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The “Unlessons” of Vietnam

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At the height of the Vietnam War, Samuel Huntington offered an observation about the conflict that stands in stark contrast to the enormous public and scholarly interest generated by America’s involvement in Southeast Asia. Speaking to a group of luminaries, Huntington noted that the right lesson to learn from the Vietnam experience “may be an unlesson”. He explained, “If the legacy of misplaced analogies which the past has bequeathed to the Vietnam debates is even half equaled by the misplaced analogies which Vietnam bequeaths to the future, error will compound error in a positively horrifying manner.”

Some in Huntington’s audience agreed with him. Albert Wohlstetter, for example, noted that the way policy-makers employed Korean War analogies had a deleterious impact on America’s prosecution of the war in Vietnam. By contrast, Daniel Ellsberg noted that Huntington was simply anticipating the fact that he was not going to like what some of the participants were about to say. Of course, Huntington, and the other conferees, went on to develop a rather large catalog of lessons from the Vietnam experience. Still, Huntington’s suggestion that future policy-makers might be best served by blotting Vietnam from their minds remains strangely haunting.

Over thirty years have passed since Huntington expressed these misgivings about the potential lessons of Vietnam. Unlike observers in the summer of 1968, however, we now have the luxury of hindsight to evaluate America’s involvement in Southeast Asia. New questions also can be raised about the usefulness of the Vietnam experience as a guide to US foreign policy now that the Cold War is over. Have Huntington’s fears been justified? Exactly what lessons have gained policy and public salience over the years?

A review of the lessons of Vietnam contained in the huge historical, literary and social science literature generated by America’s involvement in the Indochina wars would be a task of truly encyclopedic proportions.¹ Since new publications on the war appear almost daily, even the most comprehensive survey of Vietnam literature would quickly be outdated. Additionally, the “Vietnam analogy” is in a state of flux: national leaders as diverse as Ronald Reagan and Saddam Hussein make reference to various aspects of the war to frighten their opponents or to reassure their friends.² Scholars also are criticizing some of the myths and lessons of the Vietnam War and are echoing Huntington’s reservations about the search for lessons itself.³ Because this debate about the

war is so vibrant, it is difficult to catalog the changing findings offered by recent scholarship.

Given these caveats, the most effective way of exploring the concerns raised by Huntington in 1968 might be to identify the dominant lessons drawn from the Vietnam experience by three recognizable, if not completely distinct or homogeneous, sectors of American society. This article seeks to identify the publicly and politically salient lessons drawn from America's involvement in Southeast Asia, the lessons that appear to have an ongoing impact on US foreign and defense policy. Exactly who is learning what from Vietnam is politically more important to future US policy than the vast storehouse of knowledge contained in the entire body of Vietnam scholarship. It also would be interesting to see if Huntington's concern about the lessons and "unlessons" of Vietnam is justified.

To explore these issues, the analysis unfolds in three sections. First, the lessons drawn by scholars, who primarily specialize in the field of political science, will be surveyed. Admittedly, this scholarship is not known outside of a small academic and professional community; it also does not include much interesting work that debates the propriety and effectiveness of US intervention in the third world.⁴ But this political science literature does offer a baseline to evaluate the lessons drawn by other segments of American society. Next, the article will explore some popular interpretations of the Vietnam experience, most recently evidenced in the media response to the publication of Robert McNamara's *In Retrospect*. These popular images of the war are extremely important because they seem to be the most widely known lessons drawn from the conflict. The "conventional wisdom", disseminated widely in the mass media, helps shape political discourse about the relevance of the Vietnam experience to current policy questions. Third, the paper explores some important lessons drawn by US military officers and strategists from the Vietnam debacle. These lessons have been encapsulated in what is often referred to as the Weinberger doctrine, an influential and controversial guide to America's use of force in world politics.

THE VIETNAM WAR: A SCHOLARLY VIEW

With the possible exception of the subject of nuclear strategy and deterrence, few topics are as rewarding to political scientists and historians as the study of the Vietnam War. The conflict in Southeast Asia has produced a rich and sophisticated literature that can be divided into four categories. One group of authors has explored what the Vietnam experience reveals about the American system of government. For example, Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, in *The Irony of Vietnam*, argue that the nature of US politics and government yielded the "middle-of-the-road approach" of gradual escalation adopted by the United States in Vietnam. Similarly, George Herring, in his *LBJ and Vietnam*, explores how the interaction between American politics and government and a President who valued the appearance of consensus over the substance of policy "incrementally" helped shape the debacle in Southeast Asia. What these authors suggest is that the policy of incremental escalation, identified by many critics of the war as a major strategic mistake, could be viewed as the natural product of the American system of government.⁵

By contrast, a second group of authors offers a bureaucratic politics explanation of the way the United States prosecuted the Vietnam War. This group is best exemplified by Robert Komer's *Bureaucracy at War*, Andrew Krepinevich's *The Army and Vietnam*, Mark Clodfelter's *The Limits of Airpower*, Douglas Kinnard's *The War Managers*, Larry Cable's *Unholy Grail* and H. R. McMaster's *Dereliction of Duty*.⁶ These authors suggest that government bureaucracies rarely tailor their standard operating procedures to meet specific circumstances; instead, they implement policies that reflect the needs, preferences and traditions of individual organizations. Because policies shaped by this organizational “essence” or “personality” rarely address the unique aspects of a given crisis or conflict, it is simply coincidence when an organization's policies happen to respond to the exigencies of a specific situation.⁷ To paraphrase Komer, bureaucrats recognized that “Vietnam was different”, but they still implemented “off-the-shelf” policies.

A third group of scholars has produced a rich and theoretically informed analysis of the history of the war. Comparativists have explored the culture and politics of Southeast Asia, offering fascinating accounts of everything from village life in South Vietnam to what makes the People's Army of Vietnam or the Viet Cong tick.⁸ Others, for instance Townshend Hoopes, Larry Berman, Herbert Schandler and Dale Andrade, explore key events or issues in the history of the conflict.⁹ Sometimes, this kind of analysis takes on a clear normative tone. Fred Ikle's *Every War Must End*, for example, offers a warning about the difficulties states face in extracting themselves from failing military adventures.¹⁰

A fourth group of political scientists uses Vietnam as a case study for the development and testing of theory. These analysts treat the Vietnam War or some aspect of the conflict as representative of a larger phenomenon. In his *Analogies at War*, Yuen Foong Khong explores the way policy-makers in the Johnson administration employed historical analogies in their decision to escalate American involvement in the war.¹¹ Others examine developments in Vietnam from a comparative perspective by contrasting aspects of the war with other conflicts. In *Adventures in Chaos*, Douglas Macdonald traces how variations in party affiliation affect the way American administrations deal with issues of patron–client relations and governmental reform.¹² Deborah Avant and Martin Van Creveld explore the behavior of military organizations in Vietnam to illustrate arguments about the relationship between domestic and bureaucratic politics and military performance in wartime.¹³ The American prosecution of the war also has been used to illustrate the particular shortcomings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff prior to the reform mandated by the Goldwater/Nichols Act.¹⁴

America's experience in Vietnam has provided a fertile field for political scientists. Useful generalizations at several levels-of-analysis are offered not only about the way Americans conducted the war, but also about what the American experience in Asia has to say about issues of more general interest. Political scientists have highlighted the interaction between domestic, bureaucratic and even cognitive variables and foreign policy behavior.

Nearly three decades after Huntington expressed his reservations about the “lessons of Vietnam”, political scientists and historians seem to have put his concerns to rest. The war not only has produced compelling analyses, but an awareness of the risks of

blindly attempting to apply lessons from Southeast Asia as a guide to action in current and future conflicts. Some lessons drawn from the conflict clearly will withstand changing circumstances and the test of time. Policy-makers could forever benefit, for example, from Ikle's observation about Vietnam: those who are beginning a war should make certain that they also have a plan to end it.¹⁵

POPULAR IMAGES OF THE WAR

Historians and political scientists have not cornered the market on the Vietnam debate. In fact, popular images of the war – journalists' reports, television documentaries and movies such as *Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter* and *Platoon* – are, by definition, experienced by more people than the work of scholars publishing monographs or debates in refereed journals. In the popular marketplace, film-makers and commentators often take far more poetic license in communicating their message than is considered appropriate in scholarly works. For example, units can suffer from the battle fatigue experienced by the characters in *Platoon*, but most commanders would do everything in their power to relieve militarily ineffective soldiers from front-line duty.¹⁶ But there is a popular image of the war that has recently resurfaced in the public outcry following the publication of McNamara's *In Retrospect* that is extraordinarily counterproductive.¹⁷ According to some commentators, Robert McNamara was part of a conspiracy to deceive the American public about the pitfalls inherent in US involvement in Southeast Asia.

The notion that America's troubles can be traced to a conspiracy is not an idea that originated or ended with the Vietnam War.¹⁸ Richard Hofstadter, for instance, suggests that conspiracy theories, often accompanied by a "paranoid style" of political rhetoric, emerge cyclically in American history. According to Hofstadter, paranoid discourse demonizes the political opponent, treats conspiracy as a motive force in history and suggests that some group has been singled out for political persecution.¹⁹ Rival politicians are not treated as members of the loyal opposition, but are accused of all sorts of chicanery in the pursuit of evil objectives. Robert Reich also notes that the suggestion of elite perfidy and political corruption is one of the cultural myths that underlies American political rhetoric.²⁰ The idea that there is "rot at the top", to borrow Reich's phrase, itself is a product of the American revolutionary experience, which helps explain its longevity.

As cultural myths go, the notion of conspiracy has obvious advantages as an explanation of events in times of deep peril. Conspiracy theories offer the comforting illusion that someone is in charge, that events are unfolding according to somebody's plan or that fundamental American values and institutions are safe despite the corruption of certain politicians or their policies.²¹ As a result, conspiracy theories offer a simplistic view of a reality in which the future is up for grabs, the past is due for a reinterpretation and no one is in charge. Still, as Senator Joseph McCarthy discovered in the 1950s, for many Americans conspiracy is a popular and, at least initially, a plausible interpretation of the foreign and domestic problems facing the United States. For appreciable segments of the public, we live in a world where it is possible for Franklin Roosevelt to orchestrate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, for Harry Truman and the State

Department to lose China, or for Dwight Eisenhower to scuttle the Paris Summit by sending Francis Gary Powers on a fateful mission to Moscow.²²

Conspiracy theories concerning the Vietnam War come in left-wing and right-wing varieties. The right-wing view holds that the American military was “stabbed in the back” by a corrupt political leadership that micro-managed a flawed incremental strategy and failed to rally the American public behind the war effort.²³ In other words, when Rambo asks “Do we get to win this time?” he is invoking the idea that despite never having lost a “major battle”, the United States still lost the Vietnam War.²⁴ This interpretation remains popular today. Speaking after the Gulf War, the JCS expressed relief that officers of their (Vietnam) generation, no longer hamstrung by incompetent political leaders, were finally vindicated on the battlefield.²⁵

Critics of the right-wing conspiracy thesis argue that it is all “Ramboloney” posited to cover a range of military mistakes: a flawed strategy, one-year officer tours, inter-service rivalry, logistical overindulgence, etc.²⁶ Indeed, a school of “right-wing” revisionists has recently emerged. Robert Buzzanco, for example, has suggested that it was the US Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves who ignored dire estimates about prospects for victory in Vietnam and deliberately failed to inform politicians about the real situation the United States faced in Southeast Asia.²⁷

Without digging into the heart of the debate over why the United States failed in Vietnam, however, a few *prima facie* flaws in the right-wing theory can be identified. For instance, it fails to describe how Republican and Democratic administrations collaborated in this conspiracy. It also fails to explain why the American military agreed to pursue such a flawed strategy in the first place (although Buzzanco would explain this decision based on the incompetence or perfidy of senior officers). Additionally, the charges of incrementalism often made by right-wing critics ignore the enormous logistical constraints confronted by the US military as materials and personnel poured into Vietnam. When Lyndon Johnson decided to deploy US ground forces to South Vietnam, there were only five deep-draft berths in the entire country capable of unloading ocean-going vessels. Combined, these facilities could handle a bit over 150,000 tons of cargo per month; by contrast, John Prados estimates that US and South Vietnamese ground forces alone were consuming about 285,262 tons of supplies every month by the end of 1965.²⁸ Given the state of the South Vietnamese logistics infrastructure, US officials were forced to adopt an incremental build-up in Vietnam. But, by insisting that “rot at the top”, and not operational or logistical difficulties likely to be encountered in a fight against a competent opponent in a faraway land,²⁹ created the Vietnam disaster, the stabbed-in-the-back school ultimately suggests some sort of conspiracy was behind America’s failure in Southeast Asia.

The left-wing version of the Vietnam conspiracy usually advances the notion that some group of government leaders stopped the heroic efforts of a lone individual to bring the reality of America’s debacle in Vietnam to the attention of key US policy-makers.³⁰ Individuals sometimes describe their own wartime experiences in these terms. Samuel Adams, a CIA analyst who disagreed with the military’s estimates of enemy strength during the war, alleged that a conspiracy existed to prevent his high estimates of enemy strength from reaching influential policy-makers. In Adams’ view, this conspiracy laid the groundwork for America’s failure of intelligence during the 1968 Tet offensive.³¹ Others have seconded

Adams' suspicions of conspiracy by seeing evidence of the deepest perfidy behind ill-conceived memoranda or office procedures.³² Since it is not uncommon for controversial memoranda to generate bureaucratic or political opposition, any piece of critical reporting on the war that received a negative response can now be cited as evidence of a conspiracy to suppress honest appraisals of America's prospects in Vietnam.

Louis Sarris, a State Department analyst during the war, for instance, approvingly cites authors associated with left-wing conspiracy themes in explaining why his negative assessments of the military situation in Vietnam prior to the Diem coup generated a firestorm of opposition within the Department of Defense. Sarris, however, goes on to explain this opposition as a textbook case of bureaucratic politics: the military objected to State Department officials encroaching on their bailiwick by offering assessments of battlefield events.³³ Why would Sarris suggest that a conspiracy has been behind the military's opposition to diplomats meddling in military matters? Apparently, even insiders well versed in Washington politics sometimes cannot resist the romantic appeal of conspiracy as an explanation of some lost bureaucratic battle.

Neil Sheehan's description of the way Lt Col. John Paul Vann failed to convince a military bureaucracy of the inappropriateness of American strategy at the outset of the "big-unit" war also contains conspiratorial overtones. Despite compelling evidence received during a trip to Vietnam, Marine General Victor Krulak, a Second World War hero and innovator, seemed to ignore the dismal situation facing the United States following the Battle of Ap Bac. Krulak, in Sheehan's view, was afflicted by a combination of *hubris* and ambition; a rosy report from Vietnam could help a Marine General become Commandant of the Marine Corps.³⁴ Nothing else could explain how Krulak, depicted as a military genius by Sheehan, could fail to recognize the problems facing the United States in Vietnam.³⁵ In Sheehan's view, careerism apparently produced a conspiracy of silence when ambitious officers confronted evidence of impending disaster in Vietnam. This conspiracy of silence also seems to have afflicted the officers who populate the pages of Buzzanco's *Masters of War*.

These conspiratorial explanations for what went wrong in Vietnam can attract enormous amounts of attention: Adams' charges, for instance, formed the basis of a 1982 CBS News television documentary and the resulting *Westmoreland v. CBS* litigation.³⁶ What is often missing from these accounts, however, is the identity of the individual or individuals who have blocked the truth from being told about the real situation in Vietnam. Judging from the reaction to the publication of Robert McNamara's memoirs, it now appears that the mastermind of this conspiracy has been identified. McNamara was vilified by the *New York Times*, for example, for continuing to conduct the war long after he recognized that it was futile. He was also condemned for shooting the messengers – dismissed senior officials, court-martialed junior officers and hounded young protesters – who tried to inform him of the situation in Southeast Asia.³⁷ In *Newsweek*, David Halberstam was even more direct:

{McNamara's} book is shallow and deeply disingenuous. For him to say, "We couldn't get information" borders on a felony, because he was the creator of the lying machine that gave him that information. The point was to make a flawed policy look better.³⁸

On television talk shows, this kind of analysis is trumpeted as evidence that McNamara is a “war criminal”.³⁹

Left-wing Vietnam conspiracy theories have at least one more element in common. Many of their proponents were relatively junior analysts, officers or reporters during the Vietnam War. As newcomers to the ways of bureaucracy, the American military or Asia, these individuals were confronting the confusion, bureaucratic inertia, heated political infighting and horrors of war for the first time. Sam Adams, for example, was praised highly for his analysis of the Congo in the 1960s; by contrast, his analysis of the situation in Vietnam won few accolades. Adams chose to interpret legitimate criticism of his analysis as evidence of conspiracy.⁴⁰ More experienced observers faced the horrors and ironies of Vietnam, but did not persist over decades to explain America’s predicament in Southeast Asia as the product of conspiracy.⁴¹

Scholars have responded to both varieties of conspiracy theory by raising questions about the quality of American leadership during the war. These arguments undermine the fundamental assumption of conspiracy theory; senior policy-makers and officers no longer appear omniscient, but instead are depicted as incompetent, overwhelmed by events or simply wrong. McMaster, for example, describes how the inter-service squabbles among the Joint Chiefs produced policy paralysis. The Chiefs became locked in a bureaucratic battle over the role of airpower in Southeast Asia and lost sight of their primary duty to their country. McMaster is horrified by his own description of the policy-making process because officers value loyalty, honesty and order above other desirable qualities. The reason for this preference lies in battle itself: the orderly conduct of a suboptimal strategy or campaign generally prevails over a badly executed, but superior, strategy. But, in McMaster’s view, the Joint Chiefs were disloyal to their troops and dishonest to their fellow citizens and elected officials. They were disorderly: they bickered for bureaucratic advantage while civilians were left alone to devise military strategy.⁴²

By contrast, in George Herring’s view, the JCS knowingly agreed to what they considered to be a flawed strategy in the hopes they could persuade President Johnson to modify it over time.⁴³ In hindsight, willingly adopting a flawed strategy in wartime appears to be an act either of extreme *hubris* or stupidity. Similarly, in a recent biography of Maxwell Taylor, Douglas Kinnard suggests that by the mid-1950s, Taylor was relying on his legendary, albeit exaggerated, reputation, rather than any real expertise on revolutionary warfare to make recommendations on Vietnam policy. Taylor’s advice not only cowed the JCS, but provided a false sense of security to civilian policy-makers in the Johnson administration, who wanted their preferred military options to receive the Pentagon’s blessing.⁴⁴ In a fresh appraisal of John T. McNaughton’s performance as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Suzan Travis-Cline also calls into question McNaughton’s reputation as a leading and early critic of America’s involvement in Vietnam. Even though McNaughton apparently recognized the futility of American strategy by 1965, he greatly tempered his dissent within the Johnson administration. Travis-Cline notes evidence that suggests McNaughton did not want to return to his academic job at Harvard. He enjoyed his position as Assistant Secretary of Defense and hoped to secure a higher position in the Johnson administration. In other words, McNaughton might

have decided not to rock the policy boat for personal and professional reasons.⁴⁵

The idea that some ill-defined conspiracy was responsible for the debacle in Vietnam, however, is a frightening lesson to draw from America's experience in Southeast Asia. Conspiracy theory denies the overwhelming complexity and dangers of revolutionary or civil wars that threaten to become interstate conflicts. It ignores the extraordinary military and diplomatic problems that US policy-makers confront as they contemplate intervention in limited wars. Conspiracy theory also ignores a defining characteristic of war: its strategic nature (i.e., the fact that wars' outcomes are produced by the interaction of two or more nations or groups in conflict). If one party to a dispute could actually control the outcome of a conflict, as conspiracy theories seem to suggest, then the dispute could not be characterized as war. As an explanation for events in Indochina, conspiracy obfuscates all potential lessons, both good and bad, accurate and misinformed, that might be drawn from the Vietnam experience.

THE "NEVER-AGAIN" SCHOOL

Since the end of the Vietnam War, various Department of Defense officials and officers have drawn lessons from the US experience in Indochina.⁴⁶ These lessons, sometimes referred to as the "Never-again" school, not only highlight shortcomings in America's political and military conduct of the Vietnam War, but also suggest a few rules-of-thumb to prevent future military debacles. These ideas reflect a general American disillusionment with limited war that initially surfaced following American involvement in Korea.⁴⁷ Admittedly, some expositions of this school of thought closely resemble the right-wing conspiratorial explanation of the American failure in Indochina.⁴⁸ But official statements of this position focus on policy prescription, not on allocating blame for Vietnam. In other words, the "Never-again" school focuses on preventing key mistakes in the future; expositions of this school rarely are accompanied by sophisticated explanations of what led to the problems they have identified and now seek to overcome. Poor leadership by the JCS, however, is rarely mentioned by military members of the "Never-again" school.

Heavily influenced by the writings of the nineteenth-century philosopher Carl von Clausewitz, "Never-again" thinking was re-codified during a 1984 speech to the National Press Club by then Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. Known as the Weinberger Doctrine, the speech described a series of issues that policy-makers needed to consider before they committed US military forces to battle:

1. The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies.
2. If we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning. If we are unwilling to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all.
3. If we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives. And we should know precisely how our forces can

- accomplish those clearly defined objectives. And we should have, and send, the forces needed to do just that.
4. The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed – their size, composition and disposition – must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
 5. Before the United States commits combat forces abroad there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress. This support cannot be achieved unless we are candid in making clear the threats we face; the support cannot be sustained without continuing and close consultation.
 6. The commitment of US forces to combat should be a last resort.⁴⁹

The Weinberger doctrine, however, is more than just a relic of the Cold War or a manifestation of the Reagan administration’s effort to overcome the “Vietnam syndrome”. The Weinberger doctrine reflects an underlying tension between political efforts to control the use of force and military desires to use all available forces to end war quickly and decisively.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, Weinberger’s guidelines continue to strike a responsive chord among officers and civilian defense officials.⁵¹ For example, participants have highlighted the importance of Weinberger’s principles in the Bush administration’s preparation and conduct of the Gulf War.⁵² The debate over American intervention in Somalia and the turmoil that plagues the Balkans often refers to the issues raised by Weinberger in 1984.⁵³

At first glance, little in the Weinberger doctrine appears controversial. In fine Clausewitzian fashion, it enjoins policy-makers to contemplate the political objectives, and the domestic political ramifications, of a decision to employ force. It encourages civilians and officers alike to specify how the use of force will achieve political objectives before engaging in hostilities. It suggests that without a plan or the resources needed to prevail in a conflict (i.e., achieve US objectives, however defined), policy-makers should avoid using military force. Deploying US forces as a stop-gap measure, without the numerical strength, strategy or political will to achieve identified national objectives, is deemed unacceptable by Weinberger. The doctrine also holds that war is an extraordinarily dangerous enterprise: force should only be used as a last resort because of the inherent risk of disaster that accompanies even the best planned and executed military operation. The Weinberger doctrine suggests that it is the ultimate act of folly to commit US forces to combat before political goals, a military strategy and capability to achieve defined objectives, and domestic political support have been identified and developed. Policy-makers should authorize violence only when they can specify how they will use the tools and political support available to end the conflict successfully.

As a product of the Vietnam War, the Weinberger doctrine offers some reasonable and useful guidelines for policy-makers contemplating the use of force to achieve US objectives. As with other good rules of thumb, however, there are circumstances when it might be best not to follow these guidelines slavishly. The admonition to secure Congressional and public support before undertaking hostilities, for example, would not have served Franklin Roosevelt well as he engaged in “short of war” naval operations against Nazi Germany following the fall of France in 1940.⁵⁴ Roosevelt’s decision to

protect convoy routes to Great Britain in the face of a staunchly isolationist Congress and American public prior to America's declared involvement in the Second World War is now viewed as an act of inspired leadership by most observers. Additionally, even supporters of the Weinberger doctrine worry that by publicly stating his views on the use of force, Weinberger undermined the position of future policy-makers in two ways. First, by announcing to the world a doctrine for the American use of force, Weinberger reduced foreign leaders' uncertainty about American intentions. The guidelines might provide opponents a benchmark by which to judge exactly how far they can push the United States. Second, any fixed set of principles cannot account for unique circumstances that might be driving a particular situation. A strict adherence to the Weinberger doctrine could result in a "stylized debate" over how to respond to a threat and not an honest appraisal of particular circumstances that might require deviation from doctrine.⁵⁵ Still, this criticism would apply to any kind of doctrine, regardless of the inherent qualities of the doctrine itself.

If the Weinberger doctrine stands up to criticism, is it a productive response to the Vietnam debacle? On balance, the answer to this question is no, not because of anything inherent in the doctrine itself, but because of the way it has been used by the American military. Many observers seem to believe that the Weinberger doctrine justifies military efforts to keep track of unreliable political authorities. By contrast, given the context in which it was developed, the Weinberger doctrine seems directed toward the National Command Authority (the President and the Secretary of Defense) rather than toward a military audience alone. With the Weinberger doctrine in place, the process of understanding the military's role in the Vietnam disaster has slowed to a snail's pace.

Early critics of the Weinberger doctrine offered an important observation about his guidelines that has apparently been forgotten in current policy debates: criteria one (identification of national interest) and five (generation and identification of public support) are not the responsibility of uniformed officers. According to Samuel J. Newland and Douglas V. Johnson:

Traditionally, the US military establishment does not determine the nation's political objectives or its national interest, although they may have direct input into it. Rather, this important function is accomplished through the Executive Office and key congressional and governmental committees. Once established by the political leadership, it is the military's role to plan for any and all eventualities if war is not deterred.⁵⁶

One might also add that the military have little to contribute to the political decision (criteria six) about when diplomacy has failed, concessions or surrender are not appropriate, and the time has come to turn to war as a last resort. The Weinberger doctrine, however, has apparently produced confusion about this division of civil-military responsibilities. Eliot Cohen notes that since the Gulf War, senior military officers have taken to offering publicly unsolicited advice about American political objectives. Cohen attributes this challenge to civilian leaders to the "Never-again" lessons learned by the generation of soldiers who served in Vietnam as junior officers. Thus, it is not surprising that Colin Powell, a junior officer who was deeply affected by his Vietnam

experience, remains one of the leading advocates of the 1990s version of the Weinberger doctrine: if war is too important to be left to the generals, it surely is beyond the capability of average politicians.⁵⁷

The US military would do well to remember the “pre-Gulf War” context in which Weinberger, a politician and member of the National Command Authority (NCA), announced his guidelines. Admittedly, all sources agree that Weinberger was influenced by Vietnam, but when viewed from his political position atop the military hierarchy, the Weinberger doctrine takes on a whole new meaning. The mechanical failures and plane crashes that were the proximate causes of the 1979 debacle at Desert One, for example, were not produced by ill-defined political objectives (e.g., free the hostages).⁵⁸ The Reagan administration placed Marines in Lebanon as a sign of US resolve and interest in the region, admittedly a suspect goal under the Weinberger doctrine. But exactly who was responsible for allowing the Marines to treat the deployment as a Mediterranean vacation?⁵⁹ The 23 October 1983 suicide bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon apparently was the catalyst that set Weinberger’s pen to paper.⁶⁰

The performance of the American military in the invasion of Grenada, on 25 October 1983, also was a source of political embarrassment for the Reagan administration, although in comparison to Lebanon it was considered a success. Clear political goals (protect US citizens, seize control of the government, eject Cubans) were identified, but were not achieved quickly or prudently, even though US forces enjoyed the overwhelming superiority some say is called for by the Weinberger doctrine.⁶¹ Indeed, when Weinberger announced his guidelines, the US military could point to its encounter with Libyan forces in the “Line of Death” standoff in the Gulf of Sidra (i.e., US 2, Libya 0) as its only clear-cut victory since before Vietnam.

The Weinberger doctrine can thus be viewed not as a warning to the military to watch out for incompetent politicians, but a quick review for the NCA, Congress, the American people and the US military of six factors that contribute to the political success or failure of military operations. It cautions the NCA not to assume that officers understand the relationship between force and politics or that the way victory is achieved on a battlefield can also influence political outcomes (e.g., Weinberger’s third point). In the aftermath of Desert One, Lebanon and Grenada, the doctrine also seems to caution the NCA, Congress and the American people not to take military competence for granted.⁶² After all, who but the military bears the primary responsibility for responding to questions about force size and composition, strategy and military threat assessments?

Did the American military forget that blame for the Vietnam debacle does not rest solely with 1960s politicians? Are officers forgetting that in the 1960s it was the US military, not the Johnson administration, that failed to develop a strategy for winning the war in Southeast Asia?⁶³ At the time, the failure of the American military in Vietnam was clear to senior officials. When former Secretary of State Dean Acheson asked General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in March 1968 about the status of our plan to win in Vietnam, the General responded curtly that we had no plan to win in Vietnam, we were only helping the Vietnamese avoid a communist victory. Acheson responded: “{W}hat in the name of God are five hundred thousand men out

there doing – chasing girls? This is not a semantic game, General. If the deployment of all those men is not an effort to attain a military solution, then words have lost all meaning.”⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

What are the “unlessons” of Vietnam? It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Huntington was correct in expressing concerns about what Americans would learn from Vietnam and how they would apply these lessons in the future. The only trouble is that he was expressing them to the wrong audience. On balance, academics have drawn positive and useful lessons from the Vietnam experience. The lessons are not only useful to current policy-makers, but these academics also have used the history of the period to advance the state of the art of their own discipline. For political scientists and historians, Vietnam remains a lively subject of debate even if it is difficult to assess a positive public-policy effect from this discourse. Scholarly ideas, however, are occasionally injected into policy formulation: Colin Powell, for example, circulated excerpts from Ickle’s *Every War Must End* to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Affairs Adviser and Joint Chiefs of Staff on the eve of the Gulf War.⁶⁵

In terms of popular lessons, the record is far less encouraging. Conspiracy, whether of the right- or left-wing variety, is a poor explanation of the origins and course of the US involvement in Southeast Asia. Indeed, the notion of conspiracy hides the fundamental complexity of the situation confronting the United States in Vietnam; it was this very complexity that created the Vietnam quagmire that swallowed America’s good intentions and resources. Even more disturbing is the continued popularity of conspiracy as an explanation for a variety of troubles that plague America. Maybe allegations of conspiracy are not only a popular reaction to the Vietnam catastrophe, as Hofstadter would suggest, but a manifestation of a more diffuse reaction to the intractable problems posed by modernity and rapid technological and political change. Indeed, as more historically illiterate voices are added to the interactive computer cacophony, conspiratorial explanations of current events will compete for information dominance. Clearly, an unlesson would be more productive than this.

It also might be better if the American military attempted to put Vietnam behind them, or at least developed a more balanced assessment of history. For the military, the Weinberger doctrine suggests that officers should concentrate on how best to prosecute a war to achieve political objectives. It appeals to the services to be responsive to the exigencies of the battlefield and not to succumb to the urge to fulfil blindly bureaucratic imperatives in wartime. In effect, the Weinberger doctrine is nothing more than a call to treat warfare as a very serious matter and never to take victory for granted, thoughts that could stand reiteration in a post-Desert Storm US military.⁶⁶ By contrast, the Weinberger doctrine is not an open invitation for the military to participate in politics; it simply suggests that officers have a role to play in achieving political objectives set by the NCA.

Critics of the Weinberger doctrine are wrong to blame these guidelines for perceived breakdowns in civil–military relations. In fact, the Weinberger doctrine only leaves one way open for officers to influence the designation of political objectives, i.e., by stating

it is impossible to attain a given objective through military action. And, if the NCA refuses to accept this “military–political” judgement, the officer or officers who hold this opinion should feel free to make their professional judgements public while announcing their resignations.

Vietnam remains an evolving, emotionally powerful and multifaceted analogy. It can be used to justify or condemn virtually any policy option or prediction. In a sense, every generation can project its own concerns onto the complex events in Southeast Asia to draw parallels that justify preferred policies. Thus, Huntington was in fact quite perceptive in voicing concern about the potential danger posed by the effort to draw lessons from Vietnam. Huntington’s call for “unlessons” probably was always impractical, given the impact of the war on Americans. But his call for caution in applying lessons from the Vietnam experience as a solution to the problems we now confront appears as prudent now as it did in 1968.

NOTES

1. So large is this literature that analyses of even small portions of this scholarly material on Vietnam produce book-length manuscripts. The war also is producing a rich literary tradition. See Timothy Lomperis, *Reading the Wind, The Literature of the Vietnam War*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1987. Surveys of documentary sources produce article-length works. See Greta E. Marlatt, “Researching the Vietnam Conflict Through U.S. Archival Sources”, *Journal of Government Information*, Vol. 22 No. 3, 1995, pp. 195–226.
2. Before the outbreak of hostilities, Saddam Hussein repeatedly warned Americans that a war with Iraq would be another long, bloody and divisive struggle “like Vietnam”. See William Head, “Introduction: The Vietnam War – A Look Back, a Look Ahead”, in William Head and Lawrence Grinter (eds), *Looking Back on the Vietnam War*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993, p. 3. According to James Nathan and James Oliver, “Reagan frequently indicated a desire to break out of what he believed was a debilitating ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ that overemphasized international complexity and limits on American power and thereby enfeebled American will.” See James A. Nathan and James K. Oliver, *United States Foreign Policy and World Order*, Boston: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1989, p. 482.
3. John Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995, and D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
4. For example, see Stephen Van Evera, “Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn’t: American Grand Strategy After the Cold War”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 2 (June 1990), pp. 1–51; and Michael Desch, *When the Third World Matters*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
5. Leslie Gelb with Richard Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*, Washington, DC, The Brookings Institution, 1979; and George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. For similar analyses, see Robert Gallucci, *Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Viet-Nam*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975; Stephen P. Rosen, “Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War”, *International Security* Vol. 7 No. 2, Fall 1982, pp. 83–113; and David M. Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors: Lyndon Johnson and his Vietnam Advisors*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993. For representative critiques of America’s incremental approach to the conflict in Southeast Asia, see Harry Summers, *On Strategy*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982; and US Grant Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat*, San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978.

6. Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, Boulder: Westview, 1986; Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower: The American Bombing of North Vietnam*, New York: The Free Press, 1989; Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977; Larry Cable, *Unholy Grail: The U.S. and the Wars in Vietnam, 1965-8*, London: Routledge, 1991; and H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, New York: Harper-Collins, 1997.
7. Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1974; and Carl Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
8. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972; Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986; and Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966.
9. Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention*, New York: David McKay, 1969; Larry Berman, *Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1989; Herbert Y. Schandler, *The Unmaking of the President*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977; and Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War*, Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1990.
10. Fred Charles Ikle, *Every War Must End*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
11. Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. For a decision-making analysis of the US intelligence failure prior to the 1968 Tet Offensive, see James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
12. Douglas Macdonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
13. Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994; and Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
14. Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.
15. Ikle, *Every War Must End*, p. 2.
16. In fact, reality can be worse than fiction. In October 1943, General Marshall radioed General MacArthur about his concern over newspaper reports of atrocities committed by Americans in the Pacific. One paper showed photos of the steps involved in "cooking and scraping of the heads of Japanese to prepare the skulls for souvenirs". See Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, New York: The Free Press, 1985, p. 411.
17. Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect*, New York: Times Books, 1995
18. For a new look at today's popular conspiracies, see Jodi Dean, *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
19. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965, pp. 3-40.
20. Robert B. Reich, *Tales of a New America*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987, pp. 6-8. For an application of Reich's analysis to the debate over Vietnam policy, see J. Justin Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993, pp. 55-64.
21. According to Hofstadter, "Catastrophe or the fear of catastrophe is most likely to elicit the syndrome of paranoid rhetoric", Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, p. 39.
22. Gordon Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981 (Appendix "Revisionists Revisited"); H. W. Brands, *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 37-8; and Walter LaFeber, *The American Age*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1989, p. 543.
23. Jeffrey P. Kimball, "The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War", *Armed Forces and Society* 14, Spring 1988, pp. 433-58.
24. On Rambo's contribution to the "stab-in-the-back" thesis see Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*, p. 143.

25. William Head, “Introduction”, p. 2.
26. Stephen Pelz, “Vietnam: Another Stroll Down Alibi Alley”, *Diplomatic History* 14, 1990, p. 123; and John M. Gates, “If at First You Don’t Succeed, Try to Rewrite History: Revisionism and the Vietnam War”, in William Head and Lawrence Grinter (eds), *Looking Back on the Vietnam War*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993, pp. 177–89.
27. Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
28. Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War*, p. 105.
29. Shelby Stanton notes, for instance, that by some measures of effectiveness, US ground forces did not always fare well against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. In 1966, 88 per cent of military engagements were started by the enemy and about half of these were ambushes. Apparently, America’s opponents were free to seek and break off combat at their initiative. See Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army*, Novato: Presidio Press, 1985, p. 85.
30. The image of the heroic individual is similar to Reich’s discussion of the “triumphant individual”, the Horatio Alger myth that underlies political discourse in the United States. See Reich, *Tales of a New America*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987, pp. 6–8. On this phenomenon in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, see James J. Wirtz, “Intelligence to Please? The Order of Battle Controversy During the Vietnam War”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106 No. 2, Summer 1991, p. 261.
31. On the Adams charges, see Wirtz, “Intelligence to Please”, pp. 239–63; Renata Adler, *Reckless Disregard*, New York: Knopf, 1986; Bob Brewin and Sydney Shaw, *Vietnam on Trial*, New York: Atheneum, 1987; and Michael Hennesy, “The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception Revisited”, in David Charters and Maurice Tugwell (eds), *Deception Operations: Studies in the East–West Context*, London: Brassey’s, 1990, pp. 373–92.
32. Bruce Jones, *War Without Windows: A True Account of a Young Army Officer Trapped in an Intelligence Cover-up in Vietnam*, New York: Vanguard Press, 1987.
33. Louis G. Sarris, “McNamara’s War, and Mine”, *New York Times*, 5 September 1995, p. A17.
34. Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, New York: Random House, 1988, pp. 292–305.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
36. “The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception”, transcript of 23 January 1982 broadcast on CBS Television Network, 1, listed as Joint Exhibit #1 in *Vietnam: A Documentary Collection – Westmoreland v. CBS*, New York: Clearwater Publishing, 1985.
37. “Mr McNamara’s War”, *New York Times*, 12 April 1995, p. A14. Theodore Draper has recently noted that *The Times* is wrong to allege that McNamara did not make known his reservations about the war until the publication of his book. In November 1965, McNamara first questioned American policy *vis-à-vis* Vietnam in a memo to President Johnson. Draper finds this omission on the part of *The Times*’ editorial staff odd, since the memorandum is contained in the Pentagon Papers that were published by the *New York Times* starting on 13 June 1971. See Theodore Draper, “The Abuse of McNamara”, *The New York Review*, 25 May 1995, p. 16.
38. Halberstam, quoted in Jonathan Alter, “Confessing the Sins of Vietnam”, *Newsweek*, April 1995, pp. 40–1.
39. Richard Harwood, “As Wrong As McNamara”, *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 24–30 April 1995, p. 27. By contrast, some commentators take McNamara to task for his non-strategic approach (e.g., “crisis management”) to national security issues. McNamara’s reputation for technical rationality and efficiency suggests that he was ill-suited to lead some cabal. See James L. Richardson, *Crisis Diplomacy*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 25.
40. Wirtz, “Intelligence to Please”, p. 261.
41. Years after the war, Don Oberdorfer recounted the story of Walter Cronkite’s post-Tet visit to Vietnam. Cronkite, horrified by the intensity and destruction of the battle, encountered General Abrams in the ruins of Hue. He remarked to Abrams that he had not seen anything

- like this since the Second World War. Cronkite concluded that he, and the American public, fundamentally misunderstood the war, but he did not blame a government conspiracy for this misconception. Ironically, Oberdorfer noted that the Battle for Hue probably was the only engagement during the entire Vietnam War that resembled urban warfare on Second World War European battlefields. See Don Oberdorfer, "Oral History II", interviewed by Ted Gittinger, 17 September 1981. Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX, p. 16.
42. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*; James J. Wirtz, "A Review Essay of H. R. McMaster's *Dereliction of Duty*", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114 No. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 131–6.
 43. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, pp. 30–6.
 44. Douglas Kinnard, *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor & the American Experience in Vietnam*, Washington DC: Brassey's, 1991.
 45. Suzan Ruth Travis-Cline, "Maintaining Power and Voicing Dissent: John Theodore McNaughton and the Vietnam War 1964–1967", paper presented at the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations Annual Meeting, 21–24 June 1995, Annapolis, Maryland.
 46. For an overview of writings by officers about Vietnam in professional US military journals, see Stephen Mariano, "Peacekeepers Attend the Never Again School", MA Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, December 1995. An excellent examination of the events and the ideas that shaped the "Never-again" school and tension over the conduct of limited war in American foreign policy, is in Christopher M. Gacek, *The Logic of Force*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
 47. Christopher Gacek dates the origins of the "Never-again" school to the aftermath of the Korean War, specifically the publication of Mark Clark's memoirs, when the idea arose that the United States should never again be "mousetrapped" into a limited war in Asia. See Mark Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, New York: Harper, 1954, p. 328; and Gacek, *The Logic of Force*, p. 13.
 48. Harry Summers, *On Strategy*, Novato: Presidio Press, 1982.
 49. Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Use of Force and the National Will", *Baltimore Sun*, 3 December 1984, p. 11. For a fine discussion of the similarities between the Weinberger doctrine and key Clausewitzian ideas, see Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini*, London: Frank Cass, 1992, pp. 11–14.
 50. Gacek, *The Logic of Force*, p. 294.
 51. General Colin Powell contributed to the formulation of the Weinberger Doctrine and represents one of its chief practitioners as National Security Affairs adviser in the Reagan administration and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in the Bush and Clinton administrations. Powell was present at the creation, so to speak, since he was working in Weinberger's office at the time the Secretary drafted his guidelines. See Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Perisco, *My American Journey*, New York: Random House, 1995, p. 302.
 52. Powell notes, for example, that the NCA was very concerned that General Norman Schwarzkopf had sufficient forces to carry out offensive and defensive operations in the Gulf War. See *ibid.*, p. 487.
 53. For a discussion of the impact of Weinberger's guidelines on Somalia and the Persian Gulf, see Gordon A. Craig and Alexander George, *Force and Statecraft*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 268–73.
 54. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Two-Ocean War*, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1963, pp. 28–38.
 55. Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71 No. 5. Winter 1992/93, pp. 37–8.
 56. Samuel J. Newland and Douglas V. Johnson, "The Military and Operational Significance of the Weinberger Doctrine", in Alan Ned Sabrosky and Robert L. Sloan (eds), *The Recourse to War: An Appraisal of the "Weinberger Doctrine"*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1988, p. 177.
 57. Eliot Cohen, *Making Do With Less, or Coping With Upton's Ghost*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995; and Eliot A. Cohen, "Playing Powell Politics", *Foreign*

- Affairs*, Vol. 74 No. 6, November/December 1995, pp. 104–5, 108–9.
58. Gary Sick minces no words in his judgement: “The rescue mission was a failure, but it was a failure of military execution, not of political judgement or command.” See Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America’s Tragic Encounter with Iran*, New York: Random House, 1985, p. 302.
 59. The commission that was convened to explore the deaths of 241 Marines in Lebanon concluded that *military* commanders were responsible for failing to take elementary security precautions, billeting 350 Marines in one building and giving “unmilitary” instruction to the sentries (whose weapons were unloaded). See Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984, p. 50.
 60. Powell, *My American Journey*, pp. 302–3; and Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 6. Gacek notes, however, that Weinberger was primarily concerned with responding to Secretary Shultz’s repeated public criticism of some members of the Reagan administration for their reluctance to use force to back up US diplomacy. See Gacek, *The Logic of Force*, pp. 262–72.
 61. According to Freedman and Karsh, 148 Americans were killed and 458 were wounded in action during the Gulf War, remarkably light casualties that reflected both the outstanding professionalism of American forces and the lack of Iraqi will to fight. According to Luttwak, 18 Americans were killed and 116 wounded in the battle with 636 Cuban construction workers and 43 Cuban soldiers on Grenada. The outcome of the invasion was never in doubt, but from the American perspective, it was not a finely executed military operation. See Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 409; Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War*, pp. 51–8; and Mark Adkin, *Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada*, Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1989.
 62. It is possible that some senior officers recognized the criticism of the US military inherent in Weinberger’s guidelines. Bob Woodward reports, for instance, that all of the Joint Chiefs except Chairman General John Vessey strongly opposed the doctrine. See Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, New York: Pocket Star Books, 1991, p. 89.
 63. In this context, Andrew Krepinevich has recently noted that American officers did not “forget” these lessons of Vietnam; they have deliberately ignored them. See Andrew F. Krepinevich, “Recovery From Defeat: The US Army and Vietnam”, in George Andreopoulos and Harold Selesky (eds), *The Aftermath of Defeat*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, pp. 124–42.
 64. Clark Clifford with Richard Holbroke, “Annals of Government, Serving the President: The Vietnam Years – II”, *The New Yorker*, 13 May 1991, p. 78.
 65. Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 519.
 66. James J. Wirtz, “QDR 2001: The Navy and the RMA”, *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Autumn 1999, Vol. V, Issue 4, pp. 43–60.