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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 03/31/2017		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis			3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 07/21/2016 to 03/31/2017	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Modifying the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine for the Modern Geo-Strategic Environment				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
				5b. GRANT NUMBER		
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Scott T. Yeatman, Lt Col, USAF				5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
				5e. TASK NUMBER		
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Joint Forces Staff College Joint Advanced Warfighting School 7800 Hampton Blvd Norfolk, VA 23511-1702					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution is unlimited.						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Not for Commercial Use without the express written permission of the author.						
14. ABSTRACT The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine intends to apply a rational set of criteria to the deliberations of policy-makers and senior military leaders. Analysis of contemporary literature reveal three principle critiques of the Doctrine's modern utility: its lack of congruence with the modern geo-strategic environment, its prescriptive nature, and its misunderstanding of the modern utility of force. This paper examines each of these issues then proposes both a revised doctrinal criteria and reconceptualization of use in order to return the Doctrine to utility.						
15. SUBJECT TERMS Weinberger, Powell, Doctrine, Strategy, Status Quo, Policy, Security, Utility of Force,						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified Unlimited	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 54	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASS			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) 757-443-6301	

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**MODIFYING THE WEINBERGER-POWELL DOCTRINE FOR THE MODERN
GEO-STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

By
Scott T. Yeatman,
Lt Col, USAF

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GEO-STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

by

**Scott T. Yeatman
Lt Col, USAF**

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

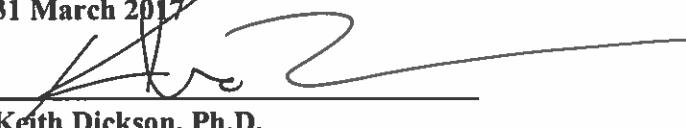
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ABSTRACT

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine attempted to apply a rational set of criteria to the deliberations of policy-makers and senior military leaders in the interests of guiding them toward more pragmatic decisions concerning the use of force in pursuit of national interests. Analysis of the literature concerning the Doctrine's utility and use shows it has fallen out of favor and no longer serves its intended purpose because it is acontextual with the modern geo-strategic environment, overly prescriptive in its guidance, and misunderstands the utility of force on the modern battlefield. These three factors culminate in the Doctrine failing to adequately inform senior leaders functioning at the strategy bridge – the link between policy and operations. While there can be no definitive set of rules or criteria to determine every decision concerning the use of force in the pursuit of national interests, analysis of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine suggests modification to both its language and intent can restore its utility and use. The revised Doctrine and reconceptualization of its utility recommended in this paper attempts to inform both policy-makers and the senior leaders at the strategy bridge. It means to be congruent with the geo-strategic environment, free from prescriptive dictates, and aligned with the utility of force in our present global engagement.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. Their selfless service to the nation secures our democracy. Their intervention abroad upholds the international order and improves the lives of millions.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to my thesis advisors, Dr. Keith Dickson and Colonel Kevin Therrien. Their mentorship and unflagging encouragement helped me through the process of reading, thinking, and writing. Additional thanks to my seminar faculty, Colonel James Golden and Dr. Gregory Miller, for their instruction and advice. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge Mr. Jeffrey Turner for the many hours of professional and objective editorial counsel he provided. This paper would not have been possible without his coaching and support.

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Chapter 1 -- Introduction

On April 30, 1975, the People's Army of Vietnam captured Saigon. The event was the culmination of a thirty-year socio-political conflict and marked the effective end of the United States war in Vietnam. The failure to achieve both military and political victory in Vietnam, coupled with the significant human cost to the war, ground down the American military establishment to a near-breaking point. Morale and discipline among troops was at an all-time low, public support had significantly eroded, and the utility of US force was called into question. Nine years later, 241 US Marines were killed in a single suicide attack on their barracks in Beirut. Following that attack, Secretary of State George Shultz made a public statement calling for resolve in the pursuit of US foreign policy through the use of military power by noting, "We cannot allow ourselves to become the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond."¹ A solution to the problem identified by Schultz was already in the making and about to face its first objective test.

Two days after the tragedy in Beirut, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and his senior military aid, Major General Colin Powell, closely monitored the status of Operation URGENT FURY. The operation was a major US assault on the small island of Grenada to rescue over one thousand Americans deemed to be in imminent danger as a result of a coup d'état orchestrated by a leftist movement with close ties to Cuba.² The

¹ Kenneth J. Campbell, "Once Burned, Twice Cautious: Explaining the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine," *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (1998): 364.

² The majority of the Americans on Grenada were medical students studying at a single university and the rationale for the invasion involved more than the rescue operation. The Bishop government established in the wake of the coup was seen as an extension of the Castro regime and a nascent client state of the Soviet Union. Allowing Grenada to fall to the communist tide would grant the Soviet Union an expanded foothold in the Western Hemisphere and risk their increased influence and power projection into Central and South America. Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990), 103, 128, 170.

mission was also the first test for what has since become known as the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine (WPD). The Doctrine was the creation of both men, experienced in war and statecraft, with the intent of applying the lessons of Vietnam to the challenges of a Cold War geo-strategic environment. The Doctrine was grounded in military theory, overwhelmingly supported by the senior leadership of the uniformed services, and intellectually rigorous in its assessment of risk through ways, ends, and means calculations. But, perhaps most importantly, the Doctrine served to inform the deliberations of senior policy-makers when making the sober decision of whether or not to place American service members in harm's way.

Despite contemporaneous critics among senior policy-makers, the WPD quickly became the gold standard decision-making framework for determining when and where the US should use military force in pursuit of national interests. In 1984, Weinberger outlined his contributions to the Doctrine in a speech at the National Press Club.³ Powell, who went on to serve as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, publicized his own criteria in a 1992 article for *Foreign Affairs*.⁴ Together, there are nine separate criteria to the WPD.⁵ They asked policy-makers to assess the need for force based on the national interest, to specify a clear and attainable political objective, to ensure the military has sufficient means necessary to achieve the military objectives, to ensure there is public and

³ Ibid, 443.

⁴ Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5 (1992), 38.

⁵ The nine criteria of the WPD used by this paper are an amalgamation of the six criteria specifically presented by Secretary Weinberger during his 1984 speech and in subsequently provided in his memoirs and the addition of the less specific criteria discussed by General Powell in both his 1992 article and in other writings and speeches. The nine criteria are used routinely by academics and policy-experts assessing the WPD. See Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 433; Stephen Walt, "Applying the 8 Questions of the Powell Doctrine to Syria," *Foreign Policy*, (September 13, 2013) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/03/applying-the-8-questions-of-the-powell-doctrine-to-syria/> (accessed December 10, 2016).

congressional support for any military operation, to calculate the risks, and to establish an exit strategy.

The Doctrine served both men well during their time on the National Security Council (NSC) and was praised by both President Reagan and President GHW Bush. Arguably, the apotheosis of the Doctrine was the 1991 Persian Gulf War, wherein Saddam Hussein was compelled to withdraw his military from Kuwait as a result of the overwhelming force brought to bear by the US and allied coalition. Following Iraq's concessions, Operation DESERT STORM was widely regarded as a resounding victory. The war was popular with the American people and troops were treated to a hero's welcome upon returning to the US. In short, the Persian Gulf War was everything the Vietnam War was not. It appeared the US had finally solved the question of when and how to use force in the pursuit of national interests. Yet, twenty-five years after the ticker tape parade in New York featuring a triumphant General Norman Schwarzkopf, the WPD has fallen out of favor with policy-makers. What began as a gradual turning away from the Doctrine under President Clinton became a general collapse under President GW Bush and President Obama. The utility of force has been, once again, called into question due to the apparent failures in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.

This paper examines the critiques of the WPD and finds it to be misaligned with the realities of the geo-strategic environment, overly prescriptive in practice, and misunderstanding of the utility of force. The paper goes on to examine these issues in detail and provide recommendations for modification of the Doctrine to restore the WPD to utility among policy-makers.

The logic of the paper is laid out over the following five chapters. Chapter two reviews the existing critique of the WPD arranged into the three main categories: 1) the lack of context; 2) the overly prescriptive nature; and, 3) differing perspectives on the utility of force. The next three chapters examine each of those issues in greater detail. Chapter three examines the problem of context by presenting two competing theories of war then examining how those theories relate to the changes in the geo-strategic context over the last thirty years. Chapter four looks at the problem of prescriptive thinking by examining how ideas become prescriptive and examining the difference between policy and strategy. Chapter five weighs the utility of force under the WPD's original construction compared to current doctrine and global engagement. Lastly, chapter six provides recommendations to modify the criteria of the WPD by synthesizing the previous chapter's logic concerning the Doctrine's existing problems.

Table 1 – Weinberger-Powell Doctrine⁶

The US should not commit forces unless our vital national interests are at stake. Our interests include the vital interests of our allies.
The US should commit forces in sufficient numbers and with sufficient support to win.
We must have a clearly defined political objective
Continual reassessment and adjustment of applied force is necessary.
Support for operations from both the public and Congress are a necessity. Broad international support is necessary where appropriate.
Use of force as the last resort – only after diplomatic, political, economic, and other efforts have failed.
Assessment of the associated risks
A plausible exit strategy in place
Consideration for the consequences of using force.

⁶ The nine criteria of the WPD presented here are an amalgamation of the six criteria specifically presented by Secretary Weinberger during his 1984 speech and in subsequently provided in his memoirs and the addition of the less specific criteria discussed by General Powell in both his 1992 article and in other writings and speeches. The nine criteria are used routinely by academics and policy-experts assessing the WPD. See Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 433; Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," 38; Stephen Walt, "Applying the 8 Questions of the Powell Doctrine to Syria," *Foreign Policy*, (September 13, 2013) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/03/applying-the-8-questions-of-the-powell-doctrine-to-syria/> (accessed December 10, 2016).

Chapter 2 – Existing Critique

Writing about the utility of the WPD in a post-Desert Storm age, Cori Dauber notes, “While it may no longer be the controlling argumentative structure of American military doctrinal statements, [the WPD] clearly continues to define American military preferences.”¹ The statement captures the problems inherent to the Doctrine’s status in the 21st century. Although the WPD remains popular among senior military leaders and some policy experts, it still lacks utility for policy-makers because of three underlying tensions: the lack of contextual congruity with the current geo-strategic environment, the overly prescriptive nature of the criteria, and its misunderstanding of the modern utility of force.

Critique of Acontextual Nature of WPD

Supporters of the WPD assert its utility and enduring relevance stem from it being intellectually rigorous and grounded in classic military theory. Powell has always asserted the Doctrine does little more than seek a modern-day application of Clausewitz’s ideas on strategy.² Clausewitz recognized two levels of war: strategy, the application of coercive violence against the fielded enemy forces to achieve military objectives that lead to political ends; and tactics, the details associated with the application of coercive violence.³ The WPD applies to both these levels by requiring a clear articulation of policy ends to inform military objectives and provides a list of the WPD prerequisites designed to mitigate the uncertainty of war.

¹ Cori Dauber, "Implications of the Weinberger Doctrine for American Military Intervention in a Post-Desert Storm Age," *Contemporary Security Policy* 22, no. 3 (2001): 73.

² General Powell consistently makes the point that the WPD is little more than a restating of the basic nature of war found in classic military works and inculcated in military doctrine.

³ Antulio J. Echevarria, "Clausewitz: Toward a Theory of Applied Strategy," *Defense Analysis* 11, no. 3 (1995), <http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Echevarria/APSTRAT1.htm> (accessed January 10, 2017)

When speaking about the Powell Doctrine, General Powell often relates his decision-making criteria to the principles of war, especially mass and objective. He also takes care to note that no doctrine can apply unilaterally to every situation; however, he suggests that seeking a competitive advantage is the heart of the strategy and the core of the WPD.⁴ Supporters of the WPD echo these sentiments and note that just as Clausewitz remains relevant to military theory, the WPD remains relevant to informing policy-makers.

Luke Middup's *The Powell Doctrine and US Foreign Policy* examines the WPD criteria's origins and application over the last thirty years. Middup assesses the WPD to be as relevant today as in 1984. He traces the WPD to the many evaluations of Vietnam, the ultimate laboratory in bad policy and failed military adventurism. Middup references the work of Colonels Douglas Kinnard and Harry Summers, both of whom produced scathing critiques of the war by referencing aspects of the WPD to show how policy-makers erred in their use of force calculus.⁵

Walter LaFeber charts the history of the WPD from the 1989 invasion of Panama to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He notes that influential policy-makers such as National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pushed to change the discussion informing use of force decisions by down-playing the WPDs stiff

⁴ When discussing the Powell Doctrine with war college students, General Powell routinely describes the Doctrine as little more than an articulation of the principles of *objective* and *mass*, and therefore something every student of military planning and tactics should already be familiar with. James E. Armstrong, III, *From Theory to Practice: The Powell Doctrine*, (master's thesis, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2010), 36; Colin L. Powell (lecture, National Defense University, Washington DC, November 30, 2016).

⁵ Douglas Kinnard's book *The War Managers* is a compilation of interviews conducted with every senior ranking General officer to have commanded in Vietnam. Harry G. Summer's book *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* has become required reading at the Army War College and is widely considered to be among the best assessments of the Vietnam War from the military perspective. Luke Middup, *The Powell Doctrine and US Foreign Policy* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 3.

requirements.⁶ Rumsfeld, in particular, pushed for a revolution in military affairs in which joint operations might be lighter, more lethal, and readily deployable.⁷ Rumsfeld's transformation in military planning and employment led to the rapid and successful invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸ LaFeber argues the transformation's turning away from the WPD is also the reason those wars took a turn for the worse following major combat operations.⁹

When asked in a recent interview whether the WPD remained relevant to our modern geo-strategic environment, former CENTCOM Commander General (retired) Anthony Zinni remarked, "Parts of it yes. Colin Powell talked about the use of overwhelming force . . . If we would have gone into 2003 Iraq with 400,000 troops, as we rolled-back the regime, the whole trajectory might have been different."¹⁰ However, he went on to note, "The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine is a good recipe to re-fight WWII, but where the Weinberger-Powell doctrine fails is that it isn't a good recipe for the conflicts that we are inclined to be [in] today . . ."¹¹ Here, General Zinni points to the central issues raised by critics of the WPD: the acontextual relationship between the Doctrine and the realities of today's geo-strategic threat environment.

⁶ Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 86.

⁷ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2001), 32.

⁸ Use of the term "success" here implies only that the initial invasion was successful in defeating the national forces defending the sovereignty and territory of the states in question. The term does imply that the overall outcome of the war was a success or that the political objectives articulated at the war's outset were achieved.

⁹ LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," 93.

¹⁰ Octavian Manea, "Reflections on the Modern Battlefield: A Discussion with General Anthony Zinni," *Small Wars Journal*, (September 11, 2014) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/reflections-on-the-modern-battlefield-a-discussion-with-general-anthony-zinni>, (accessed January 14, 2017).

¹¹ Ibid.

The Prescriptive Nature of the WPD

While the WPD endeavors to be a distillation of Clausewitz, its prescriptive nature is best explained through the differences between Clausewitz and Jomini. In their efforts to understand and elucidate the success of Napoleon, the focus of the two theorists became divergent. Clausewitz conceived of Bonaparte's domination of Europe to be a function of his strategic and tactical genius and dedicated himself to understanding how to cultivate similar genius within the Prussian General Staff. Clausewitz was focused on waging war in the mind. Jomini, by contrast, strove to disaggregate the tactics and procedures of Napoleon; he remained focused on waging war on the map.¹² Of the two, Jomini dominated professional military education until the early 20th century. His *Art of War* was more directly applicable to instructing young soldiers how to make war, not merely to think about war. Over time, Clausewitz has supplanted Jomini as the tactics and procedures of 19th century Europe have become increasingly antiquated and less relevant. Similar flaws plague the WPD.

In *Masters of War*, Michael Handel devotes a chapter to examining the WPD's historic significance and logic. He concludes that while the WPD endures as a source of valid strategic questions for policy-makers, the Doctrine quickly became overly prescriptive in its interpretation by supporters and is out-of-step with how the US actually uses force in pursuit of national interests. Handel notes, "[S]tates must often fight for secondary and even tertiary interests to protect their vital interests," going on to say, "the 'crisis in Grenada' did not even remotely threaten vital US interests."¹³

¹² Jan Angstrom and Jerker Widén, *The Dynamics of War: Contemporary Military Theory* (London: Routledge, 2013), 34.

¹³ Michael Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2007), 313.

Jeffrey Record, a professor of strategy at the Air War College, builds off Handel's critique to examine the neo-conservative policies of President GW Bush using the WPD as a framework for analysis. Characterizing Powell as a realist serving amongst a cadre of idealists, he finds the WPD imperfect for modern application despite its utility in explaining the errors inherent to neo-conservative military adventurism. Record sees the WPD as suffering from its own form of idealism noting, "to view the use of force as a substitute for diplomacy is to see military victory as the objective of war rather than as the achievement of the political ends for which war is waged. Frederick the Great got it right: 'Diplomacy without arms is music without instruments.'"¹⁴ The WPD criteria seeks to both link military victory to political ends and reserve military force as the instrument of last resort. The result is thinking that is narrowly prescriptive on how and when to use force.

The Utility of Force Considerations in the WPD

In his influential book on modern conflict, *The Utility of Force*, General Sir Rupert Smith echoes Record's assessment. Smith links the WPD to an anachronistic perspective on war he calls Interstate Industrial War and explains that the Doctrine has fallen out of favor with policy-makers because it fundamentally misunderstands the utility of force in the current geo-strategic threat environment. According to Smith,

"With the end of the Cold War [the reasons for the WPD] evaporated, yet we have continued to conduct our analysis within the industrial model. Indeed, the principles and the ethos they represent have

¹⁴ Jeffrey Record, "Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, (Fall 2007): 91. Within this article, Record quotes Frederick the Great. The original context of that quote may be found in Robert Debs Heinl Jr., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 88.

become an obstacle to using military force with utility, since they are based on flawed assumptions that have nonetheless become written in stone.”¹⁵

For Smith, the Doctrine cannot be appropriately assessed without understanding its first principles. Mapping the Doctrine to its roots in classic military theory helps to understand its prescriptive nature while also leading to a an examination of the perspectives on war that underpin the document’s central beliefs concerning the utility of force and the military instrument of national power.

Similar critiques concerning the WPD’s rigid view of the utility of force existed among policy-makers contemporaneous to Weinberger and Powell. Secretary of State George Shultz and Congressman Les Aspin were among the most vocal critics.¹⁶ In 1984, Schultz remarked, “diplomacy not backed by strength will always be ineffectual at best, dangerous at worst.”¹⁷ Echoing this sentiment, Aspin noted that the Doctrine was an “all-or-nothing” approach that prevented the US from using limited force in the pursuit of limited objectives.¹⁸ This line of complaint came to a head after the Persian Gulf War while General Powell served as CJCS under President Clinton. The resounding defeat of the Iraqi military during Operation DESERT STORM fueled the lure of decisive capability. The notional power to resolve international conflict through the application of precise force led the Clinton administration to expand the aperture on why and where to intervene militarily. This sea-change in use of force considerations explains US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright’s support for *coercive diplomacy*

¹⁵ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 377.

¹⁶ George Shultz served as Secretary of State under President Ronald Reagan from July 1982 to January 1989. Les Aspin represented Wisconsin in the US House of Representatives from 1971 to 1993 and was the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee at the time of the comments noted here.

¹⁷ Barry M. Blechman and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Defining Moment: The Threat and Use of Force in American Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 1 (1999): 2

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and was foundational to the NSC's waning support for the WPD's restrictions.¹⁹ Albright expressed her frustration over Powell's resistance to the use of force as an expedient to diplomatic efforts questioning, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"²⁰

Summary

The rationale for the WPD is rooted in the need for policy-makers to sufficiently scrutinize where, when, and how to employ force as an instrument of national power. The outcome of that scrutiny should be sound decision-making that seeks a particular political outcome, attempts to mitigate the uncertainties of war, and strives for a competitive advantage over the enemy. Supporters of the WPD highlight its intellectual coherence and concise distillation of military theory. The WPD, they assert, contains enduring truths about the conduct of war as an instrument of national power. Meanwhile, critics note the incongruity between the Doctrine's perspective on war and the world as it is. They find the WPD to be misaligned with, or acontextual from, the modern geo-strategic environment, overly prescriptive in its criteria, and out of sync with the modern utility of force. Assessing how these areas of critique impact the Doctrine's utility to policy-makers is central to developing recommended modification. That work begins by examining the current geo-strategic environment along with two competing perspective on war.

¹⁹ Secretary Albright's frustration with General Powell, noted earlier, stems from her desire to use the military in support of on-going diplomatic efforts – coercive diplomacy. Alexander George describes coercive diplomacy as "back[ing] one's demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand." Alexander George, "Coercive Diplomacy," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 7th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 72.

²⁰ Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 576.

Chapter 3 – The Problem of Context

The WPD struggles to align its guidance with the modern realities of conflict because it is based on a narrow perspective of war. This perspective creates the lens through which the Doctrine attempts to frame the geo-strategic environment and associated problem sets. This chapter examines this issue by first presenting the WPD theory of war, then providing an alternative perspective. That alternative theory is then used to discuss the changes in the geo-strategic environment that have occurred over the course of the WPD's lifespan. Finally, a rationale for modifying the doctrine is provided based on the theory and application discussed.

Competing Theories on War

In *The Utility of Force*, Smith argues the WPD is acontextual because it is predicated on an antiquated theory of war which he terms Interstate Industrial War (IIW).¹ Smith unpacks the basis of that worldview to explain its origination in the Napoleonic-era and incongruence with the modern geo-strategic environment.² This paper posits a competing perspective on war, the Status Quo Theory (SQT). This competing perspective offers a contrasting vision for both explaining the world as it is and assessing utility of force within it. The following section provides an overview of the IIW and explanation of the SQT. These competing theories are essential to assessing the utility of the WPD and making recommendations for its modification.

IIW is the modern distillation of classic investigations into Napoleon's innovations in policy, strategy, and tactics. Napoleon dominated western Europe by

¹ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 61.

² Ibid.

building massive armies, exercising effective command and control of those forces, and linking the national will to the military campaign. In accordance with Clausewitz, IIW conceives of war as a continuation of politics that prefers to withhold the military option as the last among competing instruments of national power.³ Pragmatic reservations concerning the use of force are necessary within the IIW paradigm because war is a violent clash between states intent on forcing concessions.

War within the IIW construct may be best described as the use of military force to resolve a discrete political conflict in which a strategy of annihilating the enemy's fielded forces is used. Annihilation succeeds because decimation of the enemy force leads to political capitulation thereby yielding desired ends based on a linear relationship between military objectives and political outcomes. Lastly, war under IIW is episodic in nature meaning nations will occasionally need to go to war based on vital national interests, but war remains a distinct departure from the underlying state of peace.

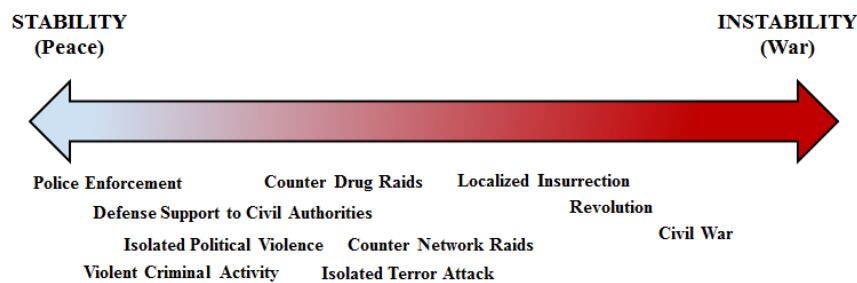
The IIW theory of war was perfectly valid during the Napoleonic era and to a lesser extent during the early 20th century. However, the Cold War began the actual transformation away from the age of IIW as conflict and war became more prevalent and based not on short-lived political disputes, but the ongoing state of conflict resident at the sub-systemic level.⁴ The SQT attempts to explain the nature of this conflict in order to better understand the character of modern war.

³ Ibid, 310.

⁴ The sub-systemic level is that level of analysis within the Cold War bi-polar international system that resides below the systemic level of the United States and Soviet Union. Sub-systemic conflict and wars are often called post-colonial revolutions and proxy-wars. Keith Dickson, "New Global Order: The Cold War" (lecture, Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA, December 7, 2016).

The SQT defines the status quo as the cumulative state of the socio-political, economic, and legal interactions between the people, organizations, and governments of a society. The theory goes on to view the status quo of any society as its defining feature and the best predictor of the existence of conflict and violence. According to the SQT, organized coercive violence is both necessary to a stable status quo and the consequence of an unstable status quo. The intrastate status quo can be conceived of as possessing a

Figure 1 – Continuum of Violence within the Status Quo



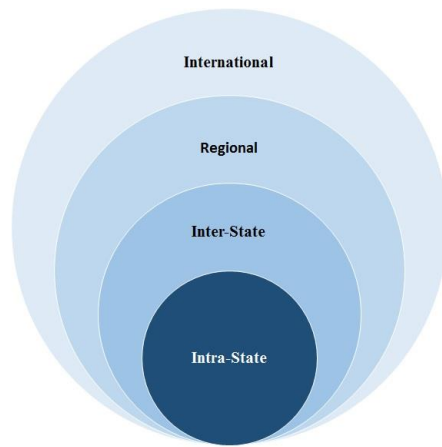
continuum of violence (figure 1) whereby some degree of violence always exists, even within a stable system.

When the level of coercive violence necessary to maintain order is normative, the status quo is stable. Conversely, when factors driving instability (e.g. crime, political unrest) require a level of coercive violence that exceeds the societal norm, the status quo becomes unstable. While the application of coercive violence is not the state's only instrument for stabilizing and restoring the status quo, it is instrumental and inherent to the state's underlying legitimacy according to both classic and modern social science. A state's sovereignty is contingent on both controlling the use of force within its borders and the ability to effectively wield that force for the purpose of maintaining order.⁵ The

⁵ In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes asserts the basis for state authority is to act as the common power that brings order to his state of nature – a “nasty, brutish” world in which exists a war of “every man against every man.” Max Weber advanced social sciences understanding of the state by describing it as the socio-

important take-away here is that SQT understands a stable status quo to include an element of both conflict and violence. The SQT concept of the intrastate status quo is applicable to not only states, but also to inter-state relationships, regions, and ultimately, the international system. This extrapolation perceives interstate, regional, and international societal interactions as operating in accordance with the same status quo concepts of the domestic sphere. Additionally, the SQT asserts there is an interaction between these nesting status quos such that stability and instability have a cascading effect from one to the next (figure 2).

Figure 2 – Status Quo: A layered series within a radiating structure, each exerting an effect on the next



The SQT builds upon the nested status quo concept by incorporating the work of Quincy Wright. In his *Study of War*, Wright delves into two key concepts that inform the SQT concept of status quo. First, that key disruptions to the status quo may lead to violence as a political necessity. These disruptions include technological innovations,

political manifestation of Hobbes' common power achieving sovereignty through "claim[ing] the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." The SQT is derived from both of these concepts by conceiving of the state as the *common power* that controls the monopoly of force and that force being required to maintain order. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (Lexington, KY: Seven Treasures Publications, 2009), 62; Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 98.

legal concepts of sovereignty and justification for war, sociological, and psychological.⁶ Second, that war is the result of political instability and the inability for non-violent policy activities to restore a stable status quo. Amplifying this point is Wright's insight that a stable status quo is capable of accepting evolutionary but not revolutionary rates of change.⁷

Any given status quo is dynamic because it is a manifestation of the many socio-political forces in play within it (e.g. new technology is continually developed, elections are held, and cultural shifts take place). Much of the dynamic change will be evolutionary in nature but not always. Revolutionary changes will occur within otherwise stable states or regions. These revolutionary changes may come from a single advance with significant consequences, such as a revolutionary technological shift. Or, they may result from the confluence of otherwise evolutionary changes that combine to form a revolutionary result, such as the effects of globalization.

Within states, internal security forces (e.g. police) maintain the monopoly for the exercise of coercive violence. These forces must continually demonstrate their ability and willingness to exercise their authority in order to achieve the coercive effect required to maintain order in the face of both evolutionary and revolutionary changes. The degree of violence required to maintain a status quo will correlate to the relative stability of the dynamic environment at that point.⁸ Normative levels of violence will correspond to

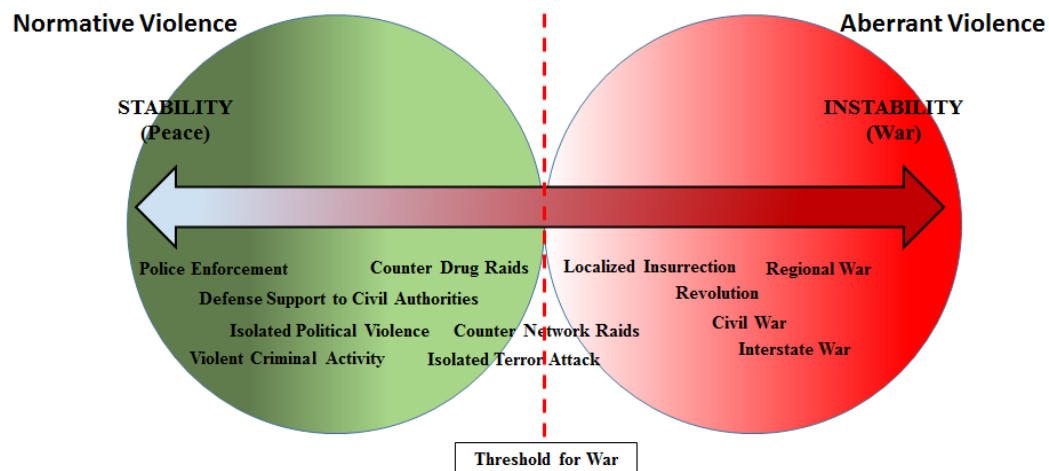
⁶ Quincy Wright and Louise Leonard Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 114.

⁷ Ibid, 80.

⁸ For example, police departments are required to demonstrate their presence to the communities they are responsible for securing. Additionally, police are required to respond to security situations to put down unrest through the use of force and detention. Together, the show of force and occasional application of force, there is derived a deterrent effect. Ideally, this deterrent limits the need for the actual application of force.

evolutionary changes. By contrast, revolutionary changes may require a significant amplification of coercive violence, which would be considered by the society as aberrant. War resides beyond the threshold and within the sphere of aberrant violence; the threshold for war will change within different contexts as the line between normative and aberrant violence shifts (figure 3).

Figure 3 – As the degree of coercive violence escalates in response to evolutionary and revolutionary changes within the status quo, normative levels may be exceeded resulting in an aberrant degree of violence and crossing the threshold for war.



War within the SQT may be best described as the use of force to contend with disruptions to the status quo that necessitate a degree of coercive violence outside the normative sphere. In contrast to the IIW, the SQT does not see annihilation alone as the operative strategy. Instead, a mix of annihilation and exhaustion is required to achieve military objectives. There is also no linear relationship between military objectives and political outcomes as coercive violence is only part of a larger set of complex and dynamic factors that contribute to the stability of the status quo. Lastly, while transitions to war may be episodic in nature, coercive violence is a steady state requirement of the

system therefore resident during both war and peace, varying as matters of degree. The following section further develops this concept by examining how the geo-strategic environment has changed over the lifespan of the WPD.

Changes to the Geo-Strategic Environment

Bipolarity describes the international balance of power during the Cold War wherein the United States and the Soviet Union stabilized the international status quo into what John Lewis Gaddis refers to as “the long peace.”⁹ War at the systemic, or international level, had become far too destructive and costly, and so the competition for influence was fought at the sub-systemic level. The result was a zero-sum competition by which a loss for one side equated to a gain for the other. Under the bipolar system, the two superpowers projected power into the regions of the world in an attempt to spread their influence, contain the other, and establish stability within their sphere of control. While these activities could be destabilizing they also created a strong external pressure creating regional stability. The US policy distillation of this concept is known as *containment* and translated to stopping the spread of communism as both an ideology and a system of government. The dedication to containment was fundamental to US national security strategy as the Cold War came to an end.

The US effort to secure democracy in Vietnam, and in particular the associated impacts on military readiness and morale, served as the impetus for the WPD. The Doctrine is deeply rooted in the Cold War military strategic context, drawing away from wars of choice in favor of refocusing on wars of necessity. Weinberger described this as a

⁹ John Mueller, "The Obsolescence of Major War," in *Conflict after the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace*, ed. Richard K. Betts (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 224.

pragmatic assessment of where the US should intervene in order to husband popular support, sustain morale, and maintain readiness for “engagements we *must* win.”¹⁰

Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, describes the modern geo-strategic environment as one marked by nonpolarity as the result of globalization creating an international system in which states are no longer the sole dominant actor.¹¹ Haass asserts the fundamental change to the geo-strategic environment is that nation-states have lost their monopoly on power and are now challenged by institutions, corporations, and increasingly powerful non-state actors including militias, violent extremists, and transnational criminal organizations. Despite the waning power of states, the systemic level remains stable; however, at the sub-systemic, or regional level, the loss of state power and influence creates challenges to order as the result of two countervailing changes – the withdrawal of stabilizing external power and the increased influence of non-state power.¹²

If a regional order is stabilized by an external power, it follows that it may prove unstable once the external power is withdrawn. Likewise, should the external power become diminished, the effect would be the same – a stress on the internal powers to fill the power vacuum. This was a situation faced in several regions in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse and the subsequent end of the bipolar system. Despite a 523 billion dollar defense budget, the US cannot completely fill the void left behind by the Soviet

¹⁰ Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 437.

¹¹ Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity: What Will Follow US Dominance?," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (2008): 44.

¹² This entrenched stability at the systemic level is due to the interplay between complex interdependence and the destructive power of conventional and nuclear weapons creating inducements and deterrence that prevents war between the world’s most powerful states.

Union's withdrawal.¹³ As a result, some previously stable regions, such as West Africa and the Middle East, have undergone revolutionary changes over the last two decades. In addition to the problem of the power vacuum, regional destabilization has also occurred as the result of globalization leading to evolutionary and revolutionary changes. The more stable the region's status quo, the more capable it is of absorbing change into the system without experiencing conflict and disorder.¹⁴ Globalization has empowered the rise of non-state actors to challenge state sovereignty. The nexus of international crime and extremist ideologies accelerates this trend.

Summary

The WPD criteria for evaluating the use of force in securing the national interest is not aligned with the current geo-strategic context. The Doctrine remains rooted in the IIW theory that conceives of coercive violence solely as war – the violent clash of armies used to settle political disputes between states. The competing SQT understands coercive violence to be an inherent part of a settled status quo and to exist along a continuum of degree rather than a stark dichotomy. Under the SQT, the US employs force to settle political disputes with belligerent nations, but also to stabilize intrastate and regional status quos.

The transition to a nonpolar world has significantly diminished the stability in some regions due to the withdrawal of externally stabilizing power and the challenges

¹³ Lynn M. Williams and Pat Towell, *Fact Sheet: Selected Highlights of the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4909, S. 2943): A Study Prepared for the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, United States Congress, by the Congressional Research Service*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 19, 2016), 1.

¹⁴ The Arab Spring is a ready example. Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation began as an act of individual political protest but spread across the region through as the result of social mobilization enabled by digital recruitment and organization.

posed to weak and failing states to compete with strengthening social movements, criminal elements, and violent extremists. The result is regional orders fraught with instability and the on-going struggle over who, if anyone, will achieve sufficient coercive control to restore a stable status quo. The past sixteen years have amplified this effect to the extent that “combating the persistent threat of terrorism” posed by violent extremist organizations is now included in the US National Security Strategy (NSS) as a central component to the security of the nation.¹⁵ It is within this geo-strategic context that policy-makers must decide what threats challenge vital national interests and which engagements must be won. The WPD no longer sufficiently informs that decision-making process because its perception of war is too narrowly focused.

¹⁵ US President, *National Security Strategy* (Washington: Government Printing Office, February 2015), 9.

Chapter 4 – The Problem of Prescriptive Thinking

In the same article in which Powell laid out his contribution to the Doctrine, he claimed, “There is, however, no set of rules for the use of military force. To set one up is dangerous.”¹ The WPD was not intended to be a prescriptive set of criteria governing any and all use of force. Instead, the Doctrine was intended to function as a list of best practices, and direct policy-makers to ask questions prior to the commitment of US combat forces based on lessons learned and enduring military truths. What was intended as criteria for informing a conversation, however, has been subsumed into military orthodoxy and become rigid precepts rather than thoughtful questions. Understanding how and why this happened requires examining the difference between strategy and policy and the problems experienced at their intersection.

The Policy-Strategy Divide

Policy may be defined as a set of guiding principles that direct the activities and choices of an organization through prioritization of effort and stated preferences concerning possible outcomes. Strategy, by contrast, is a plan of action for marshalling the power of the organization, and the activities resident within that power structure, toward achieving a desired end state or specific outcome. Put differently, policy is a set of principles while strategy is an actionable plan in support of those principles.² The challenge presented by the US system of civil-military control is for military strategy to support a national strategy that is defined by a national policy. Mapping these

¹ Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," 37.

² Surbhi S, "Difference Between Strategy and Policy (with Comparison Chart)," Key Differences (January 07, 2017), <http://keydifferences.com/difference-between-strategy-and-policy.html>, (accessed February 20, 2017).

connections the other direction, national policy sets principles which filter down to operations that action plans designed to achieve outcomes that both adhere to the principles and defend and advance the defined interests.

Writing about the difficulties of translating policy to operations, Richard Betts notes, “it is less useful to think of three realms—policy, strategy, and operations—than to think of strategy as the bridge between policy and operations.”³ The challenge for those acting at the strategy bridge is the task of translating the principles of policy into a more determinative set of guidance useful to operational planners. Joint doctrine describes a similar set of challenges as the task confronted by the Operational Artist. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, describes Operational Art as, “the creative thinking used to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and to organize and employ military force.”⁴ In Joint Doctrine, Operational Art is the purview of the commander and translates the abstractions of design and pre-planning assessment to the more tangible and concrete necessities of campaign planning and execution – the challenge of linking complexity to linear decision-making. Ben Zweibelson has conducted extensive research into this challenge and writes on the use challenges of incorporating design concepts in military planning.

How Ideas Become Prescriptive

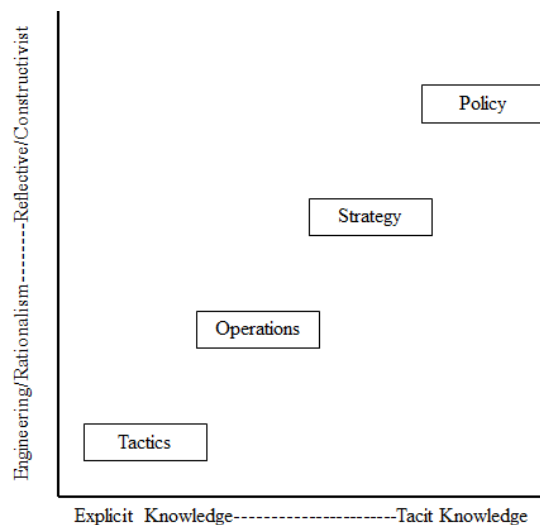
Zweibelson assessed the question of how a criteria becomes rigid precepts rather than thoughtful questions when seeking to understand why it has been so difficult for the

³ Richard K. Betts, "The Trouble with Strategy: Bridging Policy and Operations," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 29, Autumn/Winter (2001-2): 24, <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-29.pdf>, (accessed February 20, 2017).

⁴ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Operational Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington DC: August 11, 2011), I-5.

military to incorporate design into planning doctrine. He concludes that traditional military planning is in contradiction to design theory because the two methodologies think about thinking differently. Military planning is predicated on rationalism and explicit knowledge while design theory employs tacit knowledge and constructivist thinking.⁵ Military planning seeks to devise workable plans within the realm of the known with the intent of achieving a pre-determined outcome. Design, by contrast, operates with less certainty and acknowledges that not every aspect of the problem is knowable, to include the outcome of any given action within the system described. In a situation in which two competing methodologies are at odds, the method of thinking supported by the prevailing orthodoxy often wins and ends up working a conversion of sorts on the competing methodology. In the case of design, what is intended to be a free roaming exchange of ideas and analysis becomes a more perfunctory and orderly assessment of environment and problem. In other words, it becomes prescriptive.

Figure 4 – Relationship between Policy and Level of War



⁵ Ben Zweibelson, "An Awkward Tango: Pairing Traditional Military Planning to Design and Why It Currently Fails to Work," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16, no. 1 (2015): 27.

The relationship between policy and the levels of war (figure 4) helps explain the prescriptive nature of the WPD. Posited by two military men, the Doctrine was constructed in accordance with linear rationalism and sought to extract explicit guidance and decisions from policy-makers. Powell may describe the Doctrine as residing in the realm of policy, however, its language and relationship to the linear dictates of military planning cause it to be a tool more suited to taming policy than informing its construction. This is flawed logic and creates two essential problems to the Doctrine's utility for policy-makers. First, policy does not operate in accordance to linear connections. There can be no discreet cause-and-effect relationship in policy because the environment is simply too complex. Sheila Ronis, an expert in design and strategic development, explains "complex systems cannot be controlled – at best, they can be influenced."⁶ Second, the rationalism and explicit knowledge that underpin the WPD criteria are based on a stale assessment of the geo-strategic environment. Like Jomini's geometric assessments of Napoleon's lines of operation, the IIW perspective of war has failed to keep pace with the changes to the environment it seeks to describe. As a result, current application of the WPD requires the conceptual flexibility to bypass the inconsistencies between the criteria and the problem set.

⁶ Dr. Sheila R. Ronis is Chair and Professor of the Department of Management at Walsh College. She is also the Director of the Center for Complex and Strategic Decisions at Walsh College holding a joint appointment with Argonne National Laboratory University of Chicago. Dr. Ronis is the former chair of the Vision Working Group of the Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) in Washington, D.C., which was tasked by Congress to rewrite the National Security Act of 1947. Sheila R. Ronis, ed., *Forging an American Grand Strategy: Securing a Path Through a Complex Future*, report, Selected Presentations from a Symposium at the National Defense University, United States Army War College (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College Press, 2013), 5.

Summary

The WPD is overly prescriptive because it attempts to solve the problem of translating policy to operations by applying the linear, cause-and-effect thinking of military planning to the construction of policy principles. The current failure of the Doctrine comes from both the resistance of policy makers to be tamed by a doctrinal set of restraints and the disconnect between those restraints and the ends, ways, and means calculus currently informing use of force decisions.

In military doctrine, the challenge of connecting the dynamic and complex world of concepts and ideas to the linear world of specific plans and actions is captured in the concept of Operational Art and described as, “the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgement – to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means.”⁷ Per this definition, Operational Art is exercised both in the development of military plans and at the strategic bridge between policy and operations. Outlining meaningful criteria to inform those operating at the strategy bridge is the intent of the revised WPD.

⁷US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Operations*. Joint Publication 3-0, (Washington DC: August 11, 2011), I-13.

Chapter 5 – The Utility of Force

WPD Perspective on Utility of Force

The WPD was devised under the bipolar system and informed by the IIW theory of war. As previously described, the WPD perceives the utility of force as the resolution of a discrete political conflict through the annihilation of the enemy's fielded forces leading to political capitulation thereby yielding desired ends based on a linear relationship between military objectives and political outcomes. Military intervention of this kind is not focused on the stabilization of the underlying status quo. Instead, the target of force is the activities of a disruptive political actor. Defeating the actor has the intended effect of both resolving the immediate political crisis and restoring regional stability. Lastly, the WPD conceives of war as an episodic phenomenon disrupting an otherwise peaceful status quo.

SQT Perspective on the Utility of Force

Within the nonpolar geo-strategic environment, perceptions on the utility of force must be modified. Force must occasionally be employed to contend with disruptions to the status quo that necessitate aberrant levels of coercive violence to be contained. However, there must also be a sufficient monopoly over and application of normative levels of coercive violence by the dominant political actor to maintain stability. The utility of force applies to both situations. Some degree of coercive violence is a steady state requirement and not an episodic phenomenon. A mix of annihilation and exhaustion strategies is required to achieve political effects and there can be no distinct linear relationship between military objectives and political ends.

Looking at the way in which US forces are currently fielded and employed, we see the US already applies a SQT utility of force model and has throughout most of its history as a global power. A review of over 200 discrete US military operations reveals only eleven involved a declaration of war against a foreign power.¹ Presently, US Special Operations Command is tasked with “synchroniz[ing] the planning of Special Operations and provid[ing] Special Operations Forces to support persistent, networked and distributed Global Combatant Command operations in order to protect and advance our Nation’s interests.”² To accomplish this, a network of seven Theater Special Operations Commands are spread across the globe supporting US military forces in 138 countries across six continents.³ Within that number are twelve nations where weak governments and socio-political unrest has led to intrastate turmoil and significant regional disruptions (e.g. Mali, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan).⁴

The SQT contends the order and stability in the world is an aggregate constructed from the cumulative effect of nested status quos beginning at the intrastate-level. The violence resident at the systemic level comes from conventional and nuclear forces capable of a degree of aberrant violence so great the deterrent effects have lasted for decades. At the sub-systemic level, violence must actually be exercised to maintain

¹ Eleven nations included in the five declared in US history. Most formal uses of US military force did receive congressional authorization; covert operations not included. Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2010: A Study Prepared for the United States Congress, by the Congressional Research Service* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 10, 2011).

² United States Special Operations Command, *2016 Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command*, publication, US Special Operations Command (MacDill AFB, FL: 2016).

³ Nick Turse, "American Special Operations Forces Are Deployed to 70 Percent of the World's Countries," *The Nation: US Wars and Military Action*, (January 5, 2017), <https://www.thenation.com/article/american-special-forces-are-deployed-to-70-percent-of-the-worlds-countries/>, (accessed February 12, 2017).

⁴ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "This is Where American Special Operations Forces are Helping Advise U.S. Allies," *The Washington Post*, (April 17, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/04/17/this-is-where-american-special-operations-forces-are-helping-advise-u-s-allies/?utm_term=.01535be2bee9, (accessed 12 February 2017).

stability. The degree of violence is dependent on the degree of stability in the system. Again, these concepts are already resident within the existing US utility of force methodology as evidenced by both doctrine and action.

Joint Publication 3-07 defines Stabilization as, “the process by which military and nonmilitary actors collectively apply various instruments of national power to address drivers of conflict, foster host-nation resiliencies, and create conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.”⁵ Deterring and degrading destabilizing non-state actors via targeted military strikes while simultaneously cooperating with the interorganizational community on non-violent mechanisms of developing state capability, capacity, and resiliency is the foundation for the direct and indirect methodology in use today. It is refined for special operations in Joint Publication 3-05 and Army Doctrine Publication 3-05, but applies equally across the range of military operations that do not involve special operations.⁶

Summary

The SQT captures the utility of force as currently employed. Large scale force-on-force wars are relatively rare as compared with the vast majority of US military operations and the day-to-day employment of force around the world. That day-to-day, steady state application exists to provide stability to the states and regions of the world most at risk to disorder. Acting as an external force to provide both direct and indirect influence on state and regional status quos secures the national interest. It is within this

⁵ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Stability*. Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington DC: August 3, 2016), ix.

⁶ JP 3-05 and ADP 3-05 provide Joint and Army doctrine describing special operations core activities, command and control, and support considerations. US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Special Operations*. Joint Publication 3-05 (Washington DC: July 16, 2014). Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Special Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication 3-05 (Washington DC: August 31, 2012).

conceptualization of the utility of the force that modifications to the WPD must be considered.

Chapter 6 – Modifying the WPD

The WPD requires modification because it is acontextual to the current geo-strategic environment, is overly prescriptive in its relationship to policy-makers, and misunderstands the utility of force on the modern battlefield. The following is a discussion of the five principle focus areas for the construction of a modified doctrine (table 2). Proposed wording for revised criteria is presented in italics at the beginning of each section followed by a discussion of the proposal.

Interests

Securing US national interests requires an international order comprised of regional order. The use of force may be required to establish or support a regional status quo, however, support for long-term regional stability requires the judicious use of military intervention as part of a national strategy using all instruments of national power.

The WPD specifies that military force should not be used unless the vital national interests of the US are at stake. The problem inherent to this seemingly clear piece of guidance is that what exactly constitutes the vital national interests of the US is not discretely defined. Nor is it likely to ever be discretely defined by policy-makers because to do so would be to tie their hands for future decisions. Such is the nature of politics – restricting trade space is never preferred.

Instead of attempting to push policy-makers to justify the use of force through the narrow articulation of vital national interests, it is preferential to accept that the use of force is an essential instrument of national power. This realist assertion of the necessity of force to secure the national interests is inherent to the SQT perception of the regional stability and informs the revised doctrine's central philosophy – a stable regional order is

essential to securing vital US national interests. The use of force continues to be an instrument of national power essential to supporting and defending regional orders. That being noted, the modified doctrine must remind policy-makers of the limits of force alone to stabilize order. Complex interdependence stemming from in-depth economic and socio-cultural connections amplify the efficacy of non-military mechanisms to assist in securing the national interests through supporting regional order.

Policy, Roles, and Responsibilities

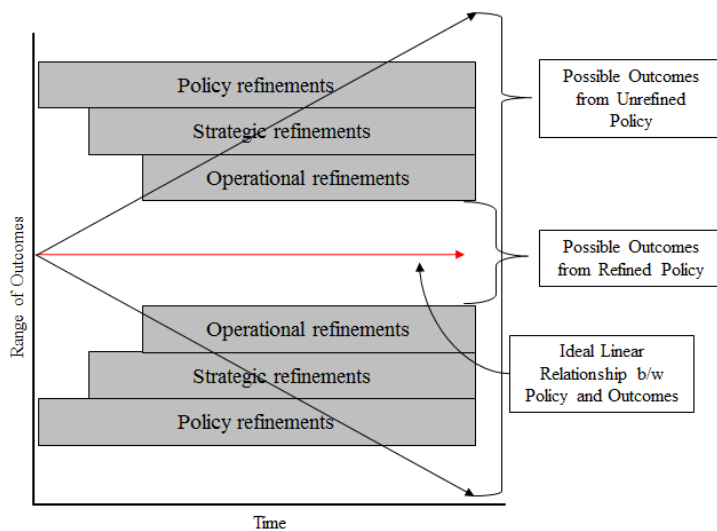
The National Command Authority must establish unambiguous policy concerning the desired effect of any use of military force in defending and securing the national interest. Military commanders will provide advice for framing policy then translate that policy to strategic and operational plans designed to implement and achieve the policy ends. Both policy and strategy will be reevaluated and modified as often as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest.

The WPD misunderstands the construction and application of policy. Policy is not strategy nor is it operational guidance. Strategy seeks to align ways and means to gain a competitive advantage over the adversary and operations seek to plan, conduct, and sustain campaigns resident within the strategy; both are adherent to the logical, linear thinking that connects a discrete outcome to a set of smaller, connected objectives. Policy, by contrast, seeks to define a guiding set of principles that achieves a desired outcome that is less definitive than strategy. These principles may be thought of as akin

to the constraints and restraints discussed in Joint Doctrine.¹ By knowing what is both acceptable and required, the range of possible actions and outcomes is reduced.

Given this conceptualization, the interaction between policy and strategy becomes clearer. Policy-maker's guidance to strategists and planners should be unambiguous as to the outcome they seek and the limitations within which strategists should operate. Then, rather than quibble over the lack of specificity included, strategists and planners must refine that guidance to devise a strategy designed to support the desired outcome. By necessity, any strategy and associated operational plans, will have a greater degree of specificity – restraints and constraints will attempt to further restrict the range of possible outcomes. That is to be expected and must be the case if anything meaningful is to be accomplished. The essential step between policy and strategy is for policy-makers to empower strategists to pursue outcome planning at the strategic, operational, and tactical level in accordance with military doctrine. This does not mean national command

Figure 5 – Refining policy through the use of constraints and restraints reduces the range of possible outcomes



¹ JP 3-0 defines constraints and restraints as, “limitations (restraint – cannot do, and constraint – must do) on actions that the commander may take.”; US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Operations*, I-13.

authority is abrogated. It means that once policy guidance is provided, operational art further refining that guidance is expected and approval provided as appropriate.

Ways, Means, and Authorities

US military operations require sufficient ways, means, and authorities for success. The mismatch between necessary ways, means, and authorities and desired ends creates risk that must be evaluated and either mitigated or accepted by commanders and policy-makers prior to execution. The risk associated with on-going operations must be reevaluated, modified, and accepted anew as often as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest

The WPD is an extrapolation of a basic operational assessment. Planners assess the ways and means necessary to achieve the desired end state. Powell boils this down to mass and objective – given the mass necessary to overwhelm the enemy, the objective may be obtained. The modern geo-strategic environment has significantly changed these relationships. In an environment where non-state actors employ guerilla tactics and the support of the people is one of the objectives, overwhelming mass may be more of a hindrance than a necessity. Intelligence and the speed of decision-making and assessment has proven to be far more effective than mass alone.

Rumsfeld's transformation agenda is often critiqued given how both Afghanistan and Iraq took a turn for the worse. However, looking closer, it is true that both invasions were surprisingly effective when assessed by the limited objective of toppling the ruling regime. Both resulting occupations were far less successful as force alone proved insufficient to restoring a stable status quo. The take-away informing a modified doctrine

is that successful strategy balances the ways, means, and authorities provided against the desired end state.

Here we return to the interaction between policy and strategy. It is up to the strategist to discern what sort of intervention is required to achieve the desired policy effects. Once determined, policy-makers must be informed on the ways, means, and authorities desired to accomplish the strategy and the associated risks from any imbalances. Risk is accepted across the spectrum of command, to include the national command authority. The higher the degree of risk, the higher the echelon of command that signs off on that risk. Risk stemming from national missions such as high-profile raids or joint, multi-national operations are accepted as the highest level. Additionally, certain risk is resident only at the policy level. This includes the political risk of public opinion and the associated risk of congressional support. While the WPD sees both public and congressional support as necessary to the use of force, the modified doctrine will frame public and congressional support as elements of risk. Necessity will drive the political calculus as regards risk.

When and Where to Act

US military force should be used where appropriate as part of a broader, whole-of-nation strategy to secure US national interests by stabilizing the regions of the world.

As should be clear by now, the decision on when and where to act cannot be restricted by the last resort calculus of the WPD. The use of military force, as articulated in JP 3-07, must be part of a broader, whole-of-nation effort to “collectively apply various instruments of national power to address drivers of conflict, foster host-nation

resiliencies, and create conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.”² These direct and indirect methods work in tandem to both deter and degrade the forces of destabilizing violence while simultaneously building organic capability, capacity, and resilience within states to provide for their own security. Secure, resilient states are capable of positively contributing to regional security and stability. This is the basis of the nested status quo concept.

The utility of force in the current geo-strategic environment is to buttress the intrastate and regional status quo at the lowest degree of force necessary. Further, targeted force allows aberrant violence to be contained and directed at specific targets rather than indiscriminately applied. Specificity of violence permits direct and indirect methods to operate simultaneously and, by design, synergistically. As a result, the decision on when and where to use force will be part of a broader regional strategy that sees coercive violence as only one of many tools available.

Sustaining the Effect

US military force should be sustained as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest. Use of US military force should always be part of an interorganizational approach that addresses drivers of conflict, fosters host-nation resiliencies, and creates conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.

The regional status quo will, like the international status quo, require the complex interdependence of political, economic, and socio-cultural ties to resolve balance of power issues. However, when regional states cannot maintain their own sovereignty and

² US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Stability*, ix.

non-state actors are provided a safe space from which to challenge state and regional authority, no stable status quo can prevail. The utility of force within the modern geo-strategic environment is to establish or restore the intrastate and regional status quo by restoring a monopoly over the coercive use of violence to legitimate political actors. The US strategy that governs this utility of force seeks to empower states to provide for their own security and sovereignty. Most US military intervention is based on restoring stability then handing off that requirement to non-military and organic assets.

Civilian control of the military requires that the determination of when and how to effect that transition reside with national command authority in military commanders. This strategy does not require a pre-defined exit strategy or a discrete set of policy objectives to act as a set of check boxes that predetermine when stability has been restored. Instead, the determination of how to best sustain the effects of any military intervention or prolonged engagement will be determined by the facts on the ground and the long-term policy and strategy that govern the employment of force.

Table 2 – Revised Weinberger-Powell Doctrine

Securing US national interests requires an international order comprised of regional order. The use of force may be required to establish or support a regional status quo, however, support for long-term regional stability requires the judicious use of military intervention as part of a national strategy using all instruments of national power.
The National Command Authority must establish unambiguous policy concerning the desired effect of any use of military force in defending and securing the national interest. Military commanders will provide advice for framing policy then translate that policy to strategic and operational plans designed to implement and achieve the policy ends. Both policy and strategy will be reevaluated and modified as often as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest.
US military operations require sufficient ways, means, and authorities for success. The mismatch between necessary ways, means, and authorities and desired ends creates risk that must be evaluated, mitigated, and accepted by commanders and policy-makers prior to execution. The risk associated with on-going operations must be reevaluated, modified, and accepted anew as often as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest
US military force should be used where appropriate as part of a broader, whole-of-nation strategy to secure US national interests by stabilizing and developing the regions of the world.
US military force should be sustained as necessary given the changing circumstances of the environment and associated risks to the national interest. Use of US military force should always be part of an interorganizational approach that addresses drivers of conflict, fosters host-nation resiliencies, and creates conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine (WPD) was formulated with a particular mission in mind – to put an end to the senseless waste of American lives in the pursuit of vague policy goals. The Doctrine responded to a crisis of confidence within the Department of Defense concerning policy-maker decisions on where, when, and how to use force as an instrument of national power. The Doctrine attempted to take a rationalist approach to governing the use of force by establishing a set of rules, or criteria that reduced success in war to enduring military principles. This rationalism explains why it continues to be embraced by some as logical, intellectually rigorous, and grounded in timeless military truths. Regardless of its rational foundations, it cannot be denied that the Doctrine has fallen out of favor among policy-makers and no longer serves its intended purpose.

The decline in the Doctrine's use and utility is an example of how things that are ideal in theory struggle to contend with the dynamics of application in both the political and operational environment. Strict adherence to the WPD criteria drive the US toward either isolationism or heavy-handedness. The Doctrine's decline may be mapped to its principle flaws. Namely, that it is acontextual with the modern geo-strategic environment, overly prescriptive in its guidance, and misunderstands the utility of force on the modern battlefield. These three factors culminate in the Doctrine failing to inform the operational artist who functions at the strategy bridge – the link between policy and operations.

Similar to the artist who links operational design to operational planning, the artist in question uses expertise, experience, and intuition to refine policy principles into a strategic plan. There is no definitive set of rules or criteria that can appropriately

prescribe the necessary actions to accomplish that task. However, the revised doctrine presented here attempts to inform the operational artist by providing general guidance congruent with the geo-strategic environment, free from prescriptive dictates, and aligned with the utility of force. The recommendations offered acknowledge the need for a whole-of-nation strategy, an interorganizational approach, and the recognition that supporting and stabilizing the status quos of partner nations and vital regions is not military adventurism – it is the pursuit of national interests on behalf of a nation whose interests span the globe.

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Vitae

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