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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2008
ABSTRACT


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Abstract

This dissertation addresses one of the most vexing issues in American foreign policy: Under what circumstances should the United States use military force in pursuit of national interests? Despite not having a policy upon entering office or articulating one throughout its first term, the Reagan administration used military force numerous times. Two-weeks following Reagan’s landslide reelection victory, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger articulated six tests for when and how to use military force, which surprisingly seemed to call for restraint. Through the examination of three case studies, the Reagan administration’s decisions are found to have been influenced by the assimilation of lessons from Vietnam, the reading of public pulse, the desire to placate Congress, and the need to protect the nation’s strategic interests. All these factors, ultimately codified by Weinberger, were considered by the leaders in the Reagan administration as they tried to expand the military’s ability to help the U.S. meet an increasingly wider range of threats. Thus this dissertation will show that, contrary to what one finds in contemporary scholarship, the Weinberger doctrine was intended as a policy to legitimize the use of military force as a tool of statecraft, rather than an endorsement to reserve force as a last resort after other instruments of power have failed.
## Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iv

Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter One: Political Rhetoric ................................................................................................. 12

  Part I: A Crisis of Confidence or A Crisis of Leadership? .................................................. 12

  Part II: A “Referendum of Unhappiness” or a “Mandate to Make America Great Again” ................................................................................................................................. 21

  Part III: The Reagan Administration’s Political Rhetoric: ............................................... 25

    The Economy: The Problem and Reagan’s Proposed Solution ........................................... 27

    National Security: The Problem and Reagan’s Proposed Solution ............................... 32

      America’s Role in the World ...................................................................................... 32

      America’s Will to Fulfill Its Role ............................................................................. 34

      America’s Capability to Fulfill Its Role ................................................................... 38

      Reagan’s Proposed Solution – Peace Through Strength ............................................. 44

  Chapter One Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 47

Chapter Two: Domestic Political Realities ................................................................................. 48

  Part I: “The Age of Consensus” - Political Realities in Post World War II America 49

  Part II: A New Pattern - Social Norms in the Mid-1960s and 1970s ............................. 54

  Chapter Two Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 61

Chapter Three: Case Study Central America ............................................................................. 64

  Part I: Background Information on Central America ...................................................... 65

  Part II: Gaining Flexibility for Future Action ................................................................. 78

  Part III: Haig’s Solution for Central America ................................................................. 90

  Part IV: National Security Decision Directive on Cuba and Central America .............. 104
“Operation Urgent Fury” ......................................................................................................................... 211

Part II: Preparing the Nation to Use Military Force ........................................................................... 227

Chapter Six Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 258

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................. 260

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................... 267

Archives .................................................................................................................................................. 267

Primary Sources ..................................................................................................................................... 267

Periodicals ............................................................................................................................................. 277

Secondary Sources ................................................................................................................................. 282

Biography ............................................................................................................................................... 301
Introduction

On 28 November 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger delivered a speech to the National Press Club entitled “The Uses of Military Power.” In his speech he addressed one of the most vexing issues in American foreign policy. Under what circumstances should the United States use military force in pursuit of national interests. It was a question of extraordinary salience and importance during the first administration of President Ronald Reagan, from January 1981 through November 1984. President Reagan had entered office without a clearly formulated policy in his own mind or within his administration on when and how to use military force. Not until two weeks after Reagan’s landslide reelection victory did the administration step forward via Weinberger’s speech.

Weinberger proposed six tests for American leaders to consider when using military force in pursuit of national interests:

(1) First, 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) Second, 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. . . . (3) Third, if we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives. . . . (4) Fourth, 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) Fifth, before the U.S. 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…. (6) Finally, the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.¹

Reporting on the speech, one contemporary journalist wrote: “The speech appeared to be the clearest enunciation of military policy since President Reagan was elected in 1980.”² Others quickly labeled the six tests as the Weinberger doctrine.³

Given the record of candidate and then President Reagan, the doctrine appeared to mark a significant departure for his administration. In the 1980 presidential campaign, Reagan had vowed to scrap the strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II) negotiated by the Carter administration, rebuild American military power, confront and roll back Soviet expansionism, and contain Cuban proxy activity in the Third World. In his first term, Reagan stayed true to those promises by not returning to SALT, but instead introducing a strategic arms reduction treaty (START) and spending billions to rebuild the nation’s strategic and conventional military forces. Additionally, the administration dispatched


military advisors to help the government of El Salvador overcome an insurgency supported by Cuba and the Soviet bloc and spent millions building a proxy force to fight against what it saw as a Communist-led government in Nicaragua. Marines were also dispatched to Lebanon on two separate occasions to maintain order and check Soviet influence in that region. Finally, the administration sent military forces to Grenada to remove a Marxist dictator and approved two large show-of-force exercises focused on Nicaragua.

To the surprise of many, it appeared that Reagan’s Secretary of Defense had presented a doctrine which called for restraint on the use of military power. Why had the Reagan administration, which seemed to have valued the utility of military power in pursuit of national interests in its first term, come to announce a doctrine that called for its restraint?

In the contemporary literature, three explanations emerge for why the six tests were presented. The first is that they were in response to the legacy of Vietnam and other negative experiences like the October 1983 terrorist bombing in Lebanon, which killed 241 Marines. The second links the tests to the debate between Weinberger and Secretary of State George Shultz over the use of military force to counter terrorism and support the nation’s diplomatic efforts. The third explanation is that the tests were presented as a moral guide for the nation on the use of military force as it faced challenges such as terrorism and proxy wars.

In general, authors who focus on the Reagan administration attribute the policy dispute between Weinberger and Shultz as the impetus for the doctrine, while authors who focus on the Weinberger doctrine attribute the reaction of Pentagon leaders to
Vietnam and Beirut as the impetus. Regardless of the impetus, they all characterize the Weinberger doctrine’s intent as to reserve military force as a last resort, only after diplomatic, political, economic, and other efforts have been expended. Additionally, no work in the contemporary literature provides a clear explanation for why the Reagan administration, which in its first term had used military force in pursuit of national interests, had come to articulate a doctrine seemingly intent on reserving the use of military force as a last resort.

The narrative surrounding the reactionary impetus for the doctrine suggests that the six tests reflected American experience in the Vietnam War and more recently in Lebanon. In advancing the six tests Weinberger was simply reflecting the views of the military leadership and their continued aversion to the possibility of further experiences. Within this body of literature, the only disagreement is over the degree of Weinberger’s involvement in writing the speech. In some accounts the speech was conceived and drafted by military leaders in the Pentagon; Weinberger was merely the spokesperson for a consensus within the military establishment. In other accounts, Weinberger collaborates with his military aide, Major General Colin Powell, to write the speech. In still others, Weinberger is the principal author with minimal assistance from Powell or others.\(^5\)

Regardless of who wrote the speech, its content represented a dramatic reversal of policy from the Reagan administration’s first term, which the reactionary explanation does not completely account for. If the Marine tragedy truly were the proximate cause for the administration’s apparent call for restraint, then Reagan, who claimed to be a proponent for America’s leadership in the world, was cowed relatively easily. The explanation becomes even less satisfying when one considers that the administration launched the invasion of the island of Grenada two days after the terrorist bombing in Beirut. Additionally, in its second term, the administration used military force on several occasions to carry out its policies abroad.

For instance in 1985, the Reagan administration dispatched fighter jets to force an Egyptian commercial airliner to land in Italy. The airliner carried the terrorists who had hijacked the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and killed an American passenger. In 1986, U.S. forces sparred with Libyan forces in the Gulf of Sidra and, in a separate incident, bombed targets in Libya in retaliation for a Libyan-inspired terrorist attack in Germany that killed several American servicemen. And in 1987, the administration dispatched American forces to help Kuwaiti oil tankers convoy through the Persian Gulf in the face of Iranian naval attacks and in spite of stiff opposition from Congressional leaders, negative media coverage over the death of 37 sailors, and the threat of further U.S. involvement.6 If Weinberger’s speech truly was a call for restraint, the administration largely ignored or disregarded it.

Perhaps a more complete explanation also requires consideration of the second explanation that the tests were part of a policy struggle between Shultz and Weinberger over how military force should support the nation’s diplomatic efforts and combat terrorism.7 Shultz believed the presence of American military forces on the ground was important in demonstrating the nation’s resolve, credibility, and strength to negotiations and diplomatic efforts. Weinberger cautioned against basing American diplomacy on the

6 The sailors were aboard the U.S.S. Stark. The ship was fired upon on 17 May 1987 by Iraqi aircraft who mistook the vessel for an Iranian ship.

ability to deploy American forces because it ignored the possibility that domestic
constraints on the use of military force could preclude such leverage. The clash between
the two men first began in 1982 in regards to the Marine peacekeeping role in Lebanon.
Although initially kept internal, the debate became public after the fatalities from the
Marine barracks bombing in 1983.

The Secretaries also debated over how to apply military force to counter
terrorism. Shultz advocated the nation’s use of military force to preempt, prevent, and
retaliate in response to terrorism. Weinberger charged Shultz with favoring an
“unfocused” or “revenge” approach which he believed failed to focus on the terrorists
themselves and would lead to an unnecessary cycle of violence and revenge. Instead,
Weinberger favored a “focused” approach which meant withholding action until
confirmation of the terrorists’ identities, and then only responding in the appropriate
degree to match the terrorist effect and discourage others from terrorism in the future.

The policy debate explanation is again only partially satisfying. Although the two
men did indeed debate over the relationship of military force to diplomatic efforts, one
also finds what two contemporary journalists referred to as “nondifferences.”8 Shultz and
Weinberger both warned that the nation had to avoid isolationism, embrace its role as a
leader on the world stage, and prepare to respond to “gray-area” threats with economic
aid, security assistance, and diplomatic mediation. They also agreed the nation needed to
be prepared to strengthen its diplomatic mediation with military force. This military

8 Reporting on the debate between Reagan’s cabinet secretaries, Fulbright and Tillman wrote: “There may
be less to their apparent difference than meets the eye.” See J. William Fulbright and Seth P. Tillman,
force could be direct in nature, such as localized military actions, show-of-force operations, or peacekeeping missions, or, indirect in nature, such as support for contra proxy forces in Central America. Both men made clear that the administration’s ability to use military force hinged largely on the backing of the American people and their Congressional leaders. Therefore, their words seem more intent on garnering support for the availability of military force than for its restraint.

The third explanation offered for the emergence of the Weinberger doctrine - the tests were presented as a moral guide to using military force when threats fell in between peace and war – is more promising. Weinberger noted that a pluralist democracy like the United States could easily decide to use military force when its own territory was under attack or when to invade, conquer or subjugate other nations. It could not, however, easily reach consensus on less clear-cut cases. “The extent to which the use of force is acceptable remains unresolved for the host of other situations which fall between these extremes of defensive and aggressive use of force.”\(^9\) Weinberger explained that the six tests would guide the administration’s decisions through the fragmented U.S. political system when the challenges existed in the gray area between the extremes.

While every author concluded that the six tests were meant to reserve the use of military force as a last resort when all else fails, neither the rhetoric of Reagan, nor the actions of his administration, matched that call for restraint. In this work, the origins of the Weinberger doctrine are explored in order to find an explanation that does not lead to apparent contradictions. What was found both validates and refines other authors’

conclusions: the doctrine emerged from a combination of historical lessons, hard experience, intense ideological and political struggle within the administration, and a need to describe a moral way to respond to gray area challenges.

This dissertation’s primary contribution to the literature is its finding that, contrary to contemporary scholarship, the Weinberger doctrine was not intended to reserve the use of military force as a last resort when all else failed. Instead, the doctrine was meant to articulate clearly the conditions under which the United States could legitimately use military force as a tool of statecraft to pursue its national interests. To date, this dissertation provides the most thoroughly developed and documented explanation of the origins of the Weinberger doctrine and the doctrine’s relationship to national power and military force.

The first chapter sets the domestic and international context for the first term of the Reagan administration. The administration entered office believing in the efficacy of military force, not only to secure the nation but also to carry out the nation’s policy objectives. During the 1980 campaign, Reagan called upon the nation to be prepared physically, with the necessary forces, and ideologically, with the proper will to use military force, to respond to the entire range of possibilities for American involvement, from peacekeeping to global war. While the administration reformed the economy and increased defense spending in its first year in office, it also began to gain a greater appreciation of some of the domestic political realities that restrained its ability to use military force. Chapter two identifies and describes the political realities governing the use of force. The subsequent three chapters examine case studies from the Reagan administration’s first term in which force was recommended or employed in pursuit of
national policies. The case studies explain how leaders in the administration used the concepts, ultimately codified in the Weinberger doctrine, to guide their decisions.

The final chapter presents the Reagan administration in 1984 still harboring at least two different ideas about how military force should be used in pursuit of national interests. Shultz’s ideas were representative of a gradualist, incremental approach associated with the conduct of the Vietnam War. Weinberger was adamantly opposed to this approach because it ignored the impact of the domestic environment upon the power of military forces on the ground. At the conclusion of the chapter, the Weinberger doctrine is boldly announced to the world as the administration defines the circumstances and the manner in which the United States will use military force in pursuit of national interests.

Fourteen years later, in December 1998, a group of defense intellectuals gathered at the Monarch Hotel in Washington D.C. to make recommendations on a working paper from the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. The paper, entitled “Emerging Principles for the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era,” posited that while the old Weinberger principles for the use of military force, enunciated in 1984, had not lost all relevance in the post-Cold War security reality, they needed to be supplemented. The political system in the United States, said the paper, allowed many voices to speak on a multitude of perceived threats, making it difficult to achieve consensus on the use of military force.

The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict was established in May 1994 and ceased its operations in December 1999. The Commission’s reports are available for download at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/subsites/ccpdc/index.htm; however, this particular piece, written by Donald Jordan, does not seem to have ever been published. The author received a copy of the essay from General David H. Petraeus who had received a copy of the essay and the officer’s note while serving as Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
force. The domestic and external environment seemed to “defy productive generalization about the evolution of a doctrine for the use of force.” Even with the collective advantage of many intellects, the task of supplementing Weinberger’s principles proved difficult. A representative of the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs reported back to his superiors: “We didn’t make much progress on the principles.” If these men and women had truly understood the Weinberger doctrine, as it will be explained in this work, they may have concluded that the six tests did not need to be supplemented and that the principles were, in fact, still relevant for the use of force in the post-Cold War Era.


12 Memorandum to Colonel Petraeus, Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Lieutenant Colonel Hooker, Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Re: Carnegie Working Group on “Emerging Principles for Use of Force” – 15 Dec 98. Author’s copy of the memorandum.
Chapter One: Political Rhetoric

1980 was a presidential election year marked by sharp contrasts. The political rhetoric of President Jimmy Carter, nominated by the Democratic party to run for a second term, differed on all fronts with that of the Republican nominee, Ronald Reagan. Interestingly, when the election concluded in a landslide victory for Reagan, pundits were uncertain how to explain the result. Were the millions of votes cast for Reagan an affirmation for his conservative agenda, or a rebuke of Carter and his policies? Did Reagan have the support of Americans for his proposed solutions to the vital problems facing the nation? Reagan claimed that he had received a mandate to follow the agenda proposed during his campaign. This chapter details the transformation of Reagan’s campaign rhetoric into Presidential policies. The first section describes the differences in view of the two candidates regarding America’s future. The second explores the varying interpretations of the election results. The third concludes with Reagan’s interpretation of the economic and security problems facing the nation and his proposals to resolve the problems.

Part I: A Crisis of Confidence or A Crisis of Leadership?

On 20 January 1981, Ronald Wilson Reagan was sworn in as the fortieth President of the United States. While every orderly transfer of power is a testament to the American democratic system, this inauguration possessed its own dramatic script. Mere minutes after Reagan delivered his inaugural address, having just promised his fellow Americans an “era of national renewal,” a plane carrying 52 American hostages
departed from Tehran, after 444 days of captivity in the hands of the new revolutionary government of Iran. The drama was not lost on contemporaries of the time. *Time* magazine captured the emotions of the country:

…within 41 minutes, a presidency began, an ordeal ended, and the nation was swept by a sense of shared emotion and exuberance not felt in years. Even Ronald Reagan, at ease with the implausibilities of fictive film, would have rejected the script as beyond belief…. Watching on television, getting the word from a neighbor or a passer-by on the street,… Americans learned of the hostages’ release and felt a surge of national relief, a rebirth of confidence and hope, however transitory, that rivaled the first landing on the moon.¹

Looking back at the news stories on that day one cannot help but be struck by a number of contrasts. Pictures from the inauguration show President Jimmy Carter ashen and worn out, while President-elect Ronald Reagan appeared remarkably well rested and ruddy cheeked. Jimmy Carter had stayed up for two days straight, only taking an occasional catnap on a couch in the small study adjacent the Oval office, working desperately to get the American hostages released on his watch. Michael Deaver, Reagan’s Deputy White House Chief of Staff, assumed that the president-elect would be

practicing the most important speech of his life to that point. Instead, he found Reagan on the morning of the inauguration still sleeping comfortably at 8 o’clock.\(^2\)

Even the weather seemed to respond to each man’s spirit. Caspar Weinberger, who was confirmed later in the day as Secretary of Defense, recounted in his memoir:

… when President-elect Reagan took the inaugural oath, his voice infused the air with his characteristic confidence and sparkling vigor, lifting the pall and almost literally parting the clouds. As I had witnessed many times before, Reagan effortlessly summoned brightness; a golden stream of sunlight broke through the dark sky, first shining only on him, then showering everyone present.\(^3\)

There is an almost religious connotation to the Weinberger description - dark forces gripping the nation were seemingly counteracted by light showering forth from a new, vibrant leader. In direct contrast, the exhausted Carter left after the ceremony and flew with his entourage back to a dark, rain-soaked Plains, Georgia.\(^4\)

The most critical contrast between the old and new administrations came from the words that Americans heard from their new leader. In his inaugural address, Reagan told his listeners that there were no limits to what they could achieve. “It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as


some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do.” He called for his countrymen to believe in themselves and to believe in their individual and collective capacity “to perform great deeds, to believe that together, with God’s help,” they could “resolve the problems” facing the country. Reagan urged: “So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal.” It was a message that contrasted sharply with the one Americans had received from President Jimmy Carter eighteen months earlier.

In 1979, in a Sunday evening televised address about energy and national goals, President Carter informed his audience that the true problems of the nation were much deeper than gasoline lines, energy shortages, inflation, or recession. Instead, he warned

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6 It also contrasted sharply with President Carter’s inaugural address given four years earlier. In that address Carter said, “We have learned…that even our great Nation has its recognized limits, and that we can neither answer all questions nor solve all problems. We cannot afford to do everything.” The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter, 20 January 1977,” [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6575](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6575) [accessed November 20, 2007].

7 Carter’s speech was the product of a remarkable twelve-day period in the history of his Administration. President Carter had planned to give an energy speech to the nation on 5 July. However on 4 July, he decided the speech needed to be broadened to include other national concerns. Therefore, he cancelled the original speech and called in advisors to help him pull together a domestic summit at Camp David. Over the next six days, 150 people were shuttled by helicopter from Washington for sessions of varying lengths with the President. The participants included governors, Cabinet members, former defense secretaries, educators, union leaders, clergymen, bankers, and civil-rights leaders. Carter also left the confines of Camp David to visit the homes of two families in Middle America. Carter’s decision to hold a summit and give a broader speech was not spontaneous. Instead, his decision was influenced by concern over opinion poll numbers which had been dipping since the winter and concerns over the mood of the American public found by his pollster Pat Caddell in the spring. For a more detailed narrative of this period in the Carter Presidency see Jimmy Carter, Keeping the Faith (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), 114-122; Burton I. Kaufman, “A Growing Sense of Crisis,” in The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 133-150; Peter G. Bourne, Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Postpresidency (New York: Scribner, 1997), 441-446. Also see James T. Patterson, Restless
the more worrisome problem was that Americans were suffering from “a crisis of confidence” that posed a “fundamental threat to American democracy.”

Carter informed Americans that over the last generation their confidence in the future and their faith in the ability of “citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers” had declined. “For the first time in the history of the country,” he said, a majority of our people believe the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world.

Finally, he added, there was evidence of a growing disrespect for government, churches, schools, and media.

The roots of these problems, according to Carter, lay in Vietnam, Watergate, inflation, dependence on foreign oil, and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. These events had served to undermine many of the

country’s core beliefs: ballots not bullets, invincible armies, just wars, honorable leadership, and limitless resources. The nation was at a historical turning point, Americans could decide to continue down the path of self-indulgence and consumption, which Carter described as a path fraught with conflict, chaos, and certainty of failure, or Americans could solve their energy problems through sacrifice. Carter urged the path of sacrifice because not only would it resolve the energy crisis, but it would also allow Americans to resolve their crisis of confidence by rekindling a “sense of unity” and “confidence in the future,” giving the nation and each individual “a new sense of purpose.” He concluded: “There is simply no way to avoid sacrifice.”

While Carter offered six steps for solving the energy problem in his speech, those points were largely subordinated to his broader argument that Americans were suffering a “crisis of spirit” and needed to be prepared to face limits and make sacrifices. At a press conference following the speech, one of Carter’s aides spoke of a “malaise” having

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8 The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, Energy and National Goals Address to the Nation, 15 July 1979,” [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32596&st=&st1](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32596&st=&st1) [accessed November 20, 2007] and Carter, Keeping the Faith, 118-120. Also see William K. Stevens, “Basic U.S. Shifts Foreseen,” The New York Times, July 1, 1979, [online archive]; accessed Feb 15, 2007. This article, published two-weeks before Carter’s speech, discussed the potential psychological and sociological impacts that the energy crisis might have on the American public. Stevens seemed to accept that there was no way around the tyranny of limitations America began to encounter in the 1970s. He cited the following: “First there was Vietnam, convincing many Americans that their country could no longer automatically have its way in the world. Then there was the Arab oil embargo of 1973-4, demonstrating to Americans that they no longer had a special claim to the world’s resources. Next, soaring inflation sapped Americans’ long-standing conviction that they could get ahead if they worked hard. And now the energy crisis of 1979 appears to be crystallizing it all, according to some experts.” Stevens’ article asked whether Americans would learn to sacrifice while preserving a “spirit of can-do optimism,” or if instead, they would adopt a more pessimistic outlook. Carter clearly believed Americans were beginning to adopt a more pessimistic outlook. He wanted to check that trend and have Americans draw upon their historical “can-do optimism” to help them accept sacrifices.

9 Carter urged the nation to never import more foreign oil than it did in 1977, to set import quotas, to commit funds and resources to develop America’s own alternative sources of fuel, to pass a law to make utility companies cut their use of oil by 59 percent over the next decade, to create an energy mobilization board, and to follow a bold conservation program.
“descended on American society.”

Although Carter had not used the term, his address was soon dubbed the “malaise” speech by the media.

Carter seemed to have struck a chord with his fellow Americans. One poll found 77 percent agreed with the statement: “there is a moral and spiritual crisis, that is, a crisis of confidence, in the country today.” Additionally, his approval rating jumped from 26 percent to 37 percent following the speech. Although Carter did not officially announce he was running for reelection until 4 December 1979, his “malaise” speech and subsequent request for the resignation of five Cabinet members were largely seen as the start of his reelection campaign.

Ronald Reagan’s message for Americans was quite different. Reagan did not announce his intent to run for President until 13 November 1979, four months after the

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10 Patterson, Restless Giant, 127-128.


12 Ibid.

“malaise” speech. In the declaration of his candidacy, Reagan repudiated Carter’s calls for Americans to learn to live with limits and argued that the nation’s crisis of confidence was not caused by a failure of American spirit but by a failure of leadership. Reagan said:

Our leaders attempt to blame their failures on circumstances beyond their control, on false estimates by unknown, unidentifiable experts who rewrite modern history in an attempt to convince us our high standard of living, the result of thrift and hard work, is somehow selfish extravagance which we much renounce as we join in sharing scarcity. I don’t agree that our nation must resign itself to inevitable decline, yielding its proud position to other hands. I am totally unwilling to see this country fail in its obligation to itself and to the other free peoples of the world. The crisis we face is not the result of any failure of the American spirit; it is failure of our leaders to establish rational goals and give our people something to order their lives by. If I am elected, I shall regard my election as proof that the people of the United States have decided to set a new agenda and

14 A contemporary journalist, Howell Raines, reached a similar conclusion while interviewing Americans in early August 1979. Raines reported that people from around the country agreed with President Carter’s theory that Americans had lost confidence in the future; however, his interviews also revealed that even among Carter supporters there was “widespread agreement that much of the country’s crisis had to do with Mr. Carter’s leadership.” See Howell Raines, “Citizens Ask if Carter is Part of the ‘Crisis,’” The New York Times, August 3, 1979, [online archive]; accessed February 15, 2007.
have recognized that the human spirit thrives best when goals are set and
progress can be measured in their achievement.\textsuperscript{15}

Reagan asserted that America’s problems could be solved with sound leadership and
policies rather than by emplacing limits and shouldering large sacrifices.\textsuperscript{16}

On 4 November 1980, Americans elected Ronald Reagan as their new President
in a landslide. Reagan won 50.8 percent of the popular vote, 489 electoral votes, and 44
states, while Carter received 41.0 percent of the popular vote, 49 electoral votes, and 6
states and the District of Columbia. In the twentieth century only two elected incumbent
Presidents had failed to win a second term – William Howard Taft, whose party had split
in 1912, and Herbert Hoover in 1932 during the Great Depression. Furthermore, Carter
received the lowest percentage of the popular vote of any incumbent Democratic
President in American history.\textsuperscript{17} Reagan asserted that he was a leader who could remove
the roadblocks of government and help overcome the three issues he identified as

\textsuperscript{15} Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, “Ronald Reagan, Intent to Run for President, 13
3, 2007]. In addition to The American Presidency Project, this web site was used as a source for several of
President Reagan’s speeches. It is the official web site for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Foundation.

\textsuperscript{16} Many other Americans also questioned whether the crisis was more to do with Carter’s leadership and
ability to govern than to some national malaise. See Howell Raines, “Citizens Ask if Carter is Part of the

\textsuperscript{17} Gerald M. Pomper, “The Presidential Election,” in The Election of 1980: Reports and Interpretations, ed.
Marlene Michels Pomper (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1981), 67. In addition to Reagan’s impressive
victory, the Republican Party had remarkable success. In the U.S. Senate, Republicans gained a majority
for the first time since 1954, in the House of Representatives the Democratic majority was cut in half, and
the G.O.P. gained four governorships (Missouri, West Virginia, Washington, and Arkansas). See Ellis
Sandoz “Introduction: Revolution or Flash In the Pan?” in A Tide of Discontent: The 1980 Elections and
Their Meaning, ed. Ellis Sandoz and Cecil V. Crabb, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press,
undermining national confidence: a poor economy, an energy crisis, and a perceived weakness in defense.\textsuperscript{18} The election results appeared to validate Reagan and his roadmap for the future.

\textbf{Part II: A “Referendum of Unhappiness” or a “Mandate to Make America Great Again”}

In spite of the convincing victory, some post-election survey results suggested caution on the part of the new administration on interpreting its landslide victory as clear support for its conservative agenda.\textsuperscript{19} One survey of Americans conducted in January 1981 indicated that the election results were best construed as an overwhelming rejection of Carter and his administration. 63 percent indicated the Reagan victory was mostly a rejection of the Carter administration while only 24 percent answered that it was a mandate for Reagan’s conservative policies.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, “Ronald Reagan, Intent to Run for President, 13 November 1979,” \url{http://www.reaganlibrary.com/reagan/speeches/speech.asp?spid=4}; [accessed February 3, 2007]. In his speech Reagan admitted that there was a lack of confidence in the nation. He said, “It is true there is a lack of confidence, an unease with things the way they are.”


\textsuperscript{20} See Schneider, “The November 4 Vote for President,” in \textit{The American Elections of 1980}, ed. Ranney, 247. Schneider cited a survey conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White in January 1981. Schneider also noted: “Even Republicans (54 to 34 percent) and self-described conservatives (57 to 30 percent) felt that the election was more a rejection of Carter than a conservative mandate. Also see Sandoz “Introduction: Revolution or Flash In the Pan?” in \textit{A Tide of Discontent}, ed. Sandoz and Crabb, 15. Sandoz cited a \textit{New York Times/CBS} News exit poll that found that only 11 percent of the respondents said their reason for voting for Reagan was because “he’s a real conservative.”
Carter’s own polltaker characterized the election as “a referendum of unhappiness” on Mr. Carter.21 Another pollster for Democratic candidates said that the 1980 results were indicative of “a call for order and stability” by Americans in the areas of foreign policy, world prestige, and the economy. “It [stability] was that side of equation that people were buying into, not necessarily the change side.”22

Sources that were more generous toward the Reagan administration’s agenda suggested that the dominant political ideology for the country had shifted to support conservative principles to help solve the nation’s urgent problems.23 Other sources went so far as to suggest that Reagan had received a mandate for his foreign policy campaign pledge to “make America great again” and for “dramatic economic innovation.”24 In the

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end, the 1980 election was clear on what Americans disapproved of - President Carter’s leadership - but less clear on what it wanted or expected the Reagan administration to do differently.

Such an ambiguous outcome is not uncommon in American politics. V. O. Key, who studied the American electorate over a twenty-four year period, posited that the American electorate’s role is best understood as an appraiser of past events. According to Key, the electorate provides leadership direction only in so far as it is possible to see what actions were approved or disapproved of in the past.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, like its predecessors, the Reagan administration would seemingly have to figure out what the electorate would allow all on its own.

Regardless, Ronald Reagan and his closest advisors entered office in January 1981 believing that the election provided a mandate from the American public to follow the domestic and foreign policy agenda they had articulated during the campaign. In his first press conference, President-elect Reagan was asked if he felt “totally wedded to the Republican Party platform” he had run on, given the fact that he had received millions of independent votes. Reagan replied:

\begin{quote}
that “the trend of American opinion on international issues was definitely running in Reagan’s direction.” In particular, Destler noted that Americans in larger numbers were supportive of greater defense spending, anti-Soviet efforts, and opposition to SALT II. Thus, Destler concluded: “If Reagan did not have a foreign policy mandate, he did have a clear opening, an opportunity to press his tough line and see how far he could get.”
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{25} See V.O. Key, \textit{The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960} (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge 1966), 61-62. One analyst of the election wrote: “The voters were voting for a change, and they were certainly aware that the type of change Reagan was offering was going to take the country in a more conservative direction. They were willing to go along with that, not because they were convinced of the essential merits of the conservative program, but because they were willing to give conservatism a chance.” See Schneider, “The November 4 Vote for President,” in \textit{The American Elections of 1980}, ed. Ranney, 248.
I am – I ran on the platform; the people voted for me on the platform; I do believe in that platform, and I think it would be very cynical and callous of me now to suggest that I’m going to turn away from it. Evidently, those people who voted for me – of the other party or independents – must have agreed with the platform also.\

26 “Transcript of Reagan News Conference With Bush on Plans for Administration,” The New York Times, 7 November 1980 [online archive]; accessed 15 November 2007. Also see Hedrick Smith, “A Turning Point Seen: Republicans Call Election Watershed – Look to Party Realignment,” The New York Times, 6 November 1980 [online archive]; accessed 15 November 2007. Smith’s article quoted Reagan’s Chief of Staff, Edwin Meese 3d, as stating: “A new President has a mandate.” During the Reagan transition into the White House, Meese became counselor to the president. In his memoir Meese does not use the term “mandate,” instead he described some of the advantages the administration had to overcome political constraints in order to correct the nation’s problems. He wrote: “The President’s victory, popular support, and communications skills gave us a powerful impetus coming out of the election. And a Republican Senate and the potential support of the “boll weevil” (conservative, mostly Southern) Democrats in the House gave us hopes of winning majorities for our legislation in Congress. Most important – the flipside of all these developments – was the widespread belief that the system was not working, that some kind of change was urgently needed. This configuration of forces by no means guaranteed victory. But it did give us a ‘window of opportunity.”’ See Edwin Meese III, With Reagan: The Inside Story (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 119.
Part III: The Reagan Administration’s Political Rhetoric:\textsuperscript{27} 

At the heart of Reagan’s platform was a promise to renew the nation’s confidence to pursue its interests and lead on the international stage. He identified the nation’s poor economic outlook, strategic vulnerability, and weakness and vacillation under President Carter’s indecisive leadership as the primary sources of America’s faltering confidence. Reagan’s promise of renewal would come through decisive leadership and the rebuilding and reasserting of the nation’s strength – economically and militarily.

Nevertheless, Reagan did not believe rebuilding economic and military power on its own was enough; in addition a renewal of the American spirit and sense of purpose must also occur. An important component in that process of renewal was to rebuild American confidence in the nation’s ability to legitimately use the tools of statecraft – diplomatic, economic, and military - in pursuit of national interests.\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{28} Much of the literature on Reagan conceptualizes his aim as rebuilding American economic and military strength in order to meet the dangers of international communism. For examples of see Pach, “Sticking to His Guns” in The Reagan Presidency, ed. Brownlee and Graham, 86. However, this work argues that Reagan did not believe rebuilding economic and military power on its own was enough; instead, he also
While most of this section is devoted to Reagan’s political rhetoric regarding the nation’s security problems, a brief discussion is necessary on his interpretation of the nation’s economic problems and his proposals to resolve them. As the administration made decisions regarding when and how it could pursue its policy objectives on the international stage, other agenda items, such as the economy, would play an interrelated and influential role.

Edwin Meese III, Reagan’s counselor, recounted that on the first day of the Reagan administration everyone working in the cabinet knew what the President wanted to accomplish and understood the program he wanted to use. Meese explained that everyone knew the expectations because the ideas Reagan “spelled out in the campaign – and in all the years preceding it were, essentially, the program. There wasn’t the usual disparity between election rhetoric and governing agenda; what you heard was what you got.”


Meese, With Reagan, 126. Meese may have overstated one point. Apparently, not everyone on the Reagan team understood that the campaign play book would be the same for running the administration. Donald T. Regan, Reagan’s first Treasury Secretary, acknowledged in his memoir that it took him some time to realize that Reagan “had meant what he said about federal spending and fiscal and monetary policy in his campaign speeches and his other public utterances.” Regan, who served in Reagan’s cabinet for four years, recounted that he never saw the President alone and was never told by the President directly what he wanted to accomplish in economics. Regan recounted that he eventually learned: “I had to figure these things out like any other American, by studying his speeches and reading the newspapers.” See Donald T. Regan, For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1988), 142. Without exception scholars writing on the Reagan administration support Meese’s claim of continuity between the President’s campaign rhetoric and his actions upon taking office. One can see the continuity of Reagan’s ideas regarding the problems facing the nation and proposals for resolving those problems by reading his writings from the 1960s and 1970s in the following works: Skinner, Anderson, Anderson, eds. Reagan, In His Own Hand; Ronald Reagan and Richard Gibson Hubler, Where's
done. I came with a script.” That script was proclaimed by Reagan while on the campaign trail in 1980, to describe the economic and security problems facing the nation and how he proposed to resolve them if elected.

The Economy: The Problem and Reagan’s Proposed Solution

In his speech at the Republican National Convention in July 1979, Reagan metaphorically described the nation’s economic problems:

First, we must overcome something the present administration has cooked up: a new and altogether indigestible economic stew, one part inflation, one part high unemployment, one part recession, one part runaway taxes, one part deficit spending and seasoned by an energy crisis. It’s an economic stew that has turned the national stomach.

Many analysts agreed with his overall assessment, if not his specific diagnosis. The American economy was a mess in the 1970s, as was much of the world economy.

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30 Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 845n2. It seems that the administration did exceptionally well following Reagan’s plan of action. Four years later, during a strategic planning session for Reagan’s reelection campaign the President’s chief strategist worried out loud about what the administration had to offer in way of a second term agenda. He said: “The Reagan administration fired all its bullets very early and very successfully in the first two years….All their plans, all their priorities, all their programs. They’ve run out of ammunition.” See Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, 4.


32 For detail narratives regarding the economic situation and policies during the Carter administration see Bruce J. Schulman, “Slouching toward the Supply Side: Jimmy Carter and the New American Political Economy,” in *The Carter Presidency*, ed. Fink and Graham, 51-71; Erwin C. Hargrove, “Economic Policy Making,” in *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good* (Baton Rouge:
Prices more than doubled in the 1970s, while output had only increased by two-thirds the rate for the 1960s. Unemployment kept creeping higher and was over 7 percent by the end of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{33}

Throughout the presidential campaign, Reagan spoke about the nation’s economic problems and offered a solution that rested upon two policies: cutting taxes and reducing government spending.\textsuperscript{34} Specifically, Reagan called for a 30 percent reduction in income tax rates over a period of three years and a hiring freeze and review of all federal government programs. He told one audience in July 1980: “I believe it is clear our federal government is overgrown and overweight. Indeed, it is time for our government to go on a diet. Therefore, my first act as chief executive will be to impose an immediate and thorough freeze on federal hiring.”\textsuperscript{35}

Justifying this governmental diet, Reagan invoked the 10\textsuperscript{th} article of the Bill of Rights which, he noted, “is explicit in pointing out that the federal government should do

\begin{itemize}
  \item “Ronald Reagan, Time to Recapture our Destiny, 17 July 1980.”
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only those things specifically called for in the Constitution. All other shall remain with
the states or the people.”

Reagan vowed to conduct a thorough review of the federal
government and transfer unnecessary functions, and the sources of taxation to pay for
them, to the state and local governments. He also promised to stop waste, extravagance,
and outright fraud in Federal agencies and programs and to place prudent limits on the
regulation of business.

Reagan’s proposals for cutting taxes and the size of the federal government were
key components in what became known as Reaganomics or the Reagan Revolution.

Reaganomics rested on supply-side economic theory which argued that tax cuts and
deregulation would afford businesses more capital that could be reinvested and turned
into greater profits. Ultimately the increased profits would increase tax revenues in spite
of having lower tax rates. Supply-siders believed that taxation negatively affected the

36 “Ronald Reagan, Intent to Run for President, 13 November 1979.”


38 Reagan’s assistant secretary of the Treasury for economic policy Paul Craig Roberts wrote: “The term
‘Reaganomics’ originated, I believe, in the title that a copyeditor put on an article, ‘Reaganomics: A
Change?’ that I wrote for the New York Times (November 9, 1980) a few days after the election of Ronald
Reagan….I did not like the copy editor’s title because it seemed to imply that the President’s economic
program was an idiosyncrasy.” See Paul Craig Roberts, The Supply-Side Revolution: An Insider’s Account

39 For more detailed discussion on Reaganomics see the following: Roberts, The Supply-Side Revolution;
Hill, Moore, and Williams; Hugh Heclo and Rudolph G. Penner, “Fiscal and Political Strategy in the
Reagan Administration,” in The Reagan Presidency, ed. Greenstein; After Reagan was elected he selected
David Stockman to serve as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Stockman introduced
two changes into the Reagan economic plan. The first was to focus on extensive reductions in non-defense
spending rather than focus on the fraud, waste and abuse as Reagan had campaigned upon. The second was
to make balancing the budget and eliminating the deficit a principal aim. While Reagan had campaigned
on the promise he would balance the budget it was to be the result of following supply-side theory and
achieving economic growth. A balanced budget was not to serve as a principal aim or as a constraint in
economy by lowering people’s incentive to want to work, save, invest, and take risks. Craig Roberts, who served as Reagan’s Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy and played a significant role in managing the administration’s economic policy during its first two years, described the power in Reagan’s supply-side platform:

It gave him [Reagan] an employment policy that did not rely on inflation and government programs. It gave him an anti-inflation policy that did not rely on the pain and suffering of rising unemployment. And it gave him a budget policy that eliminated the deficit through economic growth instead of balancing the budget on the backs of taxpayers.

Reagan’s optimism and belief in the capabilities of both the American people and the American economy contrasted greatly with the rest of the Republican establishment, moving the other primary candidate in the 1980 presidential campaign, George Bush, to call it ‘voodoo economics.’

Reagan saw big government as the cause of problems rather than the solution and repeatedly emphasized to his audiences the “proper” relationship between a government and its people. He believed that America had prospered like no other nation in the world because the original American system of government had allowed the “energy and individual genius of man” to be unleashed to a greater extent than ever known before in

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40 Roberts, The Supply-Side Revolution, 89.
the history of mankind. Reagan held, however, that over time individuals began to abandon the belief that they could solve their own problems and had begun to rely on an “intellectual elite” in a “far-distant capital.” Thus, he said: “It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government.” He pledged to restore to the federal government the capacity to do its job without dominating people’s lives.

The leaders in the administration wanted the Reagan Revolution to take hold before Congress took its traditional recess in early August. Meese explained that they calculated approximately 180 days from the inauguration until the recess in which “to make a determined effort to accomplish our objectives.” Therefore, the first few months were seen as a critical time for those leaders charged with moving the administration’s major agenda items forward.

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National Security: The Problem and Reagan’s Proposed Solution

In addition to addressing the nation’s economic problems, Reagan also sought solutions for the nation’s security problems. Reagan emphasized three themes of national security: America’s role in the world, the will or spirit to fulfill that role, and the capability to fulfill that role. In his speech accepting his party’s nomination for president at the Republican National Convention, Reagan expressed all three themes:

Let our friends and those who may wish us ill take note: the United States has an obligation to its citizens and to the people of the world never to let those who would destroy freedom dictate the future course of human life on this planet. I would regard my election as proof that we have renewed our resolve to preserve world peace and freedom. This nation will once again be strong enough to do that.46

America’s Role in the World

Reagan spoke tirelessly of the responsibility of the United States to establish lasting world peace; “Divine Providence” had left America an “island of freedom” that could serve as a refuge for everyone yearning “to breathe freely.”47 America was to serve as a beacon of hope, a model for all of mankind and a city upon a hill.48


48 “Ronald Reagan, Intent to Run for President, 13 November 1979.” These were themes that Reagan had been speaking on for over twenty years. In 1952 he delivered a commencement address at William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri in which he discussed these themes. See Schweizer, Reagan’s War, 19.
As a model for the world, Reagan wanted Americans to be involved in defending and spreading freedom and thus he believed that the Cold War had to be won without any policy of accommodation with the Soviet Union. While campaigning on behalf of Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964, Reagan had called the American policy of accommodation with communism “a utopian solution of peace without victory.”  

Reagan found it morally repugnant to buy American security and freedom from the threat of the bomb while saying to the millions in slavery behind the Iron Curtain, “Give up your dreams of freedom because we have to save our own skin, we are willing to make a deal with your slave masters.” The United States would support countries opposed to communism, even those led by authoritarian regimes whose human rights records were poor. Reagan also desired to put freedom on the offensive in the Third World and roll

49 “Ronald Reagan, A Time for Choosing, 27 October 1964.”

50 Ibid.

51 Reagan argued that the United States could coax and influence such regimes to improve upon their human rights records through positive dialogue and support. Reagan spoke out against the double standard of backing left-wing dictators but opposing right-wing regimes often. For an example of one of Reagan’s earlier ruminations on the subject see “Ruritania, August 1975,” in Skinner, Anderson, and Anderson, eds. Reagan, In His Own Hand, 130. Reagan selected Jeane J. Kirkpatrick to serve in his Cabinet as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations. An essay she had written, “Dictatorships & Double Standards,” was published in Commentary magazine in November 1979, shortly after the start of the Iranian Revolution. In the piece she argued that the United States was undermining its strategic position in the world by forcing friendly autocratic governments, such as the Shah’s in Iran and Somoza’s in Nicaragua, to implement democratic reforms that served only to make the conditions ripe for their downfall. Kirkpatrick believed that the United States, as well as the citizens in those nations, would be better served by following a more moderate course of reform. This position was congenial to Reagan. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorship & Double Standards,” Commentary, http://www.commentarymagazine.com/cm/main/viewArticle.aip?id=6189 [accessed March 28, 2007].
back the gains he contended that the communists had made during the 1970s in places like Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, North and South Yemen, and Cambodia.  

**America’s Will to Fulfill Its Role**

According to Reagan, the nation’s weakened economic and defensive capabilities, as well as a series of setbacks on the international stage in the 1970s, had shaken its confidence to serve as a leader on the international stage. Many disagreed, stating that the national consensus regarding America’s role in the world, which had formed at the beginning of the Cold War, had been destroyed by the war in Vietnam. These critics questioned if the American people still were willing to make sacrifices for the cause of freedom.  

Neither Reagan nor the Republican platform was very specific regarding how this would be carried out. The platform stated: “To pursue positive non-military means to roll back the growth of communism.” Nevertheless, since the early 1950s Reagan had been involved in using non-military means, such as radio addresses and movies, to challenge those who supported communism. For a more detailed description of Reagan’s activities see Peter Schweizer, “You Too Can Be Free Again,” in *Reagan’s War*, 17-28.

The “Vietnam syndrome” was the terminology to describe hesitancy on the part of Americans to exert their military power to influence events abroad. Reagan’s conceptualization of the “Vietnam syndrome,” however, included hesitancy on the part of Americans to pursue national interests using other measures as well, such as proxy forces and covert operations. Yet for him, the idea of such a syndrome should be set aside. In his speeches, Reagan contended that Americans in 1980 were no less willing than their forefathers to use their power or make sacrifices to keep what he called their “rendezvous with destiny,” so long as their leaders explained what actions were required and why.

Regarding the home front, he described that destiny as one in which Americans upheld “the principles of self-reliance, self-discipline, morality, and…responsible liberty.”

Regarding the larger world, Reagan described that destiny as one in which Americans carried out a foreign policy that was “firm and principled” and sought change by “leadership and example.”

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54 Vietnam is a historical phenomenon that hangs over this entire study. Its impact on American foreign policy will be discussed in further detail in chapter two.

55 “Ronald Reagan, *Intent to Run for President*, 13 November 1979.” In his speeches Reagan borrowed and attributed that phrase to Franklin D. Roosevelt who had used it in his speech to the Democratic nominating convention in July 1932. Also see Skinner, Anderson, and Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 24. The editors made the following observation: “Reagan also argues that the popular idea that a “Vietnam Syndrome” exists in the United States should be abandoned. Even though the fall of Saigon punctuated a painful period of American military failure, Reagan contends that America is not unwilling or unable to fight the cold war. America’s destiny is to be a shining example and defender of freedom; it is a destiny that transcends the temporary setbacks of Vietnam, he says. The American people will accept the responsibilities of their country’s destiny if the requirements of freedom and the nature of internal and international challenges are explained to them, but, Reagan charges, American leaders failed to do this during the Vietnam War.”

In his speech to the Republican nominating convention, rather than attribute the nation’s hesitancy for action on the international stage to a lack of consensus or will, Reagan blamed poor leadership at the national level. The “weakness” and “vacillation” from indecisive leadership resulted in the series of recent setbacks the nation had endured.\(^57\) For Reagan, the American spirit was constant; what was changeable was leadership.\(^58\)

Thus, in his speech Reagan asked his listeners to consider whether or not the nation was stronger and more respected in July 1980 as it had been three-and-a-half years ago before Carter became President. Prior to posing that question, Reagan identified a series of troubling events with significant impact during this time: the recent revelation of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, the seizure of the American hostages in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.\(^59\)

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\(^58\) Reagan’s Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, did not conceptualize that spirit as constant; however, he reached the same conclusions as Reagan regarding the nation’s readiness to use its power. In public addresses he often said that in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate the United States went through a period of confusion which he described as a period in which the nation questioned its values and purposes: “Did our democratic institutions still work? Were they worth defending? Could we offer anything to the world? Was the dream over?” Haig told his listeners that the period of American introspection had ended. Americans had reached a new consensus. Democratic institutions do work, are worth defending, and the nation’s ideals do offer more to those in the Third World.” Haig never specified a specific date or event that ended the period of introspection. The quote is taken from Haig’s commencement address before the graduating class at Syracuse University on 9 May 1981. See Alexander Haig, “NATO and the Restoration of American Leadership,” \textit{The Department of State Bulletin} 81, no. 2051 (June 1981): 11.

\(^59\) This list is not all inclusive. Reagan also argued that America’s defense strength was at its lowest ebb in a generation when compared to the Soviets and that the nation’s European allies had turned to the United States and not found adequate leadership. “Ronald Reagan, \textit{Time to Recapture our Destiny}, 17 July 1980.” Some scholars note that “most efforts to uncover a systematic relationship between world events and public opinion on national security issues have failed.” See Bruce Russett and Donald R. Deluca, “Don’t Tread on Me”: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the Eighties,” in \textit{Political Science Quarterly} 96, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 395. In their essay they explain that the Iranian hostage affair and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan immediately preceded peaks in the number of Americans who selected foreign affairs as the most important problem facing the country and the number of Americans favoring increased defense.
The first event occurred at the end of August 1979, when it was publicly revealed that a brigade of between 2,000 and 3,000 Soviet troops was stationed in Cuba. Although the unit posed no military threat to the United States, Reagan and other opponents of the Carter administration profited from its existence to support several items on their political agenda. For instance, senators who were eager to stall the ratification process of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) II arms treaty agreement had one more excuse to do so. The first SALT had been signed by President Nixon and ratified by the United States Congress in 1972. SALT II was an attempt by the Carter administration to further limit the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers.

Much of the success of that treaty would lay in the trustworthiness of the Soviets and the ability of the United States to verify Soviet compliance to the terms. The fact that a Soviet combat brigade had operated for so many years only ninety miles away without accurate determination of its purpose left many senators questioning whether the American intelligence community could truly verify Soviet compliance to the treaty. Additionally, the disclosure seemed to provide evidence that the Soviet Union was behaving in provocative ways and challenging the U.S. The Soviets in Cuba reportedly not only trained the Cuban soldiers, but also enabled Cuban soldiers to leave and serve as spending. However, other events like the oil embargo in 1973, the fall of the Shah in January 1979, and the announcement of the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba in the summer of 1979 did not trigger a strong response.

Democratic Senator Frank Church, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee went public with news of the brigade while campaigning in his home state of Idaho on 30 August 1979. Secretary of State, Cyrus R. Vance, held a news conference on the matter on 5 September 1979 and President Jimmy Carter gave a five minute address to the nation on 7 September 1979. See The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, Soviet Combat Troops in Cuba Remarks to Reporters, 7 September 1979,” http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32832&st=&st1 [accessed March 2, 2008]. The Kremlin claimed that the forces had been in Cuba for 17 years and their purpose was to train the Cubans.
proxies in the communist revolutions occurring in Africa and Central America.\textsuperscript{61} One Democratic senator from Florida used the event to shine a spotlight on American resolve, viewing the situation as a “test of U.S. firmness or lack of it” in dealing with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{62} If the nation lacked resolve on this issue then it might lack the resolve needed to ensure compliance from the Soviets with SALT II. In contrast during his campaign, Reagan used the Soviet brigade matter as evidence of the nation’s eroded capabilities for action.

\textbf{America’s Capability to Fulfill Its Role}

In an early brief to reporters on the situation, President Carter had stated, “We consider the presence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba to be a very serious matter and that this \textit{status quo is not acceptable} [emphasis added].”\textsuperscript{63} Carter explained:

This Soviet brigade in Cuba is a serious matter. It contributes to tension in the Caribbean and the Central American region. The delivery of modern arms to Cuba and the presence of Soviet naval forces in Cuban waters have strengthened the Soviet-Cuban military relationship. They've added to the fears of some countries that they may come under Soviet or Cuban

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\item \textsuperscript{63} “Jimmy Carter, Soviet Combat Troops in Cuba Remarks to Reporters, 7 September 1979.”
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pressure. During the last few years, the Soviets have been increasing the
delivery of military supplies to Cuba. The result is that Cuba now has one
of the largest, best equipped armed forces in this region. These military
forces are used to intrude into other countries in Africa and the Middle
East.  

However, since no treaty or law had been broken, there was no pressure exerted
from the larger international community upon the Soviet Union when it refused to budge.
Thus, Carter and his administration were forced to defuse the situation by moderating the
nation’s concern in a subsequent address to the nation. Carter explained that the nation
did not “face any immediate, concrete threat that could escalate into war or a major
confrontation.” Instead, the nation faced a “challenge” to find a way to “give a measured
and effective response to Soviet competition and to Cuban military activities around the
world.”

Over the next few months that challenge became even more pronounced and
spread beyond concerns regarding the Soviets and their Cuban proxies. In November, the
American embassy in Iran was overrun by a group of militants in support of Iran’s
revolution and 52 American diplomats were taken hostage. At the end of December, the
Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in an effort to preserve the communist regime in that

64 The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, Peace and National Security Address to the Nation on
Soviet Combat Troops in Cuba and the Strategic Limitation Treaty, 1 October 1979,”

65 Ibid. Also see “Carter Defuses a Crisis: Getting rid of the issue, if not the Soviet brigade, but at some
cost,” Time, October 15, 1979; Richard Burt, “Carter, Given Conflicting Advice, Chose a Middle Course
reported that those advising the President urged two different courses. One side saw the “problem as
serious but isolated” while the other saw it as “part of a global contest.”
nation. The move also put the Soviets one step closer to oil supplies in the Middle East. Concerns escalated even further the following April when the rescue attempt of the hostages in Tehran ended in a fiery disaster. Could the United States still protect its own security interests and those of its allies, or was it a “superpower” in name only?

Reagan turned these events into evidence to support his calls for rebuilding the nation’s military might. Throughout his campaign Reagan claimed that the Soviet Union took advantage of the period of détente in the 1970s to build up its military capabilities and create an arsenal larger than anything required for solely a strong defense. In addition to increasing its conventional forces on the Chinese border, modernizing the forces of the Warsaw Pact, and increasing its theater and strategic nuclear capabilities, the Soviet Union had begun to transform itself from a continental power to a maritime power by improving its navy. The Soviets’ increasing global reach was evident, Reagan contended, in its aid to proxy forces which promoted Marxist-Leninist governments in areas of strategic importance. Finally, Reagan warned that the Soviet preponderance of nuclear power was such that, if they were not properly deterred, they might take

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66 Between 1975 and 1980, the Soviet Union provided military assistance and supported proxy forces and advisers to aid insurgent activities in Ethiopia, South Yemen, North Yemen, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. The Soviet proxy forces in Central America were typically Cubans. In Africa there were Cubans in Angola and Cubans and East Germans in Ethiopia. There were also Cubans and East Germans in South Yemen. In Asia, Vietnamese forces were used to conquer Kampuchea. Finally, the Libyans, while not an official Soviet pawn, had occupied Chad and bought an estimated $1 billion in arms a year from the Soviet Union. William Casey, Reagan’s choice for Director of Central Intelligence, claimed that it was not a coincidence that the eleven insurgencies being supported by the Soviets and their proxy forces were situated close to natural resources and choke points that were of a vital strategic nature to the United States and its allies. See Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990), 320. The Libyan estimate came from Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 94. These views are captured in the Republican Platform of 1980 that was adopted by the Republican National Convention on 15 July 1980. See *The American Presidency Project*, “Republican Platform: A Preamble.” http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=R1980 [accessed February 3, 2007].
advantage of their position and launch an attack on the United States and its European allies.67

These concerns were certainly not new for Reagan. Between his time as governor of California and his inauguration as President, Reagan wrote hundreds of radio addresses in which he expressed those same concerns regarding the nation’s defenses and foreign policies.68 Reagan also served as a member of the board of directors for the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), a group formed shortly after Carter’s election with the expressed purpose of advocating stronger defense and foreign policies for the nation. In its policy statement, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” the group warned that the nation, world peace, and the cause of human freedom were severely threatened by the Soviet Union and, unless the nation took “decisive steps…to change the course of its policy,” its economic and military capacity would soon “become inadequate to assure peace and security.”69 The particular policies that the group took exception to were détente and the SALT treaty.


The written notes from those broadcasts have been preserved and demonstrate that the concerns Reagan expressed while on campaign in 1980 were concerns he had possessed for a number of years. The text of those broadcasts can be seen in Skinner, Anderson, and Anderson, eds., Reagan, In His Own Hand.

In the mind of at least one observer, the CPD succeeded in turning the debate over the SALT II treaty into a larger national debate over the nation’s security in general.\textsuperscript{70} In his memoir, Carter’s Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance did not specify the impetus for the national debate; however, he provided an accurate description of it:

The hearings [on SALT II] launched a great national debate that focused not only on the terms of the treaty, but on a much broader range of issues: the nature of the U.S.-Soviet relationship; the role of nuclear arms control in U.S. foreign policy; trends in the military balance; the adequacy of our defense capabilities, programs, and spending; the will of the West to protect its interests; and finally, the nature and scope of U.S. national interests.\textsuperscript{71}

Reagan addressed these same issues in his 1980 campaign.

Convincing the American public that there was a need to spend more on defense was not a difficult matter in 1980 amidst the backdrop of the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Public opinion polling indicated a significant spike in January in the number of Americans who favored spending more on defense. While an NBC poll from September 1979 showed that 38 percent of respondents believed the nation was spending too little for defense, four months later, in January 1980, that poll

\textsuperscript{70} See Jerry W. Sanders, Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 254-263.

showed a sharp increase to 69 percent. Additionally, polling data showed that Americans were beginning to express a greater willingness to consider the use of military force to defend other countries, particularly if the threat was coming from the Soviet Union. Some argued that the Iranian hostage affair had caused the nation to move beyond the Vietnam syndrome.

Writing in early December 1979, prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, one journalist reported that the Iranian crisis had served to mark the close of the post-Vietnam era. A senior official who had served in several administrations was quoted: “In terms of domestic politics, this [the seizure of American hostages] has put the end to the Vietnam syndrome.” Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill echoed a statement made by John C. White, the Democratic national chairman: “We may have reached a turning point in our attitude toward ourselves and that is a feeling that we have a right to protect legitimate American interests anywhere in the world.” Nevertheless, while leaders were expressing a greater willingness to consider intervening, they were also expressing caveats drawn from lessons with Vietnam. One Senator explained that intervention should only be undertaken very selectively: “Other countries have to show the will and

72 For full figures and more information see Russett and Deluca, “Don’t Tread on Me”: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the Eighties,” 381-399. Russett and Deluca note that the Soviet brigade in Cuba did not lead to greater calls for defense spending. The seizure of the hostages in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan seemingly did; however, the authors note that there was no poll taken in between the two events so it is difficult to disaggregate the relative effect of each event. Also see “In a Fiercely Hawkish Mood: TIME poll shows voters rallying strongly round Carter,” Time, February 11, 1980, 23.

73 Ibid.
the capability to help themselves. We should help those who really want us and where there is pro-American support.”74

Although some observers argued that Americans seemed willing to rattle the nation’s saber again, candidate Reagan warned that the nation would require more than better military capabilities in order to check the Soviet Union’s imperialist ambitions. The nation’s success in achieving those ends also depended on fulfilling its role as an international leader and, if elected, Reagan vowed to prepare the nation to fulfill that leadership role by following a strategy he called “peace through strength.”75

Reagan’s Proposed Solution – Peace Through Strength

Under “peace through strength,” peace was not simply the absence of war.76 Instead, peace was conceived as a world hospitable to American society and its liberal democratic ideals where the United States and its allies were free from the threat of nuclear war and had access to vital resources, such as oil, and vital transportation and communications routes. Reagan believed that such a peace was dependent upon American strength.77 This strength would come from rebuilding the nation’s economic


75 The general principles and goals of that strategy were enunciated as he campaigned and captured in the Republican platform adopted by the Republican National Convention in July 1980. See The American Presidency Project, “Republican Platform: A Preamble.”


77 The Soviet actions undermined the old conception of national security that centered on détente and the United States undertook a new assessment of the nation’s vital interests and available capabilities. The reassessment process surfaced in January 1980 in President Carter’s State of the Union pronouncement that the Persian Gulf region was a vital interest to the United States and its allies and as such would be
and military might, pursuing reductions in nuclear arms with the Soviet Union, and proactively working to roll back communism and to spread freedom and democracy.78 A
defended. The Carter Doctrine expanded the American sphere of responsibilities. Reagan and other key leaders in his administration accepted the underlying concept of the Carter Doctrine – a hospitable world was one that freely allowed the United States and its allies access to vital natural resources, such as oil, and access to vital transportation and communications routes. More evidence that the reassessment process was underway could be seen in the Carter administration’s decision to expand the American sphere of responsibility by playing a more constructive role in defeating the leftists in the Third World. Secretary of State Edmund Muskie announced on the last day of the Carter administration that they had decided to restore nonlethal aid and send $5 million dollars of lethal material to the Salvadoran armed forces fighting a leftist insurgency. Thus, in rather dramatic fashion, the announcement signaled not only the end of the Carter administration’s dealing in foreign policy, but also the end of a period in which instability and violence in the Third World were attributed to factors other than Soviet-American competition. See Moreno, U.S. Policy in Central America, 20-21. When viewed outside the context of the Cold War, the United States had been more inclined to give Third World nations the latitude to find their own way and experiment with systems of government that were less than democratic, or in the case of the Sandinistas, were leftist. Such a nuanced approach became increasingly difficult to follow in the face of evidence that arms were being sent from Cuba via Nicaragua to the guerillas fighting in El Salvador. Fearful of another Nicaragua, Carter returned the nation to the traditional stance of blaming the instability and violence in the Third World on the Soviets and their proxies. Like his call to defend American vital interests in the Persian Gulf, the Carter decision to expand the American sphere of responsibility by playing a more constructive role in defeating the left in the Third World was heartily accepted by the Reagan administration.

78 Unfortunately, the brevity of this paper does not allow the author to fully describe the administration’s efforts to provide leadership on the international stage as it related to arms control and rolling back communism in the Third World. In the area of nuclear arms control, the Reagan administration provided exceptionally decisive leadership. While on the campaign trail in 1980, Reagan made it clear that he supported nuclear arms reductions but also made it clear that he would only negotiate with the Soviets from a position of strength. However, given the abhorrence that most Americans had toward the concept of spending more money on strategic weapons, regaining that position of strength required a great deal of effort on the part of the administration. Nevertheless, Reagan persevered and he got congressional approval for increased defense spending throughout his first term in office. His efforts in the area of arms control reached a climax in 1987 when he signed the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the Soviet Union that eliminated two classes of nuclear weapons. For more discussion on the role that arms control played in the administration’s defense policy see Spalding, “The Origins and Meaning of Reagan’s Cold War,” in The Reagan Presidency, ed. Kengor and Schweizer, 57-61; John Lewis Gaddis, “The Reagan Administration and Soviet-American Relations,” in Reagan and the World, ed. Kyvig; Samuel F. Wells, Jr. “Reagan, Euromissiles, and Europe,” in The Reagan Presidency, ed. Brownlee and Graham, 133-152; Raymond A. Moore, “The Reagan Presidency and Foreign Policy,” in The Reagan Presidency, ed. Hill, Moore, and Williams, 179-198; Michael Paul, “The Reagan Administration’s Strategic Arms Control Policy: The Meaning of ‘Deep Cuts’, “ in The Reagan Administration, ed. Haftendorn and Schissler, 231-249. Nor does the brevity of this work allow the author to fully describe all the administration’s actions to roll back communism. For the most detailed discussion about that topic see Peter Schweizer, Victory: The Reagan Administration’s Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994) and Schweizer, Reagan’s War; Also see Thomas Bodenheimer and Robert Gould, Rollback! Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989); James M. Scott, Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Mark P. Lagon, The Reagan Doctrine: Sources of American Conduct in the Cold War’s Last Chapter (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994). In its first term, the administration’s most decisive
description of the strategy is found in the Republican platform presented at the Republican convention in July 1980.

Specifically, the platform described eight general principles and goals of the peace through strength strategy: (1) to inspire, focus, and unite the national will and determination to achieve peace and freedom; (2) to achieve overall military and technological superiority over the Soviet Union; (3) to create a strategic and civil defense which would protect the American people against nuclear war at least as well as the Soviet population is protected; (4) to accept no arms control agreement which in any way jeopardizes the security of the United States or its allies, or which locks the United States into a position of military inferiority; (5) to reestablish effective security and intelligence capabilities; (6) to pursue positive non-military means to roll back the growth of communism; (7) to help our allies and other non-Communist countries defend themselves against Communist aggression; and (8) to maintain a strong economy and protect our overseas sources of energy and other vital raw materials.

Clearly, these were extremely ambitious policy objectives and accomplishing them would require a President to use all the tools of statecraft. Yet remarkably Reagan entered office in 1981 with no clear policy of his own or within his administration on when and how to use military force, either direct or indirect, to strengthen diplomatic mediation. 79 This fact is even more notable when one considers that throughout his action to roll back communism came with its decision to invade Grenada in order to eliminate the Cuban and Soviet presence and activities on the island. That action will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, but the administration’s other activities around the world will not be covered in this dissertation.

79 Throughout this dissertation, unless specified differently, when the term military force is used it implies both a direct and indirect use. These terms were discussed in greater detail in the introduction.
campaign Reagan had attributed the nation’s hesitancy for action to poor leadership at the national level. Would Reagan and his administration be prepared to provide better leadership without a clear policy on when and how to use military force?

Chapter One Conclusion

At the heart of Reagan’s platform as he campaigned for President in 1980 was a promise to renew the nation’s confidence to pursue its interests and lead on the international stage. Those interests involved producing a world hospitable to the nation’s liberal democratic ideals, free from the threat of nuclear war, secure in vital resources, and open in transportation and communications routes. Reagan contended that such a world was dependent upon American military and economic strength as well as upon American leadership. He maintained that the American people if properly led would willingly agree to use the nation’s power for such a firm and principled foreign policy. However, this leadership must account for the nation’s experience in Vietnam, which some argued had undermined America’s confidence in its own ability to legitimately use military force.

When entering office in January 1981, the Reagan administration had no policy for when and how to use military force. Instead, as the case studies will show, the administration made its decisions by assimilating the lessons of Vietnam, reading the public pulse, placating Congress, and responding to the nation’s strategic interests. Before examining the case studies, a more detailed explanation is necessary of the domestic political realities that challenged the administration on the use of military force.
Chapter Two: Domestic Political Realities

When Reagan entered office the majority of Americans agreed that the nation needed to spend more on defense, but there was little consensus on when and how to use a robust military. Deciding under what circumstances, and through what means, an administration should consider using military force to protect national interests and carry out its policies has proven to be one of the most challenging tasks. One reason is because the American political system allows a multitude of voices to speak out regarding perceived threats and the role of American power in the world. Thus, American history is replete with bitter debates over when and how to use military force in pursuit of national interests.

However, the decision of the nation of how to build and employ its military forces is not simply a product of beliefs regarding the threat and American power in the world; it is also a product of the nation’s political system and laws. Scholars capture these concepts under the purview of civil-military relations. In a theoretical construct, civil-military relations are the bridge that connects the military security needs of a nation with its social norms governing the use of violence. While social norms are typically thought of as shared values and beliefs, they also entail the nation’s laws and political system.

Throughout this work, the nation’s values, beliefs, laws, and unique aspects of its political system are categorized under the heading of “political realities.” This chapter begins with an examination of American political realities governing the use of force following the Second World War, followed by an explanation of why and how those political realities changed in the late 1960s and 1970s. The concluding section presents the legislation, born from the nation’s experience with Watergate and the Vietnam War, which the Reagan administration would face as it sought to assert its leadership in American foreign policy.

**Part I: “The Age of Consensus” - Political Realities in Post World War II America**

Most scholars classify the period from the 1940s until the mid-1960s, as one of foreign policy consensus in the United States. That consensus was largely based upon common perceptions of the threat and common opinions regarding the purposes for American power in the world. During that period, Americans subscribed to six

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2 See Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, for his complete theory on civil-military relations.
fundamental propositions regarding the international system as identified by Richard Melanson in his work *Reconstructing Consensus*:

1. Alone among the nations of the Free World the United States has both the material power and the moral responsibility to create a just and stable international order.
2. In light of the interdependent nature of the world, U.S. security interests must be necessarily global.
3. Soviet and Soviet-inspired aggression and subversion constitutes the primary threat to world peace.
4. The policy of containment represents the best way to stop further Soviet and Soviet-sponsored expansion.
5. The United States must possess nuclear weapons in order to help deter a Soviet attack on it and its allies.
6. A stable, open world economy required American leadership.

In his work, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, John Erhman classified those themes as being part of the “vital center ideology” that emerged in the late 1940s following World War II, and served as the standard for mainstream liberal thinking and official foreign policy rhetoric until the mid-1960s when they were disrupted by revisionist thinking and the Vietnam War.

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3 Melanson, *Reconstructing Consensus*, 4-7. John Erhman classified such themes as being part of “vital center ideology” that emerged in the spring and summer of 1946. Erhman explained that those themes were synthesized in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.’s work *The Vital Center* published in 1962 and served as the standard for mainstream liberal thinking and official foreign policy rhetoric until the mid-1960s when liberals lost faith in the ideals that coincided with the policies stemming from these themes.

During the twenty years of consensus fueled by vital center ideology, American foreign policy was largely constructed and directed by a para-institutional group known as the foreign policy Establishment. As described by one scholar, the Establishment was “a relatively homogeneous group of bankers, lawyers, and Foreign Service officers, largely from the northeastern part of the United States, largely pragmatic and centrist in beliefs.” The group held common beliefs on both the ends and means of U.S. foreign policy; that international Communism was a mortal threat to western values and the nation’s responsibility was to provide the international leadership and resources to fight against that threat.

To that end, the Establishment believed that the President should lead American foreign policy without interference from Congress and found support for that position from both congressional leaders and the attentive public. The attentive public, classified as such because they paid close attention to foreign policy matters, was inclined to follow the leadership of the President and was typically described as well-educated, internationalist-minded, and receptive to the nation’s involvement overseas. During “the age of consensus” congressional-executive cooperation over the conduct of foreign policy was wide-ranging with congressional leaders giving deference to the president and his

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, \textit{Our Own Worst Enemy}, 18.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\text{ Melanson, Reconstructing Consensus, 13.}\]
policies which often called for American involvement overseas and the use of military force.\(^8\)

The support that Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy received from the attentive public and congressional leaders stemmed from the fact that these two groups believed that the Soviet/Communist threat represented a significant threat and that the nation’s best course of action was to project unified support for policies supportive of the nation’s overall strategy which called for containing the spread of Communism.\(^9\) The growth of that perception regarding the threat occurred in the late 1940s and was aided by both international and domestic events.

Abroad, the Soviet test of a nuclear weapon, the “loss” of China, and the war in Korea, led many to conclude that indeed the Soviets were a significant threat that needed to be confronted. While at home, the principal conclusions of National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68), which was a top secret study, conducted for Truman in an effort to systematize the strategy of containment, were widely publicized. John Lewis Gaddis explained: “The whole point of the document had been to shake the bureaucracy, Congress, and the general public into supporting more vigorous action [against the Soviets.]”\(^10\) Specifically, the document called for much greater defense spending.

American concern over the spread of Communism was heightened further by Senator

\(^8\) Truman won overwhelming support to dispatch American forces to Korea in 1950, Eisenhower received authorization to use American forces to counter the Communist threat against Formosa in 1955 and to send military forces into Lebanon in 1958, and Kennedy received support to use force to resist communism in the Western Hemisphere when Congress passed the Cuba resolution in 1962. See I. M. Destler, “Congress,” in The Making of America’s Soviet Policy, ed. Nye, 42-43.

\(^9\) For more discussion about the nation’s strategy of containment see Gaddis, Strategies of Containment.

\(^10\) Ibid., 107.
Joseph R. McCarthy’s claims that there were large numbers of Communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers inside the federal government.\textsuperscript{11}

Gallup poll results show how much American public opinion about the Soviet Union changed in the late 1940s. At the end of World War II, close to 50 percent of the American public, told the Gallup poll that the Soviets could be trusted to cooperate when the war was over. In 1947, the percentage holding that view was lower, but still 43 percent held that the Soviets would work with the United States. However, by June 1949, only 20 percent still felt that way.\textsuperscript{12}

To demonstrate commitment of the public and congressional support to presidential policies meant to contain Communism, congressional leaders passed joint resolutions authorizing the president to take necessary measures, even to use military force, in order to prevent the further the spread of Communism. Truman’s decision to dispatch American forces to Korea in 1950 was covered under such a resolution. In 1955, Eisenhower received authorization to use American forces to counter the Communist threat against Formosa when congressional leaders passed the Formosa Resolution. And, in 1962, Kennedy received support to use force to resist communism in the Western Hemisphere when Congress passed the Cuba resolution.\textsuperscript{13}

The one group in American society which remained unsupportive of American involvement overseas was the mass public. Unlike the attentive public, Americans in the


mass public were poorly educated and uninterested in foreign policy. As a group they were against U.S. involvement in the affairs of other countries unless vital national interests were at stake, and even then they wanted swift, decisive action, not long-term commitments.\textsuperscript{14} However, the mass public was largely inert and only became active in the foreign policy process during presidential elections by passing judgment on the performance of leaders.\textsuperscript{15}

This pattern remained stable until the mid-1960s when the beliefs shared by the Establishment, congressional leaders, and the attentive public were challenged by revisionist thinking and the Vietnam War experience.\textsuperscript{16} An anti-Establishment movement arose in the mass public and congressional leaders cast aside their deference to the President and sought greater oversight and participation in foreign policy.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Part II: A New Pattern - Social Norms in the Mid-1960s and 1970s}

Revisionist thinking challenged the Establishment’s most fundamental propositions on three accounts. First, the Communist threat was less than that typically argued by the vital center. Second, many people in the third world genuinely wanted to follow communism and should not be prevented from doing so. Third, the United States was more to blame for the Cold War than the Soviet Union. Despite knowing the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 11-13.

\textsuperscript{16} Melanson, Reconstructing Consensus, 14-15.

weakness of the Soviet Union following World War II, American policymakers had insisted on forcing the Soviets to conform to American expectations and indoctrinated the American people to view the Soviets as an enemy.\textsuperscript{18}

Though William Appleman Williams captured these themes in his 1959 work \textit{The Tragedy of American Diplomacy}, people did not subscribe to his view until the mid-1960s when the Vietnam War escalated. Many Americans questioned the contention that the Soviets and communism were at the base of all world problems and began to think that perhaps America itself was culpable.\textsuperscript{19} William Schneider described the ideological polarization that occurred within American leadership in the 1960s: “Counter-elites emerged on both the right and the left to challenge the supremacy of the old foreign policy establishment” which in turn split the attentive public and shattered the consensus that had been shared since the 1940s.\textsuperscript{20}

From the embroilment three groups emerged: neo-isolationists, cold war internationalists, and post-cold war internationalists.\textsuperscript{21} Neo-isolationists perceived the problems facing the United States as stemming from internal issues, such as inflation, unemployment, and environmental damage, and were against any American international involvement. While neo-isolationists wanted the nation to focus inward, both the cold

\textsuperscript{18} Erhman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, 18-20.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 13; Destler, Gelb, and Lake, \textit{Our Own Worst Enemy}, 20.

war internationalists and post-cold war internationalists emphasized addressing the problems facing the world at large.

Although both of these groups perceived the Soviet Union as the major threat to the nation and world peace, they differed on the degree of culpability. The cold war internationalists tended to blame the Russians for all ills in the world, whereas the post-cold war internationalists believed that other issues needed to be considered, such as poverty, pollution, and scarcity of natural resources that impeded better relations between developed and developing nations. As such, cold war internationalists wanted to rebuild American military power to challenge the Soviets, while post-cold war internationalists wanted to work with the Soviets to address problems common to all of humanity.22

22 See Moreno, U.S. Policy in Central America, 4-5; Holsti and Rosenau, “The Three-Headed Eagle: Three Perspectives on Foreign Affairs,” in American Leadership in World Affairs, 108-139; Schneider, “Public Opinion,” in The Making of America’s Soviet Policy, ed. Nye, 16-18. Rhetoric from the 1980 campaign would label Reagan as a cold war internationalist. During his run for president, Reagan used a briefing book to prepare for questions and answer sessions. In the briefing book his views on the Soviet threat are revealed. To the question “Is it your view…that the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that’s going on?” Reagan answered: “If you are familiar with the currently popular rating scale, is that in a rating of threat and troublemaking the Soviet Union is a true 10, while all others are 5 or less. My view is that the primary challenge, by far, to our security and interests, and to the security of others, comes from the Soviet Union. That does not imply exclusivity, but dominance – it is the threat that most dominates our security concerns. This does not mean that I am unaware of all the various sources of international unrest, many of which are indigenous and of ethnic, economic, or social causes; but it is a fact, which we cannot ignore, that the Soviet Union feeds on, exacerbates, and attempts to exploit such sources of unrest or instability – particularly in areas of strategic and economic importance. If this view seems “simplistic” to you, I might point out that nearly 200 of the nation’s leading intellectuals and statesmen – prominent professors and university presidents; men of vast government experience; labor, business, and financial leaders – a wholly bipartisan or multipartisan group – have subscribed to the statement: ‘The principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance based upon an unparalleled military buildup.’” See Weinberger Papers, Library of Congress, Container I:572, folder “Transition Papers, Campaign Defense Policy Briefing Book, 1980, by William Van Cleave.” The briefing book consisted of a series of defense related questions and answers that President Reagan used while on the campaign trail. William Van Cleave was the administration’s Transition Team Leader and Director, Defense and Strategic Studies at the University of Southern California. Additionally, he was a founding member of the Committee on the Present Danger. The 200 leading intellectuals and statesmen that Reagan referred to were members of the Committee on the Present Danger, a group that scholars classify as cold war internationalist. See Holsti and Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs, 108-109.
In addition to the ideological splits within the Establishment and attentive public, there was a change in the mass public as well as it became more active in foreign policy during the later stages of the Vietnam War. The mass public was not driven so much by ideology, as within the Establishment and attentive public, but instead by a rejection of those in power. As the mass public lost confidence in the president and the nation’s foreign policy leaders, they came to be seen as corrupt, incompetent, and ineffective.\textsuperscript{23} This mood of hostility towards American leadership was sustained by the mass media whose themes were anti-Establishment as well.\textsuperscript{24}

Because it was no longer inert, the mass public had to be considered by American leaders when charting the nation’s foreign policy. The importance of public opinion lies not in compelling leaders to avoid certain course of actions, but in the public support that is necessary for the pursuit of a course of action. Schneider explains:

> The question is sometimes asked whether, and how, public opinion constrains foreign policy. Does public opinion compel foreign-policy-makers to take certain actions or not take others? Putting the question this way reverses the actual direction of causality. Public opinion is reactive, not prescriptive; the operative relationship is one of support, not constraint. Policymakers do not look to the public for specific policy


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 14.
direction. But they must mobilize public support for the policies they want to pursue, or at least preempt opposition to them.25

Yet, the mass public is well known for its unpredictable swings of support.26 One reason for this contradictory behavior is the mass public’s support of both strength and peace. Thus, mass public support is sometimes gathered into an alliance with the right when the right plays to the need for a strong defense. At other times, it is just as easily allied with the left when the left plays to the public’s strong desire for peace. As an example that will appear in the case studies, the public supported Reagan’s call for a large military buildup, but not his call for more involvement in El Salvador.27

As the mass public’s importance increased, there was a corresponding change in the congressional role with the President. Vietnam and Watergate contributed significantly to congressional leaders abandoning their deference to the President as those leaders now sought a greater oversight role and more participation in the making of foreign policy.28 In 1966, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) chaired nationally televised hearings on Vietnam in which congressional leaders would question President Lyndon B. Johnson’s policies to try to reduce the President’s range of action without congressional approval.29 The quagmire of Vietnam was not the only event that drove congressional leaders to forego their deference

25 Ibid., 30.

26 Melanson, Reconstructing Consensus, 17.

27 Ibid., 20.

28 Arnson, Crossroads, 3, 9.

to the president. As Cynthia Arnson explained, “Watergate, with its revelations of 
residential corruption and even criminality, served to further weaken the executive and 
undermine its prestige, paving the way for a congressional foreign policy challenge.”

To that end, Congress passed legislation in the 1970s that afforded congressional 
leaders greater participation and oversight in how the nation conducted its foreign policy. 
While there were many pieces of legislation, three in particular – the War Powers Act of 
1973, the Hughes-Ryan amendment of 1974, and the Clark amendment of 1976 – played 
a key role in the decision making of the Reagan administration in the three case studies.

As already discussed, in the “age of consensus,” the congressional joint resolution 
became a commonly used policy device to carry out the nation’s strategy of containment. 
Such a resolution was meant to deter would-be adversaries by demonstrating the 
commitment of the public and congressional leaders to the support of the President and 
his policy. In 1964, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which allowed the 
“President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed 
attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” As 
Vietnam unfolded, many congressional leaders felt that President Johnson had abused the 
open language of that resolution. Thus, in 1970, Congress repealed the resolution and, 
determined to ensure that such a situation did not occur again, passed the War Powers 

30 Arnson, Crossroads, 9.
31 Melanson, Reconstructing Consensus, 11.
The War Powers Resolution had the stated purpose to fulfill the intent of the framers of the Constitution of the United States by ensuring “that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.”\(^{33}\) The resolution directed that the President as Commander-in-Chief only send armed forces into hostilities or areas of imminent hostilities in three situations: “(1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.”\(^{34}\) Additionally, the President must terminate military action after sixty days “unless the Congress (1) has declared war or has enacted a specific authorization for such use of United States Armed Forces, (2) has extended by law such sixty-day period, or (3) is physically unable to meet as a result of an armed attack upon the United States.”\(^{35}\) Clearly, the resolution if followed could greatly restrict a President’s actions by congressional consultation, setting time limits on his actions, and allowing Congress to direct removal of armed forces at any time.

The second piece of restrictive legislation was the Hughes-Ryan amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act. The amendment, named after its sponsors Senator Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) and Representative Leo Ryan (D-Calf.), was adopted in 1974. The amendment called for congressional oversight of intelligence activities, specifically


\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
prohibiting the CIA from engaging in any actions other than intelligence gathering, unless the President issued an official “finding” that the operation was important to national security. The President was required to submit his “finding” to no less than six congressional committees which had access to intelligence information. Though the law was meant to provide Congress with intelligence oversight, it was also seen as a means to limit covert operations and, like the War Powers Act, the principal thrust of the legislation was anti-interventionist.  

Passed in 1976, the third piece of legislation was the Clark amendment to the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, named for its sponsor Senator Dick Clark (D-Iowa). The amendment barred U.S. aid from going to anti-Communist forces in Angola. President Gerald Ford wanted to restrain Soviet-Cuban activities in Angola, but this legislation prevented his efforts to counter “covertly,” those activities and it sent a clear message that Congress not only wanted to be involved in oversight activities as represented by the Hughes-Ryan amendment, but that Congress would be involved in the actual practice of foreign policy. The days of congressional deference and the “age of consensus” were clearly over.

**Chapter Two Conclusion**

In his classic work *Soldier and the State*, Samuel P. Huntington explained that prior to the start of the Cold War the primary question Americans asked about civil-military relations was “what pattern…is most compatible with American liberal democratic values?” Then with the start of the Cold War, Huntington asserted that

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question was revised to “what pattern…will best maintain the security of the American
nation?”37 In the first two sections of this chapter, Americans adopted a pattern to answer
that question, one in which the nation had a strong presidency leading foreign policy with
little congressional interference.

However in the 1970s as the Vietnam War drew to a close, American concerns
shifted the balance once again to the civil side of civil-military relations and the question
was revised into two questions: “What pattern will best ensure that the nation never gets
involved in another Vietnam War?” and, “What pattern will make sure that American
power is used legitimately?” Hence, the American civil-military relations pattern would
prevent the nation from entering into another quagmire or using its power for less than
noble purposes. Clearly, the nature of these questions demonstrates a lack of confidence
in the President and it is not surprising that the pattern adopted enabled congressional
leaders to exercise additional oversight and participate in the foreign policy process
principally through the War Powers Act, Hughes-Ryan amendment, and Clark
amendment.

The domestic political realities facing the Reagan administration as it stepped into
office were set against American leadership through foreign policy. To take on this role,
the administration needed to recognize the mass public’s lack of confidence in the
President and other leaders’ ability to create foreign policy. Unless changed, American
involvement in other countries’ affairs would only come by clear and compelling issue of

37 Huntington, “The Soldier and the State in the 1970s,” in Civil-Military Relations, ed. Goodpaster and
Huntington, 13-14.
national interest or national security and an assurance of swift and decisive action. Additionally, the administration needed to acknowledge the paramount importance of building public support for its policies to avoid the stagnation from the political system through the interference of Congress. The following three case studies cover the Reagan administration’s attempts to lead on the world stage and develop its military and foreign policy relationship amidst the influences of domestic political realities.

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Chapter Three: Case Study Central America

The first chapter of this work described a president who entered office in 1981 believing that the nation’s overall security was largely dependent upon how well the nation fulfilled its role as an international leader. He also believed that the nation’s confidence to fulfill that role, and success in doing so, depended not solely upon its capabilities, but also upon whether or not its president provided leadership and used the tools of statecraft in a decisive manner. However, as the second chapter demonstrated, a host of contemporary political realities presented challenges to using military force in a decisive manner. The next three chapters examine cases from Reagan’s first term in office in which military force was considered and used as part of his administration’s overall strategy devised to achieve its policy objectives. Each case study describes the evolution of thinking among senior administration officials regarding the relationship between the nation’s foreign-policy objectives, the use of military force, and political realities. This thinking eventually led to the promulgation of the Weinberger Doctrine at the start of the administration’s second term.

One of the Reagan administration’s first foreign policy challenges arose in Central America. The following case study of that challenge is divided into four sections. The first section provides background information about the situation in Central America that the Reagan administration inherited from the Carter years. The second examines the administration’s attempts to gain flexibility for action in the region by reducing constitutional and political constraints on the use of military force. The third describes Secretary of State Alexander Haig’s policy proposal for Central America and the
reactions it prompted. The last section describes the administration’s policy for Central
America, arrived at after almost a year of consideration.

**Part I: Background Information on Central America**

On 17 July 1979 Anastasia Somoza Debacle resigned as Nicaragua’s President.\(^1\) Somoza, whose family had led Nicaragua since 1936, was forced from office by a broad coalition of Marxists, capitalists, social reformers, and Christians, although most recognized that the key power brokers in the junta that would replace him were members

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of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The Sandinistas, who had received funding for their revolutionary activities from Cuba, publicly expressed their admiration for that nation and their hatred for the United States. Before assuming power on 19 July 1979, the new junta promised elections and human rights and pledged to respect private property and preserve a mixed economy. Such promises were designed in part to diminish the likelihood that the Carter administration might intervene militarily. As it turned out, these concerns were unwarranted; the Carter administration never seriously considered such an option.

American policymakers were largely divided into two camps on how the nation ought to respond to the revolution in Nicaragua. One group viewed the events in Nicaragua as a positive step forward, arguing that the cause of the revolution was internal difficulties derived largely from social inequality and repressive leadership under the

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2 The last time a government in Latin America had been overthrown by an armed revolution was in 1959 when Fidel Castro seized power from Fulgencio Batista.

3 This sentiment is clearly expressed in an interview of Daniel Ortega conducted by CNN in 1997 for its Cold War series. Ortega was one of the leading commanders of the Sandinista forces that overthrew Somoza in 1979. He became the head of the ruling junta and was elected president in November 1984. Throughout the remainder to the 1980s he led the Sandinistas in their civil war against U.S.-backed Contra rebels. In 1990, Ortega was defeated by Violeta Chamorro and left office in April 1991. See Cable News Network, “Episode 18: Backyard, Interviews, Daniel Ortega, Sandinista Leader, Nicaraguan President,” in CNN Cold War, http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold_war/episodes/18/interviews/ortega/ [accessed August 20, 2007].


5 See Pastor, Condemned to Repetition, 193-195, for a discussion about the calculus the Carter administration used to decide whether or not to intervene.

6 See Moreno, U.S. Policy in Central America, 3, for another discussion of the two views regarding revolutionary forces in the Third World which were prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s.
Somoza regime. 7 To ensure a stable future for Nicaragua, the best course for the United States would be to allow the Nicaraguan people to control their own destiny. The Nicaraguan people would not allow a radical revolution to take hold and, once in power, the Sandinistas would see the benefits of following a pragmatic course of action, which meant not jeopardizing the revolution by exporting it to El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras. Such adventures would lead to Nicaragua’s involvement in a superpower rivalry and separation from important democratic nations in Latin America. American strategists who reasoned thus argued that the worst mistake President Carter could make would be to confront the Sandinistas, a course the nation had taken with the Cuban revolution. 8 Instead, the U.S. ought to establish good relations with the new Nicaraguan regime.

President Carter had approached the Central American region this way when he entered office in 1976, and he took the same approach with the Sandinistas in 1979. In 1976, Carter had believed that the United States’ long term security interests would be best served by treating Latin American countries with respect and, through American power and influence, turning unpopular but survival-minded regimes toward the promotion of human rights and the broadening of political processes. To encourage traditional regimes, such as Somoza’s, to open up their political systems, Carter tied

7 In addition to President Carter and key leaders in his administration, this group was made up of liberal leaders in Congress and progressives in the State Department. Viron Vaky, Assistant Secretary of State, fell into this group of thinkers. Vaky said, “the real issue facing American foreign policy…is not how to preserve stability in the face of revolution, but how to create stability out of revolution.” See Bermann, Under the Big Stick, 276.

8 They believed that Castro’s slide toward Communism was largely a result of the United States’ challenges to Castro’s decisions to gain control of Cuba’s politics and economy. See Pastor, Condemned to Repetition, 192, 231 for the lessons the Carter and Reagan administrations drew from the Cuban revolution.
economic aid and security assistance to human rights performance. While Carter believed it was unwise for the United States to support repressive regimes such as Somoza’s, he did not believe the role of the United States should be to overthrow established governments.9

Communicating his willingness to respect the concerns and interests of small Latin American nations, Carter committed to new Canal treaties with Panama with his first Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM 1).10 He further emphasized human rights and democracy by establishing the Interagency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance, under the chairmanship of Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher on 1 April 1977. The Christopher Committee’s function was to ensure the amount of foreign aid received from the United States was directly tied to a government’s human rights performance. Somoza’s government immediately came under scrutiny and was pressured to change.11 Somoza responded by ending martial law and censorship and making his cabinet more broadly representative, measures which provided the political space for the Sandinista-led revolution to begin. Finally, Carter demonstrated his

9 The best single source to see these themes is President Carter’s speech presented at Notre Dame in May 1977. See The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, University of Notre Dame – Address at Commencement Exercises at the University May 22, 1977,” http://www.americanpresidency.org [accessed August 17, 2007].

10 Carter committed a large amount of political capital at the beginning of his administration fighting for ratification of the treaties. For President Carter’s view on the fight over the treaties and the political cost it imposed on him and his supporters see Carter, Keeping Faith, 152-185. Under the treaties, the U.S. and Panama would run the canal together, with the U.S. as the senior partner, until the end of the century when U.S. military forces were to be withdrawn, with the right to return to defend the canal’s neutrality.

11 Somoza had imposed martial law in December 1974 following a Sandinista raid on a farewell party held for United States Ambassador Turner Shelton. The Sandinistas had taken hostages and to get them released Somoza had agreed to release fourteen Sandinistas who were in prison, one of which was Daniel Ortega; provide the Sandinistas $1 million in cash; and publish an FSLN communiqué that denounced Somoza and U.S. imperialism and called for the people to rise up and overthrow Somoza.
commitment to established governments by not insisting that Somoza resign immediately, even though Washington believed that the longer he stayed in office the more likely it was that the radical Sandinistas would fill his place.\footnote{Ironically, the Sandinistas saw Somoza’s reforms as a threat to their revolution. They wanted Somoza to remain in power until after they had defeated the National Guard. The Sandinistas learned from the Chilean and Guatemalan coups that the success of a revolution lay with the ability to destroy the old army and replace it with a new force willing to follow the new leadership and its programs. See Kagan, A Twilight Struggle, 104-105 and Pastor, Condemned to Repetition, 57. The Carter administration had begun trying to convince Somoza to step aside as early as September 1978 in hopes that power could be transferred to “moderate” elements while the National Guard was still intact and capable of holding the Sandinistas in check. It was not successful and the National Guard disintegrated within twenty-four hours of Somoza’s departure. See Kornbluh, ‘Nicaragua,’ The Price of Intervention, 15-16, 18.}

Following the Sandinistas’ seizure of power, Carter said that the events in Nicaragua should not be viewed as a victory for Cuba and a loss for the United States: “It’s a mistake for Americans to assume or to claim that every time an evolutionary change takes place or even an abrupt change takes place in this hemisphere, that somehow it’s a result of secret, massive Cuban intervention.”\footnote{The American Presidency Project, “Jimmy Carter, The President’s News Conference of July 25, 1979,” http://www.americanpresidency.org [accessed August 17, 2007].} Instead, Carter encouraged Americans to trust the judgment of the Nicaraguan people. In an effort to avoid the path the United States had taken following the Cuban revolution, the administration sought to avoid confrontation and instead mold the new regime with provisions of emergency food and relief supplies.\footnote{The administration gave the new regime $15 million in emergency reconstruction aid and a $75 million economic assistance package. Nevertheless, the administration covertly began setting the stage for a counterrevolution. On 19 July 1979, the same day the Sandinistas marched into Managua unchallenged, U.S. operatives began evacuating leaders of the Nicaraguan National Guard and their families to Miami, where they were to be reorganized to return to fight the Sandinistas. See Dickey, With the Contras, 51-55. Additionally, in late 1980, Carter authorized the CIA to fund anti-Sandinista labor, press, and political organizations in an effort to destabilize the Sandinistas. See Kornbluh, ‘Nicaragua,’ The Price of Intervention, 19. One account estimates Carter had allocated approximately $1 million for covert anti-Sandinista aid. See Burns, At War in Nicaragua, 22.}
Carter’s policy toward Central America in general and Nicaragua in particular was anathema to the second group of policymakers in Washington.\(^\text{15}\) When the Sandinistas came to power, that group believed that the Carter administration had indeed “lost” Nicaragua to the Communists. Somoza, who had been a long-time supporter of the United States in its fight against Communism, should have been aided in his fight against the Marxist Sandinistas. People of this persuasion thought the younger Somoza was akin to that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s regard for his father, “He [Somoza] may be a son of a bitch, but he’s our son of a bitch.\(^\text{16}\) They also agreed with Jeane Kirkpatrick’s argument that authoritarian governments were more likely to reform than totalitarian governments.\(^\text{17}\) For them, the appropriate lesson from Cuba was not that the U.S. had pushed Castro too hard; instead, the lesson was not to allow a revolution time to consolidate.\(^\text{18}\) Nicaragua was just another in a series of unsettling Communist gains in the late 1970s, including the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Nicaragua might be the domino that would topple El

\(^\text{15}\) This group was based primarily in the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency. It also included Democratic neoconservatives and State Department liberals who agreed with John F. Kennedy’s vision and style for promoting progress in the Third World.


\(^\text{17}\) Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorship & Double Standards.” Kirkpatrick’s thesis was that the United States was undermining its strategic position in the world by forcing friendly autocratic governments such the Shah’s in Iran and Somoza’s in Nicaragua to implement democratic reforms that ultimately led to their downfall. Making matters worse the governments which succeed the autocrats were no more democratic and were hostile to the United States. Kirkpatrick argued that “there was no instance of a revolutionary ‘socialist’ or Communist society being democratized;” however, there were instances of right wing autocracies evolving into democracies “given time, propitious economic, social, and political circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government.” Kirkpatrick questioned why the Carter administration had selectively applied its principles of self-determination and nonintervention to “nations ruled by ‘right-wing’ dictators or white oligarchies,” while accepting the status quo in Communist nations.

\(^\text{18}\) Pastor, Condemned to Repetition, 231.
Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and a lack of action by the United States could signal weakness to geopolitical competitors. Finally, these people were adamantly opposed to Carter’s decision to sign away the nation’s “rights” to the Panama Canal, in which they presumed the United States had a vital strategic interest.

These arguments anticipated the positions Ronald Reagan expressed during the Presidential campaign in 1980 and in his first year in office. Well before the Sandinistas came to power, Reagan had denounced Carter’s approach to Central America. In radio addresses broadcast in the spring of 1979, Reagan warned that “the Caribbean is rapidly becoming a Communist lake in what should be an American pond and the United States resembles a giant, afraid to move.” Reagan believed that the United States had lost control of its strategic backyard and needed to take action to regain that control.

Taken on their own accord, the tiny republics of El Salvador and Nicaragua, the subject of so much debate for the Reagan administration in its first term, hardly seem to have been critical to the foreign policy of the United States. They possessed neither raw materials nor significant economies; neither did they possess the military capability to

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19 Cuba was viewed as a proxy of the Soviet Union so, in the minds of many American policymakers, the conflicts in Central America, such as the Nicaraguan revolution and subsequent war against the Contras, were by implication fueled by the Soviet Union. See Cable News Network, “Episode 18: Backyard, Interviews, John Negroponte, U.S. Diplomat,” in CNN Cold War, http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/18/interviews/negroponte/ [accessed August 20, 2007]. Negroponte was the U.S. ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985 and in that role heavily involved in the U.S.-contra war against the Sandinistas. He said: “I certainly think [the Soviets] must have enjoyed our discomfort. Whether they micromanaged this or not, I just I don’t know. I’d be reluctant to say. My working hypothesis was that they sort of let Cuba have the lead on this, and basically said to them: ‘Have at it boys, and see what you can accomplish’….I don’t think there was any doubt of Cuban involvement.” Evidence suggests that the Soviets did not become heavily involved with the Sandinistas until after they had overthrown Somoza and were in need of weapons to defend their gains.

threaten U.S. territory or lines of communication. However, leaders in the Reagan administration believed that an opportunistic regime of a republic such as Nicaragua might ally itself with an external force hostile to U.S. interests. The regime could weaken the overall stability of the region by spreading revolution and threatening oil reserves in Mexico and Guatemala or important lines of communication, such as the Caribbean Sea lanes and the Panama Canal, with the acquisition of offensive weapons such as aircraft or missiles. Such actions by a hostile entity could force the United States to redeploy assets from Europe or Asia to deal with the threat in its own hemisphere.\textsuperscript{21} The Reagan administration considered Central America the nation’s third border and felt that U.S. freedom of action around the world depended in part on the stability of the region. Thus, the administration was psychologically ready to use all its instruments of power, even military force, in order to achieve its policy objective of restoring the principles of democracy and freedom to the region, by minimizing communist influence, and by providing assistance to nations, such as El Salvador, to help them reform their government toward a liberal democratic system.

Contrary to the expectations of the first camp of policymakers, the Sandinistas did follow a radical path and became involved in superpower rivalry. In the early 1980s, the Sandinistas began requesting arms from the Soviet Union, Algeria, socialist countries in Eastern Europe, and Vietnam and sending those arms to communist-inspired guerrillas in

other nations such as El Salvador. In January 1981, days before Reagan’s inauguration, Marxist guerrillas, supported by the Sandinistas, launched an attack to overthrow the government of El Salvador led by Christian Democrat José Napoleon Duarte. While heavily engaged in attempts to negotiate the freedom of American hostages in Iran, Carter suspended aid to Nicaragua and reinstated military and economic aid to El Salvador on 19 January 1981. For the Reagan administration, which entered office the

22 Daniel Ortega, head of the ruling junta, said the Sandinistas turned to these countries for arms in the early 1980s because the Cubans were very limited in what they could provide. Ortega said he received promises of MiG-21s from the Soviet Union, Mirages from France, and smaller planes from Libya. The Libyan planes got as far as Brazil, where they were intercepted and sent back. Ortega does not specify who intercepted the planes in Brazil. The Soviet MiGs and French Mirages never materialized, due to pressure from the United States, according to Ortega. See Cable News Network, “Episode 18: Backyard, Interviews, Daniel Ortega, Sandinista Leader, Nicaraguan President,” in CNN Cold War.

23 On 15 October 1979 a coalition of Salvadoran military officers and civilian leaders had overthrown the military dictatorship of General Carlos Humberto Romero. The junta included civilian members, such as Guillermo Ungo, head of the Social-Democratic party, who favored allowing leftists an opportunity to participate politically. However, such accommodations with the left proved unpopular not only with the junta’s conservative military leaders, but also with officials in the administration of President Jimmy Carter, who feared a repeat of the experience in Nicaragua. In December, Christian Democrat José Napoleon Duarte took over as the President of the junta and, backed by the Carter administration, proposed a two-pronged strategy designed to enfeeble the left. The first prong was to pull support away from the left politically by implementing agrarian reforms and nationalizing the banks and export trade. The second was to appease the right by eliminating the rebellion with military force. Thus, by early January, the more leftist-oriented members of the government, such as Ungo, had resigned, leaving Duarte’s Christian Democratic Party as the civilian component of the government. On 11 January, Marxist guerrillas launched a “final offensive,” which was intended to hand President Reagan a “fait accompli,” a revolutionary government in place that could not be dislodged, when he entered office on 20 January 1981. However, Duarte and his government survived the offensive, largely because the Salvadoran people did not rally around the rebels. Instead of supporting the Marxist guerrillas by rising up and conducting strikes, the people of El Salvador went to work and largely ignored the rebels’ calls for revolution. The Reagan administration read the Salvadoran’s response to the guerrillas as support for the revolutionary civilian-military government of El Salvador, headed by Duarte. Thus, eager to promote liberal democratic progress in the Third World, the Reagan administration adopted Duarte and his government, which had stated a commitment to land reform and elections.

24 See Moreno, U.S. Policy in Central America, 80-81; Allan Nairn, “Endgame,” Report on the Americas (May/June 1984): 25. Carter invoked emergency executive powers and sent El Salvador $10 million, 4 helicopters and 19 U.S. advisors. Aid had been suspended in December 1980 pending the investigation of the murder of four U.S. churchwomen. Lethal aid had been withheld from El Salvador since 1977 on human rights grounds; however, in June 1980 the Administration had sent El Salvador $5 million in military supplies and training funds. These decisions by President Carter suggest that he had begun to see events in context of the East-West dispute. As it turned out the Salvadoran armed forces put down the
next day, the situation in El Salvador provided an opportunity to demonstrate to the world that it was ready to play a stronger role in Central America and unwilling to “lose” another small republic to Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Even before Ronald Reagan was elected, William Casey, his nominee to be Director of Central Intelligence, had “decided that El Salvador was, symbolically, the most important place in the world,” surmising that “if the United States could not handle a threat in its backyard, Reagan’s credibility would be at risk in the rest of the world.”

One month before the election, Casey brought together a group of seventeen senior foreign-policy experts, including former President Gerald Ford, to serve as an interim foreign-policy advisory board. The group identified the Communist insurgency in El Salvador as “an immediate and important challenge to the incoming Administration.”

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guerrilla offensive before any American aid arrived. This fact was often used by those who argued against President Reagan’s calls to send more foreign aid to El Salvador over the coming months and years.


27 Woodward, Veil, 38-39. Casey’s group was not the only one to argue Central America’s strategic importance, the Council of Inter-American Security published a 1980 report entitled A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties. Popularly known as the Santa Fe Document, the report argued that Soviet surrogates were attacking an important source of America’s power in the Western Hemisphere and urged the United States to take initiative in Central America both strategically and diplomatically. See The Committee of Santa Fe, A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties (Washington, D.C.: Council for Inter-American Security (CIS), 1980), ii, 4, 3, 52. The members of The Committee of Santa Fe were L. Francis Boucheys, Roger W. Fontaine, David C. Jordan, Gordon Sumner, and Lewis Tambs. Specifically, the reported called for “revitalizing the Rio Treaty and the Organization of American States; reproclaiming the Monroe Doctrine; tightening ties with key countries; and, aiding independent nations to survive subversion.” p. 52. Several of the men who worked on the report were later assigned positions in the Reagan administration. Roger W. Fontaine was assigned to the National Security Council (NSC) as a Latin American specialist, Lewis Tambs was a consultant to the NSC and later posted as the ambassador to
American relations with El Salvador and Central America in general did become one of the Reagan administration’s early foreign policy priorities and was discussed in some of the first National Security Council meetings held by the administration.  

Reporter Bernard Gwertzman and others have suggested that the administration selected El Salvador as an early test for its relations with both the Soviet Union and its allies, but that it was given more attention than it warranted because of its perceived significance as Columbia and later to Costa Rica.  Gordon Sumner was assigned as a special consultant to the State Department’s Bureau of Inter-American Affairs.  

28 See Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 127 and 77.  Haig noted that the day after the inauguration, Reagan held a meeting of the National Security Council where El Salvador, Iran, and Libya were discussed.  While still classified, the following documents examined in the Weinberger Papers archived at the Library of Congress are supportive of the narrative presented in this case study on Central America:  Container I: 645, National Security Council, folder 1, Item no. 8, X12774, “10 February 1981, Memorandum for Distribution From Richard Allen; Subject:  Paper for NSC Meeting on Feb 11, 1981 and Minutes from NSC Meeting on 6 February 1981”;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 1, Item no. 4, X13244, “11 Mar 81, Memo for SecDef from Richard Stilwell, Subject:  State/DoD/CIA Working Group on Cuba Strategy.”  General Stilwell worked in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 2, Item no. 11, X14665, “6 Jun 81 – Memo for SecDef from Richard Allen, Subject:  Presidential Decisions on U.S. Policy Toward Cuba.”;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 1, Item no. 6, X[no number provided], “23 May 81 – Memo for DepSecDef from Fred Ikle, Subject:  SIG [Senior Interdepartmental Group] Meeting on Cuba: Attached Paper – An Initial Approach for Dealing with Cuba.”  Ikle worked in the office of the Under Secretary of Defense;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 1, Item no. 7, X [no number provided], “26 May 81 – Talking Paper for SecDef from J-5, Subject:  Cuba – NSC Meeting on 4 June 1981”;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 1, Item no. 8, X 14515, “27 May 1981 – Memo for SecDef from Fred Ikle, Subject:  Results of the SIG on Policy toward Cuba”;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 2, Item no. 9, X14546, “29 May 81 – Memo for Sec Def from L. Paul Bremer; Subject:  Discussion Paper for NSC Meeting – Initial Approach for Dealing with Cuba; I: 630, Cuba, folder 2, Item no. 10, X [no number provided], “5 Jun 81 – DoD Position Paper for SecDef from Francis West, Subject:  NSC on Cuba – Tighten Screws on Cuba;”;  I: 630, Cuba, folder 2, Item no. 11, X14665, “6 Jun 81 – Memo for Sec Def from Richard Allen, SUBJECT:  Presidential Decisions on U.S. Policy Toward Cuba.”;  I: 630, Cuba, Folder 2, Item no. 19, X16237 – “17 Sep 81 – Memo for SecDef from LTG James Dalton, Subject:  Military Readiness Measures.”;  I: 630, Cuba, Folder 2, Item no. 21, X [no number provided], “13 Oct 81 – DepSecDef’s Briefing Book, Subject:  NSC Meeting on Cuba.”;  I: 651, Nicaragua, Item no. 2, X [no number provided], “3 Mar 81 – Memo for Record from M/Gen Decamp, Subject:  Nicaragua IG.”;  I: 651, Nicaragua, Item no. 5, X13543, “26 Mar 81 – Memo for SecDef from Richard Allen, Subject:  Decisions at NSC Meeting, March 26, 1981.”;  I: 651, Nicaragua, Item no. 15, X [no number provided], “19 Oct 81 – Background Paper for SecDef, Subject:  SecState Haig’s Argument at NSC Meeting on Covert Action Against Nicaragua.”  The fact that this is only a partial list of the materials in the Weinberger Papers is indicative that this topic was taken seriously by the administration and not simply an attempt at propaganda or bluster.
a symbol of American resolve. In an interview, on 13 March 1981, with Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer, Secretary of State Alexander Haig was asked if the administration had decided to highlight El Salvador and its ties to the Soviet-bloc to further the case against international interventionism. Haig replied that El Salvador was experiencing a guerrilla movement fueled by Cuban armaments and Soviet-supplied equipment and “it wasn’t a contrived situation to draw the line on.” However, years later, Haig would claim that President Reagan “knew that his opportunity to act would not last long, that if [sic] was to have an effective policy in Central America and throughout the world, he must put its elements in place in the first months of his Administration.”

By early February, the administration had established five policy objectives: (1) halt the infiltration of arms to the insurgents in El Salvador from abroad; (2) help the government of El Salvador defeat the leftist insurgency; (3) minimize Soviet and Cuban influence in both El Salvador and the region; (4) demonstrate U.S. resolve against


31 Ibid., 2. Also see, “[Secretary Haig] Interviews at Breakfast Meetings,” Department of State Bulletin 81, no. 2050, 10. In that interview, conducted on 13 March 1981, when the administration was trying to shift public attention from El Salvador, Haig argued: “After all we didn’t trigger El Salvador, I see some press people suggest that we triggered El Salvador and a big draw-the-line operation. The problem with El Salvador was that we inherited massive evidence which had not been collated and had not been drawn together, and we did that in the first 2 weeks of the Administration – really in the first week – and it constituted irrefutable evidence of massive Cuban, Eastern, and Soviet involvement. This isn’t a case of manipulating the news or focus or anything else. It [collating and presenting the new intelligence data] was an effort to lay out the facts as we saw them and to get a reasonable degree of support for the actions we felt had to be taken.”

32 Haig, Caveat, 127.
international communist aggression; and, (5) restore Salvadoran stability by encouraging the government to take measures to develop popular support including: (a) ending security force abuses and curtailing extreme-right terrorism; (b) proceeding with its economic and agrarian reforms; and (c) moving toward a peaceful political process and the promised 1982 elections.33

Three themes surface in the numerous memorandums and policy papers that key leaders in the Reagan administration exchanged regarding how to achieve those policy objectives. First, those leaders recognized that there was a very good chance that American military force might have to be used. Nevertheless, they were determined to ensure that the use of military power in any strategy would be both credible and sustainable. Credibility demanded that if American military power was focused on Castro, it ought to be sufficient to cause him to back down. If he did not, then the nation should be prepared to respond with a decisive amount of force. At the same time sustainability demanded that proposed military actions use the nation’s resources conservatively. Any proposed action needed to take into account the nation’s worldwide

33 See Weinberger Papers, I: 645, National Security Council, folder 1, Item no. 14, X12905, “18 Feb 81 – Memorandum from Richard Allen, Subject: National Security Council Meeting – 18 Feb 81.” This is one of the few papers to be declassified. It shows the importance the administration placed upon having public and congressional support. It stated: “The full panoply of concerned activist and church groups (with the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the forefront) is beginning efforts to mobilize public opinion to demand an end to U.S. support for the Salvadoran government. This campaign can be expected to have growing effect –particularly in Congress – unless our intelligence on international communist intervention orchestrated by Moscow and Havana convinces the American public that the East-West factor and El Salvador’s proximity to the U.S. have assumed overwhelming importance in determining U.S. interest. Sustained U.S. support for El Salvador will obviously require the cooperation of the Congress. For the present, careful adherence to the applicable laws…and extensive briefing and consultations should be sufficient to gain necessary support. For the longer term, however, (e.g., FY 82 and beyond), if there has not been substantial improvement in the situation, Congressional support is likely to erode. This risk can be diminished by an intensive effort, beginning now, to build a broad bipartisan base of support for administration policy objectives through involving the Congress directly in deciding how the U.S. should respond to this communist challenge close to the United States.”
commitments and cost. Finally, those leaders appreciated that being able to use military force in a credible manner and sustain its use ultimately rested upon whether or not the administration could gain and sustain public and congressional support.

The administration did not want to get into the position the Carter administration had regarding the Soviet combat brigade when it declared the status quo would not stand and yet was unable to back those words up with action. Rather the administration wanted to avoid taking any rash action in the region until there was public and congressional support for the administration’s broad objectives. To that end the administration immediately set out to address the political and legal constraints on its use of military force.

**Part II: Gaining Flexibility for Future Action**

To seek release from political constraints, the administration catered to public, Congressional, and allied opinions regarding the promotion of progress in the Third World and restraint of further incursions by the Soviets and their proxies. To that end the administration presented briefings and published reports that described the Salvadoran junta as a moderate government, committed to human rights and political reform, fighting for survival against guerrilla fighters supplied by Soviet-bloc nations.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) A talking points paper for a Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting held in early March 1981 describes what the administration was up against in selling this storyline. The paper made the following three points: (1) “the Government of El Salvador is not a model the American people identify with” (2) “the overall issue has the public confused”; (3) “despite DoD’s wishes, the Vietnam analogy will not go away.” See *Weinberger Papers*, I: 628, Central America, folder 1, Item no. 3, X13080, “3 Mar 81 – Talking Points for JCS Mtg from Francis West; Subject: Military Training and Central America.”
On 13 February 1981, congressional leaders received a five-page State
Department overview on El Salvador with a brief sketch of the three primary groups
vying for power: Marxist guerrillas, right-wing extremists, and the moderate
civilian/military government. The paper noted that over the past year the U.S.
government had assisted the ruling junta because it was working to implement important
social and political reforms, stop the violence of right-wing extremists, and defeat
Marxist guerrillas. Further justification for the aid program lay in the fact that the junta
faced guerrillas armed, trained, and supported with political and military advice from
Cuba and other Communist nations.\(^\text{35}\) Five days later, Secretary Haig followed up with a
closed-door briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which he again
emphasized that the Salvadoran insurgents were receiving arms supplied by the Soviet
Union, Cuba, Ethiopia, and Vietnam.\(^\text{36}\)

The administration also sought to break down resistance from the American
people. Five days after Haig’s session with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the
State Department published a White Paper titled “Communist Interference in El
Salvador.” The purpose and motivation for the White Paper was clear:

This special report presents definitive evidence of the clandestine military
support given by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and their Communist allies to
Marxist-Leninist guerrillas now fighting to overthrow the established

\(^{35}\) National Security Archives, El Salvador [microfiche]: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1984,

Government of El Salvador. The evidence, drawn from captured guerrilla documents and war material and corroborated by intelligence reports, underscores the central role played by Cuba and other Communist countries beginning in 1979 in the political unification, military direction, and arming of insurgent forces in El Salvador.\(^37\)

The complete text of the State Department report, published in *The New York Times* on 24 February 1981, publicly revealed titillating details of Salvadoran guerrillas at the Hungarian Embassy in Mexico City meeting with representatives from the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Vietnam, Hungary, Cuba, and the Soviet Union, and on other occasions meeting directly with Fidel Castro in Cuba.\(^38\) Specific details emerged about trips by the leader of the Salvadoran Communist Party leader in trips to the Soviet Union, Vietnam, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Ethiopia to procure arms and gain support for the movement.\(^39\)


\(^39\) “Text of State Department Report on Communist Support of Salvadoran Rebels,” *The New York Times*, February 24, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. In spite of the presented evidence, not everyone was convinced. In his memoir Haig quoted one such skeptic: “The White Paper fails to provide a convincing case….Its evidence is flimsy, circumstantial, or nonexistent; the reasoning and logic is slipshod and internally inconsistent; it assumes what needs to be proven; and, finally, what facts are presented refute the very case the State Department is attempting to demonstrate.” Haig attributed this response to what he called the “will to disbelieve,” which had been unleashed by Vietnam and Watergate. He noted: “The White Paper was combed for errors and traces of conspiracy. Were the captured documents quoted in the White Paper forgeries? Were the photographs of captured weapons genuine? The White Paper was subjected to the sort of burning scrutiny that only a heretical document can provoke. Mistranslations and
Lastly, the administration sought to build support among its allies. In February 1981, Lawrence Eagleburger, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, visited Bonn, Paris, Brussels, the Hague, and London to “share recent intelligence on outside support for the Salvadoran insurgency and provide background on the evolution of U.S. policy toward Central America.” Secretary of State Haig telegraphed those words to American embassies in Europe, Mexico, and El Salvador to describe the purpose behind Eagleburger’s trip.

Between 14 and 19 February 1981, Eagleburger briefed foreign ministers, NATO Permanent Representatives, and the European Community President on evidence to back the administration’s claims that the Soviet bloc was arming the rebels in El Salvador. Eagleburger reportedly used a slide show of documents allegedly written by an El Salvadoran guerrilla leader tracking the military arms promised by Vietnam, Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, and Eastern European nations. He also showed photographic evidence of a tractor-trailer captured in Honduras that had a false bottom used to smuggle 150 M-16 assault rifles. Two State Department-led interagency teams followed Eagleburger to

other small errors, which should not have occurred but in no way affected the authenticity of the other information cited, were discovered. These were used to discredit the entire document.” See Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Caveat, 140.

40 National Security Archives, El Salvador, Document 01338, “Department of State Telegram; Subject: Special Briefings on El Salvador,” 2.

41 Congress did not get briefed until 18 February when Haig held a closed door session with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In addition to sending Eagleburger to Europe, the administration dispatched retired Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters to Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile to share the message of the threat to El Salvador. See Juan De Onis, “U.S. Seeks Allies’ Backing on Salvador,” The New York Times, February 14, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. The administration referred to these briefing teams as “truth squads.”

continue the campaign and provide an opportunity for exchanges with other key allied leaders.\footnote{National Security Archives, \textit{El Salvador}, Document 0138, “Department of State Telegram; Subject: Special Briefings on El Salvador,” 4. The telegram also stated: “In each capital, teams would appreciate an early, opportunity to brief and be briefed by interested embassy personnel on means of continuing private and public diplomacy efforts in this area, and would appreciate embassy assessments of key audiences and factors contributing to current public opinion climate….The teams’ primary mission, however, will be to background opinion shapers and political forces now or potentially active on El Salvador.” p. 5.}

In spite of this campaign to shore up support for action in El Salvador, the administration encountered resistance on 2 March 1981, when it formally announced its decision to send $25 million in military aid and increase the number of military “trainers” in El Salvador to fifty-four.\footnote{These measures, when considered in light of Haig’s proposal for Cuba which will be discussed in the next section, were very moderate. The administration did not like to use the term “advisors” because it conjured up associations with Vietnam. One finds in Congressional testimony, recorded interviews, and speeches that the President and his key leaders insisted that the military men sent to El Salvador be referred to as “trainers.” President Reagan discussed this issue “You could say they are advisers in that they’re training, but when it’s used as adviser that means military men who go in and accompany the forces into combat, advise on strategy and tactics. We have no one of that kind. We’re sending and have sent teams down there [to El Salvador] to train. They do not accompany them into combat. They train recruits in the garrison area. And as a matter of fact, we have such training teams in more than 30 countries today, and we’ve always done that…” See “[President Reagan] Interview With Walter Cronkite,” \textit{Department of State Bulletin} 81, no. 2049 (April 1981): 8. Also see “Document 675, The Essential Problem in El Salvador,” in \textit{American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1981} (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1984), 1274. Document 675 contains extracts from a Press Briefing by Secretary of State Haig on 27 February 1981 in which Haig described the difference between trainers and advisors in the same way President Reagan did during his 3 March interview with Cronkite. In addition to not wanting to evoke the Vietnam War, their other motivation for making such a distinction was to prevent Congressional demands to begin reporting under the War Powers Act or the Arms Export Control Act.} Each constituency - allies, the American public, and Congressional leaders – voiced misgivings about the policy. However, the policy objectives which the administration had adopted for the region were unlikely to be noted in an interview with CNN: “We also got some weapons from the United States, because some of our comrades worked in the solidarity [movement] in the United States and had connections there, so they found a way of buying weapons in the United States and bringing them to Nicaragua via Mexico.” See Cable News Network, “Episode 18: Backyard, Interviews, Daniel Ortega, Sandinista Leader, Nicaraguan President,” in \textit{CNN Cold War}.
achieved through rhetoric alone. Instead, they would require American leadership, resources, and the backing of allies, the American public, and Congressional leaders.

America’s European allies had registered their concerns during Eagleburger’s trip. Though the Europeans were generally sympathetic, left-wing opposition at home made them unwilling to support the U.S. El Salvador proposal. West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was in a particularly difficult position since leftists in his own Social Democratic Party were known supporters of the Salvadoran guerrillas. Therefore, the Europeans let Eagleburger and the other members of his delegation know that their support, in Alexander Haig’s words “could only, at best, be muted.”

At home, concerns over repeating the Vietnam experience were still prevalent, and the administration immediately began receiving clear signals from the public and Congressional leaders to avoid greater military involvement in Central America. The American public registered its disapproval through polls, letters to political leaders, and protest marches. Reagan’s presidential pollster, Robert Wirthlin, found in March 1981 that presidential popularity had suffered a sharp and sudden drop, attributable to the President’s decision to send military advisors to El Salvador. In spite of the administration’s efforts to emphasize that U.S. military personnel would not accompany Salvadorans on missions or participate in combat operations, many saw the moves as first steps into a potential quagmire reminiscent of Vietnam.

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45 Haig, Caveat, 130.
46 Don Oberdorfer, “More U.S. Effort Yields Less Result,” The Washington Post, February 14, 1982. The administration made this announcement on 2 March 1981. The funding would provide the GOES with additional helicopters, vehicles, radars, surveillance equipment, equip its new quick reaction forces, and provide needed spare parts and ammunition. Four five-man training teams were also to be sent to train the
Reagan used special executive authority to transfer $20 million of the $25 million he proposed as aid to El Salvador. The remaining $5 million had to be re-programmed by the House appropriations subcommittee. It was a measure that was narrowly approved by the subcommittee in late March. The New York Times reported that the vote was so close because Congressional leaders found that their “constituents were overwhelmingly opposed to the military aid.”

Representative Silvio O. Conte, Republican of Massachusetts, received about 600 letters that were 20-to 30-to-1 against sending military aid and advisers to El Salvador. Senator Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, reported 300 letters a week on the topic of El Salvador from constituents, three-quarters of them opposing military aid. Representative Michael D. Barnes (D-Maryland), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Latin America, said that 100 percent of the letters he received were against the administration’s policy. A Gallup poll conducted on 14 and 15 March found that two-thirds of the “informed” Americans Salvadorans in communications, intelligence, logistics, and skills used in interdicting infiltrations and responding to terrorists. See “Document 676, Additional Security Assistance to El Salvador,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1981, 1276.

47 This was the Presidential Determination discussed in an earlier note.


49 Ibid.

50 Representative Silvio Conte, ranking minority member of the full Appropriations Committee, exercised special voting privileges afforded to him from his rank on the full committee to participate in the Foreign Operations Subcommittee vote and Representative Jamie Whitten (D-Miss) did the same. Their votes to approve the aid to the Salvadorans allowed the measure to be passed. See Arnson, Crossroads, 68.


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surveyed believed the situation in El Salvador could develop into another Vietnam. The President’s own mail bag showed that 96 percent of the letters expressed unhappiness with the direction the nation was taking in El Salvador.52

In addition to writing letters, Americans staged protests across the nation. At Columbia University several hundred students held an outdoor rally, at Ohio State protestors conducted a fast at the state capitol, and at the University of Michigan a group of 500 marched from the campus to the federal building in Ann Arbor. A march in Boston attracted over 3,000 protestors, though other demonstrations were much smaller, such as the thirteen-person sit-in at the offices of Senator Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.).53

Congress registered its concerns over the administration’s proposed actions in two ways. First, Congressional leaders requested that the administration heed the structural constraints imposed by the Arms Export Control Act and the War Powers Resolution. Second, Congressional leaders wrote legislation placing conditions on Salvadoran aid.

52 “Reagan Mail Opposes Involvement,” March 29, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. The White House opened 7,224 pieces of mail on El Salvador and 6,939 were against American involvement with only 285 for it.

53 Raymond Bonner, “Protests on Salvador Are Staged Across U.S.,” The New York Times, March 25, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. Raymond Bonner, “Protests on Salvador Are Staged Across U.S.,” 25 March 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. Also see “Playing for High Stakes: Reagan dispatches more “trainers” to El Salvador,” Time, March 16, 1981, 10. Not all protestors had come out to register their unhappiness that the United States might be stepping into another quagmire. Instead, some were out to protest the nation’s decision to help the GOES which was known to have a poor human rights record. Others were unhappy that the Reagan administration would send more aid before there was resolution regarding who had assassinated three American nuns at the end of 1980. The Carter administration had cut off aid pending the investigation in 1980 but reinstated it when the guerrillas began their “final offensive” in January 1981. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations heard testimony on 18 March and 9 April at which the above concerns were considered. See Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, The Situation in El Salvador, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981. While the House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs heard similar testimony on 5 and 11 March 1981. See House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Policy Toward El Salvador, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981.
Four days after the Administration’s announcement, Clement Zablocki Jr. (D-Wisc.), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent Secretary of State Haig a letter about growing congressional concern and requested that his committee be provided with “a copy of the instructions and guidelines governing the activities of U.S. military personnel in El Salvador” and “a periodic report describing the internal security situation in El Salvador and the activities of U.S. military personnel there” in order to provide independent congressional oversight on the administration’s compliance with the Arms Export Control Act and the War Powers Act.  

Senator John Glenn (D, Ohio) felt very strongly that due to the overall threat present in El Salvador and the fact that the Secretary of Defense was considering awarding hostile fire pay to the “trainers” sent to El Salvador, the administration ought to begin reporting under both laws. He argued:

How can we say that 12,000 people including four churchwomen killed, the Embassy shot up, American people in garrison with sidearms, hostile-fire pay, people getting killed all the time isn’t significant hostilities? That is just tortured logic to me. I can’t see it. And I don’t know why we don’t declare it as such, report to us, then we have the confidence that we are going to get reports if there are future events like this in other countries.

54 See National Security Archives, *El Salvador*, Document 01435, “Presidential Decision to Increase the Number of U.S. Military Advisors in El Salvador.” Twelve days after Zablocki’s request Secretary of State Haig appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and asked its members to develop legislation to allow the administration more flexibility in the conduct of the nation’s foreign policy.

In order to sidestep the reports to Congress under these laws, the administration revoked the hostile-fire-area designation for El Salvador.\textsuperscript{56}

The second action came from both the House and the Senate, as each body introduced legislation requiring that the administration end aid to El Salvador and withdraw military advisers unless the President was able to “certify” that human rights conditions were improving.\textsuperscript{57} While Congressional leaders agreed with the administration’s decision to continue to support Duarte and his government, they could not agree upon how to deal with right wing death squads and Marxist guerrillas. Each chamber heard extensive testimony, some of which argued that military aid would only feed more power to the extreme right and hinder Duarte’s efforts at reform and a negotiated settlement with the left. In the end, Congress compromised and decided that military assistance was required but that the government of El Salvador must demonstrate progress in making reforms.\textsuperscript{58}

The administration sought release from some of the legal constraints to its actions by requesting the House Foreign Affairs Committee develop legislation that would allow

\textsuperscript{56} Even after that revocation, service members serving in El Salvador continued to receive hostile-fire pay. See Arnson, \textit{Crossroads}, 66.

\textsuperscript{57} Public Law 97-113 demanded the President “certify” that the GOES was making progress in six areas - human rights conditions, controlling the misdeeds of security forces, promoting economic reforms, holding elections, negotiating a political settlement, and investigating the murders of six U.S. citizens – before sending aid.

\textsuperscript{58} Many of the above concerns were considered by the Senate on 18 March 1981 and 9 April 1981. See Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, \textit{The Situation in El Salvador}. The House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs heard similar testimony on 5 and 11 March 1981. See House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, \textit{U.S. Policy Toward El Salvador}. For additional discussions about the Legislative-Executive debate over these issues see Arnson, \textit{Crossroads}, 69-71 and Moreno, \textit{U.S. Policy in Central America}, 113-120.
more flexibility in the conduct of security assistance operations. The administration called for abolishment of the Clark Amendment and exemption from reporting and funding restrictions. Several of Reagan’s key cabinet leaders, such as secretaries Haig and Weinberger, believed that the War Powers Act and the Arms Export Control Act, both passed by Congress in the 1970s in reaction to the Vietnam War and CIA covert activity, acted as legislative constraints on the President in his conduct of the nation’s foreign policy.  

Despite their beliefs, Reagan, Haig, and Weinberger recognized that the War Powers Act was an issue that congressional leaders were not ready to tackle. Instead, the administration accepted that bitter pill for the moment and focused upon trying to get the U.S. Arms Export Control Act amended. The administration sought to get the Congress to abolish the Clark Amendment and to change the manner in which funds were appropriated for security assistance programs. In Secretary Haig’s first formal appearance before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, he urged Congress to abolish the Clark Amendment and to change the manner in which funds were appropriated for security assistance programs. Regarding the Clark Amendment Haig argued:


60 The administration had already resorted to using a Presidential Determination so that it could send funds and defense articles to the GOES. The determination noted: “an unforeseen emergency exists which requires immediate military assistance to El Salvador; and the aforementioned emergency requirement cannot be met under the authority of the Arms Export Control Act or any other law except section 506(a) of the Act. The President was allowed to publish the determination pursuant to the authority vested by section 506 (1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. See Weinberger Papers, I: 635, El Salvador, folder 3, Item no. 26, W38137, “5 Mar 81 – Presidential Determination No. 81-4, Subject: Determination
I am concerned and we are concerned about the provisions of the Clark Amendment, which is unique and unprecedented in American history. I am concerned about it...because it is a blatant restriction on executive authority...which presents an American President with a priori restriction on his ability to deal with any subject in that area with the kind of objectivity, flexibility, and, I hope clarity of thought that is necessary.  

Haig also sought to improve the President’s flexibility by changing the manner in which funds were appropriated for security assistance programs. In his testimony he asked Congress to consider three measures to improve security assistance response and eliminate the involvement of U.S. forces: create a contingency fund for foreign crises; support a $350 million revolving weapons fund that would allow foreign buyers to receive arms faster; and lessen reporting requirements on arms shipments and overseas military advisors.

The administration’s policy toward El Salvador was just one piece of a larger strategy it was seeking to develop for the Central American region as a whole. As readers will remember, the importance of Central America to the nation’s overall security was discussed in the very first NSC meetings. Nevertheless, Reagan’s National Security

to Authorize the Furnishing of Immediate Military Assistance to El Salvador.” The Clark Amendment modified the U.S. Arms Export Control Act of 1976, prohibiting military and covert aid to private groups engaged in paramilitary operations in Angola.


Decision Directive on Cuba and Central America (NSDD-17), which established U.S. policy toward the Americas, was not signed until 23 November 1981. The primary reason for the delay was that top leaders in the administration could not agree where to try to cut off the supplies going to the insurgents in El Salvador. Should they be cut off at Cuba or at Nicaragua?

At the same time he was trying to convince Congressional leaders, the public, and allies that action was needed in Central America, Secretary Haig waged a similar campaign within the high councils of the administration, recommending interdiction of arms coming from Cuba. His policy solution was largely influenced by the lessons he had taken away from the nation’s experiences in Vietnam.

**Part III: Haig’s Solution for Central America**

Secretary Haig applied two lessons from the Vietnam War to U.S. policy in Central America. First, the nation needed to stop fighting proxies and start fighting the real enemy. Second, the United States should not impose irrational limits on the use of power. Haig believed that the United States had failed in Vietnam because it had focused too much on fighting the Vietcong, whom he saw as proxies for the real enemies in the Soviet Union and North Vietnam, and because it had followed a doctrine of incrementalism that had prevented the nation from using its power decisively.63

Regarding the first lesson on proxies Haig wrote:

The United States…stubbornly refused to treat the Vietnam insurgency as anything other than a local problem. We knew…that if the war was, in important measure, an expression of North Vietnamese imperialism, that it nevertheless could not take place without the approval, the encouragement, and the massive support of the U.S.S.R. Yet we chose not to take the issue to the Soviet Union or even, in a meaningful way, to Hanoi. We chose, instead, to tangle ineffectively with the puppets, rather than the puppet masters.64

To avoid this mistake in Central America, Haig advised Reagan to deal with the puppet masters, the Soviet Union and Cuba, rather than fight the puppets, the Salvadoran guerrillas and the Sandinistas.65

Haig recommended that Reagan pursue this tough policy at the beginning of his administration, while he still possessed a large measure of freedom of action not only from his honeymoon in office, but also from the forbearance of the Soviet Union.66 Haig

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64 Haig, Caveat, 122.

65 Haig argued: “There could not be the slightest doubt that Cuba was at once the source of supply and the catechist of the Salvadoran insurgency. Cuba, in turn, could not act on the scale of the rebellion in El Salvador without the approval and the material support of the U.S.S.R. I believed that our policy should carry the consequences of this relationship directly to Moscow and Havana, and through the application of a full range of economic, political, and security measures, convince them to put an end to Havana’s bloody activities in the hemisphere and elsewhere in the world.” See Haig, Caveat, 122; Haig also advocated supporting El Salvador with higher levels of U.S. aid and with “reasonable numbers of military advisors.” See Haig, Caveat, 124.

66 Robert McFarlane, State Department Counselor, who Haig instructed to develop a plan to isolate and roll back Marxist control of Cuba, later said that Haig believed that “during the President’s political honeymoon, he should use his great popularity to push forward a tough policy in the Western Hemisphere, where the most immediate problems required the most difficult and most politically unpopular actions.” See Kagan, A Twilight Struggle, 174. This is Kagan’s paraphrase of McFarlane’s remarks made in their 23 January 1991 interview. Also see Haig, Caveat, 131.
had learned through a series of conversations with Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin that the Soviets viewed Cuban activities in the Western Hemisphere as a matter strictly between the United States and Cuba. Thus, Haig reflected: “the way was open to solve the problem in Central America, and solve it quickly, through the unequivocal application of pressure. The question was, had we the will to do it promptly, while the President still enjoyed the freedom of action he had won at the polls?”

Interestingly, the Soviet Ambassador’s message seemingly undermined the first of Haig’s two lessons from Vietnam, that the Soviet Union was the puppet-master in Central America. While the administration could point to military support sent to Salvadoran guerrillas from Nicaragua, the Soviet Union, Cuba and other communist nations, Ambassador Dobrynin’s position belied Soviet instigation of insurgent activities in Central America. Haig never appeared to have been troubled by that contradiction.

Haig fervently advocated taking quick and decisive action during crisis situations, such as that existing in Central America in 1981. “If not nipped in the bud,” said Haig, “a crisis not only blooms in its own right but pollinates new crises.” This conviction arose from Haig’s Korean War experience. As an aide in 1950 to General Douglas MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, Major General Edward Almond, Haig was in the room or within earshot as MacArthur and the key members of his staff grappled with the strategic

67 Haig, Caveat, 131.
68 Ibid.
69 This contradiction has been noted by others. See Sklar, Washington’s War on Nicaragua, 72; Nairn, “Endgame,” Report on the Americas (May/June 1984): 32.
70 Haig, Caveat, 96.
and military issues involved in fighting in Korea the nation’s first limited war.\footnote{As Major General Almond’s aide, one of Haig’s jobs was to keep the situation map used by MacArthur and his subordinate commanders up to date. He was also asked to listen in on the conversations MacArthur and Almond had with the Eighth Army, commander, Lieutenant General Walton H. “Johnny” Walker, and to take notes. Additionally, he was frequently in the communications room when MacArthur reported on the military situation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President. Therefore, he was privy to many of the discussions held at the highest levels. For these stories see Haig and McCarry, \textit{Inner Circles}, 12, 21, 27, 23.} On 23 August 1950, when the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff gathered to discuss General MacArthur’s proposed amphibious landing at Inchon, General J. Lawton Collins, the Army chief of staff, “strongly opposed…the landing,” as Haig later recalled, “calling it a shoestring operation and pointing out that the consequences in case of failure would be calamitous.”

MacArthur listened to the points made by Collins and the others but ended the discussion by saying: “Gentlemen, we will land at Inchon on September 15 or you will have a new Supreme Commander in the Far East.” Haig called MacArthur’s decision to go forward with the Inchon landing in spite of the opposition “not vainglory but wisdom.” In Haig’s view, MacArthur had recognized that the fastest way to end the bloodshed and achieve a negotiated peace was to eliminate the fighting power of the enemy.\footnote{Haig and McCarry, \textit{Inner Circles}, 35-37.} For Haig, the wisdom of MacArthur’s military strategy lay in its decisiveness.

In 1981, Haig wanted to pursue decisive action in Central America by cutting off the revolution’s source of supply at Cuba, stopping the Cubans’ spread of the revolution to Central America and Africa, and striking a blow at what he still saw as Soviet adventurism. At the same time, Haig argued that the administration also needed to heed a
second lesson he believed was born out of Vietnam: the nation’s power should not be hamstrung by “incrementalism.” That doctrine, said Haig, called for subtle escalation in the form of Western probes designed to show the U.S.S.R. our determination to stand firm against further Soviet challenges while avoiding countermeasures that would risk conflict. Even in the gaming stage, it soon became clear that, in practice, incremental increases in force tended to intensify the risk rather than control it; as in a schoolyard scuffle, the possibility of either party backing away decreased with every shove and expletive, with the world press acting out the role of the crowd of taunting children. These ideas from the ivory tower contradicted the centuries of military wisdom embodied in Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest’s famous formula for victory, “Get there first with the most men.” It seemed to me that any doctrine based on the notion of maximizing the enemy’s strength while placing voluntary restraints on one’s own freedom of action risked provoking the very outcome it sought to avoid.

73 Other terms used to capture the same concept are “gradualism” or “incremental-gradualist approach.”

74 Ibid., 97. Haig’s opposition to incrementalism was also developed from a study he conducted while a student at the Army War College, the year prior to deploying to Vietnam. Haig was the chairman of Committee 8, a group of War College students tasked with conducting a study on the “use of force.” Through its historical research and analysis, which did not include Vietnam, the committee concluded “that the lesson of history was that gradual, as opposed to the overwhelming, application of military power, tended to produce the very outcome it was designed to avoid.” The committee found that in “nearly every instance…incrementalism had presented the enemy with opportunities to meet or exceed the measure of force applied, leading to localized military defeats, prolonged conflict, and a greater expense in lives and money than had been forecast by those who had made the policy.” The group concluded that “senior military officers had a duty to point out these military realities to civilian policymakers.” See Ibid., 155-156.
Haig argued that incrementalism was ineffective in persuading an adversary to alter his actions because the enemy would perceive that action for what it was: “moral weakness and military folly.”

To avoid that pitfall, Haig called on the administration to combine its instruments of power - economic, diplomatic, and military – to pressure Cuba to modify its international behavior. He argued: “It was obvious that Cuba, an island nation of 11 million people lying 100 miles off the coast of a United States with a population of 230 million, simply could not stand up to the geostrategic assets available to the larger country.”

Although Haig subsequently claimed never to have contemplated direct military action against Cuba, he did advocate that the U.S. apply its military strength “to the degree necessary.” As he later stated his position:

I did envisage…an augmented U.S. military presence in the region. A carrier group, or two, maneuvering between Cuba and the Central American mainland would have been a useful reminder of the revival of keen U.S. interest in these waters and coasts and of our ability to blockade Cuba if that became necessary. Reinforcement of Army and Air Force

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75 Ibid., 127.
76 Haig, Caveat, 129.
77 Ibid.
units already in the region, and their advancement into a higher state of readiness, would have been desirable.\textsuperscript{78}

While Haig’s solution appears counter to his second lesson, that contradiction disappears if Haig’s words are understood as a desire to follow a doctrine of flexible response or limited war.

For Haig, “to the degree necessary” could be translated as “to the extent required to compel an adversary to do one’s will.” Haig was not opposed to limited war so long as the American military forces involved possessed the means, and were backed by the political will required to destroy the enemy’s will to resist. Haig was very critical of previous American presidents, such as Lyndon B. Johnson, who had only applied U.S. military strength, in Haig’s view, to the extent that it did not detract from their political agenda.\textsuperscript{79} Haig believed that the United States needed to be prepared to back its words with military force if necessary, even if that meant disrupting a president’s domestic political agenda by expending his political capital on an action that did not have the wide support of the public or their leaders in the Congress.

For Haig it was not the strategies of limited war and flexible response that precluded the nation from achieving decisive victory in Korea or Vietnam; instead, it was the ill-conceived notion that the nation could compel an adversary to respond by adopting progressively harsher methods. Haig argued that to start slow or show hesitation in Central America would lead to incrementalism and “Vietnamize” the situation. Such

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 124.

\textsuperscript{79} See Haig and McCarry, Inner Circles, 23, 153, 98, 132; Haig, Caveat, 127, 129, 130.
policies in the past had led the United States into a trap of committing ever more resources to a small objective because it was easier for an adversary to adapt to small steps and thus compel another escalation. Therefore, Haig advised application of the military power and political will necessary to stop Cuba from continuing its export of Communist revolution. Haig did not believe that objective would necessitate landing U.S. military forces in Central America.

By the end of January 1981, Haig had instructed Robert McFarlane, Counselor to the Department of State to develop plans for rolling back Cuba’s revolutionary activities in Central America and Africa. McFarlane convened a group of officials from the Pentagon, the CIA, and the State Department that unanimously decided that isolating Castro would require extensive military force and would jeopardize the nation’s security interests in other regions. Therefore, the group recommended instead that the United States focus its efforts on isolating Nicaragua while simultaneously working to improve the economic development of the surrounding countries. It was presumed that such efforts would moderate the revolutionary government in Nicaragua and prevent it from destabilizing other nations in the region. Unhappy with the group’s recommendations,

80 Haig, Caveat, 125.

81 Additionally, he recognized that using American ground troops in such a capacity was unrealistic given the domestic and foreign political realities the nation faced. He wrote: “I never envisaged the landing of Marines in Central America. This was not necessary; there was no popular consensus to support such an act, and in any case, it was not possible under the War Power Act without the consent of Congress. Every realistic being knew that such consent would only be given in case of catastrophe. It risked inflaming the xenophobia of neighboring states and all the consequences this implied.” See Haig, Caveat, 124.

82 Kagan, A Twilight Struggle, 175.

83 In 1983, President Reagan appointed Dr. Henry A. Kissinger to serve as the Chairman of “The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America.” That group was charged by the President to provide advice
Haig asked McFarlane to draw up plans for stationing American vessels to cut off supplies of oil going to Cuba or to intercept Soviet-bloc weapons leaving Cuba for Central America.  

Haig’s plan to focus on Cuba reached the White House in May, but it was not new to some leaders in the administration. Secretary of Defense Weinberger recalled that, even before the administration took office, Haig had made it “quite clear we would have to invade Cuba and, one way or another, put an end to the Castro regime.”

Weinberger wrote: “All agreed upon the nature of the Cuban regime and upon the basic risks it posed to us in view of Cuba’s geographical position – its ability to interrupt our normal maritime trade, to interfere with any NATO reinforcement convoys that would have to pass close by Cuba, and to give the Soviets valuable intelligence capabilities.”

Nevertheless, despite the Cuban threat to American interests, the more aggressive military measures such as a blockade of Cuba or a quarantine of Central America, which Haig sought in order to make the administration’s approach toward Cuba more credible, were never implemented.

for a long-term U.S. policy to respond to the challenges presented to the security and stability of the Central American nations from internal and external threats. It concluded that the U.S. ought to consider “a significantly larger program of military assistance, as well as greatly expanded support for economic growth and social reform.” Essentially, the Kissinger Commission proposed a Marshal plan for Central America. The commission’s recommendations were very similar to those proposed by McFarlane’s group in 1981. See “Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America,” January 1984.


85 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 31-32. Of course, Haig denied ever considering such an action. See Haig, Caveat, 129. With the exception of that note in Weinberger’s memoir, there are no other indications that Haig ever intended a military invasion of Cuba; nevertheless, his plan did call for a very aggressive stance in the region.

86 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 31.
The feasibility of Haig’s plans to blockade Cuba or quarantine Central America rested on an assumption that the president could convince congressional leaders and the public to provide the support requisite for military success in such operations. The operations would require the commitment of a significant number of air and naval resources, over many months, and it might be very difficult to demonstrate tangible results. Many senior leaders cautioned against the expenditure of the president’s political capital for this issue, while others, such as Secretary of Defense Weinberger, believed that the domestic political realities, described in chapter two, would prevent the President from gaining the will and means necessary to support Haig’s proposals to a decisive end.

Reagan’s “Troika” – Chief of Staff James Baker III, Counselor to the President Edwin Meese III, and Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver – decided early on that the problems with Cuba and Central America should not be elevated to the “presidential” level because of the political risk involved. They wanted public focus to be on

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87 Senior leaders in the Pentagon had concerns with the Haig plan. Specifically, they were concerned about the commitment of significant numbers of ships and aircraft to the Caribbean. The Joint Chiefs worried that the Soviets might take the opportunity to exploit an area of weakness elsewhere in the world, perhaps even attack an American ally. Leaders in the Pentagon were also afraid the plan would damage the prospect of rebuilding the nation’s military strength. See *Weinberger Papers*, I: 630, Cuba, folder 2, Item no. 10, X [no number], “5 June 81 – DoD Position Paper for SecDef From Francis West, Subject: NSC on Cuba – Tighten Screws on Cuba.” DoD opposed U.S. ships to shadow Cuban freighters because it was costly and could be mocked. DoD also opposed the transfer of U.S. air squadrons to Florida because its leaders believed it would be very costly and accomplish very little. Also see Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 174-175; Haig, *Caveat*, 124, 127-128; Woodward, *Veil*, 171; Don Oberdorfer, “The White House Charts Its Course From Crisis to Crisis: Blockade of Cuba Was Rejected,” *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1983.

88 Journalist Allan Nairn made similar observations about the constraints caused by domestic political realities in an article he wrote in 1984. See Nairn, “Endgame,” *Report on the Americas*. Also see Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, 72. Sklar argued: “Reagan’s advisers were divided into two camps: Haig’s high-intensity/go-to-the-source minority vs. the incrementalist majority.”

congressional passage of Reagan’s economic program and they worried that Haig’s inflammatory rhetoric about the Communist threat in Central America might disrupt this effort.\textsuperscript{90} By public statements to the press in March 1981, the troika made clear to Haig that he should tone down his position.\textsuperscript{91}

Additionally, Secretary of Defense Weinberger expressed concerns with Haig’s plan. Weinberger did not believe the plan heeded the lessons he had derived from the American experience in Vietnam and other crises. Reagan’s popularity aside, Weinberger was skeptical of any scheme that assumed that Congress and the American public would be supportive of the use of force. Weinberger believed that assumption would hold only when force was used to secure a vital national interest.\textsuperscript{92} He did not


\textsuperscript{91} Martin Schram, “White House Revamps Top Policy Roles: Bush to Head Crisis Management; White House Moves to End Disarray on Policy,” \textit{The Washington Post}, March 22, 1981. Also see Haig, \textit{Caveat}, 81, 92-94, 144. In the end the troika’s concerns seemingly carried the day. On 13 March 1981, John A. Bushnell, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, provided a background briefing to reporters in which he “charged that news organizations were exaggerating the situation in El Salvador and that this was deflecting attention from other key foreign policy issues.” Bushnell reportedly said, “‘This story has been running five times as big as it is,…and we figured, if we talked to you about it, you might not make this thing such a big deal.’” See “High Official Now Plays Down El Salvador,” \textit{The New York Times}, March 13, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. The next day Haig offered that he “wouldn’t suggest that it’s not that big a deal,” however, he cautioned that there were “many equally important issues” such as the situations in Afghanistan and Poland and “other vital issues – East-West relations at large, arms control, and a host of other matters of equal importance.” See “[Secretary Haig] Interview on the ‘MacNeil/Lehrer Report’,” \textit{Department of State Bulletin} 81, no. 2050 [May 1981]: 1; “Salvador Becomes A Smaller Big Deal,” \textit{The New York Times}, March 15, 1981 [online archive]; accessed May 4, 2007. These statements from Bushnell and Haig were in sharp contrast to all that had preceded them. The administration had devoted its first month of political energy and capital to its message regarding the Soviet-bloc’s involvement in the El Salvadoran insurgency.

\textsuperscript{92} Weinberger had an opportunity to make these same points in opposition to Haig’s successor, George P. Shultz. Shultz like Haig believed that the President must be free to commit American military forces without the advance support of the public or their leaders in Congress. Shultz explained: “There is no such thing as guaranteed public support in advance. Grenada shows that a president who has the courage to lead will win public support if he acts wisely and effectively. And Vietnam show that public support can be frittered away if we do not act wisely and effectively.” See George P. Shultz, “The Ethics of Power,” in
believe a blockade of Cuba in 1981 met that requirement.\textsuperscript{93} Regarding that lesson Weinberger wrote:

I told the President that one of his predecessors had already tried that invading Cuba [invading Cuba] in a halfhearted way and that if we were to follow Al Haig’s advice and if all went well, we \textit{might} have a satisfactory result.

But, I added, one of the principal lessons I had learned from the Vietnam experience was that we could not suddenly explode upon the American people a full-fledged war and expect to have their support. American public opinion would have to support such an action, and would therefore have to be convinced that our national interests required, indeed demanded, that we go to war.\textsuperscript{94}

\textit{Ethics and American Power}, ed. Lefever, 15. Weinberger clearly enunciated his views on this topic in his annual report to Congress in 1986. He wrote: “No aspect of the [Weinberger] doctrine I have enunciated for the use of force has received more comment and criticism than the requirement that we have reasonable assurance of the support of the American people. There can be no assurance, the critics say. A government forced to wait for the people will be paralyzed in international politics…My purpose is not to wish away the frustrations of leadership in a democracy. Perhaps if President Roosevelt had been willing to act on his own authority in 1939, 1940, or 1941, the enormous losses of World War II could have been reduced. But perhaps, only by waiting until the full force of American public opinion was clearly mobilized behind the necessity of winning an all-out war was President Roosevelt able, with our allies, to secure the unconditional surrender of both the Nazis and the Japanese. It is not necessary for me to argue that the considered judgment of the American people is always correct. My thesis is more modest, but more important. It is that American democracy is constructed on the principle not that the American people will always be right, but that there exists no better guide to wise policy. Our government, therefore, constructs a process that forces the President and the Congress to lead and argue, to seek and win the support of the American people in order to sustain a course of action. The inherent assumption here is that this will, in the long run, produce wiser choices than any other mechanism yet discovered.” See United States, Department of Defense, \textit{Report of the Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to the Congress, on the FY 1987 Budget, FY 1988 Authorization Request, and FY 1987-1991 Defense Programs} (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1986), 80. Hereafter abbreviated Weinberger, \textit{Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1987}.

\textsuperscript{93} Haig wrote in his memoir: “In the NSC and in private meetings with me over breakfast, Cap Weinberger insistently raised the specter of Vietnam.” See Haig, \textit{Caveat}, 128.

\textsuperscript{94} Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 31. During the administration’s first NSC meeting Weinberger made the following points: “There is no doubt that we face a tough situation in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The
Weinberger made a similar argument at his Senate confirmation hearing. When asked what lessons he had learned from the American experience in the Vietnam War, Weinberger replied:

It is not really possible, no matter what the skill, nor the size, nor the effectiveness of the American forces, to fight a war that does not have the understanding of the American people and the support of the American people. And I think another and perhaps subsidiary lesson from that would be that we cannot and should not enter a war that it is not vital for our national security to enter…”

When Weinberger arrived at the Pentagon he found many who shared these sentiments. More importantly, he found that military leaders had internalized these lessons and developed military strategies that would hopefully avoid having to relearn them.

A 1977 Army War College study noted that “the continued presence of military missions [in Central America] is justified principally in terms of maintaining influence problem stems from Cuba. With some covert aid, we could disrupt Cuban activities. I am not sure that most Americans understand the situation there. The majority probably believes that these governments are repressive and that we should not do anything provocative. We need to explain to people that this is a dangerous situation for the US, and that we may have to move strongly.” See Ronald Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting Files Records, NSC 00001 2/6/81 [Caribbean Basin and Poland] Box 91282. Weinberger mirrored the post-Vietnam War pattern of civil-military relations. He did not focus on the use of the military force to best protect American liberalism or best protect American security; instead, he matched the use of military force to best ensure the support of the American people. As a vocal Secretary of State, Haig had many opportunities to make the American public aware of his plan to “go after the source” and, as Weinberger predicted, Americans never warmed to the idea. The administration was never able to garner public or congressional support for taking decisive action to obtain its policy objectives enunciated for Central America.

95 Senate Committee on Armed Services, Nomination of Caspar W. Weinberger to be Secretary of Defense, 97th Cong., 1st sess., January 6, 1981, 38.
with a rather unique regional political elite who guide or control the destinies of many countries.”

Therefore, military leaders favored covert operations run by the CIA and their associates to maintain that influence, support for security assistance operations, and assistance for diplomacy with show-of-force operations. In early 1980, Major General Robert L. Schweitzer, director of strategy, plans, and policy in the office of the Army deputy chief of staff for operations and plans, visited Honduras and reportedly offered the Honduran junta $5 million worth of equipment, $500,000 in training funds, and the lease of 10 “Huey” helicopters at a nominal cost. This was the kind of offer that American military leaders favored for Central American governments fighting communist insurgencies.

In the end, the concerns of Weinberger and the troika carried the day. The administration determined that in Central America it would pursue the nations’ interests and provide leadership on the international stage by providing the government of El Salvador with military assistance and by exerting pressure on Nicaragua rather than


97 Three “Big Pine” exercises were conducted between 1983 and 1985 with the Hondurans. The General Accounting Office found that some of the military construction of bases and airstrips that went as part of these exercises was intended to benefit the CIA’s Contra operations. Big Pine II which began on 3 August 1983 was the largest and involved over 12,000 U.S. troops and two Pacific battleship groups.


99 In April 1981 the leader of the Honduran army, Colonel Gustavo Álvarez Martínez in a meeting with CIA Director William Casey offered for his nation to serve as a base for anti-Sandinista insurgents. See Gutman, Banana Diplomacy, 16.
Cuba. In spite of Haig’s best efforts, the administration had decided to cut the “umbilical cord” at the next level down from Cuba in regards to exporting communist revolution – Nicaragua.

**Part IV: National Security Decision Directive on Cuba and Central America**

The specifics of the administration’s strategy were laid out in the National Security Decision Directive on Cuba and Central America, (NSDD 17), signed by President Reagan on 23 November 1981. The directive stated:

> U.S. policy toward the Americas is characterized by strong support for those nations which embrace the principles of democracy and freedom for their people in a stable and peaceful environment. U.S. policy is therefore to assist in defeating the insurgency in El Salvador, and to oppose actions by Cuba, Nicaragua, or others to introduce into Central America heavy weapons, troops from outside the region, trained subversives, or arms and military supplies for insurgents.  

While NSDD 17, itself, was classified TOP SECRET, the majority of its points were immediately made public. The administration’s appreciation for the importance of gaining and maintaining public and congressional support for its strategy is demonstrated in the first decision spawned by the directive: “Create a public information task force to

inform the public and Congress of the critical situation in the area [Central America].”\textsuperscript{101}

Seemingly, the administration was taking specific measures to prepare the nation to take whatever steps might be called for in the Western hemisphere.

The other decisions Reagan made by signing the directive were to provide economic support to the countries in the region, increase military assistance to El Salvador and Honduras, provide military training for indigenous units, and encourage cooperative efforts to defeat the externally supported insurgency. In regards to Nicaragua, trade and credit were to be maintained with the Sandinistas so long as they permitted the private sector to operate. Nevertheless, support was to be lent to the democratic forces in Nicaragua. Two components to that support were to come from military show-of-force operations and covert operations conducted against the Sandinistas. American newspapers reported the show of force operations as major exercises, while, initially, only members of the congressional intelligence committees were aware of the covert operations.\textsuperscript{102}

On 1 December 1981, Reagan signed a presidential “finding” authorizing William Casey’s Central Intelligence Agency to oversee covert operations, executed by foreign fighters, against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{103} Specifically, Casey’s agency was

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\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{102} The public did not find out about the covert operations against Nicaragua until November 1982 when Newsweek broke the story. See “America’s Secret War: Target: Nicaragua,” Newsweek, November 8, 1982.
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\textsuperscript{103} The Hughes-Ryan Act, passed in 1974, amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The act prohibited the use of appropriated funds for the use of Central Intelligence Agency or Department of Defense covert operations until the President issued an official “finding” that the operation was important to the national security of the United States. Due to their nature, most presidential findings are classified and presented to
authorized to create a commando force of up to 500 Latin Americans to conduct operations in Nicaragua from bases in Honduras. Those forces were to destroy power plants, bridges, and other critical infrastructure to disrupt the Nicaraguan economy and the flow of arms from Nicaragua into El Salvador. The plan also called for the United States to provide financial and logistical support to Argentina’s military which was training 1,000 Nicaraguan exiles.\(^\text{104}\) The operations were to accomplish three goals: interdict the flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador, get Nicaragua to focus inward, and make the Sandinistas amenable to negotiations.\(^\text{105}\)

In reality, Reagan’s finding largely ratified a process that the administration had begun nine months earlier.\(^\text{106}\) On 9 March 1981, Reagan had signed his first presidential finding which called for $19.5 million to be given to the CIA to expand a program begun by President Carter to support moderate opponents of the Sandinistas. The finding also provided funds to stop the flow of weapons from Nicaragua to guerillas in El Salvador. In the end the finding proved to be significant because it allowed CIA agents to lay the groundwork for covert operations against the Sandinistas; operations that were a key

\[\text{the intelligence oversight committees within Congress. The intent of the law was to ensure that the responsibility for such actions was attributable to the President and that Congress was made aware.}\]


\(^\text{105}\) Gutman, \textit{Banana Diplomacy}, 85. Gutman’s source was a staff member on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee.

\(^\text{106}\) See Gutman, \textit{Banana Diplomacy}, 85. Gutman notes that the decisions Reagan reached in November to sign NSDD-17 and on 1 December 1981 to sign his second “finding” did not change the direction of policy. Instead, those decisions “ratified a process that had begun months earlier.”
component though not the sole component, of the administration’s overall strategy for the region.\textsuperscript{107}

The groundwork for covert operations had been directed by a small circle of subcabinet aides known as the “Core Group.” The group was chaired by Thomas O. Enders from the State Department and had representatives from Defense, the CIA and the National Security Council. While membership varied slightly over time some of the key members were General Paul Gorman (Defense), Duane “Dewey” Clarridge (CIA), and Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North (NSC).\textsuperscript{108} The group oversaw activities involving contact with anti-Sandinista exile groups located in Guatemala, Honduras, and the United States. One of the most significant activities of the group was to unite representatives of the 15\textsuperscript{th} of September Legion and the Nicaraguan Democratic Union (UDN) together under one anti-Sandinista banner.

The Legion was the largest group of former Somoza National Guardsmen in exile in Guatemala, while the UDN was a group of anti-Somoza businessmen in exile in Miami. The unified command was established on 11 August 1981 in Guatemala City.


\textsuperscript{108}In early August, Nester Sanchez, the Latin American division chief at the Directorate for Operations at the CIA retired from the Agency and moved over to the Department of Defense to serve as deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs. Casey had pushed for this reassignment because he wanted Duane R. Clarridge to replace Sanchez as a member of the Core Group. General Gorman took command of U.S. Southern Command in May 1983.
The political component of the new junta, now called the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), established itself in Tegucigalpa, Honduras in a house rented for it by the CIA. Meanwhile, the junta’s military members assembled in Honduras from their exiles in Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Miami. These fighters were to be trained by Argentinean military officers, with the entire military operation funded by the United States.  

Once those elements were in place, the Core Group began drawing up contingency plans for the new junta to conduct clandestine operations in Nicaragua.

**Chapter Three Conclusion**

When the Reagan administration entered office, one of its top priorities was to develop a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the communist activities in Central America. The Reagan administration considered Central America the nation’s third border and felt that American freedom of action around the world depended in part on the stability of the region. The administration was psychologically ready to use all the tools of statecraft, even military force, in order to restore democracy and freedom to the region by minimizing communist influence and by providing assistance to nations such as El Salvador.

Nevertheless, the administration’s freedom to use military force to carry out its policy objectives in that region was constrained by the nation’s domestic political reality. The negative response from allies, the public, and congressional leaders to proposals to

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109 See Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, 87-88; Kornbluh, ‘*Nicaragua,*’ *The Price of Intervention*, 28. Sklar wrote: “The early contra war relied on a three-sided arrangement, “La Tripartita”: the United States supplied direction and money; Argentina provided training and cover; and Honduras was the main base of operations.” The Argentine military had begun fighting against the communists in 1976 when it took over the government in a coup.
send a small number of military trainers to El Salvador made it clear to administration officials, with the exception of Alexander Haig, that they would not have the support necessary to use military force in a decisive manner against Cuba. Instead, a more modest strategy would be adopted until the administration could garner more political support.

In that decision the Reagan administration solidified two of the six tests that became policy at the end of its first term in an effort to legitimize the use of force as a tool of statecraft. The first test stated: “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...[original emphasis].”

The fifth test stated: “Before the U.S. 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...”

Seeking to gain such support, the administration informed the public and Congress of what it saw as the critical situation in the region. Over time, it was hoped that these groups would be convinced that vital national interests were involved, thus warranting action to prevail decisively over Castro and his supporters. Until that support

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109 The omitted portion stated: “That emphatically does not mean that we should declare beforehand, as we did with Korea in 1950, that a particular area is outside our strategic perimeter [original emphasis].” See Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 441.

111 The omitted portion stated: “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. We cannot fight a battle with the Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking out troops not to win, but just to be there [original emphasis].” Ibid., 442.
could be gained, the administration’s strategy was to take as much action as domestic political realities allowed.

Thus, it provided economic support for El Salvador and other nations and adopted a modest role for military force within its strategy. In addition to providing military assistance and training to indigenous forces in Central America, the administration planned to pressure the Sandinista government by conducting show-of-force operations and lending support to proxy fighters. These measures were possible because the show-of-force operations would not force the administration to take any action under the War Powers Act and the covert operations would be supported with funds appropriated by members of the intelligence committees who had received the Presidential finding.

Existing scholarship characterizes the Reagan administration’s decision to adopt a covert strategy in Central America as a decision largely forced upon the administration because more aggressive action against Cuba was deemed unviable due to domestic political constraints. Robert Kagan, for example quotes Haig on the administration’s embrace of covert operations as a “decision almost by default.” Roy Gutman, who studied the evolution of the policy, found neither substantial support for covert operations, nor a single triggering event or a single point of decision. Dario Moreno explained that senior leaders in the Reagan administration accepted the proxy force plan because it accounted for the political realities they faced.

113 Gutman, Banana Diplomacy, 82-83.
114 See Moreno, U.S. Policy in Central America, 101-103.
This work makes a different argument. The Reagan administration’s actions and decisions were influenced by the political realities of the time. Still, the Reagan administration worked very hard to adopt strategies that acknowledged those constraints, while at the same time seeking to inform the public and congressional leaders of the need to take more decisive action. With its strategy in Central America, the administration sought to keep its options open for more assertive action in the future should the political opposition subside. The administration’s strategy was consciously crafted, and its decision to use contras was not taken by default.\textsuperscript{115}

This case study in the first year of the Reagan administration represents but one evolution of senior leader thought regarding the relationship between national political objectives, the use of American military force, and political realities. The administration’s understanding of these issues would evolve yet again as it sought to devise a viable strategy for a second region, the Middle East.

\textsuperscript{115} One piece of evidence that the administration did not simply decide to use the contras as a last resort is the fact that Reagan’s first presidential finding, signed in early March 1981, providing the funding that laid the groundwork for such activity.
Chapter Four: Case Study Middle East – First Deployment

Even as the Reagan administration wrestled with policy for Central America, it also faced policy decisions for a different region halfway around the world - the Middle East. In keeping with his promise to provide leadership on the international stage, in June 1982, President Reagan decided to get involved in the war being fought in the small nation of Lebanon. Israeli, Syrian, Palestinian forces, as well as separate factional militias were fighting on Lebanese soil. Reagan adopted two policy goals for the nation of Lebanon – withdrawal of all foreign forces and a stable central government. To ensure these ends, he also adopted a third policy objective, a secure border for Israel.

To develop and execute a strategy for achieving those ambitious political objectives, senior officials in the administration needed to account for the relationship between national political objectives, the use of military force, and political realities both at home and abroad. Secretary Weinberger and General John W. Vessey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, clashed with Secretary Shultz and the American Ambassador in Lebanon over how American military force ought to be used in Lebanon in order to achieve the President’s political objectives.

The Middle East case study is divided into four sections. The first section provides historical information regarding American policy toward the Middle East in the 1970s and describes the policy the Reagan administration inherited. The next two sections present the events leading up to the call for U.S. military assistance and the subsequent reaction from Congress, the American public, and the Pentagon. The final
section examines the U.S. commitment of forces in Lebanon and illustrates conditions under which military force might be deployed successfully; conditions that were later captured in the Weinberger Doctrine at the end of the administration’s first term.

Part I: Background Information on the Middle East

On 16 January 1979, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, abdicated his authority to the revolutionary forces gripping his nation and departed Iran. Two weeks


2 Like the Somozas in Nicaragua, the Pahlavis had led Iran since the early 1920s. The shah’s father, Reza Khan, had commanded the Persian Cossack Division, whose forces ended the rule of the Qajar dynasty in 1921. After Shi’a religious leaders blocked his plans for a republic, Reza Khan crowned himself as Reza Shah Pahlavi on 12 December 1925. In 1941, British and Soviet troops invaded Iran to secure its oil fields and open additional supply lines to Russia. The allies sent Reza Shah into exile and placed his son
later on 1 February, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, exiled since October 1964, returned to Iran and by year’s end had used the shah’s absence for medical treatment in the United States and the seizure of American hostages as an opportunity to seize power and impose a theocratic regime upon Iran.

The shah’s fall undermined the policy that had under-girded American strategy in the Middle East since the early 1970s. This “twin pillar” policy, first adopted by President Nixon, made provisions for the supply of military arms to Iran and Saudi Arabia. In return, the two nations were to serve as pillars of strength and stability in the Persian Gulf region, although neither the support nor the expectation for each pillar was the same.³ While Iran was guaranteed access to some of the most sophisticated non-nuclear technology in the American military arsenal, U.S. support for the Saudis was much more modest.⁴ Additionally, Iran was expected to provide proxy resistance to the Soviets and other sources of regional instability, whereas the Saudis were expected to help keep oil prices low and promote moderation in the Arab-Israeli dispute.⁵

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³ American planners recognized that the Saudis did not have the population or the infrastructure necessary for a large military build-up and that such a rapid growth in the Saudi armed forces might lead it to challenge the royal family.

⁴ Sick, All Fall Down, 13.

⁵ See Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, 35-36; Teicher and Teicher, Twin Pillars to Desert Storm, 29, 35; and, Chadda, Paradox of Power, 38-41. Chadda never refers to the “twin pillar” policy and credits the shah rather than Nixon with the idea of using Iran as a “policeman in the Persian Gulf” p. 38-39. Kupchan noted that the formulation of the twin pillar policy can be found in National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 66 published on 12 July 1969. The NSSM recommended an increase in arms sales to Iran and Saudi Arabia to help them deter Soviet moves into the region and maintain stability in the region overall, p. 35. For discussion on specific actions the Shah of Iran took in his capacity as a surrogate to the United States see Chadda, p. 40-42.
The impetus for the “twin pillar” policy can be traced back to two sources: the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and the British withdrawal from east of the Suez in 1971. During the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the Soviets broke relations with the Israelis and began supporting the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In turn, the United States replaced France as Israel’s largest benefactor. The decision by the superpowers to pair off on opposing sides to gain leverage in the Middle East transformed the Arab-Israeli dispute from a regional issue into a global affair.\(^6\)

Initially, the United States relied heavily on the British to provide the foothold for Western interests in the region.\(^7\) However, on 16 January 1968, known as “Black Tuesday,” British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced that his nation would relinquish its remaining holdings east of the Suez Canal by 1971. On 1 December 1971, Great Britain completed a withdrawal from the region that had begun in the late 1940s with a departure from Greece, Turkey, India, and Palestine, followed by the withdrawal from the Suez Canal in 1956. The United States responded to each withdrawal with policies intended to ensure that the vacuum left by the British was not filled by the Soviets. President Harry S. Truman promised economic and military aid to Greece and

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\(^7\) For discussion of superpower activity in the Middle East see Teicher and Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 22-23. Also see Kupchan, *The Persian Gulf and the West*, 29. Kupchan noted: “Before 1967, arms sales were offered primarily as a means of securing political influence and access to bases. After the war, however, transfers were directed more at building up the regional military capabilities of the Soviet-backed Arabs and the American-supported Israelis.”
Turkey, while President Dwight Eisenhower further promised armed assistance to free nations from the Soviet sphere of influence. 8

Like his predecessors, Nixon needed to ensure that the vacuum left by “Black Tuesday” was not filled by the Soviets. However, his administration believed that for the policy to be effective it had to account for two sets of constraints: first, those generated by domestic political realities largely shaped by the nation’s experience in Vietnam and second, those generated by foreign political realities largely shaped by radicalism, colonialism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. To accommodate both sets of constraints, Nixon relied upon surrogates, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, as a way to look after American interests in the region.

While the War Powers Resolution of 1973 had not yet been enacted, many of the same domestic political calculations that drove the Reagan administration to rely upon proxy forces in Central America drove the Nixon administration to rely upon surrogates in the Middle East. Specifically, the experience of Vietnam eliminated any chance that Congress or the American people would tolerate replacement of departing British forces in the Middle East with Americans. This was not the first time Nixon faced the challenge of meeting American strategic interests while heeding domestic political constraints. In July 1969, while the nation was still engaged in Vietnam, Nixon announced what came to be called the Guam Doctrine, later known as the Nixon Doctrine. In recognition of the American experiences in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Nixon Doctrine promised

8 See Kuniholm, “Retrospect and Prospects,” 9-16. Also see Kuniholm, Persian Gulf and United States Policy, 20. Kuniholm explained: “The Eisenhower Doctrine extended the containment policy from the Northern Tier states [Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran] to the Middle East in general, and Congress subsequently authorized use of armed force to assist non-Communist Middle Eastern nations threatened by armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism.”
that the United States would continue to keep its treaty commitments, but called on nations to take responsibility for their own security. Many authors have described the “twin pillar” policy as the Nixon Doctrine applied to the Middle East. However, there was a key difference between the two. The “twin pillar” policy made an additional demand of its recipients; they were expected to take overt action to help protect American interests.

The Nixon administration’s second set of constraints was radicalism, the legacy of colonialism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict upon Arab leaders in the region. American strategic planners considered subversion and political instability brought on by Arab radicalism one of the most dangerous threats to Saudi Arabia and Iran. The United States did not want to inflame that threat by building American bases in the region, which would serve as a reminder of the colonial past and provide opportunities for pro-Soviet and other radical groups to gain influence. Instead, American interests would be better served by relying upon regional actors to pursue the desired ends. Additionally, Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger believed that until the Arab-Israeli

9 See Kupchan, *The Persian Gulf and the West*, 34; Teicher and Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 23; and Chadda, *Paradox of Power*, 35. All three authors conceptualized the twin pillar policy as the Nixon Doctrine applied to the Middle East.

10 The author has not found anyone else highlighting this distinction between the Nixon Doctrine and the twin-pillar policy. Other authors do note that Iran and Saudi Arabia were expected to support U.S. interests; however, they do not emphasize the difference between providing a country with the means to defend itself from internal instability or an outside threat such as Communism and providing a country with means and then asking it to serve as a proxy for American forces. One author wrote: “This policy [twin-pillar] was perhaps the clearest translation of the Nixon Doctrine into concrete practice anywhere in the world.” See Gary Sick, “The Evolution of U.S. Strategy Toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Regions,” in *The Great Game*, ed. Rubenstein, 58.

conflict could be resolved, using surrogates was one of the few ways for the United States to improve its position in the Arab world. Iran and Saudi Arabia would be the surrogates to advance American interests in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

The first challenge to the Nixon Doctrine came in 1973, when the Middle Eastern oil-producing states led by Saudi Arabia, declared an oil embargo on the United States. On 6 October, Egypt had launched a surprise attack against Israel, prompting the United States and the Soviet Union to respond with massive arms airlifts to their respective clients. The Arabs, however, did not respond in their usual, uncoordinated way. Instead, the oil-producing nations of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, and Libya collectively agreed to launch an oil embargo. Initially they cut production by 5%, but when their demands for a full Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories occupied from the 1967 war were not met, a 25% cut in production followed and eventually all shipments of oil to the United States and Israel stopped.

One might imagine that Saudi participation in the oil embargo emplaced against the United States would have undermined the Saudi policy pillar; actually, it had the opposite effect. Support for the Saudis increased significantly throughout the remainder of the 1970s, as each administration embraced two premises: first, Saudi support was critical to gaining Arab support for the Arab-Israeli peace process and for securing reasonable oil prices and, second, Saudi support could be gained through enticements of additional weaponry. So, while the United States issued warnings and developed contingency plans for a U.S. intervention to occupy Saudi oil fields, plans were also

12 Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict, 172-173.
formulated for Saudi investments in American weapons as well as airfield and port improvements.\textsuperscript{13} Despite the oil embargo, American policy in the region continued to rest upon the Saudi pillar.

Instead it was Iran, the pillar deemed most critical to U.S. strategy in the Middle East due to its military capability, that collapsed first. When the Carter administration entered office in January 1977, it had taken up the “twin pillar” policy despite the fact that Carter had campaigned on limiting arms sales abroad and despite the signs that the shah’s control over Iran was becoming tenuous.\textsuperscript{14} Regardless of whether Carter could have or should have done more, the shah’s departure from Iran signaled the end of the American approach of reliance upon a surrogate to provide for American security interests in the Middle East.

The Carter administration had to adopt a new policy. Two years earlier, President Carter had approved the concept for a rapid deployment force (RDF). Presidential Directive (PD-18) called for “a deployment force of light divisions with strategic

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\textsuperscript{13} The following works were consulted for these paragraphs on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War: Kupchan, \textit{The Persian Gulf and the West}, 45-51, 53-64; Chadda, \textit{Paradox of Power}, 49-51. For discussion on U.S. plans for military action see Kupchan, 47 and Chadda, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{14} One leader in the Carter administration explained that the Administration continued to follow the policy because it had become largely institutionalized in the bureaucracy of the United States government since its adoption five years earlier by President Nixon. See Sick, \textit{All Fall Down}, 18, 21. Sick was the principal White House aide for Iran during the Iranian revolution and the hostage crisis and served on the National Security Council staff under Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan. Sick also noted that Kissinger and Nixon had taken measures to ensure the policy was institutionalized quickly. Sick said that the Department of Defense had studied the situation in Iran and concluded that introducing complex equipment based upon high technology would be counterproductive. He recommended instead that the shah concentrate on educating and professionalizing his force and purchasing weapons that would better match the capabilities of his soldiers and officers. Kissinger found a way around that bureaucratic friction. In July he had the President sign a memorandum that directed that all purchasing decisions be left up to the Iranian government. That White House directive was universally accepted as a presidential order and allowed the shah access to some of the most sophisticated non-nuclear technology in the American military arsenal. See Sick, \textit{All Fall Down}, 14-16.
mobility independent of overseas bases and logistical support, which includes moderate naval and tactical air forces, and limited land combat forces.” These forces were to be capable of taking action against local or Soviet militaries in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or Korea.

However, until the shah departed Iran, very little progress was made in implementing the concept due to resistance from both the State Department and the Department of Defense. The State Department fought the concept on the grounds that increased American military presence would lead to increased anti-American sentiment and pose more challenges for regimes, such as the Saudis, that were perceived to be aligned with Washington. On the other hand, the Department of Defense opposed the concept on the grounds that the RDF would take forces away from planned European contingencies. The Department of Defense also believed the RDF might be asked to carry out missions the military wished to avoid, such as helping to secure the internal


17 One historian emphasized that “the fall of the Shah was a major turning point in the evolution of the rapid deployment concept. It needs to be stressed that it was the Iranian revolution, and not the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which provided the decisive impetus for the realization of the deployment force conceived in PD-18.” See Acharya, U.S. Military Strategy in the Gulf, 53.
stability of a Middle Eastern nation.\textsuperscript{18} The shah’s departure from Iran cut through such misgivings and ended the resistance to the RDF. The fact that the United States had lain “strategically naked beneath the thin blanket of Iranian security” for so long was exposed for the world to see.\textsuperscript{19}

The events in Iran were followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. One historian has noted that “the obvious weakening of the US position in the region…may have influenced the decision of the Soviets to move in.”\textsuperscript{20} The Soviet invasion signaled that their influence in the Middle East, which had been minimal since the 1973 War, would again need to be reckoned with.\textsuperscript{21}

The Carter administration, which had already worked for months to correct the problems exposed by the overthrow of the shah, capitalized upon the renewed threat from

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\textsuperscript{21} The Soviet loss of influence can be traced back to the beginning of 1971 when Egypt’s new President, Anwar Al Sadat, launched his corrective revolution, purging government leaders who were considered pro-Soviet. In July 1972, Sadat expelled Soviet military advisors from Egypt. In spite of these activities Egypt received support from the Soviet Union during the 1973 War. However, the United States influence in the region increased following that war in comparison to the Soviets. One reason was American armaments proved yet again to be superior to those of the Soviets. Another reason is that the United States demonstrated that, of the two superpowers, it was the only one that could successfully negotiate with and on behalf of both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This fact was brought home to the Arab nations when American diplomatic pressure convinced Israel to stop short of destroying the Egyptian Third Army trapped in the Sinai. See Kupchan, \textit{The Persian Gulf and the West}, 48, 51; Chadda, \textit{Paradox of Power}, 42-46.
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the Soviets to resolve the political challenge of publicizing the RDF concept. In his State of the Union address delivered on 23 January 1980, Carter announced:

Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

Five weeks later, on 1 March 1980, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was activated at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. The RDF consisted of 261 personnel from all three services charged with responding to any contingency that threatened U.S. vital interests. Carter’s speech and the activation of the RDF signaled that his administration was no longer going to depend upon surrogates to defend the nation’s interests in the Middle East. When the Reagan administration came into office in January 1981, it embraced the Carter Doctrine and the RDF concept.

In order for that concept to be viable, the nation needed to address a number of issues. Five days into his job, Weinberger received a memorandum from a subordinate

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22 See Kupchan, *The Persian Gulf and the West*, 127. Kupchan explained that the Carter administration was concerned about how to publicize the RDF concept: “Should the RDF be presented as part of a global strategy, a regional strategy or a reaction to vulnerability in a specific theater?”


24 The RDF was initially a subordinate command of the Readiness Command. However, on 1 October 1983 it was made into a separate joint task force that was to report directly to the National Command Authority through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At that time it was also tasked to make its primary focus Southwest Asia. On 1 January 1983, the RDF was transformed again into U.S. Central Command and given geographic responsibility over the Southwest Asia region. For the Evolution of the RDF Command Organization see Acharya, *U.S. Military Strategy in the Gulf*, 66.
that identified thirteen different issues that needed to be addressed by the administration in order to build a viable response for the Persian Gulf region. Nevertheless, neither the nation’s ability, nor its true willingness to deploy military force to the Middle East would be tested until 2 July 1982. On that day Lebanon’s president, Bashir Gemayel, requested that an international peacekeeping force, to include United States troops, be dispatched to his nation.

25 Weinberger Papers, I: 645, National Security Council, folder 1, Item no. 3, X12590, “27 Jan 81 – Memo for SecDef from Mr. Kramer, Subject: NSC Topics.” Some of the issues addressed were: peacetime presence, en route access, exercises, Sinai air bases, allied contributions, and basing requirements.

Part II: The Call for U.S. Forces

The Lebanese government’s call for an international force can be traced back to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49, when tens of thousands of Palestinians entered Lebanon after fleeing northern Palestine. Their numbers grew during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, when many more left their homes in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Finally, the last large influx occurred in 1971, when 150,000 Palestinians were expelled from Jordan. The Palestinians established PLO headquarters in Beirut, organized the


28 Jordan had served as the Palestinians’ major base for operations against Israel; however, Jordanian military and political elites decided that their nation would be better served without the presence of the PLO and were able to drive them out. Thus, many of the refugees Lebanon received in 1971 were top
Palestinian people living in the camps, and launched raids from southern Lebanon against Israel and against Israeli targets outside of the Middle East.

The Lebanese government’s weakness precluded it from stopping the Palestinians from forming a veritable state within Lebanon. The first challenge to Lebanese sovereignty came in December 1968, when the Israelis conducted a raid on the Beirut International Airport in retaliation for a Palestinian attack on an Israeli plane in Greece. The second challenge followed in November 1969, when the Lebanese government signed the Cairo Agreement with the PLO. Intended to maintain Lebanese sovereignty while providing the PLO with some autonomy, the agreement served to legitimize PLO freedom of action and ultimately allowed the Palestinians to gain control over large portions of southern Lebanon by the mid-1970s.

The third challenge, in May 1976, came not from the Israelis or Palestinians, but from the Syrians, who entered Lebanon to restore order and stop the civil war that had been under way there since April 1975. The Syrians were by and large successful, winning the consent of the Lebanese government as well as the Arab League to remain in the country as part of an Arab peacekeeping force.29 In July 1977, Syria, the Lebanese government, and the PLO signed the Chtaura Agreement, under which the PLO would


29 This Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) consisted of approximately 30,000 soldiers who were mostly Syrian. The force was funded by the oil-producing states but under the authority of the Lebanese president. The ADF was not asked to depart until 1982. The information for the Palestinian and Lebanese problems with sovereignty came from the following sources: Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, 40-41, 54-56; Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon*, 7-9, 13-16; David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 86-96, 129-142.
pull back from the border with Israel and allow units from the reconstituted Lebanese army to move in to restore the government’s authority over the border. Days before the handover was to occur, the plan was thwarted when a Christian militia group, supported by Israel, attacked the PLO.\textsuperscript{30} The renewed fighting prevented the Lebanese army from occupying positions in the south.

In 1977, Israelis voted into power the right-wing Likud coalition, under the leadership of Menachem Begin. During the campaign leading up to the election, Begin had promised to take a tougher stand against the PLO in Lebanon. Following through on that pledge in March 1978, the Begin government deployed 25,000 soldiers across the border to seize a security zone six miles deep into Lebanon. The United Nations immediately passed resolutions calling for an Israeli withdrawal and for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to enter Lebanon to help the government reestablish control of the southern border. However, the Lebanese were again prevented from restoring complete control when the Israelis turned over the final tracts of land to the same Christian militia group that had prevented the Lebanese army from occupying positions along the border a year earlier.\textsuperscript{31}

In 1981, the Israelis aided Christian militiamen, engaged in fighting the Syrians in Northern Lebanon, by downing two Syrian helicopters. In June of that year, the Israelis conducted air strikes on PLO positions in Lebanon, one of which hit the PLO headquarters in downtown Beirut. Syria responded by emplacing ground-to-air missiles

\textsuperscript{30} This Christian militia group served as a proxy force for the Israelis in Lebanon and was led by Haddad.

\textsuperscript{31} Gilmour, \textit{Lebanon}, 143, 146, 150-151.
in Lebanon, while the PLO stepped up attacks into northern Israel. The United States sent retired Under Secretary of State Phillip C. Habib to serve as a special negotiator to work on both issues. Habib could not convince the Syrians to remove its missiles, but successfully negotiated a cease fire between the Israelis and the PLO on 24 July 1981.

The cease fire was tenuous and the Israelis looked for a provocation to justify an attack into Lebanon on the PLO. On 3 June 1982, that provocation came when a group of Palestinians, who were not PLO members, attempted to assassinate Israel’s ambassador to Great Britain. The Israelis charged the PLO with breaking the cease fire agreement and retaliated by bombing PLO targets in Lebanon, which in turn prompted PLO bombings of northern Israel. Both parties were exhorted by the United States and others to refrain from violence, but to no avail. On 6 June 1982, the Israelis invaded Lebanon.

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32 The PLO used the period following the cease fire to build up its artillery, rocket, and other heavy arms supplies, while the Israelis made plans to attack and destroy the PLO forces in southern Lebanon. In October 1981, Begin told American Secretary of State Alexander Haig about Israeli plans to move into Lebanon. Haig said: “In the months ahead the subject would arise again and again.” See Haig, Caveat, 326-327 and 332.


34 On 25 February Moshe Arens, the Israeli Ambassador told US reporters that an Israeli invasion of Lebanon was “a matter of time.” See American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982, 7n, 801. Earlier
The Israeli cabinet issued a statement indicating that the purpose of the incursion, named Peace for Galilee, was to “place all civilian population of the Galilee beyond the range of the terrorist fire from Lebanon.” To that end, the Israelis announced that they planned to clear a forty-kilometer zone but not to engage Syrian forces. By 9 June, however, the Israelis had pressed well beyond the forty-kilometer zone, attacked Syrian SAM [surface-to-air missile] batteries, and shot down some twenty Syrian MIGs with no losses. Two days later the Israelis were within sight of Beirut. They proceeded to lay siege to the PLO forces trapped inside the city and Syrian forces cut off outside, announcing that (1) all foreign armies (including the PLO) were to be withdrawn from that month, General Yahoshua Sagay, director of Israeli military intelligence had called on Haig and told him of Israel’s plans to attack the PLO in Lebanon. One of the administration’s memorandums on this subject has been declassified and thus allows this subject to be discussed with further candor. According to the memorandum “Secretary Haig warned the Israeli emissary, General Sagi, the Chief of Intelligence, that such an attack would have ‘grave implications’ for US-Israeli relations.” One can see from this memorandum and others which are still classified that the Reagan administration was very opposed to the prospect of an Israeli invasion. The memorandum further stated: “The United States has nothing to gain and much to lose should Israel again invade Lebanon. We must alert Arabs (Saudis, Jordanians, Syrians, and others) to the dangers and enlist their support for PLO restraint. Our goal must be to dissuade Israel, and should that fail, to keep Israel’s response in some reasonable proportion to a provocation.” See \textit{Weinberger Papers,} I: 687, Lebanon, folder 1, Item no. 1, 18317, “1 Feb 82 – Memo for DepSecDef from Noel Koch, Subject: Lebanon – Information Memorandum” In May 1982, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon visited Washington D.C. and sketched out two possible military campaigns to a room of State Department officials. See \textit{Caveat,} 332, 335. For specific information on the Israelis war plans see Richard A. Gabriel, \textit{Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 60-61.

35 “Document 350, U.S. Reaction to the Attempted Assassination of Israel’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom,” and “Document 351, Appeal for a Cease-Fire in Lebanon,” in \textit{American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982,} 803-804. The impotence of the UNIFIL was demonstrated when the Israeli forces rolled right through its positions.

36 This statement was part of the following source “Document 353, Efforts to Limit the War in Lebanon,” in \textit{American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982,} 804.

37 See Davis, \textit{40Km into Lebanon,} 92. It is still unknown why the Israeli actions did not match their words. Haig argued the attacks were extended due to military concerns. See Haig, \textit{Caveat,} 338. Others have seen the extension of attacks as representative of a battle between Begin and Sharon over what ends the nation of Israel ought to be pursuing. See Davis, \textit{40Km Into Lebanon,} 77. Still others argue that the Israelis’ intent from the start was duplicitous. See Gilmour, \textit{Lebanon,} 143, 146, 161.
Lebanon; (2) a new Lebanese Government was to be formed; and (3) the new government was to sign a peace treaty with Israel.38

Ambassador Habib, who was on his way to the Middle East when the war began, arrived in Jerusalem for talks on 7 June. On 22 June, Secretary of Defense Weinberger advised President Reagan:

Thirteen days ago, Israel invaded Lebanon to push the PLO and its artillery back 40 kilometers. Israel’s army has now advanced 80 kilometers to encircle the PLO in Beirut. The low-key U.S. reaction has upset our Arab friends, who are questioning our motives. Israel once again has demonstrated its overwhelming military superiority and, for the time being, has positively secured its only porous border. The effect upon our security interests is not as positive. Turbulence, hatred and confusion among 120 million Arabs do not enhance stability in the vital Gulf region or the influence of the West.39

Weinberger recommended that U.S. policy should preserve American standing in the Arab world.

To that end, Weinberger recommended that the President direct Habib to negotiate with the PLO to lay down their arms and withdraw their fighters from Lebanon. Weinberger emphasized that “a face-saving, political role for the PLO…be salvaged [his emphasis].” Weinberger also recommended that America “reiterate our long-time offer


39 Weinberger Papers, I: 687, Lebanon, folder 4, Item no. 22, X20284, “17 June 82 – Memo for SecDef from Francis West, Subject: U.S. Policy in Lebanon.”
to recognize the PLO, deal with it and win a place at the peace table for it, if it unequivocally endorses Resolution 242, and commits itself to a negotiated peace with Israel working with the Camp David agreements [his emphasis].

Weinberger noted:

“This position would give us enormous leverage with the Gulf States where we have vital interests that are now in peril as a result of our reactive support of Israel’s use of force [author’s emphasis].” Weinberger said:

Under these circumstances, the international force for Southern Lebanon might include Egyptian, Saudi and Jordanian forces as well as our own, the French and others. We must carefully link our participation in such a force to broader agreements about the peace process and the Government of Lebanon….In the absence of an agreement, we must not deploy U.S. troops in a continuing hostile situation [author’s emphasis].

The international force for Southern Lebanon, to which Weinberger referred, was a force that had not yet been put together. Nevertheless, everyone could agree that the Israelis would not leave Lebanon until they received some type of security guarantee for their

40 Ibid. UN Res. 242 was adopted by the UN Security Council on 22 November 1967 and called for a withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from territories (Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Eastern Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights) occupied during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Weinberger believed that such a demand would divide the PLO and allow the U.S. to work with the moderate remnants. Weinberger also recommended that the United States announce that it intended to put forward American ideas for full autonomy for the Palestinians as it was envisioned at Camp David. Following twelve days of secret negotiations at Camp David, Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed two agreements. The second agreement led directly to the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty signed in March 1979. That treaty made plans for the Israelis to withdrawal from the Sinai.

41 Ibid. Weinberger concluded: “While this program both preserves our interests and buttresses Israel’s security over the long-term, it probably will provoke outrage from Begin and Sharon because it brings in the PLO and forces a compromise short of the Israeli goal of eventual annexation of the West Bank. Many Israelis would welcome the above initiatives from us, as would broad sections of Congress and the U.S. public. Such a policy also would secure our standing in the Arab world and among our alarmed allies.”
northern border. Thus, it would be necessary to have some force interposed between the Israelis and their enemies.

One idea for that force was to expand the role of the UN forces (UNFIL) already located in Southern Lebanon. However, the idea that the administration favored most was to construct a Multinational Force (MNF). In his memoir, Shultz summarized some of the reasons why the administration believed an MNF was justified: “A multinational force separate from the United Nations could be formed more quickly and would be composed of forces from major countries whose involvement the ever-bargaining Lebanese regarded as advantageous.”42 Additionally, he noted that the Israelis “would have nothing to do with a UN role in any form for Beirut, a view traced back to 1967, when the United Nations pulled its peacekeeping troops out of the Sinai at Gamal Abdel Nasser’s demand, a step toward the war that followed.”43 Another reason why the administration did not favor a UN role was that it left open the potential for the Soviet Union to demand inclusion for its forces.44

The inclusion of U.S. troops in the MNF, if and when it was formed, was an issue that would challenge the Reagan administration. Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey did not think that it was a good idea to include U.S. soldiers, arguing that the mission might trap the U.S. in a long-term peacekeeping mission in which American

42 George P. Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 46.

43 Ibid. Also see Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 144, note 3.

44 Bernard Gwertzman, “Key Lawmakers Express Doubts About Plan,” The New York Times, July 7, 1982, [online archive]; accessed September 14, 2007. This article also reported that Yasser Arafat did not have an objection to the U.S. being involved in an international force charged with guaranteeing the Palestinian departure from Beirut.
troops might have to kill Israelis, Arabs, or civilians.\textsuperscript{45} This was particularly worrisome to leaders in the Pentagon, because they were charged with providing credibility to the RDF-concept and needed access to facilities and logistical support in the Arab states around the Gulf to do so. As Weinberger told reporters, the United States needed a “number of friends” in the Middle East and U.S. military participation in a peacekeeping force that excluded the Palestinians from southern Lebanon would not serve that end.\textsuperscript{46} Instead, U.S. military involvement had the potential to present “immense diplomatic and political problems” with the Arab nations.\textsuperscript{47} Weinberger wanted the administration to avoid actions that might anger important Arab states such as Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{46} Mary McGrory, “Playing Rodney Dangerfield in the Mideast Has Its Hazards,” \textit{The Washington Post}, July 8, 1982. In general, Caspar Weinberger was very sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and frustrated by Israeli unilateralism. In June Weinberger recommended that the administration support a UN resolution condemning Israel for its invasion and threaten the state with sanctions. By August, Weinberger was so frustrated with the Israelis over their tough tactics that Shultz wrote: “he [Weinberger] seemed almost ready to sever relations.” See Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 140-146; Haig, \textit{Caveat}, 343-344; Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 60.


\textsuperscript{48} See Ralph A. Hallenbeck, \textit{Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy: Intervention in Lebanon, August 1982-February 1984}, (New York: Praeger, 1991), 14. Hallenbeck cited many of the same newspaper articles used as sources here but reaches very different conclusions. He argued that Weinberger and Vessey were concerned about employing U.S. Marines in Lebanon because it “entailed risks similar to those that had accompanied the initial introduction of U.S. units into Vietnam.” Hallenbeck did not note Weinberger’s concerns regarding how the deployment might interfere with U.S. relations with the Arab states. In his memoir Weinberger provided more specific concerns regarding the second MNF deployment; these were closely related to the concerns of becoming involved in another Vietnam type situation. This author does not believe those concerns were as strong with Weinberger on the first deployment because he and Vessey were able to get the administration to agree to have the forces deployed for only thirty days and made plans for restricting the mission of the American forces. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Also see Robert C. McFarlane and Zofia Smardz, \textit{Special Trust}, (New York: Cadell & Davies, 1994), 211. Regarding Weinberger’s push to get the Marines out quickly after the PLO fighters were evacuated, McFarlane wrote: “Weinberger, with his pro-Arab convictions, had no doubt acted out of concern that the Marines could be identified as tilting toward Israel, and that they could become involved, even if only coincidentally, in violence against Arabs that would damage our position \textit{vis-à-vis} the Arab states.” McFarlane’s statement seems to back the argument posited above that many of Weinberger’s concerns stemmed from strategic considerations.
Nevertheless, Weinberger’s June memorandum to the President demonstrated that leaders in the Department of Defense could conceive of deploying soldiers as part of a MNF so long as that force was tied to securing a larger peace plan for the region. A regional peace plan would improve American relations with the Arab states, which in turn would help with American relations with Persian Gulf states who Pentagon leaders wanted to court for basing rights.

Later, Secretary of State Shultz would charge Pentagon leaders with being too hesitant in using military force, which left him and other State Department officials to conduct diplomacy without the advantage of being backed by credible military power. As this study progresses, readers will be shown that just the opposite was true. Pentagon leaders were supportive of using military force, such as in the case of providing security to the PLO fighters, when that military force could be used to secure an important political objective. Hesitancy on the part of Pentagon leaders only came in the absence of a plan that related military force to political objectives to serve the nation’s vital interests in the region.

On 30 June 1982, the administration announced the U.S. objectives for Lebanon: (1) withdrawal of all foreign forces; (2) a stable central government for Lebanon; and (3) a secure border for Israel.\(^49\) Throughout the remainder of June and into July, Ambassador Habib worked to achieve a new cease fire that would help set the stage for America to exert its leadership in the region and work toward meeting those objectives. Early on 2

July, Habib returned to the State Department to report significant progress: Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, had agreed to depart Lebanon with his fighters so long as the Palestinian refugees left behind would be protected.

The Government of Lebanon recognized that assistance from an international force was necessary to give such a guarantee. Thus, the Lebanese sent word back through Habib to Reagan that they would request an international force, to include the U.S., be sent to Lebanon. Habib gave his news to Walter Stoessel, Deputy Secretary of State, and Larry Eagleburger, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, because Haig, having just recently resigned, was staying at an isolated resort in West Virginia in order to avoid the media. Nevertheless, Haig was immediately notified about Habib’s breakthrough because Reagan had asked Haig to continue to manage the Lebanon crisis until his replacement, George Shultz, could be confirmed. The New York Times reported that later that evening in secrecy, Reagan, Haig, Shultz, and other key leaders made the decision to allow American troops to participate in an international force for Beirut. While Weinberger and Vessey had concerns about the mission, they supported it.

50 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 47 and Haig, Caveat, 349.

51 On 25 June 1982 President Reagan gave Haig a note that read: “Dear Al, It is with the most profound regret that I accept your letter of resignation.” This caused Haig to hurry back to his office to write his letter of resignation. For details about the events that led to Haig’s resignation see Haig, Caveat, 310-316, 350-351.

The force was directed “to assist Lebanese armed forces in the orderly and safe
departure from Beirut of armed personnel, and to assist in the transition of authority to
the Lebanese government in Beirut.”\textsuperscript{53} Although Reagan’s announcement was only an
agreement in “principle,” the die was cast. The administration’s intention to commit U.S.
military forces was met with a range of reactions from leaders in Congress, the American
people, and leaders in the Pentagon.

\textit{Part III: The Response to the Call to Use Military Force}

\textbf{Congress}

At the beginning of July, when the deployment of American troops to Lebanon
was still theoretical, congressional reaction was mixed. Leaders of both parties expressed
“doubts” and “deep concern” over the administration’s plan.\textsuperscript{54} For example, Senate
majority leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn) argued: “It is not wise to introduce
American fighting men in the Lebanese conflict,” while Representative Clement J.
Zablocki (D-Wisc), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, had “serious


\textsuperscript{54} Don Oberdorfer and John M. Goshko, “U.S. Set to Send Troops to Lebanon: Peace-Keeping Force,” \textit{The Washington Post}, July 7, 1982; Bernard Gwertzman, “Key Lawmakers Express Doubts About Plan,” \textit{The New York Times}, July 7, 1982, [online archive]; accessed September 14, 2007. Members of Congress were not brought in on the discussion until the matter of using U.S. military troops was announced by the Israeli press. In response, Reagan made a formal announcement on 6 July that he had agreed in principle to contribute forces to a peacekeeping force in Lebanon. In an effort at damage control, Senior White House and State Department officials quickly placed calls to members of Congress.
reservations regarding the proposal.”\textsuperscript{55} However, two Democratic leaders from key House subcommittees lent their support to the administration’s plan.\textsuperscript{56}

One fact-finding trip to Beirut by two senators from the Foreign Relations Committee captured the feelings of Congressional leaders about the issue. Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn) told reporters that before the trip he favored using Marines as part of an international force but changed his mind when he came to realize how many factions did not want peace and would view the Marines as opportune targets. In contrast, his traveling companion, Carl Levin (D-Mich), stated that he was still in favor of the deployment, but added several caveats. First, he said those troops should be charged only with assuring the safe exit of the PLO fighters. Second, they should be there for only a limited time. Third, they should be invited by all parties. And, fourth, they should deploy as part of a multinational force. Levin argued that further expansion of the war posed a greater risk to American interests than deployment of American forces.\textsuperscript{57}

Unlike the news reports in 1981, when the Administration planned to send a small number of military advisors to El Salvador, coverage of this military plan avoided


\textsuperscript{56} They were Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) from the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East and Joseph P. Addabbo (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House defense appropriations subcommittee. See Michael Getler, “Israel Approves Most of U.S. Plan for PLO Pullout; Troops Would Be Used As Departure ‘Screen’,” \textit{The Washington Post}, July 8, 1982. For an explanation as to why it is common to see Congressional leaders crossing party lines in the formulation of positions concerning Israel see Nimrod Novik, \textit{The United States and Israel: Domestic Determinants of a Changing U.S. Commitment} (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 39.

the words “quagmire” or “another Vietnam.” Additionally, there were no protest marches, large volumes of mail to the White House and Congress, or pressure on congressional leaders to block the administration’s plans. Congress did, however, ask Reagan to abide by the War Powers Act.

The president promised he would, though he did not specify under which provision of the law he would report. Section 4 (a) (1) of the War Powers Act required the President to report to Congress when U.S. forces were introduced “into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.” If the President reported under that section, he would be required to withdraw the forces within sixty days unless Congress declared war or extended the time, or he could demonstrate that an “unavoidable military necessity” demanded an extension of an additional 30 days. Section 4 (a) (2) simply required that the president report to Congress when American forces were introduced “into territory, airspace or waters of a foreign nation, while equipped for combat.” If Reagan chose to report under that provision he could dispatch troops to Lebanon without a time limit.

Congressional leaders wanted Reagan to report under the former section, so that they would be involved in deciding when the U.S. forces would come home.

58 The author examined numerous articles from the period and the only reference to Vietnam came from Senator Charles Percy (R-Ill.). The Senator was very critical of Israel’s decision to invade Lebanon and noted that the situation could turn out to be “Israel’s Vietnam.” See William Branigin, “Fighting in Beirut Mounts With Talks Still at an Impasse; President Sees Hope For End in Fighting,” The Washington Post, July 12, 1982.


Nonetheless, many congressional leaders privately admitted that the mission was unlikely to extend beyond sixty days unless the administration decided to move beyond providing a screen for the PLO. To assuage the concerns of troubled critics such as Senate Majority Leader Baker the administration repeatedly stressed that the mission would not extend beyond thirty days.⁶¹

Additionally, days before the administration made its final decision to deploy 800 U.S. Marines to Lebanon, recently confirmed Secretary of State Shultz held sessions with congressional leaders to get their views on the Palestinian issue. He devoted the better part of three days to meeting with senators and congressmen. One participant was reported as saying, “It was a classic case of what consultations should really be about….Shultz showed he had an understanding of the need to stroke members of Congress and make them feel as if they are really part of the process, even if in the end he doesn’t use their ideas at all.” Another said, “I don’t know whether to admire him for soliciting our advice, which no Secretary has done before, or be nervous if he really is looking to us for creative thoughts.”⁶² Shultz’ efforts were apparently appreciated and may have been one reason why congressional leaders allowed Reagan a measure of latitude in the deployment.⁶³

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⁶³ Finally, what is difficult to ascertain, but what must be mentioned, is the power of the pro-Israel lobby, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), over congressional leaders and their decisions.
The American People

A Harris poll, reported in *The Washington Post* on 19 July 1982, found that 54 percent of Americans disapproved of the Administration’s plan to deploy U.S. forces to Lebanon as part of the MNF.\(^{64}\) Surprisingly, 40 percent said that dispatching American forces was a good decision. This considerable support from the U.S. public, which flew in the face of the “Vietnam Syndrome,” may have several explanations.

First, in the early 1980s, three out of four Americans held a positive image of Israel. Because of shared values and traditions and the large American-Jewish population, over the years a special relationship had formed between the two countries. While most polls showed that Americans were not interested in foreign affairs, the issue that consistently attracted the attention of American citizens was Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This interest is reflected in media coverage throughout the 1960s and into the early 1980s in which Israel received almost as much attention in the media as any...

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domestic issue.\textsuperscript{65} In October 1980, 86 percent of Americans questioned were found supportive of the statement that described Israel as “a small, courageous, democratic nation which is trying to preserve its independence.”\textsuperscript{66} This pro-Israeli sentiment may have helped to mute some of the concerns Americans had about sending troops as peacekeepers.

Second, a majority of Americans believed that the nation had a vital interest in Israel. In a poll conducted in late 1981, Americans were asked whether they felt the U.S. did or did not have a vital interest in any of twenty-four countries. At 81 percent, Israel ranked as the second most important country in terms of “American vital interest there,” trailing only Saudi Arabia at 84 percent.\textsuperscript{67} The Arab nations had already demonstrated their ability to disrupt Western economies by imposing an oil embargo, and if matters in the Middle East were allowed to escalate further, America might again be punished for the aggressive actions of its ally Israel in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{68} The premise underlying the Carter Doctrine was that American military forces might have to protect American vital interests.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 37. In 1982, the Jewish population in the United States was estimated to be 5.725 million or 2.5 percent of the overall American population. See Mandell L. Berman Institute, “North American Jewish Data Bank,” \url{http://www.jewishdatabank.org/AJYB/AJY-1983.pdf} [accessed March 18, 2008]. For a book explaining the impact of the Israel lobby on U.S. foreign policy see Mearsheimer and Walt, \textit{The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy}. Mearsheimer and Walt contended that American support to Israel cannot be explained either on strategic or moral grounds. Instead, such support is gained because of the activities of the Israeli lobby, which the authors described as “a loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively works to move U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction.” P. 5.

\textsuperscript{66} See Novik, The United States and Israel, 21.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 39n, 21.

\textsuperscript{68} For a contradictory argument to this claim see Cheryl A. Rubenberg, \textit{Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 285. Rubenberg argued: “Haig announced on June 10 after a meeting between President Reagan and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal that Saudi Arabia had given no indication of any possible interruption in the flow of oil to the West in spite of Arab “anger” over the invasion. Thus the United States was assured at an early date that it had nothing to fear from the Arab oil-producers for its support of Israel’s actions in Lebanon.
in the region. Deploying forces to “rescue” the PLO from the Israelis seemed a relatively straightforward way to demonstrate the credibility of the nation’s doctrine and to gain favor with the Arab states.69

Third, many Americans may have been influenced by graphic imagery on television and in newspapers of innocent civilians killed or maimed in Beirut and Israel. Shultz wrote in his memoir: “The symbol of this war has become the baby with its arms blown off.”70 He referred to a picture in The Washington Post of a nurse feeding a seven-month-old baby who had lost both arms and was severely burned when an Israeli jet accidentally hit a residential area in East Beirut.71 Another graphic picture showed a young Lebanese child bent down at a dripping faucet with the caption: “A Lebanese child scrounges for a few drops of water in West Beirut after Israeli forces cut off water and power.”72

69 Like the Carter administration, the Reagan administration also considered the Persian Gulf region a vital interest to the United States and its allies. Likewise, the Reagan administration was committed to defending the nation’s interests there with American military forces.

70 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 61.


72 Don Oberdorfer and John M. Goshko, “U.S. Set to Send Troops to Lebanon; Peace-Keeping Force; Reagan Approves Sending a U.S. Peace-Keeping Force to Beirut,” The Washington Post, July 7, 1982. Also see Thomas L. Friedman, “Food is Becoming the Critical Problem in Lebanon,” July 18, 1982, [online archive]; accessed October 4, 2007; Shawn G. Kennedy, “Arab-Americans Seeking to Bring Children to U.S.,” August 12, 1982, [online archive]; accessed October 4, 2007. A Washington Post/ABC poll conducted on 17 August 1982 found an 8% increase in sympathies for the Arab Nations since a similar poll was conducted in June 1982. See Gilboa, “Trends in American Attitudes Toward Israel,” 67-72 and Table 2.10, 66. During the summer of 1982 the American media was accused of being pro-PLO and anti-Israel. For a thorough discussion on this issue see Noam Chomsky, The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 280-289.
Lastly, American newspapers throughout the month of July portrayed intervention as a last resort: broken cease-fires that halted or slowed Ambassador Habib’s diplomatic efforts; concerns of epidemics due to the Israeli siege and shortages of basic services in the city; Israeli intransigence against U.N. resolutions demanding the provision of electricity, food and medical care; and the growing divide between the Reagan and Begin administrations over the tactics to expel the PLO from Beirut. By the end of the month many Americans may well have felt the same way as the Commander in Chief. President Reagan was asked by a reporter: “Are you losing patience? Are you frustrated?” The President answered: “I lost patience a long time ago.”73 Thus, like their congressional leaders, most Americans remained quiet when the Administration made its decision to deploy Marines to Beirut.74

In the Central American case study, Caspar Weinberger resisted taking stern measures against Cuba because he did not believe the American people and their congressional leaders would support such an action. He argued that the American experience in Vietnam had demonstrated that Americans and their congressional leaders were unlikely to respond positively to using military force unless American vital interests were at stake. The response of congressional leaders and Americans to the proposal to send military forces to Lebanon suggested acceptance, if not positive endorsement, with the caveats described by Senator Levin: do it quickly and limit the mission to getting the


74 In late June 1982, in spite of such reporting, 79% of Americans still labeled Israel as either “a close ally” or “friend” of the U.S. That represented a 4% increase since January 1982. See Novik, The United States and Israel, 155-156n43.
PLO out. The Senator’s caveats echo those, described in chapter two, for the mass public: swift, decisive action, not long-term commitments.

The Pentagon

Both Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey supported the administration’s plans for four reasons. First, assisting the departure of the PLO was an explicit military objective. Second, the mission aimed at securing an important political objective. The U.S. could point to this action as a gesture of goodwill toward the Palestinians, in particular, and the Arab world, in general, and thus serve the nation’s strategic interests in the Persian Gulf region; interests which both men considered vital to the nation’s overall security. Third, the mission was supported by the American public and their congressional leaders. Fourth, a decisive result could be achieved in a very short period of time and without impinging upon resources needed for other global challenges.

Nevertheless, General Vessey expressed his concern regarding the second portion of the administration’s announced intent, which called for assistance in the transition of authority to the Lebanese government. A critical component in that transition would be rebuilding the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) so that they could support the Lebanese Government. General Vessey believed that the political situation in Lebanon was more

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75 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 14.

76 In his memoir Weinberger does not provide a specific explanation for why he and General Vessey were against U.S. troops participating in the first MNF operation. The explanation provided for his concerns regarding the mission relies on evidence from the memoirs of other leaders, newspapers, and secondary source material. See Haig, Caveat, 343; “U.S. Warships Ordered to Stand By Off Lebanon,” Washington Times, July 7, 1982; Don Oberdorfer, “Plan to Send in the Marines Caught Up in Controversy,” The Washington Post, July 11, 1982; Mary McGrory, “Playing Rodney Dangerfield in the Mideast Has Its Hazards,” The Washington Post, July 8, 1982; and Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 14.
likely to constrain the capability of the LAF to reassert Lebanese governmental authority than any shortage in equipment, arms, or training.\textsuperscript{77}

In a memorandum written to Secretary Weinberger in late July, General Vessey explained that while the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that a strong Lebanese Army was essential to ensuring the sovereignty of the Lebanese government, they also believed “that any United States action to assist in the strengthening of the LAF must be taken \textit{only after careful consideration of pertinent political and military factors bearing on the situation} [author’s emphasis].”\textsuperscript{78} Vessey went on to describe the constraining political situation:

The PLO and Syrian elements remaining in Lebanon have not yet agreed to accept Lebanese government authority in areas still under their control. Perhaps most significantly, the LAF itself is still beset with religious factionalism which makes their utility for governmental objectives doubtful in the absence of a political consensus.\textsuperscript{79}

Thus, Vessey cautioned against sending a large influx of security assistance items into Lebanon until “suitable political conditions can be achieved.”\textsuperscript{80} Vessey’s concern also applied to the concept of keeping American soldiers deployed in Lebanon after the PLO had departed. The small, lightly armed MNF, which the administration had agreed to

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Weinberger Papers,} I: 688, Lebanon 1982, folder 4, Item no. 48, X21012, “29 Jul 82 – Memo for SecDef from Gen. Vessey, Subject: Rebuilding the Lebanese Armed Forces.”

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
deploy, was not disposed to exert pressure on any of the parties to reach a political settlement. Thus Vessey, who was joined by Weinberger, wanted the administration to make it very clear to all parties involved that American forces would redeploy as soon as the PLO fighters had left.

The influence of Weinberger and Vessey is manifest in the administration’s announcement that explicit conditions would need to be met before it would officially consider dispatching troops. First, the administration demanded assurances from the involved authorities and governments that the peacekeeping forces would be accepted and protected. Second, the administration wanted a formal request from Lebanon. Third, another country needed to participate along with the U.S. Finally, the role of U.S. troops needed to be limited by geography and time.81 Each condition was meant to gain support for the mission both at home and abroad.

Weinberger took every opportunity to emphasize these points while talking to reporters and during television interviews.82 While on “Meet the Press” he stressed that American forces would be in Lebanon only for the period of time it took to evacuate the PLO forces, which he predicted could be done in a matter of days. With regards to assistance in the transition of authority in Beirut, Weinberger said that American forces


would not remain in country waiting for the full restoration of the Lebanese
government’s authority because that would lead to a “totally open-ended, indefinite
commitment.” Weinberger noted: “our acceptance of the use of U.S. troops is for the
very limited purpose of getting the PLO out.”

At that time there was no official comment from the White House regarding the
Weinberger interpretation of the mission. On 20 August, however, the administration
formally announced that 800 Marines would deploy to Lebanon in accordance with the
Weinberger interpretation. President Reagan announced:

Our purpose will be to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in carrying out
their responsibility for insuring the departure of PLO leaders, officers, and
combatants in Beirut, from Lebanese territory under safe and orderly
conditions. The presence of U.S. forces also will facilitate the restoration
of the sovereignty and authority of the Lebanese Government over the
Beirut area. In no case will our troops stay longer than 30 days.

Clearly, the Pentagon had helped shape the President’s orders to the Marines in the MNF.
Reagan’s statement emphasized the Marines’ mission of helping to evacuate the PLO
members. The second portion of the Administration’s previously announced intent,
restoring the sovereignty and authority of the Lebanese government over the Beirut area,
was limited in scope, to be accomplished by the mere “presence” of the U.S. forces.

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83 William Branigin, “Fighting in Beirut Mounts With Talks Still at an Impasse; President Sees Hope For

84 “Document 392, Announcement of an Agreement for the Withdrawal of the PLO From Beirut,” in
American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982, 839-840.
In its decision to send military force to the Middle East the administration did not face the same domestic political constraints it had when it considered using military force to blockade Cuba or quarantine Central America. Congress and the American people were generally supportive of the announced policy, stemming from a perception that if the matter was allowed to get further out of hand it might result in far greater risk to American vital interests than that involved in dispatching American forces. The conditions that the administration placed on deployment were designed to help the administration account for the two constraining factors: domestic political realities driven by the American experience in Vietnam and foreign political realities driven by radicalism, colonialism and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The administration took specific actions in order to mitigate each of those constraints. First, it submitted a report consistent with the War Powers Resolution and consulted with Congress regarding U.S. strategy in the region. Second, it did not take action until it had received a formal request from the Lebanese government and ensured that another nation would be involved in the operation. Lastly, the administration planned to keep its involvement limited to the clear objective of removing the PLO within a thirty-day time span.

**Part IV: The First U.S. Deployment**

On 18 August 1982, the Lebanese government presented to the American Ambassador in Lebanon its formal request for a MNF. Two days later the United States
responded favorably. On 24 August, President Reagan reported to Congress “consistent with the War Powers Resolution” on the deployment and mission of the Marines. Since the President’s report did not specify that he was under Section 4 (a) (1), no time limit was placed on the deployment other than the administration’s self imposed public promise to redeploy the forces after thirty days.

On 21 August, the French contingent of the MNF began arriving in Lebanon, joined four days later by Marines from the 32d U.S. Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU). From their mission statement, the Marines were to:

Support Ambassador Habib and the MNF committee in their efforts to have PLO members evacuated from the Beirut area; occupy and secure the port of Beirut in conjunction with the Lebanese Armed Forces; maintain close and continuous contact with other MNF members; and be prepared to withdraw on order.

Regarding the PLO evacuation, the chief Department of Defense spokesman said the Marines role was expected to be “totally pacific.” He continued: “the presence of the

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Americans…will be seen as a guarantor and as a safety mechanism that will make the Palestinians feel comfortable in a withdrawal situation.”

The mission statement did not direct the force to help restore the sovereignty and authority of the Lebanese government over the Beirut area. Nonetheless, that aspect of the Administration’s intent had not been forgotten by members of the media or by Habib. In regards to helping the Lebanese restore their sovereignty, the Defense Department spokesman said:

There won’t be anything, as far as I understand it, specific done to help restore Lebanese authority except the very key first step, which is to remove the PLO fighters from the Lebanese capital. That in itself will contribute to the restoration of the authority of the Lebanese Government.

One reporter summarized the entire press conference by asking:

Have I got this right? Eight hundred marines wearing camouflage field uniforms and carrying M-16’s are going to get on boats and helicopters and go into the port area of Beirut and set up tents. That is all you’ve told

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us they are going to do in the course of 30 days, isn’t it? Have you told us
a single thing that they are going to do while they’re there?91

The spokesman answered: “You are quite correct. I have not told you a single thing that
they are going to do while they are there because it is, at this stage of the game, quite
simply impossible to know in advance precisely what is going to be.”92

On the ground in Lebanon, Philip Habib did have plans for how to use the
Marines to help the Lebanese restore their authority. Specifically, he wanted the Marines
to take up the positions vacated by the Palestinian forces under Syrian command along
the “Green Line,” which divided Christian East Beirut from Muslim West Beirut. The
Palestinians wanted to turn their positions over to the Americans because they believed
the Lebanese Army was too weak to stand up to the Christian militias that might attack
the Palestinian civilians left behind.93 As a significant negotiating point, Habib had
“given assurances for the safety of the camps after the PLO fighters departed” and
wanted the American forces to enforce that assurance.94

Nonetheless, Weinberger refused to allow the Marines to leave the port
compound. Shultz went to President Reagan on the matter but the President, according to
Shultz, “did not want to intervene with his secretary of defense on matters of tactical

92 Ibid.
93 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 80.
94 Ibid., 103.
deployment of troops.”\textsuperscript{95} Shultz also related that “Habib sent a blistering cable to Weinberger arguing for an active marine role along the Green Line. Cap would not hear of it.”\textsuperscript{96} Weinberger noted in his memoir that the MNF had been “sized and equipped” for a “single mission.”\textsuperscript{97} Clearly, he saw a relationship between the first and second aspects of the mission as it was described by the Defense Department’s spokesman. Getting the PLO out would promote the conditions for the Lebanese government to establish its sovereignty again; but, other than helping with the evacuation of the PLO fighters, the Marines had not been sized or equipped to play any further roles in the process.\textsuperscript{98}

On 1 September, the last PLO elements departed Lebanon and from 10 to 16 September, the U.S. Marines followed suit. Weinberger took the lead in extracting the American force as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{99} Yasser Arafat who was counting on the MNF to

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 150.
\textsuperscript{98} Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey supported the decision to send American forces to help provide security for the PLO fighters because it supported important political objectives of the nation and could be accomplished despite the challenging political situation in Lebanon. Beyond assisting in the departure of the PLO fighters, the two Pentagon leaders argued that there was no further usefulness for American forces in Lebanon until the military and political situation in that nation changed. The small, lightly armed MNF, which the administration had agreed to deploy, was not disposed to exert pressure on any of the parties to reach such a political settlement or to change the military situation on the ground. Leaving American soldiers there would only put them at risk of being killed or injured themselves or killing or injuring an Israeli or an Arab. Any of those developments would hurt the administration’s political interests at home and strategic interests in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Their concerns in this regard will be discussed in more detail in the next case study.

\textsuperscript{99} Roy Gutman, “Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes,” \textit{Long Island Newsday}, April 8, 1984. This article is from the archives of General John W. Vessey, USA (ret). General Vessey’s papers are housed at the National Defense University Library, Fort McNair, Washington D.C. The clipping came from Binder 84, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff clippings. In his memoir Robert C. McFarlane claimed that Weinberger sent the order for the withdrawal without consulting the Secretary of State or the President and was “criminally irresponsible.” See McFarlane and Smardz, \textit{Special Trust}, 211. This argument is not supported elsewhere. See Hallenbeck, \textit{Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign}
protect the Palestinians left behind in the Beirut refugee camps complained that the
United States was withdrawing prematurely. He sent word through intermediaries urging
America to remember the promise made through Habib about the safety of the camps.\textsuperscript{100}

The Lebanese government also wanted the MNF to stay on longer to help provide
security and stability to the broken city.\textsuperscript{101}

Nonetheless, from Weinberger’s perspective, the Marines had completed their
mission and needed to depart. Of the decision, Weinberger wrote:

\begin{quote}
Policy, 16. Hallenbeck noted that on 1 September Reagan announced that the Marines would be withdrawn from Lebanon within two weeks. Also see Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 103. Shultz wrote: “I had misgivings about such a quick withdrawal, but under the circumstances, I realized that the marines would in fact leave as soon as possible after the PLO departure.”
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{100} Yasser Arafat’s intermediary during the negotiations, Saeb Salem, told the press that it had been his understanding that the MNF would stay in Beirut for a brief period after the PLO left while the Israelis withdrew from the capital and international airport. Salem was a leader of West Beirut’s dominant Sunni Moslem community and Beirut’s Muslims also wanted the MNF to remain for a period of time to protect them from the Israelis. See Jay Ross and Loren Jenkins, “Marines Expected to Quit Beirut Soon; Weinberger Says Troops Have Completed Their Duties in Lebanon,” \textit{The Washington Post}, September 2, 1982. Concerns about the Palestinian safety had been expressed to Weinberger as well. On 12 July 1982, Henry E. Catto Jr. who worked in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, was called by Ambassador Ghorbal of Egypt, a friend of his, and passed a message. Catto characterized that message as “clearly along foreign policy lines.” Catto wrote to Weinberger that the Egyptian Ambassador said “we [The United States] should not go into Lebanon with the sole purpose of evacuating the PLO. He pointed out that, after the PLO leaves, there will still be thousands of Palestinians left behind and subjected to the tender mercies of the Israelis: ‘An international force could protect these Palestinians from Israeli excess. The Israelis say arbitrarily this one is a terrorist, this is not. If you are going to remove their armed forces but leave the civilians exposed, the result might be a rebellion of Muslims as the Israelis mix in Lebanese politics. You can’t say to hell with the rest ‘after the PLO is out’. Don’t clean the living room and leave the rest of the house dirty.’” The Ambassador recommended that the force sent include troops from Muslim countries as well as France so that it would look better to the Arab world. See \textit{Weinberger Papers}, I: 688, Lebanon, folder 4, Item no. 40, 14862, “12 July 82 – Memo for SecDef from Henry Catto, PA, Subject: A Message from Ambassador Ghorbal of Egypt.” The leaders in the Defense Department were not callous to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. A memorandum drafted on 19 July 1982 recommended that the United States consider accepting the Palestinian civilians itself. See \textit{Weinberger Papers}, I: 688, Lebanon, folder 4, Item no. 44, X21077, “19 Jul 82 – Memo for DepSecDef from Noel Koch, Subject: Disposition of Palestinian Refugees.” Koch was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary International Security Affairs.

\textsuperscript{101} Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 103.
Frequently in the case of such special forces, there is not a sufficiently clear-cut objective, so no one can tell when the objective has been secured (whether or not we had “won”); and thus when it is time to leave. In this case we had not only secured our objective, but agreed with our associates that after ten quiet days following the departure of the PLO forces, it was time to leave, and we left.\textsuperscript{102}

A statement in Shultz’ memoir captures both sides of the issue. “To Arafat the MNF meant protection for civilians but, in fact, the MNF’s stated mission – to achieve the safe departure of the PLO – had been completed.”\textsuperscript{103} Arafat’s concerns became reality when on 17 and 18 September a bloody massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila resulted in the deaths of an estimated seven to eight hundred unarmed Palestinian civilians. The next case study begins with the administration again pressed to decide when and how to use military force in the Middle East.

\textsuperscript{102} Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 150. Weinberger also wrote: “I judged the MNF action to be a complete success because with virtually no losses, we had not only taken out the PLO army, one of the principal magnets for an Israeli house-to-house attack through Beirut, but we had removed a principal cause of instability in Lebanon itself.” Ibid., 144. In a 21 September press conference, Shultz seemed to agree with Weinberger’s assessment of the situation. Shultz was asked if he agreed with the assertion made by many that the Marines had departed too early. Shultz replied: “No, I don’t agree. The situation was stable, and the new GOL was in the process of taking over. The President, Bashir, was in the process of bringing about reconciliation. So the conditions that were presumed at the time we came in had been met, and so we left, and I think properly so.” See “Document 404, Mission of the Second Multinational Force,” in \textit{American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982}, 865.

\textsuperscript{103} Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 103. Not everyone saw the U.S. mission in the narrow form accepted by Weinberger and Shultz. Robert C. McFarlane described Weinberger’s order to remove the Marines as “fateful” and “treacherous.” See McFarlane and Smardz, \textit{Special Trust}, 209.
Chapter Four Conclusion:

The Reagan administration entered office believing in the efficacy of military force, not only in securing the nation but also in carrying out the nation’s policy objectives abroad. Reagan had called on the nation to be prepared physically, with the necessary forces, and ideologically, with the proper will, to respond to a range of possibilities. In 1982, the call came from the Government of Lebanon who wanted assistance in providing security for the departure of PLO fighters out of its nation.

The Middle East was a region of importance to the United States’ overall vital interests because events there often influenced matters in the Persian Gulf region. The Reagan administration was very interested in pursuing the Middle East peace process begun by the Carter administration and developing a security framework around the oil resources in the Persian Gulf. When the Reagan administration received the Lebanese request for assistance in 1982, it was psychologically ready to use all the tools of statecraft, even military force, in order to achieve its policy objectives, (1) withdrawal of all foreign forces; (2) a stable central government for Lebanon; and (3) a secure border for Israel. Leaders in the administration believed that achieving those objectives would further the securing of peace for the Middle East and better relations with Arab nations critical to American interests in the Persian Gulf region.

The American public and congressional leaders tended to agree and were seemingly prepared to allow the deployment of military forces. Many of the constraints to using military force that the administration had encountered in 1981 when it sought to aid El Salvador did not come into play in 1982 for three reasons. First, Americans
believed that vital interests were at stake in the Middle East. Second, the mission was largely portrayed by the American media as a last resort. Third, the mission was to be swift and decisive, without a long-term commitment, making it tolerable to the mass public.

At the end of 1984, when the administration developed its policy to legitimize the use of force as a tool of statecraft, tests were adopted to ensure vital interests were at stake and reasonable assurance of support from the American people and their leaders in Congress. The administration also adopted a sixth test: “The commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.” Waiting to commit forces until it was perceived as a last resort, like the perception that a vital interest was at stake, was undoubtedly intended to gain the support of the American people and congressional leaders.

This case study represented another evolution of senior leader thought regarding the relationship between political objectives, the use of American military force, and political realities. The next case study will show that as the military and political situation on the ground in Lebanon evolved so did General Vessey and Secretary Weinberger’s stance on when and how to use American military force there.

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104 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 442.
Chapter Five: Case Study Middle East – Second Deployment

Very near the heart of all foreign affairs is the relationship between policy and military power. – McGeorge Bundy

In 1981, in the early weeks of the Reagan Administration, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger argued that domestic political realities made it unwise to use military force to overtly coerce Cuba. Specifically, Weinberger contended that public and congressional support would be absent because the military forces were not being called upon as to secure a vital national interest. A year later, in 1982, the circumstances in Lebanon were such that the administration did have domestic support for deploying military forces to Beirut. Still, Weinberger argued that domestic political realities in that instance supported only a very limited use of military force. Additionally, he contended that political realities in the region were such that the administration should exercise caution in deploying military forces lest it threaten its vital strategic interests in the Persian Gulf region. In the end, the administration deployed military forces in pursuit of a narrow and clearly articulated objective - to lend support to the Lebanese government as it escorted PLO fighters out its territory. United States forces were redeployed as soon 

1 Quote taken from Walter Isaacson, “Weighing the Proper Role: Grenada and Lebanon illustrate the uses and limits of power,” Time, November 7, 1983, 3. This article and the following newspaper and magazine sources cited in this chapter are from the archives of General John W. Vessey, USA (ret): Roy Gutman, “Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes,” Long Island Newsday, April 8, 1984; Richard Halloran, “Reagan as Military Commander: Bolder in the use of military power than his own generals, the President has become an activist Commander in Chief – and has stirred growing anxiety in the process,” New York Times Magazine, January 15, 1984; Patrick J. Sloyan, “Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure: A Special Report” Newsday, April 8, 1984. The clippings came from Binders 82-84, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff clippings.
as that objective was met. Nevertheless, Weinberger’s concerns regarding domestic political realities, limited mandates, and vital strategic interests for the use of American military force were over-shadowed by the massacres at the PLO refugee camps in September 1982.

This next case study is focused on the administration’s second round of involvement in Lebanon. It further explains the evolution of the administration’s thoughts regarding the relationship between national political objectives, the use of American military force, and political realities in terms of strategic reappraisals. The case study is divided into three sections.

The first covers the administration’s decision to return military forces to Lebanon, the political objectives sought in the region, and the plan to relate military force to policy objectives. It concludes with recognition, on the part of the administration, that its original strategy was unlikely to succeed and that it needed to reappraise how it planned to use its diplomatic, economic, and military strength to achieve its objectives. The second section explains the strategic reappraisal the administration conducted in October 1982 regarding its strategy toward Lebanon, while the third section explains a second strategic reappraisal almost a year later in September 1983. Each strategic reappraisal provides insight into how the administration sought to account for the political realities it faced, both domestic and international, when deciding to use military force in support of its political objectives.

The case study concludes with the tragic bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon on 23 October 1983, which resulted in the death of 241 Marines. That event
forced the administration to conduct a strategic reappraisal of how and when military
force ought to be used to support American diplomatic efforts. That strategic reappraisal
is the topic of chapter six, which concludes with the administration’s promulgation of the
Weinberger Doctrine.
Part I: Return of American Forces – Relating Military Force to Policy Objectives

The chain of events leading to the massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps on 17 and 18 September 1982 began four days after the U.S. Marines, having overseen the evacuation of Palestinians from Lebanon, departed from Beirut. On 14 September, Bashir Gemayel, the Lebanese President-elect was assassinated, prompting the Israelis to occupy West Beirut. The United States and the U.N. Security Council immediately

demanded that the Israelis return to their previous positions, but their calls went unheeded.³ The actual murderers were Phalangist Party militiamen; but many observers blamed the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) because they had allowed the militiamen to enter the camps.⁴ French officers who entered the camps shortly after the massacres reported horrific carnage and were told by survivors that Israeli bulldozers had come in to push rubble over the bodies.⁵

After the re-entry of Israelis into Beirut and the massacre of the Palestinian refugees, many senior officials in the Reagan administration felt morally obligated to do something.⁶ Publicly however, Reagan did not accept responsibility:

I don’t think that specifically there could [be] assigned a responsibility on our part for withdrawing our troops. They were sent in there with one understanding. They were there to oversee and make sure that the PLO left Lebanon. And that mission was completed, virtually without incident,


⁵ Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 104.

⁶ In his memoir Robert McFarlane talks about a conference call that was held on Saturday, 18 Sept with Ed Meese, Bill Clark, George Shultz, Casper Weinberger, Bill Casey, and Jack Vessey. McFarlane wrote: “With the exception of Weinberger, all the participants expressed guilt at the massacres and a sense that the United States should offer to do something to ease the situation in Beirut.” McFarlane largely blamed the tragedy on what he referred to as “Weinberger’s irresponsible removal of our Marine protection from these hapless innocents.” See McFarlane and Smardz, Special Trust, 211.
and they left. Then, who could have foreseen the assassination of the President-elect that led to the other violence and so forth.\(^7\)

Nonetheless, the Arab League accused the U.S. of being “morally responsible for the massacre” and supported the PLO’s demand that a new international force be sent back to Beirut.\(^8\)

Key leaders in the Reagan administration reached a similar conclusion and supported the assignment of U.S. forces to a new MNF. During a conference call on 18 September, a recommendation by Secretary of State Shultz to reconstitute the MNF was backed by Edwin Meese, William Clark, and William Casey, but opposed by Casper Weinberger and John Vessey.\(^9\) Regardless, Reagan’s desire to go back and resolve the problems in Lebanon left little space for disagreement. He explained to his leaders that the nation had “inherited a responsibility.”\(^10\)

Thus, the administration’s decision to redeploy the Marines as part of the reconstituted MNF was made relatively quickly. Robert McFarlane, who was working at the time as National Security Advisor William Clark’s deputy, wrote that “the Marines


\(^10\) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 106. In his memoir Shultz wrote: “Everyone knew that President Reagan was ready to send the marines back to Beirut, so the Pentagon had at least to appear to be responsive.” See Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 107.
were sent in out of guilt and compassion, purely as moral support, without clarity or
analysis beyond that level."\textsuperscript{11} Prior to the Marines’ redeployment, Clark did not solicit
formal opinions from any government agencies. Nor did Weinberger request a formal
clarification of the purpose or end date of the redeployment prior to the Marine return to
Lebanon.\textsuperscript{12}

However, to characterize the administration’s actions as devoid of analysis, as
McFarlane did, is not completely accurate. Senior administration officials did consult
with the President, articulate political objectives for American policy in Lebanon, and
consider several different options for the use of the Marines in support of those
objectives. Additionally, as the deployment progressed, the administration carried out
two deliberate strategic reappraisals in which the disposition of the Marine force in
Lebanon was considered in relationship to the administration’s political and military
objectives and in relationship to political realities at home and abroad.

\textbf{The Objectives}

On 19 September 1982, the morning after learning of the Palestinian refugee
camp massacres, President Reagan met with his chief advisors in the White House
Situation Room. Reagan wanted American military forces returned to Lebanon for the
immediate purpose of protecting the Palestinians. But he also wanted American policy to

\textsuperscript{11} Quoted in Roy Gutman, “Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes,” \textit{Long Island Newsday},
April 8, 1984; McFarlane and Smartz, \textit{Special Trust}, 212.

\textsuperscript{12} Gutman, “Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes.”
accomplish much more. “We should go for broke,” Reagan told his closest advisors.\(^{13}\)

As he recorded in his diary entry for September 19:

We are asking the Israelis to leave Beirut. We are asking Arabs to intervene and persuade Syrians to leave Lebanon at which time we’ll ask Israelis to do likewise. In the meantime, Lebanon will establish a govt. & the capability of defending itself. No more half way gestures, clear the whole situation while the M.N.F. is on hand to assure order.\(^{14}\)

One objective Reagan did not record in his diary, but was included in his announcement regarding the MNF reconstitution the next day, was to provide security for Israel’s northern population.\(^{15}\) Thus, the administration publicly articulated three policy goals: (1) departure of all foreign forces from Lebanon; (2) a stable Lebanese government; and (3) security for Israel’s northern border.\(^{16}\)

Consensus was not difficult to reach on these objectives. Members of the administration and even members of Congress were in agreement that it was in keeping with the United States’ strategic interests to remove foreign forces from Lebanon and


\(^{14}\) Ibid. Clearly, the administration’s sense of guilt over the massacres did not preclude it from wanting to achieve broader aims. This argument was also made in Pelcovits, “What Went Wrong?” in The Multinational Force in Beirut 1982-1984, ed. McDermott and Skjelsbaek, 41.

\(^{15}\) “Document 403, Announcement of a New Multinational Force Deployment in Beirut,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982, 863.

\(^{16}\) An Israeli departure from Beirut was a prerequisite for the return of the U.S. Marines and is not listed here as a U.S. objective. Note that these three policy objectives were the same policy goals the administration had outlined in June 1982, shortly after the Israeli initial invasion into Lebanon. See “Document 366, Policy Goals in Lebanon,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1982, 817.
establish a stable, sovereign government there. The real problem for the administration was deciding how best to relate military force to its policy objectives and to the political realities it faced at home and abroad.

**Relating Military Force to Policy Objectives**

The administration considered three different options. First, a large force could be sent, akin to the 7,000 troops that President Eisenhower deployed in 1958 to help Lebanon’s President Camille Chamoun maintain order after he tried illegally to seek another term as President. Convincing the Israelis to leave Lebanon would be easier if a large force was in place to secure the border with Lebanon. Such a force could also compel the Syrians, still severely weakened from conflict with Israel over the summer, to depart Lebanon.

McFarlane favored the large-force option. “At this stage of the game,” he later wrote, “Syria was on its knees. It was the moment to take heed of W.C. Fields’ admonition: ‘Never kick a man unless he’s down.’ There was a need to act quickly to

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17 Congressional leaders were generally supportive of the President’s decision so long as he followed the terms of the War Powers Act. The favorable political climate could be attributed primarily to two matters. First, the Israelis initially had decided to not conduct an inquiry into the events surrounding the massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps. Congressional leaders were reported as being “shocked” by the news, which left them disapproving and disenchanted. See Hedrick Smith, “Congress Shocked at Refusal of Israel to Have an Inquiry,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1982, [online archive]; accessed October 10, 2007. Second, many Congressional leaders believed that the situation was too precarious to be ignored. Senate majority leader, Howard H. Baker Jr., (R-Tenn), who had opposed the first deployment, said: “I don’t believe you can leave that situation, dangerous as it is, unattended.” Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Plans to Send Marines Back To Beirut; Reagan Terms Israeli Pullout ‘Essential,’” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1982, [online archive]; accessed October 10, 2007.

18 Chamoun appealed for help under the Eisenhower Doctrine and received it. The opposition to Chamoun came from Pan-Arabists backed by Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser and the politically disadvantaged Muslim community.
force the Syrian troops out of Lebanon before they had time to rearm and dig in their heels.”  However, neither Shultz nor Weinberger supported this option. In addition to the lessons of Vietnam, Shultz and Weinberger shared other concerns that drove them to different solutions.

Shultz favored sending in a small multinational force, similar to the first MNF, to stabilize the situation in Beirut. Joined by Reagan’s Special Envoy to the Middle East, Ambassador Philip Habib, Shultz believed that after a ceasefire was achieved in Beirut the State Department could proceed with diplomacy and achieve the administration’s objectives. Shultz’s reasoning was captured comprehensively by a senior American officer involved in planning the deployment of U.S. forces to Lebanon:

A small force seemed prudent and sufficient for the immediate task of stabilizing the situation in Lebanon’s capital city. Additionally, a small force could be deployed more quickly than a large one; it would be less likely to provoke a U.S.-Soviet confrontation; and it would be simpler to introduce and less costly to support. It would also keep the U.S. contribution in proportion to the French and the Italian contributions, thus

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19 McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 212.

20 Ibid.

21 See Richard Halloran, “Reagan as Military Commander: Bolder in the use of military power than his own generals, the President has become an activist Commander in Chief – and has stirred growing anxiety in the process,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 15, 1984, 25. Halloran wrote: “Back in September 1982, General Vessey and the four service chiefs had argued against sending American forces into Lebanon for fear that the United States would become entangled in a conflict that might turn into a quagmire like the war in Vietnam.”

fostering perceptions that the interpositional forces were truly
multinational and neutral with respect to the military and political interests
of the factional antagonists.\textsuperscript{23}

Nevertheless, the success of the small-force plan rested upon three critical
assumptions: the Israelis would leave as soon as there was a satisfactory security
arrangement with the government of Lebanon; the Lebanese would be strong enough to
enforce such an agreement; and the Saudis would and could convince the Syrians to leave
Lebanon as soon as the Israelis agreed to leave.\textsuperscript{24}

Not everyone was convinced that diplomacy would go smoothly even if a
ceasefire was upheld in Beirut. McFarlane argued that the approach ignored “the
implausibility of the [Amin] Gemayel government enforcing such an agreement” and
demonstrated “a grave lack of analytical depth in the career foreign service.”\textsuperscript{25} The Shultz
plan depended on what one writer described as an “astounding reliance on a best-case
scenario.”\textsuperscript{26} For diplomacy to be successful, the Lebanese would need to form a
government of reconciliation out of factions that had warred for years, the Israelis would
need to be convinced that the Lebanese government could secure their mutual border, and

\textsuperscript{23} Hallenbeck, \textit{Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy}, 29. Hallenbeck served in U.S.
European Command as the Chief of Current Operations in the Directorate of Operations and Plans. In that
role he was involved in planning the deployment of U.S. forces to Lebanon.

\textsuperscript{24} In his memoir Shultz wrote that he conceptualized the mission in two phases: “Phase I, namely, an MNF
presence in Beirut, and a Phase II, dealing with the larger issues of Lebanon.” Presumably by “larger
issues” Shultz meant getting all foreign forces to depart Lebanon. See Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 108.

\textsuperscript{25} See McFarlane and Smardz, \textit{Special Trust}, 212. Following Bashir Gemayel’s assassination, his brother,
Amin Gemayel, became president of Lebanon.

the Syrians would have to allow the balance of power in the region to shift in favor of Israeli and American interests.

Questioning the soundness of the Shultz option, Caspar Weinberger argued for a third option of holding off reintroduction of American forces until all foreign forces departed Lebanon, then deploying a U.S. force large enough to “form a giant cordon around the entire perimeter of Lebanon’s borders and coastline so that the Lebanese army would be undisturbed as it retook control of internal security.”

Weinberger believed that it was far too risky to return to Beirut and “simply hope for the best.” Specifically, Weinberger believed it was foolish to deploy American forces into Lebanon before the Israelis and Syrians had agreed to withdraw or before the Christian and Muslim factions warring in Beirut had formed a government of reconciliation.

Shultz reacted heatedly to Weinberger’s condition of the removal of all foreign forces before the introduction of the U.S. military. Shultz related in his memoir: “I was, under this ‘plan’, supposed to conduct diplomacy without strength, with no military

27 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 108. Curiously, Weinberger did not discuss this in his memoir. The author was left to rely on Shultz.

28 Ibid.

29 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 151-153. Similar to the first MNF, Ambassador Habib had received assurances from the Lebanese government that the armed militias would not interfere with the MNF. The Druze and other principal Muslim parties wanted the MNF to serve as a counterweight to the Phalangist Party Christian militia. See Pelcovits, “What Went Wrong?,” 42; Weinberger believed that the threat from the Phalange Christian militia alone might require that the U.S. deploy a division (16,000 to 20,000 men) to be prepared to deal militarily with that force. See Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 108; The assurances held up until March 1983 when members of the MNF began to come under attack from factional militias. See DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport, Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983, 20 December 1983, 39-41. Here after The Long Commission Report. However, it was not until August 1983 that Marine positions began receiving sustained rocket and mortar attacks from Muslim militias.
backup – and in pursuit of a ludicrously impossible ideal.”

Determining how to relate diplomacy and military strength proved to be a constant challenge for the top leaders in the Reagan administration. This would not be the last time that Shultz and Weinberger would reach different conclusions over how best to relate those two aspects of American power in order to achieve the administration’s policy objectives.

In order to gain a diplomatic voice in the region, Reagan believed that it was important that the United States deploy military forces to demonstrate America’s willingness and resolve to assert leadership in the region. However, for years it has seemed that the military and political situation in Lebanon and the Middle East was so challenging that only a leviathan could affect matters. The role of leviathan was one that the Reagan administration did not want to take on because its leaders believed that such action would cause the Soviet Union to get involved more heavily in the region, an end that was to be avoided. Additionally, the Reagan administration did not support the Israelis in that role because of American interests in the Persian Gulf.

Nevertheless, in the fall of 1982, Reagan, joined by Habib and Shultz, believed that a window of opportunity had opened in Lebanon, making political change possible without the introduction of a large military force. The Syrians were badly beaten, the Israelis wanted to avoid city fighting or a long occupation, and the Palestinian leaders had

30 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 108.

31 From the perspective of the Arab nations which were critical to American security in the Persian Gulf region, Israeli actions were controlled by the United States. However, that was more perception than reality. The Reagan administration did try to influence Israeli actions, but as already discussed in Chapter Four, those efforts were largely ineffective. See note 33 in chapter four. Instead, the Israeli actions in Lebanon were ultimately curbed by realities on the ground and at home. Any further gains would require street fighting in Lebanon and result in casualties the small nation of Israel could not afford. Additionally, domestic support for the war had begun to crumble following the Sabra and Shatila massacres.
escaped with their political dignity intact so they could conceivably engage in a larger Middle East peace process. Weinberger and Vessey disagreed; they believed it was risky to stick one’s hand into the proverbial hornet’s nest until there was more proof that a political solution was possible and would be embraced by the parties involved. From the perspective of the Israelis and Syrains, the overall weakness of the Lebanese government lent itself just as well to partitioning of the country as to Reagan’s plan for a sovereign Lebanese government created out of the factions vying for power.

Partitioning Lebanon was supported by neither the Reagan administration nor the European partners in the MNF, who believed a partitioned Lebanon would invite more violence down the road. Instead, Reagan thought that long-term stability depended on achieving a sovereign Lebanese government that was strong enough to secure its borders and provide the Israelis with a security agreement for its northern border. It was essential the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to be able to demonstrate success and provide security to Beirut and its inhabitants. Amin Gemayel believed that to be successful in achieving those ends the Lebanese Army would initially need assistance. Thus, he asked that the American, French, and Italian MNF be redeployed.

In consultation with the United States government, the Lebanese government specified that the “MNF will be to provide an interposition force at agreed locations and thereby provide the Multinational presence requested by the Lebanese Government to assist it and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the Beirut area [emphasis added].”

That in turn was translated by the U.S. military chain of command into a Marine mission “to establish an environment which will permit the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out their responsibilities in the Beirut area [emphasis added].”

On 29 September, a force of 1,200 Marines began landing and took up positions that were vacated by the Israelis at the Beirut International Airport.

It is worth noting that the Marine mission statement did not require them to attack, defend, police, or protect anyone or anything during their estimated sixty-day deployment in Lebanon. The Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces were responsible for providing security to Beirut. In their “presence” role the Marines were to remain neutral. Technically, the Marines would not be allowed to respond militarily even if another massacre began. Instead, their mission was to serve, as one author succinctly described it, as a “symbolic presence designed to alter the psychology of confrontation and fear then rampant in Beirut.”

33 The Long Commission Report, 35.

34 The Marines would have been on the ground three days earlier, but the Israelis were delayed in departing the airport. The Beirut International Airport location was selected for the U.S. Marines because it was considered one of the least dangerous sectors that the MNF was assigned. The French fell in on positions in downtown Beirut, while the Italians were to oversee three major Palestinian refugee camps. See F.G. Hoffman, Decisive Force, 43. Also see Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 177nn 10, 29. Hallenbeck explained: “The initial mission and force size decisions were accomplished by cribbing from policy statements that had been issued in coordination with the PLO evacuation….The work was accomplished within the Joint Staff, in conjunction with HQ USEUCOM. The number 1,200, for example, originated as a staff officer’s best guess of the size of the Marine unit then deployed with the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.” Hallenbeck also noted: “Whereas President Reagan’s decision to reintroduce U.S. forces meant committing U.S. forces for largely politico-diplomatic purposes, the diplomats had neither asked for nor been assigned a responsibility to determine the size, composition, or employment of the military force.”

35 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 31-33.

36 Ibid., 32.
Robert McFarlane of the NSC staff described their role:

The MNF was a political signal [of American support] to the government of Lebanon as well as to the Arabs in the context of the peace process. The deployment of the MNF was a political act…not a military act, and if we didn’t do it, we would lose credibility in the Middle East and any hope of success with the president’s peace initiative.\(^\text{37}\)

Reagan appeared to be quite optimistic that American resolve demonstrated by the redeployment of the MNF would quickly convince all foreign forces to leave. At a press conference held the day before the Marines reentered Lebanon, President Reagan was asked if the Marines would remain until all foreign forces were withdrawn. “Yes,” he answered,” because I think that’s going to come rapidly.”\(^\text{38}\) On the same day Weinberger publicly supported the President with his own optimistic statement. On the ABC News program “This Week,” Weinberger said he expected the Israelis and Syrians to be out of Lebanon by Christmas and added “I would certainly hope they would be out long before that. There’s no reason they couldn’t get out in less than a week.”\(^\text{39}\)

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\(^{37}\) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 108. Note that these are McFarlane’s views as described by Shultz. McFarlane had wanted to send in a large force to convince the Syrians and Israelis to depart Lebanon; however, when that option was not accepted, he supported the concept of the Marines serving in a symbolic role of American interest and resolve.


\(^{39}\) Charles Mohr, “U.S. Says 1,200 Marines May Join Beirut Force,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1982 [online archive]; accessed October 10, 2007. State Department and White House officials were reportedly not as optimistic as the President and issued clarifications about what the President really meant. A spokesman from the Pentagon said troops would remain as long as necessary. While the State Department said that the withdrawal of foreign troops was a goal, not a criterion for the withdrawal of American troops. See Thomas A. Sanction, “Once More into the Breach,” *Time* October 11, 1982, 28.
Unfortunately, the “presence” of the MNF failed to achieve the administration’s goals, forcing a strategic reappraisal of its policy. The next section explains the first of two strategic reevaluations.

Part II: A Strategic Reappraisal – NSDD-64 “Next Steps in Lebanon”

Although it is an artificial construct to describe a strategic reappraisal as a single event occurring within a set period of time, the term is used here to denote times when the Reagan administration devoted attention to the strategic issues regarding its policy in Lebanon, decided to change course, and codified that change of course by publishing a National Security Decision Directive. The first instance occurred less than a month after the MNF reentered Lebanon. However, before describing that reappraisal, background information is necessary in order to contextualize the decision directive ultimately settled upon by the administration.

Political Reality – Fall 1982

In the last chapter it was noted that Israel announced three objectives for its military drive into Lebanon in the summer of 1982: all foreign armies withdrawn from Lebanon; a new Lebanese government formed; and a peace treaty signed between Israel and the new Lebanese government. To achieve these objectives, the Israeli plan did not rely solely upon the use of military force; it also relied upon diplomacy. The Israelis had supported the Presidential aspirations of Bashir Gemayel, who commanded the Phalangist Party militia, the largest and best-armed militia in the country, with the expectation that as soon as he was elected in August 1982 he would sign a peace treaty

That plan was disrupted when Gemayel was elected but proved unwilling to sign such a treaty and instead pursued his own vision for Lebanon. On 1 September 1982, while Secretary Weinberger was visiting American service members deployed in Lebanon, Gemayel approached him and requested that the United States consider using Lebanon as a strategic outpost in the Middle East. Weinberger described Gemayel’s vision: “Lebanon was not quite to be our fifty-first state, but its relationship with us [the United States] might not have been altogether dissimilar.”\footnote{Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 146. Of the idea Weinberger wrote: “To me, Gemayel’s plan was little more than a wild idea. Here was a small country torn by civil war, without strategically important resources, whose main claim to American attention was its ability to serve as a breeding ground for trouble in a very volatile region of the world. Lacking any real leverage, Bashir Gemayel put forth the political equivalent of a “blank check” – saying, in effect, “Do anything you want with Lebanon – just save us.” I, of course, reported Gemayel’s idea fully to the President and to State, and discussed it with my Defense staff. No one reached a conclusion different from mine.” See Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 147.}

Gemayel must have hoped that a large American troop presence in Lebanon would prevent Syria and Israel from ignoring Lebanon’s borders and sovereignty.

The day after his discussion with Weinberger, Gemayel was whisked to Jerusalem by helicopter at the behest of Begin, who berated Gemayel for his ingratitude and demanded that he sign a peace treaty with Israel immediately.\footnote{Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 99.} Gemayel told Begin that he could not, claiming that such a treaty would be unacceptable to the Muslim citizens of Lebanon.
his nation and would result in Lebanon being isolated from other moderate Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia. Gemayel recommended that the two nations exercise patience and consider negotiating a treaty in six to twelve months. In the meantime, Gemayel promised to keep the borders open and encourage trade between the two countries.  

Gemayel’s resolve in the face of Begin’s demands was undoubtedly helped by President Reagan’s nationally televised announcement the night before, on 1 September 1982, of his plan for achieving peace in the Middle East. One portion of Reagan’s plan was to support the Lebanese in rebuilding and reviving their nation into a stable state. Thus, while the Reagan administration would not accept the strategic outpost concept, Gemayel would have known when he faced Begin that the Reagan administration would support Gemayel’s desire to obtain autonomy for his nation from Israel and Syria.  

In Reagan’s Middle East policy address to the nation one can hear a refrain of the themes he campaigned upon in 1980:

> Our involvement in the search for Mideast peace is not a matter of preference; it’s a moral imperative. The strategic importance of the region to the United States is well known, but our policy is motivated by more

43 Bavly and Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut*, 192. Bavly and Salpeter place Begin’s confrontation of Gemayel in Nahariya, where Begin was vacationing and describe the event as having occurred on 8 September 1982 rather than 2 September. This author believes that the 2 September date related in Shultz’ memoir is probably more accurate given the fact that the impetus for the encounter was likely the announcement of the Reagan administration’s Middle East Peace Initiative.

44 For the full text of the speech see The American Presidency Project, “Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East,” [accessed January 30, 2008].
than strategic interests. We also have an irreversible commitment to the survival and territorial integrity of friendly states.\textsuperscript{45}

Reagan called for international assistance in Lebanon, self-government by the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan, a settlement freeze in those areas by Israel, unchallenged legitimacy for Israel within the community of nations, and an undivided Jerusalem with its final status to be decided through negotiation.\textsuperscript{46}

While Reagan’s policy was supported by Congress, the press, and America’s allies in Europe and in the Arab world, it was repudiated by Israel. Begin wrote directly to Reagan: “A friend does not weaken his friend; an ally does not put his ally in jeopardy.”\textsuperscript{47} Shultz related the impact the peace initiative must have had on the psyche of the Israelis:

What we have announced as a Middle East initiative must be shattering for Begin and the group around him. In recent days they must have felt at the

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46} The Reagan administration began working on its peace plan for the Middle East on 17 July 1982. When the administration entered office in January 1981 it was committed to follow the broad guidelines laid down by President Carter and his administration regarding the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors. That broad outline was to follow the Camp David accord framework which made the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty a first priority and autonomy talks for the Palestinian people the second step. The first step was completed in April 1982 when the Egyptians returned to the Sinai, while the second step was preempted when the Israelis invaded Lebanon. With his 1 September speech Reagan announced to the nation and the world at large his intention to link the situation in Lebanon to the wider negotiations for peace in the Middle East. The administration’s decision to link the two together made its dealings with Israel over Lebanon that much more challenging. Israel wanted to turn Lebanon into a pro-Western nation and sign a peace treaty with Lebanon before cooperating on any larger peace issues. When Israeli’s Ambassador Moshe Arens learned that the Reagan administration was trying to revitalize the peace process he said: “We have wiped the PLO from the scene. Don’t you Americans now pick the PLO up, dust it off, and give it artificial respiration.” See Shultz, \textit{Turmoil and Triumph}, 91.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 98.
height of their power. They have proven again the invincibility of their military machine. They have secured their southern border in a peace treaty with Egypt. They believe they have just devastated their bitter enemy, the PLO, and most of southern Lebanon is their playground. They think they have the power and influence to establish whatever kind of government they want in Beirut. They are wrong about that, but they see the road open to a unilateral implementation of restricted autonomy in the West Bank. Jordan is cowering. All of this has brought Israel, in their eyes, to a supreme position. As they see it, we have suddenly pulled the rug out from under them.  

On 14 September 1982, twelve days after his tense meeting with Begin, Bashir was assassinated and the responsibility to move Lebanon toward greater autonomy and stability fell upon his older brother, Amin.

Like his younger brother, Amin had no interest in signing a peace treaty with Israel, nor in being beholden to the Syrians, but Amin was considered more open to Muslims and Syrians than Bashir had been. However, the most important difference between the two brothers had to do with their relationship with Lebanon’s largest militia force, the Phalangist Party militia. Bashir had been their commander and they were fiercely loyal to him, but that force did not consider Amin their commander in chief. If Amin was to reestablish a working central government, enforce law and order, and put an end to factional violence in Lebanon, he would need a credible fighting force of his

48 Ibid.
own. Unfortunately, in the fall of 1982, the Lebanese Army was in no condition to take on such a task.

Thus, as one of his first actions, Gemayel traveled abroad visiting Western and Arab governments and asking for promises of economic and military support. Specifically, Amin hoped he could convince the international community to send a force of 30,000 soldiers to Lebanon to help him stabilize the nation, remove the foreign fighters, and give him time to rebuild the Lebanese Army. His first stop was in New York, where he told the United Nations General Assembly that Lebanon was “like a phoenix rising out of its own ashes” and vowed to lay “the foundations of a strong, independent and democratic state.” Next Gemayel traveled to Washington D.C. to visit President Reagan and his top cabinet officers.

On 19 October 1982, Gemayel had breakfast with Reagan, lunch with Shultz and tea with Weinberger. The visit had been initiated by the Reagan administration and was intended to allow the administration to let Gemayel know that it shared his desire for the prompt withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and for a strong, independent government that included all parties, Druze, Muslim, and Christian alike.


50 Ralph Hallenbeck provided a very good description of the Lebanese Armed Forces: “In 1982, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were at best a ragtag excuse for a national guard. Although approximately 20,000 men strong...the LAF was poorly equipped (lacking even complete uniforms), very poorly led, untrained, and riddled with corruption, factional loyalties, and political intrigue. Since the Army’s disintegration during the 1975-76 Lebanese Civil War it had seen no combat (the LAF had remained in its garrisons even during the June Israeli invasion). As a result, LAF units were no match for any of the factional militias, all of which had been seasoned by recent fighting.” See Hallenbeck, *Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 37.

51 Ibid., 38-39. What is unclear is how truly devoted Gemayel was to the concept of rebuilding a government that included all parties, Druze, Muslim, and Christian alike.

state. Following their discussion Reagan and Gemayel came forward with official
remarks regarding the meeting. Reagan stated that he had “reaffirmed the U.S. support
for the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and freedom of Lebanon.” It was time to
get serious about getting the foreign forces to leave and helping Lebanon prepare to
manage its own internal affairs.

**A New Strategy for Lebanon – NSDD-64**

Reagan’s words were immediately backed by action. By the next day plans to put
an early end to the Marine presence in Lebanon were held in check and interagency staffs
in Washington began working on contingency plans for positioning an expanded (15,000-
man) multinational force in the areas from which the Israeli and Syrian forces were
expected to withdrawal. Reagan’s call for action was officially codified a week later
with National Security Decision Directive Number 64 (NSDD-64), “Next Steps in
Lebanon.”

While the text of the directive was classified, three days earlier during a press
conference, Shultz laid out its central point: “We have set in our minds an objective of
trying to get the foreign forces out of Lebanon by the end of this year [1982].”

Additionally, three days after the publication of the directive, a White House aide
indicated another major aspect of the directive - the President might be willing to commit

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53 “Document 413, Visit of President Amin Gemayel of Lebanon,” in *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*, 872.

54 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 37.

more military force if necessary to help Lebanon. The aide stated: “The President believes the ‘Viet Nam syndrome’ has put ridiculous restraints on peace keeping, even when it is in American interests. He is disturbed at the reluctance to use American military force when it can be a useful adjunct of our foreign policy.”\(^{56}\)

The decision directive noted that until negotiations with the parties involved moved forward, it would be difficult to determine “the size, composition, recommended deployment and employment of the MNF to assist in meeting the security requirements” of the Lebanese. Nevertheless, the directive was quite clear that the administration needed to significantly increase security assistance to Lebanon and be prepared to contribute additional U.S. forces to a multinational force. The directive concluded: “Clearly, our initiatives and our commitment to Lebanon’s independence will further strengthen our credibility and demonstrate our determination to continue the progress we have already made.”\(^{57}\)

With his 1 September speech, Reagan demonstrated his willingness to exert American leadership on the international stage in the Middle East. His signing of NSDD-64, he demonstrated a willingness to use American military forces as part of that solution. Nevertheless, Reagan counted on his cabinet officers, such as Shultz and Weinberger, to develop the specific diplomatic strategy and supporting plans to achieve his objectives given the political realities faced at home and abroad.


On 3 November, five days after NSDD-64 was signed, Shultz and Weinberger sent a memorandum to the president in which they laid out a series of strategies for Reagan to consider.58 Unfortunately, the memorandum remains classified, so the options cannot be discussed in this work. Nevertheless, this work can freely note that the Marines, who were sent to Lebanon in early November, to replace the Marines, who had deployed there since late September, were sent in with a different mission.

Starting in early November, the Marines deployed as part of the MNF were charged with establishing a larger presence in Beirut and conducting presence patrols in East Beirut.59 While on patrol in East Beirut the Marines were to warn infiltrators to turn back and avoid any decisive involvement. The responsibility for physically turning back infiltrators was to rest solely upon the Lebanese Army. Thus, even though the Marines were patrolling in a new and expanded area, the “presence” mission remained the same as it had been in the first deployment.

Nevertheless, the patrols being carried out in East Beirut were to help support the achievement of two political ends. First, the patrols were meant to support Gemayel’s efforts at reconciliation by demonstrating an even-handedness, by not simply patrolling Muslim areas, and by demonstrating the willingness of the Lebanese Army to exert control over areas that had been controlled by the Phalangist Party militia. Second, the

58 See Weinberger Papers, I: 689, Lebanon, folder 12, Item no. 139, X [no number], “3 Nov 82 – Memo for President from Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger.” Note that on the list, at the front of this chapter, which provides the header information for each memorandum, the memorandum title does not include Secretary Weinberger; however, the memorandum was from both Cabinet officers.

patrols were to serve as a rehearsal for the time when the Lebanese Army, supported by an expanded MNF, would extend its responsibility to areas outside of Beirut after the Israelis and Syrians departed. Although, the Joint Chiefs had been against the idea of redeploying American forces into Lebanon, they supported expanding the presence mission of the Marines beyond the Beirut International Airport into East Beirut so as to help Gemayel assert his power.\footnote{Ibid., 41-42.}

Also in November, a small group of military officers opened the Department of Defense’s Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) in Beirut to rebuild and train the Lebanese Army.\footnote{Ibid., 40.} Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe the best way to support American diplomatic initiatives in Lebanon and to support Gemayel’s drive for reconciliation was to man the borders with larger forces, as Gemayel had proposed to Reagan during his October visit.\footnote{“Document 415, The Extent and Duration of U.S. Military Assistance to Lebanon,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982, 874-876.} Instead, they favored redoubling the efforts to train the Lebanese Army so it could in time take over all of Lebanon’s security responsibilities. Opening the OMC was an important first step in getting the Lebanese Army trained.

With the benefit of hindsight, both the players involved and historians have identified the fall of 1982 as the period of time in which the administration’s prospect for achieving its political objectives relating to Lebanon was at their best.\footnote{Shultz wrote in his memoir: “Our most important missed opportunity came in September and early October 1982 – a time when the situation was most fluid, when Syria was in a weakened position, and when the Lebanese could have best responded to a strong U.S. initiative.” See Shultz, Turmoil and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 41-42.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 40.}
\item \footnote{“Document 415, The Extent and Duration of U.S. Military Assistance to Lebanon,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982, 874-876.}
\item \footnote{Shultz wrote in his memoir: “Our most important missed opportunity came in September and early October 1982 – a time when the situation was most fluid, when Syria was in a weakened position, and when the Lebanese could have best responded to a strong U.S. initiative.” See Shultz, Turmoil and
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Lebanon were expected to begin negotiating soon the terms of an Israeli withdrawal, and Syria was still severely weakened from the earlier fighting. Syria’s Foreign Minister had met with Shultz and pledged to withdraw Syria’s forces from Lebanon if the Israelis withdrew rapidly and unconditionally.64

Additionally, during his travels Gemayel found his request for assistance received favorably by the leadership in France, Italy, Great Britain, and Morocco. He returned home to Lebanon with numerous promises for assistance. Each promise for assistance, however, was typically prefaced with the condition that Gemayel secure an Israeli withdrawal based upon terms which were acceptable to Arab leaders, especially Syria’s President Assad. Additionally, he needed to demonstrate that he was making progress toward reconciling the Christian, Druze, and Muslim demands for political change. Gemayel’s efforts to gain support from the Muslims and Christians for reconciliation were expected to be helped by the fact that he could tell both parties that further international support was conditioned upon demonstrated steps toward achieving a unified government.65

Even the challenge of rebuilding Lebanon’s Army appeared surmountable. In early October, shortly after the second MNF went ashore, a team of American military specialists went to Lebanon to assess the Lebanese Army. The group’s report, released on 1 November, recommended creation of a force of four 70-percent operationally-ready

Triumph, 232. Ralph Hallenbeck characterized matters this way: “If the situation was not rosy, neither was it bleak.” See Ralph Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 39.

64 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 39.

65 Ibid., 39-40.
infantry brigades by February 1983. Four under-manned and under-equipped infantry brigades could not defend Lebanon’s sovereignty, but the Lebanese Army Modernization Program (LAMP), as the initiative was called, was expected to produce a nucleus for a larger, more capable military by 1986 or 1987.\(^6^6\)

Unfortunately, a host of issues cropped up to slow the agreement process for the departure of the Israeli forces, the first step in getting Syria and the PLO fighters to depart. Shultz recounted some of the problems in his memoirs: (1) Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon tried to negotiate a peace treaty with Lebanon on his own without U.S. involvement which only served to slow the process; (2) Ambassador Habib’s health was poor and he convinced Shultz that his deputy could handle the negotiations which, as Shultz said, “sent a signal to the region that Lebanon had been relegated to a lower level of priority;” (3) Finally, Shultz said he misjudged Menachem Begin and the Israelis’ “stomach for sustained political engagement in or with Lebanon.”\(^6^7\)

In late October 1982, with the publication of NSDD-64, the Reagan administration committed itself to getting all foreign fighters out of Lebanon and to helping the Lebanese Government gain control of its territory. In reality it may be more accurate to say that the Reagan administration recommitted itself to those goals. For NSDD-64 did very little to change the basic premise under which the administration operated when it decided to send the Marines back to Lebanon as part of the second MNF. That premise was that if the administration demonstrated leadership and resolve,

\(^6^6\) Ibid., 40.

\(^6^7\) Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 232-233.
by keeping American military forces present to support and train the Lebanese Army, the Lebanese government would have an opportunity to achieve stability and the foreign forces would agree to leave Lebanon. NSDD-64 simply expanded the area of the presence mission - into East Beirut - and set a definitive timeline for success – the end of the year.

In the end, 1982 closed without any of the parties agreeing to a withdrawal. Nevertheless, for almost a year, the Reagan administration would continue to follow the strategy laid out in NSDD-64 and adhere to the premise underlying that strategy - the mere presence of American military forces would be enough to support American diplomatic efforts and achieve the administration’s political objectives.

**Part III: A Strategic Reappraisal – NSDD-103 “Strategy for Lebanon”**

In September 1983, the administration decided to change its strategy toward Lebanon. Some additional background information is necessary in order to contextualize why the administration decided to make such a change.

**Political Reality – Early 1983**

In late January 1983, in an effort to move Israel to an agreement for withdrawal, Ambassador Habib returned to the negotiating table with approval from Reagan and Senate Democrats to offer more American troops to help secure the Israeli-Lebanese border. This gesture was meant to eliminate the Israeli demand to keep IDF outposts in southern Lebanon. Shultz was also working to gather support from more nations for a 15,000-man expanded MNF mission in southern Lebanon, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff
were working to determine what role American forces would play in such a force.\textsuperscript{68} Domestic politics in the United States did not preclude the deployment of additional American military forces.

On 21 March, the American efforts were rewarded when the Israelis finally agreed to Habib’s proposal to use U.S. and Lebanese outposts in southern Lebanon instead of Israeli ones. Matters finally seemed to be progressing.\textsuperscript{69} Less than a month later, however, on 18 April 1983, the United States Embassy in Beirut was car-bombed and seventeen Americans were killed.\textsuperscript{70} The very next day Congress voted to place restrictions on the size, disposition, mission, and employment of the Marines unless Reagan obtained congressional approval. Additionally, Congressional leaders suggested that Reagan might need to reassess his determination that hostilities were not imminent but, they did not try at this time to force Reagan into reporting under the War Powers Resolution. Congressional and public support existed for Reagan to respond to the bombing provided his response was reasonable. Nevertheless, the Congressional decision to place restrictions on the disposition and employment of the Marines, unless Reagan obtained congressional approval, restrained the military support Habib could promise as he continued to work for a diplomatic solution.\textsuperscript{71}

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\textsuperscript{68} Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 49.  
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{70} Intelligence pointed to Iranian responsibility for the bombing with Syrian involvement.  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 52-53.
In order to reenergize the political process and to obtain an Israeli-Lebanese agreement as quickly as possible, Reagan dispatched Shultz to the Middle East.\(^2\) By 17 May, Shultz had accomplished his mission; Israel and Lebanon finally signed a peace accord which included an agreement from Israel to withdrawal. The cost of Israeli support for the 17 May Agreement was high. The United States agreed to participate in a Trilateral (U.S.-Israel-Lebanon) Security Arrangements Commission and the agreement was written in such a way that the Israelis were allowed to remain in Lebanon until the Syrians agreed to withdrawal as well.\(^3\) Thus, the next step in the process was to get an agreement from the Syrians to leave Lebanon. Eight months had passed since the Syrians had told Shultz that they would be willing to depart Lebanon and much had changed.

The Syrians, with Soviet assistance, had taken advantage of the long lull in activity to rearm. They no longer believed that it was in their best interest to leave Lebanon and were able to find support for that stance from Lebanon’s Muslim and Druze factions and their militia forces. The Muslim and Druze factions, who had initially supported Gemayel because they believed he would satisfy their demands for economic and political reform, by the spring of 1983 were ready to accept Syria’s support and guidance in fighting against Gemayel, the Lebanese Army, and even the American

\(^2\) Ibid., 53.

\(^3\) Weinberger described the situation as one in which the Syrians now exercised “veto power over any withdrawal and thus over Israel’s ability to establish better relations with a key Arab neighbor, Lebanon.” Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 156. In his memoir, Robert McFarlane wrote “It [the 17 May agreement] was a dead letter the day it was signed.” McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 240.
Marines in the MNF if necessary. From their perspective Gemayel had not made any reforms and would be even less likely to do so once he gained control with an army equipped and trained by the United States. These factions wanted to resist any further expansion of the Lebanese Army until there were guarantees made by the Gemayel government for reform.75

**Political Reality – Summer 1983**

In the summer of 1983, the conflicting interests of all parties erupted in the Shouf Mountains of Lebanon. Historically, a stronghold of the Druze militia, the area had been occupied by the Israelis in the summer of 1982. The Israelis allowing Phalangist Party militia forces into the area, hoping to use them as proxy forces against the Syrians. By the fall of 1983, Begin, struggling to maintain support at home for the extended occupation, could no longer afford the regular casualties that were occurring in the Shouf from ambushes and bomb attacks. He made plans to pull the IDF out of the Shouf Mountains into more defensible positions in the south. Who would control the Shouf after the Israelis departed? Would it be the Druze, who had filled that role historically, the Phalangist Party militia forces, who were no friends of the Druze, and had only been


allowed to take up those positions through the help of the Israelis, or would it be forces from Gemayel’s Lebanese Army?

From the perspective of Gemayel and the Reagan administration, the answer had to be the last. From the perspective of the Druze, however, there was little difference between the Lebanese Army and the Phalangist militia forces; both needed to be thwarted until a government of reconciliation was formed. The Druze, Walid Jumblatt turned to the Syrians for help.\textsuperscript{76} The Druze, therefore, came to be considered a proxy of the Syrians.

For the Reagan administration, Israel’s plan to pull out of the Shouf presented a number of problems. First, the unilateral pullback could be taken as a sign of success by Syria and its proxy Druze forces and give them additional impetus to oppose the May 17 Agreement. Second, the United States was uncertain if the Lebanese Army was prepared to decisively engage the Druze. If the Lebanese Army suffered defeat at the hands of the Druze militia in the Shouf it would surely lead to the downfall of Gemayel and provide the Israelis additional justification for their continued occupation of southern Lebanon. Essentially, it would justify the partitioning of Lebanon, which the Reagan administration wanted to avoid. Third, the Shouf Mountains were tactical high ground, overlooking the Marine position at the Beirut International Airport. Whoever controlled that land could easily reign down fire on the Marine positions.

On 22 July 1983, President Gemayel returned to Washington to visit President Reagan and requested additional military assistance from the United States. During the

\textsuperscript{76} Gilmour, \textit{Lebanon}, 192-194.
visit, Reagan promised to do all he could to quickly increase U.S. military assistance to the Lebanese Army. He dispatched General Vessey to assess the ability of the Lebanese Army to absorb more aid. General Vessey was also to determine what additional role the Marines might be able to play on the ground to assist Gemayel. On 27 July Reagan announced that he was willing to consider expanding the MNF presence into the Shouf if an agreement could be reached between the Lebanese government and the Druze. In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs worked to develop a plan to reinforce the Marines with an additional battalion so that they could maintain contact with the IDF as it withdrew to its new defensive positions.77

Events in August did not favor the administration and its policies. On 10 August, sparked by concern that the Reagan administration might be dragging the nation into a quagmire, Congress placed a rider on a supplemental appropriations bill that prohibited any significant change to the size, mission, or location of the Marines without prior congressional approval. That rider signaled that it would be very difficult for the administration to send in the additional battalion that the JCS had under consideration. Additionally, it made it very unlikely that the administration would obtain support for expanding the MNF mission to accompany the Lebanese Army into the Shouf.

Hoping to gain additional time to try to negotiate with the Druze and turn them away from the Syrian influence, on 28 August the Reagan administration, sent a flash cable to Prime Minister Begin requesting a delay of the IDF withdrawal from the Shouf. Begin, agreed to delay the IDF withdrawal until 4 September. On 3 September, Reagan

77 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 70-71.
called Begin and again asked for more time. The Israelis told Reagan that their forces were already on the move. In order to offer additional protection to the MNF during the period of uncertainty, Reagan held the carrier *Eisenhower* off Beirut and brought 2,000 Marines from Egypt to stand by off shore.\(^78\)

Five days earlier, on 29 August, two Marines were killed and fourteen wounded in Druze rocket, artillery, and mortar attacks. That action triggered congressional debate over whether Reagan should file a report under the War Powers Act Section 4 (a) (1), imminent hostilities, which would place a time limit of sixty days on the deployment unless the House and Senate approved the force for a longer duration.\(^79\) On 30 August, Reagan submitted a report to Congress “consistent with Section 4 of the War Powers Resolution.”\(^80\)

The administration’s chances to achieve its political objectives in Lebanon seemed to be unraveling. With Israel unilaterally agreeing to withdrawal, it would be very difficult to convince Syria of the need to withdraw. Additionally, American resolve and credibility were now seemingly tied up in Congressional debate over whether or not the Marines should be allowed to remain.

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\(^79\) The House vote was 253 to 156 in favor of authorizing the administration an additional 18 months for action, while the Senate vote was 54 to 46.

\(^80\) “Document 369, The Death of Two U.S. Marines,” in United States, Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1983* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1985), 772. Note Reagan did not specify that his report was consistent with Section 4 (a) (1), imminent hostilities.
During testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Shultz warned Congressional leaders that an early departure of the Marines would undermine American leadership and credibility abroad:

The simplest and first thing that I think you have to keep in mind is that when the world sees that when America sends its forces to perform a legitimate mission asked for by the legitimate government involved and it does so and then the minute some trouble arises we turn tail and beat it, I think that sends a gigantic message around the world that is very undesirable and totally incompatible with our role as a defender of freedom and justice around the world and as a great power with interests around the world.\(^\text{81}\) 

In the end, the administration was able to persuade Congress to allow the forces to remain in Lebanon for eighteen months.\(^\text{82}\) Nevertheless, Shultz believed that the debate in Congress weakened the power of the Marine force to serve as a lever in American diplomacy.\(^\text{83}\) Shultz told congressional leaders:


\(^{83}\) Ibid., 781.
Our marines, or the multinational force as a whole, cannot tip the balance of forces alone – and it is not their mission to do so. But their presence remains one crucial pillar of the structure of stability. As a former marine…I will not allow anyone to cast doubt on how formidable even this small number of marines can be. They are an important deterrent, a symbol of the international backing behind the legitimate Government of Lebanon, and an important weight in the scales. To remove the marines would put both the government, and what we are trying to achieve, in jeopardy. This is why our domestic controversy over war powers has been disturbing. The uncertainty about the American commitment only weakens our effectiveness; doubts about our staying power can only cause the aggressors to discount our presence – or to intensify their attacks, in hopes of hastening our departure.\(^84\)

Robert McFarlane shared Shultz’s concerns about how the United States was expressing its resolve and commitment to both friends and adversaries. On 22 July 1983, McFarlane began serving as Reagan’s Personal Representative in the Middle East. On 3 September, he returned to Washington for a strategy session on Lebanon with President Reagan and the other members of the National Security Planning Group.\(^85\) In that strategy

\(^84\) Ibid.

\(^85\) The meeting was held Saturday, 3 September 1983 in the White House Situation Room between 11:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Secretary Shultz, Secretary Weinberger, Ambassador McFarlane, General Vessey, William Clark, Edwin Meese III, and James Baker III were all in attendance. Thus, Reagan was afforded perspective on the situation in Lebanon from the State Department, the Department of Defense, and from his political team. The purpose of the meeting was to make decisions on the administration’s diplomatic and military strategy for Lebanon in the coming weeks. The briefing
session, the Reagan administration abandoned the basic premise underlying its strategy for Lebanon: the “presence” of American military forces would be enough to move diplomacy along in Lebanon. Instead of “presence,” the administration adopted an operational concept called “aggressive self-defense.” As will be explained next, the concept was largely shaped by the political realities the administration faced at home and abroad.

**A New Strategy for Lebanon – NSDD-103**

At the 3 September strategy session, McFarlane reported on what he had learned while in the Middle East. The Syrians were determined to maintain influence over Lebanese policy and would likely achieve that goal due to their overwhelming military power unless a major third country decided to intervene on behalf of Lebanon. McFarlane recommended that the administration intervene with a credible display of military force to convince the Syrians that a withdrawal was in their best interest.  

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memorandum presented to participants noted that the administration needed to be “especially sensitive to the legislative and public affairs dimension of any decisions we take.” See *Ronald Reagan Library*, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records National Security Planning Group, File Folder: NSPG 0068 & 0068A (1), 3 Sep 1983, Box 91306. The Reagan administration held meetings with the Congressional leadership the following day, Sunday, 4 September, to discuss the situation in Lebanon.

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86 *Ronald Reagan Library*, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records NSC Meeting Files, File Folder: NSC0088 10 Sep 1983 (1) Box 91285. In this cable McFarlane recapped the points he made during the 3 September NSPG meeting. In his cable McFarlane noted that while the administration wanted Syria to depart from Lebanon it was willing to accept the political reality that the government of national unity ultimately formed by the Lebanese would include figures beholden to Syria. Also see McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 248-250. In his memoir, McFarlane wrote: “On more than one occasion, after formal meetings, key Arab advisors would take me aside and say something like, “Bud, the United States has wasted eight months out here. Hafez al-Assad respects power, and unless you are prepared to use it against him, he will not yield. None of the Arab states are going to deliver anything of consequence to put pressure on Syria.” See McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 246-247. McFarlane also noted: “Early in my sessions with Assad, it became clear that he felt no pressure to make any concessions, and that I had no leverage to coerce them. Even the prospect of U.S. assistance in promoting an Israeli pullout was not a convincing instrument. After a year of struggle and combat losses, the Israeli body politic was becoming
Reagan’s Special Negotiator on the ground, McFarlane wanted to be able to call upon the fires from the U.S. Sixth Fleet that was deployed to the Mediterranean. Shultz and Clark agreed with McFarlane; the administration’s diplomatic efforts toward Syria needed to be backed with a display of credible force.

General Vessey also agreed on the importance of constructing an American strategy that was more influential with the Syrians. In a memorandum to Secretary Weinberger sent three days prior to the 1 September strategy session, Vessey emphasized that it was important to “find solutions to the root causes of the current confrontations.” Many of Syria’s opportunities for meddling in Lebanon came from the fact that Gemayel had yet to build a government of reconciliation. Thus, Vessey advised that “the focus should continue to be on diplomatic initiatives aimed at the achievement of a viable political accommodation between the GOL [Lebanese Government] and the Lebanese factions.”

Vessey’s memorandum recommended that, in addition to obtaining Syrian cooperation, there were “a number of parallel efforts that should be undertaken” to move Lebanon toward a government of reconciliation. Those efforts were to convince Gemayel that a government of reconciliation was imperative, to persuade the Druze to support the reconciliation effort, to demand that the Israelis control factional artillery firing from areas under their control, and to warn the Soviets that any US-Syrian confrontation would have detrimental effects on US-Soviet relations. Additionally, he

less and less supportive of the war and had begun to call for the withdrawal of Israeli troops. From Assad’s point of view, if the Israeli withdrawal was inevitable, there was no need for him to give anything up to achieve it. Indeed, he could seize the opportunity of an Israeli withdrawal to solidify his own position inside Lebanon.” Ibid., 247.
recommended that the Lebanese Army “undertake a series of confidence building measures,” such as sending advance parties into the Shouf to get factional support for their later arrival. Furthermore, he suggested that the administration be prepared to demonstrate its resolve by positioning US forces to protect or reinforce the MNF and to consult with other members of the MNF about expanding the mission and/or size of the current forces.

Regarding the Syrians, Vessey noted: “To gain Syrian cooperation there are very few political and military levers that can be employed.”

Constructing a credible American threat to the Syrians would be no easy task given the domestic political realities in the beginning of September 1983. The administration was locked in battle with Congress over whether or not the Marines would remain in Lebanon. Additionally, the administration was still under the constraints from Congress’ 10 August rider that

87 Weinberger Papers, I: 729, Lebanon, folder 6, Item no. 195, X [no number], “31 Aug 83 – To SecDef From Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: U.S. Initiatives in Lebanon.” The memorandum suggested a number of actions that were available to the U.S.: (1) remind the Syrians that confrontation with the US will have long term negative effects; (2) emphasize that the US remains the only avenue available to assist in return of the Golan to Syrian control; (3) point out that failure of Syria to cooperate could lead to indefinite Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon; (4) direct the US Ambassador to protest immediately each instance of artillery or mortar fire originating in Syrian-controlled area into Beirut; and, (5) inform the Syrians that fire from Syrian-controlled areas at MNF forces could lead to direct Syrian-US confrontation. The discussion paper prepared for the NSPG held on 3 Sept made the following assumptions about Syria: (1) Syria is unlikely to be persuaded to change its present course through persuasion and the implicit threat of Israeli military reaction is now a less credible deterrent; (2) Syria will make serious efforts to prevent the LAF from peacefully extending its authority into the Shuf following the Israeli redeployment; and, (3) Gemayel’s attempts to form a government of national unity are likely to be opposed by Syria unless the influence and power of the Phalange is significantly reduced and the Gemayel Government caves completely to the Syrian opposition to the Lebanon-Israeli Agreement. See Ronald Reagan Library, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records National Security Planning Group, File Folder: NSPG 0068 & 0068A (1), 3 Sep 1983, Box 91306.

88 Congress would not make its decision to approve the MNF for eighteen additional months until 21 September 1983.
prohibited any significant change to the size, mission or location of the Marines without prior approval. 89

Nevertheless, on 10 September 1983, the administration published National Security Decision Directive Number 103, “Strategy for Lebanon.” 90 In the directive, the administration attempted to walk a fine line between using military force and avoiding a War Powers dispute with congressional leaders. A concept of operations called “aggressive self-defense” signaled the end of the “presence” mission for the MNF. In “aggressive self-defense,” the Americans, French, and Italians were to coordinate their supporting naval and air forces in order to respond to hostile fire, intelligence, and reconnaissance activities. 91 Such action was meant to demonstrate credible resolve to the Syrians until more could be done to gather up third-party support for the Lebanese.

General Vessey also recommended that Reagan dispatch the battleship New Jersey to the Mediterranean to lend additional fire support.

89 One of President Reagan’s talking points for the NSPG meeting held on 3 Sept was the following: “I need your [cabinet officers] advice on how to handle the Congressional leaders tomorrow [4 Sept 83]. What themes do you think I should stress? I don’t think they will be interested in the details of confessional problems of Lebanon. Isn’t it the bigger picture we have to worry about? And how do we bring Israel into the equation? I presume the Israeli lobby can be helpful on the hill.” Ronald Reagan Library, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records National Security Planning Group, File Folder: NSPG 0068 & 0068A (1), 3 Sep 1983, Box 91306.

90 On 10 September, Reagan held a National Security Council meeting to discuss the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) that was being worked out with the Soviets. Lebanon was added to the agenda and given fifteen minutes of the one hour session. President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Secretary Shultz, Secretary Weinberger, General Vessey, William Clark, and Edwin Meese III were all in attendance. See Ronald Reagan Library, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records NSC Meeting Files, File Folder: NSC0088 10 Sep 1983 (1) Box 91285. For a copy of NSDD-103 see Federation of American Scientists: Intelligence Resource Program, “NSDD - National Security Decision Directives Reagan Administration, NSDD-103, Strategy for Lebanon,” http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/index.html [accessed February 2, 2008].

The strategy developed at the beginning of September was only an interim measure until the administration had time to adopt a more deliberate and longer-term strategy.\footnote{Ronald Reagan Library, Collection: Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records NSC Meeting Files, File Folder: NSC0088 10 Sep 1983 (1) Box 91285. See Memorandum for The Honorable George P. Shultz, The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger, The Honorable William Casey, and General John W. Vessey, Subject: Staff Papers on Lebanon from William P. Clark.} In many ways this is reminiscent of the administration’s actions during the first Central America case study. In Central America, the administration developed a strategy of covert operations with the intention of demonstrating American leadership, will, and credibility until domestic political realities could be shifted to afford an opportunity for those traits to be exerted in a more overt manner. In the case of Lebanon, NSDD-103 called for the MNF contingents to adopt “aggressive self-defense” until third-party support for the Lebanese government could be recruited.

Events on the ground were so fluid that the day after the administration published NSDD-103, it wrote and published an addendum. Nevertheless, even in the addendum, which will be discussed in further detail a little later, one can see the fine line the administration continued to walk based on the political reality it faced at home regarding the use of military force.

On 11 September, McFarlane sent a flash cable back to Washington informing the key leaders in the administration of “a serious threat of a decisive military defeat which could involve the fall of the Government of Lebanon within twenty-four hours.”\footnote{McFarlane and Smardz, Special Trust, 250-251.} McFarlane believed that the Lebanese Army was one battle away from being broken, which in turn would lead to the collapse of its government and the administration’s hopes
for achieving its political objectives in Lebanon. McFarlane asked that Reagan consider modifying the Marines’ rules of engagement to allow them to fire in support of the Lebanese Army, in addition to self-defense.\textsuperscript{94} Essentially, the concept of “aggressive self-defense” codified in NSDD-103 would be extended to include the defense of the Lebanese Army. In his diary Reagan recounted the situation on 11 September:

\begin{quote}
NSC is meeting without me on Lebanon re a new Cable from Bud MacFarlane [sic]. Troops obviously PLO & Syrian have launched a new attack against the Lebanese army. Our problem is do we expand our mission to aid the army [the LAF] with artillery & air support. This could be seen as putting us in the war. George S.[hultz], Bill C.[asey, Director of CIA] & Jim Baker [Chief of Staff] have just left me…to get more info. on what is happening.\textsuperscript{95}
\end{quote}

After being briefed by his key leaders, Reagan decided to order the use of naval gunfire to support the Lebanese Army forces that were defending SUQ-AL-GHARB.

The decision was captured in an addendum to NSDD 103 published on 11 September which read:

\begin{quote}
It has been determined that occupation of the dominant terrain in the vicinity of SUQ-AL-GHARB by hostile forces will endanger Marine positions. Therefore, successful LAF defense of the area of SUQ-AL-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{94} McFarlane and Smardz, \textit{Special Trust}, 251.

GHARB is vital to the safety of US personnel....As a consequence, when
the US ground commander determines that SUQ-AL-GHARB is in danger
of falling as a result of attack involving non-Lebanese forces and if
requested by the host government, appropriate US military assistance in
defense of SUQ-AL-GHARB is authorized.\textsuperscript{96}

Of the decision Reagan wrote in his diary: “My reasoning is that this can
be explained as protection of our Marines hoping it might signal the Syrians to
pull back. I don’t think they want a war with us. If it doesn’t work then we’ll
have to decide between pulling out or going to Congress & making a case for
greater involvement.”\textsuperscript{97}

Clearly, Reagan hoped to use the naval fire as a signal to the Syrians of American
determination, in hopes that such resolve would ultimately move diplomacy along and
convince the Syrians to accept the 17 May Agreement and withdraw from Lebanon.
Shultz and McFarlane agreed with the President’s decision and felt that in order for
diplomacy to work the nation needed to demonstrate both the will and the means
necessary to change the balance of power in Lebanon. Both also favored air strikes on
the Syrian surrogates fighting against the Lebanese Army.

On the other hand, Weinberger and Vessey believed that supporting the Lebanese
Army with U.S. fire power might lead to retaliations, which the Marine force was not

\textsuperscript{96} See Simpson, National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations, 326.

properly disposed to defend against. Therefore, they argued that the mission should not change until the force’s disposition on the ground was also changed to afford it with adequate protection. The Marines were armed as peacekeepers and could not handle any retaliatory attacks. Additionally, they were not convinced that such measures would truly bear any diplomatic fruit. There was no support from Congress or the U.S. public for a war with Syria. Based on that political reality, the most force the administration could bring to bear was gun fire from the Sixth Fleet. Since Assad could rely upon proxy forces to do his bidding in the Shouf, such fires were unlikely, as Weinberger believed, to convince Assad to leave Lebanon or stop meddling in Lebanese political affairs.

Between 19 and 26 September 1983 the Syrians were given a display of what “aggressive self-defense” could look like. On 19 September fires were called upon to support the Lebanese Army forces defending Suq-Al-Gharb. Three days later the French conducted a retaliatory air strike on Syrian and Druze elements in the Shouf. Then on 26 September, the New Jersey arrived off the coast of Lebanon, signaling additional resolve.

*98 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 82-83.*

*99 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 154. Although the Marines’ rules of engagement were changed, as Shultz and McFarlane desired, the final decision to call for fire support was given to the Marine commander on the ground and not to the diplomats. That decision made it very difficult for the fires to be used as a lever in American diplomacy with Syria because the Marine commander was told that three specific conditions had to be met before he called for fire support from the Sixth Fleet. First, the Suq Al Gharb had to be in danger of falling. Second, the enemy threatening Suq Al Gharb had to be non-Lebanese. Third, the support had to be requested by the Lebanese government. See Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 82. It would be a week before the U.S. fired on the forces opposing the Lebanese Army. The Marine commander charged with calling for the fires was reportedly hesitant due to the retaliatory attacks his forces were likely to face. The commander, under pressure from one of McFarlane’s associates, yelled, “We’ll pay the price…We’ll get slaughtered down here.” See Eric Hammel, The Root: The Marines in Beirut August 1982 – February 1984 (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985), 220.*

*100 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 90-91.*
on the part of the administration. McFarlane made a deliberate point of letting Syria’s Assad know that the New Jersey had arrived. The positions of the administration’s negotiators were further strengthened on 21 September when Congress approved the MNF mission for another eighteen months.101

On 26 September, the same day that the New Jersey arrived, the Syrians agreed to sign a ceasefire with the Lebanese. While it is difficult to know exactly why Assad made that decision, from the perspective of Shultz and McFarlane, American diplomacy had succeeded because it had been backed by a credible show of military strength. Another factor may have also been at work. The Druze had been unable to overrun the Lebanese Army, which was well armed by the United States and hung together rather than breaking along confessional lines as many had believed it would. By signing the ceasefire, Assad signaled that he did not want to commit the Syrian Army. A stalemate had been reached. Neither the United States nor Syria was willing to take the next step militarily, clearing the way for diplomacy.102

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101 On 27 September 1983, Reagan wrote letters to Thomas P. O’Neill, Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives, Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, Jr., Senator Charles Percy, Chairman Committee on Foreign Relations, and Congressman Clement Zablocki, Chairman Committee on Foreign Affairs. In those letters he wrote: “I know you were as gratified as I with Sunday’s announcement of a cease fire in Lebanon. While there were many things that contributed to the cease fire, it is my belief that your agreement to advance the compromise resolution on war powers…were particularly important. At a crucial point, your agreement and the supporting committee actions expressed a commitment to bipartisanship in U.S. foreign policy. Please accept my thanks.” See Weinberger Papers, I: 729, folder 7, Item 227, W05567, “27 Sep 83 – To Donald P. Gregg from Robert Kimmitt, Subject: Presidential Letters on War Power.”

102 Hallenbeck, Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, 88.
In the aftermath of the 26 September ceasefire with Syria, Weinberger and Vessey hoped to reduce the number of forces ashore.\textsuperscript{103} They believed that the American fires from the Sixth Fleet had put the Marines assigned to the MNF in the difficult position of appearing to have joined the side of the Lebanese government and Phalangist militia forces and thus put them at risk for retaliation. Nevertheless, Weinberger and Vessey were cognizant that such a removal of American forces had to be done in a way so as not to disrupt the delicate diplomatic dance that was being managed following the ceasefire.\textsuperscript{104}

The administration had just begun its considerations of when and how to adjust its military posture on the ground in Lebanon when a suicide terrorist blew up the Marine barracks at the Beirut International Airport, killing 241 Americans. The 23 October bombing spurred the administration to conduct a reappraisal of how and when military force ought to be used to support American diplomatic efforts.

\textsuperscript{103} See Weinberger, \textit{Fighting for Peace}, 160n7. Weinberger proposed that the Marines be kept on Navy ships 400 to 500 yards offshore. They would be safer but still available to support President Gemayel if necessary. For more discussion on the military’s attempts to get the Marines out of Beirut before the barracks bombing in October 1983 see Roy Gutman, “Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes,” \textit{Long Island Newsday}, April 8, 1984; Richard Halloran, “Reagan as Military Commander: Bolder in the use of military power than his own generals, the President has become an activist Commander in Chief – and has stirred growing anxiety in the process,” \textit{New York Times Magazine}, January 15, 1984 and Patrick J. Sloyan, “Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure: A Special Report” \textit{Newsday}, April 8, 1984.

\textsuperscript{104} On 28 September, Syria’s Foreign Minister Khaddam delivered a speech at the UN in which warned that the UN should be immediately withdrawn. His speech made it politically difficult for the Reagan administration to immediately adjust the disposition of the Marines. Additionally, although the administration had received approval from Congress to keep the Marines deployed in Lebanon, the administration was constrained as to how they could be disposed. See Hallenbeck, \textit{Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy}, 91-92.
Chapter Five Conclusion

The case study presented in this chapter further explains the evolution of senior leaders’ thoughts regarding the relationship between national political objectives, the use of American military force, and political realities during the administration’s second round of involvement in Lebanon. While the administration’s political objectives were very broad at the outset – withdrawal of all foreign fighters, a stable central government for Lebanon, and a secure border for Israel – the role of American military forces in achieving those objectives was expected to be very minimal. As events unfolded, the administration recognized that its original strategy was unlikely to succeed and that a reappraisal was needed for its use of diplomatic, economic, and military strength.

The strategic reappraisal resulted in NSDD-64, “Next Steps in Lebanon,” which committed American military forces to more involvement in Lebanese affairs. Whereas their initial mission had been simply to serve as a “presence” at the Beirut International Airport, American Marines were to extend their “presence” to areas of Beirut that would bolster Gemayel’s attempt to bring about a government of reconciliation. NSDD-64 served as the basis of American policy until September 1983, when the administration recognized that it was necessary to once again reappraise its political objectives and strategy due to increasing Syrian political and military involvement and a fluctuating Israeli home front.

The Reagan administration recognized that those changes in the political and military landscape in Lebanon made the application of additional military power necessary to support the diplomatic efforts to achieve its political objectives. However,
the administration also recognized that domestic political realities, specifically congressional concern that the administration might drag the nation into a quagmire, limited the amount of military power realistically available to support its diplomatic mediation with Syria. Thus, the strategic concept of “aggressive self-defense,” articulated in NSDD-103, “Strategy for Lebanon,” was greatly influenced by the administration’s desire avoid a War Powers dispute with congressional leaders.

In these reappraisals the Reagan administration solidified one more test of the six that became policy at the end of its first term to legitimize the use of force as a tool of statecraft. The fourth test stated:

The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed – their size, composition and disposition – must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary. Conditions and objectives invariably change during the course of conflict. When they do change, then so must our combat requirements….

Pentagon leaders were in the process of conducting a reappraisal regarding the disposition of the Marines when the terrorist attack occurred at the Marine barracks. The bombing, which seemed to vindicate the concerns of Weinberger, the JCS, and the Marine commanders, served as an impetus for the administration to solidify one more test. The third test stated:

105 The rest of the test stated, “We must continuously keep as a beacon of light before us the basic questions: ‘Is this conflict in our national interest?’ ‘Does our national interest require us to fight, to use force of arms?’ If the answers are ‘yes,’ then we must win. If the answers are ‘no,’ then we should not be in combat [original emphasis].” Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 442.
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….If we determine that a combat mission has become necessary for our vital national interests, then we must send forces capable to do the job – and not assign a combat mission to a force configured for peacekeeping [original emphasis].”

In the Reagan administration’s second round of involvement in Lebanon, challenges arose in balancing domestic political realities, which restricted the administration’s use of American military forces, and political realities on the ground, which demanded commitment of more military forces to achieve the broad political objectives. The administration’s strategic reappraisals of the relationship between objectives and the size, composition, and disposition of committed forces helped avoid a show down with Congress and a quagmire in Lebanon.

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106 The portion of the test removed stated: “As Clausewitz wrote, ‘No one starts a war – or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so – without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war, and how he intends to conduct it.’ War may be different today than in Clausewitz’s time, but the need for well-defined objectives and a consistent strategy is still essential.” Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 441-442.
Chapter Six: The Weinberger Doctrine - A Strategic Reappraisal of the Relationship between Military Force, Political Objectives, and Political Realities

Under what circumstances, and by what means, does a great democracy such as ours reach the painful decision that the use of military force is necessary to protect our interests or to carry out our national policy? - Casper Weinberger

Chapter Five examined the Reagan administration as it worked to relate military power and diplomacy to achieve its policy objectives in Lebanon. The administration conducted a formal reappraisal of its strategy in two instances and then adjusted the manner in which it used military power. With its first strategic reappraisal, the administration expanded the area of the Multinational Force’s presence mission to improve Lebanon’s chances for building a government of reconciliation. With the second strategic reappraisal, the administration changed the MNF’s operational concept from “presence” to “aggressive self-defense” to steer Syria back to the negotiating table. Each reappraisal was greatly influenced by the political realities the administration faced at home and abroad in the Middle East.

Although tragic, the barracks bombing did not seem to dampen the administration’s resolve to pursue its interests or lead on the international stage, nor did the event seem to undermine its belief in the efficacy of military force. Reagan and his

1 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 434.
key cabinet leaders continued to stress that military force must remain an available part of American foreign policy.

At the time of the terrorist attack, the administration was already involved in plans to invade Grenada. Rather than backpedal from using military force, the bombing in Beirut provided the administration with further opportunity to consider the domestic political realities that influenced when and how military force could be used in pursuit of national goals. Specifically, the administration seemed to gain an even greater appreciation of the challenge that gray-area threats, such as proxy wars and state sponsored terrorism, presented to a nation that preferred to reserve military force as a last resort. That national predisposition had prompted the legislative restrictions in the 1970s on the President’s discretion to use military force.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first explains why, even after the barracks bombing, the administration still regarded military force as an essential instrument of national policy. Though the administration was juggling political objectives with questions on the use of military force and political realities, it sent American forces to invade Grenada. To mitigate unpopularity for the operation, the Reagan administration attempted to explain what actions were required and why they were necessary. Though the public embraced Grenada’s success, concerns still remained that American power would be misused to carry out American foreign policy.

The second section explains why the administration promulgated the Weinberger Doctrine in November 1984. Influenced by its perception of the threats facing the nation, its concern about the public’s willingness to support military force as a viable tool of
statecraft, and frustration over legislative restrictions which made it difficult to use military force as part of a consistent, determined, coherent foreign policy, the administration presented several speeches promoting their prerogatives in the use of military force. Their aim was to convince Americans that military force was an essential arrow in the nation’s quiver to meet threats ranging in intensity from isolated terrorist acts, to guerrilla action, to full-scale military confrontation. The administration proposed six tests that it would follow to ensure the nation could meet these challenges but still use its military power legitimately.

In this section, the examination of the current scholarship regarding the origins of the six tests uncovers the need for a few refinements. As noted in the work’s introduction, much of the contemporary scholarship regarding the Weinberger doctrine has concluded that his tests represented the dominant view of lessons that should be taken from Vietnam and was part of the ongoing dispute between Weinberger and Shultz over how to use military force. This work agrees with the scholarship that contends that Weinberger’s tests match the consensus view held by many Pentagon leaders regarding the lessons from the nation’s past experiences. The exception to this agreement lies in the fourth test which called for a constant reappraisal of the objectives sought and power of the force dedicated to achieve those objectives,

The consensus view, as discussed in the current scholarship, is one in which the tests were meant to restrain the use of military force rather than facilitate it. Evidence presented in this work shows that when the tests are considered in the overall context and

2 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 434.
time of the speech’s presentation, the Weinberger Doctrine was not promulgated as an endorsement to reserve force as a last resort, but was instead intended as a policy to legitimize the use of military force as a tool of statecraft.  

Part I: Military Force Remains an Applicable Instrument of Power

While running for President in 1980, Reagan had promised to renew the nation’s confidence in pursuing its interests and leading on the international stage. He identified the nation’s weakness and vacillation under President Carter’s indecisive leadership as the primary sources of America’s faltering confidence and proposed a renewal by providing decisive leadership and rebuilding and reasserting the nation’s economic and military strength. An important component in that process of renewal was to rebuild American confidence in the nation’s ability to legitimately use the tools of statecraft, including military force.

Since taking office in January 1981, Reagan spoke tirelessly on the responsibility of the United States to stand up to the Soviets and their proxies in order to establish lasting world peace, and he frequently backed his words with action. By the summer of 1983, the administration had American naval assets deployed along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Nicaragua to display firepower and force to the Sandinistas, military advisors in El Salvador to assist that government’s efforts to stand firm against

3 See Twining, “Vietnam and the Six Criteria for the Use of Military Force,” 10. Twining also explained that the tests were a way to think about using military force morally, or as described in this work, legitimately. However, Twining conceptualized the tests as a way to restrict the use of force not as a way to garner support for the use of military force. Twining wrote: As Mr. Weinberger has observed, the responsible use of military force is a moral issue, and military power is but one tool among many. For democracies, however, it is most appropriately the final political tool when all else fails.”
communism, and U.S. troops engaged in operations in Honduras, Sudan, and Somalia to challenge the Soviets and their proxies. Not since Vietnam had the United States exercised its military might so widely overseas. Even the barracks bombing would not shake the administration’s commitment to pursue its interests. Evidence of that fact came only two days later on 25 October 1983 when American Marines and Army Rangers landed on the island of Grenada.

“Operation Urgent Fury”

The events leading up to the deployment began in 1979 when Maurice Bishop, the leader of a Marxist group called the New Jewel Movement, took control of Grenada in a coup d’état. Bishop immediately aligned Grenada with Cuba, and in turn with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc nations. The Reagan administration became concerned about Grenada in early 1983 when intelligence reports indicated that approximately 800 Cuban

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4 For an article outlining the administration’s military activities in the summer of 1983 see Kurt Anderson, “Showing the Flag: Not since Viet Nam had the U.S. flexed so much muscle abroad,” *Time*, August 22, 1983, 10.

soldiers and technicians were constructing a 10,000-foot jet aircraft runway on the island. This runway was considered much larger than anything Grenada would need for its tourist industry and Grenada did not have an air force. The administration concluded that Grenada was being transformed into a Soviet-Cuban colony from which to launch military operations. The most significant concern was that the Soviet Union could send long-ranger bombing missions from the island or Cuba could ship supplies from this logistics base to Libya and Angola. In a 23 March 1983 defense address to the nation, Reagan informed the American public about his concern regarding the runway.

On 7 June, Bishop visited with National Security Advisor William Clark and Deputy Secretary Kenneth W. Dam who encouraged him to moderate his actions, which included jailing his political opponents and denouncing the United States. The trip to Washington left Bishop vulnerable to attack from a more radical faction in Grenada charging that he did not truly support the revolution’s Marxist-Leninist program. He was overthrown in a coup and placed under house arrest by members of that faction on 13 October. Although freed six days later by a crowd of 3,000, Bishop and five of his cabinet officials were caught again and assassinated by members of the Grenadian Armed Forces. Amidst the ensuing chaos and turmoil, a twenty-four hour curfew was issued.

6 The strategic significance of Grenada is that it sits astride the southern Caribbean sea lanes. For a war in Europe, Africa, or Asia, approximately eighty-five percent of the material support would be shipped through either the Straits of Florida or Yucatan Channel. While Cuba threatened the Straits of Florida, Grenada could threaten the Yucatan Channel with Soviet support. See Hall, “Grenada, 1983,” in The Reagan Wars, 167.

7 Of Bishop’s response Weinberger wrote: “His [Bishop’s] response led us to conclude that we should review United States policy toward Grenada and also to start thinking what we should do if the Americans in Grenada were threatened or taken hostage.” See Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 106.
with a warning that anyone in public would be shot. Diplomats from the U.S. Embassy in Barbados attempted to travel to Grenada, but all flights to the island were cancelled.

While Bishop was no friend of the West, the unrest following his assassination greatly concerned the United States and members of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which were joined as well by Jamaica and Barbados. On 22 October, the OECS unanimously decided to form a multi-national Caribbean force to remove what they considered an outlaw regime and restore democracy. That same day Dominican Prime Minister Eugenia Charles, acting on behalf of the OECS, requested help from the United States to accomplish those objectives.

Reagan agreed to answer the call, offering three justifications for his decision. First, approximately 1,000 American citizens lived on Grenada, of which 800 were medical students, and Reagan did not want to face a hostage situation like the one in Iran that had paralyzed the Carter administration. Second, Reagan wanted to follow through on his commitment to support democracy and freedom. As Secretary of State Shultz cast the issue in his memoirs: “What kind of a country would we be, he [Reagan] asked, if we refused to help small but steadfast democratic countries in our neighborhood to defend themselves against the threat of this kind of tyranny and lawlessness?” Finally, Reagan wanted to eliminate further Cuban intervention in Grenada.

Thus, on 23 October, Reagan signed NSDD-110A, “Response to Caribbean Governments’ Request to Restore Democracy on Grenada,” which outlined those three

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8 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 329.
policy objectives. Reagan received unanimous support from his cabinet officers and from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The support of the Joint Chiefs stemmed from their view that intervention in Grenada would be “a clearly defined mission for which United States forces have been trained and armed” and the assigned “objectives...were realistic and could be achieved of military forces and power.”

In considering how to relate military force to its policy objectives, the administration had to address three issues: when the force should be sent; what size the force should be; and how the administration should handle the political realities that would come into play. Regarding commencement of operations, most agreed that it should be done as soon as possible to capitalize on surprise and improve the chances of rescuing the Americans. Weinberger and Vessey recommended delaying the operation until at least 25 October to give the Defense Department time to gather additional intelligence for the operation. Weinberger noted: “My original instructions to the Joint

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9 The Directive stated “The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence, will land U.S. and allied Caribbean military forces in order to take control of Grenada, no later than dawn Tuesday, October 2, 1983…..This operation has a three-fold objective: Assuring the safety of American citizens on Grenada; In conjunction with other OECS/friendly government participants, the restoration of democratic government on Grenada, the elimination of current, and the prevention of further, Cuban intervention in Grenada.” See Federation of American Scientists: Intelligence Resource Program, “NSDD - National Security Decision Directives Reagan Administration, NSDD-110A, Response to Caribbean Governments’ Request to Restore Democracy on Grenada, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-2171t.gif [accessed February 9, 2008].

10 The literature does note that the leaders in the Pentagon would have preferred to have had more time to plan the operation. Nevertheless, with this exception, Pentagon leaders were supportive of the mission.

11 Richard Halloran, “Joint Chiefs Supported U.S. Action as Feasible,” The New York Times, October 27, 1983, [online archive]; accessed February 12, 2008. In the article the Grenada operation was contrasted with the Lebanon mission and noted that the Joint Chiefs had been reluctant to support the operation in Lebanon because the mission there was seen as political rather than military.

12 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 114.
Chiefs had been that we should plan to begin the operation at the soonest possible time consistent with the maximum safety to our forces, and consistent with the actual time needed to assemble both the forces and supplies for a successful action.”

Regarding the size of the force, Weinberger and Shultz both were of one mind; the force should be twice as large as the Pentagon recommendation. In his memoir Shultz recounted: “I suggested to the president that he call Jack Vessey…and ask him what the numbers of troops were that would be required for this operation. ‘After he has told you, Mr. President, I suggest that you tell him to double it.’” Similarly, Weinberger told the Joint Chiefs “to double whatever forces the field Commander said he would need.” He also related in his memoir that his “invariable practice was to double, at least, any Joint Chief recommendations as to the size of a force required.” Weinberger noted that this reasoning was based on his belief that one of the major problems with the 1979 American hostage rescue attempt in Iran was that the mission sent too few helicopters.

13 Ibid.
14 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 329.
15 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 111.
16 Ibid., 111n3. It is clear from reading his memoirs that Weinberger’s thinking was also greatly influenced by the manner in which the nation conducted the Vietnam War. He explained: “The war in Vietnam, with our “limited objectives” and yet unlimited willingness to commit troops, reinforced my belief, which I expressed many times when I was the Secretary of Defense, that it was a very terrible mistake for a government to commit soldiers to battle without any intention of supporting them sufficiently to enable them to win, and indeed without any intention to win.” Ibid., 8-9. Elsewhere he said: “I…felt keenly that we should not wander into any situation or conflict unless we felt it was important enough to win. We should define our mission carefully – and then go in with overwhelming force to ensure victory.” Weinberger, In the Arena, 297. Also see Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 31, 180-181, 398.
In the end, American forces in the operation out-numbered the defenders of Grenada by ten to one.¹⁷

Regarding political realities, the Reagan administration did its best to manage the perception of congressional leaders, allies, and the public regarding the operation. The day prior to initiating the operation, the Joint Chiefs presented Reagan with the final plan. During that discussion General Vessey strayed away from providing strictly military advice and warned Reagan of possible problems with public opinion because of what had happened to the Marines in Lebanon.¹⁸ While Vessey was correct and the President did face criticism, the administration took a number of actions to keep that opposition within manageable limits.

On 20 October, Reagan directed his Counselor for Legislative Affairs, Kenneth Duberstien to develop a strategy for consultation with the leaders on Capitol Hill. Implementation of that strategy began the evening before the invasion when Reagan invited the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, the Speaker of the House, and the House Majority and Minority Leaders to the family quarters of the White House to “consult” with them regarding the invasion. Although Reagan had already given the final approval for the mission, he and other members of his administration pointed to this meeting as fulfillment of the requirement in the War Powers Act for consultation with Congress. They believed that Reagan had followed the intent because he had the power

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¹⁸ Reagan apparently asked one question: “Is there any military reason for not going ahead with the operation?” The Chiefs said no and Reagan signed the official authorization for the operation to proceed. Quoted in Meese, *With Reagan*, 218.
to abort the mission if he had deemed it necessary to do so after consulting with the congressional leaders.

Still, the congressmen at the residence meeting did not believe that they had been consulted. Tip O’Neill, the Speaker of the House, characterized the meeting as one in which they were “informed” and Howard Baker, the Senate Majority Leader, said they were “advised.”19 As to the timing of the meeting, it was held after the daily news cycle to prevent leaks that might jeopardize the secrecy of the mission.20 A second part of Duberstein’s plan was for President Reagan and his advisors to “consult” with the entire congressional leadership. Thus, at 08:15 a.m. the following day, three hours after the invasion had begun, Reagan and his key advisers conducted a briefing for congressional leaders.21

Congressional reaction to the invasion was divided; Republicans rallied around the decision, while Democrats split over whether or not to support the President. Tip O’Neill, who had not supported the President’s decision when he was “consulted” at the residence, nevertheless lent his support while American soldiers were in action on the island, arguing that the President deserved bipartisan support in a time of crisis.22 Not everyone was as generous. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) called the attack “an act of war,” and questioned whether “you restore democracy at the point of a

19 Raymond, “President Reagan and the Grenada Intervention,” in Collision or Collusion?, 427-431.
20 Ibid., 430.
21 Ibid., 437.
bayonet.” Senator Alan Cranston (D-Cal.) called Reagan “a trigger-happy president” and Representative Ted Weiss (D-N.Y.) characterized the invasion as “immoral, illegal, and unconstitutional.”

On 27 October, seventeen House Democrats introduced a concurrent resolution that called upon the President for immediate removal of U.S. military forces from Grenada. A day later, nine Democrats and nine Republicans introduced a joint resolution requiring an immediate withdrawal and asserting that the President had violated the constitutional prerogatives of the Congress. Neither resolution left the Foreign Affairs Committee. On 1 November, the House approved a resolution making the War Powers Resolution operative on the day of the invasion, 25 October, but this resolution failed in the Senate. All these legislative actions carried little weight because few in Congress or the administration believed that the operation would last over sixty days.

The administration worried not only about the perceptions in Congress, but also about those of its European allies. American nuclear missiles were to begin deployment into Europe in December 1983 and the administration was concerned that the action in Grenada might give antimissile groups an opportunity to argue that the United States was


24 Raymond, Collision or Collusion? 442-443.

25 On 28 October, the Senate approved a rider, 64 to 20, to an unrelated bill that invoked the War Powers Resolution. However, that bill never passed the Senate. Thus, the Congress as a whole never invoked the War Powers Resolution. See Hall, The Reagan Wars, 199. Also see Schoenhals and Melanson, Revolution and Intervention in Grenada, 155.

irresponsible and should not be trusted with nuclear weapons in Europe. Additionally, the administration was counting on continued support from the French and Italians in Lebanon, in spite of the bombing there and the American actions in Grenada. To manage the perceptions of America’s allies, George Shultz traveled to Europe on 27 October to meet with the British, French, and Italian Foreign Ministers.27 All three nations expressed criticism for the Grenada operation, and they were joined by most Latin American countries as well. On 28 October, eleven nations voted for the United Nations Security Council resolution “deeply deploring” the U. S.-led invasion of Grenada as a “flagrant violation of international law.”28 While the United States vetoed the resolution, the administration’s actions left America isolated, supported only by the eastern Caribbean nations that had requested help for the invasion.

In addition to opposition from its allies, the Reagan administration worried about the support of the American public. The administration tightly controlled the flow of information from Grenada, and news camera crews were kept off the island for four days. In the interim, the administration released sanitized videotapes of the operation to the press and justified its actions by claiming the military necessity for secrecy. By the time

27 President Reagan had notified Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher before the invasion took place; however, she was vehemently opposed to the idea. Reagan’s phone conversation with Prime Minister Thatcher is recounted in the memoirs of the men who were present for it. Apparently, Reagan, who was known to have very poor hearing, had to hold the phone away from his ear because Prime Minister Thatcher was expressing her dismay very vigorously. See Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 119-120 and McFarlane and Smardz, Special Trust, 265.

the press was allowed to report unhindered on Grenada, American public opinion on the invasion was successfully shaped.\(^{29}\)

In addition to controlling the news coverage from the island, the administration presented its rationale for the operation to the public. As noted in chapter one, Reagan believed that the American people would accept the responsibility to spread freedom and preserve peace so long as the nature of the challenge was conveyed to them. On 27 October, Reagan addressed the nation to explain that even though Grenada and Lebanon were “oceans apart” they were “closely related” by the fact that Moscow had “assisted and encouraged” violence in both countries and provided support through a network of surrogates and terrorists.\(^{30}\) He stated:

You know, there was a time when our national security was based on a standing army here within our own borders and shore batteries of artillery along our coasts, and, of course, a navy to keep the sea lanes open for the shipping of things necessary for our well-being. The world has changed. Today, our national security can be threatened in faraway places. It’s up to all of us to be aware of the strategic importance of such places and to be able to identify them.\(^{31}\)

\(^{29}\) Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 211-221. Also see Quester, “Grenada in the News Media,” in *American Intervention in Grenada*, 109-128. Interestingly, the press did not report on the censorship that was occurring until 28 October, and polls showed that a majority of Americans supported the administration’s decision.


\(^{31}\) Ibid.
Regarding American interests in Grenada, Reagan presented three reasons for the operation: that approximately 1,000 American citizens had been at risk of being taken hostage or killed, that the United States had received a legitimate request for help from the OECS to help restore order and democracy on the island, and that there was a real threat of the island becoming a Soviet-Cuban colony.\(^{32}\)

Following Reagan’s speech, polling data showed that respondents were more receptive of the presence of American forces in Grenada than the previous night. However, polling data also indicated that the change could be attributable more to news accounts than to the President’s speech.\(^{33}\)

In examining the popularity of the Grenada invasion with the American public, one cannot overlook the reactions of the medical students who returned from Grenada. Upon return to American soil, one student fell to his knees and kissed the runway asphalt, an event covered widely on all three major networks.

Shultz recounted: “The TV anchormen kept trying to push the students to say that they were never in danger; it didn’t work. Suddenly I could sense the country’s emotions turn around. Our effort in Grenada wasn’t an immoral imperialist intervention: it was an essential rescue and a job well done.”\(^{34}\) A *New York Times* article on the students return reported: “With tears and expressions of relief, scores of American students evacuated from Grenada told yesterday of days and nights of terror on the strife-torn island and

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\(^{34}\) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 339.
praised the Reagan administration and United States invasion forces for bringing them safely away.”

Additionally, news reports showed warehouses full of weapons, ammunition, and communications equipment, which implicated Cuba in using Grenada as a military base to spread Communism in the Caribbean and Africa. A poll conducted on 26 and 27 October showed men, by a margin of 62 to 29 percent, approved of Reagan’s decision to send American troops to Grenada. Similarly, a November ABC-Washington Post survey showed Americans 71 percent in favor and only 22 percent opposed to the Grenada landing. With such strong public support, concerns about congressional reaction to the invasion were largely negated.

Kai Schoenhals and Richard Melanson, while examining a series of polling data taken following the Grenada operation, found an “overwhelmingly pragmatic nature...[to] the public’s reactions.” They concluded:

Despite the administration’s elaborate efforts to portray the Grenada intervention as a humanitarian rescue mission, a compassionate response to an urgent request for help by small, friendly, democratic neighbors, and


37 Schoenhals and Melanson, Revolution and Intervention in Grenada, 153.
the successful foiling of a Soviet-Cuban colony, the U.S. public supported
the action because it was swift, conclusive, and relatively free of cost.\textsuperscript{38}

Thus while November polling portrayed Americans as strongly in favor of the
Grenada operation, a Newsweek-Gallup canvass showed a majority favoring a withdrawal
as soon as U.S. citizens were secured, rather than maintaining forces until the formation
of a democratic government. Furthermore, 47 versus 43 percent believed that Reagan
was too quick to employ U.S. forces.\textsuperscript{39} While Reagan may have earned support from the
American people for the Grenada operation, he had not convinced Americans to support
his broader plans to advance democracy in the region through aggressive action against
the Soviets and their proxies.\textsuperscript{40} These results match the scholarship presented in chapter
two: members of the public want swift, decisive action and the avoidance of long-term
commitments.

Nonetheless, the administration viewed Grenada as a defining moment in
American history. Reagan proclaimed: “A period of self-doubt is over….History will
record that one of our turning points came on a small island in the Caribbean where
America went to take care of her own and to rescue a neighboring nation from a growing
tyrranny.”\textsuperscript{41} The operation allowed the administration to demonstrate its willingness to use

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., 154, 153.}
\footnote{Ibid., 153-154.}
\footnote{For instance, a New York Times/CBS New Poll taken in on 26 and 27 October 1983 indicated that only 22
percent of Americans believed that the United States should help to overthrow the Government of
Nicaragua. See David Shribman, “Poll Shows Support for Presence of U.S. Troops in Lebanon and
\footnote{Strober and Strober, The Reagan Presidency, 250.}
\end{footnotes}
military force in order to pursue its interests. Years later Shultz explained why he believed the administration had made the right decision to use military force in Grenada:

Often one hears the argument ‘Force should be used only as the last resort.’ This makes people feel good, and it sounds statesmanlike. In fact, I feel strongly that it is poor public policy and an unsound application of the law. *The use of force, and the credible threat of the use of force, are legitimate instruments of national policy and should be viewed as such* [author’s emphasis]. Waiting to use force as a last resort would have meant possibly enduring hostage taking and having to use force then. The use of force obviously should not be taken lightly, but better to use force when you *should* rather than when you *must*; last means *no other*, and by that time the level of force and the risk involved may have multiplied many times over [Shultz’s emphasis].

Weinberger similarly had positive remarks regarding the operation:

In many ways, it was the complete model for future such activities, should our armed forces be called upon to undertake them at such short notice as we were in Grenada. If the measure of success is attaining our political objectives at minimum cost, in the shortest possible time, then the Grenada operation has to be judged to have been a complete success.

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42 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 345.

43 Weinberger, Fighting of Peace, 126.
In its decisions regarding the handling of the situation in Grenada, the administration further assimilated lessons that would ultimately be incorporated into policy to legitimate the use of military force as a tool of statecraft. One particular lesson revolved around Reagan’s belief that the American people were willing to use power to carry out a “firm and principled” foreign policy so long as their leaders explained what actions were required and why.

Reagan first sought to explain the administration’s actions to a small group of congressional leaders, then the congressional body as a whole, and finally the public. In those forums he presented the need to quickly attend to vital American interests and those of the friendly, democratic nations of the OECS. These arguments for the defense of vital interests were in keeping with the first of the Weinberger doctrine’s six tests.44

However, the administration’s actions to essentially censor media reporting on Grenada creates a discrepancy with test five - before committing combat forces abroad there should be some reasonable assurance of support. One reason for the apparent censorship may have been that actions in Grenada would be difficult to justify as a measure of last resort. Rather, the administration had turned to force relatively quickly without exploring all other tools of statecraft. With the Grenada operation, the administration further signaled its belief that military force should be available as a tool of statecraft and not reserved as a last resort after all other measures had been exhausted.

This concern about the reasonable assurance of support would be counteracted by a combination of the second and third tests. The second test was: “If we decide it is

44 Test one stated: “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.”
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 [original emphasis].”

The administration practiced the second test in its decision to double the force size requested by the military leaders in the Pentagon. The third test stated: “If we *do* decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives.” Such was the case in Grenada, for the administration.

This section serves to show that the barracks bombing did not dampen the administration’s resolve to use military force to pursue its interests on the international stage. The bombing, though, did significantly influence the administration by convincing its leaders that more needed to be done to prepare the nation for gray-area threats such as state sponsored terrorism. In spite of Reagan’s proclamation that “a period of self-doubt is over,” the leaders in the administration knew that the invasion had neither eliminated public concern about using American military force, nor revoked the 1970’s laws restricting when and how American military power could be used.

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45 The rest of the test stated: “Of course if the particular situation requires only limited force to win our objectives, then we should not hesitate to commit forces sized accordingly. When Hitler broke treaties and remilitarized the Rhineland, small combat forces then could perhaps have prevented the holocaust of World War II.” See Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 441.
Part II: Preparing the Nation to Use Military Force

The discussion of Grenada and the case studies presented in chapters three, four, and five showed how the administration tried to develop strategies that took those concerns and restrictions into account. One example was its adoption of a strategy of “aggressive self-defense” as a way to demonstrate resolve toward the Syrians and at the same time avoid a War Powers dispute with congressional leaders. As another example, the administration adopted a more modest strategy with the contras until more public support could be gathered against Cuba. However, by the time the administration entered its fourth year, a number of events convinced its leaders that more needed to be done to address the public’s hesitancy to support both the use of military force as a tool of statecraft and the executive branch’s prerogatives in the conduct of foreign policy.

As already noted, one of these events was the terrorist attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon. Following the incident, Secretary of Defense Weinberger convened a DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport (BIA) Terrorist Act of 23 October 1983, or the Long Commission, for short. The Commission told Secretary Weinberger:

The 23 October 1983 attack on the Marine Battalion Landing Team Headquarters in Beirut was tantamount to an act of war using the medium of terrorism. Terrorist warfare, sponsored by sovereign states or organized political entities to achieve political objectives, is a threat to the United States that is increasing at an alarming rate. The 23 October catastrophe underscores the fact that terrorist warfare can have significant political impact and demonstrates that the United States…is inadequately prepared to deal with this threat.

The Commission’s findings were made public in early December 1983.

The administration believed the only way to challenge terrorism was to be willing to respond with military force, but it also recognized that combating terrorism raised a host of questions for a free society like the United States. Americans would undoubtedly, and justifiably, have many questions about when and how preemptive, preventative, or

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47 DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport, Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983, 20 December 1983, 2. Of the decision to convene the Commission Weinberger wrote: “Given the magnitude of the Beirut barracks disaster, with 241 American servicemen killed and United States policy in Lebanon reeling from the effects of a bomb laden truck driven by a suicidal driver against U.S. forces that I did not think should have been there in the first place, I believed that an independent inquiry into what had happened was absolutely necessary.” The commission was chaired by Admiral Robert L. J. Long, USN, (Ret), and assisted by Honorable Robert J. Murray, Lieutenant General Lawrence F. Snowden, USMC, (Ret), Lieutenant General Eugene F. Tighe, Jr, USAF, (Ret), and Lieutenant General Joseph T. Palastra, Jr, USA.

punitive action would be taken against known terrorist groups. What evidence would the public insist upon before sanctioning forceful action and what action would the nation consider appropriate? Given the national preference to reserve military force as a last resort when all else has failed, the administration recognized the challenge of developing a sound counterterrorism program.

Shultz explained the concerns of the administration:

As the [terrorist] threat mounted – and as the involvement of such countries as Iran, Syria, Libya, and North Korea had become more and more evident – it had become increasingly important that the nations of the West face up to the need for active defense against terrorism. Once it becomes established that terrorism works – that it achieves its political objectives – its practitioners will be bolder, and the threat to us will be all the greater. The lesson of Vietnam was continually being cited to reject any use of military force unless in exceptional circumstances and with near total public support in advance.

Shultz presented a speech to the Trilateral Commission on 3 April 1984 to address the administration’s position on the lessons of Vietnam:

It is often said that the lesson of Vietnam is that the United States should not engage in military conflict without a clear and precise military

49 Shultz discussed these concerns in his memoir. See Turmoil and Triumph, 646.


51 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 646.
mission, solid public backing, and enough resources to finish the job. This is undeniably true. But does it mean there are no situations where a discrete assertion of power is needed or appropriate for limited purposes? Unlikely. Whether it is crisis management or power projection or a show of force or peacekeeping or a localized military action, there will always be instances that fall short of an all-out national commitment on the scale of World War II. The need to avoid no-win situations cannot mean that we turn automatically away from hard-to-win situations that call for prudent involvement. These will always involve risks; we will not always have the luxury of being able to choose the most advantageous circumstances. And our adversaries can be expected to play rough….It is highly unlikely that we can respond to gray-area challenges without adapting power to political circumstances….This is just not the kind of reality we are likely to be facing in the 1980s, or 1990s, or beyond.”

Besides the threat of state-sponsored terrorism, the administration’s retreating foreign policy in the Middle East and Central America also added to their uneasiness with the nation’s hesitancy to use military force.

Following the terrorist bombing in Beirut, leaders in Congress began to reconsider their earlier decision to allow the Marines to remain in Lebanon for eighteen months. Rather than risk facing a political defeat when Congress returned to session in January,

52 United States, Department of State, American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1984: “Document 1, Power and Diplomacy Always Go Together,” 3.
the administration started making plans a month earlier to remove the Marines.\textsuperscript{53} By February 1984, the Marines were aboard ships and by March they had left the Mediterranean completely. Despite that outcome, Shultz’s words reflected the belief of the administration that the nation needed to be prepared to conduct similar peacekeeping missions in the future.

The administration struggled in Central America as well to combine military force with its diplomatic efforts. In 1981, the administration had asked for and received support from congressional leaders to aid Contra fighters in an effort to pressure the Sandinistas into diplomatic negotiations. By the end of 1982, however, some members of Congress became concerned that the Reagan administration might be funding the overthrow of the Sandinista government and engaging in activities that could draw the nation into a war in Central America.

To express its concern, the House of Representatives passed the Boland amendment by 411 to 0 on 8 December 1982. The amendment prohibited the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency from providing military equipment, training, or advice for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government. The Boland amendment was largely a symbolic act meant to warn of Congressional concerns, and the administration was left with a great deal of leeway.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} See footnote #45 for archival research materials which are still classified that support this contention.

\textsuperscript{54} See William M. LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in 	extit{Reagan versus the Sandinistas}, ed. Thomas W. Walker (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 204-205. LeoGrande explained that the language of the Classified Annex to the Fiscal Year (FY) 1983 Intelligence Authorization (P.L. 97-269) which prohibited U.S. aid to paramilitary groups “for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras,” was “not designed to bring the covert operation to a halt; on the contrary, it was intentionally crafted to register the committees’ growing
Any contra action designed to overthrow the Sandinista government could easily be justified as intended to simply apply pressure. In early July 1983, however, reports of a large Pentagon-directed show-of-force operation around Nicaragua convinced many congressional leaders that the Reagan administration was in the process of dragging the county into a quagmire in Central America. On 28 July, the House voted 228 to 195 to shut off covert assistance to the Contras.\(^5\) As it entered its fourth year, the administration found that the availability of military force to shape its foreign policy, either directly in the form of Marines on the ground in Beirut or indirectly as contra proxy forces, was eroding.

From the administration’s perspective, congressional interference was undermining its strategy in Central America and, in an effort to turn matters around, the

\(^5\) A story related by Shultz in his memoir shows that going into its third year the administration was just as concerned about Central America as it had been in its first. Shultz wrote: “On December 21, 1982, just back from a trip to solidify relations with our European allies and with a new U.S. peace initiative under way in the Middle East, I was feeling reasonably good about our progress in dealing with thorny foreign policy problems. I was startled to be assaulted by CIA director Bill Casey just after finishing a meeting in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. Bill cornered me as I was leaving and unloaded: ‘The American people are not behind our policy in Central America,’ he growled. ‘Our support in Congress is fading. We’re in danger of losing on what is by far the most important foreign policy problem confronting the nation. You shouldn’t be traveling around Europe. You should be going around the United States sounding the alarm and generating support for tough policies on the most important problem on our agenda. Force is the only language the Communists understand.’” Shultz agreed that the problem was “of immense importance to the United States” and had to be confronted, but noted that “the Soviets knew full well that Central America and the Caribbean was the region where the American press and America public opinion were the most sensitive to the possibility of ‘another Vietnam.’” Trying to forge policy was like walking through a swamp.” The Pentagon’s exercise was called “Big Pine II.” It was a six-month-long exercise involving more than three thousand U.S. combat soldiers operating with Honduran forces to conduct war games. It also included naval exercises off both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Nicaragua. For more details about the Congressional role in funding the contras see LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in *Reagan versus the Sandinistas*, 202-227; Kagan, “The Boland Amendment,” in *Twilight Struggle*, 238-247.
administration formed a bipartisan commission in July 1983. The intent of the commission, chaired by Henry Kissinger, was to gain bipartisan support for what Shultz called “a sensibly tough and ambitious policy toward Central America.”

Recognizing that its Middle East policy had largely been undone by the terrorist attack on the Marine barracks, the administration sought to prevent another such setback. In April 1984, Reagan signed NSDD-138, “Preemptive Strikes Against Suspected Terrorists” which authorized the Green Berets and Navy SEALS to conduct guerrilla warfare. It also authorized “sabotage, killing (though not “assassination”), preemptive and retaliatory raids, deception and an expanded intelligence collection program.”

Despite these minor victories, neither attempt was able to address what the administration perceived as a larger problem: restrictions on military force that stemmed from public protest or legislature. Reagan and his advisors believed that public and congressional support were critical components to using military force as an effective tool of statecraft and to constructing a foreign policy that was able to address the multitude of threats the nation faced.

Therefore, in speeches presented in 1984, Reagan, Shultz, and Weinberger sought to convince the country on three points. First, the nation’s security and protection of its vital interests demanded that the nation be prepared to deploy military force to respond to

56 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 309.


58 In the spring of 1984, congressional leaders learned that CIA agents, rather than contra fighters, had conducted mining operations in Nicaragua’s harbors. In October 1984, Congress passed legislation commonly known as Boland Amendment II which terminated U.S. assistance to the Contras.
a conflict or crises. Second, for diplomacy to be effective, it needed to be backed by military force, both direct and indirect. Third, a better system than the present one was needed to ensure that the nation legitimately used the tools of statecraft and achieved a consistent, coherent and determined foreign policy.\(^5\)

In their speeches the men explained that the nation’s security depended on providing leadership within the community of nations. They maintained that isolationism was no longer an option for the nation because America’s strength was needed to protect all democratic nations’ vital interests, to include peace, justice, sources of energy, minerals, and free markets. It was a theme that the administration had promoted throughout its first three years in office; however, this time the men insisted that military force may very likely be required to carry out that leadership responsibility.

Weinberger explained:

While we do not seek to deter or settle all the world’s conflicts, we must recognize that, as a major power, our responsibilities and interests are now of such scope that there are few troubled areas we can afford to ignore. So we must be prepared to deal with a range of possibilities, a spectrum of

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crises, from local insurgency to global conflict. We prefer, of course, to limit any conflict in its early stages, to contain and control it— but to do that our military forces must be deployed in a timely manner, and be fully supported and prepared before they are engaged, because many of those difficult decisions must be made extremely quickly [Weinberger’s emphasis].

Nevertheless, the men noted the fine line the nation needed to walk as it carried out this responsibility. In their speeches, by invoking the memory of the democratic nations’ early appeasement of Hitler, the men justified the need for involvement. Whereas, by invoking the memory of Vietnam, they emphasized the limitations to the amount of blood, treasure, and spirit that the nation would forfeit to meet that responsibility.

The three characterized the threats to peace as covering a full spectrum from individual acts of terrorism to nuclear war. They warned that gray-area threats, such as state-sponsored terrorism and wars fought by proxy forces were particularly challenging for the nation to respond to because they fell somewhere in the continuum between war and peace. The men noted that, as a democracy, the decision to use military force came easily only when one’s own soil was attacked, but knowing when and how to respond to all other significant, yet different, events was much more challenging. Weinberger worried:

60 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 436.
We find ourselves, then, face to face with a modern paradox: The most likely challenge to the peace – the gray area conflicts – are precisely the most difficult challenges to which a democracy must respond. Yet, while the source and nature of today’s challenges are uncertain, our response must be clear and understandable.61

The three men emphasized that it was in the nation’s best interest to become committed to smaller events in order to prevent those events from spinning out of control and leading to total war. Such commitments were described not only in terms of military force but also in terms of economic aid, security assistance, and diplomatic mediation.

The concept of diplomatic mediation led to their second point: for diplomacy to be effective it needed to be backed by both direct and indirect military force. In support of diplomacy, this force might include direct involvement in localized military actions as in Grenada, show-of-force operations like those in Central American in the summer of 1983, or peacekeeping as in Lebanon. Such military force could also be indirect in nature, such as support for contra proxy forces in Central America or military assistance to allies to help in their defense.

While both Weinberger and Shultz agreed on the importance of relating military power to diplomacy, in their speeches they parted company over when and how American military forces were to be coupled to the diplomatic effort. Weinberger believed that the nation should preserve its American combat soldiers as a last resort and instead rely upon what he in later years called “other currencies of power” to promote the

61 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 435.
nation’s interests and shape outcomes.\textsuperscript{62} Thus he supported economic aid, political support, military aid, sales and training, and covert action to advance American interests and believed those actions, if carried out successfully, could preclude the need for American combat forces. Weinberger argued that soldiers put into harm’s way as pawns in a diplomatic chess game were likely to have lower morale and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{63}

Shultz, like Weinberger, was supportive of using “other currencies of power” whenever possible; however, he was more inclined to believe that the presence of American forces on the ground was important in demonstrating the nation’s resolve and lent credibility and strength to negotiations and diplomatic efforts. Weinberger cautioned against basing American diplomacy on the ability to deploy American forces because it ignored the possibility that domestic constraints on the use of military force could preclude such leverage. For Shultz, American military forces on the ground linked with diplomatic efforts represented power; those forces were the physical embodiment of national resolve and support for the diplomacy at hand. His ideas reflected a pragmatic, rationalist, or gradualist, incremental approach, popularized in the 1960s by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and by limited war theorists.\textsuperscript{64} They believed that military force was one instrument of national power that could be combined simultaneously with

\textsuperscript{62} See Caspar W. Weinberger, Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1987, 81-82.


\textsuperscript{64} For further discussion on the rationalist approach see Gregory Palmer, “The rationalist approach in American defense policy,” in The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 1-18.
others in order to achieve policy ends.65 According to this thinking, the use of military force should operate on a continuum of coercion to achieve strategic advantage and if the desired response is not forthcoming, then one has the option to add more force. In this approach, military force is a direct extension of policy.

Weinberger was adamantly opposed to the gradualist, incremental approach which he associated with the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the administration’s efforts in Lebanon. He argued that the approach was fatally flawed because it ignored domestic political realities. Weinberger explained: “Gradualism is inherently attractive to some [sic] almost always mistaken. It exaggerates the illusion of control, violates the strategic principle of concentration of force, and encourages underestimation of the domestic political costs entailed by any use of American military forces abroad.”66

Weinberger seemingly believed that how and when American military forces were coupled to American diplomacy ultimately determined the ability or power of that force to serve as an effective instrument. In his classic, On War, Carl von Clausewitz contended, “If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz. the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will [his emphasis].”67

Weinberger apparently recognized that in a democracy like that of the United States, a slightly different formula was called for because the convoluted political and

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65 The other instruments of national power typically discussed are diplomatic, informational, and economic.

66 Weinberger, Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1987, 80.

bureaucratic systems adversely affect how will and means are coupled to a military force. Therefore, rather than describe power, like Clausewitz, as a product of all the will and means at the nation’s disposal, Weinberger conceptualized power as the product of the will and means that were actually coupled to the military instrument on the ground. Through his six tests Weinberger sought to maximize the will and means coupled to a military force by capitalizing on the strengths of American ideals and circumventing the weaknesses of the American political and bureaucratic system.

With his first test Weinberger emphasized that the nation should not commit forces to combat unless vital interests were at stake and with his fifth test that the administration should have reasonable assurance of the support of the American people. He asserted that:

Any U.S. government that attempts to fight where our vital interests are not at stake, when we have no good reason to suppose there will be continuing public support, committing military forces merely as a regular and customary adjunct to our diplomatic efforts, invites the sort of domestic turmoil we experienced during the Vietnam war. Such a government has no grounds for expecting any less disastrous result.68

Additionally, Weinberger’s sixth test limited the use of American military force only as a last resort. Taken together, these three tests worked to ensure that power would

68 Weinberger, Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1987, 80-81.
exist with the military force on the ground because the American people’s will would come from self-preservation or the defense of moral issues such as freedom and liberty.69

In order to circumvent the weaknesses brought on by the American political system, Weinberger’s second test called for commitment of enough military force to quickly achieve one’s objectives. Rapid achievement of the proposed objectives would serve to minimize congressional involvement; this was an important goal because he believed that even a Congressional debate over the enactment of the War Powers Resolution served to preclude the leverage a military force could exert.

Lastly, Weinberger sought to circumvent the weaknesses of the American political system with his fourth test, which called for a constant reassessment. Through continual reassessment, any degradation in the will or means that was coupled to the military force could be recognized quickly and allow the military force’s objectives to be adjusted accordingly. Thus, Weinberger’s six tests sought to root the will and means coupled to a military instrument in moral concerns and alleviate the impact of the political and bureaucratic system.

A subset of the Shultz and Weinberger debate on the proper relationship of power and diplomacy was the disagreement over how the administration ought to respond to

terrorist attacks. Shultz believed that Weinberger and the leaders in the Pentagon had what he called a “deep philosophical opposition to using…military for counterterrorist operations.” Shultz wrote: “There was the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), a group of commandos trained to rescue Americans held by terrorists. But Cap [Weinberger] set down conditions that must exist before the JSOC could be employed that were so restrictive as to mean that they would virtually never see action.”

Weinberger on the other hand charged the members of the State Department with favoring an “unfocused” or “revenge” approach, which called for bombing a Syrian or Iranian city if the United States believed a terrorist attack originated from that nation. Arguing against that approach, Weinberger believed it failed to focus on the terrorists themselves and led to an unnecessary cycle of violence. Instead, he favored a “focused” approach that held off action unless the terrorists’ origins were confirmed, and then responded only in a manner that was appropriate to the terrorist action and would discourage terrorism in the future. The administration’s response to the terrorist bombing of a discotheque in Berlin served as Weinberger’s example of a successful focused approach. When Libyan linkage to the bombing was exposed, the administration

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70 In their work *Landslide*, Jane Mayer and Doyle McManus wrote: “The battle over the proper response to terrorism drove the two cabinet officers out into the nation’s pulpits like feuding medieval theologians debating a point of doctrine.” See Mayer and McManus, 53. David C. Martin and John Walcott, whose work was strictly focused on America’s war against terrorism, conceptualized the debate in a broader fashion, noting that the men were grappling with a strategic question of how to relate power to diplomacy. See Martin and Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, 155. Shultz offered his insight into the situation by explaining that the debate he and Weinberger were having “over the proper use of force to combat terrorism” was part of “the larger debate over the proper relationship of power and diplomacy.” See Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 649.


72 Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 188.
responded with attacks on various targets in Libya associated with terrorism. Despite the differences, the administration believed that the nation could abide by the rule of law and effectively counter terrorists if a more active means of defense was developed.73

Most of the news media focused on these differences of opinion between Shultz and Weinberger rather than on the larger message each speech imparted – the executive branch needed to be allowed to exercise its prerogative to use military power as a tool of statecraft.74 Senator J. William Fulbright and Seth Tillman were an exception to this rule and in their article, “Shultz, Weinberger Nondifferences,” they wrote: “there may be less to their apparent difference than meets the eye…. [W]hile they may differ as to when and how it should be used, both regard military force as the primary instrument of American foreign policy.”75 Nevertheless, because of the emphasis placed in the news-papers on the debate between the Cabinet officers, it is not surprising to find that interpretation emphasized in the subsequent literature.

One example of such an interpretation taken to the extreme is found in John Arquilla’s The Reagan Imprint. Arquilla explained that Weinberger “articulated the

73 Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 647. For more details regarding the dispute between Weinberger and Shultz regarding terrorism see Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 643-688.


series of six restrictive tests” in response to NSDD number 138, “Preemptive Strikes Against Suspected Terrorists.” The directive was sought after by Shultz and signed by Reagan in April 1984. As stated previously, the directive authorized creation of secret FBI and CIA paramilitary squads and use of the Green Berets and Navy SEALS to conduct clandestine military operations. However, evidence from this work suggests that attributing the formulation of the six tests solely as Weinberger’s response to NSDD-138, as Arquilla does, is too narrow a reading and fails to adequately contextualize the tests.

Similarly, focusing just on their debate over how to relate military force to diplomacy is also too narrow a reading.

The larger context of the speeches shows the similarity in their support for the executive branch’s use of military power as a tool of statecraft. Military actions demonstrated the nation’s strength and resolve to pressure adversaries to negotiate, but unfortunately this demanded a balanced and sustained approach which had proven difficult for the United States following its experience in Vietnam.

Thus, the third point for Reagan, Weinberger, and Shultz was the importance of and challenges to consistency, coherence, and determination in American foreign policy. Reagan explained that a web of restrictions on executive action embedded in American laws made it very difficult to maintain a coherent policy:


77 Arquilla’s presentation of the issues surrounding the formulation of the doctrine is a bit unclear in that he claims that Reagan during his time as commander-in-chief unleashed a set of dueling concepts – the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines. Yet the Powell Doctrine is typically associated with General Powell’s time as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President George Bush’s time in office. Ibid., 145.
In the 1970’s we saw a rash of congressional initiatives to limit the President’s authority in the areas of trade, human rights, arms sales, foreign assistance, intelligence operations, and the dispatch of troops in time of crisis. Over a hundred separate prohibitions and restrictions on executive branch authority to formulate and implement foreign policy were enacted.

Reagan argued: “If we’re to have a sustainable foreign policy, the Congress must support the practical details of policy, not just the general goals.”

While not mentioning the War Powers Act by name, for his part Weinberger said: Once a decision to employ some degree of force has been made, and the purpose clarified, our government must have the clear mandate to carry out, and continue to carry out, that decision until the purpose has been achieved….The issue of which branch of government has authority to define that mandate and make decisions on using force is now being strongly contended. Beginning in the 1970s Congress demanded, and assumed, a far more active role in the making of foreign policy and in the decision-making process for the employment of military forces abroad than had been thought appropriate and practical before. As a result, the centrality of decision-making authority in the executive branch has been compromised by the legislative branch to an extent that actively interferes with that process. At the same time, there has not been a corresponding acceptance of responsibility by Congress for the outcome of decisions
Concerning the employment of military forces.\textsuperscript{78}

According to Shultz, congressional interference also stemmed from what he called “alibis for inaction.” The first alibi was to argue that a nation should not be helped because it did not meet the human rights standards required to receive assistance; the second alibi was that conflict stemmed from deep social and economic problems that must be resolved before United States involvement; and the third was that America was a guilty party and did not have anything good to offer. The leaders insisted that the nation must overcome these concerns over the legitimacy of American action.

Reagan, Shultz, and Weinberger believed that events had demonstrated that the legislative branch’s capability to restrict the President’s freedom of action was detrimental to the nation’s security. The nation’s current system to ensure that military force was for legitimate purposes and used in a legitimate manner needed reconsideration. Shultz stated:

\begin{quote}
Congress has the right, indeed the duty, to debate and criticize, to authorize and appropriate funds and share in setting the broad lines of policy. But micromanagement by a committee of 535 independent-minded individuals is a grossly inefficient and ineffective way to run an important enterprise. The fact is that depriving the President of flexibility weakens our country. Yet a host of restrictions on the President’s ability to act are now built into our laws and our procedures. Surely there is a
\end{quote}

better way for the President and Congress to exercise their prerogatives without hobbling this country in the face of assaults on free-world interests abroad. Surely there can be accountability without paralysis. The sad truth is that many of our difficulties over the last 15 years have been self-imposed.

It was not until Weinberger’s speech to the National Press Club that the administration proposed how the nation could legitimately use military force to respond to the full spectrum of challenges it faced.79

Reiterating the same themes Shultz and Reagan had touched on in the spring, Weinberger told his audience that the nation could not afford to slip into isolationism and ignore troubled areas. He then described six tests to be applied by the administration in its second term as it weighed whether to use military force abroad.80 As Weinberger noted, a pluralist democracy like the United States could easily decide upon military

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79 Two weeks after Weinberger’s speech, Secretary Shultz provided three tests that could be used to determine whether or not a use of power was legitimate. Shultz stated: “The use of power is legitimate: Not when it crushes the human spirit and tramples human freedom, but when it can help liberate a people or support the yearning for freedom; Not when it imposes an alien will on an unwilling people, but when its aim is to bring peace or support peaceful processes; when it prevents others from abusing their power through aggression or oppression; and Not when it is applied unsparingly, without care or concern for innocent life, but when it is applied with the greatest efforts to avoid unnecessary casualties and with a conscience troubled by the pain unavoidably inflicted.” See “Document 17, The Ethics of Power,” in American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1984, 73.

80 In an essay written for Foreign Affairs in 1986, Weinberger explained that the six-tests came from the Administration’s reading of the postwar World War II period. He wrote: “Despite our best efforts to deter or prevent such developments, situations will arise in which it may be appropriate to commit U.S. military forces to combat. From our reading of the postwar period, this Administration derives several lessons that can be stated as tests to be applied in facing such choices. These tests cannot be applied mechanically or deductively. Weighing the evidence in specific cases will always require judgment. But applying these tests to the evidence will make it clear that while there are situations in which U.S. troops are required, there are even more situations in which U.S. combat forces should not be used.” See Caspar W. Weinberger, “U.S. Defense Strategy,” in The Reagan Foreign Policy, ed. William G. Hyland (New York: New American Library, 1987), 190.
force when its own territory was under attack or to refrain from military force to invade, conquer, or subjugate other nations. Easy consensus could not be reached on less clear-cut cases: “the extent to which the use of force is acceptable remains unresolved for the host of other situations which fall between these extremes of defensive and aggressive use of force.”81 The tests were offered as a way to think about using force in a fragmented U.S. political system when the international challenges were in the gray area between the extremes.

Although discussed in the work’s introduction, the six tests are repeated again:

(1) *First*, 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) *Second*, 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.…

(3) *Third*, if we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives.…

(4) *Fourth*, 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) *Fifth*, before the U.S. commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in

81 Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 441-442. Weinberger’s emphasis.
Congress…. (6) Finally, the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.  

The speech, appropriately entitled “The Uses of Military Power,” was described by one journalist as “the clearest enunciation of military policy since President Reagan was elected in 1980.” These six tests were quickly labeled as the Weinberger doctrine.

Weinberger told his listeners that each test was phrased negatively because they were “intended to sound a note of caution.” The literal interpretation of this quotation from Weinberger would seem to undermine the thesis of this work, but it is important to consider the overall context of the speech and the time in which it was presented. The speech was intended to articulate his concerns and prevent American military forces from serving as pawns in a diplomatic chess game.

When Weinberger revisited these matters in an essay for Foreign Affairs he wrote:

The caution sounded by these six tests for the use of military force is intentional. The world consists of an endless succession of hot spots in which some U.S. forces could play, or could at least be imagined to play, a

82 Ibid. Weinberger italicized these words in his memoirs.


85 Ibid., 443.
useful role. The belief that the mere presence of U.S. troops in Lebanon, or Central America or Africa or elsewhere could be useful in some way is not sufficient for our government to ask our troops to risk their lives. We remain ready to commit our lives, fortunes and sacred honor when the cause warrants it. But the hope that a limited U.S. presence might provide diplomatic leverage is not sufficient. 86

His note of caution should not negate the fact that in his speech Weinberger had stated: “…we must recognize that, as a major power, our responsibilities and interests are now of such scope that there are few troubled areas we can afford to ignore. So we must be prepared to deal with a range of possibilities, a spectrum of crises, from local insurgency to global conflict.” 87 Additionally, Weinberger stated that:

Some on the national scene think they can always avoid making tough decisions. Some reject entirely the question of whether any force can ever be used abroad. They want to avoid grappling with a complex issue because, despite clever rhetoric disguising their purpose, these people are in fact advocating a return to post-World War I isolationism. While they may maintain in principle that military force has a role in foreign policy, they are never willing to name the circumstance or the place where it would apply.


87 Weinberger, Fighting for Peace, 436.
On the other side, some theorists argue that military force can be brought to bear in any crisis. Some of these proponents of force are eager to advocate its use even in limited amounts simply because they believe that if there are American forces of any size present they will somehow solve the problem.\(^8^8\)

Although Weinberger intentionally instilled a cautionary note in his speech, he fully supported using military force as a tool of statecraft. This is clearly seen in the administration’s actions in Grenada, which selected military force despite the difficulty to justify it as a measure of last resort. Opposition to the six tests, though, arose almost immediately.

Just days after Weinberger’s address, William Safire from *The New York Times* wrote an editorial essay on the speech entitled, “Only the ‘Fun’ Wars.” Safire contended: “Secretary Weinberger’s purpose in enunciating the doctrine of only-fun-wars is to undermine Secretary of State Shultz’s position in the battle for President Reagan’s strategic soul.” Safire said that Weinberger’s speech expressed “the world according to the most Vietnam-traumatized elements in the Pentagon” and explained:

Secretary Weinberger’s stunning doctrine suggests that we take a poll before we pull a trigger. No more unpopular wars – if the public won’t hold a big parade to send us off, we’re not going. And, no more of the ‘gradualist incremental approach,’ goes this Pentagon ultimatum – if we can’t win in a week by pulverizing the place, it’s not worth jeopardizing

\(^8^8\) Ibid., 436-437.
our men’s lives or all the expensive equipment. Finally, our interest must
be ‘vital’ – we fire only when we see the reds of their eyes….No wonder
the epitome of a military operation in the mind of Pentagonians has
become Grenada, the quick crushing of a lightly armed gang of thugs by a
huge task force operating in the dark for a few weeks. Oh, what a lovely
war.”

Like Safire, much of the contemporary scholarship regarding the Weinberger
doctrine has concluded that the tests represented the dominant view of lessons from
Vietnam and was presented as part of the ongoing dispute between Weinberger and
Shultz over how to use military force.

In *The New American Militarism*, Andrew Bacevich, like Safire, argued that the
Weinberger doctrine emerged out of a much larger context than just a dispute between
two Cabinet secretaries. Bacevich contended that Weinberger’s specific criteria
regarding the use of force originated from the uniformed military and that “Weinberger
was in fact merely the medium for its [the message’s] delivery.” Bacevich wrote:


90 Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 48. The author spoke to Professor Andrew Bacevich on 19
March 2008 over the phone about his impression of who wrote the Weinberger doctrine. He said that he
did not know who drafted the speech, that he had read somewhere that General Colin Powell had written it
and that General Wesley Clark indicated that he had a hand in writing it in his book *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001). Although, Bacevich
indicated that he did not think that Clark truly was involved. Bacevich indicated that the point he wished to
express in his work was that the doctrine was a reflection of the views of senior military leaders regarding
the lessons learned in Vietnam. That the doctrine was representative of a consensus view held in the
Pentagon. He likened it to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s Transformation. Rumsfeld did not
invent transformation according to Bacevich; instead, Rumsfeld collected up all the lessons currently
floating around the Pentagon on the topic. Bacevich concluded, Weinberger did not invent the ideas, he
simply articulated a pre-known consensus.
Those who actually devised it did not direct it at any particular official. Nor did they wish to confine its application to a particular moment or circumstance. They intended it as a permanent and comprehensive statement of policy, codifying the paramount lessons of Vietnam as the military itself had come to understand those lessons. Their intent of having the secretary of defense promulgate those lessons was simply to invest them with greater authority, in the hope that they would become binding for all time and in all situations.91

Thus, Bacevich concluded: “The purpose of the Weinberger Doctrine was not to facilitate the effective use of American military power but – very much in the spirit of Creighton Abrams - insulate the armed services from another Vietnam-like disaster [emphasis added].”92 Eliot Cohen’s work, *Supreme Command*, published three years earlier in 2002, came to the same connection regarding Abrams’ Total Force concept and

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid. In 1973, General Creighton Abrams, the Army Chief of Staff, proposed to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird’s successor, James R. Schlesinger, that the Army expand from thirteen to sixteen divisions. Recognizing that plans were already underway to reduce the post-Vietnam Active Army, Abrams assured Schlesinger that he could grow the Army without needing to add overall numbers to its manpower pool of approximately 765,000 soldiers. Abrams had planned “a wholesale transfer of many support missions into the reserves, and integration of reserve combat units into active divisions, creating a total fighting force more reliant on reserves than any other in modern times.” This agreement between Abrams and Schlesinger became known as “the golden handshake.” While the move made sense from the standpoint of cost savings, Abrams’ larger motivation was that, under the new structure, the nation would need to implement a reserve call-up almost anytime it wished to use force, thus preventing a Vietnam-like situation where the Army was sent off to fight and the country left behind. Whether Abrams explicitly planned the move to limit the President’s flexibility in committing military forces is not clear; however, it was one of the results. If the Army was headed for a sustained deployment, the President would need to call up the reserves which contained most of the Army’s logistical support units, and a debate would ensue. See Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 149-151; Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 39-41.
the Weinberger Doctrine.\textsuperscript{93} The scholars described both as attempts by the Pentagon to limit when and how policymakers could use the military.\textsuperscript{94}

With the exception of Weinberger’s fourth test, which called for a constant reappraisal of the objectives sought and power of the force dedicated to achieve those objectives, this work agrees with Bacevich, Cohen, and others who argue that Weinberger’s tests match the consensus view held by many Pentagon leaders regarding the lessons learned from the nation’s past experiences.\textsuperscript{95}

Within contemporary newspaper interviews of uniformed military officers and journal articles written by military officers are many of the same considerations to using military force that Weinberger presented. For instance, on 20 March 1984, Richard Halloran reported, “As military officers here [in the Pentagon] talk about the invasion of Grenada and the deployment of marines to Lebanon, or the possibility of fighting in Central America or the Persian Gulf, the legacy of Vietnam is striking.” Halloran said,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{93} Cohen, \textit{Supreme Command}, 184-187.
\item \textsuperscript{94} For other scholars who conceptualize Weinberger’s six tests as a restraint on the use of military force, see Richard Haass, \textit{Intervention}, 14. Haass wrote that Weinberger’s guidelines “written in the aftermath of the Beirut tragedy and in the more distant shadow of Vietnam, had the intent (or at least the effect) of erecting tall barriers to the use of military force.” Also see Phil Williams, “The Reagan Administration and Defense Policy” in \textit{The Reagan Presidency}, 221-222. Williams explains: “In advancing these arguments Weinberger reflected the views of the military leadership and the continued resentment at the experience in Vietnam. In a sense, therefore, the Reagan administration did not really succeed in going beyond the Vietnam syndrome.”
\item \textsuperscript{95} Also see David Howell Petraeus, \textit{The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era}, PhD diss., Princeton University, 1987), 132, 298; Handel, \textit{Masters of War}, 10-11. Handel explained that, following the debacle in Vietnam, American officers looked to classics such as Sun Tzu’s \textit{The Art of War} and Clausewitz’s \textit{On War} to find answers as to what went wrong. Officers attending the U.S. war colleges in the late 1970s and early 1980s learned a number of lessons from these works and “eventually, these collectively learned lessons – whether learned directly in the U.S. war college or through an ‘osmotic process’ – were ‘codified’ in the Weinberger Doctrine.”
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“An Army colonel summed up three main points many officers make, saying: ‘Mr. President, don’t send us to war unless you have clear-cut political goals and attainable military objectives.’ ‘Sir, don’t send us unless you give us sufficient forces and enough freedom of action to use them properly.’ ‘And, Mr. President, you’d better have a lot of public support.’”

In the June 1983 edition of the US Army War College journal *Parameters*, Harry G. Summers Jr. described the strategic lessons he believed should have been learned from the nation’s experience in the Vietnam War. In his later work *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, he articulated the lessons as: when going to war it was important that the President mobilize the national will; have clear military and political objectives; and use overwhelming or decisive force when fighting.

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98 Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1982). In his article, “Once Burned, Twice Cautious: Explaining the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine,” Kenneth Campbell, indicated that there was an effort in the Pentagon to develop a “post-Vietnam approach to the proper use of force: In 1979, the U.S. Army assigned Colonel Harry Summers to conduct an extensive study of the Army’s role in the Vietnam War. The results were published in his now classic book, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War.*” Campbell explains: “Summers’ analysis of the lesson of Vietnam was formally adopted by the U.S. Army, and his book was distributed to the Army’s entire general officer corps. It was also incorporated into the curriculum of all the armed services’ educational institutions. Copies were sent to the Reagan White House, and Representative Newt Gingrich sent the book to all members of Congress.” Campbell said that “the military leadership’s next task was to consolidate their Vietnam lessons by having them raised to the level of formal doctrine.” According to Campbell, this was accomplished when “Weinberger chose to go public with the Pentagon’s post-Vietnam approach to the proper use of force” following the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut in October of 1983. See Kenneth Campbell, "Once Burned, Twice Cautious: Explaining the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine," *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (1998).
It is easy to see why contemporary newspaper reports and the subsequent literature have assumed that the tests were intended to restrain the use of military force. However, when studying the tests in the relation to the overall speech and context in which they were presented, one finds that Weinberger and the administration intended those tests not as a restraint, but rather as policy to be followed while using military force as a tool of statecraft.

While Weinberger likely wrote the speech himself, he did consult and receive input from the President, other cabinet members, and members of the NSC staff, which led him to make changes to the final version of the speech. Weinberger submitted the speech to the National Security Advisor, Robert McFarlane and discussed it with McFarlane, noting: “It was customary to submit to the national security adviser any speeches I planned to make, more for his information than to get his okay. Of course, changes were often suggested and sometimes were adopted.” Weinberger’s calendar

99 Weinberger wrote: “This particular address to the National Press Club, on the uses of military power, I wrote myself because I felt that forum was an important one in which to present a synthesis of a number of ideas I had formulated over a period of time.” See Weinberger, In the Arena, 308. General Colin Powell, who was serving as Weinberger’s military aide at the time, has a recollection of events which also supports the position that Weinberger wrote the speech, not a group of military officers or Powell himself as has sometimes been posited in the literature. Powell wrote: “A singular draft document came out of his [Weinberger’s] office. He asked me to take a look at it and circulate it to the administration’s national security team.” Powell recounted: “At the time of the speech, I was concerned that the Weinberger tests, publicly proclaimed, were too explicit and would lead potential enemies to look for loopholes.” That last statement by Powell suggests that he was not integrally involved in crafting the speech. See Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, My American Journey, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1995), 292-293. Max Boot in Savage Wars of Peace reported that General Colin Powell, who was serving as Weinberger’s military aide at the time, worked with Weinberger to produce the doctrine. See Boot, Savage Wars of Peace, 318. In his work, Prodigal Soldiers, James Kitfield wrote that Powell “had no major part in crafting it [the speech],” but instead, a staff of speechwriters warned Weinberger that six was too awkward and he ought “to keep his prerequisites on the use of force to a manageable three.” See Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, 269-270.

100 Weinberger and Roberts, In the Arena, 308.
for the day of the speech show him consulting with Colin Powell in the morning regarding the National Security Council’s proposed changes and then calling McFarlane regarding his meeting with Powell. Additionally, he had breakfast with Shultz and talked with him about the speech. Weinberger’s calendar also indicates that following his meeting with Shultz, Weinberger called McFarlane back “re meeting with Shultz & further changes in speech.”\textsuperscript{101}

Materials from the Reagan Presidential Library show that a copy of Weinberger’s speech arrived at the National Security Council on 27 November 1984 and was circulated for comment.\textsuperscript{102} A routing form indicates that General Powell sent the speech to Admiral John Poindexter, Deputy National Security Advisor. Karna Small, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the National Security Council Public Affairs Directorate, received the speech for Poindexter and sent copies to Robert McFarlane, Donald Fortier, and Robert Kimmitt, as well as giving Poindexter his copy. Donald Fortier was Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director of NSC Political-Military Affairs Directorate, which later became the Policy Development Directorate, while Kimmit was Deputy Assistant to the President, Executive Secretary and General Counsel. During that staffing process, changes were recommended and incorporated into the final version of the speech.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 307. This note is taken from Weinberger’s calendar. The “re” is shorthand for “reference.”

\textsuperscript{102} Ronald Reagan Library, WHORM Subject File, FG013 281190, “Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the National Press Club, 28 November 1984.” This file is 101 pages and includes the original draft of Weinberger’s speech, a copy of the changes recommended when staffed at the NSC level, and one additional copy of the speech. The NSC received the draft on 27 November 1984, so the members who saw the speech did not have long to comment.
A review of the changes and differences in the draft versions, mark-ups, and final speech provides considerable insight into the position of the administration. In Weinberger’s original version of the speech, the fifth test read:

Before the U.S. 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. *Unless we are facing an immediate and grave crisis requiring decisive action and secrecy which prohibits prior notification, we should seek congressional approval before committing our combat forces* [emphasis added]. We cannot fight a battle with the Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win, but just be there.  

In Weinberger’s original words, one sees an administration offering assurances that their intent was not to persuade Congress to entrust the executive branch with unilateral decision-making on military force. Instead, their intent was to offer six tests for the nation to form a new consensus regarding military response to a wide range of issues and to encourage congress to avoid hampering the process.

Poindexter crossed through the words emphasized in italics above and noted in the margin of the draft: “Omit – will be used by War Powers advocates to support their interpretation of the act which we have not acquiesced in [.]” Instead, he provided on a separate sheet of paper the line that was used instead by the administration: “This

103 Ibid.
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.”

Additionally, in Weinberger’s original version of the speech, the sixth test was written: “the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort to be used only when other means have failed or clearly have no prospect of success.” During the staffing of the speech, Poindexter crossed through “to be used only when other means have failed or clearly have no prospect of success” and he noted in the margin of the draft: “This leaves open the possibility of combining diplomatic and military force as a last resort.” Poindexter’s comment can be interpreted as further evidence that the administration intended these six tests as a policy to legitimize the use of military force in conjunction with other tools of statecraft.

**Chapter Six Conclusion**

In his “The Uses of Military Power” speech, Weinberger asked “Under what circumstances, and by what means, does a great democracy such as ours reach the painful decision that the use of military force is necessary to protect our interests and carry out our national policy?” In answer he proposed six tests that the Reagan administration would follow as it considered using military force as a tool of statecraft to protect the nation’s interests. With the exception of one test, the other five matched the consensus view held by many military leaders of the lessons the nation ought to have learned from

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104 Ibid.

Vietnam. As such the tests have been interpreted in contemporary scholarship as preserving American military force for “only fun wars.”

Yet, as each of the tests were introduced throughout this dissertation, one saw that they emerged from a combination of historical lessons, hard experience, intense ideological and political struggle within the administration, and a need to respond to gray area challenges. Considering the tests in the overall context of the speech and the time in which they were presented, the Weinberger Doctrine was not promulgated as an endorsement to reserve force as a last resort, but was instead intended as a policy to legitimize the use of military force as a tool of statecraft.  

106 See David T. Twining, “Vietnam and the Six Criteria for the Use of Military Force,” Parameters XV, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 10. Twining also explained that the tests were a way to think about using military force morally, or as described in this work, legitimately. However, Twining conceptualized the tests as a way to restrict the use of force not as a way to garner support for the use of military force. Twining wrote: As Mr. Weinberger has observed, the responsible use of military force is a moral issue, and military power is but one tool among many. For democracies, however, it is most appropriately the final political tool when all else fails.”
Conclusion

On 28 November 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger took the podium in front of the National Press Club to deliver a historic address entitled “The Uses of Military Power.” He had decided upon that forum in the belief that it afforded the best opportunity to explain the administration’s new policy to the widest possible audience.\(^1\) Weinberger described six tests to be applied by the administration in its second term as it weighed whether to use military force abroad. Ironically, as Weinberger intended, news about the six tests was immediately spread by the press; however, the true intent of the tests, which was to legitimate the use of military force as a tool of statecraft, was not.

Instead, the speech was generally interpreted in one of two ways. One interpretation was that the speech represented another round in the policy struggle between Weinberger and Shultz over how military force should support the nation’s diplomatic efforts and combat terrorism. A second interpretation was that the speech was a reaction to the nation’s experience in the Vietnam War and more recently in Lebanon. Both interpretations led reporters to the same conclusion: the intent of the Weinberger doctrine, as the tests were soon called, was to reserve military force as a last resort. In the subsequent years, with only one exception, scholarly literature on the Weinberger doctrine has reached similar conclusions. A very small group of authors have instead offered that the tests were presented as a moral guide to using military force when threats

\(^1\) Ronald Reagan Library, WHORM Subject File, FG013 281190, “Remarks by Secretary Weinberger to the National Press Club, 28 November 1984.”
fell in between peace and war. Nevertheless, even those authors concluded that 
Weinberger intended to reserve military force as a last resort only after diplomatic, 
political, economic, and other efforts had been tried. For over twenty years, the true 
intent behind Weinberger’s address has gone largely unnoticed.

In 1980 while campaigning for President, Ronald Reagan made the renewal of the 
nation’s confidence to pursue its interests and lead on the international stage the heart of 
his platform. An important component in Reagan’s process was to rebuild American 
confidence in the nation’s ability to legitimately use the tools of statecraft – diplomatic, 
economic, and military - in pursuit of national interests, yet when the administration 
entered office in January 1981, it did so without a policy for military force.

Despite the absence of a policy throughout its first term, the Reagan 
administration believed in the efficacy of military force, using it numerous times to 
pursue national interests. However, in each case, administrative action was impeded 
either by public and congressional hesitancy to exercise American power or by legislative 
laws such as the War Powers Act that restricted use of combat forces. The domestic 
political realities facing the Reagan administration seemed to be set against American 
foreign policy leadership.

This dissertation, through its three case studies, explained the strategies the 
Reagan administration adopted to overcome the impediments to the executive branch’s 
conduct of foreign policy. In the first case study, the administration wanted to minimize 
Soviet and Cuban influence in El Salvador and the surrounding region by blockading 
Cuba. However, the administration recognized that the American people were unlikely to
support such an action because it would be difficult to justify the relationship to vital national interests. Therefore, the administration consciously crafted a more modest contra strategy until support could be gained for more assertive action against Castro’s Cuba. In that decision the Reagan administration solidified test 1 – vital interests before commitment of American forces and test 5 – reasonable assurance of support from the American people and congressional leaders.

In the second case study, the administration sent American forces into Lebanon to remove the Palestinian fighters, invoking the two tests again. The American public’s support for that action came from their perception that American vital interests were involved in the Middle East. Additionally, the administration found public support for the action when the American media depicted the necessity for military force to help diplomacy and the deployment as a last resort. Thus, the administration learned the value of test 6 – the commitment of U.S. forces to combat as a last resort. Nevertheless, while the administration found support from the American people to send forces into Lebanon, it found little for any of its broader objectives for the region.

The third case study examined the administration’s second deployment of military forces to Lebanon. At the outset of the operation the administration’s objectives were very broad – withdrawal of all foreign fighters, a stable central government for Lebanon, and a secure border for Israel. Nevertheless, the role of American military forces in achieving those objectives was expected to be very minimal as their mere presence was to establish an environment that would permit the Lebanese Armed Force to carry out their responsibilities. As events unfolded, the administration learned the value of both test 4 –
the relationship between objectives and forces committed must be continually reassessed and test 3 - clearly defined political and military objectives. The strategy of “aggressive self-defense” was adopted as a way to demonstrate resolve toward the Syrians and at the same time avoid a War Powers dispute with congressional leaders. That strategy called for American naval and air force response to hostile fire, intelligence, and reconnaissance activities in order to demonstrate credible resolve to the Syrians, but left the disposition and firepower of the Marines on the ground largely unchanged from their original peacekeeping operation. The deaths of 241 Marines resulting from the barracks bombing served to underscore the importance of these two tests.

Finally, the administration furthered the lessons that would ultimately become policy to legitimize military force as a tool of statecraft in its decisions and handling of the situation in Grenada. Specifically, the administration sought to counteract its concerns over test 5 - receiving support for the operation by applying test 2 – commitment of necessary resources to win - and test 3 – clearly defined political and military objectives. While congressional reaction to the invasion was divided, the majority of the American public lent their support to the administration. Public support for the operation undoubtedly played a role in the failure of congressional efforts to limit Reagan’s prerogatives. With the Grenada operation, the administration further signaled its belief that military force should be available as a tool of statecraft and not reserved as a last resort after all other measures had been exhausted.

The conclusions drawn from the dissertation’s case studies served to validate and refine conclusions from other authors that the doctrine emerged from a combination of
historical lessons, hard experience, intense ideological and political struggle within the administration, and a need to describe a moral way to respond to gray-area challenges. However, the dissertation introduced additional evidence, through the case studies and chapter six, which showed that the contemporary scholarship had not accounted for the administration’s primary reason for promulgating the doctrine.

By the administration’s fourth year, the threat of state-sponsored terrorism and the administration’s retreating foreign policy in the Middle East and Central America led its leaders to conclude that the nation’s security demanded more be done to overcome the public’s hesitancy and free the executive branch’s prerogatives in the conduct of foreign policy. Through a series of speeches presented in 1984, Reagan, Shultz, and Weinberger sought to convince the country on three points. First, the nation’s security and protection of its vital interests demanded that the United States be prepared to deploy military forces. Second, for diplomacy to be effective, it needed to be backed by military force. Third, the legislative branch’s capability to restrict the President’s freedom of action was detrimental to the nation’s security. Therefore, the primary reason Weinberger promulgated his six tests in a speech to the National Press Club was to announce in a very public forum when and how the executive branch could legitimately use military force as a tool of statecraft to respond to the full spectrum of threats facing the nation.

This dissertation’s primary contribution to the literature is its finding that, contrary to contemporary scholarship, the Weinberger doctrine was not intended to reserve the use of military force as a last resort when all else failed. Instead, the doctrine was meant to clearly articulate the conditions under which the United States could
legitimately use force as a tool of statecraft to pursue its national interests. To date, this
dissertation provides the most thoroughly developed and documented explanation of the
origins of the Weinberger doctrine and the doctrine’s relationship to national power and
military force. This discernment is significant because it suggests that the Weinberger
doctrine was meant to offer useful principles for using military force beyond overt,
conventional military operations to respond to a spectrum of threats.

As discussed in the work’s introduction, the group of defense intellectuals who
gathered in Washington D.C. in 1998 to develop principles for the use of military force in
the Post-Cold War Era, could have found the case studies and conclusions presented in
this dissertation helpful to their task. For like the Reagan administration, the working
group sought to describe when and how military force could legitimately respond to a
host of threats and pursue national interests. The group’s difficulty at task may be
attributed to the fact that the paper from which they worked concluded that Weinberger’s
principles reserved military force as a last resort and as such were only useful when
considering combat operations. Specifically, the paper said: “His [Weinberger’s] notions about the efficacy of force were stark; force only as a last resort…”\(^2\) and
concluded that: “From Somalia to Rwanda to Bosnia to Haiti, it is difficult to discern a
clear pattern [for American intervention], though one thing is clear: Weinberger has been
abandoned.”\(^3\)


\(^3\) Ibid., 26.
It is beyond the scope of this work to argue whether or not the six tests were applied when the nation intervened in these countries, but this dissertation has demonstrated that the statement’s premise is flawed in believing that Weinberger’s tests were intended to reserve military force only as a last resort and to perform only combat operations. The author then concluded that since military forces had been sent to perform humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, the Weinberger doctrine must have been abandoned. As explained in this work, the understanding of the Weinberger tests, as intended to legitimize military force as a tool of statecraft given the plural nature of American society and the diverse needs for response, would have led to the conclusion that Weinberger had in fact been embraced.

The Reagan administration danced an intricate step in November 1984. Its leaders wanted to expand the military’s ability to meet an increasingly wider range of threats, but also appreciated the impact of domestic political realities on using force as a routine part of statecraft. The administration understood that an American military force’s power, or ability to produce leverage, rested not only in how many soldiers were involved and how they were equipped, but also in whether or not their mission was supported by the public and congressional leaders. Thus, it was imperative to find a way to convince them that the administration could use military force in a legitimate manner and warrant the full support of both groups. The administration’s thinking regarding the relationship between the nation’s foreign policy objectives, the use of military force, and those political realities led to the promulgation of the Weinberger doctrine.
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270


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290


Biography

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