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Modern U.S. Civil - Military Relations: Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword

David E. Johnson

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Modern U.S. Civil-Military Relations:

Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword

David E. Johnson

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Introduction

On November 30, 1995, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry testified before the House International Relations and National Security committees on the commitment of U.S. ground forces to the Former Yugoslavia. The commitment, crafted in Dayton, Ohio, had been avoided for some 4 years. Perry carefully discussed the mission, rules of engagement, and exit strategy for U.S. forces.[1]

Perry explained the rationale for the deployment—an opportunity to end the bloody conflict, further American interests in the region, and prevent the spread of the war to neighboring nations. He clearly defined the mission of the Implementation Force (IFOR) as "to oversee and enforce implementation of the military aspects of the peace agreement."[2] He pointedly stressed the strictly military nature of IFOR's mission, and noted that IFOR would not be involved in "civilian programs . . . rebuilding the infrastructure, revitalizing the economy, bringing refugees back for resettlement and providing for free elections."[3] Perry also discussed the military capabilities of IFOR:

> We are going in with a well-armed and well-trained force and with robust rules of engagement. The U.S. ground contingent is built around the 1st Armored Division. Nobody should doubt that the 1st Armored Division is capable of taking care of itself. The 1st AD's Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, artillery and Apache helicopters will be sufficient to take on any opposition in the region.[4]

Author's note: A shorter version of this paper was prepared as part of the post-Cold War U.S. Civil-Military Relations project of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University. The concept for the paper, and much of the research conducted for it, evolved when I was a Research Fellow at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1994.

Perry further promised that military commanders would "have access to as much NATO air power as they require."[5] Finally, Perry put a time limit on the deployment—American troops would be out of Bosnia in one year, even if the civil functions IFOR was charged to protect were not accomplished.

A December 1995 article in the *Washington Times* examined the "huge say" U.S. military leaders had had in crafting the provisions of the Dayton agreement. It quoted several anonymous administration officials as believing that the agreement "was carefully crafted to reflect demands from the military. . . . Rather than be ignored . . . the military, as a price for its support, has basically gotten anything it wanted."[6] The article also speculated that the administration had listened so intently to its military leaders for reasons that were "part political cover, part lessons learned from the Somalia debacle and Haiti, part reflection of the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina."[7]

This essay will argue that the demands placed by military officers on the provisions of the Dayton agreement reflect a steady increase in the influence of military officers in crafting defense policy, rather than the recognition of any lessons learned in Somalia or Haiti. Furthermore, this increased authority of the military—and the resultant deterioration in civil-military relations—is largely the result of the lessons drawn by the military from the American experience in Vietnam. In effect, Somalia and Haiti serve only to reinforce in the minds of military officers the validity of the Vietnam lessons, rather than provide new insights. And the essential lesson of Vietnam was that only professional military officers can formulate the fundamental principles governing the application of American military power, or military doctrine.

In the United States, military doctrine can be thought of as a paradigm, similar to the paradigms employed by scientific communities described by Thomas Kuhn in his classic study *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn described scientific paradigms in two ways. First, in a sociological sense, paradigms defined "the entire constellation of beliefs,

values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community."[8] Second, the paradigm provided "exemplary past achievements" that gave "the concrete puzzle solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science."[9]

Kuhn also described how paradigms change. Essentially, they shift when they fail to provide solutions to the problems against which they are applied. These conditions of failure, or anomalies, can result in two responses. First, the community can "devise numerous articulations and *ad hoc* modifications of their theory in order to eliminate any apparent conflict."[10] Thus, the anomaly remains such and is not the basis for a fundamental rethinking of the validity of the paradigm. Second, if the discontinuities are clearly not solvable within the existing paradigm (a situation Kuhn calls a crisis), a new paradigm will emerge. In the latter case, Kuhn asserts that a paradigmatic revolution has occurred.[11]

Kuhn's logic resonates in the comprehensive definition of U.S. military doctrine contained in *Joint Pub 1: Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces*, in that doctrine "offers a common perspective from which to plan and operate, and fundamentally shapes the way we think about and train for war."[12] While the services are not unsophisticated, monolithic entities marching blindly to the beat of a rigid set of rules, their "institutional essence" is defined by their doctrine.[13] In short, doctrine is the frame of reference that fundamentally defines the activities of each of the Armed Forces by:

- Prescribing the shared worldview and values as well as the "proper" methods, tools, techniques, and approaches to problem solving within and among the Services.
- Providing a way in which the Services view themselves.
- Governing how the Services deal with each other and with other governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

- Prescribing the questions and the answers that are considered acceptable within the institution or school of thought covered by the paradigm.

Although each Service is a unique institution, with its own ruling paradigm, a unifying theme that has fundamentally shaped American military doctrine since the mid-1980s is the criteria that govern the decision to commit American forces to combat. These criteria were publicly announced by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger during a November 1984 speech before the National Press Club, "The Uses of Military Power." Mr. Weinberger enunciated "*six* major tests to be applied when we are weighing the use of U.S. combat forces abroad."[14] They were quite explicit:

> (1) *First*, the United States should not commit forces to *combat* overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies. . . .
>
> (2) *Second*, if we decide it *is* necessary to put *combat* troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning. If we are *un*willing to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all. Of course if the particular situation requires only limited force to win our objectives, then we should not hesitate to commit forces sized accordingly. . . .
>
> (3) *Third*, if we *do* decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives. And we should know precisely how our forces can accomplish those clearly defined objectives. And we should have and send the forces needed to do just that. . . .
>
> (4) *Fourth*, the relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed—their size, composition and disposition—must be continually reassessed and adjusted as necessary. Conditions and objectives invariably change during the course of a conflict. When they do change, then so must our combat requirements. We must continuously

> keep as a beacon light before us the basic questions: *"Is this conflict in our national interest?"* "Does our national interest require us to fight, to use force of arms?" If the answers are "yes," then we *must* win. If the answers are "no," then we should not be in combat.
>
> (5) *Fifth*, before the U.S. commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance that we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress. This support cannot be achieved unless we are candid in making clear the threats we face; the support cannot be sustained without continuing and close consultation. We cannot fight a battle with the Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops *not* to win, but just to be there.
>
> (6) *Sixth*, the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.[15]

The Weinberger Doctrine, inherently restrictive in its criteria, became further constrained in application by the so-called Powell Doctrine. This corollary to the Weinberger Doctrine, crafted by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, demands the use of overwhelming force when American military power is committed:

> to operate with *overwhelming force*, based not only on the quantity of forces and materiel committed, but on the quality of their planning and skillfulness of their employment. Properly trained and motivated forces with superior technology, executing innovative, flexible, and well-coordinated plans, provide a decisive qualitative edge. Careful selection of strategic and operation priorities aids concentration at the decisive point and time. Action to affect the enemy's dispositions and readiness prior to battle and to prevent enemy reinforcement of the battle by land, sea, or air also promotes concentration. The purpose of these and related measures is to achieve strategic advantage and exploit that advantage to win quickly, with as few casualties and as little damage as possible.[16]

The Weinberger and Powell Doctrines both seek to capitalize on the strengths of the American military paradigm. Both, however, also make military considerations paramount in the political-military decisionmaking process of when to commit American military forces to combat and how they will be employed once committed. Consequently, both clearly have significant implications for civil-military relations. These doctrines, however, are products of an American military paradigm that was fully defined in World War II and that faced its only potential crisis in Vietnam.

Notes

1. William J. Perry, "The Deployment of U.S. Troops to Bosnia, Prepared Statement of Secretary of Defense William J. Perry to the House International Relations and National Security Committees, Nov. 30, 1995," *Defense Issues* 10, no. 102.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Warren P. Strobel, "This Time Clinton Is Set to Heed Advice from Military," *Washington Times,* December 1, 1995, 1.
7. Ibid.
8. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 175.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 78.
11. Ibid., 66-91.
12. *Joint Pub 1: Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 6; emphasis in the original.
13. Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1974), 28. I rely on Halperin's definition of "organizational essence" when I refer to "institutional essence." Halperin notes that: "Organizations have considerable freedom in defining their missions and the capabilities they need to pursue these missions. The organization's *essence* is the view held by the dominant group in the organization of what the missions and capabilities should be. Related to this are convictions about what kinds of people with what expertise, experience, and knowledge should be members of the organization."

14. Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon*, rev. ed. (New York: Warner, 1991), 453; emphasis in the original.

15. Ibid., 453-54; emphasis in the original.

16. *Joint Pub 1*, 22-23; emphasis in the original.

Modern U.S. Civil-Military Relations:

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1.
Forging the Paradigms

World War I was the catalyst for a fundamental reconstruction of the American military paradigm. For the first time in its history, the United States participated with an alliance in a war against a first class enemy that posed no direct threat to the American homeland. During the subsequent interwar period, the Army and the Navy focused on developing the doctrines and technologies that would support the lessons they learned from World War I.

The Army Paradigm

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, its Army, still largely a frontier constabulary, was clearly unprepared. The Army traditionally relied on mobilizing militia and volunteers to swell the ranks of its small Regular

or Spain, a woefully inadequate procedure for a modern war. As in the Civil War, the nation had to resort to conscription to meet its huge manpower needs. By war's end in 1918, the Army counted 3,685,458 soldiers in its ranks, compared to a 1914 strength of 98,544.[1] Further complicating mobilization was the fact that the United States did not have an industrial base that could arm its Army. Consequently, the American Army had to rely on its allies for virtually all of its war materiel.

The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was not ready for even modest offensive operations until May 1918. Its major campaign of the war, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, started on 26 September and ended with the Armistice in November. This campaign was against a German Army exhausted and demoralized by a series of abortive offensives. Nevertheless, the campaign provided the Americans with the practical battle experience from which they would assess their performance and the adequacy of their doctrine.

The Army's limited, but highly favorable, experience in World War I seemed to reinforce the conviction that its doctrine, based on the importance of the transition from trench combat to offensive "open warfare," was essentially correct. Fire superiority was deemed essential, as was the efficient operation of the combined arms. Other major lessons involved increasing the number of modern weapons in the Army and the importance of managing the vast logistical requirements of mass armies and modern warfare.[2]

The Army captured the doctrinal lessons of World War I in its 1923 revision of the *Field Service Regulations*. Key points included:

> The ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces by battle. Decisive defeat in battle breaks the enemy's will to war and forces him to sue for peace.[3]

Army for a quick war against a third-rate power like Mexico or Spain, a woefully inadequate procedure for a modern war. As in the Civil War, the nation had to resort to conscription to meet its huge manpower needs. By war's end in 1918, the Army counted 3,685,458 soldiers in its ranks, compared to a 1914 strength of 98,544.[1] Further complicating mobilization was the fact that the United States did not have an industrial base that could arm its Army. Consequently, the American Army had to rely on its allies for virtually all of its war materiel.

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> The ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces by battle. Decisive defeat in battle breaks the enemy's will to war and forces him to sue for peace.[3]

> Concentration of superior forces, both on the ground and in the air, at the decisive place and time, creates the conditions most essential to decisive victory and constitutes the best evidence of superior leadership.[4]
>
> Decisive results are obtained only by the offensive.
>
> Only by means of a relentless pursuit of the beaten enemy can the full fruits of victory be obtained. . . . The object of the pursuit is the annihilation of the hostile forces.[5]
>
> Superior fire constitutes the best protection against loss as well as the most effective means of destruction.[6]

The Army also made a decision about the type of enemy that it would prepare to fight that fundamentally influenced both its warfighting doctrine and organizational structure. In the future the Army focused exclusively on preparing to fight:

> an opponent organized for war on modern principles and equipped with all the means of modern warfare" since "An army capable of waging successful war under these conditions will prove adequate to any less grave emergency with which it may be confronted."[7]

These principles, implemented by a mass army created around the nucleus of a small Regular Army and rapidly expanded by mobilized reserves and conscripts and armed by American industry, formed the basis of the doctrinal paradigm for the Army during the interwar period.

The Navy Paradigm

In the years before World War I, the U.S. Navy embraced a new doctrine:

> establish a command of the sea that would assure security to one's own coast and shipping, and destruction of the enemy's commerce "root and branch." The battleship was

> considered the index of a navy's power, and the backbone of its fighting fleet whose ability to destroy, or at least to immobilize an enemy's fleet was the decisive factor in establishing command of the sea.[8]

Accordingly, once the president and Congress reached a consensus on these points, it naturally followed that the United States would join in the naval arms race that began in earnest in the early 20th century with the commissioning of the "all big gun" battleship *HMS Dreadnought*. Between 1899 and 1916, the Navy increased its number of combatant vessels from 36 to 74 and its personnel from 16,354 to 60,376. The Navy also concentrated its battleships in the Atlantic to create its "fighting fleet." Consequently, by 1907 the traditional squadrons on distant stations had largely disappeared.[9]

The naval lessons of World War I were mixed. Some believed that the ascendance of the submarine and airplane "sounded the death knell of the battleship."[10] This view was strengthened in 1921 when Army bombers, under the command of Brigadier General Billy Mitchell, sank the "unsinkable" German battleship *Ostfreisland*.[11] The Joint Board that examined the bombing tests did not agree:

> The battleship is still the backbone of the fleet and the bulwark of the Nation's sea defense, and will so remain so long as safe navigation of the sea for purposes of trade or transportation is vital to success in war.
>
> The airplane, like the submarine, destroyer, and mine has added to the dangers to which battleships are exposed, but has not made the battleship obsolete. The battleship still remains the greatest factor of naval strength.[12]

This view of the primacy of the battleship was the essence of the paradigm the Navy developed after World War I. Although it devoted significant effort to developing submarines and naval shore and carrier aviation before World War II, these weapons were clearly ancillary to the big-gun

battleship—the "backbone of the fleet" and the final arbiter of naval warfare.[13]

In its planning for future war, the Navy looked to the East where another naval power was on the rise—Japan. Its strategy for a conflict with Japan, War Plan *Orange*, defined its strategic planning between the wars. *Orange* envisioned a war in the Pacific in which the United States Navy would drive across the Pacific to relieve the Philippines and eventually defeat Japan through blockade.

Naval planners realized that the successful execution of *Orange* required ground forces to wrest bases from the Japanese and to establish and defend facilities to support its operations.[14] In the Marine Corps, the Navy had its own organic force for this mission. In January 1920, Admiral Robert E. Cooney, Chief of Naval Operations, informed Major General George Barnett, Commandant of the Marine Corps, that "ORANGE would henceforth determine all the Navy's plans and programs." He also recommended that the Marine Corps develop an expeditionary force to support ORANGE.[15] Thus began a process that slowly transformed the Marine Corps during the interwar years into an amphibious assault force.

The Air Power Paradigm

The potential of aviation as a weapon had become clear in World War I, and the major American military doctrinal innovation between the two World Wars was in aerial warfare. How this potential could best be realized was open for debate, however. In the Navy, airplanes and the aircraft carriers designed to allow their operation with the fleet clearly took second place to the battleship. The role of naval aviation was to support a navy still committed to seizing command of the seas with a battleship fleet. Most naval aviators accepted this complementary and subordinate role and worked to further naval aviation within these constraints.[16] The attitudes of Marine Corps aviators are

perhaps best captured in the statement of Major Alfred A. Cunningham in a 1920 *Marine Corps Gazette* article: "It is fully realized that the only excuse for aviation in any service is its usefulness in assisting the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their operations."[17]

Perhaps the one area in which a real revolution in military affairs occurred in the United States during the interwar era was in the birth of air power doctrine within the Army. The Army was the only service where there was outright contention over the future of aviation. The National Defense Act of 1920 created an Army Air Service more or less equivalent to the other Army branches like the Infantry. For many air officers (Brigadier General Billy Mitchell was the most vocal), the true possibilities of military aviation, particularly bombardment aviation, could be realized only with the creation of an independent air force.

Even those Army aviators of a less radical bent than Mitchell were frustrated by the limited vision of a conservative War Department fixed on the primacy of the infantry in warfare. The 1923 *Field Service Regulations*, published after the sinking of the *Ostfreisland*, still envisioned bombardment aviation as a kind of aerial artillery. Operating "beyond the effective range of artillery," it attacked the "enemy's line of communications and supply"; however, "During decisive combat, its effort is concentrated to render the greatest assistance possible to the main attack."[18]

During the interwar years, the War Department gradually began to recognize the growing importance of aviation. In 1926, the War Department published *Training Regulations No. 440-15: Fundamental Principles for the Employment of Air Service*. This manual finally recognized a strategic, independent mission for bombardment aviation with "the object of destroying military supply, main lines of communications, mobilization, concentration, and military industrial centers," that did "not involve direct cooperation with ground troops on the field of battle." Still, control over even strategic bombardment was implicit in the statement that

it "should be based on the broad plan of operations of the military forces."[19]

Strategic bombing came to dominate American air power doctrine between the wars. It had antecedents in the theories of a number of air power theorists: Giulio Douhet of Italy; Hugh Trenchard of Great Britain; and Billy Mitchell. The real work of crafting the American air power doctrine, however, was done at the Air Corps Tactical School. At that institution, beginning in the mid-1920s, some of the best minds in the Air Corps worked to develop a doctrine that would capitalize on the what they believed were the inherent strengths of bombardment aviation.

In 1931, the Air Corps Tactical School stated explicitly the central assumption that governed doctrinal development in the Army air arm: *"Bombardment aviation, under the circumstances anticipated in a major war, is the basic arm of the Air Force."*[20] The most radical notion developed by the school, however, was the nature of the targets bombers would attack. Unlike the ground Army and the Navy, which both focused on the opposing military forces, air power advocates saw the enemy's industrial capacity to wage war as the decisive target. Furthermore, these industries, susceptible to attack only by bombers at the start of a war, could be disabled by attacking their "critical nodes."

Control of the air weapon, however, was the central issue in the insurgency conducted by Army air power advocates throughout the interwar era. Although the War Department made concessions that progressively yielded greater autonomy for the air component of the Army, it did not relinquish control. Finally, in February 1942, in the early uncertain days after Pearl Harbor, an accommodation was reached when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9082 reorganizing the War Department per Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall's plan. Marshall, fed up with the bureaucratic inertia of the War Department, restructured it into three separate and autonomous commands: the Army Air Forces, the Army Ground Forces and the Services of Supply.[21] The restructuring

sanctioned two fundamentally different doctrinal approaches by Army forces to the conduct of World War II. The Army Ground Forces trained and equipped forces to destroy enemy ground forces; the Army Air Forces focused on a strategic air war dominated by its own unique doctrinal vision—destroying the enemy's means of making war.

Paradigms Triumphant: World War II

In World War II, the United States held a dominant position. The mobilization, production, and deployment issues that had hamstrung American efforts in World War I had been studied between the wars, so when the United States began rearming, it did so with vengeance. American efforts, particularly when coupled with the production of the Allies, yielded an immense quantitative advantage over Axis powers.

During the war, each of the American Armed Forces adhered to the doctrinal paradigm it had developed between the World Wars, using ever increasing material resources. This is not to say that there was no adaptation to wartime experience, only that the essence of each service's doctrine prevailed. Furthermore, each service concentrated on fighting the war for which it had planned and prepared.

In accord with the "Europe first" policy of the Allies, the Army focused on Europe. After bloodying its newly formed units in Africa and Italy, it finally made the long awaited invasion of France in June 1944. The underlying premise of the invasion, from the American perspective, was the "belief that the destruction of the enemy's armed forces ought to be the first object of strategy and that northern Europe was the best place to confront and destroy the German army."[22]

The period from the invasion to the collapse of the Third Reich was a long and brutal campaign. General Dwight D. Eisenhower advanced on a broad front, using overwhelming firepower, constant pressure, and direct assaults to annihilate the German Army. The chief lessons the Army learned in the war were ways in which existing doctrine could be enhanced.

Foremost was the importance of combined tank-infantry operations supported by the overwhelming firepower provided by artillery and air power.[23]

The development of tactics and procedures for the employment of air power by ground units had, however, been largely an ad hoc effort by units in the combat theaters. As an institution, the Army Air Forces had little interest in this role. Consequently, "Because of the hesitancy on the part of the War Department to publish a Field Manual or Training Circular . . . . The splendid cooperation between the Tactical Air Commands and the Armies was developed during operations."[24]

The lack of emphasis on air-ground operations stemmed from the fact that the attention of the Army Air Forces was riveted on its strategic bombing campaign against Germany and from its different conception of the utility of tactical aviation. In July 1943, the War Department published FM 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power*. The new manual was published without the concurrence of the commander of Army Ground Forces, and was "viewed with dismay by the Ground Forces—as the Army Air Forces' 'Declaration of Independence'."[25] The issue of autonomy was addressed head-on with the statement, in capital letters,

> LAND POWER AND AIR POWER ARE CO-EQUAL AND INTERDEPENDENT FORCES; NEITHER IS AN AUXILIARY OF THE OTHER.[26]

Furthermore, the thorny issue of control was resolved:

> CONTROL OF AVAILABLE AIR POWER MUST BE CENTRALIZED AND COMMAND MUST BE EXERCISED THROUGH THE AIR FORCE COMMANDER IF THIS INHERENT FLEXIBILITY AND ABILITY TO DELIVER A DECISIVE BLOW ARE TO BE FULLY EXPLOITED.[27]

The manual also gave doctrinal guidance concerning strategic and tactical aviation. The goal of strategic air forces was "the defeat of the enemy nation." Only in situations "when the action is vital and decisive" would they be diverted to tactical air force missions. The roles of tactical air forces, in priority, were gaining air superiority, isolation of the battlefield, and battlefield support of ground units. Furthermore, ground support missions against enemy units or "contact zone missions" were downplayed as "expensive" and "only at critical times" were they deemed "profitable."[28]

For General Henry H. Arnold and a generation of air power advocates, the stakes were extraordinarily high to prove that *"our way of making war"* was in fact decisive.[29] The outcome of the strategic bombing campaign was the determining issue for an independent air force. The American air campaign against Germany began in August 1942 and eventually extended to Japan. Although strategic bombing did not end the war independently, its effects were judged by some to be decisive to the outcome.[30] The model that defined the views of Air Force officers about the employment of air power was also settled in the critical areas of independence, control, and strategic and tactical missions. Finally, any criticisms of the decisiveness of strategic bombing became seemingly irrelevant in the blinding flash of the atomic bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Navy, and its supporting Marine Corps, focused on the Pacific Theater. The only fundamental assault to its model came on December 7, 1941, with the destruction of its battleships at Pearl Harbor. Billy Mitchell's prophecy had come true. Nevertheless, the accommodation was rather simple: the aircraft carrier became the Navy's new capital ship. Although American submarines ravaged Japanese commercial shipping, the Navy's main effort was fixed on the goal of destroying the Japanese fleet and strangling the island nation's economy by blockade. To this end, the Navy and Marine Corps executed a strategy that largely mirrored its prewar *Orange* plan and that was derived from its doctrine.[31]

Notes

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26. U.S. War Department, FM 100-20, *Field Service Regulations: Command and Employment of Air Power* (Washington, 1943), 1.

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28. Ibid., 8-12.

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30. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)* (Washington, 1945-1946; reprint, Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1987), 37.

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2.
From Triumph to Crisis: World War II to Vietnam

It is difficult to overstate the influence World War II had on the United States. With its entry into World War II, the United States began a course that marked a fundamental shift from the key tenet that had defined its political and military policies since President George Washington had warned the nation in his 1796 farewell address to "steer clear of permanent alliances, with any portion of the foreign world."[1] For the first time in its history, the United States was committed to the concept of collective security it had avoided following World War I, when it refused to join the League of Nations. In the aftermath of World War II, the United States became a player on the world stage and committed itself to further alliances guaranteed by its military might, defined for the services by their experiences in World War II.

In the main, each service had executed, with some adaptation, its prewar doctrine and had triumphed. The success of these doctrines in practice, at the head of a wartime alliance that had won the greatest conflict in human history, seemed to fulfill the services' prewar assumptions. In the aftermath of war, the tested paradigms formed the frames of reference for the generation of military leaders who led the Armed Forces of the United States into a future fundamentally different than the past.

The anchor of the alliances made by the United States was the imperative to contain Communism, viewed largely as a monolithic Soviet-led threat, until the waning years of the Vietnam War. The world had seemingly become bipolar and

aligned in either the American or Soviet camp. Furthermore, the World War II experience framed how American policymakers viewed geopolitical issues. To many, the war was caused by the attempts of the Western democracies to appease, rather than confront, Hitler's aggression. Thus, Munich became a powerful symbol for a generation of statesmen and soldiers who argued for preparedness and the willingness to take a stand against aggression.[2] Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe seemed ominously familiar and clearly threatening.

The new American policy of containment was a radical departure from the traditional American military policy of defending the nation. In the aftermath of World War II, the military forces of the United States demobilized as they had after every war; it was, however, a temporary demobilization. For the first time in its history, the United States resolved to maintain a large peacetime military establishment to counter the "threat by the monolithic mass of Communistic Imperialism."[3] Thus, the new centerpiece of American military strategy, enunciated in 1948 by the State Department, was a new reality that recognized:

> while war "is always a possibility," the main purpose in maintaining armed forces was to provide "support for our political position"; other purposes were to act "as a deterrent," to encourage other nations attempting to resist Soviet aggression, and to "wage war successfully if war should develop."[4]

The passage in 1948 of a peacetime selective service law enabled the United States to maintain the active duty military posture necessary to support containment. A large National Guard and Reserve force undergirded the active component.[5]

Service Roles and Missions

The implications of a continual East-West confrontation, in the presence of nuclear weapons, had significant ramifications

for the nation and its Armed Forces. Foremost among these issues were determining service roles and missions and national security policies. If there was any single military lesson from World War II, it was that air, sea, and land forces had to operate jointly. The highly decentralized and simplistic prewar conception, with the Army responsible for land operations and the Navy focused on command of the sea, was clearly inadequate. Still, plans to unify the armed services met stiff opposition, particularly from naval officers who believed their service would suffer in the postwar competition for resources with the Army and the Air Force.[6] The initial efforts—the National Security Act of 1947 and Executive Order 9877— began a process that by 1949 resulted in the establishment of the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Nevertheless, the services still retained a great deal of power because the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not "command" the chiefs of the services.[7]

Power was retained by each service through their roles and missions. In March 1948, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and the Joint Chiefs crafted the Key West Agreement, later sanctioned by Executive Order 9950, that delineated the primary and collateral functions of each service. What is particularly striking about the Key West Agreement is that it essentially assured the retention by each service of its traditional turf, thereby virtually guaranteeing, at best, duplication of effort and, at worst, incompatibility. The services were virtually autonomous because each retained its authority to "organize, train, and equip forces for joint operations" and "conduct research, to develop tactics, techniques and organization, and to develop and procure weapons, equipment, and supplies . . . each service coordinating with the others in all matters of joint concern."[8]

Although the April 21, 1948 "Functions of the Armed Forces and the Joint Chiefs of Staff" document that resulted from the Key West conference provided extensive lists of functions, the key missions assigned each service endorsed

the doctrinal paradigms refined during World War II. For Air Force officers, this recognition was particularly important, because the definition of "Strategic Air Warfare" codified their assertions about the decisiveness of air power:

> Air combat and supporting operations designed to effect, through the systematic application of force to a selected series of vital targets, the progressive destruction and disintegration of the enemy's war-making capacity to a point where he no longer retains the ability or the will to wage war. Vital targets may included key manufacturing systems, sources of raw material, critical material, stock piles, power systems, transportation systems, communications facilities, concentrations of uncommitted elements of enemy armed forces, key agricultural areas, and other such target systems.[9]

Still, intense interservice rivalry remained the norm, occasionally punctuated by extreme episodes like the 1949 "revolt of the admirals."[10] In 1950, Dwight Eisenhower, then serving as the president of Columbia University, noted in a letter to Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, the source of this tension:

> Manifestly, each service will attempt to secure the greatest possible portion of the aggregate sum [of the budget] in any year in order that it may find itself in a position to meet, with some degree of effectiveness, its own assigned and traditional responsibilities. Much of the heat in recent inter-service controversy has sprung directly *from this process of attempting to distribute deficits* among the three, with the consequent jealousy with which each has viewed every allocation made to other services. When civilian authority is forced to intervene and make decisions in this delicate matter, it is easy to see where one of the services can quickly convince itself that it is the victim of special considerations or special lobbying ability on the part of others. It then seeks relief from any possible source, including the Congress.[11]

Eisenhower also noted the informing nature of the World War II experience in the arguments made by the services: "All advocates of every theory of American security turn back to the experiences of World War II for historical example—for illustrations to prove the soundness of their own arguments."[12] For the Air Force, strategic bombing of the Soviet Union's industrial capacity seemed the war winning strategy. For the Navy, command of the seas and the ability to attack Soviet land targets with carrier based aviation was the focus. The Army concentrated on a land war in Europe against the Red Army.[13]

Testing the Paradigms: The Korean War

On June 25, 1950, the armies of North Korea invaded South Korea, a complete surprise to the United States; in July 1953, an armistice was declared sanctioning the 38th parallel as the border between the two Koreas. America had fought its first limited war of the post-World War II era. In the process, a strong tradition that had been sacrosanct in American politico-military relations was seriously undermined. Civil-military relations before Korea had met a time-honored standard—political considerations defined the goals of a war at its inception, but civilian leaders then largely stepped aside and let military officers prosecute the war with broad operational autonomy. There were no sanctuaries for the enemy and military strategy was paramount. The object of American military strategy was decisive victory in the field, rather than the attainment of any nebulous political goal.

The wars America engaged in were total, and its enemies surrendered unconditionally after defeat on the battlefield. Only then did the politicians and diplomats regain control. Indeed, "War was seen as a failure—not a continuation—of diplomacy and politics. It was up to the military to put things right again—without interference from the diplomats or politicians."[14]

Thus, in World War II, while its allies "focused on the shape of the postwar world and the fate of their national interest in it," the United States "devoted primary attention to winning the war and put off until later the settling of political issues."[15] President Franklin D. Roosevelt and President Harry S. Truman resisted "making political commitments to either of their Allies until victory had been achieved" and "consistently gave the green light to their military chiefs, and these consistently rejected decisions on grounds other than military effect."[16] Therefore, the American way of war in many ways perverted the Clausewitzian dictum: "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."[17]

Seen from this perspective, the near crisis in civil-military relations caused by MacArthur's challenging the restrictions of a limited war were in consonance with past American practices when theater commanders were largely autonomous in their prosecution of the nation's wars. This had been MacArthur's experience in World War II, when his major source of friction with the War Department was over the issue of getting more resources to prosecute the war in the Pacific, not over how to fight the campaigns in his theater.

While there was widespread support in military circles of the MacArthur relief on the grounds that he had openly opposed the President, many officers shared his frustration over the limitations on military action. General George E. Stratemeyer, Commanding General, Far Eastern Far East Air Forces, believed that the American military policies in Korea were against the national military tradition, stating:

> It [the American military objective] is contrary to everything that every military commander that I have been associated with or from all of our history—he has never been in a position where he could not win the war he started to win. That is not American . . . I know that General MacArthur's hands were tied, I am sure, not by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but by the . . . State Department.[18]

Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander, Naval Forces Far East, believed that "the Communists would respond *only* to massive force, and that Truman's unwillingness to pursue such a policy foredoomed American negotiating efforts prior to the spring of 1953."[19] Finally, General Otto P. Weyland, Stratemeyer's successor as Commanding General, Far East Air Forces, although understanding the war was limited, wrote that there had been "chafing at the political limitations on the employment of air power."[20] In short, "In Korea, for perhaps the first time in modern American experience, military objectives were tempered and shaped by political considerations, and the American military became very frustrated with this new intrusion and limitation upon their traditional quest for military victory."[21]

The object of American military strategy had always been decisive victory, rather than the attainment of any nebulous political goal. The wars America engaged in were total and its enemies surrendered unconditionally after defeat on the battlefield. Only then did the politicians and diplomats regain control. In Korea, MacArthur's military strategy of annihilating the enemy was clearly in this tradition. It also came into conflict with the administration's political imperative of limiting the conflict in the broader context of containment and the avoidance of global conflict.

Indeed, the Korean War seemingly challenged the utility of ground forces in war. President Dwight Eisenhower entered office promising to bring the war to a conclusion. He soon made it clear that he had no compunction about resorting to nuclear weapons to end the conflict. In a meeting with the National Security Council on May 6, 1953, Eisenhower stressed that "we have to consider the atomic bomb as simply another weapon in our arsenal."[22] He also let the Chinese know that he was willing to widen the war and attack Manchuria to get the communists to agree to an armistice.[23] In such an attack the President noted that "it was clear that we would have to use atomic weapons."[24]

Although there is still contention over the effect the nuclear threat had on the Chinese,[25] Eisenhower and members of his cabinet were convinced it had been decisive and "the first vindication of the Massive Retaliation theory" that would be the centerpiece of the administration's national security policies.[26] Indeed, the belief in the bomb was reaffirmed by Eisenhower when he stated at a October 13 meeting of the National Security Council that "we should use the bomb in Korea if the aggression is renewed."[27]

Secretary of State Dulles announced the administration's new national security policy, dubbed "massive retaliation," before the Council of Foreign Relations on January 12, 1954. Dulles stressed that the new strategy was designed for a protracted solution to the Soviet threat, but one that did not cause the nation "to become permanently committed to military expenditures that they lead to 'practical bankruptcy'." Dulles posited that what the administration wanted was "a maximum deterrent at a bearable cost." Thus, the new policy would "depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing."[28] Dulles further amplified on the intent of the "New Look" during a Senate hearing, explaining that "the new policy clearly provided political guidance to the military to emphasize air and naval power and to deemphasize land power."[29]

Limited War: A New Paradigm?

The inauguration of John F. Kennedy as President marked a shift by the United States toward a more activist role in the Cold War. Kennedy had castigated the Eisenhower strategy of massive retaliation throughout the presidential campaign because, in the words of a member of the new administration, it seemingly offered only "the alternatives of either national humiliation or all-out war."[30] The failures were patently manifest: in 1954 France had been forced out of Indochina by the Communist Vietminh; in 1956 the Soviets had brutally repressed an anti-Communist revolution in Hungary; and,

certainly most alarming, in 1959 nearby Cuba had fallen under the Communist yoke and was apparently bent on exporting its revolution throughout Latin America. Clearly, the "all or nothing" policy of massive retaliation had failed miserably in containing Communist expansion.

Kennedy viewed the Third World "as the decisive arena of competition between the free world and international communism"[31] and was committed to forging "a credible deterrent to Communist expansionism."[32] The strategy the Kennedy administration embraced in the place of massive retaliation was termed flexible response.

Flexible response had its origins in the debates of the 1950s over what capabilities and doctrines were necessary to address local or limited wars stemming from Communist expansion. Critics of massive retaliation, such as Bernard Brodie, Edward L. Katzenbach, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Chester Bowles,challenged the notion that nuclear threats could deter limited wars, "suggesting that the enemy would find it hard to believe that the United States could mean it when it threatened massive retaliation for limited provocation."[33]

Two widely read books by Robert E. Osgood and Henry A. Kissinger offered further critiques of massive retaliation and posited arguments for an American capability to fight limited wars. In *Limited War: The Challenge to American Security*, Osgood posed the question that he believed was the central challenge facing the nation's foreign policy: "How can the United States utilize its military power as a rational and effective instrument of national policy?"[34] Answering his own question, Osgood asserted that "the only rational course is to develop a strategy capable of limiting warfare and fighting limited wars successfully."[35]

Kissinger, in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, asserted that massive retaliation had its basis in an American penchant for "a theory of war based on the necessity of total victory."[36] He believed that "we added the atomic bomb to our arsenal without integrating the implications into our

thinking. . . . we saw it merely as another tool in a concept of warfare which knew no goal save total victory, and no mode of war except all-out war."[37] Kissinger argued that such a narrow view created local conditions wherein which the Communists could expand without triggering American nuclear response.[38] He advocated "flexible, graduated deterrence and flexible, graduated military action if deterrence failed or if there arose initiatives to be seized."[39] The challenge, in Kissinger's view, was for the United States "to find intermediate applications for our military strength . . . which brings power into balance with the willingness to use it.[40]

The most widely read articulation of the need for an American limited war capability written by a military officer was retired Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor's *The Uncertain Trumpet*. Throughout his tenure as Chief of Staff, Taylor was a critic of massive retaliation and the Eisenhower administration's New Look cuts of conventional military capabilities. Taylor's critique of the Eisenhower strategy was similar, if less academic, than that of the civilian strategists: "It offers no alternative other than reciprocal suicide or retreat."[41]

To replace the strategy of massive retaliation, Taylor advocated flexible response because of its three basic objectives:

> To deter nuclear attack on the United States, to deter or defeat limited aggression anywhere (including a Communist attack on NATO with conventional forces), and to make provision for essential survival measures in the unhappy event that general war is not deterred or comes through miscalculation.[42]

The strategy also called for a commitment by the United States to symmetrical containment and a conventional arms buildup because it required the nation to "prepare itself to respond

anywhere, any time, with weapons and forces appropriate to the situation."[43]

In March 1961, Kennedy echoed Taylor's strategy in his address to Congress on his administration's defense policies: "Our defense posture must be both flexible and determined. Any aggressor contemplating an attack on any part of the Free World with any kind of weapons, conventional or nuclear, must know that our response will be suitable, selective, swift, and effective."[44] The President also warned of an insidious threat posed to the security of the Free World by its "being slowly nibbled away at the periphery, regardless of our strategic power, by forces of subversion, infiltration, intimidation, indirect or non-overt aggression, internal revolution, diplomatic blackmail, guerrilla warfare, or a series of limited wars."[45] To counter "this area of local wars" he proposed a revamped Military Assistance Program. Additionally, he was interested in "the need for a wider range of *usable* military power,"[46] stating: "Diplomacy and defense are no longer distinct alternatives, one to be used where the other fails—both must complement each other."[47] In a departure from the Eisenhower policy of stressing economic security, Kennedy noted: "Our arms must be adequate to meet our commitments and insure our security, without being bound by arbitrary budget ceilings."[48]

The Kennedy defense buildup focused on both nuclear and conventional forces. Early in the administration, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara imposed a new rationality on the defense budget process by introducing the Planning Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS). McNamara further postulated the view that the basis for defense planning would be preparation "to fight two and one half wars simultaneously--that is, a major war in Europe, a major war in Asia, and a lesser struggle elsewhere."[49] He also laid the foundation for what would become the "strategic nuclear triad" of nuclear submarines, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and manned bombers. The debate over the strategic nuclear deterrent would continue within the context

of nuclear parity with the Soviet Union.[50] There was, however, growing consensus that nuclear weapons were only appropriate in general war situations, and that "Limited, local war should be fought with conventional weapons, or the danger would become too great that the war would not remain limited and local."[51]

This new emphasis on conventional capability was welcomed by the Armed Forces, with the possible exception of the Air Force's Strategic Air Command.[52] The Army was clearly the greatest beneficiary after its years of New Look neglect and Army Chief of Staff George H. Decker noted: "It is gratifying to the Army that the new administration is pursuing a policy stressing nonnuclear weapons and conventional forces. . . We feel that as we make our ideas and objectives better understood, we will see the Army in a better position than it has been for some time."[53] The Army also restructured its divisions, abandoning the nuclear-battlefield-focused Pentomic organization for a new, more flexible ROAD (Reorganization Objectives Army Division), geared to functioning on conventional battlefields.[54]

Still, even in the face of what appeared to be a new era of military expansion there were signs of growing tension between the civilian and military members of the Department of Defense. A September 1961 article in *Army* magazine, titled "McNamara and His Band," noted:

> If his military advisers respond with clear and cogent ideas, well and good. If they don't, then McNamara turns to his eager, articulate "whiz kids"—young civilian mathematicians, economists, physicists and logicians who make up for their lack of battlefield experience and military knowledge by the impressive application of scientific analysis and mathematical logic couched in a jargon that sometimes makes old and simple ideas appear brilliantly new and complicated.[55]

The Kennedy administration had ample opportunity to demonstrate the credibility of flexible response and its growing military capability as it responded to a series of foreign policy challenges. The Bay of Pigs, Communist forays into Laos, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Berlin Crisis all tested the administration's resolve and, in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, brought the nation to the brink of nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Each of these events was, however, short lived—the real test case for the tenets of flexible response in a limited war occurred in Vietnam.

When President Kennedy entered office he believed that the Communist insurgency was the threat to the Diem regime, not a conventional invasion from the North. This view coincided with Kennedy's conviction that "sublimited or guerrilla warfare have since 1945 constituted the most active and constant threat to free world security."[56] Kennedy also believed that the United States military was poorly equipped to deal with the problem. Consequently, he tried to force a doctrinal change on the Armed Forces from the top down.

Kennedy began his reform effort by directing Secretary of Defense McNamara to examine American "counter-guerrilla resources." The President took extraordinary steps in his efforts to get the military to embrace his views about the centrality of counterinsurgency in the strategy to thwart communist expansion. He confronted the Joint Chiefs early in his tenure and directed that they develop the necessary capabilities to meet the unconventional challenge.[57] Kennedy also took a keen interest in the Army's Special Forces, because he was convinced that they "had great potential as a counterinsurgency force."[58] Up until this point, the focus of the Army's Special Forces had been assisting conventional operations through "guerrilla warfare against conventional forces in enemy territory."[59] Over the objections of the Army leadership, Kennedy ordered significant increases in Special Forces strength.[60]

Despite Kennedy's personal emphasis, the military, particularly the Army, was slow to respond to the President's

"counterinsurgency kick."[61] Kennedy, however, showed that he understood the tremendous barriers against his imposing change on the military bureaucracy when he remarked, "I know that the Army is not going to develop in this counterinsurgency field and do the things that I think must be done unless the Army itself wants to do it."[62]

The President had ample reason to feel the military was not in step with his views. It soon became patently clear to an increasingly frustrated Kennedy that the military, although ebullient over the defense buildup, did not share his vision of what constituted usable military force. General Decker had reportedly "shrugged off preparation for counter-guerrilla warfare as something it [the Army] can take in stride," telling the President that "any good soldier can handle guerrillas."[63] It was also obvious that Decker viewed counterinsurgency as a distraction from the real threat, Soviet conventional military power in Europe.[64]

Surely more distressing to the President were the views of the supposedly enlightened General Taylor, who stated, "We good soldiers are trained for all kinds of things. We don't have to worry about special situations."[65] Indeed, Taylor's flexible response doctrine had been designed to enhance the Army's ability to fight midintensity conventional wars, not to prepare it to fight against guerrillas in "sublimited wars."[66]

The views of the Army's senior leadership mitigated the effects of the President's prodding and scrutiny of the Army's efforts in counterinsurgency, the service he clearly viewed as having the lead in the field. The Army made only marginal accommodations of the President's views in the doctrine they promulgated to deal with limited wars.

The Army issued two manuals that dealt specifically with counterinsurgency. The May 1961 version of FM 31-15, *Operations Against Irregular Forces,* discussed the need for civil-military cooperation, intelligence, propaganda, and civic action, but its clear emphasis was on offensive combat operations: "The ultimate objective of operations against an irregular force is to eliminate the irregular force and prevent

its resurgence."[67] The manual also cautioned that the initial military "force assigned to combat an irregular force must be adequate to complete their elimination."[68] That existing organizations were adequate to the task of fighting irregulars was also stated: "Infantry, armored cavalry, and airborne units are the TOE units best suited for combat against guerrillas."[69] FM 31-22, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Forces,* issued in November 1963, had little impact across the Army as a whole since it "was written by the Special Warfare Center and directed at Special Forces troops, *not* the Army as a whole."[70]

The February 1962 version of FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations—Operations,* was much more sophisticated than its predecessors. It discussed national objectives, the character of conflict, limited war, unconventional warfare, military operations against irregular forces, and situations short of war.[71] Nevertheless, although the doctrine recognized the inherent linkage between national policies and military objectives, and stressed that "Military objectives selected must be compatible with the limitations which national policies impose upon the area of conflict, weapons, participants, or other factors," the military strategy focused on the central tenet that:

> military objectives are pursued energetically, and military power is applied forcefully and decisively in accord with the chosen strategy. . . . Subordination to broad national interests does not diminish the force and vigor with which military operations are executed.[72]

In short, the time honored principles of war still applied, particularly the "Principle of the Objective" and the "Principle of the Offensive." The "ultimate objective of war" remained "the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and his will to fight"; accordingly, "each operation must contribute to this ultimate objective."[73]

Essentially, the Army adapted along the margins of its doctrinal paradigm in its response to President Kennedy's promptings. Although "not intentionally frustrating the formulation of national security policy," the Army was "acting out its convictions that its first priority was in Europe and that if you could win a big war, you could certainly win a little one."[74] The efforts were also clearly in response to Kennedy's pressure; consequently, there was little hope of them enduring past his tenure in the best of circumstances. As one officer noted, "'we were rather mechanistic about the whole thing' and that the doctrinal effort was perceived to be in response to a 'fad' originating during the Kennedy administration."[75] Nevertheless, throughout Kennedy's tenure, the military was becoming increasingly involved in the struggle in Vietnam, a struggle that was markedly different in its character from the wars the Armed Forces were preparing to fight.

To the Brink of Crisis

President Lyndon Johnson's administration was the first faced with the clear choice of losing South Vietnam or becoming deeply engaged. For Johnson, the consummate politician who had declared, "I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went," the choice was clear.[76]

President Johnson, however, wanted a limited war. He did not want the scope of the American commitment to detract from his Great Society programs nor did he want to place an undue strain on the national economy. Therefore, the President placed strict geographic restrictions on military operations to ensure the Chinese and the Soviets would not intervene.[77] In 1965 the conventional wisdom perceived the North Vietnamese as surrogates for an expansionist Communist monolith, much as the North Koreans had been viewed in 1950. Consequently, there was justifiable concern that the Chinese, who shared a border with North Vietnam, might enter the war if the United States invaded North

Vietnam. This view was supported by a CIA report in the mid-1965:

> The Chinese would intervene *only* "If U.S. ground forces invaded North Vietnam in such strength as to control the country," and "almost certainly if U.S. forces approached the Chinese frontier." It is significant the CIA *did not* believe the Chinese would intervene militarily with ground forces "if the U.S./GVN were winning the war in South Vietnam," or "if U.S. air attacks began to damage the industrial and military sector of North Vietnam."[78]

The Johnson administration crafted a strategy that assumed the leadership of North Vietnam would respond to American military pressures in a rational manner,[79] and the conditions were set to enable the North Vietnamese to make the right choice: it was made clear to the North Vietnamese that the United States would not invade nor threaten the existence of their country if they ceased their activities in the South. Beginning in February 1965, the "American strategies for success in Vietnam were based on the central assumption that if the Communists sustained enough military punishment they would finally relent, forsaking (at least temporarily) their war effort."[80] The central premise was the belief that "there was some 'breaking point' for the North Vietnamese—some level of punishment at which their morale and resolve would crumble, at which their 'will' would be 'broken.'"[81] In short, the Communists "merely had to give up the fight in the south and they would be permitted to retreat to an independent existence in the north."[82]

There was also a degree of arrogance in the decision to escalate the war: "How could a tiny, backward Asian country *not* have a breaking point, *not* have a price when opposed by the might of the United States?"[83] George Ball, Deputy Under Secretary of State during the Johnson administration, later recalled that there was a "feeling of overwhelming confidence—almost of omnipotence—many took it for

granted that we could, with a limited commitment of resources, enable the Government of Vietnam to hold the Viet Cong insurgency and forestall Hanoi's threatened intervention." Ball further noted that a penchant for quantification by key members of the administration led to a seemingly rational presumption that because the United States "had *x* times the resources of men, wealth, and material as the North Vietnamese, all we needed to prevail was to find an effective means to apply them." Unfortunately, this "Concentration on quantitative measurements meant that all unquantifiable elements were omitted from the equation of decision."[84] Clark Clifford, McNamara's replacement as Secretary of Defense, noted the general views of military officers about the difficulty of the task in Vietnam:

> When the military was told that we were going in there and save South Vietnam, I think it felt that it was not going to be a particularly difficult task. Here were a lot of little people running around in black pajamas in North Vietnam, and here we came in, the greatest nation in the world, with the most enormous firepower and with bombing that could wipe them out.[85]

And the military instrument was awesome. Since the beginning of the military buildup in 1961, America's conventional capabilities had been significantly improved, as Secretary McNamara noted during testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee in 1965:

> Fortunately, we have greatly increased the strength and readiness of our military establishment since 1961, particularly in the kinds of forces which we now require in Southeast Asia. The active Army has been expanded from 11 to 16 combat-ready divisions. Twenty thousand men have been added to the Marine Corps to allow them to fill out their combat structure and at the same time facilitate the mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve. The tactical fighter squadrons of the Air Force have been increased by

> 51 percent. Our airlift capability has more than doubled. Special Forces trained to deal with insurgency threats have been multiplied eleven fold. General ship construction and conversion has doubled. . . . In brief, the military establishment of the United States, today, is in far better shape than it ever has been in peacetime to face whatever tasks may lie ahead.[86]

The greatest flaw in the administration's strategy proved to be its lack of comprehension about the character of the war taking place in Vietnam. To the Communists, the war was largely a political contest, although it clearly had significant military dimensions. The Americans, as had the French, dealt with the conflict in almost a purely military context. Furthermore, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, although embracing a Marxist ideology and pursuing a modified strategy of Maoist People's War, were not instruments of the Chinese or the Russians, and this was an unacceptable view in the administration: "Any suggestion that Hanoi's forces and the Viet Cong might be something other than mere instruments of Moscow and Peking, that nationalism, anticolonialism, and Tonkinese imperial ambitions were major driving forces, was dismissed as reflecting a softheaded attitude toward the Communist menace."[87] Indeed, "the North Vietnamese viewed their fight against the United States as a continuation of the struggle for independence and unity in progress for two thousand years, initially against the Chinese and later against the French."[88]

As the United States became more deeply embroiled in the war in Vietnam, its military forces increasingly gravitated to conventional military options. As with World War II and Korea, there were in effect two wars, a ground war and an air war. The focus of the ground war, beginning with General William C. Westmoreland's tenure as Commander, Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), shifted to the destruction of enemy forces. All other efforts were displaced as resources were organized to contribute to the effort to

destroy the enemy. Special Forces units, heretofore focused on "the overriding goal of securing control over the indigenous minorities and winning their allegiance so that they would not fall to the Communists," shifted to an offensive role of destroying the Viet Cong.[89] Additionally, the "best people" started avoiding advisory duty, seeking the more career enhancing assignments in conventional American combat units.[90]

Westmoreland also put pressure on his subordinate Marine commander in Vietnam, Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt, to support his strategy and "go after the enemy in the hinterland."[91] Although the Marines continued to place more emphasis on pacification than the Army, they also became heavily involved in the war against main force units.[92] Still, the Marines clung to their doctrine by conducting some 62 amphibious landings between 1965 and 1969, with mixed success.[93] Thus, these "landings not only kept the amphibious art alive, but also actually advanced it by providing testing and training in a combat environment."[94]

Unfortunately, search and destroy operations were in many ways counterproductive to efforts to pacify and secure rural areas. Aside from pulling resources away from such efforts, the operations themselves were highly destructive and created civilian casualties and refugees. As one brigade commander in the 1st Cavalry division noted: "The awesome firepower—artillery, air strikes, and ARA [aerial rocket artillery from helicopter gunships]—that had saved our lives in the unpopulated Ia Drang Valley now, despite our best efforts, began taking a toll of innocent civilians killed and maimed, villages destroyed, and farm animals slain."[95] Typically, American units employed heavy firepower, in an effort to close with and kill as many enemy as possible. In many instances the Americans would "liberate" an area after inflicting heavy damage and then move on to the next area where the enemy might be engaged. Shortly after their departure, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Communists would resume control of the area.[96]

The firepower employed was massive, ranging from the weapons of individual soldiers to the use of B-52 bombers in close air support missions and area bombings of "suspected enemy locations" as large as 8 square kilometers.[97] Indeed, as Westmoreland proclaimed, "Prisoners and defectors list the B-52 as the most feared of all weapons arrayed against them."[98] One of the best descriptions of the American way of war in Vietnam was given by Israeli Major General Moshe Dayan:

> The Americans carry out their counterattacks and pursuits in the jungles not with infantry but with firepower . . . The problem faced by an American infantry unit engaging the Vietcong is not how to storm the enemy positions but how to discover where they are. The storming and assault will be done by the 155s [artillery] and aerial bombs. These are not restricted to jungle paths and are not vulnerable to ambush.
>
> The most effective weapons the Americans have for this function are their heavy bombers and they can operate no matter what the weather or visibility.[99]

Robert Komer reported to the President in August 1966 that the results of this massive application of resources were seemingly effective: "Wastefully, expensively, but nonetheless indisputably, we are winning the war in the South. Few of our programs—civil or military—are very efficient, but we are grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass."[100]

The air war mirrored the ground war in its conventionality. President Kennedy's views about counterinsurgency and flexible response had made few, if any, inroads within a U.S. Air Force dominated by Strategic Air Command generals. They were committed to the decisiveness of air power, as proven, in their minds, in World War II and Korea. General Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff from 1961 to 1965, noted, "The administration spouted new phrases and things of that sort, but as far as the Air Force was concerned, we had no radical change in

thinking at all."[101] There were, in broad terms, two air wars in Vietnam: the strategic air war against the North and the tactical air war supporting ground operations in the South. The air power advocates focused primarily on the air war against the North as the "war winning strategy," although they ensured that ample resources fully supported the tactical war in the South.

Although belief in the efficacy of bombing was not universal among the service chiefs, they approached the civilians in the administration with a "united front." In general, the "foremost airpower exponents, unwavering in their beliefs, were the Air Force and the Marine Corps."[102] General LeMay proposed, and believed, that the Air Force could "bomb North Vietnam 'back to the Stone Age'."[103] LeMay's faith in the decisiveness of air power pervaded his service. The optimistic views of one general visiting Vietnam before the large-scale American intervention were probably widely held: "But just wait till we get a squadron or two of F-100s over here. . . . We'll clean this thing up in a month!"[104]

The principal doubters about the decisiveness of strategic bombing were the Army and, to some degree, the Navy. Army officers in particular drew different conclusions from World War II and Korea. They questioned the utility of a doctrine designed to destroy the capacity of industrial nations to conduct war being applied to North Vietnam. Clearly, North Vietnam was an agrarian nation and the majority of its war materiel came from China and Russia. As for resupply and infiltration, the transportation infrastructure (if one was inclined to call dirt roads infrastructure) was easy to repair, while the Navy believed it would be extremely difficult to interdict the "thousands of small junks and water craft" available to the Communists for infiltration by the sea. Still, the Joint Chiefs "persuaded themselves that they should pursue the air war solution on the grounds that all could agree at least that it was worth the effort and that there was no harm in trying it."[105]

Although the Joint Chiefs supported a strategic air campaign against North Vietnam, they chafed at the restrictions imposed by the civilian members of the Johnson administration on *Rolling Thunder*, the air campaign they believed would end the war. The Joint Chiefs had gone on record with Secretary McNamara in November 1964, saying that they advocated an intense and "systematic bombings of ninety-four strategic targets in North Vietnam."[106] The plan "embodied the essence of American strategic bombing doctrine. Air Force planners designed it to destroy North Vietnam's ability to wage modern war. After that capacity was eliminated . . . Hanoi would have to stop its aggression."[107]

The administration refused the advice of its professional military officers for a rapid and heavy bombing campaign, before the North Vietnamese could disperse their resources and construct an air defense system. Rather, the President endorsed a graduated response plan of using bombing as political signaling, and he personally retained strict control over the bombing.[108] The President and his civilian advisers were concerned that an "all-out bombing campaign might widen the war and would 'transmit a signal of strength out of all proportion to the limited objectives of the United States in South-East Asia,' thus ending the possibility "of achieving American goals at a 'relatively low level of violence.'"[109] This caused enormous resentment among military officers. They were not even included as regular members at the President's weekly "Tuesday lunch group" sessions, during which targets were approved, until October 1967, when Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Earle G. Wheeler became a regular attendee.[110] Some 25 years later, LeMay maintained, "We could have ended it [the war] in any ten-day period you wanted to, but they never would bomb the target list we had."[111]

Initially, *Rolling Thunder* was limited mainly to military installations and lines of communication. President Johnson predicted that the "air effort . . . would take twelve weeks to produce results."[112] The desired "result" was a realization by

the Hanoi regime that "the cost of continuing aggression was 'becoming unacceptably high'," without incurring Chinese or Soviet intervention.[113]

On 10 May 1965 the President ordered a temporary suspension of the bombing "on the remote chance that Hanoi might respond" and to demonstrate to international and domestic critics that the administration was reasonable.[114] Johnson cabled Taylor in Saigon that "my purpose in this plan is to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military action, depending upon the reaction of the Communists."[115] When the North Vietnamese refused to offer the necessary response—stopping their support of the Viet Cong—the administration had a clear rationale for military escalation. Indeed, the North responded by stepping up its activities in the South after the pause.[116] Thus, a pattern was established that ended only with the termination of *Rolling Thunder* operations north of the 20th parallel on March 31, 1968, and the cessation of all attacks against North Vietnam on 1 November.[117] The pattern was disarmingly simple. The administration, following a pause to allow the North Vietnamese the opportunity to submit to its goals, would resume the attacks on the North. Furthermore, these attacks would escalate in intensity and in allowable targets for attack since the previous program had not been a sufficient inducement for the North Vietnamese to modify their behavior.

By the end of 1967, all but 5 of the 94 targets recommended for attack by the Joint Chiefs had been authorized for bombing by the President, but *Rolling Thunder* had not been successful by the single meaningful measure of its effectiveness—North Vietnamese support of the fighting in the South had not stopped.[118] Indeed, "Between 1965 and 1968, U.S. attack sorties against North Vietnam increased fourfold. Over this same period communist main force strength increased about 75 percent, enemy attacks fivefold and overall activity levels ninefold."[119] This is not to say that the effort had not been substantial. Over the course of *Rolling*

Thunder, the North Vietnamese had lost an estimated $600 million "in terms of destroyed military facilities, loss of capital stock and lost production."[120] This included "77 percent of all ammunition depots, 65 percent of all POL storage, 59 percent of the power plants, 55 percent of the major bridges . . . 39 percent of the railroad shops. . . . 12,521 vessels, 9,821 vehicles and 1,966 railroad cars and engines and damaged thousands of others."[121] Unfortunately for the American effort, the North Vietnamese received $2 billion in foreign aid, while the bombing campaign cost the United States some "$6 billion in destroyed aircraft alone."[122]

Eventually, the majority of the civilians in the Johnson administration, including the President and McNamara, became disillusioned with the claims that air power could win the war, and this disillusionment became the ultimate rationale for abandoning the expensive *Rolling Thunder* campaign. Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke summed up the civilian perspective when he noted in 1969, "The trouble with our policy in Vietnam has been that we guessed wrong with respect to what the North Vietnamese reaction would be. We anticipated that they would respond like reasonable people."[123]

The Navy and the Air Force, however, "were loathe to recognize the failure. . . . Recognition would imply that bombing had little military value and would have serious and pervasive implications for the organizations themselves and their tasks."[124] Since strategic air power was "the essence of the air force and part of the essence of the navy," proving its efficacy was an institutional imperative of the first order.[125] Therefore, proponents of air power maintained that the gradual escalation approach of *Rolling Thunder* and its limitations had enabled the North Vietnamese to adapt to the pressures of bombing. They still advocated an unrestricted air campaign against the North. General William C. Momyer, commander of the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam, captured the frustrations military officers generally shared with the political restrictions on *Rolling Thunder*:

> My regret is that we didn't win the war. We had the force, skill, and intelligence, but our civilian betters wouldn't turn us loose. Surely our Air Force has lived up to all expectations within the restraints that have been put on it. If there is one lesson to come out of this war, it must be a reaffirmation of the axiom—don't get in a fight unless you are prepared to do whatever is necessary to win.[126]

The Tet Offensive in early 1968 was the turning point for the United States commitment to a military solution in Vietnam. Henry Kissinger noted:

> The Tet offensive marked the watershed of the American effort. Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within a period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people. . . . This made inevitable an eventual commitment to a political solution and marked the beginning of the quest for a negotiated settlement.[127]

In the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, Westmoreland departed MACV and became Chief of Staff of the Army. He was replaced by General Creighton Abrams. Abrams began the task of implementing the Johnson administration's new Vietnam policy that embraced negotiations, reliance on an improved South Vietnamese Army, and a decreased American combat role.[128]

As the combat role—and consequently, any sense of purpose for being in the war—vanished, the morale and discipline of the American forces in South Vietnam, particularly in the Army, also plummeted. An Army report noted that lack of purpose resulted in the "'last man' syndrome," or an attitude of "We're getting out anyway. So why should I be the last man killed in this no-good war." Incidents of drug use, attacks on officers and noncommissioned officers, racial incidents, and combat refusals skyrocketed.[129] In short, the Army had massive internal problems.

To make up for the fact that it was "less capable of influencing the action on the ground" MACV "relied increasingly upon firepower—artillery, gunships and tactical air."[130] American firepower, particularly airpower, was surely the key factor in saving the South Vietnamese from defeat during the North Vietnamese "Easter Invasion," begun in late March 1972. Interestingly, during the invasion from the North, American ground troops in Vietnam were ordered "not to engage the enemy" since Nixon "intended the withdrawal of ground forces to proceed on schedule regardless of the invasion."[131]

The Easter Invasion also provided a rationale for stepping up the air effort against North Vietnam and gave the advocates of "victory through air power" another chance to validate their doctrinal paradigm.

In April 1972, Nixon met with the General John W. Vogt, Jr., the officer designated to take command of the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam. During the meeting Nixon gave his views about the Communist offensive and outlined Vogt's mission:

> I made a promise to the American public to disengage our ground forces and the enemy has seized upon this as an opportunity to gain military advantage, but I am determined that we will not let South Vietnam fall. I'm equally determined to carry out my pledge to the American people and I will continue to withdraw ground forces. Now you, General, will have to get in there with air power and naval support and turn this thing around. I want you to crush the invasion and cause the North to get back to the negotiating table. Now you tell me what you need to do this.[132]

Vogt responded:

> I ask one thing Mr. President—that you revise the procedures for air targeting in Vietnam so that I'm the man authorized to decide when we're going to attack and what we're going to attack. You tell me those things that you

> don't want hit because of political reasons and leave to me the decisions on what to hit and when they should be hit.[133]

As Vogt recalled, Nixon responded "without hesitation," saying, "You've got it."[134]

Clearly, Nixon viewed airpower as a means to both interdict external support to the North Vietnamese and a means of leveraging diplomacy. He also faced a far different international political environment than had his predecessors. With the Sino-Soviet rift, American-Chinese rapprochement, and détente with the Soviets, he believed that his ability to broaden and increase air attacks against the North was not constrained by an overriding fear of broadening the war. Nixon was correct: "The Communist powers limited their reaction to verbal denunciations of the American activities."[135]

Linebacker, as the renewed bombing offensive was dubbed, finally removed the vast majority of the limitations that air power advocates had riled against since the days of *Rolling Thunder.* Additionally, the President authorized the mining of North Vietnamese harbors and a blockade of the coast.[136] Even the limitations against striking Hanoi and Haiphong eventually disappeared and attacks were made within 15 miles of the Chinese border. Precision-guided munitions—laser and television-guided "smart bombs"—made the attack of previously sensitive targets near civilian areas or close to the Chinese border possible because of their accuracy.[137] On 23 October, Nixon suspended attacks north of the 20th parallel when the North Vietnamese returned to the peace negotiations.[138]

A breakdown in the peace negotiations in late November convinced Nixon to launch LINEBACKER II. This bombing campaign, focused on the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, began on 19 December and was devastating. On 30 December Nixon announced that the bombing above the 20th parallel had again been suspended, because "it was clear . . . that serious negotiations could be resumed."[139] On 23 January

1973, Kissinger and North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho finalized the cease-fire agreement.[140]

For air power advocates, the lesson of LINEBACKER II was obvious, and probably best stated by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Thomas H. Moorer:

> I am convinced that Linebacker II served as a catalyst for the negotiations which resulted in the ceasefire. . . . Airpower, given its day in court after almost a decade of frustration, confirmed its effectiveness as an instrument of national power—in just 9½ flying days.[141]

Finally unleashed, air power had won the war just as its proponents always knew it could if not fettered by amateurish civilian interference. Little notice was taken of the fact that the targets attacked in 1972 were largely against a conventional North Vietnamese military machine, one that had not existed during the days of *Rolling Thunder*. The tough questions about whether air power could defeat an externally supported insurgency or halt the infiltration of North Vietnamese infiltrators into the South went largely unanswered.[142] Nor was much made of the fact that *Linebacker* II achieved "a limited objective: forcing the North Vietnamese to sign the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 (which they had already agreed to in principle in October 1972)."[143]

The cease-fire provided the United States with a "decent interval" to disengage from Vietnam,[144] but on April 30, 1975 the Republic of Vietnam finally collapsed when the North Vietnamese accepted its unconditional surrender.[145] The war was over.

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3.
Limits of American Power

In the aftermath of the American failure in Vietnam—if one accepts the word "failure" as an appropriate description for the fact that the long maintained goal of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism was not accomplished—the legacy of the war loomed large in the American consciousness. The effects of the war, although permeating the entire society, were perhaps most strongly felt in the government's foreign policy apparatus and in its military forces. Indeed, these effects were felt well before the end of the war in 1975.

The Years in the Wilderness

The most significant change from the strategic assumptions of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, embodied in their "two and one half war strategy," was the enunciation of a "one and a half war" strategy. The realization that there was a significant rift between the Chinese and the Soviets, in Henry Kissinger's view, required that the United States "give up the obsession with a Communist monolith."[1]

The second departure from the Kennedy/Johnson era that affected the Armed Forces was the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine that replaced the Kennedy policy of confronting Communist expansion wherever it occurred. The basis for this abandonment of symmetrical containment was, as Kissinger noted, the realization of the limits of national power: "No country can act wisely simultaneously in every part of the globe at every moment of time."[2] Nixon first publicly announced the new limits on American foreign

policy in Guam on July 25, 1969. The Nixon Doctrine, in effect, "proclaimed an end to American ground force commitments to stop wars of national liberation."[3]

In the aftermath of Watergate, Nixon resigned. His successor, President Gerald Ford, retained Kissinger as his Secretary of State. Ford, however, was severely constrained in exercising executive authority in foreign policy by a Congress asserting its power in the wake of Watergate. Symbolic of this new congressional role in foreign policy was the March 11, 1975, refusal by the House of Representatives of a Presidential request for $300 million in military aid for a rapidly disintegrating South Vietnam.[4] Still, Ford recognized the political hazards lurking in the Third World, and reemphasized in 1975 the tenets of the Nixon Doctrine, particularly the fact that "we cannot, however, fight their battles for them."[5]

And the battles raged. During Ford's tenure, Laos, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Angola all succumbed to Communist insurgencies that enjoyed external support, while American covert aid to Angola was prohibited by the 1976 Clark Amendment.[6] Nixon later wrote that the "new isolationists chanted 'No more Vietnams' as the dominoes fell one by one."[7] Nevertheless, in the Eisenhower sense of the cliché, the domino principle proved fallacious. After the two other countries of old Indochina, Laos and Cambodia, collapsed, no other Southeast Asian nations succumbed to communism.[8]

In 1976, Ford was beaten at the polls by the new American Populist, Jimmy Carter. For Carter, the lessons of Vietnam were clear:

> For too many years, we've been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We've fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water. This approach failed, with Vietnam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty. But

> through failure we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained our lost confidence.

Carter continued, noting, "We can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of justice, equity, and human rights." The new foreign policy course he proposed to steer for the nation was one "based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision."[9] Carter also believed that it was time for the United States to move beyond its obsession with the notion "that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained."[10]

Initially, Carter pursued a foreign policy characterized by a "minimalist defense policy and noninterventionism."[11] In the wake of Vietnam, Carter's approach was largely supported by the American people and Congress. Public opinion polls showed "Americans thought that defense spending was adequate, that the armed forces could perform their missions, and that Russia might have increased its military capability but did not intend to use its military for coercive purposes." Furthermore, the "public thought that only nuclear deterrence and the defense of NATO justified military spending."[12] Carter emphasized this point to the Joint Chiefs in 1978: "Our near-term objective is to assure that NATO could not be overwhelmed in the first few weeks of a blitzkrieg war, and we will spend our resources to that end."[13]

The key element in Carter's defense policies was a belief that American and Soviet relations had entered an era of détente, rather than competition and confrontation. Indeed, Carter even attempted to apply his human rights standards to the Soviet Union by championing the cause of Russian dissidents. In so doing, he effectively drove a moral wedge between his administration and the regime of Leonid Brezhnev that in many ways heightened antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union.[14] The final rift came, however, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in

December 1979, which had followed closely on the heels of the fall of the United States supported Shah of Iran to Islamic fundamentalists and their taking over of the American embassy in Teheran in November.

In the wake of these twin disasters, Carter revised his foreign policy and increased defense spending. The collapse of the pro-American regime in Iran and the assertiveness of the Soviet Union in the region also led the President to issue what became known as the Carter Doctrine. In his January 23, 1980 State of the Union Address, Carter spelled out the essence of this new foreign policy:

> Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.[15]

In the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Adviser, the Carter Doctrine "represented a formal recognition of a centrally important reality: that America's security had become interdependent with the security of the three central and interrelated strategic zones consisting of Western Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East-Persian Gulf area."[16] The military instrument supporting the doctrine was the new Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF).[17] Carter's one major attempt to use military force, however, was an abject failure. An April 1980 operation to rescue the American hostages in Iran, dubbed *Desert One*, failed miserably, and in the minds of many marked the nadir of American military power in the post-Vietnam era.[18]

The Armed Forces

For America's Armed Forces, the years between the decision to withdraw from Vietnam and their resurgence during the Reagan administration were a nightmare. All the services shared a number of problems, both social and institutional.

In Vietnam, the services had fought a protracted and increasingly unpopular war without mobilization. Consequently, the Army and the Marine Corps relied heavily on the Selective Service System to furnish the manpower they needed. Therefore, the announcement in October 1970 that the draft would end by July 1973 portended to many immense problems in fielding adequate forces, both in terms of numbers and quality.[19]

As the war ground on, particularly after Nixon's announcement that his policy was withdrawal, the Armed Forces became increasingly less disciplined. Again, the problem was most prominent in the Army and the Marines, because these services suffered most of the casualties and faced the greatest risks. In the latter years of the war, racial clashes, combat refusals, drug usage, desertions, and incidents of violence against officers and noncommissioned officers increased significantly.[20] After the war the incidents of indiscipline continued and morale remained low. For the leadership of the Armed Forces—whose very effectiveness was inextricably tied to discipline, morale, and a shared sense of purpose—the situation was alarming.

Nor were the prospects for the future particularly promising. A report prepared for Army Chief of Staff Westmoreland, titled *Army Tasks for the Seventies*, was likely representative of the views held by the leadership of the other services. It noted, "American society is undergoing rapid social, economic, and political change, the result of technological developments, demographic shifts, and social and political change at home and abroad." The implications of these changes were significant. Domestic spending in support of improved social programs would compete with defense spending in an environment characterized by "lack of concern and general indifference . . . towards defense problems," attitudes that would be worsened by doubts concerning "the legitimacy and credibility of public institutions."[21]

Also disturbing was that the very need for conventional armed forces was being called into question in some quarters, hence, the prospect arose that the "nation may well adopt a deliberate policy of 'no more Vietnams.'"[22] Calls for reductions in overseas commitments, particularly in Europe, gained momentum, and the entire concept of flexible response was delegitimized because of Vietnam.[23] In short, a return to isolationism loomed as a distinct possibility.

Finally, the services all shared structural problems to varying degrees. With the adoption of a strategy of fighting one and a half wars and the end of the existing "half war" in Vietnam, the size of the services was bound to go down from what they were under the two and one half war rationale. Budgets tightened and the emphasis on deterring war in NATO resulted in the strategic and theater nuclear forces receiving greater emphasis during the Nixon and Carter administrations, thus making less money available for conventional force modernization.[24]

Vietnam also had a number of significant "lessons" for the leadership of the Armed Forces that influenced their thinking about the future employment of America's military power. Most shared a central conviction: fuzzy political objectives and limitations had constrained them from fighting the war as it should have been fought. In the minds of many officers, "limited war" as practiced in Vietnam connoted "gradualism," a concept they believed synonymous with failure. As one journalist wrote, "The generals and admirals have learned and overlearned the lesson of Vietnam. They instinctively recoil from applying small doses of force in messy wars for obscure political purposes."[25] Furthermore, in the aftermath of the war, the temporary political appointees moved on, while military officers stayed to rebuild their services. An Army general officer told an Army War College class, "Remember one lesson from the Vietnam era: Those who ordered the meal were not there when the waiter brought the check."[26]

There was a shared belief among the military that "We were the scapegoats of that conflict."[27] One Army officer noted, "Today's generals and admirals want, above all else, to avoid not just another Vietnam, but the erosion of public support that would accompany military failure in virtually any endeavor." The same author suggested that "contemporary military leaders seem far more inclined to avoid any involvement overseas that could become another Vietnam."[28]

There was also a growing consensus for the positions espoused by Army Chief of Staff General Edward C. Meyer, who, in January 1981, delineated "three criteria" for the use of military force:

> First, there must exist the military capacity for engagement. We possessed this in Vietnam.
>
> Second, we must share a clear idea of what constitutes the essential national interests.
>
> Third, there must be a willingness on the part of the nation to sacrifice in order to ensure maintenance of those interests which we declare essential. There are no "cost-free options.[29]

In June 1982, Meyer refined his views by adding a fourth criterion: "We need to decide what the mission is, what our goals and objectives ought to be so we have a clear campaign plan capable of achieving the national objective."[30] As early as 1979, Robert E. Osgood, one of the principal intellectual forces behind limited war concepts, observed:

> On the basis of the Vietnam experience one is tempted to conclude, as many military men do, that the United States . . . should not intervene in any kind of local war unless it can defeat the enemy and restore the status quo within a year or two by applying maximum military force within the geographical boundaries of the nation attacked. Some would add that U.S. armed forces should also refrain from intervening if the adversary is going to be permitted to enjoy adjacent sanctuaries outside the nation attacked. By

> implication, therefore, the United States should intervene only if it can attack such sanctuaries--unless perhaps this would create a clear and present danger of direct encounter with Soviet forces.[31]

Immediately following the war, military writers about the war almost invariably castigated civilian leadership, the media's interpretation of the war, the antiwar movement, the political limits placed on military operations, and the need to go "all out" in any future conflict. Some, like Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., in his Army-sponsored study *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, posited that the war was a conventional conflict and should have been treated as such. Summers also stressed the necessity of gaining and maintaining national approval for any future military actions. He advocated declaring war and mobilizing the reserves to ensure Congressional and public support for future wars.[32] Summer's work, sent by General Meyer to all Army general officers and the White House, "became widely adopted as a text in military educational institutions of each of the armed services."[33]

Although each of the services' senior officers surely ascribed to the emerging "Vietnam lessons" about the use of force, each had a different view of the implications of the war for their individual service. All the services, however, embraced the rediscovered Soviet "threat." There was consensus that the Soviets had made great strides in expanding and modernizing their military forces, while the United States had lagged behind in its modernization efforts because of the requirement to fight, and finance, the war in Vietnam. Additionally, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War had shown the "lethality" of the "modern battlefield" in what "constituted a microcosm of the kinds of issues that might be involved in a high-technology war of movement in Europe."[34] This was particularly important, because all the services had gravitated to a war with the Soviet Union as their principal focus with the enunciation of the Nixon Doctrine, and the Israelis had

fought foes using Soviet equipment and doctrine. Each service, however, viewed these events somewhat differently as it prepared for the future.

The Air Force

For the Air Force, the lessons from the war in Vietnam were abundantly clear: the decisive application of air power is a war-winning strategy. Unfettered air power had proven, in the minds of most air power advocates, an inexorable force. In their opinion, unrestrained air power had stopped the Easter Offensive and forced the North Vietnamese to the peace table, because "The country had been laid open for terminal destruction, and the North Vietnamese had to do something to avoid that eventuality."[35] General Momyer confidently noted the historical validity of air power doctrine:

> The development of air strategy in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam was a repetitious process. In each case, planners first perceived airpower as a subordinate part of a joint strategy that would employ an extensive ground campaign to end the war on favorable terms. On the other hand, airmen came increasingly to believe that airpower, in its own right, could produce decisive results. The validity of such a view was suggested by results of the Allies' combined bomber offensive in Europe and by the surrender of Japan in the 1940s. Additional evidence came from the skies over Hanoi in December 1972. In a concentrated 11-day test, our air strategy persuaded a determined adversary with a remarkably elaborate air defense system that overt aggression could not be sustained in the presence of unrestricted U.S. airpower.[36]

Lieutenant General Ira Eaker, commander of the 8th Air Force during the early days of the strategic bombing campaign in Europe during World War II, perhaps captured the absolute faith of the most ardent advocates that air power could independently win wars when he commented on Vietnam:

"In retrospect, how much better it would have been, if necessary, to destroy North Vietnam than to lose our first war."[37]

Indeed, in the aftermath of *Linebacker* II, many believed that if the onerous restrictions had not been imposed by politicians, air power could have won the war in 1965.[38] Therefore, as one historian has noted,

> Post-Vietnam air commanders have advocated no sweeping doctrinal changes. They parade Linebacker II as proof that bombing will work in limited war, and they dismiss the notion that too much force could trigger nuclear devastation.[39]

In the absence of any perceived need to reassess its way of making war in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the Air Force turned to the process of modernization to make up for ground lost during the prosecution of the war. The leadership of the Air Force assessed the growing Soviet conventional and nuclear threat and the tactical and operational lessons of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War within the framework of their existing doctrine. Consequently, a new air superiority fighter, improved electronic countermeasures to thwart air defense systems, "high technology weapons like laser and electro-optically guided bombs,"[40] a more survivable ICBM, and a bomber to replace the aging B-52 were the Air Force's preoccupations after the Vietnam War—all technological enhancements of a proven, valid doctrine. Therefore, "for the air force, the early 1970s were less a time of trauma and soul searching than they were of seeking to maintain and upgrade the organization's capacity to play a vital role in the nation's defenses."[41]

For the leadership of the Air Force the most difficult eventualities were nuclear or conventional war in NATO, and that is where they focused their attention. The Air Force kept "its eyes fixed . . . on grand strategic warfare against enemies with similar industrial and military institutions."[42] Any lesser

conflicts could be coped with adequately, as had Vietnam, by an Air Force prepared for the battle in Europe against the Soviets. As one author paraphrased General Curtis LeMay, "If you can lick the cat, you can lick the kitten."[43]

The Navy

The Navy had deep-seated internal problems. The unpopularity of the war, coupled with long and frequent deployments, exacerbated existing problems that eventually erupted in serious racial incidents on the carrier *Kitty Hawk*, the oiler *Hassayampa*, and the carrier *Constellation*. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., initiated widespread reforms, considered by many traditionalists as "permissiveness," to correct the problems.[44]

Zumwalt's programs addressed institutional and cultural issues in the Navy, issues he believed needed immediate action. These problems did not, however, involve an assault upon fundamental American naval doctrine. Like the Air Force, the Navy was exuberant over the results of *Linebacker II* as a justification of the decisive role of carrier aviation. Admiral Sharp, Commander in Chief, Pacific, for much of the war, later wrote:

> Whatever else may be argued, the fact is that the eleven-day air campaign of December 1972 will go down in history as a testimonial to the efficiency of air power. "Linebacker II," as it was called, combined air force and navy air power in a skillfully coordinated effort, exemplifying the way air power should be used.[45]

The Navy was also likely pleased with the effectiveness of its mining and blockading of North Vietnam. Nevertheless, these efforts were all peripheral to the Navy's essence: command of the seas.

The Navy's leadership, although often opposed to Zumwalt's social reforms, fully backed his assessment of the implications of the Nixon Doctrine: "The credibility of the

Nixon Doctrine clearly depended on U.S. control of the seas."[46] The clear threat to America's command of the seas, and the first it had faced since World War II, was the powerful Soviet Navy. After Vietnam, the Navy's ability to confront the Soviets was at a low point. The Navy, like the other services, had deferred modernization efforts while it prosecuted the war. As a result, in "1977 there were only 464 ships of all types in the U.S. Navy, the lowest number in the active fleet since 1939."[47]

Carter viewed NATO as the principal American interest. Accordingly, he envisioned a limited role for the Navy. Harold Brown, Carter's Secretary of Defense, emphasized to Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James L. Holloway III that the Navy's "prime wartime . . . mission was to protect the sea lines of communications between Europe and America."[48] This was in stark contrast to the two "basic functions" Holloway envisioned for the Navy—sea control and power projection. Both functions relied on a powerful Navy capable of the "destruction of enemy naval forces at their home bases or enroute to those ocean areas which the United States desires to protect, destroying their logistic support, or preventing the approach of enemy forces within range from which their weapons can be employed against U.S. forces.[49] The implications of this new strategy, if not already clear, were made abundantly so to Holloway when he "was ordered by Brown's staff to drop the use of the term 'maritime superiority.'"[50]

After the promulgation of the Carter Doctrine, the Navy's role was expanded without a corresponding increase in the size of the fleet. Consequently, long deployments became the norm, affecting morale and reenlistment rates, which subsequently caused "critical shortages in ships' crews that, in some instances, prevented the ships from getting underway."[51] In 1979 Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Thomas Hayward testified that the United States had "a one-and-a-half-ocean navy for a three-ocean commitment."[52] Senator John Tower's comments about the deterioration of

naval power under Carter's administration surely reflected the views of the majority of naval officers: "For more than three years, while hiding behind a smoke screen of tough rhetoric, Jimmy Carter has presided over the most ominous shift in the balance of power in modern history."[53]

The Marine Corps

For the Marines, Vietnam had mixed signals. They shared the Army's frustrations over political limitations that afforded the enemy sanctuary and inhibited his destruction. Nevertheless, they could hold up their enclave pacification strategy as a plan that could have worked. The Corps, however, was determined to put the war behind it and move on.

The Corps also shared the Army's enormous problems with discipline, desertion, race, and drugs. The ending of the draft worsened matters, because Department of Defense guidelines "stressed quantity recruitment of marginal youths and the rapid release of Vietnam veterans in order to avoid political criticism."[54] The result was immense turbulence: "In FY (fiscal year) 1972 alone nearly 78 percent of the entire Marine Corps either joined or left the service."[55]

The Marine Corps had a doctrine that it could fall back on to rebuild itself. The leadership of the Corps believed the Nixon Doctrine was a "maritime strategy of limited commitment outside of NATO, a strategy that suggested an increased need for a force in readiness like the FMF (Fleet Marine Force)."[56] As early as 1969, Marine Corps Commandant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., realized that it had become "apparent, that we were going to abandon ship . . . [in Vietnam] and resume our force and amphibious readiness posture."[57] The Corps voluntarily began reducing its numbers.[58] It returned to its amphibious roots and structured itself to support "a high-intensity war in Europe and . . . a low-intensity war in Asia."[59] It went back to basics, working to build a Corps that was "highly skilled, highly disciplined, smaller, uncivilianized, naval in character,

physically fit, and traditionalist . . . Spartan among the Babylonians."[60]

The Army

The Army, of all the services, had the greatest difficulty recovering from the Vietnam War. Not only was the Army racked with internal social and manpower problems (similar to the other services, but generally to a higher degree), it also had disturbing problems within its officer corps.

A 1970 Chief of Staff directed study on Army professionalism asserted that the Army was rife with careerists and ticket-punchers who could be generally characterized as

> an ambitious, transitory commander--marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties--engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates.[61]

A 1972 *Military Review* article revealed the depths and origins of the crisis many believed the Army faced:

> It is a crisis of confidence, born of an "unwon" war, of charges of mismanagement and incompetence attendant to that war, of increasing manifestations of public antimilitarism, and of doubts about the role of ground forces in the era of the Nixon doctrine.[62]

Turbulence in the Army after the war was immense, caused by a massive reduction "from 1.6 million men to 800,000 in four years."[63] Nevertheless, with the end of the draft, the Army could not man the force. In 1974, the Army was 20,000 soldiers short of what it required and only four of the thirteen active divisions were considered ready for combat. Of particular concern was the "strategic posture of

the United States" in NATO, because readiness in the European based Seventh Army had been "destroyed" by its use as a replacement pool for Vietnam.[64]

The larger institutional question the Army had to answer in the aftermath of Vietnam and the advent of the Nixon Doctrine was, "Why an Army?" In 1973, Chief of Staff Creighton Abrams had asked that question and formed a Strategic Assessment Group, headed by Colonel Edward F. Astarita to "determine if there was a legitimate role for conventional strategy and for the Army in the post-Vietnam world."[65] The report of the "Astarita Group" argued that the United States needed a "sufficient conventional capability to deter limited Soviet or Chinese conventional attacks, and to control such attacks without resorting to nuclear weapons."[66] It further recommended limiting forward deployments to Western Europe and Korea. Finally, careful to avoid a repetition of Vietnam, the report stressed avoiding the Third World: "Military assistance groups, advisory teams, exchange programs, ship visits, disaster relief, and other low key options, tailored to specific American interest in each country, should be the extent of American military involvement."[67]

The Army dealt with the Vietnam war by largely ignoring the experience. There were many sound reasons for so doing, but three are perhaps the most important. First, the national strategy embodied in the Nixon Doctrine eschewed intervention by ground combat forces in the Third World against insurgencies. Therefore, any concerted effort to learn from the war could be pragmatically argued away as irrelevant. Second, the leadership of the Army in the main viewed the war as an aberration, one that should be moved past as quickly as possible so that the Army could return to the more important issue of defending the nation from its principal threat—the Soviet Union. As James Fallows noted,

> The military, like the rest of the country, has declared Vietnam not a real war. Because military men can argue that it was not military factors, but rather political

> constraints, that kept them from prevailing, the war's lessons cannot be applied to tomorrow's contingencies.[68]

A more conventional view was offered by an Army general officer: "There was the strong feeling that, after every war, armies always set out to figure out how they might have fought the last war better. There was an even stronger determination to avoid that pitfall, and this time to look ahead, not back."[69] Perhaps the best analysis is provided by historian Russell Weigley: "Military men, we have so often been told, are forever preparing to refight the last war. It would be more accurate to charge them with preparing to refight the last *satisfactory* war."[70] Finally, on a more visceral level, "There were several compelling reasons . . . why post-mortems on Vietnam were to be avoided" because, as one general officer noted, such introspection "would have given the appearance . . . of 'revisionism, alibis, self justification, rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, opening old wounds, [or] severe mental retardation, given public attitudes.'"[71]

The focus of the Army shifted to Europe. Turning to NATO was attractive to the Army on a number of levels. Clearly, the reorientation served internal needs, because "it was an absolute intent to give the Army a mission that everybody understood and to focus on the basics and to get the Army healthy again."[72] Furthermore, it served the Army's external needs since it provided an argument for structure—or "Why an Army"—in terms of men, equipment, and budgets:

> We decided that NATO was the centerpiece of what we were going to do . . . and that the Soviet Union was the evil empire and that was the basis upon which we were going to get force structure . . . I think the people that did that really believed that there might be a war.[73]

Furthermore, the Army leadership saw little impact of the shift to NATO on other possible contingencies. Following the

logic that had formed the basis of its force structure and doctrine since the interwar era, the leadership of the Army clung to the notion that "if you could fight the big war you could fight the little wars."[74]

These initiatives all came at a time when many in the Army were disillusioned with the war in Vietnam and were questioning if the Army even had a role in unconventional conflicts. In their 1973 book *The United States Army in Transition*, Lieutenant Colonels Zeb B. Bradford, Jr. and Frederic J. Brown questioned "the appropriateness of counter-insurgency as a major mission for the American Army."[75] They believed that conventional warfare was more appropriate because:

> highly mechanized and technical warfare reinforces our tendencies and talents and serves as a vehicle for evolutionary advance; counter-insurgency goes against the grain. We are a rich, industrial, urban country. Highly technical forces are compatible with our characteristics and resources.[76]

The "challenge" of the Vietnam experience for the Army was to find "what is transferable to a conventional-type environment rather than to determine how we would do better next time in a future Vietnam-type situation."[77] The authors recommended focusing on conventional forces, since they were "most easily adaptable for general and rapid employment in an advanced conflict."[78]

The individual who would provide the doctrinal underpinnings for the revitalization of the post-Vietnam Army was General William E. DePuy, commander of the Army's new Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The pivotal document DePuy relied upon to launch the "substantial renaissance in tactical theory and practice throughout the Army" was FM 100-5, *Operations*. DePuy later recalled that the authors of the manual "were driven by certain events and forces then at work," particularly:

- The Vietnam war—combat with light and elusive forces—was over.
- The defense of central Europe against large, modern, Soviet armored forces once again became the Army's main, almost exclusive, mission.
- The Arab-Israeli War vividly illustrated the lethality of modern weapons and the high value of crew proficiency and the skill of tactical commanders.[79]

FM 100-5 was so important because DePuy had decided to rewrite all of the Army's field manuals over an 18-month period—and all would conform with the tactical principles enunciated in the capstone FM 100-5.[80] Indeed, the manual stated on its first page that it "sets forth the basic concepts of US Army doctrine" and as such the "concepts form the foundation for what is taught in our service schools, and the guide for training and combat developments throughout the Army."[81] The Army's "primary objective" was also clearly defined: "to *win the land battle*—to fight and win in battles, large or small, against whatever foe, wherever we may be sent to war."[82] The manual stated that the "primary mission of the U.S. Army is to prepare for the defense of NATO,"[83] because:

> Battle in Central Europe against forces of the Warsaw Pact is the most demanding mission the US Army could be assigned. Because the US Army is structured primarily for that contingency and has large forces deployed in that area, this manual is designed mainly to deal with the realities of such operations.[84]

FM 100-5 also stated confidently that this focus on conventional war in Europe was appropriate elsewhere: "The principles set forth in this manual . . . apply also to military operations anywhere in the world."[85] These areas outside NATO were addressed as environmental concerns—operations in mountains, jungles, deserts, northern regions, and built-up areas; fighting would still be conventional with tactical adaptations and a heavy reliance

on firepower.[86] Nowhere was there any mention in FM 100-5 of Vietnam, the political dimensions of warfare, or counterinsurgency.[87]

Coupled with the doctrinal reorientation to combat in Central Europe was a revolution in the way the Army approached training at both the individual and collective levels. In the words of General DePuy, the revision of Army fighting doctrine around the principles contained in FM 100-5 "would tell everyone in the combat and combat support arms how the Army would fight on the modern battlefield at every echelon from the weapons crew up through the division," hence the dubbing of the new doctrinal literature spawned by FM 100-5 as "How to Fight" manuals.[88] The ultimate test of individual and unit performance would be at the National Training Center (NTC), opened at Fort Irwin, CA, in October 1980. At the NTC, visiting Army units fought an opposing force that was structured like a Soviet mechanized regiment and that used Soviet tactics. The exercise was highly instrumented and provided a rigorous assessment of performance against a highly skilled opponent.[89]

FM 100-5 also served as the basis for force design and force modernization. Various studies—*Army Restructuring, Army 86,* and *Army of Excellence*—sought to redesign Army units for combat in the lethal European environment and, eventually, provide contingency and light organizations.[90] Weapons procurement also focused on developing systems that would even the odds in Europe, and "doctrine . . . was an important persuasive tool in the weapons acquisition process."[91] Eventually, the Army procured the M-1 Abrams tank, the M-2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the UH-60 Blackhawk and AH-64 helicopters, the Multiple Launch Rocket System, Stinger air defense missile, and the Patriot air defense missile system.[92]

One remaining component of the Army's post-Vietnam reformation was of signal importance: Army Chief of Staff Abrams decided to heavily integrate the Reserve Components into the active force structure. Although part of this decision

was Abram's commitment to expand the Army from 13 to 16 divisions within the existing end strength constraints, there was another, more compelling, reason for embracing the Reserves.[93] In his biography of Abrams, Lewis Sorley posed the question: "Was part of the thinking in integrating the reserves so deeply into the active force structure that we were making it very difficult, if not impossible, for the President to deploy any significant force without calling up the reserves?"[94] General John Vessey, future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recalled: "That's it, with malice aforethought." He also remembered hearing Abrams often comment, "They're not taking us to war again without calling up the reserves."[95] Many senior officers believed that not mobilizing the Reserves had been a critical reason for the loss of public support for the war in Vietnam as well as the need to adopt the ruinous 1-year rotation policy. Abrams actions ensured that "the Army could not go to war again without the involvement and tacit approval of the American people. A call-up of the Reserves would bring home to Americans from the beginning that they had a personal stake in the conflict."[96] Thus, the Army took a critical step in usurping its traditional role of subservience to civilian authority in structuring itself to make it politically difficult for a president to involve it in another Vietnam.

Although there was an intense internal debate over FM 100-5, the dialogue focused almost exclusively on how to fight conventional war in Europe, or conventional wars elsewhere, not on attempting to understand the political dimensions of conflict or the bases for revolutionary warfare and insurgency as experienced in Vietnam. The debate was about *how to fight a conventional war*. As Major John Oseth noted, the assumptions that undergirded FM 100-5 were based on the fact that the Army "found the Soviets, and the European battleground, in large measure because we knew we were deployed in Europe, and we knew we were structured to fight against that kind of enemy. We surveyed the world for an enemy and found, literally, ourselves."[97]

An even more pointed criticism of the Army's focus on conventionalism was evident in an article written by Lieutenant Colonel Donald B. Vought, a member of the faculty at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Vought argued that the Army had turned its back on low-intensity conflict, even though that was the most likely kind of war it would face, in its fixation on Europe. He admitted that one explanation for the return to conventionalism were the "'mind-sets' . . . [that] contribute to a threat analysis wherein *the* enemy is the Soviets, and, if we share the force levels and weaponry to deter them, the same will suffice for any other use."[98] Vought allowed that he could not "'prove' that low-intensity conflict has been disavowed by the Army as a legitimate form of conflict in which the Armed Forces could be called upon to pursue national objectives."[99] Nevertheless, he believed that his reading of the evidence justified the question:

> Is it possible that the trauma of having been found fighting the wrong kind of war [in Vietnam] so deeply disturbed the Army's leadership that they (who, after all, are men who made their careers in that military aberration) actually have "erased the tapes," expunged the unpleasant memory and are resuming the conventional deterrent role they played in the late 1950s?[100]

Vought's qualified conclusion was that the premises undergirding the Army's post-Vietnam doctrine were based more on the "removal of an option from the policymakers than on rational threat analysis—that is, if we do not have the capability to engage in subconventional war, that option simply is not available to the government."[101] To support his case, Vought quoted a newspaper interview with Lieutenant General Donn A. Starry, the commander of the V Corps in Germany and DePuy's eventual successor as TRADOC commander: *After getting out of Vietnam, the Army looked*

around and realized it should not try to fight that kind of war again elsewhere.[102]

The opinion that forces prepared for mid- to high-intensity conflict in Europe would also be sufficient for lesser conflicts prevailed. It was buttressed by the widely accepted views contained in Bruce Palmer's *The 25-Year War: America's Role in Vietnam* and Harry Summers's *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* that the war in Vietnam was largely conventional and that the United States did not win because, as Palmer believed, "We lacked a clear objective and an attainable strategy of a decisive nature, and we relinquished the advantages of the strategic offensive to Hanoi. The best of initiatives, resources, exemplary conduct and fighting spirit cannot make up for these deficiencies."[103] Summers stressed that the doctrinal essence of the Army, which had always been "the defeat of an enemy," had been perverted during the Vietnam War to "the fundamental purpose of the U.S. military forces is to preserve, restore, or create an environment of order or stability within which the instrumentalities of government can function effectively under a code of law" in the 1968 version of FM 100-5. He held that "our own doctrine contributed to the subsequent failure of U.S. national policy in Vietnam."[104] In essence, Summers argued, the Army was called upon to perform "nation-building" in Vietnam, while simultaneously being restricted from using a winning military strategy.[105] The post-Vietnam Army doctrine, however, was fully in accord with the views of Palmer and Summers and had a comforting historical continuity, because it focused on fighting and destroying the enemy through vigorous offensive action centered on maneuver warfare.

For the Armed Forces as a whole, Vietnam created no crisis to the doctrinal paradigms of the services. Instead, the crisis was to the paradigm of civil-military relations. Military officers emerged from the conflict, and the extremely difficult years of rebuilding their institutions, with a clear sense that their civilian counterparts did not understand the use of

military force. Instead of applying the war-winning overwhelming power of the American military instrument to the conflict, politicians had ordered a gradualism that foredoomed victory and damaged the services. Thus, the fundamental lesson for the military that emerged from the Vietnam war was crystal clear—"no more Vietnams."

Notes

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4. Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford, 1978), 212.

5. "Gerald R. Ford on the Lessons of Vietnam," in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990), 600.

6. Richard M. Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 212.

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8. George C. Herring, "Legacy and Lessons of the War," in McMahon, 608.

9. "Jimmy Carter Sees a 'Profound Moral Crisis," 1971, in McMahon, 600-1.

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11. Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A History fo the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 582.

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13. Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy*, vol. 2, *1942-1991* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992), 674.

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15. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1985), 426.

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20. W. B. Rosson, "Assessment of Influence Exerted on Military Operations by Other than Military Considerations," 1970; reprint, Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993), VIII-23—VIII-29; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 596-604.

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37. Ira C. Eaker, "Some Observations on Air Power," in *Air Power and Warfare: Proceedings of the Eighth Military History Symposium*, ed. Alfred F. Hurley and Robert C. Earhart (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1978), 358.

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47. Floyd D. Kennedy, Jr., "From SLOC Protection to a National Maritime Strategy: The U.S. Navy under Carter and Reagan, 1977-1984." in *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775-1984*, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth J. Hagan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 347.

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63. Romie L. Brownlee and William J. Mullen, III, *Changing an Army: An Oral History of General William E. DePuy, USA Retired* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988), 174.

64. John Schlight, ed., *Second Indochina War Symposium: Papers and Commentary* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1986), 266.

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66. Ibid., 43.

67. Ibid., 44.

68. James Fallows, "Residual Effects of the Vietnam War on the Military," in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons from a War*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 293.

69. Donn A. Starry, "A Tactical Evolution—FM 100-5," *Military Review* 58 (August 1978): 3.

70. Peter Braestrup, ed., *Vietnam as History* (Washington: University Press of America, 1984), 115; emphasis in the original.

71. Lovell, 130.

72. Interview with General Edward C. Meyer, USA (Ret), 23 February 1994.

73. Ibid. During my interview with General Meyer I asked him why, if the Soviets enjoyed such an enormous conventional advantage in the post-Vietnam era before the Reagan buildup, had the Warsaw Pact not attacked NATO? His response was that the ever- present nuclear deterrent had protected NATO. Arguably the

rationale for the Army's as well as the other services' focus on Europe was based on internal institutional needs, rather than solely as a response to the Soviet threat.

74. Ibid.

75. Zeb B. Bradford and Frederic J. Brown, *The United States Army in Transition* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), 66.

76. Ibid.

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79. William E. DePuy, "FM 100-5 Revisited," *Army* 30 (November 1980): 12.

80. Paul H. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), 37.

81. U.S. Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: 1976), i.

82. Ibid., 1-1; emphasis in the original.

83. Ibid., 14-1; emphasis in the original.

84. Ibid.,1-2.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., 14-1—14-26.

87. This focus on the conventional should not be surprising given DePuy's views about the Vietnam War. See William E. DePuy, review of *The Army and Vietnam*, by Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. In *Army* 36 (September 1986): 77-78. DePuy noted in this review that: "U.S. combat forces were not and are not the preferred or proper instrument for counterinsurgency operations amongst the people. Short of genocide or relocation, as in Afghanistan, foreign armies have a record of failure in such operations for the most obvious political reasons." Furthermore, "The instinct of the U.S. Army in Vietnam to go after the Vietcong main forces and the North Vietnamese in the back country was correct. It was not that some abstract doctrine was in error; it was rather the failure to isolate the battlefield operationally."

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89. James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting It Right: American Military Reforms After Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993), 175-85.

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92. Romjue, 4-5.

93. Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 363-64.

94. Sorley, 364.

95. Ibid.

96. Scales, Johnson, and Odom, 18.

97. John M. Oseth, "FM 100-5 Revisited: A Need for Better "Foundation Concepts?" *Military Review* 60 (March 1980): 18.

98. Donald B. Vought, "Preparing for the Wrong War?" *Military Review* 57 (May 1977): 32.

99. Ibid., 30.

100. Ibid., 32.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., 32; emphasis in the original.

103. Bruce Palmer, *The 25-Year War: America's Role in Vietnam* (New York: Touchstone, 1985), 193.

104. Summers, 71.

105. Ibid., 71-72.

4.
Resurgence

The 1981 election of Ronald Reagan as President marked a turning point in the fortunes of the Armed Forces. As the Reagan defense buildup poured money into the Armed Forces, the services became well equipped and, with high quality recruits attracted to military service by higher pay and enlistment incentives, an exceptionally competent and professional force. In fact, the Armed Forces, particularly the Army, made a remarkable transformation from "a mass conscripted force to one of long-service professionals."[1] The danger, however, remained that the rebuilt Armed Forces might again be damaged if committed by politicians to another Vietnam-like conflict. The true resurgence of the Armed Forces began when they took control of their own destinies.

Years of Plenty and the Emergence of the Joint Paradigm

When Ronald Reagan became President in 1981, his agenda was a matter of public record: "Less government, lower taxes, more defense, global anti-Communism."[2] The new administration's views about Carter's foreign policy were also clear: "Détente was disastrous . . . because it ignored the realities of Soviet expansionism and failed to stop the shift in the balance of strategic nuclear power in favor of Moscow."[3] Consequently, the Reagan administration's foreign policy replaced détente with competition and confrontation, views clearly expressed by Secretary of Defense Weinberger in a speech in April 1982 to the Council on Foreign Relations.

Weinberger stressed that the Soviets were "emboldened by America's post-Vietnam paralysis" and had taken advantage of the American malaise by expanding "its traditional policy of global expansionism to new dimensions."[4] Weinberger favored a policy that would "not only resist Soviet incursions in the Third World *but begin to roll them back*."[5] He stated that: "We must be prepared to halt and seek to reverse the geographic expansion of Soviet control and presence, particularly when it threatens a vital interest or further erodes the geostrategic position of the United States and its allies."[6] Reagan's personal views of the Soviet Union were clearly enunciated in his March 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals where he described the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" that was "the focus of evil in the modern world."[7]

In the specific area of "more defense," Reagan soon made a commitment to Weinberger, that his "top priority" was to reverse the low state of America's military capabilities.[8] In Weinberger's view, a view fully supported by the President, "it was vital that we regain an effective and credible deterrent strength quickly."[9]

The Reagan defense buildup, one which resulted in real growth after inflation of some fifty-two percent between fiscal years 1980 and 1985 was obviously welcomed by the Department of Defense.[10] Indeed, one journalist noted that the "JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] would finally get the kind of president they had always wanted" and that "the vast majority of JCS officers looked forward to his administration with keen anticipation. . . . they would be getting the first peacetime, pro-defense president in their history."[11] Nevertheless, there were aspects of the new presidency that clearly alarmed military officers.

In some ways, the policies of the Reagan administration during its first term were reminiscent of the early days of the Kennedy administration. A very popular president had made a commitment to increase the conventional military capability of the nation, after it had undergone a period of significant

decline. Although military officers applauded this effort, they were also wary of early signs by some members of the administration that they were not reluctant to use the revitalized military in pursuit of American foreign policy goals. In what became an intense bureaucratic battle over the control of the employment of conventional or "usable" military power, the administration split.

In the early months of the administration, the most vociferous advocate for using military power was Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr. Haig was intent on confronting the Soviets, particularly in Central America. Soon he was talking about a possible naval quarantine against Cuba, and "House Speaker Tip O'Neill quoted Haig as saying U.S. troops would have to be used in Nicaragua."[12] Weinberger later recalled, "Al . . . said that it was quite clear we would have to invade Cuba and, one way or another, put an end to the Castro regime."[13] Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who did not always agree among themselves on the Defense Department agenda, particularly strategic weapons, could agree on what they felt was a dangerous use of American military power and opposed Haig.[14] This opposition prompted Haig to respond:

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff, chastened by Vietnam, in which our troops performed with admirable success but were declared to have been defeated, and by the steady decline of respect for the military—and the decline of military budgets—resisted a major commitment in Central America.[15]

By 1983, however, Weinberger had "reluctantly" sent American military trainers to El Salvador. Nevertheless, the Department of Defense steadily resisted sending American ground combat troops to Central America. Its offer, as expressed by General Paul Gorman, Commander, United States Southern Command, was markedly similar to that made earlier by Kennedy and Nixon, which included military

training and assistance but stopped short of committing American combat forces to fighting.[16] Such aid was given by the United States to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. American forces conducted ground and naval exercises in the region, but the threshold of active combat was never crossed.[17] The military remained steadfastly opposed to a combat role to the point that: "There was one report in 1983 that the Joint Chiefs of Staff even 'resisted drawing up contingency plans for sending U.S. troops to fight in Central America, partly for fear that civilian leaders in a crisis atmosphere would order the plans implemented before they are assessed adequately.'"[18] One "senior officer" even went so far as to tell a reporter from *The New York Times,* "We're the ones pulling back on the reins on [Central America]."[19]

Clearly, there was a difference in opinion in the Reagan administration over the criteria that governed the employment of military force. Haig's replacement, George P. Shultz, held that, "The use of force, and the credible threat of the use of force are legitimate instruments of national policy and should be viewed as such."[20] His views were shared by Robert McFarlane, the President's National Security Adviser. In August 1982, Schultz and McFarlane prevailed over the objections of Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Reagan ordered Marines to Lebanon in a peacekeeping role. On October 23, 1983 a truck loaded with explosives crashed into headquarters of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit in Beirut, killing 241 Marines and confirming the worst fears of those opposed to the deployment to Lebanon.[21] Weinberger later commented that the penchant of:

> some theorists. . . . [for] employing our forces almost indiscriminately and as a regular and customary part of our diplomatic efforts—would surely plunge us headlong into the sort of domestic turmoil we experienced during the Vietnam War, without accomplishing the goal for which we committed our forces.[22]

Military officers surely agreed with Weinberger, and the day after the Beirut bombing another event proved a crucial turning point on the road to the recovery of the United States military from its experience in Vietnam.

On October 24, 1983, U.S. forces invaded the island of Grenada. Although Operation *Urgent Fury* revealed significant problems in interservice cooperation, it was a clear success in one crucial aspect for military officers—President Reagan gave complete authority to the military for the operational aspects of the invasion.[23] American civil-military relations had returned to their World War II model in that once the decision to employ force was made by the politicians, military officers had control of the operational aspects of conflict until "victory" was attained.

The operations in Beirut and Grenada were a watershed for the American military. Beirut proved the hazards of undertaking military operations without a clearly defined mission and for the sake of nebulous political aims. Grenada showed that military operations, when entrusted to the capable hands of military officers—with clearly defined objectives and the clear intention of "winning"—would be successful in achieving political aims.[24]

Beirut and Grenada also made it axiomatic in the military that "the best wars are those you cannot lose."[25] Secretary of Defense Weinberger understood this, and in November 1984 he publicly proclaimed his six tests for the use of American military force. Weinberger insisted that he personally crafted the doctrine, but it resonated with the post-Vietnam perspectives on the use of military force advanced by General Abrams, General Meyer, General Palmer, General Momyer, Colonel Summers, and others.[26] In the opinion of General Powell, Weinberger's military assistant at the time, the doctrine had a flawless logic: "In short, is the national interest at stake? If the answer is yes, go in, and go in to win. Otherwise, stay out."[27]

What was also becoming clear was the fact that in an increasingly complex and professional military establishment,

only military officers had the answers to the tests posed in the Weinberger Doctrine. In the aftermath of Beirut and Grenada, both of which highlighted problems in interservice cooperation, the push for defense reform took on new life. In October 1986, Congress passed the Department of Defense Reorganization Act, commonly referred to as the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This law greatly strengthened the power of the Joint Staff and the regional commanders-in-chief and made the Chairman, JCS, the principal military adviser to the President and the Secretary of Defense.[28]

Following the passage of Goldwater-Nichols, the influence of military officers came increasingly to resemble that held by the "technical specialists" in "large-scale administration" described by Max Weber. Weber argued that these possessors of special knowledge controlled the bureaucratic machinery, since only they understood its operation in a meaningful way.[29] Furthermore, the interservice rivalry inherent in the Department of Defense was greatly mollified after the passage of the law, particularly with the appointment of the popular General Powell as Chairman of the JCS in October 1989.[30]

The Joint Paradigm Triumphant: Panama and the Gulf War

The first major operational test of the post-Goldwater-Nichols defense establishment came in December 1989, with the invasion of Panama, Operation *Just Cause*. The military leaders who executed *Just Cause* enjoyed the same operational latitude experienced during *Urgent Fury*—once the political decision to execute the invasion was made, the military controlled the campaign. This was fully in accord with General Powell's view of war: "Political leaders must set a war's objectives, while armies achieve them."[31]

Just Cause was a resounding operational success, one that convinced military leaders of "the imperative that victory must be won quickly with overwhelming force to ensure minimum

casualties."[32] Nevertheless, there were some who noted that "supervising humanitarian assistance, restoring order, and rebuilding damaged infrastructure. . . ." were significant "postconflict headaches" and "would require a great deal more effort than generals ever imagined."[33] Still, *Just Cause* demonstrated that the American military had largely resurrected itself from its post-Vietnam funk and had corrected many of the joint operations problems that had plagued *Urgent Fury*.

The new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, likely captured the views of many of his peers when he noted that *Just Cause* "confirmed all my convictions over the preceding twenty years, since the days of doubt over Vietnam."[34] To the Chairman, JCS, the lessons of *Just Cause* were patently clear: "Have a clear political objective and stick to it."[35] The military means of attaining the political objective were also clear to General Powell: "Use all the force necessary, and do not apologize for going in big if that is what it takes. Decisive force ends wars quickly and in the long run save lives."[36] Powell later recalled that: "Whatever threats we faced in the future, I intended to make these rules the bedrock of my military counsel."[37]

The greatest post-Vietnam challenge to the capability of the U.S. military came in the summer of 1990, when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait. The Iraqi aggression came when the Cold War was clearly coming to a close and the American military was in the midst of reducing its size in response to the waning Soviet threat. In the months that followed, the United States deployed a massive military force, which served as the heart of the larger coalition, to confront the Iraqis. The force was perhaps the most competent and best equipped ever fielded by the United States; it was a force designed to fight the Soviet Union.

Powell played a crucial role in both defining the response to the Iraqi aggression and the criteria for ending the war. There would be no half-measures:

> Shaped by the Vietnam experience, the American military fashioned a winning strategy. Overwhelming force would be used. The enemy would be given no sanctuary; nor would there be any diplomatic pauses to let enemy forces catch their breath. It would be the generals, not civilian targeteers in Washington, who would pick the targets. A decisive victory would be achieved and American forces would be quickly withdrawn so as not to become entangled in the war's messy aftermath. . . . The doctrine was applied in the invasions of Panama and Grenada with good results. Powell and Schwarzkopf made sure it was applied to the gulf as well.[38]

Powell assembled the massive military instrument necessary to apply overwhelming force against the Iraqis. Powell's military strategy was supported by President George Bush who had stressed, "This will not be another Vietnam. . . . Our troops will have the best possible support in the entire world and they will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back."[39] Still, the Persian Gulf War resembled past conflicts in that there were both an air war and a ground war. The massive air campaign pulverized the Iraqi infrastructure and its armed forces, and a 100-hour ground campaign forced the Iraqis out of Kuwait—all at a remarkably low cost in allied casualties.[40]

President Bush declared at the end of the war, "Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives have been met,"[41] However, nagging questions about the "premature" termination of the war arose. Interestingly, President Bush did not refer to "political objectives" in his speech. Some thought that the military advice given by General Powell to President Bush and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to end the war created a situation that "left Washington without a means of influencing events in postwar Iraq."[42] These charges were deftly fended off by the military. Powell defended his advice to avoid prolonging the war in his memoirs from an emotional perspective: "I am relieved that I don't have to say to many more parents, 'I'm sorry your son

or daughter died in the siege of Baghdad'."[43] His statement was clearly in accord with his doctrine of overwhelming force—"Win quickly, with as few casualties and as little damage as possible."[44] General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the theater commander during *Desert Storm*, echoed Powell's aversion to a protracted conflict, writing in his memoirs, "I am certain that had we taken all of Iraq, we would have been like the dinosaur in the tar pit—we would still be there."[45] Even the limited aim of supporting the Shiite insurgency in Iraq was opposed by Powell and Schwarzkopf because it might lead to a protracted American military involvement.[46]

Clearly, the Bush administration had relied on the "expert advice" of the military on when to end the war, but there was little consideration of the long-term consequences of the decision. From the perspective of officers who had made the long trip from the protracted Vietnam War to the "brilliant and unqualified success" of the Persian Gulf War, there was little debate.[47] The U.N. mandate of freeing Kuwait had been met; it was time to declare victory and go home.

It is clear, however, that "Whatever the success of the campaign, there has been far less evidence of careful preparation for war termination. The first lesson after the shooting stopped was that there was considerable ambiguity about objectives."[48] Indeed, Gordon Brown, Schwarzkopf's foreign policy adviser, recalled: "We never did have a plan to terminate the war."[49] In the final analysis, Saddam Hussein remained in power, and the United States military remains today committed to operations to protect the Kurds of northern Iraq and enforce the U.N. sanctions regime.[50]

Despite any lingering doubt about the political outcome of the Persian Gulf War, there was wide consensus that the Ameican military had triumphed. American troops returned home to receptions that brought to mind the triumphal celebrations at the end of World War II. President Bush reflected the euphoria of many when he proclaimed, "By God . . . we've licked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all."[51] Indeed, a report by the House Armed Services Committee

noted, "Many of the Vietnam War's principal shortcomings—incremental build up of forces, fascination with statistical measures of success, divided, service-oriented command and micromanagement from Washington—were scrupulously avoided.[52] Furthermore, "the fresh memory of Operation *Just Cause* validated the use of overwhelming force to achieve lilmited military objectives" and "was central to the approach taken in deploying the massive 550,000-man force used to defeat Iraq."[53] The report also presciently predicted:

> Operation *Desert Storm* will now be the yardstick against which the most significant military hardware and policy questions for the future will be measured. The instinctive question will no longer be "What did the failures of Vietnam teach us about this or that?" but rather "How well did we do against Iraq with this technology or with that doctrine?"[54]

The military soon moved to inculcate the larger institutional lessons of the war. The singular importance of clear political objectives as the underpinning of military operations made itself into the joint doctrinal debate. A May 1991 "Proposed Final" *Joint Pub 0-1: Basic National Defense Doctrine* proclaimed that, although "the ultimate responsibility for selecting objectives for war or military operations short of war falls upon the President," the military had a threefold interest in the selection of military objectives:

> First, that it be done. Absence of clear national objectives risks military action without a politically useful conclusion, confounds efforts to develop popular support, and hinders development of negotiation goals associated with conflict termination. Second, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, normally in consultation with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the affected combatant commanders are expected to recommend possible national military objectives and assess their military adequacy, feasibility and acceptability. Third, these objectives provide

> the foundation upon which the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, normally in consultation with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the affected combatant commanders will construct military courses of action for strategic advice to, and decision by, the National Command authorities.[55]

General Powell also formalized his doctrine of overwhelming military force in *Joint Pub 1: Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces* in November 1991.[56] The document carefully stressed that the "Defense of our nation and its interests defines our reason for being" and that this defense "rests first on the concept of *deterrence*." Nevertheless, "If deterrence fails, then our single objective is *winning the nation's wars*. When we fight, we fight to win."[57] Throughout this publication, the Gulf War was held up as the model of joint operations, along with historical examples of campaigns from other "good wars"—the American Civil War and World War II. As for lessons from America's limited wars, Macarthur's landing at Inchon during the Korean War received brief mention, while no operational lessons from Vietnam were cited.

A Challenge to the Paradigm: Somalia

In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War and the breakup of the Soviet Union, new international crises arose that would further solidify the thinking of military officers on the appropriate use of force. Perhaps the most important of these was the American involvement in Somalia. The United States became engaged in Somalia in August 1992 in support of UNOSOM I (U.N. Operation in Somalia), "whose mission was to provide humanitarian aid and facilitate the end of hostilities in Somalia."[58] President Bush ordered the support of Operation *Provide Relief* and directed that U.S. forces "provide military assistance in support of emergency humanitarian relief to Kenya and Somalia."[59] The intent of the operation was the provision of food and medical supplies to

the Somalis, whose suffering had been driven into the American consciousness by the news media.

The generally benign humanitarian assistance mission authorized by *Provide Relief* changed during the waning weeks of the Bush administration. In November, a ship carrying relief supplies was fired upon in Mogadishu, forcing it to leave before delivering its cargo. Clearly, the security environment in Somalia was constraining humanitarian efforts. Consequently, on 4 December, President Bush ordered the initiation of Operation *Restore Hope*.[60] U.N. Resolution 794 provided a mandate for the operation: "to provide humanitarian assistance to the Somali people, and to restore order in southern Somalia."[61] To execute the mandate, a combined military organization, UNITAF (United Task Force), was created. Once a secure environment was created to ensure uninterrupted relief operations, UNITAF disbanded and transferred operations to U.N. peacekeeping forces. UNITAF was led and largely manned by the United States—28,000 of the 38,000 coalition forces from the 21 contributing nations were Americans.[62]

In March 1993, the mission in Somalia underwent another evolution. UNOSOM II was formed to execute U.N. Security Resolution 814, which established the requirements to perform peacekeeping operations, including the disarming of the Somali clans, rehabilitate Somali political and economic institutions and establish a secure environment throughout Somalia.[63] The role envisioned for the 4,500 American troops committed to the mission was the provision of logistical support and a "Quick Reaction Force—some 1,150 soldiers from the US Army's 10th Mountain Division—that would operate under the tactical control of the Commander, U.S. Forces, Somalia."[64]

Americans soon discovered the difficulties of fighting an urban guerrilla war, a war for which they were neither trained nor equipped:

> The terms under which Aidid took on the United States were quite different. For starters, his chosen terrain was urban—a complex and congested environment as alien to American forces as it was intimately familiar to Aidid's supporters. The technology that had given rise to speculation about a revolution in military affairs proved ineffective, if not counterproductive, for close-in urban warfare. By the time Americans resorted to the use of anti-tank guided missiles to root out snipers, it had become apparent that the firepower which had demolished the Iraqi republican Guards was ill-suited to the streets of Mogadishu.[65]

The situation in Somalia steadily deteriorated, and in June 1993, members of the Somali clan under Mohammed Aidid killed 24 Pakistani members of UNOSOM II in an ambush.

The U.N. Security Council called for the "immediate apprehension of those responsible."[66] As a consequence, the United States deployed members of Delta Force and Army Rangers to assist in the capture of Aidid.[67] On 3 October, U.S. forces became engaged in a bloody battle with Somali militia in the aftermath of a raid to capture Aidid. American casualties numbered 18 dead and 84 wounded; estimates placed Somali casualties at 312 dead and 814 wounded.[68] In the aftermath of the battle, President Clinton directed a policy review that eventually resulted in a plan to withdraw American forces from Somalia by 31 March 1994.[69]

The Somalia experience was extremely important for the American military—it seemingly showed the hazards of becoming involved in a protracted conflict with an unclear exit strategy and fuzzy military objectives, as well as the hazards of "mission creep." In a statement reminiscent of Vietnam, Powell recalled the situation in Somalia "was the quicksand that the U.N. 'nation-building' mission had sucked us into."[70] Indeed, an analysis published by the National Defense University posits that Somalia "teaches us that there must be limits to the commitment of American military

power" and that nation-building is *"a mission for which our forces should not be primarily responsible."*[71]

Somalia also caused a rift between military and civilian policy makers. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin was deeply resented by military officers for not honoring the request of the American commander in Somalia, Major General Tom Montgomery for tanks and armored vehicles to protect his force, although Aspin had earlier sent helicopter gunships and AC-130 strike planes to Somalia. There was speculation that the armor would have prevented many of the U.S. casualties during the ill-fated raid.[72] What is rarely discussed is the fact that General Montgomery must not have believed the armor critical to his mission or for the raids to capture Aidid. U.S. forces executed their missions without the armor and, in the case of the final raid, did not coordinate for UNOSOM II armor until after the mission went bad.[73]

Notes

1. Scales, Odom, and Johnson, 31-32.
2. Ibid.
3. William P. Snyder and James Brown, ed., *Defense Policy in the Reagan Administration* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1988), xv.
4. Michael T. Klare, "The Reagan Doctrine: Grenada: 2," *New Statesman* (4 November 1983): 9.
5. Ibid., 9-10; emphasis in the original.
6. Ibid., 10.
7. Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991; reprint, New York: Touchstone, 1992), 316-17.
8. Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon,* rev. ed. (New York: Warner, 1991), 34.
9. Ibid., 35.
10. Snyder and Brown, xxv.
11. Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 277.
12. Hedrick Smith, *The Power Game: How Washington Works* (New York: Random House, 1988), 350.

13. Weinberger, 31; Weinberger confirmed Haig's views about Cuba during a interview with me on December 1, 1993.

14. On the sometimes tempestuous relationship between Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff see Perry, 287-304.

15. Alexander M. Haig, *Caveat* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 128-29; quoted in William J. Taylor, Jr. and David H. Petraeus, "The Legacy of Vietnam for the U.S. Military," in *Democracy, Strategy, and Vietnam: Implications for Policymaking*, eds. George K. Osborn, Asa A. Clark IV, Daniel J. Kaufman, and Douglas E. Lute, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987), 258.

16. Taylor and Petraeus, 258-59.

17. Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military history of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 584.

18. George C. Wilson, "U.S. Urged to Meet Honduran Requests," *Washington Post*, June 20, 1983, A-4; quoted in Millett and Maslowski, 260.

19. Richard Halloran, "Vietnam Consequences: Quiet From the Military," 2 May 1983, A16; quoted in David H. Petraeus, "Lessons of History and Lessons of Vietnam." *Parameters* 16 (Autumn 1986): 52.

20. George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 345.

21. Perry, 305-12.

22. Weinberger, 448-49.

23. Richard A. Gabriel, *Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1985), 150.

24. Ibid., 150-51; Weinberger, 162-67.

25. Gabriel, 173.

26. Weinberger interview. Some, however, maintain that Colin Powell wrote the speech that enunciated the Weinberger Doctrine; see Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Conflict and the Use of Force," in *U.S. Civil-Military Relations: In Crisis or Transition?* ed. Don M. Snider and Miranda A. Carlton (Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995), 130.

27. Colin Powell, with Joe E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 303.

28. Perry, 337-8; and Christopher Allan Yuknis, "The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986: An Interim

Assessment," in *Essays on Strategy X*, ed. Mary A. Sommerville (Washington: National Defense University Press), 75-99.

29. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and Alcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964), 337-38.

30. Yuknis, 85.

31. Powell, 207.

32. Scales, Johnson, and Odom, 34.

33. Ibid., 35.

34. Powell, 434.

35. Ibid.

36. Powell, 434.

37. Ibid.

38. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995), 465-69.

39. George Bush, "The Liberation of Kuwait Has Begun (speech of January 16, 1991), in *The Gulf War Reader*, eds. Michah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York: Times Books, 1991), 313.

40. Powell, 459-524.

41. George Bush, "Kuwait is Liberated" (speech of February 27, 1991), in Sifry and Cerf, 449.

42. Gordon and Trainor, 469; Powell, 522-28.

43. Powell, 527.

44. *Joint Pub 1*, 23.

45. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books, 1992), 498.

46. Gordon and Trainor, 456.

47. Gordon and Trainor, 452.

48. Bobby R. Inman, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., William J. Perry, and Roger K. Smith, "Lessons from the Gulf War," *The Washington Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1992): 70.

49. Gordon and Trainor, 461.

50. Gordon and Trainor, 461.

51. Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 493.

52. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Defense for a New Era: Lessons of the Persian Gulf War*, report prepared by Les Aspin and Willian Dickenson (Washington, 1992), 4.

53. Ibid., 5.

54. Ibid., 5-6.
55. The Joint Staff, *"Proposed Final" Joint Pub 0-1: Basic National Defense Doctrine* (Washington, 1991), II-17.
56. *Joint Pub 1*, 22-23.
57. Ibid., 1; emphasis in the original.
58. Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1995), 14.
59. Ibid.
60. Powell, 564-65; and Allard, 15-16.
61. Allard, 16.
62. Ibid., 16-17.
63. Ibid., 18.
64. Ibid., 19.
65. A.J. Bacevich, "Learning from Aidid," *Commentary* 96 (December 1993): 32.
66. Allard, 20.
67. Powell, 583-84.
68. Rick Atkinson, "Night of a Thousand Casualties," *The Washington Post*, January 1994, A1, 10-11. Malaysian members of UNOSOM II had 1 dead and seven wounded.
69. Powell, 588; Allard, 20.
70. Powell, 586.
71. Allard, 89.
72. Powell, 584-88.
73. Atkinson, "Night of a Thousand Casualties."

5.
Conclusion

If knowledge is indeed experiential, then the Gulf War and Somalia weigh heavily on the minds of American military officers. Quite simply, the "good" lessons of *Desert Storm* are paraded by military officers, as are the "bad" lessons of Somalia—and they are both supportive of the existing military paradigm. This ruling model has its historical origins in an "American way of war" that embraces technology and massive firepower to annihilate enemies and preserve the lives of American fighting men. Military professionals control operations, and the enemy is given neither respite nor sanctuary. The one conflict in which this paradigm seemingly did not work—Vietnam—was largely treated by military officers as a painful anomaly in which political constraints inhibited the application of overwhelming force and ceded the initiative to the enemy. In their minds, the military was denied an achievable victory; it did not lose the war. The recent revelations in Robert McNamara's memoirs only serve to reinforce this sense of betrayal.[1]

The Vietnam "aberration" also created immense turmoil within the services for a generation of military officers who worked hard to resurrect the Armed Forces from their post-Vietnam depths. The military believed that it was wrongly abandoned by the American people because politicians had not taken the steps necessary to guarantee public support for the war. Thus, the apparent vindication of the ruling paradigm by *Desert Storm* was all the more sweet because, as the Army's official history of the war noted: "*Desert Storm* represented the resurgence of an institution

crippled both by the Vietnam War and the subsequent period of social neglect."[2]

The open-ended character of the Somalia campaign, with its unclear military and political objectives and limits on the application of force was, for military officers, hauntingly similar to Vietnam. Haiti, on the other hand, was a "success" in the judgment of the military because the paradigm was finally allowed to operate. General Powell was convinced that the Haitians gave up power without violence because of the overwhelming military force arrayed against them.[3]

But is the ruling paradigm adequate for the future? Failure in Somalia and the fact that Saddam Hussein remains in power in Iraq would suggest that a doctrine of overwhelming force may not be the answer in all cases. Yet, these operations create an institutional dilemma for the Armed Forces of the United States. If their core value is being prepared "to fight and win the nation's wars," then a new international environment characterized by "operations other than war" creates a perplexing problem. Other types of challenges to the nation—international drug cartels, illegal immigration, etc.—are even more problematic because they do not offer clear military opponents and are troubling in their legal implications.

To date, this discontinuity between institutional preparation and operational reality has been largely resolved by clinging to the notion of inherent versatility. Major General S.L. Arnold, one of the commanders of the Army Forces in Somalia, reiterated the primacy of forces trained and ready for combat. By virtue of their excellence they would "remain versatile enough to adapt to any situation" and would therefore be equal to any challenge. Thus, Arnold was able to state confidently: "Our doctrine is about right"[4]—essentially, the same argument that was advanced 70 years earlier in the Army's *Field Service Regulations*: an Army prepared for great wars could readily adapt to lesser conflicts. This perspective, however, is not limited to the Army. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's *Joint Vision 2010* states:

> Our forces have been largely organized, trained, and equipped to defeat military forces of our potential adversaries. Direct combat against an enemy's armed forces is the most demanding and complex set of requirements we have faced. Other operations from humanitarian assistance in peacetime through peace operations in a near hostile environment, have proved to be possible using forces optimized for wartime effectiveness.[5]

Why such an apparent inability to change? Part of the answer is that paradigms create power bases that derive their relevance from the mastery of the existing paradigm. Few, if any, military officers rose to prominence in the aftermath of the Vietnam War by arguing the necessity of adopting an institutional doctrine that could better address the complexities of limited wars. Instead, the stars fell on those who treated Vietnam as an anomaly and who took the existing paradigm and refocused it on a relevant enemy—the Soviet Union.

In the absence of the Soviet Union, the American military has developed a two-major-regional-conflict threat that continues to justify the ruling paradigm and its attendant weapons and organizations.[6] Thus, the American military has been "downsizing" from what it was before the demise of the Soviet Union, rather than fundamentally analyzing what kind of forces should exist in the future. There has been no "radical restructuring of the military but rather a moderate shrinkage and consolidation."[7] The major opportunity to review the relevance of the paradigm, the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions, generally affirmed the existing model and dwelt in the main on issues of managerial and fiscal efficiency. Thus, the U.S. military is, for all intents and purposes, merely a smaller version of what it was at the end of the Cold War.

Forestalling any rush to change American military doctrine is the fact that the U.S. military is uniquely situated at present

in that it has no peer competitor. In an institution that is traditionally risk averse, this condition has led to a situation where the existing paradigm—the one that yielded decisive victory in *Desert Storm*—is almost unquestioningly embraced.

Given the hubris of being the "sole superpower" and the victors of *Desert Storm*, it is highly likely that the approach the U.S. Armed Forces will take in the future will be one in which the existing doctrines prevail and evolve. Few officers endowed with power by the existing military paradigm will be willing to acknowledge, much less to embrace, radical shifts. What will likely occur in the Armed Forces will be a situation where military forces will continue to attempt to force their operational environment to adapt to their doctrine, rather than adapting the doctrine to the environment, much less changing the doctrine. In a larger sense there will probably be an evolution, rather than a revolution, in military affairs. During this evolution the central weapon systems, doctrines, and hierarchical command and control systems that have their origins in the period before and during World War II will continue to be refined and improved, but they will all remain wedded to the essence of the ruling paradigm.

What does all of this mean for U.S. post-Cold War military-cvil relations? In the historic sense, the military will use its special knowledge to shape defense policy to ensure that American forces are not committed to operations by their civilian superiors if they face the same constraints to winning that existed in Vietnam, and then Somalia, or if they pose a risk to the institutional well-being of the military. These institutional imperatives are grounded in a belief that only military professionals are competent to make decisions about the deployment of the Armed Forces and that they must exercise operational control during any military commitment. To cede these prerogatives to less competent civilians carries with it the inherent risk of exposing the military to failure in the field, a failure whose consequences would be heavily borne by the military itself.

Furthermore, given the deference paid to each service's roles and missions by the others, and the desire for consensus by the Joint Staff, the Army will likely have the greatest say in any decision to commit ground forces to an operation for an extended period of time. Thus, the service most reluctant to repeat Vietnam will likely have the deciding vote in any deployment debate.

Edward Lutwak commented on what he views as "an erosion of civilian authority, manifest in the effective veto power acquired by the military leadership over intervention decisions:"

> Constitutionally, it is the civilian authorities alone who should decide whether, when, where, and how to intervene, albeit with such military advice as they care to solicit. There has been no *coup d'état*, and the Constitution has not been rewritten to place the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff above the President and his Secretary of Defense, but in real-live American politics a situation has been created in which those two civilians feel that they must defer to military preferences, because of the very real risk that they would otherwise be undermined *politically* by their nominal military servants.[8]

Given the political liabilities inherent in overriding a military recommendation not to intervene, or to be as seen micromanaging what are clearly "military matters," civilian leaders are more prone than ever to accept the advice offered them by their military subordinates.

The current state of affairs is one in which civilians have clearly ceded many of their prerogatives—they have become too deferential to the point of view of military officers. Therefore, Perry's careful adherence to the catechism of the American military paradigm in outlining the mission in Bosnia, noted at the beginning of this essay, is not surprising. That an armored division, with its enormous firepower, was the unit selected for service in Bosnia, and that the unit has broad authority to exert overwhelming force against any threat

is also predictable, as are the constant reminders to the American public that U.S. forces will be withdrawn in a year—no open-ended involvement here. Nevertheless, despite all the assurances, but given the American military's reliance on its doctrine of overwhelming force, it is not surprising that "U.S. commanders are unsettled by seat-of-the-pants, untraditional operations" such as those in Bosnia. As one Army lieutenant colonel in Bosnia recently noted, "There's almost no comfort level for any of this. . . . You don't have an array of manuals that take you from corps down to company level, providing you doctrine that contains sound, time-proven guidance."[9] Thus Bosnia, in the final analysis, does look like Vietnam in a singularly important way: the American military paradigm may be largely inappropriate given the central nature of the conflict.

The current state of military-civil relations in the United States should not, however, be linked to the Clinton administration. One should bear in mind that the Weinberger and Powell doctrines were crafted during the tenure of Republican administrations. Indeed, any administration will face the same challenges so long as the American military clings to its existing paradigm. This construct sanctions, in the minds of military officers, the duty to decide not only how to fight but also when to fight. Thus, in a bureaucratically significant way, military officers are dictating defense policy.

If, as asserted, there is an improper ascendancy of the military perspective in American post-Cold War civil-military relations, the obvious question is what should be done to correct this imbalance? This question defies any prescriptive answer. Nevertheless, there are insights that have emerged from this study that may help.

What is clear is that the military will not solve what has been argued is a significant military-civil relations problem, even if it could recognize it as such, for a number of important structural and institutional reasons. Quite simply, it is not in the interests of the military to do so, and the lessons of Vietnam, reinforced by Somalia, only serve to strengthen

the conviction that civilians cannot be trusted to wield the military instrument. Thus, given their central belief that only military professionals understand the use of force, uniformed officers will continue to try to control the important decisions about when and how to deploy military forces. Furthermore, they will argue that "good warriors"—conventional forces, authorized to use overwhelming force—are appropriate in any environment, thus avoiding the tough issues about alternative force structures and organizations. Although the military may "do windows" in the future, it will likely do them largely with existing sledgehammers. This reluctance to shift the paradigm and its supporting structures will only stiffen as downsizing continues and the focus becomes riveted on the retention of existing capabilities. Finally, military officers will press for operational autonomy, clear *military* objectives, and certain victory, with political objectives a secondary consideration.

Therefore, much of the onus for correcting the existing imbalance in civil-military relations rests on the civilian side of the scales. Civilians, particularly short-term political appointees, must come to grips with the fact that they do not possess the requisite bureaucratic competence to challenge military recommendations. This is not to say that they should continue to defer to military officers. Rather, a more viable course would be to emphasize civilian competencies by making political considerations paramount in the decisionmaking process—and to insist that military options are tailored explicitly to meet them. In short, the political bureaucratic process must assert itself over the military bureaucratic process.

Notes

1. Powell, 577.
2. Scales, Johnson, and Odom, 383.
3. Ibid., 600.
4. S.L. Arnold and David T. Stahl, "A Power Projection Army in Operations Other Than War," *Parameters* 23 (Winter 1993-94): 25.

5. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington: 1996), 17.

6. Les Aspin, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington: 1994), 15-16.

7. Eliot A. Cohen, "Playing Powell Politics: The General's Zest for Power," *Foreign Affairs* 74 (November/December 1995): 108.

8. Edward N. Luttwak, "If Bosnians Were Dolphins . . ." *Commentary* 96 (October 1993): 29.

9. Rick Atkinson, "Warriors Without a War," *The Washington Post* 12 April 1996, A22.

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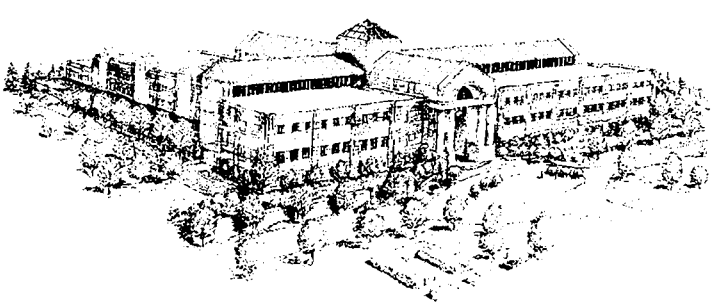

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