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**THE 2002 U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:  
A NEW USE-OF-FORCE DOCTRINE?**

by

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## *Abstract*

The Weinberger-Powell doctrine for conditions and manner of using military force was a product of thinking about the relatively recent US military conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, in particular, the limited conflicts that presented leaders with more ambiguity as to their nature than did the two total wars of that century. However, the events of 9-11 represent, ostensibly, a milestone marking a new strategic era that follows the Cold War and 1<sup>st</sup> Post-Cold War era spanning from 1991 to 9-11-01. Even a cursory review of the new National Security Strategy (NSS) shows a change in how US national leadership perceives the current, global strategic environment. Therefore, if use-of-force doctrines like Weinberger-Powell are useful and are an outgrowth of American experiences in earlier strategic environments, then appropriate questions to ask at the threshold of this new era are “Does the NSS imply a new use-of-force doctrine?” “Regardless of what the NSS implies, what is the right doctrine for this era?”, and “How does this doctrine differ from Weinberger-Powell?”

## *Biography*

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## **Introduction**

Even a cursory review of the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) will reveal a strategy vastly different from any of its predecessors. While this difference may be expected and appropriate for the post-post-Cold War, as the basis for subordinate strategies such as the National Military Strategy (NMS), it deserves close scrutiny. That scrutiny will show that the NSS defines a strategic environment completely different from what existed just a few years ago, and may even be unique in history. Therefore, the potential for equally significant changes in U.S. military strategy demands a critical study of impacts of the NSS on a subsequent NMS. The following discussion is one such study, specifically focused on the implications of the NSS on the use of military force in pursuit of national objectives. Its conclusion is that the new NSS does imply a U.S. doctrine for use-of-force substantially different from the doctrine that has dominated U.S. strategic security thinking to this point, the so called Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. This new doctrine appears to be far less cautious and more proactive than Weinberger-Powell by permitting the use of force in a preventive or preemptive manner against entities based simply on their possession of hostile capabilities and a general hostile intent. To set the stage for a general discussion of use-of-force doctrine and to understand how use-of-force concepts in the NSS differ greatly from the previously prevailing use-of-force doctrines requires a review of the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines. That discussion will further benefit the analysis of the NSS for its implications on use-of-force and national military strategy.

The development of doctrines related to strategy is an epic that has continued, and will continue unceasingly, for millennia, and at least two characteristics of strategic doctrine fuel this persistent search: its importance and its elusiveness. Overvaluing the importance of strategic



doctrine is difficult because effective strategic doctrine is, after all, an enduring principle or set of principles, based on historical experience and the current strategic environment, that successfully guides the development of a strategy that, in turn, results in the attainment of national objectives. Therefore, two possible measures of the effectiveness of a strategic doctrine are, first, how closely and consistently adherence to its principles results in its predicted effects and, second, how universal these principles remain over time and strategic environment. Clearly, in the realm of strategy, in which so many sociopolitical and historical factors interact in an infinite number of ways, reliable and timeless principles are priceless because of their ability to reduce the complexity of strategy to a few, critical issues. However, the complexity that gives effective strategic doctrine its value is also the complexity that makes the formulation of that enduring doctrine so elusive. Unlike the laws of Newtonian physics that have served well for 300 years and continue to resist obsolescence, thousands of years of human history have failed to yield an equivalent achievement in strategic doctrine. Consequently, the seductive allure of a “silver bullet” doctrine calls some strategists onward, while its frustratingly elusive nature causes some to quit or to fall short. However, as opposed to either engaging in a never-ending search for perfection or giving up completely, a more practical approach is to find a sufficiently useful strategic doctrine, as opposed to a completely effective one, applicable for a time but subject to revision or replacement based on changes in the strategic environment. The strategist therefore benefits from a doctrine that has some basis in critical thinking about national experiences and provides at least a guide, if not a prescription, for action. Therefore, in spite of the challenge of formulating effective strategic doctrine and the prospect of having to perform periodic maintenance on that doctrine regardless of how useful it proves in the near-term, its paramount importance to the attainment of national objectives means that failure to consider a practical use-

of-force doctrine is negligent, and failure to do so on the heels of 9-11 and the new National Security Strategy is derelict.

## **Review of Weinberger-Powell**

Regardless of what one thinks of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine, any discussion on use-of-force must include this doctrine. This is partly because Weinberger-Powell is, so far, the most prominent attempt to capture, in a single articulation, a coherent basis for use-of-force decision-making, partly because of its continuing sway over U.S. strategic thought, and partly because Colin Powell, as the current Secretary of State, ensures the philosophies behind this doctrine will play directly in current and near-term U.S. foreign policy. However, the evolution of the doctrine's name from "Weinberger" to "Weinberger-Powell" is extremely unfortunate because, although similar in form and foundation, the authoritative discourses by each of these gentlemen on this issue (a 1984 speech in the case of Weinberger and a 1992 journal article in the case of Powell) differ in critical ways. In other words, as shown later, they are not the same doctrine. Nonetheless, use of the terms "Weinberger Doctrine" and "Weinberger-Powell Doctrine" usually refers to Weinberger's original "six major tests," and that practice will continue herein. However, reference to the "Powell Doctrine" will mean the principles expounded by Colin Powell in his 1992 article. In any case, a critical review of both statements is a necessary foundation for further discussion.

### **Definition of Doctrine**

First, though, any attempt to critically analyze, develop, and evaluate doctrine requires a common understanding of what constitutes doctrine. Because the Weinberger Doctrine bears the name of its founding senior government executive, one may be tempted to equate it with

presidential doctrines like the Monroe or Truman Doctrines. However, presidential doctrines tend to speak of foreign policy at the grand strategic level in that they pronounce national principles or objectives without specifying particular economic, political, or military strategies. For example, even though the 1947 Truman message to Congress that defined his doctrine asked for a specific amount of economic aid for Greece, the doctrine itself was centered on the principle that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” and the economic aid was merely a strategic action that supported this principle in the specific instance of Greece.<sup>1</sup> Presidential doctrines are also somewhat enduring and directive because they are crafted to guide national action in a specific strategic environment, and those environments do not change overnight. Finally, presidential doctrines are generally not systematically formulated or documented: one must extract the doctrines of Monroe and Truman from portions of their respective speeches, and the full meaning of their doctrines appears to have developed over time through the interpretations of others. At the other end of the strategic doctrine spectrum is joint military doctrine, which is systematically developed to guide the application of force in the pursuit of national objectives. However, joint military doctrine is still at a level above static checklists, expressed as “Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof *guide* their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires *judgment* in application” (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> Use-of-force doctrines, then, appear to lie somewhere between presidential and joint doctrine: they are specific to the military instrument of power but should be guides that, coupled with the strategist’s judgment, assist in determining if and how to apply force as part of a military strategy. As mentioned at the outset, their usefulness and applicability to the strategic environment determine their value.

## The Weinberger Doctrine

Weinberger's original statement of his "six major tests" for use-of-force was a 1984 speech to the National Press Club.<sup>3</sup> Although he mentioned virtually every U.S. conflict from World War I to the time at which he delivered this speech, his emphasis was that the utility of a use-of-force test was not for situations in which the decisive use of military power was clearly appropriate (as in defending a violation of one's national sovereignty, for example) or inappropriate (as in the case of committing an unprovoked violation of someone else's sovereignty). Rather, its utility proves itself in the more ambiguous situations—the "gray area conflicts" that have been frequent since World War II and are, because of their varied natures, the more difficult crises for which to craft the correct response. Although Weinberger used historical examples from the interwar years, the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, and Grenada to support his "six major tests" and their underlying arguments, clearly, Vietnam's specter heavily influenced his thinking. In making his case, he referenced that conflict more than any other, and the points he makes in his closing summary, though stated generally, reek of lessons of Vietnam:

"The President will not allow our military forces to creep—or be drawn gradually—into a combat role . . . This means we will need sustained congressional support. . . . These tests can help us to avoid being drawn inexorably into an endless morass, . . . But policies and principles such as these require decisive leadership in both the executive and legislative branches of government—and they also require strong and sustained public support."<sup>4</sup>

Although Weinberger called his principles "tests," he does use some language that implies they should be used as guides for judgment, similar to joint military doctrine. For example, he implies that the gray area conflicts that make critical thinking about use-of-force necessary will continually challenge America for the foreseeable future and, by their nature, defy rote solutions. Another supporting example is the language he uses immediately before and after the tests: ". . .

major tests to be applied when *weighing* the use of U.S. combat forces abroad . . . I believe that these tests can be *helpful* in deciding whether or not we should commit our troops to combat . . .” (emphasis added).<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the first and sixth tests certainly appear to be directives with little room for judgment. A final observation about the Weinberger statement, and one important to subsequent analysis of use-of-force doctrines, is that it is fundamentally a realist doctrine. The speech focuses exclusively on the instruments of national power, national interests, and threats to those interests, and says nothing of foreign interventions in the pursuit of values abroad. Furthermore, vital interests are the key criteria in answering the “if-force-should-be-used” question, and none of the six major tests uses values as a criterion. “We should only engage *our* troops if we must do so as a matter of our *own* vital national interest” (emphasis original).<sup>6</sup>

### **The Powell Doctrine**

Colin Powell’s “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead” was not specifically a use-of-force treatise.<sup>7</sup> It was, rather, his forecast of the types of missions our nation would require of its armed forces and the capabilities necessary to accomplish those missions. In it, he raised the issue of use-of-force only as part of his larger discussion on which kinds of future missions our forces would have to execute. He stated that military-operations-other-than-war are a given, but that whether or not the U.S. would call its military to all types of missions involving the use of “violent” force is debatable. Consequently, his use-of-force concepts arise as a result of his exploration of the possibility of “violent force missions” and are, therefore, scattered throughout that section of the article. As a result, his use-of-force principles are not in a neat list, as are Weinberger’s “six major tests,” and the reader must extract them from the text:

IF force should be used:

1. The political objective must be important, clearly defined, understood.
2. That objective must be supported by the American people (by implication).

3. The use of force must be able to be combined effectively with diplomatic and economic policies.
4. The risks must be acceptable. Force should be restricted to instances in which the resulting good will outweigh the loss of lives and other costs.
5. Actual (as opposed to threatened) use of force should come at the end of the plan.

HOW force should be used:

6. Clear, unambiguous, and achievable objectives must be given to the armed forces, and these objectives must be firmly linked with the political objectives.
7. Decisive means and results should be preferred (Powell uses gradual escalation as a counterexample of “decisive”), unless U.S. objectives call for something short of “winning” (he uses Libya, 1986, as an example of “objectives short of winning”).

Because these principles are an extraction from Powell’s narrative, a risk exists that they are not totally faithful to his intent. Therefore, the list above does not represent an attempt to consolidate or reduce his principles into a non-overlapping set of minimum items: as much as possible, his original wording remains. Unlike Weinberger, Powell did not devote significant effort in attempting to support these principles with historical examples and, as a result, linkage between the principles and any of his specific experiences is not clear. However, in his autobiography, Powell clearly demonstrates the impact of his personal Vietnam experience on these principles: “War should be a politics of last resort. And when we go to war, we should have a purpose that our people understand and support; we should mobilize the country’s resources to fulfill that mission and then go in to win.”<sup>8</sup> “. . . I had been appalled at the docility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fighting the war in Vietnam without ever pressing the political leaders to lay out clear objectives for them.”<sup>9</sup>

Powell’s intent was to provide a guide to judgment, as opposed to an inflexible catechism. However, what appears, superficially, as an inconsistency in Powell’s discussion may obscure that intent for some readers: “To help with the complex issue of the use of ‘violent’ force, some have turned to a set of principles or a when-to-go-to-war doctrine. ‘Follow these directions and

you can't go wrong.' There is, however, no fixed set of rules for the use of military force. To set one up is dangerous."<sup>10</sup> The apparent inconsistency is that, immediately following this criticism of principles and doctrine, he proceeds to provide a set of principles on if and how to use force. The resolution of this contradiction is that when Powell uses the terms "principles" and "doctrine" he must mean, in this context, a checklist of "go/no go" criteria, rather than a guide for judgment. What this illustrates, however, is that in a discussion that critically analyzes and develops doctrine, a clear definition of what constitutes doctrine and its purposes is essential.

Far more substantial, on the other hand, is that, while Weinberger's statement is unambiguously realist, Powell's is an eclectic collection of mixed, neutral, realist, and idealist language. His introduction and opening section are a thorough mix of idealist and realist concepts. In fact, in discussing what tools America will use to lead the world, he lists the three traditional instruments (economics, politics, and armed forces) but then adds a fourth: ". . . the power of our beliefs and our values is fundamental to any success we might achieve; . . ." <sup>11</sup> "Future Missions and Clear Objectives," the section in which he discussed use-of-force, never mentions either values or interests. However, in the section "Future Military Structure," in which Powell proposes the force structure to meet America's obligations, he is thoroughly realist, mentioning threats, vital interests, and security arrangements as issues affecting force structure, but never mentioning values once. Finally, his closing section is predominantly idealist: "What our leadership in the world does mean is that [peace, prosperity, justice for all and no more wars in the world] have a chance."<sup>12</sup>

### **Comparison and Analysis of Weinberger and Powell**

Comparison of Powell's principles, extracted above, with Weinberger's six tests reveals many similarities, but several differences, some of them fundamentally significant. One of the

minor differences is Powell's lack of a principle corresponding to Weinberger's fourth test regarding the need to constantly reassess the appropriateness of the size, composition, and disposition of forces, once deployed to deal with a crisis. However, Powell covers this test by implication through his discussion of why fixed rules for use-of-force are inappropriate: "How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?"<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, several highly consequential differences exist between these two doctrines.

Weinberger's principles for determining if force should be used are his tests #1 (vital interests), #5 (American support), and #6 (last resort). Powell's are principles 1-5. Although both doctrines have more than one test or principle for guiding the decision to use force, each has one primary principle that defines the critical issue over which to use force, the issue that, as Clausewitz says, is "the object of war." The remaining "if" principles are "permissive" principles that do not define the reason for using force but conditions that must exist to permit the use of force to proceed. The remaining tests and principles are the "how" or "practical" principles that guide the manner in which to apply force. Weinberger's key primary principle is his test #1, and its critical issue is "vital national interests." Powell's primary principle is also his first one, but its critical issue is that the "political objective must be important." This is in no way surprising: as mentioned above, Weinberger's speech was thoroughly realist, while Powell clearly articulated both values and interests as motivations for U.S. actions. Therefore, Powell's critical issue is not restricted to either values or interests exclusively, but is raised to the level of "political objective," which may include either or both. This does not necessarily mean Powell's primary principle is superior to Weinberger's. Two valid criticisms of Weinberger's critical issue are, first, that, values have been and will continue to be a motive, in some circumstances,



worth fighting over and, second, that he provides no definition for what constitutes vital interests.<sup>14</sup> The greater breadth of Powell's critical issue means it cannot be criticized for excluding values, but that same breadth means that, as the Weinberger Doctrine is unhelpful in defining "vital interests," the Powell Doctrine is equally unhelpful in defining "political objectives." Yet perhaps he is merely subscribing to the Clausewitzian principle of political primacy over the use-of-force.

Powell's doctrine has two permissive "if" principles that are equivalent to Weinberger's tests #5 (American support) and #6 (last resort). However, Powell has two additional permissive principles, #3 (force combined with diplomacy and economics) and #4 (acceptable risks). If Powell meant by his third principle that force must not be used unless integrated with diplomatic and economic actions, then he faces a criticism similar to that which Record levies against force-as-a-last-resort.<sup>15</sup> Some adversaries may refuse to engage diplomatically while economic instruments may not be effective, work in a manner timely enough to support political objectives, or even be necessary. In such a case force could conceivably be used in a way that accomplishes those objectives without any synergy resulting from economic or diplomatic actions. The 1986 attack on Libya is a case in point. However, Powell's fourth principle of acceptable risks is a significant advantage over the Weinberger Doctrine. The concept of weighing the costs and benefits of using force imposes a rational yet adaptable process on the decision-making, as opposed to an inflexible, rules-based one. Therefore, use-of-force is not necessarily limited to overwhelming force or "winning" scenarios, but to any situation in which the political leadership believes a given amount of force will achieve the desired political objective for an acceptable cost. Table 1 summarizes the types of use-of-force principles that may be found in use-of-force doctrines.

Primary principle	The main principle(s) based on the critical issue(s) which, if true, dictates the decision to use force.
Permissive principles	Principles that do not, by themselves, dictate the need to use force but express conditions that, in addition to the primary principle, must also be true to permit the use of force to proceed.
Preferential principles	Principles that do not necessarily have to be true for the use of force to proceed but, if true, positively influence the decision to use force. Preferential principles may be helpful when a use-of-force doctrine's primary principle or the situation to which it is being applied is ambiguous.
Practical principles	Principles that guide not the decision to use force as much as how force should be applied, if at all.

**Table 1. Types of Use-of-Force Principles**

### **The National Security Strategy**

Use-of-force doctrines like those of Weinberger and Powell should be based on the prevailing strategic environment, and so the first step in searching for a new doctrine is to understand the strategic environment upon which the NSS is based. Having done that, the next steps are to analyze the NSS for its primary, permissive, preferential, and practical principles for the use of force. The NSS states that the end of the Cold War has created the current strategic environment in which the great threat to the U.S. is no longer from conquering states, but from failed ones and from an “embittered few” that possess “catastrophic technologies.”<sup>16</sup> The U.S. enjoys safety from conventional, peer competitors because it “possesses unprecedented—and unequaled—strength and influence in the world.”<sup>17</sup> Its new adversaries differ from U.S. Cold War adversaries in several important ways. They are not conventional nation states, but terrorists and rogue states. They will use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and other non-conventional means to attack; their purpose will not be to conquer but to instill fear; they will strike with no warning; their soldiers will not be visible; and their primary targets will include civilians. This threat is a consistent theme throughout the NSS and is clearly the basis for use-of-

force strategies contained therein. In Chapter IV, “Work with others to Defuse Regional Conflicts,” the NSS seems to be making an attempt to address the other class of conflicts that have also been a concern in the past for the U.S., but clearly the emphasis is on the terrorist threat.

### **The Search for Use-Of-Force Criteria**

To understand the implied use-of-force doctrine in the new NSS, one must understand not only the new strategic environment and threats but also the concepts of preemption and prevention, because they play heavily in the strategy. First, consider the standard Department of Defense definitions of preemption and prevention from Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 as a starting point. With respect to use of force, JP 1-02 states that a preemptive attack is “an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.”<sup>18</sup> Imminence is inferred from indicators like mobilization of an enemy army on one’s border. A preventive attack, on the other hand, is “A war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk.”<sup>19</sup> Preventive and preemptive attacks are examples of being proactive, and the alternative is being “reactive.” Preemption, prevention, and reaction represent three levels of threat response. With the greatest level of perceived threat, a nation believes an enemy attack is imminent and takes all necessary actions to preempt the attack. At the next level, a nation perceives that an attack is inevitable, but not imminent. The nation must, in that case, weigh the risks of preventively attacking against the risks of doing nothing. Even if the decision is to do nothing because the risks associated with preventively attacking are deemed greater, the nation has still been proactive because it has chosen a course of inaction through rational consideration of the threat. The last threat response is one in which the nation does not attempt to evaluate the nature of the threats it

faces or endures a high threat state, possibly even an attack, before taking any action. The preceding discussion prescribes three threat-based approaches to determining use-of-force, and the proactive approach is the one to which the NSS prescribes.

The NSS rejects the concept of reaction as being too risky in the current strategic environment because the dispersed, determined, and stealthy nature of terrorism makes terrorist attacks likely but difficult to reliably detect and deter, and the success of even a small percentage of these attacks has consequences that are unacceptable. “Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first.”<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the distinction between preemption and prevention is blurred in the NSS (the terms are used almost interchangeably) because the concepts of inevitability and imminence appear to no longer be the criteria for proactive intervention. The new criteria appear to be twofold: status as a rogue state or terrorist and possession of harmful capability. The sense of the NSS is that action should be taken against rogue states or terrorists that merely possess the capability to harm us. Intent is either no longer an issue or is presumed within the definition of rogue states and terrorists. “The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, *even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack*” (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup> The lack of distinction between preemption and prevention is consistent with how the NSS defines the prevailing threats. First, as already mentioned, destructive capabilities in the hands of radicals make waiting to determine hostile intent too risky. Also, determining the extent of capabilities

and imminence of attack and weighing the risks of action versus inaction are difficult enough such that the risk of waiting for perfect information is unacceptable. Hence, the NSS takes the approach that waiting to determine specific hostile intent is too difficult and too risky, and that presuming hostile intent by acting based on possession of capability is the most reasonable way to go—and is justified morally and legally, even if it means violating the sovereignty of states by “compelling [them] to accept their sovereign responsibilities.”<sup>22</sup>

Hence, the existence of rogue states and terrorists that are radically motivated against the U.S. and its allies and possess harmful capability is the NSS’s critical issue for use-of-force. Clearly, however, the specific cases in which these conditions exist are of varying priority for the U.S. For example, the instance in which a terrorist attack is undoubtedly imminent is of highest priority for intervention and would earn a use-of-force solution before a threat that is inevitable but not immediate. However, the issue is one of prioritization and allocation of military resources, not a judgment that the latter case does not qualify for use-of-force. Another factor for prioritization is the destructive power of each threat, with WMD threats generally being a higher priority than others.

The NSS also has use-of-force preferential principles. They are preferences because they describe conditions desirable, but not necessary, for the use of force. Indeed, the first preferential principle for use of force against rogue states and terrorists in a particular region is for U.S. partners in that region to take up a campaign that would localize threats, after which the U.S. would assist.<sup>23</sup> However, the most prominent preferential principle is the multilateral approach. The approach to multilateralism in the NSS is not limited to use-of-force; it is another theme that prevails throughout the document and across all instruments of power. Yet the reason it remains a preferential principle is that the U.S. reserves the right to act unilaterally if necessary

for proactive self-defense.<sup>24</sup> The NSS also appears to advocate two practical principles for use-of-force. The action must target a specific threat and eliminate it, and the use of force should be measured.<sup>25</sup> The implied NSS use-of-force doctrine is summarized in Table 2.

Primary principle	Force should be used proactively against rogue states and terrorists that possess the capability and motivation to harm the U.S. and its allies.
Preferential Principles	U.S. partners in the region of interest should be the first to take up the fight, and the U.S. will assist.
	If the U.S. must use force, multilateral action is preferred, but the U.S. reserves its right to act unilaterally, if necessary, in self-defense.
Practical Principles	The action must target a specific threat and eliminate it.
	The use of force should be measured.

**Table 2. NSS Use-of-Force Principles**

While the NSS acknowledges, by the inclusion of Chapter IV, that regional conflicts still exist (these are, incidentally, conflicts of the “gray area” class around which Weinberger fashioned his tests) and require U.S. attention, that chapter contributes nothing to the furthering of use-of-force doctrine for that class of conflicts. In fact, its two strategic principles for dealing with regional conflicts both have to do with international institution and nation building.

### **Evaluation of the Criteria**

The first criticism of the doctrine is the narrowness of its critical issue and primary principles. The NSS provides guidance on use-of-force against rogue states and terrorists, but not for any other scenario. For instance, it is completely unhelpful in guiding the use of force in purely humanitarian situations such as Kosovo, in which the belligerents were not directly threatening the U.S. or supporting those who were. This specificity makes the application of the doctrine easier than does Weinberger’s “vital interests” or Powell’s “political objectives,” but it also limits its usefulness because it reduces the critical issue to something of a “no-brainer.” In

other words, the utility of use-of-force doctrines is in resolving the use of force in “gray area conflicts,” not situations in which the appropriateness of force is obvious.

The NSS does not specify force as a last resort or as necessarily coupled to other instruments of power. The overarching approach of the NSS to threats is indeed a proactive, parallel approach advocating all traditional instruments of power and the support of allies and regional partners, but it does not preclude force as the first and/or only instrument. On the other hand, it describes two polar situations in which the predominance of the instruments of power switches between the two. The first situation is in the nation building of failing states as a means of preventing the development of terrorism as early in its growth cycle as possible. If the state is not yet a rogue state or sponsoring terrorists, the need for the military instrument is low while the economic and political instruments are more appropriate. At the other extreme, an imminent terrorist attack calls for force more loudly than it does for economic or political solutions.

The NSS does not specifically call out American public support as a use-of-force principle. This is understandable considering that the doctrine considers use of force against entities that are, by definition, a threat to the U.S. In contrast, as mentioned above, it does not deal with use of force in situations like Kosovo in which U.S. interests are debatable. Furthermore, the NSS appears to go to great lengths to “pre-justify” its preemptive/preventive approach as generally legal, moral, and logical, such that public acceptance of the justification is equivalent to implicit public support of subsequent operations. The NSS doctrine is also not explicit about using risk analysis to assist in the decision to use force. Again, that may not be necessary because the doctrine narrowly focuses on a situation in which the risk factors for analysis, such as the determination and uncertain location of the enemy, are somewhat fixed. Finally, the NSS’s

practical principle of targeting a specific threat and eliminating it sounds akin to the Powell principle of having “Clear, unambiguous, and achievable objectives.”

Another significant difference between the NSS principles, on the one hand, and the Weinberger and Powell doctrines on the other, is in their underlying beliefs about the role of American support. The latter doctrines presume that American public support is necessary but intolerant of casualties, failure, and ambiguity of purpose. Their principles, therefore, support courses of action that are quick and overwhelming to avoid Vietnam-like “quagmires.” The NSS assumes the war on terrorism is necessary and is, by its nature, necessarily protracted, so rather than mold the doctrine to address American tolerances, as do Weinberger and Powell, the NSS crafts the strategies necessary to win the war against terrorism and then tries to sell that strategy to the public.

### **Implications for U.S. National Military Strategy**

The first implication for U.S. national military strategy is that, if the strategy must be strictly confined to the boundaries of the NSS, then U.S. leaders, both military and civilian, should keep a doctrine like Weinberger or Powell in their hip pockets because the NSS provides use-of-force guidance for a very narrow class of threats only. Even if it has correctly predicted that these will be the most critical threats to U.S. security for the next 20 years, it certainly admits at the same time that regional conflicts exist and require attention, yet its threat-based use-of-force doctrine seems far less relevant in those cases.

Another implication of the NSS threat-based use-of-force doctrine on military strategy is that it changes what civilian and military leaders used to agonize over. Some of the sticky issues used to be whether or not force should be used at all and to what extent, but the rationale of the NSS makes those decisions, at least for the terrorist cases, non-issues. What leaders now have to



struggle with is, first, how to find, fix, track, prioritize, and target threats against which the U.S. must use force and, second, how to apply force. The existence of rogue states as terrorist sponsors provided some level of localization of terrorists, which in turn made the task of identifying and targeting them somewhat easier. However, the U.S. position, both in practice and as documented in the NSS, of armed intervention in rogue states is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it forces dispersion of terrorists, who then lose the benefits of state sponsorship. On the other hand, that same dispersion makes finding, fixing, tracking, and targeting them much more difficult, and given the extent of global communications, may only marginally affect their functional cohesion. The dilemma for the military is that it cannot ignore terrorists based in rogue states because of the great advantages state sponsorship provides them, but the resulting dispersion makes subsequent operations more difficult. When first targeting terrorists in rogue states, the U.S. may ostensibly have had the advantage of surprise necessary to eliminate most of the terrorists before they could disperse. However, with armed intervention now being the state of practice, terrorists will be less likely to congregate in so vulnerable a manner. The other challenge is how to apply force to such a dispersed enemy, and this challenge is made even greater by the covert integration of that enemy into civil societies, including the U.S. The trans-border nature of terrorist organizations was probably not perceived to include the crossing of our borders, but it does, and that may mean a sharing of the responsibility for use-of-force with domestic agencies.

The final implication for the national military strategy is one of overseas sustainment. Forward basing during the Cold War was integral to the strategies of that era. That was followed by a more expeditionary approach consistent with a smaller force structure and a disdain of lengthy deployments for fear of losing public support and getting into another “quagmire.” The

preference was for operations that would quickly and overwhelmingly accomplish U.S. objectives, followed by an immediate withdrawal. That paradigm is, for reasons explained earlier, entirely consistent with both the Weinberger and Powell doctrines. However, the new paradigm is a lengthy struggle with victory coming in increments. So far, it appears that the implementation of the NSS will indeed require protracted military operations, and even military occupation, in some countries if the objective is truly to “eliminate” the threat. Certainly, in Afghanistan, the U.S. cannot withdraw its forces at this time and expect a rule of law to prevail throughout the country. Likewise, the elimination in Iraq of the reign of Saddam Hussein and WMD appears to be requiring, as some feared, not only an invasion but a lengthy occupation of that country, as well. Hence, even after the military overcomes the difficulties of finding and prioritizing targets and developing appropriate force application strategies and tactics, the NSS yet seems to back national military strategy into a corner in which it must somehow take a force structure already strained from a high operations tempo and sustain the lengthy deployment of forces to even more locations.

## **Conclusion**

The use-of-force doctrine implied by the NSS is very different from the Weinberger or Powell Doctrines but, because the latter are products of an earlier strategic environment and the lessons derived from the military engagements of that era, a difference is natural. However, the heavy emphasis of the NSS on the terrorist threat means its threat-based use-of-force concepts are limited to that class of conflicts even though the NSS also identifies regional conflicts as issues of strategic concern for the U.S. These are the types of conflicts that gave rise to the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines, and yet the NSS provides no guidance on use of military force in those situations. Therefore, perhaps the most important lesson derived from this study is this:

U.S. dominance has created a strategic environment that, although generally more stable, is so much more diverse in its security threats that it defies the development of a single use-of-force doctrine that is universal in its relevance and, at the same time, equally useful and specific in every situation. Stated in terms used at the outset, the post-post-Cold War environment makes the development of a “silver bullet” or “universal” use-of-force doctrine more challenging than at any other time in history. Therefore, this analysis has come full circle and proved the wisdom of the joint definition of doctrine, for any use-of-force doctrine developed today can be no more than “Fundamental principles by which the military . . . guide their actions . . . ,” but the success of these principles ultimately “. . . requires judgment in application.”

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Harry Truman and the Truman Doctrine,” 2001, n.p, on-line, Internet, 23 November 2002, available from <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/teacher/doctrine.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Publication 1-01, *Joint Doctrine Development System*, 5 July 200, GL-4.

<sup>3</sup> Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990), 433-445.

- (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. 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.
- (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. If we are unwilling to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all. 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.
- (3) Third, 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. 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 than in Clausewitz's time, but the need for well-defined objectives and a consistent strategy is still essential. 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.

## Notes

- (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. Conditions and objectives invariably change during the course of a conflict. When they do change, then so must our combat requirements. We must continuously keep as a beacon 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.
- (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. 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 our troops not to win, but just to be there.
- (6) Finally, the commitment of U.S. Forces to combat should be a last resort.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 441-442.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>7</sup> Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, (Winter 1992/93): 32-45.

<sup>8</sup> Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1995), 148.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 464-465.

<sup>10</sup> Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, 37-38.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Record, "Weinberger-Powell Doesn't Cut It," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 126 (October 2000): 35.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>16</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>18</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 12 April 2001, 333.

<sup>19</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 12 April 2001, 336.

<sup>20</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16.