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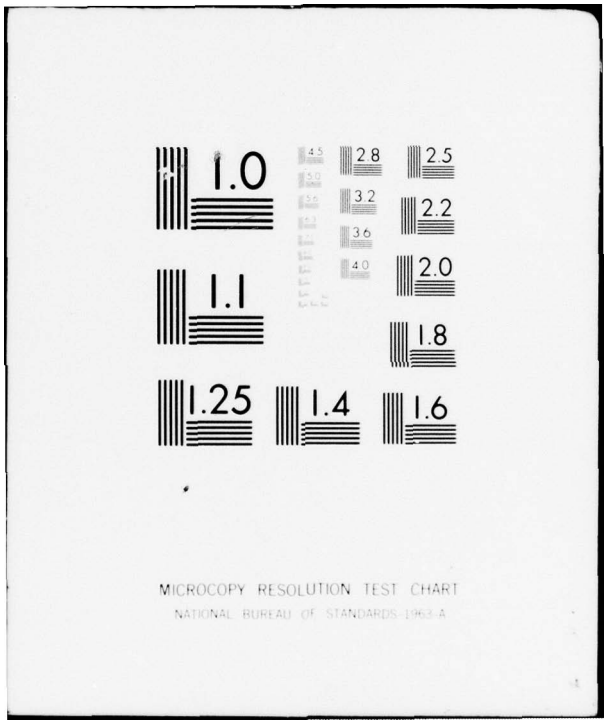
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25 MAY 1977

ACN 77021

CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECTION OF CONVENTIONAL US MILITARY FORCES

MILITARY ISSUES RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECTION OF CONVENTIONAL US MILITARY FORCES

by

Colonel Donald Esper

25 May 1977

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The views of the author do not purport to reflect the position of the Department of the Army or Department of Defense.

FOREWORD

This memorandum reviews factors and trends which constrain the projection and, in some cases, the effects of US conventional ground forces as a form of military power available for use to influence events in a crisis situation. In the military sphere, the author views recent developments as leading to increasing doubt concerning the US capability to meet the requirements for the projection of conventional military power. Among the constraints he considers are reduction in forces and capabilities viz-a-viz the growing conventional forces of the Soviet Union. Other aspects of the problem which are discussed include doubts concerning the actual intent and likelihood of US use of force in pursuit of a diplomatic objective and fears regarding the perceptions of other governments regarding the US use of such forms of power. The memorandum concludes that the United States must maintain its military power abroad in support of national objectives, which in turn will encourage the resolve and rededication of the American will to continue carrying out its national responsibilities.

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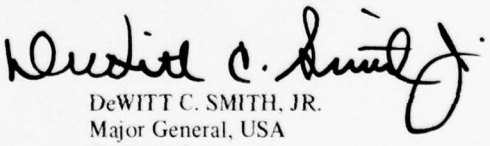
This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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COLONEL DONALD ESPER joined the Strategic Studies Institute in 1975 following an assignment as Chief, Surface Plans Division, US Support Activities Group, Thailand. His service in the Army includes troop command tours in cavalry and armor units as well as recent staff assignments in the operations, armor development, and intelligence fields. Professional assignments include the directorship of the 25th Infantry Division Language School. Colonel Esper graduated from Xavier University with a bachelor's degree in personnel management and holds a master's degree in education from Canisius College.

CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECTION OF CONVENTIONAL US MILITARY FORCES

During the 30 odd years since World War II, the United States has enjoyed a capability to rather freely project its available conventional military surface forces, in support of national objectives, into almost any area of concern about the globe, excepting those areas already occupied or dominated by forces of major opposing nations. This relative freedom of military action in support of US foreign policy usually has been available in time of stress to back up softer measures of diplomacy, economic sanction, and political pressure.

Though most often unused, this military power potential has existed as a tool of last resort in times of crisis to exert the fundamental power of the United States. Whether used or not, the very existence of this capability undoubtedly has been felt in many instances of international turmoil as a stabilizing element to bring about a solution short of unconstrained warfare.

At present, several factors, some of them newly emerging, are combining to severely limit, if not absolutely negate, the effectiveness of such American projections of conventional military power into many areas heretofore open to such force or its threat.

In response to expressed doubts concerning the US ability to apply its conventional or general purpose forces in time of crisis, a questioner will be immediately deluged with considerations of the general purpose forces in-being, of the tremendous capability of American strategic airlift in terms of the C-141 and C-5A heavy air transports of the US Air Force and of the civilian reserve air fleet, reinforced with the other varieties of strategic and tactical airlift. Similarly, claims for large-scale logistic movements by sea lift will be claimed by some naval proponents. Collectively, such military capability or potential is, however, only one portion, albeit an important one, of the very complicated equations associated with the projection of military power. Even in the sphere of these military considerations, developments of recent years are leading to increasing doubt concerning the capability of the United States, in its present and planned military posture, to meet the requirements of the near tomorrow for the projection of conventional military power.

Another major aspect of the conventional military power projection problem is reflected by questions concerning the will of the American people and their government to utilize military force in pursuit of US objectives in problem areas of the world. This growing concern regarding US will takes a two-fold form. First, doubts are expressed in regard to the actual intent or likelihood of US use of military force in pursuit of a diplomatic objective. Secondly, fears are generated as to the possibly erroneous perception held by opponents concerning the will of the United States for employment of such forms of power.

The objective of this essay is to review existing or developing factors and trends which tend to constrain the projection and, in some cases, the effects of US conventional forces as a form of military power available for use to influence events in a crisis situation, initially short of open warfare. In addition to trend developments within the military sphere, consideration will be given to certain pertinent economic, political, and sociological aspects which impact upon military applications of national power.

A SITUATION OUTLINE

In viewing the impact of these constraints, it appears worthwhile, for common understanding, to first develop briefly the flow of events that might make up a typical application of conventional military power. This self-formulated skeletal outline may apply to the employment of

conventional military forces, at least initially, in a situation short of open warfare. The force envisioned may be of any size up to a multidivision structure with normal support elements but the use of force at the lower end of this spectrum would be probably more common.

As a preliminary caution it is important to remind ourselves that the events postulated in such an outline are not, in the real world, typically time-sequential in occurrence, event-dependent in initation, nor isolated in execution from other on-going, nonmilitary efforts to control or manage the crisis at hand. Concurrent efforts to control events by tools of foreign policy would be more usual. Meanwhile the military machinery, if alerted, will begin to update suitable contingency plans, identify, assemble, and perhaps even pre-position forces for movement at increasingly higher conditions of readiness. As an aside in this connection, the additional time for preparation purchased by early identification of the possible need to eventually deploy forces in a crisis situation is extremely valuable to the success of the operation if the actual commitment of forces is ultimately required. This early "stand-to" may spell the difference between having a suitable force on the scene in a timely manner rather than being faced with a prepared opponent already in position and able to forestall or counter US military initiatives. This urgency is especially important in precluding major power confrontation.

Once the decision is made to deploy the force into the troubled area or its proximity, all appropriate speed is essential so as to be first upon the scene of operations. During this phase the major focus will shift from organization and formation of the force to the actual movement of the force by the required air and sea lift. In addition to the availability of the necessary strategic air and sea lift forces required for both the initial deployment and force buildup as well as for sustained operations, is the freedom of the lift and force movement over required air or sea lanes and the use of in-transit and terminal staging areas. These areas may be necessary for lift refueling, possible troop rest, and final preoperation force structuring with training rehearsals as required. These terminal staging areas may also serve to facilitate last-minute diplomatic decisions on the force projection prior to irrevocable commitment. The necessary international agreements must be obtained for the suitably unrestricted passage and usage rights for both lift and the operational force.

The use of a forward or terminal base area may not be feasible in

terms of force size, timing, or mission, but if utilized, may be either in the operational area itself, in a nearby but easily accessible locale, or, in the case of naval or amphibious forces, located in a near off-shore sea area. If the mission requires such a forward base, a combat operation to seize and secure a site may be necessary.

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Having been deployed into the approximate area of operations, the conventional force must resume its normal military operation and logistic functions with the overall aim of a reduction or stabilization of the crisis and attainment of the assigned goal.

Attention at the national level during this time must be applied to ensuring the fullest possible support or at least understanding, both with the American people and abroad, of the actions being taken and of the objectives desired. The major aim must be to reap the fullest possible value of the military force projection for the overall national goal and, at the same time, efforts must be undertaken to provide for the earliest suitable force withdrawal and to regain a more normal or at least more desirable environment of international relationships.

Viewing this rather generalized and very simplistic outline as a base case for study, its careful analysis exposes many requirements for not only suitable military capabilities, but also for physical and psychological support from most elements across the spectrum of our national existence.

MILITARY CAPABILITIES

A primary concern are constraints on the proper organization, equipping, and disposition of appropriate military forces. These may limit force utility in terms of effectiveness for mission accomplishment as well as in flexibility of employment and of ready response.

Essential indeed to a review of these restraining factors must be a consideration of the actual conventional forces available for such projection in view of the overall reduction of all of the US military services following the conclusion of US involvement in hostilities in Southeast Asia. Predating these recent major reductions in force was a general downward trend of US military capability in comparison to Soviet Russia beginning in the early 1960's and only temporarily interrupted by our buildup of forces for Southeast Asia. This point is borne out by a review of the military forces of early 1964 as compared to those of the 1976 period.[1,2]

A reduction in numbers of units, manpower, or equipment is, of course, not necessarily in direct correlation to a loss of equal capability. Nevertheless, it is fairly safe to speculate that there has been a meaningful loss in the flexibility of the force in terms of time-critical worldwide employment potential. This reduction of US military forces in-being is particularly significant to a consideration of potential for limited military power projections in view of the growing Soviet capability for overseas projection of its rapidly growing conventional military power.

Equally important to a consideration of the quantity of forces available to the United States in a crisis, which might lead to commitment of a conventional military force, is an analysis of the types of units and equipment translated into capability which might be required.

We will first examine the major surface force of a conventional nature which will make up the ground component of the force projection envisioned by our outline. In the usual type of intervention short of major combat, this force will be projected by either air or naval means into a location or position where, at least initially, it will face no more than a low-intensity battlefield environment. The requirement then would appear to be for a light, highly-mobile organization with a minimum of heavy equipment and backup support. The austerity of such a unit in turn provides a bonus benefit in terms of the increased economy possible in planning the air or sea lift asset requirement portion of the projection. This economy can be used to either reduce the amount of lift required or to enable the force to be increased in either size or staying power. If faced with any but the most sophisticated enemy armor or air threat, the force should be able to operate, at least initially, with the lightweight antitank and antiair weaponry now available to our conventional infantry and amphibious units. Other lightweight equipment such as the jeep-transported TOW missile and the trailer-mounted Vulcan air defense system, together with tactical air support, could provide backup support if required.

At present, US forces available for employment in this mode and not already publicly committed to NATO or other primary contingencies are two Army infantry divisions, two Army special purpose (airborne and air assault) divisions, and three understrength Marine Amphibious Forces.[3] While it is true that the organization of three additional Army infantry divisions are in various stages of completion, at least four brigades of this total force will be organized in the civilian or reserve

component[4] and thus will not be available for immediate deployment. Additional classified requirements for NATO reinforcement and possible employment in the Mideast or elsewhere may further degrade the potential size of this light, fast-reaction force. The intention of the Department of Defense to reorganize and equip two additional divisions of this force as mechanized divisions in a heavier antiarmor configuration[5] for presumable reinforcement of the NATO and Mideastern commitments will also detract from low-key crisis-oriented forces in the event of a concurrent NATO or Mideast buildup. In this same vein, the commitment to NATO of at least one Marine Amphibious Force in either its conventional form or even as a reorganized mechanized force has been studied in both the United States and in Europe. Additionally, there is some limitation to rapid deployment of the air assault division with its large numbers of difficult-to-transport helicopters which require some form of forward base for necessary preflight processing. Such a base is not always immediately available; otherwise this concept could be ideal for employment in the baseline scenario that we have envisioned.

As an additional consideration to the conventional surface force which we have discussed above, we must look at recent trends in tactical close air support and Naval gunfire support available as necessary components of the conceptual force.

During 1975 the last 8-inch gun-capable cruiser in the US Navy was deactivated. The 5-inch gun, with its 13 nautical mile maximum range for conventional ammunition, remains as the heaviest gun available for naval gunfire support of either amphibious operations or ground operations conducted in areas contiguous to the sea. While this gunfire can be augmented by surface-to-surface missiles in the fleet, when guided by forward located beacons, this type of fire is extremely expensive, is not particularly accurate or effective in this nonconventional mode, and is in short supply. Eventually, a new 8-inch lightweight gun, now in testing, could be mounted in a variety of surface combat ships and utilized for long-range gunfire support of ground forces; at best, this asset in significant quantities is still several years in the future and must continue to compete successfully against other high-priority shipbuilding or naval modernization projects[6] as it passes its developmental tests.

In the near term, deficiencies in naval gunfire support for our force must be compensated for by Air Force and naval air support and here too, one finds serious limiting trends.

In 1964 the structure of the US Air Force Tactical Air Command and similar overseas commands contained 85 fighter/attack squadrons. By 1976 this force had fallen to 74 fighter/attack and general-purpose squadrons.

In the same timeframe of 1964 to 1976, reduction of the aircraft carrier force level from 24, including 8 ASW carriers to 13 ships has been carried out with a concurrent drop in naval fighter/attack squadrons from 85 to 65. The Marine active fighter/attack structure dropped from 28 squadrons in 1964 to 25 in 1976.[7]

Some of the shortfall in aircraft carrier support with its fighter/attack aircraft may be made up by diversion to tactical air support or general fleet air functions of the helicopter-carrying general purpose Amphibious Assault Ships (LHA) now under construction. This diversion may be at the expense of perhaps sorely needed amphibious lift. The 5-ship LHA program is more than 3½ years behind schedule now and not due for completion until 1979 or later.[8]

A planned program for a new class of relatively cheap multipurpose carriers optimized for tasks in medium and low intensity warfare, has been proposed by the Department of Defense,[9] but may not survive the Navy's cost and operational effectiveness study rooms. Meanwhile a new type of sea-control ship which could carry small numbers of very short take-off and landing aircraft was deferred for further study by Congress in 1975. Both types of ships could probably be useful in providing tactical air support for our scenario requirements in the mid- to long-range timeframe.[10]

As in the case of all the military services, any significant reinforcement to tactical air forces would involve a call-up of civilian component elements with time delays required by mobilization procedures and political decisions.

Indeed, any prolonged projection of significant forces would almost inevitably force a call to active duty of at least selected reserve component elements.[11] The austerities which are being implemented in the overall army force structure, in terms of a "bare-bones" organization of the support base for the combat arms in order to provide manpower spaces for the 16 Division force,[12] makes doubtful the possibility of establishing even a limited base support structure without seriously degrading the capability to act concurrently in Western Europe. It is certain that the military leadership of the United States during any period of increased international tension would find it extremely difficult to draw down forces programed for European

commitment faced with the uncertainties of initiating an equivalent buildup from the reserve components. Congressional approval for such a buildup is not a reasonable expectation at the present time.

National military policy seems to envision a one and one-half war concept. Currently, in terms of available combat resources it is doubtful that the active force structure would be able to support national military requirements for more than one major contingency in one area of the world at one time. The one and one-half war capability is open to at least serious question when faced with the buildup of conventional forces taking place in all services of the Soviet armed forces. Even if the ability to maintain a reasonable conventional deterrent capability in Europe and some support of a Mid-Eastern, North Asian, or other less critical requirement, little if any of the currently planned military capability would be available for concurrent commitment elsewhere.[13]

In some situations forces programed for mid- to high-intensity warfare may be committed for the less conventional operations envisioned in our projection of forces scenario. There is little doubt that, at least to a meaningful degree, the capability of these same forces will be degraded for commitment elsewhere, in terms of organization, training, and equipment, by their orientation towards the militarily more sophisticated environment of the European or even Mid-Eastern battlefield. There is little resemblance between the threat posed by the heavily-mechanized, trained, and well-equipped forces generally found in the Warsaw Pact and its closest client states compared to the low-key, sometimes less-modern enemy which may be encountered in many of the areas of concern in Africa, Latin America, and Asia at the present time.

FORWARD POSITIONING

Another factor which impacts greatly on the capability to rapidly muster American military force as a projection of US foreign policy is the positioning of the available forces. Even in the current era, characterized for US military planning by its extremely-rapid and very flexible military airlift potential, a requirement for the appropriate forward positioning of forces about the world is still an important factor in our projection of force equation. Permanent stationing of piecemeal forces throughout the world is not necessarily a requirement but the capability to preposition forces in forward operating areas in time of crisis may be critical to success.

Without the Air Force helicopters operating from Thailand, the fortunate presence of naval forces with an aircraft carrier off Vietnam, and the location of Marine ground forces on Okinawa, the timely rescue of the SS Mayaguez crewmen in May of 1975 would have been virtually impossible. Only the presence of flexible US forces in the Southeast Asian and Western Pacific areas made that projection of force operation feasible.

Nevertheless, despite the rather clear requirement for the strategic forward operating positions for appropriate military forces, the trend seems to be one of withdrawal from such areas. Since the cease-fire signed with North Vietnam in 1973, which marked the end of direct US combat operations in South Vietnam, the US presence has been completely eliminated from Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam leaving only Thailand as a semi-committed friend of the United States in mainland Southeast Asia. Even there, the United States has been forced by internal Thai political pressures to withdraw all except a minimal military assistance force from that vital forward base.

During the same timeframe, US forward positioning and bases have been placed under severe local political pressure for a limitation of US base usage in both the Philippine Islands and in Okinawa. Efforts to counter this pressure against US forward forces in the Western Pacific by the establishment of a major base in the Marianna Islands have met with failure[14] due to budgetary constraints and lack of congressional interest, if not outright opposition. In a similar manner, lack of funds and congressional restraint hinder a suitable buildup of the Diego Garcia Island base as a counter to Russian expansion into the Indian Ocean.[15] Other setbacks to US strategic bases and positioning have been felt in the forced withdrawal of US facilities in Ethiopia and in future restrictions threatened against the free use of the Azore Islands as a refueling base.[16] Serious restraints have also been placed upon US forces operating from both Greece and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean.

During this same period, the USSR has continued to extend its presence in the Indian Ocean, has maintained its friendly interest with Vietnam and the strategic bases in that important corner of the world, has developed bases on both the Guinea (West) and the Somali (East) coasts of Africa, and more recently has openly and heavily supported the Communist forces that fought in Angola and elsewhere in Africa, presumably with the expectation of eventually being able to use bases in that important area.

It takes only a glance at a world map to quickly grasp the difficulties caused by the loss of the ability of the United States to operate from or through only those bases mentioned here that have been lost or, even worse, replaced by Soviet influence in the past few years. If allowed to continue, this trend ultimately may lead toward a withdrawal of US forces into a "fortress America" with possibly a European and a North Asian outpost. Such a withdrawal could not help but be a serious detriment to possible projections of US military force which may be required elsewhere.

SOVIET PROJECTION

One cannot leave this consideration of the trend of US withdrawal from the far reaches of Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Africa without at least a brief consideration of some pertinent and growing capabilities of the military forces of the Soviet Union available for its use in the exploitation of these withdrawals of US presence.

Annual reports by the Secretary of Defense and Service chiefs during this same timeframe continue to reflect the growing naval power of the Soviet Union together with its amphibious capability and, also, the growing military airlift capability of Soviet air assets. It may be granted that these airlift and sea lift or amphibious forces are not yet the equal of similar US force capabilities,[17] nevertheless it is easy to envision either Soviet or client-state forces, supported by such lift or amphibious capability, moving into new Communist spheres of influence about the shores of the Indian Ocean and the coastline of Africa thus expanding Soviet areas of direct military influence.

A perfect example of the exploitation of new Soviet capability came with the rapid airlift of Cuban mercenaries into Angola as support for the Communist-dominated takeover of that African state. During that same crisis, Communist bloc sea lift moved large tonnages of military equipment, possibly from other African bases, into the Angolan area.

Note should be made here of the Soviet employment in this instance of the military forces of a client-state. Such employment better enabled the Soviet to maintain its own anticolonialism image and to continue to at least superficially prevent a rupture of its delicate detente with the United States while continuing as the primary sponsor of international communism.

Such use of the forces of a client-state enables the Soviets to preposition their air and sea lift forces so as to be in a posture to

quickly project suitable surface forces into an area of Soviet interest or of international crisis. These forces can be specifically tailored for the operation at hand and, as a bonus, do not degrade Soviet conventional force concentration in opposition to either NATO or China.

SUPPORT FROM ALLIES

Earlier in this essay mention was made of the vital requirement for uninterrupted use of air and sea lanes for the projection of US force when employed. The free use of these lanes in recent years has been seriously jeopardized in several instances by varying combinations of diplomatic, political, and even terroristic pressure available to forces opposed to any projection of the US military force or influence.

Included among such examples of prevention of free movement of projected forces was the denial by Greece, Spain, and Turkey of their air-fields as refueling bases for US airlift resupply in support of Israeli efforts in the Middle East War of 1973.[18] In a future crisis, threats of terrorist activities against airfields may also hamper the free use of those bases[19] as did the imposition or threat of fuel embargoes by the oil-producing states in sympathy or participating with the Arab forces opposing Israel.

While the conventional military forces of the United States have been undergoing a period of general reduction and at the same time continued withdrawal from many bases strategically located about the world, other allies have been forced by a variety of economic or political pressures to withdraw from their previously-held responsibilities in support of free world activities. When the withdrawal of our allies, in such instances, have been from areas or functions of important concern to the United States, it has been sometimes necessary for the United States to underwrite or accept new responsibilities in those areas.

An example of this problem may be found in the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the area of Singapore, and the Malaccan Straits. In fact, British presence is virtually at an end throughout the Indian Ocean area.[20] Unless the United States acts to assume at least the more important of these tasks, a power vacuum can develop which will serve as an open invitation for Communist expansion. If the United States does accept these additional missions, then the forces available for the projection of conventional power will assume even greater and wider responsibility. This widening of responsibilities, in turn, tends to

weaken the ability to react in specific instances due to overcommitment of available forces.

MODERN WEAPONRY FOR UNDERDEVELOPED STATES

This last consideration in the military category has to do with the increasing capabilities among the formerly backward nations in their efforts to counter the very sophisticated modern weaponry of the more advanced national powers.

The capability of even a relatively backward people to master the intricacies of such weapons as antitank and air defense shoulder-fired weapons, and even the techniques of the smaller variety of antishipping missiles, has been proven. When met, this type of weaponry may seriously hamper a full application of modern equipment on those battlefields where formerly we were accustomed to almost literally meeting the bow and arrow with the bomb and machine gun.

Included in this concept must be a consideration of the training of dissident leaders of those same formerly backward nations provided by the Communist states in applying the very positive lessons of guerrilla or other forms of unconventional warfare against a more sophisticated modern military establishment. Such training was quite evident during the recent wars in Southeast Asia.

DESIRE FOR PEACE

As stated earlier in this discussion, another category of constraints on the ability and effectiveness of US projection of conventional military force concerns itself with less measurable nonmilitary areas directly related with the capability to project military force. Among these sometimes unquantifiable factors or trends which include economic, political, sociological, and other impacts upon our national power and will is our almost overwhelming national desire for a state of peace between the United States and other nations of the world. This desire for peace, sometimes even at a high cost to other national interests, is a thread which, although frequently violated, is woven throughout the fabric of our national existence during this century. In some instances this drive may be a strong constraining factor to the projection of military power as an instrument of foreign policy.

In the military area this strong national desire for peaceful coexistence often lies behind the ever-occuring drive to reduce, often

ostensibly in the name of economy, the military forces and capability of the United States.

It is useful for our analysis to recognize that this desire for peace is based upon two pertinent concepts. The first of these concepts is the desire on the part of much of our citizenry to reduce the often erroneously perceived as unproductive requirements of our military establishment in terms of money and national energy, which presumably slow or limit the progress of the United States toward the "Great American Dream." This concept drives us towards often false economies including a reduction of the size and thus the cost of our armed forces, a withdrawal of costly military forces from overseas bases, and an acceptance of a general tendency to place our military interests on the "back-burner" of our national endeavors.

The second of these significant concepts of our desire for peace is an almost tangible public horror of the destructiveness and costliness of warfare in terms of wasted lives and national resources. Often this psychological revulsion towards warfare drives the national will into seriously limiting the military capability of our armed forces. Frequently the steps taken in the name of this repugnance toward the horror of war are, in the long run, even more detrimental than the horrors which are being avoided.

Today, as an example, this same repugnance of war severely limits development of an adequate capability for the US armed forces to defend against, or respond offensively to, chemical warfare operations if initiated by the forces of the Soviet Union.[21]

In relation to our ability to project military force, this abhorrence appears to sometimes cause opportunity for the successful employment of such projections to be lost, or in other cases cause a delay beyond the most effective point for the implementation of such projection.

Altogether, the increasing fear both in the United States and throughout the Western world towards a war which could be almost universally catastrophic tends to limit the US use of military force to gain its objectives in the field of foreign relations, regardless of how correct or justified those objectives might be.

This limitation reflects an almost all-pervasive fear that even the lowest levels of military force could somehow lead to an overall exchange of nuclear weaponry which, in the ultimate, could result in subsequent disaster for all concerned.

DETENTE

A major aim of US foreign policy during the Nixon and Ford eras

and one continued into the present administration of President Jimmy Carter is summed up in the often-misunderstood and even disavowed but still descriptive word "detente." In many, if not most, American minds, detente means, or is supposed to mean, a worldwide state of peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union; it might be more usefully described as a condition under which both sides are attempting to reduce specific tensions and stabilize relations in an effort to create an environment which will permit a series of agreements limiting the nuclear arms race. The latter interpretation of the condition of detente permits the Soviet Union, and indeed the United States if it so wills, to continue the pursuit of international objectives of national policy, even at the expense of the other partner in detente.[22] Meanwhile the growing involvement by the US public, with its own cloudy interpretation of detente, tends to limit in major ways the willingness to take any overt military action which could be interpreted as an effort counter to the development of detente, or even possibly detrimental to the fruits of detente which may have already been gained.[23]

While this condition indeed limits the options acceptable to the United States, the Soviet Union continues to pursue international goals finding no real conflict with its probably less self-limiting understanding of the true condition of detente. Recent development, especially in connection with political considerations, are tending to reduce this constraint in a hardening US attitude toward the USSR.

AFTER VIETNAM

Another intangible factor constraining our ability to project the United States stems from the unfortunate outcome of US involvement in Southeast Asia.[24] In this connection the national pride or self-image of the United States has been severely eroded by, in effect, a lost war. In view of this threat to national self-esteem, the United States is clouded by self-doubt and an increasing will towards isolationism which will be discussed later in this paper. This cancer of Southeast Asian experience on the US national morale and, to an unknown extent, even on the national will was compounded by the common distrust of the leadership of South Vietnam felt by many Americans. This experience in turn nurtures a tendency to distrust any foreign government which is not patently and overtly a mirror-image of our own democracy and thus limits military arrangements with certain nations useful to US power projection planning and operations.

NATIONAL WILL

Along with these American self-doubts concerning Vietnam is a perception, held by segments of world opinion, that the United States may be in the process of becoming a "paper tiger" as a result of Vietnam.[25] These doubts concern the US will to react strongly within its own capabilities in support of its vital interests or in accordance with its agreements or understandings with other countries.[26]

Reinforcing these doubts stemming from the debacle of Vietnam are other examples of US weakness or confusion during recent years in the face of Communist opposition. Instances of this sort include the capture of the US navy ship Pueblo with its crew, the forced withdrawal of American presence from Cambodia and Laos, and the failure to support the pro-western position in Angola. The rapid and strong reaction of the United States at the time of the SS Mayaguez incident only partially put to rest these foreign feelings of doubt in US national will.[27]

Few seriously doubt the potential military capability of the United States to face and successfully resist Soviet pressure. However, doubt does remain concerning the US will to exercise its military might and so in turn this factor must be considered as a limitation to the projection of US military power in terms of its tendency to lessen the support of neutral nations and, in some cases, even of our friends.

ISOLATIONISM

In the face of a changing world situation highlighted by the growing loss of confidence by foreign nations in the United States and of the impact the economic results of a threat of energy boycott upon their political institutions, the United States appears to have lost a significant measure of international prestige. We may well expect that many of our former friends and even allies will be coerced into not only the withdrawal of support of the United States, but conceivably, even to some condemnation of activities by the United States in support of its own national objectives as well as those of the free world.[28] Commonly, in the past, the United States was able to depend strongly upon if not the active support of its allies, at least their passive cooperation and their concurrence in the American use of free passage rights and base support. Today this developing lack of allied support constrains, possibly to a serious degree, US ability to freely project its military power.

Collectively, many of the abstract concepts just discussed are combining to also promote a reverse loss of confidence in other nations by the American citizenry. There is a growing feeling of disenchantment with the failure of allies to carry their fair share, as perceived by the United States, and with the burden of the common protection of the non-Communist world. Political attacks on America and its policies by third-world countries receiving large quantities of US assistance have further exacerbated this US perception of a lack of foreign support. As a result of these pressures the United States may well be tending towards an increasingly isolationist attitude or at least a reassessment of our national interests.

As such an attitude might develop and become more commonly perceived as grass-roots feeling, it could not help but detract from any efforts of our leadership to enlist the support of the nation in acting rapidly and promptly to support aims of US policy in foreign areas.

Recent problems of the Ford administration in enlisting the support of the non-Communist factions contending for control in Angola may be considered, in part, symptomatic of this growing sense of isolationism within the United States. In that sense it can be viewed as an example of the detrimental effect such a concept can have on the projection of US power in support of foreign policy.

FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

In the 20th Century the growth of communications technology has enabled the public news media to inform and influence national and world opinion with unprecedented speed. This early reporting of events, which creates a greenhouse-like atmosphere of national and international governmental activities, may seriously restrict the freedom of governments in the earliest and perhaps most vulnerable decisionmaking stage. Especially affected will be efforts to organize and prepare for projection of military forces. The lack of support from public opinion and the media for US efforts to back the non-Communist factions in Angola is a case in point. It reflected a lack of public understanding of the issues and was probably accurately reflected in the lack of congressional interest in permitting decisive US action in that crisis.

Several of these not clearly measurable concepts from the field of politics and sociology are generally more easily perceived in their round-robin spiraling effect upon one another in the development of

public opinion. It matters little where one enters this ever-tightening circle; the eventual impact will be directly on the national will in regard to decisions concerning the responsibilities of the United States toward the free world. If, in fact, the national will is lacking, it is almost impossible in the long term to project military power in support of US foreign policy.

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

Another basically nonmilitary factor in our national existence having a very primary effect on the possible projection of US conventional military force is the field of economics.[29] Restraints on the projection of military force stem from at least two major aspects of the economic sector: First, because of the economic situation in the United States, in the mid-1970's characterized at best as a period of weak recovery from a great recession, if only in terms of economic implications, a major buildup of American conventional military strength must be limited. Secondly, also due to the economic difficulties within the United States, there is a tendency on the part of our leaders as well as the people themselves to be more concerned with problems at home, sometimes at the expense of interests abroad. This internal economic concern may further reinforce a feeling of isolationism in connection with the possible directions which foreign policy might take.

Together then, the lack of a sufficiently high priority of economic resources necessary for a major buildup of US military forces, coupled with a national tendency in times of economic stress to look inward towards internal problems, jointly limit in some part the US ability to develop a stronger military posture and thus a greater capability to organize and position its forces in such a way as to be most effective in the projection of conventional military power.

ENERGY CRISIS

Perhaps in a causal relationship to the current posture of economic difficulty are the effects of the energy crisis already mentioned. These effects, perhaps best characterized by the rapidly increasing costs of energy products, have exacerbated the difficulties with rising prices and inflation both within the United States and throughout the Western world.

The concern of this exposition with the energy crisis is focused upon

several aspects of this very complicated total picture. One aspect is the limitation that the threat of a cutoff of energy sources might have on the US freedom of action to project military power. In that sense the impact of such a cutoff must be considered in its implications both internally and to US relationships with friendly nations or allies upon whom the United States must depend for support, or at least for passage or usage agreements, at the time a projection of military power may become desirable.[30]

Another impact of a threat to cut off energy would be in the actual production and distribution problems caused by such a cutoff of energy resources. If such a threat is actually carried out in reprisal against nations supporting US pursuit of common objectives, steps to share available resources would be essential to the interests of the common well-being.[31]

The problem of that sort of energy crisis is not mainly one of providing sufficient energy resources for the military power projection itself, but rather is one of concurrently producing and sharing available resources which must be spread over all friendly powers affected by the energy boycott and especially those directly participating in the joint effort.

This required sharing of available resources could well be the anvil upon which united ventures by concerned powers could be broken. Questions which must be raised concern the will of the people who possess the resources to suffer, at least to some degree, personal hardship in sharing their assets with a second party in support of possibly still a third party. Unless the national will has been formed and hardened to such a degree that it can withstand the assault of this question, the military power projection may never be possible or, if underway, may be brought to an unsatisfactory or untimely conclusion.[32]

IMPROVING CAPABILITIES

Despite the rather gray tone of our discussion thus far, it would be overly biased to leave the subject without some consideration of aspects or factors which cast a more encouraging light upon the capability of the US military forces to rapidly and effectively project the military force of the nation.

Even though attention was directed towards the trend for elimination of major essential units in the active force, steps are

concurrently being taken to raise the readiness of the active force which remains and, at the same time, to make possible a more rapid activation and integration of selected units from the civilian components necessary for a force buildup if required by a major projection of military power.

Especially on the active forces side of the balance, programs to procure whole new families of military equipment are being carried out. This more modern equipment possesses a much greater degree of capability than the equipment presently in the inventory and frees many still useful types of equipment for civilian component use. In providing funds for this equipment modernization, the FY 77 defense budget was over $100 billion and has received approval from the Congress.

Typical examples of equipment programs with such increased general purpose force capability are the F-14 and F-15 fighter aircraft, currently coming respectively into the US Navy and Air Force inventories. Along with these aircraft, the highly effective and very survivable A-10 aircraft is now being produced for the Air Force close air support role. At the same time giant strides are being made in the development and procurement of precision-guided munitions for the Air Force attack and naval aerial ammunition stockpiles. This ammunition will improve both the capability of some current aircraft as well as that of aircraft now under development.

Efforts to improve the capability of the strategic airlift fleet are also underway. Congressional approval and funding is being sought for programs to increase the range of the strategic airlift fleet by developing the tanker aircraft capability for aerial refueling of C-5 and C-141 aircraft. A program to lengthen and strengthen the C-141 aircraft, thus increasing its hauling capability in terms of both bulk and tonnage, has been planned, subject to funding by Congress. An additional program to increase the flexibility and shorten the cargo-handling time and load-size of selected wide-body jet cargo aircraft of the civilian reserve air fleet is also waiting congressional approval.

In the surface forces, major strides have been taken in developing and issuing light-weight, sometimes man-portable, antiarmor and antiair precision-guided missile weaponry for both the forces in-being and the civilian component. In connection with the ground forces, plans have been prepared and programs are being implemented to increase readiness posture by manning active combat units at close to wartime strength and by increasing readiness training both by improved

techniques and effective innovations in new training devices and equipment.

In terms of improving its readiness, the Army has taken major strides for increasing its "tooth-to-tail" ratio or comparison of combat to support manpower and units. Some quarters even believe that this ratio in certain areas may have become overly austere in active force support capability. This question is currently under study.

We have previously considered typical oncoming Navy programs such as the F-14 fighter, the general purpose amphibious assault ship program, and the light-weight fully automatic 8" naval gunfire support weapon. These programs, too, should eventually result in an improved projection of limited military force capability.

All of the services are taking extensive measures to affiliate individuals and more especially units of the civilian component with active elements of the military force, while at the same time civilian component organizations are being given more modern equipment, more realistic missions in both the support and combat areas, and, generally, are being prepared for their newly emphasized role as a more flexible and faster responding element of our total military force structure.

Thus, major programs are planned or are in being to improve the posture by the military forces in respect to performing general purpose missions which might be executed in the limited projection of military force role. Improvements in this area are costly in terms of manpower and money, both for procurement as well as for training and maintenance budgets. Given the national will, translated into resources provided by the Congress, there is little physical reason, in view of the American advantage in gross national product alone, to believe that the United States could not maintain a viable capability in this area of limited projection of conventional military force vis-a-vis the capability of the Soviet Union or other foreign power.[33]

Recent trends appear to indicate at least the beginning of recovery from the economic recessions of the 1974-75 period. In the face of this beginning of recovery,[34] some small improvements in the energy problem,[35] an accompanying improvement in public morale, and the healing passage of time since the Southeast Asian debacle of early 1975, the stage is being set for a possible strengthening of the American will to continue to carry the burden of national responsibilities, both at home and throughout the world. These same trends should tend to improve the equally important foreign perception of American will in the international sphere.

In regard to this improvement in national will, no absolutely predictable outcome is possible at this time. Therein lies, perhaps, the real issue of this essay. If the American people clarify or refocus their intent as a nation to carry their burden of international interests and responsibilities, the ability to maintain sufficient forces to project its national will appears to be within the reach of the nation.

SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE

In summary, this essay has attempted to develop or delineate factors and developing trends which tend to affect and, sometimes, to constrain the projection of military power by the United States in support of objectives of its foreign policy. These constraints have been categorized for discussion into those of the military spheres and those from other than military disciplines, which nevertheless have direct bearing upon the ability or the willingness of the American system to project limited military force in a crisis situation.

A generalized scenario was developed against which major military force requirements and capabilities could be tested and analyzed. Shortcomings in the required capabilities were expressed and, to some limited degree, trends were quantified.

A major aspect of the total problem concerned doubts of the willingness, either real or perceptual, of the United States to project military force in pursuit of US objectives overseas. Such doubts both at home and abroad in US national will were found to be exacerbated by American loss of morale in regard to the disasters in Southeast Asia, by economic conditions compounded by the energy crisis, by national attraction towards a universal peace together with possible isolationism, and by the enervating aspects of a possibly misinterpreted condition of detente with the Soviet Union.

On the more optimistic side of the question concerning capability to project military force, we scanned typical new efforts in the areas of manpower, organization, equipment, and improvement of the civilian component programs now being planned or underway. These programs aimed at higher readiness and greater effectiveness of the general purpose military forces, together with at least the initial signs of improvement in the national economic picture, and the wound-healing passage of time since the humiliating events in Southeast Asia of early 1975, combine to portray a picture in which the national will is the real determinant and, in fact, the unknown factor in the questions "Can the

United States currently project limited military power in crises situations?" and "If so, will this capability continue to be maintained, and if appropriate, used to further US national interests?"

The capability to project its conventional military force in time of crisis is a tool of national policy which must be carefully maintained against a time of need. If once lost it cannot be regained quickly and, even in time, only with large expenditures of resources and the purposeful drive of a strong national will.

ENDNOTES

1. The Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1964-65*, pp. 22-25.

2. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, (referred to hereafter as IISS), *The Military Balance 1975-1976*, pp. 5-7.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4. Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Posture Statement FY 1977 Presented to the 94th Congress, 2d Session, 1976*, p. 103.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

6. James R. Schlesinger, *Posture Statement FY 1976 and FY 1977 Presented to the 94th Congress, 1st Session, 1975*, p. III-94.

7. *Ibid.*, Annex D, p. D-2 (Table 2).

8. *Ibid.*, p. III-93.

9. John W. Finney, "Dreadnought or Dinosauer," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 16, 1976, p. 6. Mr. Finney provides a comprehensive but concise overview of the often bitter debates concerning the future of the aircraft carrier and its mission in the modern era.

10. Schlesinger, p. III-80.

11. Howard H. Callaway, *Posture Statement Presented to the 94th Congress, 1st Session, 1975*, p. 8.

12. Frederick C. Weyand, General, *Posture Statement Presented to the 94th Congress, 1st Session, 1975*, p. 10.

13. Rumsfeld, pp. 88-92. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld provides an excellent summary of the one and one-half war strategy. This statement serves as the basis for this author's judgement concerning ". . . little if any capability would be available. . . ."

14. Spencer Rich, "Marianas Acquisition is Voted," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 1976, p. A-6.

15. Schlesinger, p. III-28.

16. IISS, *Strategic Survey 1974*, p. 55.

17. Rumsfeld, pp. 99-100.

18. IISS, *Strategic Survey 1973*, pp. 62-63.

19. Kenneth E. Roberts, *Terrorism and the Military Response*, Military Issues Research Memorandum, pp. 5-6.

20. George S. Brown, General, USAF, *Posture Statement Presented to 94th Congress, 2d Session, 1976*, pp. 23-24.

21. Rumsfeld, p. 98.

22. Peter Osnos, "Soviet Backs Detente, Angola Moves," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 1976, p. 1. The cited article reports a five-hour speech made by Communist Party Leader Leonid Brezhnev to the 25th Soviet Communist Party Congress in Moscow on February 24, 1976.

23. Andrew J. Goodpaster, General, US Army, Retired, *Interests and Strategies in an Era of Detente: An Overview*, Military Issues Research Memorandum, p. 6. General Goodpaster presents an overview of "detente" and its impact and constraint of the development and execution of military strategy.

24 William A. Rusher, "No More Vietnam, Just More Losses," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 28, 1975, p. 7-F.

25. "Western Europeans see Fall of Saigon as Chastening Lesson for US," *The New York Times*, May 1, 1975, p. A-15.

26. Ray Cline, *World Power Assessment: A Calculas of Strategic Drift*, pp. 103-104. The author believes our national will to be weaker than those of the Soviet Union, Cuba, West Germany, Israel and even the Netherlands, Canada, and Mexico.

27. "A Strong but Risky Show of Force," *Time*, May 26, 1975, p. 17.

28. IISS, *Strategic Survey 1974*, pp. 23-28. A review of the economic situation and its security implications ties together the triple crises of energy, inflation, and recession with resultant effects on power relations in the world.

30. IISS, *Strategic Survey 1973*, pp. 30-36. The "Oil Weapon" is surveyed in terms of the history, results and implications of its use during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

31. Harold C. Deutsch, *A Fifth Round in the Middle East? Western European Perceptions*, Military Issues Research Memorandum, pp. 4-13.

32. Rumsfeld, Part IV, General Purpose Forces, pp. 87-162. This part of the annual Department of Defense report provides an overview of the threat, strategy, and plans involving US general purpose forces during the FY 1977-82 timeframe.

33. Theodore Shabad, "Soviet Exceeding US in Key Industrial Output," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1976, p. 45.

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1. REPORT NUMBER: ACN 77021	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. / 3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle): Constraints on the Projection of Conventional US Military Forces	5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED: Military Issues Research Memorandum / PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s): Colonel Donald Esper	8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013	10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS	12. REPORT DATE: 25 May 1977 / 13. NUMBER OF PAGES: 25
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)	15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report): UNCLASSIFIED / 15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

force projection; crisis management; conventional forces; limited warfare.

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

This memorandum reviews recent developments and trends which tend to constrain the projection of, and in some instances, the effects of US conventional ground forces as a form of military power used to influence events in a crisis situation, initially short of open warfare. Particular attention is directed to the examination of growing Communist bloc capabilities in a role vis-à-vis the capabilities of the United States. Consideration is given to those factors of an economic, political, and sociological nature as well as those of the military

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sphere. Lastly, some preliminary insights are developed as to the effects these limiting trends may have on the emerging policies and planning of the United States, in an era typified by worldwide change in strategic relationships.

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