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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

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ENTITLED Which President Used the Military More, And Why

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## INTRODUCTION: The Need For This Endeavor

Why do we act the way we do? What is it that makes us perceive situations as we do? After we have made a decision or acted in a given manner, do we know why we did it? Many of us, after considering the facts, make a decision based on our values, our idea of right and wrong and our simple "gut feelings". These feelings are the product of all of our life experiences. It would then follow that we, as personified by our decisions and actions, are the product of our pasts, which are our life experiences. This conclusion is not some great revelation. In fact, any introductory psychology textbook would not only make this statement, but would proceed to fill the better part of four hundred or so pages with experiments and and ten-year studies to prove the point. The point, however, is key to understanding the reasoning and need for this endeavor.

In modern America, it seems that our population is not content merely to leave the psychoanalysis of others to the experts. Instead, everyone from the supermarket tabloids to Dr. Ruth suddenly has the answers as to why people behave in the ways which they do. Even as Ted Bundy was being executed, people were attempting to determine what would make a former law school student go on a killing spree. Did he have some repressed hostility towards women? If so, what would cause something like that? These types of questions flowed from news anchormen, editorial pages of newspapers, family, friends and

just about anyone who took up the subject in conversation.

I do not mean to imply that this type of questioning is bad or wrong. On the contrary, it seems that these very questions must be studied and analyzed so that we, as a society, can take steps which may prevent future Ted Bundy incidents. But at least one sector of observation (presumably there are many more) has gone unnoticed by the watchful eye of the public. That is the area of politics and, specifically, of political figures and candidates.

Consider this. If we can analyze the actions of Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, Jack the Ripper or any other criminal, in a systematic, meaningful and efficient manner, then we should be able to arrive at some conclusions. Hopefully one of these conclusions would be something, or some set of things, in each of their pasts that could be linked to their crimes. Of course, such links would have to have some plausible explanation. It would not suffice to say that since they all had blue kitchen curtains, blue curtains made them commit crimes. But if such links could be established, then we could attempt to remove these precipitating factors. If removal of these factors were impossible, then we could at least try to identify and stop such men from committing these horrible crimes. But either way, we would be one step ahead just because we knew what these links were.

Now consider the political environment in this country. Specifically, consider last year's presidential election. For

the better part of one year, candidates tossed around issues, artfully dodged questions from the press and vaguely stated their positions on the issues which the public seems to care about. We learned about George Bush wanting to be the "Education and Environment President" from his speeches, ten second sound bites on the evening news, articles in the newspaper and media advertisements. Bush and Dukakis muddled around and eventually gave us some semblance of a platform, or at least stances on key issues. The voting public listened to the two men, mulled it over for a while, and then cast their ballot for the man with whom they agreed most. This is the way a representative democracy is supposed to work, right? Of course it is, but one aspect of the whole situation remains puzzling. The millions of Americans who voted for George Bush simply took his word for it when he said he wanted to improve the educational system of our country. True, there were some who said "But Mr. Bush, you were Vice-President in an administration which severely cut educational funding. How are we supposed to believe that as President you would be very different?", but apparently most people chose to ignore those questions.

The point here is threefold. First, a man is a product of his past and his life experiences. Second, if it were possible for a citizenry to establish links between a man's past experiences and his action in the present, then that citizenry would be in a position to make a prediction about the actions of men in the future based on their individual

experiences. Third, if this were accomplished, then we could rely on more than just someone's word when we are trying to figure out what they are going to do in the future.

It is this need for some predictor that serves as the inspiration and driving force behind this undertaking. The focus here is presidential policy, but there seems to be no good reason why such a study could not take place in relation to almost any aspect of almost any field of study. The object of this examination is to answer some of those questions about why people behave in the way they do, especially when that behavior has a profound impact on the lives and welfare of a large number of other people. The aspect of the presidency to be examined here is that of the President's use of the United States military. Specifically, the task at hand is as outlined below.

Throughout history, the societies of man have engaged in warfare. From the earliest stone-throwing, hunter-gatherers to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the military excursion into Libya, whole populations have resorted to destructive force in an attempt to gain that which they desire. And although we generally say that Germany and Japan fought the United States and its allies, this is not quite accurate and needs some clarification.

First, a country is nothing more than a geographical boundary and a government to take care of the internal affairs and needs of the population. But "country" itself is an abstract

idea which can no more go to war than it can blow its nose. It is more accurate to say that it is the people of a country who are at war with the people of another country. While this is accurate, it might not be accurate to state that the people of an entire country declared war on the people of another country. This idea might be illustrated in a comparison between the Vietnam War and World War II. In WWII, there was a great outrage among the American population at the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and keeping up public support for the war was not too difficult. Vietnam, on the other hand was a case study in the ways you can be involved in a war and not have much public support for that involvement, or at least very divided public support. One can imagine that the case of WWII was one in which the whole American public declared war on another country, but the same statement can hardly be said of the United States' involvement in Vietnam. It is important to note the differences between these two cases because it serves to shed light on the parties which actually make the decisions to enter a war or war-like situation. The governments of our planet's nations are the bodies which are actually at war. They are the ones who communicate. They are the ones who have disagreements. And they are the ones who invade, blockade and declare war against each other. It is true that these governments are often acting in what they consider to be the best interests of their people, but the fact remains that it is the governments which come into conflict.

The idea of governments coming into conflict with each other, as opposed to entire populations doing the same, is key to the argument and research which will follow. It is key because it demonstrates that we are somewhat at the mercy of our elected leaders. Cynics will say that we had the chance to elect who we wanted during the last elections and we must now abide by the decisions of those we placed in office. But that is little comfort to the mothers who must watch their nineteen year-old sons fly off to some foreign land, not knowing if they will ever see them again. Obviously, we must do everything we can to place those in office who will best look after our general welfare. The objective here is to try to establish some criteria by which we, as general citizens, can better predict how well a given prospective leader will care for our needs. The supposition here is that limited use of the United States military, whether it be in a formal state of declared war or in a limited act of aggression, is a better course for a President to take than to liberally use the military. This is because military aggression, while sometimes necessary and/or unavoidable, endangers the lives of our servicemen and also sets the stage for an escalation of the conflict which could endanger the lives of many more servicemen and possibly even the lives of civilians at home. We are, therefore, searching for some indicators which will be useful in predicting the propensity of the President of the United States to commit U.S. troops to warlike conditions.



There are three factors which will be examined in order to try to shed some light on the military use question. The first of these factors is the budgeting practices of the presidents. The other two factors are more internal in nature. They are the military experience and exposure of the presidents and their socio-economic backgrounds. These are described as internal because they are factors from a man's past which shape his judgment and require a fair amount of theory and hypothesizing to understand. The budgeting issue, on the other hand, is one which can easily be quantified and requires little effort to interpret the results other than a simple comparison of numbers. The reasons for choosing these factors as possible predictors will be discussed in depth in later chapters. Meanwhile the first task at hand is the evaluation of each President to determine whether or not he is a "military use" president.

## CHAPTER 1: Just Who Are The Military Presidents?

The United States of America has been involved in world affairs and, in some cases armed conflict, for almost the entirety of its existence. By virtue of the Constitution, the president is the commander-in-chief our military. And while an act of Congress is required to declare war, there are many examples of military excursions which were not only not sanctioned by Congress, but were carried out (or at least begun) without Congress knowing of the affair. This can occur because the framers of the Constitution had the foresight to allow the president to act or react quickly as world events dictated without the need to engage in the cumbersome and time-consuming task of a congressional declaration of war. This same privilege is evident when the United States is engaged in declared war. The president can order troops into new arenas of combat or authorize strategic and tactical missions without waiting around for Congress to debate the pros and cons of the action. This allows split second reaction to critical events. It seems very prescient indeed that the framers included such stipulations in the Constitution. After all, with the relatively few representatives in Congress and slow troop movements of the late seventeen-hundreds, a system of Congressional approval for all actions could just about have been feasible. But imagine such a system today, with 535 members of Congress, world-wide power projection capabilities of our forces and the amazing

mobility and elusiveness which modern technology has brought us. Quick, decisive judgments are necessary and can best be made by one man, with brief advice from his panel of experts.

Thus is the nature of high-level decisions in our country. This type of decision-making can result in the saving of many lives, but it leaves our nation vulnerable too. We are at the mercy of a given president's judgment. We all know that if some trigger-happy psychotic were in office, quick removal would be imminent. But what if a president were not very willing to negotiate with another country to settle disputes. What if he saw the United States military as a diplomatic weapon to be wielded whenever the outcome would favor the U.S.? This mindset must be tempting because, with the most powerful military on the planet, the outcome of just about any military conflict is almost assuredly going to favor the U.S. The danger with this type of diplomacy is that it presents the very real possibility of needlessly endangering American lives. If one holds, as most rational people do, that human life is the one thing which is most sacred, then the possibility of needless loss of life is disturbing. This is why it is necessary to identify those individuals who tend to lean toward possibly unnecessary use of the military and prevent them from having the opportunity to endanger lives. The first step in this identification process is to study past presidents to see if there exists any trends in the use of military force. This analysis must begin by classifying presidents as militarily

active or militarily inactive.

The classification of any president, or any person for that matter, is always a difficult task. This study examines the presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, and Reagan. Kennedy and Ford will not be examined because their terms of office were so short that it is difficult to get a clear picture of their intentions militarily. Some of these men led our nation during war, some during pseudo wars (undeclared wars), some during relative world peace and most during international political unrest. Because of these varied and incomparable conditions, I will try to identify trends in military involvement in order to classify the presidents as militarily active or militarily inactive. In other words, I will attempt to identify the general mood of the presidency under each of the chief executive officers in question. This will allow a fair comparison of these men even though they each faced very different national and international conditions.

#### **FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**

Franklin Roosevelt was handed the reigns of the presidency by Herbert Hoover at what turned out to be the beginning of the Great Depression. Roosevelt saw a nation facing 25% unemployment figures and a New York Stock Exchange worth only one-quarter of its value only four years earlier in 1929. The first order of business was to shore up the failed banking industry. The subsequent creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation eased the public's fears of failing banks

losing the people's savings. Roosevelt's New Deal concentrated on placing America on its economic feet again and that was clearly the first order of business for his administration.

Not as important, but nonetheless vital, was Roosevelt's intentions in the realm of international affairs, especially military intentions. During his campaign in 1932, Roosevelt campaigned on what seemed to be an isolationist policy of not entering the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> This impression, however, proved to be false as Roosevelt extended diplomatic relations to the Soviet Union, implemented the Good Neighbor policy in Central America and repudiated the "belligerent corollary" Theodore Roosevelt had attached in 1904 to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting the claim of the United States to exercise international police power in the western hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> In 1935, a Democrat-led and Roosevelt-led Congress passed the Neutrality Act which imposed a mandatory embargo on arms shipment to all belligerent nations.<sup>3</sup> The election of 1940 saw Roosevelt campaign on a platform of not entering the already begun World War II.

Even though Roosevelt occupied the presidency through most of World War II, it doesn't seem that he can be considered a militarily active president. As stated earlier, the object here is not to simply count up military encounters under the individual presidents, but rather to obtain a feel for the general mood of the presidential office during each of the administrations. Any president would have had to enter the

war after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and such action, as well as subsequent actions leading to the winning of the war must be attributed to the conditions of the war and the nature of warfare itself. Thus it seems that the propensity of a president to engage in military action cannot be determined by the United States' entrance into and activities related to World War II because just about anyone would have had to react in a similar fashion.

Therefore, it seems proper to place Franklin Roosevelt in the category of militarily inactive. As explained above, even though he sat in office during the bloodiest war in this planet's history, his foreign policy stance and actions prior to the war were benign in their nature. It may seem paradoxical to place a president whose administration conceived the atom bomb in such a category, but war is, as they say, hell, and once in the devilish affair the best one can do is try to get out.

#### **HARRY S. TRUMAN**

Growing up in small-town Independence, Missouri, Harry Truman seemed content to farm and live out his life in his home state. Truman entered public life in in 1934, running successfully for the United States Senate defeating four candidates in the primary, and easing into the Senate without much fanfare. In fact, President Roosevelt took almost two weeks to invite the new senator to the White House and when Truman finally arrived to greet Roosevelt, he was only allowed

seven minutes to meet with the President. It appears that Roosevelt disliked Truman because he considered him part of the patronage and graft machine of Kansas City Democratic Party boss Tom Pendergast.<sup>4</sup>

Truman almost stumbled into the presidency, coming into office at the death of Roosevelt after being sought by Democratic Party higher-ups for the vice-presidential slot because of Roosevelt's failing health. Truman's expertise lay in the realm of domestic politics and his ignorance of international affairs was his Achilles heel. He learned quickly on the job, though, and the results of his decisions are what will categorize him here.

One generally thinks of Truman as the president who dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This alone would suffice for some people as justification for placing him in the category of militarily active. This, however needs to be studied closer to be certain.

The bombing of the two Japanese cities caused the immediate loss of approximately 100,000 civilian lives, an atrocity to be sure. But had Truman not used the bombs, there would have been an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 American lives lost in an attempt to take mainland Japan.<sup>5</sup> Given the almost 2.6 billion dollars that the government had spent developing the bomb, it seems that a possibly unavoidable loss of so many American lives would have impeached Truman.

Even if one does not condemn Truman to the militarily active

category for the use of atomic weapons, there are other factors which seem to point in that direction. Truman's basic program in foreign policy was a three-pronged one. It was composed of; the Truman Doctrine, which broadly stated that we would do all within our power to halt the spread of communism anywhere in the world; the Marshall Plan, which was basically an economic assistance plan for Western Europe; and the formation of NATO. Of the three plans, two are directly related to the use of military force in the future and the broadly stated Truman Doctrine was the justification to enter the Korean theater, which ultimately cost over 33,000 American lives. Truman was not so pro-military that he supported MacArthur's desires to use nuclear weapons against North Korea and China, but he seems to fall somewhat clearly into the category of militarily active.

#### **DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**

After graduating from West Point, Eisenhower rose quickly within the military establishment. Beginning with work in the Panama Canal, he accelerated through the Army War College and Command and General Staff School, arriving as chief aide to Douglas MacArthur in 1933. Nine years later, he commanded the American invasion of North Africa, and by early 1943 had been promoted to supreme commander of Allied Forces in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower was clearly one of the greatest military tacticians of World War II and one of the greatest in American history. His subsequent rise to the presidency was well supported by the American public and he remains the only president to



substantially retain high effectiveness ratings for the duration of his term of office.

As a president, however, Eisenhower appeared not as the powerful Nazi-defeating general, but rather low-keyed and militarily restrained. The end of the Korean conflict came about shortly after Eisenhower took office in 1953 and the remainder of his term seems fairly sedate in retrospect. Unrest in Eastern Europe, culminating in the Hungarian Uprising, as well as military exchanges between U.S. allies France and Britain and the Nasser-led Egypt provided ample opportunity for Eisenhower to commit troops, but he chose to restrain himself. The sending of army troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to quiet the anti-integration protests and the brief commitment of marines to Lebanon at the request of Lebanon's president stand as the only two examples of calling the military to duty during the Eisenhower years. Additionally, the passage of the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine stipulated that, due to the power vacuum in the Middle East, the U.S. could send troops with congressional approval to any state in the Middle East which requested assistance.<sup>7</sup> The object was to deter Soviet aggression in the region while leaving the final decision to send troops to the president and to the country in question. Eisenhower only resorted to this once (Lebanon) and in fact used the same doctrine to justify not involving the U.S. in the Britain/France-Egypt conflict.

Eisenhower seems to have been quite restrained in his use

of the military, although the threat of a powerful U.S. military surely assisted him by providing some degree of deterrent effect. Nonetheless, he was restrained in his actions and for that reason must be placed in the category of a militarily inactive president.

#### **LYNDON B. JOHNSON**

Lyndon Johnson took office in November, 1963, amid the turmoil of Kennedy's assassination. He quickly sought to pass civil rights legislation begun by his predecessor, which was accomplished quickly. He then unveiled his own agenda for the nation, henceforth known as the Great Society. His plan called for the creation of VISTA, the Job Corps, the Office of Economic Opportunity and Head Start programs, with the goal being help to the hard-core poor and those who were considered to be culturally disadvantaged.<sup>8</sup> The conception of these and similar programs have led historians to view Johnson as a benevolent and caring leader on the domestic front. But he inherited one rather small problem from the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations which proved to be his downfall and which will serve as the foundation for his classification here.

The Johnson administration was born with Vietnam in its lap. Sixteen thousand troops were based in the Southeast Asian country the day Johnson took office. Johnson's resolve to defend democracy from the evils of communism lead to an involvement which seemed to spiral ever deeper into the realm of U.S. involvement. It seems ironic that, in 1964, Johnson campaigned

against Senator Barry Goldwater on the premise that Johnson possessed "restraint and judgment in military matters [which] could be relied upon."<sup>9</sup> Four years later, that restraint and judgment effectively precluded Johnson from even attempting to seek his own party's nomination.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by Congress to allow the president to react to situations in the Vietnamese region which might endanger U.S. troops there, was quite similar in purpose to the resolution extended to Eisenhower for operation in the Middle East. Unlike Eisenhower, however, Johnson ended up relying on the Tonkin Resolution to ferry more and more troops and supplies to South Vietnam. Johnson seemed stuck in the Vietnam quagmire. If he were to continue to send troops, he would surely face growing opposition at home, but if he removed the U.S. forces from the region, South Vietnam would most assuredly fall to the Communists. Johnson was afraid of the "domino theory", that is if one South East Asian nation fell to communism, then others would follow.<sup>10</sup> The decision to escalate the war is the decision that places Johnson in the militarily active category. Even though he was duly restrained in other parts of the world, most notably in Central America, his raising the level of U.S. involvement in Vietnam from 16,000 to 525,000 in just over four years, even over the growing opposition from Congress and the general public, justly identifies Johnson as a president with a rather high propensity to resort to the military to solve problems.

## RICHARD M. NIXON

Richard Nixon entered the office of the President of the United States with the nation still deep in the muck of the Vietnam War. His criticism of the previous administration's policies in the Asian theater of operations won him some support from the general public, enough to squeak by in the election with a less than ideal 43 percent of the overall vote. While this was enough to place him in office, it was hardly the type of "mandate" which presidents so often refer to for support of their policies. Nevertheless, Nixon had voiced a desire to "Vietnamize" the war, that is hand over more and more of the defense responsibility to the people of South Vietnam, and he intended to follow through with that plan.

Intentions, as we all know, are not always reflected in the actions of men, and so was the case with Nixon's Vietnamization plans for the war. While he did pull massive amounts of U.S. troops from the region, he escalated the air war to prevent the North Vietnamese from running roughshot over its weak neighbor to the south. This escalation of the air war led to the bombing of Cambodia and the ravaging of many areas in the North due to constant "carpet bombing" and deforestation.<sup>11</sup> And although many troops were removed, the ones which remained took on new responsibilities due to new ground incursions into Cambodia. The response back home was one of renewed protest and in May of 1970, National guardsmen who were controlling a protest at Kent State opened fire on

a crowd killing four protesters. Peace negotiations floundered about during the period 1970-1972 and just when Henry Kissinger announced that "peace was at hand", the South Vietnamese objected to the cease fire terms and Nixon stalled the agreement. He subsequently ordered massive bombings to resume in North Vietnam and this order came through just after his re-election in 1972.

Although Nixon campaigned on a platform of undoing the Vietnam mess, it remained nothing more than a campaign promise and was never realized to any significant extent. Nixon did, however, make impressive strides in diplomatic relations with China and succeeded in concluding the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) with the Soviet Union. It is obvious that these diplomatic successes continue to have profound effects on the state of U.S. relations with these and other countries, but this is a study in military use and in that light Nixon must be classified as a militarily active president.

#### **JAMES E. CARTER**

Jimmy Carter can best be described as an unfortunate president. He entered office just as the economic backlash of the early 1970's oil embargo was beginning to take its toll on other aspects of the U.S. economy and his name has become synonymous with inflation and stagflation to the average American.

In events dealing with the military, too, Carter has been effectively portrayed as a man who weakened the U.S. military to the point of making the nation extremely vulnerable to attack

with a very limited ability to defend itself. This perception has been largely created by other politicians hoping to gain from Carter's failures, but it is grounded in truth. It is true that Carter canceled the B-1 bomber program and sought to reduce the shipbuilding activity in favor of alternate, and sometimes non-defense related, programs. But he also favored the strengthening of NATO and the development of the neutron bomb.<sup>12</sup> However, he then teetered back and forth on the decision to go ahead with neutron bomb research and confused observers as to what his true military intentions were.

While we can speculate endlessly as to the intentions of Carter in the area of military development, we can easily quantify his actions. The simple fact is that the United States military was unusually free from encounters with hostile forces while Carter remained in office. The lone incident involving the attempted rescue of the hostages in Iran stands as the isolated event in which military action was used as a means to accomplish a diplomatic goal, and this came only after embargoes and freezing Iranian assets in the U.S. accomplished no resolution to the situation. Carter's term seems to be littered with attempts to bridge diplomatic chasms by use of bargaining and the power of the pen in the form of treaties. Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, the failed SALT II treaty, the recognition of the Peoples Republic of China as the only China (ending the relations with Taiwan) and the boycotting/embargo situations which followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

all paint a picture of a president who sought to use the military to attain goals only as an absolute last resort. It is because of this that Jimmy Carter must be classified as a militarily inactive president.

#### **RONALD W. REAGAN**

Ronald Reagan rode into the White House astride the crushing defeat he had dealt Jimmy Carter in November of 1980. The former actor played upon the economic woes of the nation under Carter and the perception of a weak military which had come into existence under his predecessor. He possessed a charisma and an ability to relate to all types of Americans which has only been rivaled by Franklin Roosevelt. Reagan promised a better economy, and he delivered. He also promised a stronger military with "peace through strength" being the rallying cry for his military program. The question stands, however, have we really achieved peace through our newfound strength?

Quite obviously we are not at war, so by that criteria we have indeed achieved peace through strength. But if one accepts the notion that we can be a society not at peace without going to war, then the question opens up for debate. In 1983, the United States initiated a brief exercise in bombing foreign targets when Reagan authorized the bombing of key strategic positions in Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> Shortly thereafter, U.S. marines invaded Grenada.<sup>14</sup> Two years later in 1985, American FB-111s based out of England attacked the home of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in retaliation for terrorist actions carried out against

Americans which were linked to Libya. The United States also took an active role in the Persian Gulf by sending an entire fleet of naval vessels to the gulf to protect reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers. Due to the American presence in the gulf, U.S. lives were lost when an Iraqi F-4 (curiously made in and sold by the U.S.) accidentally mistook the U.S.S. Stark for an oil tanker and fired upon it. A similar accident occurred some months later when the crew of the U.S.S. Vincennes mistook an Iranian passenger jet for an Iranian F-14 (also produced in the U.S.) and downed it with a missile, killing all of the approximately 290 passengers aboard. These events, in addition to the vehement support of the Contra rebels in Nicaragua by the Reagan administration seem to cast some doubt as to the level of peace we have obtained during the Reagan years.

We certainly have not entered into another Korea or Vietnam (although some will point to Nicaragua and insist we are headed in that direction), but peace is a relative term and for a nation who is not at war, we have succeeded in keeping the military machine well-oiled and broken in. It is the situation when viewed in this light that dictates Reagan be classified as a militarily active president.

#### **SUMMARY**

The presidents have now been classified and the classifications are to be examined for consistencies among the members of the respective categories. Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Carter comprise the militarily inactive group while Truman,



Johnson, Nixon and Reagan fall into the militarily active category. It deserves mention that the political affiliation of the groups is a mixed bag with both parties being represented in both categories. This is significant because it forces the conscientious voter to look past simple party affiliation to make a reasonable decision about a president's propensity to use the military.

The cases of Roosevelt and Reagan need to be briefly addressed because of an apparent inconsistency in their classification. It seems altogether paradoxical that a president whose term saw the United States engaged in the greatest war the planet has ever seen be placed in the militarily inactive group while a president in office during no major wars be placed alongside the militarily active presidents. However, as stated before, peace is indeed a relative term and, as previously explained, a president must be judged not merely by the quantity of militarily significant events occurring during his term, but by the conditions present in the world during his term as well. That being the case, it seems fitting that these men reside in these respective groups.

The following chapters will focus on some possible explanations for the activeness or inactiveness of these presidents in hopes of finding some predictive characteristics.

## CHAPTER 2: Budgeting For War And Peace

So, now that we know who the military and non-military presidents are, what factors can we look at about each president which could possibly serve as an indicator when evaluating future presidents? One rather obvious factor is each president's level of funding for the military, and that is the focus of this chapter.

It seems rather sensible that if a president was making a conscious decision to use the power of the United States military at some point in the future, he would want to make sure that that military was sufficient to almost ensure victory by the very nature of its size and strength. The best analogy is that of a safari hunter preparing to go off on safari in Africa in search of lions, tigers, elephants and whatever else happened to be there. The hunter wants to prove he is king of the jungle so-to-speak. If he only possessed a pocket-knife with which to conduct his safari, chances are he would head to the local Safaris Are Us to stock up on the essential elephant guns and tranquilizer darts so his chances of bagging his game and simultaneously remaining alive would be enhanced.

The same type of reasoning applies here. If a given president were to consciously decide to go out and be "king of the jungle" he would make sure the U.S. military were in top shape. That is why an examination of the budgeting practices of the presidents can offer some insight into the question of

whether or not the military propensity of a president is a fact of conscious decision and will. If not, then the military propensity must come from some subconscious belief system formed by outside factors.

Chart 1 (page 26) graphically illustrates the amount of defense spending in the United States, represented as a percentage of the federal budget for that year, from Roosevelt's first budget in 1935 to Reagan's fiscal year 1989 budget. As one can clearly see, the graph exhibits a rough approximation of a bell curve with the apex of the curve occurring during the Eisenhower years. This is excepting the large spike representing World War II during the Roosevelt years. The exception of this spike is necessary because the United States was pulled into the war by forces beyond the control of Roosevelt and his administration. In World War II, the U.S. was engaged in the most serious war with the most dire consequences it had ever seen. This situation may justify the levels of funding given to the defense effort (exceeding 90% of the entire federal budget for several years), but it also serves to distort the figures for this study and is therefore not seriously considered viable data. The same argument could be made of the Vietnam and Korean conflicts but to a much lesser degree. Additionally, the Vietnam and Korean conflicts were conscious decisions to enter the theater of operations and the very homeland of the United States was not attacked or even in danger.

That aside, the budgeting of the various presidents seems

Percentage of Budget for Defense

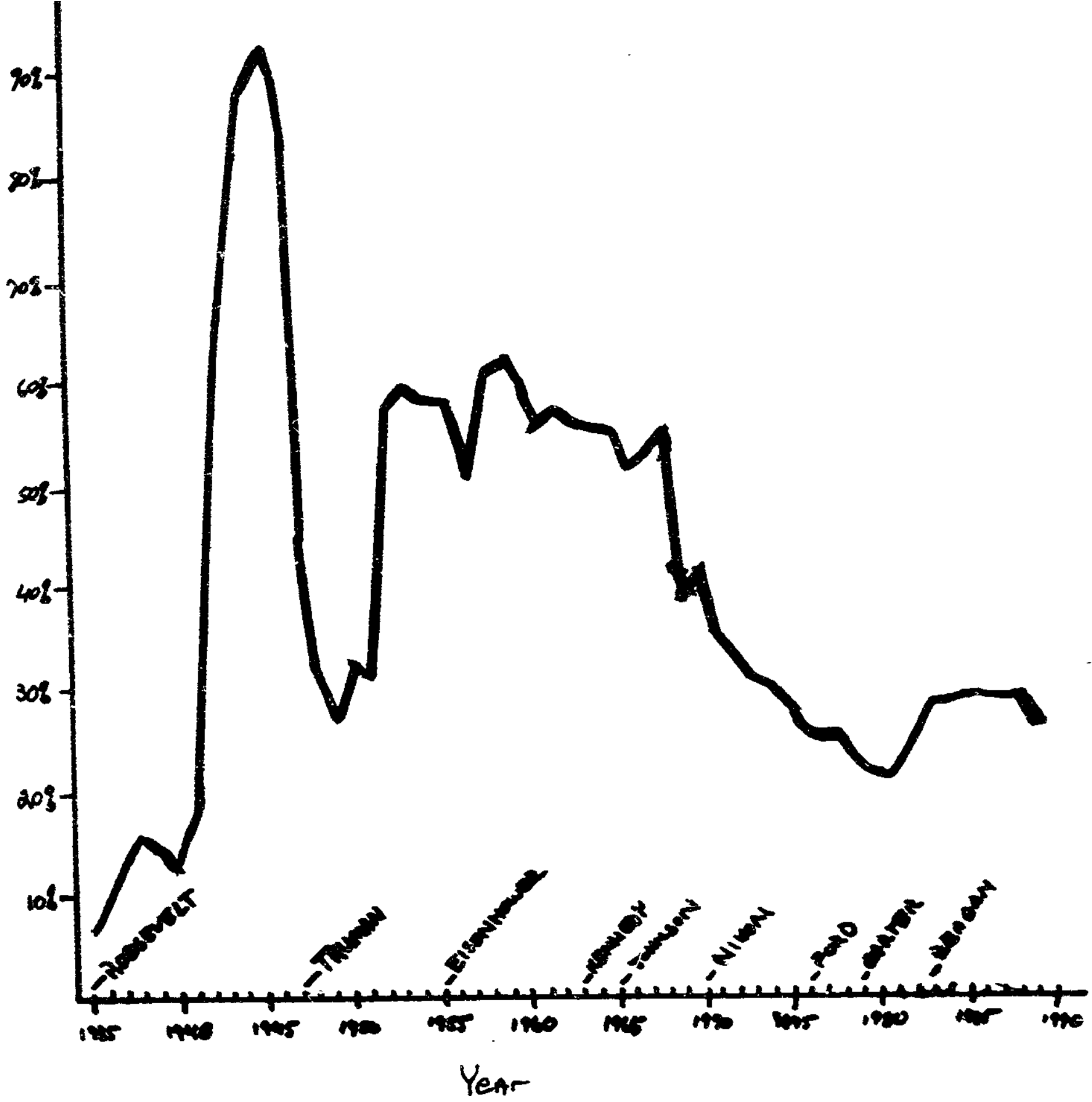


CHART 1

to say that no specific correlation exists between the budgeting of the presidents and their respective active or inactive categories. For instance, Roosevelt and Carter, two of the three militarily inactive presidents, find themselves on either end to the curve and with budgeting levels for defense lower than those of the other presidents. Remember, this is not considering Roosevelt's few years during World War II when funding spiked at the 90% level. It would, therefore, make a very nice conclusion to categorically state that presidents with very low relative levels of funding for defense, in relation to the overall budget, are ones who could be considered militarily inactive. The one small problem with this statement is the presence of the Eisenhower administration right at the peak of the funding curve.

While it is possible that Eisenhower stands as an exception, there seems to be a more plausible explanation for the positioning of the curve and the presidents along it. Consider that the Roosevelt administration came into being during the great depression and, even though Hitler was already rising to power, had more important things to do than to build a large defense. Carter, on the other hand, came into office with Vietnam fresh in the minds of every American. Additionally rising inflation and Carter's commitment to energy research and conservation plus his commitment to improving human rights around the world focused attention in areas other than the military. Eisenhower, it seems, along with several other

presidents of his era (and level of funding on the graph) seems to have been caught in the paranoia which swept the decade of the 1950s concerning communism and the Communist possession of the atomic bomb. This paranoia, fueled by Senator Joe McCarthy, sent a panic throughout the public and Congress, necessitating the security blanket effect of massive military spending. The domestic situation during the Eisenhower years made this security blanket possible because the economy was rolling along smoothly and the pressure for large scale social programs was still about a decade in the future. It seems rather doubtful that any meaningful relationship can exist between the budgeting of the militarily inactive presidents and their classification as being militarily inactive.

The militarily active presidents also exhibit no set pattern of budgeting for defense. They run the gamut from the rise in defense budgets under Truman to the fall in the same budgets under Johnson and Nixon. Again, it seems that the threat of communism and Communist expansion in the late 1940s and 1950s fueled the desire for large amounts of defense spending. Likewise, the long, protracted war in Vietnam soured the public on military excursions in general, forcing a redirection in funds and energies for a society with a changed world outlook.

In conclusion, it seems that the two undeclared wars of the modern era, Korea and Vietnam, bracket in a timeframe during which military spending was sustained at the relatively high level of about 53-54% of the total budget. What seems to be

important about this is the fact that this time frame encompasses both militarily active and militarily inactive presidents. It is because of this phenomenon that one must conclude that militarily active presidents do not make a conscious effort to increase military strength so that operations can be carried out with a greater degree of success. It logically follows that since no conscious effort towards military use seems to exist on the part of either the active or the inactive presidents, some factors are at work which have instilled, at a subconscious level, a pro-military or anti-military approach to achieving diplomatic goals. Some possible factors which could be at work are the focus of the following chapters.

### **CHAPTER 3: How Personal Experience Reflects On A President's Military Actions**

As has already been demonstrated in chapter 2, it seems that conscious efforts to be a pro-military president do not exist to any great degree in our highest office. So there must be other factors, most likely working at a subconscious level, which cause a president to lean more or less in the direction of military use. The introduction to this endeavor, if you will recall, presented the notion that a man is the product of his past life experiences. Each event or condition to which he is exposed acts in some way to shape and mold his character and his way of thinking. If this is accepted as a plausible hypothesis, then it would logically follow that there must be some experiences in a president's past which have helped to mold that president's views on the military and its use. This is the assumption which will provide the foundation for the rest of the research into this matter. In this chapter, three aspects of an individual's past which could reasonably have a profound effect on attitudes towards military use will be discussed. They are the personal military exposure and training of the presidents, the socio-economic environment in which they were raised and the type and level of education which they possessed

#### **Military Exposure and Training**

The exposure to the military and military training must be examined in terms of quality, as well as quantity, to have



any real meaning. This point will be expanded on shortly. However, a quick look at just the rank level of military achievement of each president shows some interesting trends. Table 1 illustrates the highest rank achieved by the respective presidents.

**TABLE 1**

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	<u>HIGHEST RANK</u>
Franklin Roosevelt . . . . .	No Military Experience
Harry Truman . . . . .	Captain
Dwight Eisenhower . . . . .	General of the Army
Lyndon Johnson . . . . .	Lieutenant
Richard Nixon . . . . .	Lieutenant
Jimmy Carter . . . . .	Lt. Commander
Ronald Reagan . . . . .	Private

(Source; Who's Who in America, 1988-1989)

Close examination of the table reveals that none of the militarily active presidents had experience at a field grade level. A field grade officer is an officer of at least the rank of major. The significance of a field grade officer is that it is the level at which vital decisions take place. Officers below this level, while still important, serve more of an administrative function than an important decision making function. Field grade officers are much more "in the know" as far as planning goes and are responsible for considerably more men and equipment than are lesser officers.

In comparison, the militarily inactive presidents, with the exception of Roosevelt, show very significant experience at a much higher rank. Eisenhower, clearly the most militarily accomplished of our leaders in modern history, was a graduate

of West Point and a career military man. Carter also intended to be a career military officer and his closest friends say he had his sights set on becoming Chief of Naval Operations.<sup>13</sup>

Roosevelt stands as the lone exception, but in this case it seems proper that the Roosevelt case be treated as an exception rather than proof that no correlation exists between personal military experience and propensity to use the military. The skeptic may be quick to point out that, in the previous chapter, the non-conformity of the Eisenhower case was reason enough to dismiss budgeting as a possible related factor to military use. This, however, is not entirely true. It is true that in both the budgeting and the military experience discussions, two militarily inactive presidents followed a similar trend while the third did not. But the third president bucking the trend was not the only cause for dismissal of the budgetary correlation. The cause was a combination of that fact as well as the fact that the militarily active presidents followed no coherent trend either. The personal experience factor, on the other hand, gives us two trends. One, broken only by Roosevelt, is that presidents with significant military experience above the level of a field-grade officer seem to be restrained in committing troops of hostile situations. The second and crucial trend, which lends a degree of validity to this correlation, is that the militarily active presidents, without exception, do not possess field-grade military experience. It is the existence of these two mirror-like trends

which allows us to simultaneously see Roosevelt as an exception and allow the claim of correlation between personal military experience and propensity to use the military seem quite valid. Finally, it deserves mention that Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the Wilson Administration.<sup>14</sup> It seems quite possible that this degree of high level exposure to military decision making served Roosevelt in a manner similar to the field grade officer experience of the other militarily inactive presidents.

Even more validation of this correlation presents itself when the quality of the military careers is examined. For instance, the military careers of the the militarily active presidents looks even more far removed from those of the inactive presidents when you look at what they actually did and how long they served. Truman, the most militarily accomplished of the group, had only four years of experience. Johnson, meanwhile, served only six months of active duty and that was while he was in Congress! The idea of an attempt to make himself and Congress look good by symbolically saying "I would ask you to do nothing I wouldn't do myself" seems to quickly come to mind. This seems especially suspect when one considers that Johnson was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action just because the plane he was in was shot at.<sup>15</sup> Not hit, just shot at. Nixon, while serving for almost four years, attained the rank of lieutenant junior grade in the Navy, which is equivalent to a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant in the Army, not close to field grade.<sup>16</sup>

Reagan was not only not an officer but made training films for the Army for three years during World War II.<sup>17</sup>

These records of military accomplishment pale in comparison to Eisenhower's duties as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and Carter's work as a student of Admiral Hyman Rickover, who is considered the father of today's nuclear Navy. Therefore, it does seem that quality, high level experience in the military is a characteristic of militarily inactive presidents while a lack of the same seems to point to a militarily active president.

#### **Socio-Economic and Educational Backgrounds**

The question of whether or not the socio-economic upbringing of the presidents has any correlational value to their use of the military appears, at least initially, to be a reasonable one. In today's society, people are quick to point out that if a leader elected to public office has come from a privileged background that he cannot identify with the "common folk" and therefore cannot be as effective in creating policies which will be favorable to the common, everyday American. Americans seem to be very wary of finding themselves in a situation where they feel they are being ruled by anything resembling an aristocracy. Just last year, Michael Dukakis touted his own heritage as the son of immigrants and poked fun at George Bush for being a sheltered, Ivy Leaguer. The effect was to portray Dukakis as an average American and at the same time painting a picture of an almost aristocratic George Bush, distanced from

mainstream society.

It is just such an identification which raises the question of socio-economic background and its effects on the actions of the presidents. Are the Dukakises of the world correct in stating that an Ivy League upbringing produces Ivy League policies? Or is this notion simply a variation on descriptive representation which tends to have no significant policy effects?

Before tackling this problem, a brief description of the underlying "common man" theory must take place. Basically, the common man theory states that the military is populated to a great extent by your average, garden variety American. Among the fighting men that crawl through the mud, land on the beaches and give their lives so that the goals of the United States may be realized around the world, the vast majority are not college educated and certainly not of Ivy League stock. According to those who place faith in the common man theory, it logically follows that if you have a man of privileged upbringing in office, a member of the elite of American society if you will, then the policies which come from such an administration will be elitist in nature and will not be favorable to the ordinary man. An example of this line of thinking is in the uproar over income taxes. Many people perceive the Republicans, many of whom are not members of the lower socio-economic classes, as supporting tax policies which favor the wealthy and big business. Blue-collar Democrats charge that these Republicans are placing the bulk of the tax burden

on the poorer people of the nation and supporting policies which favor their own kind, the relatively wealthy.

If this type of reasoning is indeed accurate, then it could be applied to the case of the military use by a president as well as taxation policies. The common man theory states that elected leaders will look out for the common man's interests only if the leader himself also comes from a background which is similar to the ordinary American's. Since the enlisted personnel, the backbone of the military establishment, are mostly non-college educated men and women, one would expect the leaders with less education to be less likely to expose the common man to warfare (assuming he had other options to deal with the situation). In addition to education, the general socio-economic background of the presidents must parallel that of the general soldier in our armed forces. Again, along with little or no college education, most (but certainly not all) of our men in uniform are from working class backgrounds. The Army even exploits this fact in its recruiting campaigns by stating that a three-year stint in service can help the young high school graduate stash away some money so that he can pay for college later, implying that the majority of people who enter the Army cannot afford to pay for college themselves. How many wealthy "elitists" cannot afford to pay for college?

So according to this common man approach to looking at the military use issue, presidents who are militarily inactive should be from a relatively common socio-economic background

and have little college level education. But not many presidents in the modern era have no college level education. Therefore we must extend the common man supporters to include presidents whose education took place in public institutions as opposed to private ones. This seems logical because most public institutions are accessible to a greater number of people and are much less expensive than their private counterparts. This would allow the president much more exposure to a more representative sample of Americans which should keep the common man theory intact.

The fact is, this theory simply is not valid in the case of the presidents and military use. The modern presidents examined here are a mixed bag, both educationally and socio-economically. But when you divide them into their respective militarily active and inactive categories, it becomes evident quite quickly that not only does a trend not exist which would support the common man theory of representation, but that no trend seems to exist at all which would support any theory about representation. Table 2 lists the educational and socio-economic backgrounds of the presidents in this study.

**TABLE 2**

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	<u>COLLEGE LEVEL EDUCATION</u>	<u>BACKGROUND</u>
Roosevelt	Private (Harvard)	Wealthy
Truman	None	Farmer
Eisenhower	U.S. Mil. Acad.-West Point	Modest
Johnson	Public (S.W. Texas)	Modest
Nixon	Private (Whittier; Duke)	Merchant
Carter	U.S. Naval Acad.-Annapolis	Farmer*
Reagan	Private (Eureka)	Modest*

\*Both Carter and Reagan became millionaires later in life

(Sources; Who's Who in America, 1988-1989; THE PRESIDENTS: A REFERENCE HISTORY, by Henry F. Graff)

The militarily inactive presidents, Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Carter, represent the most elite of private schools (Harvard) and two of the three service academies. Additionally, one began life wealthy, one remained a man of somewhat modest means as a career military officer, and one began life somewhat modestly and went on to become a millionaire.

The militarily active presidents, also, shoot the common man theory clear out of the water. None of them began life wealthy, and only Reagan attained sizable wealth while he was still somewhat young. What's more, two of the presidents in this category fall into the educational group which should be friends of the common man (Truman had no advanced education and Johnson attended public schools) while none of the militarily inactive presidents had similar educational backgrounds.

It seems that the idea of descriptive representation as it applies to education, socio-economic background and the propensity to use the military does not hold water in the case of the modern presidents. Many political scientists have long held that descriptive representation, while seeming logical to the general public, is not an accurate theory and should be generally dismissed. The facts, as presented above, seem to concur with that assessment.

**Summary**



This chapter has examined three factors of presidential pasts in an attempt to understand whether or not those factors had altered or molded the personalities of the men to the degree that they would be more or less likely to commit the U.S. military to hostile activities. To the casual observer, the military experience of the presidents, the socio-economic and the educational aspect of the president's past seem as though they could offer some clue or lend some predictive quality to the quest for identifying militarily prone presidents. As often happens in life, however, common sense is simply not borne out by the facts. The facts seem to be that only the military experience of the presidents can offer any real insight into the military mindedness of a president. But one must examine the military experience carefully, noting not only the time served, but the rank achieved as well as the demonstrated commitment to really understanding the complexities of the United States military, such as with Carter and Eisenhower both intending to be career officers. Only when the inquiry is approached in this manner can the results possess and predictive qualities.

## CONCLUSION: What Have We Learned?

In the beginning of this endeavor, it was stated that there was a real need for research into this kind of topic because it would allow society to learn of factors which are common to certain types of people and make decisions based on this data. If we knew what caused mass murderers to commit their crimes, or could even simply establish links between experiences and certain types of crimes, then we would have discovered a rudimentary ability to predict actions. This ability would be quite useful in all facets of life. Whether it be spotting potential mass murders or spotting militarily active presidents, we all would be better off.

The question now stands, are we any closer to being able to predict, with any degree of confidence at all, what a person will do? Although we may still not know why certain presidents are more prone to use the military more often than others, we have seemingly found one factor of presidential character which is a fairly reliable indicator. As expressed previously, that factor is the personal military experience of the president in question. The other factors examined here, budgeting, socio-economic background and educational exposure, seem not to be directly linkable to a president's military use. We have, however, reinforced the idea that a man is indeed a product of his life experiences, but we are only slightly closer to understanding which of those experiences are relevant to which

actions. It is quite possible that factors such as the presidents' socio-economic or educational backgrounds could indeed be important signals for some other type of action, but that will be for some other author to determine. For now, we have one factor which seems to have some predictive ability.

The question of why a lack of sufficient exposure to the military seems to produce a president more apt to use armed forces to resolve conflict is one which can only be speculated upon. One answer could be that the men with the most exposure to the military have developed a perception of the military as more than just a faceless machine. It is possible that the time they spent in the service served to give them an understanding of the military as a group of men, women and machines who are not infallible or undefeatable and therefore are not a sure-fire answer problems. The flip side of this idea would be that men with little or no military experience would tend to be in awe of the military establishment without fully understanding it. They therefore would be much more likely that they would see the military as being capable of settling almost any dispute it needed to. All of this, however, is only speculation because of the nature of the question. Thankfully, we do not need to know why something works for it to work. Just as we do not fully understand why electricity works, we know that it does behave in certain predictable ways and it is because of those predictable behaviors that we can use it to our own advantage. While it is not being suggested that

we understand presidential motives as well as we understand electricity, it does seem that we have stumbled onto a factor which allows us to predict with some confidence at least one aspect of presidential behavior.

The idea of predictive ability leads us to our final task in this endeavor. That task being to look at the current President of the United States, George H.W. Bush, and see what our data will predict for the military during the Bush administration. To do this we will, naturally, look at the military exposure of George Bush.

George Bush entered the military at the onset of World War II. He served four years, attained the rank of lieutenant junior grade in the Navy as a fighter pilot and was discharged honorably. In addition, he was awarded three service medals for gallantry, bravery and distinguished flying.<sup>18</sup> Certainly a military career that anyone would be proud of. But within the context of our study here, this information presents some cause for worry.

First of all, Bush did not attain what seems to be that mystical rank of a field grade officer. As you will recall from chapter 3, all presidents who fell below that level, with the exception of Roosevelt (who had no military experience) were classified a militarily active. This does not present a pleasant picture for the years ahead. When you look at the quality of Bush's time in the service, a little relief, though not much is found. While Bush seems to possess the one "fatal

gene" which is so common among the militarily active presidents, he also seems to be the most militarily experienced of the group. Although not a career-minded military man, it is possible that his experience in the military was enough to teach him some of the limitations of our military. After All George Bush was a real war hero in World War II. It is possible that this intense exposure to war will affect Bush like high level military positions affected the militarily inactive presidents. We, however, cannot count on this hope to keep us out of military hostilities. So it must be predicted that the United States will indeed be engaged in military hostilities which could possibly be avoided if someone else had been elected in 1988.

Remember that a president is not considered to be militarily active if he was forced by the direct action of another country against the United States to commit U.S. troops. He is only condemned to that category if he decided to use the military when he had other reasonable and workable alternatives. This is the fate which is predicted for the United States under George Bush. We can only speculate, however, as to the heroic military leadership we could expect if Dan Quayle were to come into office.

## Endnotes

1. Graff, Henry F., THE PRESIDENTS: A REFERENCE HISTORY, p. 415.
2. Ibid, p. 416.
3. Ibid, p. 416.
4. Ibid, p. 475.
5. Ibid, p. 481.
6. Who's Who in America 1988-89, vol. 1, p.819.
7. Graff, Henry F., THE PRESIDENTS: A REFERENCE HISTORY, p. 526.
8. Ibid, p. 537.
9. Ibid, p. 539.
10. Ibid, p. 540.
11. Frank, William, A HISTORY OF WAR, p. 1078.
12. Graff, Henry F., THE PRESIDENTS: A REFERENCE HISTORY, p. 752.
13. Keyser, Thomas C., REAGAN AND FOREIGN POLICY, p. 205.
14. Ibid, p. 205.
15. Graff, Henry F., THE PRESIDENTS: A REFERENCE HISTORY, p. 541.
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18. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 156.

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5. WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA, Macmillan Directory Division, Wilmette, Illinois, 45<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1988-89, Vol. 1, 1988.