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**DECISIVE FORCE AND
THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

DECISIVE FORCE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

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The National Military Strategy defines decisive force as, "The commitment of sufficient military power to overwhelm an adversary, establish new military conditions, and achieve a political resolution favorable to US national interests". It is becoming increasingly evident that decisive force means many things to many people. Unfortunately, military leaders must decide how to define, quantify, and measure "decisive force" as it pertains to the national military strategy. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the question, "decisive force to do what?" For the near future, on the high end of the spectrum, as far as difficulty is concerned, decisive force is linked to two Major Theater Wars (MTWs), while on the low end, it could be applied to multiple peace operations. For the foreseeable future, the two MTWs strategy will remain a feature of the National Military Strategy, and National Security Strategy will continue to stress "engagement". This suggests a second question, one of strategy versus capabilities. Is there a mismatch?

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DECISIVE FORCE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

The United States government prides itself as being a reflection of a Democratic society. We go through a rather formal process when it comes to developing our national posture, which is based on our national values and the perceived threat. This overall process is derivative of how we, collectively as a country, look at both the global and domestic environments. So, this begins the process of policy formulation. The president's guidance can be found in a document called A National Security Strategy for a New Century. Once the national interest has been clearly stated, a National Security Policy can be formulated.

In keeping with our founding forefathers' wishes, the national security strategy must be judged by its success in meeting the fundamental purposes set out in the Constitution.

...provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity..

Since the founding of the nation, certain requirements have remained constant. We must protect the lives and personal safety of Americans, both at home and abroad. We must maintain the sovereignty, political freedom, and independence of the United States, with its values, institutions, and territory intact. And, we must provide for the well-being and prosperity of the nation and its people. ¹

This is where the National Military Strategy comes into play.

The United States' 1997 National Military Strategy reminds us that our nation's strategy is "to defend and protect US national interests". The national military objectives are to "promote peace and stability" and, when necessary, to "defeat adversaries". US Armed Forces advance national security by applying military power as directed to help "shape" the international environment and "respond" to the full spectrum of crises, while we also "prepare" now for an uncertain future.²

THE PROBLEM

The National Military Strategy describes the strategic concepts, which govern how our forces are used to meet the demands of the environment. To that end, the National Military Strategy defines *decisive force* as "the commitment of sufficient military power to overwhelm an adversary, establish new military conditions, and achieve a political resolution favorable to US national interests".³

Here is where it becomes a little cloudy. It is increasingly evident that the concept, *decisive force*, means many things to many people. Unfortunately, military leaders must decide how to define, quantify, and measure "*decisive force*" as it pertains to the national military strategy. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the question, "decisive force to do what?" For the near future, on the high end of the spectrum, as far as

difficulty is concerned, decisive force is linked to two Major Theater Wars (MTWs), while on the low end, it could be applied to multiple peace operations. For the foreseeable future, the two MTWs strategy will remain a feature of the National Military Strategy, and the National Security Strategy will continue to stress "engagement". This suggests a second question, one of strategy versus capabilities. Is there a mismatch? ⁴

The National Military Strategy sets the framework for our discussion. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in cooperation with the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders, set the strategic stage for military responsiveness. The military leaders mentioned above have a weighty responsibility in that they provide professional advice to political leaders who ultimately make crucial policy decisions. Their advice is considered to be expert opinion. Many of these men draw from past experiences and thus their attitudes and lessons learned provide valuable insight into the political decision making process.

With the current process, political and military leaders work together to decide when to use military force to resolve conflicts. The decision to use force is a critical matter and there is no greater test of national leadership than when it comes to the issue of war. ⁵ This leads us to several questions.

What is the origin of the concept decisive force and how has the definition of this concept evolved, especially in recent years?

DECISIVE FORCE

Military forces have always been used to support national policy and secure national interests. Only recently has an attempt been made to quantify the use of force to preclude unintentional ambiguity in national interest. To this end, the Joint Staff developed the concept of decisive force. While General Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he routinely articulated this concept. Experts have chosen to label this the post cold war doctrine. ⁶

The National Military Strategy (NMS) of 1992 embraced the strategic principle of decisive force. This was the first time that the NMS was printed in an open unclassified format. This document became a public forum for explaining the rationale and framework for national policies. ⁷ "The strategy was produced in a top down process, unusual for Joint planning documents, and reflected the personal influence of General Powell". ⁸

Originally the definition of decisive force was as follows:

Once a decision for military action has been made, half-measures and confused objectives exact a severe price in the form of a protracted conflict which can cause needless waste of human lives and material resources, a divided nation at home, and defeat. Therefore, one of the essential elements of our national military strategy is the ability to rapidly assemble the forces needed to win the concept of

applying decisive force to overwhelm our adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with minimum loss of life.⁹

Decisive force as a concept thus has become linked to the political will of the country. However, it does not speak to the more immediate problem of "why" and "when" military force is used. The focus is more to answer the question of "how" military forces are utilized. However, the requirement for clear objectives, for permitting the military to apply decisive force to win by overwhelming their opponents, and quickly terminating the conflict with minimum loss of life reflects the essence of the way America conducts war. The strategy to employ both mass and technology remains consistent with the traditional strategy of annihilation.¹⁰ Decisive force was designed to ensure defeat of adversaries in an overwhelming fashion. Decisive force has become a fixture in our strategic vocabulary, largely due to the efforts of General Colin Powell.

General Powell was uncomfortable with what he found to be political temporizing. Powell sought to clarify political thinking to such a degree as to best support the drafting of military strategy. Taking a line from Clausewitz, Powell noted that without a clear statement of policy (expression of political objectives) no clear (appropriate/correct) military strategy could be developed, for it was from the political objectives that military objectives were derived. Powell sensed

that if he were able to make the costs associated with the employment of military forces, policy makers would be compelled to distill their thinking and thus refine the political ends. He was amazingly successful. By constantly asking political masters for clarity in thinking he was able to match the political objectives to military objectives (in Panama and the Gulf) in such a way that planners could estimate accurately the required forces (read least risk forces). This in essence put a military price tag on "success" as defined by Powell (and having learned the lessons of Vietnam, Powell was highly risk adverse). Defining success in terms of the politicians own choosing enabled him to involve the policy types in meaningful costs-versus-benefits discussions early in the planning process. Ends and means were thus known and evaluated early, rather than late in the planning process.¹¹

Unfortunately, the Powell doctrine (of decisive force) is being watered down even as we write this. Our current military leaders have knuckled under to political pressure and have allowed ambiguity to slip back into the process. Policy makers delight in ambiguous objectives because it leaves them with maximum flexibility. For the military planner, this greatly complicates the task and sends risk off the scale. It is impossible to determine how much force is required (or the risks involved) if one is uncertain as to what will be done with it.

Said another way, if one does not care where one is going, any road will do.¹²

F. G. Hoffman suggests that this will be the *New American Way of War*. His assumptions were not to wear down an opponent with combat power over time, but to be deliberate with time limits and sensitive to the numbers of casualties. The decisive force concept thus demands that the U.S. military use overwhelming force to rapidly overcome an enemy in the shortest period of time and with minimal loss of American lives.¹³

The underlying logic for the decisive force concept has become embedded in our military culture and has characterized our strategic use of power. In evaluating the utility of decisive force as an affirmation of policy, the assessment hinges on how effectively it serves as an instrument of policy. The efficacy of the concept is measured by what we are trying to accomplish with the use of power. The National Military Strategy is designed to address the ways and means in which military force will contribute to the desired ends. Decisive Force is a "way" of achieving these ends or objectives.¹⁴

There are several good examples of the application of decisive force throughout history. For analysis purposes, let us look at Panama and Dessert Storm.

Events leading up to the Panama Invasion

The Bush Administration had long suffered many problems with General Manuel Antonio Noriega in Panama. Noriega was suspected of being involved in illegal drug trafficking and running a notorious crime regime. In the case of Panama, the nation's (US) political purpose was protecting the Panama Canal because it was being turned over to the Panamanian government at the end of the century. Manuel Noriega was seeking to impose his political will on the struggling democratic government of Panama. This particular action caused the U.S. to respond with intervention. The new JCS Chairman, General Colin Powell, took deliberate steps to safeguard U.S. interests in the region. ¹⁵

On Saturday, September 30, 1989, General Maxwell Thurman replaced General Fredrick Woerner as the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Commander. After the change-of-command ceremony in Panama City, General Thurman went to work receiving extensive briefings. It was not long before Thurman was revitalizing contingency planning. He increased the alert status in the region with a series of plans and exercises that increased his military preparedness. Thurman knew it was only a matter of time before there would be a showdown between the U.S. and Manuel Noriega. ¹⁶

Operation Just Cause

President Bush met with senior foreign policy leaders and military advisors in a lengthy meeting on Sunday, December 17, 1989, precipitated by a series of incidents that collectively constituted a vital threat to US interests in the region. At the end of the meeting, President Bush ordered the invasion of Panama. The strategic objectives of the operation were clearly and concisely expressed in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) execution order, which stated in part..

"To ensure: continuing freedom of transit through the Panama Canal, freedom from Panama Defense Forces (PDF) abuse and harassment, freedom to exercise US treaty rights and responsibilities, the removal of Noriega from power in Panama, the removal of Noriega's cronies and accomplices from office, the creation of a PDF responsive to and supportive of an emergent democratic government in Panama, and a freely elected GOP [government of Panama] which is allowed to govern".¹⁷

The strategic military objectives were translated into operational objectives that were audacious and extremely complex.¹⁸ The plan called for deploying thousands of troops from the Continental United States to Panama under the cover of darkness. Military officials predicted that the plan would cause an unexpected blow to Noriega's forces, starting a panic that would lead to chaos.

The plan designed by General Maxwell R. Thurman, Commander in Chief (CINC), SOUTHCOM, and Lieutenant General Carl W. Stiner, Commander, Joint Task Force (JTF) South, emphasized the

concept of decisive force. Over and over again during the planning process, the idea of applying decisive force was expressed. The primary purpose behind dedicating overwhelming combat power was to shorten the length of the conflict and limit casualties on both sides. Simply stated, an enemy vastly outnumbered is less likely to resist and a force with superior combat power enhances its own force protection. ¹⁹

General Maxwell Thurman and Lt. Gen. William Hartzog wrote an article in Army Magazine that stated Operation Just Cause proved the point that overwhelming combat power concentrated on an enemy's "center of gravity" resolves a conflict decisively with minimal casualties. Throughout the article, they reiterate the decisive force concept used in conjunction with the principle of simultaneity of operations. "Simultaneity is the generation of simultaneous effects that combine to create overwhelming and focused power (the centers of gravity) in a campaign or major operation". The concentration of forces in space and time refers to mass. However, simultaneity implies dispersion in space of actions whose effects are aimed to achieve a specific goal. Today's mobility and communications allow simultaneity to paralyze the enemy's ability to make decisions and causes chaos. ²⁰

As the generals stated, probably the best example of simultaneity took place in Panama. On a hot night in December

1998, 28,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines participated in Operation Just Cause. The METT-T (Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops, and Time available) allowed them to succeed. It clearly defined the operational planning phase, which was followed by the troops' perfect execution of the plan. The generals believed that a well-designed and well-prepared plan could compel opposing leaders to adopt a mind-set that left them unprepared for the decision-making process. Throughout Just Cause, Noreiga's men could not exercise effective leadership. This crippled their ability to fight and caused the resistance to collapse. More to the point, it confined the violence and permitted rapid termination of the conflict. ²¹

What lessons should we take away from Operation Just Cause? Looking again at METT-T, the following lessons helped achieve simultaneity. This analytical information is taken from the article written by General Thurman and General Hartzog.

At the strategic level, there were *international considerations* that involved coalition support. The ability to provide flexibility in basing and over-flight greatly affected strategic assembly and lift. In this particular case, third country landing rights were arranged and the potential strategic impact of Cuba was carefully considered.

The *visioning* phase was critical. Part of the vision included the "day after the battle". National, theater, and

tactical leaders had to understand and be capable of articulating the intent and concept in detail. The key here was the ability to consistently assess the situation and make the necessary adjustments. In this case, it was important to frequently review the concept against what the National Command Authorities intended.

The commander and chief's instructions were clear: create a safe environment for Americans, maintain the integrity of the Panama Canal, ensure the newly elected Panamanian government could operate openly and freely, and to bring Manuel Noriega to justice.

The commander's concept of *utility* was equally important. This involved swift entry at night using overwhelming force to impede Noriega's defense forces. The rules of engagement ensured that both sides would suffer minimal casualties and that collateral damage would be consistent with safeguarding US lives. All service members were clear on their individual roles. Along with this, it was important that leaders stay in their respective lanes of engagement. All of this together contributed to achieving simultaneity.

There were several *execution challenges* during the early days of *Just Cause*, some of which required large amounts of flexibility. For example, the airborne forces were hampered by ice storms and there were hostages that needed to be rescued.

The ability of US commanders to adhere to the US plan actually facilitated flexibility. Every target had primary and secondary forces assigned to it. US forces were well practiced in every detail. Each phase had small packages that were highly mobile. These small package forces were capable of responding to the unknown. The impact was the maintenance of momentum facilitated by simultaneity.

When looking at simultaneity, one cannot ignore the necessity for and impact of training. Most of the key players who participated in Operation Just Cause were veterans of the National Training Center (NTC) and the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). Both of these training facilities had provided these troops with the opportunity to practice critical skills, which also involved live-fire exercises. In this case, the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps had participated in exercises at similar training facilities. Demanding training experiences like these helped American Forces to perfect their plans with many rehearsals.

Just Cause was the first modern example of simultaneity—a complex, formidable operation that involved numerous moving parts functioning in close harmony. The result was irrefutable success, achieved with a small number of casualties. This operation demonstrated the principle of decisive force with precise application against the enemy in order to achieve

overwhelming power at all potential centers of gravity. Through effective use of decisive force, General Thurman believed that the opposition's command and control system would be paralyzed. This proved to be the case.²²

Desert Storm Objectives

A second and even more dramatic application of decisive force accrued in Operation Desert Storm. The administration's goal in the Gulf War was to restore the legitimate government of Kuwait and prevent Iraq from further aggression in the Persian Gulf area. This involved the complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, while maximizing protection of U.S. citizens in the region. Finally, the operation was designed to enhance the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region.²³ Once the Bush administration established a set of clear national political objectives, the military was able to define a military strategy and assemble the means of achieving its military objectives.²⁴

Southwest Asia and the Military's Use of Force

There are military and political leaders who believe that Panama was the dress rehearsal for utilizing the decisive force concept and that Desert Storm was the real show. In defining the mission, senior military officials asked for and received nearly

500,000 American troops, along with troops provided by 30 different coalition partners. ²⁵

For the first time in their memories, military leaders found their concerns were being taken seriously by the political leadership. The forces they assembled were designed to fight and win. On several occasions, President Bush commented that the conflict in the Gulf would not be "another Vietnam". The force size and manner of employment demonstrated the principle of decisive and overwhelming force in both the air and ground campaigns. Now that the military had been given the necessary tools and forces to accomplish its assigned objectives, they could begin to focus on the task at hand, planning its war strategy. ²⁶

The Campaign

The ground phase consisted of a buildup of forces as summarized in the commander's intent statement:

Maximize friendly strength against Iraqi weakness and terminate offensive operations, with the Republican Guard Force Command destroyed and major U.S. forces controlling critical lines of communication in the Kuwait Theater of Operations. ²⁷

The main effort of the ground attack was to destroy the Republican Guard Forces. The battlefield was prepped with mass, speed, and firepower occurring at the same time, synchronizing attacks on the enemy's center of gravity which resulted in targets being attacked relentlessly until the enemy force was

almost destroyed. The "air phase" of the campaign plan also employed the same tactics of utilizing technology and firepower. There was no doubt about how the air phase contributed to Desert Storm. In fact, the American military were successful in promoting the principle of decisive or overwhelming force in both its ground and air phases. Considering the alternative, I can not disagree with it. Can you? ²⁸

In this instance, it appeared that civil-military relations were at their best, along with public support for U.S. policy objectives. Again, when one thinks about what Clausewitz has to say about the "remarkable trinity" (people, government, and military), Desert Storm is a classic illustration of American theory and its importance in implementing a national policy.

Clausewitz speaks about the military genius who has the foresight to properly identify and utilize his forces to exploit an advantage by keeping the enemy under relentless pressure, thus denying him any opportunity to retain control over his forces. Basically, the intent is to attack and crush his equilibrium. Clausewitz referred to this as the "Principle of Continuity", as demonstrated by VII Corps 250-kilometer attack on and subsequent pursuit of Iraqi Republican Guard Forces (RGF) during Operation Desert Storm. In keeping with Clausewitzian theory, no one begins a battle without knowing what he clearly

wants to achieve or how he wants to succeed, as the Desert Storm campaign plan so clearly demonstrated.²⁹

DECISIVE FORCE CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, operational art links the application of military forces to the appropriate phases of the campaign plan, thus contributing to the desired end-state. F. G. Hoffman has observed that the Pentagon's preferred paradigm was tested in the Gulf War and the military found it to be satisfactory. He stated that Panama further defined the decisive force concept by reinforcing the predisposition towards short decisive operations that provide for the synchronizing application of all the firepower and technology available to American forces.³⁰

Desert Storm demonstrated how American forces could utilize swift and massed applications of overwhelming force to produce decisive results; winning quickly, with minimal loss of life. Clearly, the Persian Gulf War established a methodology for defining measurable objectives at the operational level of war and delineating the accomplishment of those objectives which involve reaching a culmination point. For Desert Storm, this occurred somewhere around 28 February 1991, close to when the cease-fire occurred. The U.S. goal at the operational level was to destroy the operational capability of Republican Guard Forces

and keep them from occupying the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO).³¹

The future is not the "Son of Desert Storm", but the Stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya.

Lieutenant General Martin Steele, USMC³²

This is probably a good place to transition from an examination of past military operations and shift our focus to the future and the changing faces of conflict as it relates to the National Security Strategy.

RESPONDING IN THE NEAR FUTURE

The ability of the U.S. to respond to any operational military contingency is the cornerstone of America's defense policy. On the high end of the spectrum of conflict, this means responding to crises which involve two Major Theater Wars (MTWs). As the National Security Strategy (NSS) asserts, this capability remains the definitive test of our collective total force—our active and reserve military components. For the foreseeable future, it appears that two MTWs will stay in the National Military Strategy (NMS) and the National Security Strategy (NSS) will continue to stress "engagement".³³

The National Security Strategy states that fighting and winning major theater wars involves three essential prerequisites. First is the ability of the force to rapidly defeat initial enemy advances in two theaters in relatively

close succession. Second, we must be prepared to deal with asymmetrical threats such as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), information warfare, and terrorism. And finally, the military must be able to transition to fighting major theater wars from circumstances that impact on global engagement.³⁴ How does our strategy effect what our forces can realistically accomplish?

One of the problems with the National Security Strategy has to do with our ability to accomplish two near simultaneous Major Theater Wars (MTWs) while performing other smaller scale contingencies. The risks associated with this type of situation pose substantial political and operational challenges. This strategy has generated a great deal of controversy, which centers on whether our capabilities are matched or mismatched to our National Security Strategy.³⁵

For both MTWs, whether separate or near simultaneous, it depends greatly on the ability of U.S. forces to react in a timely manner; this effort would include both active and reserve components who may be assisted by allied coalition support. Either MTW could pose serious challenges that would stress U.S. responsiveness. Both MTWs pose risks that are inevitably part of combat, almost irrespective of the quality of defensive preparations. The main risk associated with this line of thinking is that both conflicts could erupt at the same moment, or so close together that they could be considered simultaneous

rather than "nearly simultaneous". This type of situation could negatively impact our ability to respond with U.S. airlift and sealift capacity, thus causing shortages of necessary specialized capabilities such as combat service support. Successful slowing of the build up process allows the enemy to employ asymmetric strategies that could exploit U.S. vulnerabilities. The U.S. runs the risk of early forces possibly being defeated by rogue forces or enemies who may use weapons of mass destruction. ³⁶

On the low end of the spectrum, this could involve Military Operations Other than War (MOOW), which usually involves maintaining regional stability in a region where our forces are not there to "fight-and-win". ³⁷ The latest acronym on the horizon is small-scale contingencies. Just what do these acronyms mean? Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW) and/or Small-Scale Contingencies (SSCs):

Various phrases and acronyms have been used to describe the long history of U.S. involvement in operations of this nature. U.S. Navy and Army actions in Mexico, Cuba, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and China in the latter part of the 19th century and between the two World Wars that then had no particular name now come under the heading of today's SSCs. The Marine Corps Small Wars Manual of 1940 contained doctrine, based on experience in the Caribbean and Central America in the 1920s and 1930s, for what are now called SSCs. Examples during the Cold War were supported for anti-Communist governments in the Dominican Republic in 1965, Vietnam and Central America in the 1960s and 1980s (first counterinsurgency, then low-intensity conflict), and

the Lebanese Multi-National Force (MNF) in 1982-83. Starting in 1993, operations of this kind were variously called peace operations other than war (OOTW) and are known as military operations other than war (MOOTW), as well as support to civil authorities.

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Complicating matters, it is difficult to clearly define what a small-scale contingency might be because of all the activities associated with missions of this nature. There are, however, some distinguishing characteristics that separate them from MTWs. Usually the decision is made to intervene. SSCs are normally unpredictable, with little time for planning and preparation, let alone the actual deployment action-taking place. Often SSCs extend beyond the initial target date of completion. For example, Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq (1991 to the present) was projected to last only a few months; an Implementation Force followed by a Stabilization Force (IFOR/SFOR) in Bosnia (1995 to the present) was predetermined to last at most a year. ³⁹

We must remember that Small-Scale Contingencies (SSCs) are not designed as fight-and-win operations, although they clearly attempt to inflict maximum destruction when dealing with an enemy. When conducting SSCs, soldiers are required to change their attitudes and actions, which often conflicts with their primary war-fighting mission. This particular situation calls for a clear and concise interpretation of the rules of

engagement (ROE). Usually the emphasis is on restraint, while also trying to guarantee a certain level of force protection. It is normally at this point when the big question arises on whether to use deadly force or not. To effectively accomplish an SSC, we must, as a nation, understand the regional culture and its associated politics before we can successfully reestablish political, diplomatic, humanitarian, and economic agendas. Finally, SSCs require cooperation from the entire international community.⁴⁰

FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

History has served us well when it comes to teaching us the importance of each period. Clausewitz has been considered to be a military genius by all that have studied him. Clausewitzian theory has demonstrated how every age has had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions. Clausewitz also observed that the events of every age must be judged in light of its own peculiarities.⁴¹ Therefore, responding to an uncertain future leaves the nation looking ahead, trying to anticipate what will be needed in the next 20-30 years. Again, Clausewitz reminds us that over time the means may change, however, "war is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will".⁴²

So the question becomes who or what regional hegemon may attempt to oppose the United States and become a potential future threat? It has been said many times over that we can only postulate who may be our next major competitor. One thing is for sure though; the President's National Security Strategy will define those vital national interests as they pertain to the nation.

Vital interests include the physical security of our territory and the security of the territory of our formal allies. They also include the safety of American citizens at home and abroad. Part of insuring our security is maintaining access to trade and resources that are vital to our economic well-being. To defend these vital interests we are, and will remain, ready to use military force "unilaterally and decisively".⁴³

The United States is attempting, and will continue to attempt, to sustain its preeminent position of power and defend its national interest by delineating those interests as interests of the "world community".⁴⁴

There are issues that divide the United States and other societies that are increasingly more important to the nation's global agenda. There are four main issues that we seem to focus on as a nation. (1) the ability to maintain a superior military that enforces policies of nonproliferation and counter-proliferation in regards to nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and any means of delivery; (2) to promote western values and political institutions by demanding other societies respect

human rights; (3) promoting democratic practices; and (4) to protect the cultural, social, and integrity of western societies and their allies to include all nation state citizens whether living at home or abroad. All of these issues affect the well being of global and economic prosperity across the world.

As a result of these developments and the potential threats to national interest, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has moved to the top of the US agenda for security challenges of the future. The nation promotes counter-proliferation by reflecting it as an international interest and essential to international stability. This has been and will be the nation's major security challenge of the future, followed by differences over human rights, which involve culture and value systems of many peoples and nations.

The road ahead will definitely be uncertain. What does our National Security Strategy say about our capabilities to accomplish all of these (MTWs, SSCs, peacekeeping, humanitarian) missions at once? The NSS continues to stress "engagement". Typically, this is the scenario U.S. forces have been facing throughout most of this century. The problem is we don't know where the next threat is coming from. Therefore, it makes it extremely difficult to match our current capabilities to a strategy that stresses engagement. Today, the U.S. has soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines stationed in seventy-six countries

across the world. Strategy versus capability, is it matched or mismatched, is a difficult question for today. It is all the more so when one wonders what the strategy will be twenty to thirty years from now.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

A critical study of history, whether it is world, national, or military history, serves to clarify one's vision for the future. Looking at the past has been essential to understanding where the present strategic environment is headed. This research effort suggests that the strategic principle behind "decisive force" is the proper employment of the military as an instrument of national power. This principle has become the recognized standard for the underpinning employment of US military forces. It has been tried, tested, and validated on several occasions, as demonstrated by various examples given throughout this paper.

The question then becomes, how does "decisive force" match our needs in strategic terms? This becomes an evaluation of utility, which centers on policy and the direct implementation of decisive force as a strategic principle. The principle itself depends on how well the use of military power acts as an instrument of policy, in the context of the use of military force contributes to a desired end state and the concept of

Decisive Force is the actual "way" of achieving these ends or objectives.

Throughout this paper, decisive force was evaluated against the strategic uses of military power. The examples demonstrated strategic and conventional deterrence; defense, including defending allies from external attack; decisive influence involving coercion via the specific threat of force; diplomatic support that often means peacekeeping, security assistance, and various humanitarian tasks. The research indicates that "the concept of decisive force should be seen as the military's expert opinion on how military means can best contribute to meeting policy objectives". A nation can only have an effective strategy when that strategy maintains a degree of balance between the ends and means. Decisive force is designed to complement the relationship, not throw it out of balance. Policy makers are a critical part of the process. ⁴⁵

For the future, it appears the NSS remains focused on the upper end of the conflict spectrum. This involves the United States' ability to rapidly project overwhelming combat power to any regional conflict. The military clearly recognizes the challenges of the future; however, those instances that cause military action are still the responsibility of political leaders who better understand the ambiguity that is involved in predicting that future.

Decisive force will probably continue to evolve based on each administration's NSS. For the foreseeable future, decisive force appears to be consistent with the military's culture. However, the decisive force concept may not be adaptable across the entire spectrum of future conflict. The nation's political leadership must determine whether military and political objectives are matched or mismatched, and, having done so, they must answer this question. Does the military (as an instrument of power) have the capability to do what the strategy calls for? If the strategy matches the capabilities, everything is fine. If not, the strategy needs to be changed because, as Clausewitz so rightly assures us, policy must drive strategy. It is impossible to discern exactly what constitutes decisive force if objectives are not clearly developed. That's the caution that Colin Powell raised and it is also the caution I have arrived at after thinking about the problem.

(word count - 6,082)

ENDNOTES

¹ William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy For A New Century, National Security Strategy of the United States from The White House May 1997, 1.

² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John M. Shalikashvili, National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 1997, Washington, D.C. 2.

³ National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 1997, 3.

⁴ Len Fullenkamp fullenkampl@awc.carlisle.army.mil, "SRP," electronic message to Deborah Rogers rogersd@awc.carlisle.army.mil, 19 Oct. 1998.

⁵ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 13-15.

⁶ Ibid., p. 100

⁷ Robert J. Art, Strategy and Management in the Post-Cold War Pentagon, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 22, 1992, p.20; Harry E. Rothmann, Forging a New National Military Strategy in a Post-Cold War World: A Perspective from the Joint Staff, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 1992, pp.1, 16. Colonel Rothmann was head of the Strategy Applications Branch, J-5 during the development of the 1992 strategy.

⁸ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 100.

⁹ National Military Strategy 1992, p.10. Original drafts of the strategy employed the phrase "overwhelming force" vice decisive, which was the subject of debate between the Joint Staff and various Pentagon departments. Eventually, the term "decisive force" was selected to avoid negative connotations. The present author was an action officer at the Pentagon at this time and involved in preparing Service comments for the Marine Corps. Confirmed by General Powell in an interview January 11,

1994. The terms overwhelming and decisive continue to be used. See Colin Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992/93, pp.32-45.

¹⁰ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 101.

¹¹ Len Fullenkamp, Professor US AWC. "SRP", Memorandum for Deborah Rogers, Class of 1999, 4 March 1999.

¹² Len Fullenkamp, Professor US AWC. "SRP", Memorandum for Deborah Rogers, Class of 1999, 4 March 1999.

¹³ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 101.

¹⁴ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 100- 106.

¹⁵ Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991, pp.83-104, 127-128, 156-174.

¹⁶ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 61.

¹⁷ Message from Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), DTG 182325Z December 1989, Subject: Execute Order.

¹⁸ Lieutenant Colonel William C. Bennett, "Just Cause and the Principles of War," Military Review, March 1991, 2-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

²⁰ Gen. Maxwell R. Thurman and Lt. Gen. William Hartzog, "Simultaneity the Panama Case," Army, November 1993, 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16-24.

²² Gen. Maxwell R. Thurman and Lt. Gen. William Hartzog, "Simultaneity the Panama Case," Army, November 1993, 16-24.

²³ President Bush's State of the Union Address January 16, 1991; The Pentagon's Conduct of the Persian Gulf War report, p. 31.

²⁴ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 79-80.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 82-83.

²⁹ Dominic J. Caraccilo, Terminating the Ground War in the Persian Gulf: A Clausewitzian Examination, The Land Warfare Papers, No. 26 September 1997, 2-3.

³⁰ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 71-73.

³¹ Dominic J. Caraccilo, Terminating the Ground War in the Persian Gulf: A Clausewitzian Examination, The Land Warfare Papers, No. 26 September 1997, 3, 6.

³² Ibid., p. 12.

³³ William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy For A New Century, National Security Strategy of the United States from The White House May 1997, 2, 12.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 12-13.

³⁵ 1998 Strategic Assessment Engaging Power for Peace, Institute for National Strategies Studies National Defense University, p. 148.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 148-150.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 155, 158.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 154-155.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 155-156.

⁴¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 593.

⁴² Ibid., p. 75.

⁴³ A National Security Strategy for a New Century, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1998, p. 5. Also U.S. Army War College, America's Army: Preparing For Tomorrow's Security Challenges, Army Issue Paper No. 2, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Georgi Arbatov, Neo-Bolsheviks of the I.M.F., New York Times, 7 May 1992, p. A27.

⁴⁵ F. G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport: Praeger, 1996) 105-113.

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