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## Afterword

Afsheen John Radsan  
john.radsan@mitchellhamline.edu

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## AFTERWORD

### A. John Radsan

Greatness depends on knowing how to start and knowing when to stop.

Michael Jordan demonstrated greatness in his basketball career.<sup>1</sup> On June 14, 1998, Jordan played for the Chicago Bulls against the Utah Jazz in the NBA Finals. Game six was in Salt Lake City in front of a hostile crowd, a tough venue for any opposing team. The Bulls led three games to two with a chance to close out the series in the Salt Palace. Despite Jordan's best efforts, the Jazz led most of the game. With twenty seconds left and down by one, a stealthy Jordan strips the ball from Utah's Malone, then dribbles across the half-court line.

The path leading to these final seconds for Jordan was remarkable. Once cut from his high school basketball team, he played college basketball at UNC and, as a freshman, sank the game-winning shot from the left side in the 1982 NCAA championship game against the Georgetown Hoyas. He left UNC early to enter the 1984 NBA draft. Somehow two teams passed on selecting him, and the Bulls selected him third in the draft. After a few years of building a team in Chicago, Jordan led them to three straight NBA Championships in 1991, 1992, and 1993. "Threepeat" entered the national lexicon. Then—at the pinnacle of his career—he retired from professional basketball. The recent death of his father—killed in a random act of violence in his car—weighed on him. His father had been more of a baseball player than a basketball player and, to honor him, Jordan tried his hand at professional baseball. Excellence in one sport, however, did not easily translate into excellence in another; Jordan seemed destined to languish in baseball's minor leagues. Jordan changed uniforms and returned to the Bulls. Next they won the 1996 and 1997

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1. As a fan of the Duke Blue Devils and the Detroit Pistons, I still find it difficult to admit the obvious about a former North Carolina Tar Heel who then played for the Chicago Bulls. Admissions against interest, they say, are especially reliable.

championships.

Going into game six of the 1998 Finals against Utah, Jordan's trophy case included two Olympic gold medals, five NBA Finals MVP trophies, five NBA Championship rings, ten NBA scoring titles, and eleven all-star appearances. According to Magic Johnson, "There's Michael Jordan, and then there's the rest of us."

With the seconds ticking down, Jordan dribbles into Utah territory. He pauses just before the three-point line and allows the play to take shape. Thirteen on the clock. Twelve. Eleven. He drives into Byron Russell, one of Utah's best defenders. At the top of the key, he stops, crosses over, and reverses direction. Russell loses his footing. (Some say Jordan pushes off in an offensive foul, but none of the referees blows a whistle.) In a rhythmic zone all his own, Jordan sinks a twenty-foot jump shot. After the shot, he stands, right arm extended, wrist bent in a flawless follow-through. Perhaps aware of the history in the making, he lingers in that pose for a second or so as cameras, in a flurry, snap pictures of the famous ending. Chicago takes the lead with just over five seconds to play.

Does anyone remember the rest of the story? The Jazz called a time-out to set up their play. John Stockton heaved a shot that clanked off the rim. In celebration, Jordan needed two hands to show the world how many fingers it would take to hold all his championship rings.

Like Jordan, the JNSF team has reached a milestone. You hold in your hands the fifth and final issue of *The Journal of the National Security Forum*. For several years, this Journal has been home to many thoughtful conversations. Its pages have carried the words of scholars, spies, and analysts. Judges and journalists rounded out the perspectives.

Nearly ten years have passed since 9/11. In an age of terror, the study of national security remains pertinent to the lives of all citizens. Within the legal academy, national security law has gone mainstream. More courses, more law journals, and more symposia are offered on the topic. The American Bar Association has a standing committee on national security, and the American Association of Law Schools has formed a section on this topic.

In 2005, the JNSF was created to help develop the field. We wanted our issue to be read as much by practitioners and the public as by academics. So we kept the pieces short; we asked many of our contributors to respond to a list of ten questions with op-ed style

answers instead of droning on over esoteric topics. As the first managing editor described it, we wanted the JNSF to resemble the fruits of an evening of passion between Rolling Stone magazine and the Yale Law Journal. Our readers will judge whether he accomplished this goal—and whether the union was successful. Our journal has emphasized the quality of content over the breadth of footnotes. Unlike other journals, we have encouraged the creative and the unorthodox. Although national security is as likely to continue as the great game of basketball, we recognize that a time comes for every player (and for every team) to retire. If retirement is inevitable, then the question becomes one of timing. Even though Osama bin Laden was killed on May 1, 2011, the issues related to international terrorism will continue to be significant for the United States. His killing, however, presents an obvious ending to an era.

Jordan, after winning the 1998 Finals, retired for a second time. Rich from his basketball salary and all his endorsements, he took an ownership interest in the less-than-excellent Washington Wizards. His management skills did not match his athletic skills, however, and to help this new team, he began contemplating a return to the basketball court as a player. In September 2001, a month historic for other reasons, Jordan suited up for the Wizards. But his game was a faint shadow of its former sparkle. He was good but no longer great. Hobbled by injuries, he spent the last part of the season warming the bench. For once, his reach exceeded his MVP-ringed grasp.

We are one MVP ring short of Jordan. Even so, we choose this year to go out on top. We hope you consider this issue to be better than any of the prior four issues. Instead of playing past our prime, we have imposed a retirement of sorts. We have agreed to incorporate the JNSF fully into the *William Mitchell Law Review*.

Next year will be different. We will no longer be a special issue, just one of five regular issues. We trust that our founding principles of independence and originality will carry through into succeeding issues. Just as fans see flashes of Jordan's brilliance in the basketball moves of his sons, we expect some of our legacy to endure.

For us, it is June 14, 1998, the end of a championship season. We will not repeat the mistake of going to Washington to play with the Wizards.

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