

DEATH AND DOCTRINE:  
U.S. ARMY OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN CASUALTY AVERSION  
1970-1999

A Thesis

by

DANIEL ISAAC JOHNSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2010

Major Subject: History

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## ABSTRACT

Death and Doctrine: U.S. Army Officers' Perceptions of American Casualty Aversion

1970-1999. (May 2010)

Daniel Isaac Johnson, B.S., United States Military Academy; M.A., Webster University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Brian McAllister Linn

While academics and commentators have devoted considerable energy to analyzing the relationship between United States military casualties and the reaction of American public opinion, few have taken notice of the opinions and perceptions of military officers. U.S. Army officers, comprising the bulk of the American military leadership, sustained a thorough debate concerning casualties and public opinion between 1970 and 1999. That debate is apparent from a study of articles in the military's professional journals, contributions to scholarly journals, memoirs, and monographs emerging from the various service schools.

Examining the material generated by officers during these decades reveals that they perceived a trend - as well as disclosing a trend in their own writing and discussions. Shaken by the experience of the Vietnam War, unsettled by the public's rejection of that war, officers struggled to prepare for future wars. In the thirty years under discussion, U.S. Army officers noticed an emphasis on technology intended to be more lethal to the enemy and to provide more protection for the American soldier.

Officers observed a doctrinal trend beginning with conserving scarce manpower, escalating to minimizing casualties, and reaching the establishment of force protection as a mission equal to any in a given operation. American officers perceived that their political and military leadership had first grown wary of spending American lives and gradually came to view casualties as synonymous with defeat. Associated with this phenomenon, officers noted that in many cases – increasing as this era advanced – sustaining casualties below a given threshold marked the operation as a victory. In sum, military officers observed a trend in which America’s civilian and military leadership strived to avoid sending men into conflict, attempting to mitigate through technology the risk combat posed to soldiers, and reacting to casualties as if they signified military defeat.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who, accepting risk, serve the United States of America.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION: THE ISSUE OF CASUALTIES

In 2001, United States Army Lieutenant Colonel Richard R. Caniglia completed an analysis of the American military participation in operations throughout the Balkans. Caniglia declared that “[Officers] below the senior military level are convinced that the United States is casualty-averse.”<sup>1</sup> Relying heavily on anecdotal evidence from the U.S. Armed Forces’ involvement in Kosovo in the 1990s, Caniglia argued that casualty aversion was a self-fulfilling belief, propagating its own bureaucracy and policies of force-protection. These in turn created a reinforcing cycle, an organizational culture that had less and less tolerance for casualties even as it worked to limit them. One of the important aspects of Caniglia’s argument is his emphasis on the officers’ perception of American casualty aversion and the effect that perception had upon the policy of force protection. These officers observed a transformation of policy, a development that diminished the military’s trust in public support even as it diminished the public’s trust in military competency.<sup>2</sup>

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This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Military History*.

<sup>1</sup> Richard R. Caniglia, “U.S. and British Approaches to Force Protection,” *Military Review* 81 (July-August 2001): 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78.



U.S. Army officers' observations of American society in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s revolve around certain military operations and the civilian reactions to those operations. Army personnel observed and discussed the operations carried out by the other service branches, just as Air Force, Navy, and Marine officers analyzed Army operations. During these decades, the scholarly conversation among sociologists and defense analysts also considered these operations and circumstances, and their discourse at times informed the professional discussion among officers. Immediately after the Vietnam War, a consensus emerged among defense analysts that the American public suffered from a phenomenon variously described as casualty shyness, casualty intolerance, casualty dread, or casualty aversion. To put it more simply, that American society appeared unwilling to suffer casualties in military operations. This consensus, dominated by sociologist John Mueller, gained a wide audience and popular appeal, both in the United States and abroad.<sup>3</sup> Mueller's theory of a reflexive and

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-66; Jason Dylan McMahan, "Explaining and Exploiting American Casualty Aversion" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 2002); K.S. Balshaw, "Spending Treasure Today but Spilling Blood Tomorrow: What are the Implications for Britain of America's Apparent Aversion to Casualties?" *Defence Studies* 1 (Spring 2001): 99-120; Jonathon R. Moelter, "Effects of Foreign Perceptions of U.S. Casualty Aversion on U.S. International Relations" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2002); Sidney Verba and Richard A. Brody, "Participation, Policy Preferences, and the War in Vietnam," *Public Opinion*

inexorable decline of popular support for war based on the number of casualties suffered “fixed in the public mind the idea that support for Vietnam buckled as the body-bag toll mounted,” permanently linking through his work’s broad appeal declining support with mounting casualties.<sup>4</sup>

A number of scholars challenged Mueller’s thesis, introducing factors that increased the complexity of what Mueller had described as a simple relationship between casualties and popular support. After analyzing the response to the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, RAND researcher Benjamin Schwarz persuasively argued that, after the attack, the public increased its support for the operation, inclining toward a punitive escalation of military activity rather than withdrawal.<sup>5</sup> Also referencing the operations in Lebanon, Professor James Burk argued that the support for military operations depended upon several factors: a perception of

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*Quarterly* 34 (Autumn 1970): 325-332; Jeffrey S. Milstein, *Dynamics of the Vietnam War: A Quantitative Analysis and Predictive Computer Simulation* (Columbia: Ohio State University Press, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> John Mueller, “Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam,” *American Political Science Review* 65 (June 1971): 364-366; Quote from Gelpi, et al., *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 9. The political discussions in the 1970s frequently referenced Mueller and his work. One example: George W. Grayson, “The Economy: Will the Upswing Help Ford?” *Washington Post*, 2 September, 1976, A15.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin C. Schwarz, *Casualties, Public Opinion and U.S. Military Intervention: Implications for U.S. Regional Deterrence Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), 25. Schwarz asserts (p.20) that casualty totals from Korea and Vietnam founded preliminary societal fears. For an earlier analysis of the Beirut attack, see Brian Jenkins, “Defense Against Terrorism,” *Political Science Quarterly* 101 (1986): 773-774.

clear national interest, a degree of consensus among American elites, and a perception of success. Burk demonstrated through an analysis of polling data that the public support for the intervention in Lebanon had in fact declined before suffering the bombing casualties, reflecting the discord among the political and military elite. Burk argued that public support increased after the casualties, counter to the dictates of casualty aversion theory.<sup>6</sup>

Further complicating Mueller's thesis, Eric Larson suggested, after an analysis of the public reaction to military operations through the 1993 intervention in Somalia, that much of the populace of the United States appeared capable of complex cost-benefit analysis when presented with a proposed military action. The American people showed a willingness to suffer casualties for meaningful objectives and did not demand a zero-casualty prediction so long as the objective reflected a "moral force or . . . recognized national interests." Larson argued as well that this relationship depended much upon the quality of leadership demonstrated by the political elites. Similarly, suffering casualties did not always spur the public to demand "escalation to victory."<sup>7</sup>

Larson had the benefit of observing both Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf and the American intervention in Somalia – particularly the subsequent

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<sup>6</sup> James Burk, "Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia: Assessing the Casualties Hypothesis," *Political Science Quarterly* 114 (Spring 1999): 53-78.

<sup>7</sup> Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), 100.

withdrawal from Somalia provoked by the battle in Mogadishu. Several scholars suggested over the course of the decade that the outcome of the Somali intervention reinforced the idea that the American populace reflexively opposed taking casualties.<sup>8</sup> The military experiences in Haiti, particularly that of the *USS Harlan County*, and in the Balkans reinforced such perceptions. Scholars such as Burk opposed this argument, however, demonstrating that support for the operation in Somalia had declined significantly before Mogadishu and that the inflicted casualties shattered the consensus of elite political support, not popular support.<sup>9</sup> Christopher Gelpi and Peter Feaver argued that the American public ceased supporting the mission because of the shift away from the humanitarian Operation Restore Hope to the peace-enforcement of UNOSOM II, particularly as the public perceived the peace-enforcement mission as failing.<sup>10</sup> Gelpi and Feaver pointed to the “rally-round-the-flag” effect, elite consensus, and cost-benefit analysis and asserted that the “U.S. public is not casualty phobic . . . [but] can be thought of as ‘defeat phobic’.”<sup>11</sup> Gelpi and Feaver convincingly argued that in the public perception the results of military action mattered most, and a lack of

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999), 91; Louis Klarevas, “Trends: The United States Peace Operation in Somalia,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64 (Winter 2000): 528.

<sup>9</sup> Burk, “Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia,” 76.

<sup>10</sup> Gelpi, et al., *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 260; Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, “A Look At . . . Casualty Aversion: How Many Deaths are Acceptable? A Surprising Answer,” *Washington Post*, November 7, 1999, B03.

progress sapped support more quickly than bloodshed. This scholarly debate, even as it informed some, failed to gain significant ground against the popular belief in casualty aversion.<sup>12</sup>

More likely than most academics to provide the casualties under discussion, military officers remained generally absent from the wider scholarly debate. This thesis will demonstrate, however, that this was not because officers ignored the topic. Army officers, representing the majority of the commissioned leaders of the American armed forces, produced the bulk of the material discussed in this thesis. Their representation and perceptions direct this argument; for simplicity's sake, the use of the term "military officer" in this thesis will indicate, unless otherwise specified, an officer in the U.S. Army. A study of the essays emerging in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s from the Army War College, the Naval War College, the Air University, the Army Command and General Staff College, the Marine Command and Staff College, the professional publications *Parameters*, *Military Review* and the other service magazines revealed considerable and developing debate over casualty aversion. The student papers emerging from the military's institutes of higher education proved particularly useful in this respect; they presented a chance to observe the thoughts and perspectives of

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<sup>12</sup> Gelpi, et al., *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 1, 4; Max Boot, "Envisioning a Future of Casualty-Free Pushbutton Wars? Get Over It," *American Enterprise* 12 (October-November 2001): 31; Paul Cornish, "Myth and Reality: U.S. and UK Approaches to Casualty Aversion and Force Protection," *Defence Studies* 3 (Summer 2003): 121.

experienced officers after both introspection and research. In addition, academic publications, notably the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and *Armed Forces & Society* address the topic of American casualty aversion and its impact on the U.S. Armed Forces. Finally, the manuals and doctrine produced and published during these decades demonstrate the fulfillment of the intellectual process.

The structure of this work echoes the natural division of the decades. The first chapter will address the 1970s. During that decade, the United States Army recovered after its withdrawal from Vietnam. Vietnam occupied much of the intellectual attention and subsequently the material produced by officers who, throughout the decade, fought the war over and over again in their minds. Bearing that in mind, the chapter will address three points: U.S. Army officers' perceptions of societal pressure to limit casualties, the reflection of that pressure in the military culture of the 1970s – particularly the development of the All-Volunteer Force, and the attendant appearance of a concern for casualty minimization in doctrine.

The second chapter will examine the 1980s. Despite lacking a great war during the decade, service members deployed around the globe throughout the decade. This service was not bloodless. Perhaps the most critical portion of the decade, in this discussion, proved to be the bombing of the U.S. Marines' barracks in Beirut in 1983, coupled with the intervention in Grenada during the same year. This chapter will revolve around a discussion of doctrine and military culture. Both reflected the challenges of dealing not only with the still-unproven volunteer system but also with

the American involvement in what officers described as “low intensity conflicts” during the Cold War. Much of the officers’ professional discussion reflected the challenge of succeeding in low intensity conflicts without alienating the public and while coping with a doctrine and organization predicated upon a major war with the Soviet Union.

The final chapter will address the contributions of operations in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans to the debate on casualty aversion. Following the success of the short Desert Storm campaign, some officers claimed that senior military leaders appeared more concerned with avoiding the stigma of failure than with achieving military victory. Bound to this argument was the critique of the military’s growing “zero-defect” mentality and its fixation on force-protection.<sup>13</sup> The officers’ discussion of force-protection, its application, and its doctrine is integral to understanding how military officers perceived American casualty aversion in the decade. Each of these factors is connected and apparent in the context of the major military actions in the 1990s.

I intend to demonstrate that, over the three decades under consideration, United States military officers developed a perception of the American public as casualty averse. Officers expected rising casualties to diminish public and political support for military operations. Despite a deepening scholarly understanding of the public’s reaction to casualties, a preponderance of the military officer corps expressed

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<sup>13</sup> Caniglia, “U.S. and British Approaches to Force Protection,” 78; Cornish, “Myth and Reality,” 123-124.

a perception of a casualty averse general public whose beliefs these officers observed influencing the nation's political elite.<sup>14</sup>

The significance of this discussion of perception rests upon the nature of war in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. During this period, military officers recognized an increased momentum toward American involvement in asymmetric or fourth-generation warfare, insurgencies, guerrillas and terrorism.<sup>15</sup> Such conflicts lack clear national interests, which military and political leaders noted as a factor influencing public support. Without a clear national motive for such conflicts, the national elite struggle to justify American casualties in distant military operations. Whether described as peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, nation building, counter-insurgency operations, or any other euphemism, victory in military conflict entails a risk of casualties. The perception, widespread among American military officers, that the American public would react negatively to any American casualties attacked the needed trust between a society and its military. At one level, it charged that the American society cannot be trusted to soberly invoke military force, and all that it

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<sup>14</sup> Burk, "Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia," 78. Here he referenced Donald C.F. Daniel, "The United States," in *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers*, ed. Trevor Findlay (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1996), 94-95, who suggested that "members of Congress place more credence in what their constituents tell them than what national polls show, and that patterns of constituent contacts might actually support something like the casualties hypothesis."

<sup>15</sup> David Harper, "Targeting the American Will and Other Challenges for 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Leadership," *Military Review* 87 (March-April 2007): 95.



implies. At another, it imputed that society could not trust the military to competently carry out the missions it was assigned without unnecessary losses. This frayed trust between society and military suggested implications for the willingness of the armed forces to take risks and to engage the enemy on behalf of the nation's government.

## CHAPTER II

## CASUALTY SHOCK: EMERGING FROM VIETNAM IN THE 1970s

Military officers during the 1970s faced the task of rebuilding the United States' armed forces after the Vietnam War. The U.S. Army had emerged from Vietnam grievously damaged if not broken and the other services had suffered, if not to the same extent.<sup>16</sup> Senior officers' distrust for politicians and the media complicated these rebuilding efforts. The end of the draft and the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973 introduced further complexity to the process. At the same time, it became apparent that the military required more than simple repair – the Yom Kippur War between Arabs and Israelis in October 1973 shook the American military establishment and sent it reaching for a new doctrine.

This chapter discusses the ways in which these factors intersected with the ongoing conversation among officers concerning the public reaction to casualties. One officer said of that era, "The result of [Vietnam] was a fear, at the highest levels of

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<sup>16</sup> For more on officers' observations of the state of the military, particularly the U.S. Army, in the wake of Vietnam, see Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981) 152-158; James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); Frederick Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 3-10.

command and government, of getting bogged down in a protracted war, [and] suffering unacceptably heavy casualties.”<sup>17</sup> Many observers pinpointed the Vietnam War as the origin of American casualty aversion. The professional discussion among officers, with some exceptions, generally reflects this assumption. A more complete understanding includes earlier American experiences. George Washington feared colonists lacked the resolve to pay the necessary costs for victory during the American Revolution.<sup>18</sup> American leaders who succeeded the general and president later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century considered the costs, both in treasure and in blood, of military action.<sup>19</sup> In the American Civil War President Abraham Lincoln expressed concern over the political and social burden of the mounting tally of casualties.<sup>20</sup>

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended, signs indicated the increasing lethality of war. Antulio Echevarria noted that German, British, American, and French military theorists of that era discussed how best to address the larger, more lethal contemporary battlefield and accomplish military missions without suffering crippling losses. The introduction of technological developments improved artillery fire and increased the efficiency of closer combat through magazine fed-rifles and the machine-gun. Such weapons accompanied a fundamental change in tactics and a greater appreciation for

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<sup>17</sup> Moelter, “Effects of Foreign Perceptions of U.S. Casualty Aversion on U.S. International Relations,” 6.

<sup>18</sup> Gelpi, et al., *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Donald B. Vought, “Preparing for the Wrong War?” *Military Review* 57 (May 1977): 31.

<sup>20</sup> Gelpi, et al, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 3.

fire superiority.<sup>21</sup> One military theorist argued that excessive casualties and inconclusive struggle would render future wars incapable of achieving decision.<sup>22</sup> At much the same time, General Philip Henry Sheridan anticipated that economic and political strength would decide future wars as much as military prowess. Battle would become pointless as the costs, both in blood and treasure, became prohibitive.<sup>23</sup> Other officers maintained, “No victory can be gained without paying for it,” and that “The dread of losses is immoral.”<sup>24</sup> While that attitude did not prevent leaders such as President Woodrow Wilson from fearing “the wastefulness of war,” it dominated the American discussion through World War II.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 70-73.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. Echevarria discusses the theorists who oppose Jan Bogomil Bloch in this position as well in pages 86-92.

<sup>23</sup> Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 46-47.

<sup>24</sup> Jette, “The Dread of Incurring Losses on the Battle-field and the Essential Elements of the Offensive,” tr. R.H. Wilson, *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 51 (November-December 1912): quotations from 330 and 340.

<sup>25</sup> Gelpi, et al, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 3; William O. Odom, *After the Trenches: The Transformation of U.S. Army Doctrine, 1918-1939* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 39. Odom discussed (p. 43) the Army perception on casualties in the inter-war era.

Many officers memorialized the Second World War as the way that America should wage war. Some officers held that, in that conflict, the American military had waged a total war and achieved a total victory. These officers claimed that success raised the standard for military achievement to new heights and rationalized the concurrent heavy casualty toll.<sup>26</sup> Writing in 1962, Lieutenant Commander Robert Monroe argued that American armed forces would more likely face limited war in the future, rather than total war along the World War II model. He noted the many difficulties, under the American political system, of fighting in this form of conflict. Monroe argued these difficulties derived in part from the political opposition, in part from American military officers fixated upon total victory, and in part from the effect of the daily loss of American lives in such conflict.<sup>27</sup> The perceived influence of popular

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<sup>26</sup> Carl T. Schmidt, "The Limitation of 'Total' War," *Military Review* 29 (1949):12-16; Charles A. Lofgren, "How New Is Limited War?" *Military Review* 47 (July 1967):17-19; Frederick S. Rudesheim, "Quick, Decisive Victory: Defining Maxim or Illusory Concept Within Army Doctrine?" (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1993), 14, 20, 37; John W. Allen, "The Victory Disease and the U.S. Army after the Cold War" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1999), 7, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Robert R. Monroe, "Limited War and Political Conflict," *Military Review* 42 (October 1962): 3-4. For more on this topic see also, Allen, "Victory Disease," 88; Jack H. Nunn, "Termination: The Myth of the Short, Decisive Nuclear War," *Parameters* 10 (December 1980): 37; Charles F. Kriete, "The Moral Dimension of Strategy," *Parameters* 7 (June 1977):72; Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., "Does the Army have a Future? Deterrence and Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Vietnam Era," *Parameters* 8 (September 1978): 51.

and political restraints on military policy choices in the years following World War II caused many American military officers to believe that the United State's enemies had identified American casualty aversion as a weakness to exploit. Officers' noted North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh's strategy of targeting American popular opinion, which fed their perception that the forces of communism targeted popular support during the Cold War.<sup>28</sup> As this idea grew more popular among officers, their fear increased that future insurgencies would emerge targeting U.S. political will.<sup>29</sup> Colonel Robert Gard wrote in 1971 of the difficulty, in such conflicts, of justifying "to American society the loss of lives in clear-cut moral terms."<sup>30</sup> Such fears promoted a feeling that the American military should avoid direct involvement in insurgencies and small wars; yet officers uneasily proposed that avoiding these conflicts could send out "an invitation for those who wish us ill to practice those forms" of warfare attacking an identified weakness – America's national will.<sup>31</sup>

In the post-Vietnam era, three factors combined to influence officers' perception of American tolerance for casualties. The first was clear – the mass media

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<sup>28</sup> B.A. Clayton, "War Studies," *Military Review* 51 (September 1971): 67.

<sup>29</sup> Michael T. Klare, *War Without End: American Planning for the Next Vietnams* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 61.

<sup>30</sup> Robert G. Gard, Jr., "The Military and American Society," *Foreign Affairs* 49 (July 1971): 701.

<sup>31</sup> Vought, "Preparing for the Wrong War?" 33; Richard T. Ackley, "Intervention versus Nonintervention," *Military Review* 51 (November 1971): 81-82.

had made the popular discontent of American society widely apparent, and it plainly influenced the political elite.<sup>32</sup> The second was the shift from conscription to voluntary recruitment. Recruiting among America's 'amilitaristic' youth forced the services – chiefly the army – to change their image.<sup>33</sup> "Selling" or advertising itself demanded that the traditional values of duty, of fighting and dying for one's country, fade into the background, moving those values down the traditional military hierarchy and elevating other values in their place. Thus, the 'New Army' emphasized the message of benefits and development and progress. An essential part of the message to recruits became the security of service in the armed forces; in fact, recruitment material made little mention of combat.<sup>34</sup>

This positive message ran at odds to the third influence, the evidence of the Arab-Israeli War. That conflict came to a bloody end after intense combat over a brief period; eighteen days of combat witnessed over 13,000 soldiers died and nearly 30,000

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<sup>32</sup> Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam," 366. For more depth see Mueller, *War, Presidents and Popular Opinion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

<sup>33</sup> Richard F. Rosser, "Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s," *Military Review* 52 (March 1972): 26; Beth Bailey, "The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force," *Journal of American History* 94 (June 2007): 50.

<sup>34</sup> Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1997), 120-122; Bailey, "The Army in the Marketplace," 57, 68.

wounded.<sup>35</sup> Transposing that picture of modern war over the canvas of an American-Russian clash did not bode well for the recruits glibly promised the benefits of a better PX and free space-available travel on military aircraft.

Translating their perceptions of American society through these influences forced officers to examine the problems within their own organizations. The American military at the beginning of the 1970s needed to deal with rampant drug use, a corrupted system of officer promotion, and a populace disaffected by news from Vietnam of My Lai, free-fire zones, refugee relocation, body-count emphasis and other related subjects.<sup>36</sup> Yet if such stories carried by the press from Vietnam disturbed the civilian population, it became an axiom to many officers that the press had a distinct anti-military bias.<sup>37</sup> At its furthest extreme, officers accused the media of exaggerating defeats and casualties, turning the American people against the military and the war,

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<sup>35</sup> Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 646.

<sup>36</sup> Ronald Spector, "Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty: Military History, Official History, and the American Experience in Vietnam" *Military Affairs* 38 (February 1974): 12; Rosser, "Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s," 24.

<sup>37</sup> John H. Moellering, "The Army Turns Inward?" *Military Review* 53 (July 1973): 73-74; Gaither C. Bray, "The Impact of Mass Media Upon Public Opinion" (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1973): 22; Staudenmaier, "Military Strategy in Transition," 31.



and so stripping both of political support.<sup>38</sup> Some officers found this to be particularly galling in light of their perception that the defeat in Vietnam predominately reflected the influence of their political overseers.

This 'stab-in-the-back' ideology affected the relationship between politicians and the military as much as the military and the press.<sup>39</sup> A 1971 survey of officers at the Command and General Staff College revealed that a majority of officers believed themselves misunderstood and unappreciated by the public.<sup>40</sup> In a 1973 *Military Review* article, Lieutenant Colonel John H. Moellering argued: "We are victimized. We are called upon to take abuse from the press and public for decisions in which we have taken no part . . . civilians got the Army improperly involved in the war, [and] then made the Army a scapegoat."<sup>41</sup>

From a broader perspective, however, officers perceived politicians to be too quick to follow the whims of public opinion. The ensuing distrust for politicians readily translated to an increased and worrisome separation of the military from the populace

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<sup>38</sup> George T. Talbot, Jr., "Review: The War Managers, by Douglas Kinnard," *Military Review* 58 (January 1978): 101; William E. DePuy, *Changing an Army* (Washington, D.C.: United States Military History Institute, 1979), 170; William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday, 1976); Bray, "The Impact of Mass Media Upon Public Opinion," 1.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey P. Kimball, "The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War," *Armed Forces and Society* 14 (Spring 1988):433-458.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 77-79.

<sup>41</sup> Moellering, "The Army Turns Inward?" 73.

at large, colored in part by disdain. The notion that the public viewed them so negatively fed a trend toward partitioning the armed forces from civilian society, turning the U.S. military inward, distrustful of the civilians its leaders blamed for abandoning them in Vietnam. In Moellering's view, soldiers had "sacrificed the most," and they attributed their failure in Vietnam to their betrayal by politicians and journalists.<sup>42</sup>

Doubtless influenced by this alienation, officers distrusted the public, doubting the ability of voters to communicate an "intelligent and informed opinion" to policy makers.<sup>43</sup> Further, some officers perceived the public as fickle and lacking the resolve to support global commitments or national defense. Officers believed that public opinion had dictated the end of the war in Vietnam, and seemed likely to withdraw American forces worldwide back within the nation's borders.<sup>44</sup> Believing the public

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 68. See also Frederic J. Brown, "The Army and Society," *Military Review* (March 1972): 3-4; Richard H. Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *National Interest* 35 (Spring 1994): 3-17; Kohn, "Upstarts in Uniform," *New York Times* (10 April 1994): E19; Richard H. Kohn and Peter D. Feaver, "The Gap: Soldiers, Civilians and their Mutual Misunderstanding," *National Interest* 61 (Fall 2000): 29-37; Kohn, "Coming Soon: A Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *World Affairs* 170 (Winter 2008): 69-80.

<sup>43</sup> Rosser, "Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s," 25; Kriete, "The Moral Dimension of Strategy," 66; Bray, "Impact of Mass Media Upon Public Opinion," 10.

<sup>44</sup> Spector, "Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty," 11; Russell F. Rhyne, "Victory In Vietnam," *Military Review* 50 (February 1970): 43; Rosser, "Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s," 20; Thomas V. Forburger, "U.S.

incapable of understanding the realities of geopolitics, some officers came to despise civilians and politicians, even while claiming they respected civilian control of the military apparatus.<sup>45</sup>

Some officers perceived that foreign policy developments and domestic politics might combine in the 1970s and 1980s to minimize American military expeditions abroad. In their eyes, however, minimizing such expeditions did not mean eliminating them, and minimizing interventions would not end the loss of American life. It was simply a fact of military life.<sup>46</sup> They believed that national interests were located overseas and, if not threatened by communist forces, nonetheless required military attention to ensure their security. Such officers faced a dilemma as their perception of national interests conflicted with their perceptions of the American domestic political atmosphere. Brigadier General Edward B. Atkeson summarized their views in a 1975 article: “the clearest lesson gained from the [Vietnam] experience was that there is a threshold of tolerance within the American political system for support of military

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Army Officers’ Attitudes and Perceptions of National and International Issues and Trends” (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1976), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Maslowski, “Army Values and American Values,” *Military Review* 70 (April 1990): 16, 20; A.J. Bacevich and Richard H. Kohn, “Grand Army of the Republicans,” *New Republic* (8 December 1997): 25; Kohn, “Out of Control,” 3-17; Kohn, “Upstarts in Uniform,” E19.

<sup>46</sup> Gard, “The Military and American Society,” 698; Raymond R. Batreall Jr., “Thesis: Massive Retaliation; Antithesis: Flexible Response; Synthesis: The Nixon Doctrine?” *Military Review* 55 (January 1975): 66; Atkeson, “International Crises and the Evolution of Strategy and Forces,” 47.

expeditions abroad which is highly dependent upon perceptions of the acuity of the threat, the justice of the U.S. response and the prospects for prompt unequivocal success.”<sup>47</sup> Military action abroad, while particularly contentious and complicated, was not something these officers could plan to avoid. Planning for operations overseas while remaining within both the threshold of American tolerance and the realistic limits imposed by a relatively modest-sized force intensified the challenge these officers faced.

This threshold of tolerance became the object of further reflection among officers.<sup>48</sup> They feared that any war that did not begin with success and end promptly and conclusively critics would quickly call “another Vietnam.” Influenced by their belief in the existence of a “Vietnam Syndrome,” military leaders feared the public would be quick to dissent during such an operation, and that the political establishment would be unwilling to commit forces in support of national interests. Some worried that even a limited and finite intervention by military forces, such as in Lebanon two decades earlier, would be unfeasible because of “domestic and international opinion.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Atkeson, “International Crises and the Evolution of Strategy and Forces,” 47.

<sup>48</sup> Battreall, “Thesis: Massive Retaliation,” 74; Atkeson, “International Crises and the Evolution of Strategy and Forces,” 47; Vought, “Preparing for the Wrong War?” 19.

<sup>49</sup> Battreall, “Thesis: Massive Retaliation,” 73.

During this time, the media claimed that the ever-mounting casualty toll played a significant role in American disaffection with the Vietnam War.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps perceiving in this an attack on American military competence, officers maintained that casualties were an inescapable part of combat; that, in fact, “combat was a tough business in which only the best survive.”<sup>51</sup> By this claim, military officers distanced themselves further from greater society, refusing to acknowledge the affect losses had upon morale at home. The argument that combat was intrinsically bloody -- and should be accepted as such -- did not withstand the spectacle of war in the Middle East.

The October War fought in 1973 between Arabs and Israelis “was short, intense, violent, lethal, and almost the polar opposite of Vietnam.”<sup>52</sup> The war served as a conflict of surrogates, matching Soviet technology and tactics wielded by the Arabs against Western technology in Israeli hands; in the process it demonstrated the U.S. military’s lack of readiness for what many officers fastened upon as the new face of

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<sup>50</sup> Carl Rowan, “Some Basic Truths Mixed with Dash of Snake Oil,” *Dallas Morning News*, 13 May 1970, 23; “Most Successful,” *Dallas Morning News*, 5 June 1970, 2; Denis Warner, “When U.S. Quits the War Completely, Hanoi Wins,” *Dallas Morning News*, 10 July 1971, 17; “U.S. War Toll of 5 Lowest in 6 Years,” *New York Times*, 22 October 1971, 3; Michael Maclear, “North Vietnamese Are Expected to Picture Cease-Fire as an American Defeat,” *New York Times*, 28 October 1972, 10; George Will, “The Enduring Cold War,” *Newsweek*, 15 May 1978, 116.

<sup>51</sup> Timothy B. Jeffrey, “Today’s Army Wants to Join You: Do We Really?” *Military Review* 53 (January 1973): 66. Quote attributed to LTG Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. (USMC).

<sup>52</sup> Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 202.

warfare.<sup>53</sup> Americans extracted several distinct lessons from the Arab-Israeli War. Among these were the strain of continuous operations, the importance of mobility, the vulnerability of those less mobile, and the crucial value of the first engagement. Observers incorporated combined-arms capability, maintaining the initiative, and adopting a flexible defense into the new American understanding of mobility. Officers writing new doctrine from 1973 to 1976 incorporated these lessons into the understanding of war they transmitted throughout the military. Of these lessons, the costs of future war proved the simplest derived from the Yom Kippur War, and American officer's observations of the casualty toll in Israel raised the question of when that cost would become excessive when measured in American lives.<sup>54</sup>

The number of American lives imperiled by future wars fought according to the lessons of the Yom Kippur War became particularly relevant with the 1973 transition to the All-Volunteer Force, a transition that also affected the development of doctrine. Reflecting on the decision to end conscription and make military service voluntary, Colonel Robert Gard commented, "there is probably a good deal of truth in the adage

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<sup>53</sup> Roger L. Crump, "The October War: A Postwar Assessment," *Military Review* 54 (August 1974): 21-24; Martin J. Slominski, "The Soviet Military Press and the October War," *Military Review* 54 (May 1974): 44; John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 339; Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 204.

<sup>54</sup> Jeremy Black, *War Since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 107, 128-130; Keegan, *Face of Battle*, 340; Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 237; D. Borel, "Additional Reflections on the Yom Kippur War," tr. John W. Price, *Military Review* 55 (October, 1975): 79; Crump "The October War," 17.

that a democracy gets the military establishment it deserves. The attitudes of American society will set the tone and general limits within which the armed forces can adjust.”<sup>55</sup> The transformation to an all-volunteer force occasioned much discussion on the subject of manpower, including the risks to limited personnel resources posed by battle casualties.<sup>56</sup>

Some officers contended that transitioning to a military composed solely of volunteers would be a positive development, creating a more professional, motivated and efficient force. Others feared exactly this outcome, combined with what they perceived as a trend toward partitioning the military from American society. In a 1978 article, Lieutenant Colonel Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., called on military leadership to “arrest this trend toward insularity.”<sup>57</sup> Throughout the decade officers who shared his opinion imagined that, without the draft’s wide-ranging impetus, the services would become increasingly elite, critical of and isolated from American society.<sup>58</sup> One extreme scenario anticipated this elite and professional force stagnating in frustration because of a popular and political unwillingness to employ it in situations risking casualties, with

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<sup>55</sup> Gard, “The Military and American Society,” 710; DeWitt C. Smith, Jr., “Free Men and Soldiers,” *Parameters* 7 (June 1977): 90.

<sup>56</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army’s Transition*, 30-33, 181-184, 205-207, 228-233.

<sup>57</sup> Paddock, “Does the Army Have a Future?” 56.

<sup>58</sup> Gard, “The Military and American Society,” 707-8.

dire implications for the civil-military relationship.<sup>59</sup> This was not a consensus opinion, however; still others argued that this isolation, a ‘turning-inward,’ would be beneficial. They perceived that after Vietnam a period of emotional distance would favor both the military and the nation.<sup>60</sup>

The practical problems created by the transition provoked the greatest anxiety. In 1970 the U.S. Army consisted of 1,293,276 soldiers; in the wake of Vietnam, officers feared that the military would be unable to recruit enough volunteers to fill its ranks, and those of the other services.<sup>61</sup> Even as the size of the military decreased this fear remained active, and the military complained of “insufficient numbers” and “low-quality recruits.”<sup>62</sup> Increased pay and benefits, combined with a loosening of some of the rigidity and discipline of military life composed part of the package assembled to persuade potential recruits that, indeed, “the Army Wants to Join You!”<sup>63</sup> Recruiters struggled most, however, to overcome the 50,000 casualties lost in Vietnam. The

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<sup>59</sup> Vought, “Preparing for the Wrong War?” 25; Strom Thurmond, “Military Unions: No,” *Military Review* 57 (August 1977): 51; Rosser, “Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s,” 28.

<sup>60</sup> Richard M. Swain, ed., *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 179; Moellering, “The Army Turns Inward?” 82.

<sup>61</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center, Statistical Analysis Division, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/Miltop.htm>, accessed July 24, 2008; Gard, “The Military and American Society,” 705.

<sup>62</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army’s Transition*, 252; Bailey, “The Army in the Marketplace,” 63, 65, 74.

<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey, “Today’s Army Wants to Join You,” 63.



memory of those losses posed the greatest obstacle to the transition, and, as the army lost the majority of those casualties that service faced the greatest challenge in transformation. The oft-repeated mantra of “never again,” exclaimed to stave off involvement in another war like Vietnam, became a large part of the ultimate success.<sup>64</sup> However, could the American military avoid combat? Some officers expressed the fear that an army without an enemy, an army always ready for a war that never came, would become restless; a restless military could pose a danger to the republic.<sup>65</sup> It is possible that later force-protection doctrines were born from the seed of this inherent conflict: a necessary force composed of scarce volunteers who must be conserved yet required combat in order to remain quiescent.

The U.S. Army needed a new doctrine to address these issues. Decreasing manpower, coupled with the absence of the draft, contributed, with a societal unwillingness to lose men to foreign wars, to suggest caution in future military operations. However, officers recognized the need to protect national interests overseas and the need to demonstrate the willingness and ability to project force in the face of an enemy threat – particularly a threat as potent as that apparently offered by the Soviets. The obvious solutions to these issues contradicted each other and so dictated compromise.

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<sup>64</sup> Griffith, “Conscription and the All-Volunteer Army in Historical Perspective,” *Parameters* 10 (September 1980): 62.

<sup>65</sup> Rosser, “Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s,” 28.

That compromise found life in the new doctrine epitomized in *FM 100-5 Operations*. Issued in 1976, it derived from the military-political environment of the decade. It also reflected officers' concerns about casualty aversion, drawing from the difficulty of the transformation to an all-volunteer force, and from the lessons learned through observation of the Arab-Israeli War. The man most widely credited for engineering this new doctrine was General William E. DePuy. Therefore, though *FM 100-5* and the doctrine it advanced benefitted from the collaboration of many minds, it can be examined and understood with reference to DePuy's vision of war, his measures intended to address the problems posed by casualty aversion and the all-volunteer army, and his opponents and critics.<sup>66</sup>

DePuy's experience with the 90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during World War II shaped his understanding of training, of preparing men and units for battle. That war established the foundation of his understanding that the fire team and squad -- small units -- fought wars, and that, unless America was willing to overwhelm the enemy with numbers, those teams and squads needed to have better training and better equipment than the enemy.<sup>67</sup> In the subsequent decades, his observations of U.S.

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<sup>66</sup> Suzanne C. Nielsen, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982: A Case Study In Successful Peacetime Military Reform" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 48, 51-52, 54-55; George William Casey, Jr., "TRADOC Change of Command Speech" (speech to US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, VA, December 8, 2008).

<sup>67</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 138.

Army training frustrated him. He perceived the nation to have been caught up in limited wars in Korea and Vietnam, wasting poorly trained soldiers under inadequate leadership – yet because of the nuclear arsenal of the Cold War, he, like other officers, saw no alternative to limited war.<sup>68</sup>

In DePuy's view, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War "provided a marvelous excuse or springboard . . . for reviewing and updating our own doctrine."<sup>69</sup> The Syrian and Egyptian campaign against Israel was brief, bloody and bitterly fought. American military officers observed the hostilities with both fascination and horror. The cost of the war entailed staggering losses in men and materiel, particularly when placed in context: DePuy argued that no American had considered Syria or Egypt a serious opponent on the Cold War battlefield. Yet the Arabs managed to employ 3,000 artillery pieces, and lost almost 500 during the war. As a point of comparison, DePuy emphasized that in 1973 the U.S. Army fielded roughly 500 artillery pieces in all of Europe.<sup>70</sup> He observed the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War and concluded that America, caught up in Vietnam for fifteen years, had failed to modernize its military.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 154; Jay B. Durst, "Limited Conventional War – Can it be Successful?" *Military Review* 50 (January 1970): 56-57; Forburger, "U.S. Army Officers Attitudes and Perceptions," 8.

<sup>69</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 190-191.

<sup>70</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 78-79.

<sup>71</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 100-5: Operations* (1 July 1976), 2-2, 3-1, hereafter cited as *FM 100-5 (1976)*; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 213.

DePuy employed the lessons he and his team extracted from the Arab-Israeli War as impetus for modernization.

DePuy and his team distilled these lessons from observing the results of tank combat supported by infantry, artillery, close air support, and integrated air defense. One fundamental lesson emerged. Modern war between relative equals involved weapons “vastly more lethal” than the weapons used in the past. Hence the first to shoot was the most likely to win. That principal alone rationalized development of optics and weaponry to enable gunners and riflemen to acquire and attack targets first – before themselves receiving fire. The speed of combat had increased and mobility became integral to acquiring a position in order to take that first shot. Supporting and defending the attacking tank element required an aggressive, “highly trained and highly skilled combined arms team.” Again and again DePuy confronted a form of warfare that he described the American military, particularly the U.S. Army, as ill-prepared to wage.<sup>72</sup>

DePuy believed that tank warfare would decide conflicts on conventional battlefields for the foreseeable future. In his view, shared in NATO, Central Europe was the battlefield that mattered. Applying the lessons from the Arab-Israeli War to that theatre forced several difficulties to the forefront. Numbers seemed the most obvious. The Soviet force would vastly outnumber any American deployment to Europe. This simple fact occasioned hard looks at the manpower expectations of the all-volunteer

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<sup>72</sup> *FM 100-5 (1976)*, 1-1; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 76, 86, 106, 146.

force, at NATO's political environment, and at American casualty sensitivity during the doctrinal development process.<sup>73</sup> The American military had to find a way to be effective despite the disparity.

Officers in the U.S. Army attempted first to bridge that gap through new weaponry. The now-familiar Big Five of the Abrams tank, Bradley mechanized infantry fighting vehicle, Apache and Blackhawk helicopters, and Patriot air defense system found their genesis in this attempt. But the new weapons systems, requiring years to field, were not a complete answer. DePuy and his team expanded upon the observation that the first to fire had the greater chance for success and demanded that the American force win the first battle of any future conflict. They developed a doctrine, Active Defense, designed to allow the American military to flex and concentrate firepower through mobility and superior information to attain that initial victory.<sup>74</sup>

Active Defense, codified in *FM 100-5 Operations* published in 1976, demanded much of the Americans positioned to face the Soviet military. It codified a rigid

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<sup>73</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 189-191; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 122, 144; Vought, "Preparing for the Wrong War?" 29; Dan G. Loomis, "FM 100-5 Operations: A Review," *Military Review* 57 (March 1977): 68; *FM 100-5 (1976)*, 4-7, 5-2.

<sup>74</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 183, 190-191; Loomis, "FM 100-5 Operations: A Review," 68; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 111, 298; Vought, "Preparing for the Wrong War?" 29; Edward N. Luttwak, "The Decline of American Military Leadership," *Parameters* 10 (December 1980): 88.

adherence to a system of force ratios, massed fires, and target servicing intended to achieve victory. The doctrine could not guarantee victory, however; in DePuy's eyes, "success in those early critical engagements will depend mostly upon the courage of our soldiers, the quality of our leaders and the excellence of our techniques and tactics."<sup>75</sup> The failure of any of these would be catastrophic. If the American force received bad intelligence or made a mistake – or its nerve failed – it faced the choice of defending Western Europe to the last man or trading some of Europe to save casualties and gain time.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps in their own statement on the choice, officers and men in these units began referring to themselves as "speed bumps on the way to the Rhine."<sup>77</sup>

The new army that coalesced around *FM 100-5* after 1976 struggled to deal with its role in Europe, the aftermath of Vietnam and the transition to a volunteer force. Caught between the demands of society and the mission, DePuy actually lamented, "If there was ever an army that needed an alternative to the long, thin line with its high casualties and dubious prospects it is the weapons-intensive, manpower-starved, all-volunteer Army."<sup>78</sup> Reconciling the first and last of these seemed particularly difficult. The U.S. Army's role in Europe appeared fundamentally opposed to the manpower limitations it faced. Some described Active Defense as "attrition warfare" even as the all-volunteer army struggled to provide the bodies to operate it. DePuy disputed that

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<sup>75</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 122.

<sup>76</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 192; *FM 100-5 (1976)*, 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 262.

<sup>78</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 302.

characterization, arguing instead that the operational commander decided how to use the doctrine, and that the doctrine did not dictate warfare by attrition. Such a mandate would have been unsustainable due both to the numbers available and to the political climate post-Vietnam. Indeed, DePuy often promoted a mobile and flexible defense coupled with overwhelming firepower on the grounds of preventing casualties.<sup>79</sup>

DePuy believed that casualties often derived directly from poor leadership, and advocated removing incompetent commanders and seasoning the more competent. He wrote, “The secret to success lies in the selection and training of leaders before the first battle so that the *seasoning process can stay ahead of the casualty process*. When the opposite happens . . . a downward spiral occurs and the resultant disaster is a producer of mass casualties without any offsetting contribution to the war effort.”<sup>80</sup> Much of the training regimen that DePuy and his cadre developed in concert with *FM 100-5* began this seasoning process. He coupled this with a near-mania for effective training at all levels within the service, also often on the grounds of conserving the force.<sup>81</sup>

Given its limited numbers available, the U.S. Army could only tolerate a certain proportion of losses before being unable to fight. Most armies engaged in such

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 298; *FM 100-5 (1976)*, 3-4 – 3-5.

<sup>80</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 202. Emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 65, 142, 249, 258; DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 189, 193.

battlefield arithmetic; the prospect of defending the breadth of Europe against Soviet might certainly occasioned it. In keeping with his belief in the importance of the smallest unit on the battlefield, DePuy believed the effects of casualties at the microscopic level could be as damaging as at the national level. Society's reaction was ultimately as important as the effectiveness of the deployed force, however; DePuy worried over engagements on the modern battlefield that could engender "losses for which we are not prepared either in materiel or psychologically."<sup>82</sup> In his doctrine he perceived there might be a need to trade space in order to avoid excessive casualties, despite the political repercussions, saying that in certain situations "the defenders have the choice of expending themselves in place or . . . trading a little space for time and casualties."<sup>83</sup> A product of his generation, DePuy nevertheless understood the inevitability of casualties in combat; he determined to minimize them in the course of carrying out the mission. DePuy's Active Defense doctrine embodied that determination to limit American casualties.<sup>84</sup>

The officers who developed the 1976 doctrine kept in mind the composition of the force. Active Defense called for a highly trained and highly skilled combined arms team conducting complicated maneuvers to a precise timetable. The officers

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<sup>82</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 165.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-283.

<sup>84</sup> DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 192, 202; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 81, 96, 271; Borel, "Additional Reflections on the Yom Kippur War," 79.



developing doctrine believed, however, that the current volunteer force lacked a sufficient number of motivated and intelligent soldiers. DePuy's writing references the need to simplify concepts in order to communicate them to soldiers, in hopes that they would understand – because he believed confusion bred casualties and that even minimal complexity could confuse soldiers and wreak havoc among front-line units.<sup>85</sup>

The officers who criticized DePuy's doctrine seldom found fault in his understanding of soldiers. Instead these critics found fault with DePuy's vision of war. The major complaints fell into two categories. First: that it neglected moral issues, such as courage, initiative, and determination. Critics noted that Active Defense ignored this aspect of combat as it related both to the American force and to the enemy. Second: the doctrine utilized only conventional tactics and techniques primarily inspired by the Arab-Israeli War. Special units and unconventional methods possessed no role in the Active Defense.

In 1977, Lieutenant Colonel Donald Vought addressed what he perceived as the doctrine's failure to consider the enemy's political will. He criticized *FM 100-5's* explicit emphasis on winning the first battle without addressing the enemy's own resolve to fight on to victory. Vought argued that without planning to target the enemy's political will the American military deluded itself by planning to win the first battle of, in his view, an unlikely war between major powers. The implications disturbed Vought. Without addressing the intangibles of political and popular support the 'battlefield

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<sup>85</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 61.

calculus' used in *FM 100-5* could not accurately predict the duration of the anticipated war, much less the grinding war of attrition Vought felt more likely to take place. He feared an expectation for quick victory that could, in its turn, lead to shattered American morale if the war persisted. More importantly, Vought asserted that the authors' of Active Defense failure to consider resolve and will exposed weaknesses in the American military, which an enemy could exploit. In this sense, the American disregard for the possibilities presented by waging war on morale or incorporating methods of unconventional warfare appeared dangerous and neglectful.<sup>86</sup>

In a 1978 article, Major David Schlacter and Major Fred Stubbs identified Active Defense's neglect of unconventional war as dangerous. In their view, the doctrinal emphasis on conventional and nuclear conflict was simply "the tip of the iceberg." Successfully executing a campaign using Active Defense required significantly more, in their minds, than tanks and missiles. Specifically, these officers discounted the prospect of winning the first battle – out-numbered, deployed abroad, and dependent on virtually impossible "perfect intelligence" – unless the United States used Special Forces to promulgate unconventional warfare. Essentially, while *FM 100-5* gave scant mention to Vietnam, these officers promoted the incorporation of the lessons learned in that conflict as well as those learned from the Arab-Israeli War.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Vought, "Preparing for the Wrong War?" 29, 33.

<sup>87</sup> David C. Schlacter and Fred J. Stubbs, "Special Operations Forces: Not Applicable?" *Military Review* 58 (February 1978): 16-17, 25.

In a letter to General Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., at the end of the 1970s, DePuy wrote, “The next ten years are critical for the Army. We are playing catch-up on modernization, having missed one generation of modernization during the Vietnam War -- modernization in weapons and equipment -- modernization in tactics and techniques -- modernization in training methodology and effectiveness. . . . Preparing for war is the only justification for a large peacetime army.”<sup>88</sup> DePuy expected another war at the end of the 1980s and this expectation motivated his efforts to reform America’s idea of “how to fight.”<sup>89</sup>

DePuy’s efforts faced considerable obstacles in the contemporary political and social environment. The public’s dissatisfaction with the course of the war in Vietnam had created an atmosphere easily perceived to be anti-war and perhaps anti-military. The societal and cultural dissatisfaction with the number of casualties produced over the course of the war was one aspect of this atmosphere. The military also desired to set aside the experiences of Vietnam. Even had this not been the case, the armed forces had to deal with a smaller pool of bodies from which to draw. Officers observed that the end of the draft forced the services to change their image and the message they delivered to the populace – and a part of that had to include some measure of reassurance, minimizing the prospect of death in the line of duty. This became more difficult when the Arab-Israeli War demonstrated what Americans could expect of a

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<sup>88</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 213.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 159, 181, 194, 222, 229.

NATO-Warsaw Pact struggle in Central Europe. American officers struggled to reconcile the amilitaristic and casualty-averse domestic political environment with what they believed to be the nature of the next war.<sup>90</sup> Officers attempted to resolve these problems through the doctrine of Active Defense, relying on advanced technology, intelligence, and concentration of firepower to limit casualties. Their perception of American casualty aversion influenced the development not only of military officers' vision of future war but of the doctrine devised to wage that war.

In 1978 columnist George Will wrote, "Even before the Vietnam war ended, wise people warned that the 'lessons' Americans would choose to draw from the war would be as dangerous as the war itself."<sup>91</sup> Officers derived many lessons from Vietnam that they applied to the policy and doctrine of the 1970s. Among them, the lesson teaching that the American people reacted reflexively and negatively to military casualties seemed perhaps only one of many. It would gain in importance as the 1970s gave way to the 1980s.

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<sup>90</sup> Nielsen, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 52; Loomis, "*FM 100-5 Operations: A Review*," 66; Forburger, "U.S. Army Officers Attitudes and Perceptions," 8.

<sup>91</sup> George Will, "The Enduring Cold War," *Newsweek*, 15 May 1978, 116.

## CHAPTER III

## CONFLICT INTENSITY IN THE 1980s

This chapter argues that American military officers in the 1980s believed public support for military operations was necessary and that casualties threatened that support; that these officers believed the American public was casualty averse, even while (for the most part) excepting the military men themselves. The military operations of the decade, particularly the U.S. Marine's service in Lebanon, contribute to a discussion that revolves around doctrine and military culture – particularly the idea of “warrior spirit.” Both doctrine and culture reflected the challenges of dealing not only with the still-unproven volunteer system but also with the American involvement in what officers described as “low intensity conflicts” during the Cold War. Much of the officers’ professional discussion reflected the challenge of succeeding in low intensity conflicts without alienating the public and while coping with a doctrine and organization predicated upon a major war with the Soviet Union. American officers focused upon this potential conflict, and with rolling back the Soviet threat. War planners developed a complicated relationship with the European plains of the Central Region, even as other wars, less suited to the American predilection for large-scale conventional warfare, dominated the geopolitical landscape.

In their own forums, American military officers discussed the affects of casualties upon the society to which they owed their loyalty. In that debate, they

considered the impact of casualties upon the American military's means and methods of waging war. This discussion took place in the turmoil of the early 1980s. Public failures such as that of Operation Eagle Claw in 1980, the attempt to rescue American diplomats held in Iran, increased scrutiny on the military. Critics from both within and without the armed forces, many of them influential academics, characterized the military during these early years as "hollow" and questioned its competence. One aspect of that hollowness involved the leadership's struggle with a number of the intangible aspects of command, such as values.<sup>92</sup> Scholars, commentators and officers observed that the military had become overly bureaucratic, overly corporate, and that the nation's military leaders had departed from their calling as warriors to embrace a

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<sup>92</sup> Franklin Y. Hartline, "The U.S. Army Training System and the Modern Battlefield," *Military Review* 62 (February 1982): 10; John M. Vann, "The Forgotten Forces," *Military Review* 67 (August 1987): 9; Kevin D. Stubbs, "Beyond the Army of Excellence," *Military Review* 68 (August 1988): 25; John A. Adams, "Balancing Strategic Mobility and Tactical Capability," *Military Review* 68 (August 1988): 10; Thomas C. Linn, "Ethics and How We Fight" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, 1989); Anthony L. Barnhill, "Train as You Will Fight: Factors Affecting Development of a Strategy to Train National Guard Units to the Level Organized" (student paper, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1990), 32; John W. Mountcastle, "The Search for Enduring Soldier Qualities," *Military Review* 76 (January-February 1996):22; Steven P. Schook, "Paying the Price for Versatility," *Military Review* 77 (October 1997): 2, <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/milrvweb/engsp/sch.html>; Dennis J. Reimer, "Leadership Doctrine – Turning Challenge into Opportunity," *Military Review* 79 (May-June 1999): 5-6; Allen, "Victory Disease and the U.S. Army after the Cold War," 5.

managerial role. General DePuy, retired and reminiscing in 1984 observed, “an army devoted to an endless bloodless ballet does not inspire much confidence.”<sup>93</sup> The increasingly corporate military organization had fostered leaders who favored a more managerial leadership style, perhaps at the expense of emphasizing the American warrior spirit.

The occasionally heated discussion over the conflict between a warrior’s and a manager’s role touched on many aspects of intra-military conflict during the decade, including competence, doctrine and equipment.<sup>94</sup> One of the most strident discussions concerned the integral nature of the military as the body responsible for killing the nation’s enemies and, perhaps, dying in the attempt. Observers of the military noted a subtle departure from this requisite of warfare. One such observer, retired army officer Fred Downs, blamed the military’s disassociation from killing on the death toll of Vietnam. In his point of view, “killing is the Army’s major function during war. Yet it is the least understood, most ignored, and least discussed aspect of a young officer’s training as a platoon leader. . . . We understood and expected that some of our men

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<sup>93</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 316; Ian R. Cartwright, “Training for War,” *Military Review* 61 (September 1981): 48; David H. Hackworth, “Bring Back Blood-and-Guts Patton!” *Parameters* 17 (September 1987): 113; Samuel J. Barlotta, “Basic Training: The Verge of Destruction,” *Military Review* 60 (November 1980): 56; Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 219; Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 252-253.

<sup>94</sup> Luttwak, “The Decline of American Military Leadership,” 85, 88; Samuel P. Huntington, “Playing to Win,” *Parameters* 16 (Autumn 1986): 79-80; Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 196-200.

would be killed. But no one taught us what would happen to us.”<sup>95</sup> Other officers widened the failure of the military’s professional education system to include soldiers of all ranks. They collectively asserted that the men in the military were not instructed in death – what it was like to cause it nor how to deal with it when it affected their unit. Some suggested that Americans in general were psychologically unready for a war that caused them to confront its casualties.<sup>96</sup>

The Vietnam War had brought Americans face-to-face with their dead, and the military continued to deal with the lingering effects of that war in the 1980s. Many military officers had blamed the American failure in Vietnam on the popular opposition, and at least as many had blamed the media for exposing the populace to the bloody vagaries of war, without emphasizing the strategic purpose of stopping Communist expansion – the strategy at the heart of the Cold War.<sup>97</sup> Professor Michael

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<sup>95</sup> Fred Downs, “Death and the Dark Side of Command,” *Parameters* 17 (December 1987): 94. Downs lost his left arm in combat in Vietnam, wrote three books based on his experiences in and recovering from combat, and is currently the Chief Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics officer with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

<sup>96</sup> Barlotta, “Basic Training,” 56; Alistair Cooke, “Freedom and the Soldier,” *Parameters* 10 (September 1980): 2; Samuel T. Cohen, “Whither the Neutron Bomb? A Moral Defense of Nuclear Radiation Weapons,” *Parameters* 11 (June 1981): 22; Hackworth, “Bring Back Blood-and-Guts Patton!” 113; Cartwright, “Training for War,” 48; Downs, “Death and the Dark Side of Command,” 92, 95.

<sup>97</sup> Cass D. Howell, “War, Television and Public Opinion,” *Military Review* 67 (February 1987): 71-79; Luttwak, “The Decline of American Military Leadership,” 83; Wallace B. Eberhard, “A Familiar Refrain But



Mandelbaum studied the “widely believed [theory] that . . . the United States lost the war because it was televised,” exposing the public to the ugly reality of battle. His study, published in 1983, coupled with others – including the U.S. Army’s official history – found that the theory of media hijacking public support did “not stand up to scrutiny.” Rather, “the United States lost the war in Vietnam because the American public was not willing to pay the cost of winning, or avoiding losing.”<sup>98</sup> Casualties, and particularly excessive casualties, appeared to be the responsibility of the professional military. Suffering such casualties in combat with such a technological advantage, and so losing the support of the American people, spoke directly to the competence of the American military. The military could not expect the full faith and confidence of the public if it failed to protect its own members.<sup>99</sup>

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Slightly Out of Tune,” *Military Review* 67 (February 1987): 71, 80-84; Kimball, “The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War,” 433-452; Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 195.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, “Vietnam: The Television War,” *Parameters* 13 (March 1983): 89, 96; William M. Hammond, *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962-1968* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1988): 386-387; Luttwak, “The Decline of American Military Leadership,” *Parameters* 10 (December 1980): 83.

<sup>99</sup> Luttwak, “Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare,” *Parameters* 13 (December 1983): 11; George C. Wilson, “Army Study Plays Down Media’s Vietnam-Era Impact, Report Says Casualties and Policy, Not Coverage, Eroded U.S. Public Support for War,” *Washington Post* (29 August 1989): A12; Reuters, “Bad policies made U.S. lose Vietnam war, study finds,” *Globe and Mail* (30 August 1989): A14.

If the public weighed the costs of a military operation against its perceived value, what costs were acceptable? The Army War College's journal, *Parameters*, asked if "the preservation of the Union and the end of slavery [were] worth one million dead and wounded Americans? Was the defeat of Nazism commensurate with the loss of 55 million lives? The principle of proportionality cannot be quantified."<sup>100</sup> The question prompted discussion of just how to predict casualties, as well; even in situations similar to past operations, too many variables existed to determine the cost of a future mission.<sup>101</sup>

Officers found themselves forced to consider what political objectives in the Cold War era merited such societal effort and sacrifice. One response proposed in a 1981 article that the citizenry required concrete gains in national interest to rationalize American deaths – in fact, that "there must exist a reasonable probability of success achievable at costs proportionate to the importance of the end sought."<sup>102</sup> Some officers absorbed that the American public required a tangible benefit rather than an ideological "greater good" to support a bloody war.

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<sup>100</sup> John W. Coffey, "The American Bishops on War and Peace," *Parameters* 13 (December 1983): 32.

<sup>101</sup> Woods, "Limiting Casualties," 28-29; John A. Hamilton, review of *Attrition: Forecasting Battle Casualties and Equipment Losses in Modern War*, by Trevor N. Depuy (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1990), *Military Review* (April 1991): 89.

<sup>102</sup> Guenter Lewy, "The Proprieties of Military Intervention," *Parameters* 11 (June 1981): 5.

Academics eagerly addressed this cost-benefit analysis. Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington claimed that American politicians were reluctant to use the military in the 1980s, particularly in low-intensity conflict situations, because they feared the military lacked competence. Such fears reflected the heritage of Vietnam and the bungled Iran hostage rescue and drew upon the perception that the public would quickly disavow any military operation they believed wasted American lives.<sup>103</sup> Reaching similar conclusions – though likely following a different rationale – military officers also increased the emphasis they placed on popular support. According to a 1982 article by Colonel William O. Staudenmaier, this increased emphasis produced “an imbalance wherein professional judgment has given way to political expediency,” creating an environment in which the demands of war fighting – or even preparation for war – were subordinated to the exigencies of public opinion.<sup>104</sup> Such an environment affected an officer culture already prone to careerism and a zero-tolerance mentality, resulting in a shying-away from the risks of unsupported combat. Journalist Charley Reese, after a 1983 assignment at the U.S. Army War College, observed, “The military is loath to the n<sup>th</sup> degree to get involved in any operation that

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<sup>103</sup> Huntington, “Playing to Win,” 80; Luttwak, “Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare,” *Parameters* 13 (December 1983): 11.

<sup>104</sup> Staudenmaier, “Strategic Concepts for the 1980s,” *Military Review* 62 (February 1982): 43; David H. Petraeus, “Korea, the Never-Again Club, and Indochina,” *Parameters* 17 (December 1987): 69.

does not have the 100 percent support of the American people.”<sup>105</sup> Casualties seemed particularly relevant to many as, over the course of the decade, the official U.S. Army position came to be that excessive casualties were responsible for the loss of public support for the war in Vietnam.<sup>106</sup>

Such perceptions could not help but have an effect on recruitment, training and doctrine within the military. The maintenance of the All-Volunteer Force affected the U.S. Army’s effort to cultivate resilient public support in unexpected ways. Since the end of the draft, the service had striven to cultivate an image attractive to potential recruits, and it continued to struggle in the 1980s. Captain Samuel J. Barlotta argued in a 1980 *Military Review* article that “making death and self-sacrifice look appealing is virtually impossible, so the Army is being sold under the pretense that it is a comfortable job instead of a demanding profession.”<sup>107</sup> Delivering on that promise proved impossible as well.

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<sup>105</sup> Charley Reese, “Army War College a Place of Reality, not ‘Apocalypse Now’ Myth,” *Parameters* 14 (Autumn 1984): 85.

<sup>106</sup> William M. Hammond, *Public Affairs*, 387; Harry G. Summers, Jr., “Principles of War and Low-Intensity Conflict,” *Military Review* 65 (March 1985): 44-45.

<sup>107</sup> Barlotta, “Basic Training,” 48. See also Walter A. Schrepel, “Reflections on Citizen-Soldiers and Low Intensity Conflict” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, 1988); Michael L. Combest, “Building the Will to Fight – Prerequisite to Winning the AirLand Battle” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1986), 11, 24.

During the 1980s, the Cold War seemed poised to call upon Americans to make just that sacrifice for military power. Officers discussed the prospect of war with the Soviet Union with obsession. In General John R. Galvin's words, "We continue to show our fascination with the ever-increasing conventional and nuclear power of the Soviet Union – focusing almost exclusively on our potential opponent's capability to fight a massive high-intensity war in Western Europe."<sup>108</sup> Some officers attributed the threat posed by the Soviets to the number and quality of soldiers available to the Warsaw Pact.<sup>109</sup> Other officers posited that the crux of the conflict was not that the Soviets possessed too many soldiers but that the Americans possessed too few. General Donn A. Starry, reviewing the decade, summarized the problem: "Inherent in the changing force balance was the unpleasant truth that no longer could we guarantee numerical superiority, even with the help of allies. So our whole concept, of mass conscript armies and mass industrial means to support battles of military and national annihilation, came to be at risk."<sup>110</sup> Further, the cost of such a clash, in treasure, equipment, and most importantly lives was a colossal burden.<sup>111</sup> Experts estimated that in the event of a war in Korea some 50,000 Americans and nearly half-a-million South Koreans might

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<sup>108</sup> John R. Galvin, "Uncomfortable Wars: Toward a New Paradigm," *Parameters* 16 (Winter 1986): 4.

<sup>109</sup> Bernard Loeffke, "The Soviet Union: Perspective of an Army Attaché," *Parameters* 10 (December 1980): 52-56.

<sup>110</sup> Donn A. Starry, "A Perspective on American Military Thought," *Military Review* 69 (July 1989): 7.

<sup>111</sup> Summers, "A Strategic Perception of the Vietnam War," *Parameters* 13 (June 1983): 44.

die within three months. Some 20,000,000 might die in a war in Europe.<sup>112</sup> The prospect of presenting such a toll to the American people was intimidating; the fear was that such a war would become necessary yet lack popular support, so long as it remained overseas. Some officers drew comfort however by noting that fighting the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century without the support of the majority of the population had been the norm rather than the exception; only the military efforts in World War II had enjoyed the support of the majority from beginning to end.<sup>113</sup> Despite the recent trend, the costs of bloody war had not always required popular approval.

Given the potential for such enormous losses, General DePuy understandably lamented in 1986, "Attrition, the dirtiest word in current U.S. Army doctrine, is warmly embraced by the Soviet Army."<sup>114</sup> Officers studying Soviet military doctrine anticipated that the Soviet leaders would happily engage in an exchange of casualties with the United States' forces. The Soviet advantage in numbers, and its social structure, permitted war by attrition while American officers expected their own society would protest. This factor combined with changing force ratios, the dissatisfaction with a managerial officer corps and the perceived importance of popular support for all extra-

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<sup>112</sup> Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 182; Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 217.

<sup>113</sup> Petraeus, "Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam," *Parameters* 16 (Autumn 1986): 45.

Petraeus referenced John Mueller's *War, President's and Popular Support*.

<sup>114</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 346.

territorial military operations to influence the development of doctrine in the 1980s. Active Defense fell as the first victim of these doctrinal changes.

Active Defense emanated from the first Training and Doctrine Command as *Field Manual 100-5 Operations* (1976). It proposed to use mechanized forces and technological advances to enable the numerically disadvantaged American forces to win a battle against a Soviet enemy. Active Defense relied upon the idea that the first battle would in fact decide the war, and focused its efforts on massing firepower from a defensive position against an attacking enemy.<sup>115</sup>

After a few years of operating within the doctrine, select officers criticized Active Defense for what they perceived as an emphasis upon attrition warfare. From that perspective, officers noted with disfavor the means by which the Active Defense attempted to ameliorate the risks to manpower, relying upon a prepared defense and superior firepower to lessen the costs of combat attrition. Overwhelming firepower, in this argument, allowed the American forces to wage a war of attrition even while facing overwhelming numbers of men. In a parallel argument, fighting from a prepared defense allowed the army to engage in the slugfest of firepower and avoided the high risks and potentially high gains of maneuver warfare. Based on these criticisms, officers called for a revised doctrine.

Other officers contested the need for a doctrine to replace Active Defense. General DePuy responded to critics of Active Defense, arguing in 1980: "Just because

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<sup>115</sup> Linn, *Echo of Battle*, 203; Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 192.

we have studied Soviet doctrine exhaustively, we must not sanctify his intentions nor assign his tactics an aura of inevitable success. A well-situated, well-supported U.S. tank or mech[anized] company with ten to 15 high-performance tank and antitank weapons [using Active Defense] should be able to destroy a Soviet tank battalion coming straight at it nine times out of ten with moderate losses.”<sup>116</sup>

Proponents of maneuver warfare, among the critics of Active Defense, noted the requirement in DePuy’s argument for a Soviet frontal assault that suggested the Soviets would neglect their own operational maneuvers. Lieutenant Colonel Paul T. Devries likewise protested, observing in 1982 that the U.S. military “cannot match firepower with the Soviets so we must be smarter to establish combat ratios favorable to us at decisive points. Proper positioning of forces in relation to the enemy frequently can achieve results which otherwise could be achieved only at a heavy cost in men and materiel.”<sup>117</sup> Devries drew from a broad palette of inspiration to address the shortcomings in Active Defense and advocated reemphasizing maneuver in doctrine rather than firepower from a prepared defense.<sup>118</sup>

Based on many of these same critiques, senior officers criticized the doctrine of Active Defense and commanders distrusted it. Many advocated emphasizing maneuver

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<sup>116</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 306.

<sup>117</sup> Paul T. Devries, “Maneuver and the Operational Art” (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1982), 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6, 10-12.



warfare rather than firepower.<sup>119</sup> The result was two revisions of the U.S. Army's primary field manual, *FM 100-5*, one published in 1982 and one in 1986. Lieutenant Colonel Huba Wass de Czege and Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Holder, two of the contributors to *FM 100-5 Operations* (1982), claimed in an article published the same year that the "doctrine [of Active Defense] was changed [because] Army commanders became convinced . . . that they would be unable to defeat the Soviets using the [previous] doctrine."<sup>120</sup> *FM 100-5* (1982) was a swing of the pendulum in the direction of maneuver, creating the doctrine of AirLand Battle. Rather than emphasizing technology and firepower used from a prepared defense, AirLand Battle emphasized technology and firepower wielded in attacks deep into enemy territory to "fight the Soviets – or any other adversary."<sup>121</sup>

Another debate emerged within the larger framework of the discussion over Active Defense and AirLand Battle. In this debate proponents of firepower and maneuver within and without the military voiced their opinions. Try as they might, neither group could avoid using the term "attrition." Strongly associated with General William Westmoreland's strategy in Vietnam, the term aroused such distaste that

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<sup>119</sup> Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 56-57, 60; Devries, "Maneuver and the Operational Art," 3; Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare," 11.

<sup>120</sup> Huba Wass de Czege and L.D. Holder, "The New *FM 100-5*," *Military Review* 62 (July 1982): 53; Archie Galloway, "*FM 100-5*: Who Influenced Whom?" *Military Review* 66 (March 1986): 47.

<sup>121</sup> Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 57.

General Dave R. Palmer declared, "Attrition is not a strategy. It is irrefutable proof of the absence of any strategy. A commander who resorts to attrition admits his failure to conceive of an alternative."<sup>122</sup> DePuy in 1984 described attrition as "such an 'ugly' doctrine that it claims no known or announced adherents, even though most wars finally have been resolved on that basis."<sup>123</sup> Perhaps this attitude, coupled with the recognition that the American military lacked the resources to pursue a strategy of attrition through to resolution, lent credence to the criticism of Active Defense.<sup>124</sup>

Proponents of maneuver doctrine rejoiced upon the codification of AirLand Battle. These officers claimed that it was their objective "to break the spirit and will of the enemy command by creating surprising and dangerous operations or strategic situations," and argued further that a doctrine based on maneuver would minimize casualties.<sup>125</sup> General Starry, chiefly responsible for the *FM 100-5* (1982) revision, took

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<sup>122</sup> Cecil B. Currey, "Preparing for the Past," *Military Review* 69 (January 1989): 3-4. Currey quotes Palmer from a 1967 meeting in New York City at which GEN Westmoreland addressed officers. See also Geoffrey G. Prosch and Mitchell M. Zais, "American Will and the Vietnam War," *Military Review* 70 (March 1990): 76.

<sup>123</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 315-316.

<sup>124</sup> Donn A. Starry, "A Perspective on American Military Thought," *Military Review* 69 (July 1989): 3; Wass de Czege and Holder, 53.

<sup>125</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 100-5: Operations* (1 May 1982), 8-4, hereafter cited as *FM 100-5* (1982); Devries, "Maneuver and the Operational Art," 3, 7, 10-12; Starry, "A Perspective on American Military Thought," 9.

the argument a step further. He did not criticize the United States' technological emphasis, which formed the crux of the American attempt to overcome the manpower shortfall, but argued instead that both sides of the Cold War battlefield wielded "large numbers of modern weapon systems" and "sophisticated electronic warfare means." Starry came to the conclusion that no single weapons system would bring victory but that such an outcome would be dependent on "factors other than numbers."<sup>126</sup> Therefore, AirLand Battle required a return to emphasis of the very "warrior" qualities officers perceived as lacking in American military leadership.

The emphasis on such intangible aspects of leadership remains particularly apparent in *FM 100-5* (1982). The authors agreed with DePuy, a critic of AirLand Battle, that this first revision pushed doctrine further from firepower than was, in their view, necessary. As DePuy argued, it was "possible to be 'for' maneuver without being 'against' firepower. This is a pendulum that needs to be pushed back and promptly. It is possible to be 'for' the offense without being 'against' the defense."<sup>127</sup> In the meantime, however, *FM 100-5* (1982) advocated "speed, surprise, maneuver, and decisive action," noting that on a lethal battlefield success had to be achieved early and sustained. Such skills required leaders willing to take risks with imagination, courage,

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<sup>126</sup> Starry, "A Perspective on American Military Thought," 8-9; Galloway, "*FM 100-5*: Who Influenced Whom?" 48-49; Combest, "Building the Will to Fight," 4; Wayne A. Downing, "Training to Fight," *Military Review* 66 (March 1986): 19, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 339.

conviction, initiative, endurance, innovation and genius sufficient to create combat power by substituting massed fire for massed troops.<sup>128</sup> Given such requirements, DePuy described AirLand Battle as “a doctrine that would be perfectly understood and beautifully executed by commanders cut in the mold of a General George S. Patton Jr. or a General Matthew B. Ridgway; but there are only a few of them, and the rest of us vary widely in imagination, resolve and risk tolerance.”<sup>129</sup> The implication was that the military’s current crop of officer-managers was unable to meet the demands that maneuver victory required of officer-warriors.

AirLand Battle’s ambiguous definition of victory itself reinforced DePuy’s criticism. *FM 100-5* (1982) stated that “destroying the enemy’s fighting force is the only sure way of winning,” urging attacks aimed to “avoid the enemy’s main strength but shatter the will of the defending commander or reduce the fighting capability of his troops” as “the fastest and cheapest way of winning.”<sup>130</sup> Yet General William R. Richardson admitted in a 1986 article that AirLand Battle failed to address strategic victory. As an operational and tactical doctrine, it focused on the battle, rather than the war. Richardson rationalized that “*not* winning is an anathema to the warrior ethos

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<sup>128</sup> *FM 100-5* (1982), 1-3, 2-5, 2-6, 2-7, 2-9, 2-10, 7-1, 8-4, 8-5, 9-11, 9-13, 11-3, 11-8, B-2-B-4, quote from 8-1.

<sup>129</sup> Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 419.

<sup>130</sup> *FM 100-5* (1982): 8-4.

and is professional nonsense,” but he ascribed final responsibility for ultimate strategic victory to the political administration.<sup>131</sup>

In the middle of the decade, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command further revised military doctrine. *Field Manual 100-5 Operations* (1986) opened its discussion of AirLand Battle doctrine by stating that: “The overriding mission of U.S. forces is to deter war.”<sup>132</sup> Perhaps in the era of deterrence this seemed a reasonable statement. Yet Major David Petraeus pointed out in an article for *Parameters* in 1986 that the U.S. Army was involved in violent low-intensity conflicts in El Salvador, Chad, Columbia, Ecuador, Honduras, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines, Sudan, and Thailand, and that further involvement in small wars was unavoidable.<sup>133</sup> It seems plausible that the writers of *FM 100-5* (1986) were aware of American military involvement around the world, which suggests that they directed the manual’s opening statement regarding deterrence toward the long-anticipated war with the Soviet Union.<sup>134</sup>

The doctrinal decision to focus on deterrence rather than wage a conventional war with the Soviets did not prevent the Army from training for a conventional conflict.

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<sup>131</sup> William R. Richardson, “*FM 100-5: The AirLand Battle in 1986*,” *Military Review* 66 (March 1986): 8.

<sup>132</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 100-5: Operations* (1 May 1986), 1, hereafter cited as *FM 100-5* (1986); A.J. Bacevich, “Old Myths, New Myths: Renewing American Military Thought,” *Parameters* 18 (March 1988): 20.

<sup>133</sup> Petraeus, “Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam,” 49, 50.

<sup>134</sup> Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 77-78.

The training evoked concerns, however, as, in 1988, the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) “discovered that too many tank and mechanized infantry battalion commanders were being ‘killed’ in training exercises, after which their units deteriorated and were trounced in battle.” Key losses among these units, the study demonstrated, could lead to casualties on a much greater scale. Research disclosed that this military problem had troubled mobile units for more than a century.<sup>135</sup> Given the hundred-plus years the military struggled with it, the problem seemed insoluble. Alternatively, because of the likelihood of the mode of warfare such training exercises prepared for, the actual importance of the problem seemed negligible. General Galvin reiterated the vanishingly small possibility that the Cold War would birth a conventional clash in Western Europe and urged the American military to turn its attention to the Third World as the actual theatre of conflict.<sup>136</sup>

Officers encountered some trouble applying AirLand Battle to the low-intensity conflicts typical in these regions. The doctrine gave responsibility for all unconventional war to the Special Forces and mentioned that unconventional forces could be valuable in the deep attack.<sup>137</sup> Otherwise, the doctrine’s drafters expected that AirLand Battle would adapt to fit any form of war, assuming in a way similar to

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<sup>135</sup> Richard Halloran, “Army Finds Too Many Commanders Are ‘Killed’,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1988, A17; Echevarria, *After Clausewitz*, 2-17.

<sup>136</sup> Galvin, “Uncomfortable Wars,” 4.

<sup>137</sup> *FM 100-5* (1982), 1-5, 7-13, 7-23-7-24, 11-4.

senior army officers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that an aggressive small-unit leader could meet the challenges low-intensity combat presented.<sup>138</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, it was true that, in the words of Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, “The likeliest physical challenges to the United States come in the Third World – not in Europe or North America.”<sup>139</sup> This geographic certainty changed more than the location of the threat – in the eyes of many officers, it changed the *nature of the threat*. Some expected perhaps to face Soviet surrogates in Third World countries; more, however, expected to engage in low-intensity conflict.<sup>140</sup> Even with that expectation, however, officers struggled to grasp and define the nature of low-intensity conflict.

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<sup>138</sup> John M. Gates, “Indians and Insurrectos: The U.S. Army’s Experience with Insurgency,” *Parameters* 13 (March 1983): 59; Rod Paschall, “Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine: Who Needs It?” *Parameters* 15 (Autumn 1985): 41.

<sup>139</sup> Petraeus, “Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam,” 50; Petraeus quotes “Excerpts from Schlesinger’s Senate Testimony,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1985, A14.

<sup>140</sup> Hartline, “The U.S. Army Training System and the Modern Battlefield,” 9; John D. Waghelstein, “Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” *Military Review* 65 (May 1985): 42; Paschall, “Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine,” 33, 41, 43; Swain, *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy*, 356; Petraeus, “Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam,” 50; Francisco J. Pedrozo, “On Handling Guerillas,” *Military Review* 66 (January 1986): 81-82; Bacevich, “Old Myths, New Myths,” 20.

Officer's definition of low-intensity conflict ranged from acts of terrorism to "total war at the grass roots level."<sup>141</sup> Low-intensity conflict did not preclude sustained clashes between regular forces but rather de-emphasized the importance of the military aspect of warfare. Some officers dismissed this form of warfare in the very terms used to describe it: low-intensity conflict, military operations other than war, and, in a case like Vietnam, the "other war;" such disparagement was used to argue that the army should focus on conventional war, along the lines of World War II. Officers closer to the "front" of unconventional war contended that low-intensity warfare used "all of the weapons of total war, including political, economic and psychological warfare," and would be the prevalent form of war in the future.<sup>142</sup>

It was perhaps fortunate that during the decade American officers were able to observe a sustained low-intensity conflict by the Soviets in Afghanistan and study the tactics of both insurgent and counterinsurgent. Some observed that the Soviet Army's focus on tank warfare developed for the European plains inhibited its counterinsurgency methods, a problem that might also apply to the U.S. Army.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 42.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.; Frederic C. Hof, "The Beirut Bombing of October 1983: An Act of Terrorism?" *Parameters* 15 (Summer 1985): 69, 72.

<sup>143</sup> Terry L. Heyns, "Will Afghanistan Become the Soviet Union's Vietnam?" *Military Review* 61 (October 1981): 51, 53, 57, 59; Scott R. McMichael, "The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War," *Parameters* 19 (December 1989): 21, 24, 26-27; "Diplomat Says Afghan Rebels Killed 200 of Army's Soldiers," *New York Times*, June 8, 1983, A4; Earl C. Ravelan, "Intervention vs. Doing Nothing,"



Spanning the decade, the Soviet struggle in Afghanistan provided American officers two particularly relevant foci for the discussion of unconventional war: casualties and popular support. Comparisons between American involvement in Vietnam and Soviet operations in Afghanistan were unavoidable. Against what some described as a “classic guerrilla force,” the Soviet Army in 1979 deployed between 105,000 and 120,000 conventional forces, supplemented with an estimated 160,000 Afghans on the Soviet payroll in either a military or paramilitary capacity. According to one estimate, 85,000 to 100,000 “freedom fighters” stymied this massive Soviet force. Few of the Soviet attempts to “win hearts and minds” prospered as the Afghan government they installed floundered, economic efforts failed, and the skilled Afghans needed to develop the country fled with the rest of the refugees. As Major Joseph J. Collins observed, only the insurgency prospered. After two years, he tallied 15,000 Soviet casualties, killed or wounded, and after four years, he estimated the Soviets had lost 20,000 troops in combat with perhaps an equal number lost to disease. When the Soviet force withdrew in February 1989, the total stood at 11,897 battle deaths; the war directly caused an estimated 1,300,000 Afghan deaths.<sup>144</sup>

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*Parameters* 11 (September 1981): 87-91; Paschall, “Marxist Counterinsurgencies,” *Parameters* 16

(Summer 1986): 2; Joseph J. Collins, “Afghanistan: The Empire Strikes Out,” *Parameters* 12 (March 1982): 32-41, 50-53, 58.

<sup>144</sup> McMichael, “The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War,” 21; Collins, “Afghanistan: The Empire Strikes Out,” 32-41; Collins, “The Soviet-Afghan War: The First Four Years,” 50, 52; Selig S.

As damaging to morale as the attrition must have been to the Soviet forces, worse still was the rate of desertion. Particularly damning was the mode – many southwest Asians from the Soviet Union or Afghans from the Soviet-sponsored military deserted to join the insurgent forces. American officers observed that the Soviet government made efforts to limit the news of casualties from reaching their domestic press. Major Terry L. Heyns noted in 1981, “Soviet management of the Afghan intervention goes beyond the media” and discussed the treatment of Soviet wounded at facilities far from the metropolis. The USSR buried Soviet dead within its own borders – but not in the deceased’s own local cemeteries. The Soviet public never received news of deserters changing their allegiance; “in this way, the Soviet authorities can further mitigate the impact of the war at home.”<sup>145</sup> The Soviet method of dealing with public opinion, casualties, and media coverage provided a case study for American observers, but few answers.

American officers struggled throughout the decade to come to grips with the domestic relationships among casualties, media coverage, and public opinion. This was evident in the officers’ discussion concerning the intervention in Lebanon, the largest casualty-producing operation of the 1980s. Expecting to be engaged in low-intensity

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Harrison, “Afghanistan Stalemate: Self-Determination’ and a Soviet Force Withdrawal,” *Parameters* 14 (Winter 1984): 36; Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 672.

<sup>145</sup> Heyns, “Will Afghanistan Become the Soviet Union’s Vietnam?” 57; “Diplomat Says Afghan Rebels Killed 200 of Army’s Soldiers,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1983, A4.

combat throughout the decade, few officers discussed its costs in terms of casualties. Rather, they discussed it in terms of maintaining popular support – with the understanding that the populace would not willingly suffer casualties for a conflict that was not determined to be worth the cost.

Lebanon provided an apt example of this public support phenomenon. On 23 October 1983, a truck loaded with explosives entered the American consular facility at the Beirut International Airport. Two-hundred forty-one Americans died in the explosion.<sup>146</sup> *Parameters* published an article a year later observing that the press coverage following the attack focused much more on the possible political repercussions than on the military questions surrounding the attack.<sup>147</sup> Commensurate with the political emphasis, President Ronald Reagan authorized the withdrawal of American forces by March 1984 in anticipation of a decline in popular support. This withdrawal occurred despite a 21 percent increase in public approval for the mission following the attack – the “rally-around-the-flag” phenomenon.<sup>148</sup> Building upon this conversation, political scientist Eliot Cohen suggested that the American intervention in

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<sup>146</sup> Clyde R. Mark, “Marine Security in Beirut: A Comparison of the House Armed Services Committee and Long Commission Reports,” *Congressional Research Service* (6 January 1984): CRS-1; Hof, “The Beirut Bombing of October 1983: An Act of Terrorism?” 69-70.

<sup>147</sup> Donald Aswell Zoll, “The Press and the Military: Some Thoughts after Grenada,” *Parameters* 14 (Spring 1984): 30; Huntington, “Playing to Win,” 80.

<sup>148</sup> Burk, “Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia,” 66.

Lebanon resulted in failure and defeat not because of military incompetence or an inability to achieve the operational aims, but because of American casualties. In his argument, the 256 total battle casualties suffered in Lebanon proved too great for American politicians to risk, increasing the chances of public disapproval.<sup>149</sup>

Officers meanwhile argued that the military leadership had opposed sending Marines to Lebanon initially, and offered only a weak argument that it would be “unpalatable” to withdraw them in accord with the administration’s direction. These officers discussed their perceptions of the public’s cost-benefit analysis with respect to Lebanon, however, and recommended that the U.S. government find “alternative means to achieve U.S. objectives in Lebanon” which would “reduce the risk” to troops. The official report on the attack commissioned by the Department of Defense emphasized “how” the enemy attacked the barracks, rather than “why,” perhaps indicating an organizational inclination toward force-protection.<sup>150</sup>

The factors that influenced policy-making in Lebanon similarly influenced American involvement in low-intensity conflict throughout the decade. Officers such as

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<sup>149</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “What To Do About National Defense,” *Commentary* 86 (November 1994): 21; Karl W. Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” *Parameters* 26 (Summer 1996): 111.

<sup>150</sup> “Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983,” (Washington, D.C.: Government Accounting Office, 20 December 1983): 8; Ronald Steel, “Why is the United States in Lebanon?” *Parameters* 13 (December 1983): 81; Reese, “Army War College a Place of Reality,” 85; Hof, “The Beirut Bombing of October 1983: An Act of Terrorism?” 74.

Major Gilbert S. Harper predicted more deployments similar to Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983 – a phenomenon he termed “no-plan wars.”<sup>151</sup> The term “no-plan war” described an American military reaction to an urgent perceived need, characterized in Grenada by the tensions over communist influence in the Caribbean exacerbated by the collapse of Grenada’s government and internal turmoil, even military rule. American forces intervened twelve days after dissidents toppled the legal government of Grenada, and suffered nineteen casualties – only nine of them to hostile fire.<sup>152</sup> Describing Operation Urgent Fury in terms of speed and costs placed it as a standard of sorts in the ongoing discussion among American officers concerning the model of future war.

The rapid response in Grenada posed a contrast to the development of Operation Just Cause in Panama, the other successful operation of the 1980s. Instead of a twelve day planning and preparation period, the United States Department of Defense began planning contingency operations and increasing the available forces nearly two years before the 1989 invasion.<sup>153</sup> The two operations, in Grenada and in Panama, provided ends to the spectrum developed by American officers in their debate over future wars. The intervention in Grenada, quick and reactive, responded to a

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<sup>151</sup> Gilbert S. Harper, “Logistics in Grenada: Supporting No-Plan Wars,” *Parameters* 20 (June 1990): 50.

<sup>152</sup> Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 713.

<sup>153</sup> Bulletin No. 90-9, “Operation Just Cause Lessons Learned,” (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 1997).

suddenly perceived -- and potential -- threat with ideological motivation; the intervention in Panama addressed an area with inherent American national security interest and a less clearly perceived threat. American officers in their debate attempted to create a framework with which to address future wars which fell within the spectrum defined by Grenada at one end and Panama at the other; both ends, then, notable for their lack of casualties.

Even after the success of Panama and Grenada officers struggled with the ongoing American intervention in unconventional wars and low-intensity conflicts. The breadth and scope of conflict throughout the Third World suggested that the American military would have a great variety of operations and minimal time to prepare for them. Such an outlook, for many observers, implied that Harper's argument for "no-plan wars" merited further consideration, and that such consideration was the United States' responsibility. Many observers, military officers, analysts and commentators asserted that America had the "worldwide interests, worldwide vulnerability, and worldwide strategic mobility" to require and maintain global stability.<sup>154</sup>

Officers perceived that the questions of how many troops could be politically risked, and what costs the United States public would tolerate, became more important

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<sup>154</sup> John O'Sullivan, "James Burnham and The New World Order," *National Review* 42 (5 November 1990): 49-50; A.J. Bacevich, "New Rules: Modern War and Military Professionalism," *Parameters* 20 (December 1990): 12; Gilbert S. Harper, "Logistics in Grenada: Supporting No-Plan Wars," 50-51; Donald Aswell Zoll, "The Press and the Military: Some thoughts after Grenada," *Parameters* 14 (Spring 1984): 30.

in these operations than determining the requirements for victory. In some cases this resulted in congressional limitations on the number of Americans permitted to be involved in a low-intensity conflict, and it did not fail to highlight a weakness in the United States' civil-military relationship – a weakness many officers feared would be exploited.<sup>155</sup> Involved in El Salvador throughout the decade, the American military was congressionally constrained to fifty-five advisers. In Nicaragua “the effective orchestration of U.S. public opinion by sympathetic interest and front groups” made its “impact on congressional security assistance support.”<sup>156</sup>

Congressional reluctance to provide military manpower to these areas was symptomatic of a trend away from involvement in low-intensity conflict. For many military officers the discussion of unconventional war ventured too far into the gray. General John Vessey said as much, stating for an article in 1984, “I am absolutely, unalterably opposed to risking American lives for some sort of military and political objectives that we don't understand.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Waghelstein, review of *American Military Policy in Small Wars The Case of El Salvador*, by A.J.

Bacevich, James D. Hallums, Richard H. White and Thomas F. Young, *Parameters* 18 (December 1988): 145; Waghelstein, “El Salvador and the Press: A Personal Account,” *Parameters* 15 (Autumn 1985): 67; Pedrozo, “On Handling Guerillas,” 81-82; Reese, “Army War College a Place of Reality,” 85.

<sup>156</sup> Waghelstein, “Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” 48.

<sup>157</sup> Petraeus, “Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam,” 46. Vessey quoted in Halloran, “A Commanding Voice for the Military,” *New York Times Magazine* (15 July 1984): 52. See also Petraeus, “The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger delivered what would become the Weinberger Doctrine in 1984. In it, he asserted that “the most likely challenge to the peace” would arise in the type of “gray area conflicts” democracies were little inclined to support. He called on Americans to support efforts in these low-intensity conflicts. Weinberger also proposed consulting six tests before deploying troops overseas. These tests emphasized that the mission be one “vital to [American] national interests” and assured of support by both the American people and politicians.<sup>158</sup> According to Samuel Huntington, “Weinberger declared that he was focusing on the problem of using U.S. military force in gray area conflicts, but he then defined criteria which would, if applied with only modest vigor, virtually limit the use of those forces to the defense of U.S. territory.” Defining what may be termed the “traditional viewpoint,” Huntington declared that “the military do not want to act because they fear the absence of public support,” arguing “that Secretary Weinberger has it backward: public

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the Post-Vietnam Era” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1987), i, ii; Bruce Palmer Jr., *The 25-Year War: America’s Military Role in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 194, 204; Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 25, 113; Summers, “War: Deter, Fight, Terminate: The Purpose of War is a Better Peace,” *Naval War College Review* 49 (January-February 1986): 18-29.

<sup>158</sup> Caspar W. Weinberger, “The Uses of Military Power” (speech to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1984). See also Summers, “War: Deter, Fight, Terminate,” 18-29.



support is not the prerequisite for successful military action; successful and decisive military action is the prerequisite for popular support.”<sup>159</sup>

The uniformed military position was more ambiguous. General Galvin reflected, “Warfare is . . . no longer fought simply by the military. It now encompasses entire populations, large or small, sophisticated or developing, and its outcome depends more and more on their collective will, what Clausewitz termed the ‘popular passions,’ the compelling motivation and defiant attitude of the people upon whose commitment and readiness to make personal sacrifices military power ultimately depends.”<sup>160</sup> The task of keeping the public informed and supportive of wars large and small was daunting. Officers worried about national security and about stabilizing the media-military relationship that many persisted in believing a source of defeat rather than a necessary tool of victory. In the past, only in a major war such as World War II, where the very survival of the United States was arguably threatened, was the value of victory evident enough to bear the costs such victory required. Some officers did not believe every future military operation was going to be so clear, and so able to garner the support

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<sup>159</sup> Huntington, “Playing to Win,” 79, 80.

<sup>160</sup> Galvin, “Uncomfortable Wars,” 4; Raymond B. Furlong, “On War, Political Objectives, and Military Strategy,” *Parameters* 13 (December 1983): 2; Balshaw, “Spending Treasure Today but Spilling Blood Tomorrow,” 101. Balshaw cited *Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy*, as quoted by Karl W. Eikenberry in “Casualty Limitation and Military Doctrine,” *Army* 44 (February 1994): 17.

that the Weinberger Doctrine required.<sup>161</sup> They feared losing support while fighting one or more wars on foreign soil. This emphasis on public support, coupled with the perception that such support inversely reflected a given operation's casualty total, established a troubling precedent for American military policy in the years to come.

Looking back over the decade, a strange disconnect existed between the "Hollow Army" of the 1980s and the doctrinal transition from Active Defense to AirLand Battle. The critics who described the service as hollow claimed that the military leadership had adopted a bureaucratic, managerial style. Warrior leaders were in short supply and much in need. Yet AirLand Battle, adopted and refined throughout the decade, called upon military leaders to show just those intangible warrior qualities that observers claimed were missing. Facing the perceived threat of conventional war with the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact, AirLand Battle proposed to enable a numerically weaker American force to defeat a numerically superior foe using a genius for maneuver, advanced technology, cooperation between the various arms of the

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<sup>161</sup> Winant Sidle, "The Military and the Press: Is the Breach Worth Mending?" *Army* 35 (February 1985): 23, 29; Clinton D. Esarey, "The Media and the U.S. Army: You Don't Always Get What You Want; You May Just Get What You Need" (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994): 2-3; Summers, "Principles of War and Low-Intensity Conflict," 45; Petraeus, "Lessons of History and the Lessons of Vietnam," 45.

military, and allies.<sup>162</sup> The doctrine proposed to gain victory in an overseas war at the lowest possible cost in lives – for two reasons.

Given the nature of the All-Volunteer Army, the service had relatively few lives to offer - and the political and military leaders feared the consequences of sacrificing them. Because of these two factors, these leaders believed that the U.S. public would not support a war spilling excessive American blood overseas, particularly a long-lasting war waged for ambiguous goals. Peacekeeping, nation building, and counter-insurgency operations placed lives on the line as surely as would a maneuver war with the Soviets; however, such conflict did not stir the national passions in the same manner as the potential clash of great powers. The answer in the 1980s proved to be limited involvement. Nations bound to the United States by treaty or other agreements received money while the number of Americans involved in their inner struggles remained low. Limiting the body count limited the damage to the United States' popular psyche. It indicated a potential trend, however, in which officers anticipated the national leadership would exert itself for the prospect of conventional war and expend effort to garner popular support for such. In other forms of conflict, however, officers perceived that the national leadership expected the casualty costs to remain low enough to warrant little or no public attention.

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<sup>162</sup> Summers, "Is Our High-Tech Military a Mirage?" *New York Times*, October 19, 1990, A35.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE ROLLER COASTER OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE 1990s

In 1991, the United States led a military coalition that expelled an invading Iraqi force from Kuwait. Some observers hailed the victory as a “revolution in military affairs” and enshrined characteristics of Operation Desert Storm as doctrinal touchstones for future success.<sup>163</sup> Yet victory in the Gulf War also reinforced perceptions among officers about American casualty aversion that had been building for decades. In order to understand the role that the Gulf War and the 1990s played, this chapter divides the discussion of U.S. military officers’ perceptions of casualty aversion in American society into three sections. The first section addresses the debate among military officers over whether Desert Storm’s model of low-casualty fast operations preceded by lengthy planning and preparation should serve as the blueprint for future war. The second section argues that the failure to revise Cold War doctrine after the Gulf War contributed to U.S. military officers seeking to protect their forces rather than prosecute operations to victory. The final section examines the reaction of

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<sup>163</sup> Henry A. Leonard, “Risky Business: Fundamental for a Security Consensus in 1990’s and Beyond” (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1992), 55; Steven Metz and James Kievit, “The Revolution in Military Affairs and Conflict Short of War” (Strategic Studies Institute Report, U.S. Army War College, 1994), 1; Gordon R. Sullivan and James M. Dubik, “Land Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Military Review* 73 (September 1993): 15.

military officers to the smaller-scale operations after Desert Storm, such as Somalia and Kosovo. It contends that officers perceived senior military and political leaders expected American casualty aversion and reacted as if it had occurred. These officers attributed operational and strategic decisions, such as the withdrawal from Somalia and the rules of engagement in Kosovo, to the reaction against casualties that their leaders *anticipated* from the American people.

Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990; six days later Saddam Hussein declared Kuwait the nineteenth province of Iraq. The American response came swiftly; troops deployed to guard Saudi Arabia from a possible Iraqi incursion on 7 August. In the eyes of the United States military, the war began on this date, and concluded 14 September 1991. The short ground war captured the imaginations of most Americans. Ground forces in the U.S.-led coalition invaded Kuwait before dawn on 24 February 1991. By the end of that month, ground warfare was over, and American soldiers began returning home in March. Military officers, politicians and commentators agreed that the military action against the Iraqi forces resulted in a resounding victory that, in some measure, put to rest lingering doubts resulting from the failure in Vietnam.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> William J. Perry, "Desert Storm and Deterrence," *Foreign Affairs* 70 (Fall 1991): 68-69; Thomas R. Dubois, "The Weinberger Doctrine and the Liberation of Kuwait," *Parameters* 22 (Winter 1991-1992): 38; Joseph C. Bowen, "Military Movements and the Principles of War" (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1992), 30; Douglas A. MacGregor, "Future Battle: The Merging Levels of War," *Parameters* 22 (Winter 1992-1993): 37-38; Dennis M. Drew, "Desert Storm as a Symbol: Implications of the Air War in

Only 147 U.S. soldiers died in or because of combat in the Gulf War.<sup>165</sup> When 4,000 to 5,000 casualties had been expected and as many as 30,000 predicted, the simple fact that so little American blood spilled onto Kuwaiti sand lent credence to the declaration of victory. In part the contrast proved convincing because of the audience. Many of the senior American military officers who commanded in Desert Storm had served in Vietnam at the company or battalion level, and perhaps equated the high casualties suffered in Vietnam with defeat. By placing the war in the Persian Gulf on the opposite end of a spectrum with the war in Vietnam, the American leadership – political and military – helped make casualty minimization a, if not the, standard against which to measure success.

Through changing the ways many Americans measured victory, the Gulf War also offered a new conceptual structure about which military leaders sought to construct future wars. Major Joseph J. Collins declared in 1992 “Desert Storm will, for

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the Desert,” *Airpower Journal* 6 (Fall 1992), accessed through

<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj92/fall92/drew2.htm> on 22 January 2010.

<sup>165</sup> There is no confusion over the total American death toll in the Persian Gulf. Yet in the media and military press, the number represented as the casualty total varies with the author’s intent. Grant T. Hammond numbers the battle deaths at 146, 35 suffered from friendly fire, in *Airpower Journal*; journalist Dana Priest represents it as 147 in the *Washington Post*; Woods cites Eikenberry’s 293 from *Parameters* for his SAMS student paper. The Department of Defense records 147 battle deaths, 35 of whom died as a result of friendly fire, and a further 235 non-hostile deaths, for a total of 382 in-theatre losses.

better or for worse, be a benchmark for future U.S. defense policy and military art.”<sup>166</sup> Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi military provided an obvious “evil” to counter the proclaimed “good” of the invasion force, and the achieved goal of Kuwait’s liberation, while only one of the coalition’s war aims, proved acceptable to many Americans. The speedy return of troops, low casualties, and easily communicated achieved goals became the core of this new standard. At a level understood by the American public, the Gulf War set a standard for success.

By this measure, the American military had experienced some success before the Persian Gulf. With the new clarity afforded by the Gulf War victory, Colonel Karl W. Eikenberry asserted that assessing operations by the standard of the casualties suffered allowed military leaders and politicians to embrace past operations as victories, simply because few Americans lost their lives.<sup>167</sup> The negligible loss of life in operations in Grenada and Panama overshadowed the valid criticisms of American military competence in these operations, as well as sweeping aside the disputable achievement of American aims. Similarly, Professor Eliot Cohen contended that past American interventions, such as in Vietnam and Lebanon, resulted in failure and defeat not

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<sup>166</sup> Joseph J. Collins, “Desert Storm and the Lessons of Learning,” *Parameters* 22 (Autumn 1992): 83.

<sup>167</sup> Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” 113. See also John Mueller, “A Quick Victory? It Better Be,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1991, A31.

because of military incompetence or an inability to achieve operational aims but because of American casualties.<sup>168</sup>

Reaching a conclusion similar to Cohen's, Eikenberry claimed that the low casualties had a negative consequence. The low casualty totals from Grenada, Panama and the Persian Gulf "may have created strong, and unrealistic, expectations among the general public and civilian leaders that armed conflict, properly managed, can usually be waged with little loss of life."<sup>169</sup> He argued that the new standard for victory set the bar high; unreasonable measures of success often result in an internal conflict harmful to the organization.

Many declared that the technological advantages the United States enjoyed over its Iraqi enemy enabled that nearly bloodless victory. American military leaders and politicians furthered that argument, often through the means of the media, claiming that technology – primarily precision guided munitions and techniques of information warfare – granted operational and tactical advantages to the U.S. forces. These elites claimed that they adhered to a Western and democratic regard for life that preferred to spend money before lives.<sup>170</sup> By spending more money and increasing the

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<sup>168</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, "What To Do About National Defense," 21.

<sup>169</sup> Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties," 112; Collins, "Desert Storm and the Lessons of Learning," 83.

<sup>170</sup> Summers, "Is Our High-Tech Military a Mirage?" A35; Grant T. Hammond, "Myths of the Gulf War: Some 'Lessons' Not to Learn," *Airpower Journal* (Fall 1998): 16; Richard A. Lacquement, Jr., "The Casualty Aversion Myth," *Naval War College Review* 57 (Winter 2004): 49, which is a late printing of Lacquement's



technological advantage, some Americans expected in the future to wage war without suffering friendly casualties. In 1995, a *Time* magazine article discussing information warfare quoted one Air Force officer who claimed that in the future an attack on an enemy's information network would gain victory for the United States "without firing a shot."<sup>171</sup> Popular among many officers, this perspective on the future of warfare emphasized the employment of the Air Force through strategic bombing. Such tactics lumped with others to compose what Dr. Michael J. Mazarr, a reserve intelligence officer and a member of the Strategic Studies Institute, termed "disengaged combat."<sup>172</sup> Disengaged combat proposed that increasing the distance between Americans and their enemies enabled American troops to gain victory without the risk of casualties. This trend became so pervasive that American officers defended before Congress weapons systems under development with the argument that cancelling

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1997 student paper at the Naval War College; Dana Priest, "Fear of Casualties Drives Bosnia Debate; After Recent Troop Missions, Americans Expect Almost Bloodless Battles," *Washington Post*, December 2, 1995, A01.

<sup>171</sup> Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "21<sup>st</sup>-Century Land Warfare: Four Dangerous Myths," *Parameters* 27 (Autumn 1997): 32.

<sup>172</sup> Kevin S. Woods, "Limiting Casualties: Imperative or Constraint?" (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997), 33-34, references Mazarr's *The Revolution in Military Affairs* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1994); MacGregor, "Future Battle," 38; Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties," 111; Grant T. Hammond, "Myths of the Gulf War," 16; Allen, "Victory Disease and the U.S. Army After the Cold War," 17, 38.

them “would put soldiers’ lives ‘at risk.’”<sup>173</sup> Managing the perceptions of risk by either enhancing or minimizing them became part of making their case and involved interacting with the media.

During Desert Storm, American military officers recognized and discussed the influence of media coverage of casualties upon the popular support for military. Media coverage featured on officers’ lists of “typical constraints on military intervention.” At the same time, news coverage of disasters, genocides, wars, and human rights abuses around the world could provide an incentive for American military intervention.<sup>174</sup> Following Desert Storm military officers postulated “media spin” as a new principle of war.<sup>175</sup> Media spin mandated avoiding “operations that will alienate public support, while ensuring maximum media coverage of success stories.” In making this argument, Lieutenant Colonel Frank J. Stech contended that units either could choose missions because of their media relations value or could keep secret from the media missions that would harm the military’s public image.<sup>176</sup> Conflicts likely to generate good video

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<sup>173</sup> Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 49. Lacquement cites Rowan Scarborough, “Army Investigating Officials Who Defended Crusader,” *Washington Times*, May 4, 2002, available at [www.washtimes.com/national/20020504-13602565.htm](http://www.washtimes.com/national/20020504-13602565.htm).

<sup>174</sup> William A. Stofft and Gary L. Guertner, “Ethnic Conflict: The Perils of Military Intervention,” *Parameters* 25 (Spring 1995): 37.

<sup>175</sup> Frank J. Stech, “Winning CNN Wars,” *Parameters* 24 (Autumn 1994): 42.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Szafranski, “Thinking About Small Wars,” *Parameters* 20 (September 1990): 42; Stech, “Winning CNN Wars,” 42; Bernard E. Trainor, “The Military and the Media: A Troubled Embrace,”

gained coverage and so public interest, while “conflicts that fail to generate good video fail to be politically real,” United Nations Ambassador Madeleine Albright observed.<sup>177</sup> In the age of twenty-four hour cable news, a military deployment anywhere around the globe could attract attention. That coverage, however, proved a two-edged sword; American military casualties received ready attention as well.<sup>178</sup>

The three traits that made the war in Kuwait the new American standard for future wars were the speedy return of troops, low casualties, and the communication to the American people of successfully achieved goals. Of the three, critics could not dispute the low casualty toll. Similarly, the troops did in fact begin to return only a month after the ground invasion. Yet Professor Grant Hammond maintained that the American military never left Kuwait. In fact, he questioned what he called a string of myths about the Gulf War, including: “It Was a War,” “It’s Over,” “We Won,” “We Accomplished Our Objectives,” “We Can Do It Again If Necessary,” “Gulf War Represents an Almost Unblemished Record of Success, Superior Military Performance,

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*Parameters* 20 (December 1990): 2; David Jablonsky, “U.S. Military Doctrine and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” *Parameters* 24 (Autumn 1994): 18-22; Timothy A. Jones, “Fighting With One Hand Tied: Constraints on Force in the Post Cold War Era” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997), 16.

<sup>177</sup> Stech, “Winning CNN Wars,” 38.

<sup>178</sup> Stofft and Guertner, “Ethnic Conflict,” 37; Jablonsky, “U.S. Military Doctrine and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” 18-22.

and Accomplishment,” and “The Promise of Airpower Was Finally Fulfilled.”<sup>179</sup>

Hammond concluded that America achieved few of its political and military objectives, yet declared victory because so few Americans died. So few Americans died in combat with Iraqis, however, because the conflict never became a war; at the height of hostilities, Americans proved less likely to suffer violent death in the combat theater than at home in the United States. How media portrayed the Gulf War elevated public confidence in the military to 85 percent, greater than any other institution in the country – but troops remained in the Gulf, Saddam Hussein remained in power and continued to pose a threat to Kuwait, and most of the Iraqi Republican Guard remained intact. Each of these results represented objectives unachieved.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps the most damning condemnation of Operation Desert Storm, however, came seven years later. In 1998, General Anthony C. Zinni hailed as a success another attack on Iraq, a bombing operation in support of ongoing U.N. sanctions. The operation received such commendation because it suffered zero casualties.<sup>181</sup> Such criticism cast doubt upon the validity of assertions that future wars could -- or should -- be fought on the Gulf War model.

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<sup>179</sup> Grant T. Hammond, “Myths of the Gulf War,” 7-15.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-14; Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, tr. Paul Patton (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995): 17, 69.

<sup>181</sup> Serge Schmemmann, “War Without Casualties; Not Taking Losses Is One Thing. Winning Is Another,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1999, D1.

With the end of the Cold War dawned what President George H. W. Bush believed to be a uni-polar “New World Order.” The new cliché held that the fading Soviet Union had ceded its role in the bipolar geopolitical arena, leaving the United States as the sole superpower. Many observers, military officers, analysts and commentators determined that America had the “worldwide interests, worldwide vulnerability, and worldwide strategic mobility” to require, desire, and maintain global stability.<sup>182</sup> This worldwide paradigm complemented a media that provided the American people with remarkable access to situations and information around the globe. Major General William A. Stofft argued that the ability, through the media, to view more of the world would increase domestic pressure on the U.S. government to intervene, in order to “alleviate the consequences of ethnic conflict.”<sup>183</sup> Some of these military operations would derive from political motivations; some would spring from a humanitarian desire to save lives. The breadth and scope of conflict throughout the “Third World” suggested that the American military would have a great variety of similar operations and minimal time to prepare for them.

Some American military officers contended that such a dramatic change should prompt a reexamination of military doctrine. The dissipation of the Cold War left the United States military facing the 1990s with doctrine devised for the Soviet military

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<sup>182</sup> O’Sullivan, “James Burnham and The New World Order,” 49-50; Bacevich, “New Rules,” 12; Gilbert S. Harper, “Logistics in Grenada: Supporting No-Plan Wars,” 50-51.

<sup>183</sup> Stofft and Guertner, “Ethnic Conflict,” 35.

without any likelihood of facing a Soviet army in a conventional war. Instead, the American military faced ongoing low-intensity operations and military operations other than war and expected more in the near future. AirLand Battle doctrine emphasized the conventional clash while minimizing the unconventional and some officers expressed doubt it was suited for the future operations they expected. They referenced Grenada, El Salvador and Lebanon as their benchmarks for future operations, as well as the Reagan administration's war on drugs.<sup>184</sup> Colonel Andrew J. Bacevich, for example, asserted in an article in 1990 that making such a change required a change in strategic perspective. Rather than embrace such change he expected the military to cling to a nostalgic vision of traditional conventional warfare.<sup>185</sup> In contrast, some officers cited Grenada and Panama to maintain that AirLand Battle was suited for post-Cold War contingencies.<sup>186</sup>

The Gulf War interrupted the discussion about doctrine and derailed any consideration for dramatic change. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 allowed the United States to postpone its doctrinal and strategic debates. Here was a conventional

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<sup>184</sup> Victor M. Rosello, "Lessons From El Salvador," *Parameters* 23 (Winter 1993-1994): 103, 107; Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustration of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), v, 18-21, 74; Bacevich, "New Rules," 15; John E. Shephard, Jr., "On War: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant?" *Parameters* 20 (September 1990): 92-94.

<sup>185</sup> Bacevich, "New Rules," 15.

<sup>186</sup> Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties," 111.

foe against which U.S. forces could wield AirLand Battle. The nearly bloodless conclusion of Desert Storm seemed to reinforce the validity of conventional American doctrine.<sup>187</sup>

The reinforcement such a victory offered did not escape the authors of the 1993 *FM 100-5 (Operations)*. This update to AirLand Battle explicitly urged commanders to minimize friendly casualties, in fact, declaring through its keystone document, “The American people expect decisive victory and abhor unnecessary casualties.”<sup>188</sup> The doctrine’s authors enshrined certain tenets -- speed, size, maneuver, decisive action, and overwhelming force -- all of which they described as minimizing casualties.<sup>189</sup> It is worth noting that the 1982 edition of *FM 100-5* contains the same number of references to casualties as the 1993 version; but in 1982 two-thirds of these references note procedural reporting of casualties or tactics for reacting to nuclear, biological or chemical attack. In 1993, the manual made two such references. The other references emphasized the importance of minimizing casualties, a key lesson extracted from Desert Storm. In the years following the Gulf War, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine

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<sup>187</sup> Gordon R. Sullivan and James M. Dubik, “Land Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Military Review* 73

(September 1993): 15; Metz and Kievit, “The Revolution in Military Affairs and Conflict Short of War,” 1.

<sup>188</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 1-3; henceforth cited as *FM 100-5* (1993); Michael McCormick, “The New *FM 100-5*: A Return to Operational Art,” *Military Review* 78 (March 1998), <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/milrvweb/engsp/mcc.html>.

<sup>189</sup> *FM 100-5* (1993), 1-5, 2-1, 2-16, 8-4, 9-4.

Command (TRADOC) established achieving “decisive victory with minimum casualties” as an essential task.<sup>190</sup>

Casualty minimization complicated the military understanding of risk and boldness in American army doctrine. AirLand Battle urged commanders to take risks; it had in publications in the 1980s and it continued to do so in the 1990s, after the Gulf War. AirLand Battle enshrined boldness as a key to victory.<sup>191</sup> Eikenberry, however, argued that training standards instilled in leaders acute sensitivity to casualties. Training to execute AirLand Battle, commanders tied performance standards for various tactical operations to “allowable friendly casualties;” training missions could be assessed as successful until they reached a pre-set number of casualties, at which point the exercise became a failure.<sup>192</sup> While the U.S. Army desired bold commanders, American military in practice demanded officers succeed in the risks taken. The American military culture did not tolerate well those who risked and lost.

During this post-Gulf War period, the idea of force protection gained increasing prominence. The concept of “protection” had attained doctrinal status in *FM 100-5*

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<sup>190</sup> Anne W. Chapman, Carol J. Lilly, John L. Romjue and Susan Canedy, *Prepare the Army for War: A Historical Overview of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1998* (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1993), 22.

<sup>191</sup> *FM 100-5* (1982), i, 2-2 – 2-4, 7-5, 7-24, 9-2, 9-8, 9-16; *FM 100-5* (1986), 1, 17, 33, 95; *FM 100-5* (1993), 2-0, 2-11 – 2-15, 7-1 – 7-9.

<sup>192</sup> Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” 113.



(1982) as part of a complex view of combat power. It discussed protection in the context of utilizing terrain in maneuver to protect friendly forces from enemy fire in order to mass greater fire on the enemy, an idea reaffirmed in the 1986 edition. In the 1990s, after the Gulf War, this was transformed to a stand-alone mission touching elements throughout operations, termed “force protection.”<sup>193</sup>

To some officers, force protection was a manifestation of the priority which casualty minimization had achieved in American culture. The military intervention in Somalia provided more material to fuel this view. American forces entered Somalia in 1992 as part of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) with a humanitarian mission. The Clinton administration did not expect conflict and anticipated costs commensurate with the gains in goodwill generated by aiding those starving and suffering in the African country. Public support remained high until attacks on Pakistani peacekeepers in June 1993 provoked a change in the mission. Instead of humanitarian objectives, the goals became more military and punitive and Americans perceived that the “Somali’s seemed unappreciative of the humanitarian assistance received.”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Michael D. Stewart, “Protecting the Force in Operations Other Than War” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1996), 11, 36-37; *FM 100-5* (1982), Chapter 14; *FM 100-5* (1986), 13; *FM 100-5* (1993), 2-10 – 2-13, 2-24, 3-11, 6-10, 13-7.

<sup>194</sup> Timothy S. Mundy, “Casualty Aversion: Dispelling the Myth” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999), 16; Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment,” 32.

The risks to the American troops mounted until the 3 October battle between Task Force Ranger and the mob of gunmen in Mogadishu. The United States quickly became aware of the eighteen dead servicemen resulting from that firefight. Politicians called for the withdrawal of American forces. In their discussion of that reflexive action, officers argued that the American people had little more desire to withdraw than they had expressed before October. They proposed instead that Americans, angered by the result of the clash, desired retribution. Indeed, Major Timothy S. Mundy contended that the American people, averse to civilian collateral damage, “seemed to have no aversion to the (conservatively estimated) 1000-plus Somalis who had died when the Rangers were killed.” Instead, Mundy concluded that most Americans polled favored escalation of the conflict.<sup>195</sup>

Withdrawing the American forces, officers maintained, had two significant effects. It strengthened the significance of force protection in military doctrine and it reinforced the fallacious notion that “CNN contributed to U.S. intervention in Somalia and CNN gave cause for the U.S. to withdraw.”<sup>196</sup> Taken together the two effects

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<sup>195</sup> Mundy, “Casualty Aversion,” 17; Stech, “Winning CNN Wars,” 40; Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 11-12; Robert F. Wendel, “Casualty Aversion in the Post-Cold War Era: Defined and analyzed through the logic of Clausewitz” (master’s thesis, U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2001), 7; Paul S. Warren, “A New Kind of War: Adaptive Threat Doctrine and Information Operations” (student paper, U.S. Army command and General Staff College, 2000), 26.

<sup>196</sup> Quote from Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 11-12; Mundy, “Casualty Aversion,” 21, 39; Priest, “Fear of Casualties,” A01; Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment,” 33.

enhanced the perception officers developed in which force protection gained in prominence over mission accomplishment – particularly under media observation.

Dead Rangers in Mogadishu formed a lasting image in American cultural memory. The eighteen killed in action in Somalia did not constitute a significant operational factor, yet the images proved “politically overwhelming,” as witnessed by the subsequent withdrawal of American forces.<sup>197</sup> Major Kevin S. Woods pointed out later “one need only to read through the U.S. military’s joint warfighting doctrine to find ready references to minimizing casualties.”<sup>198</sup> Citing *Joint Publication 3-0, Operations*, and *FM 100-7, Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, Woods concluded that the American military had prioritized winning in as little time and while incurring as few casualties as possible, a perspective shared among the officer corps. These publications tried to balance the need to minimize casualties with the need to achieve the military objective, but officers worried that force protection would take priority over achieving the objective.<sup>199</sup>

Soon after the debacle in Mogadishu, officers began questioning the 1993 publication of *FM 100-5*. In a 1995 article, Lieutenant Colonel David A. Fastabend criticized the newest evolution of AirLand Battle for maintaining a mindset obsessed

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<sup>197</sup> Stech, “Winning CNN Wars,” 40.

<sup>198</sup> Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 29-30.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*; Allen, “Victory Disease,” 32-33; Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” 114.

with strategic concepts dating back to World War II.<sup>200</sup> Much of the problem lay in the American decision to separate “war” from “conflict,” and Fastabend contended, “national confusion about conflict is at the heart of today’s discourse on the role of military force.”<sup>201</sup> Fastabend, among others, argued that war was conflict, and any conflict the military involved itself in shared certain characteristics, including the risk of casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Michael H. Hoffman pointed out in the same year that peace enforcement missions shared this risk of casualties, complicating attempts to gather public support. Much of the support for such missions derived from humanitarian organizations whose perspectives proved irreconcilable with the inescapable deaths following military intervention in an armed conflict.<sup>202</sup>

After the American withdrawal from Somalia the counter-argument gained momentum; “Somalia showed that a low-tech enemy could exploit American weakness created by a sense of invincibility.”<sup>203</sup> Officers pointed out that the United States’ enemies had found and would continue to find a way to strike at technologically superior U.S. troops. Humans, endlessly adaptable, find a way. Instead of technology,

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<sup>200</sup> David A. Fastabend, “Checking the Doctrinal Map: Can We Get There from Here with FM 100-5?” *Parameters* 25 (Summer 1995): 42.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>202</sup> Michael H. Hoffman, “War, Peace, and Interventional Armed Conflict: Solving the Peace Enforcer’s Paradox,” *Parameters* (Winter 1995-1996): 42.

<sup>203</sup> Mundy, “Casualty Aversion,” 28.

these officers proposed fostering a “warrior spirit.” The vast multitude of the American military by the mid-90s had not experienced combat. This phenomenon, coupled with the realization that in the contemporary environment the American rear lines were not safe from enemies urged on the development of both this warrior spirit and force protection.<sup>204</sup>

The struggle between a warrior spirit and force protection caused some turmoil amongst the officer corps. One officer argued that, in Third World interventions, “We will fight men who do not look, think, or act like us . . . this brutal, casualty-prone, and dirty kind of combat will negate many of our technological advantages.”<sup>205</sup> Just as the United States embraced a supposed technological “revolution in military affairs,” officers observed war all around the world becoming more personal, less likely to achieve resolution through high-altitude precision bombing of politically acceptable targets.<sup>206</sup> Facing Third World warriors on their own ground and at their own brutal

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<sup>204</sup> Robert C. Johnson, “Warrior Spirit: What it is and How to Make it Happen” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1993), 12.

<sup>205</sup> Ralph Peters, “The Culture of Future Conflict,” *Parameters* 25 (Winter 1995-1996): 26.

<sup>206</sup> John C. Bahnsen and Robert W. Cone, “Defining the American Warrior Leader,” *Parameters* 20 (December 1990): 27; Bacevich, “New Rules,” 19; Steven N. Collins, “Just Cause Up Close: A Light Infantryman’s View of LIC,” *Parameters* 22 (Summer 1992): 62; Richard C. Halbleib, “No Guts No Glory – Operational Risk Taking: Gaining and Maintaining the Tempo” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1990), 37-38.

terms, they doubted that Americans were able to “engage in and sustain” the level of violent commitment he perceived necessary to overcome the enemies of the future.<sup>207</sup>

The abortive intervention in Haiti following the American withdrawal from Somalia served to foster this perception. Just a week after the firefight in Mogadishu, the *USS Harlan County*, tasked to offload members of the Joint Task Force *Haiti Assistance Group*, arrived at Port Au Prince. Major Kevin S. Woods argued in a paper for the U.S. School of Advanced Military Studies in 1997 that, before authorizing the Haiti operation President Clinton had asked for the average of American casualties from Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf. Woods maintained that the President stated he “thought the public would tolerate the average.”<sup>208</sup> Perhaps influenced by the President’s deliberations, orders directed the commander of the *Harlan County* to offload the task force in a permissive environment. On arriving at the port to intervene in an area of important national interest the U.S. Navy vessel discovered armed demonstrators on the docks and small, armed craft in the port and withdrew.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ralph Peters, “The New Warrior Class,” *Parameters* 24 (Summer 1994): 16, 18, 20, 22; Peters, “The Culture of Future Conflict,” 26; Ralph Peters, “Heavy Peace,” *Parameters* 29 (Spring 1999): 77.

<sup>208</sup> Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 22-23.

<sup>209</sup> Roger A. Pretsch, “Tomahawk Diplomacy and U.S. National Security” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999), 6; Wendel, “Casualty Aversion in the Post-Cold War Era,” executive summary, vi.

This initial intervention in Haiti did not result in any casualties. Rather, influenced by the American political and military environment the commander on the scene chose not to risk suffering losses. Marine Corps Major Robert F. Wendel argued that “passive or unprepared leadership” made the *Harlan County* unable to accomplish its mission, forcing the United States to change its Haiti policy. Wendel contrasted that scenario with the successful intervention a year later in which “the determination to use force, created a situation where combat was unnecessary,” concluding that the willingness to use force and risk casualties could serve in its own way to minimize the likelihood that casualties would be inflicted.<sup>210</sup>

The American military began revising AirLand Battle, incorporating the lessons of Somalia and Haiti and publishing a coordinating draft of an updated *FM 100-5* in 1998. The new doctrine included treatments on war, peace enforcement, and military operations other than war, among others, under the rubric of “conflict;” it addressed AirLand Battle’s short treatment of military operations other than war and removed the inherent contradiction Fastabend had identified. Every military operation short of general war fell into four categories of operations within this new model of conflict -- offensive, defensive, stability, and support operations.<sup>211</sup> Yet Major Michael J. Flynn

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<sup>210</sup> Wendel, “Casualty Aversion in the Post-Cold War Era,” viii.

<sup>211</sup> McCormick, “The New FM 100-5,” 5; Michael J. Flynn, “A Common Understanding of Conflict: The Doctrinal Relationship of *FM 100-5* (Coordinating Draft) and Joint Doctrine” (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997), 26-27.

pointed out that the draft claimed, “The most violent form of conflict is war,” and he maintained that this continued emphasis on general war rather than on operations other than war represented a shortcoming.<sup>212</sup> Flynn argued for reexamining the idea that general war was the most violent form of conflict. He contended the history of American operations in the 1990s demonstrated that unconventional wars had an equal potential for violence, particularly as he believed that future interventions would be more similar to that in Somalia than in Kuwait.<sup>213</sup> Despite provoking debate, the draft of *FM 100-5* (1998) was never finalized. It did introduce, however, the concept of network centric information dominance as a keystone principle in war.<sup>214</sup>

Network centric warfare (NCW) and information dominance proved to be guiding principles in the last years of the 1990s, and NCW superseded the never-finalized 1998 draft of *FM 100-5* and influenced the discussion of casualties and popular support. Officers extracted from the doctrine of NCW that, with information dominance, the military could expect to win wars while spilling minimal American blood. Gathering information on just what totaled the minimal amount posed a challenge, however.

After the stunning apparent success of Desert Storm, officers struggled to predict how the low casualty totals of the recent past would affect American

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<sup>212</sup> Flynn, “A Common Understanding of Conflict,” 37.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 37; Stewart, “Protecting the Force in Operations Other Than War,” 38-39.

<sup>214</sup> Flynn, “A Common Understanding of Conflict,” 16.



involvement in future conflicts. Officers struggled to balance the requirements of casualty minimization, force protection, and mission accomplishment. Of the operations in the years between 1991 and the turn of the century, the interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans serve as the best examples of that struggle, in which two distinct and oppositional factions emerged.<sup>215</sup> The first claimed that technological developments, including methods of achieving and maintaining information dominance, would further distance the American soldier from combat until waging war cost no American lives. The second contested that view, asserting that victory in war would always risk lives and that future wars would play out on battlefields where American forces would be unable to wield their technological advantage.<sup>216</sup>

In planning for operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo politicians called upon officers to predict the casualty burden that an operation might force them to rationalize before the American people. There existed no reliable way to predict the casualties America might suffer in applying AirLand Battle to low-intensity conflicts and other interventions. In fact, forecasting casualties had been a notoriously tricky procedure since the 1940s.

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<sup>215</sup> Sullivan and Dubik, "Land Warfare in the 21st Century," 15; Metz and Kievit, "The Revolution in Military Affairs," 1.

<sup>216</sup> Grant T. Hammond, "Myths of the Gulf War," 16; Lacquement, "The Casualty Aversion Myth," 49; Priest, "Fear of Casualties," A01.

Perhaps made watchful by these concerns, officers observed that, after Somalia, force protection became a mission of itself and military officers began making decisions based not on achieving the objective but on the casualties they might expect. Recognizing that most politicians, as well as many in the military, believed that Americans possessed a casualty threshold, officers could raise or lower their estimates less in accord with their “best guess” than in accord with their own desires. Admiral Leighton W. Smith, Jr., provided an apt example. As the former commander of the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Kosovo, Smith discussed his response to requests for action against individual war criminals in the Balkans:

What’s it going to take and what’s it going to cost? Then I’ve got to feed that back to the politicians. . . . “All right, you want me to do this, this is the price.” Remember what I said about the war criminals? “You want me to do that, it’s going to cost you lives. We’re going to get people killed doing this. I might have to go to Kansas and tell Johnny’s mama that he got his head blown off trying to arrest [Ratko] Mladic in a coffee shop somewhere.”<sup>217</sup>

Colonel Richard A. Lacquement, Jr., argued Admiral Smith demonstrated that, in certain cases, the officer’s opinion “that the public ought not to accept casualties for this mission” proved more important than the relevance of the mission. It proved more important, as well, than the public’s actual willingness to accept casualties for a mission – which the officer had no means of predicting. From Lacquement’s perspective, the

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<sup>217</sup> Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 50.

admiral had opted to invoke casualty concerns rather than voice his own objections to the mission of pursuing war criminals, and Lacquement described Smith's behavior as "inappropriate . . . it represents a corruption of the professional military ethic."<sup>218</sup>

In practice, force protection outstripped its doctrinal roots. Major Michael D. Stewart observed in a 1996 paper for the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies that, given the doctrinal confusion over just what constituted force protection, coupled with the political emphasis on avoiding casualties, it seemed that force protection would continue to gain in importance, particularly in low intensity conflicts or operations other than war.<sup>219</sup> The precepts of network centric warfare acknowledged the viable threat posed by those conflicts previously understood to be "less than" or "other than" war.<sup>220</sup> Nevertheless, by allegedly returning to the principles that led to victory in Desert Storm, network centric warfare promised to achieve rapid success quickly and with minimal casualties. According to one of its supporters, "NCW offers . . . to both improve the effectiveness of military operations and to reduce their costs," shortening the duration of combat and addressing as well

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<sup>218</sup> Lacquement, "The Casualty Aversion Myth," 53-54.

<sup>219</sup> Stewart, "Protecting the Force in Operations Other Than War," 42-43. See also Woods, "Limiting Casualties," 29-30.

<sup>220</sup> John M. Shalikashvili, "Joint Vision 2010," publication of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1999, 11, available at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/jv2010.pdf>.

the concern that excessive emphasis on force protection may impinge upon the mission.<sup>221</sup>

Within the larger claim asserting technology prevented American combat deaths many narrower arguments thrived. The Air Force renewed its organizational campaign for the preeminence of air power and strategic bombing in warfare. The term “disengaged combat” entered the military lexicon and the idea of increased distance between combatants gained traction with the American people. Officers and politicians justified weapons programs by asserting that the systems saved the lives of American troops. Many of these programs focused on robotics to remove Americans from the edge of combat.<sup>222</sup> Leaders lauded technology as the means by which the United States would maintain its dominance.

Adherents to this viewpoint flourished even as the American emphasis upon technology continued. Colonel Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., called a myth the “accepted truth

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<sup>221</sup> David S. Alberts, John J. Garstka, Frederick P. Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: Developing and Leveraging Information Superiority* (Washington, D.C.: CCRP, 1999), 186; Perry D. Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2001), 40.

<sup>222</sup> MacGregor, “Future Battle,” 38; Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” 111; Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 33-34; Grant T. Hammond, “Myths of the Gulf War,” 16; Allen, “Victory Disease,” 17, 38; Dunlap, “21st-Century Land Warfare,” 32; Metz and Kievit, “The Revolution in Military Affairs,” 6; James D. Lee, “Information Dominance in Military Decision Making” (master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1999), 77-78; Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 49.

in the United States and many Western nations that information technologies will allow wars to be waged virtually bloodlessly.”<sup>223</sup> The position of these intellectual dissidents maintained that the technologically advanced U.S. military, with its professional soldiers and ritualized combat, would find itself facing well-armed warriors lacking a technological support structure to attack and refusing to follow the formalized laws of war.<sup>224</sup> In so doing the American forces would find themselves caught struggling to find the enemy’s non-existent center of gravity while striving to protect their members.

This argument gained increased support during the operations in the Balkans. During that operation, an officer could claim, “The American way of war, and the American way of preventing war, is increasingly characterized by a desire for its military to conduct casualty-free operations. This casualty-free inclination to warfare . . . has led many self-professed military theorists to suggest, through editorials, that the U.S. military has abandoned its warrior ethos.”<sup>225</sup> To many officers it seemed that the trend emphasizing victory through casualty minimization imparted to many Americans,

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<sup>223</sup> Dunlap, “21st-Century Land Warfare,” 32.

<sup>224</sup> Peters, “The New Warrior Class,” 22; Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 33-34; Eikenberry, “Take No Casualties,” 111; Dunlap, “21st-Century Land Warfare,” 32-33; Jones, “Fighting With One Hand Tied,” 2-3; Allen, “Victory Disease,” 88; Schmemmann, “War Without Casualties,” D1.

<sup>225</sup> Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment,” 65.

including those in the military, the notion that “the warrior leader’s goal is to be successful without unnecessarily risking soldiers’ lives.”<sup>226</sup>

Military planning for intervention followed that trend by emphasizing force protection and standoff distance rather than a bold willingness to use force. Lieutenant Colonel Richard J. Matason asserted in a U.S. Army War College paper in 1993 that the Clinton administration’s Bosnian policy, announced 10 February of the same year, ruled out intervention. Matason claimed the administration made clear it would not consider even intervening with “aircraft, cruise and tomahawk missiles, psychological operations and other measures short of ground troops” on the grounds that “it would endanger the lives of the U.N. soldiers currently in the former Yugoslavia.”<sup>227</sup> From this beginning momentum built until officers could exclaim at the unprecedented emphasis on force protection throughout the operation.<sup>228</sup>

Officers noted that the Balkans, like Haiti, fell under the category of important, rather than vital, national interests. They also observed the connections drawn between American casualties and policy decisions by the media. Given these considerations, and in the post-Mogadishu environment, these officers nonetheless

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<sup>226</sup> Bahnsen and Cone, “Defining the American Warrior Leader,” 27. See also Bacevich, “New Rules,” 19; Steven N. Collins, “Just Cause Up Close,” 62; Halbleib, “No Guts No Glory,” 37-38.

<sup>227</sup> Richard J. Matason, “The Former Yugoslavia and the Quest for Improving Regional Stability” (student paper, U.S. Army War College, 1993), 31.

<sup>228</sup> Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment,” 4.

determined that leaders developing policy over-emphasized their concerns over casualties.<sup>229</sup> The emphasis placed upon casualties from on high created an ethical space some officers exploited. Officers could create an image for themselves by exaggerating the casualties they anticipated for any operation and then achieving their objective with less. Along another intellectual track, they could avoid a mission when they feared the casualty total would be unpalatable, creating an environment one officer found to be hostile to the warrior spirit.<sup>230</sup> Lieutenant General Charles A. Horner argued “that American support” for military “depended in large measure on the ability to operate ‘with less than anticipated’ losses of human lives.”<sup>231</sup>

The ethical space implied in the phrase “less than anticipated” contributed to the obstacles facing the American military culture. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General John M. Shalikashvili addressed the same ethical issue in testimony before the Senate in 1995. General Shalikashvili stated, “I am very concerned about it . . . not only are we setting a standard by which this country will judge us [the military], but . . . that might begin to have an impact on our young [commanders who] have to sense that if they go into an operation, and despite their best efforts, suffer casualties, that

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<sup>229</sup> Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 5; Pretsch, “Tomahawk Diplomacy and U.S. National Security,” 6; Rearick, “Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment,” 24.

<sup>230</sup> Allen, “Victory Disease,” 83.

<sup>231</sup> GEN Horner quoted in Jones, “Fighting With One Hand Tied,” 23-24. See also Martin Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Lessons of Combat, from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006).

someone's going to be looking over their shoulders. How tragic it would be if we did that, because we would grow a group of leaders who, through their hesitancy, would begin to endanger people."<sup>232</sup>

The concerns General Shalikashvili raised about young officers resonated among the wider officer corps. Major Perry D. Rearick interviewed commanders returned from rotations in the Balkans to assemble a convincing argument that, "avoiding casualties was the top-priority mission in the American sector in [Bosnia-Herzegovina]." He asserted "the tremendous emphasis on protection was an unquestioned, routine part of the operations conducted . . . force protection was a paramount issue for 1st [Armored Division] . . . and was emphasized during all phases of planning and execution."<sup>233</sup>

Casualty avoidance in the Balkans became the most critical factor for commanders on the scene. The 1995 Dayton Accords failed to bring peace to the former Yugoslavia and the atrocities perpetrated by Serbian forces upon Kosovar Albanians stirred the United States and NATO to intervene in 1999. Yet the resulting air campaign did not stifle the Serbian efforts. American officers argued that the mandated altitude of 15,000 feet did more to accelerate the ethnic cleansing than it did to slow the atrocities, begging the question of just what had prompted intervention in

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<sup>232</sup> GEN Shalikashvili quoted in Priest, "Fear of Casualties," A01.

<sup>233</sup> Rearick, "Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment," 56.



Kosovo in the first place.<sup>234</sup> Ultimately, the Serbian government sought terms and the United States and NATO declared victory, despite the dislocation or death of 1.3 million Kosovars, whose safety was a prime objective of the NATO war plan.<sup>235</sup> In that sense, if no other, leaders sacrificed the ostensible objective in order to achieve another objective, that of a war without American casualties.

Contemporary officers, for the most part, could not accept the validity of gaining success in conflict by avoiding casualties, yet they struggled against doctrine, politicians, and conventional wisdom. The situation resembled the oft-repeated idea that, in Vietnam, the failure of public support had countered tactical and operational success. In the 1990s, the American military culture mirrored that by emphasizing the cultivation of public support over the tactical and operational success. Officers throughout the military contended that American leadership, overly concerned with casualties, had adopted an emphasis on technology and precision guided munitions in an attempt to wage bloodless war – no matter how ineffective such measures proved

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<sup>234</sup> Morris T. Goins, "Does the Perception of Casualties Affect Military Operations in the 1990s?" (student paper, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999), 37-44; Lacquement, "The Casualty Aversion Myth," 44; Charles K. Hyde, "Casualty Aversion: Implications for Policy Makers and Senior Military Officers" (student paper, U.S. Naval War College, 2000), 17-18; Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Unlearning the Lessons of Kosovo," *Foreign Policy* 116 (Autumn 1999):129-139.

<sup>235</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, "Unlearning the Lessons of Kosovo," 130.

to be when measured against actual military objectives.<sup>236</sup> In fact, they maintained, casualties inevitably follow military action. These leaders urged that, rather than step further from their role as warrior-leaders, American officers accept the knowledge that “risk, sacrifice, and possible death” are a simple piece of military life – and that an understanding of this inherent risk ought to be “inculcated throughout the military organization and sealed in its doctrine.”<sup>237</sup>

Throughout the decade, officers examined the idea of casualty aversion within the American populace. Particularly, these officers analyzed casualty aversion with respect to military and political leadership and the creation of military policy. Many officers borrowed the arguments of sociologists such as Erik Larson, Peter Feaver, and Christopher Gelpi to urge that American leaders discard their obsolete understanding of the relationship between the American people and casualties. Colonel Lacquement stated in a 1997 Naval War College paper, “Squeamishness about even a few casualties for all but the most important national causes is a myth.”<sup>238</sup> Upon examination, however, these officers did not dismiss casualties from affecting popular support for military operations. Rather, they contended that the public weighed the value of the

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<sup>236</sup> Szafranski, “Thinking About Small Wars,” 42; Geoffrey G. Prosch and Mitchell M. Zais, “American Will and the Vietnam War,” *Military Review* 70 (March 1990): 71; Schmemmann, “War Without Casualties,” D1; Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 49-50.

<sup>237</sup> Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 30.

<sup>238</sup> Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 39.

mission and retracted support from those missions not worth the lives spent. The myth of an uncritical response to casualties concerned them more, implying as it did a future limit to boldness in military operations, and creating an environment that made success more difficult, increasing the likelihood of casualties.<sup>239</sup> Major Kevin S. Woods argued further that most military and political leaders would not believe that Americans did not possess “a distracting sensitivity toward combat casualties.” That belief, he contended, affected political and military decision-making about the application of military force.<sup>240</sup>

Casualty aversion, even if mythic, had such an impact because the great majority of military officers, in every grade, accepted it at its least complex level. Public support for military operations was clearly necessary, yet the elements working upon popular opinion were largely qualitative – except for casualties. While the amount of elite consensus behind an operation could not be tallied in the nightly news, the number of dead service members resulting from the operation could. The quantitative nature of the casualty tally, combined with the popular conception of the United States as a nation that valued life, increased the intrinsic appeal of this simpler understanding.

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<sup>239</sup> Mundy, “Casualty Aversion,” ii, 1; Lacquement, “The Casualty Aversion Myth,” 39, 54; Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 17; Eliot A. Cohen, “What to do About National Defense,” 21- 22; Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, “A Look At . . . Casualty Aversion: How Many Deaths Are Acceptable? A Surprising Answer,” *Washington Post*, November 7, 1999, B03.

<sup>240</sup> Woods, “Limiting Casualties,” 14, 23.

Many American military officers revealed this understanding of casualty aversion in their writing and in their dealings with the press. These sources show some officers attributed this simpler understanding of the effect of casualties upon popular opinion both to the public and to their own ranks.<sup>241</sup>

By the end of the decade officers worried that the military had bound the definition of victory to the traits emphasized in the Gulf War -- minimal casualties, speed, and clean, tangible and easily achieved objectives. Victory in the Persian Gulf could create an environment in which the military strove for victory only along the path made familiar by recent history. If an operation suffered casualties, or appeared to last over-long, or aspired to achieve murky objectives -- even if the seeming setback did not threaten the operation with failure -- these officers feared such an operation would be condemned by military leaders, politicians, and civilians.<sup>242</sup>

At the simplest level, the American military leadership reacted to the public's awareness of friendly casualties. It is apparent that many officers perceived in American doctrine, policy, and operations a belief in casualty aversion, and that a vocal

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<sup>241</sup> Steven N. Collins, "Just Cause Up Close," 62; Thomas R. Dubois, "The Weinberger Doctrine and the Liberation of Kuwait," *Parameters* 21 (Winter 1991-1992): 33; Jones, "Fighting With One Hand Tied," 14, 16; Lacquement, "The Casualty Aversion Myth," 40, 41; Elizabeth Kolbert, "MIDEAST TENSIONS; No Talk of Glory, but of Blood on Sand," *New York Times*, November 15, 1990, A1; Schmemmann, "War Without Casualties," D1; Wendel, "Casualty Aversion in the Post-Cold War Era," 7.

<sup>242</sup> Allen, "Victory Disease," 83.

minority railed against it. Inherently top-down, however, casualty aversion and the emphasis on force protection it generated affected doctrine and imbued the newest cohorts of junior officers with a mindset counter to the very attitudes which doctrine, in AirLand Battle, relied upon. High-level belief in casualty aversion created a military culture and a body of American officers dedicated to minimizing risk and protecting their force, even within a doctrine preaching bold maneuver for decisive victory.

## CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSIONS

The shattered military that emerged from Vietnam carried with it organizational memories still potent thirty years later. Vietnam's lessons marked the officers who served there and influenced their careers – and through them touched others. Despite the difference in scale, and with thanks to the advances enjoyed by the media, perhaps the lessons of Desert Storm and Somalia will enjoy similar durability. This examination of American military officers' perceptions has demonstrated that these military leaders drew from their experiences to inform their discussion of the relationship between casualties and public support. In some instances, applying the fruits of their discussion to their profession, officers influenced policy, doctrine, and the military culture. In others, officers perceived that the public's negative relationship with American casualties wielded more influence than did they.

Shaken by the experience of Vietnam, U.S. Army officers reassembled their service and attempted to revise doctrine in order to address the world around them. Their chief concern with the American people being maintaining public support for military efforts, officers focused on the negative aspects of Vietnam and sought to avoid repeating that phenomenon. Observers in academia and in the media blamed the mounting casualty toll for the failure of public support for the Vietnam War, but in its aftermath, most officers focused on a more pragmatic discussion of casualties. As

the military transitioned to a volunteer system it simply could not afford to hemorrhage troops as it had; while officers discussed their concerns for the psychological effects casualties had upon the nation, their priority remained finding doctrine that enabled an outnumbered military to achieve victory in modern war.

This priority changed in the 1980s. The Reagan administration quickly withdrew American forces from Lebanon after the bombing attack on the Marines in Beirut. The official history of the U.S. Army attributed the withdrawal of public support in Vietnam to the mounting casualties, and key officers began citing the sociological works discussing casualty aversion in their professional publications.<sup>243</sup> At the same time, officers began to rebuild the spirit of the U.S. Army, changing its doctrine from Active Defense to AirLand Battle, perhaps in part as an attempt to regain the glory of World War II and the maneuver victories of General George S. Patton. Even as doctrine enshrined the intangible values of boldness, courage and initiative as keys to victory, officers perceived that it, for the first time, discussed protection. Presented with the Weinberger Doctrine, officers surveyed the military landscape of the decade. Lacking a galvanizing World War II or conventional clash with the Soviets but instead conducting operations in Lebanon, Grenada, El Salvador and Panama many officers fastened upon casualties as the linchpin of public support.

In the 1990s this trend continued. The Gulf War presented all the opportunities of a conventional war without the casualties expected. By doing so it increased the

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<sup>243</sup> William M. Hammond, *Public Affairs*, 386-387.

sensitivity of American leaders to casualties while raising the standards required to declare victory; in some cases, officers argued, the American establishment declared victory solely because it suffered few, if any, casualties. Other circumstances, notably Somalia, hastened the military momentum toward doctrinally codifying casualty minimization. By the end of the decade the emphasis on force protection reached such a level that officers perceived it acting against the warrior spirit they hoped to see within the army, asserting that senior military leaders sought to limit casualties rather than achieve victory. Such activity had a recognizable trickle-down effect and officers at all levels feared the influence it would have on the junior leaders.

As the decade closed, commanders like General Wesley K. Clark could convincingly maintain, "It wasn't just the politicians who were pushing the military to avoid casualties. We were feeling the impact of deeply rooted organizational forces from within the military itself . . . 'Voluntary' operations that incurred casualties might not be sustainable. Period. All senior military leaders sensed it."<sup>244</sup> Officers perceived that the discussion of casualty aversion and casualty minimization had gathered such momentum that it affected both the guidance the civilian administration gave to the military at the highest level and the actions of commanders at the lowest level.

Picturing politicians worried about the effect casualties might have on the public, and

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<sup>244</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Conflict* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 437-38.



senior officers sharing that anxiety, officers noted that these leaders' collective concern over facing the public with symbolically bloody hands influenced their decisions.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and operational Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 12; Warren, "A New Kind of War," 31; Mark A. Bucknam, *Responsibility of Command: How U.N. and NATO Commanders Influenced Airpower over Bosnia* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2003), 40; Jeffrey Record, "Collapsed Countries, Casualty Dread, and the New American Way of War," *Parameters* 32 (Summer 2002): 12; Jeffrey Bell, "Rumsfeld's Vietnam Syndrome: Will casualty-aversion cost Bush the election?" *Weekly Standard* 9 (24 May 2004): 1-2.

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