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## THE RISE OF THE FRANKEN POWELL DOCTRINE – WHY THE UNITED STATES SHOULD RESUSCITATE THE UNDEAD POWELL DOCTRINE

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SHOULD RESUSCITATE THE UNDEAD POWELL DOCTRINE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite being the world's most powerful nation, and having been largely responsible for the global changes following World War II, the United States does not appear able to adapt to the world it has irrevocably altered. As a result, America's perch at the top of the world order is now increasingly unsteady as the strategic landscape shifts around it, and its old strategies prove less effective than they were in the past.

Though it is still the world's most powerful nation, it is today a more vulnerable and less flexible America. Use of force remains an alluring means of fending off threats to its national interests because its military power is yet unrivaled. However, though this achieves short term gains, in many ways it is harmful to the long term interests of the United States. This paper will demonstrate that it is in the United States' best long-term interests to re-adopt principles consistent with the Powell Doctrine when committing whether, when, where and how to exercise military force.

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*History teaches that wars begin when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap.*  
— Ronald Reagan<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The United States of America emerged from World War Two (WWII) as unquestionably the world's most powerful nation. It was the only populous country whose territories and industrial capacity remained intact, and it possessed the world's sole nuclear arsenal, which ensured its ability to attack with disproportionate force in the event of war. Almost seven decades later its lead has diminished, but its might remains unrivalled. No country has yet acquired the ability to compel the United States to do something it deems to be against its own interests.<sup>2</sup> This outsized power has provided every post-WWII Presidential Administration enormous flexibility in its pursuit of American national and strategic objectives.

Military force is one instrument by which the United States can exercise and has exercised its national will – to varying degrees of success. Violent force has always been a blunt instrument of policy, and its use is always at the price of certain disadvantages. These include the immediately tangible costs of waging war – counted in fallen, operational costs, and lost national productivity; long term costs including the creation of adversaries and strained international and domestic relationships; and unavoidable risks. Though rarely predicted in advance, there is a long history in the world of militarily dominant powers being defeated after initiating armed conflict.<sup>3</sup> While it is easy enough

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the Nation, Jan 16, 1984

<sup>2</sup> Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy For America*, Cornell University Press, 2004, pg 13.

<sup>3</sup> Examples include: the defeat of the Persian fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC; defeat of sixteen Roman and Allied legions at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BC; defeat of the Qin army by much larger Chu forces in 207 BC (Qin's total losses mounted up to well over 100,000 and the Qin dynasty collapsed soon after); Operation Compass in North Africa during WWII, where a British force of 35,000 men defeated an Italian army of 150,000, forcing them back 800 km with almost no losses.

for a victor to attribute their successes to cleverness, superior training, preparation or other advantage, the element of chance is always inherent to a war's outcome, and should not be overlooked.<sup>4</sup>

Assuming it were possible to guarantee the outcome of war, one must remember that the goal of war is not simply to win on the battlefield, but to win some strategic objective. Clausewitz emphasizes the fact that “war is an instrument of policy. It must necessarily bear the character of policy and measure by its standards. The conduct of war, in its great outlines, is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen.”<sup>5</sup> On this point, Robert J. Art states the obvious in his book *A Grand Strategy For America* that “[u]sing military power correctly does not ensure that a state will protect all of its interests, but using it incorrectly would put a great burden on [...] other instruments and could make it impossible for a state to achieve its goals. Decisions about whether and how to use military power may therefore be the most fateful a state makes.”<sup>6</sup> As one example of a fateful mistake, a vastly superior Russian force initiated the Winter War by invading Finland in 1939. Though Russia ultimately won the war, the extraordinarily high cost for the victory was devastating to its military reputation and national pride.<sup>7</sup> It is

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of chance playing a significant factor in the outcome of war dates as far back to Thucydides. Analysis of his writing can be found in the following article: Stewart Flory, Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-), Vol. 118, (1988), pp. 43-56.

Clausewitz also noted that chance was the very last thing that war lacks. He stated that “no other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance. And through the element of chance, guesswork and luck come to play a great part in war,” and finally likened war most to a game of cards. Clausewitz, Carl Von, *On War*, translated by Howard, M., Paret, P., and West, R., Princeton University Press, 1984, pg 85.

<sup>5</sup> Clausewitz, Carl Von, *On War*, translated by Howard, M., Paret, P., and West, R., Princeton University Press, 1984, pg 610.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy For America*, Cornell University Press, Dec 31, 2004, pg 4

<sup>7</sup> The terms of the armistice granted Russians eleven percent of the Finnish territory, and 30% of its economic assets. However, not only did the Russians fail to attain their objective of the total conquest of Finland, their losses were disproportionately large against the much smaller and lesser equipped Finnish forces. Khrushchev later commented that “a victory at such a cost was actually a moral defeat.” EN

believed that the display of military weakness was a significant consideration in Hitler's decision to invade Russia only 15 months later. As an American example, while Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 succeeded in ousting Saddam Hussein, it created new threats to United States security interests where none had existed before.<sup>8</sup>

Changes in the global context have significantly altered the strategic environment in which the United States finds itself today. Conventional military force is now of lower utility and higher cost when used in pursuit of strategic objectives. To elaborate, globalization has created a much more interconnected and interdependent world. In contrast to the past when it was cheaper and easier to seize territories and resources by force than to derive benefits from other means, the use of force in today's globalized world is now more likely to jeopardize a nation's economic objectives.<sup>9</sup> This is true for powerful, non-powerful, democratic and non-democratic nations alike.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, complex issues such as transnational terrorism cannot be solved by force alone, but will require multinational solutions that put the role and limitations of armed force in proper perspective.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, technological advances have created new domains such as cyber that are critical to developed economies but can be neither exploited nor protected in any practical sense with the use of force.

The United States has much to lose if it does not recognize and adapt to changes in the strategic landscape. Paradoxically, despite having "done more than any other

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Kulkov and OA Rzheshesky, *Stalin and the Soviet-Finnish War, 1939-1940*, trans. T. Sokokina (Frank Cass, 2002), foreword.

<sup>8</sup> Record, Jeffrey, "Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine" *Air University Maxwell Air Force Base Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 2007

<sup>9</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization*. Psychology Press, 2004, pg 55.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Nye, *The paradox of American power: Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford University Press, 2003, pg 6.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, Wesley. America's Virtual Empire. *The Washington Monthly*, 2003.

country to change the world, Americans are among the least prepared to cope with the world they have changed.”<sup>12</sup> Globalization has been so favourable to the interests of the United States that it has been called “the new American empire,”<sup>13</sup> but the country is now more vulnerable because of its growing dependency on the benefits this system brings. In acting to protect its interests and defend against threats within the interconnected world, the United States has systemically traded short term benefits for increased long term risks, and has reduced the robustness of the very network upon which it depends for security and prosperity.<sup>14</sup> With its “sphere of influence” and interests spread over half the world, the interconnectedness of the international system means that a disturbance around the world is more likely to threaten some American interest. In a similar fashion, the actions and reactions of the United States will also reverberate around the system. The risks of unintended consequences are amplified in this environment, with those involving the use of force being the most dangerous and expensive.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the inescapable costs and risks, the use of force remains seductive. For one, it can produce immediately recognizable benefits while disadvantages may only become apparent much later. Moreover, it is easy to discount the effects of chance in armed conflict if one is blinded by overconfidence, hubris or victory disease. Christopher Preble explains the tendency to do exactly what is dangerous in his book *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free*. He states that one of the problems facing powerful nations is the propensity to over-develop and overuse military might, and allowing it to supplant rather than

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<sup>12</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, *Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust Between America and the World*. Public Affairs, 2005, pg xv.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, Wesley. America's Virtual Empire. *The Washington Monthly*, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy For America*, Cornell University Press, 2004, pg 4.

supplement other levers of diplomacy. He argues that when nations have more military power than is needed for the defence of its core interests, the scope of “national interest” will inevitably widen. This leads to military engagements abroad where the nation would otherwise not venture, and to increasingly murky definitions of “victory.”<sup>16</sup> This conduct would clearly increase the likelihood of utilizing military power “incorrectly,” and thus harming strategic interests. To be clear, this is not just a theoretical concern of academics, and anti-war critics but a worry shared by esteemed United States Army Generals.<sup>17</sup>

Preble’s solution to this problem is for a much-reduced role for the U.S. military in the world, but his conclusion that “[the United States] should reduce [their] military power in order to be more secure,” is both extreme and disputed.<sup>18</sup> A less drastic alternative would be to use strong policy to restrict the use of military power to those circumstances which would serve the United States’ long term strategic interests, and then to ensure that it is used properly to maximize the probability of attaining strategic aims.

This paper will demonstrate that the Powell Doctrine, when applied correctly, can achieve this effect. To do this, this paper discusses the origins of the Powell Doctrine before summarizing its brief adoption, long degradation, and ultimate rejection by the American political and military establishments. Looking to today’s context, we will see how specific factors in today’s changing world suggest that despite its current pre-eminent position, it is in the United States’ best long-term interests to re-adopt principles consistent with the Powell Doctrine when committing whether, when, where and how to

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Preble, *The power problem: how American military dominance makes us less safe, less prosperous, and less free*. Comstock Pub Assoc, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Clark, Wesley. America's Virtual Empire. *The Washington Monthly*, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy For America*, Cornell University Press, 2004, pg 11.

exercise military force.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, that use of military force is limited to circumstances which are vital to the nation, where all other options have been exhausted, where force could reasonably bring forth some policy objective, and with the clear understanding of what is to be achieved and at what cost. Only then, would force be applied “decisively” to achieve the objective, unencumbered by artificially created limitations which could jeopardize the mission.

Because adhering to such a policy will implicitly compel the United State to inevitably accept many limitations, this paper will also conduct an examination of possible repercussions that such a policy entails, but will ultimately show that despite the trade-offs and limitations, the Powell Doctrine is the best option for the times ahead in the American national journey.

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<sup>19</sup> In forwarding such points, this analysis limits itself to so-called wars of choice, meaning engagements that are not themselves retaliations against what would be legally deemed *casus belli* by a hypothetical neutral third party, even if avoiding such engagements would produce politically or economically unpleasant consequences.

Similarly, for consistency, anything that the United States does that could be considered *casus bellum* under international law by a hypothetical neutral party will be defined as a policy that falls under consideration for the Powell Doctrine. Such scenarios encompass political coups or drone attacks sanctioned by the strictly-speaking civilian Central Intelligence Agency.

Taken to extremes, these somewhat arbitrary definitions produce unsatisfactory juxtapositions. For example, American response to foreign invasion and military occupation of Mexico would be considered a war of choice for the United States, whereas an American invasion of Egypt in response to its citizens’ scaling the U.S. embassy’s walls would be considered justifiable. However, even Powell opposed reducing his namesake doctrine to a checklist and argued in favour of examining each event on its own merits.

*I was at Annapolis one day lecturing after the Gulf War was over, and some Navy [...]officer raises his hand and says, I don't understand, General Powell. General Schwarzkopf had four aircraft carriers, battle groups, and he asked for two more and you gave him three more. Why did you give him three more rather than two more? I said, because they didn't have time to go get the rest.*  
 — General Colin Powell (ret.)<sup>20</sup>

## CHAPTER 2 – WHAT IS POWELL DOCTRINE?

Before launching into a debate of its merits or why Powell Doctrine should be revisited in the current United States context, we should be clear what we are talking about. The Powell Doctrine is generally understood to mean the following: employing military force as the last resort when handling issues of vital national interest and only under very specific conditions.<sup>21</sup> Once force is prescribed, sufficient force should be used to decisively achieve the clearly defined and attainable objective. Though it bears the name of Colin Powell, former United States Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell himself neither articulated the doctrine in a single body of work, nor did he consistently adhere to a single set of principles throughout his career.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the details of the doctrine are subject to some level of interpretation.

Powell Doctrine is often compared to or conflated with former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's Doctrine, which was clearly articulated by Weinberger while Powell served as his Senior Military Assistant. The two doctrines are sufficiently

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<sup>20</sup> Remarks by Gen. Colin Powell (ret.), Former Secretary, U.S. Department of State as delivered on 29 April, 2008 at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. Transcription provided by Federal News Service, Washington, D.C., and sourced online:

<http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utills/getfile/collection/p4013coll11/id/1252/filename/1253.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> The conditions will be described later in the chapter, but are as follows: Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences? Is the action supported by the American people? Does the United States have broad international support?

<sup>22</sup> Some variations were merely minor adjustments of details to placate critics, though greater departures from his namesake doctrine occurred during his service as President George W. Bush's Secretary of State. Such departures partly contributed to the Doctrine's ultimate demise.

similar that contemporary scholars often jointly refer to them as the “Powell-Weinberger Doctrine,” while other academics insist that they are sufficiently different that conjoining them is erroneous.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the colloquial terminology, neither the Powell nor the Weinberger Doctrine should be mistaken for real “doctrine.”<sup>24</sup> Official military doctrine implies a set of agreed-upon best practices and principles that are unambiguously codified and sanctioned by an appropriate authority.<sup>25</sup> Like many of the other so-called doctrines of United States foreign policy, Powell Doctrine simply provides shorthand reference to a set of general ideas, practices, and predilections of its namesake.

Notwithstanding such caveats, the Powell Doctrine encompasses general guidelines which can assist policy-makers in the development of practical policy. It can also provide a lens through which contemporary commentators and historians can analyse such policy.

This chapter will provide a brief background to the Powell Doctrine, including its history, its application criticisms and ultimate rejection in favour of largely unsuccessful alternatives. It will include a clear definition of the Doctrine used in this paper, and show that America’s post-WWII military operations have been most successful when conducted in a manner consistent with the Powell Doctrine’s core operational tenets. Conversely, it will show that American military interventions largely failed when they

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<sup>23</sup> Two examples of conflating the doctrines include Record, Jeffrey, “Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine” Air University Maxwell Air Force Base *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 2007 and Campbell, Kenneth J. “Once burned, twice cautious: explaining the Weinberger-Powell doctrine.” *Armed forces & society* 24, no. 3 (1998): 357-374. Alexander Wolf disagrees in his publication “U.S. Interventions Abroad: A Renaissance of the Powell Doctrine?”. FEDERAL ARMED FORCES UNIV (FAF) MUNICH (GERMANY), 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Heiko Meiertöns, *The doctrines of US security policy: an evaluation under international law*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, pg 3-22.

<sup>25</sup> Sellers, John S. *The Weinberger" Doctrine": Useful Compass or Flawed Checklist?*. AIR UNIV MAXWELL AFB AL SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES, 2001.

were conducted in a gradual manner or when the military was tasked with pursuing open-ended or vague objectives. Although the treatment herein merely demonstrates correlation and not causation, the sum of America's military experiences over the last seven decades strongly suggests that it is in the United States' best interests to readopt the Powell Doctrine when employing military force as a tool of state.

### **From Vietnam...**

The Powell Doctrine is generally accepted to have been the by-product of Powell's military experience, and particularly to America's failed policies during the Vietnam War.<sup>26</sup> The American officers who served in Vietnam generally believed that the war's failure began very early with President Johnson's unnoticeable creeping escalation, which was abetted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who meekly accepted civilian micromanaging of the war's operational details. In doing so, these "Five Silent Men" acquiesced to political dictates that initially constrained the military's ability to use force and then later demanded ever increasing levels of it without providing a clear objective concerning its purpose.<sup>27</sup>

This escalation persisted under both Presidents Johnson and Nixon despite increasing domestic and international opposition. Although the "United States' isolation in international society in the late 1960s [...] represented the lowest ebb of U.S.

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<sup>26</sup> In actual fact, Christopher Gelphi and Peter Feaver trace the Powell Doctrine's lineage even further "back to "the 'never again' or 'all or nothing' school of senior military disenchanted with the restrictions imposed by military leaders during the Korean War. " *Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force*, " *The American Political Science Review*, 96.4 (Dec 2002): 779-793.

<sup>27</sup> Herbert R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff*. HarperCollins e-books, 2011.

legitimacy in the post-World War II era,”<sup>28</sup> both presidents initially argued that leaving Vietnam without an honorable exit would damage American credibility around the world and negate U.S. sacrifices up to that point.

By 1972 the final outcome was deemed inevitable, and even National Security Advisor and future Secretary of State Henry Kissinger ceased seeking “peace with honor” in favour of finding an exit strategy that would provide for some time before South Vietnam's inevitable political overrun.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, the war dragged on because policy makers continued to view the withdrawal of American troops as detrimental to long term strategic considerations.

Unsurprisingly, the military officers (undoubtedly along with numerous war deserters) held a dim view of such analysis and agreed with Major General H.R.

McMaster’s conclusion that the

war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of *The New York Times* or on the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C., even before Americans assumed sole responsibility for the fighting in 1965 and before they realized the country was at war.<sup>30</sup>

Powell echoed such analysis and commented that “[p]oliticians start wars; soldiers fight and die in them. We do not have the luxury of waiting for a better war.”<sup>31</sup> The majority of these officers resented “bearing the responsibility of an unpopular war fought according to policies set by civilian appointees.”<sup>32</sup> Caspar Weinberger later remarked that the U.S. policymakers’ pursuit of such policies “wasted not only force,

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<sup>28</sup> Robert W. Tucker, and David C. Hendrickson. "The sources of American legitimacy." *Foreign Affairs*, 2004, pp18-32.

<sup>29</sup> Hakan Tunç, "Reputation and US withdrawal from Iraq." *Orbis* 52, no. 4 (2008): 657-669.

<sup>30</sup> Herbert R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff*. HarperCollins e-books, 2011. pp 333-334

<sup>31</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico. *My American Journey*. Ballantine Books, 1996, pg 123.

<sup>32</sup> James P. Rubin, "Stumbling into War." *Foreign Aff.* 82 (2003): 46.

they wasted a lot of effort, and most of all they wasted a lot of lives” by “asking our troops not to win, but just to be there.”<sup>33</sup>

According to Lt. General Bernard Trainor, Vietnam “scarred Colin Powell as it did most of the officers of his grade, that is, officers who were captains and majors during the Vietnam War.”<sup>34</sup> Powell and his cohorts returned to the United States with the firm belief that American soldiers should never again sacrifice suffer so many dead and wounded for ill-conceived or inadequately resourced objectives.<sup>35</sup> The disenchanting Vietnam veterans who remained in the military upon returning to the United States became more influential as they were promoted to higher ranks, and they took their beliefs with them. Powell later commented that

Our senior officers knew the war was going badly. Yet they bowed to groupthink pressure and kept up pretenses. [...] Many of my generation, the career captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels seasoned in that war, vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in half-hearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand.<sup>36</sup>

Concerns over “half-hearted warfare” were strengthened by the 1980 failure of Operation Eagle Claw to rescue fifty-two Americans held in the United States Embassy in Tehran, and then Powell’s suspicions about “half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand” were reinforced by events that unfolded in Lebanon in 1983.

By then, Major-General Colin Powell had just begun his 1983-1986 term as Senior Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, where he was

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<sup>33</sup> Caspar Weinberger, 1984 Press Club Address

<sup>34</sup> A Panel Discussion on American Civil-Military Relations, October 23, 1995, transcript accessed online: [http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil\\_military/no1.htm](http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil_military/no1.htm)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico. *My American Journey*. Ballantine Books, 1996, pg 149.

instrumental in shaping Weinberger's thinking.<sup>37</sup> Even before Powell's appointment, the United States' State and Defense Departments vociferously disagreed over the American military's involvement in international relations. While Secretary of State George Shultz considered the military as a means to further American diplomatic goals by demonstrating credible willingness to employ force, the Defense Department was still recoiling from the army's Vietnam-induced implosion.<sup>38</sup> The Defense Department feared that lack of popular support would doom it to perpetually fielding insufficient numbers of troops into prolonged conflict.<sup>39</sup>

President Ronald Reagan initially shared Shultz' position, and American Marines were deployed during the early 1980s to separate warring Lebanese factions and supervise the Palestinian Liberation Organization's withdrawal from Beirut. While publicly supporting Reagan, Weinberger was privately skeptical that any outside force could bring order to Lebanon's chaotic, violent situation and strenuously opposed the ill-defined mission. His argument that U.S. military personnel would become prominent targets for the civil war's various belligerent factions materialized on October 23, 1983, when a suicide bomber drove into U.S. Marine barracks at Beirut airport and killed 241 American marines, sailors, and soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Reagan retracted U.S. forces from Lebanon in response, thereby leading adversaries to question America's commitment to its own policies, and reducing American prestige.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Walter LaFeber, "The rise and fall of Colin Powell and the Powell doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

<sup>38</sup> David Cortright, "Reminiscences of resistance," *Peace Review* 18, no. 2 (2006): 207-214.

<sup>39</sup> Handel, Michael. *Masters of war: classical strategic thought*. Routledge, 2000, pg 307-309.

<sup>40</sup> Some sources say 241 (Hastedt, Campbell), others say 266 (Handel). The 266 figure seems to include some French servicemen and a janitor.

<sup>41</sup> Hakan Tunç, "Reputation and US withdrawal from Iraq." *Orbis* 52, no. 4 (2008): 657-669.

With the specters of the failed interventions in Vietnam, Iran, and Lebanon still looming in public consciousness, Weinberger delivered a memorable speech entitled “*The Uses of Military Power*,” before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on November 28, 1984. In it, Weinberger argued for fewer military engagements, and greater flexibility in how they should be conducted. He noted that

[c]onditions 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.<sup>42</sup>

Weinberger specifically articulated six conditions for determining if American combat forces should be deployed abroad:

1. The United States should only commit combat forces overseas when the particular engagement or occasion is vital to American or allied national interests.
2. If combat troops are necessary, they should be employed wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning. If the United States government is unwilling to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve its objectives, then it should refrain from committing them at all.
3. In committing combat forces overseas, the government should send them in sufficient numbers, should provide clearly defined political and military objectives, and should know precisely how those forces can accomplish those objectives.
4. The size, composition and disposition of the combat forces committed must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
5. Before committing combat forces abroad, the support of the American people and their elected Congressional representatives must be reasonably assured. This requires candidly and clearly explaining the threats faced.
6. American combat forces should only be committed as a last resort.<sup>43</sup>

The earlier October 25, 1983 invasion of Grenada, which deployed 7,600 American troops to overthrow a regime that commanded a 350 square kilometer country of 91,000 inhabitants, succeeded on the basis of such principles. Powell later noted that

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<sup>42</sup> Caspar Weinberger, 1984 Press Club Address. Paraphrased for simplicity

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

upon his October 1, 1989 appointment to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “when it became my responsibility to advising the president on committing forces to combat, Weinberger’s principles turned out to be a practical guide.”<sup>44</sup>

Although he found Weinberger’s principles to be useful, Powell was far more cautious. While Weinberger discussed committing a size of combat force that would be continually reassessed and readjusted, Powell favored sending larger deployments upfront. If operations could achieve their objectives sufficiently quickly, it would obviate the need for future reassessments.<sup>45</sup> For example, Walter LaFeber remarks in *Political Science Quarterly* that when President George H.W. Bush decided to overthrow Panama’s Manuel Noriega,

Powell insisted that the overthrow of Noriega be a quick, overwhelming strike carried out by a force of 20,000 Americans, accompanied by the U.S. Air Force, against a handful of Panamanians who had no air force. In December 1989, the American operation quickly forced Noriega to flee, finally captured him after a series of almost comic failures, and installed a friendlier government. Powell became widely known as the highly articulate general who often explained on television why the operation was going so well.<sup>46</sup>

### **Peak of the Powell Doctrine**

Following the Vietnam War’s dismal conclusion, a confluence of factors resulted in fewer and less extensive direct military engagements.<sup>47</sup> America instead used indirect force through proxy wars – supporting and encouraging Iraq’s 1980 invasion of Iran and supplying the Afghan Mujahedin with stinger missiles in 1986 to repel a Soviet

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<sup>44</sup> O’Sullivan, Christopher D. *Colin Powell: American power and intervention from Vietnam to Iraq*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub Incorporated, 2009, pg 84

<sup>45</sup> Powell himself objects to the term “overwhelming”, instead preferring the term “decisive.”

<sup>46</sup> Walter LaFeber, “The rise and fall of Colin Powell and the Powell doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

<sup>47</sup> The factors included lack of public support, as well as political lack of confidence in an Army that “had ceased to function as an effective combat force. The Nixon administration was forced to withdraw troops to save the army from internal ruin.” David Cortright, “Reminiscences of resistance,” *Peace Review* 18, no. 2 (2006): 207-214.

invasion.<sup>48</sup> More often than not, its measures were even less belligerent. In analysing the foreign policy of one of the Cold War's most outspokenly hawkish American Presidents, Peter Beinart noted that

Americans loved Reagan's foreign policy for the same reason they loved the 1985 blockbuster *Rambo*, in which the muscle-bound hero returns to Vietnam, kicks some communist butt, and no Americans die. Reagan's liberal critics often accused him of reviving the chest-thumping spirit that had led to Vietnam. But they were wrong. For Reagan, chest-thumping was in large measure a substitute for a new Vietnam, a way of accommodating the restraints on U.S. power while still boosting American morale.<sup>49</sup>

Such policies, combined with enormous annual military budget allowed the military to rebuild and regroup over nearly twenty years. When President George H.W. Bush deployed the United States Armed Forces to the Persian Gulf in 1990 as a part of Operation Desert Shield, it was the first major conflict in which many of the Vietnam-era non-commissioned officers were in senior positions during a combat setting.<sup>50</sup>

President Bush publically employed numerous methods of statecraft to resolve the dispute. Such measures included working with Iraq's traditional Soviet supporters to pass an August 6 United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq's withdrawal of Kuwait. This was followed by Resolutions 661 and 665 imposing sanctions and a naval blockade to enforce them. In addition, Bush cancelled billions of dollars of Egyptian debt to win the country's support, sought Arab countries' approval of the invasion, and pressured Israel to avoid retaliating from Iraqi missiles in order to keep the fragile Arab alliance intact. In contrast to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, who almost accidentally entered the Vietnam War without

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<sup>48</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, "The Stinger missile and US intervention in Afghanistan," *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 2 (1999): 219-263.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Beinart, "Think again Ronald Reagan." *Foreign Policy* no. 180 (2010): 28-33, pg. 28

<sup>50</sup> Luke, Middup, "The Impact of Vietnam on US Strategy in the First Gulf War." *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 5 (2010): 389-404.

realizing it, President Bush sought and received Congressional authorization of force, albeit by a narrow five vote margin in the Senate. Only after three months of such diplomacy did Bush, largely goaded by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, finally sponsor United Nations Resolution 678, which provided legal justification to use “all necessary means” to force Iraq out of Kuwait in the absence of a unilateral Iraqi withdrawal by January 15, 1991. Even then, President Bush remained cautious. LaFeber notes that

The president also decided on a carefully limited invasion and then—most importantly—closely followed Powell’s advice by committing overwhelming force to achieve the single specific goal: the liberation of Kuwait. In the 100-hour war of late February 1991, the U.S.-led forces of 550000 soldiers destroyed large numbers of badly outgunned Iraqi troops. The road to Iraq’s capital, Baghdad, lay open. Bush refused to take it. He and Powell had achieved their primary objectives. Kuwait was liberated, and Saudi Arabia was no longer in danger. Many of Bush’s allies, moreover, wanted nothing to do with an attack on Baghdad and the overthrow of Saddam. Led by the Saudis themselves, these allies feared a civil war might erupt in Iraq and destabilize the entire region. It would be better to let the Iraqis and Iranians continue to balance each other so neither could again threaten their neighbors.<sup>51</sup>

To ensure public support throughout the war’s operations, Powell braced the public for unforeseen adverse developments by overstating potential casualties and extensively courted reporters in order to ensure favorable media coverage.<sup>52</sup> In discussing the military’s cautious approach to the invasion, evidenced by its request for enormous numbers of troop and equipment deployments, the Washington Post noted that

Powell’s thinking on the subject [...] can be thought of as “Weinberger plus” [...] Powell had been influenced by a 1984 speech entitled “The Uses of Military Power,” in which Weinberg laid out his criteria for deploying force into combat. [...] Weinberger] stopped short of declaring that overwhelming force should be

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<sup>51</sup> Walter LaFeber, “The rise and fall of Colin Powell and the Powell doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Force-Protection Fetishism: Sources, Consequences, and (?) Solutions,” AIR UNIV MAXWELL AFB AL, *Aerospace Power Journal*, 2000.

used to guarantee success in battle, a refinement that characterizes the Cheney-Powell doctrines.<sup>53</sup>

The same article stated that, “The doctrine represents a reaction to and rejection of the gradualism of Vietnam and the tentative approach of Desert One, the disastrous and undermanned effort in 1980 to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran.”<sup>54</sup>

Powell himself downplays the novelties ascribed to his contribution to warfare and instead attributes the doctrine’s concepts to the fundamental principles of war.<sup>55</sup>

Regarding his namesake doctrine, Powell remarked in his 2008 address to U.S.

Command and General Staff College students in Leavenworth, that

Doctrine is another issue. How do you go about war? Much has been made of something called the ‘Powell Doctrine.’ You cannot find the ‘Powell Doctrine’ in any Army manual. They never bought it[...] The term ‘Powell Doctrine’ was invented by a reporter. Jeffrey Smith of the Washington Post came to see me one day, and I was chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], and he said, I’m writing an article about the ‘Powell Doctrine.’

I said, great, what is it? And he said, it seems to be the way you do things. The Panama invasion, Desert Shield, Desert Storm, seem to reflect a way of doing it where you will argue with your political leaders about what the political objectives to be, and then you want to sort of pile on overwhelming force.

[...]And I said, to some extent, yeah. But ... [if] you really want to know where the Powell Doctrine came from, go to Leavenworth and ask them to give you a class on the principles of war. And the Powell Doctrine is essentially two principles of war: the principles of the objective and mass, simple as that.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, unlike the Weinberger Doctrine, which was deliberately articulated by a Secretary of Defense as an indirect means of influencing the Secretary of State and President Reagan, the Powell Doctrine was a media-coined concept that attempted to succinctly popularize Powell’s empirical military observations by the time he had

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<sup>53</sup> Gulf Turning Points: Strategy, Diplomacy. Washington Post, Dec 2, 1990

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Remarks by Gen. Colin Powell (ret.), Former Secretary, U.S. Department of State as delivered on 29 April, 2008 at Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Although Powell here mistakenly credits Jeffrey Smith, during a later interview he corrects himself by saying that it was in fact the New York Times’ Michael Gordon who originated the term.

become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Because Powell never articulated the specific details of the doctrine himself, it has since been applied liberally in academic and mainstream press and now means many things to many people.

### **Criticism and Articulation of the Powell Doctrine**

Such simple formulations and definitions belie the ambiguous and difficult problems to which it is applied. This has led to multiple and sometimes contradictory criticisms as well. Some critics claim that deploying the overwhelming force that Powell had demanded during Desert Storm is both unnecessarily violent and immoral.<sup>57</sup> Such critics gained particular traction after widely disseminated television footage showed the consequences of stealth bombers killing approximately 400 civilians in their attack of the Iraqi Al Firdos bunker, which later proved to have no military value. Less than two weeks later, this view was hardened with the widely broadcast images of the so-called “highway of death.” The bombing of retreating Iraqi tanks led to increased outrage and claims of Geneva Convention violations.<sup>58</sup>

Powell responded to such events by adding detail to his doctrine, vocalizing his disapproval for making “rubble bounce” with “million dollar bombs.”<sup>59</sup> He further stressed that

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<sup>57</sup> The True Nature of the Gulf War is Civilian Slaughter. *New Statesman and Society*, Feb 15, 1991 and Human Rights Watch (Organization. *Needless deaths in the Gulf War: civilian casualties during the air campaign and violations of the laws of war*. Human Rights Watch, 1991.

<sup>58</sup> It is argued that the Iraqi tanks were not involved in hostilities and were in effect complying with the UN resolution demanding that they leave Kuwait when U.S. Marine aircraft dropped anti-tank ordinances to block their withdrawal along Highway 80 and then spent the next ten hours bombing them. Coll, Steve and William Branigin Washington Post, Foreign Service. "U.S. Scrambled to Shape View of 'Highway of Death'." *The Washington Post (1974-Current File)*, Mar 11, 1991, and Dunlap, Charles Jr. *Organized Violence and the Future of International Law: A Practitioner's View of the Emerging Issues*. Washington, United States, Washington: American Society of International Law, 1999.

<sup>59</sup> Atkinson, Rick. *Crusade: the untold story of the Persian Gulf war*. Mariner Books, 1993, pg 288.

[w]e have got to review things to make sure we're not bombing just for the sake of indiscriminate bombing [...] Let's take a hard look and determine whether a target's destruction is really required for prosecuting the war or whether it's just somebody's favorite target. If there's a target in Baghdad that we need to hit, then by God take it out. But don't target indiscriminately.<sup>60</sup>

Despite Powell's propensity to respond to such views, the criticism which would have the greatest impact in reducing the Powell Doctrine's influence of on future U.S. military policy was not that the Doctrine were too violent and indiscriminate, but rather that the requirements for overmatch was overly restrictive and therefore unnecessarily hindered the country's ability to employ the military to further its objectives.<sup>61</sup>

For example, one commentator claimed to be "familiar with and concerned by some of the supposedly core elements of the Powell Doctrine, namely that you do very little, that what you do you do with massive force, and everything else is someone else's business."<sup>62</sup>

Similar criticism was also earlier directed towards the much more explicitly stated Weinberger Doctrine. Less than one week after Weinberger delivered his Press Club address, *New York Times* columnist William Safire criticized the proposed military policy by comparing it to "a hospital that does not want to admit patients."<sup>63</sup> Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz recorded in his memoirs his vehement opposition to a policy that called for the American military

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<sup>60</sup> Atkinson, Rick. *Crusade: the untold story of the Persian Gulf war*. Mariner Books, 1993, pg 289.

<sup>61</sup> Eliot Cohen stated "[t]his idea favors setting aside obscure missions and other morass-types of circumstances like we experienced in Vietnam, in favor of having a clear objective and public support for any military commitment. We should use overwhelming force in order to achieve a decisive outcome, always have an exit strategy, and emphasize low casualties. Each of these prescriptions is noble in its own right. However, if you apply them rigidly and literally, you will never use military force." at the Panel Discussion on American Civil-Military Relations, October 23, 1995, transcript accessed online: [http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil\\_military/no1.htm](http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil_military/no1.htm)

<sup>62</sup> Moises Naim and Dave Case. "True Believer." *Foreign Policy* no. 123 (2001): 26-41.

<sup>63</sup> William Safire, "Only the 'Fun' Wars." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 03, 1984.

to be constantly built up but not used: everything in our defense structure seemed geared exclusively to deter World War III. [...] This was the Vietnam syndrome in spades, carried to an absurd level, and a complete abdication of the duties of leadership [...] On Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, among Democrats and Republicans, on the left and on the right, all too many people of influence and authority seemed to have an endless litany of reasons to refrain from the use of power as an instrument of foreign policy.<sup>64</sup>

But this was exactly as it was meant.<sup>65</sup> As James Fallows noted, the oft-discussed Powell Doctrine was part of the military's response to Vietnam. Its stated purpose was to keep the military from being misused, but a side effect was to make the use of military force less likely. Through at least the last decade, the more that military commanders have had to say about a decision, the less likely the United States has been to send troops.<sup>66</sup>

The debate leading to Operation Desert Storm further illustrates this. When the Defense Department was asked to produce plans to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, General Powell recommended that Persian Gulf forces would require 500,000 American troops,<sup>67</sup> six carrier task forces, and additional aircraft. Even a military professional such as former U.S.A.F Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, who succeeded Colin Powell to become George H.W. Bush's National Security Advisor, was both astonished and deeply skeptical of the size of the military buildup. According to Scowcroft,

[t]he initial plan for retaking Kuwait, briefed to President Bush in October, had not seemed designed by anyone eager to undertake the task. Similarly, the force requirements for a successful offense given to [Bush] at the end of October were so large that one could speculate that they were set forth by a command [CENTCOM] hoping their size would change his mind about pursuing a military option.<sup>68</sup>

Powell was completely unsympathetic to and unfazed by such criticism. One observer commented that Powell "effectively stated that if the objective of U.S. forces

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<sup>64</sup> George P. Shultz, "Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993)." *quote from* (1996): 687.

<sup>65</sup> Henrik Bering, "Fighting Clever." *Policy Review* no. 155 (2009): 90-99.

<sup>66</sup> James Fallows, "The Military-Industrial Complex." *Foreign Policy* no. 133 (2002): 46-48.

<sup>67</sup> This figure excludes allied troop numbers

<sup>68</sup> Scowcroft, Brent, and George Bush. "A world transformed." *New York: Alfred A. Knopf* (1998): 314-87.

were as important to the security of the country as Scowcroft says it was, no one would care how much it costs so long as U.S. forces succeeded.”<sup>69</sup>

Criticism of overly cautious military policies predated Operation Desert Storm, but they failed to resonate with the public until the first Persian Gulf War’s overwhelming victory, reflected by President Bush’s proclamation that “we’ve kicked that Vietnam syndrome for good.”<sup>70</sup> Politicians and the American public came to view military victories as both easy and inevitable “cakewalks” instead of Clausewitz’s inherently uncertain card games riddled with hazards of potential bad fortune. Increasingly hawkish public sentiment “viewed the [military] services not through the prism of Weinberger’s Doctrine but as flexible instruments that should automatically be on call to carry out the nation’s foreign policy.”<sup>71</sup> Michael Desch observed in *Foreign Affairs* that “[d]ebates about using force, contrary to popular perception, tend to pit reluctant warriors against hawkish civilians.”<sup>72</sup>

To a large degree, the Powell Doctrine thus became a victim of its own success. Beinart notes in his Foreign Policy article that, “With each victory, U.S. resistance to military intervention receded. The public grew more pliant, Democrats grew more fearful of looking weak, and the generals who warred of Vietnam-style quagmires came to seem like boys crying wolf.”<sup>73</sup>

Possibly related to, or merely coincidence, there was also a growing interest towards the use of military force for humanitarian interventions and nation-building

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<sup>69</sup> Luke, Middup, “The Impact of Vietnam on US Strategy in the First Gulf War.” *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 5 (2010): 389-404.

<sup>70</sup> Janine Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace: How Americans learned to fight modern war*. University of Michigan Press, 2010, pg79.

<sup>71</sup> Walter LaFeber, “The rise and fall of Colin Powell and the Powell doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

<sup>72</sup> Desch, Michael C. "Bush and the Generals." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 3 (2007): 97-108.

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/think\\_again\\_ronald\\_reagan](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/think_again_ronald_reagan)

exercises. The “fundamental premise is that outside powers have the right and, perhaps, under some circumstances, the duty to intervene to protect people in other countries who are being victimized, even if what is taking place is a conflict within a State.”<sup>74</sup> For example, the *New York Times* commented that

[t]here can be few conflicts that have been so overwhelmingly won and yet left the victor with so brief a period of satisfaction as the gulf war. Even as it ended there were the first cries of condemnation because the allies were killing too many Iraqi soldiers, to be rapidly replaced by more condemnation because Iraqi soldiers were now being allowed to kill Shiites and Kurds.<sup>75</sup>

When attention turned to Bosnia, the military provided an estimate to President Bush that a successful mission in the Balkans would require at least 250,000 troops.<sup>76</sup> As with Powell’s earlier request for half a million troops in Desert Storm, such estimates were met with skepticism. Critiquing such numbers long after the fact, Lt. Col Lawrence Spinetta wrote that

[c]iting a “requirement” for overwhelming force, commanders sometimes request more assets than needed, thereby limiting political options.[...] When the army did not want to do something—as in the Balkans in the 1990s—it would simply overstate the force requirements: The answer is 350,000 soldiers. What’s the question?<sup>77</sup>

Head of the House Armed Services Committee and future Defense Secretary Les Aspin argued against Powell Doctrine by saying

[i]f we say it is all or nothing and then walk away from the use of force in the Balkans, we are sending a signal to other places that there is no downside to ethnic cleansing. We are not deterring anybody. Serbian forces in Bosnia have been accused of widespread “ethnic cleansing” — killing or expelling members of other ethnic groups. [...] Those who disagree with the all-or-nothing school are

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/humanitarian-intervention/>

<sup>75</sup> Mark Laity, “Of Generals on Maneuvers among Themselves.” *New York Times*, Feb 15, 1995.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Maass, “Paying for the Powell Doctrine.” *Dissent*, 2002. 49.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence Spinetta, “Strategy and Cost: A Gap in our Military Decision-Making Process.” *Air & Space Power Journal* 22, no. 3 (2008): 89-96,127.

unwilling to accept the notion that military force can't be used prudently short of all-out war.<sup>78</sup>

The public was moved by articles portraying the situation as an humanitarian injustice – a preventable slaughter that no one would stop.

[T]he war in Bosnia is not a fair fight and it is not war. It is slaughter. Yet American officials, despairing of a way to end the war, continue to dither. They remain oddly unwilling to acknowledge that even if collective military intervention cannot readily compel a cease-fire, it can at least slow the slaughter. [...]

In short, what Bosnia holds out to the military is the prospect of dangerous, undesirable duty. But when Americans spend more than \$280 billion a year for defense, surely they ought to be getting more for their money than no-can-do. It is the prerogative of civilian leaders confronting this historic nightmare to ask the military for a range of options more sophisticated than off or on, stay out completely or go in all the way to total victory.<sup>79</sup>

It was a resurgence of the same theorists with whom Caspar Weinberger disagreed two decades earlier – those who believe “that military force can be brought to bear in any crisis. Some of these proponents of force are eager to advocate its use even in limited amounts simply because they believe that if there are American forces of any size present they will somehow solve the problem.”<sup>80</sup>

Arguably overstepping his boundaries, then-General Powell delivered a searing response. He pointed to the Gulf War and the U.S. invasion in Panama, as well as minor interventions in the Philippines, Somalia, Liberia, and other humanitarian relief operations to defend his approach to use of military force.

All of these operations had one thing in common: they were successful. There have been no Bay of Pigs, failed desert raids, Beirut bombings and no Vietnams. Today, American troops around the world are protecting the peace in Europe, the Persian Gulf, Korea, Cambodia, the Sinai and the western Sahara.

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<sup>78</sup> Michael R Gordon, Special to The New York Times. "Powell Delivers a Resounding no on using Limited Force in Bosnia." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Sep 28, 1992.

<sup>79</sup> "At Least: Slow the Slaughter." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Oct 04, 1992.

<sup>80</sup> Caspar Weinberger, 1984 Press Club Address

Unwilling to use the armed forces? Tell that to our troops who are constantly being deployed to accomplish these missions. Americans know they are getting a hell of a return on their defense investment, even as the critics shout for imprudent reductions that would gut the armed forces.[...]So you bet I get nervous when so-called experts suggest that all we need is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack. When the desired result isn't obtained, a new set of experts then comes forward with talk of a little escalation. History has not been kind to this approach.<sup>81</sup>

Going one step further, he praised Bush for understanding the proper use of military force as a tool of diplomacy.

The reason for our success is that in every instance we have carefully matched the use of military force to our political objectives. President Bush, more than any other recent President, understands the proper use of military force. In every instance, he has made sure that the objective was clear and that we knew what we were getting into. We owe it to the men and women who go in harm's way to make sure that their lives are not squandered for unclear purposes.<sup>82</sup>

Such views became increasingly isolated, especially after Bill Clinton's election.

To make his points clear without crossing the line of insubordination, Powell published an article in *Foreign Affairs* prior to Clinton's inauguration.<sup>83</sup> This article intended to constrain the use of the United States Armed Forces by stipulating that the United States should go to war only as a last resort and only with decisive force. Additionally, engaging in war presupposed numerous other considerations, which are generally deemed to be:

1. Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood?
2. Have all other nonviolent policy means failed?
3. Will military force achieve the objective?
4. At what cost?
5. Have the gains and risks been analyzed?

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<sup>81</sup> Colin Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous." *New York Times*, Oct 08, 1992

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Walter LaFeber, "The rise and fall of Colin Powell and the Powell doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

6. How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?<sup>84</sup>
7. Is the action supported by the American people?
8. Does the United States have broad international support?

In his article, five of the above questions were explicitly mentioned, one could be inferred, and the final two were frequently mentioned elsewhere but excluded from the article, possibly because American and international opinion both favoured military intervention in the Balkans.

Although popularly reduced to a checklist of binary conditions, Powell himself viewed these questions as a framework, and he denounced the idea of resorting to a rigid set of rules to decide when, where and how to employ violence in the pursuit of political aims. His *Foreign Affairs* article criticizes those that “have turned to a set of principles or a when-to-go-to-war doctrine” in wrestling “with the complex issue of the use of “violent” force.” He particularly laments what he perceives to be a misguided hope where you would “[f]ollow these directions and you can’t go wrong.” He believed there could be no fixed set of rules for the use of military force, and to “set one up would be dangerous.”<sup>85</sup>

### **The Decline and Fall of the Powell Doctrine**

Although this article is usually referenced as Powell’s pronouncement of his doctrine, it was ironically only expressed after the Powell Doctrine was openly questioned and in already in decline. The political class had largely dismissed his views as outdated, and the restrictions that the Powell and Weinberger Doctrines placed on the

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<sup>84</sup> These first six questions are quoted word for word, but were not enumerated in the original article. They have been enumerated here for clarity and ease of comparison with the Weinberger doctrine

<sup>85</sup> Colin L. Powell, “U.S. forces: Challenges ahead.” *Foreign Affairs* (1992): 32-45.

civilians' ability to conduct warfare became increasingly disputed, if not outright ignored and neglected.<sup>86</sup> Although he could not know it at the time, Desert Storm was the last time that the Powell Doctrine was employed in a major conflict. In fact, aside from the successful 1994 American-led invasion of Haiti, which held no vital American interests whatsoever, Operation Desert Storm would in hindsight be the last time that decisive force would be employed in any American war.<sup>87</sup>

The lack of decisive force was generally matched by unclear and open-ended objectives. Bill Clinton's political appointments, such as National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and future Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, all generally supported increasing foreign military intervention for problems not clearly defined. In one of the most referenced examples of the conflict these views engendered, Powell recalled in his autobiography that, "I thought I would have an aneurysm" upon hearing Madeleine Albright contend that the U.S. should intervene in the Balkans because, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"<sup>88</sup>

Powell was able to draw upon his close relationship with the press and Clinton's already strained relationship with the military to successfully oppose many of Clinton's inclinations for military intervention.<sup>89</sup> However, ever since Powell's military retirement on September 30, 1993, Clinton and his successors easily circumvented the Powell Doctrine by selecting replacements who were both more open to overseas military

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<sup>86</sup> A Panel Discussion on American Civil-Military Relations, October 23, 1995, [http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil\\_military/no1.htm](http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/publications/workingpapers/civil_military/no1.htm)

<sup>87</sup> Omestad, Thomas. "Foreign Policy and Campaign '96." *Foreign Policy* no. 105 (-97, 1996): 36-54.

<sup>88</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico. *My American Journey*. Ballantine Books, 1996, pg 576.

<sup>89</sup> Richard L. Russell, "Civilian Masters and Military Servants: A Review Essay." *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (2004): 171-178.

intervention and who lacked Powell's personality and ability to influence the media when they disagreed.<sup>90</sup> The results are perhaps instructive.

Powell had generally advised that, "If you finally decide you have to commit military force, you've got to be as massive and decisive as possible. Decide your target, decide your objective, and try to overwhelm it."<sup>91</sup> Les Aspin, Clintons' first Secretary of Defense, declined the military's request for additional equipment to support a poorly defined and open-ended operation in Somalia that resulted in eighteen American deaths, 75 wounded, and the destruction of two American Black Hawk helicopters. The televised footage of American casualties dragged through the streets of Mogadishu led to Alpin's resignation and the United States abandonment of its Somali operations soon thereafter.<sup>92</sup>

Powell's autobiography transparently criticized Clinton's adventurism by noting that "[W]hen the fighting starts, as it did in Somalia, and American lives are at risk, our people rightly demand to know what vital interest that sacrifice serves."<sup>93</sup> After the Somalia debacle, Clinton seems to have agreed. However, rather than limiting military intervention to affairs involving vital American interests, Clinton instead continued to intervene, but exhibited acute casualty aversion whenever he did so.

Employing an approach that eschewed overwhelming force in favour of underwhelming casualties produced their own complications. For example, unable to secure a UN resolution to support operations in Yugoslavia, the United States instead relied solely upon NATO airpower to conduct a calibrated and escalating air campaign to attain its objectives in Operation Allied Force. Not only did this run against Powell's

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<sup>90</sup> Sean E. Duggan, "Redefining the Relationship: Reclaiming American Public Diplomacy from the US Military in Iraq." *The Middle East Journal* 66, no. 1 (2012): 53-78.

<sup>91</sup> Colin L Powell and Lisa Rogak. *In His Own Words: Colin Powell*. Berkley Publishing Group, 1995, pg 98.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Omestad, "Foreign Policy and Campaign '96." *Foreign Policy* no. 105 (-97, 1996): 36-54.

<sup>93</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico. *My American Journey*. Ballantine Books, 1996, pg 605.

views of using overwhelming force, but casualty aversion reached levels of absurdity that allied pilots tasked with bombing alpine targets were forbidden from flying below cloud cover due to worries about being shot down.<sup>94</sup> As a result, 30,000 air sorties apparently destroyed a mere thirteen Yugoslavian tanks.<sup>95</sup>

Despite NATO's airpower, Serbia only negotiated an end to hostilities after NATO had bombed for far longer than it had originally intended and convincingly spoke of its intention to deploy ground forces.<sup>96</sup> Even then, NATO eventually settled for terms in the Dayton accords that were little better than what Serbians had offered prior to bombing in the Rambouillet negotiations.<sup>97</sup> Between the Rambouillet and Dayton negotiations, Serbia had accelerated its forcible expulsion of 1.3 million ethnic Albanians from Kosovo,<sup>98</sup> retained much of their advanced military equipment,<sup>99</sup> and even shot down an F117 Nighthawk stealth bomber and shared its remains with Russia to advance their own stealth capabilities. Although Clinton initially set a timetable for the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops, he gave up on an exit strategy altogether after several missed deadlines, and troops remain stationed in the Balkans to keep peace almost two decades later. Much like Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, Operation Allied Force also failed to attain its main strategic objectives, which in this case was the prevention of a

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<sup>94</sup> Gow, James. "Nervous Bunnies-The International Community and the Yugoslav War of Dissolution." *POLITICAL QUARTERLY-LONDON THEN OXFORD-MACMILLAN THEN BLACKWELL*-65 (1994): 14-14.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson, Paul. "Ready to Kill but Not to Die': Nato Strategy in Kosovo." *International Journal* 54, no. 4 (1999): 671-682.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Jeffrey Record, "Force-Protection Fetishism: Sources, Consequences, and (?) Solutions," AIR UNIV MAXWELL AFB AL, *Aerospace Power Journal*, 2000.

<sup>98</sup> Daalder, Ivo H., and Michael E. O'Hanlon. "Unlearning the lessons of Kosovo." *Foreign Policy* (1999): 128-140.

<sup>99</sup> Robinson, Paul. "Ready to Kill but Not to Die': Nato Strategy in Kosovo." *International Journal* 54, no. 4 (1999): 671-682.

humanitarian disaster and restoring Kosovo's autonomy within Yugoslavia.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, there are doubts that the region will remain stable upon eventual peacekeeping withdrawals.<sup>101</sup>

### **... To Iraq and Afghanistan**

What little remained of the Powell Doctrine by the time Clinton left office was completely abandoned by the end of his successor's first term. Clinton was criticized for using the military in open-ended operations of questionable strategic value. Bush was even more ambitious in employing American military power to not merely rebuild war-torn societies, but to also transform entire regions into models of Jeffersonian democracy that became friendly with their long-term enemy, and to do so quickly, cheaply, and with even fewer troops than his predecessors had employed. The difficulties involved in such undertakings, which would be heroic in even the most ideal circumstances, became herculean due to the Bush Administration's clear hostility towards diplomacy, which alienated even most of its longstanding allies, and forced the United States to operate without much of its traditional support.<sup>102</sup>

President George W. Bush's two primary military conflicts involved Iraq and Afghanistan, which have since become two of the three longest-running wars in American history.<sup>103</sup> These wars were fought for different reasons and under different conditions, but the Pentagon pursued what Richard Armitage called "the anti-Powell doctrine" that violated all of the Powell Doctrine's recommended guidelines for waging

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<sup>100</sup> Daalder, Ivo H., and Michael E. O'Hanlon. "Unlearning the lessons of Kosovo." *Foreign Policy* (1999): 128-140.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Wesley Clark, "America's Virtual Empire." *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

<sup>103</sup> Grimmett, Richard F. *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2012*. DIANE Publishing, September 2012.

war.<sup>104</sup> A retrospective *Defense Studies* article noted that due to cost considerations, and having already alienated its allies,

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's vision for transforming the armed forces was essential to allow the current Bush administration to follow a unilateral path of action that 'took the battle to the enemy'. By mid-2003, the ongoing process of force transformation had been put to the test in two separate theatres of operations."<sup>105</sup>

Both tests ended in abject failure. Despite former NATO commander Wesley Clark's view that the Taliban "were the most incompetent enemy since the Barbary pirates,"<sup>106</sup> the United States invaded Afghanistan lacking clear objectives and cautioning the public of an unpredictable multigenerational war with changing objectives.<sup>107</sup>

In counselling against a British conquest of Afghanistan, the Duke of Wellington once astutely remarked that, "In Afghanistan a small army would be annihilated and a large one starved."<sup>108</sup> The United States was neither annihilated nor starved, but it initially employed only 13,000 American soldiers to occupy the country, or 1 peacekeeper per 1,000 Afghans. Such numbers were employed despite the fact that a mere decade earlier, NATO' concluded that 20 peacekeepers per 1,000 civilians were considered inadequate in the failed Balkans.<sup>109</sup>

In another clear example of military failure after ignoring the Powell Doctrine, U.S. has recently begun a large scale withdrawal from Afghanistan without any clear long-term strategic victories to show for its enormous commitment and twelve year

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<sup>104</sup> Joyce, Anne, Interview: Richard L. Armitage, *Middle East Policy*, 12.3 (Fall 2005): 145-151

<sup>105</sup> Fotios Moustakis, and Rudra Chaudhuri. "The Rumsfeld Doctrine and the cost of US unilateralism: lessons learned." *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 358-375.

<sup>106</sup> <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people6/Gordon/gordon-con2.html>

<sup>107</sup> Walter LaFeber, "The Post September 11 debate over empire, globalization, and fragmentation." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002): 1-17.

<sup>108</sup> Henrik Bering, "Fighting Clever." *Policy Review* no. 155 (2009): 90-99

<sup>109</sup> Fotios Moustakis, and Rudra Chaudhuri. "The Rumsfeld Doctrine and the cost of US unilateralism: lessons learned." *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 358-375.

occupation. In a particularly bleak summary of the current situation, Foreign Policy magazine recorded that “many” anonymous Afghanistan insiders and veterans bluntly complained that

We don't know why we are here, what we are fighting for, or how to know if we are winning. The strategy is to fight, talk, and build. But we're withdrawing the fighters, the Taliban won't talk, and the builders are corrupt.

[...] The Taliban may be willing to fight forever. We are not. [...] Afghans didn't get the memo about all our successes, so they are positioning themselves for the post-American civil war [...] And they're not the only ones getting ready. The future of Afghanistan is probably evolving up north now as the Indians, Russians and Pakistanis jockey with old Northern Alliance types. Interestingly, we're paying more and getting less than any other player.

[...] The situation American faces in Afghanistan is similar to the one it faced in Vietnam during the Nixon presidency: A desire a leave and turn over the war to our local allies, combined with the realization that our allies may still lose, and the loss will be viewed as a U.S. defeat anyway.<sup>110</sup>

Whatever the initial odds of securing a strategic “victory” in Afghanistan, they were significantly diminished by the Bush Administration’s insistence on simultaneously fighting a second war in Iraq in what it dubbed Operation Iraqi Freedom and the manner in which it attempted to do so. For one, the U.S. initially intended to occupy all of Iraq by deploying an astonishingly few “116,000 troops to stabilize a state of 27 million people, the majority of whom were expected to react negatively to the change in the political situation.”

Such poor planning was even further compounded by the obvious lack of planning for Phase IV operations and its “The post-invasion phase of the Iraq mission has

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<sup>110</sup> 19 True Things Generals Can’t Say in Public About the Afghan War – A Helpful Primer. Accessed online: [http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/09/19\\_true\\_things\\_generals\\_cant\\_say\\_in\\_public\\_about\\_the\\_afghan\\_war\\_a\\_helpful\\_primer](http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/09/19_true_things_generals_cant_say_in_public_about_the_afghan_war_a_helpful_primer)

been the least well-planned American military mission since Somalia in 1993, if not Lebanon in 1983, and its consequences for the nation have been far worse than any set of military mistakes since Vietnam. The U.S. armed forces simply were not prepared for the core task that the United States needed to perform when it destroyed Iraq's existing government—to provide security, always the first responsibility of any sovereign government or occupier.”<sup>111</sup>

The Powell Doctrine called for employing the military as a last resort, and even then only using overwhelming troops to attain specific objectives. Not only did the Bush Administration refuse to follow such recommendations, it also neglected to consider or articulate an exit strategy. An entire two years after the invasion of Iraq, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice downgraded the importance of such a strategy, claiming that, “The President talks not about an exit strategy, but a success strategy.”<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Vice-President Dick Cheney remarked that, “We'll leave as soon as the task is over with. We haven't set a deadline or a date. It depends upon conditions.”<sup>113</sup>

Conditions continued to deteriorate, and so did the objectives. In a roundtable discussion, Michael Gordon noted that

the objective -- victory -- has been redefined in this war. Victory initially was, we go in, we take out Saddam, a new government is established out of the rubble, they carry the main burden, allies come in to do the main peacekeeping, we keep maybe a division there [...]), our forces are withdrawn, refit, we've taught an object lesson to the Iranians and the Syrians. That was the original goal.

The second goal became, okay, there's an insurgency that we didn't anticipate, so now the second definition of victory [is] we defeat this insurgency and then we get back with the plan.

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<sup>111</sup> O'Hanlon, Michael E. "Iraq without a Plan." *Policy Review* 128 (2004): 05.

<sup>112</sup> Evelyn Nieves, “For Rice, Unexpected Sanctuary by the Bay,” Washington Post Staff Writer, Saturday, May 28, 2005, accessed online: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/27/AR2005052701290.html>

<sup>113</sup> “Interview With Dick Cheney, Lynne Cheney,” CNN LARRY KING LIVE. Aired May 30, 2005 - 21:00 ET, Transcript accessed online: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0505/30/lkl.01.html>

[Then], the definition of victory has changed yet again. And it is: well, the insurgency is held at bay and we transfer the primary role of fighting this insurgency to a newly established Iraqi military that we support, but we gradually reduce our force presence in Iraq. But this insurgency goes on for years, and yet somehow the government holds. That's the new definition of victory in this war.<sup>114</sup>

The policies leading up to both wars and the manner in which they were executed both ran contrary to the Powell Doctrine, and as a General, Powell would have undoubtedly opposed their implementation. In fact, Powell appeared jaundiced about at least some aspects involved in fighting two open-ended wars halfway around the world within eighteen months of each other. For example, upon hearing President Bush boast that he was “sleeping like a baby” before the Iraq war, Powell acidly retorted that, “I’m sleeping like a baby, too. Every two hours, I wake up, screaming.”<sup>115</sup>

Yet for all his criticism of Vietnam-era policies, when Secretary of State Colin Powell’s “turn came to call the shots”, or at least strongly influence them, his public and active support was instrumental in attaining the public approval necessary to begin open-ended operations with unclear objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite clearly doubting the evidence, Powell delivered a fateful February 5, 2003 UN speech insisting that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which he knew would provide the Bush Administration with popular American support required to launch the invasion.<sup>116</sup> A few months after the invasion, Powell also published an editorial that further supported an open-ended and vaguely defined war. Ironically, this editorial employed the tortured

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<sup>114</sup> <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people6/Gordon/gordon-con2.html>

<sup>115</sup> The Tragedy of Colin Powell, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/assessment/2004/02/the\\_tragedy\\_of\\_colin\\_powell.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/assessment/2004/02/the_tragedy_of_colin_powell.html)

<sup>116</sup> Zarefsky, David. "Making the case for war: Colin Powell at the United Nations." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2007): 275-302.

justification of domino theory and spreading democracy that was equally applied to justifying the Vietnam War that he so vehemently opposed.

## **Conclusion**

Almost forty years after America's withdrawal from Vietnam, defence policies have come full circle, with the U.S. engaging in faraway wars with unclear and unattainable objectives, and lacking any semblance of a realistic exit strategy.

Upon exiting Vietnam, the United States initially avoided large-scale military interventions, and the 1983 difficulties in Lebanon led to the Weinberger Doctrine which even further restrained military use. Combined with large budgets, such policies greatly reinvigorated the United States military and enabled it to conduct the enormously successful 1991 Desert Storm campaign. This victory coincided with the end of the Cold War and led to hubris regarding United States military power, which in turn led to abandoning the Powell Doctrine and misusing the American military until confidence in it once again degraded again, although not to the point that occurred at the nadir of the Vietnam conflict.

However, for all the controversy that surrounded the adoption of Powell Doctrine, post-WWII history suggests that the United States succeeds at military operations when it provides its armed services limited scope and uses decisive force to attain those objectives. Similarly, America is unsuccessful when it engages its military in unclear commitments such as Somalia, or when it restrains the military's, as it did by insisting on relying solely on aerial bombardment in Yugoslavia or by limiting its troop commitments, as President George W. Bush did in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore,

despite partially contributing to the wholesale destruction of his doctrine by 2003, Powell was perhaps justified when he noted in a 2009 interview that

I think the Powell Doctrine is pretty good military strategy and I'm proud to have a doctrine named after me that really is classic military thought: decide what you are trying to achieve politically and if it can't be achieved through political and diplomatic and economic means, and you have to use military force, then make sure you know exactly what you're using the military force for and then apply it in a decisive manner.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Full Text Transcript: Colin Powell talks with Rachel Maddow, April 1, 2009.

*I don't think we have any choice but to learn to operate in a globally integrated economy. National governments cannot isolate themselves. So the equilibrium phenomena [...] are, first of all, going to require a degree of regulation. And second, that regulation, however it is achieved, is going to have to be achieved across a broad coalition that includes essentially all major countries. That means that we have to develop new mechanisms of coordination. And that says a lot about what kinds of policies we ought to be following. To the extent that we advance conceptions of national interest that put us into such fundamental conflicts with other countries that we cannot coordinate, that's not really in our interest.*  
 — John D. Steinbruner of the Brookings Institution<sup>118</sup>

### CHAPTER 3 – THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD TODAY

The previous chapter demonstrated the U.S. military's ability to successfully attain operational objectives when decisive numbers of troops are deployed in pursuit of clear and limited aims. It further illustrated the questionable results that arise from attempting to employ the military in open-ended commitments, or restricting combat troop numbers or their terms of engagement in order to calibrate its lethality.

This chapter demonstrates that the strategic landscape is very different from in the past. Numerous American-inspired post-WWII institutions have created a highly interconnected and interdependent global system. This system coincides with technological developments to limit the utility and simultaneously increase the cost and risks of employing military power.<sup>119</sup> The cost and risks associated with military force should therefore, in circumstances where the very survival of the nation is not at stake, render its use as a last resort and with heavy consideration.

Synthesizing this with the conclusions of Chapter 2 produces the essential elements of Powell Doctrine, but does so from the perspective of statecraft rather than from a military perspective.

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<sup>118</sup> Issues in Science and Technology 10th anniversary colloquium at the National Academy of Sciences on May 11, 1994. Quote from John D. Steinbruner of the Brookings Institution participated in the discussion.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy For America*, Cornell University Press, 2004, pg 3.

### **Winning at the Game of Globalization: the New American Empire**

Following WWII, the United States recognized that it could no longer sustainably pursue isolationist policies<sup>120</sup> and used its power and wealth to create a new international order based upon increased global interaction.<sup>121</sup> At this point in time, the U.S. had sufficient military might to credibly simultaneously defend itself, Canada, Western Europe and Japan from the world's second most powerful country. In addition to this, the United States also had seemingly inexhaustible economic resources to invest in and rebuild the war-torn European and Asian nations.<sup>122</sup> In doing so, the United States encouraged and greatly assisted in creating instruments and organizations for world cooperation that reflected, protected, and promoted American values.<sup>123</sup>

The United States mobilized the international community by establishing consensus and cooperation-based bodies across political, military and economic domains. America's decision to act as a "magnanimous and benign victor" of WWII that created an interlocking and independent international system<sup>124</sup> was not an act of altruism, but a rational choice stemming from the "realization that a robust global economy underpinned by strong institutions of international cooperation was in the long-term interest of the U.S."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Steven W. Hook., Spanier, John W., *American foreign policy since World War II*. 19th Edition, Sage, 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid pg 46.

<sup>123</sup> Wesley Clark, "America's Virtual Empire." *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-06-14/imf-to-the-u-dot-s-dot-and-europe-help-not-wanted>

Although it shared its post-WWII power with the rest of the world while voluntarily constraining itself to an unprecedented historical degree, the United States maintained a strong level of influence over the new international system via *de facto* or *de jure* veto rights in the institutions it created. These newly-created institutions enabled the U.S. to effectively exercise power and achieve political aims while minimizing the risk of another costly world war.<sup>126</sup>

Recognizing its role in the League of Nations' failure, the United States actively participated in creating the United Nations (UN) to provide a mechanism to better enable collective security resolutions and promote peaceful cooperation in economic development, human rights, international law, and humanitarian affairs. Though its efficacy was strained throughout the Cold War, the UN is today widely recognized as the source of international law. The UN Security Council resolutions are now the legitimate authority for establishing international sanctions, launching peacekeeping operations, and providing member nations the legal authority to conduct military force for international interventions. Impressively, the council's resolutions carry sufficient legitimacy to influence domestic politics despite lacking its own sovereign army to enforce them.<sup>127</sup> The United States historically made extensive use of the UN to, for example, legitimize its actions in Operation Desert Storm, publically denounce the U.S.S.R's role in the Cuban missile crisis, and prevent the legitimization of declarations it disliked, such as the numerous resolutions criticizing various Israeli policies.

While the UN acts as a forum for international discussion and law, the United States reinforces its supranational security interests via military agreements and

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

institutions, which enable it to distribute the financial, personnel, and political burdens otherwise associated with military hegemony. It accomplishes this through multilateral agreements such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) collective security agreement and the agreements that led to the creation of the five eyes community with New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom as junior partners.

Additionally, it entered into numerous bilateral agreements such as its North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) agreement with Canada. The hundreds of thousands of American soldiers deployed globally alleviated many of its important economic and commercial partners of some defence burdens while enabling the United States to influence foreign financial, political, and cultural issues abroad.<sup>128</sup>

In pursuing interconnected economies, the United States encouraged regular meetings between economic powers, which over time enlarged to the current G-8. It further created multinational entities such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to encourage international economic stability and development. Recognizing the role that protectionism played in leading to WWII, the United States also pushed agreements such as General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that promoted multinational trade and investment by encouraging governments to adopt free-market economic systems. The U.S. also played a key role in creating the World Trade Organization (WTO) to foster and regulate international commerce.

The benefits gained from an interconnected world economy extended far beyond access to new markets for high-end exports and low cost imports. United States markets and the U.S. dollar were viewed as safe investments, resulting an influx of foreign investment and financing that enabled American economic and military expansion

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

without relying solely on tax revenues. Further, the Bretton-Woods Agreement made the American dollar the world's *de facto* medium of exchange, thereby enabling the U.S. to borrow in its own currency and accrue seignorage benefits whenever it printed money. Americans were thus unburdened with foreign exchange rate fluctuations and could typically borrow at lower rates than foreigners. Foreign nations, meanwhile, no longer needed to depend on territorial acquisition to ensure access to required resources, and could instead buy them through economic means.<sup>129</sup> The American dollar was viewed so instrumental to global affairs that even the Soviets at the height of the Cold War often required it to settle international trade.<sup>130</sup>

In addition to supporting organizations that produced immediate benefits, the United States was also occasionally willing and able to lead the world in founding organizations that provided tangible long-term global benefits. For example, it helped establish the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to monitor and enforce treaties related to weapons of mass destruction. UNCLOS was formed to govern resources such as oceans and marine shipping, which were ungoverned by any state but important to all of them.

The United States' employment of such international structures slowly and systematically secured American interests over a broad range of issues, largely with the blessing of other states. Combined with its immense wealth, the United States could involve itself in world affairs while also creating a pro-democratic and pro-American system that was accepted and adopted as a new world order. Analysts therefore

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<sup>129</sup> Stephens, Alan, and Nicola Baker. *Making sense of war: strategy for the 21st century*. Vol. 247. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pg 168-169, Steven W. Hook., Spanier, John W., *American foreign policy since World War II*. 19th Edition, Sage, 2013 pg 48.

<sup>130</sup> <http://business.time.com/2012/02/24/how-the-u-s-could-pressure-north-korea-tomorrow-quit-the-100-bill/>

sometimes interpret the globalized world as a new and subtle form of virtualized American empire that spreads American ideals and norms beyond its geographical boundaries.<sup>131</sup>

Mao Zedong famously claimed that “all political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” However, the United States rarely needed to resort to such crude forms of compulsion to create a system favourable to its interests due to its abundance of soft power, the allure of American ideals, and the esteem of American legitimacy.<sup>132</sup>

In exchange, states that pursued collective interests based on an American-centric common vision attained tangible political, economic, and security advantages. Many states readily adopted the combination of economic strength and American ideals. Idealists were inspired by America’s Bill of Rights and its policies to promote freedom movements around the world. Liberals were encouraged by broader American policies at home and abroad, and realists attained tangible economic and security benefits to joining forces with the most admired nation in the world.<sup>133</sup> As a result, Mao Zedong’s implications that the United States military was merely a paper tiger that was “unable to withstand the wind and the rain” turned out to be wildly inaccurate. While the United States militarily lost its proxy Vietnam war against the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, all three of the war’s “victors” now trade extensively with the United States while employing some form of the capitalistic systems that they previously eschewed. In fact, China, which is normally touted as America’s fiercest future rival, is so

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<sup>131</sup> Wesley Clark, “America's Virtual Empire.” *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

<sup>132</sup> David A. Lake, "Making America Safe for the World: Multilateralism and the Rehabilitation of US Authority." *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 16, no. 4 (2010): 471-484, Wesley Clark, “America's Virtual Empire.” *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20, Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Wesley Clark, “America's Virtual Empire.” *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

embedded in the international system of America's creation that Colin Powell openly questioned the likelihood of future Sino-American hostilities:

The Chinese, meanwhile, [...] said, we got to change economically, we can't change politically because we don't know how to run 1.3 billion people except with this kind of totalitarian system, but I'll tell you what, let's start selling to Wal-Mart. And that's what they've been doing for 30 years and they've become the third largest economy on the face of the earth. They'll be the largest one. A lot of my colleagues in Washington say, you know, you're so naïve, Powell, they're going to become an enemy. I said, please tell me why they're going to become an enemy when they're doing so well by not being an enemy. They've seen the level of wealth they've never seen in their history, and they have to keep that going because they haven't benefited enough of their people yet with this wealth.<sup>134</sup>

### **The Cost of Winning: An Interdependent Empire**

Although immensely powerful, the United States was never omnipotent. Joseph Nye noted that, "Even after World War II, when the United States controlled half the world's economic production (because all other countries had been devastated by the war), it was not able to prevail in all of its objectives."<sup>135</sup> If that was true then, it is even more evident now. America remains the world's dominant political, economic, and military power.<sup>136</sup> However, today it is increasingly entrenched in and interdependent upon the ever increasingly complex and interconnected global system that it was largely responsible for creating.<sup>137</sup>

The United States largely designed, financed, and benefited from this system,<sup>138</sup> but it is also subject to its disadvantages. While the immense cost of building and maintaining the current international system's institutions and agreements were

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<sup>134</sup> Remarks by Gen. Colin Powell (ret.), Former Secretary, U.S. Department of State as delivered on 29 April, 2008 at Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>135</sup> Joseph Nye, *The paradox of American power: Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford University Press, 2003, pg 16.

<sup>136</sup> <http://www.globalissues.org/print/article/75>

<sup>137</sup> Wesley Clark, "America's Virtual Empire." *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

recognized up front, other disadvantages were unintended and perhaps irreversible consequences.

One set of costs involves economic factors. For example, the rest of the world benefits from the U.S. Navy expending resources to keep shipping lanes free of piracy or to ensure their access despite hostile state or criminal activity. This protection improves transportation reliability by reducing shipping risks (and therefore costs), thereby enabling companies to outsource globally, which in turn encourages the extension of supply chains. As a result, low cost producing states may export goods globally, and consumers around the world can purchase these goods at minimal cost. These benefits are essentially heavily subsidized by the United States, which bears the brunt of the costs while competing with other countries who attain many of the benefits. Similarly, America's much-criticized Middle East policies to guarantee petroleum supplies benefit all oil consuming countries, whether or not they contribute to improving the reliability of that supply.<sup>139</sup>

As another example, the open labour market that initially benefited American companies has produced foreign competition that now threatens industries that the United States once monopolized. Furthermore, the United States increasingly depends on lower cost foreign industries in its supply chains. Outsourced manufacturing and blue collar jobs gradually evolved into outsourced Information Technology (IT) and white collar jobs. Just as the United States overtook Britain in steel production in 1905, many Asian

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<sup>139</sup> Weiss, Geoffrey F. *The Efficiency Paradox: How Hyperefficiency Can Become the Enemy of Victory in War*. AIR COMBAT COMMAND TINKER AFB OK AIRBORNE AIR CONTROL SQUADRON (964TH), 2012.

countries have now eclipsed the United States in the current fundamental microchip fabrication industry.<sup>140</sup>

Aside from ensuing trade deficits, which for now are mainly funded by foreign investors anyway, the problem with relying on such nations is the increased vulnerability which it engenders. This is particularly acute when the suppliers view their interests as unaligned with their consumers. For example, Deng Xiaoping in 1992 declared that, “There is oil in the Middle East; there is rare earth in China.”<sup>141</sup> The U.S. now depends on China for many of these rare earths, which are critical in technology and military applications. China’s ability to curtail American supplies has led to a concerted political effort to revive America’s rare earth industry<sup>142</sup> and to create similar industries in friendly nations such as Canada. However, adopting such strategies is too time-consuming and expensive to be universally adopted for every element or component in every single supply chain.<sup>143</sup>

The digital computing and electronic components industries illustrate this problem well. Manufacturing these components requires long supply chains, multibillion dollar fabrication plant expenditures, and highly specialized workforces. Due to economic pressures, microchip fabrication plants are now mostly found in Asia, and economies of scale dictate a quite homogeneous set of prevalent hardware designs.<sup>144</sup>

General Wesley Clark claims that

[b]y imposing homogeneity onto the United States' computing infrastructure, generations of public- and private-sector systems operators have—in an attempt to keep costs down and increase control—exposed the country to a potential

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<sup>140</sup> S. Adee, "The Hunt For The Kill Switch," *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol.45, no.5, pp.34-39, May 2008

<sup>141</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/opinion/18krugman.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/opinion/18krugman.html?_r=0)

<sup>142</sup> <http://energy.gov/articles/ames-laboratory-lead-new-research-effort-address-shortages-rare-earth-and-other-critical>

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/Reports/2012/201204RareEarthElements.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> C. Mouli, W. Carriker, "Future Fab," *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol.44, no.3, pp.38-43, March 2007.

catastrophe. Rethinking Washington's approach to cybersecurity will require rebalancing fixed systems with dynamic, responsive infrastructure.[...]In addition to building diverse, resilient it infrastructure, it is crucial to secure the supply chain for hardware.<sup>145</sup>

The Institute for Electrical And Electronics Engineers' (IEEE's) flagship magazine, *IEEE Spectrum*, notes that whereas

[w]ell into the 1970s, the U.S. military's status as one of the largest consumers of integrated circuits gave it some control over the industry's production and manufacturing, so the offshoring trend didn't pose a big problem. The Pentagon could always find a domestic fab and pay a little more to make highly classified and mission-critical chips. The DOD [Department of Defense] also maintained its own chip-making plant at Fort Meade, near Washington, D.C., until the early 1980s, when costs became prohibitive.

But these days, the U.S. military consumes only about 1 percent of the world's integrated circuits. "Now [...] all they can do is buy stuff." Nearly every military system today contains some commercial hardware. It's a pretty sure bet that the National Security Agency doesn't fabricate its encryption chips in China. But no entity, no matter how well funded, can afford to manufacture its own safe version of every chip in every piece of equipment.<sup>146</sup>

This dependency puts American interests at risk should foreign governments incentivize their manufacturers to insert secret backdoors or logic bombs in parts destined for other nations' commercial and military use. Though examples of this has yet to be proven, counterfeit electronics have been found in military aircraft and 3,600 counterfeit Cisco network components were discovered inside U.S. defence and power systems.<sup>147</sup> Such concerns permeate the United States Department of Defense and have led western

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<sup>145</sup> Wesley K Clark, and Peter L. Levin. "Securing the Information Highway." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (2009): 2-6,8-10

<sup>146</sup> S. Adee, "The Hunt For The Kill Switch," *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol.45, no.5, pp.34-39, May 2008

<sup>147</sup> Wesley K Clark, and Peter L. Levin. "Securing the Information Highway." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (2009): 2-6,8-10, M. Pecht, S. Tiku, "Bogus: electronic manufacturing and consumers confront a rising tide of counterfeit electronics," *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol.43, no.5, pp. 37- 46, May 2006, Skorobogatov, C. Woods, "Breakthrough silicon scanning discovers backdoor in military chip." *Cryptographic Hardware and Embedded Systems—CHES 2012* (2012): 23-40..

policymakers to prohibit foreign bids in goods required to maintain critical national infrastructure.<sup>148</sup>

The most essential and sensitive equipment can be manufactured in the United States at higher cost, and other programs can be implemented to assure product integrity and security.<sup>149</sup> However, the decision to pursue lower cost options is irreversible on a large scale, and many industries such as those in the communications and energy sectors that must minimize costs would likely be highly prioritized targets during war. Moreover, the supply of computer components is just one example of the many dependencies that the United States has developed while benefitting economically from globalization's apparent benefits. Therefore, from a National Security perspective,

[t]he Pentagon is now caught in a bind. It likes the cheap, cutting-edge devices emerging from commercial foundries and the regular leaps in [...] performance the commercial sector is known for. But with those improvements comes the potential for sabotage. "The economy is globalized, but defense is not globalized. [...] How do you reconcile the two?"<sup>150</sup>

### **Unable to Quit the Game: A Trapped and Fragile Empire**

Despite its power, then, America's position at the heart of such an interdependent system renders it increasingly vulnerable to supply shocks. Yet the complex web of international relationships limits the country's ability to unilaterally address those threats without itself facing repercussions. Singapore's former Ambassador to the UN illustrates this with a simple analogy:

Before the era of modern globalization, humankind was like a flotilla of more than 100 separate boats in their separate countries. The world needed a set of rules

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<sup>148</sup> Investigative Report on the U.S. National Security Issues Posed by Chinese Telecommunications Companies Huawei and ZTE, 112th Congress, October 8, 2012

<sup>149</sup> DARPA proposer's day presentation for High Assurance Cyber Military Systems (HACMS) program, Feb 2012. Accessed online on 8 Jan 2012 at: <http://www.darpa.mil/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147484882>

<sup>150</sup> S. Adeo, "The Hunt For The Kill Switch," *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol.45, no.5, pp.34-39, May 2008

then to ensure that the many boats did not collide and facilitate their cooperation on the high seas if they chose to do so. The 1945 rules-based order strived to do this, and despite some obvious failures, it succeeded in producing a relatively stable global order for more than 50 years.

Today, the 7 billion people who inhabit planet earth no longer live in more than 100 separate boats. Instead, they live in 193 separate cabins on the same boat. But this boat has a problem. It has 193 captains and crews, each claiming exclusive responsibility for one cabin. No captain or crew cares for the boat as a whole. The world is now sailing into increasingly turbulent waters with no captain or crew at the helm.<sup>151</sup>

While the interrelated world system highlights the United States' vulnerabilities, America must continue engaging in world affairs in order to ensure that the evolving world remains compatible with American values and interests.<sup>152</sup> Shortly before leaving office, George H.W. Bush acknowledged the effects of this paradigm shift:

Two hundred years ago, another departing President warned of the dangers of what he described as "entangling alliances." His was the right course for a new nation at that point in history. But what was "entangling" in Washington's day is now essential. This is why, at Texas A&M a few weeks ago, I spoke of the folly of isolationism and of the importance, morally, economically, and strategically, of the United States remaining involved in world affairs. We must engage ourselves if a new world order, one more compatible with our values and congenial to our interest, is to emerge. But even more, we must lead.<sup>153</sup>

## **A Fragile Empire**

To lead, the United States must continue to bear the brunt of the costs of navigating the very large, complex and highly nonlinear system it had largely created. This presents three fundamental concerns.

Firstly, effects no longer remain regionalized and actions cannot be considered in isolation. Former Secretary of State George Shultz noted "that foreign policy starts with

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<sup>151</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, Yale Global, 11 Feb 2013 <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/us-ready-be-number-two>  
[http://mahbubani.net/articles%20by%20dean/Is%20the%20U.S.%20Ready%20To%20Be%20Number%20Two\\_.pdf](http://mahbubani.net/articles%20by%20dean/Is%20the%20U.S.%20Ready%20To%20Be%20Number%20Two_.pdf)

<sup>152</sup> HG Bush "Remarks at the United States Military Academy," January 5, 1993.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

your neighborhood.” However, the United States’ neighbourhood comprises the entire world.

The United States has to have a global outlook. You can’t just focus on this or that. Most countries don’t have to do that. They aren’t significant enough around the world. So they focus on particular things, understandably. Usually their neighborhood. [...] But in the U.S. you have to have a global outlook and be sensitive to the connections that are there.<sup>154</sup>

Secondly, the system’s increasing complexity makes it exponentially more difficult to model, predict, and understand the ramifications of any policy actions.

Mathematician Edward Lorenz famously described complexity theory by explaining that a butterfly flapping its wings could produce tornadoes halfway around the world.<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, Joseph Nye commented that

international networks are increasingly complex, and their effects are therefore increasingly unpredictable. Moreover, in human systems, people are often hard at work trying to outwit each other, to gain an economic, social, or military advantage precisely by acting in an unpredictable way. As a result, globalization is accompanied by pervasive uncertainty.<sup>156</sup>

The international system’s interconnectedness enables a disturbance’s higher-order effects to propagate far from the point of origin, thereby exposing numerous players to what would have once been remote and isolated issues. One of the current international system’s defining characteristics is that the dangers of instability in the domestic realm often extend internationally.<sup>157</sup> This leads Michael Hirsh to comment that

[t]he nature of the U.S.-dominated global community today that America repeatedly finds itself drawn into once-obscure hot spots that seem, on their face, to have little or nothing to do with the traditional U.S. national interest, but which

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<sup>154</sup> Oral History, Interview with George P. Shultz recorded by the Miller Center <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/oralhistory/george-shultz>

<sup>155</sup> James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a new science*. Vintage, 1997.

<sup>156</sup> Joseph Nye, *The paradox of American power: Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford University Press, 2003, 87

<sup>157</sup> Hewitt, J. Joseph, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr. *Peace and conflict 2008*. Paradigm Pub, 2008 pg 17.

damage the fabric of the international system that is part of a new, more diffuse national interest.<sup>158</sup>

Lastly, complex systems are “intrinsically hazardous systems” where “catastrophe is always just around the corner.”<sup>159</sup> Manipulating the system for short term advantages can actually increase the probability of long term catastrophes occurring, and because of non-locality, to occur globally.

Rational players understandably attempt to advantageously influence the outcome of such events. Yet America’s unprecedented has now expanded such that its “sphere of influence” encompasses over half the globe. Any disturbances will thus invariably effect one or more of its national interests. The natural immediate reaction is to suppress short-term volatility and mitigate negative ramifications to its business, economic and political interests. However, the impulse to control global events, and respond to crises that have direct implications for United States interests will not necessarily lead to long term benefits. Nicholas Taleb explains that many policies intended to “stabilize the system by inhibiting fluctuations” inevitably produce the contrary effect.

The critical issue in both cases is the artificial suppression of volatility—the ups and downs of life—in the name of stability. It is both misguided and dangerous to push unobserved risks further into the statistical tails of the probability distribution of outcomes and allow these high-impact, low-probability “tail risks” to disappear from policymakers’ fields of observation.<sup>160</sup>

This phenomenon is intrinsically true of all complex systems, and because the United States is “structurally embedded” in the global system by virtue of its sheer size, it

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<sup>158</sup> Michael Hirsh, "America Adrift: Writing the History of the Post Cold Wars." *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (2001): 158-164.

<sup>159</sup> Richard I. Cook, MD, "How Complex Systems Fail ", Cognitive technologies Laboratory, University of Chicago, 2000. This paper is included with a short introduction explaining its applicability in a variety of fields in the following e-book. John Allspaw, Jesse Robbins, *Web Operations: Keeping the Data On Time*, O'Reilly Media, 2010 pp 107-118

<sup>160</sup> Taleb, Nassim Nicholas, and Mark Blyth. "Black Swan of Cairo: How Suppressing Volatility Makes the World Less Predictable and More Dangerous, The." *Foreign Aff.* 90 (2011): 33.

is unable to escape the effects of such “tail risks.”<sup>161</sup> The short term politics that dictate the pursuit of short term stabilization policies may create adverse long term consequences by increasing system fragility

This occurs frequently, but it can be explained adequately by returning to America’s policies to secure reliable access to oil. This is attained through overt and covert policies to ensure that oil production disruptions are minimized, and by America’s naval presence in the Persian Gulf to, among other things, ensure its transport. It also involves protecting domestically unpopular governments in countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and intervening against their populations when these governments face uprisings.

LaFeber points out that

[h]istorians have long observed how empires can be most vulnerable at their outer limits. President John F. Kennedy translated such an observation into a much larger U.S. commitment to Vietnam. Those who want to create or maintain empires, whether formal (as in the British case) or informal (as in the multiple political, economic, military, and cultural levels of the American example) quickly discover the high costs of such commitments.

[...]Those who espouse a new imperial policy in the early twenty-first century understand some of the processes of decentralization and fragmentation, so much so that they demand a much larger U.S. military either to protect or stop (depending on which will more benefit American interests) the process. It is not clear that the new imperialists understand either the complexities of the fragmentation that narrow choices or the price that might be required to bring about the desired order in such a complex empire.<sup>162</sup>

Considered in isolation, these policies often appear successful when considered over a short timeframe because they artificially maintain a low cost and reliable supply of oil. However, these policies not eternally sustainable, and any initial benefits may

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<sup>161</sup> Beeson, Mark. "American ascendancy: Conceptualizing contemporary hegemony." In *Bush and Asia: America's Evolving Relations with East Asia*. 2004.

<sup>162</sup> Walter LaFeber, "The Post September 11 debate over empire, globalization, and fragmentation." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002): 1-17.

therefore actually increase longer-term risks. In the case of oil, the U.S. expends political, economic, and military resources to ensure relatively cheap and abundant petroleum supplies. This inadvertently encourages unsustainable suburban lifestyles while increasing petroleum demand in the transportation, agricultural, and petrochemical industries. These industries' access to artificially cheap and prevalent oil make them appear more viable than they actually are. Excluding most forms of natural gas, energy is generally a global market (which is also possible due to the American Navy enabling free flow of transportation), and so other petroleum consuming countries also benefit from low prices and organize their industries with the assumption of the indefinite continuation of the status quo. Any failure in America's ability to indefinitely maintain an unsustainable situation will therefore create global problems in the supply chain for goods, food, and transportation,<sup>163</sup> and such difficulties would likely be sustained for a lengthy period because artificially low oil prices have significantly reduced the attractiveness of developing alternative supply chains or energy supplies. Such alternatives are only now being given serious widespread consideration after oil prices increased more than tenfold over a decade.

Further,

on the issue of sustainable development, we have a major mismatch in time scales here. The dynamics of our globalizing economy have tremendous effects projecting out over several decades. But the mechanisms that we have for making

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<sup>163</sup> Weiss, Geoffrey F. *The Efficiency Paradox: How Hyperefficiency Can Become the Enemy of Victory in War*. AIR COMBAT COMMAND TINKER AFB OK AIRBORNE AIR CONTROL SQUADRON (964TH), 2012.

political and economic decisions have much shorter time scales.[...] We are going to have to invent something on top of what we are currently doing.<sup>164</sup>

It is in the United States' interests to recognize the potential long term pitfalls of its policy choices. The interconnected system that it has created and upon which it has grown critically dependent is inherently hazardous. Actions taken to artificially suppress volatility for apparent stability can make the system extremely fragile. It will exhibit minimal variability while silent risks accumulate beneath a calm façade. The extreme complexity of the global system makes it difficult to adequately model and predict the system response to severe impulses.<sup>165</sup>

### **The Great Game: A No Longer Isolated Empire**

A state has most leverage in unilaterally affecting international change when it has the power to exert disproportionate amount of influence on the system without itself being subject to negative ramifications from the effects of such actions. The highly interconnected and interdependent global system has limited the United States' ability to even thoroughly understand the ramifications of its actions, while its size and role in the system that has been over-optimized for stability virtually guarantees that it will be negatively affected by changes. This places the U.S. in a triple-bind. It can neither leave the system, nor can it maintain the costs of indefinitely sustaining it, nor can it act

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<sup>164</sup> Kevin Finneran, Environment, economics, and National Security, *Issues in Science and Technology* 10.4 (Summer 1994):41.

<sup>165</sup> Taleb, Nassim Nicholas, and Mark Blyth. "Black Swan of Cairo: How Suppressing Volatility Makes the World Less Predictable and More Dangerous, The." *Foreign Aff.* 90 (2011): 33.

unilaterally, as it will be adversely effected by weakening the system. Nor should it want to do so. As John Ikenberry explains,

[t]he problems the liberal democratic order confronts are mostly problems of success[...]. Here one sees most clearly that the post-Cold War order is really a continuation and extension of the Western order forged during and after World War II. The difference is its increasingly global reach. The world has seen an explosion in the desire of countries and peoples to move toward democracy and capitalism.<sup>166</sup>

While international norms may reduce America's ability to militarily act independently, technological developments also conspire to increase the costs and risks of doing so. The enormous mistakes made by the heavily armed French in their war against Henry V's longbows, and that the Great Powers similarly made in misunderstanding industrialism's role in fighting World War I are among the many historical examples showing that war is particularly risky for those who go to war during periods of rapid technological change.<sup>167</sup>

As Secretary of State George Shultz understood during the 1980s, a fatal weakness of Soviet leadership was its inability to exploit the new technology without modifying the Soviet system to the point where it was modified out of existence. Results included not only a series of independent nations once part of the Soviet empire, but an Afghanistan left fragmented by retreating Soviet troops.<sup>168</sup>

The Soviet leadership may have been particularly inept at adapting technology to its system, but the deep and widespread technologically-driven changes today are particularly profound, and it is especially difficult to grasp their eventual military significance.<sup>169</sup> In fact, the use of civilian airplanes to cause 9/11 and the idea of

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<sup>166</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos, The." *Foreign Aff.* 75 (1996): 79.

<sup>167</sup> James Fallows, "The Military-Industrial Complex." *Foreign Policy* no. 133 (2002): 46-48.

<sup>168</sup> Walter LaFeber, "The Post September 11 debate over empire, globalization, and fragmentation." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002): 1-17.

<sup>169</sup> Paul Kennedy, "The rise and fall of the great powers: economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000." *New York: Vintage* (1987).

hijacking civilian trucks to use as explosives in future terror plots seem to suggest that it is the actors at the margins of the system who are adopting new technological tactics more effectively in order to compensate for their lack of technical capabilities. As a result,

To battle insurgents in Iraq, directors of combined air operations centers authorized \$35 million F/A-18As flying from a carrier that costs \$2.5 billion to drop \$190,000 laser-guided weapons on the position of a single insurgent armed with an AK-47, while our enemy uses old artillery shells and a cell phone to build up an improvised explosive device to destroy one of our Humvees, which cost \$150,000 apiece.<sup>170</sup>

### **Space Invaders**

Although it is currently impossible to anticipate technology's eventual effects in the battlefield, certain general trends may be surmised so far, and these trends currently point to the increased risk in conducting American military operations.

For example, the United States' physical isolation from other Great and aspiring Powers provided it enormous benefits during its ascendant years. By global historical standards, the U.S. had particularly friendly relations with its Northern and Southern neighbours, and the separation afforded by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans enabled America to choose when to avoid and when to involve itself in international disputes. This in turn enabled the U.S. to dictate the terms of its military attacks while rendering its own territory relatively easy to defend. However, modern globalization and advances in telecommunications and transportation have diminished the benefits of geographical isolation, thereby significantly altering America's threat environment. In fact, so long as the U.S. depends on overseas locations such as Asia and the Middle East for its supply

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<sup>170</sup> Branislav L. Slantchev, "The principle of convergence in wartime negotiations." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 621-632.

lines, its geographical location may prove to be a net disadvantage in the future. The advent and proliferation of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and nuclear submarines has significantly diminished its geographical buffers to sufficiently advanced adversaries.

Moreover, John D. Steinbruner notes that

the process of technology diffusion associated with the globalizing economy and the application of information technology itself is transforming security circumstances. It's making the technology of weapons generally available not only to fairly minor states but to substate organizations. Therefore, [the United States] will have to develop different mechanisms of control.

In the short run this is not a problem for [the America]. The United States military establishment at the moment really has no competition[...] However, over an extended period of time, with technology diffusion going on, others will be in a position to develop commensurate capabilities involving weapons of mass destruction as well as advanced conventional munitions. So [the United States does] not have the problem of a strategic opponent of commensurate size but the potential proliferation of a large number of opponents with small but extremely troublesome capabilities.<sup>171</sup>

Technological developments are not only diffusing to minor organizations, they are also extending to extraterrestrial domains. Although the military has employed space-based satellites for over fifty years to provide imagery that enhances situational awareness and to facilitate long distance communications, the "weaponization" of space is a new development. Except for the brief passage of ICBMs through space during their flight and selected small arms which have accompanied Soviet missions, actual instances of weapons in space have thus far been limited. Scientific advances now make space weaponization both possible and advantageous for its adopters. Just as Cold War satellites enabled the United States to improve its situational awareness without overflying U.S.S.R sovereign airspace, space-based weapons will provide important

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<sup>171</sup> Kevin Finneran, Environment, economics, and National Security, *Issues in Science and Technology* 10.4 (Summer 1994):41.

targeting advantages. For example, the developmental U.S. Prompt Global Strike system may employ orbiting space platforms to launch kinetic weapons that destroy targets located anywhere in the world within an hour.<sup>172</sup>

Critics argue that the U.S should not pursue such weapons, arguing that they would be quickly challenged, either in the form of anti-satellite attacks or by the development of similar competing satellite weaponry. Both approaches would pose problems for the United States. John Newhouse notes that

A major and related Russian concern [of the United States' interest in weapons platforms in space,] one that China shares, is what both see as the militarization of space by the United States—of missile defense turning space into an arena of competition...[D]eploying such weapons will press other countries to develop and deploy countermeasures. And in any such tit for tat, the United States has the most to lose, since it is far more dependent on satellites for commercial communications and data-gathering operations than any other country<sup>173</sup>

Moreover, critics argue, the military's ability to ensure the security of such weapons is dubious. Military communications satellites have already been hacked,<sup>174</sup> and as every electronic system has inherent weaknesses, implementing stronger security measures does not guarantee their security. Weapons-based satellites may be particularly attractive to state or non-state hackers due to their value, and the United States could be vulnerable to their own weapons if hackers succeeded in gaining control. Regardless, even if the U.S. can guarantee control of its weapons, such technological monopolies have proven fleeting and technological diffusion inevitable, as the history of surveillance satellites, atomic weapons, and ICBMs attest.

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<sup>172</sup> Amy F. Woolf, "Conventional Prompt Global Strike and Long-Range Ballistic Missiles: Background and Issues." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2011.

<sup>173</sup> John Newhouse, "The Missile Defense Debate." *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 4 (2001): 97-109.

<sup>174</sup> Non-Military Asymmetric Challenges, Whitehall Papers, 49:1, 50-68

These criticisms may be correct, but they are also largely irrelevant. Once scientific advances enable such weapons to be developed, they likely will be used by anyone who sees the advantage and has the means of doing so. Once this occurs, the benefits that the U.S. derives from its geographical isolation will even further reduce.

The advantages of America's geographical isolation were buttressed by its expanse. Whereas most powers such as France, England, or even Japan have heavily concentrated their population and wealth in their capital cities, the United States' large population and economy is distributed across its large landmass. This affords America enormous benefits. For example, while Britain's size compels it to depend upon constantly deployed submarine-based nuclear weapons for its deterrence policies,<sup>175</sup> the United States can rely upon numerous mainland nuclear second-strike facilities. Moreover, successfully invading the U.S. would involve simultaneously occupying literally hundreds of cities. This is currently well beyond any country's practical ability.

However, technology is currently reducing the benefit of America's spatial vastness as well. Metcalf's law models a network's utility as increasing exponentially with the number of nodes. However, this works equally for users as saboteurs. In other words, the very value of a network also makes it vulnerable.<sup>176</sup> "Cyberwar" is frequently touted as a revolution in military affairs because new platforms give way to new exploitable vulnerabilities that are virtually omnipresent in most modern societies and economies. Cyberattacks can be executed from the digital domain, where costs and barrier to entry are low, in order to adversely affect things in the physical domain, where the

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<sup>175</sup> John Baylis, *Ambiguity and deterrence: British nuclear strategy, 1945-1964*. Vol. 4. Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>176</sup> Joseph Nye, *The paradox of American power: Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford University Press, 2003, pg 85

costs are high.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, cyber-attacks can use the nature of interconnected systems to attempt disruption on scales far greater than would otherwise be possible or cost effective using physical agents.

Cyber exploits are not limited to events that cause physical damage. For example, Nye notes that

In the area of industrial espionage, China has had few incentives to restrict its behavior because the benefits far exceed the costs. Spying is as old as human history and does not violate any explicit provisions of international law. China has made it their official policy to use industrial espionage to save money and time.<sup>178</sup>

America's clear vulnerability to such exploits has been repeatedly demonstrated. In 2008, foreign intruders compromised the classified network of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). Although few details have been publicised, then Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn described the attack in 2010 as "the most significant breach of U.S. military computers ever."<sup>179</sup> One year later, the theft of the TOP SECRET plans for the \$300 billion Joint Strike Fighter was uncovered from the computers of six major United States defence contractors. By the time of the theft's discovery in 2009, several terabytes of information had already been stolen.<sup>180</sup> The prevailing belief that China was behind the theft was reinforced when the Chinese tested a new stealth aircraft that closely resembles the F-35 in October 2012.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Nuclear Lessons for Cyber Security?", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2011

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> William J Lynn, I.,II. "Defending a New Domain." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 5 (2010): 97-108.

<sup>180</sup> Etzioni, Amitai. "Cybersecurity in the Private Sector." *Issues in Science and Technology* 28, no. 1 (2011): 58-62, and Siobhan Gorman, August Cole, Yochi Dreazen, "Computer Spies Breach Fighter-Jet Project", *Wall Street Journal*, 21 Apr 2009.

<sup>181</sup> David Axe, "China's Newest Stealth Fighter Takes Flight", *Wired*, 31 Oct 2012, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/10/china-stealth-first-flight/>

Although China has been plausibly or positively identified as responsible for these attacks, future successful attacks may leave “false flags” to achieve political ends.<sup>182</sup> Lynn summarized the impacts of these issues in remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations:

Cyber is also attractive to [American] adversaries because it is hard to identify the origin of an attack. A keystroke travels twice around the world in 300 milliseconds. But the forensics necessary to identify an attacker may take months.

Without establishing the identity of the attacker in near real time, our paradigm of deterrence breaks down. Missiles come with a return address. Cyber attacks, for the most part, do not. For these reasons established models of deterrence do not wholly apply. Even if the attached is identified, they may be a terrorist group with no assets to strike back at.<sup>183</sup>

Furthermore, there is no equivalent to the Moscow–Washington hotline in the cyber world, nor may such a hotline be useful. Joseph Nye observes that

Rather than the 30 minutes of nuclear warning and possible launch under attack, today there would be 300 milliseconds between a computer detecting that it was about to be attacked by hostile malware and a pre-emptive response to disarm the attack. This requires not only advanced knowledge of malware being developed in potentially hostile systems but also an automated response. What happens to the human factor in the decision loop? Obviously, there is no time to go up the chain of command, much less convene a deputies’ meeting at the White House. For active defense to be effective, authority will have to be delegated under carefully thought-out rules of engagement developed in advance. Moreover, there are important questions about when active defense shades into retaliation or offense. ...such legal authorities and rules still remain to be fully resolved.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> The term “false flags” originates from the naval practice of raising a flag other than one’s own when sailing into battle, but can be applied anywhere the organization behind an operation is concealed.

<sup>183</sup> Remarks on Cyber at the Council on Foreign Relations, As Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn, III, Council on Foreign Relations, New York City, Thursday, September 30, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1509>

<sup>184</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “*Nuclear Lessons for Cyber Security?*”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2011

Deterrence in these circumstances will of necessity be based more on concepts of denial of benefit than imposing cost through retaliation. The challenge is to make defenses effective enough to deny an adversary the benefits of an attack.<sup>185</sup>

However, despite these threats, the everyday benefits that communications networks provide make it infeasible to simply abandon them out of security concerns. Moreover, the technology is inextricably entrenched in the entire modern economy.<sup>186</sup>

Wesley Clark theorizes that

Seeking to completely obliterate the threats of electronic infiltration, data theft, and hardware sabotage is neither cost-effective nor technically feasible; the best the United States can achieve is sensible risk management. Washington must develop an integrated strategy that addresses everything from the sprawling communications network to the individual chips inside computers.<sup>187</sup>

## Conclusion

Whatever globalization's merits or drawbacks, technological developments and governmental policies have indisputably reduced barriers to trans-border commerce and opened domestic and international markets. However, globalization has both evolved from and created new global economic, political and military structures in a complex system.<sup>188</sup>

As the United States becomes increasingly interdependent and entrenched in the international system, it is more vulnerable to disruptions around the world and inevitably exposed to the intrinsic hazards that characterize complex systems. Because it is "structurally embedded," and dependent on many of the benefits provided by the

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<sup>185</sup> Remarks on Cyber at the Council on Foreign Relations, As Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn, III, Council on Foreign Relations, New York City, Thursday, September 30, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1509>

<sup>186</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Nuclear Lessons for Cyber Security?", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2011

<sup>187</sup> Wesley K. Clark, and Peter L. Levin. "Securing the Information Highway." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (2009): 2-6, 8-10

<sup>188</sup> Wesley Clark, "America's Virtual Empire." *The Washington Monthly*, 2003. 20

globalized economy, it cannot simply opt out of participating in this system, even as its vulnerability to such a system increases. This augments the temptation to intervene as an increasing number of locations and events will fall under the “national interest.”

While the military has conducted much research to forecast alternate futures in order to avoid or mitigate strategic surprise, Donald Kagan emphasizes the futility of such an effort by stressing that the one great truth of history is that “there is always one other possibility besides all the ones that you can imagine.”<sup>189</sup> Similarly, Nicolas Taleb laments that “surprise [seems to be] the permanent condition of the U.S. political and economic elite.”<sup>190</sup>

However, even initially successful interventions create greater unseen risks by increasing the fragility of the system on which the U.S. depends for its security and prosperity. The examples presented this chapter are not meant to prove that the United States will be subject to space-based weapons or permanently succumb to overwhelming cyber-attacks. Rather, they are merely meant to illustrate a globalized system that is changing so rapidly that it is impossible to even identify all its vulnerabilities, let alone predict how they will be exploited. Similarly, the interconnected and interdependent nature of the existing system makes it impossible to accurately foresee the effects of engaging in belligerent attacks. Moreover, even where military action is warranted, the ability to project force has limited utility if adversaries have the capability of doing the same or if such an attack eventually has a disproportionate effect on the attacker.

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<sup>189</sup> Michael Moodie, *Conflict Trends in the 21st Century*. NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIV WASHINGTON DC INST FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIC STUDIES, 2009.

<sup>190</sup> Nicholas, Taleb, and Mark Blyth. "Black Swan of Cairo: How Suppressing Volatility Makes the World Less Predictable and More Dangerous, The." *Foreign Aff.* 90 (2011): 33.

If a country's immediate vital interests are at risk and can only be addressed by resorting to armed combat, then system impacts will inevitably be secondary, and a country will likely accept the inevitable myriad of costs that are required. However, in such cases, decisive force should be employed to ensure that objectives are met as quickly as possible.

These combination of conditions are the essence of the Powell Doctrine. While pursuing the Powell Doctrine will not resolve the risks which have accumulated from prior decisions, fewer military interventions for the sake of short term stability would over time reduce long term strains on a system at the expense of increasing short-term instabilities. Such policies would also, incidentally, greatly reduce the visibility of American policies and perhaps make them less likely targets of attack.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Kagan Robert, "Of Paradise and Power, America and Europe in the New World Order." *Alfred A. Knopf, New York* (2003), pg 32

*If not in the interests of the state, do not act. If you cannot succeed, do not use troops. If you are not in danger, do not fight.*  
— Sun Tzu.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Sun Tzu, Samuel Griffith, *The Art of War*, Oxford University Press, 1963, pg 142