Military Influence And the Post-Vietnam Use of Force

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One day I read that the Joint Chiefs are weak and never consulted, and another day that they are controlling the country.
Adm. Thomas Moorer[1]

Vietnam was, of course, another limited war. . .and in a sense was an extension of the Korean War. But Vietnam shook the morale of our fighting men to a far greater degree than did Korea. It left our military leaders confounded, dismayed, and discouraged.
Gen. Bruce Palmer[2]

The generals and admirals have learned and overlearned the lessons of Vietnam. They instinctively recoil from applying small doses of force in messy wars for obscure political purposes. . . . In practice, the skepticism of the military about applying force weighs far more on the president than does the sniping of the political opposition. For on security matters, the professional soldiers carry weight with everybody in the country.
Joseph Kraft[3]

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Popular perceptions of America's military leaders conjure up visions of cigar-chomping, table-pounding warmongers, of a phalanx of aggressive and activist advisers poised against the country's civilian leadership.[4] Such stereotypes reflect a common assumption that during crises the military, in Pavlovian fashion, urge the use of arms.

As Richard Betts has explained, however, the view of military leaders as aggressive and influential presidential advisers on the use of force has been more the premise of political debate than the conclusion of rigorous analysis. In his path-breaking work on cold war crises, Betts showed that the popular stereotype rarely proved accurate during the period from the end of World War II through the early 1970s.[5]

The stereotypical view of the military is particularly unsupported by the evidence in the post-Vietnam era. An examination of the cases since 1973 in which the use of force was considered reveals that the military's voice in presidential counsels of war has been neither the most commanding nor the most bellicose.[6] Still, as will be explained in this article, America's senior soldiers have been neither doves in uniform nor of insignificant influence. Military advice has frequently been of significance in intervention decisions—even when senior military leaders have sought to avoid the issue of whether force should be used. And when the discussion has turned to consideration of how to use force in a particular situation, military leaders have exerted considerable influence.

Military Advice

An examination of the military's role in crisis decision-making requires answers to two sets of questions. The first set deals with advice, the second set with influence. The former concerns what the military advised on two decisions: first, on whether to use force; and second, on how to use it. The latter set focuses on whether the military's advice on those two decisions had any effect on the eventual decisions made.

To Intervene or Not to Intervene

In examining the cases in the post-Vietnam period, it must first be determined what advice the military gave prior to decisions to take military action. The record since 1973 shows that, on the question of committing American troops abroad, the military generally have been more cautious than the president's most aggressive principal civilian advisers.[7] No military leader argued for the use of force as vehemently as did Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, or a number of Reagan

administration officials. The leading hawks have been the civilian, not the military, advisers.

Most notably, the military resisted the Marine peacekeeping mission in Lebanon that lasted from 1982 to 1984 and advised against potential U.S. involvement in the Horn of Africa in 1978 and in the Persian Gulf in 1984.[8] Military leaders also sought to discourage White House officials from considering the use of American forces to invade Libya in 1986 and made it clear that military approval of any direct use of American troops in Central America would be contingent on the presence of specific conditions.[9] More recently, senior officers reportedly questioned the wisdom of an April 1988 State Department plan to send several thousand American soldiers to Panama to depose Gen. Antonio Noriega and reinstate Eric Delvalle as president.[10]

There have been cases, to be sure, in which military leaders have recommended the use of force, or at least concurred in the recommendations of civilian policymakers. But such instances have been rare since 1973, occurring only in relatively clear-cut, well-bounded situations—such as the October 1985 aerial interception of the hijackers who had seized the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and killed an American citizen.[11] The decision to bomb Libya in April 1986 in retaliation for Qaddafi's support of anti-U.S. terrorist actions and the October 1987 retaliation against Iran for its missile attacks on two U.S. flag ships in the Persian Gulf both had the backing of the military leadership, too.[12] In each case, senior civilian advisers also recommended the use of force.

In several other cases, military members of the president's inner circle sought refuge in "professional neutrality," maintaining that such questions were not within the province of the military and thereby avoiding the issue of whether force should be used. During the Iran hostage crisis, for example, military advisers maintained that the decision to use force was the president's to make, not theirs. The military's job, they insisted, was to come up with the plans.[13] Finally, there have also been cases in which the military were not consulted seriously before particular decisions were made.[14] The decision to provide U.S. naval protection to reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers was one example. As an admiral told the *New York Times*'s Bernard Trainor: "It would be stretching it to say that the [Joint] Chiefs were in on the decision, or even asked their opinion on it." In that case, reportedly, "[Secretary of Defense Caspar] Weinberger's inquiries to the military focused on [the military's] technical ability to support the policy, not [on] the wisdom of the policy itself."[15]

In sum, military advice on whether to commit U.S. troops has gen-

erally been the opposite of the popular stereotype. Caution, not activism, has characterized military participation in discussions of intervention abroad.

How to Use Force

Once the decision to use force has been made, however, the military have frequently, and understandably, sought to use as much as they believed was necessary to bring the commitment to a speedy and victorious conclusion. On several occasions, this tendency has led the military to be the most aggressive of the president's advisers on the amount of force appropriate.

Recognizing the perishability of public support for military action abroad, the post-Vietnam military have come to regard time as the principal limit in so-called limited wars. Thus, when early resistance during the October 1983 invasion of Grenada proved to be greater than was anticipated, the military poured more troops onto the island to ensure that the enemy entertained no ideas of holding out.[16] When President Reagan decided in early 1986 to take action against Libya in retaliation for its support of terrorist activities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff counseled against moving until a third aircraft carrier was in the Mediterranean—irritating several senior civilians who questioned the necessity for such precautions.[17] During deliberations over the appropriate targets of strikes to retaliate for Iran's missile attacks against two U.S.-flag oil tankers, the JCS preferred to hit an Iranian warship rather than the oil rig that President Reagan eventually chose.[18] And if a decision were ever made to use U.S. combat troops in Central America, the military undoubtedly would argue for a massive commitment in order to bring U.S. military involvement to a swift conclusion—thereby presenting the American public with a quick victory, before the surge of support that typically follows the commitment of American troops abroad dissipated.

The record is mixed, however. The military have not always recommended the use of more force than civilian policymakers have deemed necessary. During the final National Security Council (NSC) meeting on the *Mayaguez* crisis in 1975, the acting chairman of the JCS argued against Secretary of State Kissinger's proposal to use B-52 bombers against Cambodian airfields.[19] Similarly, during the Korean Demilitarized Zone crisis of 1976, the military's proposed response to the brutal slaying by North Korean soldiers of two American officers was more restrained than what Kissinger had in mind.[20] More striking still was the military's restraint during the Marine peacekeeping mission in Lebanon; even after U.S. troops had been deployed on the ground, the mili-

tary never sought to use force as aggressively as presidential envoy Robert McFarlane or Secretary of State George P. Shultz advocated.[21]

The military's actions in these cases seem attributable to their fundamental fears over new or widened commitments that lack clearly defined victory conditions. In each instance, the military perceived that, rather than bringing American involvement to a swift conclusion, the use of additional force might significantly broaden the existing military commitment. In the Korean DMZ crisis, for example, the military feared that a more intense response might provoke North Korea into further action and thereby lead to greater U.S. involvement. Similarly, military leaders saw that escalation of U.S. involvement in Lebanon would undoubtedly have engaged the United States more deeply in what was increasingly perceived as a no-win situation. In neither case would the use of additional force (unless at levels vastly beyond that contemplated by policymakers) have brought the U.S. commitment to a swift, successful conclusion.

Military Influence

But has the military's advice made a difference? To answer that question, it is necessary to distinguish between military influence on decisions to intervene and military influence during the subsequent deliberations over how to employ force once intervention has been decided upon.

To Intervene or Not to Intervene

In the post-Vietnam era, the military have exercised relatively insignificant *direct* influence—leverage that flows from formal and explicit military recommendations—on decisions over whether to commit American forces abroad. As noted earlier, on this issue the military have not always been consulted by civilian policymakers, nor have the military always been forthcoming when their advice was requested. And when presented, the military's views have generally been accorded little weight—except in those rare cases in which the military voiced outright opposition, as in the final months of the Marine mission in Lebanon. Mild military skepticism about intervention has had little impact, perhaps because it has come to be expected. The decisions to intervene in Grenada in 1983 and to commit U.S. Marines to peacekeeping in Lebanon in 1982, for example, were taken in spite of the reluctance (but not outright opposition) voiced by the JCS.

Military leaders have, however, had an impact through their considerable *indirect* influence—that is, through leverage apart from for-

mal and explicit recommendations. The military have influenced decision making by the way they have answered the question always posed by the political leadership: Can force be used in a particular case to accomplish a specific mission?

The military's answers to that question have inevitably been of consequence. The military's estimate of the chance for success in the Iran hostage rescue attempt in 1980, for example, was a major factor in the eventual decision to conduct that operation. Military confidence played an even bigger role in the decision to intercept the *Achille Lauro*'s hijackers. Failure of the military to be very vocal in opposing the Marine mission in Lebanon until December 1983, on the other hand, removed an important potential obstacle to that mission.[22] And the 1985 proposal by low-level White House officials to overthrow Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi through a joint U.S.-Egyptian invasion was quashed when the military estimated it would need up to six American divisions (one-third of the U.S. Army's active divisions—well over 100,000 troops), not to mention supporting air and naval forces.[23]

Indirect military influence also has been exercised through various actions aimed at influencing the overall environment within which decisions on the use of force are taken. The most tangible result of these efforts was Secretary of Defense Weinberger's famous speech detailing the conditions that should obtain before American troops are committed abroad. The Weinberger criteria were a virtual recitation of the preconditions set by most senior military officers based on lessons learned from Vietnam. Weinberger's speech, not to mention his positions during crisis deliberations, was reported to reflect military views.[24]

Senior officers have also used speeches and interviews to express their views, particularly in their final days before retirement. Such occasions have been used by certain Army leaders to specify the conditions that should exist before American troops are committed in Central America or elsewhere.[25] A number of naval officers have also used speeches to express their views on issues involving the use of force. The chief of naval operations, for example, used a widely publicized Naval Academy graduation address to announce the conditions that should be met before the United States used military force to retaliate against terrorists.[26]

Some reporters contend that in the 1970s senior Army officers sometimes sought to influence deliberations over deployment by structuring Army forces so as to force a mobilization decision before any sizable commitment of U.S. troops could take place. The gradual shift of certain support functions to the reserve components and the integration of

National Guard brigades into one-third of the active Army divisions meant that even for contingencies involving America's rapidly deployable forces, a limited call-up of reserve component units would be required.[27]

How to Use Force

The military have exercised the most influence when decision makers have turned to consideration of the options available to accomplish the objectives established by the president. Options are the military's area of expertise, and expertise, particularly when concentrated in one institution, yields influence.

The development of military options is a complex undertaking that requires knowledge, experience, and creativity. Detailed and timely information about one's own forces is essential, as is current intelligence on the target of the military action. An understanding of the systems established for the planning, coordination, and command and control of military operations is necessary as well. Military operations are complicated affairs, and only senior military officers fully master their conduct.

As a result, the military in the post-Vietnam period have exercised considerable influence over how force has been used—particularly in those cases in which the missions have been especially demanding and complex, thereby increasing the dependence of civilian policymakers on military judgment, expertise, and information. In no case in which force was used, in fact, did the military fail to influence the way in which it was used—although the military have not consistently supported either a more or a less aggressive use of force than have key civilian advisers. As noted earlier, military influence led to more restrained use of force than that proposed by the most aggressive civilians in both the Korean DMZ incident and the Marine mission in Lebanon. In the case of Grenada and the bombing of Libya, on the other hand, military advice led to the use of greater force than many civilians initially thought necessary. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War alert—during which Secretary of State Kissinger dominated the decision-making process—the military's suggestion to conduct highly visible measures in addition to advancing the alert status of U.S. military forces was implemented and proved to be of great importance.[28] In the Persian Gulf in October 1987, the crippling of Iranian speedboats that fired at a U.S. helicopter and the capture of an Iranian boat in the act of laying mines was due to the chairman of the JCS's personal order to U.S. forces in the Gulf to accept American special operations helicopters.[29] Finally, in the Iran hostage rescue mission and the interception of the *Achille Lauro* hijackers, the

military played an important role in designing operations in which their recommendations on the appropriate level of force coincided with the views of the civilian leadership.

The JCS and Field Commanders

Three different categories of military officers have influenced decisions on the use of force: (1) the JCS, especially their chairman; (2) senior members of the JCS; and (3) field commanders. Not surprisingly, the most influential military position in the post-Vietnam era has been that of chairman of the JCS, whose occupant is the only military leader who routinely participates in NSC meetings.[30] The other members of the JCS—the four chiefs of the military services—rarely participate in deliberations on the use of force during swift-moving crises, except when serving as acting chairman or when their service is providing the bulk of the military forces involved. The use of Navy forces in the *Mayaguez* incident, for example, led Admiral Holloway, chief of naval operations, to attend the final NSC meeting on that crisis. In fact, the chiefs of the services generally have had very infrequent contact with presidents on *any* issues in the post-Vietnam era, at least until the appointment of Gen. John Vessey as JCS chairman in 1982, when regular meetings between the president and the JCS began.[31] The influence of service chiefs, therefore, has come more through the JCS chairman and through the chiefs' impact on the plans developed for the use of force, than through direct participation in White House deliberations.

Several senior JCS officers in the Pentagon also have had an impact on the use of force, typically in cases that have developed over a long period of time—such as the Marine mission in Lebanon and the Iran hostage rescue attempt—although one JCS officer also played a key role in the swift-moving *Achille Lauro* case. Characteristically, these officers have been high-ranking members of the JCS—such as Lt. Gen. John Pustay during the planning of the Iran hostage rescue mission or Vice Admiral Moreau during the planning to intercept the *Achille Lauro* hijackers—who have represented the JCS on a White House task force (such as the one on counterterrorism) or on an interagency working group (such as the special coordinating committee that developed military options during the Iran hostage crisis).

Finally, commanders in the field often have had an impact on the use of force within their geographic or functional area of responsibility. Field commanders always have been an integral part of the planning process, not only because they carry out most operations but also because of the natural tendency to defer to the responsible commander—the man

on the spot. This has been especially evident in the post-Vietnam period when field commanders submitted plans early in the process that satisfied the objectives of decision makers in Washington, as well as the objectives of their own particular area of operations. Gen. Richard Stilwell, the field commander during the Korean DMZ crisis, did precisely that. As a result, he played a central role in determining how force was used in that case. Similarly, the theater commander was an important participant in the development of options prior to the Grenada intervention. Successive commanders in chief of the U.S. Southern Command have helped to determine policy in Central America as well. And because of the delegation of key decision-making authority to the commander on the ground in Beirut, a Marine colonel was a central figure in determining how force was used during the Marine mission in Lebanon.[32]

The Impact of the Vietnam Experience

A comparison of military advice in the post-Vietnam era with that in the preceding three decades shows that the senior military have universally been more cautious since Vietnam. The Vietnam experience had a chastening impact on the willingness of the top military—especially within the Army and Marine Corps—to commit troops to combat unless specific conditions obtain. U.S. units should not be committed, the military maintain, unless public support is assured, military objectives are clear and reasonably attainable, and commanders are provided with sufficient forces and the freedom necessary to accomplish their missions. The unquestioning, can-do attitude of the 1960s has given way to a more sober view that reflects a greater understanding of the limits of military power and a conviction that the military leadership has not just a right but also a duty to question those who would send American soldiers to war.[33]

We should not, of course, overstate the generational change that has taken place. As is clear from an examination of the lessons of the Korean War (most visible during the deliberations over intervention in Indochina in 1954), there have been earlier periods during which *some* military leaders have approached the use of force with considerable caution.[34] Richard Betts found such attitudes among military leaders in his study of the period 1945–73, but he also found many cases in which certain military leaders were the least cautious and most bellicose of the president's advisers.[35] The difference is the degree to which a cautious approach to the use of force has characterized the senior military. Com-

pared with their counterparts in the post-Korean era, the post-Vietnam military seem to possess more firmly, and much more universally, the attributes that Samuel Huntington ascribes to the "professional military man"—attributes that Huntington felt contributed a "cautious, conservative, restraining voice to the formulation of state policy."[36]

Since Vietnam, in fact, senior officers have not displayed the consistent aggressiveness of earlier military leaders such as Adm. Arthur Radford or Air Force Gens. Curtis LeMay, Thomas Powers, and Nathan Twining. In spite of occasional tough talk, when the commitment of American troops has hung in the balance, only rarely has any senior military leader been as aggressive as the most aggressive civilian advisers.

Did Vietnam Cause the Change?

Implicit in this discussion is an assumption that the changes since Vietnam were in fact caused by Vietnam, rather than by other factors. That seems to be the case, but even if we accept that Vietnam contributed to the change—something that few analysts would dispute—the *extent* to which it did so is still open to debate. The frustration of American involvement in Southeast Asia is only one of a number of factors that may account for military conservatism in the use of force, although I believe it is the most important factor since 1973, particularly in cases that bore any resemblance to Vietnam.

But even without the Vietnam experience, a degree of caution among military leaders is understandable. It is, after all, the senior military's institutions—the services to which the officers have devoted their lives—that have the most to risk in foreign intervention. As the Army's Gen. Douglas MacArthur stated so eloquently, "the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."[37] We would expect America's generals and admirals to be very circumspect in their approach to commitments that could possibly damage those institutions.[38] Generally conservative by nature, few senior soldiers would be eager to seek commitment of their organizations in anything but "sure-thing" operations. The chance of gaining glory for their service, or even greater funding and manning levels, does not seem worth the possible cost of most potential commitments. Furthermore, perceiving the United States as already overcommitted, America's senior military have been very cautious in considering new commitments, especially those that have held the potential for extended combat.[39] The price of intervention is often seen as prohibitive.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons and the resulting possibility

of escalation have reinforced these cautious instincts. And beyond Vietnam, Afghanistan also has shown that superpower military involvement for an extended period of time may not be successful.

Thus there would appear to be some logic, at least, to the arguments of leaders who have stated that their attitudes toward the use of force were not formed by the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Retired Army chief of staff E. C. Meyer, for example, has questioned whether the so-called lessons of Vietnam are really anything new.[40] Similarly, former JCS chairman John Vessey has argued that the lessons of Vietnam are not lessons at all, but rather "truisms" long honored by prudent military leaders. As he has explained:

> My recommendations on the commitment of military force have very little to do with any Vietnam syndrome. They are based more on the principles of war, the first of which is to know the objective. . . . We don't learn new lessons. We relearn old lessons that we haven't paid attention to.[41]

There is one major problem with such contentions, however. As Betts showed, senior military leaders during the pre-Vietnam (post–World War II) period frequently did not honor what Vessey, Meyer, and others have identified as truisms governing the use of force. These timeless verities were never as widely shared, as deeply institutionalized, or as explicitly applied as they have been since the final days of America's involvement in Vietnam. Even the 1950s' heyday of the post-Korea "Never-Again" Club never saw the kind of universal subscription to lessons on the use of force as has characterized the period since 1973. The military superhawks of the 1950s and 1960s have no counterparts in the contemporary military landscape.

The Significance of Military Conservatism

The widespread acceptance of the lessons of Vietnam has produced a military leadership that today conforms more closely to Huntington's concept of military conservatism than it did in any other period since World War II. This finding is significant, for the military do influence whether and how force is used. Military leaders have, to be sure, influenced the *way* force has been used more than *whether* it has been used. But even in discussions of whether to intervene, the military have not been inconsequential, especially when opposing the use of force. As has been noted, military opposition was instrumental in bringing the

Marine commitment in Lebanon to an end, in halting further thoughts of invading Libya, and in tempering the thinking of those who entertained notions of using American troops in Central America. As in the period from 1945 to 1973, soldiers in the post-Vietnam era have exerted the greatest leverage on intervention decisions when they have vetoed them.[42]

Military advice on the use of force, therefore, has a direct bearing on how the United States employs its foreign policy tool of last resort—American combat troops. An observation by Graham Allison in the early 1970s emphasizes this point:

> No military action is chosen without extensive consultation of military players. No decision for a substantial use of force, short of nuclear war, will be made against their advice, without a delay during which an extensive record of consultation is prepared.[43]

It matters that in the wake of Vietnam, America's senior military leaders agree with a foreign policy prescription proffered by Hans Morgenthau in 1967. The United States, Morgenthau wrote, should "intervene less and succeed more."[44] The post-Vietnam military could not have put it better.

Notes

1. Quoted in Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 204.
2. Bruce Palmer, *The 25-Year War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 204.
3. Joseph Kraft, "Power and the Pentagon," *Washington Post*, 8 April 1984, p. C7.
4. Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 4; see also David C. Martin and Michael A. Lerner, "Why the Generals Can't Command," *Newsweek*, 14 February 1983, p. 22; and Carl Rowan, "Be Thankful Pentagon Resists Schemes to Use the Military in Panama," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 6 April 1988, p. 33.
5. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, pp. 1-4.
6. For the case studies on which this article is based, see David H. Petraeus, *The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michi-

gan Microfilms, 1987), pp. 134-238. The endnotes for this article will provide only the most important sources; readers who wish more information should refer to that work.

7. I define *military* as the senior leaders and top staff officers of the JCS, the military services, and the combatant commands. Officers in assignments outside the military services or in joint service positions, therefore, are not "military" in my analysis; nor are retired military officers. For the rationale behind this definition, see Petraeus, *The American Military*, pp. 5-6.

8. In addition to Petraeus, *The American Military*, on Lebanon, see Ralph A. Hallenbeck, *Force and Diplomacy: Examining America's Strategy in Lebanon, 1982–1984* (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1986); *Report of the DOD Commission on the Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 20 December 1983); and Roy Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," *Foreign Service Journal* (June 1984): pp. 30-31. On the Horn of Africa, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), pp. 178-183; Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 222; and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 73, 84. On the 1984 Persian Gulf case, see Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Affirms U.S. Would Guard Shipping in Gulf," *New York Times*, 24 May 1984, pp. A1, A12; Steven Weisman, "Reagan Says U.S. and Allies Weigh Persian Gulf Aid," *New York Times*, 23 May 1984, p. A1; and Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Said to Urge Caution on a U.S. Role in Gulf," *New York Times*, 27 May 1984, p. A18.

9. On Libya, see Stephen Engelberg, "Egypt-U.S. Plan to Raid Libya Reported," *New York Times*, 21 February 1987, p. A3; and Bob Woodward, "U.S. Decided to Give Libya Firm Message," *Washington Post*, 26 March 1986, p. A26. On Central America, see Adam Smith, "Will You Go to El Salvador?" *Esquire*, September 1983, p. 12; George Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," *Washington Post*, 24 June 1983, p. A20; and Richard Halloran, "General Opposes Nicaragua Attacks," *New York Times*, 30 June 1985, p. A3.

10. Frederick Kempe, "State Department, Pentagon Split Over Pushing for Ouster of Noriega," *Wall Street Journal*, 29 February 1988, p. 17; Richard Halloran, "What Terrifies the Toughest Soldiers? A Civilian Military Plan," *New York Times*, 14 April 1988, p. B6; and Douglas Waller and John Barry, " 'Backwards' Strategy," *Newsweek*, 18 April 1988, p. 31.

11. John Walcott, "Getting Even," *Newsweek*, 21 October 1985, pp. 22-24; Scott Truver, "Maritime Terrorism," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 112, 5 (May 1986): p. 168; and Francis Clines, "U.S. Heads Off Hijackers: How the Operation Unfolded," *New York Times*, 12 October 1985, pp. A1, A9.

12. For the former case, see Gerald Boyd, "How President Decided on Raid Against Libya," *New York Times*, 15 April 1986, p. A11; Seymour Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," *New York Times Magazine*, 22 February 1987, pp. 48, 71, 74, 84; and George Church, "Hitting the Source," *Time*, 28 April 1986, pp. 17-27. For the latter case, see "Will Reagan Hit Back at Iran?" *Newsweek*, 26 October 1987, pp. 31-32; "A Salvo for Teheran," *Newsweek*, 2 November 1987, p. 63; Jim Stewart, "Pentagon Reviewing Potential Targets for New Attacks on Iran," *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 October 1987, p. 22; James Dorsey, "Webb Urges Pre-empting of Iran's Aggressive Acts," *Washing-*

ton Times, 3 November 1987, p. 3; and Michael Kramer, "The Gang That *Can* Shoot Straight," *U.S. News and World Report*, 23 November 1987, p. 17.

13. See Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1982), pp. 251-252; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 476-494; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 501-510; and Gary Sick, *All Fall Down* (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 284-292.

14. There is nothing new about this, of course: presidents often have not asked the military's opinion on whether force should be used. See, for example, Amos Jordan and William J. Taylor, Jr., *American National Security*, rev. ed. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 174.

15. Bernard Trainor, "U.S. Officers Troubled by Plan to Aid Gulf Ships," *New York Times*, 29 June 1987, p. 6; William Chaze, "The Dangers Deepen, and So Do the Doubts," *U.S. News and World Report*, 17 August 1987, pp. 18, 23.

16. Bernard Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion: No More 'Paper Tiger,' " *New York Times*, 30 October 1983, p. A1; Ralph Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," *Reader's Digest*, February 1984, pp. 72-73; Thomas DeFrank, "The Invasion Countdown," *Newsweek*, 7 November 1983, p. 75; and Richard Halloran, "Reagan as Military Commander," *New York Times Magazine*, 15 January 1984, p. 68.

17. Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," p. 71.

18. "A Salvo for Teheran," p. 63.

19. Richard Head et al., *Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the* Mayaguez *and Korean Confrontations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 108-131; Douglas King, "The Seizure of the *Mayaguez*: An Analysis of Presidential and Congressional Response to a Crisis in Foreign Policy" (Senior thesis, Harvard University, 1981); Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal* (New York: Harper, 1979), chap. 5; and Roy Rowan, *The Four Days of the* Mayaguez (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).

20. Head et al., *Crisis Resolution*, pp. 180-191, 245.

21. Roy Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," Long Island *Newsday*, 8 April 1984, p. 37; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Lebanon: A Divided Administration," *Washington Post*, 30 January 1984, p. A11; and *Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving That Security* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1985), p. 595.

22. In fairness to the military leadership during the evolution of the commitment in Lebanon, the viability of the "presence" mission given the Marines changed dramatically as U.S. involvement in Lebanon shifted from ostensible neutrality to overt support for President Amin Gemayel's faction.

23. See George C. Wilson, "Tit-for-Tat in Vietnam Is What the Brass Hated," *Parameters* 16, 2 (Summer 1986): p. 83. In a similar way General Ridgeway's estimate in 1954 that huge forces would be required for intervention in Indochina dissuaded policymakers considering U.S. involvement in Indochina. See my discussion of that case in "Korea, the Never-Again Club, and Indochina," *Parameters* 17, 4 (December 1987): pp. 59-70.

24. See Richard Halloran, "U.S. Will Not Drift into a Latin War, Weinberger Says," *New York Times*, 10 December 1984, p. A1.

25. See, for example, Walter Mossberg, "The Army Resists a Salvadoran Vietnam," *Wall Street Journal*, 24 June 1983, p. 22.

26. See Adm. James D. Watkins, "Address at the U.S. Naval Academy Graduation," 23 May 1984 (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Public Affairs Press Release 271-84); and George C. Wilson, "Reagan Will Hear Conflicting Advice About Retaliation for Terrorism," *Washington Post*, 23 June 1985, p. A23.

27. Of course, this restructuring has been motivated by a number of other factors as well. The most important of these has been active force end strength limitations that have forced greater use of National Guard brigades to "round out" active divisions and have also led to a considerable portion of the Army's combat service support elements being placed in the National Guard and Army Reserve. Nonetheless, it appears that the desire to force a mobilization decision before committing U.S. troops to any sizable contingency also was an important factor. According to the *Washington Post*'s George Wilson, Gen. Creighton Abrams came home in 1972 after commanding in Vietnam and, as Army chief of staff, "started restructuring the division of labor between the active and reserve forces so it would be virtually impossible for a future president to go to war without activating the reservists." See "War's Lessons Struck Home," *Washington Post*, 16 April 1985, p. A9; see also Michael R. Gordon, "The Charge of the Light Infantry—Army Plans Forces for Third World Conflict," *National Journal*, 19 May 1984, p. 972; Harry Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1981), p. 113, and "Army Rebuilds Its Confidence," *Washington Times*, 26 April 1985, p. E15; Bill Keller, "Reserves Move to the Forefront of Defense," *New York Times*, 10 March 1985, p. E3; and Gen. E. C. Meyer, *E. C. Meyer* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1983), p. 314.

28. Carl Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," *International Security* 9, 4 (Spring 1985): p. 128, and "Lessons of the Yom Kippur Alert," *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1979): pp. 160-177; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), pp. 586-598; and Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* 7, 1 (Summer 1982): p. 137.

29. Melissa Healy, "Navy Ill-Equipped to Fight a Restricted War in Gulf," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 October 1987, p. 1; and Jim Stewart, "U.S. Special Forces Play Large but Little-Known Role in Persian Gulf," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1 November 1987, p. 10.

30. Additionally, it appears that chairmen of the JCS have more influence when they have been nominated by the incumbent administration. Gen. David Jones, for example, was almost replaced when the Reagan administration took office, and he had little influence during the remainder of his tenure: see Richard Burt, "Reagan Might Oust Head of Joint Chiefs," *New York Times*, 20 December 1980, p. A11; Michael Getler, "Brown Cautions Against Ousting Joint Chiefs Head," *Washington Post*, 22 December 1980, p. A1; and Maxwell D. Taylor, "Should They Fire General Jones?" *Washington Post*, 22 January 1981, p. A17. Gen. John Vessey, on the other hand, was chosen by President Reagan and enjoyed an unprecedented amount of contact with the White House during his tenure, as has his successor,

Adm. William J. Crowe: see Rudy Abramson, "Reagan Moves to Establish Closer Ties to Joint Chiefs," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 March 1982, pp. I-1, I-12; and the sources in the next note.

31. Gerald Seib, "Vessey of Joint Chiefs Helps Give the Military Clout in the White House," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 March 1984, p. 27; LuAnne K. Levens and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "General John W. Vessey, Jr.," *Armed Forces Journal International* 120, 9 (May 1983): p. 53; and Richard Halloran, "Steering an Uncharted Course," *New York Times*, 2 March 1987, p. A14. The pattern of contact that began with the appointment of General Vessey slowed, however, after his retirement in 1985. Although the goal remains for the president to meet with the JCS quarterly, Reagan actually saw them as a corporate body only twice in 1986, a pace that reportedly has held since then.

32. Additionally, the commanders of the Joint Special Operations Command and the Delta Force—America's counterterrorist headquarters and principal counterterrorist operational element, respectively—reportedly have played key roles in the employment of teams from Delta Force. The deployments of these teams, however, have always been highly classified, and open sources on the decision making surrounding their activities are relatively few. Among the best sources have been Stephen Engelberg, "Officials Say U.S. Team Was Sent to Help Pakistanis End Hijacking," *New York Times*, 8 September 1986, pp. A1, A6; Robert Manning and Stephen Emerson, "Special Forces: Can They Do the Job?" *U.S. News and World Report*, 3 November 1986, pp. 36-47; and Judith Miller, "Maltese Reported to Have Barred Role for U.S. Officers in Jet Raid," *New York Times*, 3 December 1985, pp. A1, A14.

33. For a further discussion of these points, see my "Lessons of History and Lessons of Vietnam," *Parameters* 16, 3 (Autumn 1986): pp. 43-53; and Edwin Marks, "The Vietnam Generation of Professional American Military Officers," *Conflict* 5, 1 (1983): p. 48.

34. See Petraeus, "Korea, the Never-Again Club, and Indochina."

35. See Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*.

36. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 69.

37. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, "Duty, Honor, Country" (Speech given at the U.S. Military Academy on receiving the Thayer Award, 12 May 1962).

38. Interestingly, the only official in the post-Vietnam period consistently as cautious as the military is the secretary of defense (with the exception of Secretary Weinberger's position during the October 1987 deliberations over the appropriate target for retaliatory strikes against Iran): see Nancy Cooper, "Will Reagan Hit Back at Iran?" *Newsweek*, 26 October 1987, p. 32. Morton Halperin would have predicted this finding: "Career officials," he wrote in the early 1970s, "often develop their position largely by calculating the national interest in terms of the organizational interests of the career service to which they belong. Even in-and-outers are sometimes 'captured' by the organizations which bring them into government." See Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1974), p. 62.

39. Military statements about being overcommitted may be found in Richard Halloran, *To Arm a Nation* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 212, 222-223, 226.

40. Comments by Gen. E. C. Meyer in April 1985 on a paper by William J. Taylor and David H. Petraeus, "The Legacy of Vietnam for the U.S. Military," subsequently published in *Democracy, Strategy, and Vietnam*, ed. George K. Osborn et al. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1987).

41. Quoted in Harry Summers, "American Military Is in 'A Race to Prevent War,' " *U.S. News and World Report*, 21 October 1985, p. 40; and in Steve Berg, "Nation's Top Soldier Prepares for Assault on Walleyes," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, 25 August 1985, p. 1. The protestations of Generals Vessey and Meyer are interesting because those two officers have been among the most vocal proponents of what I have termed the lessons of Vietnam. Richard Betts found similarly that five of the officers most closely identified with the post-Korea "Never-Again Club" rejected their "membership" in that "organization." Four of those five then went on, in talking with Betts, to espouse the views popularly associated with the "never again" designation: see Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, p. 266.

42. For the period 1945–73, see Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, p. 5.

43. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 181.

44. Hans Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs* 45, 3 (April 1967): p. 436.

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