

Alas, today the typical citizen or politician probably does not know who Mountbatten was and might even have a hard time locating Southeast Asia. Like Mountbatten, internationalists in the United States are fighting a holding action until the rest of the public starts paying attention to international affairs—as they will inevitably have to do, because the United States cannot isolate itself from world events. Strange as it may seem, what Ledeen, Muravchik, and Rodman have to say may be less important than their persistence in saying it.

The Illusion of Bloodless Victories

by Michael P. Noonan

Explorations in Strategy. By Colin S. Gray. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. 265 pp. \$59.95.)

“Toward Post-Heroic Warfare.” By Edward N. Luttwak. In *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1995, pp. 109–22.

“A Post-Heroic Military Policy.” By Edward N. Luttwak. In *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1996, pp. 33–44.

“Casualties, Technology, and America’s Future Wars.” By Harvey M. Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro. In *Parameters*, Summer 1996, pp. 119–27.

“Take No Casualties.” By Karl W. Eikenberry. In *Parameters*, Summer 1996, pp. 109–18.

Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations. By Eric V. Larson. (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996. 126 pp. \$15.00.)

“The New Warrior Class.” By Ralph Peters. In *Parameters*, Summer 1994, pp. 16–26.

“Winning Against Warriors.” By Ralph Peters. In *Strategic Review*, Summer 1996, pp. 12–21.

The official U.S. Army doctrinal manual for operations declares that “the American people expect decisive victory and abhor unnecessary casualties.”¹ This supposed lesson of both the Vietnam War and the war in the Persian Gulf sums up much

¹ Department of the Army, *FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), chapter 1, p. 3.

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of today's thinking on American military affairs. But are these wishes of the American people always realistic? Proponents of the new American way of war, to fight and win quickly and cheaply, would say: if not, then do not enter the fight. Yet the post-cold war era has already seen American forces engaged in situations where both a clear victory and low casualty rates are not guaranteed. Just how important are these issues to U.S. military strategy or American civilian leaders? To judge by many recent publications, some analysts want to believe that the technological transformation of warfare, the so-called revolution in military affairs, has made the low-casualties victory a potential norm for American military action. Others (including this author) would argue that such victories will continue to be the exception rather than the rule, and as such, war making based strictly on low-casualties expectations could well lead to America's defeat on the battlefield rather than victory.

A Holistic Approach to Strategy

As with any battlefield objective, achieving a decisive victory with minimal casualties is rooted in strategy. Colin Gray, an eminent geostrategist at the University of Hull, approaches strategy holistically, reminding readers that it links political ends with military means. In *Explorations in Strategy*, Gray uses Carl von Clausewitz's definitions of strategy, "the use of engagements for the object of war," and tactics, "the use of armed forces in the engagement," in examining the role of strategy in the contemporary setting (p. 4). He posits that strategy operates both vertically—encompassing "all aspects of peace with security, from political vision down to tactical military performance"—and horizontally—including land, sea, air, and space power, and "strategic" nuclear and special operations forces (p. 7). Ultimately, strategy is "the bridge that connects the threat and use of force with policy or politics" (p. 8). But today, Gray contends, the means of strategy are so diverse that both political and military leaders have trouble grasping it holistically. Instead, they focus on the vertical or horizontal aspects, which often leads to friction between leaderships that must work together for effective strategic operations.

Gray's discussions of both air power and special operations as strategic instruments are of particular interest in regard to casualties and strategy. He argues that America is by definition an air power, and that it should use air power to the utmost effectiveness without losing sight of its limiting factors.² "Part of the appeal of air power is that it is literally above the messiness of conflict on the ground where alien cultures contend" (p. 93). He adds that when allowed to play a key role in certain conflicts, air and space power can be decisive factors.

The section on special operations is one of the most interesting in Gray's book, as the capabilities and merits of special operations forces are mostly

² See, in particular, Gray's chart on p. 98.

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ignored outside of military circles and widely misunderstood even within the military. But Gray argues that these forces are a potent strategic tool whose success depends on two conditions: “(1) a willingness on the part of political and military leaders to allow special operations forces onto the field to play and (2) the ability of all concerned to identify suitable objectives for them” (p. 151).

He does point out that such forces cannot be expected to provide solutions for all contingencies, but they may be the best option for contingencies with ambiguous objectives, when the public is less likely to tolerate casualties.³ However, after the failed manhunt for the late Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aidid in Mogadishu in October 1993, many analysts heaped blame on the “snake eaters”⁴ for failed military policy, while largely ignoring the possibility that the policy itself was flawed.⁵

Gray’s thoughts on national interests and the typology of conflicts are equally instructive. He asserts that four levels of problems comprise the national interest: survival, vital, major, and other. The balance of power, the U.S. reputation, and American citizens and their property are considered to be the greatest interests. Furthermore, five types of distinct conflicts could affect international security:

Balance-of-(great)-power problems: problems that would threaten a world war.

Regional roguery: conflicts over the balance of power in a particular region.

Local disorder: conflicts confined primarily to one country or a former country.

Nontraditional threats: organized crime, drug traffic, terrorism, and economic warfare.

“911”: unanticipated emergencies such as humanitarian relief and assistance.

As Gray proves, however, not all interventions undertaken in response to the above situations lend themselves to the decisive-victory/low-casualties goal. And for those strategists who believe technology will assure that result, he offers this:

Few rogue or would-be rogue polities are going to oblige the best and the brightest American information warriors by setting themselves up to be “Iraqed” in an information

³ For an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of employing special operations forces, see Gray’s chart on p. 186.

⁴ The term “snake eater” is the label that many apply to special operations forces, particularly U.S. Army Special Forces.

⁵ See, for example, Edward N. Luttwak, “Toward Post-Heroic Warfare,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1995, p. 115; Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans At War in the 1990s* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1995), pp. 305–7.

war. If they are able, foes of the United States will decline to wage information war and instead will threaten or conduct operations which marginalize much of the nominal U.S. "third-wave" advantage (p. 240).

A Path to Improved Policy?

In keeping with the decisive-victory/low-casualties goal, many policy-makers have proposed various checklists to attempt to regularize the decision to employ military means. During the last decade-plus, numerous such plans have been proclaimed concerning the use of American force abroad, all of which draw on America's experience in Vietnam and a reluctance to commit the military to situations such as the U.S. misadventure in Lebanon (1982–84).

After studying both disasters, then secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger unveiled what came to be known as the Weinberger Doctrine in an address before the National Press Club on November 28, 1984. He emphasized six principles that should govern the use of force: vital national interests are threatened; the United States clearly intends to win; the intervention has precisely defined objectives; there is reasonable assurance that the American people and Congress will support the intervention; the commitment of American forces and their objectives can be reassessed and adjusted if necessary; and the commitment of forces is a last resort.⁶ Members of both the Left and Right attacked this plan as unworkable and, judging by the historical precedent, probably prohibitive of any use of force abroad.

The next set of rules came from General Colin Powell, who described the Powell Doctrine as the lessons he learned from the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and its invasion of Panama in 1989.⁷ For any military intervention, Powell dictated, U.S. policymakers must have a clear political objective and stick to it; use all the force necessary and not apologize for it; and recognize that decisive force ends wars quickly and saves lives in the long run.⁸

This doctrine has also been criticized as too restrictive, largely because the general's conception of "decisive force" seems to prohibit action unless the United States assembles a grossly overwhelming force. In this vein, the six-month buildup to the war in the Persian Gulf gave the initiative to Saddam. Fortunately for the United States, he chose not to take it. Moreover, officials in the first Clinton administration claimed that the plan was an early obstacle to effective foreign policy. One senior official went so far as to say, "Everything we did effectively over the following two or three years, we did without the shadow of Colin Powell and the so-called Powell Doctrine."⁹ While one can argue that

⁶ Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," Department of Defense News Release, Nov. 28, 1984, cited in John Hillen, *American Military Intervention: A User's Guide*, Backgrounder, no. 1079 (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, May 2, 1996), p. 5.

⁷ Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), p. 420.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 420–21.

⁹ Steven Erlanger and David E. Sanger, "On Global Stage, Clinton's Pragmatic Turn," *New York Times*, July 29, 1996.

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Powell's rules restrict the executive overmuch in formulating foreign policy, his rules should not be used as a cover for an indecisive intervention in Somalia and a delayed intervention in Bosnia that the White House held off even long after the general left.

Following these precedents, the Clinton administration devised its own rules for intervention, first with the 1994 Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-25. PDD-25's criteria for American involvement in multilateral peace operations dictate that: participation advances U.S. interests, and the risks to American personnel are considered acceptable; sufficient forces have been committed to achieve clearly defined objectives, and a plan exists to attain those objectives; an end point for U.S. participation can be identified; operations are continually assessed for their viability and effectiveness; and popular and congressional support either exists or can be raised.¹⁰

To clarify the administration's policy, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, in an address at George Washington University in March 1996, enumerated four principles for the use of force: the United States will always be ready to use force to defend its national interests; a credible threat of force alone will sometimes achieve objectives; force need not always be massive in its application; and end-state planning is necessary before forces are introduced overseas. He also described seven circumstances that might call for the use of force: defending against direct attacks on the United States, its citizens, and its allies; countering aggression toward American interests; defending key U.S. economic interests; preserving and promoting democracy; preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking; maintaining American credibility and reliability; and performing humanitarian interventions in instances of famines, natural disasters, and gross abuses of human rights.¹¹

Unfortunately, such checklists are either too broad or too narrow in their application of force—the United States will intervene either everywhere or almost nowhere. Because these criteria could create ambiguity or false expectations for an American response overseas, they are most useful as a loose conceptual framework for employing U.S. forces rather than as a step-by-step plan for a response.

But while many believe the rule-making exercises restrict U.S. force abroad, the military has seen increasing action during the Clinton administration, even as the armed forces shrink.¹² Between January 1993 and December 1995, the Clinton administration used the armed forces abroad on twenty-five occasions.

¹⁰ For the unclassified version of this document see the White House, "The Clinton Administration's Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," May 1994.

¹¹ National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, "Defining Mission, Setting Deadlines: Meeting New Security Challenges in the Post-Cold War World," Address at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., Mar. 6, 1996.

¹² See, for example, John Hillen, "Having It Both Ways On Defense," *Investor's Business Daily*, Sept. 25, 1996; Bradley Graham, "Two-War Scenario: A Strategy Straining the Pentagon," *Washington Post*, Dec. 12, 1996.

That compares with seventeen instances during Ronald Reagan's two terms and fourteen during the Bush administration.¹³

The current vogue of operations other than war—the principal reason for the heightened operational tempo—has caused much consternation both within and outside the Beltway. While advocates claim that these missions are necessary and useful, the fact remains that humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement all risk lives. And much of the debate focuses on whether these operations are worth the lives of America's men and women.

Are Casualties the Sum of All Fears?

As noted, a central consideration in each of the proposed checklists is the probability of high casualties, a topic that recently has drawn considerable attention. In 1995 and 1996, Edward Luttwak, a senior fellow of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, published two articles in *Foreign Affairs* laying out his thesis of post-heroic warfare. In these articles, Luttwak contends that with the end of the cold war “the size of armed forces, military expenditures, fear of nuclear attack, and learned habits of restraint are all diminished” (1996, p. 33), bringing a new season of warfare to the international community. But few of today's conflicts merit U.S. involvement and the casualties American forces would suffer. Luttwak further argues that the American public is unwilling to sanction endless interventions, yet the United States must intervene in some situations that threaten the country's values and material interests (1995, p. 114). From this perspective, he advocates a return to some form of eighteenth-century warfare, when “most wars were fought for much less than imperative purposes that rarely evoked popular enthusiasm, with prudent strategies and tactics to conserve professional forces” (1995, p. 110).

In Luttwak's estimation, casualty avoidance should drive American military policy. High casualties, he asserts, can rapidly undermine domestic support for any military operation, which in turn is “the key constraint when decisions must be made on which forces to deploy in a crisis and at what levels” (1996, p. 36). But if the risk of American military casualties can be minimized, “the response of public opinion to proposed military interventions should also change” (1995, p. 112). With an eye to these considerations, he makes several suggestions for maintaining a robust yet protected force.

During the cold war, countries maintained large forces for both deterrence and show. In this new era, Luttwak believes overwhelming military might is no longer necessary. While he concedes that ground forces are the most versatile, he argues that they are becoming too expensive to employ overseas absent a national will to accept casualties. Instead, capital-intensive forces are the best

¹³ Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-1995*, Congressional Research Service Report, Feb. 6, 1996, pp. 19–25.

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option. Long-range bombers and cruise missiles become a viable option, and in most instances the superior one, because they can achieve objectives that reduce American casualties. However, the U.S. encounter with Iraq in September of 1996 casts some doubt on Luttwak's theory. That "victory" seems to have achieved few objectives, limited or otherwise.¹⁴ Recall that victory in Desert Storm ultimately required a ground offensive.

Luttwak also argues for using a "casualty-exposure" index when ground forces must be committed. This index would prove that mechanized or armored forces are the most desirable ground forces for any type of terrain, because "inserting forces that are theoretically more suitable only to have to withdraw them abruptly because of politically intolerable casualties accomplishes nothing" (1996, p. 41). But Luttwak does not consider that armored and mechanized forces require a significant heavy-lift capability to be deployed into a theater of war, or, more important, that the narrow streets of an urban area may make armored or mechanized forces as susceptible to casualties as the less-protected light infantry (consider the Russian experience in Grozny).

Whether or not one agrees with Luttwak's casualties analysis, his conclusion that American forces must continue to be engaged abroad seems irrefutable. In his words,

If the possessor of much of the world's military power refuses to use it, greater world disorder is only the most immediate consequence. At a time when Cold War restraint has given way to adventurism, if U.S. military power is withheld in one crisis after another, it is bound to stimulate the growth of other military powers. A vacuum will have been created that other countries will fill (1996, p. 44).

But whether the American people and their elected representatives deem engagements and their costs necessary continues to spark debate.

Parameters published two wholly different perspectives on this issue in the summer of 1996. In "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars," Harvey Sapolsky, a professor and director of the Defense and Arms Control Studies Program at MIT, and Jeremy Shapiro, a Ph.D. candidate in political science at MIT, argue that the casualty issue divides the country because of vulnerabilities of Americans and U.S. society. Americans reject not only American military casualties but also opponent and neutral civilian casualties, and even enemy military casualties, owing to restraints U.S. society has imposed on itself.

According to the authors, casualty concerns began to hinder military policy as a result of the Vietnam War. In their words:

What mattered was the domestic interpretations of the fighting, the cost to families and to public life of the casualties we suffered and inflicted. The potential political effects of these reactions began to constrain US leaders more than did assessments of opposing forces (p. 121).

¹⁴ See, for example, Harvey Sicherman, "The Strange Death of Dual Containment," *Orbis*, Spring 1997, pp. 223-40.

These effects were not limited to unpopular conflicts like Vietnam. As Sapolsky and Shapiro observe, the casualty issue affected the conduct of even the widely supported Persian Gulf War in three ways. First, the ground war lasted only four days because the generals claimed that they had achieved the military objective after that short time, and that further hostilities would risk American casualties for political objectives. Secondly, the United States stopped offensive operations for fear that a brutal offensive campaign would give the impression that the U.S.-led coalition was slaughtering Iraqi forces. And lastly, images of the suffering inflicted upon the Iraqi populace led to a modified air campaign. These perceptions, the authors believe, contribute to the quest for “magic bullets” that will sanitize warfare and reduce the risk of American casualties. For low casualty figures from the Persian Gulf War, as well as from the interventions in Grenada and Panama, give the false impression that future conflicts can also yield small numbers of American fatalities.

Thus, the desire for sanitized warfare has led to high-tech weapons, nonlethal weapons, and sanctions. High-tech weapons are desirable owing to the perception that they can defeat the enemy from a safe distance. They do, however, require tremendous intelligence input for employment; precision-guided weapons, for example, need precise targeting information. Nonlethal weapons are another option, but while sticky foam, sprays, traps, and noise-makers may be a feel-good alternative, their use can heighten an opponent’s frustration and provoke a “lethal” weapon response. Calling means “nonlethal” may also give the inaccurate impression that they never inflict casualties: “What merely stuns a 20-year-old soldier may easily kill a two-year-old child or a slightly out of shape 56-year-old professor” (p. 123). Lastly, Sapolsky and Shapiro argue that sanctions are also unreliable because they generally affect those least responsible for the sanctions’ imposition.¹⁵

Decreasing tolerance for casualties stems from more than just recent conflicts, however. According to the authors, Vietnam and Watergate sharpened an ingrained cultural distrust of government. Americans now insist that deaths “for state purposes” be proved necessary, purposeful, and unavoidable. For troops to be deployed when the country’s survival is not on the line, the polity demands a moral cause that justifies the sacrifice, which in turn makes political leaders exaggerate the stakes.

With ideological and political restraints hindering deployment at nearly every turn, perhaps U.S. military action should be limited to hunting for enemy leaders who are increasingly harder to find.¹⁶ Sapolsky and Shapiro note that “it is impossible to fight a war applying American civil liberty standards” (p. 125). They also recognize that while America may call for a crusade to expand tolerance and U.S. ideals abroad, it does not “have the stomach for the slaughter

¹⁵ See Patrick Clawson, *How Has Saddam Hussein Survived? Economic Sanctions, 1990–93*, McNair Paper 22 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Aug. 1993).

¹⁶ See, for example, Ralph Peters, “A Revolution in Military Ethics?” *Parameters*, Summer 1996, pp. 102–8.

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that such a crusade requires” (p. 126). The overarching problem is a lack of national will, which could provoke a retreat into “fortress America.”

While Sapolsky and Shapiro examine the issues underlying the casualty debate, Colonel Karl W. Eikenberry looks to its possible impact on military doctrine, arguing that hypersensitivity to fatalities could impede the armed forces’ ability to execute missions. In his article “Take No Casualties,” Eikenberry, who works on the staff of the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, contends that the military and statesmen see battle losses from entirely different perspectives. On the one hand, statesmen

must weigh the repercussions of excessive casualties on the level of civilian morale necessary to successfully prosecute a war, and ultimately (at least in a representative form of government) on their own political futures.

But generals

must balance potential losses against a wide variety of military factors including probable strategic or tactical gains, possible damage to the effectiveness of the forces employed and their ability to cope with enemy countermoves, and the difficulty of reinforcing or reconstituting the force. Military commanders, when planning and conducting operations, must also respond to their civilian leaders’ guidance (if any) concerning the number of casualties deemed politically acceptable (p. 109).

Political leaders must consider the public’s reaction to casualties and anticipate the response of the political opposition, attitudes largely shaped by whether people see a particular conflict as a legitimate defense of U.S. vital interests. Still, as Eikenberry notes, statesmen cannot set a precise, quantifiable limit for the number of casualties the United States would tolerate. To do so would invite the enemy to kill that number of American troops and then some.

Eikenberry argues that in a given conflict the military’s psyche is affected by not only the number of casualties suffered but how the public perceives the losses, which translates into the level of popular support the intervention enjoys. Preoccupation with the public’s perception of a conflict could result in disproportionate attention paid to force preservation, which commanders may come to consider more important than boldness. The continued U.S. commitment in Bosnia, for instance, seems to prove that force preservation is the goal. American personnel are not allowed off their compounds during off-duty hours, and even during duty hours they move about only in convoys.

Eikenberry further observes that “limited war begets limited objectives, which beget more urgent political concerns over casualties” (p. 112). Thus, it is “politically risky, if not suicidal, to preside over any limited conflict that could not be won quickly, with relatively few casualties” (p. 113). Like Sapolsky and Shapiro, he asserts that the low casualty levels in recent interventions may set unreasonable expectations for the U.S. military. The rub is that

one of the most difficult dilemmas facing our statesmen today is how to respond effectively to domestic concerns about losses in conflicts abroad, while still showing the tangible signs of commitment necessary to maintain a claim to coalition and world leadership (p. 115).

He further contends that “a military that on its own volition discards courses of action because they are too costly may lose its spirit of creativity and innovation” (p. 116), eventually leading to an operational blurring whereby commanders may believe that men are more important than the mission. All young officers, at least in the army, are taught “mission first, people always.” That may seem like a contradiction, but as Eikenberry points out, “considered coldly, soldiers and an army are ultimately a means, not an end” (p. 117). While one may disagree with his argument, it should be considered by everyone, particularly all officers.

For the last perspective considered here on the casualty debate, Eric V. Larson provides a behavioralist analysis of the casualty issue and corresponding domestic support for American military operations. The author, a postdoctoral fellow at the RAND Corporation, bases his conclusions on a comparison of public support for American military action in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf, Somalia, and Panama. He also touches on the Dominican Republic intervention of 1965 and U.S. involvement in Lebanon in the early 1980s.

Drawing on his survey data, Larson points out that five factors can explain public support or opposition to interventions:

The perceived benefits. Interventions garner more support when they are seen as defending significant U.S. interests.

The prospects for success. The operations most likely to achieve their objectives will receive the most popular support.

Prospective and actual costs. The public is more likely to oppose interventions with potentially high costs in human and matériel resources.

Changing expectations. The initial expectations for an operation lay the framework for support, but changes for the worse may cause the public to revise its opinion (for example, the effect the Tet Offensive had on perceptions of U.S. involvement in Vietnam).

The nature and depth of support for the intervention among the other actors. Public and political actors influence the general public’s opinion through their own support.

Larson also considers how media coverage can affect interventions. Taking on the “myth of the ‘CNN effect,’” he argues that media reporting did not contribute to the decision to intervene in Somalia. Nor did the horrifying images of the failed raid in October 1993 substantially contribute to the public’s demand for an immediate withdrawal. However, it will be interesting to see whether the survey data from the Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda interventions alter his analysis.

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Overall, Larson believes the American public will accept casualties, but only for worthy causes. Leadership consensus is also essential for the public to support U.S. military interventions. In sum,

support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighing of benefits and costs that is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders (p. xv).

Facing the “New Warriors”

Unfortunately, the evolving nature of U.S. enemies could make high casualties likely in future confrontations. If the recent precedents of the post–cold war era continue, American forces will increasingly face ambiguous threats such as those encountered in Somalia. Major Ralph Peters, the special assistant for strategic planning to the director of national drug control policy, calls these forces “the new warrior class,” a concept he introduced in his 1994 *Parameters* piece of the same name. According to Peters, the “warriors” are

erratic primitives of shifting allegiance, habituated to violence, with no stake in civil order. Unlike soldiers, warriors do not play by our rules, do not respect treaties, and do not obey orders they do not like (1994, p. 16).

This new class is growing throughout the world, drawing members from the underclass, “course-of-conflict” joiners, patriots, opportunists, failed or cashiered military types, and child warriors. Warriors are seizing power in vacuums created by weak states or in areas where they can legitimize their rule.¹⁷ To them, the will of the people “matters very little when it matters at all” (1994, p. 17). If that were not bad enough, Peters notes that warriors want to prolong violence because many of them have few marketable skills, and “the end of fighting means the end of good times” (1994, p. 17).

These marauders are the future opponents of U.S. forces. And because “the deployment of troops [has become] a substitute for policy” (1996, p. 14), American forces will encounter the new warriors on more and more missions and risk suffering casualties every time. To keep casualties to a minimum, the United States must understand the cultures and behaviors in regions where U.S. forces are deployed, plan for mission creep, and go in knowing that the intervention may require a heavy price. Furthermore, the United States should steer clear of places where an American intervention will not likely prove successful.

When American forces must fight warriors, Peters asserts, U.S. troops should use a strategy of separation. First, the warriors must be separated both physically and psychologically from the population, thereby cutting them off

¹⁷ See, for example, Mark Urban, “Warlords’ forces present new problems,” *Washington Times*, Nov. 16, 1996.

“from the sources of their strength.” Then U.S. forces must “pursue them relentlessly” (1996, p. 18). Because fighting against warriors is a zero-sum game, those conflicts may ultimately place the greatest strain on the decisive-victory/low-casualties imperative.

The Future of American Military Policy

Simply put, the world remains a dangerous and uncertain place, and U.S. forces will continue to be sent into harm’s way. With that in mind, several guidelines drawn from the above works could help shape better criteria for interventions.

Leadership. Effective leadership is the key to the support and success of interventions. When American forces must be deployed overseas, they need clearly defined objectives and bipartisan support for their mission. Sending U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines into ill-conceived and ambiguous missions is a recipe for disaster. When such missions are in the offing, the military and the Congress must present to the executive office clear, valid, and irrefutable objections against them. Ultimately, however, it is the president’s responsibility to determine when an intervention is necessary and to raise support for that operation.

Restraints. Placing inordinate restraints on the president’s ability to use military forces as an adjunct to policy may set dangerous precedents. Politicians intent on so restricting the chief executive for partisan reasons should remember that restraints imposed on the opposition today will shackle one’s own party tomorrow, the War Powers Act of 1973 being the most obvious such restraint. Moreover, guidelines that allow for the massive use of force only in limited circumstances will impede the execution of an effective foreign policy. Still, the president must keep his finger on the pulse of public and military opinion, without becoming a prisoner of polling data.

Checks and balances. A new order of checks and balances must be developed to keep the United States from jumping into ambiguous interventions. The president, Congress, and military must work together whenever possible to govern the use of military force. The president must exercise leadership; the Congress should support or oppose employing force without trying to micro-manage tactics; and the military should provide the planning and support to implement military operations, while also stating any valid objections it might have to a particular intervention. As Gray argues, this cohesion is necessary because there exists a fundamental divergence in strategic thought and implementation between the military and civilian leadership. Hopefully, constructive relations among the executive office, Congress, and the military could help bridge that gap.

Overall, Americans need to “sober up” about the realities of using force. Civilians must understand that war brings death to more than just the enemy, that it is not a science, and that the military needs clear guidance and responsibility. The military, in turn, should remember that war is about more than killing or

avoiding casualties—it is an instrument of national policy decided by civilians. When senior officers strongly disagree with their civilian bosses, they must be willing to speak out. But they should be fully aware of and unreservedly accept the consequences of their actions. The military's ultimate goal is to fight and win the nation's wars, and war is after all a political act. To avoid too much friction between the men and women in uniform and their civilian leadership, however, American participation in operations other than war should be limited to those instances where it is critically needed.

Ultimately, the issue of casualties is not, and should not be, a deciding factor in the use of force when an intervention is valid and necessary. As Larson points out, the American people will accept casualties so long as the civilian leadership persuades them of that validity and necessity. Instead of fixating on potential casualties, American military policy must concern itself with preparing the force to deal with the threats to American interests. That should be done, however, while remembering what Ambassador Paul Wolfowitz told a conference at the American Enterprise Institute in December 1995: history has shown itself to be far more imaginative than any Pentagon scenario writer.

Mexico's Flight from Freedom **by Michael Radu**

Bordering on Chaos: Guerrillas, Stockbrokers, Politicians, and Mexico's Road to Prosperity. By Andres Oppenheimer. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996. 367 pp. \$25.95.)

Tiempo Contado (Borrowed time). By Enrique Krauze. (México, D.F.: Editorial Oceano de México, 1996. 274 pp. N\$85, paper.)

The Mexican Shock: Its Meaning for the United States. By Jorge G. Castañeda. (New York: The New Press, 1996. 257 pp. \$23.00.)

Mexico at the Crossroads: Politics, the Church, and the Poor. By Michael Tangeman. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995. 138 pp. \$17.00.)

Many aspects of Mexico's self-defeating political culture provide cause for lament: the country's love affair with authoritarianism; its antidemocratic, anticapitalist, anti-American sentiments; and not least its romantic illusions about a bloody past. While most Americans probably realize that they do not know much about their neighbor to the south, what they may not realize is that Mexicans also have trouble understanding Mexico. As Andres Oppenheimer puts it, "How could one write about a country where one could not only not trust what people said, but wasn't even sure whether people were who they were supposed

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