# INTRODUCTION

Studies of international crises have repeatedly concluded that the success of crisis management efforts is critically dependent upon top-level political authorities maintaining close control of the actions of their military forces. This essential crisis management requirement has been identified as a potentially serious problem area.

Several concerns have been raised: Preplanned military operations and contingency plans may not be appropriate for the unique circumstances of a particular crisis, and may not support the political-diplomatic strategy adopted by national leaders to resolve a crisis. Delegated command of military operations could allow unintended military incidents to occur, which the adversary could misperceive as a deliberate escalation of the crisis or signal of hostile intent. Military alerts ordered to deter the adversary and increase the readiness of the armed forces could set in motion a chain of events exceeding the control of national leaders. Such problems are sources of concern because they could cause national leaders to lose control of events in a crisis, starting an escalatory spiral leading to war.[1]

This study focuses on the problems that can arise when using military force as a political instrument in crises. In an international crisis, military forces commonly perform two missions: political signaling in support of crisis bargaining, and preparing for combat operations should crisis management efforts fail. Inadvertent escalation—an increase in the level or scope of violence in a crisis that was not directly ordered by national leaders or anticipated by them as being the likely result of their orders—can be a significant danger in these circumstances. A distinction can be drawn between the political requirements of crisis management, such as limiting political objectives, and the operational require-

ments of crisis management, such as maintaining control of military operations.[2] The focus of this study is on the operational requirements of crisis management.[3] The use of U.S. naval forces in four crises that occurred since the end of World War II will be examined to develop contingent generalizations on crisis military interaction.

In the introduction to his study of international crises, Richard N. Lebow discusses the distinction long made between the underlying causes of war—the long-term sources of hostility and tension—and the immediate causes of war—the particular events, such as a crisis, sparking a war. Lebow argues that, while students of international relations since Thucydides have focused on underlying causes, immediate causes are at least as important as underlying causes, in that immediate causes can determine whether war erupts from the underlying hostility and tension.[4] This study starts from Lebow's premise that immediate causes are important for understanding how and why wars occur.

The causes of war can be viewed as falling on a time-span spectrum, with long-term underlying causes working their effects over years, decades, or even centuries toward the left end, and immediate causes occurring over days or weeks toward the right end. The underlying causes toward the left end of the spectrum include the structure of the international system, history, culture, economic development and resources, ideology, geography, and military technology. System structure has a strong influence on how "war-prone" international politics are at a given time. Historical, cultural, economic, and ideological variables help to shape the political framework within which rivalries arise between particular nations and contribute to the intensity of the hostility and tensions between them. Geographic factors and the state of military technology shape the strategic relationships between nations and contribute to the level of tensions between them.

This study will be addressing causes of war at the far right end of that spectrum—events occurring over hours, or even just minutes, at the speed of modern warfare. There is no intent to slight the importance of underlying causes or longer term immediate causes, which arrange the political and strategic circumstances for war to occur. Rather, the intent is to supplement those causes with greater understanding of how military interactions in a crisis could inadvertently trigger war.

One of the fundamental problems in international relations is to

identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for war to occur. This study makes two assumptions on the necessary and sufficient conditions for war. The first is that an international environment marked by confrontation over national interests, hostility, and tension—all arising from the underlying causes of war—is a necessary condition for war to arise from a crisis. The implication of this assumption is that inadvertent military incidents will not spark escalation leading to war in the absence of confrontation, hostility and tensions. This study thus concentrates on inadvertent escalation arising under conditions of acute international crises, when the necessary conditions for war are present.

The second assumption is that the underlying causes of war alone are not sufficient conditions for war. War can be avoided even under conditions of confrontation, hostility, and tension as long as national leaders on each side are willing to continue bargaining with the other side, are willing to sacrifice certain interests in order to protect or advance others, and perceive that the other side intends to continue bargaining rather than resort to war. This suggests that a number of factors can provide conditions sufficient for war once the necessary conditions—confrontation, hostility, and tension—are present. Examples include a belief that vital national interests cannot be protected through bargaining, an unwillingness to concede some interests to protect others (perhaps because the price would be too high or domestic political repercussions too severe), a misperception that the other side will not bargain seriously or intends to resort to war at an opportune moment, and loss of control over military operations. These factors can give rise to either deliberate decisions to go to war or to inadvertent war. The immediate causes of war can thus provide sufficient conditions for war if the necessary conditions are present. This study analyses a specific subset of the immediate causes of war: those arising from interaction of the military forces of the two sides and resulting in inadvertent escalation to war.

Command and control problems that can degrade crisis management efforts and lead to inadvertent escalation have been the subject of several recent studies.[5] However, those studies have focused largely on top-level political decisionmakers and the command and control of strategic nuclear forces. Despite the fact that conventional military forces normally play a more immediate and important role in international crises, the crisis management implications of tactical-level interaction between conventional forces

have not been thoroughly explored. This study seeks to fill that gap in crisis management research by closely examining command of conventional forces and tactical-level interaction in international crises.

## *OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS*

Three central concepts form the foundation for this study: stratified crisis interaction, stratified crisis stability, and the tensions that arise from the interaction of political and military objectives in a crisis. These concepts are explained in detail in Chapter 2. They are summarized here to provide an overview of the concepts presented in the research design.

Given conditions of delegated command, tight coupling, and acute crisis, interactions between the two sides in a crisis will have a tendency to become stratified into separate political, strategic, and tactical interactions. These are separate interaction sequences between distinct groups of decisionmakers at each level on both sides in a crisis. Decoupled interactions are defined as interaction sequences at the strategic or tactical level in which the intensity of hostilities, level of violence, and magnitude of threat being conveyed to the other side are not under the control of national leaders. This occurs when there is an interruption or severe degradation of the vertical policy and information channels between decisionmakers at the three levels. When interactions are decoupled, the intensity of hostilities at the strategic or tactical levels no longer supports the political-diplomatic strategy being pursued by national leaders. Decoupling of interactions occurs to the extent that operational decisions on the employment of military forces made at the strategic and tactical levels differ from the operational decisions political level decisionmakers would have made to coordinate those military actions with their political-diplomatic strategy for resolving the crisis.

Crisis stability exists to the extent that neither side has an incentive to strike the first military blow. The crisis security dilemma is that in a crisis, many of the actions a state takes to increase its security and improve its bargaining position decrease the security of the adversary. Under conditions of stratified interaction the crisis security dilemma is also stratified, arising from the interaction

processes occurring separately at each of the three levels, and affecting the likelihood of war separately at each level of interaction. Crisis naval operations are particularly affected by the stratified crisis security dilemma due to the emphasis on striking first in modern naval warfare. Stratified crisis interactions provide a mechanism for inadvertent escalation—escalation that is not under the control of national leaders. In an acute crisis, in which strategic or tactical interactions between the two sides have become decoupled from political level control, an escalatory spiral can be triggered at the strategic or tactical levels of interaction, which under certain circumstances can cause the crisis to escalate uncontrollably to war. Those circumstances will be addressed in the study.

An important issue is whether these phenomena—stratified crisis interaction, decoupling of tactical-level interactions from political-level control, and stratified crisis stability—are strictly symmetrical or can also be asymmetrical. That is, must the conditions necessary for these phenomena to occur be present on both sides in a crisis, or can the phenomena arise when the conditions are present on only one side? This issue will be examined in the study, but the focus of the study will be on the United States and the role of U.S. forces in crises.

The interaction of political and military considerations when military force is employed as a political instrument in crises will also be addressed in the study. The interactions generate what will be described as political-military tensions—actual and potential conflicts between political and military considerations which force decisionmakers, either knowingly or tacitly, to make tradeoffs among individually important but mutually incompatible objectives. There are three political-military tensions: tension between political considerations and the needs of diplomatic bargaining, on the one hand, and military considerations and the needs of military operations, on the other; tension between the need for top-level control of military options in a crisis, and the need for tactical flexibility and instantaneous decisionmaking at the scene of the crisis; and tension between performance of crisis political missions and readiness to perform wartime combat missions. These three tensions between political and military considerations affect the degree to which stratified interactions become decoupled in a crisis, thus having a significant impact on crisis stability.

## *RESEARCH DESIGN*

There is an inherent element of randomness and unpredictability in the occurrence of war that structural or system-level theories cannot eliminate or define out of existence. Addressing the immediate causes of war gets at that element of randomness and unpredictability, allowing identification of various sets of specific circumstances in which the probability of war is increased—which is both theoretically significant and policy relevant. This study will examine a particular subset of the immediate causes of war, those arising from the use of force as a political instrument in crises.

The nature of the phenomena being considered dictates a focus on decisionmaking and the details of how crisis military operations are controlled. This, in turn, requires a research design in which a small number of cases are examined in detail using the method of structured focused comparison, rather than a research design using a large number of cases and statistical methods to identify significant variables. The purpose of structured comparison of a small number of cases is to reveal the different causal patterns that can occur for the phenomena, and the conditions under which each distinctive causal pattern occurs.[6]

The phenomenon to be explained is the occurrence of inadvertent escalation in international crises. For the purposes of this study, inadvertent escalation will be defined as any increase in the level or scope of violence in a crisis that was not directly ordered by national leaders or anticipated by them as being the likely result of their orders. The specific phenomena to be examined are the interaction of military forces in crises and the impact of such interactions on crisis stability.

Empirical research on the use of U.S. naval forces in crises will be used to identify the conditions under which crisis interactions become stratified and decoupled, the conditions under which tensions between political and military objectives arise and affect crisis stability, and the conditions that prevent escalation dynamics from occurring. The analysis will define discrete patterns of tactical-level crisis interaction, each associated with a particular causal pattern. Because the patterns of crisis military interaction are arrived at empirically, the patterns identified in this study probably will not cover the universe of interaction patterns—ad-

ditional patterns could well be identified through further empirical research.

The research design will consist of a structured focused comparison of four cases in which U.S. naval forces were employed in crises: the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1967 Middle East War, and the 1973 Middle East War. The criteria used to select these cases are discussed in the next section of this chapter. The four case studies will be used to develop discrete patterns of tactical-level crisis interaction. Eight questions addressing specific aspects of crisis military interaction will be answered through a structured focused comparison.

*Question 1.* To what degree were interactions between the forces of the two sides at the scene of the crisis the result of actions taken in accordance with guidance in standing orders and other mechanisms of indirect control, rather than direct control by national leaders? If direct control was attempted, to what degree were national leaders able to exercise constant, real-time, positive control of operational decisions?

*Question 2.* Were the forces of the two sides at the scene of the crisis tightly coupled? Did tactical-level commanders have sufficient information on the adversary's forces to allow them to develop a picture of the adversary's moves and intentions independent of information provided to national leaders? Were tactical moves by each side quickly detected by the other side, prompting on-scene commanders to make (or request authorization to make) countermoves in order to preserve or improve their tactical situation?

*Question 3.* Were the forces of the two sides being used by their national leaders as a political instrument to convey military threats toward the other side in support of crisis bargaining? What strategy or concept of operations governed the employment of naval forces in the crisis?

*Question 4.* Did tactical-level interactions become decoupled from political-level control during the crisis? Did any of the potential causes of decoupling arise during the crisis? If conditions for decoupling existed, did national leaders perceive the operational decisions made by the on-scene commander as not supporting their political-diplomatic strategy for resolving the crisis?

There are seven potential causes of decoupling: communications and information flow problems, impairment of political-level deci-

sionmaking, a fast-paced tactical environment, ambiguous or ambivalent orders, tactically inappropriate orders, inappropriate guidance in mechanisms of indirect control, and deliberate unauthorized actions by military commanders. To establish that tactical-level interactions became decoupled in a crisis requires two findings: First, that one or more of the seven potential causes of decoupling was present, creating the opportunity for decoupling to occur, and second, that operational decisions made by tactical-level decisionmakers interfered with or otherwise did not support the political-diplomatic strategy being pursued by political-level leaders to resolve the crisis.

*Question 5.* Did national leaders and on-scene commanders hold different perceptions of the vulnerability of on-scene forces to preemption and the need to strike first in the event of an armed clash? Did actions taken with on-scene forces by national leaders for political signaling purposes generate tactical situations in which the on-scene commander perceived a vulnerability to preemption and a need to strike first should an armed clash erupt? Did actions taken for political purposes prompt the adversary's forces to take compensatory actions to reduce their vulnerability or to improve their ability to strike first?

*Question 6.* When stratified interactions become decoupled, what factors inhibit escalation at the tactical level? When tactical-level interactions begin escalating, what factors inhibit escalation from occurring at the strategic and political levels of interaction? Under what circumstances could these escalation-inhibiting factors break down, allowing a crisis to escalate uncontrollably to war?

A limitation on the research that could be conducted for this study is that no post-World War II crises escalated to a war in which the United States was a participant.[7] The absence of cases resulting in war precludes using the outcomes of the crises—whether or not war occurred and the manner in which crises escalate to war—as dependent variables. The research design thus cannot address what would otherwise be the most interesting question: the circumstances in which tactical-level military interactions generate escalation dynamics leading uncontrollably to war. Although this question cannot be addressed directly, research will be conducted to identify the conditions that appear to have inhibited escalation from occurring.

*Question 7.* Were the political signals being sent with military forces misperceived by adversaries or allies? Under what circum-

stances did inadvertent military incidents occur and how did they affect efforts to manage the crisis? Were national leaders aware of the dangers of misperceptions and inadvertent incidents, and did this affect their decisionmaking?

*Question 8.* The eighth question addresses the three tensions between political and military considerations that can arise when military forces are used as a political instrument in crises. Did tensions arise between political and diplomatic considerations, on the one hand, and military considerations, on the other? Did tensions arise between the need for direct top-level control of military operations, and the need for tactical flexibility and instantaneous decisionmaking at the scene of the crisis? Did tensions arise between performance of crisis missions and maintaining or increasing readiness to perform wartime missions? If any of these tensions arose, how did they affect political-level and tactical-level decisionmaking?

## *CASE SELECTION*

The research design consists of a structured focused comparison of four cases in which U.S. naval forces were employed in acute international crises. Case selection criteria were (1) significant U.S. naval operations were conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of a crisis; (2) U.S. naval operations were conducted under conditions of acute international crisis; and (3) the naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of adversary naval or land-based forces that could threaten U.S. naval forces, generating tactical-level interaction between the forces.

The first case selection criterion was that all cases would involve significant U.S. naval operations conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of a crisis. The study is limited to naval operations in crises, as opposed to all types of military operations, for two reasons. First, the command and control procedures, tactical doctrines, and rules of engagement used by the different armed forces vary widely. Variations in these factors can greatly affect the degree to which particular forces are prone to have crisis stability problems and escalatory potential. A study addressing the employment of all types of military force in crises would have to address variations in these factors across services in order to make an accurate comparative analysis of crisis cases. Focusing on naval

forces improves comparability among crisis cases by holding constant inter-service variation in factors that can affect crisis stability and inadvertent escalation.

The second reason for focusing on naval forces is that the Navy is the branch of the U.S. armed forces called upon most often to respond to crises. Data on the employment of the U.S. armed forces as a political instrument collected by Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan show that U.S. Navy units were employed in 177 of 215 incidents (83 percent) between 1945 and 1975, while ground forces were employed in 54 percent of the cases, and ground-based air forces were employed in 48 percent of the cases. A follow-on study by Philip D. Zelikow found that U.S. Navy units were employed in 31 of 44 incidents (70 percent) between 1975 and 1982, while ground forces were employed in 41 percent of the cases and ground-based air forces were employed in 43 percent of the cases.[8] Having decided to focus on a single type of military force, a focus on naval forces provides greatest generalization of the findings to other crises.

The second case selection criterion was that U.S. naval operations were conducted under conditions of acute international crisis. This eliminates the vast majority of the crises in which U.S. naval forces have been employed since 1945. The essential features of an acute international crisis are a confrontation short of war between two sovereign states, a perception by national leaders that important national interests are at stake in the confrontation, and a perception by national leaders of an increased danger of war breaking out, or at least increased uncertainty that war can be avoided. Acute international crises have two features of particular interest in this study: The first is that both sides in the crisis seek to protect or advance important national interests. Both sides thus take military actions intended to support crisis bargaining and to counter military moves by the other side. The second feature is that neither side desires war as the outcome of the crisis. National leaders on each side limit their objectives and restrain their military moves to avoid being misperceived by the other side as intending to launch a war. When these conditions are met, the primary danger is of war arising from inadvertent escalation.

Limiting the study to acute international crises improves comparability among the cases by narrowing the range of variation in the factors that affect crisis decisionmaking. International crises of lesser intensity can involve much different political-military objec-

tives and produce much different crisis behavior on the part of national leaders and on-scene military commanders. For example, a perception that war between the superpowers is an unlikely outcome in a crisis could well embolden U.S. leaders to take more forceful military action than would otherwise be the case. On-scene military commanders would be likely to perceive less of an immediate threat to their forces in a low-level crisis than in an acute international crisis, making them less suspicious of the intentions behind adversary military operations in their vicinity. The risk of inadvertent escalation can also be expected to be much less in low-level crises than in acute international crises because neither side perceives interests to be at stake that are worth going to war to protect.

The third case selection criterion was that U.S. naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of adversary naval or land-based forces that could threaten U.S. naval forces, generating tactical-level interaction between the forces. Such tactical-level military interaction does not always occur in crises, and its absence results in a much different political-military environment. Tactical-level military interaction increases the risk that inadvertent military incidents could occur and influence the course of a crisis. Tactical-level tensions and threat perceptions are likely to be greater when naval operations are conducted in the immediate proximity of adversary naval or land-based forces. Political-level perceptions of adversary intentions and the risk of war can also be affected by tactical-level military interaction. The propensity of national leaders to take decisive action with military forces and risk further escalation could well be moderated by the immediate proximity of adversary naval or land-based forces. Focusing on cases in which naval operations in the immediate proximity of adversary forces generated tactical-level interaction improves comparability among the cases by limiting variation in crisis military operations to those most likely to affect threat perceptions and the risk of inadvertent escalation.

Applying the three case selection criteria to the large number of postwar crises in which the U.S. Navy has played an important role resulted in four cases being selected as sources of empirical data for the study: the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1967 Middle East War, and the 1973 Middle East War.

The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis was selected because the crisis

was perceived as acute, with a serious possibility of war with the People's Republic of China; significant U.S. naval operations were conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of the crisis; and the naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of Chinese naval and land-based forces, generating tactical-level interaction between the forces. This was the only crisis that did not involve the Soviet Union as the primary adversary of the United States.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis was selected because the crisis was by far the most dangerous Soviet-American crisis of the postwar era; significant U.S. naval operations were conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of the crisis; and the naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of Soviet naval forces, generating tactical-level interaction between the forces. The Cuban Missile Crisis case study will go into greater detail than the other three case studies because the crisis was much more severe.

The 1967 Middle East War was selected because the crisis was perceived as acute, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the attack on the USS *Liberty;* significant U.S. naval operations were conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of the crisis; and the naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of Soviet naval forces, generating tactical-level interaction between the forces. Naval commanders made operational decisions without White House guidance that could have had a significant impact on the course of the crisis.

The 1973 Middle East War was selected because it was arguably the second most acute Soviet-American crisis since 1945; significant U.S. naval operations were conducted for the specific purpose of influencing the outcome of the crisis; and the naval operations were conducted in the immediate proximity of Soviet naval forces, generating tactical-level interaction. As will be seen in the case study, Soviet naval actions in the Mediterranean generated a dangerous tactical situation that easily could have led to inadvertent escalation of the crisis.

The three case selection criteria limited the number of cases considered and improved comparability among the cases, but could not eliminate variation in all the variables that could influence tactical-level military interaction and the likelihood of inadvertent escalation. Seven of the more important factors that varied across the cases were the identity of the adversary that the United States

faced in the crises, the size of the adversary's nuclear arsenal, the intensity of cold-war tensions between the adversaries before the crises erupted, the level of threat to and nature of U.S. interests at stake in the crises, the identity of U.S. leaders in the crises, the size and nature of the naval operations conducted in the crises, and the evolution of weapons and communications technology over time. The impact of these seven factors on the research design must be addressed.

The identity of the adversary that the United States faced in the crises is important to the extent that it affected perceptions of the threat that war might arise from the crises and, consequently, the willingness of U.S. leaders to use force to protect vital interests. Although the adversary was the People's Republic of China in the first case and the Soviet Union in the remaining three cases, the adversary was perceived as a serious potential threat in all four cases. As will be discussed in the individual case studies, the possibility that China or the Soviet Union might resort to military force was a serious consideration and influenced U.S. decisions on how military forces were employed in all four cases.

The United States possessed nuclear weapons in all four of the crises, but China did not possess nuclear weapons in 1958, and the Soviet nuclear arsenal varied from much smaller than the U.S. arsenal in 1962 to approximate equivalence in 1973. The role of the strategic nuclear balance in international crises and the impact of nuclear threats on the behavior of adversaries have been addressed in a number of studies, but there is no clear consensus of opinion on these issues.[9] Blechman and Kaplan conclude that the strategic nuclear balance did not have a significant impact on the outcome of the Soviet-American incidents they studied.[10] Variation in the nuclear balance does not reduce the comparability of the cases selected for this study. As the case studies will show, the nuclear balance has greatest effect on decisionmaking by national leaders, influencing the objectives they define in a crisis and the strategies they formulate in order to achieve those objectives. This study focuses on tactical-level implementation of the military actions ordered by national leaders, rather than on formulation of objectives and strategies. To the extent that the strategic nuclear balance affects tactical-level decisionmaking, it is addressed in the case studies. As will be seen, it tends not to be a significant factor.

The intensity of cold-war tensions between the adversaries before each of the crises varied widely, ranging from very high in

1958 and 1962, to slightly lessened in 1967 and detente in 1973. As was the case with the nuclear balance, because the study focuses on tactical-level implementation of military actions ordered by national leaders rather than on formulation of objectives and strategies, variation in the intensity of cold-war tensions does not reduce the comparability of the cases selected for this study. To the extent that the intensity of cold-war tensions impacts tactical-level decisionmaking, it is addressed in the case studies.

The level of threat to and nature of U.S. interests at stake in the crises also varied widely. In 1958 the threat was to a U.S. ally (Taiwan) from a cold-war rival (China); in 1962 the threat was directly against the United States from the Soviet Union; and in 1967 and 1973 the threat was against a country the United States supported (Israel) from countries the Soviets supported (the Arab nations), with a concurrent threat of direct Soviet military intervention in a region (the Middle East) in which the United States desired to minimize Soviet presence and influence. As before, however, the level of threat to and nature of U.S. interests at stake in the crises principally affect formulation of objectives and strategies, and management of the crises by national leaders rather than tactical-level implementation of military actions. It thus does not reduce the comparability of the cases.

A different administration was in office in each crisis: Eisenhower in 1958, Kennedy in 1962, Johnson in 1967, and Nixon in 1973. This difference in leadership across the cases can be expected to have a significant impact on the formulation of objectives and strategies in the crises, given that each President would have had unique political background, experience in crisis management and the use of force, and perceptions of the interests at stake and the threat to those interests. For this reason, each of the case studies begins with a summary of U.S. objectives in the crisis and the strategy pursued for resolving the crisis. The impact of the objectives and strategies on the manner in which naval force was used in the crises is also addressed in the case studies, thus providing a basis for comparative analysis of the political-military considerations that generated the tactical-level military interaction observed in the crises.

An advantage of the four cases selected is that they cover an extended time frame—from 1958 to 1973—in which significant advances were made in weapons and communications technology. This allows the study to assess the impact of improved communica-

tion and information processing technology on the ability of national leaders to exercise close control over tactical-level military interaction in crises as the range, speed, and destructiveness of naval weapons increased over time. The issue of whether improved communication and information processing technology leads to improved crisis management is addressed in chapter 7.

Although the case selection criteria limited the number of cases considered, several cases that met the criteria to varying degrees were excluded from the study. Among the cases considered and rejected were the 1954 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis, the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1958 Lebanon Crisis, the 1970 Jordanian Crisis, and the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War. Although the 1954 Quemoy-Matsu Crisis and the evacuation of the Tachen Islands were perhaps as serious as the 1958 case, there was less tactical-level interaction because China ceased its harassment of the islands while the U.S. Navy was on the scene (thus making a naval confrontation an unlikely source of escalation). The Navy role in the 1956 Suez Crisis was limited to evacuation of civilians, there was little tactical-level interaction, and little concern that the crisis would escalate to war. There was little tactical-level interaction in the 1958 Lebanon Crisis, little concern that the crisis would escalate to war with the Soviet Union, and, after the Marines were landed, little concern that the United States would be involved in a civil war. There was minor tactical-level interaction in the 1970 Jordanian Crisis, but the Navy role was small and there was little concern that the crisis would escalate to war. Although there was tactical-level interaction and concern among Navy officers over the Soviet naval threat in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, the Navy role was limited and there was little concern that the crisis would escalate to war.

Limited war situations, such as the Korean War and the Vietnam War, were not addressed because the focus of the study is on international crises rather than limited war.

Three cases in which U.S. Navy ships were attacked in peacetime were also excluded from the study. The 1964 Tonkin Gulf Incident, the 1968 North Korean seizure of the USS *Pueblo*, and the 1987 Iraqi attack on the USS *Stark* were all excluded primarily because the attackers were small nations that did not represent a serious threat to the United States and because there was little likelihood of direct Soviet intervention on their behalf. The 1964 Tonkin Gulf Incident was excluded because war was not perceived as a serious threat during the crisis. The 1968 North Korean seizure

of the USS *Pueblo* was excluded because the President decided almost immediately not to respond militarily against North Korea, essentially eliminating the threat of war over the incident. The 1987 Iraqi attack on the USS *Stark* was excluded because it did not generate significant U.S. naval operations or tactical-level interaction between the forces and the United States accepted the Iraqi explanation that the attack was inadvertent.

## *NAVAL FORCES AND INADVERTENT ESCALATION*

Inadvertent escalation is unintended escalation arising from the employment of military forces in a crisis. The feature of inadvertent escalation that distinguishes it from other paths to war is that the escalation was not intended by national leaders when they ordered military action. The military action was taken to increase security, deter escalation, or improve their bargaining position in crisis diplomacy. But it resulted in unintended escalation by their own forces or unanticipated escalation by the adversary. Inadvertent escalation can occur when either side takes military action that provides the other side an incentive to launch a preemptive attack, that causes the other side to perceive that efforts to resolve the crisis acceptably without war have broken down and cannot be restored, or that results in use of force not controlled by national leaders.[11]

Once escalation has begun, whether deliberately or inadvertently, it can be difficult to control. Studies of conflict and war have identified an escalation spiral that can cause tensions and insecurities to erupt in war.[12] In a refinement of this theory, Richard Smoke concludes that there is an escalation dynamic driven by rising stakes in the outcome of a conflict and an action-reaction cycle. Rising stakes increase the motivation of national leaders to prevail in the crisis. In the action-reaction process, an escalatory action by one side provokes an escalatory reaction by the other side in recurring cycles.[13] Although Smoke's analysis is limited to the escalation processes that occur after war has broken out, it is equally applicable to the escalation processes that can arise after fighting erupts in a crisis. The escalation spiral that led to the outbreak of World War I is often cited as the classic example of escalation dynamics at work.[14] Thus, inadvertent escalation can initiate a broader escalation process in which the two sides employ

increasingly threatening military and diplomatic moves—including alerts, mobilizations, deployments of forces, small-scale demonstrative use of conventional weapons, and ultimatums—in an effort to gain leverage in crisis bargaining and improve their military positions should diplomacy fail. Accidents and other inadvertent military incidents can contribute to this process. Such deliberate and inadvertent actions increase tensions and harden resolve until the process results in a war that neither side wanted or expected when the crisis first arose.

American leaders and many analysts perceive naval forces as having important advantages over other types of forces for crisis response. Despite their advantages, however, naval forces could well have greater crisis stability problems than other types of military force. Importantly, those crisis stability problems arise from the same characteristics of naval forces that make them the preferred type of military force for crisis response. Due to the nature of their crisis operations, naval forces carry a high risk of being involved in inadvertent military incidents. This risk is compounded by the danger that, once they are involved in an armed clash, naval forces have greater escalatory potential than do other types of military force. Analysts have proposed several reasons for believing that a clash at sea is a more likely scenario than other paths to a superpower war, and that inadvertent escalation of a war at sea could be exceedingly difficult for national leaders to control.

Naval forces are widely perceived as having several inherent advantages as a political instrument, particularly for response to international crises. Naval vessels are free to roam the oceans outside of territorial waters with few restrictions. The principle of freedom of the seas is well established in international law, and warships have long been a highly visible means of asserting that freedom.[15] The ability of naval forces to establish a visible U.S. presence in international waters near the scene of a crisis without intruding into disputed territory or immediate need of politically sensitive shore bases is an advantage not shared by land-based forces. The oceans provide naval forces with wide geographic reach. Only the few nations without sea coasts and beyond the reach of carrier aircraft are not readily influenced by sea power.

The mobility and flexibility of naval forces are highly valued by national leaders. Naval forces are readily moved to a tension area, maneuvered to signal intentions and resolve, and withdrawn when

U.S. objectives are achieved. Endurance, the ability to remain on station in a tension area for a prolonged period of time, is another important attribute of naval forces. The endurance of naval forces allows national leaders to send Navy ships to a tension area and then wait and see what develops. Although naval forces in a presence role serve primarily as a visible symbol of U.S. power and influence, their combat strength is a central element in their role. The ability of naval forces to project power ashore on short notice with naval gunfire, carrier airpower, cruise missiles, and Marine troops provides national leaders with a wide range of military options for conveying carefully crafted threats in support of diplomatic bargaining. Equally important, these combat capabilities also provide options for seeking a military solution to the crisis should it become necessary.[16]

In contrast, land-based air and ground forces face numerous political, legal, and logistical constraints on their ability to be inserted into a tense area. They often require prepared bases (at least runways), and may not be welcome on foreign soil. Nationalism is a powerful emotion in many countries, particularly former colonies, and even nations desiring U.S. support may be hesitant to incur the domestic political strife that a foreign military presence can ignite. Land-based forces have a long and heavy logistical tail that makes them a cumbersome political instrument—they cannot be rapidly deployed other than in small units with low endurance, and once inserted can be difficult to withdraw. Deployment of land-based forces by air, or even use of long-range bombers for a show of force, can be precluded by reluctant allies and other nations refusing passage through their air space or refusing landing rights to refuel.

Employment of land-based forces normally entails greater risks than employment of naval forces due to the much stronger political signals sent by forces ashore and their vulnerability to a wider range of threats. Because land-based forces imply a greater degree of permanence than do naval forces, land-based forces can signal a stronger and less flexible commitment to protecting U.S. interests. Even if a strong signal of commitment was intended, the fact that land-based forces are difficult to move can inadvertently create an actual degree of commitment greater than had been intended.[17]

Observers of naval diplomacy have concluded that changes in the structure and conduct of international politics since the end of World War II have been the primary factors causing maritime

powers, particularly the United States, to place greater emphasis on the use of naval forces as a political instrument relative to land-based air and ground forces. Starting from the perspective of Robert E. Osgood and Robert W. Tucker that the destructiveness of nuclear war and the danger of conflicts escalating to nuclear war impose constraints on and "regulate" the use of force,[18] James A. Nathan and James K. Oliver contend that the superpowers have had to search for usable and controllable forms of military power —instruments of force which are both potent and responsive to the need for limits on their use. They conclude that naval power has been the type of force best suited for use under these constraints, largely due to the advantages described above.[19] Similarly, James Cable has observed that "some of the constraints on the use of American military power to exert international influence are also such as almost to encourage reliance on limited naval force for this purpose."[20] Other observers have suggested that domestic political constraints in the United States have also caused naval forces to be favored over the other armed forces.[21] Thus, there is reason to believe that in the future, naval forces will continue to be the branch of the armed forces favored by U.S. leaders for crisis response.

The easing of Soviet-American cold war tensions and the dramatic political changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 do not presage an era in which naval forces will lose their political utility. If detente between NATO and the Warsaw Pact leads to a significant reduction of U.S. forces in Europe, the importance of naval and air forces relative to ground forces as a means of protecting U.S. interests abroad will increase. Additionally, weakening of the bipolar international system and the rise of multipolar political and economic competition will generate much greater complexity in international affairs. Rather than fading with the cold war, international crises could well occur more often as a larger number of powers and blocs compete for influence and resources. Greater international cooperation on global environmental and social problems could generate crises and force being used to bring renegade nations into line. The emerging world order is certain to be much more complex, is likely to be less stable, and might well be more crisis prone. In much the same manner as the Royal Navy served as an instrument of British foreign policy for three centuries before World War II, the U.S. Navy can be expected to thrive as an instrument of American foreign policy in the future.

The characteristics of naval forces that make them the preferred type of force for use as a political instrument in crises also tend to make them relatively more susceptible to crisis stability problems than other types of forces. Naval forces face four crisis stability problems: the political signals sent by naval forces are especially vulnerable to misperception; the nature of modern naval warfare places a premium on firing first in tactical engagements; U.S. naval leaders approach the concept of naval crisis response from a perspective that is much different from that held by civilian leaders; and naval warfare appears to be more escalation prone than other forms of warfare.

The first naval crisis stability problem is that the political signals sent by naval forces are especially vulnerable to misperception. Studies of naval diplomacy often note the danger of the signals sent by naval forces being misperceived by the target nation or third parties. Naval officers are also aware of the problem of misperception. In his article explaining the Navy's peacetime presence mission, Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner pointed out that the perceptions of the country to be influenced are a factor in selecting forces for naval presence.[22]

The signals sent by naval forces are vulnerable to being misperceived for three primary reasons. First, warships are inherently coercive, even when used for supportive, influence-building purposes.[23] They cannot escape their aura of menace. Thus, the signals naval forces send have coercive connotations that can serve as "noise" complicating reception of the intended signal. Second, the flexibility of naval forces, which makes them so valued by national leaders for political signaling, also makes the signals they convey inherently ambiguous. As Nathan and Oliver observe, because naval forces can be withdrawn as easily as deployed, they can signal uncertainty and lack of resolve, rather than firmness and commitment.[24] Third, naval forces send highly visible signals which can be received by a large number of countries in addition to the intended recipient. Thus, third parties can perceive signals not intentionally sent to them.[25]

The second naval crisis stability problem is that the nature of modern naval warfare places a premium on firing first in tactical engagements, making the security dilemma particularly acute in naval crisis response. The nature of naval warfare is that ships, submarines, and aircraft are fragile relative to the destructiveness of the weapons used against them This began during the era in

which guns were the main armament of ships. An individual hit usually did not do serious damage, but massed gunfire could destroy a ship in short order. This led to emphasis on unilateral attrition—being able to fire on the enemy without suffering his return fire—achieved through longer range guns and such tactical measures as surprise and maneuver.[26]

Advent of the anti-ship cruise missile greatly exacerbated the vulnerability of ships to weapons, allowing a single weapon to destroy a vessel. Captain Frank Andrews has described the threat presented by anti-ship missiles: "A carrier battle group is liable to serious wounds from preemptive missile attack in forward waters . . . because modern technology affords so much advantage to the side which strikes first that the victim may be unable to defend himself."[27] Even if the missile does not sink the ship, it can knock the ship out of the battle—achieving what the Navy refers to as a "mission kill." Anti-ship missiles can be difficult to defend against, making destruction of the launch platform the most effective defense against them. U.S. Navy tactical doctrine for the defense of surface ship battle groups thus emphasizes destruction of launch platforms before they launch their missiles.[28]

Soviet navy doctrine places great emphasis on the first strike, making it a central objective of strategy as well as tactics. Soviet naval writings emphasize the importance of "the battle of the first salvo."[29] The tactical doctrines of the superpower navies interact, producing a war initiation scenario described in the U.S. Navy as the "D-day shootout."[30] The side that gets off the first salvo in the D-day shootout is likely to accrue a significant tactical advantage that could determine the outcome of the war at sea. When Soviet and American naval forces are deployed to the scene of an acute crisis, the security dilemma is likely to arise at the tactical level of interaction regardless of the threat perceptions held by national leaders. The technology and tactical doctrines of modern naval warfare thus provide ample conditions for crisis stability problems to arise.

The third naval crisis stability problem is that U.S. naval leaders approach the employment of naval forces in support of crisis management with a particular perspective that is likely to be much different from that held by civilian leaders. The Navy, like every large organization, has an organizational philosophy or ideology which shapes and organizes the attitudes, perceptions, and thought processes of its members. Because success in combat is crucially

dependent on maintaining effective command and control, military organizations place great emphasis on formalizing their organizational philosophy.[31] This doctrinal guidance is a particular bureaucratic perspective on the use of force, reflecting the Navy's views on efficient and effective operation of naval forces in peacetime, and the Navy's perception of the principles of naval warfare that would be operative in the event that fighting erupts.

Prior to the early 1970s, the U.S. Navy did not conceive of peacetime missions as a category separate and distinct from wartime missions. That the Navy had peacetime roles to perform was recognized, but, with the exception of naval diplomacy, those roles were viewed as being derived from wartime missions or as preparatory to execution of wartime missions.[32]

During the tour of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., as Chief of Naval Operations, serious efforts were made to refine and clarify the Navy's conceptions of its missions. The result, as described in a 1974 article by Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner, was a scheme of four missions: strategic deterrence, sea control, projection of power, and naval presence.[33] Sea control and projection of power are wartime missions. Naval presence is "the use of naval forces, short of war, to achieve political objectives," and has two objectives: "to deter actions inimical to the interests of the United States or its allies," and "to encourage actions that are in the interest of the United States or its allies."[34] Naval presence takes two forms: preventive deployments, which are a show of force in peacetime, and reactive deployments, which are a show of force in response to a crisis. The primary difference between preventive and reactive deployments is that preventive deployments can rely on the implied threat of reinforcement as well as the combat capabilities on-scene to influence the situation, while reactive deployments must rely exclusively on the combat capabilities on-scene to convey a credible threat.[35]

A study of naval presence by Lieutenant Commander Kenneth R. McGruther identified six requirements for the naval forces employed for the presence mission: (a) the ships should be "dear," valuable assets must be committed to demonstrate will; (b) the warfighting capability of the force must be impressive and proven for the political signal to be credible; (c) the force should be multimission capable for flexibility of signaling and response; (d) the potential stay-time of the forces should be substantial from the start to signal an intent to stay until the job is done; (e) the fleet

should be forward deployed so that forces are readily available close to potential trouble spots; and (f) superior command, control and communications capabilities are essential for an effective presence role.[36] This list of requirements reflects Navy thinking on the presence mission from the early 1970s onward. Of particular interest is that the requirements emphasize employment of powerful, multi-mission, high endurance, high value forces.

Commander James F. McNulty has described the perspective commonly held by naval officers on peacetime presence as opposed to other Navy missions (deterrence, sea control, and projection of power):

> In all instances, our naval forces are organized and optimized toward one or more of the other three roles, and their commitment to the presence mission in any given case must frequently conflict with their readiness to perform tasks in support of what is almost inevitably perceived as their primary mission. This tendency to see the presence mission as competitive and mutually exclusive with the remaining mission areas seems to pose the gravest hazard to the success of our Navy in support of the basic goal of conflict avoidance.[37]

This perspective, that wartime missions have priority over and are the foundation for peacetime missions, has been consistently and strongly held by Navy leaders for over forty years, and remains central to Navy thinking today.

The Maritime Strategy was formally issued in 1982 as the overall strategic framework guiding U.S. Navy strategic and operational planning. The strategy addresses the employment of naval forces as a political instrument with greater sophistication than any previous formulation of U.S. Navy missions. The three nonwartime naval functions encompassed by the strategy are deterrence, forward presence, and crisis response.

Crisis response is defined in the Navy's maritime strategy as employment of naval forces to achieve specific objectives while limiting the scope of the conflict and terminating military action as soon as possible. Crisis response serves primarily to control escalation of a conflict by deterring Soviet intervention and escalatory actions by other participants. Should control of escalation not be possible, the objective of crisis response is to dominate escalation—to prevail over any threats that may arise with precise use of force, so as to avoid increased hostilities. National objectives are

achieved through the political impact, and, if necessary, the direct military impact, of warfighting capabilities brought to bear at the scene of a crisis.[38] Navy leaders believe that naval forces have escalation control characteristics that make them well suited for the crisis response role: mobility, readiness, flexibility, endurance, and a wide range of capabilities for precision political signaling and selective military options.[39]

Although the Navy's description of its peacetime roles and missions changed significantly in the early 1970s and again in the early 1980s, there are strong continuities in the perspectives underlying these changing mission formulations. Warfighting capabilities are viewed as the foundation for performance of peacetime missions. The ability of naval forces to deter, persuade, or impress is derived from their ability to fight. Peacetime missions always entail maintaining readiness to perform warfighting missions, particularly in crises. This entails readiness of on-scene forces to engage in combat at the scene of a crisis should fighting erupt, and readiness of all operational forces, particularly forward deployed forces, to perform wartime missions should the crisis escalate to war. Deterrence, at least below the strategic nuclear level, is achieved through threat of denial—maintaining the capability to defeat enemy forces in battle, thus denying the enemy the ability to achieve his military objectives. The purposes of forward presence are to demonstrate denial capabilities for deterrence and to place forces where they are available to conduct warfighting missions for denial should deterrence fail. The objectives of crisis management and escalation control are best achieved by employing forces capable of demonstrating deterrence by denial, and, should it become necessary, capable of defeating the enemy in battle to achieve denial.

That Navy leaders should hold such views is not surprising, the raison d'etre of navies being to win battles at sea. There is merit in naval leaders focusing on readiness to perform warfighting missions, for coercive threats are by definition threats that force will be used. The necessity of maintaining readiness to perform wartime missions is inherent in crisis response. Laurence W. Martin has observed that when naval presence is exercised in an area of acute military tension, political demonstration purposes blend into preparations for warfare. That is, despite the ostensibly nonbelligerent purpose of the presence mission, the naval forces must in fact have "a posture capable of accepting combat."[40] Naval forces deployed to the scene of a crisis to lend credibility to a deterrent

threat are also on-scene to take military action should deterrence fail. The danger, however, is that Navy leaders and political leaders may be using the terms crisis management and escalation control with much different meanings, and viewing the same military actions as having much different purposes.

Much more representative of the views likely to be held by civilian policymakers are the seven operational requirements for crisis management identified by Alexander L. George: (1) political authorities must control military operations, including details of deployments and low-level actions as well as selection and timing of the moves; (2) the tempo of military operations may have to be deliberately slowed, creating pauses for the exchange of diplomatic signals, assessment, and decisionmaking; (3) military actions have to be coordinated with diplomatic actions in an integrated strategy for resolving the crisis acceptably without war; (4) military actions taken for signaling purposes must send clear and appropriate signals consistent with diplomatic objectives; (5) military options should be avoided that give the adversary the impression of an impending resort to large-scale warfare, possibly prompting him to preempt; (6) military and diplomatic options should be chosen that signal a desire to negotiate a solution to the crisis rather than to seek a military solution; and (7) military options and diplomatic proposals should leave the adversary a way out of the crisis compatible with his fundamental interests.[41]

In contrast to these requirements, the Navy perspective on crisis response does not address political leaders controlling the details of deployments and operations, deliberate interruption of on-going operations to support nonmilitary objectives, tailoring naval operations to support political signaling, or political limitations on naval deployments arising from consideration of the adversary's interests. The scale of deployments and type of operations envisioned in Navy statements on crisis response could well be misperceived as aggressive rather than deterrent in intent, giving the adversary the impression of an impending resort to large-scale warfare and signaling a desire to seek a military solution rather than to negotiate a solution to the crisis.

Naval and political authorities could well have much different perspectives on the purposes of naval deployments during an international crisis. Misunderstandings could arise between political leaders and naval commanders at the scene of the crisis if the chain of command is not kept informed of the political purposes of naval

deployments. Such misunderstandings could lead to force being used when the political leadership would not have desired it used. As will be seen in the case studies, political authorities normally do not permit on-scene commanders to be informed of sensitive political objectives and initiatives.

The fourth naval crisis stability problem is that naval warfare appears to be more escalation prone than other types of warfare. Several researchers have expressed concern over the escalatory dangers of naval forces. Strong pressure to retaliate can arise when a U.S. Navy ship is attacked. Former White House aide Chester Cooper, commenting on the strong Senate reaction to the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Incident, described the emotions aroused by attacks on U.S. ships:

> There is something very magical about an attack on an American ship on the high seas. An attack on a military base or an Army convoy doesn't stir up that kind of emotion. An attack on an American ship on the high seas is bound to set off skyrockets and the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Hail to the Chief" and everything else.[42]

Other researchers have expanded upon Cooper's remarks. Noting that "It is dreadfully dangerous to sink a major power's warship today," George H. Quester warns that "the warships of the world have become highly prized investments, such that their loss would be likely to enrage the publics and governments that matter back home—enrage them enough to trigger off escalations that neither side might have wanted, thus setting up the deterrence and bluff mechanisms that are at the heart of 'chicken.' "[43] John Borawski echoes this concern: "The 1967 Israeli sinking [sic] of the USS *Liberty*, and the subsequent US uncertainty as to whether a Soviet ship had attacked the *Liberty*, is often cited as an example of the type of nuclear Sarajevo that could inadvertently lead to war."[44] Sean M. Lynn-Jones shares the concern that public opinion is likely to demand retaliation after a naval incident, but adds that "It is, of course, relatively unlikely that a naval incident could provoke a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. . . . An incident could, however, increase tensions and needlessly disrupt negotiations or other political discourse, much as the U-2 incident of 1960 forced the cancellation of the Khrushchev-Eisenhower summit."[45]

Some researchers contend that there is a greater risk of nuclear war erupting at sea than ashore. This argument has been made forcefully by Desmond Ball:

> The possibility of nuclear war at sea must be regarded as at least as likely as the occurrence of nuclear war in other theaters. Indeed, there is probably a greater likelihood of accidental or unauthorized launch of sea-based nuclear weapons, and the constraints on the authorized release of nuclear weapons are possibly more relaxed than those that pertain to land-based systems. Further, there are several important factors that make it likely that any major conflict at sea would escalate to a strategic nuclear exchange relatively quickly.[46]

The factors that Ball identifies are the occurrence of accidents at sea, the attractiveness of ships as nuclear targets, the nuclear weapons launch autonomy of naval commanders, dual-capable weapons systems and platforms, offensive Navy anti-submarine warfare (ASW) strategy, incentives for Soviet preemption arising from the vulnerability of Navy ASW and command and control systems, the Navy doctrine of offensive operations in forward areas, Navy tactical nuclear weapons doctrine, Soviet doctrine for war at sea, and lack of Navy contingency planning for limiting escalation in a war at sea.[47]

Another source of the escalatory danger associated with employment of naval forces in crises arises from the need to surge forces for wartime operations. In the event of war with the Soviet Union, the Maritime Strategy calls for offensive forward operations, seizing the initiative in the war at sea to destroy the Soviet navy and carry the war to the Soviet homeland.[48] The first phase of wartime naval operations commences as a Soviet-American crisis begins escalating toward war. Aggressive forward deployment of U.S. naval forces would commence on a global basis in order to be ready for wartime operations in strategic waters, to put the Soviet navy on the defensive, and to deter the Soviets from escalation.[49] This phase of operations is intended to be executed (and, if possible, completed) *before* war erupts. The emphasis is on deterrence by denial, deterring the Soviets by making it clear to them that they cannot achieve their wartime aims.

As one would expect, given the wide range of crisis scenarios that can be envisioned, the Maritime Strategy is deliberately imprecise on the circumstances in which the transition from crisis

response to the prewar deployment phase of operations would occur. In all likelihood, though this is not stated explicitly, the two phases of the strategy would proceed simultaneously. Early transition to the prewar deployment phase of operations in a crisis could create serious political and crisis management problems.

Crisis management and escalation control entail much more than deterrence by denial and escalation dominance, the central strategic concepts of the Maritime Strategy. The President could well decide upon a crisis management strategy in which he is willing to accept much greater risks to U.S. naval forces than are envisioned in the Maritime Strategy. This could preclude execution of the strategy in the manner preferred by the Navy. Conversely, naval forces organized, trained, and positioned for execution of the Maritime Strategy might not be immediately responsive to unanticipated ad hoc operational requirements created by the President's crisis management strategy.

The decision to shift from crisis response to the first phase of wartime operations (prewar deployment) would undoubtedly be a momentous and difficult one for the President. He can be expected to put off making this decision for as long as possible while seeking a negotiated solution to the crisis. Equally likely is the probability that the President would order the first phase of wartime operations incrementally, to use the forward deployments as further signals of resolve, and to convey increasingly strong coercive threats. This raises the question of whether the Navy's wartime operations plans have sufficient flexibility to allow successful conduct of wartime operations under conditions of delayed and incremental execution of the Maritime Strategy.

According to U.S. Navy leaders, delayed or incremental execution of wartime operations could seriously threaten the ability of the Navy to achieve its wartime objectives. Admiral James D. Watkins pointed this out in his 1986 description of the Maritime Strategy:

> Keys to the success of both the initial phase and the strategy as a whole are speed and decisiveness in national decisionmaking. The United States must be in position to deter the Soviets' "battle of the first salvo" or deal with that if it comes. Even though a substantial fraction of the fleet is forward deployed in peacetime, prompt decisions are needed to permit rapid forward deployment of additional forces in crisis.[50]

Admiral Watkins was arguing for the decision to commence the first phase of wartime operations to be made earlier rather than later, and decisively rather than incrementally.

Emphasis on maintaining readiness to perform warfighting missions also raises concerns among naval officers over political restrictions on crisis naval operations, particularly rules of engagement.[51] Lieutenant Commander T. Wood Parker has expressed concern that overly restrictive rules of engagement could leave the Navy vulnerable to a preemptive surprise attack:

> Our specific rules of engagement, although classified and dependent on the given situation, generally require us to assume a "defensive position" and to react to a hostile act. This, of course, is not all bad, for a different type of rules might result in a miscalculation which could have catastrophic consequences. Even so, our rules of engagement put us at a disadvantage because our unit commanders and individual commanding officers are forced to think defensively prior to taking offensive action. Moreover, our present rules put us in a very unpalatable situation in that the enemy can start the war at the time and place of his choosing. Within the context of the "battle of the first salvo," so important in Soviet military thinking, our rules of engagement give the Soviet Navy a tremendous advantage. The U.S. Navy can ill-afford to absorb a massive, coordinated attack prior to being able to take offensive action.[52]

This concern arises fundamentally from the nature of modern naval warfare, which places a premium on striking first.

In a severe crisis, one in which Soviet-American hostilities have risen to the point that wartime options must begin to be considered, the tension between crisis management and maritime strategy objectives would be acute. Top-level naval leaders would be likely to press for authority to commence large-scale deployments to forward war-fighting positions. On-scene naval commanders, concerned over the immediate threat represented by adversary naval forces and largely ignorant of political efforts to resolve the crisis, would be likely to feel dangerously constrained by peacetime rules of engagement. They would be watching closely for indications of hostile intent on the part of adversary forces and taking all actions within their authority to improve their tactical situation. Thus, both strategic and tactical considerations would

tend to drive naval forces toward courses of action that could cause political authorities to lose control over events in an acute international crisis.

In summary, inadvertent escalation is unintended escalation arising from the employment of military forces in a crisis. The military action is taken to increase security, deter escalation, or improve a bargaining position in crisis diplomacy, but results in unintended escalation by its own forces or unanticipated escalation by the adversary. Naval forces appear particularly vulnerable to inadvertent escalation because they are perceived as having important advantages over other types of forces for crisis response, yet have serious crisis stability problems arising from the very characteristics that make them the preferred type of military force for crisis response. Due to the nature of their crisis operations, naval forces carry a high risk of being involved in inadvertent military incidents and, once they are involved in an armed clash, have greater escalatory potential than do other types of military force. There are several reasons for believing that a clash at sea is a more likely scenario than other paths to a superpower war, and that inadvertent escalation of a war at sea could be exceedingly difficult for national leaders to control.

As was described in the research design, a principle objective of this study is to gather empirical evidence on these propositions. Although there is a persuasive rationale for naval forces having serious crisis stability problems and being vulnerable to inadvertent escalation, empirical research is needed to confirm whether naval incidents tend to occur in crises and whether they tend to spark inadvertent escalation. There could well be additional factors not previously identified that inhibit escalation, cause naval incidents to lose momentum and the forces to disengage, and allow national leaders to reassert control over tactical-level naval interaction. This study will attempt to identify the factors that inhibit escalation at the tactical level and the circumstances that could cause the escalation-inhibiting factors to break down, allowing a crisis to escalate uncontrollably to war.

## *ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK*

The study will begin in chapter 1 with a review of the literature on crises and crisis management. Chapter 2 defines the concept of

stratified crisis interaction and explores its implications for theory. The next four chapters present the case studies of U.S. naval operations in international crises: Chapter 3 presents the case study of the 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis, chapter 4 presents the case study of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, chapter 5 presents the case study of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and chapter 6 presents the case study of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Chapter 7 presents the findings of the case studies, the patterns of crisis military interaction, and the crisis management implications of stratified interaction.

# COMMAND IN CRISIS