Praise for

U.S. Military Intervention in the Post–Cold War Era

“Especially useful because of its informative contemporary case studies, Glenn Antizzo’s book will be an indispensable guide as American policymakers consider military interventions in the years ahead.”

—W. DAVID CLINTON
editor of The Realist Tradition and Contemporary International Relations

“This book presents a most interesting and thought-provoking perspective from political scientist Glenn Antizzo on U.S. military intervention strategies since the Cold War. Antizzo analyzes previous ‘interventions’ as case studies and raises the ‘What if?’ questions, using the identified factors and preconditions to establish a framework for application to today’s military intervention strategies. A must-read for anyone interested in developing and applying military strategy for the ‘long haul.’”

—MAJOR GENERAL HUNT DOWNER
Assistant Adjutant General of the Louisiana National Guard

“Antizzo lays out a clear set of principles, which, if adhered to, would both decrease the number of U.S. interventions abroad and increase their possibility of meeting successful ends. His argument about the conditions under which an intervention ought to be launched merits consideration by anyone who advocates an adventurous foreign policy.”

—RICK TRAVIS
contributor, After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post–Cold War World
In this readily accessible study, political scientist Glenn J. Antizzo identifies fifteen factors critical to the success of contemporary U.S. military intervention and evaluates the likely efficacy of direct U.S. military involvement today—when it will work, when it will not, and how to undertake such action in a manner that will bring rapid victory at an acceptable political cost. He lays out the preconditions that portend success, among them a clear and attainable goal; a mission that is neither for “peacekeeping” nor for “humanitarian aid within a war zone”; a strong probability the American public will support or at least be indifferent to the effort; a willingness to utilize ground forces if necessary; an operation limited in geographic scope; and a theater commander permitted discretion in the course of the operation.

Antizzo then tests his abstract criteria by using real-world case studies of the most recent fully completed U.S. military interventions—in Panama in 1989, Iraq in 1991, Somalia in 1992–94, and Kosovo in 1999—with Panama, Iraq, and Kosovo representing generally successful interventions and Somalia an unsuccessful one. Finally, he considers how the development of a “Somalia Syndrome” affected U.S. foreign policy and how the politics and practice of military intervention have continued to evolve since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, giving specific attention to the current war in Afghanistan and the larger War on Terror.

*U.S. Military Intervention in the Post–Cold War Era* exemplifies political science at its best: the positing of a hypothetical model followed by a close examination of relevant cases in an effort to provide meaningful insights for future American international policy.

**Glenn J. Antizzo** is coauthor of *Charting a New Diplomatic Course: Alternative Approaches to America’s Post–Cold War Foreign Policy* and *Congress and the Foreign Policy Process: Modes of Legislative Behavior*. He is an associate professor of government at Nicholls State University, in Thibodaux, Louisiana.
U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA
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U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

HOW TO WIN AMERICA’S WARS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

GLENN J. ANTIZZO
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORIES OF

Joseph D. Antizzo
Imogene Lawrence
Dr. Cecil V. Crabb Jr.
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments > ix

INTRODUCTION > 1

1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF U.S. DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION > 12

2. PRECONDITIONS FAVORING THE SUCCESS OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE POST–COLD WAR ERA
   A Typology > 29

3. OPERATION JUST CAUSE
   The Invasion of Panama > 41

4. OPERATION DESERT STORM
   Iraq and the Liberation of Kuwait > 69

5. OPERATION RESTORE HOPE
   Humanitarian Relief in Somalia > 105

6. OPERATION ALLIED FORCE
   The Air War in Kosovo > 141

7. EVALUATING THE INTERVENTIONIST TYPOLOGY > 209

   EPILOGUE
   The “Somalia Syndrome” and the War on Terror > 236

   Bibliography > 249

   Index > 255
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U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE POST–COLD WAR ERA
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As Cecil V. Crabb Jr. points out in his book *The Doctrines of American Foreign Policy*, the doctrines that have guided U.S. foreign policy are not static. Rather, despite recurring themes, such as anti-communism, they are pragmatically adjusted on a “need” basis. That is to say that they evolve, adapting to circumstances as the international environment and changing perceptions of national interests dictate. Bearing this in mind, it would seem that American foreign policy has undergone a gradual, yet discernable, evolution since the end of World War II.

Like nothing before it, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 forced Americans to face the fact that, whether they liked it or not, U.S. security requirements absolutely compelled defense of the nation’s interests abroad. This became even clearer when, shortly after the allied victory, the Soviet Union began to indicate that it would be neither an ally nor even a friend to the United States.

Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, while condemned by the West, was in fact tolerated and accepted. Soon afterward, however, communist designs were perceived against areas outside the conceded Soviet sphere of influence. The U.S. response to this challenge, the Truman Doctrine, seems to have set into motion a series of phases through which American policy has passed. They are approximately as follows:

1947–1957  The use (or at least the implied threat) of direct U.S. military intervention in order to defend established friendly governments from “armed minorities” acting with the aid, or at least the blessing, of the USSR and its allies. Examples of this included U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey, as well as direct military intervention in Korea. In defense of core U.S. interests, particularly Western Europe, the United States invoked the doc-
trine of “massive retaliation,” a policy that remained in place until the 1960s.


1973–1981 This was a period of relative dormancy in U.S. foreign policy, perhaps bordering on neo-isolationism. Public paranoia over getting involved in “another Vietnam” as well as a general distrust of government due to ten years of lies from both the Johnson and Nixon administrations culminated in congressional micromanagement of U.S. foreign policy. The passage of the War Powers Act, as well as the Clark and Tunney amendments, virtually tied the hands of the chief executive for two administrations. Though there were some uses of armed force (freeing the “Mayaguez” in 1975, the attempt to rescue the hostages from Iran in 1980, supplying Israel in 1973) and threats to use force (ongoing commitments to NATO, South Korea, etc.), the United States avoided the type of prolonged interventions that characterized earlier periods.

1981–1989 The era of the Reagan Doctrine. This policy took account of the fact that the USSR was a superpower only in the military sense. Furthermore, during the 1970s the Soviet “empire” had become overextended. Consequently, the United States sought to exploit the many weak points, thereby rolling back communism in the Third World while simultaneously bleeding Moscow by forcing it to engage in the costly task of defending its allies for a change. This task was accomplished by funding pre-existing indigenous rebel groups that could cost-effectively press U.S. claims without the need to commit U.S. land forces in a prolonged Vietnam-style conflict. Examples of this included U.S. aid to rebels in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. (It is interesting to note that, in the case of Nica-
ragua, while the Reagan administration denied any involvement, it used the CIA to mine Nicaraguan harbors and financed the rebels through the Iran-Contra arms sales to Iran as well as actively sought the financial support of friendly Gulf emirates.)

1989–2010 This period was characterized by the threat and/or use of direct U.S. military power for the achievement of two goals that seem, on the face of it, to be at odds with each other: (1) the protection of national interests, such as Middle East oil and the Panama Canal, and (2) humanitarian concerns in areas of the world whose value to vital U.S. interests cannot be readily demonstrated. Examples of the former include the 1989 intervention in Panama, U.S. participation in the 1991 and 2003 Persian Gulf wars, and the anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan. Examples of the latter include the U.S. mercy mission in Somalia, the food airlift to Bosnia, and the air campaign in Kosovo.

2010–? Anticipated challenges to U.S. foreign policy:

1. The need to deal militarily with terrorists and the states that sponsor them (for example, Libya, Iran, Sudan).
2. The need to deal with “loose cannons” that acquire nuclear weapons (for example, North Korea).
3. The need to intervene again in the Persian Gulf so as to defend U.S. allies, to maintain access to oil, and to ensure freedom of navigation within the Gulf.
4. The need to intervene militarily so as to restore order, to promote democracy, and to prevent mayhem (Haiti, post-Castro Cuba).
5. The need to take direct military action to deal with drug lords.
6. The need to engage in peacekeeping and/or humanitarian relief duties.
7. The need to deter Beijing from attempts to intimidate American friends in the Far East, such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea (or a weak Russia?).

It is these two most recent “periods” that will be the focus of this study.
PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Literature regarding intervention as a general topic of discussion is abundant. However, the task of building a body of literature that develops a typology of the number and nature of specific preconditions for successful intervention has largely been neglected. This is regrettable, especially in light of the fact that military options, by their very nature, “require more preconditions in place, for the options to have a reasonable chance of success at reasonable cost, than do non-military options” (Smoke, 1977: 39).

The central purpose of this work is to develop a new framework for undertaking successful direct military intervention consistent with the needs and priorities of the post–cold war world, as articulated by the Bush and Clinton administrations in the 1990s, as well as by the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama in the first decade of the new century. This study will demonstrate that when the principles presented are adhered to, American forces will tend to enjoy success. Conversely, when these principles are deviated from, military failure, while perhaps not preordained, is made substantially more likely. Furthermore, the political aspects of such a policy failure may become either a domestic albatross for the president as American soldiers die for nebulous purposes that their families cannot understand (Somalia) or a source of decay of international credibility as the president makes threats that he cannot keep (early stages in Bosnia) or perhaps had no serious intention of keeping (North Korea in 1994).

This study provides a new framework that will greatly facilitate the scholarly study of actual and potential military intervention. It provides criteria that can be used to dissect the various elements of motivation, action, and completion of such operations. As such, we can assess each phase of such operations and diagnose problems that, as a result, need not be repeated later. In a word, the key scholarly contribution of this work is clarity of understanding.

SETTING THE STAGE

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to President Carter, once noted that “war has become a luxury that only poor nations can afford” (Brzezinski, 1991: 5). This is because the post–cold war world is characterized by a dichotomy. On one hand, the deterrent threat of nuclear weapons still restrains the actions of the world’s “major players.” On the other hand, many countries, due to a variety of reasons, have had the restraints
formerly imposed on their external behavior loosened. At the same time, many of these same states have had their dictatorial domestic foundations undermined. The resultant instability, both internal and external, has made these states (primarily, but not exclusively, in the Third World) into sources and/or venues of conflict. Due to the ever-increasing interdependence of the world community, “it is just as likely that major threats could originate from within states, either through civil conflicts or because of the increased technological sophistication of terrorist acts” (Brzezinski, 1991: 6).

Brzezinski implies that pragmatically guided, prudently pursued intervention may be an answer to this challenge (Brzezinski, 1991: 6, 20). However, there is a question of sovereignty and its possible violation under such circumstances. The United States clings to what may be an antiquated notion: that sovereignty places absolute limits on circumstances where intervention is possible (recall that the United States was “asked” to “assist” in Vietnam, Korea, Grenada, etc.). Brzezinski, however, sees a possible opening: that the decision of when and where to intervene may necessarily have to downplay a strict view of sovereignty in favor of an appreciation of the scope of a given threat. Specifically, “there may develop situations in which external intervention in the seemingly internal affairs of a state . . . may be necessary and justified by the potential consequences of activities that are otherwise of internal character and that do not, of themselves, involve interstate collision” (Brzezinski, 1991: 5–6).

Steven E. Goldman takes this argument further. In essence, he argues that our traditional notions of sovereignty are not only antiquated, but also unduly legalistic. He argues that it is ridiculous to assume that all states are equal, especially when it comes to this very central issue. Goldman believes that, in order to exercise full sovereignty, a condition that would legally proscribe foreign intervention, a state must be legitimate in the eyes of modern legality. This legitimacy, of necessity, is predicated on the exercise of political self-determination within the state in question. This self-determination is clearly evident in liberal democracies, as manifested by the conduct of their political institutions and constitutional safeguards. “By contrast, states that are not democratic should not be viewed as possessing the same full untrammelled sovereignty, since the civil population, the nation that is the source and the possessor of sovereignty, has not been allowed even the rudimentary opportunity of expressing its political will. Sovereignty in such cases may be said to be in a state of suspension or impaired. The state in such circumstances is illegitimate and is not the bearer of any degree of sovereignty” (Goldman, 1994: 127, emphasis added).
Since, in such cases, full sovereignty is said not to exist, democratic states are free (and in some specific circumstances may be morally obligated) to intervene in the internal affairs of undemocratic states when conditions there represent a threat to the world community, or if the state in question directly threatens its own citizens’ human rights (for example, the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, 1975–1979). It should be noted that Goldman clearly states that while a “right of” intervention exists legally in such circumstances, the “decision to” actually intervene is and “must always remain fundamentally a political judgement” (Goldman, 1994: 128).

**INTERVENTION DEFINED**

To the practitioner of political science, the clarity of terms is important. Words are his tools, so their precise use is essential. The term “intervention” is particularly troublesome to pin down. Its meaning dramatically shifts depending upon the situation presented. Eight common uses of this term in a political context may be identified:

1. In general terms, “intervention” can be defined as the involvement, by whatever means, of one state in the domestic affairs of another state.

2. The term may also be used to denote the entry of a previously uninvolved party into a conflict between states.

The practice of intervention in this century has added several, more specific connotations to this elusive term, some of which carry the implication of the use of armed force. Arranging them in a spectrum of least to most violent, we have:

3. *Diplomatic Intervention:* This idea has two variants. On the benign side, this is involvement of the good offices of the diplomatic corps of a nation, acting as an arbitrator or a mediator, to end a conflict either between or within states. For example, in the 1970s, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger attempted, through “shuttle diplomacy,” to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1994, during the run-up to South Africa’s post-apartheid founding elections, he attempted to again use his stature as a respected diplomat to end the violent conflict between loyalists of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party.

   However, diplomatic intervention is not without its more aggressive, or intrusive, side. In an effort to get China to adhere to humane standards of human rights conduct, the Clinton administration dispatched Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Beijing. Armed with evidence that much of China’s exports to the United States were manufactured with forced labor,
Christopher warned Communist authorities that continued flouting of human rights would result in the loss of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status with the United States. Furthermore, Clinton also endeavored to use diplomatic means to get North Korea to curtail its nuclear program—specifically, to abandon further nuclear weapons development, as envisioned by the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

4. **Economic Intervention:** This entails the use of economic tools (often called “sanctions”) by one state to compel a change in the position and/or actions of another state (Elliot, 1992: 97). A prominent example of this was President Carter’s 1980 imposition of an embargo on grain exports to the Soviet Union. Undertaken in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter sought to use the embargo as a means of showing that “business as usual” could not be conducted with Moscow under the circumstances at that time. The policy was undercut when Australia, Argentina, and France opportunistically filled the void created by the U.S. abandonment of its market share. In 1986 economic sanctions were placed by the U.S. Congress on South Africa in an effort to persuade Pretoria to dismantle its apartheid laws. The Clinton administration placed minor economic sanctions on Taiwan in order to encourage Taipei to restrain its citizens who were trafficking in poached tigers and other endangered species. This is believed to have been the first time that such measures were used to advance purely conservationist goals.

5. **Covert Intervention:** This connotation is primarily, but not limited to, the use by a state of its intelligence agents to undermine the government of, or change the political situation in, another country (Ransom, 1992: 113). It is believed by some that in 1973 President Nixon ordered the CIA to destabilize the Marxist-oriented, yet democratically elected government of Chilean president Salvadore Allende. According to some reports, another instance occurred when the CIA had printed and distributed a large quantity of counterfeit Iraqi currency shortly before the 1991 Gulf War, so as to destabilize Iraq’s economy and stir up popular discontent against dictator Saddam Hussein.

6. **Coercive Diplomacy:** For present purposes, this may be defined as the credible threat (perhaps underscored by the pre-positioning of military units) to utilize force for the purpose of deterring an adversary from a course of action (deterrence), or to undo an action already undertaken (compellence). As Schelling notes: “coercion depends more on the threat of what is yet to come than on damage already done” (Schelling, 1966: 172). This was the purpose behind 1990–1991’s “Operation Desert Shield.” Fol-
ollowing Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the United States and its coalition allies deployed their forces in a defensive perimeter that paralleled the Iraq-Saudi Arabia frontier. This operation was an effort to deter Iraq from advancing further into the Persian Gulf oil fields; it was also intended to pre-position the forces and supplies necessary to dislodge Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait, in the event that diplomacy and sanctions failed to do so (as proved to be the case in early 1991).

7. Low-Intensity Warfare: This is also referred to as “coercion by proxy.” It often involves, but need not be limited to, the utilization by an outside power of a pre-existing rebel group within a country in order to attain the redress of grievances against, and/or the overthrow of, the incumbent government (Antizzo, 1992: 11).

Fearful of the geostrategic implications of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, under President Carter the United States undertook to utilize the CIA to aid covertly (and later, overtly) Islamic rebels who were fighting both the army of the communist government and Soviet occupation forces (Schraeder, 1992: 137–38). Although they did not necessarily share the same ultimate goals (the rebels sought the overthrow of the communist government, while the United States simply desired the withdrawal of Soviet troops that were too close to the Persian Gulf and to allies in the region, such as Pakistan), the United States and the rebels enjoyed a nearly decade-long marriage of convenience, wherein Washington supplied the arms and money and the rebels supplied the manpower. The 1989 withdrawal of Soviet forces, and the subsequent political mellowing of the Kabul regime, fulfilled U.S. objectives, and aid to rebel forces was terminated shortly afterward.

This pattern was repeated in Angola, Nicaragua, and Cambodia, where officials in Washington thought that they could utilize pre-existing rebel groups both to press claims against hostile governments and simultaneously to counter Soviet abilities to protect its clients (Schraeder, 1992: 141–49).

8. Direct Military Intervention: This has evolved into three distinct sub-groupings: active, reactive, and peacekeeping/order-restoring operations.

Active—This occurs when forces of an outside power intervene directly and forcefully in order to seek to engage and defeat enemy forces. This was the case when the United States intervened openly and massively in Korea, Vietnam, Panama, and the Persian Gulf area.

Reactive—In this form of military intervention, forces of the intervening power establish a security zone within another state’s territory
and seek to enforce its rules upon the “host” country within the zone. An example of such a policy would be the “no-fly” zones that the United Nations established in Iraq. It is also illustrated by the security zone that Israel established in south Lebanon during the 1980s.

*Peacekeeping/Restoring Order*—This occurs when forces of the intervening power (or powers) get involved out of largely, but perhaps not exclusively, humanitarian concerns. Such operations often involve separating belligerents, distributing food and medical supplies to civilians, establishing “zones of safety,” and building new, viable structures of state. Examples include American and/or UN interventions in Somalia (1992–1995) and Lebanon (1983) and the efforts to restore democracy to Haiti (1994, 2004). (Klare, 1992: 51–53)

As this review has demonstrated, a great variety of shades of meaning for the term “intervention” exist. For the purposes of this study, we will be concerned specifically with direct military intervention (item 8 above), dealing with any other forms only as they relate to the cases being discussed.

**Typologies of Intervention Preconditions**

Typologies of intervention are not new to political science. Only a very few authors, however, have featured such preconditions as a central concern of their writings. In many cases, the discussion of this topic is overlapped by, or buried within, literature associated with other subjects, such as deterrence, compellence, and political realism. However interesting, these subjects are beyond the scope of this study.

A concern with direct military intervention seems justified for a number of reasons. First and foremost, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, there seems to be an increased reliance by the United States on such uses of direct force. Nowhere has this renewed enthusiasm for military options been more evident than in the adoption of an uncharacteristically hawkish stance with regard to Somalia, Haiti, and Darfur by the almost uniformly liberal Congressional Black Caucus.

Second, while other forms of intervention (such as economic sanctions) still have their place in the American arsenal of options, it is evident that an increasing number of dictators will respond only to military force. Whether this is due to their ability to insulate themselves from the effects of such sanctions, their fear that backing down in a confrontation with the United States would result in a loss of face that would threaten their hold
on power, simple callousness, or possibly a failure to comprehend their own interests, tyrants in the post–cold war era seem increasingly intransigent and unresponsive to lesser forms of intervention.

Finally, there is a dearth of scholarly literature identifying and examining those preconditions favoring the success of direct military intervention. Because of the advance preparations necessary, as well as the heavy investment of both military personnel and material required to undertake such operations, greater attention to the preconditions for successful intervention is a matter of utmost urgency and priority.

To be more precise, a framework should and can be developed that identifies and explains those specific preconditions that tend to favor successful intervention by the United States overseas. Commentators on the subject have asserted that the development of such “necessary and sufficient conditions is a crucial task for further research” (Levite, Jentleson, Berman, 1992: 318, emphasis added).

Furthermore, this typology should be one that reflects the realities of both the domestic and world political environments of the early twenty-first century. Ideally it should serve as a set of guidelines for the foreseeable future.

CASES SELECTED

The cases selected for detailed consideration in this study are, in chronological order, Panama (“Operation Just Cause,” 1989), Iraq (“Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm,” 1990–1991), Somalia (“Operation Restore Hope,” 1992–1994), and Kosovo (“Operation Allied Force,” 1999). These four cases are the most recent, fully completed episodes of military intervention and have a number of prima facie similarities that appear to make them highly interesting cases for study.

First, they all involved the direct commitment of U.S. forces in armed conflict. Second, all four have occurred in the period since the 1989 “Velvet Revolutions,” which effectively destroyed communism and greatly curtailed the antagonisms that marked the cold war. Third, unlike past interventions, no ideological (East-West conflict) justification was given for why intervention was necessary.

A fourth and related point of commonality is that in none of these cases was there any real fear that entry into the conflict would prompt counter-intervention by any other great powers (that is, the Soviet Union). Fifth, official justifications for using armed force seemed to cite humanitarian
impulses, be it a desire to end human suffering (Somalia), or to punish “baby-killing sadists” (Iraq), or to bring to justice a “key figure” in the international narcotics trade (Panama), or to end a campaign of genocide (Kosovo). Finally, implicit in the objectives of each operation seems to have been a neo-Wilsonian concern with the development of a more stable and democratic system within the “target” country, which would, in turn, lead to the development of a “New World Order” of peacefully coexisting democratic states.

It is clear, therefore, that there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled. This work proposes to do so by articulating and then evaluating the validity of such a framework.
Military intervention has long been a prominent feature of U.S. foreign policy. It may be recalled that one of the first acts of the Second Continental Congress was to authorize an invasion of Quebec in order to foment an uprising there and perhaps gain an ally—a “fourteenth colony”—in the rebellion against the British crown.

The purpose of this chapter is to give a broad overview of the historical development of American military intervention. The present discussion will illustrate the types of such actions, official U.S. attitudes toward the use of force, the legacy of the cold war tradition, and the resultant post-Vietnam mind-set.

**EARLY INTERVENTIONS**

United States foreign policy, from the founding of the republic, has relied on a resort to the sword. In the late 1790s, President John Adams waged an undeclared naval war against France. His successor, Thomas Jefferson, dispatched the navy and marines to deal with marauding Barbary pirates. Furthermore, in 1818 Andrew Jackson was given unofficial approval to conduct an expedition into Spanish Florida (Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report [cited hereafter as CQWR], January 5, 1991, article by Ronald D. Elving: 37–38). Modern U.S. military intervention, however, finds its origins in the 1898 Spanish-American War. Prior to that conflict, U.S. foreign policy was largely guided by the principle of nonintervention. Americans, concerned with fulfilling their Manifest Destiny, for the most part ignored the outside world. Conflicts, when they did come, were aimed at expanding the new republic’s frontiers.

The organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy was the Monroe Doctrine. Promulgated in 1823, this policy was aimed at European colonial powers
that were contemplating the reclamation of their recently liberated colonies in Latin America. While warning European powers from attempting to interfere in Latin American affairs, it also had the effect of demarcating a U.S. sphere of interest in the Western Hemisphere. It bears noting that these bold words were unenforceable without the British Navy guaranteeing compliance. Nevertheless, the Monroe Doctrine, in one form or another, has been invoked into the twenty-first century (Gardiner, 1992: 27).

The Spanish-American War, although a comic-opera affair in its pursuit, was a watershed event in the history of U.S. military intervention. Using the destruction of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor (allegedly by the Spanish) as a pretext, the United States invaded Cuba in support of an anti-colonial uprising. The Pacific Fleet, under Admiral George Dewey, engaged the Spanish in the Philippines as well.

The war was short, barely longer than three months, and with surprisingly few combat fatalities. This “splendid little war” is significant not so much on its own merits, but rather because of what resulted from it (Muscant, 1990: 6). With the cessation of hostilities, the United States acquired a small empire. Added to U.S. territory were such far-flung locales as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands. The United States was now a world power and jingoists were eager to extend American interests to the four corners of the earth. President William McKinley, however, believed that American security and interests did not require the addition of Cuba to American territory. Rather, Washington chose to exercise a European-style “protectorate” over the island. That is to say that Cuba would maintain its official independence, but Havana’s freedom in foreign policy would be limited by the United States. This policy was codified by the Platt Amendment, which, in addition, allowed the United States both basing rights in Cuba as well as carte blanche to intervene under specific circumstances (Muscant, 1990: 50–51).

Cuba would become a model for American military intervention throughout the Caribbean basin in the first third of the twentieth century. Such intervention was virtually institutionalized by President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt added a “corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine which asserted that the United States could engage in unilateral military intervention anywhere within the Americas where conditions might otherwise entice a European armed response (Muscant, 1990: 3). As Roosevelt himself declared: “Brutal wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of a civilized society, may finally require intervention
by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the United States cannot ignore this duty” (Chessman, 1969: 97).

This broadened interventionist policy is largely associated with the 1904 debt default crisis of the Dominican Republic, when the Santo Domingo government defaulted on loans made by European creditors. Roosevelt, fearing a European “repossession” of the Dominican Republic in violation of the Monroe Doctrine, sent U.S. troops to head off such a possibility. By the following year, the situation had stabilized. With Washington acting as a loan collector, payments to European creditors resumed (Musicant, 1990: 242–44).

The most enduring legacy of Roosevelt’s policy of hemispheric intervention, however, was his simultaneous construction of both a new nation and a new canal in Panama. In 1903, a treaty that would have granted the United States the right to build a canal across the isthmus in Panama province was rejected by the Colombian Senate. An enraged Roosevelt took advantage of an uprising in Panama. By sending American warships, most notably the USS Nashville, to waters off the Panamanian coast, Roosevelt was able to prevent Colombian troops from suppressing the rebellion. With Panamanian independence thus secured, the United States and the new government entered into negotiations.

These efforts culminated with the signing of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty on November 18, 1903. This compact provided for a ten-mile-wide zone, stretching from coast-to-coast, which would be leased in perpetuity to the United States for the purposes of canal construction, maintenance, and defense (Musicant, 1990: 136). In addition, the treaty “provided a clear and specific legal basis for . . . U.S. intervention in the event of disorder,” making subsequent U.S. intervention in Panama unique in that it would be “based on treaty rights” (Scranton, 1992: 344–45).

Woodrow Wilson, perhaps best known for his post–World War I policy of national self-determination in Europe, was not above invoking Roosevelt’s corollary in hemispheric affairs. Under the earlier Taft administration, Washington had engaged in “dollar diplomacy,” under which American businessmen were encouraged to invest in the Caribbean basin by guaranteeing their loans with the full diplomatic and, if necessary, military support of the U.S. government. As such, U.S. loans were made to a number of Latin and Caribbean states (Steward, 1980: 14–17). In 1912, this policy was put to the test when U.S. troops invaded and occupied Nicaragua in order to safeguard U.S. lives and interests.

Over time, Wilson refined this interventionist policy. He sought political and economic stability in the Caribbean basin so as to engender “sus-
tained economic growth and [help] to insure the prompt payment of for-
eign debts,” which would keep U.S. (and European) bankers happy while
keeping foreign troops out of the Western Hemisphere (Steward, 1980: 17).

In keeping with his established policy, in 1917 Wilson sent 2,600 marines
to prop up the corrupt Menocal regime in Cuba (Steward, 1980: 17). Like-
wise, Haiti was invaded in 1915 in order to “prevent anarchy”—or perhaps
more accurately, to establish a government capable of maintaining a stable
environment for foreign investment (Gardiner, 1992: 30). The Dominican
Republic was invaded the following year, and both it and Haiti were placed
under U.S. military rule (Steward, 1980: 17).

Indigenous government was not allowed in either Haiti or the Domini-
can Republic until 1924. It should, however, be noted that the U.S. trained
paramilitary forces to maintain order. It has been asserted that these
groups were the forerunners of the Haitian secret police, the Tonton Ma-
coutes (Steward, 1980: 18).

American intervention during this period was not limited to Caribbean
island republics. Wilson ordered U.S. troops into Mexico twice. First, in
1914, American forces occupied Vera Cruz as part of an attempt to over-
throw Mexican military dictator Victoriano Huerta. Again, in 1916, the
president dispatched General John “Black Jack” Pershing on a punitive
expedition to capture the bandit Pancho Villa, who had killed several U.S.
citizens during raids into the American Southwest (Steward, 1980: 17; Gar-
diner, 1992: 30). Villa eluded his pursuer and was never apprehended.

Intervention in the Caribbean basin continued into the 1920s, most no-
tably in Nicaragua. U.S. Marines stationed there to protect the Nicaraguan
regime were thought to be no longer needed and were withdrawn in the
mid-1920s. However, a new uprising in 1926 prompted the marines’ return.
By 1927, U.S. forces deposed the incumbent regime and installed a new one.
The rebels, labeled “Bolsheviks” by Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and
armed by Mexico, were pursued by the marines until the mid-1930s. In
1934, rebel leader Cesar Augusto Sandino was ambushed and killed by U.S.-
trained National Guardsmen led by future Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio
Samoza (Steward, 1980: 24–25). (It may be interesting to note that Sandi-
no’s name was appropriated by a group—the “Sandinistas”—who ironically
overthrew the dictatorship of Samoza’s namesake son.)

**ISOLATIONISM**

The election of Herbert Hoover marked a change in the direction of U.S.
foreign policy. Going from interventionism to restraint, this policy dur-
ing the 1930s would evolve into isolationism. The Hoover policy was most clearly articulated in 1930 with the issuance of the so-called Clark Memorandum. This document, while not completely disavowing all possible future intervention, did renounce the Roosevelt corollary of the Monroe Doctrine. In the future, Washington would be more guarded in the utilization of military diplomacy. President Hoover, when confronted with opportunities to intervene in Panama, Haiti, and El Salvador in the latter years of his term, declined to do so (Steward, 1980: 26). In 1933, Hoover withdrew all U.S. forces from Nicaragua.

This “retreat from overt interventionism in Central America” lasted beyond Hoover’s administration. Later, it led the way to “the Good Neighbor policy” during President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration (Gardiner, 1992: 32). During the 1930s, isolationism, a term usually associated with American policy toward European affairs, was the word that best characterized both the political policies and practices of the decade (Gardiner, 1992: 32). The U.S. government largely declined to use American troops in hemispheric affairs, while the strange political bedfellows of communists, fascist sympathizers, and the apathetic majority managed to forestall any U.S. intervention in Europe.

1947–1957: THE ERA OF CONTAINMENT

The ordeal of World War II, and the circumstances leading to it, tremendously reshaped the political landscape, especially with regard to American foreign policy. With victory, there was a renewed interest in how events beyond America’s shoreline affected national security. This reassessment was fueled by a number of factors. First among these was the belief by many in both government and the public that American noninvolvement in European affairs had left the democracies no choice but appeasement, and that appeasement had necessarily led to war.

Second, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries U.S. policies were, as a practical matter, frequently enforced by British naval power. World War II, however, brought this arrangement to an end. The United States, as an emerging superpower and heir to the British position of “benevolent hegemon,” perceived the Soviet Union as “a distinctive challenge” to both American interests and global stability (Gardiner, 1992: 33).

Third, these suspicious views of the USSR’s ambitions, especially when taken with hostile Soviet conduct in the immediate post-war era, as well as the evil nature of Stalin himself, combined to create what would be called
the cold war: “an intense ideological competition” between the superpowers. It was a challenge that American leaders were eager to confront (Gardiner, 1992: 33).

A war-weary public supported the initial demobilization of U.S. forces that accompanied the immediate post–World War II period. This view had not changed substantially by the time the Greek Civil War erupted. President Harry Truman, however, thought it important to stop the spread of communism, a menace that he believed, sooner or later, would more directly threaten the West if not halted in Greece. The result was the Truman Doctrine.

In a speech before Congress on March 12, 1947, Truman sought $500 million in aid to Greece and Turkey in order to help those countries fend off communism (Gardiner, 1992: 33). Truman justified his request by arguing: “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” The clear implication of the Truman Doctrine was that the Soviets needed to be contained within Eastern Europe. Although this policy was originally intended simply to apply to the defense of Western Europe, Truman made it clear that it could be applied in other regions where communism threatened American interests (Woods and Jones, 1991: 145).

The first major expansion of the Truman Doctrine beyond Europe was not long delayed. In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist armies were defeated by communist forces and driven off the mainland to Taiwan. This was a jolt to the United States. Congress, alarmed by the loss of China, became acutely concerned over the “rising Red tide” and what it perceived as its Soviet source.

On June 25, 1950, communist North Korean forces stormed across the 38th parallel into South Korea. They rapidly captured Seoul, driving United States and South Korean forces back to the port city of Pusan. Until this invasion, Korea had not been perceived as “a major strategic interest of the United States.” The president, however, “immediately invoked the Truman Doctrine and ordered” American troops to repel the North Korean assault (Klare, 1992: 40). UN forces (about 90 percent American) under General Douglas MacArthur counterattacked at Inchon and swept the North Koreans up the peninsula to the Chinese border. With the success of the intervention, there was broad support for the “liberation of Korea” (MacDonald, 1986: 57–58). However, much of this support dissipated with the entry of China into the conflict. The war eventually bogged down into a bloody stalemate and produced “considerable public discontent in the United States”
(Klare, 1992: 40). In 1953, shortly after the election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, an armistice was signed that ended the conflict. The result has been an enduring, if uneasy, peace on the peninsula.

Eisenhower took a scaled-down defensive posture, which greatly relied on the new doctrine of “massive retaliation,” with its implied threat of resort to nuclear weapons, in order to discourage Soviet adventures in the Third World. Emphasis was placed on getting “more bang for the buck” from defense spending. As such, conventional military capabilities were reduced in favor of increased procurement of, and reliance on, nuclear weapons. This “New Look” defense saved money by cutting land forces and the surface fleet. Defense planning during this period was concerned primarily with the Soviet threat and, as such, really did not contemplate the need for force projection into the Third World until the late 1950s. Only at the end of President Eisenhower’s tenure, “with the 1958 U.S. landing in Lebanon and the accompanying Eisenhower Doctrine (authorizing U.S. military action to prevent a communist takeover of Middle Eastern countries), did he envision a direct U.S. military role in regional, nonnuclear conflicts” (Klare, 1992: 40).


By the early 1960s, the Dullesian doctrine of massive retaliation was under attack. It was criticized as irresponsible in a nuclear age, as well as ineffective in fighting communist “liberation movements” in the Third World. Therefore, after 1960, the Kennedy administration sought a new doctrine that would not require engaging in brinkmanship as a response to all provocations, regardless of how small.

The solution to this policy dilemma was found in the doctrine of “flexible response.” Its major advocate, General Maxwell Taylor, believed that while the United States was in a position to deter a general war, it should be prepared to defeat smaller-scale, local aggression. Therefore, “in order to provide a credible, realistic response” to challenges arising in the Third World, there should be a significant expansion of U.S. conventional capabilities. This buildup would enable the president to choose from a wide variety of alternatives, ranging from nonnuclear to tactical nuclear options, the type of forces that would constitute the optimal response to any challenge (Klare, 1992: 41; Kinnard, 1991: 42; Taylor, 1989: 206, 211, 214–15).

A key component of these expanded options was Kennedy’s special emphasis on the creation of counterinsurgency forces to respond to com-
munist challenges in the Third World. Modeled on the British experience in Malaya, counterinsurgency’s central purpose was to thwart communist rebels by “winning the hearts and minds” of potentially receptive peasants, while energetically engaging the rebels themselves with direct military force. In the early 1960s, Kennedy found a laboratory where it would be possible to try out these new ideas on low-intensity warfare: Vietnam.

American interest in Indochina dated back to the early part of the Eisenhower administration. It was President Kennedy, however, who authorized a substantial increase in the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam. Despite its initial role as a laboratory for newly developed weapons and counterinsurgency tactics, Vietnam rapidly generated its own inertia, becoming increasingly important as a symbol. “For, having designated Vietnam as a proving ground for counterinsurgency, it became essential for the United States to avoid defeat lest U.S. failure in Indochina encourage revolutionaries in other countries to undertake guerilla campaigns of their own” (Klare, 1992: 41–42).

There were also other international implications that developed along with such policy concerns. As George C. Herring points out in America’s Longest War, during the Johnson administration Vietnam evolved into a showcase of U.S. resolve and credibility to honor its security commitments to current and potential allies. Herring observed that “The United States intervened in Vietnam to block the apparent march of a Soviet-directed Communism across Asia, enlarged its commitment to halt a presumably expansionist Communist China, and eventually made Vietnam a test of its determination to uphold world order” (Herring, 1986: 279).

The test of American resolve that Vietnam represented was fought on a scale unprecedented for an undeclared war/intervention. Although air sorties started earlier, the first American ground forces, a pair of marine battalions, were landed at Danang in March 1965. Within a month, the Johnson administration decided to increase the U.S. presence by 40,000 troops (Herring, 1986: 131–32). At the peak of U.S. involvement, 543,000 service personnel were present in Vietnam (Lomperis, 1984: 82).

The style of combat ranged from guerrilla/counterinsurgency to strategic bombing to conventional warfare. Although U.S. forces never lost a major engagement against the enemy (even the 1968 Tet offensive was a U.S. military victory), by the early 1970s the situation had become stalemated. American troops maintained their secure points, yet were unable to fully stop communist activity in the countryside or traffic along the Ho Chi Minh trail (Herring, 1986: 147–48, 190–92). The cost, however, was stagger-
ing. Between 1969 and 1973, 20,553 American soldiers were killed (Herring, 1986: 256).

While U.S. troops were able to fend off communist forces, the South Vietnamese regime was largely ineffective in its efforts to engender any degree of effective governance or loyalty from its populace. The South Vietnamese government was a succession of dictators and military strongmen. Governmental infrastructure was rife with corruption. The United States, utilizing techniques covering the range from quiet diplomacy to outright involvement in a coup d’état (President Diem was deposed by a U.S.-backed coup in 1963), sought to transform the Saigon regime so that the “democracy” in the South that Americans were dying for would, in fact, exist (Herring, 1986: 69–70, 77, 84–85, 105–7, 205). Unfortunately, U.S. efforts at “nation-building” in Vietnam ultimately met with failure. Transformation of the political system, if it were to come at all, was going to have to be organic. It never materialized.

President Richard Nixon, tiring of both criticism and long casualty lists, in 1969 started the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces. This policy, part of a process called “Vietnamization,” was designed to shift the brunt of the fighting (and casualties) from U.S. forces to the South Vietnamese Army. By 1972, Nixon had withdrawn all but 25,000 American soldiers. The effect was a dramatic reduction in the number of casualties (Lomperis, 1984: 82; Herring, 1986: 229, 231–32).

Faced with clear evidence that U.S. intervention had long since reached a point of greatly diminished returns, the Nixon administration entered into negotiations to end the conflict. The result was the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. As Herring observes: “Only by the most narrow definition can the agreement be said to have constituted ‘peace with honor.’ It permitted American extrication from the war and secured the return of the POWs, while leaving the [Saigon] government intact, at least for the moment. On the other hand, North Vietnamese troops remained in the south and the [communist rebels were] accorded a position of status. The major question over which the war had been fought—the political future of South Vietnam—was left to be resolved later” (Herring, 1986: 255, emphasis added).

For all of the parties concerned, such “peace with honor” came at a very high price” indeed. Although the United States was not nearly as damaged by the conflict as was Vietnam, “the cost was nevertheless enormous.” Total war dead for the American side was a staggering 58,000. Furthermore, “the war polarized the American people and poisoned the political atmosphere as had no issue since slavery a century before. Although Nixon had
held out for peace with honor in order to maintain America’s position in the world, the United States emerged from the war with its image considerably tarnished abroad and its people weary of international involvement” (Herring, 1986: 256).


To many Americans, both in Congress and among the public-at-large, Vietnam was a traumatic experience. This eleven-year debacle was America’s longest military conflict, and her first defeat. Regardless of their political persuasion, Americans seemed to agree that the war and its outcome were “the politicians’ fault.” Liberals, for example, argued that President Kennedy was mistaken in involving the United States in a land war in Asia. Furthermore, some of those on the left believed that President Nixon had sinister motives behind his escalation of the conflict, especially the Christmas bombing campaign of 1972 and the invasion of Cambodia. Conservatives, on the other hand, argued that President Lyndon B. Johnson had compelled U.S. forces to “fight with one arm tied behind their back” because of his rigid rules of engagement and his refusal to carry the ground war into the communist North.

What both camps had in common were concerns about alleged executive blundering and its root cause: an “imperial presidency.” In this style of leadership, the executive could commit U.S. forces indefinitely under the aegis of the constitutionally ordained power as commander in chief, thus bypassing Congress and the need for a formal declaration of war. As a result, “U.S. citizens and policymakers sought to prevent any repetition of such a fiasco by imposing a number of important restrictions on U.S. military involvement in regional Third World conflicts. These restraints, inspired by the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’—a clear and pervasive reluctance on the part of American citizens to support U.S. intervention in local, Third World conflicts—included the abandonment of conscription, a substantial reduction in U.S. military aid to unstable Third World governments, and, under the War Powers Act of 1973, a legislative ban on the extended deployment (without congressional approval) of U.S. troops abroad” (Klare, 1992: 42–43).

During the administration of Gerald Ford (1974–1977), this retreat from direct involvement in Third World conflicts became more pronounced. Except for the insertion of U.S. Marines into Cambodia to liberate the SS *Mayaguez* and her crew from their Khmer Rouge captors in 1975, there was
no direct American military intervention in the Third World. However, covert action continued as the United States attempted to curb Soviet and Cuban adventures in the Third World, particularly in Africa.

In the first phase of the Angolan Civil War (1975–1976), Washington supplied the pro-Western National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and Jonas Savimbi’s National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Covert aid was supplied by the CIA, which used friendly countries in the region, primarily Zaire, as conduits through which arms and supplies could flow. The timing of this aid, however, was historically unfortunate. The first year of major U.S. covert aid, 1975, was only two years after the American withdrawal from Vietnam. Angola was a “far away” war, involving people Americans knew, or cared, little about (Bridgland, 1986: 155). This fact, as well as its appearance to many to be a conflict that had no end in sight, caused many to view the situation in Angola as a prospective “second Vietnam.” Because of the powerful hold that the then-newly emergent Vietnam Syndrome had on the American psyche, it was politically impossible to help UNITA to the extent that the Ford Administration wanted (Hyland, 1987: 15).

Consequently, congressional opposition increased with each passing day. This culminated with the passage of the Clark Amendment in 1975. By a margin of 54 to 22, the Senate voted to cut off further funding for the CIA Task Force on Angola. It would be another five years before the United States would undertake another such covert operation (Bridgland, 1986: 155).

The Carter administration was largely a period of isolation from intervention in Third World conflicts. However, as a result of Soviet aid and/or Cuban intervention, both direct and indirect, the list of what Washington viewed as new Soviet client states expanded with breathtaking swiftness. Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua were among the more prominent of the new allies that Moscow gathered during this period of U.S. inaction in the 1970s.

Eventually, the Carter administration came to the realization that a post-Vietnam reassessment of U.S. foreign and military policy was needed. In 1979, against the backdrop of the fall of two American clients, Anastasio Samoza in Nicaragua and the Shah of Iran, the National Security Council concluded that the time had come to reassert American power and influence in the global arena. This “new interventionist consensus” was converted, in June 1979, into new programs by “several key presidential decisions.” These initiatives included: “a commitment to the use of U.S. military power to protect key economic resources in the Third World (especially
oil); the activation of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), an assortment of units from all four military services earmarked for intervention in the Third World; the acquisition of new basing rights in the Indian Ocean area (notably in Oman, Kenya, and Somalia); and the permanent deployment of a carrier battle group in the Indian Ocean” (Klare, 1992: 44–45).

None of these initiatives were announced until the 1980 State of the Union message. Circumstances at that time, however, would give that speech far greater importance than anyone ever anticipated.

1980–1989: neo-interventionism and the reagan doctrine

On Christmas Day 1979, Soviet paratroopers and special forces seized the airport, as well as several other strategic locations, in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. After executing the Afghan leader, Hafizullah Amin, the Soviets installed the more reliable Babrak Karmal as a puppet-dictator. The new Kabul regime immediately invited Soviet forces to “help” it suppress an increasingly successful uprising by anti-communist tribesmen. Soviet troops poured across the border, secured the major cities, and engaged rebel forces throughout the country.

In his 1980 State of the Union address, President Carter devoted most of the text to foreign policy and defense concerns. He outlined a number of responses to the Afghanistan crisis. Among these measures: (1) the United States would impose an embargo on the export of grain to the USSR, (2) Washington would curtail sales of high-technology items to Moscow, and (3) the United States would plan on boycotting the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics (Hastedt, 2000: 56).

The most important part of the speech, however, reflected Carter’s concern that Afghanistan was possibly a prelude to a drive to dominate the Persian Gulf area, whether by further destabilizing Iran (where U.S. embassy personnel were in their third month of captivity by the Khomeini regime) or by an attempt at military intimidation of Gulf states, if not outright conquest. “In this address, Carter affirmed Washington’s readiness to use military force in protecting the oil flow from the Persian Gulf” (Klare, 1992: 45). Articulating what would instantly be dubbed the “Carter Doctrine,” the president declared: “Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force”
(New York Times, January 24, 1980, text of Carter address). To this day, this policy continues to serve as the rationale for American military activity in the Persian Gulf area (Klare, 1992: 45).

On April 24, 1980, in his only “major” combat deployment of U.S. armed forces, President Carter sent a commando team into southeastern Iran in an attempt to rescue U.S. embassy personnel being held hostage by the Islamic fundamentalist theocracy in Teheran (Tower, 1987: 157). Although ambitious, the plan was poorly executed. The aborted operation resulted in eight Americans killed, much equipment destroyed (including a C-130 transport) and abandoned, and an enormous embarrassment for the United States in general, and President Carter in particular (Daggett, 1992: 203). To the public this episode seemed to underscore conservative charges that Carter had, at the least, neglected the maintenance of American military power and called into question whether the United States was capable of projecting force in defense of her vital national interests.

Popular concern over both the fate of the hostages in Iran and the general decline of U.S. power and prestige loomed large in the 1980 elections. A renewed buildup of the armed forces and a resolve to use them were major themes of the victorious Reagan campaign. Once in office, the new president wasted no time in keeping his campaign promises.

In 1981, President Reagan initiated what would become a $2 trillion military buildup. Under this program, the highest priority was given to the development of expanded force projection capabilities. The focus of these enhancements centered on elite U.S. Army Special Forces units, “the navy’s carrier and amphibious fleets, and the air force’s long-range airlift” capacity (Klare, 1992: 45).

The Reagan military buildup was accompanied by a more assertive foreign policy posture, especially toward the Soviet Union and its communist/left-wing clients. To Reagan, the USSR was an “evil empire,” based on a sinister ideology: communism. In Reagan’s eyes, it was clear that Moscow desired to spread communism by destabilizing free, or at least pro-Western, governments. The Soviets were viewed, therefore, as at least indirectly behind the terrorism threatening the West and “revolutionary” upheaval in the Third World (Klare, 1992: 50).

In order to counter the Soviet threat to Europe, the United States deployed a new generation of Pershing II ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. However, blunting communist advances in the Third World was going to be considerably more difficult, given the then-still pervasive Vietnam Syn-
drome, which placed a practical limitation on the use of direct U.S. force under such circumstances.

Given the limited options available, President Reagan decided that perhaps the most effective way to engage the Soviets and their clients was to pursue a strategy similar to that which Moscow had long-used to its own advantage: find a revolutionary group to back with both arms and money in an attempt to undermine, and press claims against, the incumbent Marxist government.

The ideological justification for this policy found its expression in what came to be known as the “Reagan Doctrine.” Its theme was simple: America is the leader of the free world, and as such she must protect freedom where it exists and spread freedom to where it does not. As a practical issue, the Reagan Doctrine was this: “the U.S. is prepared to help others protect or restore their freedom and independence, but not to assume responsibility for the task” (Kirkpatrick, 1985: 11, emphasis added). The object was to help Third World peoples stop communism by aiding, with both arms and money, viable anti-Marxist rebel movements in a given country. As opposed to the traditional cold war doctrine of “we will do it for you,” as was the case in Vietnam, the Reagan Doctrine asserted “we will help you do it,” but if you want freedom, you must fight for it yourselves” (Kirkpatrick, 1985: 14). The United States was willing to give financial aid and military support, but would not commit U.S. forces. Under the auspices of the Reagan Doctrine, U.S. aid was given to anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and (after the 1985 repeal of the Clark Amendment) Angola.

President Reagan’s use of direct force as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy expanded as well. “Often disregarding the cautionary advice of his military advisors, Reagan deployed U.S. troops and advisors to Central America, Grenada, and Lebanon, authorized air strikes against Libya, and sent a powerful naval fleet into the Persian Gulf” (Klare, 1992: 46).

This conspicuous readiness, on the part of the Reagan administration, to use force in overseas conflict situations seemed designed to send two distinct messages. The first, intended for the American people, was that the United States needed to reaffirm its leadership of the free world and, in so doing, begin to put the legacy of Vietnam behind it. The second, intended for other countries, friend and foe alike, was that the United States was now ready to reassert itself in the global arena and would actively pursue its interests, whatever and wherever they might be.

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In a 1984 speech at the National Press Club, Reagan’s secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, articulated guidelines under which he believed American uses of direct military forces should be conducted. Weinberger argued that American forces should be utilized only in defense of “vital” interests. If a situation were sufficiently important to warrant intervention, then the troops must be sent “with the clear intention of winning.” Furthermore, American forces should be utilized in pursuit of “clearly defined political and military objectives.” Consequently, troop deployment “should be limited to the levels needed to achieve those objectives.” Moreover, “there must be ‘some reasonable assurance’” of popular support for such action. Finally, “the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort” (Carpenter, 1992: 158).

In the late 1980s, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, accepted and built further upon the Weinberger framework, refining it into what would become the first true post–cold war policy on the use of force. Powell viewed both Vietnam-style limited warfare and incrementalism with deep contempt. In an article that appeared in Foreign Affairs, Powell stated: “We should always be skeptical when so-called experts suggest that all a particular crisis calls for is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack. When the ‘surgery’ is over and the desired result is not obtained, a new set of experts then comes forward with talk of just a little escalation—more bombs, more men and women, more force. History has not been kind to this approach to war-making. In fact this approach has been tragic” (Powell, 1992: 40).

Powell, a veteran of the Vietnam War, rejected the half-steps and partial measures of that earlier conflict: “When we do use [force], we should not be equivocal: we should win and win decisively. If our objective is something short of winning—as in our air strikes into Libya in 1986—we should see our objective clearly, then achieve it swiftly and efficiently” (Powell, 1992: 40).

The so-called Powell Doctrine predicated the use of force on having clearly defined objectives that can reasonably be achieved. Powell understood, however, that in a post–cold war world, the military would increasingly be called upon to take on the additional tasks of peacekeeping and humanitarian relief. The nature of the conflict notwithstanding, Powell believed that prior to any commitment of armed forces to combat, the following questions must be answered: “Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that
we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?” (Mokhiber and Young, 1999).

Once the decision has been made to utilize military force, it is Powell’s belief that war should vigorously and decisively be prosecuted. The central point of the Powell Doctrine is the utilization of “overwhelming force” (Mokhiber and Young, 1999). This involves a massive buildup of appropriate force at levels adequate to virtually assure a rapid U.S. victory. The idea was not to match enemy power, “but to entirely overwhelm it in planes, tanks, technology, manpower and will” (Washington Post, April, 20, 2001, column by Charles Krauthammer, A25).

Key to the success of Powell’s “overwhelming force” concept is mobility: the ability to keep the enemy off-balance by striking hard and fast at the points of one’s choosing. As an operational matter, this includes air strikes to take out command and control facilities in an effort to “blind” and then immobilize enemy forces, as well as to degrade their ability to make war. Airpower would also play a key role in speeding victory by thoroughly demoralizing enemy forces.

In practice, the Powell Doctrine has several corollaries. The first is the use of the most advanced military technologies available in order to give the biggest possible advantage to American forces. The second is the use of stealth and deception in order to surprise and paralyze enemy forces. Third is the use of precision bombing and night-fighting capabilities to the extent possible. These tactics would grant rapid victory while keeping casualties to a minimum on both sides, as well as among civilians caught in the cross fire. The Powell Doctrine, therefore, was intended to make “war short and make victory certain” (Washington Post, April, 20, 2001, column by Charles Krauthammer, A25). In order to best fit the plans to the circumstances, Powell allowed his theater commanders not just input, but rather a central role in the drafting of the battle plans to be utilized.

The guidelines set out by Weinberger governed American military intervention during the Reagan years (even if such force was not always used as a last resort). With Colin Powell serving as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the first Bush administration was equally mindful of these caveats on the use of American military power (Carpenter, 1992: 158). However, many of these principles were developed at the height of what could be referred to as “Cold War II,” the renewed hostility between the superpowers that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Rooted as they were in an assumption that potential adversaries would have the backing of a hostile superpower, it remained to be seen whether these principles would retain...
their relevance in the post–cold war era. As a practical matter, the cold war ended with the success of the “Velvet Revolutions” that swept Eastern Europe in 1989. With the 1991 demise of the USSR, the United States became freer to dedicate greater emphasis, and resources, to the protection of its interests in the Third World. While the guidelines developed by Weinberger and Powell show considerable insight, they are still quite general in nature. To develop specific preconditions that would tend to favor the success of U.S. military intervention is a task that, until now, has yet to be undertaken. The specification of such criteria is the task of the next chapter.
It is difficult to believe that there necessarily exists any “science of war” that yields rules which, when followed, automatically guarantee victory. However, when experience with intervention is carefully examined, certain regularities begin to emerge. The record of interventions carried out in recent history demonstrates that when certain preconditions are present, military operations clearly tend to be more successful than when such preconditions are absent.

The demise of the cold war was an important turning point, not only in East-West relations, but also because of its implications for the preconditions that will affect future intervention by the United States in the Third World. On one hand, Washington is now substantially less fearful that its direct intervention will be met by counter-intervention by another superpower. The chance that a limited intervention could escalate into a global war between great powers is less of a risk. On the other hand, now freed of a need to respond reflexively to all Third World crises lest Moscow gain additional strategic footholds, the United States now has the luxury to be more selective in where it chooses to intervene. However, does the absence of a great power rival with a comparable ability to project force abroad subject Washington to greater temptation to give in to future opportunities for intervention? This question is especially pertinent because for the foreseeable future there will be no other power able, or willing, to oppose American action. Considering the United States’ post–cold war military involvement in places as varied as Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, a preliminary answer would appear to be “yes” (Carpenter, 1992: 157–58).
A TYPOLOGY OF THE PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Getting In
1. A clear and attainable goal of U.S. policy exists.
2. The intervention is not a peacekeeping operation.
3. The intervention is not a humanitarian mission within a war zone.
4. U.S. forces are not subject to a multilateral authority.
5. Force is used to defend tangible assets or other vital national interests.
6. The political situation in the target country is not one of civil war.
7. There is a strong probability of public support for intervention, or at least indifference.
8. The proposed intervention has the support of the military leadership.
9. There is a willingness to support forces in the field.
10. It is recognized that air strikes alone may not be sufficient to accomplish the policy goals established.

Conduct of the War Effort
11. There is a willingness to utilize ground forces if necessary.
12. The war is limited in geographic scope.
13. Officials in Washington are willing to commit adequate forces to accomplish the established goals.
14. The theater commander must be allowed input into decisions related to the conduct of the intervention.
15. The theater commander must be allowed discretion in the pursuit of the intervention.

Clearly, there is a greater potential for American intervention in the post–cold war era. This potential, taken with the aforementioned circumstances, seems to differentiate the nature of such military involvement today from earlier, pre-1989 forms. Therefore, the specification of preconditions favoring the success of interventionist behavior acquires even greater importance. Mindful of the above, this study will demonstrate that the following existing preconditions tend to be associated with successful interventions in the post–cold war era:
Getting In

1. **A clear and attainable goal of U.S. policy exists.**
   This can be defined, for purposes of this study, as a goal that is clearly and specifically articulated by political and/or military leaders (for example, to capture General Noriega, to liberate Kuwait). The goal has clear criteria which, once met, signal the time for the termination of interventionist action. By “attainable,” it is meant that the goal does not require indefinite or ongoing military action for its fulfillment. For example, a major factor leading to the failure of American policy in Vietnam was the seeming inability of the Johnson and Nixon administrations to articulate such goals, even as the war progressed. The questions asked both on Capitol Hill and within the general public were “Why are we there?” and “What are our sons dying for?” Such questions were never satisfactorily answered by executive policymakers.

   An ancillary concern is whether the political leadership of the intervening power has established an “exit policy” based on such proclaimed goals. It has become clear that the public is weary of open-ended commitments abroad to be assumed by their sons and daughters. In order to placate and hold the support of public opinion, silence congressional and media critics, and maintain his own clarity of purpose, the president and his advisors at some point need to formulate a timetable for the withdrawal of American forces. This schedule can be derived either by chronology (for example, “the troops will be home by Christmas”) or by circumstances (such as “the troops will be withdrawn when order is restored”).

2. **The intervention is not a peacekeeping operation.**
   Peacekeeping operations, by their very nature, require an ongoing, open-ended commitment of U.S. forces. This reality presents the potential of the situation becoming a quagmire from which the United States is unable to extricate itself. To a significant degree, this danger derives from peacekeeping’s overall lack of strategic objectives, as well as nebulously defined goals that largely defy measurement or exactitude. In general terms, how does one know when “peace” has actually been achieved within a particular society, and therefore military intervention is no longer needed? More to the point, perhaps, in volatile and conflict-prone societies such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Haiti, how does one know what “peace” really is?

   Furthermore, experience has shown that in order to be successful, peacekeeping operations require tremendous restraint. For example, on several
occasions American troops used for such purposes have either been too lightly armed or, worse, not armed at all. The latter was the case in Lebanon (1983), for example, when U.S. forces were issued guns but not allowed to load them. Their lightly defended compound/barracks at the Beirut airport made the marines stationed there “sitting ducks.” This point was underscored when the barracks were car-bombed by an Islamic fundamentalist faction. Shortly afterward, U.S. forces were recalled and the Reagan administration was taken strongly to task by Congress for the misadventure.

3. The intervention is not a humanitarian mission within a war zone.
Despite the most noble of intentions, humanitarian interventionism often goes awry. For instance, in a laudable pursuit of relieving privation in a foreign society, an intervening nation is often confronted with a problem that it did not originally foresee: the temptation to deal with what it sees as the “root cause” (or causes) of the problem. Since this “root cause” is often perceived in the final analysis to be political, the result can be that, deliberately or inadvertently, the intervening power takes sides in what is essentially a tribal conflict or civil war. This development, in turn, clearly undercuts the intervening power’s credibility as a “disinterested” humanitarian provider of relief, as well as dragging it deeper into a conflict that it neither wanted nor was prepared to resolve.

A valid question to be asked of operations of this kind is: “How do such humanitarian operations advance the intervener’s interests?” What advantage accrues to the nation engaged in interventionism, making it worth the risk of lives and the expense involved? Are not private relief agencies sometimes better suited to provide such relief? Alternatively, if relief distribution is being interfered with by marauding paramilitary units within the society, would the problem not be better dealt with by relying on military protection provided by neighboring states more directly threatened by the instability in the target nation? Finally, how is the success, and thus point of termination, of such operations determined?

4. U.S. forces are not subject to a multilateral authority.
Great powers in general, and the United States in particular, are fearful of being labeled “imperialist,” regardless of the lack of substance to the charge. Frequently, unilateral military action appears in the eyes of critics to be de facto proof of such imperialistic intent. Therefore, for its part the United States often seems to seek multilateral backing for its large military interventions as a means of acquiring a “fig leaf.” That is to say that there is often an attempt to rely on, or exploit, multilateralism as a means of legitimat-
ing, and deflecting criticism from, the use of military force by great powers. This was clearly the case, for example, in 1950, when the United States sought and was granted United Nations sponsorship for its intervention in Korea. Essentially, the conflict was a U.S. war effort (over 90 percent of the troops were American, with the whole operation always under a U.S. commander) under the UN flag, and this fact was satisfactory to Washington.

Yet over the last forty years, the UN has become increasingly unresponsive to American wishes. With the end of the cold war, the UN has become more able to assert its own wishes and goals when giving its sanction to such military enterprises. While U.S. commanders might still enjoy some considerable discretion on the battlefield, the scope of such discretion has gradually been eroded. A cursory glance at such operations seems to indicate that in recent years the UN secretary-general has become increasingly involved in the micromanagement of conflicts that involve UN forces. For example, it was been argued by members of the Senate that UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, by declaring Somalia’s General Mohamed Farrah Aidid a war criminal and authorizing his capture by UN forces, effectively “hijacked” U.S. foreign policy by forcing Washington to take sides in the fighting among Somali warlords and factions. Due to UN mandates, American forces engaged in interventionism may be effectively beyond the control of their commander in chief. The result is that such mandates for the use of force, even if sought by Washington, may be exploited by the United Nations as a way of securing maximum American participation, with a minimum of U.S. control over the operation once it has commenced.

Because they are subject to the scrutiny and approval of the member nations, United Nations “use of force” authorizations may confront additional problems. Specifically, the mandate may be so narrow that the military action taken treats only the symptoms, and not the cause, of the society’s problems. As a result, Washington may find that it has its hands tied politically: it is unable to take the action that American leaders deem necessary to fully resolve the situation that initially led to military intervention. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, U.S. Army general Norman Schwarzkopf believed that his forces could have marched on Baghdad virtually unopposed and unseated the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. However, President George Bush stopped military action early in the ground campaign, justifying his action by citing the U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force. Bush noted that the mandate was for the sole purpose of expelling Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait and nothing more. Congressional critics warned that because this premature termination of the war allowed Hussein to retain power and prevented America from rooting out and de-
stroying all Scud missiles and centers for the development (and existing stockpiles) of chemical and biological weapons, it was a virtual certainty that the United States would have to return to “finish the job.”

5. Force is used to defend tangible assets or other vital national interests.
A definition of “vital national interests” as used in our analysis is required. For our purposes it can be conceived as any asset (e.g., oil), place (e.g., Europe), or principle (e.g., the freedom of navigation in international waters) the unavailability of which places a state at a strategic or severe diplomatic disadvantage, if not directly threatening its independence and/or national security. The most enduring legacy of the Vietnam War is the universally held belief among Americans that as a nation they are no longer willing to sacrifice lives lightly for goals of dubious value (such as “nation-building”). Today, however, there is little debate that the defense of some assets, of which oil is one of the most important, is worth the commitment of forces, when necessary.

It is clear then that the defense of important assets, like oil, or strategic “choke points,” such as the Panama Canal, the North Atlantic sea lanes, and the Strait of Hormuz, is a priority for the United States. The importance of such assets to the national health, and perhaps to the very survival of the nation, not only acts as a powerful motivator to action, but also presents clear goals for policy makers and military planners.

6. The political situation in the target country is not one of civil war.
This precondition requires answers for several questions that speak to the issue of regime legitimacy. Among these questions are: Is the government that the United States proposes to support viable? Does it have the support of the population that it purports to govern, and if so, are the people willing to fight to defend it? Is U.S. assistance necessary to turn the tide of battle decisively in the favor of the government Washington is supporting, or is such intervention merely a prop that is simply delaying the inevitable collapse of the client regime? If the United States were to enter the conflict, would it, during battle, be able to distinguish “hostiles” from “friendlies”? Would American soldiers be able to successfully distinguish combatants from noncombatants, or would the line between them be obscured, as was often the case in Vietnam? If most of the answers to these questions are in the negative, then this is probably the type of conflict that is likely to become a quagmire from which Washington will find it increasingly difficult to extricate American forces.
7. There is a strong probability of public support for intervention, or at least indifference.

As was demonstrated during the Vietnam War, basic differences within public opinion may lead to official indecision regarding the war effort. Attempts to rectify this situation by efforts to balance interests may lead to the war effort being held hostage to domestic concerns. Furthermore, the emergence of significant protest may present two additional problems. First, it may convey to the opponent that there is sufficient discontent within American public opinion so that threats made by the president need not be taken seriously. Second, there is the real chance that the opponent may seek to exploit the domestic situation in the United States for its own propaganda purposes.

In an earlier era, the absence of overt opposition to interventionism could be interpreted by the chief executive as a kind of tacit support for the action, on the theory that if no one is complaining, then it must be all right. However, in this current age of electronic media, especially with such sophisticated news organizations as CNN and Fox News Channel that broadcast twenty-four hours a day, a commitment of direct U.S. force on any scale is far more unlikely to escape media (and thus public) scrutiny than might have been the case earlier.

Even today, however, it may be possible to present the public with a fait accompli, especially if the interventionist operation is narrow or limited in scope. For example, in the case of the invasion of Grenada in 1983, the operation was well under way before the public ever became aware of it. The mission was completed before any organized opposition could challenge it, and protest was largely limited to a handful of college campuses. Similarly, it is not inconceivable that the president could bypass congressional opposition by commencing an operation while Congress is in recess.

Nevertheless, as a general rule, it may be impossible to overestimate the power of the media in shaping public opinion either for or against particular interventions. Because of the emotional power of the images beamed into living rooms across the country, television can be especially decisive in determining whether intervention will be pursued as a policy option. On the one hand, television may present pictures so horrifying and/or pathos-evoking that the state is dragged by public outcry into a conflict that leaders wish to avoid. Such considerations led to pressure brought to bear on Washington to get involved in Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti.

On the other hand, stories and/or pictures of extensive carnage (especially if it comes from a “least developed” country) may so horrify the
public that intervention is made more difficult. The people may become afraid of getting deeply involved in a situation that may become a morass for intervening forces. Despite stories and pictures of the genocide taking place in Cambodia after the communist victory there in 1975, for example, the American people were loath to do anything about it. This also appears to have been the case with public opinion toward possible involvement in Rwanda, Darfur, and Liberia.

8. The proposed intervention has the support of the military leadership. Support of the military, usually as manifested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a necessity for two reasons. First, it generally signals that the Pentagon has been able to formulate several possible options capable of bringing military power to bear in pursuit of the proposed objective. Second, the military is generally much more cautious in urging the president to use force than critics of the military establishment often imagine. Such an endorsement would, therefore, seem to indicate a strong probability of success, as assessed by those who study and engage in warfare as a career.

9. There is a willingness to support forces in the field. During the debate in Congress over the authorization of the use of force that resulted in the 1991 de facto declaration of war on Iraq, opponents of the measure went to great pains to emphasize that once hostilities commenced, they would vote to see to it that American forces were given everything needed in order to ensure a rapid and complete victory. This position may have been due to sensitivity in Congress over charges that it was the “politicians” who lost the war in Vietnam. Clearly, throughout the Persian Gulf crisis, there was a desire by congressional liberals to avoid being seen as somewhat less than patriotic in a time of crisis. However, most members of Congress contended that such a position was not taken for reasons of political opportunism, but rather stemmed from the need to convince the enemy that America was unified and that legislative support for President Bush’s policy was not to be underestimated. Such a show of unity is important not only to preserve high morale both among the troops and within the general public, but also as an influential propaganda tool that may unnerve actual or potential adversaries.

On a more practical level, if they are to accomplish their mission, the armed forces must be adequately supplied. There must, therefore, be a commitment to provide the troops with what they need, when they need it. As one illustration of this principle, in Somalia, Secretary of Defense Les
Aspin’s rebuff of the U.S. commander’s request for additional armor may well have led to the military disaster for U.S. Army Rangers in the infamous “Black Hawk Down” episode. The outcome of this battle appears to have both emboldened the Somali warlords and prompted a movement at home that sought the sudden recall of U.S. forces similar to the public outcry that followed the bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut in 1983.

10. **It is recognized that air strikes alone may not be sufficient to accomplish the policy goals established.**

Since the 1980s, the military option of choice has normally been the use of air strikes, usually carried out by cruise missiles or carrier-based aircraft. This is largely because such missions require a minimum of preparation and entail a comparatively low level of risk. “Smart bombs” and cruise missiles have revolutionized conventional air warfare. Due to the incredible accuracy and destructive power of these weapons, the term “surgical air strike” has acquired renewed relevance in the layman’s military lexicon. Video presentations of the apparent success of such weapons, especially in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, appear to have solidified the appeal of air strikes among the military options available to political leaders. Examples of this preference can be found in the rapidity with which the Clinton administration chose to threaten Bosnian Serb forces with NATO air strikes if they fired on UN peacekeeping forces and, later, the 1999 air war in Kosovo.

However, it should be clearly evident that airpower is not without its limitations. First, often certain targets, such as Scud missiles launchers in Iraq or artillery pieces in Kosovo, are highly mobile. Given the propensity of American leaders to give warnings before bombings, often the weapons are moved out of harm’s way before they are in danger. Any personnel or material left behind can be either camouflaged so as to avoid detection or placed in hardened bunkers so as to heighten their survivability. Furthermore, during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraq made skillful use of decoy Scud launchers so as to divert U.S., British, and French bombers from their true targets.

Second, often the situation on the ground requires the introduction of ground forces in order to “clear and claim” a disputed area or asset. For example, even after a withering two-month air war, it still was necessary to launch a ground offensive to drive the Iraqi occupation army from Kuwait in 1991. Again, in 1999, after the successful air campaign in Yugoslavia, NATO troops were introduced as peacekeepers and guarantors of Kosovo’s de facto independence.
Third, air strikes are not without propaganda value to the enemy. At the least, because of their destructiveness, especially against civilians, they can be used to rally support around an otherwise unpopular ruler and thus harden the enemy’s resolve to resist. They can also be used in an attempt to unite international public opinion against the intervening power. Perhaps the most famous recent example of this was the Iraqi protest over the bombing of a “baby formula” plant in Baghdad by U.S. forces during the 1991 conflict.

Conduct of the War Effort

Once American armed forces have been committed abroad, certain other requirements must be met if they are to accomplish their mission:

11. There is a willingness to utilize ground forces if necessary.
Since this issue is largely discussed above, let it suffice to say here that to preclude specifically the use of ground forces before an operation begins is to give what may be a decisive advantage to the enemy. The enemy knows at once that there are limits upon how much force the intervening power is willing to commit in order to accomplish its objectives; and thus, the opponent can tailor his strategy of resistance accordingly. President Clinton’s public position of ruling out the use of ground forces in Kosovo may have had the unintended effect of prolonging the conflict. Clinton may have, in fact, come to the same conclusion. He later retracted the statement and adopted a more ambiguous position aimed at creating uncertainty in Belgrade.

12. The conflict is limited in geographic scope.
Most of the armed conflicts being fought today can be described as civil warfare. If such hatred-fueled conflicts can be said to have a “good” side, it is that they rarely seem to become broadened in scope by spilling over international boundaries.

Greater care must be taken if the intervention under consideration is, or has the potential to become, internationalized. If, for example, the region concerned is perceived by other major powers to be strategically important, the chance of counter-intervention, either by neighboring countries or other outside powers, will almost certainly rise dramatically. The fear of such a prospect was a factor that led to the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine in 1980. The promulgation of this policy served as a clear warning
to the USSR that if it attempted to move beyond Afghanistan into the Persian Gulf area, Washington would consider this a direct threat to its vital interests.

Finally, prudence must be used in attempting to intervene in nations bordering other great powers. The nature, scope, and intensity of the Korean War changed dramatically from Washington’s original expectations when the People’s Republic of China believed its vital interests were jeopardized and counter-intervened.

13. **Officials in Washington are willing to commit adequate forces to accomplish the established goals.**

This speaks to the scale of the intervention. Are the number and nature of the troops being utilized sufficient to complete the job asked of them in a timely manner? Much of the discussion concerning the point was covered in points 9, 10, and 11 above.

14. **The theater commander must be allowed input into decisions related to the conduct of the intervention.**

It would seem clear that no one is more intimately acquainted with the conditions in the theater of war, or with the progress of the fighting, than the theater commander. His advice should be sought before final decisions are made on how to conduct the operation. The requirement for the theater commander’s input is not tantamount to turning over the formulation of national policy to military leaders; their suggestions are not necessarily binding on the political leadership. Rather, this principle recognizes that experienced military leaders will have important insights concerning how most effectively to pursue the mission. Such a unique perspective may not otherwise be available either to civilian leaders who may have had no military experience, or to White House military advisors who are removed from the arena of conflict and unfamiliar with conditions on the ground.

15. **The theater commander must be allowed discretion in the pursuit of the intervention.**

In effect, this criterion is a plea for liberal rules of engagement. Although civilian political leaders must remain in ultimate control of the military, there is sometimes a real danger that civilian officials will become prone to “micromanage” the war effort. The resultant effect is to tie the hands of the theater and field commanders, who often must be in constant contact with Washington before returning fire. Obviously, it is not in the national
interest to allow overzealous or excessively nervous commanders to engage in hostilities unilaterally. However, when such hostilities have already commenced and a certain level of violence is considered acceptable by the political leaders, it would seem to be in the interest of all concerned to allow the theater commander to carry out his assigned mission in the actual prosecution of the war with a minimum of interference by civilian leaders. The evidence provided by the war effort in Vietnam, the denial by the Reagan White House of permission for the marines in Lebanon to carry loaded weapons, and the extensive political involvement by civilian officials in military operations in Somalia all provide prima facie evidence of the need to permit theater commanders flexible rules of engagement with the enemy.
The Invasion of Panama

At 1:00 A.M. on December 20, 1989, six U.S. military task forces went into action in Panama, seizing control of the country within hours. This invasion of Panama was the culmination of nearly three years of decay in the relations between the two states, nations that traditionally enjoyed a close, if not always smooth, relationship. This action was, at the time, the United States’ largest military undertaking since Vietnam. However, it also marked two equally, if not more notable, “firsts.” It was the first time that a drug indictment against a foreign head of state had been used (at least partially) as a justification for deposing that leader. It was also the first use of American direct military intervention in the post–cold war era.

THE INITIAL SITUATION IN PANAMA

The death of longtime Panamanian dictator General Omar Torrijos in 1981 paved the way “for the rise to power of a new strongman”: Manuel Antonio Noriega. Noriega, who in 1983 assumed the command of Panama’s armed forces, the National Guard, was able to use his position to secure political control over the nation (Scranton, 1992: 347).

The Reagan administration believed that U.S.-Panamanian relations would continue to be cordial. This assessment seemed to be well-founded, especially considering the assistance that Noriega gave to “various U.S. covert initiatives in the region, including the Contra war, training Central American forces in Panama, and Panamanian cooperation in Israeli covert operations” (Scranton, 1992: 347). To Washington, Noriega seemed to be a frontline soldier in the Reagan administration’s war on drugs by “providing assistance in disrupting drug trafficking operations,” which were then using Panama as a conduit to the American market (Drohan, 1991: 25). For the United States, Panama also proved to be “a strategic asset in its
interventionist policies in Central America. This process was facilitated by Noriega’s firm control over the expanded and renamed Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF)” (Scranton, 1992: 347).

During the mid-1980s, however, Noriega became an increasingly greater source of embarrassment for Washington, one from which the Reagan administration was eager to distance itself. “Opposition to Noriega among U.S. officials had been growing since 1985, when Panamanian activist Hugo Spadafora was brutally murdered by the PDF and President Nicolas Ardito Barletta, who antagonized the PDF by calling for an investigation of the murder, was removed. Of greater concern to the Reagan administration, however, was a growing scandal surrounding Noriega’s involvement in the Iran-Contra affair, particularly Panama’s central role in international narcotics trafficking and money laundering” (Scranton, 1992: 347).

The Reagan administration quickly came to the realization that it was time for Noriega to go. Starting in 1987, Washington attempted to use quiet diplomacy in order to persuade Noriega to depart gracefully. Using officials perceived by the Panamanian dictator to be “friendly,” American emissaries met with Noriega, urging him to continue Torrijos’ transition to democracy. Ultimately, these efforts proved to be fruitless. The reason for failure, it seemed, was that Washington wanted to preserve Panamanian stability; it was not willing to reinforce diplomacy with the coercive measures that might have forced Noriega to come to the conclusion that he had no choice but to depart (Scranton, 1992: 349).

On February 4, 1988, U.S. federal grand juries in Miami and Tampa investigating Noriega’s activities issued two indictments against him and fourteen others for involvement in drug trafficking (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35817). Noriega was accused of turning his country into a “vast criminal enterprise.” Specifically, he was charged with “helping a Colombian drug cartel to ship more than 4,000 lb. of cocaine into the USA via Panama.” Furthermore, he was accused of “conspiring to import over $1,000,000 worth of marijuana into the USA.” For his efforts, Noriega was said to have received $4.6 million. If convicted, the general faced a possible 145 years in an American federal prison (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35817). At the time, however, prosecution was highly unlikely because U.S. law enforcement agencies did not have any legal authority to take him into custody unless he was within U.S. jurisdiction.

Another concern for Washington was the direction of Panama’s foreign policy. As U.S.-Panamanian relations deteriorated, Noriega drew closer to the Marxist regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua, states that were “loath to align
themselves with the USA on any issue.” American animosity “was increased by reports that Panama was seeking closer ties with Libya and the Soviet Union” (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35817).

In response to the criminal allegations and Panama’s increasing diplomatic isolation, on February 25, 1988, Panamanian president Eric Arturo Delvalle dismissed General Noriega as PDF commander. In a televised address, Delvalle delivered the decree authorizing the firing as well as announcing his replacement by Chief of Staff of the Defense Forces Colonel Marcos Justines. Noriega’s Legislative Assembly promptly responded by dismissing the president. President Delvalle “went into hiding and vowed to fight” to return to office. The Reagan administration made it clear that it considered Delvalle still to be the legitimate leader (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35818).

On March 1, 1988, the Reagan administration tightened the noose on Noriega when it “‘decertified’ Panama under a 1986 law requiring” the executive “to ‘certify’ the countries cooperating with the United States against drug trafficking and to impose sanctions against those that did not.” The United States then acted to block loans to Panama by international organizations.

The “pressure was intensified” when, on March 11, Washington “ordered the suspension of all U.S. payments to Panama, including $7,000,000 in Panama Canal fees due that month,” as well as “preferential trade arrangements with Panama” (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35818). The White House announced that it would direct the placement of “all U.S. payments due to Panama into an escrow account” controlled by President Delvalle (Watson and Tsouras, 1991: 203).

Throughout 1988, continuing widespread Panamanian domestic opposition and American economic sanctions failed to dislodge Noriega from power. Having rallied some support in his country and throughout Latin America, Noriega felt emboldened to begin taunting the United States. On June 16, 1988, “a U.S. Army private and his eighteen-year-old wife were assaulted” by a probable member of the PDF. The American soldier “was beaten and locked in the trunk of his car while his wife was raped.” This was to be just one of several such incidents in the increasing war of nerves between Washington and Noriega (Watson and Tsouras, 1991: 204).

By April 1988, American concern about the situation in Panama led Washington to send “an extra 1,500 troops to supplement the 10,000 already stationed there.” Despite this enhanced presence, Noriega managed to resist American pressure. In May, negotiations between Washington and Noriega collapsed, leaving the general in control (Keesing’s, October 1988: 36215).
The 1989 change of administration in the United States brought no change in U.S. policy. Almost immediately, President George H. W. Bush authorized funds ($10 million) for covert aid to encourage a possible coup by PDF members tiring of Noriega and his increasingly paranoid behavior. In maintaining continuity with his predecessor, Mr. Bush refused to re-certify Panama as “cooperating fully” with American anti-drug efforts. The administration consequently renewed all of the existing economic sanctions imposed on Panama (Watson and Tsouras, 1991: 205).

The 1989 Elections

Under escalating international pressure, as well as ever-increasing political isolation, Noriega consented to hold a general election on May 7, 1989. An international team of election observers, led by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, was on hand to make sure that the elections were fairly conducted. On election day, 90 percent of those Panamanians eligible to vote did so (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645).

Exit polls forecasted a 3 to 1 margin of victory for the opposition over Noriega’s hand-picked candidates (New York Times, May 5, 1989, article by Lindsay Gruson). However, when the votes were being counted, “about 4,300 voting tally sheets, certified by both the government” and the opposition, were removed, “sometimes at gunpoint, and substituted with faked tally sheets” (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645). One observer noted that Noriega never considered the prospect that people would “vote against him in such numbers” (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645). President Carter was quick to denounce the theft of the Panamanian elections. Carter told the international press: “The Government is taking the election by fraud. It’s robbing the people of Panama of their legitimate rights” (New York Times, May 5, 1989, article by Lindsay Gruson).

Guillermo Endara, the opposition candidate for president, declared himself president-elect on May 9 and appealed to the international community for recognition. At a rally on May 10, Endara and his two vice-presidential running mates, Guillermo “Billy” Ford and Ricardo Arias Calderon, were severely beaten by “paramilitaries of the pro-Noriega ‘Dignity Battalions.’” Fearing for their lives, opposition leaders went into hiding (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645).

On May 11, President Bush announced a seven-point plan for dealing with Panama:
The plan provided for co-operation with and support for initiatives taken by Latin American governments through the OAS [Organization of American States] and other channels; the recall of the U.S. ambassador from Panama, and the reduction of U.S. embassy staff; the immediate removal of U.S. employees and dependents to safe housing in Panama; a call to U.S. businesses in Panama to move employees’ dependents outside Panama; the continuation in force of economic sanctions; the assertion and enforcement of U.S. treaty rights in Panama under the Canal Treaties; and the dispatch of “a brigade-size force,” described as about 2,000 troops, to Panama to augment military forces already there with the possibility of “further steps in the future.” (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645–36646)

A turning point in the crisis came on June 21, 1989, when the U.S. Department of Justice issued an opinion “that granted the president legal authority to direct the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to abduct a fugitive residing in a foreign country for violation of United States law, even if the arrest was contrary to customary international law” (Leonard, 1993: 103). Armed with such authority, President Bush privately ordered the Pentagon to undertake a review of existing military options in Panama.

The Bush administration soon got an opportunity to move against Noriega. On October 3, rebel officers within the PDF, led by Major Moisés Giroldi, attempted a coup against the general. Giroldi sought American help, requesting that U.S. forces “block major roads into Panama City in order to prevent troops loyal to Noriega from interfering with the planned coup” (Leonard, 1993: 104). Although agreeing to grant safety for Major Giroldi’s family, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) head General Maxwell Thurman believed the “coup” to be a trap laid by Noriega and, consequently, recommended against involvement with the coup plotters.

Once initiated, the coup failed miserably. The central objective of the coup, the apprehension of Noriega, was accomplished by the rebels, and he was held captive for four hours (Keesing’s, October 1989: 36971). They could not agree, however, on what to do with him. Noriega’s captors allowed him to telephone his mistress, who in turn called for troops to rescue him (Scranton, 1991: 190). Troops loyal to Noriega, specifically the praetorian Battalion 2000, quickly responded. The rebels were surrounded and, “after several hours of fighting,” surrendered later that morning (Keesing’s, October 1989: 36971). The coup leaders were captured, tortured, and killed (Scranton, 1992: 355).
It was later acknowledged by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney that American troops had blocked certain roads for the coup plotters, as well as launched U.S. aircraft and helicopters for “possible direct” U.S. intervention. Cheney disclosed that, “as the attempt came to an end, the U.S.A. gave no response to a rebel request to help defend routes to the military headquarters which they had seized.” The reason for this silence was that “the rebels had refused a demand from a U.S. officer to hand over Noriega, preferring him to retire in Panama rather than face charges” in the United States (Keesing’s, October 1989: 36971).

On October 8, Secretary of State James Baker confirmed that the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, had authorized General Thurman to seize General Noriega if it “could be done ‘without risking bloodshed, significant loss of American life and without open military involvement.’” Unfortunately, the coup attempt had failed before the directive could be acted upon (Keesing’s, October 1989: 36971).

Congressional reaction to the failed coup and Baker’s disclosures was swift and furious. Democrats especially criticized the Bush administration for its inaction and subsequent failure to capture Noriega when the opportunity had evidently presented itself (Leonard, 1993: 105). Well-respected conservative Democrats such as Senators Sam Nunn (D-GA) and David Boren (D-OK) “faulted the administration for failing” to construct contingency plans, blaming “top advisors in particular for poor decisionmaking” (Scranton, 1991: 191). From the Republican side of the aisle, scathing criticism came from Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), who, in lengthy floor speeches, challenged the Bush administration’s version of the events (Scranton, 1991: 191).

The sting of the overwhelming criticism from both parties on Capitol Hill, as well as from the press, prompted President Bush to review all of his options, especially military ones. General Frederick Woerner, the SOUTHCOM commander until September 30, had been opposed to direct military involvement. However, in light of the failed coup, such action had renewed appeal. The administration even reassessed the ban on the assassination of foreign leaders, as no policy option was left unconsidered (Scranton, 1991: 193–94).

General Thurman, SOUTHCOM’s new commander, was charged with developing a new contingency plan. The existing plan, “Operation Blue Spoon,” was a multi-phase plan intended to be implemented over the course of several days. Thurman and Powell were able to compress the plan “into an overnight operation” (Scranton, 1991: 195; New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal). Bush, however, chose not to give immediate approval.
In November and December 1989, the tension between the two sides reached a crescendo. Panamanian authorities harassed and provoked American personnel in Panama. For its part, the United States ran readiness exercises in Panama on virtually a round-the-clock basis. This was done largely to prepare, but also served to mask a massive U.S. troop buildup as well as the actual time of H-Hour (Crowell, 1991: 79–80).

On December 15, 1989, the National Assembly defiantly declared General Noriega to be “Maximum Leader,” confirming his dictatorial status. The following day, the legislative body issued a declaration of war on the United States, thus intensifying the conflict (Leonard, 1993: 106).

The final straw came on December 16 when a U.S. soldier, Lieutenant Robert Paz, was killed by PDF soldiers at a roadblock. Another American soldier and his wife, both of whom witnessed the incident, were arrested. While in custody, the soldier was beaten and his wife was sexually intimidated (Scranton, 1991: 198–99). On December 17, President Bush decided that “enough is enough.” The order was given to initiate the invasion (Leonard, 1993: 106–7).

THE REASONS WHY THE UNITED STATES CHOSE TO GET INVOLVED

The proximate cause of United States intervention in Panama was the murder of U.S. Army lieutenant Robert Paz by PDF soldiers at a roadblock and the subsequent detention of an American couple that witnessed the killing (New York Times, December 20, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon). This incident was the climax of a policy of systematic violence and psychological warfare being waged by the Noriega dictatorship for over a year. There were, however, several far more basic and serious interests at stake that eventually would compel the United States to act.

First, and perhaps most important, among these interests was a concern for the future security of the Panama Canal. Despite the inability of the canal to accommodate the very largest of U.S. warships, its importance to American commerce made it one of the United States’ principal commercial assets (Drohan, 1991: 19–20). Consequently, there was a nagging fear among policymakers in Washington, specifically: to whom would the United States have to turn over the canal in 1999 when the Panama Canal Treaties mandated its return to Panama? The thoughts of relinquishing control either to a hostile military dictatorship or to a state experiencing revolutionary turmoil were equally un palatable to the Bush administration (Drohan, 1991: 19, 25–26).
The second major concern was Panama’s increasingly prominent role as a center for drug trafficking and associated money laundering activities. For years, Noriega benefited financially from his arrangements with Colombian drug cartels to allow his country to serve as a transit point for massive drug operations (Scranton, 1991: 80–82).

A third major concern was the need “to defend democracy in Panama” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, transcript of President Bush’s press conference). It is indeed difficult to say that real democracy, as it is commonly understood in Western societies, ever fully existed in Panama. However, the “stolen” May 1989 elections, with their massive turnout and evidently decisive results, showed that Panamanians were willing finally to embark down the path to democracy in a meaningful way. The blatant fraud during the election, and the subsequent nullification of its results, served as both a powerful rallying point for the democratic opposition and as a powerful propaganda instrument for Washington in its battle with Noriega for world public opinion. Noriega gave himself an additional public relations “black eye” when his Dignity Battalions viciously beat victorious opposition leaders at a post-election rally (Keesing’s, May 1989: 36645). As of May 1989, there was now at least the potential for democracy, and there finally existed legitimate democratic leaders for Washington to support. The political and psychological power of the image of the United States acting to uphold democracy in Latin America clearly provided an impetus for action.

A fourth major concern was regional security. Panama and the United States have always enjoyed a uniquely close relationship, mostly owing to the presence of the canal and the American role in Panamanian independence in 1903. Although there was some resentment of “Yankee imperialism” because of a long history of U.S. involvement in Panamanian politics and the presence of a virtual American colony in the form of the Canal Zone, most Panamanians, at least by Latin American standards, had a favorable view of Americans. A reservoir of good will existed among Panamanians due to their access to employment with the Canal Company and U.S. military installations. This good will received a strong boost with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties, which provided for a phased return of the canal and the Canal Zone to Panamanian jurisdiction.

As the crisis leading up to the invasion deepened, U.S.-Panamanian relations became strained. Groping for support, Noriega pursued an increasingly anti-American foreign policy, which ingratiated him with the Soviet Union and radical Arab states like Libya. Most alarming to Washington, however, was Noriega’s increasingly tight embrace of fellow Latin American
tyrants Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Cuba’s Fidel Castro (Keessen’s, April 1988: 35817).

Noriega himself is largely believed to be a reason for Bush’s decision to intervene. During the crisis, Bush was said to have become angry and frustrated by Noriega’s intransigence in negotiations and by the general’s defiance. A source close to the White House told the New York Times that Bush felt that Noriega “was getting more and more abusive and that at some point he would have to be dealt with” (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Maureen Dowd).

Noriega acted as a virtual “human security leak.” There is evidence that he used his position for profit by allowing Panama to be used by interested parties to evade “the U.S. embargo on technology sales to communist nations” (Drohan, 1991: 25).

Furthermore, the general clearly acted as a double-agent. Although he was originally considered an asset by Washington for his support for U.S. and Israeli intelligence operations, evidence shows that he also spied on the United States (Drohan, 1991: 23–24). These charges were documented in a 1985 series of articles by Seymour Hersch in the New York Times. “He also bought arms from Cuba and sold them to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador” (Leonard, 1993: 98). (For a more detailed account, see Rother, Larry, “America’s Blind Eye: The U.S. for Years Has Ignored Corruption in Panama,” New York Times Magazine, May 28, 1988.)

By December 1989, the president and his closest advisors had come to the conclusion that negotiations had failed and that economic sanctions were hurting only the Panamanian people. At this point, Washington believed that all options had been exhausted and that it was impossible to accomplish anything further without a resort to force (New York Times, December 21, 1989, text of President Bush’s speech).

THE INTENDED RESULTS/OBJECTIVES OF AMERICAN INTERVENTION

The intended results of the invasion of Panama can best be understood by dividing them into two categories: the “political” and the “operational.” The political objectives were clearly articulated by the president in his December 20, 1989, address on Panama. During the speech he stated: “the goals of the United States have been to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama, to combat drug trafficking, and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, text of
President Bush’s speech). Not specifically mentioned, but certainly implicit was also the apprehension of General Noriega on drug trafficking charges.

In pursuit of the political goals, several operational goals were established in the invasion plans developed by the military. First and foremost, American forces were to destroy quickly the combat capabilities of the Panamanian Defense Forces. This was to be accomplished by rapidly striking strategic points throughout Panama and overwhelming the PDF.

The second operational goal was to seize facilities related to “the operation of the Panama Canal.” This was necessary so as to prevent sabotage of the canal, as well as to protect and defend civilians associated with its operation. Early seizure of the canal also would help keep the interruption of traffic through the waterway to a minimum.

A third, and final, operational goal was to apprehend Noriega and to liberate political prisoners being held by government forces (Crowell, 1991: 69–70).

THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION

The nature of Operation Just Cause is difficult to classify. Traditional security concerns, as demonstrated earlier, certainly characterize this operation. However, this case also exhibits elements of both a humanitarian mission and, to a degree, efforts aimed at nation-building.

The concern of the Bush administration with human rights and the suppression of liberties within Panama certainly indicates a humanitarian motivation. The president was very clear in his conviction that it was necessary to allow democratic norms a chance to become established (New York Times, December 21, 1989, text of President Bush’s speech). Human rights organizations, notably Amnesty International, had reported on the “sharp increase in human rights abuses” since before the beginning of the crisis in Panama in 1988. Such violations involved arbitrary arrests, torture, harassment, and sexual abuse (Keesing’s, April 1988: 35819). It became increasingly clear that the only way a democratic transformation of Panama would occur was if Noriega were forced from power by an American invasion.

This intervention, however, also exhibited characteristics indicative of a nation-building enterprise in the sense that democratic institutions were to be restored. One of the main goals was to allow the results of the May 1989 elections to be reinstated. As one of the first acts of U.S. intervention, the Endara government was installed, thus fulfilling its electoral mandate and bringing twenty-one years of military dictatorship to a close. No long-
term American intervention in Panama’s domestic affairs, however, was envisioned.

Key among Washington’s objectives was the destruction of the Panamanian Defense Forces. This was not sought to render Panama permanently dependent on the United States for its defense. Rather, American concern with the PDF was focused on its traditional role as a power base, the institutional support for, and “cradle” of, Panamanian dictators. If it were not eliminated as a source of power independent from civilian control, it would continue to be a potential threat to any embryonic democracy. A successful intervention would potentially have the result of giving Panama a “clean slate” by allowing for civilian-directed change far wider than otherwise would have been possible (Scranton, 1991: 227–28).

**THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CLIMATE**

The Bush administration was very secretive about any intention to intervene in Panama. In fact, during a press conference held only hours after hostilities commenced, Secretary of State Baker said: “The President made his decision [to intervene] last Sunday” (*New York Times*, December 21, 1989: transcript of Secretary of State Baker’s press conference). This places the decision at two days before the act. While an invasion was always a possibility, the conventional wisdom was that it was unlikely. This impression was reinforced by the incremental approach toward applying diplomatic and economic pressure pursued by the Bush administration. Only with the events of December 1989, however, was it finally apparent that only a use of force would bring the situation to a final resolution favorable to the United States (*New York Times*, December 21, 1989, text of President Bush’s speech).

When Americans awoke on the morning of December 20 and heard the announcement of the invasion on the morning news, most were surprised, which is just the way the Bush administration seemed to want it. This need for surprise stemmed from two important goals. First, the military wanted to be able to surprise the PDF so as to keep casualties low. Any discussion of plans to invade would have cost lives on both sides. Second, the secrecy would allow the administration to deal a fait accompli to both the public and critics in Congress. Once the invasion started, the public would likely support it, due to the usual “rally around the flag” effect. Members of Congress, reluctant to appear even remotely unpatriotic, would not be able to express any displeasure with the action as long as American troops were
in combat (for Congressional reaction, see *New York Times*, December 24, 1989, article by Maureen Dowd).

Before the invasion, the public mood had generally been anti-interventionist, fearful of “another Vietnam.” Opinion polls conducted around the time of the aborted May 1989 Panamanian elections, however, show the beginning of a change in American public opinion regarding a possible invasion. A *New York Times*-CBS News poll showed that “Americans grew much more supportive of the use of United States troops to restore order if necessary” in Panama (*New York Times*, May 13, 1989, article by Adam Clymer). As the situation in Panama continued to decay, President Bush announced his intention to dispatch an additional 2,000 troops to the Central American republic; 53 percent of those who said that they had heard about the situation supported the president’s actions. This same group was evenly divided “on whether troops should be sent in to restore order if violence occurred” (*New York Times*, May 13, 1989, article by Adam Clymer). While the poll seemed to indicate rising support for intervention, respondents showed little general enthusiasm for ousting dictators. Asked “Should the United States try to change a dictatorship to a democracy where it can or should the United States stay out of other countries’ affairs?” 29 percent supported intervention and 60 percent favored staying out.” These were basically the same numbers that had emerged from a 1986 poll taken during political turmoil in the Philippines (*New York Times*, May 13, 1989, article by Adam Clymer).

Congressional interest in the situation in Panama dated back to 1986, when conservative senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) first conducted hearings into Noriega’s activities (Scranton, 1991: 96–97). Concern over Noriega, Panama, and the canal, however, was not the exclusive domain of any particular political party. One of the first signs of this solidly bipartisan approach to Panama came on June 26, 1987, when Senate Resolution 239 was passed by a vote of 84 to 2. This resolution called on Noriega and his cronies to step down from power, and it expressed American “support for human rights and the evolution of genuine democracy in Panama” (Scranton, 1991: 111). Although it was nonbinding, the passage of the resolution “showed how few friends Noriega had” in Washington (Scranton, 1991: 111).

As the crisis intensified, congressional liberals and conservatives would repeatedly find common cause against Noriega. For example, in May 1988, while negotiations were under way that would have resulted in the dropping of drug charges against Noriega if he were to step down, the Senate passed a resolution opposing such a deal by an 86–10 vote (Scranton, 1991: 150). Throughout the 1988–1989 period, this “full spectrum” coalition gained strength. In both houses of Congress, this group frequently proposed res-
olutions to urge “the White House to take stronger action,” including the use of “military force against Noriega.” Such “resolutions, however, seldom gained majority votes on the floor” (Scranton, 1991: 136).

The mood of Congress seemed to become considerably more hawkish after U.S. forces failed to act in support of the unsuccessful October 1989 coup by PDF officers. Some lawmakers severely criticized the White House for its apparent inaction. Despite this, even on the eve of the invasion, there seemed to be no consensus on Capital Hill in favor of the use of force. In the wake of the December 17 murder of a U.S. marine by the PDF, the voice of caution could still be heard loud and clear in the halls of Congress. Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), a prominent liberal and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s subcommittee dealing with Western Hemisphere affairs, urged President Bush not to act abruptly in responding to Panamanian provocations. Recalling earlier criticism that his colleagues had leveled at Mr. Bush, Dodd stated: “My concern would be that some of the political advisors around him are reminding him of those [critical] headlines and may cause him to act precipitously here” (New York Times, December 20, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon).

The preparations for the December 20, 1989, invasion were so secret that most of Congress, including its leadership, was kept uninformed. President Bush told the public that he had “contacted the bipartisan leadership of Congress . . . and informed them of this decision” to intervene on the night before the operation was initiated (New York Times, December 21, 1989: transcript of President Bush’s speech). This assertion, however, was disputed by Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley (D-WA), who said that on the eve of the invasion “he had not been alerted” by the White House (New York Times, December 20, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon). In either case, the president had, for all practical purposes, bypassed Congress in his decision to intervene in Panama. With the invasion, the legislative branch had been dealt a fait accompli to which it could do little more than react.

THE POSITION OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TOWARD THE OPERATION

In the case of Panama, the position of the military toward possible intervention was literally a tale of two (perhaps, more accurately, three) generals. It is instructive to examine the views of Generals Frederick Woerner, Maxwell Thurman, and Colin Powell.

General Woerner was the commander of SOUTHCOM (U.S. forces in Panama) from June 1987 until September 1989. Throughout his tenure,
Woerner was “reluctant to support large-scale military action in Panama” (*New York Times*, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal). It was his position that the only durable solution to Panama’s situation was for the Panamanians to solve their own problems without outside interference from the United States. During an interview he stated that “the only chance that democracy really had in Panama was for the Panamanians to go through the catharsis of removing Noriega” (Woerner interview in Scranton, 1991: 193). In September 1989, when General Woerner advised President Bush how to proceed in Panama, he was quite straightforward: “I can tell you how to go in. What I cannot tell you is how to get out of it and leave behind something worthwhile” (Woerner interview in Scranton, 1991: 194).

The failure of the coup made it obvious that irrespective of the existing strategy to get rid of Noriega, a military coup, along with U.S. aid to the rebels, was unlikely to work. By late 1989, Noriega had become too well entrenched for such an option to have a realistic chance of success (*New York Times*, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal).

At the end of September 1989, the military awarded two promotions that were to have a profound influence on U.S. policy toward Panama, especially with regard to military options. On September 30, General Maxwell Thurman replaced General Woerner as the commander at SOUTHCOM (Woerner’s retirement had been announced the previous July). The next day, General Colin Powell assumed the position of chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Powell was both the youngest chairman in history (age fifty-three) and the first African American to hold the position (*Washington Post*, July 22, 1989, article by Molly Moore and John M. Goshko; Leonard, 1993: 103). A trait that the two generals had in common was that they tended to be more “hawkish” toward Panama than was General Woerner. Powell, in particular, had begun to review the existing options for the use of force and “found them deficient.” Those plans, as one administration official put it, “would have kept us from doing anything. It would have taken so long to assemble a large force that by the time you got it together, it would be impossible to do anything” (*New York Times*, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal).

Thurman, as commander in Panama, was not just given input into the planning; he was instrumental in the drafting of a new plan. Thurman and Powell’s new strategy compacted the existing plans for a large-scale attack into an overnight timetable (*New York Times*, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal).
CARRYING OUT THE OPERATION

In updating the existing military plans for use by the Bush administration, General Thurman developed three usable options. Option One relied on the use of massive force. Its goal was to overwhelm Noriega with numbers so that he would have to conclude that he had “no realistic chance of survival” (Crowell, 1991: 68). Option Two was to use Special Forces in a raid “to seize Noriega, with support from” U.S. troops already “stationed in Panama.” Option Three was to utilize Panama-based troops to seize PDF headquarters.

When the decision was finally made, President Bush selected Option One. This was dictated by several factors, the most important of which was a fear of prolonged resistance by Panamanian forces. Bush was concerned to keep casualties low on both sides of the conflict. Inflicting massive losses on Panamanian forces would have had the potential of needlessly stirring up nationalism within the country, and this in turn could prolong resistance and have damaging long-term effects on U.S.-Panamanian relations.

Second, the Bush administration wanted to avoid a prolonged engagement that would almost certainly have brought a firestorm of “domestic and international criticism and pressure.” Finally, Options Two and Three would have depended on perfect intelligence and surprise for success. Anything less would have allowed Noriega to evade capture; and his apprehension was, after all, of central importance to American policy toward Panama. Furthermore, Option One would almost certainly have the result of quickly eliminating the PDF as a power in Panamanian politics (New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor).

As carried out, the U.S. intervention was a unilateral military action. Under SOUTHCOM were 13,000 U.S. troops permanently stationed in Panama. In preparation for action, reinforcements from bases throughout the United States were airlifted to Panama, boosting the American presence to 26,000 (Scranton, 1991: 202). It was an integrated operation; General Thurman, as SOUTHCOM commander, had access to units from all branches of the armed services. The operation was to be carried out by the “simultaneous application of overwhelming military force against all significant centers of Panamanian resistance” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor).

For weeks, C-130s had been transporting in additional troops and equipment. In the days immediately before the intervention, these C-130s and C-141s flew around the clock, bringing men and material, including tanks and helicopter gunships (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal). When the attack finally was
to commence, American units already based in Panama would isolate and capture General Noriega’s headquarters and neutralize other Panamanian forces in Colón. Paratrooper, Ranger, and light infantry units flown in from the United States, meanwhile, would launch surprise air assaults on outlying units (New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor).

There were two keys to success that American forces could count on: night operations and complete air superiority. U.S. forces were unchallenged in the air; the PDF had no aircraft. An ability to fight at night, provided by accessories such as infrared gunsights, contributed to the element of surprise critical to low-casualty success in the urban environment presented by Panama City (Crowell, 1991: 75).

Generally, American intelligence was quite good. The failed October 1989 coup proved to be a boon to military intelligence officers. An analysis of the rebels’ actions pointed out the primary targets that U.S. forces would later attack. Also, because of the presence of American bases in Panama, invading troops had a tremendous advantage in that many soldiers were already familiar with both the target sites and local roads (Crowell, 1991: 79–80). There were, however, some gaps in the intelligence. The most damaging of these was the “lack of precise, reliable intelligence information, in this case pinpointing the location of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor).

Deception was skillfully employed by U.S. forces. For weeks, readiness exercises were frequently conducted. As the invasion date approached, exercises were held around the clock. This disguised both the scale of the operation to come and H-Hour (New York Times, December 20, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon; Scranton, 1991: 196; Crowell, 1991: 79–80). Although news reports and careless conversation between soldiers on December 19 gave the Panamanians a tip that “something” was planned, the actual date and time of H-Hour were never divulged (Crowell, 1991: 83).

The U.S. intervention force was organized into six task forces. Each group was given a set of goals to accomplish when H-Hour arrived.

Task Force Black was assigned to rescue imprisoned Americans held at PDF prisons. It also had the responsibility to raid sites where Noriega was believed to be located. Although it failed to capture Panama’s “Maximum Leader,” it successfully cut off possible air and sea escape routes. It later cornered him at the papal nunciature.

Task Force Bayonet immediately moved on the Commandancia (PDF Headquarters) and other strategic points in Panama City. Tanks and Apache helicopter gunships, many of them flown into Panama especially for the in-
vasion, provided massive firepower used to “soften-up” the Commandancia before the final assault.

Troops from Task Force Bayonet also captured PDF installations at Fort Amador. Navy SEALs attached to this battle group were dispatched to Patilla Airport in order to cut off a possible Noriega escape route. The SEALs were able to accomplish their mission by destroying Noriega’s plane. They also secured boats in Panama Harbor to prevent an escape by sea.

Task Force Atlantic defeated a PDF force at the coastal city of Colón. At Gamboa, it moved to seize canal-related facilities.

Task Force Red was composed mostly of soldiers flown in from the United States. Stealth fighters dropped 2,000-pound bombs near PDF barracks at Rio Hato, which so disoriented the Panamanian defenders that they ran for their lives. Ranger units then parachuted in. Fighting was fierce, but successful. With support from AC-130 gunships, the Rangers were able to take Tocumen/Torrijos International Airport. Later, they linked up with other units to cut off reinforcement routes utilized by the PDF’s elite Battalion 2000.

Task Force Semper Fi, as its name implies, was composed of marines. The marines secured U.S. military installations from possible PDF attack or sabotage. Later, they joined with forces from Task Force Bayonet to secure the Bridge of the Americas.

Finally, Task Force Pacific was flown overnight from Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, in twenty C-141s. This group staged jumps at the international airport and the Madden Dam in order to reinforce U.S. forces there (Crowell, 1991: 83–92).

Within eighteen hours of the start of Operation Just Cause, organized resistance ended as the PDF was defeated (Scranton, 1991: 203; Crowell, 1991: 94). However, Dignity Battalions, a pro-Noriega militia, continued resistance for several more days. Yet by the seventh day of the invasion, Panama was pacified (Scranton, 1991: 204).

Nevertheless, General Noriega eluded capture. He managed to evade his pursuers for four days. On Christmas Eve, Noriega showed up at the residence of the papal nuncio in Panama City with ten of his followers (Scranton, 1991: 205). Begging for asylum, Noriega and his entourage were admitted. When the American command discovered that Noriega had been granted sanctuary, troops were dispatched to the embassy and the building was surrounded. Papal ambassador Monsignor Laboa refused calls to turn the general over to the United States to face charges in Florida, and a standoff ensued.
The American troops could not violate the sanctity of an embassy, so they tried to coax Noriega out. Soldiers set up bright lights to shine into the nunciature and loudspeakers placed around the building blasted loud hard rock music in order to make life miserable for Noriega (Keesing’s, December 1989: 37112–37113).

In early January 1990, Noriega received assurances from the United States that he would not be subject to the death penalty for his crimes. This guarantee, along with Monsignor Laboa’s doubts about asylum in a third country, began to work on Noriega’s mind (Keesing’s, January 1990: 37181). On January 4, 1990, at 8:45 p.m., Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces. Although General Thurman was present, he did not allow a formal military surrender. Noriega was taken into custody as a criminal (Keesing’s, January 1990: 37181; Scranton, 1991: 207).

**TYPES AND QUANTITIES OF FORCES USED**

Operation Just Cause was, at the time, the largest operation of its kind since Vietnam. It was the intention of General Thurman to overwhelm the 5,000-man Panamanian Defense Force with both superior numbers and firepower. Therefore, in order to supplement forces already in Panama, a massive airlift brought an additional 9,500 troops in from bases across the United States (Keesing’s, December 1989: 37112; New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor). At its peak, 26,000 soldiers were committed to the American intervention in Panama (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Lindsay Gruson).

Not only were massive numbers of troops used, but also a wide variety of forces were employed, drawn from the full range of the armed services. Forces were organized according to type, geographic area of use, and their assigned objectives (Crowell, 1991: 71).

The then-top secret F-117 Stealth Fighter got its first combat test in the early stages of the invasion. Six of the planes were called in from their air base in Nevada, two of which dropped 2,000-pound bombs near PDF barracks in Panama (McConnell, 1991: 35–36). The use of the F-117 was part of a plan that called for using ultra-high-technology weapons systems in order to “selectively prepare the ground” for the assaults that would follow (McConnell, 1991: 31, 35).

In support roles, SOUTHCOM relied on helicopters. As noted earlier, American forces enjoyed the advantage of uncontested control of the skies. Therefore, helicopter gunships, including such advanced models as the
AH-64 Apache, as well as AH-1 Cobras, were used as aerial artillery platforms to pound enemy forces in anticipation of the impending surface attack. Other helicopters, such as the UH-1 Iroquois (“Huey”) and the UH-60 Black Hawk were used to transport troops, for firepower, and for observation purposes. In addition, some fixed-wing aircraft, specifically A-7 Corsair II fighter-bombers, were used. On December 20, a twenty-mile by twenty-mile square of airspace over Panama City was crowded with “111 transports, 7 AC-130 gunships, 173 helicopters, 21 OA-37s, 6 A-7s, and 6 F-117s” (Crowell, 1991: 76–78).

Impressive firepower was not limited to the aircraft. Indeed, tanks had been moved into Panama “several weeks before the invasion was launched” (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal). Originally intended to support a possible coup attempt by PDF officers, the tanks also were included in military intervention preparations. Plans called for tanks to be used in conjunction with the Apache gunships “to freeze the Panamanian military in place” (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Michael R. Gordon and Andrew Rosenthal).

Ground forces were drawn from across service lines, many of them among the most elite units that each branch had to offer. The U.S. Army sent Special Forces teams; they drew the assignment of tracking and attempting to capture Noriega, as well as quickly seizing strategic locations throughout Panama. The 82nd Airborne and various Ranger units were dropped in to seize airports, canal facilities, and other strategic assets. Delta Force, the United States’ quick reaction force, was also dispatched to Panama and saw action. Other elite units participating were the marines (Task Force Semper Fi) and navy SEALs (Crowell, 1991: 72–73).

Of particular interest was the use of psychological operations personnel and Army Special Forces. Trained in psychological warfare and fluent in Spanish, these soldiers would attempt to reason with PDF forces they faced before a ground assault was launched. Often they were able to convince the Panamanians of both the hopelessness of their position and of the good intentions of the American intervention. Consequently, they managed to persuade many PDF units to surrender without firing more than a few shots (Crowell, 1991: 90, 94).

Not much information is available about the role of naval forces in Operation Just Cause beyond the use of SEALs and frogmen to disable vessels that could have been used by Noriega to escape. There is good reason to believe that carrier-based planes provided air cover for transports en route from bases in the United States to Panama (Crowell, 1991: 75).
THE SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

The fighting never spilled over the borders of Panama. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming force utilized helped to bring about such a rapid victory that it is highly unlikely that other governments or political groups could have acted in support of Noriega, even if they wanted to.

There was, in the minds of Thurman, Powell, and others, a concern about the possible interdiction of U.S. transports by Cuban and/or Nicaraguan jets. The United States likely utilized carrier-based air cover to deal with this problem in the unlikely event such interference occurred (Crowell, 1991: 75). The threat never materialized.

THE NATURE OF THE THEATER COMMANDER’S POWER AND INFLUENCE

Throughout the Panama crisis, the SOUTHCOM commander’s opinion appears to have been given great weight by the White House. During General Woerner’s tenure as SOUTHCOM commander, the Bush administration heeded (perhaps grudgingly) the general’s admonition against intervention. When Woerner was replaced by Maxwell Thurman at the end of September 1989, the new commander’s advice was given full consideration. As a case in point, even at the very start of his tenure at SOUTHCOM, Thurman was able to convince his superiors not to get involved with Major Giroldi and other rebel PDF officers during the October coup (McConnell, 1991: 10).

General Thurman was a key player in the development of new plans to get Noriega. Thurman and Colin Powell reworked the existing plans, taking into account a broad range of possible responses (New York Times, December 21, 1989, article by Bernard E. Trainor). As a result, President Bush was advised that a “surgical” strike to grab Noriega would accomplish very little, and that it could prove quite embarrassing if it failed (New York Times, December 24, 1989, article by Maureen Dowd). As was noted earlier, General Thurman “compacted” Blue Spoon down “into an overnight operation” (Scranton, 1991: 196.)

The president withheld immediate approval, and Thurman had nine weeks to refine his plan. On the morning of December 17, 1989, Thurman phoned General Powell in Washington “with the recommendation that [the plan] be executed.” Bush and Powell agreed with Thurman’s assessment, and the order was given for Thurman to proceed (McConnell, 1991: 19).

In formulating the rules of engagement, General Thurman was given one
guideline to follow: to find a balance in the use of force that would hold U.S. casualties and Panamanian deaths and destruction to a minimum while successfully destroying the PDF’s combat capability (Crowell, 1991: 81). There were two main reasons for this. First, in the interest of good long-term relations, the Bush administration felt that it was imperative to accomplish operational objectives with as little destruction, and as few casualties, as possible. Second, it was thought by those in Washington that if some sort of restraint were not practiced there would be a backlash against the new Endara government, and this would exacerbate legitimacy problems that surely would be present due to its installation by force of U.S. arms.

The commanders and planners of “Just Cause,” consequently, “laid down strict rules of engagement (ROE).” General Thurman, as SOUTHCOM commander, “ordered ‘the minimum use of power required’ to achieve battlefield victories” (Crowell, 1991: 81). In practice, Thurman ordered that no one below the rank of lieutenant colonel could “order the use of indirect fire weapons, such as artillery,” mortars, aerial strafing, or bombing. One of Thurman’s subordinates, Lieutenant General Carl Stiner, acted to place even more stringent limitations on American forces. He “restricted the use of artillery” and bombing in Panama City “by requiring the approval of a major general for artillery fire, and of himself for bombing” (Crowell, 1991: 81).

Thurman also ordered that Psychological Operations teams accompany infantry units attacking PDF barracks. Using their training and Spanish language skills, members of these teams would call on PDF soldiers “to surrender within fifteen minutes.” If the demand was not complied with, a small burst would be fired as a warning and the demand repeated with a new time limit. If this second deadline passed, field officers were instructed to call senior officers for authorization to use greater firepower.

Bombing, when used, was frequently near, not on, targets. F-117 stealth fighters dropped their bombs near PDF barracks, a tactic which caused a minimum of damage and a maximum of confusion and panic among enemy forces. Surrender was swiftly obtained. These measures were highly successful in reducing Panamanian losses without raising American casualties (Crowell, 1991: 80–82).

EXIT STRATEGY

There was no formal exit plan because none was needed. Some 13,000 of the U.S. troops were permanently stationed in Panama in accordance with the provisions of the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties (Scranton, 1991: 202).
At the outset of the operation, President Bush declared: “The United States intends to withdraw the forces newly deployed to Panama as quickly as possible” (New York Times, December 21, 1989; transcript of President Bush’s speech). In accordance with this pledge, by January 7, some 3,300 troops had already returned to their bases in the United States (Keesing’s, January 1990: 37181).

It was Washington’s intention to turn over authority to Panamanian civilian leaders as quickly as possible. A key element of this transition was a need to allow the new Endara government to assume the duties associated with the maintenance of public order. However, the Endara regime faced a problem similar to that encountered in post–World War II Germany: what does the new government do when the only personnel with the necessary training to carry out such essential tasks are those most closely associated with the old regime? The need to use at least some former PDF officers “as the foundation of a new national police force tarnished the new government” (Scranton, 1991: 227). The result was that American soldiers had to remain in a constabulary capacity for an extended period. During 1990, U.S. troops were involved in stopping looting, restoring order, and were even called on to put down a new coup attempt (New York Times, December 21, 1990: editorial).

This extended role for American troops was not completely unwelcomed by the Panamanian public. A January 1990 CBS News poll taken in Panama revealed that 78 percent believed that the United States should stay “at least six months or ‘as long as necessary’” (New York Times, January 6, 1990, article by Michael R. Kagay).

THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE INTERVENTION

The intervention left the United States in control of Panama. Washington’s central concern, the Panama Canal, was secured within hours. Although the invasion forced the canal’s closure for the first time ever, the interruption of traffic lasted only one day. This minor inconvenience was more than offset by the successful protection of the canal and its associated facilities.

The primary objective of the invasion, the capture of General Noriega, was accomplished by January 4, 1990. He was promptly sent to Miami, Florida, to face trial on drug charges. On December 20, 1989, just as the invasion began, Guillermo Endara and his new government were sworn in at an American military base.

To Americans watching news reports of the invasion, no image was more gratifying than that of U.S. forces being welcomed by the people of Pan-
ama. Crowds that greeted American troops throughout the country hailed them as liberating heros (Scranton, 1991: 207). Panamanian public opinion was pro-interventionist. A January 1990 CBS News poll reported that 92 percent approved of the invasion, with 64 percent strongly approving; 67 percent said that they wished that the United States had intervened at the time of the failed October 1989 coup. Seventy-four percent of the respondents believed that “American troops had used the right amount of force and 87 percent said ‘the price paid by Panama to overthrow the Noriega regime was worth it’” (New York Times, January 6, 1990, article by Michael R. Kagay). Panamanians seemed very optimistic about their country’s future. Some 90 percent believed that their nation’s situation would improve in the near future as a result of the invasion; 88 percent of respondents “expressed confidence that Panama would remain a democracy” (New York Times, January 6, 1990, article by Michael R. Kagay).

There were, however, several unanswered questions surrounding the Endara government. Clearly it was legal, but was it legitimate? After all, some argued, it needed an invasion by a foreign power to put it in office. After the conclusion of the U.S. intervention, the new Panamanian administration still relied on American troops to control looting and maintain order (Scranton, 1992: 357). Some critics suggested that in order to leave no doubt as to his government’s legitimacy, Endara should have re-submitted it to a popular vote (New York Times, December 21, 1990, editorial). It should be noted, however, that much of this criticism did not garner support from the Panamanian people, most of whom favored letting Endara finish his term before holding new elections. There was, however, lingering concern about the inclusion of former PDF members in the new national police (Sullivan, 1991: 169–70).

Although the invasion was extremely popular in Panama, the United States was roundly criticized by the world community. For the first time ever, the country was condemned by a resolution from the Organization of American States (OAS), which held that the invasion was “a violation of international law” (Scranton, 1991: 207–8).

Washington faced similar troubles at the United Nations. On December 30, 1989, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution “deploping the American intervention by a vote of 75 to 20, with 40 abstentions” (Goldman and Biggers, 1991: 182). While formally condemning the invasion, Moscow did not appear troubled by it. Soviet objections seemed rather perfunctory, as Moscow indicated that the intervention would not stand in the way of the improvement of East-West relations (Goldman and Biggers, 1991: 182).
Latin American reaction, however, proved to be much more strenuously opposed to the invasion. Peru, in particular, seemed quite upset. Peruvian president Alan Garcia condemned the U.S. intervention as “brutal, excessive, and arrogant.” Venezuela's President Carlos Andres Perez, while critical of the invasion, also assessed some blame upon the Latin American community for lacking “the necessary determination to force the Panamanian de facto government to change its stand and permit the free exercise of the people’s sovereignty.” Perez reassured the Endara government that formal relations would be restored when American troops were withdrawn (Goldman and Biggers, 1991: 183–84).

On January 18, 1990, President Endara appealed to the world community for international aid. In response, on January 25, President Bush announced a $1 billion aid package to help Panama recover. Half of these funds were earmarked for “housing, public works, and other economic assistance.” The remainder consisted of “export assistance and trade benefits” (Keesing’s, January 1990: 37181). In an effort to provide immediate assistance, the United States offered $6,500 per family in emergency aid to those in the “El Chorrillo” neighborhood, which had been particularly devastated by the fighting. However, the distribution of this aid proved to be a long, frustrating process (Scranton, 1991: 215–16).

**UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF OPERATION JUST CAUSE**

Perhaps most striking about this case is the extremely close relationship that has been the hallmark of U.S.-Panamanian relations. Panama came into existence in 1903 because of the exercise of American gunboat diplomacy against an intransigent Colombian government (see chapter 1). The United States has always been involved in Panamanian politics and, over the years, Washington came to be viewed as the provider of a political “safety net” for the nation. Central to the relationship has been the Panama Canal, arguably America’s most important interest in Latin America. The treaties under which the canal was built and operated had long given certain rights to the United States, not the least of these being the right to intervene in Panama to defend the waterway. As a practical matter, such provisions have given the United States a legal justification to become involved in Panama whenever its interests have been threatened. Although the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties greatly reduced the degree of American “sovereignty” over Panama, the provisions of the treaty dealing with the defense of the canal allowed considerable latitude in interpretation. The practical result of the
new pact was to leave the basic relationship between the two countries unchanged. In addition, Washington had in the past been called on to supervise Panamanian elections (Scranton, 1992: 343–47).

A byproduct of this close relationship was the enthusiastic support Panamanians gave to the U.S. intervention in 1989. Because of Washington’s long-standing, tacit support for dictatorship in Panama, an invasion was seen by many Panamanians as an attempt by the United States finally to correct a wrong that it had created. America’s military intervention was seen as an acceptable price for getting rid of Noriega. Public opinion polls indicated that the invasion was welcome, with an overwhelming majority of Panamanians favoring an American presence for “as long as necessary” (New York Times, January 6, 1990, article by Michael R. Kagay).

A second variable that makes this case unique is the fact that this was not an “invasion” in the conventional sense. Unlike the 1983 Grenada invasion, wherein all troops were shipped in, Panama had been serving as host to over 13,000 U.S. troops permanently stationed there in accordance with the Panama Canal Treaties. This presence led to an important advantage for American forces. Officers attached to SOUTHCOM were able to draft effective invasion plans due to a first-hand familiarity with Panama.

Likewise, the troop presence helped to screen the American force buildup and invasion preparations. General Thurman was able to use “routine” maneuvers as a cover for U.S. invasion rehearsals. Such exercises served an additional purpose. Round-the-clock movements without any incidents lulled Noriega into a false sense of security, thus effectively concealing the exact time of H-Hour. Consequently, Washington was able to maintain the element of surprise.

The presence of U.S. forces in Panama accrued other additional benefits to the invaders. Due to their intimate knowledge of Panama, officers were already familiar with most of the targets selected. Furthermore, SOUTHCOM intelligence officers were able to directly observe, and thus more fully analyze, the October 1989 coup. The result was that those targets considered most important were identified and the invasion plans were formulated to take them into account, giving them top priority (Crowell, 1991: 79–80).

A third factor was that the United States had complete control of the air. American superiority was never challenged. As a result, Washington was able to make use of slower flying aircraft, such as the Apache helicopter gunships, as mobile artillery (Crowell, 1991: 67, 75).

A fourth variable unique to this case is the canal itself. Its importance to U.S. commerce is clearly evident. Because it cannot be moved or easily
replaced, it must be carefully safeguarded. This need for defense by the United States had been codified by the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties, which allowed Washington to maintain a military presence in the country to defend the canal until 2000. Owing to the provisions of the treaty, there was a legal basis for American intervention that may not exist in other cases.

Finally, what is perhaps most striking about Panama is that it is believed to be the first time that drug indictments against a foreign leader were used as a legal justification for military intervention. On June 21, 1989, the U.S. Department of Justice issued an opinion “that granted the president legal authority to direct the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to abduct a fugitive residing in a foreign country for violation of United States law, even if the arrest was contrary to customary international law” (Leonard, 1993: 103). This opinion cleared the way for the use of military force to obtain jurisdiction over General Noriega (Drohan, 1991: 25–26).

ASSESSMENT

There are two ways to assess the success of any American intervention. The first is on the operational level. In other words, did the operation actually work out as planned? The other is on the political level: did the intervention accomplish those goals that prompted its undertaking?

Operationally, Operation Just Cause was almost flawlessly successful. Nearly all operational goals were accomplished within the first eighteen hours of the initiation of the mission. Furthermore, the principal object of the invasion, General Noriega, was cornered by U.S. forces at the papal nunciature by December 24, 1989, and he was captured on January 4, 1990. He was sent back to the United States to face his drug indictments and was eventually sentenced to forty years in a federal prison (New York Times, May 9, 1994, article by Howard W. French). In 1994, a Panamanian court tried and convicted Noriega in absentia for murder (Keesing’s, March 1994: 39910).

The most direct way to assess the success of Operation Just Cause in a political sense is to evaluate it in terms of the fulfillment of President Bush’s stated objectives. In a December 20, 1989, speech to the nation, the president outlined his objectives: “to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama [and bring Noriega to justice], to combat drug trafficking and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, transcript of President Bush’s speech).

In terms of safeguarding American lives, the operation was a resounding
success. Once the invasion commenced, only 3 of the roughly 35,000 U.S. civilians in Panama died. Even military casualties were much lower than expected: only 23 U.S. servicemen died in action, and 323 were wounded. Panamanian casualties, too, were low, especially considering the scale of the operation. The PDF experienced only 314 dead, 124 wounded. American estimates put Panamanian civilian casualties at 500–1,000 (Scranton, 1991: 204; Keesing’s, December 1989: 37112).

The second goal, the defense of democracy in Panama, would seem ostensibly to have been fulfilled. Within hours, American troops had deposed the dictatorship and the democratically elected Endara government was installed. The Panamanian military, a traditional impediment to democracy, was at first restrained—and in 1994 abolished (Keesing’s, August 1994: 40138). A national police force now exists, although questions as to its loyalty and integrity may still remain due to the presence of former PDF officers within its ranks (Scranton, 1991: 218–21; Leonard, 1993: 115–16). Free and fair elections were held in 1994, marking the first peaceful transfer of civilian power since 1960, and only the second in Panamanian history (Keesing’s, May 1994: 40003).

With regard to the third goal of combating drug trafficking, the capture of General Noriega obviously had serious effects on the drug trade. First, it established the precedent that the United States would act, even against a foreign head of state, if the charges were sufficiently serious and documented, and if apprehension were possible. Second, the elimination of Noriega removed the Panamanian state from the drug business. Unfortunately, the effect did not prove as longlasting as initially hoped for. In 1990, the U.S. ambassador to Panama complained that no drug cases were prosecuted by the Endara government. There were even signs that matters were, in fact, getting worse. “During 1991, numerous commentators asserted that the drug trade had not only resumed but actually reached levels higher than before the invasion” (Scranton, 1991: 228). Regarding this criterion, the intervention was less than a complete success.

The final articulated American goal was “to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty” (New York Times, December 21, 1989, transcript of President Bush’s address). Once the invasion began, the canal was secured almost instantly by U.S. forces. No damage was done to canal facilities, and the fighting forced the closure of the waterway for only one day. The successful installation of the legitimate democratic government was reassuring to both Panamanians and Americans concerned with the final implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties on December 31, 1999. The 1994
abolition of the Panamanian military by the nation’s Legislative Assembly, however, raised some questions regarding Panama’s ability to defend the canal after it assumed control at the turn of the century.

There is the possibility that events since the 1989 invasion have only increased Panama’s dependence on the United States to solve its problems (Sullivan, 1991: 173–76). Oddly, this dependence on its benefactor was not unwelcome to most Panamanians. A poll in 1990 showed that 70 percent of Panamanians wanted joint U.S.-Panama administration of the canal (New York Times, January 6, 1990, article by Michael R. Kagay). Although the official position of the United States was to fulfill the treaty “as is,” there had been some sentiment to review the defense provisions of the agreement and allow an extended U.S. role in the waterway’s defense. By 1998, however, talks aimed at extending the U.S. military presence had largely ended and SOUTHCOM relocated to Florida (Keesing’s, January 1998: 42004).

Finally, a consideration not articulated by the Bush administration, but certainly not unwelcome, was its effect on the president’s political fortunes. The invasion was instrumental in helping Bush shake his “wimp” label. To most Americans, Mr. Bush finally appeared as a decisive leader in the foreign policy realm. Consequently, the president’s popularity skyrocketed. The action was so popular that even an adversarial, Democrat-controlled Congress generally supported it. Senator Gore went so far as to send his congratulations to the president. Only those on the far left of the political spectrum expressed criticism. In terms of popular perception of his leadership, Operation Just Cause was a great success. Clearly this intervention was a turning point in President Bush’s administration (New York Times, January 5, 1990, article by Michael Oreskes; December 21, 1989, article by Thomas L. Friedman).
For most of the decade following the proclamation of the Carter Doctrine in 1980, it was taken for granted that any threat to the Middle East that would trigger an American military response would most certainly come from the Soviet Union. During the 1980s, however, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran appeared to emerge as another serious threat to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region. In order to contain Iran, as well as to pursue the possibility of prying an ally away from Moscow, the Reagan and Bush administrations tilted U.S. policy in the region toward Iraq. Despite the clearly aggressive and militaristic nature of Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein, few in Washington seemed to foresee the possibility that he would turn his war machine on a fraternal Arab nation, especially one that had supported Iraq during its eight-year war against the Teheran theocracy. For this reason, when the dormant border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait flared in 1990, few expected that armed conflict would be the result. The world community was, therefore, caught off guard when on August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops poured across the border and conquered their hapless neighbor.

THE INITIAL SITUATION IN THE PERSIAN GULF REGION

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was prompted by a number of considerations. One such concern, which had been festering for nearly thirty years, was Baghdad’s claim that Kuwait was a “lost” nineteenth province of Iraq. According to the Baathist dictatorship, Kuwait had been carved out of the former Turkish province of Basra by the British following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Spencer, 1996: 91). The dispute was ostensibly settled by the recognition of Kuwait by the Baathist regime in 1963. Tensions over the territorial dispute were renewed in the late 1980s. The border had split the valuable Rumalla oil fields between the two states. Iraq charged that Kuwait was cross-drilling the oil fields in such a way that the
emirate was stealing millions of dollars worth of crude oil. Baghdad claimed that the oil was then being dumped on the international market, an action which depressed oil prices below OPEC targets. These actions robbed Iraq of the hard currency that it needed to finance its war with Iran and subsequent rebuilding.

Consequently, in 1990, the dispute flared up when Kuwait refused Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s demand for reparations, which “included up to US$10,000 million in aid; $2,400 million in compensation for ‘stolen’ oil; the cancellation of $10,000 million in debts; the renunciation of Kuwaiti claims to the southern section of the Rumalla oil fields; and a long-term lease on the islands of Bubiyan and Warba, both of which lay off Iraq’s short Gulf coast” (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37632).

Another motivating factor was most likely Saddam Hussein’s thirst for personal power and influence. He craved to be acknowledged as the leader of the Arab world. Hussein openly sought to become the “New Nasser.” Only as such a great leader could he be assured that he would be accorded respect and that his demands would be taken seriously. To have his demands so flatly rejected by his peers was both personally infuriating and frustrating, no doubt motivating him to action.

Such power could be achieved most effectively and rapidly by bold, specifically military, action to seize what Saddam saw as rightfully his. To gain control over Kuwait would give Hussein over 20 percent of the world’s known oil reserves and thus grant him tremendous influence over oil prices should he choose to exercise his prerogative. For Saddam, the invasion of Kuwait would simultaneously force reluctant Middle Eastern leaders to “recognize his ‘destiny’ to lead all Arabs” while giving him access to the tremendous wealth that would allow him to “fulfill his anti-Western, anti-Israel ambitions” (Brune, 1993: 21).

When it finally commenced on August 2, 1990, the Iraqi offensive was swift and decisive. Advance elements of Baghdad’s army reached Kuwait City within three and a half hours of the start of the operation. Spearheaded by elite Republican Guard units, the invasion proceeded according to a three-prong battle plan. One army proceeded directly down the main highway, straight to Kuwait City. The second prong swept west, seizing Kuwait’s inland oil fields. The third group moved directly to the Kuwaiti border with Saudi Arabia. The ultimate purpose of this particular drive, at that moment, was unknown. The invasion was completed by the fourth day of the operation (Watson and Watson, 1991: 15). On August 8, 1990, Kuwait was formally annexed by its conqueror (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37635).
The swiftness of the invasion and the resultant proximity of the world’s fourth largest army to the Saudi Arabian border were of great concern in capital cities both on the Arabian Peninsula and around the world. A fearful Saudi Arabia mobilized its armed forces on August 4. In support, British and French warships in the region moved into the Persian Gulf (Blair, 1992: 13).

In Kuwait, the initial post-invasion situation was fairly calm. Highly disciplined Republican Guard units maintained order. Such units, however, were soon relieved by the Iraqi General Army, conscripts who lacked the professionalism of the more elite units. Almost immediately, this “uniformed rabble” began to engage in atrocities and various crimes against their newly incorporated countrymen (Rezun, 1992: 72–73; Keesing’s, August 1990: 37633). Women, both Kuwaiti and foreign, were subject to a vicious orgy of rape. Soldiers also engaged in widespread looting, particularly in affluent Kuwait City, much of it organized by Baghdad. Between $3 and $5 billion in “gold, foreign currency, and goods” was transferred from Kuwait to Iraq. Finally, and perhaps most ominously, the Iraqi secret police dispatched operatives to Kuwait City to round up “Iraqi opposition exiles,” focusing on “communist and fundamentalist Shia opposition figures” (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37633).

To intimidate civilians and discourage resistance, torture became a prominent feature of Iraqi occupation. In one particularly heinous episode, Iraqi secret police “cornered a prominent Kuwaiti banker” in his house and gouged his eyes out while shouting insults and ridicule at him. In a final act of disdain, the Iraqis chainsawed him in front of his family, tossing his dismembered head into the gutter (Rezun, 1992: 73). The story that most outraged world opinion, however, was the one told before a committee of the U.S. Congress, in which Iraqi troops removed Kuwaiti infants from their hospital incubators, only to have the machines disconnected and taken away. The accuracy of this tale was subsequently called into question, but its effect was decisive in galvanizing world opinion against Iraq (Rezun, 1992: 72).

The reaction of the world community to the invasion was near universal outrage. The problem was immediately brought before the United Nations in search of a peaceful resolution through diplomatic pressure. Between August 2 and November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council passed twelve resolutions aimed at securing an Iraqi withdrawal (George et al., 1991: 26). The first was UN Security Council Resolution 660, which passed unanimously, with Yemen not participating. This resolution demanded the immediate, complete, and “unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces” from Kuwait, as
well as calling for negotiations to settle outstanding issues. This was the diplomatic “cornerstone” upon which all subsequent resolutions would be based. The more important of these resolutions included:

UNSC Res. 661 (Passed 13–0, “with Cuba and Yemen abstaining”). This resolution “imposed mandatory sanctions against” trade with Iraq and occupied Kuwait.

UNSC Res. 662 (“Passed unanimously”). This act voided the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait.

UNSC Res. 665 (Passed 13–0, “with Cuba and Yemen abstaining”). This allowed the use of military force to enforce the embargo. (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37639)

The resolution with the greatest potential effect on the situation, however, was UN Security Council Resolution 678. This resolution set the deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait as January 15, 1991, after which time the world body authorized allied military action to eject the invaders (Keesing’s, January 1991: 37934).

Military Buildup

Within days of the Iraqi invasion, President Bush and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher met in Aspen, Colorado, where Thatcher convinced Bush of the seriousness of the situation and of the need to send troops to head off a possible Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. The prime minister believed that only the United States was capable of projecting enough force, with sufficient rapidity, to deter Saddam from proceeding further. The president agreed, but he needed to get support from within the Gulf region before he could deploy the ground forces necessary to contain the invaders (George et al., 1991: 21).

Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and General Colin Powell consulted the Saudi Arabian ambassador in an effort to secure approval to station American troops on the Saudi frontier with Kuwait. Although traditionally reluctant to allow foreign troops on their soil, the Saudis were convinced of the necessity when they were presented with reconnaissance photos showing a massive Iraqi buildup on their border.

Once Saudi Arabia granted permission for troop deployment on its territory, other Gulf states promptly followed suit. The next task for the United States was to begin to build a coalition of nations to face down Iraq. This was done not just to avoid the appearance of the deployment as a case of American neocolonialism, but also to distribute the burden, both fiscally
and militarily, of deterring Hussein among those nations which would benefit from doing so. Furthermore, the formation of such a coalition would make it unmistakably clear to the Iraqi dictator that it was the entire world community that stood against him (George et al., 1991: 22).

The number and variety of forces committed to Operation Desert Shield varied greatly. Nonetheless, it is a tribute to the diplomatic skills of President George H. W. Bush that he was able to forge an alliance of some thirty-four nations, spanning six continents (Blair, 1992: 125). Although the largest and most operationally diverse forces came from the major powers (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Italy), it is indeed important to note that other nations also sent fairly large contingents. The fact that Egypt provided 40,000 troops and Syria some 20,000 men made it substantially more difficult for Saddam Hussein to rally support from other Arab governments by portraying the standoff as Iraq defending Arabs and/or Islam from “American imperialism.” Rather, the scope of the coalition underlined to the Iraqi dictator that he was indeed isolated, an international pariah. Only Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) would offer Saddam any measure of support.

Immediately after the invasion, President Bush ordered a carrier group to the Persian Gulf area (CQWR, August 4, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty, 2533). On August 13, 1990, allied warships in the region began enforcing a naval blockade against all Iraqi shipping violating the UN-imposed sanctions. A week earlier, on August 7, Defense Secretary Cheney announced the dispatch of U.S. aircraft to Saudi Arabia. These planes were to be stationed principally at the Saudi air base at Dhahran, near the Kuwaiti border. That same day, the first U.S. ground troops began to arrive. The largest American deployment since Vietnam was under way (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37636).

By August 25, more than 86,000 allied troops had arrived in Saudi Arabia, 40,000 of which were American. Meanwhile, a massive show of U.S. naval power began to develop in the waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula. Four carrier groups were poised for action, should it prove necessary: the USS John F. Kennedy in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the USS Eisenhower in the Red Sea near Suez, the USS Saratoga, also in the Red Sea, and the USS Independence off the coast of Oman (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37634).

In order to free more troops for possible action in the Persian Gulf, yet maintain deterrent strengths at other American vital points (for example, Germany, Korea), President Bush issued an executive order that called up reservists. Such mass mobilization had not occurred since 1968, the height of the Vietnam War.

The projection of American airpower from the continental United States
and Europe to the Middle East, in terms of both time and distance, “was the largest in history.” The deployment of warplanes entailed some 46 percent of the “total combat force [based] in the United States.” The airlift of personnel and munitions was equivalent to the entire 1948 Berlin airlift occurring every six weeks (Alonso, 1991: 61).

Airpower came in two phases. Phase One, which lasted five weeks, gave the coalition forces superiority in all classes aircraft. Phase Two, which ran from November 8, 1990, through January 15, 1991, succeeded in doubling the number of coalition aircraft present in the Kuwait theater (Alonso, 1991: 61–62).

As the January 15, 1991, deadline approached, diplomatic efforts to break the impasse failed. Saddam Hussein was intransigent and the increasing international pressure seemed only to stiffen further his resolve to resist. By the deadline, however, the coalition forces were in place. The allies were poised for war.

**WHY THE UNITED STATES CHOSE TO GET INVOLVED**

The most obvious reason why the United States chose to get involved in this crisis was that the Middle East is considered to be a region vital to the national interest—indeed, to national survival. The magnitude of this commitment was underscored by the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine during the 1980 State of the Union speech. During this address, the president made it clear that any attempt to disrupt the free flow of oil by any power would be considered an act of war that would, if necessary, be responded to with military force (Brune, 1993: 53–54).

This episode was particularly threatening to American interests because the conquest of Kuwait raised Iraq’s control of total known oil reserves to 20 percent. If Saddam’s army were to overrun Saudi Arabia and neighboring Persian Gulf emirates, the dictator would then hold some 60 percent of the world’s most important commodity. Even without the conquest of Saudi Arabia, Hussein’s share was sufficient that he could effectively disrupt the free flow of oil at market prices, an action that would play havoc with the economies of the Western democracies, as well as the rest of the world (Brune, 1993: 53).

Another reason for United States’ involvement was the need to check Iraqi aggression. With the rise of democracy in Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, it was hoped that a “New World Order” was emerging, at least in the sense that nations would shun war as a policy instrument. Hussein’s naked aggression was, therefore, an apparent attempt to “swim against the cur-
rent” of recent history. Considering its implications for the U.S. economy, as well as stability in the Middle East, President Bush was determined that, regardless of the means employed, Iraqi aggression must be rolled back. As he stated in a September 11, 1990, speech to a joint session of Congress:

America and the world must stand up to aggression. And we will.

. . . An Iraq permitted to swallow Kuwait would have the economic and military power, as well as the arrogance, to intimidate and coerce its neighbors, neighbors who control the lion’s share of the world’s remaining oil reserves. We cannot permit a resource so vital to be dominated by one so ruthless and we won’t.

Recent events have surely proven that there is no substitute for American leadership. In the face of tyranny, let no one doubt America’s credibility and reliability. (CQWR, September 15, 1990, transcript of address by President Bush: 2954)

To the world, especially Washington, Saddam was a monster, or as President Bush put it: “another Hitler.” It was common knowledge that Hussein’s Iraq was in an “elite” group of nations (along with the likes of Iran, North Korea, and Cuba) that had set the standard by which political repression and human rights violations are measured. Thousands of opponents were killed or exiled. Hussein’s most infamous “achievement,” however, was the use of chemical weapons on his own subjects during the suppression of a Kurdish rebellion in the 1980s. His existing reputation for ruthlessness was magnified when he detained foreigners in Iraq and kidnapped Kuwaiti civilians for use as “human shields” so as to discourage retaliation for his aggression (Brune, 1993: 66). When President Bush, therefore, compared Saddam to Hitler, and the situation in the Gulf to that on the eve of World War II, many in the public agreed that there should be no accommodation for Hussein, no Middle Eastern “Munich Pact” (Rezun, 1992: 76).

In the immediate aftermath of the invasion there was a genuine fear of Iraqi military capabilities with regard to the Persian Gulf region. With 900,000 men under arms, Iraq possessed the world’s fourth largest army, an army that had become seasoned by the eight-year war with Iran (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37634; CQWR, March 2, 1991, article by Pat Towell: 552). As awesome as such a large military force was, it paled in comparison to the threat posed by Iraq’s nuclear weapons program. Although its original breeder reactor was destroyed by a 1981 Israeli air raid, by 1990, Iraq’s nuclear program was sufficiently advanced that experts predicted that an operational nuclear device was within three years of completion.

Soviet-built Scud missiles, modified to increase their range, would allow
Baghdad to hit targets throughout the Middle East and Turkey. Furthermore, Iraq was developing significant chemical and biological warfare capabilities. Polling data showed that most Americans favored war if Iraq posed a nuclear threat (Brune, 1993: 67).

This fear of Iraqi capabilities led to a concern that if the United States did not get involved in the crisis, Israel might be tempted again to knock out Saddam’s ability to produce weapons of mass destruction. After all, it was a virtual certainty that this arsenal was developed with the intention of eventual use on the Jewish state. An Israeli strike would have tremendous implications for U.S. policy, as it would instantly transform Baghdad in the eyes of the Arab world from an aggressor into a victim. Consequently, U.S. efforts to forge an anti-Iraq coalition with Arab participation would be dealt a critical blow.

**Reasons for the Offensive War**

The initial American involvement in the Persian Gulf, Operation Desert Shield, was ostensibly a “defensive” deployment. Before long, however, it was decided that offensive operations should be undertaken in January 1991 to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

The most prominent reason was a belief that, after six months of an extremely tight embargo, the sanctions were not having their desired effect; all that they in fact accomplished was to starve the poor. In the view of American military experts, the expected degradation of Iraqi military readiness never came (U.S. News and World Report [cited hereafter as U.S. News], 1992: 187). Although some in the White House (principally General Powell) argued for more time for sanctions to work, perhaps up to a year, other concerns more than offset their arguments (Hilsman, 1992: 84).

The most important of these concerns was that the international coalition, composed as it was of extremely disparate states, could not be held together indefinitely. The state of readiness of coalition troops was a second factor. Because of the need to “rotate out” forces, readiness could not be maintained under the operational and environmental conditions imposed by Operation Desert Shield for a prolonged period. Furthermore, if Saddam managed to turn the situation into an Arab-Israeli conflict during the additional waiting period, there was a real possibility that the coalition could be shattered by essential Arab participants withdrawing their forces (Brune, 1993: 97).

There was also a concern about the effect of the weather on military operations against Iraq. Optimal conditions for warfare on the coalition’s
terms would exist only for a brief period between mid-January and late February. To launch offensive operations any later would put the coalition at a disadvantage due to summer heat (Tsouras, Wright, et al., 1991: 89).

There was, furthermore, a cultural factor that affected the timing of the ground war. Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting and repentance, was scheduled to begin on March 17 (Tsouras, Wright, et al., 1991: 89). To fight during this period would cause undue friction within the coalition, as well as allow some propaganda advantage to accrue to Saddam in the eyes of fellow Muslims. Finally, it was President Bush’s strong conviction that negotiations had reached an impasse. Any further talks were viewed as a cynical attempt by Saddam to stall for more time (Hilsman, 1992: 92–93).

All of these factors, combined with the growing realization that sanctions alone would not force Hussein from Kuwait, led to the decision to launch the offensive (CQWR, January 19, 1991, transcript of address by President Bush: 197). Desert Shield would now become Desert Storm.

THE INTENDED RESULTS/OBJECTIVES OF U.S. INTERVENTION

During an August 8, 1990, address, President Bush enumerated those goals that would form the basis of U.S. policy regarding Iraq. These goals included (1) “the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces” from occupied Kuwait, (2) the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait (the al-Sabah monarchy), (3) “the protection of the lives of U.S. citizens held in Iraq and Kuwait” (many of whom were being held as “human shields”), and finally (4) “the establishment of regional security and stability in the Persian Gulf” basin (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37638).

There seemed to be, however, an additional, hidden objective. The fourth goal, the one concerning regional stability, appeared to imply the specific objectives of removing Hussein from power and neutralizing Iraq’s war machine, including the destruction of its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction (Keesing’s, August 1990: 37638). This was at least partially confirmed by Bush himself during his January 16, 1991, address from the Oval Office when he stated: “We are determined to knock out Saddam Hussein’s nuclear bomb potential. We will also destroy his chemical weapons facilities. Much of Saddam’s artillery and tanks will be destroyed” (CQWR, January 19, 1991, transcript of address by President Bush: 197).

Although Bush would later deny any intent to kill or remove Saddam, it was made clear by the selection of certain targets, in particular a bunker that he was known to use, that the Iraqi dictator was a target. The air force even developed and used a new “bunker buster” bomb that could penetrate
layers of concrete and reinforcement. (For a detailed discussion, see U.S. News, 1992: 3–6.)

Bush’s speech also revealed a fifth, more long-term objective: the establishment of a “New World Order.” In the aftermath of the cold war, Bush envisioned a system where international relations were guided by certain principles that were enforced by the world community at large. In Bush’s conception, the United Nations would fulfill this role as a global enforcer in order to ensure compliance. As the President stated: “Out of these troubled times . . . A New World Order—can emerge: a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world . . . can prosper and live in harmony” (CQWR, September 15, 1990, transcript of address by President Bush: 2953).

Later, he defined the New World Order as “a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations.” Furthermore, Bush foresaw “an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the UN’s founders” (CQWR, January 19, 1991, transcript of address by President Bush: 197).

The Bush objectives were largely codified into UN policy by UN Security Council Resolution 678, which authorized the use of force to secure compliance with the earlier UN resolutions concerning Kuwait. Specifically, it was the “enabling legislation” which would allow enforcement of Resolution 660. It was careful, however, to limit the United Nations’ commitment simply to ejecting Iraq from Kuwait. Given the broader American goals, there seemed to be a tension between Washington’s objectives and those of New York. The most obvious question emerging from this tension was: could the armed forces of the United States “legally” remove Hussein from power during the course of the war? (The full text of all U.N. resolutions can be found in the appendix of U.S. News, 1992.)

The operational goals for the Gulf War were developed by the head of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), General Norman Schwarzkopf, and his staff in 1990. The first phase of the war was going to be an extensive air campaign. The allies were to establish air superiority at the earliest possible time. If command of the skies could be quickly attained, it would have the dual effect of both simplifying the achievement of the other operational objectives as well as reducing coalition casualties (Hilsman, 1992: 84).

The initial air campaign would not be aimed at Kuwait, but rather against Iraq itself. It was considered essential to “blind” the enemy by destroying radar facilities and to knock out the Iraqi command and control system, much of it located in Baghdad. By destroying these command facili-
ties, it was expected that enemy forces would largely be immobilized. Since the bunkers where these facilities were located also would be the place that Hussein would most likely be once hostilities commenced, it was hoped that air strikes against them would, perhaps, yield the added benefit of killing the Iraqi dictator (Brune, 1993: 108; U.S. News, 1992: 3–4).

The next operational goal was to neutralize the Iraqi army in Kuwait by disrupting supply lines, as well as destroying both artillery and tanks. Such intense bombing would also have the ancillary effect of demoralizing Iraqi conscripts, who made up the bulk of the occupation army in Kuwait (Alonso, 1991: 64). The third goal was to destroy industrial targets essential to the war effort, such as factories, warehouses, and communications facilities, as well as infrastructure targets such as bridges, roads, and railways (Hilsman, 1992: 96).

Once the ground campaign had begun, coalition armies would swing around the far side of Kuwait and cut off Iraqi forces from their reinforcements. The liberation of Kuwait would then be achieved with a direct drive of coalition forces from northeastern Saudi Arabia to Kuwait City.

When hostilities commenced, however, priorities shifted slightly. Moving to the top of the list was the destruction of chemical/biological/nuclear weapons facilities and the hunt for both stationary and mobile Scud missile launchers. The latter was especially important because success would mean destruction of the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction against coalition bases and/or urban centers. Failure to achieve this goal, however, would leave open the possibility that the Scuds could be used as a V-2 style terror weapon against Israel. If that were to occur, Jerusalem’s entry into the conflict would dramatically change the scenario.

**THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION**

Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm was a multilateral operation. The coalition forces were drawn from thirty-four nations, operating under the auspices of the United Nations. Despite the official classification as a UN mission, the command of military forces was clearly under American leadership. It should be noted, however, that because President Bush sought, and obtained, a use of force authorization from the world body, he was now bound to act within the parameters allowed by the resolutions that the Security Council had passed since August 1991.

Having the blessing of the United Nations had both advantages and disadvantages. In the months leading to January 1991, Bush was able to use the UN resolutions as both a tool to rally domestic and world opinion and
as a means to coerce (or embarrass) the Congress into granting him a use of force resolution. However, once committed to the UN, Bush was reluctant to exceed the mandate that provided the legal basis for military action.

Although the public rationale for action was rather Wilsonian, specifically the desire to roll back aggression and restore Kuwaiti sovereignty, clearly there was a deeper, underlying motive. It is a matter for debate whether the major powers, which dominate the UN Security Council, would have been as concerned about the admittedly naked aggression and the subsequent “death” of a UN member state if these were the only reasons for involvement. Clearly the commitment of over a half million American soldiers would have been difficult, if not impossible, if it were not rooted in healthy self-interest—in this case, access to the region’s oil at market prices. There is no doubt that there was clear outrage and disgust over humanitarian concerns, especially the heinous and flagrant disregard of human rights by Iraq within occupied Kuwait. Such concerns, however, seem to have been more of a rallying point for public opinion than a motive for action.

THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CLIMATE

Throughout the crisis, President Bush’s handling of the situation enjoyed majority support in public opinion polls. Although it was at its peak in August 1990, the president’s approval rating for his management of the Persian Gulf crisis never dropped below 50 percent during the months leading to war (CQWR, January 5, 1991, article by Holly Idelson: 14). ABC News-Washington Post polls taken during the crisis showed continuous support for military action, if that was what the situation required.

Furthermore, support for such action never fell below 65 percent during the crisis. On the eve of war, it was recorded as high as 74 percent (Mueller, 1994: 217). As a matter of fact, it is believed that the slippage of Mr. Bush’s personal approval rating in mid- to late 1990 was due to two other factors. First, some of the reduction in popularity can be attributed to a “spillover” effect from the public’s impatience with the president (and Congress) during acrimonious fighting over the budget. One may recall that 1990 was the year that the president broke his famous “read my lips” pledge and allowed congressional Democrats to impose what was, at that time, the largest tax increase in U.S. history (Mueller, 1994: 116). The second force acting to depress the president’s polling numbers were those hawks, generally more politically conservative voters, who did not think that Mr. Bush was going fast enough, or hard enough, in pressuring Saddam Hussein. They demanded
more militaristic rhetoric and stepped-up preparations for action (CQWR, January 5, 1991, article by Holly Idelson: 16).

However, as is the case with all polling data, by changing the phasing of a question, the pollster can manipulate its results. For example, in an NBC News-Wall Street Journal poll taken in early December 1990, respondents were asked: “Would you favor or oppose the U.S. going to war against Iraq if Iraq does not withdraw its troops from Kuwait by the United Nations deadline of January 15?” The answer was 54 percent in favor, 34 percent opposed, with 12 percent undecided. However, when given a choice between force and a continued embargo, there was an almost even split. Presented with yet a third scenario, should the United States “go to war if other nations [did] not commit ‘significant military forces,’” the numbers dropped to “34 percent in favor, 58 percent opposed, and 8 percent” undecided. The same poll showed that the dovish position of getting an agreement that would get “Iraq out of Kuwait,” but in return give Baghdad “some control of the disputed oil fields,” had the support of “a slim majority of Americans.” However, in another poll, 49 percent said that “a successful U.S. policy must not only” secure Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, but also remove Saddam from power, a position more hawkish than the officially articulated U.S. policy goals (CQWR, January 5, 1991, article by Holly Idelson: 15). Because of shifts such as these, pollsters cautioned against using any single polling question as a definitive reading of the public mood. (For a more detailed account of various polling data and their interpretation, see Mueller, 1994.)

Congressional Mood

In the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, there was strong bipartisan support for the president’s policies regarding the Persian Gulf crisis. Even liberal senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) conceded, “My own view is that at some point military action is probably going to be necessary” (CQWR, August 4, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2533). The House gave its solid support to a hard-line policy against Iraq by passing a tough sanctions bill by a vote of 416–0. Although the Senate declined to sign on to that particular measure, it did pass a resolution essentially endorsing the policy of the Bush administration. Passing by a vote of 97–0, the resolution urged the president to seek a diplomatic solution, while conceding that a multilateral military action “may be needed to maintain or restore” regional stability (CQWR, August 4, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2533).
Democrats, however, admonished the president that their support in the early stages of the crisis was not a blank check to engage in military operations without congressional consent. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) stated, “Approval for past actions isn’t blanket approval for all future actions” (CQWR, September 1, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2777). Representative Dante Fascell (D-FL), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, concurred, stating, “Nobody wants to give the administration an open-ended commitment” (CQWR, September 8, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2838).

Some Democratic critics of President Bush were concerned, even early in the crisis, that the administration should act, if at all, only with allied military and financial support for the action guaranteed. One such voice was that of Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-CO): “I have real questions obviously about what we’re doing to get some real substantial support from our allies besides votes in the United Nations” (CQWR, September 1, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2777). Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was more adamant, stating that he would not give “advance authorization” for “unilateral” American military action, advocating instead a “multilateral approach” (CQWR, October 20, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 3536). Even influential Republican Richard Lugar (R-IN) advocated the establishment of an international “United Way” fund to underwrite the costs of deploying U.S. troops in the region (CQWR, September 8, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2839).

There were, however, equally vocal critics who faulted Bush for not going far enough. Representative Stephen Solarz (D-NY), normally one of the most liberal members of Congress, insisted that the only acceptable American policy toward Iraq was one that resulted in the removal of Hussein. Solarz called any resolution that left the Iraqi dictator in power a “Pyrrhic Victory.” In early September, Solarz told Secretary of State Baker that he could count on congressional support “for whatever steps are deemed essential in order to liquidate the consequences of this aggression” (CQWR, September 8, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 2839).

Most in Congress seemed to agree with House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt that the United States was the only nation capable of putting together and leading an alliance to compel Iraq to leave Kuwait. Speaking for his party in the response to the president’s September 11, 1990, address to a joint session of Congress, Gephardt said: “America is still the leader—the only power capable of summoning a grand and global alliance on the scale we have seen in Operation Desert Shield” (CQWR, September 15, 1990, transcript of address by Representative Gephardt: 2956).
As noted earlier, Congress passed resolutions supportive of deployment for Operation Desert Shield and the Bush policy. There was, however, a nagging fear among some in Congress that such on-the-record statements of support might be interpreted by the Bush administration as a 1990 edition of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was used by President Lyndon Johnson to dramatically escalate American involvement in Vietnam (CQWR, September 29, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 3140). Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), for example, spoke of his "strongly held view [that] the commitment of American forces by the President in a major assault to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait would require an authorization from Congress" (CQWR, October 20, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 3535).

There was also a concern that the president might attempt to "present Congress with a fait accompli" by not consulting with the congressional leadership until after the inflow of casualties began (CQWR, October 13, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 3440). This feeling had some basis in fact when key members of Congress, specifically Senators Sam Nunn (D-GA) and William Cohen (R-ME), were not consulted regarding the actual deployment of the U.S. armed forces. Nunn, in particular, claimed that he found out about the initial deployment only "after the fact" (CQWR, October 13, 1990: 3440–3441).

The clamor to compel the president to invoke the War Powers Act as a means of obtaining a de facto declaration of war, however, was not universally acclaimed. Some members, including Representative Fascell, were fearful that to do so would tie the president’s hands during the crisis and embolden Saddam Hussein, a dictator free of such constraints (CQWR, September 29, 1990, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 3142).

A constant refrain heard on Capitol Hill was "no more Vietnams." There seemed to be, however, no consensus about the meaning of the slogan, as its interpretation shifted from member to member. For liberals it meant that the government should not engage in a war without first developing strong public support, although these members seem to have forgotten that Vietnam was quite popular up until 1967–1968 and the Tet offensive (CQWR, January 5, 1991, article by Holly Idelson: 14). For conservatives, the phase meant that if the country were to commit itself to military action, America should go in “to win.” Specifically, this meant giving the military all that it believed it needed to carry out its mission, and then allowing it to do so without the war effort being micromanaged from the White House.

In the months leading up to January 1991, President Bush would not acknowledge the need to invoke the War Powers Act and congressional Democrats were exceedingly reluctant to press the issue. Up until the final
debate on a use of force resolution, the attitude of Democrats in both houses toward the impending war “was unclear” (Keesing’s, January 1991: 37934). This was, no doubt, due to a no-win situation that they saw themselves in. If they were to sanction the use of force, the public would hold them co-responsible with the administration if the war turned into a debacle for American forces. However, if the Democrats were to vote against the resolution, it would be yet another time they would appear unpatriotic, a charge that some Republicans had used, with a degree of success, to their political advantage during the cold war. A split in the Democratic ranks became very obvious when the liberal Stephen Solarz not only became a leading advocate of war, but also a cosponsor of the use of force resolution.

After passionate debate, the House approved House Joint Resolution 77 (the use of force resolution) by a vote of 250–183. The winning side was a “nearly unanimous” Republican vote and “the preponderance of Southern Democrats.”

In the Senate, the vote for Senate Joint Resolution 2 was much closer, passing 52–47. All but two GOP Senators voted to approve the resolution, joined by ten Democrats, including Senator Albert Gore (D-TN) (CQWR, January 19, 1991, article by Rhodes Cook, Ronald D. Elving et al.: 190). (For an excellent account of the vote and a breakdown of vote categories, see Cook, Elving et al., in CQWR, January 19, 1991: 190–95.)

**THE POSITION OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TOWARD THE OPERATION**

The initial deployment for Operation Desert Shield had the strong support of the senior military leadership. The operation largely conformed to a pre-existing Pentagon contingency plan, Plan 1002-90. This provided for a commitment of forces to defend Saudi Arabia, but not enough to provide an offensive capability (U.S. News, 1992: 42–43). It called for the deployment of “two combat divisions, plus many Air Force planes and naval vessels.” The total commitment of manpower under the plan was 200,000 troops. It was estimated that it would take seventeen weeks “to mount this defensive operation” (Brune, 1993: 60–61).

A controversial element of the plan as it was originally conceived was that it called for naval aircraft to carry out retaliatory air raids against the aggressor. Such strikes could inflict damage on the enemy, but unfortunately probably could not be sustained without a larger military presence. Early in the crisis, JCS chief General Colin Powell declared his opposition
to such raids. Believing that such actions would either accomplish nothing meaningful or, worse, actually provoke an invasion of Saudi Arabia, Powell stated: “There was no point in doing a retaliatory strike. . . . You either reverse an invasion or you don’t. But to go pinprick at something had no relevance” (U.S. News, 1992: 51). During the fall and winter of 1990–1991, Powell appeared to favor the strategy essentially envisioned in Plan 1002-90, that is, militarily “containing” Hussein’s forces and continuing the buildup of offensive forces in the theater while allowing the sanctions to slowly exact their toll (U.S. News, 1992: 157; Brune, 1993: 61).

General Norman Schwarzkopf, the CENTCOM commander, however, was working on new plans. Such planning, even as a contingency, was necessary because both military and political leaders agreed that a decision on whether to take the offensive would have to be made as early as possible so as to allow for a sufficient military buildup in the theater.

Schwarzkopf placed his faith in a group of “young Turk” military planners whose philosophy, the essence of which would later be called the “Powell Doctrine,” was that military action should concentrate on the maximum use of speed and mobility in order to overwhelm a larger enemy force (U.S. News, 1992: 158–66, 169–70, 409). Haunted by the “specter of Vietnam,” CENTCOM planners decided that any ground campaign “must be short, sharp, and decisive, with minimum casualties.” They believed that this could be achieved by making use of the allies’ “technological air superiority” to soften up Iraqi forces before the offensive (Tsouras, Wright, et al., 1991: 89).

By October 1990, Schwarzkopf was finally comfortable with his defensive position in Saudi Arabia. President Bush now ordered the buildup called for in the offensive plans to begin (Brune, 1993: 61). Upon receiving the president’s order, Powell asked Schwarzkopf to define what forces would be required for a successful offensive (Brune, 1993: 61). Powell and Secretary of Defense Cheney then went about the business of planning the outlines of the shape that the offensive would take. Because the Iraqis had heavily fortified the Kuwaiti border with Saudi Arabia, the duo decided simply to bypass the Iraqi defenses. In a maneuver dubbed the “left hook,” allied forces would swing west, into the desert interior of Saudi Arabia, and cross directly into Iraq. Armor would then speed across southern Iraq and cut off Iraqi occupation forces from their reinforcements in Basra. This move, if successful, would force the Republican Guard to race back to Basra lest Saddam’s second largest city fall to coalition forces.

Schwarzkopf, as the theater commander, would be given free reign to “fill in the blanks” of the actual execution of the operation as he saw fit
(U.S. News, 1992: 168–69). The final plan was presented to President Bush by General Powell on December 1, 1990, and the president accepted it almost immediately (U.S. News, 1992: 186).

One point must be clarified. General Powell and other military leaders seem to have been in basic agreement that force was necessary, although there was disagreement regarding its timing and nature. It appears from most versions of the deliberations that Schwarzkopf believed that the conditions for action would be optimal in the winter, especially January and February. General Powell, however, argued that sanctions should be allowed more time to work. The result of a continued “siege” of Iraq would be that the enemy would become increasingly hard pressed to obtain spare parts and food, thus greatly reducing his readiness. Bush, pressed by political considerations, endorsed the earliest possible start of the offensive after the expiration of the UN deadline. The stage was set for war.

**CARRYING OUT THE OPERATION**

The long-anticipated offensive, code-named Operation Desert Storm, began just before midnight on January 16, 1991, with a massive air attack (Keesing’s, January 1991: 37936). Schwarzkopf’s strategy was to use the air war as a means of wearing down the enemy. This was especially appealing for four reasons. First, Iraq presented a target-rich environment. Second, Iraq had no experience against such a massive, concentrated air attack. Third, the availability to the coalition forces of “smart weapons” gave the allies technological superiority that would maximize the damage inflicted while minimizing casualties. Finally, the relentless pounding would, as it later proved evident, destroy morale in the enemy rear (Rezun, 1992: 80).

The first priority of the air campaign was to destroy Iraq’s command and control facilities. This began immediately at the start of the conflict, midnight Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Allied forces made use of their advantages, especially night-fighting capabilities (Hilsman, 1992: 97). As such, the opening salvos of the war were fired by F-117A Night Hawk stealth fighters and by navy warships in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea that launched Tomahawk cruise missiles at targets in and around Baghdad. The F-117A and Tomahawk strikes were aimed at “cutting off the head” of the Iraqi military so that it would be unable to transmit orders effectively to its troops in the field, thus making coordinated action difficult, if not impossible.

The second priority was to blind radar installations and destroy surface-to-air defense missile batteries (SAMs). Helicopter gunships struck these sites almost immediately.
The third priority was to destroy factories, laboratories, and depots, as well as “to inflict heavy losses” on elite troops “dug in” at the Iraqi rear, along with their supporting tanks and artillery. A final goal was to hit telephone and electrical facilities (Rezun, 1992: 89–93).

The air war was the most intensive air operation in history. During the first seventy-two hours, coalition forces averaged one sortie per minute (Brune, 1993: 108–9). Allied aircraft averaged a total of 3,000–4,000 sorties per day (Rezun, 1992: 91). Air forces involved units drawn from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Italy, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia (Alonso, 1991: 65).

Coalition forces rapidly gained control of the skies over Iraq. Allied quantitative and qualitative advantages allowed the coalition to dominate the inferior Iraqi air force. As a result, Saddam conceded the skies to the coalition. After a drubbing in dogfights with coalition fighters early in the air war, Hussein simply withdrew his aircraft from the battle zone. Many of Iraq’s seven hundred planes were moved to safety in northern Iraq or sent to seek refuge in Iran. The only defenses remaining were anti-aircraft guns and largely ineffective Soviet-made SAMs (Keesing’s, January 1991: 37936).

During the course of the war, air-to-air combat losses were stunningly one sided: the Iraqis lost 35 planes, the coalition lost none (Alonso, 1991: 70). Total aircraft loss figures were equally impressive. Iraq had 127 planes confirmed as destroyed, an additional 141 estimated losses, and 148 flown to refuge in Iran, for a total of 416 aircraft lost. Coalition forces lost only 63 aircraft, of which only 24 were American planes lost due to combat (Watson, Bruce, et al., 1991: 228–30).

After destroying major strategic targets in Iraq, the focus of the air war shifted to Iraqi troops stationed in Kuwait and the routes used to supply them. Republican Guard units, “120,000-strong,” were heavily attacked at their fortified positions just north of the Iraqi border with Kuwait. By February 3, twenty-five of the thirty bridges leading to Kuwait had been destroyed. The resulting bottlenecks allowed allied air forces to wreak havoc on the Iraqi supply and communication lines.

The bombing had a devastating effect. By mid-February 1991, Iraqi forces had lost an estimated 750 tanks, “650 artillery pieces, and 600 armored personnel carriers in the Kuwaiti theater of operations” (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37983–37984).

The allied ground offensive began at 4:00 A.M. local time on February 24, 1991. The coalition launched a three-pronged attack over a 480-kilometer front. The bombing campaign had had its intended effect, as the allies encountered only light resistance (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37983–37984).
The goal of the allied strategy was to use superior speed and firepower to engage the enemy in “a short war with few casualties” by utilizing flanking movements (U.S. News, 1992: 275). Iraqi forces were initially frozen into place by coalition diversionary tactics. Iraqi conventional wisdom was that the allies would open the ground war with an amphibious assault on coastal Kuwait, done with the aim of liberating Kuwait City as soon as possible. Schwarzkopf encouraged this belief by faking the preparations for such an operation. With Iraqi forces thus occupied, the allies were free to execute their strategy (CQWR, March 2, 1991, article by Pat Towell: 552).

One prong of the three-pronged offensive, composed of Arab divisions and U.S. Marines, breached the so-called strip of death and drove toward Kuwait City. The advance forces were aided by Iraqi POWs who alerted field commanders as to the locations of minefields and other defenses (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37985).

The main body of the coalition’s forces was committed to the “left hook,” or the “Hail Mary,” as it was popularly known. Rather than attack Kuwait and deal with the elaborate World War I-style defenses, most of the allied forces were positioned west of Kuwait so as to outflank enemy forces. This second prong consisted of the bulk of allied armor. Bypassing the main enemy lines, these units drove straight into southeastern Iraq. There they engaged Republican Guard units that were dug in south of Basra.

The third prong, consisting of French and American units, swung far to the west, advancing on the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah on the Euphrates River. The force destroyed an Iraqi division near the town of As Salam. As the area was being secured, four hundred helicopters were used to set up an allied supply base sixty miles inside Iraq (Brune, 1993: 115).

The net result was a rapid, overwhelming victory for the coalition. The first prong liberated Kuwait City on February 27, 1991. The second prong engaged Republican Guard units and soundly defeated them in an intense tank battle. Coalition forces then drove north toward Basra. The third prong successfully cut off reinforcements from entry into the theater of operations (Brune, 1993: 115–17). The Iraqis were so quickly and decisively defeated that Schwarzkopf would later assert that if he had turned his forces northward, nothing could have prevented the capture of Baghdad.

The one-sided nature of the ground war can largely be attributed to the tactics that each side employed. The styles of warfare contrasted so greatly that it has been asserted that the Iraqis were fighting World War I while the coalition campaign resembled World War III. The reliance of the Iraqis on inferior Soviet weaponry and a war of attrition may have worked against
Iran in the 1980s, but they proved no match for a modern army. The coalition’s use of movement and its technological superiority virtually guaranteed an allied victory (Rezun, 1992: 94). The war’s final major battle was to graphically illustrate this point.

Iraqi forces, ordered to surrender by the coalition, instead chose to retreat northward along the main highway that connected Kuwait City with Iraq. The slow-moving columns, heavily laden with captured booty, were spotted by allied aircraft. In what was described by the press (and some pilots) as a “turkey shoot,” the Iraqis were hit on all sides by allied aircraft. The resulting panic caused a traffic jam that allowed attacking aircraft to inflict heavy casualties. The result was a three-mile-long “highway of death,” a near-apocalyptic scene of burned-out tanks and trucks, along with perhaps thousands of charred bodies (Brune 1993: 118; Keesing’s, February 1991: 37985–37986; U.S. News, 1992: 395).

Although these air strikes were “criticized as causing needless deaths,” they could have been prevented if Hussein had “ordered a proper surrender” (Brune, 1993: 118). An angry Schwarzkopf defended the action by reminding his critics that “the allies would not attack any Iraqi soldier who left his vehicle and offered to surrender.” Those who chose to flee in tanks or any other military vehicles “were to be considered legitimate targets” if they did not comply (U.S. News, 1992: 395–96).

The coalition victory was so overwhelming that President Bush, perhaps taking the sensitivities of his Arab coalition partners into account, decided to end the ground war nearly two days ahead of schedule. Bush declared an informal cease-fire, to take effect at 5:00 A.M. GMT on February 28 (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37986).

**Types and Quantities of Forces Used**

The total of allied forces committed in Operation Desert Storm numbered 700,000 (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37986). The U.S. contingent was the largest by far, as 532,000 American soldiers were deployed to the region. In addition to the allied aircraft and carrier groups discussed earlier, it bears mentioning that the United States also dispatched 2,000 tanks to the Kuwait theater of operations (Tsouras, Wright, et al., 1991: 241).

The positioning of coalition forces in general, and of American troops in particular, allowed the allies to strike at Iraq from virtually every direction. Carrier groups were maintained in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the eastern Mediterranean. Likewise, land-based aircraft flew from bases in
Saudi Arabia (principally the air base at Dhahran), eastern Turkey, and the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Diego Garcia had been a site for the prepositioning of equipment, as well as a base of operation for massive American B-52 bombers (Brune, 1993: 54; Hilsman, 1992: 115).

Once war had been decided upon, President Bush committed himself to providing the armed forces everything that the theater commander requested (U.S. News, 1992: 172). A wide variety of forces were used in unprecedented numbers, some seeing combat for the first time ever. The types of units deployed can most efficiently be reviewed by outlining the major weapons used.

The M1A1 Abrams was perhaps the most advanced tank on the battlefield. Given Iraqi chemical warfare capabilities, the M1A1 was especially valuable because its pressurized cabin would have rendered Iraqi poison gas useless in stopping an allied advance. It also has tougher armor than other tanks used (U.S. News, 1992: 166). Two of the M1A1’s greatest assets, however, were its enhanced maneuvering capabilities and its superior firepower. The tank’s cannon employed a state-of-the-art design that allowed it to fire shells further, and with greater accuracy, than any other tank on the battlefield. Consequently, Iraq’s Soviet-built T-72s were unable to get within range to adequately engage the Abrams (Brune, 1993: 117).

Another weapon that was highly effective against Iraqi armor was the A-10 Thunderbolt II. Affectionately called the “Warthog” because of its ugly appearance, the A-10 had the ability to spend up to forty-five minutes over a target (an attribute that also made it “ideal for hunting the mobile Scud launchers”). The A-10’s real value, however, was in its two major attributes. First, it was a proven tank-killer. Its 30 mm nose cannon fires heavy shells made of depleted uranium and it “can carry up to eight tons of ordinance.” Among the weapons that it can utilize are laser-guided bombs and Maverick anti-tank missiles.

Second, the A-10 provides effective close ground support for troops. By flying at a relatively slow maximum speed of 420 mph, it is ideal for support of infantry and armor. While there were only 144 such planes in the Kuwait theater, the A-10 flew approximately “30 percent of [all] combat sorties” and “accounted for more than 50 percent of the destruction” of Iraqi field equipment (U.S. News, 1992: 160, 322).

The F-117A stealth fighter again saw action in the Gulf. This time it was more extensively used than had been the case in Panama, and it proved to be extremely lethal. Despite its classification as a fighter, it acted as a very effective penetrating bomber (U.S. News, 1992: 230, 233–34). Due to its
“stealth,” that is to say its radar-proof facets and surface, it was consistently able to elude Iraqi air defenses. No F-117As were lost during the air campaign, despite the fighter’s central role in destroying enemy air defenses (Brune, 1993: 174).

Although it comprised only 2.5 percent of the American air forces used in the war, the F-117A was responsible for hitting “31 percent of all Iraqi targets” on the first day (Alonso, 1991: 64). The stealth fighter, however, was not without its disappointments. First, it did not prove to be as effective at hunting Iraqi Scuds as expected (Brune, 1993: 111). Second, the laser-guided bombs that the F-117A used were less accurate than originally reported (Brune, 1993: 178–79).

The war in the Gulf marked the first major combat use of so-called smart bombs. Originally developed as a weapon for use against Soviet forces in the European theater, they are produced in both laser and optically (using television images) guided models (Alonso, 1991: 75). There have been major disputes over how effective such weapons are. This is because, contrary to video presented to the press during the war, such weapons are not 100 percent effective. However, while laser-guided bombs accounted for only 7–10 percent of all ordinance dropped during the conflict, “they hit their targets [an impressive] 80 percent of the time” (Hilsman, 1992: 157). This lower figure, however, still represented a vast qualitative improvement over the conventional bombs utilized during Vietnam (Brune, 1993: 178; Hilsman, 1992: 157).

Another cold war weapon that saw its first combat use was the Tomahawk cruise missile. Originally developed as a highly accurate drone that could deliver nuclear warheads deep within Soviet territory by flying below defense radar, the Tomahawk was perhaps the most technically sophisticated weapon in the coalition arsenal. Fired from navy frigates and submarines, these missiles have on-board computers that contain electronic maps that help the Tomahawk closely follow topographical contours and allow for extremely specific targeting. It is reported to be so accurate that it can be programmed to fly through a building’s window to strike at an internal target (Rezun, 1992: 84; U.S. News, 1992: 222). A total of 284 Tomahawks were fired during the thirty-eight-day air war.

Originally believed to be able to hit its target as much as 85 percent of the time, some of the Tomahawk’s critics contend that its accuracy was probably closer to 50 percent. However, as is the case with smart bombs, even this lower figure indicates an improvement in missile accuracy (Brune, 1993: 108, 179). A major advantage of cruise missiles like the Tomahawk is
that they greatly reduce “pilot exposure over heavily defended targets, especially during daylight hours” (Alonso, 1991: 64). Used as a means of destroying enemy airfields, it was also said to have been more effective than bombs in destroying hardened bunkers. The effectiveness of the Tomahawks was further improved when they were used in conjunction with unarmed drones, which diverted and confused enemy defenses (U.S. News, 1992: 223).

The weapon perhaps most closely associated with the Persian Gulf War is the Patriot missile. Presented to the public during the war as an anti-missile missile, it had been envisioned in the 1980s as the ground-based component of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or “Star Wars”). During the conflict, it was deployed as a defense against Iraqi Scud missile terror bombings aimed at Saudi Arabia, and later, Israel (Rezun, 1992: 84). Patriot battery operators man radar systems that track incoming missiles and then fire Patriots to destroy them.

In assessing the success of the Patriot, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions. During the war itself, the weapons achieved an almost mythical fame as a sort of “silver bullet” that would always successfully intercept and destroy incoming missiles. Although some damage resulted due to falling debris, the Patriot acted as a powerful psychological tool when the United States deployed batteries in Israel. As such, it may have provided essential reassurance to the Israeli public, thus keeping Jerusalem from retaliating, which could have threatened the unity of the coalition (Brune, 1993: 175–76).

**THE SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT**

The war was successfully confined to the Kuwait theater of operations, which included Kuwait, southeastern Iraq, and northern Saudi Arabia. There were, of course, several attempts by Saddam Hussein to expand the war. The most important of these attempts was the use of Scud missiles to strike civilian centers in Israel as a means of goading Jerusalem into intervening against Iraq (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37984). Saddam was convinced that by getting Israel to respond, he could split the coalition by transforming the conflict into an Arab-Israeli war. Israel, bowing to pressure from the United States, did not take the bait and this gambit failed miserably.

It is possible that the flight of Iraqi aircraft to Iran was actually an attempt to draw Teheran into the war as Hussein’s ally. One can only speculate whether coalition violation of Iranian airspace to pursue the fleeing Iraqi planes would have induced the Iranians to respond.
THE NATURE OF THE THEATER COMMANDER’S POWER AND INFLUENCE

In planning the prosecution of the Gulf War, the influence of the theater commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, was great indeed. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Colin Powell was in favor of the initial deployment for Operation Desert Shield (U.S. News, 1992: 65). Powell assigned the duty for the actual planning of the options to be utilized to the CENTCOM commander, General Schwarzkopf. Although the Pentagon already had a contingency deployment plan that allowed Desert Shield to be activated as rapidly as it was, Schwarzkopf’s staff believed that this plan provided for too small a force to engage in an operation capable of expelling Iraq from Kuwait should such action prove necessary (U.S. News, 1992: 67–69).

By mid-October 1990, General Schwarzkopf was comfortable with the defensive position of the coalition forces in Saudi Arabia. When the president was informed of the status of allied forces in the region, he ordered plans and preparations to be readied for a possible offensive. At this time, Powell requested that Schwarzkopf define the nature and number of forces that he believed would be required to undertake offensive action (Brune, 1993: 61; U.S. News, 1992: 168–69).

General Powell believed that the key to victory would be the use of overwhelming force, relentlessly applied. Put differently, coalition troops should go “all out,” “defeat the enemy,” and get out quickly (Hilsman, 1992: 96). The plan that was eventually adopted reflected Powell and Defense Secretary Cheney’s outline for victory: a massive air campaign, followed by a “left hook” ground offensive (see above) (U.S. News, 1992: 166–69).

For his part, once he was given the general concept to follow, Schwarzkopf was given free reign to “fill in the blanks” (U.S. News, 1992: 169–71, 400). Schwarzkopf’s inner circle of planners believed in mobility and speed as essential elements of any ground campaign (U.S. News, 1992: 159–60). The resulting refinement of the Powell/Cheney plan reflected the new tactics advocated by Schwarzkopf and his staff. It called for a five-week air offensive, followed by a massive ground assault (Brune, 1993: 108).

The specter of Vietnam clearly had a strong influence on the planning of the offensive. Once it was under way, the offensive would “be short, sharp, and decisive.” The main aim was to secure a rapid victory, while keeping casualties as low as possible. It was considered essential by Schwarzkopf that the war be initiated only after the coalition had achieved both quantitative and qualitative superiority in the Kuwait theater of operations (Tsouras, Wright, et al., 1991: 89). President Bush greatly sympathized
with his commander and consequently authorized General Powell to grant Schwarzkopf anything he needed to achieve a rapid victory (U.S. News, 1992: 172; Brune, 1993: 61).

The political decision to use force was, essentially, an executive decision by President Bush. It was a decision made contrary to the advice of General Powell, who argued against an offensive, pleading for sanctions to be given more time. Bush did not seek advice from his military commanders regarding the actual decision to go to war. The president made up his mind after consulting his most trusted advisor, National Security Advisor Admiral Brent Scowcroft (Hilsman, 1992: 249–50). Once the decision to begin the offensive was made, Bush conferred with Powell and Cheney about the exact time when the operation could be undertaken. They advised the president that the air war could commence as early as 12:01 A.M. GMT on January 16, 1991.

As for the actual prosecution of the war, General Schwarzkopf was essentially given carte blanche to act as he saw fit. Gone was any residue of Vietnam, specifically the micromanagement of the war that had characterized the Johnson administration. Liberal critics of President Bush’s policy of noninterference in the conduct of the offensive argued that his failure to supervise the military more carefully was an abdication of his role as the commander in chief that would undoubtedly result in the unnecessary deaths of Iraqi civilians during the course of the fighting. As one analyst put it: “The long-term political consequences of a decision to bomb particular targets are not the responsibility of military leaders, nor is the military equipped to make such judgements by either training or experience” (Hilsman, 1992: 210).

As it turned out, however, while there were some regrettable civilian casualties, they were not on the horrendous scale that some had predicted. In any case, the president was more concerned with the opinion of the American public than with Iraqi sensibilities. The public, in turn, was concerned with very little except that American casualties remain low.

Not much seems to have been revealed about limitations placed on engaging the enemy. The only publicly known restriction appears to have been that American pilots were required to positively identify their targets so that damage to civilians was kept to a minimum (Alonso, 1991: 65). The liberality of the rules of engagement was revealed by the so-called highway of death incident, when it was announced that only if Iraqi forces abandoned their equipment and laid down their arms would they be allowed to surrender. Otherwise, they were to be considered hostile and dealt with accordingly.
General Schwarzkopf’s original plan envisioned a 144-hour ground offensive. However, after consulting with his theater commander, President Bush decided to call a cease-fire after only 100 hours. There were several reasons for the decision to terminate the hostilities. The most obvious was the “highway of death” episode alluded to earlier. There was a real fear that such carnage might split the alliance, with Arab forces refusing to participate further if it meant slaughtering brother Arabs (Brune, 1993: 118; U.S. News, 1992: 395–96).

The second major reason was a desire on the part of the Bush administration not to exceed the UN mandate, which was the legal basis for Operation Desert Storm. The UN use of force resolution simply provided for the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and little more. Once this was achieved, there was a self-imposed sense of pressure on the United States to end the war as quickly as possible (Brune, 1993: 118; U.S. News, 1992: 400–401). Additional pressure came from President Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR, who himself was under “increasing pressure” from hardliners in his own military. It was feared that if Baghdad were destroyed, these military elements and the KGB might use it as the excuse to topple the Soviet leader (U.S. News, 1992: 401).

A third reason for terminating the war was a fear that if Iraq were too severely weakened, it could no longer serve as a buffer against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. The power vacuum that would be created would almost certainly be filled by Iran. As bad as Saddam Hussein was, for Washington, the likely alternative was worse (Brune, 1993: 119).

Finally, there was a certain appeal, in a public relations sense, in ending the war at precisely 100 hours. When asked his opinion about the earlier than expected cease-fire, Schwarzkopf was quoted as having replied, “I have no problem with that” (U.S. News, 1992: 396–97).

Other accounts seem to suggest that, his public professions notwithstanding, Schwarzkopf was indeed unhappy about the president’s decision. An aid to the general said that Schwarzkopf asked Mr. Bush to give him a few more hours so that Republican Guard units near Basra could be surrounded. Schwarzkopf was also said to have desired to “clarify” the situation on the battlefield. There was confusion “about the location of key enemy units” and “no provision had [yet] been made” for the establishment of a demilitarized zone to separate the two sides (U.S. News, 1992: 396, 401).

In a broadcast interview, the general claimed that he, in fact, wanted to continue the war and remove Saddam Hussein from power, but that President Bush had ordered him to stop. Shortly afterward, this statement was
recanted, with Schwarzkopf calling Bush’s decision courageous and “very humane” (Brune, 1993: 118–19).

Clearly, in terms of the actual prosecution of the war, the theater commander had nearly complete authority and his opinion carried great weight at the White House. However, the more political choices regarding whether to go to war and when to declare a cease-fire were ultimately made, after consultation with Schwarzkopf, by the president.

EXIT STRATEGY

There was no formal exit plan as such. In a speech delivered shortly after the cease-fire, President Bush indicated that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as was prudent, stating: “I have directed Secretary Cheney to begin the immediate return of American combat units from the gulf” (CQWR, March 9, 1991, transcript of address by President Bush: 624). The first group of soldiers returned that day.

By April 4, some 20,000 troops had withdrawn, and most returned home by the summer. As American forces were withdrawn, they were replaced by UN observers and “representatives of international relief organizations.” Formal control of southern Iraq was transferred to the United Nations on April 26, and the last American troops left on May 6, 1991 (Hilsman, 1992: 167–68).

THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE INTERVENTION

In his speech to Congress on March 6, 1991, President Bush declared: “I can report to the nation: Aggression is defeated; the war is over” (CQWR, March 9, 1991, transcript of address by President Bush: 632). Indeed, the immediate result appeared to be one of the greatest military victories in U.S. history. Kuwait was liberated and the Iraqi war machine all but destroyed. Some Republican Guard units, although weakened, were spared so that internal order within Iraq could be maintained in the aftermath of the conflict. It was also envisioned by the Bush administration that these units would be necessary to deter any attempts by Iran to exploit the confusion in Iraq for its own benefit.

Damage to Kuwait was extensive, but could not yet even begin to be estimated. Perhaps the most vindictive act committed by retreating Iraqi troops was the setting ablaze of all of Kuwait’s oil wells. This act of environmental terrorism so blackened the skies that noon was as dark as night
over much of Kuwait. It would cost the Kuwaiti economy billions of dollars in damages and lost revenue in the months it would take to put out all of the fires (Keesing’s, December 1993: 39792; Keesing’s, February 1991: 37988).

Iraq, too, suffered heavy, inestimable damage to its infrastructure. Most of the phone lines and electrical grid had been destroyed, which, it was estimated, would take years to fully restore. Both Basra and Baghdad had been bombed so heavily that the country seemed to have regressed to a “pre-industrial” state. There were severe shortages of medicine, food, fuel, and other necessities (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37984; Keesing’s, March 1991: 38082).

Iraqi casualties were staggering. “Unofficial estimates varied wildly, with some experts suggesting that as many as 100,000 or 150,000 Iraqis might have died during the war. A more commonly cited figure, however, was of total casualties of 100,000, of whom up to 35,000 might have been killed.” The British Defense Ministry estimated that 175,000 Iraqis had been captured (Keesing’s, February 1991: 37986).

At the time of the initial cease-fire on March 3, 1991, the coalition forces were in control of 15 percent of Iraq’s territory, including most of the coastal area near the city of Basra (Keesing’s, March 1991: 38081).

The immediate terms of the cease-fire included the prompt release of allied prisoners of war held by Iraq, help in locating land mines, arrangements to separate coalition and Iraqi forces in order to prevent skirmishes, Iraqi acceptance of responsibility to pay war damage claims, and for Baghdad to accept the terms of, and to implement, all UN resolutions regarding Kuwait.

During the negotiations for a formal cease-fire, the United Nations added several stringent conditions. Iraq was “to renounce terrorism,” to accept the 1963 (pre-invasion) borders with Kuwait, “to destroy all stockpiles of its chemical and biological weapons,” to dismantle all facilities capable of producing nuclear weapons, to destroy its “Scuds and other missiles, and to pledge never to [attempt to] acquire such arms again” (Hilsman, 1992: 168).

Sanctions were eased on food, medicine, and emergency needs; however, a request to allow Baghdad to sell its oil to pay for these goods was denied (Keesing’s, March 1991: 38083). The United Nations also mandated that 25 percent of all future oil revenues were to be set aside to pay reparations (Hilsman, 1992: 168).

The massive bombing campaign that opened the war, as was noted earlier, inflicted extensive damage on Iraq. Observers described the destruction as being “near-apocalyptic,” setting the Iraqi economy back by decades
The lack of food and other necessities led to rationing. A black market soon emerged that made many items available, but only at staggering prices (Hilsman, 1992: 169). The International Red Cross sent emergency food and medicine to ward off starvation and epidemic (Keesing’s, March 1991: 38082).

Sanctions were kept in force pending Iraqi compliance with all UN resolutions. It was the position of the United States, as well as of the Western allies, that Iraq would be allowed no oil sales or the lifting of sanctions until at least two major conditions were met: (1) the dismantling of Iraqi “chemical and biological weapons, its ballistic missiles, and its facilities” capable of producing nuclear weapons, and (2) Iraq’s agreement “to pay 30 percent of its future oil revenues to Kuwait” as reparations (Hilsman, 1992: 170).

**Twin Rebellions**

As the Persian Gulf War ended, Iraq was instantly faced with the outbreak of two major rebellions that threatened to dismember the country. In the south, the Shiite majority revolted, and in the north, the long-smoldering Kurdish rebellion flared anew.

The southern rebellion began in the Basra area on March 1, 1991. It quickly spread to other southern cities, including Nasiriyah, Karbala, and Najaf, even reaching to the very suburbs of Baghdad itself. The reported aim of the rebels was to establish a state with an Islamic government, presumably resembling that of neighboring Iran.

On March 5, government forces began to counterattack. Spearheaded by the surviving units of Hussein’s Republican Guard, armor and heavy artillery pounded rebel forces in fierce fighting. Saddam’s forces, while gaining the upper hand in battle, were having trouble holding what they had captured. As soon as government troops pushed on from a captured area, rebels would reclaim much of the lost territory.

The rebellion was brutally suppressed, as 30,000 were believed to have died in shortly more than a week of fighting. Government troops were ruthless in their vengeance, as they “executed large numbers of [captured] guerrillas and civilians.” Within weeks, Basra had been re-taken by government forces. By the end of March, the rebellion in the south had been subdued (Keesing’s, March 1991: 38081–38082).

In northern Iraq, the Kurdish minority took advantage of the post-war disorder to resume their intermittent rebellion. This time, the rebellion was
centered near the city of Mosul and the Kirkuk oil region. As in the south, the rebels initially enjoyed spectacular success, threatening to completely overrun much of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The tide of battle soon began to turn. Iraqi forces used air raids and heavy shelling in a counterattack that led to the recovery of the major cities by early April. As a result, 3 million refugees retreated into the mountains in the extreme north of Iraq in order to escape certain retribution and possible genocide. The Iraqi army made use of fixed-wing aircraft (in violation of the UN cease-fire agreement) as well as chemical bombs and phosphorus shells against rebel forces. Furthermore, it was confirmed that napalm was being used against retreating civilians.

Kurdish guerrillas were able to check the Iraqi advance with heavy fighting near Sulaimaniya. Toward the end of April, Saddam offered to grant limited autonomy to the Kurds. Kurdish leaders, however, while open to the negotiations, warned that wide differences existed between the two sides as to the actual nature of “autonomy” (Keesing’s, April 1991: 38126–38127).

A common link between both rebel groups was a sense of betrayal by the United States. For months, Washington had not-too-subtly encouraged the rebellions, but then did nothing to support the insurgents. The parallels to the ill-fated Hungarian rebellion of 1956 were obvious. Speaking for the Bush administration, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler denied that Washington had ever called for an uprising against Hussein, reminding reporters that the overthrow of the Iraqi dictator was not a stated American objective.

It is undeniable, however, that Mr. Bush had encouraged such uprisings through his fiery rhetoric both before and during the Gulf War. However, he apparently developed “cold feet” after the war’s conclusion. The president realized that, despite the emotional satisfaction that Saddam’s overthrow would provide, the collapse of Iraq would undoubtedly create a power vacuum that Iran, Syria, or both would attempt to fill. None of these scenarios were in the long-term interests of the United States. The expansion of Iran would be particularly troublesome due to the fact that its fiery brand of Islamic fundamentalism would then be even closer to Israel.

Furthermore, Washington’s Turkish allies were alarmed at the prospect of an independent Kurdish state formed from northern Iraq. Most Kurds reside in Turkey, and therefore Ankara feared the calls for the creation of a “greater Kurdistan” that would surely follow.

The United States was also afraid, or so it claimed, to involve itself di-
rectly in another state's internal affairs. Should Washington embark on this course, it would set a dangerous precedent for elsewhere, as well as engage it in an open-ended commitment in Iraq.

Ironically, the United States was forced to allow Hussein to remain in power because it could find no credible alternative to the Iraqi tyrant. This, perhaps, explains why Republican Guard units were allowed to survive the war. For better or worse, the status quo assured that internal order was maintained and that greater threats, like Iran, were kept out (New York Times, June 28, 1993, article by Thomas L. Friedman). In any case, the Bush administration could encourage a coup by disgruntled officers that would replace Saddam with a more acceptable military regime.

As the Kurdish situation became more serious, Bush reversed his non-interference policy. Perhaps feeling a degree of guilt over the plight of the Kurds, the allies set up safe havens along the Turkish border. Named “Operation Provide Comfort,” this effort established tent cities to house refugees, as well as providing food and medical care. To protect these camps, the United States declared a “no military activity” zone north of the 36th parallel, although the oil region around Kirkuk was exempted. Any attempt to interfere with relief efforts would be met with a military response (Keesing’s, April 1991: 38128).

**UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF OPERATION DESERT STORM**

The Persian Gulf War was unique in a number of ways. First, and perhaps best publicized, was the introduction of ultramodern cold war–inspired weapons systems into a conventional conflict. High-tech weapons such as cruise missiles and M1A1 Abrams tanks greatly contributed to the speed of victory and low casualty rates. The premiere of these weapons systems answered a question that had long been on the minds of defense planners: “Do these weapons really work?” The answer: “yes.” Despite their imperfections, these weapons represented a great stride in the improvement of military technology (Alonso, 1991: 75–78).

A second, yet associated, variable was the employment of new tactics of movement. Speed and mobility were used in innovative ways, in conjunction with the high-tech weapons, to soundly trounce a force that was believed to be larger in size. In concert with these tactics, flanking maneuvers like the “left hook” or “Hail Mary” were enormously successful (Brune, 1993: 115).
A less heralded, but profoundly important, difference from past interventions since 1945 was that the Soviet Union sided with the United States. For the first time, America could be absolutely sure that there would be no counter-intervention by another superpower. Washington was, therefore, virtually able to guarantee victory because it could fight without inhibition; it could do whatever it would take to win decisively (Brune, 1993: 58–59).

Unfortunately, the Persian Gulf War introduced the world to two new aspects of warfare. The first was a new variation on the use of hostages as “human shields.” Hostages have been taken since antiquity, but never before have civilians been so shamelessly exploited as when women and children were kept on military and industrial sites so as to dissuade allied forces from bombing. The second Iraqi “innovation” was ecoterrorism. Partially as a tactic to fill the skies with smoke so as to “blind” allied airmen and partially as an irrational, vindictive act, Iraqi troops uncapped and set ablaze 732 of Kuwait’s oil wells. The fires continued for months, blackening the skies over Kuwait. Furthermore, Iraqi soldiers blew apart oil lines and allowed a huge, 350-mile-long oil slick to form in the upper Persian Gulf. Although it was probably intended either to block shipping or to foul desalination plants that provided the emirate with drinking water, the result was that the regional ecosystem was severely disrupted (Watson, Bruce, et al., 1991: 214; Brune 1993: 66, 111–12). Allied bombers were able to partially alleviate the problem of open pipelines by bombing to seal them (Brune, 1993: 112).

Another unique characteristic of this case was Saddam’s use of terror bombings. Just as the Nazis had used V-2s forty-five years earlier, Hussein used modified Scud missiles, not so much to hit military targets, but to terrorize innocent civilians in a country with which he was not even at war. In their modified form, the Iraqi Scuds were so inaccurate that they had no other purpose but to be aimed at cities to kill civilians and intimidate governments (Brune, 1993: 110–11).

Finally, a unique and very curious feature of the war was that Hussein, while dramatically posturing in the world media, hardly put up a fight, especially during the air war. His concession of the skies to the coalition so early in the war essentially sealed his fate. The Iraqis were so battered, and the destruction so extensive, that when the ground war finally came, the Iraqi troops were all but waiting for the earliest possible opportunity to surrender to allied forces. The only troops that showed any fight in them were the elite Republican Guard. There still is no adequate explanation as to why Saddam did not fight back in the war’s early stages.
ASSESSMENT

Operational goals established by military planners were achieved with rapid success. At the outset of the war, the allies were able to cut off Iraqi command and control at its source in Baghdad. Unfortunately, the bombing campaign also did more damage to the Iraqi electrical grid than was intended, and thus the citizenry was made to suffer (New York Times, February 23, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).

The allies were successful in gaining control of the skies, and the relentless bombing campaign had the desired effect on Iraqi defenses. Baghdad’s military was largely destroyed before it got the chance to face coalition forces in the ground war. Soldiers, mostly conscripts, were demoralized by the constant barrage and surrendered en masse to anyone who would take them, including western news crews.

The U.S. military made skillful use of deception. The faked Marine landing in Kuwait succeeded in diverting Iraqi forces, thus allowing the allied flanking maneuvers to enjoy overwhelming success. The ground offensive managed to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait and allowed the coalition to move on Basra in only 100 hours, 44 hours ahead of the anticipated schedule. The only operational failure was that the allies were not altogether successful in discovering and destroying mobile Scud launchers and facilities for the development and storage of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush first articulated American policy goals for this intervention episode in an August 8, 1990, speech, and they were subsequently reiterated in later speeches and official policy statements in the months leading to January 1991. The first goal, to secure Iraqi withdrawal (or, if necessary, expulsion) from Kuwait, obviously was fulfilled. The second goal was the restoration of the legal Kuwaiti government. The Emir al-Sabah was, in fact, restored to his throne after the liberation of Kuwait by coalition forces. In addition, a limited parliamentary democracy was subsequently established, although its long-term future remains to be seen (New York Times, October 18, 1992, article by Chris Hedges).

The protection of U.S. lives in Kuwait and Iraq was the third goal publicly articulated by the Bush administration. As far as civilian lives were concerned, over one hundred U.S. citizens who were being held as “human shields” during the summer and fall of 1990 were released unharmed before the start of the war. These Americans were sent home in mid-December 1990 (Brune, 1993: 66). As far as American soldiers were concerned, military casualties were dramatically lower than predicted. A commonly ac-
cepted figure was that coalition forces would incur “up to 100,000 deaths” in the conflict’s first three days (Brune, 1993: 94). Actual casualty figures, however, were astoundingly low: 148 combat deaths, 458 combat wounded, and 120 noncombat deaths (Brune, 1993: 121). It bears noting that the preponderance of the combat deaths, accounting for 128 U.S. service personnel, were the result of an unfortunate, single Scud missile strike on a military housing facility at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, only days before the end of the conflict (Brune, 1993: 176).

The final articulated goal was that of reestablishing regional security and stability. In this respect, the war seems to have been a success. Over the next decade, the Iraqis were largely contained.

Lastly, the United States had finally gotten something that it wanted under President Reagan’s “strategic consensus” but was never able to fully achieve: the right to preposition supplies in several Persian Gulf states. In addition, the United States also concluded a security arrangement with Kuwait.

Perhaps the most ambitious political objective was the unstated, yet transparently obvious, desire of Washington to remove Saddam Hussein from power. This was a total failure.

In direct contrast to American expectations, Iraqi civilians, at least publicly, assigned the blame for their woes to the United States and the UN embargo, rather than their own leader and his ruinous policies (New York Times, July 31, 1992, article by Paul Lewis). As a matter of fact, it seemed that the worse conditions became, the more that the Iraqi public rallied to Hussein. There is, of course, a very real possibility that this was actually a reaction based on fear. Living in a ruthless police state, people know what to say and do in public or before Western news cameras. They save their grumblings and dissatisfaction for private airings with family and trusted friends.

It is, however, undeniable that the Iraqi dictator appeared to be as powerful, at least with regard to domestic politics, as before the war. It can plausibly be argued that he was perhaps even stronger and more secure than was the case in 1990 (Hilsman, 1992: 205). His ability after the war to uncover and quash coup attempts seems to indicate an efficient secret police apparatus (New York Times, July 9, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon). Despite CIA operations to destabilize his regime, Saddam’s two-faced rule (ruthless, yet benevolent) appeared to have earned him support among the Iraqi people (New York Times, July 31, 1992, article by Paul Lewis). An ongoing process of thorough purging largely succeeded in keeping his military in line and loyal to Hussein personally (New York Times, July 9, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).
Another goal, implicit in American policy at the beginning of the crisis, and only later publicly admitted, was the destruction of Iraq’s military capability. Much of this goal was achieved during the conflict. As the war reached its climax, however, President Bush seemed to be rethinking the wisdom of completely disarming Iraq, especially in light of the regional balance of power. This may explain why the ground war was suspended two days ahead of schedule, allowing the elite Republican Guard and some of Hussein’s best tank units to survive (Hilsman, 1992: 205). Some seven hundred Iraqi tanks were spared destruction (U.S. News, 1992: 412). Iraq also retained a considerable proportion of its fleet of helicopter gunships.

As regards the dismantling of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and nuclear facilities, it seems that bombing did some damage to Baghdad’s capabilities and UN teams accomplished much of the rest. Yet given his history, Saddam still had to be closely watched in order to ensure his compliance (Hilsman, 1992: 205). UN Security Council Resolution 715 established “a permanent UN monitoring system, [complete] with surveillance cameras” (Spencer, 1996: 24). However, the 1998 suspension of United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) activity represented a major setback of the disarmament effort. Weapons inspections would not resume again until 2002.

President Bush, like many Americans in 1991, was very optimistic about the role played by the United Nations in confronting Iraqi aggression. There was great hope that the United Nations finally had lived up to the vision of its founders. This optimism, combined with a certain sense of euphoric invincibility regarding interventionism, may have had the originally unforeseen consequence of encouraging American intervention in Somalia and Haiti, as well as NATO air strikes in Bosnia and, later, Kosovo.

If the New World Order were to be worthy of its name, it would need a leader, and clearly that leader was the world’s only superpower, the United States of America. However, while American citizens are understandably reluctant to take on all of the responsibilities that such leadership entails, so too have U.S. leaders become fearful of ceding such authority to multilateral organization, especially the United Nations. As a result, over time the phase “New World Order” has all but disappeared from public discourse.
The overwhelming victory of coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War generated a sense of optimism among American leaders, as well as among leaders of other countries. The United Nations finally appeared to be fulfilling its purpose of creating a better, more secure world. In Iraq, UN-sponsored intervention had rolled back aggression. As a result, President George Bush’s New World Order seemed off to an auspicious start.

While the war in the Gulf was being fought, in the East African nation of Somalia rebel clan militias toppled the twenty-two-year-old dictatorship of Mohamed Siad Barre. The ensuing civil war combined with a severe drought to cause a famine of biblical proportions. Although it would not become clear for several months more, the New World Order was about to be put to an early test.

Undertaken as it was for the highest of motives—humanitarian famine relief—the American intervention in Somalia seemed to be a defining moment for America in her role as the post–cold war era’s lone superpower. Despite its initial success, however, Operation Restore Hope rapidly degenerated into a manhunt for a fugitive warlord. Somalia provides a case study illustrating the limits of multilateral military operations and the failure of “nation-building” in a society embroiled in anarchy.

**THE INITIAL SITUATION IN SOMALIA**

In January 1991, the brutal reign of Somali dictator Mohamed Siad Barre came to an end when the regime was overthrown by an alliance of clan-based militia groups (*CQWR*, October 16, 1993: 2826). Vast stockpiles of arms, accumulated over the course of three decades from Barre’s cold war patrons (first the Soviet Union, then the United States), were seized by the various factions. United only by their hatred of Barre, the now heavily armed mili-
tias began to turn their firepower on each other. The result was a multisided civil war that fragmented Somalia into a collection of clan-based fiefdoms (*New York Times*, December 4, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon; Makinda, 1993: 27).

Despite the multitude of clan militias, by 1992, four major contenders emerged. The first group was the United Somali Congress (USC). Led by Ali Mahdi Mohamed, it was drawn from the central Somali Hawiye clan.

The second group was Mohamed Farrah Aidid’s Somali National Alliance (SNA). Formerly a high official in the USC, Aidid broke away after a falling out with Ali Mahdi in 1991. The SNA was subsequently formed by a union between the Aidid faction and several other clan groups. Based in the Mogadishu area, the SNA drew its strength mainly from the Hawiye clan, although others were represented as well (Makinda, 1993: 26, 32–33).

The Somali National Front (SNF), headed by General Mohammed Said Hersi Morgan, was a third force. Composed of forces still loyal to Barre, the SNF power base largely rested in southern Somalia, near the port city of Kismayu (Bryden, 1995: 147).

Finally, there was the Somali National Movement (SNM). Led by Adel-Rahman Ahmed Ali, the SNM was mostly composed of members of the Isaaq clan. The group’s support base was in northwestern Somalia, in what was known until 1960 as British Somaliland. In May 1991, the SNM declared its territory to be the independent Republic of Somaliland (Makinda, 1993: 25; *Keesing’s*, May 1991: 38182–38183). The republic has received no international recognition.

A 1991 post-revolution peace conference named the USC’s Ali Mahdi as interim president, and consequently war quickly broke out among the clans. Farrah Aidid, jealous of Ali Mahdi’s selection, decided to challenge his leadership militarily (Bryden, 1995: 147).

It bears noting, however, that both Aidid and Ali Mahdi had limited support within the country, a circumstance with deep roots in Somali political culture. In Somalia, clan loyalties have traditionally been stronger than any shared national identity. Only rarely, usually when faced by an external threat (such as the war with Ethiopia in the late 1970s), do the clans show any inclination toward unity. Even then, when the foreign threat recedes, such ad hoc alliances inevitably dissolve.

Despite various peace conferences, fighting continued among the factions. In terms of its impact on national politics, the most important fighting was between Aidid and Ali Mahdi in and around the capital city of Mogadishu (Makinda, 1993: 18).
While the conflict raged in the early 1990s, Somalia was further plagued by a severe drought. The result, predictably, was a nationwide famine (CQWR, October 16, 1993: 2826; Makinda, 1993: 41) Starvation was said to threaten 30 percent of the Somali population. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the French group Médecins Sans Frontières, the UK-based Save the Children, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), were the first to respond to the crisis with relief efforts (Keesing’s, July 1992: 38992). However, anarchy, growing out of the warfare engulfing Somalia, began to interfere with the humanitarian operations. Gunmen associated with the various clan militias looted food and medical depots, hijacked or blocked relief shipments, and occasionally killed relief workers. The motive behind these callous acts was usually to profit from the sale of the pilfered items on the black market and/or to prevent rival groups from receiving humanitarian relief (Makinda, 1993: 42).

By May 1992, it was estimated that 4.5 million Somalis were threatened with starvation, with the crisis exacting its greatest toll in the country’s southern and central regions (Keesing’s, May 1992: 38902). According to UN diplomat Mohamed Sahnoun, by late July 1992 “as many as 5,000 people” a day were dying in Somalia. A further 1.5 million were close to death, with 4.5 million more “nearing starvation.” Taken together, these accounted for almost all of Somalia’s population (Keesing’s, July 1992: 38992).

In response to the ongoing suffering, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed UNSC Resolution 767, which established the first United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I). The resolution created “operational zones” in Somalia for UN-sponsored relief efforts, as well as authorizing the secretary-general to organize an “air bridge” to speed relief to the famine victims (Keesing’s, July 1992: 39992). The resolution further established “a peacekeeping force to provide security” for UN and NGO aid activities in the greater Mogadishu area. In an action that mirrored previous UN peacekeeping operations, fifty unarmed military observers were dispatched to monitor the Mogadishu “green line,” which separated Ali Mahdi’s and Aidid’s forces (Makinda, 1993: 62).

Ambassador Sahnoun was able to secure an agreement with Aidid to allow five hundred armed guards to enter Somalia to protect food distribution centers. Sahnoun emphasized the food distribution mission, insisting that armed troops were not going to engage in peacekeeping. However, on August 28, 1992, the UN Security Council authorized the commitment of 3,000 more armed UN troops, to be deployed as four 750-member-strong “security units” (Keesing’s, August 1992: 39034).
The U.S. involvement in the relief efforts started with an emergency airlift that lasted two months. The operation was to deliver 80,000 tons in the first six weeks, to be followed by another 145,000 tons after October 1 (Keesing’s, August 1992: 39035).

By October 1992, it had become clear that UN peacekeepers had failed to prevent armed gunmen from interfering with relief distribution. Believing this failure to be a problem of manpower, the UN proposed raising its peacekeeping presence to 4,200 soldiers. General Aidid, who at the time controlled much of southern Somalia and two-thirds of Mogadishu, opposed further UN deployment, calling it a threat to Somalia's sovereignty (Keesing’s, October 1992: 39132). Aidid’s reluctance to permit a large UN presence most likely stemmed from his negative view of UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who, as Egypt’s minister of state for foreign affairs, “had been close to” Barre. Believing Boutros-Ghali now to be partial toward Ali Mahdi, Aidid viewed the UN with suspicion (Makinda, 1993: 65; New York Times, October 16, 1993, article by Elaine Sciolino with Paul Lewis).

Although the United Nations had approved a deployment of 3,500 men, most of them were not sent due to objections from the various warlords in Somalia. New York believed that the cooperation of the various clan militia leaders was necessary to the ultimate success of UNOSOM I and, consequently, the deployment was put on hold in order to avoid antagonizing the chieftains. In December 1992, therefore, the strength of UN forces in Somalia was 564. This figure “included 50 military observers,” five hundred in a security battalion, and the remainder distributed as headquarters staff and logistical personnel.

UNOSOM I had very constrained rules of engagement (ROE). As is the usual modus operandi of such operations, UN personnel were authorized to use force only for self-defense. Given the size of the UN contingent and its restrictive ROE, UNOSOM I was largely ineffective in fulfilling its mission of famine relief. Because UNOSOM played virtually no positive role in Somalia, by December 1992 it had become obvious that a larger, better-equipped force would be needed if the chaotic situation were to be brought under control (Makinda, 1993: 67–68).

Under these conditions, President Bush offered the United Nations the use of a large American force in order to stabilize the situation in Somalia and thus make possible the resumption of food and aid delivery (CQWR, October 16, 1993: 2826). On December 3, 1992, the Security Council passed UNSC Resolution 794, which formally accepted the American offer (Makinda, 1993: 64; Keesing’s, December 1992: 39225).
WHY THE UNITED STATES CHOSE TO GET INVOLVED

It is a generally accepted fact that President Bush initially chose to intervene in Somalia for humanitarian reasons (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Thomas Friedman). The key motivating factor for Bush was the scale of human suffering and death taking place. As Bush explained in his address to the nation: “Every American has seen the shocking images from Somalia. The scope of suffering there is hard to imagine. Already over a quarter million people, as many as live in Buffalo, N.Y., have died in the Somali famine. In the months ahead, five times that number, one and a half million people, could starve to death” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

The president explained that “anarchy prevails” in Somalia, and that relief workers feared for their very lives. Consequently, “confronted with these conditions, relief groups called for outside troops to provide security so that they could feed people.” As a result, it was now clear to Mr. Bush “that military support is necessary to insure the safe delivery of the food Somalis need to survive” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

Although Bush acknowledged that “the United States alone cannot right the world’s wrongs,” he argued that America must take the leading role to bring aid to Somalia because: “Only the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and efficiently and thus save thousands of innocents from death” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address). Bush reassured Americans: “We will not, however, be acting alone. I expect forces from about a dozen countries to join us in this mission” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

It is impossible to overestimate the influence television had on the decision to intervene in Somalia. Its persistent displays of grim images of human suffering shocked both the public and the government. The sight of “the mass starvation of Somali children” was instrumental in leading to American action (Makinda, 1993: 69; Bryden, 1995: 148).

Aside from the generally agreed-upon humanitarian reasons for American intervention, some political observers suggested certain less altruistic motives. One writer speculated that after his electoral defeat, Mr. Bush wanted to leave office in an upbeat, statesmanlike manner (New York Times, December 6, 1992, article by Michael Wines). Others suggested that Bush viewed Somalia as the first test of the New World Order. According to this view, Bush was quite embarrassed that his vision was now being undermined by the needless starvation deaths of children in the Horn of Africa.
If the New World Order was to become more than mere words, action was imperative (Makinda, 1993: 69). Finally, it was also suggested that, with congressional liberals demanding a “peace dividend,” the military needed to find missions that would justify its being spared large budget cuts. A relief operation to Somalia was originally perceived as a low-risk means of accomplishing this goal (Makinda, 1993: 73).

THE INTENDED RESULTS/OBJECTIVES OF U.S. INTERVENTION

During his December 1992 address to the nation, President Bush outlined the humanitarian mission of the U.S. intervention in Somalia. Despite the apparent simplicity of the two goals that the president set, he did not elaborate on their specifics. As a result, American forces operated in pursuit of rather ambiguously defined objectives (Keesing’s, December, 1992: 39225; New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

Bush’s first objective was to “create a secure environment in the hardest hit parts of Somalia so that food [could] move from ships overland to the people in the countryside now devastated by starvation” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address). The potentially open-ended commitment entailed in this goal was quickly pointed out by critics. As a New York Times editorial queried: “Just what is a secure environment? . . . On this Mr. Bush said nothing, despite expectations in Somalia that Americans will be peacemakers, not just alms-givers” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, editorial).

The other objective outlined by Bush was that once this “secure environment” was created, the United States would withdraw its forces and hand over the operation to UN peacekeepers (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

While agreeing in principle with Mr. Bush’s objectives, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali believed that under the terms of UNSC Resolution 794, which authorized the U.S. action, he had the right to determine what exactly constituted a “secure environment.” The secretary-general argued that American and other allied forces could only create a secure environment by disarming clan militias and destroying their heavy weapons. The U.S. commander for Somalia, however, asserted that disarmament “was not part of his mission” and, consequently, would not be a high priority.

There were several reasons for this disagreement between the United States and the United Nations over what exactly “constituted a secure environment.” One such reason was that both sides had very different defi-
nitions of the term. For the UN, it meant leaving Somalia “in a condition [that was] conducive to peacekeeping” and a negotiated settlement of political differences between the clans. If the arms stockpiles were not confiscated, the militias would undoubtedly become reactivated shortly after the withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces.

The U.S. theater commander, however, saw matters differently. For Lieutenant General Robert Johnston, the goal of humanitarian relief did not necessitate disarmament per se. Supply corridors could be opened, and relief distributed, without unnecessarily engaging Somali militia groups. Furthermore, Washington simply did not want to take on any high-risk ventures beyond its stated objective of “opening up supply routes.”

Another related concern was that disarming the militias would undoubtedly be a long-term operation (Makinda, 1993: 71). Even if disarmament were to be undertaken as an American mission, given the proliferation of weapons in Somalia, how would one ever know for certain when the goal had been accomplished? To engage in such operations would have the potential of keeping U.S. troops in Somalia long after the January 1993 withdrawal date that the president had set. These goals originally envisioned by President Bush would later be subject to change, or as it would be called later, “mission creep.”

THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION

The United States’ intervention in Somalia actually occurred in two phases. The first was the Unified Task Force (UNITAF); the other was the second United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II).

UNITAF

UNITAF, or Operation Restore Hope as it was called in the United States, ran from December 1992 until May 1993. The United Nations Security Council authorized the mission by passing UNSC Resolution 794 on December 3, 1992. The terms of authorization were similar to those under which Operation Desert Storm was commissioned (Makinda, 1993: 70). As with the Persian Gulf War, Operation Restore Hope was ostensibly a multilateral UN undertaking, although once again most of the troops sent were American. Likewise, the mission was commanded by a high-ranking officer from the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM); Lieutenant General Robert Johnston was put in charge of the Somalia operation (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39225; Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255).
There were, however, several differences from the earlier Persian Gulf enterprise. Unlike Operation Desert Storm, which operated independently under a U.S. command, at the insistence of many Third World states UNITAF was authorized only on the condition that the American command maintain a “close liaison [with] UN headquarters in New York” and with UN officials in Somalia (Makinda, 1993: 70; New York Times, December 4, 1992, article by Paul Lewis). (For the full text of the resolution, see CQWR, December 5, 1992: 3766.)

Another difference between the two operations was that while both sought to deploy massive force in order to overwhelm opponents, Operation Restore Hope employed substantially fewer troops. Furthermore, due to its humanitarian nature, UNITAF envisioned the use of forces in a considerably more restrained manner (Makinda, 1993: 70; CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Pat Towell: 3759, 3762).

UNITAF was largely a humanitarian mission within a low-intensity war zone. It was unique in that it had no clear link to any discernable vital interest of the United States (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Pat Towell: 3761).

By design, UNITAF had a limited operational mandate. American forces were only to engage in relief support missions in southern and central Somalia, with a focus on the greater Mogadishu area (Makinda, 1993: 76). Due to the consultative mechanism established by the Security Council in the authorization resolution, the UN, in the person of the secretary-general, had a voice in determining when the security aspects of the mission had been fulfilled. Only with the certification of the secretary-general would the Security Council allow the termination of UNITAF and the transition to a more traditional UN peacekeeping operation (CQWR, December 5, 1992, “Behind the Decorum”: 3762; see also full text of resolution on page 3766).

UNOSOM II

The UN successor operation, UNOSOM II, began in May 1993. Although American participation ended in March 1994, UNOSOM II continued for another year, concluding in March 1995. It consisted of a multilateral force under a direct UN command led by Turkish general Cevik Bir (Keesing’s, May 1993: 39451). The initial plan called for the United States to commit 5,000 troops. In the end, UNOSOM II was to have 20,000 soldiers, drawn from thirty-five countries (Keesing’s, March 1993: 39356). U.S. major general Thomas M. Montgomery was named deputy commander of UN forces. In
part, his role was to oversee American forces in UNOSOM II, most of whom were to function in supply and logistical capacities. Under this arrangement, Bir would decide when the troops were to “be deployed to a particular area.” Montgomery would then issue the orders that would carry out the mission (CQWR, May 22, 1993, article by Gregory J. Bowens: 1304).

General Montgomery also was to have direct command of a 1,300-troop quick reaction force. Although it was intended to back up UN operations, this was an independent U.S. force, accountable only to Washington (CQWR, October 16, 1993, chronology by Jennifer S. Thomas: 2826). Stationed on American ships cruising off the Somali coast, the quick reaction force was intended to act as an “over the horizon” deterrent against the Somali militias (Makinda, 1993: 77–78).

The original plan envisioned that UNOSOM II would cover all of Somalia, a significant expansion from the earlier UNITAF mission, which included only 40 percent of the country. UNOSOM II’s expanded mandate followed three major themes. First, UNOSOM II was to maintain the ceasefire. This included the clearing of mines, the disarming of the various factions, and the securing of confiscated weapons.

Second, the UN force was to make possible the distribution of humanitarian aid. This task was to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining transportation corridors, securing port facilities and airfields, and providing protection for UN and relief agency personnel and supplies.

Finally, UNOSOM II was to “create conditions conducive to a political settlement” in Somalia. It was this aspect of the mission that would substantially broaden in scope as the operation progressed. This was originally conceived as achieving national reconciliation among the various clan groups, but it later grew into efforts at nation-building, by means of a UN-sponsored restructuring of national institutions (Makinda, 1993: 76).

THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CLIMATE

At the outset of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, the public’s opinion of the operation was very favorable. In December 1992, a Harris poll revealed that 95 percent of Americans had read or heard about the famine and starvation in Somalia. The results of the poll showed that they seemed to be very affected by the news coverage of the famine: 75 percent favored sending in U.S. troops, with only 20 percent opposed.

By and large, Americans even supported the potentially longer-term objective of nation-building. When asked about the more ambitious goal of
staying in Somalia until a “new and more effective government is put in place, even if that takes a long time,” the results were surprisingly positive. Sixty-three percent favored staying until a new government was in place, while 28 percent favored leaving Somalia in the “hands of warring gangs.”

Regarding general attitudes toward using U.S. troops on humanitarian missions, 71 percent favored sending the military “to save lives and help distribute food in countries where people are starving, but where U.S. national security is not involved.” Twenty-two percent opposed this view.

Only a 48 percent plurality agreed, however, that the United States should send troops “to help restore order and save lives in war-torn countries where effective government has broken down, but where U.S. national security is not involved.” A strong 42 percent opposed dispatching troops under this scenario (Harris Poll, December 10, 1992).

A February 1993 poll (taken two months into Operation Restore Hope) showed continued support for the mission. By a 77 percent to 20 percent margin, respondents favored keeping American troops in Somalia until authority could be transferred to a “reasonably stable government.” The same poll found that 71 percent favored the more ambitious, UN-sponsored goal of having U.S. troops disarm the clan militias in Somalia. Twenty-four percent disapproved of such a policy (Harris Poll, February 8, 1993).

As Operation Restore Hope continued past its originally forecast completion date of mid-January 1993, the mission’s gradually expanding goals and increasing costs (in terms of both lives and money) caused public opinion to shift. Polls taken in October 1993, shortly after the fighting intensified, found that two out of three Americans favored withdrawal from Somalia. Close to 50 percent favored recalling U.S. troops even if it meant “leaving Somalia in more turmoil” or if a second famine developed. After a speech by President Bill Clinton that outlined the need to send more troops to Somalia, an ABC News poll showed that 53 percent did not approve of the president’s handling of the situation (New York Times, October 9, 1993, article by B. Drummond Ayres Jr.)

A poll taken in November 1993 showed that a majority of 56 percent continued to favor sending American troops to Third World countries to prevent famine. By this time, however, the public had become wary of the type of operation that UNOSOM II had become. Sixty percent now opposed committing troops for the broader goal of restoring law and order in a Third World country, even if the existing government were to collapse (Los Angeles Times, November 2, 1993, article by Doyle McManus).
Congressional Mood

When it commenced, U.S. intervention in Somalia enjoyed solid support on Capitol Hill. As Speaker of the House Tom Foley (D-WA) stated at the time, “There is strong bipartisan support among the leadership for the action the president is taking” (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Phillip A. Davis: 3760). Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee Lee Hamilton (D-IN), however, believed that such support should not preclude the Congress from giving its formal consent. As Hamilton put it: “It seems to me Congress should act to put [on record] its approval or—you can imagine the circumstances—its disapproval with respect to what’s happening” (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Phillip A. Davis: 3760).

A curious feature of the early debate, one that would become more glaring as the operation wore on, was the apparent role reversal between congressional liberals and conservatives. The Congressional Black Caucus, for example, was unusually enthusiastic about the intervention. Representative John Lewis (D-GA) acknowledged that, especially in light of his anti-war activism dating back to the 1960s: “It would seem somewhat out of the ordinary for me to support a military effort . . . but after going to Somalia and seeing what I consider the violation of just human decency . . . there are no other affirmative means to alleviate the situation except for the use of the necessary military power to see that food and medical assistance be available to the people there” (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Phillip A. Davis: 3760).

Although not a member of Congress, Jesse Jackson may have expressed a more underlying motive for some black Democrats when he stated that the effort in Somalia “breaks new ground, because for the first time we’ve been willing to risk the lives of American soldiers to save an African people” (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Phillip A. Davis). Such a quote suggests that, for at least some liberal black Democrats, enthusiasm for the intervention was based largely on racial considerations.

Despite general approval for intervention, there were a few early voices of dissent, mostly sounded by congressional conservatives. Senator Hank Brown (R-CO) opined that President Bush “had committed American forces ‘without clear, precise military objectives.’” Brown was upset that, given the absence of a clear target date for American withdrawal, the lack of established limits on American involvement, and hazy rules defining their authority, U.S. troops potentially faced a situation resembling other open-ended fiascos, such as Vietnam and Beirut. Brown also was concerned that
American forces were going to have too prominent a role in the operation. He believed, rather, that troops from Muslim nations should take the lead in Somalia, since it is an Islamic country (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines).

Other critics were concerned that the United States was shouldering “too large a share of the burden” for the relief effort. Senator Larry Pressler (R-SD) declared: “there is no reason the American taxpayer should play 80 percent of the Santa role in providing military and economic aid to Somalia” (CQWR, December 5, 1992, article by Phillip A. Davis: 3760).

The wide-ranging support for intervention notwithstanding, the Senate did not formally consider a resolution authorizing American action for two months after the operation began. On February 4, 1993, by voice vote, the upper house approved Senate Joint Resolution 45, which authorized the commitment of U.S. forces to the UN-sponsored operation in Somalia (CQWR, February 6, 1993: 277). During the debate on the measure, some members of the Senate voiced concern over the lack of a specific withdrawal date. The resolution called for the United Nations to take over the operation “at the earliest possible date” (CQWR, February 6, 1993: 277).

The House did not take action until May 25, 1993, when it also passed Senate Joint Resolution 45. The tally was 243–179 in a vote that divided largely along party lines. This vote gave retroactive approval for UNITAF (which had ended earlier that month) as well as authorizing U.S. participation in UNOSOM II “for up to a year.”

The House debate focused on the congressional role in deploying troops. As adopted, the resolution invoked the War Powers Act, an aspect sidestepped in the Senate version. Democratic sentiment on the issue was expressed by Representative Harry A. Johnston (D-FL), who argued: “My gosh, if we ever want this establishment, the U.S. Congress, to be relevant to the situation, then we [must] acknowledge the War Powers act is the law of the land” (CQWR, May 29, 1993, article by Gregory J. Bowens: 1373).

Republicans, by contrast, held to their traditional position that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional. Furthermore, they argued that a dangerous precedent was being set by placing American forces under a UN command. Representative Henry Bonilla (R-TX) stated plainly: “I do not believe that the American people want us to vote to put the destiny and lives of American troops in the hands of UN commanders” (CQWR, May 29, 1993, article by Gregory J. Bowens: 1373).

As UNOSOM II’s mission began to drift from humanitarian relief into nation-building, and finally deteriorated into a vain manhunt for a fugitive
warlord, the congressional mood shifted dramatically, especially as casualty figures climbed. A principal critic of the United Nations’ mishandling of the situation was Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV). In reopening the debate, Byrd argued that: “The United Nations’ mandate to disarm the warlords and rebuild a civil society in Somalia, approved by the UN Security Council, was never addressed, never debated, or never approved by this body” (CQWR, September 11, 1993, article by Elizabeth Palmer: 2399).

Although done in a somewhat less strident manner, Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) agreed: “No one wants to leave [Somalia] in shambles. No one wants to set up a situation where they go right back into the same kind of despair they had before. . . . But neither do we want to set up a situation where the United States has committed its military to a mission that is very broad and basically has no end point and really no definition” (CQWR, September 11, 1993, article by Elizabeth Palmer: 2399).

Perhaps unintentionally, other members of Congress invoked arguments reminiscent of the Vietnam era by expressing concern that pulling American troops out of UNOSOM II would “undermine U.S. credibility.” Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) argued: “If we pull out prematurely, chased out by a tin pot warlord, I believe that U.S. leadership, prestige, credibility, and national self-respect will be significantly harmed” (CQWR, September 11, 1993, article by Elizabeth Palmer: 2399).

However, President Clinton’s decision to send in additional troops in the wake of the October 1993 slaughter of American Rangers, and the desecration of their dead bodies by Somali mobs, evoked horror from traditional friends of the administration. Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) reacted strongly to testimony before the House Armed Services Committee by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, who defended the president’s decision. Schroeder agonized: “I kept thinking ‘come on Les, pull yourself together. Have you forgotten everything you learned in Vietnam? Remember the quagmire?’” (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by Douglas Jehl).

Senator Byrd, in particular, was outraged that the Clinton administration seemed to have no plan or direction except to follow the lead of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali. Many of Byrd’s colleagues agreed with him that the “Somalia mission [served] no national interest.” There was disagreement in their ranks, however, over a proper schedule for withdrawal (New York Times, October 12, 1993, article by Clifford Krauss).

Senator Byrd sponsored an amendment to the annual defense authorization bill (S. 1298) that would have cut off funding for the U.S. mission in Somalia within a month of passage “unless Congress explicitly authorized
continued deployment” (CQWR, September 11, 1993, article by Elizabeth A. Palmer: 2399). On October 15, however, the Senate approved a compromise that would terminate funding for U.S. participation in UNOSOM II after March 31, 1994. In passing 76–23, this “marked the first time since [Vietnam] that either chamber had voted to cut off funds for an ongoing overseas military operation” (CQWR, December 18, 1993: 3456–3457).

The Senate voted to kill a measure “that would have required congressional approval before the president” could place “U.S. forces under [a] foreign command.” The final tally was 33–65 (CQWR, December 18, 1993: 3457). On November 9, 1993, in a 226–201 vote that largely followed party lines, the House approved “an amendment to a non-binding resolution” that endorsed the March 31, 1994, withdrawal date that the president had accepted after heavy “Senate pressure” (CQWR, December 18, 1993: 3447).

THE POSITION OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TOWARD THE OPERATION

At the outset, the Pentagon had little enthusiasm to get involved in a humanitarian mission in Somalia. President Bush’s decisions during the summer of 1992 to engage in relief flights to Somalia, as well as to deploy marines to the Indian Ocean, were made despite the reservations of the military leadership (New York Times, December 6, 1992, article by Michael Wines).

During the fall of 1992, after military planners studied various options, they decided that a relief operation in Somalia was feasible. This assessment was based on several considerations. One factor was that military planners believed Somali clan militias to be disorganized and capable only of token resistance. Except for isolated incidents of sniping and placing land mines, it was expected that these groups would retreat when American troops arrived.

A second consideration was Somalia’s desert terrain. Its flat, open landscape made conditions on the ground look more like Iraq than Vietnam or Bosnia. Since potential enemies would have little cover, it appeared that the chance of Somalia turning into a quagmire of guerrilla warfare was minimal (Bryden, 1995: 148).

In the official mission statement for Operation Restore Hope, General Powell emphasized the humanitarian aims of the mission and took pains to make clear that the United States did not seek to impose a political solution on Somalia. The plan called for “a large force [to be decisively applied] over a short period of time.” Once port facilities and supply routes were
secured, the humanitarian operation was to be quickly transferred to the United Nations.

General Powell publicly warned the clan militias that they would not be allowed to disrupt relief efforts. Unlike UNOSOM I, UNITAF was going to have the means and the will to project massive force, even taking preemptive measures when necessary. To quote General Powell, force would be employed “in a rather decisive way so that there will be no question in the mind of any of the faction leaders in Somalia that we would have the ability to impose a stable situation, if it came to that, without their cooperation” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).

The plan concentrated on the delivery of assistance to famine victims. Although administration officials contemplated establishing a program to attempt to buy weapons back from the clans, the plan deemphasized disarmament as a central goal. It was feared that to make disarmament an operational objective would extend the mission further than the political leadership intended, as well as presenting the possibility of drawing the United States much deeper into Somali politics than was desired. A Pentagon official explained that, instead, the main idea of the plan was that “we will be the peacemaking force and then we’ll turn it over [to] the UN peacekeepers.” Perhaps foreshadowing future complications, he further mused: “But how do we know when we are done?” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).

The Pentagon’s plan was organized into four phases. Phase One began with the arrival of U.S. Marines in Somalia. Once ashore, they were to seize the international airport and the port of Mogadishu, as well as the city’s food warehouses. After these facilities were secured, the marines would then head inland to the town of Baidoa. This was intended to allow the Americans to bring food overland to the interior of Somalia.

Phase Two called for army troops to join the marines at Baidoa, “and then establish bases to the north at Belet, Uen, Hoddu, and Gailalassi.” Days after the securing of Baidoa and Mogadishu, large numbers of additional troops were to arrive. In Phase Three, U.S. forces were to deploy to the south and west. This would extend relief to the southern port city of Kismayu and the interior town of Bardera.

Finally, Phase Four envisioned turning over the operation to the United Nations. However, the plan was vague as to the definition of a “secure environment,” the condition under which the UN would take over the mission. Furthermore, there was a fear that the various clans might just fall back, bide their time, and then reassert their power shortly after the Ameri-

The plan concentrated on southern Somalia because it was most severely affected by both the famine and by clan interference with relief efforts. The Pentagon would take a “wait and see” attitude before making a decision to extend the mission northward (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines).

There was, however, a dispute over the projected duration of Operation Restore Hope. President Bush had envisioned a relatively short mission, with the troops returning home within a few weeks, probably in time for Inauguration Day, January 20, 1993. An unnamed Pentagon official called such a timetable “utterly ridiculous” (New York Times, December 4, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).

In the view of the military leadership at the Pentagon, the complex logistics presented by the chaotic, barren country made it a strong possibility that the operation could take considerably longer than the president believed (New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Jane Perlez). General Powell refused to give a specific date for American withdrawal, citing the uncertainty of the situation (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines). He did, however, indicate that he believed the operation could take several months (Makinda, 1993: 72). In addressing the issue of possible withdrawal timetables, Powell acknowledged that a contingent of marines and a naval task group would likely remain as a quick reaction force after the main body of troops had withdrawn. Such a force would assist UN troops should trouble erupt later. The general also stated that “a few units’ of ground forces would remain in Somalia” as part of the UN operation, following the departure of American forces (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines).

CARRYING OUT THE OPERATION

UNITAF

Operation Restore Hope began on December 9, 1992, when U.S. Marines staged a dawn landing on beaches near Mogadishu. Later in the day an additional 1,800 troops arrived (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39225). Once ashore, the soldiers quickly gained control of the port facilities and Mogadishu International Airport (New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Jane Perlez). With the exception of a minor exchange of fire at the port, the initial landing was a peaceful operation.
On the first day, American and French forces took control of much of Mogadishu and confiscated some weapons. Troops began quickly to seize transportation-related facilities and started to open up routes for relief into other coastal areas and the interior. The marines captured the former Bali Dogle military airfield, located 160 kilometers west of Mogadishu, on December 13. Three days later, U.S. and French troops accompanied a relief convoy into Baidoa and seized the town’s airstrip, encountering no opposition. UNITAF then pushed on to the southern port city of Kismayu. Due to a negotiated settlement with local factions, on December 20 American forces entered the city unopposed. Once secured, Kismayu functioned as a food distribution center for the Juba Valley of southern Somalia (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39225).

Even at this early stage of the operation, there was evidence of “mission creep.” On December 23, Brigadier General Tony Zinni, the U.S. military operations director, stated that the United States would begin to seize armed vehicles from the various Somali militias. This announcement seemed to indicate that American policy was moving closer to the UN version of what constituted a “secure environment.” The United States began implementing this new policy on December 29, when American forces swept gunmen from Mogadishu in anticipation of a visit by President Bush. American soldiers seized “weapons, armed vehicles, and missiles” from clan militias (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39226).

As a matter of practice, U.S. troops avoided the fighting among militia factions that did not interfere with relief operations or threaten UNITAF forces. However, by early January 1993, American commanders began to suggest that UNITAF forces might intervene if rival groups did not stop fighting. Furthermore, the U.S. command reaffirmed its policy of confiscating Somali weapons. Marine colonel Michael Hagee stated: “Once we have a definitive location of those weapons, we’ll remove those weapons.” Although at the outset the United States was reluctant to intervene in clan fighting for fear of being pulled into the conflict, the change in policy appeared to be prompted by the ever-increasing proximity of the fighting to western relief centers (Washington Post, January 2, 1993, article by Keith B. Richburg).

On January 7, UNITAF commander General Robert Johnston indicated that his troops had successfully opened up supply routes into the interior and, therefore, the operation was now to enter a “new phase.” This appears to have meant undertaking more aggressive pacification operations. As inter-clan warfare continued, U.S. forces raided militia weapons facilities, destroying substantial stocks of arms (Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255). Such
operations were not without cost. On January 13, marine private Domingo Arroyo became the first American fatality of the operation (New York Times, October 7, 1993, chronology: A11).

The increasingly frequent accidental killings of Somali civilians began to worry UNITAF commanders. Fearing that these deaths might be a sign of a general complacency developing among his weary soldiers, the marine commander in Somalia, Major General Charles Wilhelm, ordered his men to “adjust attitudes” and show greater respect for Somali civilians (Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255; Washington Post, January 25, 1993, article by Keith B. Richburg). U.S. involvement in the fighting deepened on January 25, 1993, when American and Belgian troops moved to stop a force loyal to deposed strongman Siad Barre from advancing on Kismayu (Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255).

The American withdrawal began on January 31, 1993, when it was announced that 2,700 U.S. troops would start to return home (Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255). Early in February, CENTCOM “informed Washington that the military task of restoring security” was almost complete. As a result, during February U.S. troop levels in the theater fell from 24,000 to 17,000. Other nations sent in additional soldiers to replace the withdrawing Americans.

Despite Washington’s claims that the situation was under control, violence, often aimed at American forces, began to erupt. UNITAF weapons sweeps, usually directed against Aidid’s SNA, fueled the Somali general’s suspicions that interventionist forces were beginning to take sides in political quarrels. Rumors that Washington was tilting toward Aidid’s rival, General Hersi Morgan, sparked further attacks against U.S. troops in February (Keesing’s, February 1993: 39308).

UNOSOM II

On May 4, 1993, the United States formally turned over the operation in Somalia to the United Nations’ UNOSOM II force. The U.S. withdrew all but approximately 3,000 troops, which remained on with UNOSOM II, mostly in a logistical capacity (CQWR, October 16, 1993: article by Jennifer S. Thomas: 2826). The total UN force numbered 20,000 troops and was drawn from thirty-five nations (Keesing’s, May 1993: 39451).

The UNOSOM II operation was authorized by the United Nations Security Council on March 26, 1993, with the adoption of UNSC Resolution 814. This resolution defined the mission and scope of the new operation. Derived from the provisions outlined in Chapter VII of the United Nations
Charter, UNSC Resolution 814 gave the secretary-general, through his theater commander, the authority to take all necessary measures, including armed force, to enforce UN resolutions pertaining to Somalia (Makinda, 1993: 76–77; Keesing’s, March 1993: 39356).

UNOSOM II was conceived as a two-tiered operation. As such, it was to act in a peacekeeping mode where possible, yet engage in peace enforcement when necessary (Makinda, 1993: 76–77). With a scope considerably wider than UNITAF, UNOSOM II’s objectives included attempts to foster progress toward national reconciliation, as well as the reconstruction of political institutions (Keesing’s, May 1993: 39451; Makinda, 1993: 80).

In terms of its operational mandate, UNOSOM II was charged with doing whatever was necessary to maintain the peace in Somalia. The United Nations applied a broad construction to “maintaining peace,” so that it included such activities as disarming the various factions, protecting relief workers, clearing mines, repatriating refugees, establishing a constabulary, and engaging in efforts to help rebuild the economy. It was expected that UNOSOM II would cover the entire country (Keesing’s, March 1993: 39356; May 1993: 39451).

It did not take long for the clan militias to begin to challenge UNOSOM II. On June 5, 1993, soldiers from Aidid’s SNA ambushed Pakistani units assigned to the UN force. The result was twenty-four Pakistanis killed and fifty-four wounded. This firefight signaled the start of four months of almost daily clashes between UNOSOM II and the SNA (New York Times, October 7, 1993, chronology: A11).

The United Nations Security Council reacted to the escalating violence in Somalia by adopting Resolution 837. This measure reaffirmed the nation-building mandate of UNOSOM II. In addition, it authorized UN forces to find and punish those responsible for the ambush (Makinda, 1993: 80). President Clinton endorsed the use of retaliatory strikes by UNOSOM II and the U.S. quick reaction force. He justified the United Nations’ more aggressive posture, arguing that action against Aidid was necessary to restore order, as well as “to strengthen the effectiveness and the credibility of ‘UN peacekeeping in Somalia and around the world’” (Makinda, 1993: 81). The Security Council backed up its words with action. On June 17, the chamber issued an arrest warrant for General Aidid. A raid aimed at arresting the general was launched, but failed to capture him (Keesing’s, June 1993: 39499).

The United Nations’ actions of June 1993 were evidence of further “mission creep.” As the nature and goals of the operation started to drift, the mission began to take on the appearance of a personal vendetta between
Mr. Boutros-Ghali and General Aidid (New York Times, October 16, 1993, article by Elaine Sciolino with Paul Lewis). This impression was further reinforced during the fall of 1993, as the focus of UN operations became increasingly fixed on neutralizing the warlord.

In the view of many Somalis, the United Nations’ actions seemed to validate Aidid’s claim that the UN was, in fact, taking sides in the civil war. For this reason, UNOSOM II efforts to capture Aidid began to have the unintended result of giving the warlord a measure of popularity among the Somali populace. To compound the United Nations’ problems, UNOSOM II seemed to be in a “Catch-22.” If it did not respond to attacks against it, UNOSOM II would invite more aggressive provocations. However, when it did retaliate, the inevitable result was civilian casualties, which only fueled Somali resentment against an intervention that only months earlier had been viewed as the country’s salvation (Makinda, 1993: 80–81).

UNOSOM II’s problems seemed only to grow worse in October 1993. On October 3, U.S. Rangers were pinned down by Aidid’s forces during a botched raid on his command compound. American losses in the “Black Hawk Down” battle included eighteen killed and nearly eighty wounded. Somali losses were estimated at three hundred (CQWR, October 16, 1993: article by Jennifer S. Thomas: 2826). To make matters worse, a U.S. helicopter pilot, Michael Durant, was captured and held hostage by the SNA.

Back in the United States, citizens were horrified by televised images of a beaten Durant being forced to read a statement obviously prepared by his captors. However, it was the pictures of a dead U.S. Army Ranger being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in front of jeering mobs that most sickened the American public. This unfortunate episode was to be a critical turning point for U.S. participation in UNOSOM II (New York Times, October 9, 1993, article by R. Drummond Ayres Jr.).

Under intense bipartisan congressional pressure, on October 7, President Clinton “announced the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Somalia by March 31, 1994,” regardless of the situation on the ground. In the interim, however, “he ordered the immediate deployment to Somalia of 1,700 infantry troops and 104 armoured vehicles.” Furthermore, an additional 3,600 marines were to join the American fleet off the Somali coast (Keesing’s, October 1993: 39675). The president justified the deployment as a measure taken to stabilize the situation, to reassure UNOSOM II’s other participants, and to allow for an orderly withdrawal. Employing language chillingly reminiscent of Lyndon Johnson during Vietnam, Clinton spoke of the need to avoid the appearance that America was going to cut and run.
from Somalia (New York Times, October 7, 1993, article by Thomas L. Friedman). Clearly, the president’s actions were at least partially motivated by his need to deflect criticism which arose over revelations that the U.S. commander in the theater, General Montgomery, had urgently requested the deployment of additional armor before the October 3 battle, only to be refused by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin (New York Times, October 9, 1993, article by Steven A. Holmes).

As a result of negotiations between the United States and Aidid’s forces, on October 14, Durant was released. President Clinton took great pains to deny that a deal was made to secure the pilot’s release. By November, however, there was an obvious shift in Washington’s policy toward the fugitive warlord. The most glaring example of this occurred on October 19, when the president recalled six hundred American Rangers who had been used in the effort to find and capture Aidid. Soon afterward, the administration was said to have lobbied the United Nations Security Council to suspend operations aimed at arresting Aidid. American policy now apparently sought to facilitate the public rehabilitation of the general so that Washington could engage in negotiations with him. The talks between the two sides began on November 18 (Keesing’s, October 1993: 39675; November 1993: 39721).

The final American pullout from Somalia began in December 1993, when 2,500 U.S. troops were withdrawn (Keesing’s, December 1993: 39768). Even though early 1994 found American forces still involved in skirmishes with local clan militias, the withdrawal continued (Keesing’s, January 1994: 39806). U.S. participation in UNOSOM II came to a close on March 25, 1994, when the final evacuation of U.S. forces was completed. All that remained of the American presence in Somalia was a sixty-man token force. Of this remnant, ten remained at UNOSOM headquarters in logistical support roles, and fifty stood guard at the U.S. embassy in Mogadishu. The departure of American and other Western forces left UNOSOM as basically a Third World operation. Until its termination in 1995, UNOSOM II was comprised mostly of troops from Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and Egypt (Keesing’s, March 1994: 39899).

**TYPES AND QUANTITIES OF FORCES USED**

**UNITAF**

When the original Unified Task Force was proposed in late 1992, military planners believed that Somali militias posed no real threat. For this reason,
it was not considered imperative to deploy troops on the scale of Operation Desert Storm. Because Somalia was not perceived to be a “combat mission” per se, it did not seem necessary to arm American soldiers with the full array of high-tech weaponry used in the Persian Gulf. Still, the plans called for a massive presence, the aim of which was to both overwhelm and intimidate the local warlords so as to ensure their non-interference with UNITAF operations. At the outset UNITAF numbered 35,000 troops, of which 28,150 were American (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39225; New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Jane Perlez).

To support UNITAF, the United States dispatched a naval task force, which was to remain just off the coast of Somalia. Leading the force was the USS Tripoli, an amphibious assault ship that carried twenty-three helicopters. Her air complement included four AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, twelve CH-46 Sea Knight medium-lift helicopters, four CH-53 Sea Stallion heavy-lift helicopters, and three UH-1 Huey support and logistics helicopters (New York Times, December 5, 1992, diagram: A15).

Soon after this initial deployment, a three-ship carrier task force was diverted from the Persian Gulf to join the Tripoli group. The lead vessel was the aircraft carrier USS Ranger. It was accompanied by the cruiser USS Valley Forge and the destroyer USS Kinkaid. Meanwhile 16,000 troops of the First Marine Expeditionary Force and some 10,000 soldiers from the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division light infantry were sent to the theater (New York Times, December 9, 1992, diagram). As a result, UNITAF reached its peak of 38,300 troops by mid-January 1993 (Keesing’s, March 1993: 39356). (For individual country totals, see table 6.1 in Makinda, 1993: 73.)

**UNOSOM II**

It was the desire of UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali that UNOSOM II be a peacekeeping force endowed with enforcement capability. In his view, such powers were necessary so as to avoid simply repeating the failure of UNOSOM I, which had been lightly armed and operated under extremely restrictive rules of engagement. The Security Council agreed with Boutros-Ghali and, as a result, UNOSOM II was much better equipped and better armed than previous peacekeeping missions (Makinda, 1993: 77–78).

The United Nations requested the continued commitment of combat units from states that had participated in UNITAF, but few nations obliged. An exception was the United States, which agreed to send troops to work mainly on logistical tasks. The initial U.S. commitment to UNOSOM II was
approximately 3,000 soldiers. Washington also sent a 1,300-strong quick reaction force, to be stationed off the Somali coast (Makinda, 1993: 77–78; CQWR, October 16, 1993, article by Jennifer S. Thomas: 2826).

Following the battle between UNOSOM II troops from Pakistan and the SNA militia in June 1993, the Security Council requested that UN member states “send heavy weaponry, including tanks and attack aircraft,” to support its forces. The United States again complied, using carrier-based aircraft in retaliatory strikes against Aidid’s forces in southern Mogadishu between June 12 and June 16 (Keesing’s, June 1993: 39499).

In response to the ambush of American troops by Aidid loyalists in October 1993, President Clinton ordered the American presence in the region to be beefed up. The upgrading of firepower came in the form of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and its battle group (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by John H. Cushman Jr.). The carrier’s sixty warplanes, mostly fighter-bombers, gave U.S. forces a formidable heavy air strike capability (New York Times, October 10, 1993, diagram: 7). Further reinforcements included 104 armored vehicles, including tanks and armored personnel carriers. In addition, the quick reaction force was expanded by 3,600 men (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by Douglas Jehl; Keesing’s, October 1993: 39675).

Helicopter gunships were also sent to Somalia to provide extra airpower. Additional transport helicopters provided the necessary lift capacity to afford greater mobility. The United States also dispatched AC-130 gunships, which are cargo planes equipped with a side-facing rapid-fire cannon that can be used for aerial support of ground forces. These capabilities were placed under a U.S. command and were to depart when American forces withdrew in March 1994 (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by John H. Cushman).

With these additional forces, U.S. strength in the region jumped from 4,700 to nearly 20,000 troops (this figure includes U.S. forces in UNOSOM II, the quick reaction force, and naval personnel). The increase cheered American military officials, who had maintained that the original 4,700 troops had been vulnerable (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by Douglas Jehl). These senior Pentagon officials had never been satisfied with UNOSOM II arrangements. Their discontent was largely rooted in the fact that U.S. forces were being used in pursuit of objectives defined by the UN Security Council, rather than by America’s own leaders (New York Times, October 8, 1993, article by John H. Cushman).
THE SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

From the outset, UNITAF limited its operations to the southern 40 percent of Somalia. No attempt was made to expand its area of coverage beyond these hardest hit regions (Makinda, 1993: 15).

Although UNOSOM II’s original mandate was to cover all of Somalia, it never succeeded in doing so. The desire to expand operations was effectively checked, as UNOSOM II became increasingly bogged down in fighting Aidid’s forces in and around Mogadishu. As a result, UNOSOM II never had the opportunity to spill across Somalia’s frontiers; even its plans to expand into northern Somalia never materialized (New York Times, March 26, 1994, article by Donatella Lorch).

THE NATURE OF THE THEATER COMMANDER’S POWER AND INFLUENCE

UNITAF

During the UNITAF portion of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, American forces were commanded by Lieutenant General Robert B. Johnston of the First Marine Expeditionary Force (New York Times, December 4, 1992: article by Michael R. Gordon). Under the terms of UNITAF’s authorization, although the United States retained control of the command, the United Nations was given an oversight responsibility. Therefore, while UNSC Resolution 794 mandated that the United States inform the Security Council of what was being done in the name of the United Nations, the U.S. government was essentially free of the kind of close control the UN often exercises in peacekeeping operations. Washington, in turn, gave General Johnston the relatively free hand in the field that he desired (New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Paul Lewis).

Perhaps the clearest example of the freedom of command that General Johnston enjoyed occurred during a dispute over the issue of disarming the clan militias. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali wanted U.S. forces to stay in Somalia until they disarmed the warring factions, removed mines, and restored order (New York Times, December 11, 1992, article by Elaine Sciolino). General Johnston objected, arguing that disarmament “was not part of his mission.” He maintained that disarmament and mine removal were long-term goals. Such goals clearly went beyond the U.S. objectives of securing supply routes and then removing American forces. Furthermore,
Johnston argued, with so many weapons in the country it was too dangerous to try to collect them forcefully. Even if it were possible to do so, how would one know when “disarmament” had been accomplished (Makinda, 1993: 71–72)?

President Bush and Defense Secretary Cheney agreed with Johnston and did not make disarmament officially part of the military’s mission per se. They did, however, set the secondary goal of seizing and destroying “as many heavy weapons as possible.” In fulfilling this goal, General Johnston and his subordinates were allowed considerable discretion regarding whether to buy weapons from the various factions (New York Times, December 11, 1992, article by Elaine Sciolino).

Although the extent to which Johnston was included in the original planning seems unclear, he appears to have had considerable authority in the theater. It was, for example, his pronouncement that his forces had succeeded in opening up relief supply routes that triggered the start of the U.S. troop withdrawal. General Johnston was also allowed to take action in the field as he saw fit. At the outset, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Colin Powell indicated that American forces under Johnston would be allowed to take pre-emptive action if the situation called for it. UNITAF’s actions in early 1993, such as aggressively engaging gunmen and preliminary attempts at disarmament, showed that Johnston did, in fact, exercise the full authority delegated to him (Keesing’s, January 1993: 39255; New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael R. Gordon).

The rules of engagement under UNITAF underscored the wide discretion granted to the theater commander (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines). In contrast with UNOSOM I, in cases of self-defense, UNITAF forces were not compelled to wait until shot at before firing on hostile forces. Leaflets dropped on Mogadishu in late December 1992 clearly warned the Somalis that anyone pointing a weapon at members of the multinational forces would be fired upon (Keesing’s, December 1992: 39226).

The rules of engagement (ROE) used in past missions, such as Beirut (1983) and Vietnam, were seen as so restrictive that they interfered with the ability to accomplish the mission at an acceptable cost. Consequently, the engagement guidelines followed in Somalia left troops relatively free to determine for themselves when they could resort to force. Although UNITAF soldiers were given strict orders to fire only in self-defense, because of the chaos in Mogadishu, the troops were allowed personal discretion in judging each potentially dangerous situation. As one colonel stated: “If an individual vehicle shows hostile intent, we’ll take away its ability to do that. . . .
We can disarm it or we can vaporize it” (New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Eric Schmitt).

President Bush underscored this “wide leeway” policy for his commanders by stating that they have the authority “to safeguard the lives of our troops and the lives of Somalia’s people” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, article by Michael Wines). Some military legal advisors believed that in Somalia, American soldiers had been granted more leeway than ever before “outside of [a] traditional combat zone” (Washington Post, January 25, 1993, article by Keith Richburg).

UNOSOM II

As both deputy commander of UNOSOM II and the commander of U.S. forces in the Somalia theater, Major General Montgomery had the power to question or decline any order that was opposed by the United States (CQWR, February 20, 1993: 395; March 6, 1993, article by Carroll J. Doherty: 529). Montgomery also exercised unilateral U.S. command over a quick reaction force stationed on American ships off the Somali coast (Makinda, 1993: 78).

General Montgomery appears to have been in substantial agreement with UN goals, particularly the capture of Aidid, which he saw as important to the entire humanitarian/nation-building enterprise. During congressional hearings on Somalia, Montgomery would later say that he “thought it made sense to take Aidid off the scene,” because, he believed, if the warlord had been apprehended, the Somali opposition might have crumbled (CQWR, May 14, 1994, article by Richard Sammon: 1234). In another interview, Montgomery reiterated his support of UN efforts to capture Aidid, but expressed slight disagreement with the methods used. Montgomery declared: “I would have done it, but not announced it” (A&E Investigative Report: “A Soldier’s Peace,” air date: April 23, 1995).

In the fall of 1993, the extent of Montgomery’s influence was put to the test. After the ambush of UNOSOM II forces on September 9, General Montgomery sent the Pentagon a “request for heavily armed M1A1 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.” He said that they were needed “to help escort convoys, break through barricades,” and patrol more dangerous areas of Mogadishu (New York Times, October 5, 1993, article by R. W. Apple Jr.). General Montgomery’s request was declined by Defense Secretary Les Aspin, who feared congressional objections (New York Times, October 9, 1993, article by Steven A. Holmes; October 8, 1993, article by John H. Cushman).
After the deaths of the American Rangers in October, Aspin would admit that he made a mistake by not honoring the request.

In response to the killing of the Rangers, President Clinton virtually doubled the American presence while dispatching ample firepower, all of which was placed under Montgomery’s direct command. Most of the criticism for the events leading to the Rangers’ deaths fell on Defense Secretary Aspin, who later resigned, in large part as a result of the incident.

**EXIT STRATEGY**

**UNITAF**

No clear timetable was ever articulated for either UNITAF or UNOSOM II. Before UNITAF, President Bush declared that he wanted the troops out of Somalia by January 20, 1993, which was also to be his last day in office. Defense Secretary Cheney and General Powell, however, indicated that U.S. forces might have to stay longer. President-elect Clinton agreed with their assessment (*Keesing’s*, December 1992: 39225).

The Security Council resolution authorizing UNITAF stated that force was to be used to establish “a secure environment.” Only when this task had been accomplished “to the satisfaction of the Secretary General and the Security Council” would U.S. forces be withdrawn (*New York Times*, December 4, 1992, article by Paul Lewis).

This policy, however, was exceedingly vague and could be construed as permitting an open-ended engagement for Washington. There was considerable disagreement between the United States and the United Nations over whether a “secure environment” was contingent on disarming the clan militias. The United States maintained that the goal was simply to establish sufficient order so that relief could be distributed. As a practical matter, Washington’s veto power in the UN Security Council could have effectively stopped any attempt to keep the United States in Somalia any longer than it wanted to be there (*New York Times*, December 11, 1992, article by Elaine Sciolino).

When, in January 1993, American commanders began to certify the security of relief operations, the troops started to return home (*Keesing’s*, January 1993: 39255). On March 5, Boutros Boutros-Ghali proposed May 1, 1993, as the date that the United States could turn over the operation in Somalia to the United Nations (*Keesing’s*, March 1993: 39356).

Despite the completion of the United States’ mission in May 1993, some
American forces remained in Somalia under UNOSOM II and in the quick reaction force. At the time, General Powell stated that he had “no date in mind” for the final withdrawal of all American forces. He declared, however, “we’ll keep [American forces in Somalia] as long as it’s serving a useful purpose” (Washington Post, April 6, 1993, article by Keith Richburg).

UNOSOM II

Backed by American support in the Security Council, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali set several ambitious goals for UNOSOM II. Among the new objectives were “to maintain the cease-fire, facilitate the delivery” of relief supplies, and, most ominously, to “create conditions conducive to a political settlement.” This last goal carried an implied commitment to building a new state apparatus that could function effectively and maintain order (Makinda, 1993: 76). But this seemed to beg two important questions: First, how does one develop stable political institutions out of anarchy? Second, could military intervention compel the Somalis to address these issues? Such questions, especially those concerning basic identity (that is, loyalty to clan versus shared nationality) are not easily answered, and certainly cannot be imposed (Makinda, 1993: 30–31).

A more basic question was never addressed. Specifically, given the anarchy and intense inter-clan hatreds, is “unity” a goal even worth striving for? If the clans cannot live together, why not encourage the creation of two, or more, Somali states?

The pace of events soon compelled a revised timetable for withdrawal. The killing of the Rangers on October 3, 1993, sparked tremendous outrage within the American public and the halls of Congress. Under intense pressure, President Clinton devised a new policy, the bottom line of which was that U.S. troops would be withdrawn no later than March 31, 1994, regardless of the state of conditions within Somalia.

The president unveiled four new missions for American forces in the interim period. The first was self-defense for U.S. personnel. The second was to keep open communication routes for UN and relief operations. The third objective was “keeping the pressure” on local irregular forces that had attacked American troops. Fourth, and finally, to maintain the security necessary so that “through that pressure and the presence of our forces, [we can] help [make] it reasonably possible for the Somali people . . . to reach agreement among themselves so that they can solve their own problems” (CQWR, October 16, 1993, article by Pat Towell: 2823–2827).
In support of this new policy and withdrawal schedule, President Clinton doubled the size of the American military presence (New York Times, October 8, 1993, editorial). Citing possible damage to U.S. credibility, Clinton declared, “It is my judgment and that of my military advisors that we may need up to six months to complete these steps and to conduct an orderly withdrawal” (New York Times, October 8, 1993, text of Clinton address). These fears notwithstanding, U.S. troops were finally withdrawn from Somalia on March 25, 1994, almost a week ahead of schedule (New York Times, March 26, 1994, article by Donatella Lorch).

THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE INTERVENTION

At the time of the final withdrawal of U.S. forces the situation in Somalia remained largely unsettled. The American record had both accomplishments to be proud of and major deficiencies.

On the positive side, by March 1994 the famine had ended. Relief efforts had been, for the most part, successful. Life in the Somali countryside had largely returned to a “normal” routine. Relief workers could take pride in the fact that many Somali children had been vaccinated against disease. Furthermore, the United States and United Nations had successfully completed numerous public works projects; many new wells and roads had been built. Due to military protection provided by U.S. and UN intervention forces, agriculture had begun to return to Somalia’s few arable areas.

On the political front, in March 1994 fifteen clan groups, including the two major factions (those headed by Ali Mahdi and Aidid) met in Nairobi, Kenya. At the conclusion of the conference, they signed a pact that seemed to give hope for a peaceful future. The terms of the document included: (1) a cease-fire among the factions, (2) a repudiation of violence, and (3) a set date for a national unity and reconciliation conference (New York Times, March 26, 1994, article by Donatella Lorch).

However, the immediate post-intervention situation also had its negative aspects. By April 1994 the peace process had collapsed, as the scheduled reconciliation conference never took place. With both major factions accusing the other of undermining the Nairobi agreement, it was clearly evident that the two sides were still far apart (Keesing’s, April 1994: 39948).

In March 1994, although the initial problem of famine was under control, a new problem, pestilence, appeared in the form of a major cholera outbreak. By late March, more than 1,700 cases had been reported, with at least 100 deaths confirmed.
Operationally, the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces left UNOSOM II in the hands of substantially less well-trained and -equipped units from Third World countries. In fairness, it was difficult to say what the immediate effect of this development would be for Somalia because after July 1993 U.S. and UN forces “rarely ventured out of their [secured] compounds” for fear of taking more casualties. A few patrols were dispatched, but they studiously avoided certain hazardous areas. In fact, some new roads were built around dangerous sections of Mogadishu so that American tanks could bypass them. The relative absence of UNOSOM II patrols allowed a noticeable increase in banditry and looting.

Although the American withdrawal removed a substantial number of troops from the operation, in March 1994 UNOSOM II still maintained approximately 19,000 troops in the country. However, the departure of the United States removed considerable firepower and a coercive presence that had “acted as a psychological deterrent.” There was a pervasive fear, both in Somalia and the international community, that in the absence of a Somali political settlement, conditions would soon deteriorate again (New York Times, March 26, 1994, article by Donatella Lorch).

Unfortunately, in the period after the American withdrawal the situation in Somalia did not substantially change, and in some respects it became worse. Fighting among the various factions continued. The leadership of the northern breakaway Republic of Somaliland asserted that it would never rejoin Somalia.

For a year, UNOSOM II remained in Somalia and continued to take casualties in a war seemingly without end. In August 1994, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali finally acknowledged the possibility that the operation might not achieve its objectives. Furthermore, the few UNOSOM II troops that had been allowed into Somaliland were expelled and the civil war there resumed (Keesing’s, March–December 1994). In March 1995, U.S. forces returned to Somalia, this time to evacuate safely the remaining UNOSOM forces, thereby abandoning Somalia to its fate (New York Times, March 3, 1995, article by Donatella Lorch).

**UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF OPERATION RESTORE HOPE**

Perhaps the most unique element of this case was the motive behind the intervention. Although altruistic rationales are often applied to American military ventures abroad, in Somalia this truly seems to have been the case. The claim that Operation Restore Hope was undertaken for humanitarian
reasons is validated by the fact that there was no discernable American national interest at stake in Somalia. In earlier years, American involvement on the Horn of Africa had been motivated by its strategic location and the need to have a client state in the region to balance Soviet influence. However, with the demise of the cold war, these justifications were no longer relevant.

It appears in this case that the scale of human suffering, presented night after night on the evening news, motivated President Bush’s actions and gained him a large reservoir of support in both the public and Congress (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address).

A second unique element of this case was the anarchical environment in Somalia. In his speech explaining the initial U.S. intervention, President Bush accurately declared: “There is no government in Somalia. Law and order have broken down. Anarchy prevails” (New York Times, December 5, 1992, text of Bush address). Somalia presented no “enemy” to defeat, only conditions (for example, famine, civil war) to deal with; therefore, it was difficult to define goals and determine their fulfillment.

Third, Somalia represented the first time that the United Nations had ever used Chapter VII of the UN Charter to justify an invasion of a member state (Makinda, 1993: 70). This authority arises from Chapter VII, Article 42, of the Charter, which states that the Security Council, when necessary, “may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security” (United Nations, 1979: 389). A broad construction of the concept of “international peace and security” apparently was accepted by the Security Council, allowing it to utilize these provisions of the Charter.

Chapter VII, therefore, was the underlying justification for both UNITAF and, later, UNOSOM II. As a case in point, UNSC Resolution 794, which authorized the initial UNITAF mission, utilized Chapter VII by granting the military operation “the right ‘to use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations’” (Makinda, 1993: 70, emphasis added). In comparison to earlier UN peacekeeping/humanitarian operations, the authority granted in this case was broadened considerably, representing a virtual blank check. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali saw to it that this authority was later extended to UNOSOM II, making it a peacekeeping operation with enforcement power. Because of its concern with peace and international security, Chapter VII was also seen as a way of evading Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, a provision that prohibits outside interference in the domestic affairs of another state (Makinda, 1993: 70).
A fourth distinction is that during UNOSOM II, U.S. intervention forces were placed under a foreign command. As noted earlier, 3,000 U.S. troops served under the direct command of Turkish general Cevik Bir. Although U.S. forces have previously served under the United Nations flag, Somalia represented the first time that combat-capable units operated outside of the American chain of command. Although the additional quick reaction force remained under a separate U.S. command, it often followed the United Nations’ lead into action (CQWR, May 22, 1993, article by Gregory J. Bowens: 1304).

Finally, this operation was unusual in that it was initiated in a very open manner. Usually, to hold casualties to the lowest possible number, the exact location and time (H-Hour) of a landing are closely guarded secrets. Even the soldiers involved are kept in the dark until the last possible minute. By contrast, in Somalia, U.S. officials were sent to Mogadishu the day before the landing in order to meet with the two main clan militia leaders. It was hoped that by explaining the humanitarian nature of the UNITAF mission, American officials could secure the militias’ cooperation during the initial deployment. The equally unusual result was that the December 1992 landing represented one of the few times that an “opponent” ordered his forces to welcome U.S. troops as “friends” (New York Times, December 9, 1992, article by Jane Perlez).

ASSESSMENT

UNITAF, which represented the initial American intervention, was generally quite successful. President Bush had outlined only two goals, and they were largely fulfilled. The first was to create a secure environment for relief operations. As early as February 1993, it was clear that UNITAF was having its intended positive effect regarding this objective. Ports and airports in Mogadishu and southern Somalia were secured, greatly facilitating increased shipments of food, medicine, and other relief supplies. Likewise, virtually all supply routes through south and central Somalia were cleared and made usable. Furthermore, bandits had all but disappeared from Mogadishu. The looting of relief supplies was stopped.

As a result of the success of these military operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was able to engage in various public works projects. Perhaps the most important indicator of American success was that the number of deaths due to starvation dropped dramatically. In sum, U.S. forces succeeded in establishing a secure environment for re-
lief efforts in areas where American troops had been deployed (Makinda, 1993: 74).

The other official American objective—the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces after the establishment of the “secure environment”—was accomplished during the spring of 1993, culminating with the turning over of operations in Somalia to the United Nations in May.

Despite clashes between American troops and Somali gunmen, casualty figures remained quite low. As a result, and as long as that remained true, U.S. public opinion viewed the UNITAF operation as having an acceptable cost politically. This is to say that there were a sufficiently low number of casualties in relation to the minimal (in terms of the nation’s vital interests) importance of the objectives pursued.

Although some relief agencies claimed that American officials had attempted to cover up Operation Restore Hope’s alleged “failure” in order to hasten the pace of the U.S. withdrawal, when considered in terms of fulfilling the objectives originally set by Washington, the mission was a success (Keesing’s, February 1993: 39308). It is interesting to note also that many of the relief workers who originally complained about UNITAF eventually came to see it as a success and requested that it stay longer (Makinda, 1993: 74).

UNOSOM II, the United Nations’ successor mission to UNITAF, is generally considered a failure. Starting with the ambitious goal of rebuilding the Somali nation, it rapidly degraded into little more than a manhunt for General Aidid.

The mission was originally conceived as a new type of UN operation: peacekeeping with the power to use force to ensure the fulfillment of Security Council resolutions. It was, however, handicapped from the start. Despite its unprecedented enforcement authority, in terms of both its armaments and manpower quality, UNOSOM II was substantially inferior to the U.S. force that it replaced. Although a quick reaction force was available to assist UNOSOM II, it remained under an American command.

The original mandate of UNOSOM II was to cover all of Somalia. In practice, however, it never succeeded in doing so. UNOSOM II’s effectiveness largely remained confined to southern and central Somalia. The cause of this immobility was twofold. First, southern and central Somalia were the regions hardest hit by the famine. The second factor was that the fighting between the two main clan militias increasingly centered on Mogadishu.

In reviewing the ambitious goals that the Security Council set for UNOSOM II, the extent of its failure becomes more evident. The objective of disarming the clan militias was never realized. Given the proliferation
of weapons throughout the country, this goal was never very realistic from the start.

In terms of the broader goal—fostering peace and national reconciliation so that Somalia could be rebuilt—the mission also failed. The United Nations sponsored several major peace conferences (*Keesings*, October 1996: 41307). Despite the expense associated with them, nothing constructive ever resulted from these meetings. Afterward, fighting continued unabated (BBC News, June 2, 2004).

Although it assumed control of the port and airport in Mogadishu from the United States, UNOSOM II had difficulty maintaining the supply routes from these facilities into the famine-stricken interior areas. Indeed, American forces attached to UNOSOM II actually had to build roads around parts of Mogadishu so that clan strongholds could be avoided.

UNOSOM II was unable to maintain the peace, which was one of its central objectives. To make matters worse, when UNOSOM II did engage in firefights with clan militias, it often took unacceptably high casualties. As a result, UN forces all but abdicated their peacekeeping role, spending the final months of their mission inside the secure confines of their fortified bases in order to avoid further casualties. When the UN force left Somalia in March 1995, the capital was still so torn by fighting among the rival gangs and militias that even relief workers withdrew.

UNOSOM II’s one major success appears to have been famine relief. Aid workers believe that intervention may have saved as many as 300,000 people from starvation. By early 1995, so complete had been the recovery for Somalia that the country was able to produce almost enough food to fulfill its domestic consumption needs. It even began to export modest quantities of livestock and fruit. These exports formed the basis for Mogadishu’s slow return as a regional trade center (*New York Times*, March 3, 1995, article by Donatella Lorch).

The apparent alleviation of Somalia’s suffering, however, was quickly undone. As early as May 1995, one relief organization reported that, due to a shortage of food and medicine, over 500,000 people in southern Somalia faced death due to starvation and diseases such as cholera, malaria, and typhoid (*Keesing’s*, May 1995: 40539).

The reversal of Somalia’s fortunes only grew worse over time. A severe drought in the southwestern part of the country caused a renewed famine that reportedly claimed 100 lives in March 1997. Relief organizations, fearing for the safety of their field-workers, were reluctant to respond unless militia leaders would guarantee sufficient security (*Keesing’s*, March 1997: 41527).
The political situation remained greatly fractured and unstable. Elections promised for 1995 did not take place. The effort of the United Nations to act as an agent of Somali national reconciliation failed miserably, in some measure undone by the personal animosity that developed between Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and General Aidid. The Security Council clearly erred in making the fugitive warlord’s capture a central part of the mission. The other, and more important, UN objectives became subordinated to this goal, as UNOSOM II’s “mission creep” allowed the operation to drift ever further off course (New York Times, March 3, 1995, article by Donatella Lorch).

The efforts to apprehend Aidid led to U.S. losses when in October 1993 American Rangers were killed by Aidid’s militia. Although initiated and carried out under a U.S. command, this incident may have had unforeseen long-range implications for future UN peacekeeping missions. Appalled by the casualties in what was originally characterized as a low-risk operation, the Congress and the American public demanded that U.S. troops be withdrawn, a move which greatly diluted the quality of forces available to UNOSOM II. More importantly, however, the United States may well have become permanently soured on the idea of committing troops to any future multilateral operations not fully under direct American command. This disenchantment with UN operations seems at least partially justified; Boutros Boutros-Ghali was a poor steward of U.S. military resources.

In this case, however, the failings of the United Nations are also largely the failings of Washington’s policy. UNOSOM II’s operations were overseen by the UN Security Council, where the United States was a permanent member with veto power (New York Times, October 16, 1993, article by Elaine Sciolino with Paul Lewis). Therefore, Boutros-Ghali could actually do no more than the United States would allow. In fact, the American ambassador to the United Nations, presumably taking her orders from President Clinton, supported and initially praised the Security Council’s policies (New York Times, March 3, 1995, article by Donatella Lorch).

Even the president’s own revised, and more narrowly defined, post-October 1993 mission goals remained largely unfulfilled. The additional forces and equipment dispatched to Somalia after the killing of the Rangers did allow U.S. forces to protect themselves until they were withdrawn, as promised, in March 1994. The Clinton administration failed, however, to accomplish its other “revised” policy goals (of maintaining pressure on local irregular forces and maintaining sufficient security on the ground) that would have afforded a breathing space to permit the formulation of
solutions for the multitude of political problems that existed in Somalia.

UNOSOM II, and the U.S. role in it, were perhaps best summed up by Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ), usually one of President Clinton’s staunchest allies in Congress. Bradley condemned the venture as “a series of ad hoc decisions, divorced from any overall strategy [that] led our troops into an ill-defined, poorly planned, and open-ended mission” (New York Times, October 16, 1993, article by Clifford Krauss).
Hopes were high that the 1995 Dayton Accords, which ended the Bosnia conflict, would prove to be the basis for a stable, if tense, peace in the Balkans. With the help of the United States and NATO, three years of bloody conflict had been brought to an end. The Serbs, Croats, and Muslims of the recently dissolved Yugoslavia still did not particularly care for each other, but perhaps coexistence as independent nation-states was possible. Under considerable pressure, much of it exerted by NATO air strikes, Belgrade’s Bosnian Serb allies had agreed to a power-sharing arrangement with the Croats and Slavic Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Likewise, Serbia agreed to withdraw from the areas it had seized from Croatia. With peacekeeping forces on the ground to enforce the agreement, perhaps the centuries-old animus between the three groups would finally begin to heal and peace could be restored to the troubled region.

Unfortunately, the peace would prove to be very brief. By 1998, long simmering animosities between Serbs and their ethnic Albanian-Muslim neighbors broke out in the Serbian province of Kosovo. Tit-for-tat killings carried out alternately by the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Serbian authorities rapidly spiraled out of control. Despite well-intended diplomatic efforts by the United Nations, the United States, and several European countries, a settlement satisfactory to both sides proved to be stubbornly elusive. The last chance for peace, the Rambouillet Peace Conference, ended in a failure to secure an agreement between the Serbian-dominated government of Yugoslavia and the representatives of the Kosovar Albanians. Within days of the collapse of the talks in March 1999, U.S.-led NATO forces acted to end the slaughter. What ensued was a seventy-eight-day air offensive unlike anything Europe had seen since the end of World War II. For the first time in its history as an alliance, NATO was at war.
THE INITIAL SITUATION IN KOSOVO

It is hard to find a point to start any discussion on the history of the Kosovo conflict. This is because the parties to the dispute, the ethnic-Albanian (and largely Muslim) Kosovars and the Orthodox Christian Serbs, both assert centuries-old claims on the territory. For purposes of simplicity, it is perhaps best to start our narrative in the twentieth century.

At the end of the Second World War, Yugoslavia’s communist authorities established Kosovo as a part of Serbia, one of the six republics comprising the new federated state. Marshal Tito, then the dictator of Yugoslavia, granted Kosovo considerable autonomy within the Serbian republic. Sitting in the capital city of Pristina, a provincial parliament was able to pass laws and govern Kosovo’s internal affairs locally (Cordesman, 2001: 5–6). This arrangement remained in force for the better part of the decade after Tito’s death on March 4, 1980 (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 135).

As a result of the internal power struggle that generally characterized the succession process in communist countries, Slobodan Milosevic began to rise to a position of prominence within the Yugoslav politburo. A key to the rapid pace of Milosevic’s ascension to power was his willingness to exploit Kosovo in order to fan the flames of resurgent Serbian nationalism. Milosevic proclaimed his belief in a “greater Serbia,” a new state that would encompass Serbia proper (including Kosovo) and the Serbian-majority regions of both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Judah, 2000: 52). As early as 1987, he stated his intention to centralize control over Serbia in Belgrade, an implicit threat to Kosovar autonomy (Cordesman, 2001: 6).

In 1988, Milosevic acted on his stated intention by forcing Kosovo’s Albanian leadership from power. The following year, Serbian tanks surrounded the parliament building and coerced the legislative body to formally renounce its autonomy agreement, binding the province firmly to Serbia. In 1990, Milosevic finished his “reconquest” of Kosovo by instituting direct Yugoslav (Serbian) rule from Belgrade (Cordesman, 2001: 6).

With the political consolidation completed, Yugoslav authorities systematically began to dismantle Albanian political and cultural institutions. This was done as a facet of “ethnically cleansing” the province by imposing a process one observer referred to as the “Serbianization” of Kosovo (Judah, 2000: 62; Cordesman, 2001: 6).

Kosovo’s Albanian majority did not take the forced abrogation of the autonomy agreement in 1990 passively. In July, members of the parliament unilaterally declared Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. Albania became the first nation to recognize the breakaway province as an independent state, but the world community largely chose to ignore the new govern-
Serbia responded by dissolving the rebellious legislative body (BBC News, 2006: “Timeline: Kosovo”). In May 1992, Ibrahim Rugova was elected president of Kosovo. He recognized that declaring independence and being independent in reality are often two different matters. Rugova was a pragmatist who preferred peaceful negotiations to violence, and consequently he sought a negotiated solution to the situation in the troubled region. Indeed, Serb and Kosovar officials held their first round of face-to-face talks in October 1993 (BBC News, 1999: “Timeline: Countdown to Conflict”).

Unfortunately, not all Albanians in Kosovo shared Rugova’s dedication to the lengthy and sometimes frustrating process of negotiating with Yugoslavia. (It should be noted that by this time Yugoslavia had broken up into its constituent, independent republics. The “Federated Republic of Yugoslavia” [FRY] henceforth referred only to the Serbian-dominated stump that remained: Serbia [including Kosovo] and Montenegro.) In 1993, those who preferred action to the glacial pace of diplomacy established what would become known in the West as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA was virtually a mirror image of the very ideas that they claimed to despise. Not unlike Milosevic, they too desired their own “superstate.” In their alternate vision, they advocated the creation of a “Greater Kosovo,” which ideally would not only gain independence for their “homeland,” but would eventually also unite them with ethnic Albanian minorities in Montenegro and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

In differentiating between Rugova and the KLA an important distinction should be noted. Rugova advocated Kosovo’s independence as a republic within the context of the Yugoslav federation, a status similar to that enjoyed by Montenegro. By contrast, the KLA advocated complete and total independence from Serbia, a status that Slovenia and Croatia had attained. To accomplish their goal, the KLA initiated a campaign of low-intensity warfare to drive out the Serbs (Judah, 2000: 103–4).

Two Major Turning Points

In the early 1990s, the Yugoslavia that Tito had worked to build imploded. The lack of a strong authoritarian leader of Tito’s stature removed the bond that had held the six republics together. In a futile effort to prevent the inevitable, Serbia fought a war to prevent Croatian independence, and in lieu of that, to seize as much of the new country’s territory as possible.

Likewise, Milosevic aided ethnic Serb militias as surrogates for his purpose in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bosnian Serb campaign of genocide against
their Muslim and Bosnian Croatian fellow countrymen introduced an odi-
ous new term to the global diplomatic lexicon: “ethnic cleansing.” (Note:
Muslims in Bosnia shared the same Islamic faith with Kosovars, but not
the same ethnicity. Bosnian Muslims are largely ethnic Slavs).

In an effort to halt the Serbs and end the slaughter in Bosnia, in 1995
the United Nations authorized NATO to engage in a campaign of limited
bombing. The action was part of a plan that U.S. negotiator Richard Hol-
broke dubbed “bombs for peace”; the idea was to push the Serbs to take
negotiations seriously and reach a negotiated solution as rapidly as pos-
sible. The strategy worked. The warring factions met in Dayton, Ohio, and
negotiated a settlement. The “Dayton Accords” secured peace in Bosnia and
established a power-sharing arrangement. Although Bosnia was preserved
as a political entity, it was divided into two zones: one Serb, one Muslim/

While the Dayton Accords were a diplomatic success, the exact nature
of the lessons it provided was in dispute. On one hand, military action had
brought the Serbs to the table. This caused some to argue that perhaps if ac-
tion had been taken earlier the conflict could have been brought to a more
rapid conclusion. On the other hand, it was argued that the agreement was
a result of all sides in the conflict being exhausted by the ordeal of war. Ad-
vocates of this perspective asserted that the Serbs had already agreed to the
main points of Dayton before the start of the bombing campaign. Western
leaders took note that the Serbs quickly sued for peace shortly after the
bombs began to drop. This lesson appears later to have greatly influenced
Western calculations regarding how to proceed under similar circumstances
in Kosovo (Judah, 2000: 123).

One point often overlooked is that the Dayton Accords were never in-
tended to be a comprehensive solution to the problems of the Balkans
(Cordesman, 2001: 7). One author notes, Dayton only “ends war in Bosnia
and ties up loose ends in Croatia” (Judah, 2000: 124). It did not address Ko-
sovo or other outstanding issues (Cordesman, 2001: 7). In fact, Holbrooke
asserts that had Kosovo been added to the Dayton agenda, it would have
made an agreement significantly more difficult to achieve, if not impossible
(Judah, 2000: 124).

For some in Kosovo, Dayton was quite instructive. Specifically, hardlin-
ers concluded the peaceful resistance urged by Rugova and the moderates
was a clear failure. “Good behavior” had not only gone unrewarded, it re-
sulted in Kosovo being almost totally ignored by Belgrade and the world
community (Judah, 2000: 124–25). The lesson was clear: the virtues of
peace and patience result only in getting you neglected and ignored; violent action gets attention and NATO assistance (Cordesman, 2001: 6).

While the Dayton Accords were pivotal to events unfolding in the Balkans, a second major event was about to shape the direction and pace of actions in Kosovo. In 1997, a financial crisis caused the collapse of the Albanian government (Judah, 2000: 120, 127–28). The result was a descent into anarchy, which, although bad in and of itself, had two major implications for Kosovo. First, the Albanian frontier with Kosovo was left unsupervised. The KLA could now cross the border with impunity; in a real sense, the rebels now had an outlet to the world. The second implication was made possible, in part, by the first: the chaos in Albania threw open Albanian military depots. The KLA now had a ready source of cheap weapons and a route to transport them into Kosovo (Judah, 2000, 128). The ability to conduct a guerrilla war against Serbian domination had just gotten a lot easier.

**Downhill Slide**

In an effort to bolster the Serbian position in Kosovo, in 1995 Milosevic resettled Bosnian Serb refugees in the region. The result was a flare-up in violence in the troubled province as a cycle of murder and revenge established itself as a norm (BBC News, 1999: “Timeline: Countdown to Conflict”). In response to rising KLA attacks, Serbia moved to assert its power. In 1997, during a brutal crackdown, the Serbs killed “hundreds of non-combatant ethnic Albanians.” Thousands more were displaced by the fighting (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 136).

Serbian authorities conducted an April 1998 referendum on whether to allow foreign mediation to resolve the Kosovo situation. The result of the poll was an affirmation of Milosevic’s position; 95 percent voted to reject any role for foreigners in the negotiations. The numbers, however, were skewed. The margin of rejection of the referendum was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Albanians in Kosovo largely boycotted the election. Furthermore, the vote was not limited to Kosovo; to the contrary, the vote was nationwide in Serbia, a fact that virtually preordained its defeat. Ironically, within days of the balloting, Milosevic was in negotiations with U.S. emissary Richard Holbrooke, the diplomat who had brokered the Dayton Accords three years earlier. There was reason for optimism when the talks yielded what appeared to be a breakthrough: Milosevic invited Rugova for talks between the two leaders (Judah, 2000: 153).

Unfortunately, fighting again broke out in the summer of 1998. The
United Nations was incapable of doing much to stop the fighting. Kofi Annan, the secretary-general of the world body, appeared to be more concerned with the prospect of outside intervention in the conflict than with doing anything to stop it. In June 1998, he admonished NATO to remember that the Security Council must approve any action that the alliance might contemplate taking in order to resolve the situation in Kosovo (BBC News, 1999: “Timeline: Countdown to Conflict”).

In September, the UN Security Council finally approved Resolution 1199, which called for a cease-fire in Kosovo. “In addition to demanding that all parties cease hostilities, the resolution called for the FRY authorities and the Kosovo leadership to enter into a dialogue to end the crisis. It further insisted that ‘security units used for civilian repression’ should be withdrawn by the FRY. Although the resolution did not explicitly threaten the use of force against the Serbs, it was widely interpreted as allowing its use, as it was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter” (Keesing’s, September 1998: 42520).

Unfortunately, not all members of the Security Council were necessarily of the opinion that the “additional measures” referred to in the resolution meant the use of force per se. The Russians made it fairly clear that they would do what they could to forestall the use of force against the Serbs, and any effort to bring a use of force authorization before the Council would almost certainly fall victim to a veto (Judah, 2000: 178–79). It should be noted that China abstained on this vote (Keesing’s, September 1998: 42520).

Given the decaying situation in Kosovo, during the summer of 1998, NATO began to prepare for the eventuality of war in the Balkans. At a June 11–12 meeting, allied defense ministers ordered the NATO military staff to draw up plans for military action should the use of force prove inevitable. The reasons for these preparations were clear: the Russians were hamstringing the United Nations and it was becoming increasingly obvious that if action were to be taken, NATO would have to take the lead (Judah, 2000: 165).

In an effort to make its intentions unambiguous, on June 15 NATO commenced air exercises in neighboring Albania and Macedonia. Eighty-five aircraft from thirteen member countries took part in the drill. The object was to use the show of force to impress Milosevic with what he could look forward to if he did not get serious about looking for a peaceful, negotiated solution (Keesing’s, June 1998: 42356).

The situation on the ground, however, continued to deteriorate. In August 1998, the Serbs mounted a determined offensive. They succeeded in
weakening the KLA, and the rebel stronghold of Junik fell to government forces (BBC News, 1999: “Timeline: Countdown to Conflict”). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 250,000 Kosovars were driven from their homes and, with winter rapidly approaching, 50,000 had no shelter from the elements. It was reported that some 98,000 had fled the province altogether (Cordesman, 2001: 11).

In a report submitted to the Security Council on October 5, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan offered no assessment of Serbian compliance. The reason, he said, was that he simply wanted to present the facts and allow Council members to decide for themselves. It appears that he did not want to get in the middle of the growing acrimony between the permanent members of the Council. For its part, Russia vowed to veto any UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Serbia. The NATO powers even showed signs of internal disagreement over whether force should be utilized (Keesing’s, October 1998: 42580).

Negotiations with the Yugoslav regime continued, with a major breakthrough achieved in October 1998. U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke was successful in negotiating a truce with Milosevic that resulted in a temporary withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo (Crabb, Sarieddine, Antizzo, 2001: 136). Serious negotiations with the Kosovar Albanians would now commence in search of a settlement leading toward a permanent peace. One major concession granted by Milosevic was permission for the insertion of a Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), a force of some 2,000 troops under the auspices of NATO that, among other powers, “would have the right to make aerial surveillance flights above the province to verify whether the authorities were living up to their promises.” Additional French-led troops would be stationed in neighboring Macedonia as a NATO rapid reaction force that could extract KVM observers if the situation in Kosovo began to degrade seriously. Of course, the subtle coercive element of these troops was not lost on anybody; a NATO presence in the “neighborhood” could serve a more assertive purpose later (Judah, 2000: 186–87).

The deployment of the KVM force marked an important turning point in U.S. and global policy toward Kosovo. If the mission failed (as it eventually did), then tremendous credence would be afforded the claim that the Clinton administration and its European allies had gone the extra mile to “give peace a chance” before military action was undertaken (Judah, 2000: 188).

In the short term, Holbrooke’s October agreement did give Kosovo a brief respite from the seemingly endless cycle of violence. Unfortunately, this was to prove to be the proverbial “calm before the storm.” By the end
of the year, fighting once again began to flair up (Cordesman, 2001: 13). The tit-for-tat violence came to a horrifying climax in early 1999.

On January 15, “the bodies of 45 ethnic Albanians were discovered in the village of Račak,” approximately eighteen miles from Pristina. The bullet wounds, mostly found in the head or neck of the victims, strongly suggested that the victims had been executed. British foreign minister Robin Cook publicly expressed his conviction that Serbian forces had, in fact, murdered the Kosovars. Press accounts, “citing Western intelligence and diplomatic sources, claimed that leaked transcripts of telephone conversations had shown that the Račak massacre had been ordered at the highest levels of the Serbian government” (Keesing’s, January 1999: 42750).

Although most international observers and governments are in agreement regarding Serbian culpability in the Račak killings, the KLA was not above trying to bait the Serbs into taking harsh action that would accrue Western sympathy for the ethnic Albanian cause. The KLA strategy, according to U.S. intelligence sources, was “to draw NATO into its fight for independence by provoking Serb forces into further atrocities” (Judah, 2000: 191). Račak and the ever-increasing spiral of violence that followed it appeared to be having the desired result; Western sympathies and rhetoric began, ever so slightly, to tilt toward the Albanian Kosovar side.

The Rambouillet Conference

As bad as Račak was, it was feared in Western capitals that the violence in Kosovo was only going to get much worse. In order to prevent the further rapid decay of the situation, the foreign ministers of the Contact Group (six leading powers, including: the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia) invited the ethnic Albanians and the Serbians to negotiations to be held at the Rambouillet Chateau near Paris. Presided over by British foreign minister Robin Cook and French foreign minister Hubert Vidrine, the meetings were to commence on February 6, 1999. Originally scheduled to last only two weeks, the conference was to utilize “proximity talks.” Under this format, although representatives for both parties would be present at the estate, the two sides would never meet face to face. Both sides, rather, would address each other through mediators who would shuttle back and forth between the two delegations.

The Contact Group was successfully able to convene the conference after NATO issued a statement endorsing its efforts. In no uncertain terms, the reluctant Serbs were told that if Belgrade did not send representatives to
the talks, NATO was prepared to commence air strikes to persuade them otherwise (Cordesman, 2001: 15; Keesing’s, February 1999: 42806).

The main points of the plan that emerged from Rambouillet included:

- All paramilitary groups, including the [KLA] to be disbanded within three months of the agreement.
- Serbia to reduce immediately its police force strength in Kosovo to 2,500.
- The head of the international monitoring mission in Kosovo to establish a timetable for the remaining police to leave the territory.
- A new police force to be established to reflect the ethnic make-up of Kosovo (which was more than 80 per cent ethnic Albanian).
- The FRY army presence in the territory to be scaled down to 1,500 and confined to three garrisons along the borders with Albania and Macedonia,
- An international peacekeeping force to enter Kosovo to enforce the settlement.

(Keesing’s, February 1999: 42806)

Each side had its concerns with the Contact Group proposal. The Serbs feared that implementation would make Kosovo Serbian in name only as it would give the rebel province “wide-ranging autonomy with only limited” ties to the Yugoslav federation. The Serbs also were not happy about the idea of a 35,000-strong peacekeeping force stationing itself in the region (Keesing’s, February 1999: 42806; Cordesman, 2001: 15). Belgrade was especially troubled by the document’s “Appendix B,” which would give the NATO force tremendous authority to inject itself into Serbian affairs (Judson, 2000: 210).

For their part, the Kosovars also had their reservations about the proposal. Some in the ethnic Albanian camp were unhappy about provisions mandating the disarming of the KLA militia. Furthermore, the “autonomy” concept envisioned by the document fell well short of the total independence that the more militant elements in the ethnic Albanian camp had hoped for (Cordesman, 2001: 15).

The talks ended on February 23 without a signed agreement. The lack of a formal accord notwithstanding, a feeling emerged from the conference that an “agreement in principle” had been reached—specifically, that Kosovo would have its autonomy restored. As is often the case in diplomacy, the devil was in the details. That is to say that there was no agreement on most of the other points of contention (Cordesman, 2001: 15). The so-called Interim Political Agreement (IPA) around which this “agreement in principle” was constructed included several key points: the holding of free and
fair elections, the protection of human rights and ethnic communities, and the establishment of a fair judicial system (Keesing’s, February 1999: 42806).

Although there was an agreement among the parties that further talks would be held in Paris on March 15, violence again began to flare up in Kosovo. Appeals were made to Milosevic to restrain the police and military units in the province, but the pleas fell on deaf ears. The fighting created 8,000 refugees as villages were burned to the ground. As the fighting ground on, it became increasingly clear that the KVM mission was impotent (Cordesman, 2001: 15).

The second round of talks took place March 15–19 at the Kleber Center in Paris. As the talks wound down, the ethnic Albanians were finally enticed to sign the Rambouillet Accords. The Kosovars had several reasons for signing when they did, and much of the motivation was based on fear. There was a fear that if they did not sign, the Western countries would deal them a public relations blow by labeling the KLA a terrorist movement. There was also the powerful fear that a lack of an agreement would lead to NATO stationing forces on the border with Albania in order to choke off the flow of arms and supplies to the insurgent forces. To compound the pressure on the Kosovars, Western nations threatened to cut off funding for the rebels coming from the Albanian diaspora community living in the United States and Europe. Furthermore, the Kosovars were aware that the lack of an agreement risked losing the international sympathy that they had worked so hard to cultivate. Finally, there was a real fear that by not signing they were perhaps losing an historic opportunity to start a political process that could eventually lead to the fulfillment of the dream of an independent Kosovo (Judah, 2000: 213).

By contrast, the Serbians were stubbornly intransigent. There is no definitive explanation for their rejection of the Rambouillet Agreement, but speculation appears to be centered around two points. First, due to internal agreements among the Kosovars’ various factions, Milosevic may not have thought it possible that they would sign, only to be totally shocked when he discovered that he had been outmaneuvered by the ethnic Albanians. Second, it has been suggested that Serbian negotiator Milan Milutinovic actually favored the agreement, but that Milosevic was persuaded against it by hardliners in the Yugoslav military who may have believed that NATO threats were merely a bluff (Judah, 2000: 221). After a failed eleventh-hour appeal to the Serbs to sign, the conference ended on March 19.

At this point, the Serbs knew what was coming and decided to act preemptively. The Yugoslav military was unleashed in a brutal offensive; KLA
positions were attacked as the province began to hemorrhage refugees. The Serbs appeared to be pursuing a “scorched earth” policy against areas that they considered strategically important. Some analysts believed that this overt campaign of ethnic cleansing was actually directed toward clearing out a “Serbian” area in anticipation of a Bosnia-style partition of Kosovo (Keesing’s, March 1999, 42846).

On March 22, in one last effort to find a peaceful resolution of the situation, Holbrooke met with Milosevic in Belgrade. Unfortunately, Milosevic would commit neither to a cease-fire nor to allowing a NATO presence in Kosovo (the KVM had departed on March 20). Holbrooke warned him that once it started, the bombing would be “severe, swift, sustained.” Milosevic remained unmoved (Judah, 2000: 227).

Thirty-four hours later, the bombing started. NATO was at war.

WHY THE UNITED STATES CHOSE TO GET INVOLVED

When Bill Clinton ran for president in 1992, his agenda was almost wholly domestic. This was only natural given that his opponent, George H. W. Bush, while a gifted international statesman, could not save the country from falling into a recession toward the end of his term. During the campaign, Bush was painted as too preoccupied with foreign policy, and this gave Clinton an opening. Utilizing clever slogans such as “It’s the economy, stupid,” candidate Clinton was able to convince the public that the greatest threat to its well-being was not some foreign threat, but economic malaise. Promising to “focus on the economy like a laser beam,” Clinton was able to muster a slim plurality of the vote to win the 1992 election.

Once in office, Mr. Clinton did not seem tremendously interested in international affairs. Consequently, his general foreign policy approach, particularly toward the Balkans, appeared to be “ad hoc and reactive” (Crabb, Sarieddine, Antizzo, 2001: 137). It has been argued that the fiasco in Somalia had made the president risk-averse and that he tended to shy away from foreign involvement if military intervention with the potential of significant casualties were to be a major component.

Why then did the United States choose to get involved in Kosovo? There appear to have been several factors that influenced the Clinton administration to commit itself to action in the Balkans. The primary reason centered on humanitarian concerns. Clinton saw parallels between Serbia’s ethnic cleansing and the Nazi “final solution” campaign during World War II. One observer believes that that may reflect the influence of his secretary of state,
Madeleine Albright, who as a young Jew had witnessed the implementation of Nazi genocide in her native Czechoslovakia (Bellamy, 2002: 73). All but casting the Milosevic regime as modern Nazis, the president emphasized the moral imperative for action (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 46). Utilizing the earlier intervention in Bosnia as his template, Clinton made his case to the American people in a March 24, 1999, televised address:

World War II and the Holocaust engulfed this region. In both wars, Europe was slow to recognize the dangers, and the United States waited even longer to enter the conflicts. Just imagine if the leaders back then had acted wisely and early enough? How many lives could have been saved? How many Americans would not have had to die?

We learned some of the same lessons in Bosnia just a few years ago. The world did not act early enough to stop that war either. And let’s not forget what happened: Innocent people herded into concentration camps; children gunned down by snipers on their way to school; soccer fields and parks turned into cemeteries; a quarter of a million people killed not because of anything they had done but because of who they were. Two million Bosnians became refugees. (New York Times, March 25, 1999, text of Clinton address)

Some observers have made the case that Mr. Clinton’s neo-liberal outlook may have been penance for an earlier “sin of omission.” In 1994, the United States, along with the United Nations and the rest of the world community, stood on the sidelines as genocidal warfare raged in the African nation of Rwanda. Clinton had been criticized for his inaction. In his defense, it should be noted that the conflict occurred shortly after the U.S. exit under fire from Somalia, and therefore it is difficult to imagine that the American public would have supported military intervention, even for the most noble of humanitarian purposes (Lambeth, 2001: 182; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 46).

The second motivating factor appeared to be a fear that the conflict in Kosovo might spill over into adjacent countries. President Clinton indicated as much when he stated: “We act to prevent a wider war.” He alluded to World War I, noting that that conflict had started as a minor dispute in the same region and eventually engulfed the world. Clinton asserted that Milosevic was purposely causing turmoil in the Balkans, declaring that: “a dictator in Serbia . . . has done nothing since the cold war ended but start new wars and pour gasoline on the flames of ethnic and religious division” (New York Times, March 25, 1999, text of Clinton address).

Mr. Clinton’s statements indicated that he saw Milosevic’s Yugoslavia as a threat not just to the security of the region, but potentially to that of
Europe as a whole. In a radio address he gave shortly before NATO intervention commenced, he stated: “There is a serious risk the hostilities would spread to the neighboring new democracies of Albania and Macedonia and reignite the conflict in Bosnia we worked so hard to stop. It could even involve our NATO allies, Greece and Turkey. If we wait until casualties mount and war spreads, any effort to stop it will come at a higher price under more dangerous conditions” (New York Times, February 14, 1999, text of President Clinton’s weekly radio address).

A third, related concern for American policymakers was a fear that Yugoslav actions would destabilize the area to an extent that it would cause a massive refugee problem. The flow of humanity streaming out of Kosovo would likely create a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, with the neighboring countries taking refugees in overwhelmed by the magnitude of the sheer numbers (Washington Post, April 2, 1999, op-ed by Charles Krauthammer). However, as serious as the humanitarian aspects of this crisis could be, the specter of an even more ominous danger lurked in the shadows. There was a real fear that because of the geography of the war, most Kosovars would flee south to the relatively stable former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. Like Kosovo, Macedonia also had its ethnic tensions. There was concern that the presence of large numbers of ethnic Albanians might exacerbate an already tenuous stability and that civil war between Christians and Muslims in Macedonia was a real possibility. The fear that refugee migration could inadvertently lead to a regional war was palpable (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 47–48).

A fourth motivation was a desire to preserve NATO (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 47). With the end of the cold war, some suggested that the alliance had outlived its usefulness. Since the enemy it was developed to deter no longer existed, perhaps it was time to retire NATO. The organization, however, had served as a foundation both of European security and transatlantic relations for half a century, and its advocates saw new possibilities for it in a post–cold war world. NATO could retain its relevance by transforming itself from a defensive alliance into a regional security guarantor. Steps toward such a metamorphosis had already begun with the creation of the Partnership for Peace in the early 1990s. By creating this “junior division,” NATO started to become a mechanism that would welcome even its former adversaries to alliance meetings to find new ways to maintain stability and keep the peace on the continent. In 1999, NATO formally expanded with the addition of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as full members.

This transformation of NATO was a means toward its preservation. Likewise, NATO involvement in Kosovo was seen as an important step in the
effort to maintain the relevance of the alliance in a rapidly changing environment. As the guarantor of peace and stability in Europe, Kosovo offered NATO a chance to abandon its traditional deterrent role and to engage in a more assertive approach to maintaining the peace. Indeed NATO, which up until this point had never launched a war against a sovereign state, was now staking its very unity and credibility on its enterprise in the Balkans (Washington Post, April 2, 1999, op-ed by Charles Krauthammer). During the fall of 1998, NATO had made threats to use military force if the fighting in the region did not stop. To fail to make good on these threats once its bluff had been called would have called the credibility of NATO itself into question. As President Clinton stated: “Imagine what would happen if we and our allies instead decided just to look the other way as these people were massacred on NATO’s doorstep. That would discredit NATO, the cornerstone on which our security has rested for 50 years now” (New York Times, February 14, 1999, transcript of President Clinton’s speech).

One aspect of NATO’s character remained unchanged; as loath as America’s increasingly independent-minded allies were to admit it, the United States remained the organization’s senior partner. Some in the United States had argued that the Balkans were solely a European problem and that the United States should not intervene. The Clinton administration realized, however, that without U.S. leadership NATO action simply was not going to happen. Consequently, Kosovo presented the United States with a unique opportunity: Kosovo could maintain NATO cohesion by underlining its value to European security while simultaneously reasserting American leadership of the alliance (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 138).

Globalization appears also to have played a role in the development of U.S. policy toward Kosovo. Clearly, the effects of events abroad are no longer locally contained; eventually all members of the global community, even the United States, are affected in one way or another. To the extent that global events can be brought under control, or at least contained, it requires power and the means to deliver it. In a post–cold war world, the only country with the ability to organize and deploy such power is the United States. The realization of America’s inescapable role in resolving crises such as Kosovo was summed up by a senior official in the Clinton administration who stated: “I am not sure there is such a thing as a foreign war anymore” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 176–77).

The final motivation for American action in Kosovo may have been personal to President Clinton. The time line of the events leading to NATO intervention in Kosovo roughly parallel those of the Monica Lewinsky scandal that resulted in Mr. Clinton’s dubious distinction as only the second
It has been widely suggested that Kosovo may have served a purpose as part of a “Wag the Dog” strategy. Named after a then-popular movie wherein a scandal-plagued president concocts a fake crisis abroad to distract the public’s attention from his ongoing problems, this theory holds that Mr. Clinton chose to embark on his Kosovo venture for a two-fold reason: he could divert attention from the ongoing impeachment investigation and, if successful, he would build a legacy comparable to other great foreign policy presidents, such as Truman, Kennedy, Reagan, and George H. W. Bush (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 138).

Although there is no hard evidence that Mr. Clinton purposely chose his course of action based on such concerns, there is considerable circumstantial evidence to make the point one worthy of debate. Indeed, even when a course of action was prudent, Mr. Clinton’s pursuit of his foreign policy agenda appeared to follow a schedule that was personally opportunistic. Three examples in the eight months from August 1998 until the start of the Kosovo war in March 1999 illustrate the point. First, in retaliation for the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Mr. Clinton launched a missile attack on suspected al Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan on August 20, 1998. This action occurred on the very day that Monica Lewinsky, the White House intern that Mr. Clinton admitted having an affair with, was scheduled to testify about their relationship before a grand jury. The second suspicious incident revolves around the timing of Operation Desert Fox in December 1998. This punitive action against Saddam Hussein was undoubtedly well deserved on the part of the Iraqi dictator, but it was carried out on December 16–20, 1998, the very time that the House of Representatives was scheduled to vote on articles of impeachment. The third instance, as we have discussed, consisted of the events leading up to the start of the war in Kosovo. Indeed, the pivotal Rambouillet Conference started on February 6, 1999, during the impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate (Judah, 2000: 197).

Again, it should be emphasized that there is no hard evidence of Mr. Clinton’s state of mind, and one could most certainly make a strong argument that it was the events on the ground rather than those in Washington that drove the pace and direction of Kosovo crisis. The desire of a president to leave a noble legacy, however, is difficult to completely dismiss.

One important element appears to be missing from the five motivat-
factors driving American intervention in Kosovo: a clear connection to any clearly discernable “national interest” (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 138). The reasons given for intervention, especially those dealing with humanitarian issues, are certainly legitimate, but do not directly engage any vital interest of the United States. Indeed, as one author points out, most of the reasons given are tertiary in nature, giving only an indirect connection to American concerns. The argument being made for intervention was basically this: “we need to take action here today in order to prevent a later possible consequence somewhere else” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 47–48).

THE INTENDED RESULTS/OBJECTIVES OF AMERICAN INTERVENTION

The United States and its NATO allies appear to have originally envisioned any military action in Kosovo as limited in scope and short in duration. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other NATO foreign ministers were believers in diplomacy backed up by the credible threat of the use of force (Judah, 2000: 228). An agreement in principle to use force had been reached by the alliance as early as 1998 when NATO issued its Activation Order (Bellamy, 2002: 156). The idea behind the use of force was simple: to demonstrate to Milosevic that NATO was not going to go away and that the Russians were not coming to the rescue (Bellamy, 2002: 157). As such, the assumption was that after experiencing the alliance’s military might, Milosevic would have every incentive to return to the negotiation table and deal seriously with NATO demands (Judah, 2000: 228).

President Clinton, in a televised speech, articulated three goals for any U.S. military action in Kosovo: First, to demonstrate the seriousness of NATO opposition to Yugoslav aggression against the Albanian Kosovars and support for the stalled peace process. Second, to deter Milosevic from further attacks against the troubled province by making Belgrade pay a price. And finally, third, it was the intention of the U.S. and its allies to damage Yugoslavia’s ability to engage in military action against Kosovo by “seriously diminishing” its war-making capabilities (Nardulli et al., 2002: 22).

NATO’s stated war aims, which Washington had a large role in crafting, were more focused and specified than those enunciated by President Clinton. The alliance outlined four certifiable goals: (1) a verifiable halt to the ethnic cleansing and other atrocities being committed against the Albanian Kosovar population; (2) the withdrawal of all but a token Yugoslav/Serb military presence in Kosovo, including paramilitary units; (3) the deploy-
ment of peacekeeping forces in order to facilitate the return of refugees and
to guarantee their unhindered access to humanitarian assistance; and (4)
implementation of the provisions of the Rambouillet agreement (Lambeth,

General Wesley Clark, NATO’s commander for the Kosovo operation, set
several operational goals for the conduct of the mission. These “measures of
merit” included minimal loss of NATO aircraft, impacting Yugoslav forces
as quickly as possible, and protecting the NATO ground forces stationed
in Bosnia, Macedonia, and northern Albania. One author has noted that two
of these three goals centered on protecting NATO forces, yet they oddly
omitted two key considerations. First, they ignored the issue of protect-
ing the Kosovars from Serbian reprisals, which was the ostensible mission
of the entire operation. The other absent consideration was the achieve-
ment of strategic bombing on “bridges, oil refineries, army barracks,” and
broadcast outlets in Yugoslavia; such infrastructure targets were central to
how the campaign was actually carried out. As Alex J. Bellamy argues, these
omissions indicate that “the wholesale ethnic cleansing and mass murder
of Kosovar Albanians did not alter Clark’s understanding of success or fail-
ure” (Bellamy, 2002: 160).

THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION

From its inception, Operation Allied Force was a multilateral, humanitar-
ian mission. What makes it different from earlier similar enterprises is the
almost total absence of a UN role in its conception and execution.

One could not be faulted for believing that after its failure to act in
Rwanda, its failure to succeed in Somalia, and its problematic response
in Bosnia, the United Nations would be anxious to reassume the position
it appeared to have earned after the 1991 Persian Gulf War: guarantor of
a “new world order,” where aggression and genocide were forcefully con-
fronted by the international community. Timing and regional politics, how-
ever, conspired against such an outcome.

In 1991, the world lost its “other” superpower when the Soviet Union
swiftly collapsed. What emerged from the rubble of the former “evil empire”
was a Russian Federation that was unsure of its position in the world. As an
historic ally of Serbia, Russia attempted to seize the opportunity to come to
Belgrade’s political and diplomatic defense. However, with its economy in
shambles and its military power revealed to be a nearly empty shell, Mos-
cow could do little more than pose as a major player in international affairs.
Consequently, the only place where the Russians could assert themselves in any meaningful manner was at the UN Security Council. In the case of Kosovo, the Russians were able to hamstring the world body by threatening to veto any measure that would effectively hold Milosevic to account by threatening military action.

The Russians, however, were also clearly annoyed with, and embarrassed by, Milosevic’s actions in Kosovo. Russian diplomats made it known to their NATO counterparts that while they would block force authorization resolutions at the Security Council, they would not do much more than offer rhetorical resistance if the alliance undertook its own operation against Belgrade (Judah, 2000: 183).

Both the United Nations (through UNSC Resolution 1199) and the Western allies (through their diplomacy in 1998 and early 1999) had made it clear that Serbian atrocities would have to stop. By late 1998, the Clinton administration had become convinced that action of some form was rapidly becoming inevitable. Several of the European powers were initially of the opinion that no action could be legally taken without UN sanction. The pace of events on the ground, however, and the realization that the United Nations would be prevented from acting, began to bring the allies around to the American position (Clark, 2001: 125; Judah, 2000: 182–88).

With the United Nations unwilling to take action, it became increasingly clear that the task, if it were to be accomplished before it was too late for the Kosovars, would fall to NATO. The alliance, for its part, had already been involved from early on. In October 1998, the North Atlantic Council had approved the Kosovo Verification Mission Agreement that resulted in the insertion of unarmed advisors (KVM) to monitor the situation in the province. In support of the KVM, NATO launched Operation Eagle Eye, an alliance program of aerial surveillance to verify compliance with the October agreements (Nardulli et al., 2002: 16). When it became clear that the United Nations would not act, the United States pushed the North Atlantic Council to approve its Activation Warning, which served as the basis for the subsequent air war (Cordesman, 2001: 11). With the collapse of the Rambouillet process, NATO saw no alternative to the use of force and commenced hostilities against the Milosevic regime (Nardulli et al., 2002: 18).

The humanitarian aspects of the operation generally revolved around three major concerns. First, and most importantly, the allies wanted to put an immediate stop to the fighting on the ground and the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing that drove it. Second, with the successful termination of the fighting, it was hoped that refugees would start to return home. Third,
the allies expected that the end of the conflict would allow international aid organizations to provide relief to the stricken area (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 128–29; Cordesman, 2001: 17).

THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CLIMATE

One word accurately captured the mood of the American public on the eve of war: ambivalence. As one writer observed early in the air campaign: “Public opinion has gyrated from indifference toward civil war in a remote pocket of the world to dismay that President Clinton began bombing a European capital city, to horror at the plight of refugees packed into boxcars with their World War II imagery, and now to support for the president’s determination to act” (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 11, 1999, commentary by Ann McFeatters).

The above depiction of a slow evolution of public sentiment in favor of war is perhaps a bit misleading. Polling data appears to suggest that while Americans came to support air strikes against Serbia, their support was limited to certain parameters of the conflict, as a quick survey of the data will demonstrate.

A Gallup poll taken at the beginning of the bombing campaign indicated that a plurality of Americans (50 percent) supported the war, with a sizable minority opposed (39 percent). Public support concentrated on the moral dimensions of the situation in Kosovo. Specifically, large majorities thought it important to use military force to protect civilians (70 percent) and that the United States had a moral obligation to keep the peace (64 percent).

The public largely did not, however, believe that the nation’s vital national interests were at stake. The notion that there was such a link was rejected by a 50 percent plurality, with only 43 percent believing that intervention was in the national interest. It is interesting to note that although the public supported taking action, they were dubious about its prospects for success. By a 44 percent–40 percent margin, respondents indicated that they did not believe that the United States would accomplish its goals. Likewise, they were virtually split on how long the mission would take. One certainty emerged from the poll: Americans were emphatically opposed to the introduction of ground forces into the conflict. Only 31 percent favored putting boots on the ground, while 65 percent were opposed (CNN.com, March 25, 1999, “Poll: Americans Split on NATO Airstrikes”).

Another poll, taken two weeks later, indicated increased support for the air war, with 58 percent now favoring the venture. Much of the increase
appeared to come from those who were previously undecided, as opposition declined by only three points to 36 percent. Although still opposed to the insertion of U.S. ground forces, a majority (51 percent) stated that they believed that doing so would eventually become necessary. Over three quarters of respondents thought that the United States would deploy ground troops, but a plurality (49 percent) would not be willing to send their son into battle. Overwhelmingly, the public rejected the notion that the objectives laid out by NATO were worth heavy casualties in a lengthy war.

In one of the more curious findings of the survey, although a plurality of Americans did not believe that Clinton had a clear policy on Kosovo (50 percent–39 percent), the public overwhelmingly still approved of his handling of the situation there (58 percent–35 percent). At this point, the public did not believe that NATO had been successful, but indicated confidence that the alliance would ultimately triumph (CNN.com, April 8, 1999, “Poll: More Americans Willing to Send Ground Troops to Kosovo”).

A New York Times-CBS News poll taken during the same period appeared to confirm the results of the Gallup poll. By a similar 58 percent–33 percent margin, the public supported the air offensive. Likewise, while an overwhelming majority (76 percent) believed that the U.S. would ultimately send in ground forces, the public was split on whether or not that was a wise course, with 46 percent approving and 48 percent objecting. When confronted by a more concrete scenario, in which ground troops are utilized to prevent Serb forces from destroying Kosovar communities and to allow refugees to return to their villages, the poll showed a dramatic shift toward approval, with 56 percent in favor.

Ironically, while the air strikes enjoyed support, the vast majority of respondents (59 percent) did not believe that they would stop Milosevic from attacking the rebellious province. Reflecting again the public’s mixed feelings, although a majority supported President Clinton’s handling of the situation, many still had doubts about his long-term strategy. The poll revealed that only 28 percent thought that he had a clear plan for the war; 58 percent believed that he was simply reacting to events as they unfolded (New York Times, April 8, 1999, article by R. W. Apple Jr. with Janet Elder).

The strong support for military operations in Kosovo appeared to have been “driven by strong sympathy for the Kosovar Albanians who [had] been uprooted by Serbian forces.” This dynamic strengthened the president’s hand in his dealings with Milosevic. As Andrew Kohut, director of polling for the Pew Research Center, observed: “Stage One was to get acceptance of the air war, and he’s gotten acceptance of the air war. . . . And he got support
for using air power in a place nobody had heard of. Two weeks ago, most people in our poll couldn’t even name the group the Serbs were attacking” ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 12, 1999, article by Ken Fireman [Newsday]].)

Although Clinton felt compelled to purchase public support for the Kosovo undertaking by taking ground troops “off of the table” initially, the polls reflected rising sentiment (although, as stated earlier, certainly not yet a majority) for their insertion if conditions dictated. Regarding this trend, Stephen Hess, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, observed that: “Having given that one away initially, the public in a sense has given it back to him.” This nascent reversal of opinion represented a political victory for Clinton; as recently as two weeks earlier, polls showed that the public opposed the use of ground troops by a two-to-one margin ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 12, 1999, article by Ken Fireman [Newsday]].)

By mid-May, support for the war was still strong. A Gallup poll, taken after the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, registered 55 percent approval for the NATO campaign. Although this number was down from the high of 65 percent in April, it was still above the 50 percent level recorded at the start of hostilities in March.

Analysts cited several reasons why the public sustained its support for the war. Pollster Robert Teeter asserted that the images coming out of Kosovo shaped the public perception of the need to fight there. He opined: “I suspect it’s because this is Europe and it looks so much like the Holocaust.” Andrew Kohut took a different view; he believed that the tactics used by NATO and the resultant low casualties largely were what accounted for continued public support ([The Globe and Mail, May 14, 1999, article by Carla Ann Robbins and Charles Goldsmith [Wall Street Journal], with Brian Coleman].)

Some observers attributed the continued support to public inattention to world affairs in general, and Kosovo in particular. Thomas Friedman of the New York Times believed that the Columbine shootings in Colorado overshadowed the war. Consequently, the public was more focused on violence in the public schools; the safety of their children was more immediate than a far-away war. Godfrey Sperling argued that, even as late as mid-May 1999, the public was still unable to comprehend the kind of war being fought. He held that although the Clinton administration had steadfastly maintained that the war was in the nation’s interests, this point was still not clear in the collective mind of the public ([Christian Science Monitor, May 18, 1999, article by Godfrey Sperling].)

A poll conducted for CNN and USA Today by the Gallup organization in early May showed that support for sending in ground forces was beginning
to contract. In this survey, support for the “ground option” had dipped to 40 percent; 55 percent now disapproved, with 42 percent strongly opposed.

With the public worried that Clinton was about to reverse himself on the issue of sending in troops, the poll indicated that an overwhelming majority (60 percent) believed that Congress, not the president, should have the final say on the issue. Only 34 percent backed allowing the president to make that call (CNN.com, May 3, 1999, article by Keating Holland).

A Washington Post-ABC News poll taken in mid-May showed rebounding support for sending in troops. Posing a scenario in which bombing did not stop the Serbs, the poll asked if respondents would support the introduction of U.S. and NATO ground forces “to try to end the conflict in Kosovo.” The result was 52 percent in favor of deployment, 46 percent opposed. In the event of U.S. forces taking casualties, those numbers virtually reversed themselves: 43 percent in favor, 56 percent opposed.

A poll by the same organizations, taken on April 8, 1999, gives some insight into how shallow support for utilizing ground forces may really have been. Asked if they would support the insertion of troops into Kosovo “if some casualties” resulted, the 57 percent approval number fell to 44 percent. Raising the number of casualties up to 100, approval dropped to 37 percent. Should the United States be faced with the prospect of losing at least 500 troops, support declined further to 31 percent. If ultimately the number lost climbed to 1,000, only a scant 26 percent still supported this option (Washingtonpost.com, May 18, 1999, results of Washington Post-ABC News poll).

The May 16 Washington Post-ABC News poll had several other interesting findings. A majority (52 percent) favored continued bombing of Yugoslavia rather than calling for a suspension of the air campaign in order to encourage Serb forces to withdraw. However, the poll also indicated some softening of popular will to prosecute the war until NATO demands were met. Asked if they supported continuing “to require Serbia to accept NATO’s terms” or if “NATO should negotiate with Serbia on terms” to end the conflict, the majority opted for negotiations (58 percent) (Washingtonpost.com, May 18, 1999, results of Washington Post-ABC News poll).

**Congressional Mood**

The title of an article appearing in CQ Weekly summed up the mood of Congress on the eve of war in one sentence: “Members Rally around Kosovo Mission Despite Misgivings about Strategy” (CQ Weekly, March 27, 1999, ar-
article by Miles A. Pomper). Split in opinion and highly partisan in the aftermath of the Clinton impeachment, Congress found it difficult to build a consensus around support for the war.

As much as a year earlier, talk about possible intervention in Kosovo had begun to emerge in the halls of the Capitol. As the world learned about atrocities in Kosovo, fears surfaced that a repeat of the war and humanitarian crisis in Bosnia could occur in the breakaway province. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) opined: “What we’re seeing happen once again is slaughter, people being left dead in the streets and ethnic cleansing. . . . If we don’t do something pretty quickly, stronger than we’ve done so far, we’re going to have the same sort of disaster occurring in Kosovo that you had in Bosnia” (CQ Weekly, June 13, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Some members of Congress, notably Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), questioned whether the sanctions imposed on Serbia were enough to dissuade Milosevic from his deadly course. Even as early as June 1998, Lugar stated his belief that “military force probably ought to be on the table.” Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE) concurred, stating: “I would like to see NATO do what they’re probably not inclined to do—we need physical sanctions as well as economic sanctions.”

Not all members of Congress, however, were ready to make a commitment of American lives and treasure to the cause of Kosovo. Virginia Republican Senator John Warner questioned the wisdom of military intervention, warning that it would lead to a “never-ending commitment” of troops to the region. Warner cautioned: “First it’s Kosovo, then it’s Macedonia, then it’s Albania. . . . I think that this has serious chances of escalating.”

John McCain (R-AZ) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) expressed the desire of some Senate Republicans that force, if it were to be used, be limited to confining the conflict to Kosovo. McCain argued: “I would urge the administration to look at taking forceful steps to put a fence around the problem and prevent it from destabilizing countries other than the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. . . . Our interest is in containing conflict, not solving ethnic rivalries” (CQ Weekly, June 13, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Many who favored the use of force, such as Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated their preferences of how it should be applied. Senator Smith publicly stated his desire that the use of force in Kosovo should take the form of air strikes as opposed to the immediate insertion of troops on the ground. Smith’s position had resonance in Congress, as over thirty House members signed on to a letter to President Clinton which stated that “air strikes and a no-fly zone
might be needed to end the violence” (CQ Weekly, June 13, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Republican opposition was made problematic because of an event six years earlier. At the close of his presidency, George H. W. Bush and his successor, Bill Clinton, jointly issued the 1992 “Christmas Statement.” This pronouncement put Milosevic on notice that if he used force against Kosovo, the United States would reserve the right to respond militarily. This statement made GOP opposition to action in Kosovo awkward due to its bipartisan nature (CQ Weekly, June 13, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

During the fall of 1998, Congress was “largely supportive, with little of the dissension” that had vexed the earlier peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. To the contrary, most of the criticism of Mr. Clinton was that he was not moving quickly enough to keep pace with the unfolding situation on the ground. Senator Gordon Smith worried: “Winter is coming, and tens of thousands of Kosovar Albanians are in the hills and will soon die if something is not done to ensure their rights, to ensure their safety and to stop the bloodshed” (CQ Weekly, September 26, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Senator McCain was worried that conditions in Kosovo were “potentially more dangerous” than the previous situation in Bosnia and that they presented the real possibility of igniting a regional conflict. McCain stated: “A token number of cruise missiles will cost a lot of money but will not accomplish our goals.” Consequently, the Arizona senator favored an “all out attack” (CQ Weekly, September 26, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Senator McCain’s position was opposed by a large number of his fellow Republicans. One particularly outspoken critic was Representative Tom Campbell (R-CA). Although the House had beaten back his earlier attempt to mandate congressional approval for military action in Kosovo, in September 1998 Campbell made public his intent to try to activate the provisions of the 1973 War Powers Act. Had he been successful this time, the Clinton administration would have been forced to submit to a congressional vote approving any extended deployment (CQ Weekly, September 26, 1998, article by Miles A. Pomper).

By early 1999, the mood in Congress had begun to shift. As the United States moved closer to taking action, members of Congress grew increasingly vocal in expressing their reservations about any military operations in Kosovo. Opponents of going to war largely fell into two categories. The first of these may be referred to as “national interest” conservatives. Their main premise was that a nation should only go to war when a national interest is at stake. While conceding that there was indeed an unspeakably horrible crisis going on in the Balkans, they believed it was Europe’s mess and there-
fore fell on the nations most directly affected, not the United States, to fix the situation. Using the guerrilla fighting by partisans in the region during World War II as their model, this group argued that the proposed mission was fraught with peril and did not engage any clearly discernable American interest.

This group proposed taking lower cost (in terms of both finances and risk) alternatives in order to deal with the situation. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) believed that the key to the situation was the removal of Milosevic. Consequently, Mr. Helms introduced a bill to send aid to domestic Serbian opponents of Milosevic in hopes that they could eventually topple the Yugoslav dictator and replace his regime with a new democratic government. Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) advocated sending arms and ammunition to the KLA in hopes of “leveling the playing field.” Although the creation of a stalemate on the ground in order to force the two sides to negotiate had its theoretical appeal, others considered the KLA to be every bit as bad as the Serbians and wondered if there might be unforeseen “blowback” from pursuing this strategy (CQ Weekly, March 27, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper).

The other opposition group was anti-war liberals. Although they were almost exclusively from the president’s party, these Democrats stood in opposition to Mr. Clinton on what they believed to be a basic foundation of their beliefs, specifically that war is never an answer because it only creates bigger problems later. Furthermore, the saving of Kosovar Albanians, they argued, should not be purchased at the price of slaughtering innocent Serbian civilians who, for the most part, were also victims of Milosevic (CQ Weekly, March 27, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper; CQ Weekly, May 15, 1999, article by Mary Dalrymple). Members of this group included left-wing stalwarts such as Representatives Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) (CNN.com, April 30, 1999, article by Ted Barrett).

On March 23, the Senate gave its assent to the air campaign in a 58–41 vote (S. Con. Res. 21) (CQ Weekly, March 27, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper). What is noteworthy is that President Clinton had to rely on significant help from the opposition party, as he cobbled together a coalition of forty-two Democrats and sixteen Republicans. Standing in opposition were thirty-eight Republicans and three Democrats, including Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Russ Feingold (D-WI), and Ernest Hollings (D-SC).

Some opponents had originally intended to preclude the deployment of U.S. forces to the Balkans by seeking to block funds for the operation unless Congress specifically approved. Debate had continued until almost the minute that the bombing commenced. When it became clear, however, that
Mr. Clinton was going to proceed with or without Congress on board, Senate leaders crafted the measure that eventually was adopted.

Opponents of the resolution loudly denounced what they perceived as a march to war. Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) said: “This is a mistake. This is a civil war. We’re going to regret it.” Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) cautioned that by going to war in Kosovo, “We’re coming close to starting World War III.”

Conceding defeat, Republican opponents of the war voiced support for the troops. Summing up the sentiments of many of her colleagues, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison stated: “I disagree with the policy of what we’re doing in Kosovo, but I think that it becomes a different issue when action is imminent and when you are getting ready to have troops go in harm’s way” (Associated Press, March 23, 1999, article by Tom Raum).

As is often the case under such circumstances, the commitment of the nation’s armed forces to battle created a “rally around the flag effect” that temporarily muted criticism of the president. Although criticism of Mr. Clinton eventually reemerged, its nature had fundamentally changed.

In order to rally public support for the air war, in a speech to the nation on March 24 President Clinton took a major option off the table by declaring: “I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war” (CQ Weekly, March 27, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper). While this was reassuring to the public and members of Congress who feared that involvement in the Balkans would lead to a Vietnam-style quagmire, it was a cause of concern to others. Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) quipped that Mr. Clinton was willing to “fight evil,” but only if it was done “from above 15,000 feet” (CQ Weekly, April 17, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Senator John McCain argued that Clinton’s approach was not nearly as aggressive as it needed to be. Criticizing, among other things, the president’s ruling out the use of ground forces, McCain stated: “I am not haunted by memories of Vietnam. . . . But I must admit that I never thought we would again witness in my lifetime the specter of politicians picking targets and ruling out offensive measures in the absurd hope that the enemy would respond to our restraint by yielding to our demands” (CQ Weekly, April 17, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper).

Senator Robert Kerrey (D-NE) expressed concern that the effort in support of the air war in Kosovo was diverting critically important intelligence resources from the nation’s other vital regions of concern, such as Iraq and North Korea. Kerrey observed: “The collection, analysis and dissemination requirements mean that we are not collecting as much for non-NATO targets. . . . Our blanket’s been pulled off the targets that are vitally important to the nation’s interests” (CQ Weekly, April 17, 1999, article by Miles A. Pomper).
By late April 1999, the divisions within Congress over Kosovo were split wide open by two key votes. The first was when the House of Representa-
tives voted 249–180 to require congressional approval before the president
could introduce ground forces into Kosovo. Voting for the measure were
203 Republicans, 45 Democrats, and an independent; voting against were
16 Republicans and 164 Democrats.

The other vote, also in the House, was particularly stinging to Presi-
dent Clinton. A Democrat-sponsored resolution expressing support for the
already month-old air campaign died as the House deadlocked, 213–213.
Although the Speaker of the House, Representative Dennis Hastert (R-
OH), supported the measure, only thirty-one Republicans voted in favor.
Twenty-six Democrats defected from their camp to vote against the resolu-

To add insult to injury, seventeen members of Congress, including two
Democrats, filed suit in Federal Court to force an end to the bombing cam-
paign. The plaintiffs claimed that in pursuing the air war, Mr. Clinton was
in violation of the 1973 War Powers Act, which mandated congressional ap-
proval of overseas deployments of U.S. forces exceeding sixty days (CNN.
com, April 30, 1999, article by Ted Barrett).

In an effort to bridge the divide, Senator McCain introduced a resolution
that would have authorized the president to utilize “all necessary force” in
order to secure victory in Kosovo. He thought that it would provide an im-
petus for the president to start drafting a plan for the use of troops should
the use of airpower alone prove unfruitful (CQ Weekly, May 8, 1999, article
by Pat Towell). One of the principal opponents of the proposal, however,
was the leader of McCain’s own caucus, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott

In taking up McCain’s proposal, the Senate voted 78–22 to table the mo-
tion, in effect killing the measure. The motion to table was backed both by
Senator Lott and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), who con-
curred that the measure was premature and that airpower should be given
more time to succeed (CQ Weekly, May 8, 1999, article by Pat Towell).

THE POSITION OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP
TOWARD THE OPERATION

The military appears to have been supportive of a possible mission in Ko-
sovo and was actively involved in all phases of the planning for the cam-
paign. General Wesley Clark, who held the dual positions of NATO’s Su-
preme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and commander in chief of
the U.S. European Command, was charged with the planning and military preparations for the Kosovo mission. Given the rugged terrain and the volatile political considerations, it was decided early on that the main thrust of military action would be aerial bombardment. Consequently, General Clark delegated the task of creating an appropriate strategy to one of his deputy commanders, General John Jumper, commander of U.S. air forces in Europe (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 3).

General Clark’s support may be inferred, in part, by the political role he played in the months preceding the start of the air war. In October 1998, Clark accompanied NATO secretary general Javier Solana on a diplomatic mission to Belgrade and personally met with Milosevic. His presence on so sensitive a mission appears to have been intended to lend credibility to the alliance’s position that, should talks fail, dire consequences would swiftly be visited upon Yugoslavia (Nardulli et al., 2002: 15).

Clark, himself, made public statements that made his position on Kosovo unmistakably clear. As early as January 1999, the general advocated the use of punitive air strikes in order to curb Serbian atrocities committed against the rebellious province. Political pressures within NATO, however, made such a course of action impossible at that time (Lambeth, 2001: 14).

Between summer 1998 and spring 1999, military planners developed a variety of options. Two of the earliest plans were Operation Nimble Lion and Concept of Options Plan 10601 (CONOPLAN 10601). The two proposals possessed a degree of overlap, but were quite different in their respective emphases. Operation Nimble Lion would have hit the Serbians hard very early on. This plan called for the employment of substantial force against 250 targets located not just in Kosovo but throughout Yugoslavia.

While Nimble Lion was drafted by American officers, CONOPLAN 10601 was developed by NATO planners and approved by the North Atlantic Council. It provided for “gradual, incremental, and phased” escalation of bombing, the approach that ultimately became the basis for Operation Allied Force (Lambeth, 2001: 11).

Complicating the development of a coherent and workable strategy was the need for planners to constantly adjust the details of their plans. These changes became necessary in order to accommodate General Clark’s shifting “commander’s intent,” directives that indicated which targets would be hit and which would be spared. Three criteria remained constant, however, throughout the planning process: minimize collateral damage (civilian deaths), avoid friendly losses, and preserve the civil infrastructure of Yugoslavia (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 3–4). By March 1999, General Jumper
had developed and “fine tuned” more than forty options for an air cam-
paign (Lambeth, 2001: 12).

Any controversy over Kosovo within the military appears to have been
not about the decision to go to war, but rather how to conduct it most effec-
tively. Even before the initiation of hostilities, a major difference of opinion
on how to conduct the air offensive emerged between General Clark and
his senior air forces commander, Lieutenant General Michael G. Short. The
basic difference between these senior officers: what strategy best meets the
goals set forth by President Clinton and NATO leaders (Judah, 2000: 265)?

It was Clark’s view that the initial attacks should be concentrated on
Serb military and security forces in Kosovo itself. Any bombing should
be modest at first, but would be ratcheted up incrementally should an ex-
tended campaign prove necessary. Clark’s view was driven by his belief that
the NATO allies would not accept anything more stringent.

By contrast, General Short advocated a substantially more aggressive
approach. He urged that Serbia proper, especially Belgrade, be targeted at
the outset of hostilities (Judah, 2000: 265). His idea was to hit the political
leadership as hard as possible, as early as possible. Milosevic could only be
made to cease and desist his campaign of ethnic cleansing if he and his cro-
nies could be made to experience the pain that they were inflicting on the
Kosovars. Furthermore, he believed that disrupting the command and con-
trol centers could most effectively halt Serbian operations in Kosovo, and
that meant hitting Belgrade. Clearly, Short’s vision of how the air campaign
should be carried out drew its inspiration from the massive coalition bomb-
ing of Baghdad that was carried out in the opening days of the 1991 Persian
Gulf War (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 4–5).

The plan eventually adopted, as noted earlier, was a modified version of
CONOPLAN 10601. As originally conceived, the operation was intended to
coerce the Serbians into withdrawal from Kosovo. The plan was predicated
on the use of restraint; NATO would use just enough force to get Milosevic
to give in rapidly (Lambeth, 2001: 11–12).

Basically, this would be a quick “demonstration bombing.” The NATO
heads of state and military leaders were in general agreement that this
would be a short campaign (Nardulli et al., 2002: 22; Bacevich and Cohen,
2001: 2). General Clark, himself, was of the belief that there was a 40 per-
cent chance that hostilities could be brought to a favorable conclusion
within three days (Cordesman, 2001: 25–26).

One observer noted that neither General Clark nor any other high of-
officials questioned the expectation that limited air strikes alone would bring
success. Consequently, there was no consensus as to what the alliance would do after the initial forty-eight hours of bombing. Although they were agreed that the next step would be a phased escalation, there were no exact plans regarding how this would be carried out (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 4–5).

A major problem complicating what would come “next” for the military was actually created by the commander in chief. In a speech he made on the opening day of the war, President Clinton took the ground option off the table, stating: “I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8, 32). This statement was clearly aimed at reassuring an ambivalent nation that, although the country was going to war, it would not get caught up in a Vietnam-style quagmire in the Balkans. There is reason to believe that the statement was also meant to soothe the more dovish allies, such as Italy and Greece. Although it may have been a wise move domestically, Mr. Clinton’s statement clearly signaled to Milosevic that there were limits to the American commitment to its declared mission. As long as Milosevic could withstand the bombing, he had a chance to wear down Western public opinion and win (Bellamy, 2002: 158–59).

For his part, General Clark had earlier raised the possibility of a “ground option” with NATO secretary general Javier Solana. At that time, the general was informed that the alliance was not prepared to commit to such a course (Nardulli et al., 2002: 15).

One author asserts that when Mr. Clinton made his announcement that he was going to refrain from committing ground forces, it was done without the president giving General Clark any advance warning (Bellamy, 2002: 158). Perhaps it should not have come as any surprise, as one observer noted: “Well before Operation Allied Force began, U.S. and NATO senior civilian and military leaders had largely eliminated any prospect of using ground forces as a part of an integrated campaign to meet NATO’s objectives in Kosovo . . . not only was this option shelved, no serious contingency planning for air-land operations was undertaken” (Nardulli et al., 2002: 3).

This, of course, begs the question “why?” The answer was simple. First, as noted earlier, there was the widespread belief that if air operations could take out Yugoslav defenses in the early going, Milosevic would be sufficiently vulnerable that he would have no choice but to come to terms. Second, “the political and military costs and risks” of inserting ground forces “were viewed as excessive,” not just in the United States, but in Europe as well. As a consequence of these factors, “there was no sense that an air-land operation was either appropriate or necessary” (Nardulli et al. 2002: 3).
CARRYING OUT THE OPERATION

The final war plan adopted by NATO incorporated elements of the viewpoints of both General Clark and General Short. The proposal was for an air campaign that would conform to several mandatory constraints: minimizing collateral damage, avoiding losses to NATO forces, and preserving as much of the local infrastructure as possible (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 6–7). The campaign was to be carried out in five phases:

Phase 0: Deploy U.S. and NATO air assets to the area in order to build up forces necessary to engage Yugoslav forces.

Phase 1: Take out the air defense system in order to establish air superiority in Kosovo. Also, hit key military installations with the intention of disabling as much of the command and control structure throughout Yugoslavia as possible.

Phase 2: “Attack military targets in Kosovo.” Likewise, attack any Yugoslav forces south of 44 degrees north latitude so as to prevent reinforcement and resupply of troops in Kosovo.

Phase 3: “Expand air operations against a wide range of high-value military and security force targets throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.”

Phase 4: Redeploy NATO forces as necessary. (Cordesman, 2001: 24)

The immediate goal of the U.S./NATO plan was to stop the killing in Kosovo. This would be accomplished by securing a cease-fire and withdrawal of all Serbian troops, security forces, and paramilitaries from the province. Once that was accomplished, the refugees could return and an international presence would be established in the territory in order to provide security and humanitarian relief operations. The ultimate goal would be to secure Yugoslav cooperation to work with NATO and the United Nations in order to implement “a political framework based on the Rambouillet accords” (Cordesman, 2001: 25).

The operating assumption was that these goals would be rapidly achieved. There was a widespread belief in Western capitals that after a forty-eight-hour “demonstration bombing,” Milosevic would see that NATO meant business and would quickly bend to the alliance’s will. This was to prove to be one of many miscalculations on the part of the United States and its allies (Cordesman, 2001: 21; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 6–7).

The NATO air campaign began when bombing commenced on March 24, 1999, at 8:00 P.M. local time (Judah, 2000: 237). The opening salvo of the war consisted of twenty-seven cruise missiles, some fired from U.S. Navy
ships and a British submarine in the Adriatic Sea. These initial strikes were followed by attacks from U.S. B-2s and F-117s, both “stealth” bombers. The ordinances dropped in the original sorties were new satellite-guided precision bombs (JDAMs) (Cordesman, 2001: 20–21; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8). Due to their groundbreaking technology, these bombs were successfully delivered by the B-2s from altitudes of 40,000 feet (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8). The initial targets included air defense installations and military communication facilities (Cordesman, 2001: 21). Also hit on the first night “were the Military-Technical Institute, a military academy,” and the Yugoslav air base at Batajnica (Judah, 2000: 237). In total, the first night’s mission encompassed four waves of bombing carried out by 214 American planes and 130 aircraft from NATO allies, including the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Spain, and Germany (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8).

Kosovo was to be a precision war. Casualties among innocent civilians would be dramatically reduced, as only carefully selected targets with military significance would be pursued. This surgical approach to warfare was to be achieved through the extensive use of so-called smart weapons. As such, on the opening day of the war NATO dropped over a hundred highly accurate laser-guided bombs (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8).

During the first day, NATO aircraft successfully hit forty military sites from a list of fifty-one targets selected for Phase 1. Unfortunately, most of the facilities engaged were empty. One observer related that a possible reason for this problem was that the Yugoslavs may have been tipped off, presumably by a leak from within NATO (Judah, 2000: 237–38).

As impressive as the accuracy of the allied bombing was in the early going, there were several glaring problems with the opening phase of the war. The most obvious was the fact that the Serbs were being subjected to a relatively painless war. A U.S. Air Force report revealed that for those living in Belgrade, life was unchanged and normal. To the extent that the war caused any hardship for average Serbs, they tended to blame NATO, not their own government. Serbia experienced a resurgence of nationalist fervor unseen since the early days of the Bosnia conflict. Milosevic enjoyed a “rally around the flag” effect, which encouraged his belief that if he could just wait NATO out, victory was possible (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 10).

There were other problems as well. Poor weather in the early days of the campaign caused the cancellation of numerous sorties. Furthermore, while NATO had access to volumes of information and intelligence regarding Kosovo, much of it appears to have been incorrect, which led to allied bombing errors later (Judah, 2000: 239).
The combination of NATO’s gradualist approach and President Clinton’s public statement taking the ground option off the table gave Milosevic every incentive to accelerate the pace of the ethnic cleansing taking place in Kosovo (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 9–10). Almost immediately after NATO started bombing, Serb forces began to execute “Operation Horseshoe,” a full-throttle campaign to expel Albanian Muslims from the troubled province. Within days, tens of thousands of refugees had fled to seek safety in Albania and Macedonia. By the end of the first week of the operation, over 300,000 ethnic Albanians had sought sanctuary in neighboring countries.

Although Bulgaria had passed on warnings of what was coming, NATO appeared to be taken by surprise by the scale of the movement of refugees. The sheer cruelty of the methods employed by Serb forces shocked Western sensibilities. In scenes chillingly reminiscent of the Holocaust, Albanian Kosovars were forcibly rounded up, herded into boxcars at gunpoint, and deported (Judah, 2000: 239–41).

By June, Operation Horseshoe had managed to expel 850,000 and internally displace tens of thousands of others. Any propaganda advantage that Milosevic had achieved through increased Serbian nationalism or international sympathy for the plight of civilians hit by NATO bombs was now more than offset by news reports showing the world the brutal reality of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo (Judah, 2000: 253).

The failure of the forty-eight-hour “demonstration bombing” to move Milosevic prompted NATO’s governing body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), to authorize the commencement of Phase 2 of Operation Allied Force on March 27. This move was initiated by an appeal made by General Clark to NATO’s Secretary General Solana (Cordesman, 2001: 26).

The conflict between General Clark and his lieutenant, General Short, over how to most effectively prosecute the war sharpened as, despite the approved escalation of offensive operations, certain targets remained off-limits (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 10). Clark wanted intensive air strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo, as well as security units involved in the ethnic cleansing campaign. In order to accomplish these aims, Clark pushed for NATO to hit as many targets as it could each day (Cordesman, 2001: 25–26). For his part, Short remained opposed to incremental increases and advocated a more aggressive approach, including taking the war to Serbia itself (Judah, 2000: 256).

NATO forces, due to political considerations, were forced to “pull their punches” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 10–11). Air defenses were not attacked as aggressively as General Short had advocated due to concerns
among allied governments over possible civilian collateral damage (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42899). As a consequence, Short ordered NATO aircraft to conduct missions from an altitude of 15,000 feet or higher. This precaution was taken in order to protect alliance planes by having them fly above the effective range of Yugoslav anti-aircraft missiles. Furthermore, attack packages sent against Serbian targets were to be accompanied by radar-jamming support aircraft. There was, of course, a serious drawback to this approach: the exceptionally high altitude made it more difficult for NATO pilots to positively identify and engage targets (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 14).

Restrictive rules of engagement meant that NATO forces were largely confined to hitting fixed targets, such as military barracks and headquarters buildings. The Serbs had learned from their previous experience with NATO during the 1995 Bosnia conflict and therefore spread out their forces so that they would not be caught in concentrations that would facilitate NATO high-altitude bombing. Consequently, when engaged, most of the fixed targets had already been abandoned (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 11).

In keeping with their strategy, Yugoslav forces relied heavily on mobile armament, such as SA-6 surface-to-air (SAM) missiles. The strategy, however, failed to give the Serbs much of an advantage against NATO. Of the 845 SAMs Yugoslav forces fired during the conflict, they managed to shoot down only two allied aircraft. It does bear noting, however, that the first of these planes was a particularly big prize. Early in the war, the Serbs managed to shoot down an F-117 fighter-bomber. This was significant because this aircraft, often considered virtually invulnerable due to its advanced technology and stealth design, had never been shot down in its ten-year operational history (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 14).

On March 31, Secretary General Solana escalated the air offensive to what was termed “Phase 2a” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12). As a result, the first NATO air strikes were conducted against central Belgrade on April 4. Targets hit included both the Federal and Serbian Interior Ministries.

The next day, NATO took advantage of good weather in the theater and engaged in some of the heaviest attacks since the start of the conflict. Targets were hit in nine cities across the country, including the abandoned headquarters of the Yugoslav air defenses in Zemun, a heavily populated suburb of Belgrade. Other sites hit included a metal processing plant in Nic, a chemical plant in Lucani, a fuel depot in Sombor, and a bridge that carried a highway from Kosovo over the Ibar River.

Throughout the month, bombing intensified as NATO hit other valuable targets. Several bridges spanning the Danube River were destroyed, as
were a number of radio and television transmitters. The broadcast facilities, which until this point had been considered off-limits, were hit due to their use as an “instrument of propaganda and repression.” These attacks were followed up on April 23 when bombers struck the central Belgrade headquarters of Serbian state-run television.

The Zastava car plant in Kragujevac and its separate firearm-manufacturing wing were hit on April 9. Prior to the war, this facility was Yugoslavia’s principal automobile manufacturing facility (*Keesing’s*, April 1999, 42899–42900).

A NATO damage estimate prepared in mid-April indicated considerable harm to Yugoslavia’s industrial infrastructure. According to the report, two oil refineries were rendered inoperable and eleven fuel storage areas were destroyed. The loss of these facilities meant that the country’s strategic reserve had been all but wiped out. The assessment also indicated that five industrial plants that manufactured “military-style equipment,” along with “11 main bridges, and four large ammunition storage areas,” had been destroyed (*Keesing’s*, April 1999: 42900). Unfortunately, damage to the Yugoslav air defense system was classified as moderate; only a few batteries had been fully destroyed (*Keesing’s*, April 1999: 42899).

NATO had applied strict rules of engagement (ROE) not only to avoid friendly losses, but also to save the lives of innocent civilians who might inadvertently become caught in the cross fire. Despite the best of intentions, the month of April presented a series of incidents where civilians were killed due to NATO errors. The first of these episodes occurred during an allied air raid on the south Serbia town of Aleksinac on April 5. While attacking an old army barracks near the town, several bombs went astray and killed “seven Serbian civilians, including one child.”

On April 14, a refugee convoy was accidentally attacked while traveling on the road to Djakovica, near the Albanian border. NATO pilots had mistaken the vehicles for military personnel carriers used by local Serbian forces. Serbian media sources reported seventy-two dead; Western news crews recorded footage of dead bodies and burned-out vehicles. In yet another incident, on April 28 “a NATO precision guided missile” fired during an assault on the southern Serbia town of Surdulica diverted from its course. At least seventeen people died when the missile struck a residential neighborhood (*Keesing’s*, April 1999: 42899).

One of the more bizarre episodes occurred on April 28 during a NATO anti-radar missile attack on a Yugoslav facility. The Serbs turned off the radar, which caused the missile to go off course. The errant missile slammed
into a house in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42901).

The single most grievous error, however, would occur on May 7. American B-2 bombers on a long-range mission from Whitman Air Force Base in Missouri accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in central Belgrade (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 20). The errant raid would leave four Chinese nationals dead and twenty wounded. According to the official U.S. explanation, the apparent cause of the erroneous strike was the crew’s use of outdated maps of the area; the pilots believed that they had actually targeted the Yugoslav Directorate of Supply and Procurement.

The incident served as the cause of massive and widespread anti-U.S. and anti-Western protests throughout China, the biggest public demonstrations since Tiananmen Square in 1989. Beijing stoked public sentiment by claiming that the bombing of the embassy was a deliberate act by the United States. Washington adamantly denied the accusations, made an official apology, and paid reparations to the victims and their families. China, however, appeared determined to escalate the event into a diplomatic crisis for whatever reason. President Jiang Zemin “punished” the United States by suspending several joint programs and vowed that there would be no U.N.-based solution to the conflict as long as NATO bombing continued (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42955–42956).

Ramping Up the Air War

On April 23, a NATO summit was held in Washington, D.C. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the alliance. Allied leaders used their gathering as an opportunity to reiterate their demands: a full withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo, the repatriation of refugees, and the insertion of an international peacekeeping force. Air strikes would continue until all the demands were complied with and Serbian forces began a verifiable withdrawal (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42901).

In addition to the diplomatic reaffirmation, the meeting had military implications as well. NATO leaders approved an escalation of the force level used against Yugoslavia. Furthermore, Secretary General Solana was given the power to act on behalf of the NAC to decide when to engage in further escalation should the need arise. This grant of authority was intended to avoid military necessity being hamstrung by alliance politics. In a change of policy and tactics, the NAC gave its approval to hit the power grid and industrial infrastructure of Serbia proper. Attacks would now occur “on a round-the-clock basis” (Basevich and Cohen, 2001: 16).
At the meeting, NATO leaders also discussed the possibility of an eventual ground invasion. Although it was prudent to revisit the issue in anticipation of it becoming a necessity, there was an undeniable element of psychological warfare. Earlier, NATO had dispatched 8,000 troops to Albania as part of the Operation Allied Harbor relief efforts; 8,000 additional troops were sent to Macedonia to help build housing for refugees. Putting the pieces together, it may well have looked to Milosevic that the alliance was putting the final touches on assembling an invasion force. Creating fear in the mind of the Yugoslav leader, whether intended or not, may have helped to restore some of the uncertainty that the earlier decision to dismiss the ground option out of hand had removed (*Keesing’s*, April 1999: 42901–42902; Judah, 2000: 252).

Since the beginning of Operation Allied Force, NATO had been hampered by too low a number of aircraft to effectively carry out the mission assigned. In order to compensate for this deficiency, Clark requested that the number of warplanes in the theater be increased from 400 to 1,000 (Judah, 2000: 257). The request was approved and NATO secured basing rights for the additional aircraft in Turkey and on the “front line” in Hungary. These numbers were supplemented by heavy bombers flying long-range missions from domestic U.S. bases, such as Whitman Air Force Base in Missouri (Lambeth, 2001: 34).

By May, while targets were still being hit in Kosovo, Serbia itself was now firmly in the crosshairs of NATO bombers. Along with the geographic shift, there was also a conscious decision made to widen the range of targets. NATO began to authorize hitting so-called dual use targets—those that were ostensibly civilian in purpose but had (or could potentially be converted to) military applications. A vacuum factory, for example, had been commandeered by the Yugoslav military and was used to hide a tank repair facility within its walls (Judah, 2000: 259).

There were, however, other compelling reasons for this shift besides those relying on simple utility. These new strikes were, in part, intended to break the morale of the civilian population of Serbia. It was hoped that if the war could be brought home to the average Serb, then support for Milosevic would erode rapidly (*Keesing’s*, May 1999: 42955). In a bid to make support from close associates an “expensive” proposition, the allies would now hit business and industrial sites owned by Milosevic’s cronies and government officials (Judah, 2000: 258).

That NATO was taking the war to the next phase was obvious by the choice of targets engaged. On May 3, allied aircraft used graphite “soft”
bombs to take out the main power stations, an attack that left a good portion of Serbia without power (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42955). Follow-up attacks on May 22–24, this time utilizing high-explosive ordinance, took out the Yugoslav power grid (Judah, 2000: 257). The result of these strikes was that much of Serbia was left “without electricity, water and telecommunications” (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42955).

NATO likewise hit government facilities and assets that in any way could affect military supply and manufacturing capabilities. Consequently, transportation infrastructure targets achieved high priority for military planners. During the war, bombing destroyed some 70 percent of highway bridges and 50 percent of railroad bridges.

What is perhaps more notable than what was destroyed is what was not. One of the important aspects of Yugoslav infrastructure that NATO avoided bombing was the telephone exchanges. This was due largely to concern over collateral damage and the possible loss of foreign investments. NATO steered clear of attacking pharmaceutical plants, dams, and water installations. Furthermore, “there were no attacks on food storage or other targets immediately affecting the survival of the civilian population” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 24).

Although the bombing campaign went into a lull after the Chinese embassy debacle, that came to an abrupt end on May 10 as NATO resumed night bombing. On May 12, Yugoslav forces found themselves on the receiving end of some of the biggest air strikes since the start of the war. Among the targets hit were “vehicles hidden from surveillance and military tunnel complexes . . . tanks, armored vehicles, anti-aircraft guns, artillery, command posts and troops” (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42956). A variety of factors opportune came together in order to make the massive raids possible: greatly improved weather, a larger number of available strike aircraft (especially A-10 “Tankbusters”), and a wealth of information from the KLA and special forces, which greatly aided accurate targeting (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42956). NATO estimated that after May 20 tank hits had doubled. The same report indicated that hits on armored personnel carriers had tripled and destruction of artillery pieces had quadrupled (Cordesman, 2001: 30–31).

By late May, the air campaign hit full stride. Heavy B-52 bombers were brought in to drop standard gravity (“dumb”) bombs in large numbers. The Serbian dispersion tactics, which seemed so clever at the start of the war, were now beginning to backfire. Until this point, this strategy had helped Serb ground forces in Kosovo avoid the full fury of NATO bombing. The problem, however, was that this tactic rendered the Serbs unable to estab-
lish concentrations capable of successfully engaging and eliminating KLA forces (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 18).

The KLA, sensing an opportunity, launched Operation Arrow. From their bases in Albania, the KLA staged a major offensive against Yugoslav forces in Kosovo. In and of itself, the drive was not that impressive militarily, but it was successful in forcing the Serbs into taking up formations that were more easily hit by NATO airpower (Cordesman, 2001: 30–31).

**Final Days of the Conflict**

In mid-May, General Clark drew up plans for a possible ground invasion of Kosovo. His superiors at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, tabled the proposal. The JCS argued that the bombing campaign was working and that it should be given more time. For his part, Secretary of Defense William Cohen also argued against the insertion of ground forces at that time. The secretary was of the belief that not only should the air campaign continue, it should be intensified (Judah, 2000: 270). Events in the near future would appear to vindicate their faith.

During the last week of May, the Serbian leadership signaled that it might be willing to withdraw its troops from Kosovo and allow the insertion of an international peacekeeping force. This represented a potential major shift in the Serbian position and indicated that the war might soon be concluded on NATO’s terms (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 20).

Sensing that the end of the conflict might be near, the North Atlantic Council began to prepare for how it would maintain peace and stability in post-war Kosovo. Earlier, the council had created K-FOR (Kosovo Force), a 28,000-man force that would enter the province at the end of the conflict in order to facilitate the orderly return of refugees. On May 25, the NAC approved plans to transform the force into “K-FOR-plus” by expanding its commitment to 48,000 troops. The core of these forces was already in the theater; the United Kingdom had previously sent 14,000 troops to Macedonia as part of the original K-FOR deployment. Another 5,000 U.S. troops were already stationed in Albania. On May 26, the British put 12,000 more soldiers on notice that they would soon be sent to the region to join the mission. NATO went to great pains to assure that these troops were being sent for the purpose of peacekeeping and were not intended to be the spearhead of a ground invasion force (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42960).

On May 27, 1999, the UN International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, a court specifically established to deal with war crimes in the Balkan
conflicts, indicted Slobodan Milosevic and “four other senior Serb leaders on charges of crimes against humanity.” This marked the first time that a sitting head of state had ever been indicted for war crimes (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42960).

Peace negotiators arrived in Belgrade on June 2 to engage in direct talks with Milosevic. Martti Ahtisaari, the president of Finland, represented the European Union and the United Nations while Viktor Chernomyrdin was sent as the personal envoy for Russian president Boris Yeltsin. After a second round of talks, on June 3, Milosevic accepted the key NATO demands (including Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo and the acceptance of international peacekeepers in the province). The agreement, however, gave some ground to the Serb leader, as NATO peacekeepers would be restricted to Kosovo (the Rambouillet agreement had stipulated that they would be allowed throughout Yugoslavia). In another small victory for Milosevic, no mention was made of any referendum on the future status of Kosovo (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43007).

Although peace had been agreed to in principle, the fighting would continue for several more days pending a formal disengagement agreement. During this time, fierce ground fighting between the KLA and Serb forces continued, as did NATO air strikes.

With the signing of the Military-Technical Agreement on June 9, the fighting finally ended. The agreement established the terms of the disengagement of all hostile forces. It provided for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a phased withdrawal of Serbian forces within eleven days, and the entry of the international peacekeeping force. With the adoption the following day of a formal UN resolution approving the peace plan (UNSC 1244), the war in Kosovo formally ended (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43008).

TYPES AND QUANTITIES OF FORCES USED

The overall number of forces utilized during the Kosovo war (U.S. and NATO) was 58,000. Of this total, the United States contributed 31,600 personnel, of whom 18,400 served on land and an additional 13,200 were stationed on naval vessels in the region (Cordesman, 2001: 35).

The Kosovo conflict was largely an air war, yet a variety of military assets were present in the immediate area. In terms of airpower, a full array of aircraft drawn from three services (Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps), was utilized in the campaign. The strike aircraft used during the air offensive included the principal state-of-the-art high-tech aircraft in the U.S. arsenal,
including the B-1 and B-2 bombers, and the F-117 fighter-bomber. The B-2 and the F-117 both employed stealth technology and were considered “the cutting edge” of the American fleet. Also utilized was the workhorse of the bomber fleet, the B-52. (For a full accounting of the various aircraft utilized and their intended combat roles, see Cordesman, 2001: 36–38.)

During the seventy-eight days of hostilities, NATO warplanes flew 38,004 total sorties. Of these, some 10,484 were strikes against “strategic” or “tactical” targets; 3,100 were missions aimed at suppressing Yugoslav air defenses. “A mere 22 heavy bombers—five B-1s, six B-2s, and eleven B-52s—delivered close to 12,000 weapons (constituting some 2,400 tons)” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

By the close of the conflict, some 829 warplanes drawn from fourteen countries were available to carry out missions against the enemy. These planes, including “strike, electronic-warfare, reconnaissance, refueling and support aircraft flew from some forty-seven locations in Europe and the United States” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

During the course of the air campaign, the United States was unmistakably the dominant power. The U.S. Air Force alone accounted for 75 percent of all ordnance delivered, in total some 21,120 weapons. “Including U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aircraft and missiles, weapons delivered by the United States numbered 23,506 (or 83 percent of the total).” The overwhelming majority of air strikes conducted by the United States (about two-thirds) were carried out at night (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

Not all of the assets that NATO would eventually need were available in the theater when hostilities commenced. The initial raids carried out on the first night of the war consisted of twenty-seven cruise missile strikes and four waves of attacks utilizing a total of 214 U.S. and 130 allied aircraft (Basevich and Cohen, 2001: 8). As of April 13, the number of allied aircraft in the theater rose to 550, and on April 27 the level was 700 warplanes. By May 7, the total number of alliance aircraft had reached nearly 1,000, of which 639 were American and 227 were NATO. One-third of the total at this point were “shooters” or strike aircraft.

By the end of May, the American presence in the Balkan theater had grown considerably. As of May 27, the overall U.S. contingent accounted for 717 military aircraft. Of that total, there were 309 fighter/bombers, 261 support planes, and 44 reconnaissance aircraft. In addition, Washington also sent 103 helicopters (Cordesman, 2001: 36). As the air war came to a close in June, NATO had a total of 912 aircraft committed to the Kosovo theater, with an additional 312 en route (Cordesman, 2001: 39).
In support of the air campaign, the United States utilized twenty-four bases throughout Europe. These installations included “three in the UK, one in Spain, two in France, four in Germany, six in Italy, two in Hungary, one in Greece, and two in Turkey.” In addition, long-range bomber missions were frequently conducted from stateside bases, most notably Whitman Air Force Base in Missouri (Cordesman, 2001: 36).

When compared to the massive air assault that opened the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the conduct of the Kosovo campaign, especially in the early stages, seemed rather low key. There were, however, important reasons for this. The first two are obvious: the weather and topography of the region. The weather, especially during the first month of the air war, was particularly poor, and considering the mountainous terrain of the region, this made conducting sorties extremely hazardous to pilots and crews. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of munitions used in the early phases of the conflict were precision guided and the poor weather greatly hindered their effectiveness.

The other major reason for the restrained conduct of the air campaign (and especially noticeable in its earlier phases) was the imposition of highly restrictive rules of engagement. These rules were politically imposed, largely motivated by a desire to limit, to the extent humanly possible, any casualties for NATO airmen and innocent civilians on the ground. In many cases, if there was a possibility that weapons could not be precisely delivered on military targets or if civilians were in close proximity, missions would be scrubbed (Cordesman, 2001: 41). Furthermore, the nineteen countries involved in this operation all had a voice in NATO decision making. As a result, in some cases the objection of even one member was enough to spare a target. Only those military assets directly under American command and outside of the NATO chain of command (for example, cruise missiles launched from U.S. warships) were exempt from these preemptions (Cordesman, 2001: 67–69).

An examination of the numbers of combat missions is instructive: in the first thirty-four days of the war, NATO averaged 340 sorties per day; 130 of those were strike sorties. By contrast, during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, coalition forces had flown an average of 2,555 missions per day, approximately 1,600 of which were for “strike-attack.”

A post-war report revealed that in the first four weeks of the air offensive, there was a daily average of 370 sorties. In the next four weeks the number had climbed to 522 per day, and in the last three weeks that number increased further to an average of 585 sorties per day. A report dated May 27, 1999, showed that up to that point in the conflict the United States
had flown some 52 percent of the strike sorties and 70 percent of the support missions (Cordesman, 2001: 41–42).

A January 2000 Department of Defense final report on the war disclosed that in total NATO had flown some 38,000 sorties, “almost one third of which were strike and air defense suppression.” Secretary of Defense Cohen had earlier reported that American aircraft had flown “over 24,000 combat sorties” during the course of the war (Cordesman, 2001: 43).

NATO’s significant naval strength also played a critical role in the Kosovo war. The air campaign was supported by the presence of a twenty-ship fleet in the Adriatic Sea. This force was largely built around the presence of three carrier task groups: the USS Theodore Roosevelt (U.S.A.), HMS Invincible (U.K.), and the French aircraft carrier Foch (Cordesman, 2001: 35). These ships added considerable firepower; the USS Theodore Roosevelt, for example, provided “complete strike packages, including F-14 and F-18 for strike, EA-6B for suppression of air defenses, F-14s as airborne forward air controllers, and E-2C as airborne control centers” (Nardulli et al., 2002: 31). The escort vessels also provided a considerable punch to alliance firepower. A number of the ships, including six in the U.S. contingent and a British submarine, were capable of firing Tomahawk cruise missiles (Cordesman, 2001: 35–36).

No land forces were officially on the ground in Kosovo until they were inserted as peacekeepers after the conflict had ended. To the extent NATO ground forces were in the region, they were largely confined to bases in neighboring Albania and Macedonia. The 18,400 ground troops were relegated to refugee relief missions and tending a contingent of U.S. Army Apache attack helicopters that would have been called into service had a ground offensive been necessary. Although they did not see action, their presence undoubtedly placed uncertainty in the minds of Yugoslav leaders, who were fearful that NATO was, in fact, preparing for an invasion. It would be reasonable to presume, however, that given the extensive use of laser-guided precision ordnance by NATO, a small number of Special Forces troops may have infiltrated Kosovo to act as “spotters” to “paint” enemy targets (Cordesman, 2001: 35).

**Ordnance and Weapons Systems**

The total amount of ordnance dropped by NATO during the Kosovo war was 28,236 weapons, an average of 362 weapons per day. “A total of some 12,000 tons of munitions were expended.” Seventy percent of this total...
was dropped in the final three weeks of the conflict (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

The U.S. Air Force played the dominant role in the air offensive, having delivered some 21,120 weapons, or about 75 percent of the NATO total. Adding in the missions carried out by U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aviators, the number of weapons rises to 23,506, which accounts for 83 percent of the overall NATO war effort (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

No region of Yugoslavia was completely spared from attack. Hitting Serbian mobile units carrying out “ethnic cleansing” was considered a top priority; consequently, Kosovo bore the brunt of the bombing. Still, NATO dropped an estimated 3,000–5,000 weapons on targets in Serbia and Montenegro considered to be of “strategic” value (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 25).

A central aspect of NATO strategy in the early phases of the war was a reliance on precision-guided munitions (PGMs). There are two basic types of PGMs: “man-in-the-loop” and GPS-guided. The “man-in-the-loop” munitions require a line of sight from an on-board sensor to the target, and as a consequence they are greatly affected by weather. This type of “smart bombs” can be further broken down into subtypes. The first of these may be referred to as “optically guided,” in which a small television camera on the bomb transmits real-time images back to the pilot. Using a joystick control, the pilot can control the trajectory of the bomb’s descent. The other variation is “laser-guided”; a target is acquired through use of a laser beam and the bomb follows the laser to its target.

The other main type of PGM is guided by use of the Global Positioning System (GPS). A bomb or cruise missile utilizing GPS uses “satellite input to track to specific target coordinates, which makes the weapon capable of all-weather employment” (Cordesman, 2001: 45).

Although both types of PGMs were used during the war, the value of GPS-guided systems was soon made obvious by conditions in the theater. Only seven of the first twenty-one days of the campaign presented weather favorable for an effective air offensive. On ten days during this initial period, the weather forced the cancellation of at least 50 percent of the designated strike sorties. As a consequence, inclement weather had the effect of reducing NATO’s strike/attack sortie rate “by at least 30–50 percent, even when all-weather aircraft and suitable precision munitions were available” (Cordesman, 2001: 48). Lieutenant General Michael Short, the U.S./NATO air commander, later recalled that weather conditions “just kicked our butts for the first 45 days” (Cordesman, 2001: 48–49).

As a consequence of such conditions, NATO relied heavily on the use of such precision-guided munitions. The United States alone dropped some
6,728 PGMs during the course of the war, including the debut of the GPS-guided Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21). In the early days of the offensive (March 24–29), 100 percent of the missiles fired and ordnance dropped were precision-guided (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12). The result of the precision campaign was remarkable; while hitting Yugoslav troops and installations, not a single civilian was killed on the initial night of the war. Indeed, there was only one civilian fatality in the first week of the conflict (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 15). No “legacy weapons” (conventional bombs) were introduced until the fifth day of the war and no cluster bombs were utilized until day six (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12).

Overall, NATO dropped 8,500 “smart bombs,” which accounted for some 34–37 percent of the alliance total. To put this number into historical context, the percentage of PGMs utilized by NATO was more than four times greater than the 8 percent used during the coalition’s highly successful air campaign against Iraq in 1991.

As the war progressed, improved weather and attrition of Yugoslav air defenses allowed for a transition to greater reliance on unguided weapons. The traditional gravity bombs were, however, able to be dropped with precision on targets such as “oil refineries, ammunition storage sites, and troop staging areas” (Cordesman, 2001: 44). By late May, NATO reliance on PGMs had been reduced to 10–20 percent of ordnance delivered (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21).

A number of weapons systems discussed earlier made a return appearance in Kosovo, including the F-117A fighter/bomber and the A-10 Thunderbolt II. The Tomahawk cruise missile had seen action in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, but was now updated with GPS, making it even more lethally accurate (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 21–22).

One weapon that made its combat debut during the Balkans war was the B-2 Spirit bomber. Like the F-117A, it incorporated stealth technology, including radar-absorbing paint and contours that disbursed radar wave reflection (Lambeth, 2001: 89). It was included in the first wave of attacks over Kosovo. The B-2 typically flew its missions from bases in the United States, principally Whitman Air Force Base in Missouri, which required a 28–32-hour round-trip (Basevich and Cohen, 2001: 7). The plane quickly earned a reputation as the “most consistently effective performer of the entire air war,” due in part to the B-2’s weapons effectiveness rate of 96 percent (Lambeth, 2001: 89–90).

The B-2 was capable of delivering satellite-guided JDAMs from altitudes as high as 40,000 feet, so heavy cloud cover over enemy targets was not a problem. The plane hit up to sixteen separate targets per sortie, more than
80 percent of them on the first pass. Because of its unique capabilities, the B-2 was used to hit “hardened command bunkers and air defense facilities,” the elimination of which could open up the offensive.

Although the B-2 accounted for less than 0.5 percent of the 9,500 strike sorties flown during the conflict, it was responsible for dropping 11 percent of the bombs against fixed targets in both Kosovo and Serbia (Lambeth, 2001: 90–91). Impressed with its performance, former Secretary of the Air Force Donald Rice remarked that the B-2 was “proving to be the nation’s most cost effective attack aircraft” (Lambeth, 2001: 93).

As mentioned earlier, precision-guided munitions played a prominent role in Operation Allied Force. One such weapon was the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), a device that could make conventional gravity bombs “smart.” The JDAM is essentially “a $20,000–$25,000 add-on kit that can be strapped to 500–2000 pound bombs to give them GPS guidance” (Cordesman, 2001: 49). Due to their GPS ability, JDAMs and weapons like them are capable of employment under all weather conditions (Cordesman, 2001: 45). Unfortunately, other PGMs were not as versatile; optically and laser-guided munitions were adversely affected by poor weather (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 22).

Another precision weapon of note was the High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM). Essentially, the missile follows radar emissions back to their source and therefore was used extensively against Yugoslav air defense facilities. Like JDAM, HARM is not adversely affected by poor weather (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 8, 22).

The RQ-1A Predator drone is one of several Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) utilized during the war. One of its special abilities is that it is able to track targets through cloud cover due to its synthetic aperture radar. Because it was able “to approach threat emitters more closely than manned aircraft,” the Predator was a valuable tool in collecting signals intelligence. It also had the ability to intercept transmissions from low-power sources such as cell phones and ground force field radios. As an unmanned vehicle, it was able to undertake sensitive missions while avoiding unnecessary risks to allied pilots; as such, it proved invaluable in collecting certain forms of intelligence, especially evidence of Serb “ethnic cleansing” (Lambeth, 2001: 94–95).

NATO rules of engagement required “two sets of eyes” on a potential target before it could be engaged. Consequently, real-time images provided by Predator overflights were used to help validate military targets as such. Later, General Jumper revealed that, had the offensive continued beyond June, there were plans in the works to expand the Predator’s mission.
Equipped with laser designators, Predators would fly below cloud cover in an effort to “paint” enemy targets so that bombers could effectively hit them from higher altitudes with greatly reduced risk (Lambeth, 2001: 95–97).

THE SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

Combat during Operation Allied Force was largely confined to the primary theater of war, specifically Kosovo and Serbia. Although there were no major combat operations outside these areas, there were, however, events that did threaten to expand the scope of the conflict.

Although it remained a republic of the FRY, Montenegro was considered relatively friendly to the West. Indeed, President Milo Djukanovic had long been opposed to Milosevic; consequently, when hostilities broke out, he tried to keep Montenegro neutral and outside of the combat zone. NATO, particularly France, desired to spare Montenegro the ravages of war (Keesing’s, March 1999: 42848; Judah, 2000: 268).

Yugoslav troops, however, were present in Montenegro and used assets in the republic to aid their war effort. The Serbs utilized radar at an air base near the capital city of Podgorica, and at another site in the coastal city of Bar, to track incoming NATO aircraft. The Podgorica air base was also used by the Serbs to hide jet fighters and military helicopters from NATO bombers. Furthermore, the Yugoslav army fired artillery into northern Albania from Montenegro in an apparent effort to disrupt KLA operations in that lawless border region (Judah, 2000: 268–69). Given these factors, NATO felt compelled to take action against Yugoslav forces in the republic. Although France initially was vehemently opposed to doing so, in late April NATO undertook a number of air raids, primarily against the Podgorica air base and the oil port of Bar (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42847; Judah, 2000: 268–69).

President Djukanovic had his own reason to fear the presence of Yugoslav forces, accusing Milosevic of using local Serbian troops to affect a “creeping coup” against the Montenegro leader. It has been asserted that Milosevic ultimately decided to leave his enemy in power for fear that NATO would use an overthrow of Montenegro’s legitimate leader as justification for opening up a new front that the Serbs would be forced to defend (Judah, 2000: 255–56). Secretary General Solana had earlier warned that any attempt to remove the Djukanovic government would result in NATO intervention (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42903).

Despite the presence of 30,000 NATO-led troops (SFOR) placed in Bosnia to keep the peace at the close of the 1995 conflict, Milosevic made an effort to distract NATO by expanding the war into that republic. Concerned
that NATO might use it as a base for a ground invasion of Serbia, the Yugoslavs ordered local Bosnian Serb forces to initiate guerrilla warfare against alliance troops in Bosnia. Bosnian Serb military leaders, however, refused to comply. Upon being informed of the plot, SFOR commanders took swift action to safeguard weapons depots and sternly warned the Bosnian Serbs against taking provocative actions. “The Bosnian Serb military had no appetite for another war and, now under such strict control, there was little it could do” (Judah, 2000: 255).

Kosovar refugees may have inadvertently provided another possible mode for the expansion of hostilities. The Serbian efforts to eradicate the ethnic Albanian presence from Kosovo led to a virtual tsunami of refugees fleeing to the nearest safe refuge, usually either Macedonia or Albania (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42899). NATO troops were sent to both countries in order to set up camps to provide relief for refugees. In Macedonia, locals had feared that the influx of Muslim refugees would upset the delicate local political balance. Violent demonstrations, thought possibly to be instigated by Macedonian intelligence and security forces, took place near some the camps. Due to NATO and local camp authorities’ efforts to contain the refugee problem, however, these demonstrations soon fizzled out (Judah, 2000: 254–55).

The largest number of refugees, by late April thought to be well in excess of 300,000, headed for Albania. In an effort to deal with the situation, NATO commenced Operation Allied Hope, sending 8,000 troops to assist in building camps to house and care for refugees (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42902). In a separate deployment, the United States sent Task Force Hawk to Albania. This move positioned U.S. Army Apache attack helicopters to provide close air support for ground forces should an invasion of Kosovo prove necessary. General Clark had strongly advocated their use for operations against the small units that Serbian forces in Kosovo had broken into (Nardulli et al., 2002: 59). The threat posed by Serbian air defense missiles and the success of the conventional bombing campaign and A-10 missions, among a variety of other factors, kept the Apaches out of the action (Lambeth, 2001: 51–52). It can be argued, however, that the presence of these forces may have restrained Serbian ground troops from more robustly attempting to engage the KLA in its Albanian sanctuary.

Indeed, the Albanian government’s authority over its northern border region was tenuous at best, and consequently, KLA forces had a free hand to utilize the area for their own purposes. Kosovar insurgents openly recruited from among the refugees and established base camps in Albania,
near the Kosovo border. On several occasions, Serb forces attempted to engage KLA units. On April 11–12, the Yugoslavs shelled an Albanian border village during fighting with the Kosovar rebels. Two days later, some one hundred Serbian troops entered Albania, penetrating five hundred meters near the border town of Kamenica before reportedly being driven out by Albanian forces (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42900). In late May, with U.S. air support, the KLA used these Albanian bases to launch a ground offensive that signaled the beginning of the end of the conflict (Judah, 2000: 283–84).

THE NATURE OF THE THEATER COMMANDER’S POWER AND INFLUENCE

In describing the nature of General Wesley Clark’s command, Columbia University professor Richard Betts commented that it “was compromised by more conflicting pressures—political, diplomatic, military, and legal—than any other in history. Given these constraints, keeping the enterprise from flying apart was no mean feat” (Lambeth, 2001: 193).

The situation in which Clark found himself was derived from the nature of the operation. Clark was simultaneously the supreme military commander of NATO (SACEUR) and the “commander in chief (CINC) of United States European Command” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 3). As such, he presided over parallel command structures that appeared a bit murky, largely due to the fact that many of his upper-level subordinates were likewise “dual hatted” (for an excellent schematic diagram of the chain of command, please see Lambeth, 2001: 208). Admiral James O. Ellis, Clark’s immediate subordinate, was both commander of allied forces in Southern Europe (NATO) and the head of Joint Task Force Noble Anvil (U.S.). Likewise, below Ellis, General Short served simultaneously as NATO commander of allied air forces in Southern Europe and as the commander of the air component of Joint Task Force Noble Anvil (Clark, 2001: 77; Lambeth, 2001: 207–9). Such overlap was not without consequences; “this dual-hatting of so many commanders and operational functions often made it hard for Allied Force participants, irrespective of level, to determine exactly who was operating in what capacity at any given time” (Lambeth, 2001: 209).

As SACEUR, Clark took his orders from NATO’s North Atlantic Council. Each individual alliance member also maintained its own national chain of command, and as CINC of U.S. European Command, Clark was also subject to the traditional command structure (Joint Chiefs of Staff, secretary of defense, president).
It may be argued that, as SACEUR, Clark’s primary duty was more political than military. As the “diplomat in chief,” Clark had the Herculean task of reconciling the various national interests of NATO members necessary to keep the alliance together. This role, unfortunately, frequently spilled over into the actual conduct of the war and consequently made its effective prosecution highly problematic.

In his military capacity, General Clark chose to take a direct hands-on role. Consequently, he limited the authority he delegated to his subordinates. Indeed, he often bypassed both Admiral Ellis and General Short in making the major decisions regarding the conduct of the war, essentially running the air campaign from his headquarters in Brussels. Much of this unilateralist approach within his command can probably be attributed to significant philosophical differences that Clark had with his subordinates over how best to conduct operations against Serbia (Lambeth, 2001: 193).

General Clark’s freedom of action on the battlefield was significantly hindered by the North Atlantic Council’s collective decision-making process (Lambeth, 2001: 185). Although NATO held daily conferences with Clark to authorize target selection, the type and location of targets that NATO forces would be allowed to hit was determined by the NAC (Bellamy, 2002: 161, 168). For its part, the political leadership’s (both U.S. and NATO) anxiety over possible civilian casualties drove the cautious approach that the NAC pursued toward air operations (Clark, 2001: 305). The inevitable consequence of such concerns was that the NAC engaged in continual debate over what to target as well as when and how best to escalate military operations in the theater. For his part, Clark urged NATO to hit as many targets as it could each day and tended to oppose the diplomatic bombing pauses advocated by several European allies (Cordesman, 2001: 25–26).

Due to the nature of the alliance and its organizational structure, individual members exercised considerable powers to curb or even kill certain raids that they found objectionable (Lambeth, 2001: 185). Political review of targets by NATO was conducted on a case-by-case basis (Cordesman, 2001: 27). The French were most frequently the party to veto particular strikes. Paris used its position to protect Montenegro from attack for the better part of the conflict (Bellamy, 2002: 161; Judah, 2000: 268). On at least one occasion, French objections caused planes to be recalled en route to their targets (Cordesman, 2001: 27).

For political and moral reasons, NATO put certain classes of targets off-limits, at least until late into the campaign. For the better part of the war, civilian-related targets were scrupulously avoided and targets in proximity
to noncombatants frequently required the use of precision munitions to minimize possible collateral damage. As hitting the power grid would disproportionately hurt innocent civilians, the French would not allow NATO to do so until it seemed absolutely necessary to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. The avoidance of civilian targets benefited Milosevic personally; despite Clark’s urgings, no real effort was made by the NAC to target him personally or his assets until later in the conflict. An extreme example of such limitations was the Dutch objection to hitting Milosevic’s estate for cultural reason. They vetoed the attack out of fear that a Rembrandt painting known to be in the house might be destroyed (Lambeth, 2001: 34–36, 40). Even certain types of military targets were spared. Fearing possible loss of life by Serbian conscripts, political leaders refused to allow Clark to attack occupied military barracks (Ignatieff, 2000: 96–97). Due to the dual command structure (NATO/national), allies were able to withhold military assets from participation in actions to which they objected (Bellamy, 2002: 167–69).

Before escalation of operations could be undertaken, General Clark would have to secure the prior approval of the NAC. Consequently, some targets were hit repeatedly at least in part due to NATO delays in expanding the list of approved targets and Clark’s intent to keep the action going (Lambeth, 2001: 36–37). The desire to maintain NATO unity made the drafting of plans difficult, as the member’s conflicting political agendas had to be constantly reconciled (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 4). General Klaus Naumann, the chairman of NATO’s Military Committee, publicly stated his belief that a lack of political and military resolve within the alliance had had the effect of unnecessarily lengthening the war (Bellamy, 2002: 158).

As the war continued, NATO granted greater authority and resources to Clark. In an effort to maintain military effectiveness, NATO secretary general Javier Solana and General Clark eventually were given a degree of practical flexibility in their conduct of air operations (Bellamy, 2002: 168). Indeed, a NATO summit in April granted the SACEUR a freer hand to pursue the campaign, including additional firepower. Although the mistaken attack on the Chinese embassy reinstated some limits, the NATO summit gave Clark the green light to apply decisive force to bring the war to a victorious conclusion. Indeed, as Clark had long advocated, NATO now began to discuss a possible ground assault (Cordesman, 2001: 27–30).

In his more conventional role as the commander in chief of U.S. forces in Europe (CINCEUR), Clark had considerable assets that he could unilaterally control, including B-1, B-2, and B-52 bombers, as well as the F-117 stealth fighter-bombers. In addition to his complement of strike and sup-
port aircraft, Clark had insisted on and received the deployment of U.S. Army Apache attack helicopters based in Albania (Bellamy, 2002: 187; Clark: 2001: 305).

This independent capability gave Clark the means to order “U.S.-only” missions outside the NATO command. Indeed, a separate U.S.-only planning track was developed, allowing for the striking of targets considered too sensitive by NATO. Although such a capability had its obvious advantages, the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy as the result of one such raid glaringly highlighted the problems that such a track could pose to both the United States and NATO (Bellamy, 2002: 187; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 17). For their part, the French and the Dutch made their objections to American unilateral action known to Washington (Bellamy, 2002: 162).

A major problem within the U.S. chain of command was the return of Vietnam-style political micromanagement of the war. In many (if not most) cases, the military had to get clearance from officials in Washington before they could engage certain targets. Targets of a sufficiently sensitive nature would have to be approved personally by President Clinton (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 19).

For his part, Mr. Clinton did not appear to extensively consult his Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding conduct of the war. Instead, he largely confined his discussions to its chairman, General Henry H. Shelton, who tended not to air military misgivings about Clinton’s conduct of the war (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 157).

The most glaring example of how political micromanagement may have impaired the war effort took place on the first day of the conflict. By publicly taking the ground option off the table, many in the military believe, Mr. Clinton may have inadvertently prolonged the war by encouraging Milosevic in a belief that if he could just hold out against the bombing, NATO would eventually give up (Bellamy, 2002: 159). Clark had advocated planning for a ground war, believing that a Gulf War-style offensive backed with overwhelming force would eventually be necessary, but Washington showed little interest in pursuing the option (Bellamy, 2002: 172, 179).

Toward the end of the war, the Clinton administration had started to revisit the concept of utilizing ground forces. General Clark drafted new plans involving 175,000 troops thrusting from Macedonia in a massive “right hook” through Kosovo and drew up a timetable for implementation. When this proposal was brought forward in late May, it appeared unlikely that the full NAC would approve such an undertaking. One scholar, however, argues that there is considerable evidence that the United States was contemplat-
ing putting together a “coalition of the willing” to carry out such an opera-
tion if NATO balked (Bellamy, 2002: 192–93).

With regard to the resources requested, General Clark generally got what
he asked for in terms of increases in personnel and aircraft. He was, for ex-
ample, able to get the aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* battle group
put on station in the Adriatic in a support role, its flight wing and cruise
missile capabilities adding substantial muscle to U.S. forces. Likewise, Clark
requested and got approval for the deployment of Task Force Hawk and its
complement of Apache attack helicopters to Albania. Clark had anticipated
using the Apaches for suppression of air defenses and close ground support
for a possible ground invasion, but was later overruled by his superiors in

A major problem for Clark was a rather public difference of opinion with
his subordinates. General Short, the air commander for Operation Allied
Force, had argued for a direct approach, advocating going after high-value
targets in Serbia immediately to “cut the head off the snake” (Cordesman,
2001: 26; Judah, 2001: 265–66). Specifically, he advocated a massive air cam-
paign modeled on that used against Iraq in the opening days of the 1991
Persian Gulf War (Cordesman, 2001: 26). Clark, by contrast, thought that to
end ethnic cleansing against the ethnic Albanians, it was essential to go af-
after the perpetrators, namely Serbian forces in Kosovo. Because of his posi-
tion as SACEUR, Clark also had to take account of both European sensibili-
ties and public opinion. He believed that to do what Short suggested, while
militarily sound, risked fracturing what at the time was a very delicate con-
sensus within NATO (Cordesman, 2001: 26).

**Rules of Engagement**

The rules of engagement imposed on the military by both NATO and Wash-
ington were severely restrictive. Pilots were required to positively identify
targets and to avoid possible civilian damage. According to General Short,
the NATO rule required that “we had to put our eyes on a target every time
we were going to strike a tank or an artillery piece.” Clarifying this require-
ment further, General Clark explained that military lawyers (JAGs) had re-
quired that: “someone would have to view Serb air defenses through pho-
tography or t.v. within a few hours of the time the artillery was to be fired
. . . never had we imposed such a standard on ourselves” (Clark, 2001: 304).
Furthermore, to avoid losses to Serbian anti-aircraft fire and missile bat-
teries, Short required that sorties be conducted from an altitude of at least
15,000 feet (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12–15). Given poor weather in the region and the tendency of Serbian forces to position troops and assets near civilians, these conditions often could not be met as fully as required and consequently led to the cancellation of many missions (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12–15).

Certain targets, either civilian or dual-use (ostensibly civilian, with possible military applications), were effective placed off-limits at the outset of the war. It does, however, bear noting that this requirement was loosened considerably as the conflict continued. Targets such as the power grid and state-run broadcast facilities were eventually approved for bombing (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 7, 14). Such politically sensitive targets required prior approval from the NAC, although as a practical matter in the latter stages of the campaign approval was reduced down to a small handful of the countries engaged in the brunt of the operations: the United States, Britain, and France (Judah, 2000: 266).

Before they could be engaged, most targets had to be vetted by JAGs (military attorneys), who evaluated the legality of hitting the targets under existing international rules of warfare and the Geneva Conventions (Judah, 2000: 257). As Michael Ignatieff observed: “By 1999, military lawyers had been integrated into every phase of the air campaign, including the finalization of the air tasking orders which assigned pilots to specific targets and missions. Military lawyers, attached to the United States European Command, sat at computer terminals and contributed assessments of the standard Geneva Convention questions for each target: was the objective military; were the means selected proportional to the objective; and what were the risks of damage to civilians. The texts of the Geneva Conventions themselves were available on screen” (Ignatieff, 2000: 197–98).

As difficult as such restrictions made the prosecution of the war, they were deemed necessary. After all, how could the West seek indictments against Milosevic and his henchmen for their violation of international law only to have NATO violate some of the same principles during its offensive? The legalities were also observed in order to maintain public support for the war in NATO countries (Ignatieff, 2000: 199–200).

For their part, the military was not happy about what it considered overly restrictive rules of engagement, and their “extreme dissatisfaction” over how NATO and the White House directed the war effort quickly became public. “Indeed, Kosovo prompted complaints of civilian interference—voiced openly by serving officers—not heard since Vietnam.” After the conclusion of the conflict, Admiral Ellis lamented that the air war had been “politically constrained,” citing a “tendency toward ‘incremental war’ and
excessive concerns about collateral damage” on the part of civilian leaders. General Short largely concurred with Ellis’s assessment, stating that the military had been “constrained in this conflict to an extraordinary degree.” Consequently, in Short’s opinion, such political restrictions prevented the armed forces “from conducting an air campaign as professional airmen would have wanted to conduct it” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 156).

EXIT STRATEGY

It is difficult to speak of an “exit strategy” for Kosovo, as there was never really an “entrance.” With President Clinton taking that option off the table and both the American public and NATO allies largely opposed to “putting boots on the ground,” it was clear that the situation in Kosovo would have to achieve a substantial critical mass before the ground option would be revisited. Consequently, there was no serious consideration of inserting combat troops until shortly before the war ended, and even then there were considerable obstacles blocking any deployment inside Kosovo.

Indeed, the argument can be made that the only exit strategy contemplated was victory. With Belgrade’s rejection of the Rambouillet agreement, the West had come to the conclusion that there was nothing left to talk about with the Serbs. One may recall that U.S. and NATO leaders initially believed that a forty-eight-hour “demonstration bombing” would bring Milosevic back to the table for serious negotiations that would resolve the situation (Cordesman, 2001: 21; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 6–7). As there was the widespread assumption that this mini-offensive would have the desired effect, there was not much planning on the part of the political leadership for what should happen next if it failed.

Milosevic did not crumble as readily as most in the West had expected. Having embarked on a moral crusade to end genocide, NATO was now committed to seeing Operation Allied Force to a successful conclusion.

The first serious discussions of a ground invasion occurred at the NATO defense ministers’ meeting in Cologne, Germany, on May 27. This provided a clear signal that victory was the only acceptable conclusion, as discussions centered on winning the war quickly so that refugees could return home before the start of winter. NATO’s resolve was demonstrably strengthened when the French and Italians, two of the more dovish allies, signed on to a British plan for a ground invasion and pledged troops (Bellamy, 2002: 196).

From the outset, President Clinton and his NATO allies had made it clear that nothing short of the implementation of the terms established at Rambouillet would be acceptable for ending the war (Lambeth, 2001: 10;
Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 139). That these terms were non-negotiable was inadvertently underlined on May 24 when the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia handed down indictments against Milosevic and members of his inner circle for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Alex Bellamy asserts that the formal charges “reinforced NATO’s insistence that there could be no negotiations on its five demands in a context where discussion of a land war was taking on new impetus.” There is, therefore, reason to believe that Milosevic soon had concluded that the only way to avoid arrest was to stay in power, and that meant coming to terms with NATO before a ground invasion (Bellamy, 2002: 197). Within two weeks, after receiving some minor concessions, Milosevic finally came to terms.

It was only with the conclusion of hostilities that U.S. and NATO troops finally entered Kosovo as part of international peacekeeping forces. In an ironic twist, a large part of their mission involved protecting Kosovar Serbs from vengeful ethnic Albanians.

**THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE INTERVENTION**

With hostilities all but ended, the United Nations began to lay the groundwork for the post-war recovery of Kosovo. On June 10, the Security Council passed UNSC Resolution 1244, which established the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), with all council members voting “yea” except China, which was still fuming over the mistaken bombing of its Belgrade embassy (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43010).

The resolution itself is essentially the practical application of the major features of the Rambouillet agreement (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43011). Specifically, it authorized an international peacekeeping force (KFOR) to be inserted into Kosovo in an effort to “establish a safe environment for all people in Kosovo and to facilitate the safe return to their homes of all displaced persons and refugees” (Judah, 2000: 297). In an effort to reestablish order in the province, the resolution called for the establishment of an interim civil administration that would grant Kosovo “substantial sovereignty” within the FRY. As it was a large part of the justification for going to war, a major priority for UNMIK was the protection of human rights within Kosovo (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43011).

The resolution provided for the creation, on a provisional basis, of democratic institutions to provide for eventual self-government of the province (Judah, 2000: 297). One of the first tasks undertaken was planning elections for the creation of a regional parliament (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43011).
It was clear, almost from the start of the process, that post-war Kosovo was beginning to take on some of the characteristics of statehood. This was perhaps inevitable, as the old order had largely broken down and the remnants of Serbian authority were withdrawing from the province. Under UNMIK, the new administration began to fund itself through the imposition of taxes, mainly import duties. In a move heavily laden with symbolism, Kosovo scrapped the Yugoslav dinar as its official currency and in its place adopted the German deutschmark. The United Nations also began to issue its own unique Kosovo documentation for identification and car license plates (Judah, 2000: 298).

Within days of the end of the fighting, hundreds of thousands of refugees jammed the roads back into Kosovo. By the end of the third week, it was estimated that approximately a half million refugees had returned. The “quickest and biggest refugee return in modern history” overwhelmed local authorities, who found it difficult to absorb the huge numbers as quickly as the stream of humanity was flowing into the devastated province (Judah, 2000: 286). The consequences were immediately obvious; the massive and sudden influx of returning Albanians helped lead to the breakdown of law and order in Kosovo, particularly in the capital city of Pristina (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43105).

Operation Joint Guardian, the UN-approved mission to stabilize Kosovo, began on June 13. With the withdrawal of the remaining Yugoslav forces, KFOR troops entered the province. The United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy were each assigned a zone to oversee and protect pending the reconstitution of local civil authority. Upon their arrival, KFOR units were welcomed as liberators, greeted by jubilant crowds of ethnic Albanians who threw flowers to tank crews entering towns and villages throughout Kosovo.

The Russians had also wanted to take a role in the peacekeeping mission, but talks aimed at establishing the terms of their inclusion in KFOR had deadlocked. The impasse did not deter Moscow, however, as it redeployed troops from the ongoing SFOR mission in Bosnia to the airport in Pristina, a site that was to serve as a British base. Arriving in the early hours of June 12, the initial two hundred Russian troops represented the first foreign forces on Kosovar territory. With the arrival of UK paratroopers later in the day, there was a tense standoff between KFOR forces and the Russian interlopers.

The official U.S. position was that the Russians could participate in the peacekeeping mission, but only if they served under NATO command. For
their part, the Russians insisted on having their own zone within Kosovo. Although Moscow had originally claimed that the movement of Russian troops was unilaterally undertaken by their theater commander without orders from the Kremlin, new evidence quickly came to light that belied that version of events. It was disclosed that Moscow had actually attempted to fly troops into Kosovo a day earlier (June 11), but that they were foiled by the refusal of Hungary and Bulgaria to allow passage of Russian military aircraft through their airspace.

The situation was eventually resolved when Russia dropped its demand for a sector of its own. Instead, 3,600 Russian troops would be divided among the U.S., German, and French zones. In an effort to save face, the Kremlin insisted that the troops would remain under Russian command.

With the withdrawal of all remaining Yugoslav troops on June 20, NATO secretary general Javier Solana declared the air war officially over (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43014).

Making Order Out of Chaos

As Albanian war refugees returned, tens of thousands of Serbs fled, fearing the wrath of vengeful Kosovars. By November 1999, the Yugoslav Red Cross had registered 247,391 refugees, largely Serbs and Gypsies who had either left Kosovo voluntarily or been driven out. Gypsies had been particularly targeted due to the belief of many ethnic Albanians that they had collaborated with the Serbs and later took advantage of the situation to loot the homes of war refugees. As a result of this mass exodus, the Serb population of Pristina fell from 20,000 to as few as 1,000 by the end of 1999.

KFOR had greatly underestimated the situation on the ground. The British, having dealt with what they saw as an analogous situation in Northern Ireland, thought that they had sufficient insight to deal successfully with the situation in Kosovo. To their chagrin, revenge killings continued unabated even after KFOR troops arrived (Judah, 2000: 286–89).

The watchdog group Human Rights Watch accused the KLA of being behind much of the mayhem in post-war Kosovo. The organization was unable to discern, however, whether the lawlessness and terror was undertaken as a matter of policy by the KLA leadership or simply a few renegades operating outside of their orders. Even after it “disarmed,” the KLA was believed to have carried out a campaign of terror and revenge killings against Serbian civilians (Judah, 2000: 290).

The Serbs who chose to remain in Kosovo became increasingly “ghettoized,” as they coalesced into small pockets that could more easily be de-
fended from ethnic Albanian attack. Although KFOR troops protected these enclaves, they became isolated—protected, but all but cut off from the outside world.

As the revenge killing and general lawlessness continued well into 2000, sympathy for the Albanian Kosovars began rapidly to dissipate. Foreign countries and influential individuals who had advocated military action to stop Serb violence against the Albanians became disgusted and embarrassed over the revenge killings and endless violence. Unfortunately, there was precious little reconciliation in the new millennium (Judah, 2000: 295).

From the start, UNMIK found it difficult to provide order and administer Kosovo pending the reestablishment of local civil authority. The main impediment to its mission was that much of Kosovo was under the effective control of the KLA. By contrast, the provisional government established by the Rambouillet process was weak and ineffective. Indeed, although the “government” existed in Pristina, it was incapable of governing in any real sense (Judah, 2000: 298–99).

The KLA did eventually disarm and disband, at least technically. In September 1999, the KLA dissolved itself and surrendered some of its arms. Almost immediately, however, the militia was reconstituted as the “Kosovo Protection Corps” (KPC) (Judah, 2000: 299). The new force was designed to take on a role often associated in the United States with the National Guard, namely, help with civilian emergencies. The reconfiguration plan called for trimming the 9,000-strong KLA down to approximately 5,000 KPC, only 200 of whom would actually carry guns (Keesing’s, September 1999: 43170).

There were, however, some aspects of the transition that presented potentially ominous signs. First, many of the KPC officers were former KLA commanders, a situation that raised questions about where the ultimate loyalties of the KPC may lie. Another cause for concern was that despite the KLA’s official “disarming,” its members made no secret of the fact that not all of the weapons had been surrendered. Indeed, it was widely believed that considerable caches of arms were hidden in Albania (Judah, 2000: 299).

By fall 1999, KLA thuggery had reached a point that even Albanian Kosovars were becoming fearful for their lives. Moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova saw a resurgence of his popularity as a counterbalance to the more radical elements in the Albanian community, but even he dared to make only a few public appearances. The violence between Muslim Albanians and Serbs continued unabated and with no end in sight. Due to the chaotic situation, Kosovo became a de facto protectorate of the United Nations (Judah, 2000: 300–301).

Prior to the conflict, Albanian Kosovars largely had an idealized view of “Mother Albania.” Some had actually advocated the establishment of a
“greater Albania” that would incorporate Kosovo and part of Macedonia. Refugees who made it to Albania, however, were shocked to find the appalling conditions that decades of harsh communist rule had wrought. This revelation, along with the negative experience that many Kosovars had as refugees there, did much to cool the sentiment in favor of political union with Albania. Indeed, the course leading toward eventual independence began to look increasingly likely (Judah, 2000: 301–2).

Serbia and the End of Milosevic

In Serbia, while some important aspects of the national infrastructure were quickly repaired, the overall rebuilding effort was slow due to lack of resources. The West further complicated this task by ruling out the lifting of sanctions and reintegration back into Europe as long as Milosevic was still in power (Judah, 2000: 203).

With Milosevic weakened politically by the war and its aftermath, Serbian opponents of the regime began to come to the conclusion that finally the time was right to work openly to topple the Yugoslav president. Some observers believed that once a certain critical mass of insider defections was reached, there would be a popular uprising that would bring Milosevic’s regime crashing down in a manner similar to that which liberated neighboring Romania from the yoke of Nicolae Ceaucescu’s dictatorship.

Anti-Milosevic demonstrations began in earnest with a rally in Belgrade on August 19 that drew 100,000 protestors. By late summer 1999, however, the opposition movement began to appear fragmented and attendance at rallies started to dwindle (Judah: 2000: 303). A turning point indicating that change might not be long in coming appeared to occur at a September 29 rally that attracted 30,000 demonstrators, as Serb police had to call in riot squads to break up the protest (Keesing’s, September 1999: 43171).

On January 10, 2000, sixteen anti-Milosevic parties issued a joint statement calling for early elections and a joint street protest to dramatize their demands for change. They demanded that the government elections (not just for president and parliament, but local offices as well) should be set for the end of April. Failure to comply would trigger a resumption of demonstrations in early March. This bold initiative was organized by Vuk Draskovic, the leader of the opposition Serbian Renewal Party (SPO). His prominent role underlined his emergence as the overall leader of the anti-Milosevic opposition (Keesing’s, January 2000: 43381).

For the time, at least, Milosevic appeared to be holding his own. His Socialist Party of Serbia reelected him as its president at the party congress
on February 17 (Keesing’s, February 2000: 43431). His grasp on the reigns of power, however, became increasingly tenuous as protests began once again to flare up in the spring. On April 14, over 100,000 participated in an opposition-organized demonstration in central Belgrade (Keesing’s, April 2000: 43534).

Anti-Milosevic protests continued throughout the late spring and summer. In May 2000, the protests began to spread throughout Serbia. In addition to Belgrade, the opposition managed to stage rallies in Nis, Novi Sad, and even Milosevic’s hometown of Pozarevac (Keesing’s, May 2000: 43585).

Bowing to both domestic and international pressure, the government scheduled elections to be held on September 24. The campaign was marred by intimidation of opponents of the government and characterization of the primary opposition candidate, Vojislav Kostunica, as little more than a puppet of the NATO powers.

Despite allegations of vote rigging and intimidation, voter turnout for the election was estimated at about 75 percent. Independent monitors put the result at 58 percent for Kostunica and 33 percent for Milosevic. Yugoslavia’s Federal Election Commission, however, declared that the “official” result showed Milosevic with 40 percent and Kostunica at only 48 percent. As election laws stipulated that a candidate needed at least 50 percent of the vote to win, a run-off was set for October 8.

Kostunica claimed that Milosevic was engaging in fraud to steal the election and announced that he would not participate in a run-off. He and other opposition figures appealed to Milosevic to accept defeat and step aside gracefully. The opposition received rhetorical support from the international community. President Clinton claimed that Milosevic was trying to “steal” the election, while British foreign minister Robin Cook declared that a run-off “would be a waste of everybody’s time” (Keesing’s, September 2000: 43766).

A major shift came when the Serbian Orthodox Church declared Kostunica to be the legitimately elected president. Military support, the key pillar of Milosevic’s power, crumbled as General Nebojsa Pavkovic, the head of the FRY army, made public assurances that there were no circumstances under which the armed forces would intervene in the political situation.

What little support Milosevic had in foreign capitals also appeared to be drying up. On September 29, it was revealed that Russian president Vladimir Putin reportedly told German chancellor Gerhard Schröder that Milosevic had in fact been beaten in the elections and discussed with his counterpart what steps the international community could take to help ease the situation (Keesing’s, September 2000: 43766).
Although Milosevic stubbornly held on to his power, a strike by coal miners on October 1, followed the next day by a general strike, brought Yugoslavia to a halt. On October 5, protesters in Belgrade managed to break through a police cordon and stormed the parliament building. Shortly afterward, demonstrators seized the state media complex. As the uprising swept through the capital city, police and security forces chose to stand aside or change sides.

Milosevic, realizing that the end had finally arrived, faced the nation in a televised address on October 6 and announced his resignation. Kostunica was formally inaugurated as the president of Yugoslavia on October 7 (Keeling’s, October 2000: 43805–43806).

**UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF OPERATION ALLIED FORCE**

This last war of the twentieth century had more than its share of unique characteristics; some of these elements stand out as particularly notable.

A number of earlier conflicts, several of which are detailed in this book, had been fought with extremely light casualties. In one of the most remarkable outcomes in history, however, this intervention is notable in that it was the first war involving American troops to be fought to its conclusion without a single U.S. combat fatality. What is less impressive is the means by which this feat was accomplished.

The rationale for going to war in Kosovo was that NATO had a moral imperative to protect ethnic Albanian civilians from the ravages of a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing being carried out by Serbian forces. The tactics utilized by NATO, however, appeared to relegate its ostensible mission to secondary importance. Indeed, by relying exclusively on airpower, and applying it in a cautious and incremental manner, one could argue that a new imperative had superceded the original one. From early on in the conflict, it became clear that the overriding priority for NATO was not stopping civilian deaths but rather avoiding combat losses at all costs. It was feared that combat casualties would strain the alliance to the point that it might break up the Kosovo operation and perhaps even threaten the organization’s overall cohesion. Indeed, one could plausibly argue that by pursuing such an overly cautious approach, the allies may have inadvertently increased the suffering of the Kosovars by lengthening the war (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 155).

A second unique characteristic of the Kosovo conflict is that it represented the first time a president had publicly set limits on the amount of
force that would be applied. In a televised speech on the opening day of the air offensive, President Clinton announced to the world his intention to refrain from utilizing ground forces in Kosovo. While this was intended to reassure Washington’s allies and a wary American public that every effort would be made to avoid a Vietnam-style quagmire, it almost had the exact opposite effect. Milosevic, upon hearing that Mr. Clinton had taken the ground option off the table, now knew the upper limits of the force level NATO would be willing to contemplate.

This knowledge appears to have informed Milosevic’s strategy, encouraging him to hold out. If Yugoslavia could outlast NATO bombing, especially if images of grievous civilian casualties were shown on Western media outlets, there was a good chance that NATO would eventually become weary of the conflict and “go home.” Although it would involve subjecting his country to punishing air raids in the short term, this strategy held out the prospect of a victory for Milosevic in the long run (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 155).

A third unique characteristic of the conflict is that it was a limited war that did not threaten the survival of either the Serbian government or its military. At the outset, the air campaign was largely confined to engaging Serbian units serving in the Kosovo theater. Until late spring, Serbia proper was not made to pay a price in the same way Iraq did during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. During the effort to liberate Kuwait, it was deemed essential to hit Baghdad early in an effort to destroy the Iraqi command and control structure. In this conflict, however, Serbia in general and Belgrade in particular were spared the immediate and intense bombing that characterized the earlier war. The restraint shown by NATO in the Kosovo war may have actually helped to find a settlement by encouraging Milosevic, in an effort to save his own life and position, to give in before the alliance came to a firm decision that a ground invasion would be necessary to end the conflict (Cordesman, 2001: 84).

The Kosovo war also appeared to herald the return of the concept of “gradual escalation,” a principle that had been all but discredited by the American experience in Vietnam. With the successful application of overwhelming airpower to prepare the ground for the hundred-hour offensive that liberated Kuwait, it seemed apparent that gradual escalation had all but been banished from operational planning (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 156). In Kosovo, however, there was tremendous concern on the part of NATO political leaders for the possible effects of collateral damage on the alliance. It was feared that civilian casualties would split the fragile consen-
sus that existed in the North Atlantic Council, and consequently a slow and incremental approach was seen as a necessity to hold the alliance together (Lambeth, 2001: 234).

Although creeping incrementalism was popular among the alliance’s political leaders and diplomats, NATO military leaders, particularly the Americans, despised the approach. Almost overnight, a rift developed between the politicians and their theater and field commanders, with the latter favoring a substantially more aggressive approach than the former were willing to contemplate. It was, therefore, not uncommon to hear military leaders complain about “civilian interference” on a level unseen since Vietnam. Admiral Ellis lamented that sound military operations were being “politically restrained” (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 156).

Yet another unique aspect of the Kosovo war was that it was fought entirely from the air. As alluded to earlier, this was done for political reasons. By using airpower alone, NATO forces would face significantly lower risk of casualties than if a massive ground invasion were launched against Yugoslav forces hidden in the rugged terrain of the region. In order to lend an additional measure of protection from Serbian air defenses, missions were conducted from above 15,000 feet, an altitude thought to be beyond the range of Yugoslav surface-to-air missiles (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 160).

A final point worth mentioning is that the Kosovo war was fought for almost exclusively humanitarian reasons (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 160). Although such a motivation does not represent a unique circumstance per se, the fact is that NATO intervention was prompted by the second case of “ethnic cleansing” in the Balkans in less than a decade. Because the Serbian-sponsored terror took place in Europe, the specter of the Holocaust hovered over the Kosovo crisis. This reopened wound was especially painful as the West was subjected to stories of the Serbians piling ethnic Albanians into boxcars for deportation, just as the Nazis had done to the region’s Jews and Gypsies less than six decades earlier (Judah, 2000: 239–41). Indeed, President Clinton relied heavily on this analogy when he made his case for U.S. intervention to the American people (New York Times, March 25, 1999, text of Clinton address).

Assessment

On the whole, the air campaign in Kosovo appears to have been a resounding success. U.S. and NATO goals were largely fulfilled, though not without serious and often unanticipated consequences.

The easiest to assess are the NATO political/humanitarian goals, which
essentially reflected the priorities of the Clinton administration. The most immediate of these goals were to secure an end to the ethnic cleansing being perpetrated by the Serbs against the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo and to begin the return of refugees who had been driven out by the state-sponsored terror campaign. By the end of the conflict, the systematic killings carried out by Serbian forces had indeed been stopped and refugees were returning almost as fast as they had fled. The solution to the original problem unfortunately created another equally ugly situation. Upon their return, vengeful ethnic Albanians attacked their Serbian neighbors with such a hateful wrath that many who had supported their cause earlier were now reconsidering the wisdom of their position. Against the chaotic backdrop of the immediate post-war situation, the Kosovar Albanians pursued a campaign of reverse ethnic cleansing that forced the province’s Serbian population into a mass exodus that mirrored the situation that had prompted NATO intervention. Those Serbians and other minorities that chose to stay in Kosovo languished in NATO-protected ghettos, largely cut off from the outside world (Judah, 2000: 286–95).

Two other NATO objectives were security-related: (1) the withdrawal of all but a token Yugoslav/Serbian military presence, including paramilitaries, and (2) the deployment of peacekeeping forces in order to facilitate the return of refugees and guarantee their unhindered access to humanitarian assistance (Lambeth, 2001: 10; Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 139). These goals were also largely achieved. Serbian forces had exited by mid- to late June and immediately NATO peacekeepers began to assume their assigned security zones. The peacekeeping operation was threatened when Russian troops redeployed from their ongoing mission in Bosnia in order to muscle their way into Kosovo with the aim of granting themselves a central role in the administration of Pristina. A compromise was eventually worked out to placate the Russians while confirming NATO’s dominance in post-war Kosovo (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43014).

Peacekeeping troops were intended not simply to maintain order, but to promote the peace by disarming all hostile forces, including the KLA. Unfortunately, NATO met resistance on this point. The KLA held effective control of much of Kosovo and used their position to terrorize not just Kosovar Serbs, but also ethnic Albanians who dared to stand up to their iron-fisted tactics. NATO peacekeepers, therefore, were forced into the role of de facto protectors of the remaining Serbs (Judah, 2000: 298–301).

The final NATO objective was the implementation of the terms of the Rambouillet agreement. This was largely accomplished by the achievement of the other previously stated objectives, although this too was not without
modification (Nardulli et al., 2002: 17). The original accord was to have allowed NATO peacekeeping troops access not just to Kosovo, but to Serbia proper as well (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 78). NATO backed off of this demand, which had been made in Appendix B of the original agreement, and elected to confine its operations to the immediate Kosovo theater.

In terms of its operational objectives, the United States and NATO again achieved a mixed bag of results. On the positive side, most of General Clark’s "measures of merit" were achieved: NATO aircraft losses were, given the level of the conflict, remarkably low. For its part, the United States and its allies lost only two planes during the seventy-eight-day war. It does bear noting, however, that one of those planes was an F-117 stealth fighter-bomber, giving the Serbians the distinction of recording the only kill of such an aircraft in its decade of combat service up to that point (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 14).

The goal of impacting Yugoslav forces as quickly as possible proved problematic. At the outset of the conflict, it was decided that, at least at first, NATO operations would be conducted solely against Serb forces in Kosovo; the Serbian homeland would be spared. This approach differed dramatically from Operation Desert Storm, where it was deemed imperative to hit military and political targets in Baghdad in order to disrupt Iraqi command and control over its troops in Kuwait. Indeed, life continued on in Serbia proper much as it normally had until the closing days of the air war (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 4–5, 10).

In an effort to avoid being shot down, allied bombing operations were conducted from extraordinarily high altitudes (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 12–15). Although this alone would make precision bombing difficult, the NATO offensive was additionally plagued by bad weather (Cordesman, 2001: 48). Taking advantage of these NATO handicaps, the Serbs applied the lessons they had learned earlier in Bosnia. Serbian forces in Kosovo stayed spread out so that they were not as easily engaged by high-altitude bombing. Only late in the war, when faced with an offensive by a resurgent KLA, did Serbian forces mass in formations amenable to NATO bombing (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 18).

Clark’s final measure of merit, the protection of NATO ground forces in Bosnia, Macedonia, and northern Albania, was fulfilled almost by default. The Serbs did not engage these forces, as they certainly must have known that to do so would invite a NATO ground offensive, President Clinton’s disavowal of such an option notwithstanding.

Two other tactical goals may be considered together: minimizing collateral damage and the preservation of Yugoslavia’s civil infrastructure.
In many respects, Kosovo may have presented the most politically correct conduct of warfare up to that point in history. The United States and NATO went to great pains to characterize their argument as being solely with the Milosevic government, not the Serbian people. As a consequence, NATO made every effort to avoid civilian casualties; indeed, the North Atlantic Council’s decision-making structure vetoed raids that presented a disproportionate threat to noncombatants. Even high-value political targets, such as party headquarters and state broadcast facilities, were called off due to the threat of loss of civilian lives. Likewise, certain dual-use targets, such as manufacturing plants, were initially off-limits due to fear of loss of life and hardship for the general population. Indeed, the Dutch even had a raid on a Milosevic residence called off for cultural reasons, protecting a rare Rembrandt painting (Lambeth, 2001: 34–36, 40). It was not until the latter phases of the air war, and only in an effort to bring it to a swift conclusion, that NATO finally authorized strikes against targets that were not strictly military in nature.

There are some shortcomings of the Kosovo war that need to be raised. The first, and most glaring, is President Clinton’s removal of the ground option at the outset of the war. This decision appeared to be rooted in both humanitarian and political concerns: to minimize casualties, both civilian and military, on both sides and to reassure the American public that there was no chance of U.S. forces getting bogged down in a Vietnam-style quagmire in the Balkans. This decision, however, may have actually lengthened the war by indicating the upward limit of NATO’s commitment to the war effort. This knowledge had the effect of encouraging Milosevic to hold out in hopes that if he could withstand a few weeks of air attacks, a risk-averse NATO would eventually lose interest in its Kosovo venture and go home (Bacevich and Cohen, 2001: 155). As if to underscore the magnitude of this mistake, it bears noting that Milosevic finally came to terms when, after the alliance summit in April and a defense ministers’ meeting in late May, he began to see signs that NATO was in fact preparing for a ground offensive (Keesing’s, April 1999: 42901–42902; Judah, 2000: 270).

Second, the NATO bombing campaign failed to accomplish its ostensible purpose, namely an immediate halt of the Yugoslav campaign of systematic murder and ethnic cleansing of Albanian Muslims in Kosovo. To the contrary, the advent of the air war actually had the effect of accelerating Serbian operations in the rebel province. Within days of the start of NATO bombing, Yugoslav forces stepped up their activities, sending tens of thousands of Muslims fleeing to safety in Albanian and Macedonia. Within a week, some 300,000 refugees had abandoned Kosovo (Judah, 2000: 239–40).
Finally, even in victory, NATO ended up scaling back its demands. The original terms of the Rambouillet agreement permitted allied forces to insert peacekeeping troops that would have free reign throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The final settlement, however, limited NATO forces to Kosovo. The Russians, originally envisioned to have no role in post-war Kosovo, were able to force their way into the province, although in a smaller capacity than Moscow apparently desired (Keesing’s, June 1999: 43014).

Despite the best intentions of U.S. and allied leaders, NATO found it difficult to fight an antiseptic war where precision-guided weapons kill only hostile military forces. Faulty intelligence led to bombing errors, several of which resulted in the inadvertent killing of civilians, in several cases the very Albanian Kosovars the United States had intervened to protect (Judah, 2000: 239, 259–61). One particularly grievous error led to the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, an episode that would have far-reaching implications for Sino-American relations (Keesing’s, May 1999: 42955–42956).

In conclusion, Kosovo was one of the most lop-sided victories in U.S. military history; most political objectives were achieved and casualty figures were far below even the most optimistic expectations of military planners. There were, however, enough flaws in its execution and resolution that it would be a considerable stretch to classify it as an unmitigated success.
During the course of the preceding six chapters, this work has touched upon issues that cross the breadth of the discipline. Although the chief focus has been within the field of international relations, this study also contains elements of comparative government (for example, civilian-military relations, military doctrine) as well as aspects of American politics, such as domestic public opinion and U.S. executive-legislative relations.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study, however, is in the subfield of conflict, specifically direct military intervention by the United States. It considers the efficacy of utilizing direct military intervention: when it will work, when it will not, and how to undertake such action in a manner that will bring rapid victory at an acceptable political cost.

Although much has been written on the general subject of military intervention, most of the literature centers on other aspects and problems related to the use of force, such as deterrence and coercive diplomacy. As was pointed out in the introduction, there is a dearth of literature dealing systematically with the preconditions that need to be fulfilled before an interventionist policy can successfully be undertaken. Much of what has been written largely deals with intervention in the abstract; that is to say, dealing with the subject from a theoretical perspective and unapplied to actual cases. Our purpose here has been to fill this gap in the literature by identifying the specific criteria that favor the success of direct military intervention.

With the policy of the United States now more inclined toward the use of direct military force than during any other time in the post-Vietnam period, this concern with the preconditions necessary for successful intervention acquires a sense of urgency. Clearly, military intervention requires more preparation than other policy options if it is going to be fruitful. The investment that such a policy entails, in terms of money, hardware, and hu-
man lives, is so great that the failure to execute it skillfully and successfully may greatly curtail its availability as a future policy option.

**REVIEW OF ELEMENTS OF THE TYPOLoGY**

The typology’s criteria basically fall into four broad categories. The first (covering items 1–6 and 12) are situational variables. These criteria are concerned with the nature of the situation confronting the United States and call for identification of American interests in each case. This group of variables first requires the enunciation of a clear and attainable set of goals. On the basis of these criteria, recommendations are made about how to proceed under certain specific circumstances. These precepts include admonitions against engaging in peacekeeping operations, against involvement in humanitarian missions in war zones, against intervention in civil wars, and against placing American troops under multilateral commands. These criteria collectively suggest that military force should only be used to defend tangible assets or other narrowly defined vital national interests.

The second category (items 8–11 and 13) consists of operational variables, with a focus on how particular missions are actually carried out. These criteria are concerned with such issues as the American society’s willingness to support forces in the field, as well as the quantity and quality of troops and weapons deployed. Other criteria deal with the need to consider alternatives beyond the use of airpower, such as the possible need to deploy ground forces in the theater.

The third category (items 14–15) concerns the dynamics of civilian-military relations. These criteria require that the theater commander be integrated into the decision-making process. This is to be done by giving him input into strategic decisions, as well as allowing him discretion and initiative in the pursuit of the war effort.

The final category (item 7) concerns the public and congressional reaction to military intervention. It acknowledges that, as a general rule, intervention requires the support of both the public and its representatives at the Capitol. The larger the scale of the proposed operation, the greater is the need for such support. There are, however, several ways that the president can circumvent this requirement. As was the case in Panama, the president can quickly and secretly insert the troops into the theater, effectively presenting potential critics with a fait accompli. This acts to impose upon Congress an acquiescent silence, since few members would dare to criticize the war effort with American troops under fire and thus risk being perceived as
unpatriotic. Alternatively, the president can initiate action while Congress is in recess, making it difficult for the legislative body to react effectively.

EVALUATING THE TYPOLOGY

In evaluating the typology advanced in chapter 2, the cases examined yield mixed results. As will become readily apparent in our evaluation, however, the typology’s criteria are effective predictors of the outcome of post–cold war interventions by the United States. Panama, Iraq, and Kosovo represent generally successful interventions, while Somalia illustrates the failure of such a policy. Consequently, the results of this study demonstrate that success is associated with adherence to these principles and that failure is a likely product of their violation.

1. A clear and attainable goal of U.S. policy exists.

This condition is vital because it provides a rationale for the proposed mission. It explains what needs to be done, thereby establishing a standard that, once fulfilled, allows the interventionist action to be concluded and the troops brought home (Rice, 2000; Connaughton, 2001: 55).

In both Panama and Iraq, clearly formulated and precise goals were articulated. The goals in Panama were to apprehend Noriega, to restore the democratically elected Endara government, to secure the Panama Canal, and to safeguard American lives in the country. In Iraq, initial policy goals included the ejection of Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait, the restoration of the legitimate Kuwaiti government, the protection of American lives, and the establishment of security in the Persian Gulf region. Once the fighting began, however, this concern with security was construed to include the destruction of Iraq’s mass destructive capabilities and, although never articulated publicly, the possible removal of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Somalia involved two different missions. The initial American intervention, UNITAF, had as its objective the establishment of adequate security within the country (the so-called secure environment), so that famine relief aid could be safely and effectively distributed. As soon as the requisite level of security was achieved, U.S. troops were to withdraw and turn the operation over to United Nations peacekeeping forces. From the outset, however, there was controversy between the United States and the United Nations over what precisely constituted a “secure environment,” as well as what role, if any, the disarmament of the various clan militias in Somalia played in creating such conditions.
The United Nations’ successor mission, UNOSOM II, was even less clear in its objectives. UNOSOM II had goals that were significantly more ambitious than previous UN peacekeeping operations. However, these ends were so ambiguously defined that they would certainly require a commitment of forces for an indefinite period.

The mission’s original intent was to effect the disarmament of clan militias and to rebuild civic institutions so that, at some unspecified date, authority could be transferred to a viable Somali government. However, within months this ambiguity of purpose created real problems, as UN policy began to show signs of “mission creep.” There occurred a gradual, yet clearly evident, shift from the nebulously defined goal of nation-building to an almost obsessive manhunt for fugitive warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The unintended consequence of this development was to transform UNOSOM II from an impartial peacekeeper into a de facto participant in the Somali civil war.

In the case of Kosovo, the objectives articulated by President Clinton were ambiguously defined. The primary goal, to demonstrate opposition to Serbian actions in Kosovo and support for the peace process, by its very nature appears to defy any objective measure. At what point is “opposition” or “support” fulfilled? Mr. Clinton’s other stated missions (deterring Milosevic from further attacks by making Yugoslavia “pay a price”; damaging Milosevic’s ability to act in Kosovo by “seriously diminishing” Serbia’s war-making capabilities) do not fare much better in enunciating clear and attainable goals. These goals appear to have been carefully worded so that they were open to interpretation (or manipulation) by the administration. It is difficult for opponents to argue that a goal has gone “unfulfilled” if it has never been clearly defined in the first place. Such ambiguity has the advantage of allowing political leaders the ability to “set the bar” wherever it suits them politically.

By contrast, NATO goals in Kosovo appear more concrete and certifiable. The immediate goal, a halt to ethnic cleansing and atrocities directed against the Kosovars, is both measurable and verifiable. The other NATO objectives (withdrawal of all but a token FRY military presence; deployment of peacekeeping forces to assist with the return and care of refugees; implementation of the provisions of the Rambouillet Agreement) are clearly and unambiguously presented and, consequently, are substantially easier to confirm.

As noted in chapter 2, an ancillary concern to the existence of achievable goals is the development of an effective plan for military withdrawal, an “exit strategy.” Such plans serve an important function in domestic politics,
since they reassure both Congress and the general public that there is no ongoing or permanent commitment of American forces (Rice, 2000; Connaughton, 2001: 53–55). However, some critics of such strategies argue that they are too restrictive, setting an arbitrary schedule that may be unrealistically optimistic. The result is that as the date for withdrawal approaches and passes unfulfilled, there is a tendency to see a Vietnam-like quagmire where none exists. In reality, it simply may be that from the start the operation was going to take longer than the White House calculated or thought prudent to reveal. Furthermore, the establishment of an official time line may persuade the opponent to bide his time, only to have the conflict erupt anew once the intervening forces have withdrawn.

In all four cases, the development and articulation of such exit strategies was unsatisfactory. From the evidence presented, it appears that plans for the withdrawal of American forces are often developed on an ad hoc or impromptu basis. In Panama, for example, it was not necessary to draw up a detailed plan of withdrawal because most of the troops used during the 1989 invasion were permanently stationed on American bases in the former Canal Zone.

In Iraq, again, there seems to have been no formal prearranged exit strategy. President Bush had only promised to bring home American troops as soon as was possible. Withdrawal began almost as soon as the truce was formalized. Most U.S. forces were returned home by mid-summer 1991.

In Somalia, there was no exit strategy worthy of the name until near the end of the U.S. presence. During the original UNITAF mission, President Bush proclaimed that U.S. forces would be home by the time he left office in late January 1993. However, Pentagon and administration officials, as well as Bush’s critics, said that such an optimistic assessment was unrealistic, especially in light of the pursuit of such an ambiguously defined goal as establishing a “secure environment.” Agreeing to oversight by the UN Security Council only complicated matters and made it more difficult to establish a definitive schedule for an American withdrawal.

During the second phase, UNOSOM II, once more there was no prearranged plan for the departure of U.S. troops. According to the United Nations, UNOSOM II would be pulled out only after the fulfillment of its goals. Considering the wide scope of UN objectives, the practical effect of such a policy was to give UNOSOM II a virtually limitless mandate. There was even some discussion of reestablishing a UN trusteeship over Somalia during the nation-building process. It was only after the October 1993 killings of the American Rangers in Mogadishu that Washington finally devised an
exit strategy. Actually, this plan, as articulated by President Clinton, was more of a compelled withdrawal than an “exit plan,” since the president’s hand was being forced by an angry Congress that had voted to cut off funding for the operation. These arrangements constituted a de facto admission of the intervention’s failure because the withdrawal was to be accomplished regardless of the situation on the ground.

In the case of Kosovo, the goals themselves appeared to imply an open-ended commitment to peacekeeping after the conclusion of major combat operations. Indeed, a decade later, U.S. forces are still stationed in the theater.

2. The intervention is not a peacekeeping operation.

This condition is important for four reasons. First, peacekeeping operations by their very nature often require an ongoing, open-ended commitment of forces (Lahneman, 2004: 12). Second, the hallmarks of peacekeeping are often a lack of strategic objectives and the pursuit of nebulously defined goals that have a great potential for leading into a quagmire (Rice, 2000).

Third, peacekeeping operations generally require a degree of restraint, both in terms of action and armaments, which puts the troops involved in danger. Such restraint is perceived as necessary so as to avoid presenting a threat to the opposing sides. However, the result often is that such passive and lightly armed units are vulnerable and unable to function as anything more than a “tripwire.” Finally, trained as they are for combat, U.S. troops lack the specialized training required to carry out peacekeeping operations (Murphy, 2007: 190).

Of the four case studies, only Somalia was a peacekeeping operation. In that case, all of the above concerns were present. The usual perils were compounded by the fact that Somalia was in a state of total anarchy; there was an absence of a government with which the intervening powers could cooperate.

Somalia was embroiled in a multisided civil war. There was, in fact, no peace to keep. Furthermore, most of the provocations directed at UNOSOM II came from one side, Aidid’s SNA. As a result, military action to keep the peace increasingly focused on capturing the general and disarming his militia. Consequently, to many Somalis the conflict came to be seen as one between UNOSOM II and Aidid. Ironically, despite the officially mandated peacekeeping nature of the mission, the level of violence continued to spiral upward. When American, and later UN, forces withdrew, the situation was as bad (if not worse) than when foreign troops arrived.
3. The intervention is not a humanitarian mission within a war zone.

This admonition is critical because often the intervening power is tempted to look beyond the immediate humanitarian situation and to try to resolve what it sees as the root (usually political) cause of the nation’s instability. As a result, what started as a relief operation may end up as direct involvement in the local war in a well-intended, but greatly misguided, effort to impose lasting stability.

This caveat does not apply in the Panama or Iraq cases except in a very general sense. Only in Somalia was such a concern the central motive for the intervention. From the outset, American intervention there had as its primary purpose the delivery of relief aid for the victims of the famine that gripped the country. Such action was deemed necessary because the widespread looting of relief supplies and the kidnapping of aid workers by gunmen belonging to the warring factions had made humanitarian relief efforts all but impossible.

The UN Security Council came to see the general anarchy and chronic warfare in Somalia as the root causes of the famine. As a result, UNOSOM II was given significantly broadened objectives to pursue in the vain search for a long-term political solution. Consequently, and perhaps unwittingly, UNOSOM II became deeply involved in the civil war as a de facto ally of Ali Mahdi against General Aidid.

Gradually, the original humanitarian aid mission became superceded by the political goal of rebuilding a Somali nation-state. However, as American and allied casualties mounted, the widespread sympathy and compassion for the victims of the conditions within Somalia that had inspired the initial intervention quickly dissipated. In the United States, popular bitterness over the apparent ingratitude of the Somali people, along with the ever-increasing level of violence, led Washington in time to wash its hands of Somalia. American troops were ordered home no later than March 31, 1994, regardless of the situation on the ground. The failure of the humanitarian relief mission in Somalia appears to have had the effect of making such intervention less likely in the future. For example, despite the graphic images of massive human misery in Rwanda, which, like Somalia before it, were presented nightly on the evening news, the reaction of the American people this time was significantly more limited and restrained.

In Kosovo, at least initially, intervention actually made the humanitarian situation on the ground substantially worse. As a reaction to NATO bombing, local Serb forces immediately accelerated their ethnic cleansing campaign. Given the light and highly selective nature of the bombing at the
opening of the air offensive, Milosevic had evidently decided that by pur-
suing a full-throttled campaign to kill or run off the ethnic Albanians, he
could deal the United States and its NATO allies a fait accompli that might
head off further action. The U.S./NATO failure to pursue the bombing more
aggressively at the outset, combined with Mr. Clinton’s publicly ruling out
any insertion of ground combat forces, had the effect of undermining the
very stated goals that the intervention had ostensibly been undertaken to
achieve.

4. U.S. forces are not subject to a multilateral authority.
On the basis of the evidence presented by these cases, there are compelling
reasons why the United States should avoid committing its forces to combat
under a multilateral command. Since the orders that the American troops
will follow may emanate from a source other than Washington, there is a
real chance that once U.S. forces are sent into combat they will become, in
essence, hostages to the agenda of the multilateral entity. Even if the United
States retains a degree of control over its troops, the fact that Washington
seeks the imprimatur of a multilateral entity, such as the United Nations,
places it in the uncomfortable position of potentially having to subordinate
all or a portion of its policy goals to the decisions of the international or-
genization. The mandate that the multilateral command is granted may be
either too narrow or too broad to serve American policy interests. (For ad-
ditional operational problems of working within the UN framework, please
see David D. Laitin in Lahneman, 2004: 41–42.) These concerns do not ap-
ply to the Panama case, which was a unilateral U.S. undertaking.

In Iraq, although the United States obtained the UN’s blessing for the
operation, there was no direct UN military role. All American forces re-
mained under the Pentagon’s command. Washington determined how the
war was to be conducted and chose the operational goals to pursue.

The United Nations was not, however, without its influence over devel-
opments in Iraq. An officially unannounced, yet plainly obvious, American
objective was to depose or kill Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein if possible. As
a result, U.S. bombing missions targeted locations from which the Pentagon
believed he could be conducting the war effort. However, when the ground
offensive finally got under way, the United Nations mandate for the use of
force, narrowly constructed to include little more than the ejection of Iraqi
forces from Kuwait, acted as a political constraint. It prevented President
Bush from fully considering the possibility of allowing American troops to
march on Baghdad and remove Saddam from power. Consequently, Hus-
sein remained in power, still posing a threat to the Gulf region for more than a decade after.

In Somalia, the resolution authorizing the original UNITAF intervention was similar to that used to sanction the Persian Gulf mission. A key difference, however, was that this time the Security Council maintained an oversight role over the operation. Almost immediately, there were disputes between the United Nations and the American command over what was meant by a “secure environment.” These disagreements ultimately led the United States to begin engagement in an unplanned operation to disarm clan militias. The result was the start of a long process of “mission creep,” necessitating a delay in the withdrawal of American troops until May 1993.

In the UNOSOM II phase of the Somalia intervention, although the quick reaction force remained under an independent U.S. command, Washington allowed UN missteps to all but compel U.S. forces to become involved in the increasingly partisan fighting in Mogadishu. As a result, American troops took mounting casualties in what was becoming, in some respects, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s personal war against Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The Clinton administration found it increasingly difficult to justify these losses to the American public, which was becoming more and more restive as the operation progressed.

It does need to be pointed out, however, that the Clinton administration bears a measure of the responsibility for the policy disaster that Somalia became. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States possessed a veto that it could have used to stop, or at least to slow down, the pace of the mission creep that was overtaking UNOSOM II. Instead, it may be argued that President Clinton partially abdicated his role as commander in chief in favor of the Security Council and Boutros-Ghali. Within the Security Council, U.S. ambassador Madeleine Albright gave an American endorsement to the increasingly frequent retaliatory raids that the world body authorized against Aidid. Despite Mr. Clinton’s potential ability to influence misguided UN policies in Somalia (and perhaps because of his administration’s role in shaping them), he did not publicly challenge Boutros-Ghali’s handling of the mission until October 1993—and then only after the Congress forced his hand by voting to cut off funding and recall U.S. troops.

Judging by the public and congressional reaction to the Somalia misadventure, any future action in which the United States allows its forces to serve under a foreign and/or multilateral command, with the exception of NATO, is highly unlikely (Bhatia, 2003: 23).
The case of Kosovo is unique due to the dual command structure utilized by NATO members. NATO, as an alliance of equal partners, made decisions on a collective basis through the North Atlantic Council. As a result, many operations were either scrubbed or scaled back due to objections raised by individual NAC members. French efforts to protect Montenegro or, in an extreme example, Dutch objections to hitting a Milosevic residence over concerns for the safety of a Rembrandt painting illustrate how NATO’s conduct of military operations could be held hostage to the concerns of even a single member.

Having a separate U.S. command for a variety of forces utilized or positioned in the region (for example, B-2 bombers or Apache helicopters) allowed Washington a degree of autonomy in how it conducted operations in the theater. Missions that its allies had apprehensions over, the United States could undertake unilaterally. Indeed, a separate U.S.-only planning track was developed. Such independence, however, was not without its perils; the mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by American bombers was one of the biggest debacles of the seventy-eight-day war.

The case studies have brought to light two additional concerns with multilateral operations that were not discussed in chapter 2. First, the fact of the matter is that a country rarely sends its best units to participate in UN operations. Although it is not always the case, often peacekeeping responsibilities fall on the shoulders of units from the Third World that simply are not up to the task. In any case, such UN missions often must utilize lesser quality manpower and inferior firepower than the armies that they are drawn from (Connaughton, 2001: 114–17). In turn, these weaknesses invite challenges from potential adversaries.

Second, there is the important constitutional issue of whether the president can pull forces from the American chain of command and place them under a completely foreign leadership. It may be argued that such an act is both a violation of U.S. sovereignty and an abdication of the president’s role as commander in chief (Connaughton, 2001: 114).

5. Force is used to defend tangible assets or other vital national interests.
This point is best summarized by recalling the definition of “vital national interest” established in chapter 2: “any asset (e.g. oil), place (e.g. Europe), or principle (e.g. the freedom of navigation in international waters) the unavailability of which places a state at a strategic or severe diplomatic disadvantage, if not directly threatening its independence and/or national security” (Rice, 2000). (For a discussion of national interest as a motivation for intervention, please see Lahneman, 2004: 168–69.)
In both the Panama and Iraq cases this criterion was fulfilled. During the 1989 invasion of Panama, the use of force was undertaken with the aim of securing the Panama Canal and associated installations, shutting off Panama as a conduit for the flow of illegal drugs to the United States, and toppling Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega from power. Noriega's removal was considered necessary because he was seen as a root cause of the above-mentioned concerns. In addition, he was viewed as posing a security threat to the region due to his increasingly close embrace of communist dictator Fidel Castro of Cuba and the Marxist president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega.

Washington's interests in the Persian Gulf area were long-standing and well known. Most important was the security of the region's oil supply, and its continued free flow at market prices. A related concern was the continued freedom of navigation by U.S. and Western shipping in the Gulf itself. The Bush administration was further motivated by a strong desire to contain Saddam Hussein, if not remove him from power, so as to protect allies in the region.

The Iraqi dictator had already built up what was thought to be an impressive military machine. Adding to American worries was Baghdad's drive to obtain weapons of mass destruction: biological, chemical, and nuclear. Iraq's acquisition of such weapons posed a grave threat to American interests in the region and, with an adequate delivery system, NATO territory.

In Somalia, however, no such compelling national interest imperative existed. Although Berbera had served as a host port for American naval vessels in the 1980s, with the end of the cold war, Somalia had all but lost its strategic value for Washington. The sole basis for U.S. intervention was a humanitarian compassion for famine victims. Despite this laudable motive, because no vital American interests were at stake, intervention in Somalia became increasingly difficult to justify, in term of both lives and money, to an increasingly skeptical public and Congress.

As was the case in Somalia, the situation in Kosovo did not directly engage any discernable U.S. interests. American intervention was almost exclusively driven by humanitarian concerns. After the collapse of the Rambouillet Accords, Washington and its NATO allies were convinced that military action was the only means left to stop Yugoslavia's campaign of genocide. There is also reason to believe that the administration saw such forceful action as a means of atoning for the failure to act under similar circumstances in Rwanda five years earlier.

Only in the most general sense could one make the case that larger American interests were involved. President Clinton himself argued that American and NATO intervention was necessary to prevent the Kosovo...
conflict from metastasizing into a larger regional war. Such concerns were largely based on a single historical precedent; nearly a century earlier, World War I had started in neighboring Bosnia over comparatively lesser issues than those confronting Kosovo. More recent history, however, appeared to refute such assertions. In the preceding decade, two local conflicts had been fought (the Serbia-Croatia war and the Bosnia war), yet neither of those spilled over to engulf neighboring states.

6. The political situation in the target country is not one of civil war.
Neither the Panama nor the Iraq case involved U.S. entry into a local civil war. Somalia, however, was an extreme case. As originally formulated, this criterion conceives of civil war as a situation in which a government fights against a rebel faction contesting its authority. Somalia is unique in that all authority had collapsed and anarchy prevailed.

This fact notwithstanding, the basic premises advanced in chapter 2 remain: It was often difficult for interventionist forces to clearly distinguish hostile gunmen from the general population. The result was a high rate of civilian casualties, which had the effect of promoting the increasing alienation of the Somali people, who only months earlier had greeted American troops as saviors.

As noted earlier, the United States was placed in an increasingly difficult situation as mission creep drew UNOSOM II ever deeper into the civil war. In light of the original humanitarian concerns that prompted the initial commitment of U.S. forces, Washington appears neither to have anticipated the type of Somali opposition that evolved nor the possibility that the United Nations would become so actively involved in what was essentially domestic Somali politics.

Kosovo was not a civil war in the classical sense that two or more opposing factions were fighting for control of the state. In this case, the overwhelming ethnic Albanian majority was the victim of a genocidal campaign perpetrated by the very government that was ostensibly supposed to protect it. Support for U.S./NATO actions against Yugoslav forces and paramilitary units, therefore, had near universal support within the province. As a consequence, the fear of guerrilla war resulting in a Vietnam-style quagmire was minimal.

7. There is a strong probability of public support for intervention, or at least indifference.
Opposition to intervention from the Congress, the public, or both may have the effect of undermining the president’s policy abroad. There is a
danger that attempts to “purchase” support for intervention may hold the war effort hostage to domestic concerns. Supplemental bills to fund the war effort, for example, often get loaded with unrelated “pork” spending in order to secure passage. Furthermore, there is the real possibility that the opponent may attempt to exploit American domestic divisions for its own benefit. For instance, there is no doubt that anti-war rallies on American college campuses during the 1960s were a boon for North Vietnamese propaganda.

With regard to Panama, the public mood had long been hawkish with respect to General Noriega. There was, however, no consensus among the public or within Congress for military intervention to topple his regime. When the United States invaded Panama in December 1989, President Bush had executed a fait accompli, as both Congress and the general public were largely taken by surprise.

Intervention against Iraq, by contrast, always enjoyed wide public support, never commanding less than a majority in most polls. There was, however, significantly more disagreement in Congress over America’s specific response to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. In both houses, while there was wide support for President Bush’s initial decision to deploy forces to Saudi Arabia in 1990, there was bitter debate about how, or even if, to commit American forces to combat against Iraq. As late as January 1991, there was still strong sentiment to give economic sanctions more time to work. A resolution authorizing the use of force passed both houses of Congress, but the strong division of opinion was especially evident in the Senate, where it passed by a slim 52–47 vote.

Initially, there was broad public support for the humanitarian intervention in Somalia. Only after the October 1993 battle that resulted in the deaths of the American Rangers did opposition begin to develop in earnest. Soon, the public demanded an immediate withdrawal and Congress passed a resolution compelling an exit by no later than March 31, 1994. This vote marked the first time since Vietnam Congress had voted to cut off funding for an ongoing military operation.

In the lead-up to Kosovo, Congress was divided along partisan lines. This case, however, represented a role reversal from the conventional wisdom regarding the use of military action, with Democrats supporting the president’s position and the Republicans generally opposed to intervention.

The public, for its part, was ambivalent about possible involvement in the Balkans. There was support for going to war as long as the costs, specifically casualties, were minimal. Although there was some domestic opposition to the war (for example, some conservatives and far left activists
formed an unlikely marriage of convenience), this war generated no massive 1960s-vintage anti-war rallies to speak of. With the economy in the middle of an Internet-generated boom, as long as there were no casualties and no “boots on the ground,” the public remained quietly acquiescent.

Basically, then, this criterion was met in all four cases, at least at the outset. Only in Somalia was there a major reversal of opinion, and even then not until the killing of the Rangers and the subsequent revelation of the mismanagement of the operation, exemplified by Defense Secretary Aspin’s refusal to grant the theater commander’s urgent request for additional armor.

8. The proposed intervention has the support of the military leadership.
The support of senior military officers is essential if the success of an intervention is to be assured. Pentagon officials are very (some believe overly) cautious in advocating a resort to force as a policy instrument, General Carl von Clausewitz’s famous dictum (that war is a continuation of policy by other means) notwithstanding. Therefore, the assessment of senior officers, based on their study and understanding of the technical aspects of warfare, should be of crucial importance in the decision to commit military forces to action. Their approval often indicates a relatively high probability of success at an acceptable cost. Furthermore, the cooperation of the military is essential for the development of usable military options.

In Panama, SOUTHCOM commander General Woerner was originally opposed to intervention. However, his opposition stemmed more from political reasons than from military ones. When General Thurman replaced Woerner, and General Powell was appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military leadership then gave its support to an operation against Noriega. Generals Powell and Thurman reworked the cumbersome existing contingency plans into what became the highly successful Operation Just Cause.

From the outset, high-level military officials strongly supported the initial Desert Shield deployment as a deterrent against further Iraqi expansion. There was also general support in the Pentagon for the later direct intervention that would be called Operation Desert Storm. During the fall of 1990, Generals Schwarzkopf and Powell, Defense Secretary Cheney, and their staffs developed a plan that would be ready to be implemented by the UN deadline of January 15, 1991.

As the deadline approached, General Powell was largely alone in urging President Bush to allow sanctions more time to take their toll on the Iraqi
economy and military. For a variety of reasons, Schwarzkopf pushed for a winter 1991 offensive, which was eventually carried out.

By contrast, from the very start of the August 1992 airlift, the military was extremely apprehensive about getting deeply involved in Somalia. Yet, despite Pentagon warnings, a workable plan of intervention was developed, with emphasis placed on a quick entry and an equally rapid exit from the theater of operation. Military officials especially disliked UNOSOM II because of its pursuit of ill-defined, frequently changing UN goals.

The military appears to have been onboard with the Kosovo war from the outset. Pentagon planning for possible operations had begun almost a year prior to the commencement of hostilities, with a variety of options developed. To the extent that there was any controversy within the military regarding Kosovo, it was not over whether the United States could go to war and prevail, but rather over how best to achieve that result. The dispute centered on the respective approaches favored by General Clark and his subordinate, General Short. Clark believed that military operations should be confined to Kosovo itself. Short, by contrast, using the 1991 Persian Gulf War as his model, argued that hitting Belgrade and Serbia proper from the outset was the best means of bringing the conflict to a rapid and victorious conclusion. There appears to have been support within the military for the use of ground forces had they proven necessary.

In all four cases, the military devised workable options. Only in Somalia did the military seem greatly worried about any potential problems. As early as December 1992, General Powell correctly predicted that there would be an American involvement long after President Bush’s projected January 1993 completion date for the UNITAF mission.

9. There is a willingness to support forces in the field.

If the military is to accomplish its mission, there must be a commitment on the part of Congress and the president to provide the troops in the field with what they need, when they need it. In Panama, such a concern was never really at issue because of the massive permanent U.S. military presence in the country, as well as the extraordinarily short duration of the military action.

During the Persian Gulf War, once the debate over the use of force was concluded in January 1991, Congress was in basic agreement about supplying U.S. troops with what they required. Both Republicans and Democrats vowed that the armed forces would be given everything they needed to win quickly and decisively.
There was no debate regarding Somalia and the nature of the mission until after the operation was well under way, but Congress nevertheless gave its assent and support. The Clinton administration, however, was afraid to go too far in providing support for the troops. This apprehension was rooted in a fear of provoking the local warlords and unnecessarily arousing congressional criticism. Only after Secretary of Defense Aspin’s rejection of a request by the theater commander for additional armor resulted in the October 1993 Ranger disaster did President Clinton decide to make the full commitment to support the military operation.

Perhaps as a reaction to the mistakes made in Somalia, during the Kosovo war, there was nearly universal sentiment that once the decision to act was made, the military should be given any and all assets deemed necessary to achieve a swift victory. Consequently, General Clark was generally given anything he asked for. In accordance with his requests, the number of combat and support aircraft in the theater steadily climbed throughout the conflict. Toward the end of the war, when it appeared that perhaps ground forces might be needed to dislodge Yugoslav army units from Kosovo, Clark requested, and was supplied with, a fleet of Apache attack helicopters. Although they were never used in combat, the fact that such an asset would be moved at Clark’s request suggests that in Kosovo the Clinton administration was going to defer to its theater commander’s judgment and give him any asset that he deemed necessary.

10. It is recognized that air strikes alone may not be sufficient to accomplish the policy goals established.

The efficacy of airpower has its limits. Although useful in inflicting damage and/or “sending a message” to the adversary, the nature of warfare often requires the use of ground forces to clear and claim an area from enemy forces. Stated directly, airpower can damage enemy forces, but it may not, in and of itself, be capable of ejecting an entrenched opponent (Connaughton, 2001: 236–37). Policymakers must remain mindful of these limits, because a reliance on the air option alone can often result in an unpleasant choice: backing down or escalating involvement by introducing ground forces (Hazen, 2002: 2–4).

Because of its focus on removing Noriega from power, Panama was conceived from the very beginning as a ground operation. Consequently, the concern addressed here was never at issue in Panama.

Likewise, in Iraq there was recognition of this issue from the start. When the Bush administration was reviewing its options in August 1990, General Powell argued that air strikes would serve to inflict punishment on
Iraqi troops, but that ground forces were ultimately going to be necessary to roll back the invasion.

In Somalia, awareness of the limits of an air option was never really an issue due to the relief/peacekeeping nature of the mission. Helicopters were used in both transport and air cover support roles. Fixed-wing aircraft were largely absent from the theater until late into the UNOSOM II mission.

Kosovo appears to be the outlier for this criterion. It was a widely held belief within the Clinton administration that a brief demonstration bombing, lasting no more than perhaps a few days, would be sufficient to cause Milosevic to cave in to NATO demands. Indeed, at the outset of the war, President Clinton publicly and unambiguously took the use of ground forces off the table. There was simply no sense at that time that a ground option was either appropriate or necessary to fulfill the war aims established by Washington and its NATO allies. As a consequence, there does not appear to have been any significant planning for ground operations in the event that airpower alone should fail.

In late May 1999, Clark and his staff began to draw up plans for a ground attack. At Clark’s suggestion, Apache helicopters were moved to Albania, intended to supply close ground support for an offensive that began to appear increasingly inevitable if the war were to be brought to a conclusion. Even at this late date, however, Secretary of Defense Cohen and the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that the bombing campaign needed more time, and consequently the ground invasion of Kosovo was put on hold.

11. There is a willingness to utilize ground forces if necessary.
This criterion is the logical extension of the issues addressed in the previous section. To rule out the use of ground forces per se is to give the enemy a substantial advantage. Because an adversary now knows that there is a limit to the American intervention, it can tailor its strategy accordingly. Such a concern was not a factor in either Panama or Somalia since by their very nature both required the use of ground forces.

In Iraq, it was clear from the outset that ground forces would eventually be utilized. The accepted strategy called for a thorough air campaign lasting some four to six weeks, followed by a massive, 144-hour ground offensive. The only dispute that emerged concerned when and for how long ground forces should be used, as President Bush and General Schwarzkopf disagreed over when to terminate the fighting.

During a speech to the nation at the outset of the Kosovo war, President Clinton stated clearly that there would be no insertion of ground forces into the conflict. This appeared to be done to allay fears on Capitol Hill and
in the public regarding the possibility of massive casualties that might be incurred if a ground invasion were mounted. In debates regarding the war, Senators and Representatives from both sides of the aisle were adamant that ground forces not be utilized should the bombing campaign prove inconclusive, yet Congress put no such restrictions into law.

Senator John McCain was one of the few voices in Congress anticipating the possible need for a ground option, advocating the mobilization of infantry and armor for insertion into Kosovo should the need arise. The Senate, however, overwhelmingly defeated a McCain-sponsored measure authorizing the use of “all necessary force” needed to win the conflict. Opposition to any measure appearing to permit such action was deeply rooted in the fear of a public backlash against the war, especially if the political and military costs were seen as excessive.

Despite such apprehensions, by late spring 1999, General Clark and others were beginning to conclude that the insertion of troops into Kosovo might become inevitable if the war were to be brought to a swift and successful conclusion. As such, in May, Clark’s staff began planning for a possible invasion of the province. The plan, a massive “right hook” that in some respects resembled the offensive carried out by U.S. and British troops during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, appeared to generate interest within the Clinton administration.

Washington was fearful of how such plans, even if necessary to break the stalemated situation in Kosovo, might be received by its allies. There is evidence to suggest that the Clinton administration had even considered assembling a “coalition of the willing” to carry out a ground invasion if NATO balked. At the NATO defense ministers’ meeting in May, however, the British laid out their own plans for a ground invasion, to which the French and Italians signed on and committed their forces.

The American/NATO invasion of Kosovo ultimately proved unnecessary. In late spring, a KLA offensive accomplished much of what the planned allied assault was intended to achieve: drawing out Serbian forces so that alliance aircraft could more easily engage them. With bombing missions suddenly becoming more fruitful, ground forces now appeared less necessary.

12. The war is limited in geographic scope.
The main point of concern here is that the intervening power keeps the fighting confined geographically so that there is no spillover into the territory of other countries. Such an expansion of the conflict could have unintended consequences, not the least of which is possible counter-intervention by other great powers.
In all four cases considered here, the intervention remained confined within the original theater of operation. Iraqi Scud attacks during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, failed to achieve their intended effect of expanding the conflict by drawing Israel into the fighting.

The case of Kosovo, however, requires some additional explanation. It must be remembered that Kosovo was a province of Serbia itself. Although military action was originally envisioned within that region only, the stalemated situation on the ground convinced the Clinton administration that it needed to reconsider its strategy. Eventually, Washington came to the realization that the only way Milosevic could be made to come to terms was by making Serbia proper pay a price; consequently, the full fury of the air war was visited upon the country as a whole.

Although Montenegro was a member of the Yugoslav federation, its government was pro-Western and therefore largely spared from NATO attacks. American aircraft did conduct some raids, but confined their bombing to Serbian military assets located there. Any Serbian intentions to undermine the government of President Djukanovic were blunted by NATO’s warnings that doing so might lead to the opening of a second front in the war.

Serbian efforts to expand the war to Bosnia by reigniting the civil war there ultimately came to nothing.

13. Officials in Washington are willing to commit adequate forces to accomplish the established goals.

This point concerns the scale of the intervention. It asks if the quantity and nature of the forces being utilized are sufficient to complete the mission in a timely manner (Lahneman, 2004: xvi). If not, is the political leadership willing to provide the additional resources necessary to achieve the desired result.

In all four case studies, it is clear that a new post–cold war doctrine regarding the use of force has emerged: the use of overwhelming numbers, well-armed troops, and force decisively applied (Rice, 2000). First developed by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, these new principles were aimed at remedying the perceived failure of the policies of incremental escalation and tactical restraint relied upon in Vietnam. This new approach, dubbed the “Powell Doctrine,” calls for the use of superior numbers and ultra-modern weapons developed during the cold war to energetically engage and defeat an enemy force. The expectation is that victory can be swiftly achieved, while greatly reducing casualties on both sides. This new approach places a high premium on mobility of forces, with a heavy reliance on helicopters both for their lift capacity and their firepower.
The application of this new doctrine was clearly evident in the cases of Panama and Iraq, with the Persian Gulf War serving as a textbook example. Although Panama witnessed the first combat use of the F-117A stealth fighter, it was in Iraq that the full range of cold war conventional warfare capabilities saw their first combat test. Utilized during Operation Desert Storm were such advanced weapons systems as the F-117A, the M1A1 tank, laser- and optically guided “smart” bombs, Tomahawk cruise missiles, and Patriot anti-ballistic missiles.

In Somalia, the initial UNITAF mission employed what was believed to be an overwhelming force, with 28,150 of the 35,000 troops contributed by the United States. Because UNITAF was perceived largely as a non-combat relief mission, most of the heavy equipment was left at home.

UNOSOM II, by contrast, was a fairly large operation (22,000 total; 3,000 U.S.) and better armed than most previous UN peacekeeping operations. However, this force still lacked the quality of firepower, armor, and aircraft usually employed during unilateral U.S. interventions. The quick reaction force, while remaining under a direct American command, also was not very heavily armed. The military disaster of October 1993 finally prompted the dispatch of firepower qualitatively comparable to that used in Panama and the Persian Gulf. However, with the withdrawal of U.S. forces in March 1994, the quality of both the manpower and firepower available to UNOSOM II experienced a dramatic decline. As a result, when the fighting escalated, UNOSOM II commanders preferred to keep their personnel confined in their bunkers rather than risk taking more casualties.

The quantity and quality of American forces and arms clearly help account for the rapid and complete victories in Panama and Iraq. By contrast, the failure of the effort in Somalia demonstrates the problems inherent in assembling and deploying a UN force. UN operations usually are handicapped by four factors that ultimately place American troops at risk: (1) the force is assembled by soliciting contributions from member nations, but most countries, especially the major powers, will not send their better, more combat-ready units; (2) often UN peacekeeping forces are drawn from Third World countries, which by and large are inferior in their training and firepower to their U.S. counterparts; (3) because of their generally lower level of military professionalism, these other forces may get into trouble from which they must be rescued by better armed and better trained American troops; and finally, (4) by the very nature of their profession, most soldiers lack training in peacekeeping. As a result, they are not adequately prepared for the situation to which they are committed, with unnecessary bloodshed being the result (Connaughton, 2001: 115–16; Murphy, 2007: 98).
Kosovo, with its reliance on incremental boosts in both troop strength and aircraft, appears at first glance to be a retreat from the Powell Doctrine. By the end of the conflict, however, the presence of 912 aircraft from some fourteen different countries (with 312 more ready to be moved into the theater) marked the assembling of a considerable air armada.

State-of-the-art aircraft and munitions were extensively utilized during the air war. Kosovo marked the impressive combat debut of the B-2 bomber, with the B-1, B-52, F-117, and A-10 among those also seeing action. Sorties were staged from NATO bases throughout Europe and the United States. Aircraft carriers operating in the Adriatic Sea provided additional airpower.

Precision ordinance, which had obtained an almost legendary reputation during the 1991 Gulf War, was utilized to a greater extent than ever. The accuracy of cruise missiles and other weapons systems was greatly improved with the extensive use of GPS technology. Even conventional gravity bombs were retrofitted with JDAMs in order to make them “smart.” The heavy reliance on this precision technology was with the intention of keeping both civilian and military casualties as low as possible. As a result of these tactics, Kosovo was perhaps one of the most “antiseptic” wars in history. Nearly 40 percent of the ordinance dropped during the war consisted of “smart” weapons.

The incremental buildup of forces was a result of Washington’s initial underestimation of the Serbs. Originally, it was believed that a few days of demonstration bombing would be enough to move Milosevic; therefore, massive force on the scale as would later be applied was initially seen as unnecessary. As the war continued, however, General Clark was generally given whatever he asked for.

Although Apache attack helicopters were sent to Albania, at Clark’s request, to provide support for a possible ground invasion, they were never utilized in combat. With the exception of Special Forces units sent in to collect intelligence, ground troops were not a factor due to the all-air nature of the seventy-eight-day war.

14. The theater commander must be allowed input into decisions related to the conduct of the intervention.

This stipulation recognizes that the theater commander has firsthand knowledge of the situation in the arena of conflict. As a consequence of his unique perspective, the theater commander usually possesses a clearer understanding of the situation on the ground than his superiors at the Pentagon and the White House. By sharing his insights, the theater commander...
is instrumental in helping policymakers make better decisions based on the most complete information available.

In both Panama and Iraq, theater commanders had a central role in planning their respective operations. During the execution of these missions, their insights carried great weight within the Oval Office. It was General Schwarzkopf’s preferences that largely determined the timing of the start of the offensive against Iraqi forces. The only time that it appears that the theater commander was overruled, in either case, was when President Bush decided to reduce the duration of the ground war against Iraqi forces from 144 to 100 hours. This decision, however, was made only after the military victory had essentially been won.

In Somalia, the degree to which General Johnston was included in the planning for the UNITAF mission appears unclear. He was, however, given wide leeway in the pursuit of his mission. When the United Nations challenged his conduct of the operation, his position was fully backed by the Bush administration.

As deputy commander of UNOSOM II, General Montgomery was authorized to question any order that might seem unwise or would place American lives at undue risk. However, his counsel did not seem to carry much weight with the Clinton administration. When Montgomery requested that Washington send more heavy weapons, his request at first was ignored, and then later refused. The commander’s influence seems to have been enhanced only after the events of October 1993.

Due to his “dual hatting” as both the U.S. commander in Europe and as the SACEUR, General Clark was central to the planning and execution of the war in Kosovo. Stationed at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Clark was allowed constant input into the development of the air campaign. The collective decision-making model utilized by the North Atlantic Council and the competing political considerations each ally pressed during its deliberations, however, limited Clark’s influence.

On the operational level, Clark’s autonomy as commander was consistently hampered by the NAC, as the alliance council limited how operations could be carried out. Clark was not allowed to order NATO attacks against targets unless he got prior approval from the NAC. Approval for sorties was granted only after the NAC concluded a case-by-case political review of proposed targets, with certain categories off-limits for most (or even all) of the conflict. General Klaus Naumann, chairman of NATO’s Military Committee, publicly stated that the inaction that this political interference bred unnecessarily lengthened the war.
It was only toward the end of the air campaign that Clark’s authority, through NATO secretary general Solana, increased. After the April 1999 NATO summit, Clark was given a freer hand in his prosecution of the war. The NAC actually entertained Clark’s proposal for a possible ground assault.

As noted earlier, Clark also had access to “U.S.-only” assets, which allowed attacks on certain facilities and installations that NATO was reluctant to hit. Washington made this capability possible by granting requests for additional personnel and assets that Clark felt were necessary.

The Clinton administration, however, engaged in its own micromanagement of the war effort on a level unseen since Vietnam. Some politically sensitive targets could not be hit without the personal approval of the president himself. Indeed, President Clinton made the planning and execution of the war substantially more difficult by publicly taking any prospect of a ground option off the table at the outset of hostilities.

Just as Clark had to fight with both Brussels and Washington to wage war as he thought best, so too did his subordinates clash with him. General Short strenuously urged his commander to take the war to Serbia from the outset. Clark, however, overruled him due to largely political considerations emanating from both the U.S. and NATO. Operations, at least initially, would be confined to Kosovo.

**15. The theater commander must be allowed discretion in the pursuit of the intervention.**

This condition is a conscious reaction to the failure in Vietnam. It demands that theater commanders be granted liberal rules of engagement so that they can achieve victory in the most effective and least costly manner possible (Lahneman, 2004: 193; Eric Schwartz in Lahneman, 2004: 160). Furthermore, it urges the administration in Washington to avoid the temptation to micromanage the war from the White House and simply let the military do its job with minimal political interference. This condition was present, to varying degrees, in all four cases.

In Panama, General Thurman was allowed to develop his own rules of engagement. His major guiding principle was that he use the minimum amount of power needed to achieve victory, but there was no pre-set limit imposed by Washington. Although the rules followed by American soldiers in Panama were fairly restrictive, they were set by the theater commander, who had carefully tailored them to the local situation.

In Iraq, Schwarzkopf was given carte blanche to pursue the war as he saw fit. The operation had only one restriction on engagement: pilots had
to get a positive identification of their targets before bombing so as to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties. A clear example of how unrestricted the rules of engagement were is presented by General Schwarzkopf’s order that Iraqi soldiers, even if in retreat, were to be considered hostile if they did not lay down their weapons and abandon their equipment. Failure to disarm would make them fair targets and they would be fired upon. The only time Schwarzkopf’s freedom to act was restricted in any meaningful way was when the president ordered an early cease-fire.

In Somalia, General Johnston also was permitted liberal rules of engagement. UNITAF soldiers were allowed to consider anyone even pointing a weapon at them as hostile, and as such were allowed to fire first. U.S. Marines were told only to fire in self-defense, but were allowed very wide latitude in determining when, in fact, they were in danger.

As for UNOSOM II, there is not much information on the authority of General Bir as the UN theater commander. What is known, however, is that his orders could, under certain circumstances, be questioned by his deputy commander, U.S. general Thomas Montgomery. In addition, Montgomery retained a quick reaction force under an independent American command, which could be deployed at his discretion.

As noted earlier, General Clark was limited in his prosecution of the war in Kosovo both by NATO and his superiors in Washington. The highly restrictive rules of engagement that constrained NATO forces were made even more onerous by the imposition of stringent standards for the positive identification of targets before they could be engaged.

Military lawyers vetted targets to make certain that they fit within the parameters allowed by international law and the Geneva Conventions. Dual-use targets (those that were ostensibly civilian, but had military applications) were off-limits until late in the conflict. Forces stationed among or near civilians could not be attacked. Weather, which was notably poor at the outset of the war, caused many missions to be scrubbed due to the inability to positively identify targets. Political leaders in Washington perceived such restrictions as necessary in order to avoid the appearance of hypocrisy over war crimes allegations and to maintain public support within the United States and NATO countries.

Some military officers serving under Clark, particularly the Americans, were unhappy about the restrictions under which they labored. A number of serving officers were openly critical of the overall conduct of the war effort by civilian leaders, especially the political constrains and the incremental approach. Complaining about what they viewed as excessive civil-
ian interference in combat operations, some invoked painful memories of President Johnson's disastrous micromanagement in Vietnam.

Greater flexibility in prosecuting the war was finally granted in the latter stages of the air campaign when the NAC allowed itself to be bypassed in favor of an “executive committee” composed of the leading NATO powers. For all practical purposes, at this point, General Clark and Secretary General Solana made the major decisions.

**Clarifications and Refinements**

These four cases appear to validate the criteria established by the framework. Panama and Iraq clearly demonstrate that a successful outcome is related to adherence to these precepts. Somalia, by contrast, shows that a lack of success is associated with a failure to be guided by these principles. Kosovo, while an all-air operation, shows considerable fidelity to the principles outlined here. Despite this correlation between the criteria and the cases, a few clarifications and admonitions are in order.

First, UNOSOM II, a mission run under the command of the United Nations, was a clear failure. However, both UNITAF and the anti-Iraq coalition, remaining under direct U.S. control, were both successful multilateral operations. Bearing these facts in mind, it seems justifiable to revise the fourth criterion by narrowing its scope, to hold that: *U.S. forces are not serving under a non-American (or non-NATO) multilateral command.*

Second, the criterion dealing with the need for public support or at least indifference should perhaps be expanded to include public ignorance. (This criterion would now read: *There is a strong probability of public support, indifference, or ignorance.*) Although the pervasiveness of the news media makes it increasingly rare that the public can be kept in the dark about preparations for interventionist action, the Panama case shows that the president can still occasionally take the public and Congress by surprise. Action can, in some cases (usually smaller interventions), be taken before the public and Congress can either form or articulate an opinion. This is not meant to advocate the conduct of secret wars from the basement of the White House. To the contrary, the statement entails a simple recognition of the fact that, if small enough, an operation can successfully be concluded before domestic opposition has a chance to crystallize.

Third, in point eight, it was contended that it is necessary that the operation have the support of the military establishment. It is more accurate, perhaps, to redefine this necessary “support” as the absence of any sub-
stantive opposition from senior officers. Opposition to some of the technical elements of the operation, such as its timing or composition of forces, does not necessarily indicate material or decisive opposition to a particular mission. Conversely, the development of usable options does not necessarily imply an endorsement of a proposed mission, only the availability of a contingency plan. In some cases there are even disputes among military leaders or between the Pentagon and the theater commander regarding the requirements and/or the wisdom of a specific mission. Therefore, it is necessary not to have an endorsement per se, but rather a lack of substantive opposition from senior military officers.

Finally, it appears possible that the requirement to commit adequate force to accomplish the goals set (item 13) may be presently fulfilled by the new post–cold war “Powell Doctrine” of the use of force: overwhelming numbers, well armed and decisively applied. It remains to be seen if future administrations will continue official adherence to this philosophy.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are a few points regarding post–cold war direct military intervention by the United States that, while not directly related to this typology, do impinge on it to a degree.

First, the United States does not have a uniform policy on humanitarian intervention. Washington seems content to await the arrival of a crisis and then formulate its reaction on an ad hoc basis. The result is that policy tends to be driven more by emotion than by clear thought. On the basis of experience, it is almost certain that there will be no such formally articulated doctrine by the time the next “Somalia” appears on the horizon.

Second, as noted earlier, judging by the public and congressional reaction to the UNOSOM II fiasco in Somalia, it seems clear that American participation in future UN-controlled operations is highly unlikely. This belief has been reinforced by the events in Bosnia in 1995. Even though the United Nations had issued ultimata, air strikes and military action were handled almost exclusively by independent U.S. and NATO forces.

Combat operations in Kosovo were undertaken not by the United Nations, but by NATO. The reasons for this are varied, but given the composition the Security Council, it is a safe assumption that any attempt by the United Nations to act forcefully in this case would have been thwarted by a Russian, and possibly a Chinese, veto. Indeed, some observers believe that in the future, getting Security Council approval for military intervention will prove increasingly problematic (Bhatia, 2003: 24).
This leads to a third, related consideration. If the United States is reluctant to commit forces to a UN-commanded operation and, conversely, the United Nations will not authorize American actions that it cannot control, then when major crises arise in the future the United States will have to act unilaterally, in concert with its NATO allies (as was the case in Kosovo in 1999), or with a “coalition of the willing” (as in Iraq in 2003) (Lahneman, 2004: 184–85). Therefore, it seems that NATO may need to develop a new military doctrine or rationale to address its role in the post–cold war era.

A fourth point regards the over-reliance on airpower as a military option. American officials must remain mindful that if air strikes are used, there is a real possibility that the planes could be shot down and the pilots captured. Given the current highly polarized state of the political environment in Washington and the advent of the twenty-four-hour news cycle, the realization of such a prospect may well leave officials with a choice between two unpleasant options pushed by partisan zealots: either humbly “negotiate” with the enemy for the return of the downed flyers or escalate the level of hostilities as a means of punishing the adversary for firing on American aircraft.

A fifth concern regards the defense budget and the overextension of American power. Somalia notwithstanding, the fairly short duration of recent American interventions and their relatively low cost, in human terms, seems to have fueled a newly found enthusiasm, most notably among congressional liberals, for military intervention to solve the world’s injustices. If the military is expected to carry out missions of dubious value, while simultaneously having its budget cut, there can be no doubt that eventually military readiness will suffer as a result. The current War on Terror, while much of it necessary (Afghanistan) and some of it open to thoughtful debate (Iraq), provides stark evidence of how military assets can become stretched to a near breaking point (Rice, 2000).

As a final insight, in the post–cold war era, the willingness of American officials to intervene in a particular situation appears to be determined by the following formula: a high level of severity of the crisis, a low level of military risk, and a demonstrable national interest.
The termination of Operation Restore Hope in 1994 marked the last major commitment of ground forces into direct combat in the 1990s. While military force was employed on several occasions, it was done on a substantially smaller scale than the operations covered earlier.

On September 11, 2001, this generation experienced its “Pearl Harbor.” Within weeks of that tragic event, the United States would be engaged in a full-scale war against the al Qaeda terror network and its Taliban benefactors. Although it is still an ongoing operation (and any assessment must, therefore, be tentative), the success thus far on the Afghanistan front of the War on Terror appears to reaffirm the validity of the principles advanced in chapter 2 and the Powell Doctrine on which they are based.

INTERVENTION IN THE 1990S: PRESIDENT CLINTON AND THE “SOMALIA SYNDROME”

It can be argued that the debacle in Mogadishu created, during the 1990s, a “Somalia Syndrome” that was in many respects similar to the Vietnam Syndrome of two decades earlier. The clearest manifestation of this new malaise was the near absence of any commitment of ground forces to combat anywhere in the world. From 1994 until 2001, public opinion and congressional mood simply made the commitment of ground forces a political impossibility. Only three post-Somalia commitments of ground forces were made under any circumstances whatsoever: Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), and Kosovo (1999). In the case of Haiti, the troops were sent in only after an agreement had been reached for the Cedras junta to relinquish power voluntarily (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 142–43). In both Bosnia and Kosovo, small contingents of ground forces were sent in, but again not until after a cease-fire had been secured (Crabb, Sarieddine, and Antizzo, 2001: 135–
So great was President Clinton’s fear of the domestic political fallout of getting involved in a Yugoslav quagmire that, during the Kosovo conflict, the commander in chief himself publicly ruled out the use of ground forces. Although many at the time questioned the wisdom of conducting a “war from 15,000 feet,” in the end Mr. Clinton was able to force Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic to come to terms.

The other major characteristic of this “Somalia Syndrome” was the absence of any meaningful UN role in the use of force. Many in Congress and the public placed the blame for the failure of the Somalia mission, to a large extent, on the poor leadership provided by New York. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had insisted that UNOSOM II be led by a UN-selected commander whose primary loyalty would be to the United Nations. Somalia, therefore, represents the first time that combat-capable U.S. forces have served outside the normal presidential chain of command (recall that General Montgomery only had primary control over the quick reaction force, not American troops serving directly under the UNOSOM II command). Consequently, it irked many on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon that Americans were being asked to fight and die for a man and an organization that had never before successfully prosecuted an independent military operation. The Black Hawk Down episode and the events leading up to it in early to mid-1993 only seemed to confirm in the public’s mind what poor stewards Boutros-Ghali and the United Nations had been of the precious resources with which they had been entrusted.

As a direct result of the unmitigated disaster of Somalia, the Clinton administration shunned any further direct military involvement with the world body. Washington would be willing to aid in the enforcement of UN resolutions, but would only do so unilaterally (Haiti), in concert with its Gulf War coalitions partners, principally Britain (Iraq), or under the auspices of NATO (Bosnia and Kosovo). The multilateral commitment of U.S. forces to combat under the blue banner of the United Nations became, and remains to this day, a dead issue.

**Operation Enduring Freedom and the War on Terror**

On September 11, 2001, Islamist terrorists engaged in the bloodiest foreign attack on the American homeland since the War of 1812. Using hijacked commercial airliners as guided missiles, suicide bombers working for Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda network were able to bring down both of New York’s 110-story World Trade Center twin towers. Also struck was the Pen-
tagon in Arlington, Virginia. A fourth airliner was believed to be headed for the White House or the U.S. Capitol when passengers were able to foil the terrorists by crashing the jet into the rural countryside of western Pennsylvania.

Within a month of the attack, a vengeful America struck back. Despite repeated calls by Washington for the Afghan government to hand over bin Laden and his henchmen to face justice for their crimes, the Taliban regime steadfastly refused to comply. His patience with the Islamic fundamentalist theocracy in Kabul exhausted, on October 7, 2001, President George W. Bush ordered air strikes on Afghanistan. The War on Terror had begun.

The war in Afghanistan represents a return to the Powell Doctrine, albeit in a modified form. In some respects, the Powell Doctrine had become a victim of its own success. Due to the victorious outcomes of the various American interventions since 1989, the public had become conditioned to expect that when the nation went to war, the conflict would be short, victorious, and would keep casualties down to levels previously thought to be unrealistically low. The war in Afghanistan, however, posed unique problems. It was beyond question that the United States had tremendous technological advantages over the enemy and that American airpower would make short work of Taliban air forces and missile batteries. It was the situation on the ground that worried both civilian and military officials. During nine years of bloody counterinsurgency, the Soviet Red Army had failed to defeat rag-tag, technologically backward Afghan rebels. Using guerrilla tactics, utilizing the rugged mountainous terrain to their advantage, and armed with advanced Stinger missiles supplied by the United States, the Mujahadeen were able to fight the Soviets to a stalemate in a conflict that came to be known in the West as “Russia’s Vietnam.” Would American troops be forced to relive the nightmare scenario of having to brave extensive minefields and taking heavy casualties while chasing an elusive enemy from cave to cave through the mountains of the Hindu Kush?

The Reagan Doctrine provided a possible solution. During the 1980s, the Reagan administration had adopted a policy of aiding pre-existing rebel groups that showed promise of being able to overthrow hostile (that is, communist) governments. In so doing, the United States was willing to give the rebels financial aid and military support, but would not commit U.S. ground forces to combat (Kirkpatrick, 1985: 12–14). Reagan Doctrine military and economic aid to anti-communist Muslim rebels had successfully chased the Red Army out of Afghanistan in 1989, but unfortunately it
had the unintended longterm effect of establishing the conditions that al-
lowed the Taliban to come to power in the mid-1990s. Ironically, it was just
such aid that would drive the Taliban from power in 2001.

The Northern Alliance (formally, the United Islamic Front for the Salva-
tion of Afghanistan), a rebel coalition composed of ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks,
and other minorities, had been waging war against the Taliban since being
driven from power in 1996. Only days before the September 11 attacks, al
Qaeda operatives had managed to assassinate the Northern Alliance leader
Ahmad Shah Massoud. Although they only controlled about 5–10 percent
of the country in September 2001, the rebels had proven themselves ca-
pable of holding off Taliban forces. Consequently, American officials imme-
diately stepped up contacts with the Northern Alliance and began to make
arrangements to send it military and financial aid. Russian Federation pres-
ident Vladimir Putin announced that he, too, would contribute to the U.S.
efforts to arm and equip the rebels (Facts on File, September 27, 2001: 742).
For their part, Northern Alliance officials made it clear that they would en-
thusiasmously support with ground forces any military campaign that would
drive the Taliban from power.

By early October 2001, the alliance had been forged and the tactics de-
cided upon: the United States would supply massive airpower to pummel
the Taliban and al Qaeda; the Northern Alliance would provide the forces
that would handle the bulk of the ground combat. The U.S. partnership
with the Northern Alliance indicated a renewal of the proxy force tactics
associated with the Reagan Doctrine; meanwhile, the conduct of combat
operations would confirm the reassertion of the Powell Doctrine.

Shortly after the Taliban rejected President Bush’s ultimatum that it im-
mediately and unconditionally hand over bin Laden, the order was given
to begin a massive buildup of American forces in the Indian Ocean area. A
total of 28,000 service personnel were dispatched to carry out military op-
erations in Afghanistan whenever the president gave the order.

To facilitate operations in the theater, the administration received bas-
ing rights in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It
is noteworthy that these rights were secured with the endorsement of
Russia’s President Putin (Keesing’s, October 2001: 44392; Facts on File,
September 27, 2001: 743). As was the case in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the
British granted full access to the air facilities at Diego Garcia, a move that
would allow heavy bombers such as B-52s and B-1s to be based in the the-
aeter. Washington also secured agreements with several countries, notably
Pakistan, Russia, and several former Soviet Central Asian republics, for the right to overfly their airspace, making it possible to attack and resupply from several different directions.

Massive force was being brought to bear in the region. By early October, the following forces has been massed in the theater:

...two aircraft carrier battle groups (a battle group consisted of about a dozen ships) in the Arabian Sea (led by the USS Enterprise and the USS Carl Vinson) as well as a carrier battle group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Mediterranean. On Oct. 1 a fourth carrier, the USS Kitty Hawk, left port at the Yokosuka naval base (the home of the US Seventh Fleet) near Tokyo in Japan, bound for the Arabian Sea. Due to the enforcement of a “no-fly zone” in Iraq, the USA (and to a lesser extent the UK) already had a substantial force of about 200 aircraft and 20,000 personnel in the region, mainly based in Saudi Arabia. The UK also happened to have a large task force of 20,000 troops and 11 ships conducting an exercise... in Oman in September, in the largest UK deployment since the Gulf War, and elements of this task force (including the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious) remained in the region in October in case they were required to assist US forces in the military campaign. (Keesing’s, October 2001: 44392)

In keeping with the precepts of the Powell Doctrine, once the military buildup was completed, the forces accrued were decisively applied. On October 7, 2001, the Afghan war started with a massive cruise missile and bombing attack on targets across Afghanistan. Initial targets selected were largely those associated with air defenses and the command and control infrastructure: surface-to-air missile batteries, military airfields, and command and communications centers (specifically the Taliban Ministry of Defense) and “several suspected al Qaeda redoubts in Baghlan province.” Attack aircraft from carriers and heavy bombers (including B-52s, B-1s, and B-2s) engaged in precision bombing. Utilizing so-called smart ordinance (laser- or television-guided munitions), American bombers and cruise missiles were said to have destroyed or damaged their targets with an accuracy rate of 85 percent (Facts on File, October 11, 2001: 777).

Within three days, the U.S. coalition achieved unquestioned air superiority. With total control of the skies over Afghanistan, the United States was able to bomb targets at will. As a practical matter, the introduction of daylight raids meant that the coalition could hit targets with greater accuracy and that assessments of the damage achieved could be made more rapidly. “As the month progressed, U.S. forces widened their attack from
fixed targets, such as anti-aircraft batteries, to include mobile targets, such as troop convoys” (Keesing’s, October 2001: 44393).

Among the new targets to which U.S. forces now turned their attention were the terrorist bases and training camps used by al Qaeda. In so doing, U.S. planners were hoping to destroy the infrastructure of bin Laden’s network and to flush al Qaeda fighters out into the open so that they could more easily be killed or captured. At this point, while American aircraft began to strike small concentrations of Taliban troops, the main concentrations were purposely left relatively untouched. This was apparently in deference to Washington’s allies in Pakistan, who feared that a rapid “break out” by Northern Alliance forces might threaten Islamabad’s interests in Afghanistan (In the mid-1990s, Pakistan had aided the Taliban in their successful efforts to remove the Northern Alliance from power.) (Facts on File, October 11, 2001: 777–78; Keesing’s, October 2001: 44393).

Within days, however, the United States reversed itself and began heavy bombing of Taliban troop concentrations, especially in the Shomali plains region. The apparent goal of these punishing raids was to soften up Taliban positions in anticipation of the start of a major offensive by Northern Alliance forces.

At the same time that it escalated its air campaign, the United States also exploited its command of the skies to introduce small groups of Special Forces troops. Discreetly airlifted in, often by helicopter, these specialized teams conducted major operations against Taliban compounds in Kandahar. In addition, they were able to seize an airport south of the city, which was soon transformed into an American base camp deep within enemy territory (Facts on File, October 11, 2001: 777–78; Keesing’s, October 2001: 44393).

“Old Things Become New Again”: The Creation of the “Afghanistan Model”

It is at this point that the Reagan and Powell doctrines merged to create what may be called the “Afghanistan Model”: U.S. airpower working in close coordination with Northern Alliance forces on the ground. Before the introduction of U.S. troops into the region, the Northern Alliance held a small enclave in northeastern Afghanistan. The extensive and heavy bombing of Taliban positions, especially in areas that were proximate to Northern Alliance forces, allowed the rebels to conduct their first meaningful offensive. As a result of the initial bombing and air support by U.S. aircraft, Northern Alliance forces were able to move swiftly against the vital Taliban air base at Bagram and the strategic mountains surrounding it. The rebels, however,
delayed their final push to take the heavily fortified positions on the high ground above the airfield. Despite American air support, here and on several other newly established fronts, Northern Alliance forces were plagued by supply problems and fierce Taliban resistance. The decision was made to allow intensified U.S. bombing to weaken the Taliban further—to kill many and to demoralize those who survived (Keesing’s, October 2001: 44394).

The final offensive did not take long to arrive and once commenced was breathtaking in its swiftness. The high degree of coordination between the U.S. air forces and Northern Alliance ground troops allowed for big gains to be made in short periods of time. Taliban forces suffered tremendous casualties from U.S. bombing. As the opposition to the coalition campaign began to crumble, many Taliban commanders, apparently convinced that it was better to switch than fight, defected with their troops to the Northern Alliance.

The fall of the strategically important northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif was the first major victory for the coalition and a showcase for the “Afghanistan Model.” During a fierce nine-hour battle, the combination of heavy U.S. bombing and Northern Alliance infantry attacks killed five hundred Taliban and al Qaeda defenders and broke the resistance. In taking the city, the northern flank of the allied operation was secured and supply lines were established with American bases in Uzbekistan.

Unfortunately, the major drawback to the Afghanistan Model—an inability of the United States to control what was happening on the ground—would soon become obvious. Washington wanted the Northern Alliance to refrain from embarking on a campaign to take Kabul until an interim government including all major factions in Afghanistan could be established. The United States, however, became a victim of its own success. American bombings and the Northern Alliance ground offensive had so fully routed Taliban forces that they chose to abandon Kabul in favor of regrouping near Kandahar. The Taliban withdrawal created a political and military vacuum that irresistibly drew Northern Alliance forces southward toward the capital. Within three days of the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul fell to the rebels. While the bloodbath that Washington feared in Kabul never materialized, vengeance was taken against foreign troops, such as the Arabs and Pakistanis that had fought for the Taliban and al Qaeda.

After the fall of Kabul, a general collapse appeared to overtake the Taliban and al Qaeda forces. One after another, Afghan cities fell before the coalition juggernaut: Harat (November 10–11), Jalalabad (November 14–15), Kanduz (November 26). By late November, the Taliban, which a month
earlier held ironclad control over some 95 percent of Afghanistan, had been reduced to their Kandahar redoubt and the surrounding area (Keesing’s, November 2001, 44448–44449).

With the Taliban all but driven from power, the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan entered a new phase. Until this point, the U.S. role had been largely confined to the bombing campaign and air support. Ground combat was carried out almost exclusively by Northern Alliance forces, joined later by Pashtun tribesmen operating in the south. The American ground presence was limited to essential personnel, including spotters (to aid with the bombing), advisors assigned to aid Northern Alliance commanders, and small, limited Special Forces operations. Now, however, the hunt for Osama bin Laden would begin and American troops would take the lead.

During November 25–26, some eight hundred marines arrived at a remote airstrip 120 kilometers southeast of Kandahar. The marines were sent to set up a base that, once established, would serve as the home for a substantially larger body of American ground troops. From this base, the United States itself would now undertake the mission of pursuing bin Laden and al Qaeda (Keesing’s, November 2001, 44449).

In late November, intelligence reports indicated that al Qaeda terrorists and their Taliban allies were massing at Tora Bora, their mountain redoubt in the eastern border region. Tora Bora had been selected by bin Laden as the site for his last stand due to its geography and topography. Standing as it did near the Pakistan border, it would allow the terrorist leader to appeal for reinforcements and, if it proved necessary, provide a way out of Afghanistan. Tora Bora itself is a mountain with numerous caves in which al Qaeda had constructed an underground base. It was honeycombed with tunnels that connected various areas of the complex and afforded shelter from bombings. During the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, Tora Bora had survived attacks from the Red Army.

In early December 2001, Northern Alliance and local Pashtun forces, backed up by units of American and British Special Forces, arrived at Tora Bora to launch an attack on the complex. For a week prior to the ground assault, U.S. aircraft carpet-bombed enemy positions in an effort to either flush al Qaeda out of their caves or to kill them inside. It was discovered later that the bombing had “killed at least 10 top bin Laden aides” (Facts on File, December 6, 2001: 946).

On December 5, Afghan forces launched their ground assault. Fighting was fierce and bloody; however, “twenty-four hours into the siege . . . the commanders said half of the complex was under their control.” After efforts
to secure a negotiated surrender of Tora Bora failed, the attack resumed on December 13 with U.S. warplanes providing air support. U.S. and British Special Forces joined the assault and were said to have been involved in heavy fighting with al Qaeda (Facts on File, December 6, 2001: 946).

Fierce fighting continued for another week, during which some 1,700 al Qaeda and Taliban fighters were killed. On December 20, the Tora Bora complex was captured. U.S., British, and Afghan forces then began the daunting task of combing the caves searching for pockets of resistance, weapons caches, captured documents, and, of course, bin Laden himself (Keesing’s, December 2001: 44504).

The victory at Tora Bora appeared at the time to have effectively ended organized resistance in Afghanistan. U.S. and allied Special Forces have since taken on the primary burden of the fighting, engaging in missions like Operation Anaconda that mainly consist of engaging in an aggressive search for pockets of resistance, discovering enemy arms caches, and uncovering any intelligence that may prevent future terrorist attacks and/or lead to the capture of Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

As has been the case with most of the post–cold war conflicts, and central to the operational aspects of the Powell Doctrine, the development and use of military technology again gave U.S. forces an unquestioned edge on the battlefield. The ordinance dropped on al Qaeda troops has included two “wonder weapons,” one old, one new. The older weapon was the Vietnam War-era “Daisy Cutter,” a 15,000-pound bomb that was “the most powerful conventional explosive in the U.S. arsenal” (Facts on File, December 13, 2001: 970). This bomb is so powerful that during the Indochina conflict it was said to be able to reduce jungle vegetation to smoldering ashes. The new weapon, developed specifically for the cave-clearing operations that have epitomized the fighting during Operation Anaconda and other missions since early 2002, is the so-called thermobaric bomb. “The thermobaric bomb releases and then detonates a fine cloud of high-explosive chemicals, creating devastating shock waves that destroy everything—and everyone—inside a cave, bunker, or building” (Washington Post, March 26, 2002, article by Vernon Loeb).

CONCLUSION

During the mid- to late 1990s, the Clinton administration stepped back from the principles that had been the basis of the success of U.S. interventions in Panama, Iraq (1991), and, in the early stages, Somalia (UNITAF).
The UNOSOM II debacle, with its micromanagement of battlefield operations by politicians thousands of miles away and decisions made more for political than military reasons, appears to have represented a return to the mistakes of the Vietnam era.

During the same time period, however, the decline of the Powell Doctrine appears to have been due less to its abandonment than to its falling victim to its own successes. Victories came so quickly and at as such low cost in terms of human lives (both military and civilian), that Americans have become conditioned to expect war without pain. The shock of the 1993 Somalia debacle, taken with the risk-averse nature of President Clinton, combined to limit the number of instances that U.S. ground forces were committed to combat situations. During the 1999 Kosovo conflict, Mr. Clinton may have inadvertently encouraged Serbian resistance by explicitly ruling out the use of ground forces. During this period, troops were usually introduced into the theater only in a peacekeeping capacity, and even then, only after a political settlement had been reached.

The war in Afghanistan appears to have signaled a return to the principles related in this book and the Powell Doctrine on which they are partially based, albeit in a modified form. Elements of the Powell Doctrine were fused with elements of the Reagan Doctrine to create a potent hybrid. Under this “Afghanistan Model,” the United States once again relied on the decisive application of overwhelming force. Utilizing its superior technology and force projection capabilities, American forces unleashed a devastating air campaign to destroy enemy defenses and wear down hostile forces. The ground phase of the war utilized local rebels as ground forces, supported by tactical air support provided by U.S. bombers and carrier-based aircraft.

The result in Afghanistan has been a rout of enemy forces; the Taliban was driven from power and the al Qaeda network was smashed. American Special Forces are conducting ongoing actions to root out remaining elements of the al Qaeda terror organization and its Taliban allies. The fate of the two central figures, Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, remains uncertain.

Since the beginning of the republic, when Americans have gone to war, they have done so in the full expectation of winning the conflict. With the overwhelming success of most post–cold war military interventions, however, a new wrinkle has crept into public expectations; today, Americans demand that victory come swiftly, with nearly no casualties (military or civilian), and at very little expense to the nation’s treasury. As a result, deci-
sions made by the nation’s leaders have been made increasingly on a politi-
cal basis and often to the detriment of sound military considerations.

Due to a combination of his risk-averse nature and public expectations, at
the outset of the Kosovo intervention, President Clinton backed away
from many of the principles enunciated in chapter 2. The result of his deci-
sion to prosecute a war in a politically correct fashion was an initially in-
effective effort that became further hamstrung by the internal politics of
NATO’s decision-making process. Circumstances on the ground forced the
Clinton administration to reconsider its positions and revisit the more prag-
matic “military-first” policies that had brought rapid victory in the earlier
interventions in Panama and Iraq. Most notable among these corrections
was the president’s decision to put the “ground option” back on the table.

President George W. Bush’s initial approach to interventions in Af-
ghanistan and, later, in Iraq (2003) represented full-throated reassertions
of the principles advocated here. After an impressive military campaign
that ousted Afghanistan’s Taliban regime more rapidly than many experts
predicted, however, many of the same political considerations that had be-
developed the Kosovo operation began to resurface. Likewise, the “Shock and
Awe” campaign that saw Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship in Iraq crumble
within weeks soon gave way to an occupation encumbered with a preoccu-
pation with similar considerations. In both cases a political calculus involv-
ing, among other factors, “acceptable” casualty levels, the financial costs of
ongoing military operations, and a laudable yet naive obsession with avoid-
ing any civilian casualties, all in an increasingly difficult effort to maintain
popular support for each respective intervention, began to drive U.S. policy
as politicians and bureaucrats in Washington, rather than military com-
manders in the theater, directed the operation of these conflicts.

With the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and the
subsequent promotion of General David Petraeus to U.S. commander in
Iraq, Washington once again began to move closer toward the principles
advocated in this book. Utilizing the strategy that Petraeus had pursued in
his successful pacification of northern Iraq, in 2007 the Bush administra-
tion authorized a “surge” of over 21,000 troops. Petraeus was largely given
a free hand to utilize military force in a much more assertive manner and
with minimal interference from politicians in Washington (Keesing’s, Janu-
ary 2007: 47721; February 2007: 47780). Although one cannot discount the
propaganda advantage handed to the coalition forces by the Sunni reaction
to al Qaeda’s efforts to create a Taliban-like theocracy in western Iraq, the
fact is that the surge gave the theater commander the manpower and the
authority to carry out operations in such a manner that the U.S. was able, in a relatively short time, to neutralize both the Sunni insurgency (much of which actually now cooperates with American forces through the “Awakening” movement) and the Shiite-dominated Mahdi Army.

Since then, the level of violence in Iraq has declined to manageable levels and the situation has stabilized to the point that the provincial and municipal elections held in early 2009 occurred virtually without incident. The success of the more assertive U.S. military posture in the country has made it possible for a new “Status of Forces” agreement to be concluded with the Iraqi government. This accord provides for conditions that until recently would have been considered impossible to fulfill: the United States will terminate all combat actions in Iraq by mid-2009 and will withdraw its forces by December 2011 (Keesing’s, November 2008: 48912). Indeed, the situation has been sufficiently stabilized that U.S. and British forces have already returned much of country to Iraqi control.

The success of the more robust and assertive posture in Iraq has not gone unnoticed by the new administration. President Obama, a critic of the Iraqi surge while on the 2008 campaign trail, appeared to have been won over by its apparent success. In hopes of replicating this success in Afghanistan, in March 2009 the president ordered a surge of some 30,000 troops and requested that the other NATO powers assisting in the fight against the resurgent Taliban and al Qaeda terrorists supplement those numbers. Unfortunately, the request for additional combat troops has been given a frosty reception by the allies thus far (New York Times, April 5, 2009, article by Steve Erlanger and Helene Cooper). Although he put the additional deployment on hold in September 2009, the president has made it clear that he is not ruling it out. Indeed, Mr. Obama is said to be giving serious consideration to a major change in strategy advocated by his theater commander, General Stanley McCrystal (Washington Post, September 21, 2009, article by Rajiv Chandrasekaran and Karen de Young; Washington Post, September 21, 2009, article by Bob Woodward). It seems increasingly clear, therefore, that the Obama administration, like its predecessors, may be beginning to embrace the principles that have brought success to U.S. military interventions in the twenty years since the end of the cold war.
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INDEX

A-7 Corsair II fighter-bombers, 59
A-10 Thunderbolt II (“Warthog”), 90, 178, 185, 188, 229
Abrams tanks, 90, 100
Adams, John, 12
Afghanistan: Carter’s policy on, 8, 23–24, 38–39; Clinton’s attack on al Qaeda in, 155; military "surge" in (2009), 247; Northern Alliance in, 239, 241–44; and Powell Doctrine, 238, 240; and Reagan Doctrine, 25; Soviet invasion and occupation of, 7, 8, 23–24, 27, 238, 243; Taliban and al Qaeda in, 155, 236–47; U.S. aid for anti-communist rebels in, 25; War on Terror in, 29, 235, 238–47
Afghanistan Model, 241–45
Africa. See specific countries
Ahtisaari, Martti, 180
Aidid, Mohamed Farrah, 33, 106–8, 122–25, 127, 130, 133, 137, 139, 212, 214, 215, 217
Air Force, U.S., 172, 180–81, 184
Al Qaeda, 155, 236–38, 239–45, 247
Albania: chaos in, following financial crisis, 145; and independence of Kosovo, 142–43; KLA forces and arms in, 187–89, 199; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 153, 157, 163, 179, 183, 187–89, 192, 193, 206, 225; nationalism of, 199–200; NATO air exercises in, 146; and Operation Allied Harbor, 177; and Rambouillet Conference, 149; refugees in, 173, 188, 207
Albright, Madeleine, 152, 156, 217
Ali, Adel-Rahman Ahmed, 106
Ali Mahdi Mohamed, 106, 133, 215
Allende, Salvadore, 7
Amin, Hafizullah, 23
Amnesty International, 50
Angola, 8, 22, 25
Annan, Kofi, 146, 147
Apache helicopters, 59, 65, 183, 188, 192, 193, 218, 225, 229
Arab-Israeli conflict (1970s), 6
Ardito Barletta, Nicolas, 42
Arias Calderon, Ricardo, 44
Army Rangers, U.S.: killings of, in Somalia, 37, 117, 124, 131, 132, 139, 213–14, 221, 222, 224; in Panama, 57, 59
Army Special Forces, U.S.: in Afghanistan, 241, 243–45; in Albania, 229; in Kosovo, 178, 183; in Panama, 55, 59; and Reagan, 24
Arroyo, Domingo, 122
Aspin, Les, 36–37, 117, 130–31, 222, 224
B-1 and B-2 bombers, 181, 185–86, 191, 218, 229, 239, 240
B-52 bombers, 90, 178, 181, 191, 229, 239, 240
Baker, James, 46, 51, 82
Balkans. See specific countries
Barre, Mohamed Siad, 105, 106, 108, 122
Bellamy, Alex J., 157, 196
Betts, Richard, 189
Biden, Joseph, 163
Bin Laden, Osama, 237–39, 243, 244, 245
Bingaman, Jeff, 165
Biological warfare. See Chemical and biological warfare
Bir, Cevik, 112, 136, 232
Black Hawk Down episode, 37, 124, 237
Black Hawk helicopters, 59
Bombing. See Airpower
Bonilla, Henry, 116
Boren, David, 46
Bosnia: and beginning of World War I, 220; and Clinton, 37, 152; and ethnic cleansing, 143–44, 151, 163, 204; ground forces in, 236; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 187–88, 206, 227; and NATO, 37, 104, 141, 144, 145, 234; and Russia, 205; and United Nations, 37, 144, 157, 234; and United States, 29, 35, 163, 234, 236; war in, 172, 220
Bosnia-Herzegovina, 141–44
Bradley, Bill, 140
Brinkmanship, 18
Britain. See United Kingdom
Brown, Hank, 115–16
Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 4–5
Bulgaria, 173
Bush, George W., 4, 238, 239, 246–47
Byrd, Robert, 117–18
Cambodia, 8, 21, 25, 36
Campbell, Tom, 164
Canada, 73, 87, 172
Caribbean. See specific countries
Carter, Jimmy: and Afghanistan, 8, 23–24, 38–39; and Brzezinski, 4; and Carter Doctrine, 22–24, 38–39, 69, 74; and isolationism, 22; and Nicaragua elections (1989), 44; and Soviet client states, 22; and Soviet embargo, 7, 23
Carter Doctrine, 22–24, 38–39, 69, 74
Castro, Fidel, 49, 219
Ceausescu, Nicolae, 200
CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command), 78, 85, 93, 111, 122
Chemical and biological warfare, 75–77, 79, 90, 98, 99, 219
Cheney, Richard, 46, 72, 73, 85, 93, 94, 96, 129, 131, 222
Chernomyrdin, Viktor, 180
Chiang Kai-shek, 17
Chile, 7
China, 6–7, 17, 19, 39, 146, 176, 196, 208, 234
Chinese embassy in Belgrade, 176, 178, 191, 192, 208, 218
Christopher, Warren, 6–7
CIA, 3, 7, 8, 22, 103
Civil war: and military intervention generally, 34, 220; in Somalia, 105–8, 123–24, 134, 135, 138, 214
Clark, Wesley, 157, 167–71, 173, 177, 179, 188–93, 206, 223–26, 229–33
Clark Amendment, 2, 22, 25
Clark Memorandum, 16
Clausewitz, Carl von, 222
Clinton, Bill: and Bosnia, 37; and China, 6–7; economic policy of, 151; and economic sanctions against Taiwan; foreign policy of, 4, 7, 155, 244–45; impeachment of, 154–55, 163; and Iraq, 155; and Kosovo military intervention, 38, 147, 151–56, 158–67, 170, 173, 192, 195, 202–7, 212, 216, 219–20, 224–27, 231, 237, 245, 246; on Milosevic, 201; on NATO, 154; and Somalia Syndrome, 236–37; and Somalia/Operation Restore Hope, 114, 117, 123, 124–25, 127, 131–33, 139–40, 151, 214, 217, 224, 230
CNN, 35
Cobra helicopters, 59, 126
Coercion by proxy, 8
Coercive diplomacy, 7–8
Cohen, William, 179, 183, 225
Cold war, 1–3, 16–29. See also Soviet Union
“Cold War II,” 27–28
Colombia, 42, 48, 64
Communism: in Africa, 22; containment of, 1–2, 16–18; in Eastern Europe, 1, 17; Reagan doctrine on, 2–3, 25. See also Cold war; Eastern Europe; Soviet Union
Congress, U.S.: Black Caucus of, 9, 115; and failed coup against Noriega, 46; and Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 36, 75, 81–84, 221, 223; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 162–67, 221, 226; and military intervention generally, 35–36, 210–11, 220–22, 235; and Panama/Operation Just Cause, 51–53, 221, 233; and Somalia/Operation Restore Hope, 9, 115–18, 124, 132, 135, 139–40, 217, 219, 221, 224, 237
Containment doctrine, 1–2, 16–18
Cook, Robin, 148, 201
Counterinsurgency, 18–19
Covert intervention, 7
Croatia, 142, 143, 144, 220
Cuba, 13, 15, 42–43, 49, 60, 75, 219
Czech Republic, 153
“Daisy Cutter” bomb, 244
Darfur, 36
Daschle, Tom, 167
Dayton Accords, 141, 144–45
Defense budget, 235
Defense Department, U.S., 183
Delta Force, 59
Delvalle, Eric Arturo, 43
Desert Storm Operation. See Iraq/Operation Desert Storm; Kuwait
Dewey, George, 13
Diem, Ngo Dinh, 20
Diplomatic intervention, 6–7
Direct military intervention. See Military intervention
Djukanovic, Milo, 187, 227
Dodd, Christopher, 53, 81
Dollar diplomacy, 14
Dominican Republic, 14, 15
Draskovic, Vuk, 200
Drug trafficking, 41, 42, 43, 48, 49–50, 62, 66, 67, 219
Dulles, John Foster, 18
Durant, Michael, 124, 125
Eastern Europe, 1, 17, 28, 74, 153
Economic intervention, 7, 23, 76, 81, 86, 97, 98, 103, 221, 222–23
Ecoterrorism, 96–97, 101
Egypt, 73, 108, 125
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 18
Eisenhower Doctrine, 18
El Salvador, 16, 49
Ellis, James O., 189, 190, 194–95, 204
Elving, Ronald D., 12
Embargo. See Economic intervention
Emir al-Sabah, 102
Endara, Guillermo, 44, 50, 62, 63, 64, 67
England. See United Kingdom
Ethiopia, 22, 106
Ethnic cleansing, 142, 144, 151, 156, 157, 163, 173, 184, 186, 193, 202, 204–5, 215–16, 219
European Union, 180
F-117 stealth fighters: in Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 86, 90–91, 228; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 172, 174, 181, 185–86, 191, 206, 229; in Panama, 57, 58, 59, 61, 90, 228
Fascell, Dante, 82, 83
FBI, 45, 66
Feingold, Russ, 165
Flexible response doctrine, 18–19
Foley, Thomas S., 53, 115
Ford, Gerald, 21–22
Ford, Guillermo “Billy,” 44
Fox News Channel, 35
France: and Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 73, 87, 88; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 147, 148, 172, 183, 187, 190–92, 195, 218; and Kosovo/Operation Joint Guardian, 197; Somalia relief by, 107, 121
Friedman, Thomas, 161
Garcia, Alan, 64
Gephardt, Richard, 82
Germany, 148, 172, 197
Giroldi, Moisés, 45
Globalization, 154
Goldman, Steven E., 5–6
Good Neighbor policy, 16
Gorbachev, Mikhail, 95
Gore, Al, Jr., 68, 84
“Gradual escalation” principle, 203–4
Great Britain. See United Kingdom
Greece, 17, 153, 170
Grenada, 25, 35, 65
Guam, 13
Gunboat diplomacy, 64
Hagee, Michael, 121
Haiti, 9, 15, 16, 29, 35, 104, 236
Hamilton, Lee, 115
HARM, 186
Hastert, Dennis, 167
Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, 14
Helicopters, 58–59, 86, 88, 104, 126, 127. See also Apache helicopters
Helms, Jesse, 46, 52, 165
Herring, George C., 19, 20
Hersch, Seymour, 49
Hess, Stephen, 161
High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM), 186
Holbrooke, Richard, 144, 145, 147, 151
Holland. See Netherlands
Hollings, Ernest, 165
Holocaust. See World War II
Hoover, Herbert, 15–16
Huerta, Victoriano, 15
Human rights violations, 50, 71, 75, 80
Human Rights Watch, 198
Hungary, 99, 153, 177
Hussein, Saddam: after 1991 Gulf War, 33–34, 95, 98–100, 103, 216–17; aggressive and militaristic nature of, 69, 74–75, 101; and airpower during 1991 Gulf War, 103; and attempted expansion of 1991 Gulf War into Arab-Israeli conflict, 76, 79, 92, 227; CIA intervention against, 7; compared with Hitler, 75; and “highway of death” in Kuwait, 89; military buildup as deterrence to, 72–74; and oil resources, 70, 74; Operation Desert Fox against, during Clinton administration, 155; power desired by, 70; rebellions against, after 1991 Gulf War, 98–100, 103; removal or containment of, as implied U.S. objective, 77–78, 81, 82, 83, 103, 211, 216, 219; reparations demanded by, to Kuwait, 70; support of, by Iraqi people, 103; U.S. Congress on, 83; U.S. public opinion on, 80, 81. See also Iraq headings
Hutchison, Kay Bailey, 163, 166
India, 125
Indonesia, 125
International Red Cross, 98, 107
Intervention: definitions of, 6–9. See also Military intervention
Iran: human rights violations in, 75; and Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 92; Iraq’s war against, 69, 70, 75; Islamic fundamentalism in, 69; U.S. hostages in, 23, 24
Iran, Shah of, 22
Iran-Contra arms sales, 3, 42
Iraq: army of, 75; and chemical and biological warfare, 75, 76, 77, 79, 90, 98, 99, 219; covert intervention by U.S. against, 7; damage to, by Operation Desert Storm, 97–98, 102; economic sanctions against, 76, 81, 86, 97, 98, 103, 221, 222–23; end of Hussein dictatorship in, 246; events leading to first Gulf War, 69–77; human rights violations by, 71, 75, 80; invasion of Kuwait (1990) by, 7–8, 69–72, 74–75; Iran’s war against, 69, 70, 75; Kurdish rebellion in, 75, 98–100; military “surge” in (2007), 246; and nuclear weap-
ons, 75, 77, 79, 89, 104, 219; oil resources of, 69–70, 74, 80, 97, 98; planned withdrawal of U.S. troops from (2011), 247; Reagan's policy on, 69, 103; and Scud missiles, 34, 37, 75–76, 79, 91, 97, 101, 102, 103, 227; Shiite rebellion in, 98; Sunnis and Shiites in, 246–47; UN weapons inspection in, 104; and War on Terror (2003–2009), 235, 246–47. See also Hussein, Saddam; Iraq/Operation Desert Shield; Iraq/Operation Desert Storm

Iraq/Operation Desert Fox, 155

Iraq/Operation Desert Shield, 7, 73–74, 76–77, 82–84, 93, 222

Iraq/Operation Desert Storm: air strikes during, 37, 38, 73–74, 78–79, 86–87, 89–92, 94, 101, 102, 169, 182, 203, 224–25; assessment of, 102–4, 211–35; carrying out, 86–89; casualties of, 89, 94, 95, 97, 102–3; cease-fire terms following, 97, 99; compared with Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 185, 193, 203, 206, 223, 226; Congress on, 36, 81–84, 221, 223; cultural factor influencing, 77; and ecoterrorism, 96–97, 101; exit strategy for, 96, 213; ground offensive during, 37, 79, 87–90, 95, 100, 102, 104, 224–25; highway of death incident during, 89, 94, 95; hostages used as “human shields” during, 75, 77, 101, 102; Hussein’s attempted expansion of, into Arab-Israeli conflict, 76, 79, 92, 227; immediate results of, 96–100; initial situation leading to, 29, 69–74; intended results/objectives of, 10, 77–79, 102–4, 211; international coalition involved in, 72–73, 76, 79, 87–92, 95; and invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, 7–8, 69–72, 74–75; and Iraq’s Republican Guard, 70, 71, 85, 87, 88, 95, 96, 98, 100, 101, 104; military buildup for, 72–74; and military leadership of U.S., 84–86, 222–23; nature of, 79–80; and political climate in U.S., 80–84; and Powell Doctrine, 228; public opinion on, in U.S., 80–81, 221; reasons for offensive war in, 76–77; reasons for U.S. intervention in, 74–77; scope of armed conflict in, 92; termination of, 33–34, 95, 230; types and quantities of armed forces used in, 89–92; unique elements of, 100–101; and United Nations, 33–34, 71–72, 78–80, 95, 96, 97, 103, 105, 111–12, 216–17, 222; U.S. the-
Kosovo (continued)

See also Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA); Kosovo/Operation Allied Force


Kosovo/Operation Joint Guardian, 197–98
Kostunica, Vojislav, 201, 202
Krauthammer, Charles, 27
Kucinich, Dennis, 165
Kurdish rebellion, 75, 98–100
Kuwait: air forces from, during Operation Desert Storm, 87; damage to, by Iraq, 96–97; Emir al-Sabah government of, 102; ground offensive in (1991), 37; human rights violations in, by Iraq, 71, 80; Iraq’s invasion of, 7–8, 69–72, 74–75; liberation of, during Operation Desert Storm, 88, 102; objectives of Operation Desert Storm regarding, 77, 80, 211, 216; oil resources of, 69–70, 74, 80, 96–97, 101; reparations for, from Iraq, 97, 98; U.S. security arrangement with, 103. See also Iraq/Operation Desert Shield; Iraq/Operation Desert Storm

Laboa, Monsignor, 57–58
Laser-guided bombs. See Precision-guided munitions (PGMs); Smart weapons
Latin America. See specific countries
Lebanon, 9, 18, 25, 32, 37, 40, 115, 129
Lewinsky, Monica, 154–55
Liberia, 9, 36
Libya, 25, 26, 43, 48
Lieberman, Joseph, 165
Lott, Trent, 163, 167
Low-intensity warfare, 8
Lugar, Richard, 163

MacArthur, Douglas, 17
Macedonia: ethnic Albanians in, 143, 153, 200; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 147, 153, 157, 163, 179, 183, 192, 206; NATO air exercises in, 146; and Rambouillet Conference, 149; refugees in, 173, 177, 188, 207
Malaya, 19
Manifest Destiny, 12

Marines, U.S.: in Afghanistan, 243; in Cambodia, 21; in Iraq/Operation Desert Shield, 88, 102; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 180–81, 184; in Lebanon (1983), 32, 37, 40, 115, 129; in Nicaragua (1920s), 15; in Panama, 57, 59; and Somalia/Operation Restore Hope, 118, 119, 120–22, 124, 126

Massive retaliation, 18

Massoud, Ahmad Shah, 239

McCain, John, 163, 164, 166, 167, 226

McConnell, Mitch, 165

McCrystal, Stanley, 247

McKinley, William, 13

Mexico, 15

Middle East. See Iraq/Operation Desert Storm; and other countries

Military intervention: and air strikes, 37–38, 224–25, 235; Brzezinski on, 4–5; and civil wars, 34, 220; and clear and attainable goal of U.S. policy, 31, 211–14; and commitment of adequate forces to accomplish goals of, 39, 227–29, 234; conduct of war effort, 38–40, 225–33; and containment doctrine, 1–2, 16–18; and defense of vital national interests, 34, 218–20; definitions of, 6–9; discretion of theater commander in pursuit of, 39–40, 231–33; early U.S. interventions, 12–15; evaluation of interventionist typology, 209–35; exit strategy for, 31, 212–14; flexible rules of engagement for, 39–40, 231–33; getting involved in, 31–38, 211–25; Goldman on, 5–6; and ground forces, 37, 38, 225–26; high intervention era (1957–1973), 2, 18–21; history of, in U.S., 12–28; humanitarian missions versus, 32, 215–16, 234; input of theater commander on, 39, 229–31; and isolationism (1930s), 15–16; limited geographic scope for, 38–39, 226–27; neo-interventionism and Reagan doctrine, 2–3, 23–28; and neo-isolationism (1973–1980), 2, 21–23; peacekeeping operation versus, 31–32, 214; and phases of U.S. foreign policy, 1–3; preconditions for success of, 29–40; public opinion and Congressional mood on, 35–36, 210–11, 220–22, 233, 235; similarities among case studies on, 10–11; support of military leadership for, 36, 222–23, 233–34; types of direct military intervention, 8–9; typologies of intervention preconditions, 9–10, 30, 210–11; and U.S. forces subject to multilateral authority, 32–34, 216–18, 233, 237; and willingness to support armed forces in the field, 36–37, 223–24. See also Afghanistan; Iraq/Operation Desert Storm; Kosovo/Operation Allied Force; Panama/Operation Just Cause; Somalia/Operation Restore Hope; and other countries and commanders

Milosevic, Slobodan: Clinton on, 152, 170; end of regime of, 200–202; and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, 142, 144, 151, 156, 157, 163, 173, 184, 186, 193, 202, 204–5, 215–16, 219; Holbrooke’s negotiations with, 145, 147, 151; indictment of, for war crimes, 179–80, 194, 196; Kosovo/Operation Allied Force against, 156, 160, 164, 165, 168–71, 173, 177, 187–88, 191, 192, 195, 203, 207, 212, 216, 218, 225, 227, 229, 237; NATO air exercises as threat against, 146; opposition to, by Djukanovic, 187; and peace negotiations regarding Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 180; and Rambouillet Conference, 150, 195; “reconquest” of Kosovo by, 142; and Russia, 158; and Serbian nationalism, 142; support for, 172

Milutinovic, Milan, 150

Mitchell, George, 82

Montenegro, 143, 184, 187, 190, 218, 227

Montenegro, 143, 184, 187, 190, 218, 227

Montgomery, Thomas M., 112–13, 125, 130, 230, 232, 237

Morgan, Said Hersi, 106, 122

Mozambique, 22

Multilateral authority, 32–34, 216–18, 233, 237. See also Iraq/Operation Desert Storm; NATO; Somalia/Operation Restore Hope; United Nations

Narcotics trafficking. See Drug trafficking

National Security Council, 22–23

NATO: and Bosnia, 37, 104, 141, 144, 145, 234; Clark as SACEUR of, 157, 167–71, 189–91, 230; Clinton on, 154; and CONPLAN 10601, 168, 169; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 37, 104, 141, 146–63, 167–96,
NATO (continued)
202–8, 215–20, 225–34, 246; and Kosovo/Operation Joint Guardian, 197–98, 212; members of, from Eastern Europe, 153; and Operation Allied Harbor, 177; and Operation Allied Hope, 188; and Operation Eagle Eye, 158; and Operation Nimble Lion, 168; and Partnership for Peace, 153; in post–cold war world, 153–54, 235; and Rambouillet Conference, 148–49, 157, 158, 171, 180; U.S. leadership of, 154
Naumann, Klaus, 191, 230
Navy, U.S.: and Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 73, 86; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 171–72, 180–81, 183, 184; SEALS in Panama, 57, 59
Netherlands, 191, 192, 207, 218
New World Order, 11, 78, 104, 105, 109–10
News media, 35–36, 109, 124, 135, 233, 235. See also Public opinion
Nicaragua, 8, 14, 15, 16, 22, 25, 42–43, 49, 60, 219
Night Hawk stealth fighters. See F-117 stealth fighters
9/11 terrorist attack, 236, 237–38. See also War on Terror
Nixon, Richard, 2, 7, 20–21, 31
Noriega, Manuel Antonio: Bush’s policy on, 44–49, 221; and drug trafficking, 43, 42, 43, 48, 49–50, 62, 66, 67, 219; failed coup against (1989), 45–46, 53–54, 63, 65; and FBI, 45, 66; foreign policy of, 42–43; indictments against, for drug trafficking, 42, 62, 66, 67; and 1989 elections, 44; Reagan’s policy on, 41–43; sanctuary for, at papal nunciature in Panama City, 57–58; surrender of, to U.S., 58, 62; U.S. Congress on, 52; U.S. military intervention against, 54–60, 211, 219, 221, 222, 225
North Korea, 7, 17–18, 75
North Vietnam, 20. See also Vietnam War
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 7
Nuclear weapons, 7, 18, 75, 77, 79, 98, 104, 219
Nunn, Sam, 46, 83, 117
OAS. See Organization of American States (OAS)
Obama, Barack, 4, 247
Oil resources, 22–24, 38–39, 69–70, 74, 80, 96–98, 101
Oman, 23
Omar, Mullah, 244, 245
Operation Allied Harbor, 177
Operation Allied Hope, 188
Operation Anaconda, 244
Operation Blue Spoon, 46, 60
Operation Desert Fox, 155
Operation Desert Shield, 7, 73–74, 76–77, 82–84, 93
Operation Desert Storm. See Iraq/Operation Desert Storm; Kuwait
Operation Joint Guardian, 197–98
Operation Just Cause. See Panama/Operation Just Cause
Operation Nimble Lion, 168
Operation Provide Relief, 100
Operation Restore Hope. See Somalia/Operation Restore Hope
Optically guided bombs. See See Precision-guided munitions (PGMs); Smart weapons
Organization of American States (OAS), 45, 63
Ortega, Daniel, 49, 219
Overwhelming force, 27
Pakistan, 123, 125, 127, 240, 241
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 73
Panama: anti-American foreign policy of, 48–49; drug trafficking operations in, 41, 42, 43, 48, 49–50, 66, 67, 219; Endara government of, 50, 62, 63, 64, 67; events leading to U.S. intervention in, 41–49; failed coup against Noriega (1989) in, 45–46, 53, 54, 63, 65; financial aid for, 64; Hoover’s decision not to intervene in, 16; human rights violations in, 50; independence for (1903), 48, 64; murder of U.S. soldier in, 47; 1989 elections in, 44–47, 48, 50; Noriega in, 41–47; and Operation Blue Spoon, 46, 60; PDF (Panamanian Defense Forces) in, 42–45, 47, 50, 51, 53, 55–63, 67; Roosevelt’s intervention in, 14; U.S. troops stationed in, 43, 47, 61, 62, 63, 65, 68. See also Noriega, Manuel Antonio; Panama/Operation Just Cause
Panama/Operation Just Cause: assessment of, 66–68, 211–35; carrying out, 41, 55–58; casualties of, 67; Congress on, 51–53, 221, 233; exit strategy for, 61–62, 213; ground forces in, 55–59, 224, 225; immediate results of, 62–64; initial situation leading to, 41–47; intended results/objectives of, 10, 49–50, 66–68, 211; and military leadership of U.S., 53–54, 222; nature of, 50–51; and 1989 elections, 44–47; Panamanian public opinion on, 62–63, 65; and political climate of U.S., 51–53, 233; and Powell Doctrine, 228; psychological warfare in, 59, 61; reasons for U.S. intervention in, 47–49; rules of engagement in, 60–61; scope of armed conflict in, 60; types and quantities of armed forces used in, 58–59, 65; unique elements of, 64–66; U.S. theater commander’s power and influence in, 60–61, 230, 231; and vital national interests of U.S., 291; and willingness to support forces in the field, 223; world public opinion on, 63–64, 221
Panama Canal, 14, 34, 43, 47–50, 62, 64, 65–68, 219
Panama Canal Treaties, 45, 47, 48, 49, 62, 64–68
Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF). See Panama
Partnership for Peace, 153
Patriot missiles, 92, 228
Pavkovic, Nebojsa, 201
Paz, Robert, 47
PDF (Panamanian Defense Forces). See Panama
Peacekeeping operations, 9, 31–32, 37, 196–99, 205, 208, 214. See also UNOSOM II
Pearl Harbor attack (1941), 1
Pell, Claiborne, 82
Perez, Carlos Andres, 64
Pershing, John “Black Jack,” 15
Peru, 64
Petraeus, David, 246
PGMs. See Precision-guided munitions (PGMs); Smart weapons
Philippines, 13
Platt Amendment, 13
PLO. See Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
Poland, 153
Powell, Colin: and embargo against Iraq, 76; and Iraq/Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, 72, 84–86, 93–94, 222–23, 224–25; as Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, 27, 54, 222; and Panama, 46, 54, 60, 222; and Powell Doctrine, 26–28, 85, 227–29, 234, 240, 241, 244–45; and Somalia/Operation Restore Hope, 118–20, 129, 131–32, 223
Powell Doctrine, 26–28, 85, 227–29, 234, 238, 240, 241, 244–45
Precision-guided munitions (PGMs), 90, 91, 172, 183–86, 228, 240. See also Smart weapons
Predator drone, 186–87
Pressler, Larry, 116
Psychological warfare, 59, 61, 177
Puerto Rico, 13
Putin, Vladimir, 201, 239
Rambouillet Peace Conference/Agreement, 141, 148–51, 155, 157, 158, 171, 180, 195, 196, 205–6, 212, 219
Rangers. See Army Rangers, U.S.
Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), 23
Reagan, Ronald: foreign policy of generally, 155; and Iraq, 69, 103; and Lebanon, 25, 32, 40; military interventions by, 25–27, 40; and Nicaragua, 2–3; and Panama, 41–43; and Reagan Doctrine, 2–3, 25, 238–39, 241; and Soviet Union, 2–3, 24–25
Reagan Doctrine, 2–3, 25, 238–39, 241
Red Cross. See International Red Cross
Refugees, 145, 147, 150–53, 157, 159, 173, 177, 183, 188, 198–200, 207

Restore Hope Operation. See Somalia/Operation Restore Hope

Rice, Donald, 186

Roberts, Pat, 166

ROE. See Rules of engagement (ROE)

Romania, 200

Roosevelt, Franklin D., 16, 155

Roosevelt, Theodore, 13–14

Roosevelt corollary to Monroe Doctrine, 13–14, 16

Rugova, Ibrahim, 143–45, 199


Rumsfeld, Donald, 246

Russia: and Bosnia, 205; and Kosovo, 146, 147, 148, 156–58, 180, 197–98, 205, 208, 234; and Milosevic, 156, 203; and War on Terror in Afghanistan, 239. See also Soviet Union

Rwanda, 36, 152, 157, 215, 219

Sahnoun, Mohamed, 107

Samoza, Anastasio, 15, 22

SAMs, 86, 87, 174

Sanctions. See Economic intervention

Sandinistas, 15

Sandino, Cesar Augusto, 15

Saudi Arabia, 71–74, 84–85, 87, 89–90, 92, 93, 221, 240

Savimbi, Jonas, 22

Schelling, Thomas, 7

Schröder, Gerhard, 201

Schoeder, Patricia, 82, 117


Scowcroft, Brent, 94

Scud missiles, 34, 37, 75–76, 79, 91, 97, 101, 102, 103, 227

SDI. See Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or Star Wars)

SEALs. See Navy, U.S.

Serbia: and Bosnia conflict, 172; and end of Milosevic, 200–202; and independence of Kosovo, 142–43; and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), 145; and Kosovo/Operation Allied Force, 157, 162, 163, 169, 172, 173, 177–80, 184, 186, 187, 193, 203, 206, 212, 223, 227; nationalism of, 142, 172; and Operation Horseshoe, 173; and Rambouillet Conference, 149–51; and United Nations, 147; war between Croatia and, 220. See also Kosovo/Operation Allied Force

Shelton, Henry H., 192

Short, Michael G., 169, 171, 173–74, 184, 189, 190, 193–95, 223, 231

Shuttle diplomacy, 6

Slovenia, 143

Smart weapons, 37, 86, 91, 185, 228, 229. See also Precision-guided munitions (PGMs)

Smith, Bob, 166

Smith, Gordon, 163, 164


Solarz, Stephen, 82, 84

Somalia: agriculture in, 133, 138; basing rights for U.S. in, 23; civil war (1990s) in, 105–8, 123–24, 134, 135, 138, 214, 220; desert terrain of, 118; diseases in, 133, 138; drought and famine in, 105, 107, 109, 120, 133, 135, 138, 219; events leading to U.S. intervention in, 105–10; overthrow of Barre in, 105; peace process in, 133, 138; public works projects in, 133, 136; war between Ethiopia and (late 1970s), 106. See also Somalia/Operation Restore Hope

Somalia/Operation Restore Hope: assessment of, 136–40, 151, 211–35; "Black Hawk Down" episode in, 37, 124, 237; carrying out, 120–25; casualties of, 122, 123, 124, 134, 137, 139, 217; civilian officials’ involvement in military operations in, 40; Congress on, 9, 115–18, 124, 132, 135, 139–40, 217, 219, 221, 224, 237; exit strategy for, 131–32, 213–14; ground forces in, 119, 121–22, 126, 225; immediate results of, 133–34; initial situation leading to, 29, 104, 105–8; intended results/objectives of, 11, 110–11, 132, 134–40, 171, 211–12; killings of U.S. Army Rangers in,
Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or Star Wars), 92
Surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), 86, 87, 174
Syria, 73
Taft, William Howard, 14
Taiwan, 7, 17
Taliban, 236, 238–47
Tanks, 59, 90, 100, 104
Tanzania, 155
Taylor, Maxwell, 18
Teeter, Robert, 161
Television. See News media
Terrorism. See War on Terror
Thatcher, Margaret, 72
Thermobaric bomb, 244
Third World. See specific countries
Thurman, Maxwell, 45–46, 54–55, 58, 60–61, 65, 222, 231
Tito, Marshal, 142, 143
Tomahawk cruise missiles, 86, 91–92, 100, 183, 185, 228
Torture. See Human rights violations
Truman, Harry, 17, 155
Truman Doctrine, 1, 17
Tunney Amendment, 2
Turkey, 17, 99, 100, 153, 177
Tutwiler, Margaret, 99
UAVs, 186. See also Predator drone
Somalia Syndrome, 236–37
Somaliland, Republic of, 106, 134
South Africa, 6, 7
South Korea, 17–18
South Vietnam, 20. See also Vietnam War
SOUTHCOM (U.S. Southern Command), 45, 46, 53–62, 65, 68, 222
Soviet Union: containment of, 1–2, 16–18; demise of, 28, 157; embargo on grain exports to, 7, 23; invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by, 7, 8, 23–24, 27, 238, 243; and Iraq/Operation Desert Storm, 95, 101; and Panama, 43, 48, 63; U.S. foreign policy on, 1–3, 24–25, 69. See also Cold war; Russia
Spadafora, Hugo, 42
Spain, 172
Spanish-American War, 12, 13
Special Forces. See Army Special Forces
Sperling, Godfrey, 161
Stalin, Joseph, 16
Stealth bombers. See B-1 and B-2 bombers
Stealth fighters. See F-117 stealth fighters
Stevens, Ted, 166
Stiner, Carl, 61
Stinger missiles, 238
United Nations (continued)
222; and Korean War, 17, 33; and Kosovo, 37, 141, 146–47, 157, 158, 171, 180, 196–99; and New World Order, 78, 104; and Panama/Operation Just Cause, 63; and Rwanda, 152, 157; and Serbia, 147; and Somalia, 33, 107–8, 110–13, 116–40, 157, 211–15, 217, 220, 223, 228, 230, 233, 237, 244–45; and Somalia Syndrome, 237; “use of force” authorizations of, 33; weaknesses of interventions by, 218, 228. See also Boutros-Ghali, Boutros
United States. See Military intervention; specific U.S. presidents and specific countries
U.S. Central Command. See CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command)
U.S. Southern Command. See SOUTHCOM (U.S. Southern Command)
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), 186
UNOSOM I (United Nations Operation in Somalia I), 108, 119. See also Somalia/Operation Restore Hope
USSR. See Soviet Union
Venezuela, 64
Vidrine, Hubert, 148
Vietnam Syndrome, 21, 22, 24–25, 166, 236
Vietnam War: casualties of, 20; and “Daisy Cutter” bomb, 244; description of, 19–21, 31; and “gradual escalation” principle, 203; Gulf of Tonkin Resolution during, 83; Iraq/Operation Desert Storm compared with, 73, 93, 94; legacy of, 34; McCain on, 166; political micromanagement of, 83, 94, 192, 231, 233; Powell on, 26; public opinion on, 35, 36; rules of engagement (ROE) in, 40, 129; Somalia/Operation Restore Hope compared with, 115, 117, 124–25
Villa, Pancho, 15
Vital national interests, 34, 218–20
War on Terror, 235, 236, 237–47
Warner, John, 163
Weapons of mass destruction, 76, 77, 79, 102, 104, 219. See also Chemical and biological warfare; Nuclear weapons
Weinberger, Caspar, 26, 27, 28
Wilhelm, Charles, 122
Wilson, Woodrow, 14–15
Woerner, Frederick, 46, 53–54, 60, 222
World War I, 152, 220
World War II, 16, 151–52, 159, 165, 173, 204
Yeltsin, Boris, 180
Yugoslavia: Clinton on, 152–53; end of Milosevic’s regime in, 200–202; ethnic cleansing in, 142, 144, 151, 156, 157, 163, 173, 184, 186, 193, 202, 204–5, 215–16, 219; Holbrooke’s negotiations with Milosevic in, 145, 147, 151; indictment of Milosevic for war crimes, 179–80, 194, 196; Kostunica as president of, 201–2; Milosevic’s rise to power in, 142–43; NATO air campaign in, 37, 104, 156, 157, 162, 163, 165, 168–87, 190, 203–4, 206–7, 212, 225, 227; and Rambouillet Peace Conference/Agreement, 141, 148–51, 155, 157, 158, 171, 180, 195, 196, 205–6, 212, 219; Tito as dictator of, 142, 143. See also Kosovo/Operation Allied Force; Milosevic, Slobodan; Serbia
Zaire, 22
Zinni, Tony, 121