

STEALTH, PRECISION, AND THE
MAKING OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

BY
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DISCLAIMER

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War greatly reduced the risk that a limited, peripheral conflict would escalate to a major war between the great powers. It would seem, with this constraint removed, that the United States should be freer to intervene militarily in the affairs of other peoples. Indeed, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the United States intervened militarily as many times as it had during the full forty years of the Cold War.

Alternatively, the decision to intervene had always been based on the best interest of America. With the fall of the Soviet Union, America's most vital national interest, its security, was assured. Logic would dictate a less-interventionist foreign policy, as the *need* to intervene was drastically reduced. This study examines the paradox by investigating the presidential decision making process that leads to military intervention, determining the relative weight for intervention before and after the Cold War, and assessing the importance of technology – in this case the maturity of the combination of stealth aircraft and precision guided weapons – that made the president's decision to intervene after 1990 easier.

The president's decision is influenced by six domestic and international factors: national interest, domestic politics, potential for success, potential cost (in lives), public support, and coalition or alliance responsibilities. Tracking changes in the relative influence of each of these factors over time, the importance of promising technological capabilities emerges as much more significant than the shift in balance of power in explaining the increased intervention policies of the United States. Specifically, conclusions are drawn on the real impact of stealth and precision's ability to reduce not

only American casualties, but also collateral casualties and damage as well. Given the impact of military technological developments on foreign policy, considerations for future policy makers are recommended as new capabilities near fielding.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

War is not an instinct but an invention.

- Jose Ortega y Gasset
The Revolt of the Masses

This thesis began as a question: “Should military technology drive national policy, specifically intervention policy?” My initial reaction was that it should not. Policy, particularly foreign policy, should be carefully informed and only then formed. In a perfect world, only the national interest should drive policy, with the vital national interest taking precedence over all other variables. Certainly, technology must be carefully integrated into policy, and allowance made for breakthrough or unanticipated revolutionary technologies, but technology itself *should not* be the arbiter of great power actions. National policy should be formed through the combination of principle and vision, forethought and wisdom, not as a reaction to chance and happenstance.

But study of the historical integration of technology into the policy making process leads to the inevitable conclusion that technology *can and does* drive policy, to a lesser or greater degree depending on a multitude of circumstances. There is a great difference between what does occur and what should happen, and this thesis grapples with precisely that dilemma. Knowing that technology can and often does drive strategy, and ultimately policy, and aware that the side that fails to acquire and adapt cutting edge technology may lose to the state that does so efficiently, the question became reversed. Why *shouldn't* technology drive policy?

Rationale and Framework

With the end of the Cold War, the threat of a superpower conflict that could destroy the United States greatly diminished. The primary national interest, that of survival, became much less threatened. With more time and resources to devote to lesser

national interests, policy makers turned growing attention to relations with the minor powers. As the lone superpower in a world rife with problems that military intervention might – or might not – help resolve, the United States, the mightiest nation on earth with the most powerful and technologically advanced military on the planet, faced (and still faces) a most interesting question: “Because we *can* intervene, *should* we?” Is there a moral imperative that compels us to try to help solve world problems because we alone have a military capability that is unmatched? These questions are decidedly more than academic, and there is an established body of thought that answers them in the affirmative. For example, former Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright typified it in her comment to General Colin Powell in 1995 when they were discussing options for dealing with the crisis in Bosnia. When she perceived resistance to the idea of using military force as a solution, she asked General Powell “What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”¹

According to a 1998 article in the *Washington Post*, “over the past decade, the United States Army has been used in 29 substantial overseas deployments, compared with just 10 in the four previous decades.”² By another count, American armed forces “were tasked with 48 major overseas deployment missions overseas, in contrast with only 15 between the time of the U.S. exit from Vietnam and the collapse of the Soviet Union nearly two decades later.”³ Certainly, the United States was more active militarily in the decade immediately following the end of the Cold War than it had been in the previous four. From 1950 to 1989, the United States engaged in seven major military interventions. From 1990 to 2001, the United States also engaged in seven major military interventions.⁴ By all these accounts, American intervention overseas increased dramatically in the post-Cold War world. What condition changed that made the decision

¹ Colin Powell, *My American Journey*. New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1995, p. 576.

² Bradley Graham and Eric Pianin, “Military Readiness, Morale Show Strain; Budgets Contract; Deployments Expand,” *Washington Post*, 13 August 1998, final ed., A1, on-line, Lexis-Nexis, 20 April 2002.

³ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, RAND Report MR-1365 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), 170.

⁴ An intervention was considered major if it was a planned offensive action or American troops deployed with the specific purpose to fight. Also considered major were those peacekeeping or humanitarian operations that, through tragedy or mission creep, involved the loss of American lives as a direct result of the intervention. For a list of the interventions, see Appendix.

to use military force, to risk American blood and treasure in the pursuit of national objectives, easier? Was it simply the end of bipolar conflict? With America's superpower foe effectively vanquished, the United States had less fear of an outlying intervention spiraling out of control and drawing in the great rivals. Yet with its foremost vital national interest, state survival, virtually assured, it would also seem reasonable to argue that military conflict should be less frequent, not more so. Ultimately, one must come to the conclusion that either there were more political goals that justified the use of force, or there was less risk in using the military to obtain existing goals. The end of the Cold War, and subsequent reduced fear of a limited conflict escalating into a nuclear exchange between the United States and Soviet Union, is undeniably a significant factor in the United States' decreased concern about intervening around the world. However, reduced risk of thermonuclear war alone does not seem to justify by itself the increased frequency of the use of military force in pursuit of policy goals observed over the last decade. Another, identifiable factor *must* have influenced the presidential decision process that led to the use of force. My investigations led to the probability that the key factor was the simultaneous development of militarily decisive technologies.

In 1989, the United States introduced a powerful new weapons system during Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama to apprehend dictator Manuel Noriega. The F-117 stealth fighter, employing laser-guided bombs, had an inauspicious start, but became the centerpiece of American military power in two short years. Its ability to precisely deliver munitions while affording the pilot a previously unthinkable level of protection from harm presented the president with a far less risky means to apply military force. It was now possible to use America's military might with a greatly reduced chance of suffering friendly casualties or equipment loss. It is highly significant to note that the United States government has used or tried to use the F-117 in every planned offensive operation since its debut, and that it has become the ultimate symbol of American military superiority.

There is a clear temporal correlation between the debut of stealth and precision technology and a subsequent, radical increase in the number of American interventions abroad. Is this coincidence or is there a plausible causal link? In other words, did the arrival of the F-117, married to precision strike capability make the presidential decision

to intervene with military force easier? In answering this precise question, Anthony Lake, former Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs replied simply, “Of course!”⁵ The intuitive answer is obvious. The difficulty lies in convincingly establishing the tie between the technology and the decision.⁶

Methodology

In determining whether or not the decision to intervene with military force became easier after 1989, it is reasonable to look at the principal historical factors affecting the presidential decision to use force, and evaluate how their effect on the decision has changed over time. By isolating the effects of various influences on these factors, it is then possible to determine if change in the factor has made the decision easier or harder. In this thesis, it is asserted that the advent of the F-117 with precision guided munitions (PGM) is an influence that has had a broad impact on many of the factors affecting the president’s decision to intervene. The reduction in risk to American lives, and the resulting decrease in collateral damage and casualties during conflict that the new technology offer, affects both domestic and international elements of policy, and perhaps this is not such a lamentable thing.

“A government’s most momentous decision is to take its people to war. In the American political system, the president is at the center of the movement toward war.”⁷ It is within the president’s constitutional power to wage war, but “power and decision making are balanced and considered with a wide array of interests.”⁸ Historically,

⁵ Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 12 December 2001.

⁶ Stealth aircraft and laser guided bombs are not the only significant military technologies to mature in the late 1980s. The cruise missile (Tomahawk Land Attack Missile and Conventional Air Launched Cruise Missile) both played major roles in American intervention starting with the Persian Gulf War. In fact, they were the only weapons employed in the attacks on terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and Sudan and Operation Desert Fox in 1998. While these systems are unmanned, virtually eliminating risk to American servicemen, their precision targeting ability is more limited than weapons delivered by manned platforms, decreasing their ability to reduce collateral damage. For this reason, this study is limited the effects of precision weapons delivered by stealth aircraft.

⁷ Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

presidents have weighed very carefully the decision to use military force. Both domestic and international ramifications must be considered. Each of these elements has a number of factors that determine its level of impact on the decision. These factors, in turn, have many influences that shape their relevance for each different situation. Figure 1 depicts this decision process and the factors that influence it. Of specific importance is the influence the other domestic factors have on public support. This influence on these factors is felt not only directly in the decision process, but also has a heavy impact on public support, effectively multiplying the influence. This relationship is discussed further, below.

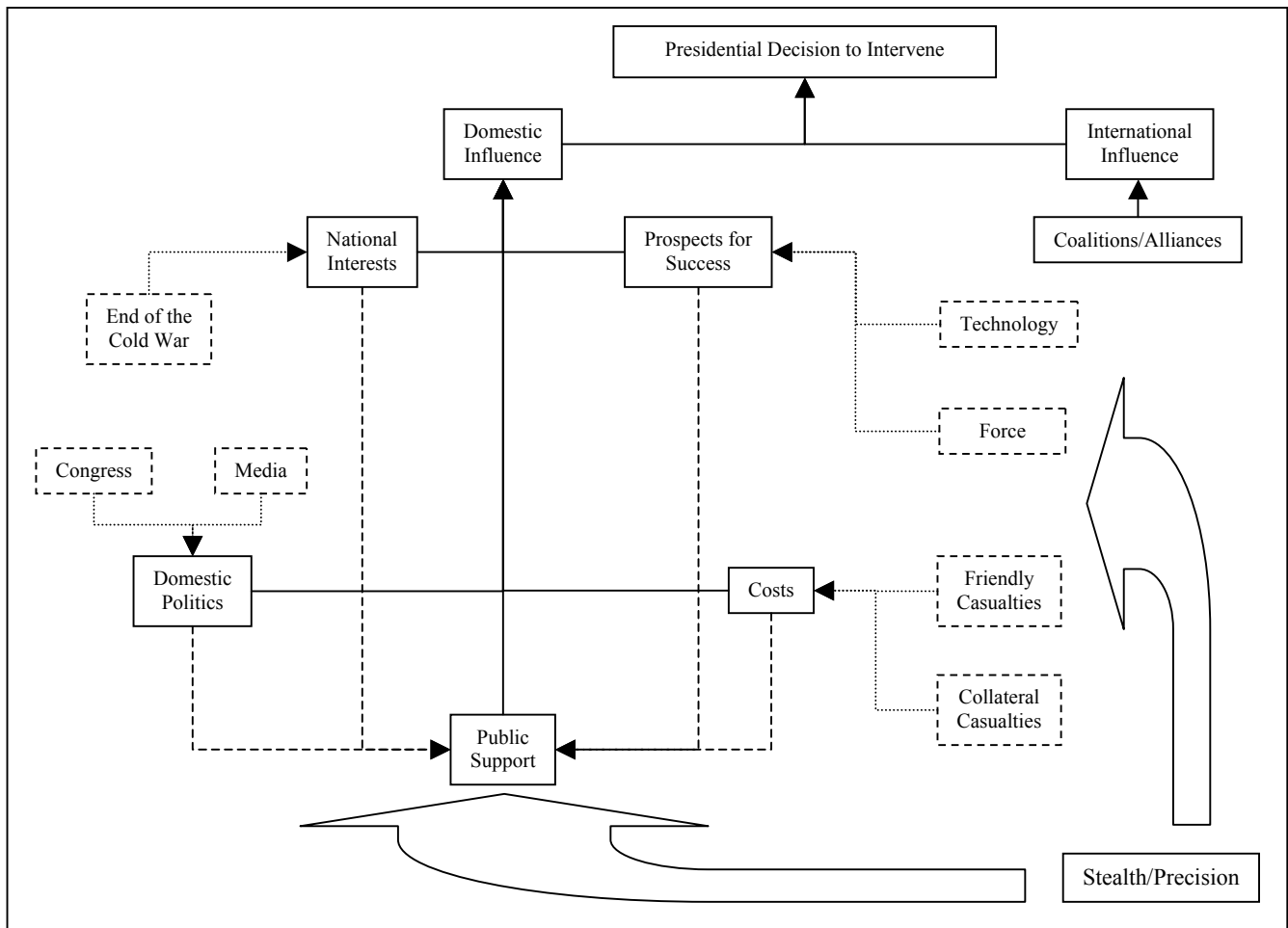


Figure 1. Influences on Presidential Decision to Intervene

The Decision to Intervene: Domestic Factors

Domestically, the president must consider a number of crucial factors when deciding whether or not to put American troops in harm's way. Most of these are a product of the American form of representative government. The president and Congress, both elected by the citizens of the nation, share governing power. As the "center of the movement toward war," the president must first determine whether or not going to war is in the best interest of the nation, whether or not the desired political goal is achievable, and whether it warrants the risk and cost of war. But the president is not alone in this determination. He does not have absolute power. He "shares power with Congress, and a president who ignores the Congressional role assumes greater risks for failure...The president also must moderate conflicting views among his advisors...(and) consider and then harness, if he can, that amorphous—but always very real—force of public opinion."⁹ All of these competing constituents break down into five broad domestic factors that the president considers before deciding to use force. The first is ***national interests***. Is the political objective vital to the nation? Is it something "upon which the state is unwilling to compromise, will not submit to arbitration, and hence will seek to protect by all available means?"¹⁰ The second factor is ***congressional support***. Does the president have the support and backing of Congress?¹¹ Third, what is ***the likelihood that military force will achieve the desired political objective***?¹² What are the prospects for success of the intervention? The fourth factor is ***the prospective and actual costs of the intervention***. What is the intervention likely to cost in terms lives? The fifth and final factor is ***public support***. In an elective democracy, continuing support of the public is essential for the government to operate effectively. Without it, legitimacy fails and effective political function wanes.

While all these factors are interrelated, public support is firmly and inextricably the foundation of the other four domestic factors. Perhaps the single most critical

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dennis M. Drew, and Donald M. Snow, *The Eagle's Talons: America's Experience at War* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 3.

¹¹ Hess, 5.

¹² Ibid.

element shaping public support in the decision to intervene is American historical tolerance for anticipated and actual casualties during the operation, a point to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Of late, there is an opinion that “the American public is no longer willing to tolerate American casualties in U.S. wars and military operations.”¹³ In fact, the American public has historically shown a remarkably consistent approach to casualties and support for intervention. “Support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighing of benefits and costs that is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders.”¹⁴ In other words, the American public uses much the same decision process to determine its support for intervention that the president uses when considering intervention, only the president factors that support into his calculation. Public support is so entwined in the other factors of the president’s decision process that it cannot be separated for consideration. It must be regarded within each of those other four factors to be understood, and as such is discussed within each of the following expansions.

National Interests. The first domestic factor the president must consider when contemplating war is America’s *national interest*. National interests are the goals or ends desired by a nation either domestically or in its relations with other nations.¹⁵ *Vital national interests* are peculiar to international politics and are comprised of two characteristics: first, the nation is unwilling to compromise on the issue, and second, the nation is willing to go to war over the issue.¹⁶ Such vital national interests are clear, and also rare. When the vital national interest is at stake, the decision to intervene should not be difficult. Indeed, to be credible, it should be automatic. Any decision to intervene that is difficult is by definition not in the vital interest of the nation.

Beyond assuring national survival, determining exactly what constitutes a vital national interest can be difficult to identify in advance of a crisis. Declarations from the Monroe Doctrine to the most recent National Security Strategy have attempted to define

¹³ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), xv.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Donald E. Nuechterlein, *National Interests and Presidential Leadership: The Setting of Priorities* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), 1-3.

¹⁶ Dennis M. Drew, and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 27-28.

the United States' most valued national interests, communicating to citizens, allies, and potential enemies that for which we are willing to go to war. Clearly, the nation also has interests that are less-than-vital. Currently, these are hierarchically classed as *important* then *humanitarian interests*. These encompass goals in pursuit of which, depending on the situation, the United States *may* be willing to use force. These situations are the ones that cause such difficulty in the decision to get involved directly and with force.

After World War II, the United States chose to intervene militarily numerous times. In a couple of cases, the intervention was a result of a direct threat to American citizens abroad, and the decision was relatively unambiguous. More critical, the vast majority of post-war interventions, if not all, were framed within the context of a global military, economic, and ideological battle for survival between the United States and Soviet Union, making the sudden and dramatic rise in interventions after the Cold War harder to explain in the absence of a superpower rival. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, America's consistent foreign policy intent was to contain the expansion of Communism.¹⁷ This policy of 'containment' provided the basis for American interventions during the Cold War. Each was portrayed in some way as a small part of the larger ideological battle raging across the globe, the loss of which would mean the loss of the United States to Communism.¹⁸ Congress and the American public generally accepted the pursuit of containment as a valid reason for military intervention, with the notable exception of Lebanon in 1982-83.¹⁹

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, America's vital interests changed dramatically. Indeed, the question arose as to whether America still *even had* vital national interests.²⁰ With no single, unifying threat to justify global intervention, it became decidedly awkward to justify the commitment of American troops in pursuit of

¹⁷ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 42. For a broader description, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1982), 65.

¹⁹ Note that a majority of Americans favored intervention in Vietnam before 1968. By 1971 the majority favored a withdrawal, even at the expense of the fall of South Vietnam, but when the subject of American prisoners of war was raised, an overwhelming majority *opposed* withdrawal until their safety was assured. See Larson, 63.

²⁰ "Where do America's interests lie?" *The Economist*, 16 September 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, 27

less-than-vital interests alone. To complement and expand upon the accepted policies of containment, the Clinton Administration implemented a policy of ‘enlargement,’ which centered on the defense and spread of democracy and free market economies.²¹ However, this approach received much criticism in its implementation.²² The loss of the focus provided by the demise of the policy of containment made the decision to use military force *more* difficult to justify to Congress and the American people. Why, then, did we find ourselves engaged militarily more often?

Congressional Support. The second domestic factor the president must consider when contemplating war is *congressional support* for his foreign policy actions, notably military intervention. Foreign policy consists of “those external American goals for which the nation is prepared to commit its resources.”²³ It is the method that the United States uses to pursue its national interests, and the resources to be committed are among the countries most valuable and cherished assets. In the decision to commit these resources, the president is at the center of America’s foreign policy process. The Constitution makes the president primarily responsible for national security and appoints him Commander in Chief of the armed forces. The Constitution also grants Congress power with respect to making war. It bestows the power to declare war and the power to control funding for the government and its actions, including the military.

Fed up with the stalemate of the Vietnam War and an ‘imperial presidency’ that had absolutely dominated foreign policy for an extended period of time, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973.²⁴ This overt attempt to limit the president’s Constitutional power with respect to making war passed over President Nixon’s veto. Successive presidents have openly questioned the constitutionality of the law, and adherence to it has been questionable at best.²⁵ While no binding action as a result of the

February 2002, available from http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=239823.

²¹ Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, “From Containment to Enlargement,” Remarks, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington DC, 21 September 1993.

²² *The Economist*, “Where do America’s interests lie?”

²³ Cecil V. Crabb and Pat M. Holt, *Invitation to Struggle: Congress, the President and Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), 6.

²⁴ Stephen W. Hook and John Spanner, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 15th ed. (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000), 146.

²⁵ Enid Sterling-Conner, “The War Powers Resolution: Does It Make A Difference?” in *The Growing*

law has limited presidential action outside its original intent, the law has provided a vehicle for opponents of the president's policies and actions to voice their objections. The resultant impact of this on the president is unclear.²⁶ Congress has become more involved in the foreign policy process, though. More traditional methods, such as exercising the power of the purse, have been more effective in providing influence. A rise in partisan politics has further made the president's relationship with Congress more difficult.²⁷ Coupled with the fact that foreign and domestic policies are becoming more entwined, Congress's position on issues has become a major factor in foreign policy decisions. Additionally, an exponential increase in immediate news coverage has given more public voice to these opponents of presidential policy.²⁸

National-level politicians are creatures of sophisticated media savvy, and television is the medium of political power. Its reach appears ubiquitous today, but in this context began with the first televised war. Vietnam brought the gruesome realities of military combat right into American (and world) living rooms. After the war, there was a strong perception that these televised images were primarily responsible for the loss of public support for the war effort.²⁹ While this ultimately proved untrue – or at the least has been unproved so far – media coverage of crises around the world continued to grow. From *Nightline*, a nightly newscast specifically covering the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979, to the advent of 24-hour news on CNN and a plethora of imitators, world access to television coverage of unfolding events increased dramatically.³⁰ The apparent reaction to televised images of crises in Somalia and Bosnia caused some to posit that instant access to tragedies around the world was subverting the normal foreign policy process.³¹ This 'CNN effect' supposedly created a "loss of policy control on the part of the

Power of Congress, eds. David M. Abshire and Ralph D. Nurnberger (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981), 301.

²⁶ Richard F. Grimmett, *War Powers Resolution: Presidential Compliance*, Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, January 8, 2002), i.

²⁷ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 21 February 2002.

²⁸ Warren P. Strobel, "The Media and U.S. Policies Toward Intervention: A Closer Look at the 'CNN Effect'," in *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy: Readings and Cases*, ed. Bruce W. Jentleson (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 181.

²⁹ Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 108.

³⁰ Strobel, 172.

government's policymakers,"³² and forced those policymakers to react prematurely to public outcry for action. While the pervasiveness of instant news has reduced the amount of time policy makers have to react to unfolding crises, it is difficult to objectively make the case that they have lost control of the foreign policy making process. It has, without a doubt however, vastly complicated that process.³³ It has given a ready and immediate voice to opponents of the president's foreign policy, and abruptly exposes rifts in government support for them. This can have a detrimental and accretive effect on the nature and depth of public support for those policies.³⁴ Given that Congress is more involved in foreign policy making, its relationship with the president has deteriorated, and opponents have a platform to express their views to a large audience, domestic politics, too, have made the intervention decision more complex and difficult for the president.

Prospects for Success. The third domestic factor the president must consider, the prospect of success for the intervention, is closely tied to public support. Military intervention is only one option available to the president in the face of a crisis. Other possible means include diplomatic, informational, and economic actions. Circumstances dictate which option, or combination of options, is the most appropriate to employ, and each must be evaluated to determine if it will attain or help attain the desired political goal. Public support has shown a constant trend when military intervention is used. "The higher the probability that the intervention will successfully achieve its objectives, the higher the probability is that the intervention will be supported."³⁵ This applies both before and during the intervention. Clarity of those objectives and the speed with which the intervention appears to be achieving them are critical pieces in determining how successful the intervention appears.³⁶

The invasion of Panama in 1989 is an example of clear objectives achieved quickly. American public support remained high, even after sustaining 23 casualties.³⁷

³¹ Ibid., 174.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 181.

³⁴ Larson, xx.

³⁵ Ibid., 11.

³⁶ Ibid., 11-13.

³⁷ Ibid., 42.

The Vietnam War and Somalia are cases where, as time wore on, objectives became less clear and public support fell in response to mounting American casualties.³⁸ A clear understanding of the purpose of the intervention is necessary to determine likelihood of success. If the objectives are unclear, public support is likely to erode as casualties mount; the longer the intervention, the greater the likelihood of casualties.³⁹ A corresponding correlation is the more likely the military appears to be able to achieve the objectives, the stronger the public support. However, determining success in advance of a military operation is very difficult. Absent the friction of war, technological capability and force size can assist in providing a reasonable approximation.

Through most of the Cold War, the United States maintained an armed force that in personnel and raw numbers of armaments was significantly smaller than that of the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, America started pursuing an offset strategy, emphasizing technological superiority over numbers, especially in Europe, the expected site of a major war with the Soviets.⁴⁰ A direct product of this strategy was the F-117. Designed to be difficult to detect and engage, the F-117's outstanding loss record in major air campaigns demonstrated to the American and world public the technological superiority of America's air forces. The stealth fighter was tied inextricably to the precision-guided munition, which was a corresponding American technology developed for Cold War advantage. With these paired capabilities, bombing accuracy and lethality increased over the years as first optically guided, then laser guided, and finally global positioning system (GPS) guided weapons were developed. The astonishing increase in bombing accuracy achieved from World War II to the Persian Gulf War meant that fewer aircraft were required to destroy the same number of targets.⁴¹ Buttressed by cockpit video from the Persian Gulf Campaign, widely broadcast on television, the Western public came to the

³⁸ John E. Mueller, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The People's 'Common Sense'," in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, 3rd ed., eds. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 47.

³⁹ Larson, 47.

⁴⁰ Paul G. Kaminski, "Low Observables: the Air Force and Stealth," in *Technology and the Air Force: A Retrospective Assessment*, eds. Jacob Neufeld, George M. Watson, and David Chenowith, (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), 299.

⁴¹ David R. Mets, "History of Armament," (presentation, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 2002), 9-14.

conclusion that the United States could strike and destroy any target it could find.⁴²

The combination of stealth and precision technologies is the embodiment of American military technological superiority and it has greatly increased the prospects for military success against traditional adversaries. As technological capability improved, America reduced the numerical size of its military forces, without a power-projection trade-off.⁴³ Despite its diminished size, the F-117's ability to attack highly defended targets with fantastic precision was significant in America's success against Iraq – trained and equipped with a Soviet-style military – in the Persian Gulf War.⁴⁴ That victory was the last chapter in the history of the Cold War, and cemented the American position at the head of a bold New World Order. Forces around the world, including its old nemesis the Soviet Union (now Russia), were being reduced as well. By the end of the 1990s, America's comparative numerical inferiority had greatly diminished.⁴⁵ By the end of the decade, the United States held a clear technological advantage and possessed a force large enough to face any of her traditional enemies on the battlefield with near numerical parity. The prospect for success for a well-defined military mission is today better than ever. This not only makes the president's decision to intervene easier, it greatly increased the likelihood that the public will support the intervention, which, in the manner of positive feedback, strengthens the president's resolve.

Prospective and Actual Costs. The fourth domestic factor the president must consider before intervening is the probable cost of the operation. Aside from personal concern for the safety of American lives, the president must gain and maintain public support for an intervention. "A majority of the public is concerned about U.S. casualties when they consider support for a U.S. military intervention...It furthermore is clear that, all else being equal, prospective and observed support for a U.S. military intervention decline as expected or actual casualties increase."⁴⁶ As America's dependence on airpower has grown, the public has become very aware of the number of aircrew and

⁴² Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 92.

⁴³ US Department of Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 120th Ed. Washington DC: Economics and Statistics Administration, 2000, p. 369.

⁴⁴ Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 189.

⁴⁵ Ignatieff, 92.

⁴⁶ Larson, 7.

aircraft the United States loses during combat. This is, perhaps, the area where the marriage of stealth and precision technology has had the greatest impact on the president's decision to intervene.

The F-117 and B-2 have amassed an amazing combat record. In over ten years of employment, just one stealth aircraft, an F-117 during Operation Allied Force, has been lost to hostile fire, and in that lone instance the pilot returned safely. When compared to the Korean and Vietnam War records, American aircraft and aircrew losses have dropped precipitously. This is explainable in large part to the protection afforded by stealth technology. But stealth technology reduces risk to more than just the pilots and aircraft flying direct combat missions. Stealth aircraft target efficiency means fewer support aircraft are needed for a comparable level of damage inflicted, thus fewer planes and aviators are put directly in harm's way.⁴⁷ This overall reduction in risk to American (and coalition) aviators dramatically reduced combat losses, reducing the perceived cost (in casualties) of intervention.

And not just friendly casualties are reduced, a factor important to a nation with the sense of righteousness in action. The PGM has reduced collateral damage as well, to infrastructure but more importantly to noncombatants. The ability to strike with precision that is perceived as "laser surgery"⁴⁸ means that the United States is ideally capable of hitting precisely, and only, those targets it wishes. Yet this capacity is a sword that cuts two ways. Interest in reducing unintended civilian casualties during war is longstanding, and during the last decade, emphasis on it has grown, with perhaps unexpected ramifications for policy. Military operations were directly affected, for example, from the planning process forward in both air campaigns in the Balkans.⁴⁹ The expectation of close to zero collateral damage has placed severe constraints on combat operations, and complicated military and political processes when mistakes unavoidably do occur.⁵⁰ American and world public hold the American military to a higher standard

⁴⁷ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 156.

⁴⁸ Ignatieff, 92.

⁴⁹ Wayne Thompson, *To Hanoi and Back: The United States Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966-1972* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 285.

⁵⁰ Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, 139.

of discrimination than its enemies, perhaps to the long-term best interest of the United States. This asymmetric constraint has emphasized the importance of accurate intelligence and targeting during an air campaign, increasing again the value of stealth and PGMs. Diplomatic difficulties arose with the mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during Operation Allied Force. It also led to much tighter restraints on the coalition's continued use of force.⁵¹ In another example, during the Persian Gulf War, the unintended deaths of over one hundred Iraqi women and children who were seeking refuge in a valid military target, caused the coalition to halt bombing downtown Baghdad until late in the war.⁵²

Neither the F-117 or PGMs are infallible, but the combination of the two has had an enormous effect on the president's decision to intervene. Not only are fewer aircraft required to hit a target, the ones used are much more difficult to shoot down, greatly increasing the probability of successful engagement with decreased risk of loss. When PGMs are used to destroy a target, the chance of unintended civilian casualties is greatly reduced, provided the targeting information is correct. While expectations of perfection may complicate the president's decision to intervene, the reduction in friendly and unintended civilian casualties has significantly reduced the perceived cost of military intervention in terms of human life. This not only eases the president's decision to intervene, but also affects the public's decision to support the intervention, which *also* affects the president's decision.

The Decision to Intervene: International Factors

While the president must be attuned to the domestic reaction to military intervention, he must also consider the impact on and views of our allies, neutrals, and potential enemies.⁵³ Even as the world's lone superpower, the United States rarely acts without coalition backing, for "few major political-economic events fail to have some

⁵¹ Ibid., 144.

⁵² Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 202. Public opinion was decidedly against the United States precisely because it has such precise control over its weapons, and not against Sadaam Hussein, who was using these innocents as human shields for his military facilities – later claiming, with the evidence of non-combatant corpses, that the Americans were bombing indiscriminately. It was a ploy that played on the sensibilities of the American people, and it worked.

⁵³ Hess, ix.

effect on every country on the globe.”⁵⁴

Alliances and Coalitions. Alliances have existed since the beginning of politics. They are traditionally formal agreements that enhance both parties’ interests and are generally oriented toward a common threat.⁵⁵ While alliances exist in peacetime for deterrence as well as wartime use, coalitions are generally associated with prosecuting a war or other military action to a specific outcome.⁵⁶ Coalitions provide three key elements to military action: legitimacy, access, and cost sharing.⁵⁷ So important is the logic that the majority of the major wars fought in the twentieth century, America’s included, were under a coalition or alliance.⁵⁸ The United States’ coalition experience started with World War I, where America provided principally manpower, and in doing so was able to exert significant influence on the conduct of the war.⁵⁹ From World War II on, the United States has played the dominant role in all of its alliances or wartime coalitions. America rarely acted unilaterally, exclusively in small military actions, but even operations like the terrorism-reprisal raid on Libya in 1986 highlighted the utility of cooperation from other countries. The Persian Gulf War showed how the United States, fully able to act unilaterally, valued a coalition to provide legitimacy for its military action.⁶⁰

While much is gained by allied support, there are trade-offs here as well. The post-Cold War world order clearly demonstrates the limitations that coalitions and alliances can impose on military action. When the national interests of a partner are not

⁵⁴ Laurence Martin, “Alliances and Alignments in a Globalizing World,” in *The Global Century: Globalization and National Security*, Vol. II, ed. by Richard L. Kugler and Ellen L. Frost (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2001), 599. This self-imposed requirement has been rhetorically lifted in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the United States. Nonetheless, no post-attack unilateral action has been taken to date.

⁵⁵ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 3-12.

⁵⁶ Maj Jeffrey W. Yeager, “Coalition Warfare: Surrendering Sovereignty,” *Military Review*, Nov 1992, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Lt Col Michael A. O’Halloran, “The Vulnerability of Coalitions,” *The US Naval Institute Proceedings* Vol. 126/9/1,171 (September 2000), p. 62.

⁵⁸ Steve Bowman, “Historical and Cultural Influences on Coalition Operations,” in *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, ed. by Thomas J. Marshall, et. al. (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 1.

⁵⁹ Yeager, 55.

⁶⁰ Susan Rosegrant and Michael D. Watkins, “The Gulf Crisis: Building a Coalition for War,” in Jentleson, *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy: Readings and Cases*, 240.

sufficiently threatened, the coalition may suffer from a lack of leadership and dissolve, as happened in Somalia.⁶¹ The two major interventions in the Balkans, Operation Deliberate Force and Operation Allied Force, vividly illustrated how political considerations in the interest of alliance cohesion can detrimentally affect military operations.⁶²

Another source of friction in coalition war fighting is technological incompatibility. Increasingly, the United States is operating military equipment that is far superior to that of its allies. While coalition partners have provided invaluable support capabilities, it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate together efficiently, and more friction can be expected in the future if European and other allied forces are not modernized.⁶³ Still, coalitions seem destined to be a part of any future American intervention. They provide great political utility and can provide access for military forces, but there is inherent friction within them. They may not make the president's decision to intervene easier or harder, but they do add a level of complexity in the decision process.

Conclusion

The United States has escalated the frequency of its military intervention in the decade following the end of the Cold War, even as threats to its vital national interests have greatly diminished. The reduced risk of escalation to global thermonuclear war has decreased American aversion to military intervention, but alone is equivocal in explaining the sizeable increase in post-Cold War deployment and use of military forces abroad. The debut and subsequent performance of advanced stealth and precision technology has played a more persuasive role in the apparently easing decision to

⁶¹ Lester H. Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, 1992-1998* (Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1998), 20.

⁶² *Kosovo Air Operations: Need to Maintain Alliance Cohesion Resulted in Doctrinal Departures*, United States General Accounting Office Report to Congressional Requesters, Report number GAO-01-784 (Washington DC: General Accounting Office, July 2001), 2.

⁶³ *Operation Allied Force: Lessons for the Future*, RAND Research Brief RB75 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), on-line. Internet, 15 March 2002. Available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB75/>.

intervene with force. Stealth aircraft dropping precision weapons decrease the risk to American airmen, reducing the loss of American lives in combat. Precision weapons further reduce the risk of unintended civilian casualties. These interrelated outcomes have a positive effect on domestic and international political support, prospects of military success, and perceived cost in human lives of intervention. All of these perceived benefits allow the president to intervene for less-than-vital interests, and to maintain continuing public support for that intervention.

Stealth aircraft and precision weapons create the enhanced intervention conditions that permit the President to intervene where and when he sees fit. The United States is no longer bound to a policy of avoiding confrontational or escalation scenarios, regardless of humanitarian or moral imperative. Technology has allowed policy to take a much more liberal stance. It has driven policy. Perhaps this is the way it ought to be. And these conditions will continue to exist as such and as long as the United States maintains its technological advantage.

Chapter 2

The Benefits of Military Action: Interests

The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their houses and farms are to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will deliver them. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.

- George Washington

Address to the Continental Army before the
Battle of Long Island (27 August 1776)

The president of the United States holds primary responsibility for conducting the nation's foreign affairs. The most significant decision the president can make in this regard is whether, and how, to go to war. The decision is complex, and can never be easy; with several key issues weighing heavily in the option to use military force. Moreover, the president cannot act unrestrained. Although commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the chief executive still must consider the views, partisan and non-partisan alike, of the legislative branch before committing the nation to war. Additionally, he needs to carefully evaluate the views and objectives of allies, who may or may not have a vested interest in the issue. Finally, the president must consider "that amorphous-but always very real-force of public opinion."⁶⁴ The relative importance of each of these factors will vary with the situation, but each has a distinct bearing on the president's decision. The president must ultimately be able to justify to the American public and body politic why it is necessary to risk American lives. At the very root of this justification is American national interest.

⁶⁴ Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), ix.

National Interests

National interests are the goals or ends desired by a nation either domestically or in its relations with other nations. Vital national interests are peculiar to international politics and are comprised of two characteristics: first, the nation is unwilling to compromise on the issue, and second, the nation is willing to go to war over the issue.⁶⁵ Beyond these loose guidelines, vital national interests can be hard to define in advance of a crisis. Historically, the United States has been willing to use force in support of a broad range of interests. National survival, obviously, tops the list. The United States has also shown willingness to fight in support of “maintaining freedom of the seas, opposing aggression by one state against another, protecting U.S. citizens abroad, the sanctity of the Western Hemisphere from outside powers (the Monroe Doctrine), and ... humanitarian reasons.”⁶⁶ Within the last twenty years, counterterrorism has been added to the list. In most cases, at the beginning of a crisis, a threat to a significant United States interest has supported the use of force. However, the importance of an interest may not be apparent until it is actually threatened, as was the case with the Korean War.

In recent years, the United States has attempted to define national interests more solidly. Recent presidents have published a National Security Strategy that describes the United States’ engagement plan for the entire globe. The current NSS defines three broad categories of national interest and gives guidance about those in which the use of force is deemed appropriate. The most critical interests are *vital national interests*, which have:

⁶⁵ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 27-28.

⁶⁶ Mark M. Lowenthal and Robert L. Goldich, eds., *Use of Force by the United States: Case Studies, 1950-1991*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1992), 2.

broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety and vitality of our nation. Among these are the physical security of our territory and that of our allies, the safety of our citizens, the economic well-being of our society, and the protection of our critical infrastructures – including energy, banking and finance, telecommunications, transportation, water systems and emergency services – from paralyzing attack. We will do what we must to defend these interests, including, when necessary and appropriate, using our military might unilaterally and decisively.⁶⁷

The next priority interests are *important interests*. These are interests that:

do not affect our national survival, but they do affect our national well-being and the character of the world in which we live. Important national interests include, for example, regions in which we have a sizable economic stake or commitments to allies, protecting the global environment from severe harm, and crises with a potential to generate substantial and highly destabilizing refugee flows. Our efforts to halt the flow of refugees from Haiti and restore democracy in that country, our participation in NATO operations to end the brutal conflicts and restore peace in Bosnia and Kosovo, and our assistance to Asian allies and friends supporting the transition in East Timor are examples.⁶⁸

Threats to important interests may call for the use of force if they are threatened. The final category of interests is *humanitarian and other interests*. These are situations where:

our nation may act because our values demand it. Examples include responding to natural and manmade disasters; promoting human rights and seeking to halt gross violations of those rights; supporting democratization, adherence to the rule of law and civilian control of the military; assisting humanitarian demining; and promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. The spread of democracy and respect for the rule of law helps to create a world community that is more hospitable to U.S. values and interests.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington DC: The White House, 1999), 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

Humanitarian and other interests are the least likely to prompt the use of military force if they are threatened. Although specific definition of these interests has happened only recently, their intent is consistent throughout America's history. America's national interests provide the framework for the president to shape the country's response to events around the globe. At a time of crisis, the president can relate the situation to broader national interests and establish objectives for America's role in the resolution of the crisis.⁷⁰

Interests and Conflict

America's response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was the last time the country officially declared war. The attack on United States soil represented a grave threat to the existence of the country. The response could be nothing short of all-out war if America was to exist without fear. After Pearl Harbor, the next attack on American soil would not occur for almost exactly sixty years, and yet the United States engaged militarily around the world numerous times. After World War II, threats to America were less well defined, and they have often rested on ideological foundations.

Containment

The United States and Soviet Union made for strange bedfellows during World War II. The presence of a common enemy brought together two almost diametrically opposed political ideologies. Indeed, the destruction of Western capitalism and of the state-system itself was a publicly proclaimed goal of the Soviet state. After the defeat of the Third Reich, old tensions reemerged. An expansionist foreign policy and atomic weapons made the Soviet Union a formidable threat. President Truman, in the 1947 Truman Doctrine, pledged to "support free peoples who are resisting attempted

⁷⁰ Hess, 229.

subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”⁷¹ In 1950, America’s policy toward the Soviet Union was set in NSC-68, a top secret document that established America’s stance on Communism and communist expansion throughout the world. NSC-68 characterized an ideological struggle with the Soviet Union, a country that was “animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and (seeking) to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world.”⁷² America was committed to preventing the spread of Communism any farther across the globe. This took shape as the policy of containment.⁷³

The Korean War. Before the surprise North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950, the security of South Korea was thought to be outside the primary focus of American foreign policy. The United States had withdrawn troops from the country in 1949 and Secretary of State Dean Acheson notably left it out of the Far Eastern defense perimeter in a speech on 12 January 1950.⁷⁴ In the event of military invasion, Acheson made it clear that countries outside the defense perimeter, South Korea included, must resist while the United Nations marshaled forces in opposition to the aggression.⁷⁵ America, however, did not completely abandon South Korea. Korea was split apart after World War II, with the southern half of the country ostensibly under democratic rule. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff were willing to cede the country to communist dominion in the event of a war, President Truman agreed that the United States should strengthen the government “helping to counter the impression that communism was the wave of Asia’s future.”⁷⁶ This strengthening effort was not to be a United States-only endeavor. Truman

⁷¹ Elmer Plischke, ed., *Contemporary U.S. Foreign Policy: Documents and Commentary* (New York, N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1991), 183.

⁷² William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 42.

⁷³ See “X”, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1947): 566-582.

⁷⁴ Lowenthal and Goldich, 7.

⁷⁵ Hess, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

took the issue to the newly-formed United Nations, pushing for international action to prompt free elections throughout the country.

When North Korea invaded, the United States intervened militarily with full United Nations support. The intervention was “intended to thwart aggression, force North Korea to withdraw above the 38th parallel (the pre-war dividing line between North Korea and South Korea) and, more generally, to contain communist aggression.”⁷⁷ Within the United States government and in the United Nations, it was believed that the Soviet Union was behind the invasion and that the world was witnessing the first stage of an aggression that mirrored the actions of the Third Reich in the 1930s.⁷⁸ Truman believed that the Soviets were testing the resolve of the United States as well as the United Nations, and that inaction was not an alternative. They had to meet the threat in order to prevent another bout of Hitler-type expansion by a stronger state over weaker ones.⁷⁹ For President Truman, the national interest of containing communist expansion, as well as providing support to a free government that was fighting against outside oppression fully justified military action in Korea. He received initial widespread bipartisan and public support for his decision to enter the war.⁸⁰

The Vietnam War. The Korean War focused America’s attention on the Far East. While still maintaining a Europe-first strategy, American policy makers recognized Asia as a vital battleground in the ideological struggle against communism. Prior to 1961, the American role in South Vietnam was limited to supplying military advisors in the fight against communist insurgents. The first formal commitment to South Vietnam actually occurred on 27 June 1950, when President Truman pledged assistance to the French in their struggle in Southeast Asia in concert with the American effort against the

⁷⁷ Lowenthal and Goldich, 7.

⁷⁸ Hess, 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁰ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 20.

North Koreans.⁸¹ President Eisenhower ruled out direct intervention in Vietnam, reflecting a widely held concern about entangling America in an “Asian quagmire.”⁸² However, with the French withdrawal in 1954, the United States began to slide down the slippery slope of involvement. Consonant with the United States’ containment policy, the new policy goal was to help South Vietnam maintain its independence.

As South Vietnam’s independence became more imperiled, President Eisenhower increased military assistance to the government. The now infamous ‘domino theory’ was used to justify the increase in support. If South Vietnam fell to communism, the theory went, so to would the rest of Southeast Asia. “To American officials, the most intractable threat posed by the Soviet Union and the Chinese People’s Republic, ... was the capacity of the communist powers to exert influence in developing nations.”⁸³ President Kennedy continued the efforts of his predecessors in attempting to contain the expansion of the Chinese Communists, increasing the American military commitment to South Vietnam significantly. By 1963, Kennedy had publicly established the security of South Vietnam as “a major interest of the United States as of other free nations” and that it was “a policy of the United States, in South Viet-Nam as in other parts of the world, to support the efforts of the people of that country to defeat aggression and to build a peaceful and free society.”⁸⁴

The most significant event regarding America’s entry into war in Vietnam occurred on 2 August 1964. North Vietnamese patrol boats fired on the destroyer *USS Maddox*, cruising in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, in the first of two attacks on American ships over the next two days. President Johnson called upon Congress to pass a resolution making it “clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the

⁸¹ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *The Eagle’s Talons: America’s Experience at War* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 262.

⁸² Lowenthal and Goldich, 11.

⁸³ Hess, 75.

⁸⁴ Plischke, 265.

area.”⁸⁵ The resulting Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed by the Senate with an 88-2 supporting vote and the House with a 414-0 vote. Although controversy later surrounded the incident, as well as the president’s use of it to engender support for direct military action, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution provided the basis for dramatically increased American involvement in Vietnam. The resolution also established the significance of the region with regard to the security of the nation in Section 2, stating “the United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia.”⁸⁶

Détente and Other Vital Interests

An emerging relaxation in tensions between the United States and both China and the Soviet Union dominated America’s exit from the Vietnam War. The United States needed to withdraw from the war but still show its resolve on the international stage. President Nixon’s ideas of “Peace with honor” and Vietnamization of the war were driven by the desire to show both China and the Soviet Union that the United States could not be pushed around in the face of increasing Soviet strength in Asia. The end of the war in January 1973 gave the president the opportunity to work on improving relations with both countries without the financial and political drain of the conflict.⁸⁷ This marked the beginning of détente, an easing of tensions between the United States and the two strongest Communist powers in the world. Although containing communism remained a central part of its foreign policy, other interests would capture America’s attention for the next decade and a half.

The *Mayaguez* Incident. In May 1975, President Gerald Ford authorized the bombing of the Cambodian mainland and invasion of the island of Koh Tang in response

⁸⁵ Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 88th Congress 2nd Session....1964, Volume XX (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1965), 332.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Stephen W. Hook, and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 15th Ed. (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000), 142-145.

to the Cambodian capture of the American merchant ship *Mayaguez*. The Cambodians seized the ship in international waters and detained its crew. The United States' response was justified for two reasons: the right to freedom of the seas and the need to protect American lives. Freedom of the seas has long been a tenet of American foreign policy. It was used to justify the War of 1812 as well as America's entry into World War I (with the sinking of the *Lusitania*). Freedom of navigation on the seas remains an integral part of its ability to protect its vital national interests, as expressed in the 1999 National Security Strategy: "The United States is committed to preserving internationally recognized freedom of navigation on and overflight of the world's oceans, which are critical to the future strength of our nation and to maintaining global stability. Freedom of navigation and overflight are essential to our economic security and for the worldwide movement and sustainment of U.S. military forces."⁸⁸ Acting decisively to protect American lives abroad also has a strong historical precedent.

America had other reasons to respond to the Cambodian aggression. Saigon had fallen only twelve days earlier and Europeans openly questioned the United States' ability to continue to act as a major international force. An unambiguous response to the situation would help diffuse such sentiments. "Public statements concerning possible or eventual U.S. actions concentrated on reacting to the act of piracy, but it was widely understood that other issues were also at stake."⁸⁹ Still, central to America's response was President Ford's desire to save the crew of the *Mayaguez*. In his memoirs, the president states that he was "responding to an act of piracy by doing everything I could to save American lives."⁹⁰ The operation was successful, but forty-one Americans were killed. The American people viewed the president's actions favorably, however, and his approval ratings went up eleven points in the immediate aftermath of the military action.⁹¹ The protection of American lives would lie at the center of numerous American

⁸⁸ The White House, 12.

⁸⁹ Lowenthal and Goldich, 53.

⁹⁰ Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979), 282.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 284.

military actions to follow.

The Iran Hostage Crisis--Desert One. In January 1979, a mob of Iranian students stormed the American embassy in Tehran, and took sixty-six Americans hostages. Thirteen were released soon after, but fifty-three remained in captivity for four hundred and forty-four days. President Carter pursued diplomatic efforts and economic sanctions, but was unable to secure their release. In April 1980, an elite military force attempted unsuccessfully to rescue the hostages and met a tragic end when two aircraft collided in a remote desert and eight servicemen lost their lives.⁹² In an address to the nation after the aborted mission, President Carter stated that he had based his decision to use the military on “the mounting dangers that were posed to the safety of the hostages themselves and the growing realization that their early release was highly unlikely....”⁹³ Once again, the safety of American lives, a vital national interest, was used to support the use of military force.

Lebanon. In August 1982, United States Marines began a one-and-a-half year, ill-fated deployment to Lebanon. They were initially put there as part of a multi-national force to protect Syrian and PLO soldiers as they evacuated from Beirut, which was surrounded by Israeli forces. This mission was successfully completed by mid-September and most forces left, but they soon returned as civil war broke out. In March 1983, the State Department outlined the United States’ goals in Lebanon: first, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, second, securing Israel’s northern border, third, restoring and reinforcing a stable central government in Lebanon, supporting Lebanese sovereignty throughout the country, and finally, the safety and security of Lebanese citizens.⁹⁴ There was considerable disagreement in the United States about whether or not America had interests in Lebanon that justified the presence of United States troops. This debate reached a fever pitch after 23 October 1983, when a terrorist attack on their Beirut

⁹² For an account of the operation, see Otto Kreisher, “Desert One,” *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 82, no. 1 (January 1999): 60-67.

⁹³ Plischke, 337.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

barracks killed 241 Marines. President Reagan, in defending the military presence there, explained:

We have vital interests in Lebanon and our actions in Lebanon are in the cause of world peace...Peace in Lebanon is key to the region's stability now and in the future...If Lebanon ends up under the tyranny of forces hostile to the West, not only will our strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean be threatened but also the stability of the entire Middle East including the vast resources of the Arabian Peninsula...⁹⁵

President Reagan was not the first to state that Lebanon constituted a vital United States interest. Upon the first deployment of military forces there in 1958, President Eisenhower had said the same thing. However, considerable debate existed then, as now, as to whether or not interests there were *vital*. America's interests in the region arguably stem more from ties in the Lebanese-American community, Lebanon's pro-Western stance, historic trade and cultural ties, and other cultural issues than those traditionally considered vital.⁹⁶ Unquestionably, a pro-American government that could act as a stabilizing influence in the region was a favorable situation for the United States, but could only be considered vital in a looser interpretation of the larger Cold War scheme. The American public apparently did not consider lofty goals of world peace and protecting the region from a non-Western oriented hegemon to be vital national interests, as reflected in the extreme drop off in support for the operation after the barracks bombing.⁹⁷ The public's reaction to the barracks bombing showed that it has little tolerance for American casualties when vital national interests are not at stake. This peacekeeping action and its associated nebulous goals would present an almost eerie template for military intervention in the 1990s.

Grenada. In October 1983, the safety of American citizens abroad was again threatened in the tiny Caribbean nation of Grenada. After a violent coup deposed and eventually killed Marxist President Maurice Bishop, concern for the safety of over 600

⁹⁵ Ibid., 344.

⁹⁶ Clyde R. Mark, *Lebanon-Updated December 11, 2001*, Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 2001), 2-3.

⁹⁷ Larson, xviii.

Americans on the island rose dramatically. The new ruling government was highly unstable and there was concern that they would use the American students and faculty of the St. George's University Medical School as hostages to gain the return of Bishop's predecessor, who was in the United States. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), joined by Barbados and Jamaica, appealed directly to the United States for military intervention to stabilize the situation in Grenada. On 25 October 1983, United States Marines and Rangers executed Operation Urgent Fury and invaded Grenada. While small contingents of forces were present from some OECS nations, the action was essentially unilateral.

In a press conference, President Reagan outlined the three purposes of the operation. The first was to protect innocent lives. The second was to forestall further chaos. The third purpose was to assist in the restoration of law and order in Grenada, where "a group of leftist thugs violently seized power..."⁹⁸ The obvious reason for the intervention was to safeguard the Americans lives. President Reagan feared the development of another Iran-hostage type situation.⁹⁹ But Cold War entanglements complicated the clear threat to Americans, and Grenada had been identified as a potential problem much earlier than 1983. The pro-Western government had been overthrown in 1979, and Cuba was helping build a large runway on the island, possibly capable of handling the Soviet Union's intercontinental bombers. A strong Cold War overtone existed as "the United States viewed Cuban assistance to Grenada with the construction of an airfield, naval base, munitions storage area, barracks, and a Soviet-style training area as another projection of Soviet power into the Caribbean."¹⁰⁰

Increasing the perceived severity of the threat, the United States has a long established interest in the security of the Caribbean region. In 1823, President James

⁹⁸ Plischke, 309.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 307.

¹⁰⁰ Nina M. Serafino, *Military Interventions by U.S. Forces from Vietnam to Bosnia: Background, Outcomes, and 'Lessons Learned' for Kosovo*, Congressional Research Report for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1999), 15.

Monroe established that the United States would resist any foreign power attempting to expand into the Western Hemisphere. This was a bold pronouncement for the young nation, but one that would become preserved as the Monroe Doctrine. President Franklin Roosevelt modified the unilateral precedent of the Monroe Doctrine with the Good Neighbor Policy, limiting American military action in Latin America, but in so doing set the foundations for the collective security agreement that led to the formation of the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS formalized a ‘consultative process’ wherein the United States consulted Latin American countries on international issues that affected the region, setting up a special relationship with the countries in the region.¹⁰¹ President Kennedy, in 1962, reasserted the Monroe Doctrine, however, in support of his actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁰²

In spite of having well-established interests in the region, the United States was forced to veto a United Nations Security Council draft resolution that condemned American interference in the internal affairs of Grenada. The United States also faced strong criticism from some close allies.¹⁰³ Domestically, there was fairly strong support in both Congress and the public because they understood the importance of saving American lives and containing Soviet expansion.¹⁰⁴

Libya. In April 1986, United States military forces bombed targets in Libya in response to overt terrorist acts against its citizens around the world. The Libyan government of Muammar al-Qadhafi supported the organizations responsible for these attacks. United States-Libyan relations had been troubled since 1973, when Libya claimed the entire Gulf of Sidra as its own territorial waters, well beyond the established twelve-mile international convention. The United States rejected this claim and routinely

¹⁰¹ Jeremy R. Azrael, and Emil A. Payin, eds., *U.S. and Russian Policymaking With Respect to the Use of Force*, RAND Report CF-129-CRES (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 122.

¹⁰² Plischke, 183.

¹⁰³ Serafino, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Julie Johnette O’Neal, “U.S. Intervention in Grenada, Panama, and Haiti: A Social Constructionist Perspective” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1995), 35.

conducted naval exercises in the Gulf to support the American position of freedom of the open seas. This insistence on access to international waters is a long-standing precedent of American foreign policy. In fact, naval attacks intended to neutralize North Africa's Barbary Pirates in 1806 probably mark the United States' first attempt to use military force internationally, and provide some precedent for the eventual American use of force in Libya.¹⁰⁵ Numerous low-level military incidents occurred from 1981 to 1986 over American (and international) rights to operate freely in the Gulf of Sidra, including the downing of Libyan fighters sent to interdict United States warships and the bombing of Libyan military targets in acts of retaliation and self-defense.

The Reagan administration came into office concerned about the rise in international terrorism and specifically Libya's role in that rise.¹⁰⁶ It had "a preoccupation with the role that Libya played as a supporter of international terrorism, as a surrogate for Soviet adventurism and as a regional problem vis-à-vis its neighbors in North Africa."¹⁰⁷ In January 1986, President Reagan froze Libyan assets in the United States and ordered American citizens out of that country. In April 1986, a bomb exploded at a German club in West Berlin, killing an American serviceman. When strong evidence of Libyan support for the attack surfaced, President Reagan had the necessary rationale to respond militarily. United States Air Force and Navy aircraft conducted Operation El Dorado Canyon, bombing terrorist-related targets in Tripoli. In selecting the targets, the president was specific in the requirement that they be military, in order to reduce the possibility of civilian casualties.¹⁰⁸ The raid was largely a tactical success, with the loss of just one American aircraft and crew to enemy ground fire. In his report to Congress, President Reagan asserted that the raid was "conducted in the exercise of our right of self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This necessary and appropriate action was a preemptive strike, directed against the Libyan

¹⁰⁵ Lowenthal and Goldich, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 77-78.

terrorist infrastructure and designed to deter acts of terrorism by Libya....”¹⁰⁹ As a response to the loss of an American life and a prevention of similar future losses, the attack was understood to be in support of a vital national interest. It “demonstrated that such uses of force could be carried out with fairly broad support at home and minimal condemnation abroad, especially if the regime being confronted was largely seen as an international ‘troublemaker.’”¹¹⁰

The End of the Cold War

During the 1980s, tensions between the United States and Soviet Union gradually thawed. Early in the decade, President Reagan referred to the Soviet Union as the “evil Empire,” demanding from Congress the monies necessary for an across the board build-up of military forces to go beyond containment and begin the task of rolling back the communist threat.¹¹¹ Yet, by the end of his administration, Reagan had crafted a working relationship and genuine respect for Mikhail Gorbachev, who became the political leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. These two extraordinary leaders were able to break the cycle of arms racing and for the first time since 1949, begin true arms reduction. Much of this was credited to Gorbachev’s policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring), which paved the way for political, economic, and military reforms in the Soviet Union.¹¹² Although his intent had always been to imitate Lenin’s New Economic Policy, a revitalization of the state through the controlled injection of democratic and capitalist reforms en route to a stronger communist government, the pace of reform surprised Gorbachev and he soon attempted to rein them in.¹¹³ Although Gorbachev did

¹⁰⁹ Plischke, 349.

¹¹⁰ Lowenthal and Goldich, 78.

¹¹¹ Ronald Reagan, speech to the House of Commons, London, England, 8 June 1982, n.p. on-line, Internet, 1 May 2002, available from <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/r40/speeches/empire.htm>.

¹¹² Plischke, 543.

¹¹³ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 11-13. See also Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (New York, N.Y.: Times

briefly attempt to retain the Soviet Union in its old form through the use of force, the clarion for capitalist liberal democracy had sounded, and his policies enabled the first real steps toward the democratization of Soviet-bloc countries. International tensions eased, and both the Soviet Union and United States pursued efforts to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles. The reduction in tensions also reduced the possibility that a small-scale or limited war could escalate into a major East versus West conflict. This critically important event gave the United States more latitude in the decision to use force in pursuit of foreign policy goals.

Panama. On 20 December 1989, American forces invaded Panama to apprehend General Manuel Noriega. The invasion capped two years of American and OAS diplomatic and economic efforts to oust the commander of the Panamanian Defense Forces. United States policy had been oriented toward a transition to democratic rule and the extradition of Noriega to American soil to face criminal drug trafficking charges. Half a year earlier, in May 1989, Noriega had overturned a free election result that would have put him out of power.¹¹⁴ Long-standing American presence in Panama had clearly made it a state of high interest, but until the invasion, American efforts to restore democracy had been limited to non-recognition of the Noriega government and economic sanctions. The OAS, which desired a negotiated settlement of the crisis, supported these non-violent efforts.¹¹⁵ However, by December 1989 the situation in Panama became increasingly dangerous for American citizens. At the time, the United States maintained a significant military presence in the Panama Canal Zone, over which it had governance. Panamanian security forces attacked numerous Americans, killing one and severely injuring several others. They also began threatening the remaining 35,000 Americans in the area and threatened the security of the Panama Canal.¹¹⁶ Adding fuel to the fire, Noriega “declared his military dictatorship to be in a state of war with the United

Books, 1985).

¹¹⁴ Lowenthal and Goldich, 89.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Plischke, 313.

States....”¹¹⁷ These actions proved reason enough for President George Bush to intervene militarily to safeguard American citizens as well as the Panama Canal. The president explained that Operation Just Cause had four primary objectives: first, protecting the Americans in the region, second, defending democracy, third, combating drug trafficking and apprehending Noriega, and fourth, protecting the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty.¹¹⁸ He explained, in an address to the nation, that as “...president, I have no higher obligation than to safeguard the lives of American citizens in Panama and to bring General Noriega to justice in the United States....”¹¹⁹

Although American rationale and resolve was clear regarding the issue, there was both domestic and international opposition to the intervention. Some observers questioned the amount of force used and whether Panama Canal operations were actually threatened. Many others simply asserted that the invasion and extradition were clear violations of international law. Several governments worldwide criticized the action, but there was also widespread recognition that a significant line had been crossed, and that all other avenues of redress had failed. The OAS passed a resolution that “deeply regretted” the action, but since then United States-Latin American relations have not suffered.¹²⁰ However, the American public saw both the security of American lives and the apprehension of Noriega were seen as valid national interests, and public support was generally strong for the action.¹²¹ As with Grenada, the United States had shown a willingness to intervene in Latin America, even in the face of international opposition.

The Persian Gulf War. On 2 August 1990, Iraqi forces invaded and occupied Kuwait. Bent on ‘liberating’ Iraq’s so-called nineteenth province and re-incorporating it into Iraq, Saddam Hussein stationed his forces in a threatening manner on the border with Saudi Arabia. President George Bush took swift action and immediately implemented

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 314.

¹¹⁸ Lowenthal and Goldich, 89.

¹¹⁹ Plischke, 314.

¹²⁰ Lowenthal and Goldich, 91.

¹²¹ Larson, xvii.

harsh economic sanctions against Iraq. He then began to form a remarkable coalition of Arab and European nations in the event that military intervention would be required. He carefully and precisely identified four principles that would guide United States policy during the crisis. First, Iraq must unconditionally withdraw all forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored. Third, the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf must be maintained. Finally, action must be taken to safeguard United States citizens abroad.¹²² These four principles would eventually coalesce into the Bush Doctrine. President Bush quickly enlisted the United Nations in his efforts to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. United Nations Resolution 660 called for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces, the first of his principles. In his memoirs, President Bush recounts how he viewed the situation as similar to the 1930s, when a weak League of Nations could not stand up to the German aggression that led to World War II. It was clear that unwavering United States leadership would be required to resolve the crisis satisfactorily.¹²³

The Gulf War represents the turning point in American military involvement overseas, yet many standing principles of national interest were extant. The United States has long had established interests in the Persian Gulf region, not the least among them a concern for the free flow of oil to industrialized nations around the world. The 1980 Carter Doctrine clearly outlined America's interest in the stability of the region:

Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region 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.¹²⁴

Given the obvious aggression of Saddam Hussein, the Carter Doctrine provided sufficient precedent for American military intervention. However, President Bush chose a different approach. While preventing a regional hegemon from gaining control of the Middle East

¹²² Lowenthal and Goldich, 97.

¹²³ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 303.

¹²⁴ Plischke, 199.

would have been justification enough just ten years earlier, President Bush outlined five assumptions that would additionally guide new national intervention policy. First, the Iraqi invasion challenged the stability of the post-Cold War international structure. It was a direct attack on the New World Order, one dominated by emerging peace among the superpowers. Second, the aggression posed a significant economic threat to the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and other nations dependent upon Middle East oil. Third, if the United States (and it alone) did not provide adequate leadership in the crisis, Saddam Hussein would be victorious. Fourth, the invasion was the first critical test of the United Nations' credibility in upholding order in the post-Cold War world. Finally, the United States had to insist on the *unconditional* withdrawal of all Iraqi forces.¹²⁵

President Bush could have explained American military involvement solely in terms of vital national interest, but he chose to characterize Iraq's actions as being just plain wrong. Its aggression against a weaker state had no place in the new, post-Cold War world, and it was necessary for the United States and its allies to reject it as an affirmation of moral principle. In a speech to the American people, he made it clear that it was "not an American problem or a European problem or a Middle East problem. It (was) the world's problem."¹²⁶ Although there was initial Congressional reticence about offensive action, by the time Operation Desert Storm commenced in January 1991, there was full public and government support for the action.

¹²⁵ My emphases, see Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 168-169. While numerous commentators saw President Bush's New World Order as a ratification of the principles of the United Nations, it was in fact a radical departure from the collective security design of that organization. Article 1 of the United Nations Charter makes it clear that an attack on one member is an attack on all. This is raw deterrence based upon balance of power equation that supposedly could not be overcome. Under President Bush, aggression was now wrong in principle, and should be rejected as morally unacceptable by all civilized states. Also see Everett Dolman, *Astropolitik: Classical Geopolitics in the Space Age*, (London, England: Frank Cass, 2002), 165.

¹²⁶ Hess, 168.

Enlargement

The Persian Gulf War marked a departure in America's foreign policy. The collapse of the Soviet Union made containment, the long-standing pillar of its foreign policy, obsolete. The end of the Cold War forced America to reconsider its entire strategy for global engagement.¹²⁷ In this spirit, the Clinton Administration developed a policy of enlargement. This policy consisted of four components. First, to strengthen established major market democracies, and to allow enlargement through globalization to proceed from there. Second, to help foster and consolidate new or emerging democracies and free market economies. Third, to counter aggression from states hostile to democracy and markets. Finally, to pursue a humanitarian agenda of providing aid and comfort, so as to help encourage democracy and market economics where they did not exist.¹²⁸ These four components manifested themselves as a new category of national interest of the United States, encapsulated in the 1999 National Security Strategy as humanitarian national interest. While the use of military force in pursuit of vital and important interests is discussed in the document, there is no mention of the use of military force with regard to humanitarian interests. Yet, military force was repeatedly used in the 1990s in pursuit of these interests.

Somalia. On 8 December 1992, a United Nations coalition of forces, led by the United States, entered the country of Somalia to "establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations."¹²⁹ The Unified Task Force (UNITAF) conducted Operation Restore Hope and by March 1993, the United Nations asserted that food distribution was being accomplished satisfactorily, and that a secure environment existed

¹²⁷ Howard J. Wiarda, ed., *U.S. Foreign and Strategic Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: A Geopolitical Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 1.

¹²⁸ Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "From Containment to Enlargement," Remarks, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington DC, 21 September 1993.

¹²⁹ Serafino, 19.

for Somali citizens.¹³⁰ The second phase of the effort, United Nations Operations in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), began that month, with the United Nations assuming operational control in May. The goals for UNOSOM II were “promoting political reconciliation, and reestablishing national and regional administrative police, and judicial institutions.”¹³¹ In short, this was nation building by military forces. Over the next year, mission creep set into the operation. American and United Nations forces increasingly found themselves called upon to apprehend and disarm the rival factions in Somalia that were attacking the relief efforts (rival warlords were using stolen food to control the population). This led to numerous violent confrontations, most notably for the United States on October 3, when eighteen American soldiers were killed in an intense firefight. This event prompted President Clinton to announce “that the United States would withdraw all combat forces and most logistics units by 31 March 1994.”¹³² By the time of the withdrawal, the United States had lost a total of twenty-nine military personnel in Somalia, and when UNOSOM II departed in March 1995 the country was still in a state of extreme disarray.

The lesson learned in Somalia was harsh, but uncomplicated. Restore Hope began as a purely humanitarian operation. Strong bipartisan congressional and public support was evident from the outset. Combating world hunger has long been viewed as an important foreign policy goal, and television images depicting the cruel situation in Somalia demanded some sympathetic action be taken.¹³³ There was, however, no *vital* national interest there. “Somalia’s political order was not critical to America’s economic or political well being.”¹³⁴ Because of this, when American soldiers began dying, public and political support for the operation dropped off dramatically. American lives were not

¹³⁰ Lester H Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, 1992-1998* (Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1998), 27.

¹³¹ Serafino, 20.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Larson, 43.

¹³⁴ Brune, 20.

an acceptable price to pay for less-than-vital national interests.

Haiti. On 19 September 1994, American troops landed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti “to create conditions that would allow for the restoration of Haiti’s first democratically-elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to office.”¹³⁵ The intervention followed three years of economic and diplomatic efforts, led by the United Nations and OAS, to restore Aristide to power after a military-led junta had ousted him in a coup. When interventionist military action was finally taken, the United States-led international force landed peacefully in support of Security Council Resolution 940 (1994), which authorized the use of “all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership.”¹³⁶ While the invasion force was en route, the military government surrendered and acquiesced to the demand to return Aristide to power. United States forces remained until February 1996, but when they left, Haiti had still failed to institute democratic governmental practices. United Nations presence there remains, continuing its laudable, if so far futile, attempts to help establish a stable government and economy.

As evidenced by the three-year delay in intervention, United States national interests in Haiti did not warrant military intervention immediately. Although the United States has a historic interest in the region (see Grenada and Panama above), there was no outside power trying to gain a foothold in its backyard. It was not until the pressure of two years of Haitian refugees migrating into the United States became overly burdensome that President Clinton decided to act. By the time of the intervention, refugee camps at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were overflowing, and there were prospects for over 100,000 more refugees.¹³⁷ United States goals for the intervention were “to restore the legitimate, democratically elected authorities, create a secure climate in which democratic processes could operate, dismantle the ‘old instruments of repression,’ and help create new institutions or replace corrupt ones, most importantly the police and

¹³⁵ Serafino, 23.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Brune, 48.

judicial system.”¹³⁸ As in Somalia, these goals reflect nation building. There is no element that meets the current definition of vital national interest, yet military force was used. Perhaps a second lesson learned is that military forces, clearly useful in providing humanitarian aid, are not a suitable instrument for nation building.

The refugee problem was so significant that “substantial and highly destabilizing refugee flows” were specifically elevated to the level of important national interest.¹³⁹ As then Secretary of Defense William Perry stated at the time, “[Haiti is] in the national interest, but not vital national interest category...The survival of the United States is not threatened by any actions going on in Haiti...”¹⁴⁰ Under this description of its interests, it is difficult to perceive the American public or Congress accepting any but an incidental level of American casualties in attaining it.

Bosnia. During the 1980s, the Yugoslav Federation went through a long economic and political decline. This prompted attempts by several provinces to break out of the federation and become independent. In 1991, these attempts spawned hostility and violence that ran across ethnic and religious lines. The United Nations brokered a cease fire between Croatian and Yugoslav forces in February 1992, and set up an international protection force (UNPROFOR) to monitor it. By December, ethnic conflict had broken out between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and UNPROFOR deployed to prevent the violence from spreading farther.¹⁴¹ American contribution to the ground forces in UNPROFOR was minimal (1,000 soldiers), but it took the lead in a NATO effort to enforce a no-fly zone over the area. This effort culminated in Operation Deliberate Force, a series of air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo and Srebrenica. Remarkably, no American casualties were suffered due to hostile action.

Congressional support for the Balkan policy varied from strong to vacillating.

¹³⁸ Serafino, 24.

¹³⁹ The White House, 2.

¹⁴⁰ William Perry, US Secretary of Defense, interviewed by John McLaughlin on “One on One,” taped: 12 August, 1994, broadcast 13-14 August 1994.

¹⁴¹ Serafino, 25.

While horrible acts were being committed, it was difficult to define specific United States interests in the region. In Defense Secretary Perry's own words in 1994

we have interests--national interests at stake. Our interests primarily are involved in seeing that war not spread, not see a wider Balkan war, or even a war that spreads out beyond the Balkans. And so that's the national interest but it's not--our survival is not at stake. The survival of an ally is not at stake.¹⁴²

American action in the Balkans was "undertaken as part of its commitment to NATO and in the interest of preserving stability in Europe."¹⁴³ The underlying concern about the region is that ethnic violence, left unchecked, could spread through other economically strapped portions of Europe and threaten the ability of those states to maintain order. This potential spread of violence could also spark large refugee flows, which could further destabilize European order. Much like its involvement in Lebanon in 1982, American action in the Balkans was founded more on the interests of its allies than on its own. This led to great difficulty expressing why United States military forces were necessary to the operation. American air strikes were successful in halting the fighting for a short period, and they did help force the warring parties to sign the Dayton Peace Accords, but the lull in fighting was only temporary.

Kosovo. In 1999, NATO once again faced a rampage of ethnic violence in the Balkans. The Serbs, led by Slobodan Milosevic, began a horrific campaign of ethnic cleansing against the large majority of ethnic Albanians residing in the Kosovo province of Serbia. Kosovars, almost entirely ethnic Albanians, had been agitating for independence, and Milosevic did not intend to accept their autonomous administration of this formerly Serbian-dominated province. When diplomatic efforts failed, NATO constructed an air campaign intended to halt the ethnic cleansing. What ensued was a 78-day, air-only battle conducted by NATO air forces. At the conclusion, Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo and accepted peace. The number of Kosovar dead remains uncertain, but the total may run into the tens of thousands. In the 78-day air campaign, not a single NATO combatant was lost to hostile fire.

¹⁴² Perry, interview.

¹⁴³ Serafino, 26.

American involvement in Kosovo was essentially a continuation of the previous action in Bosnia. The same ethnic and religious hatreds were fostering the violence. United States national interest in the region was still in question, so much so that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe interests alone were sufficient to warrant the use of military force.¹⁴⁴ US objectives for the operation were

to ‘reduce’ Serbia’s ability to continue abusing the Kosovars, with the declared goals of achieving a halt to Serbian ethnic cleansing in Kosovo; a withdrawal of all Serbian military, police, and paramilitary forces; the deployment of a NATO-led international peacekeeping presence the return of all ethnic Albanian refugees and unhindered access by them to aid; and the laying of groundwork for a future settlement that would allow for Kosovar autonomy under continued Yugoslav sovereignty.¹⁴⁵

The United States clearly had no *vital* interests in the Balkans, as widely defined. Its interests in Kosovo were humanitarian, bordering on important, but never vital. “NATO waged the war not for its interests but on behalf of its values. The supreme goal was the well-being of the Albanian Kosovars.”¹⁴⁶ In a vivid execution of the enlargement policy, the Clinton Administration was willing to commit only to an air war, not even considering the use of ground troops until the air campaign was almost two months old.¹⁴⁷ The president and NATO leadership were roundly criticized for unwillingness to commit ground troops to the conflict, preferring the relative safety of an air campaign to a ground war.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey Record, *Serbia and Vietnam: A Preliminary Comparison of U.S. Decisions to Use Force*, Center for Strategy and Technology Occasional Paper No. 8, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, May 1999), 4.

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 182.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Mandelbaum, “A Perfect Failure: NATO’s War Against Yugoslavia,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 2-8.

¹⁴⁷ Lambeth, 186-187.

¹⁴⁸ Christopher Layne, “Blunder in the Balkans: The Clinton Administration’s Bungled War against

Conclusion

Since World War II, the reasons for American military intervention around the world have fallen into three broad categories. The wars in Korea and Vietnam pursued the larger goal of containing communism, a publicly stated and widely held vital interest of the United States. This West versus East Cold War conflict was also reflected in most American interventions until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 (exceptions were Lebanon, Libya, and Panama). Interventions immediately following Vietnam through the Persian Gulf War were characterized by vital but also other important national interests, to include safeguarding American citizens (Panama, Mayaguez), maintaining freedom of navigation (Libya), or fighting terrorism (Libya). Again, Lebanon is a notable exception. Military intervention there was never satisfactorily justified as being in pursuit of a vital national interest. The peacekeeping action in Lebanon hauntingly presaged the character of interventions to come in the 1990s, however. After that, only the Persian Gulf War was justified publicly as being in the vital national interest. But that action was also fought for the moral principle of rejecting combat aggression by a stronger power over a weaker one.

With the end of the Cold War, the United States consistently intervened for less-than-vital interests in the 1990s, pursuing its enlargement foreign policy. Surprisingly, instances of intervention increased when vital national interests were not at stake. The categorization of national interests (vital, important, and humanitarian) seem to have developed to justify instances where the United States did intervene, not as a guide to help determine whether to use force in advance. This is due in part to the fact that the United States has been searching for its proper role on the international stage since its primary nemesis, the Soviet Union, disappeared.

Public support is a critical factor when the president decides whether or not to use military force. The strength of that support is reflected in the public's tolerance for

Serbia," *Policy Analysis* No. 345 (May 20 1999), The Cato Institute, on-line, Internet, 15 March 2002.

Available from <http://www.cato.org>, 10.

American casualties. Tolerance for casualties is directly related to the perceived level of national interest, itself indicative of the benefits that are to be gained through the use of force.¹⁴⁹ Public tolerance for casualties was very high during World War II, for example, because the perceived stakes were very high (national survival), and the benefits of winning far outweighed the costs of losing.¹⁵⁰ Limited wars (such as Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War) have justified limited means, and there was a corresponding decrease in casualty tolerance. The interests at stake in Panama were sufficient that the more than twenty American deaths suffered there did not appreciably shake public support.¹⁵¹ However, the Panama operation was brief and produced almost immediate positive results. Casualty tolerance has been much lower in interventions that are “prolonged...in complex political situations characterized by civil conflict, in which U.S. interests and principles are typically much less compelling or clear....”¹⁵² This situation typifies peacekeeping or nation building conflicts such as Lebanon, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia/Kosovo.

The end of the Cold War removed the primary political adversary for the United States. Without the framework of containment, American interests outside its borders are much less easily defined. In order to use the military in pursuit of a policy of enlargement, the president faces a much tougher challenge to justify the use of that force in the face of less-than-vital interests. Correspondingly, we can expect public support for such operations to be less deep, as characterized by a reduced tolerance for casualties. Although former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake asserts, “vital national interest was the most abused term in the last twenty years,” it remains that they are the foundation for justifying American military intervention.¹⁵³ In light of this, we should expect *less*

¹⁴⁹ Larson, xv.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., xvi.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., xvii.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 12 December 2001.

intervention by the United States, and yet, this is markedly not so. Other powerful factors must hold sway over the president's decision to use force in order to overcome this lack of national interest.

Chapter 3

Domestic Politics: Congress and the Media

War begun without good provision of money beforehand for going through with it is but as a breathing of strength and a blast that will quickly pass away. Coin is the sinews of war.

- François Rabelais
Gargantua and Pantagruel

The American form of democratic rule is unique in its simple, codified system of checks and balances. The framers of the Constitution constructed an ingenious system whereby no single branch, executive, legislative, or judicial, could obtain supreme governing power. Each branch has unique powers and successful governance of the country requires cooperation and consensus. As the national leader, the president must work with Congress to implement his domestic and foreign policies. In the past fifty years, Congress's interest in the president's foreign policy has grown. It has used some of its Constitutional powers to attempt to influence those policies. The Vietnam War witnessed the birth of a new potential influence on foreign policy: televised reporting from a war zone. The growth of crisis reporting from the nightly newscast to a 24-hour, constantly available medium presents a new challenge for America's foreign policy makers.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy addresses "those external American goals for which the nation is prepared to commit ... some application of the economic, military, intellectual, or other resources of the nation."¹⁵⁴ It is through foreign policy that the United States establishes and conducts relationships with friend and foe alike. The Executive and Legislative branches of government play the key roles in developing and applying United States

¹⁵⁴ Cecil V. Crabb and Pat M. Holt, *Invitation to Struggle: Congress, the President and Foreign Policy*

foreign policy, and effective control over the process has shifted between the two as the nation has evolved. In times of crisis, Congress has tended to allow the president a relatively free hand to conduct foreign policy. Following crises, Congress generally attempts to reassert itself through increased involvement in and oversight of the foreign policy process.¹⁵⁵ Constitutional rules and historical precedent provide the basis for the specific responsibilities of each branch.

Congress and Foreign Policy

The president derives much of his authority to conduct foreign policy from the Oath of Office in the Constitution of the United States. The Oath “requires the chief executive to ‘solemnly swear (or affirm)’ to ‘preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.’ The oath thus confers upon the president a unique responsibility for the preservation of national security.”¹⁵⁶ It is through this responsibility that the president exerts his influence on the nation’s foreign policy. “Presidents dominate the foreign policy process because we have endured decades of national security crises, during which the natural tendency is to turn to the President for action, and to support him.”¹⁵⁷ Democratic theory allows for such a transfer of authority based upon the assumption that an individual will act more rapidly and more forcefully than a group. Many years of such actions have effectively established for the president “the exclusive power to conduct diplomacy.”¹⁵⁸

Victory in World War II ultimately secured the United States role as the world’s foremost military and economic power. “With the advent of the nuclear age, presidential dominance (in foreign policy) increased. In the face of advanced technology, America’s emergence as the leader of the free world, and the national perception of an increased Soviet threat, many concluded that the United States could no longer afford the debate and divisions in Congress that had dominated policymaking in the nineteenth century.

(Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), 6.

¹⁵⁵ Lee H. Hamilton, Congressman (D-Ind.), “The Role of Congress in U.S. Foreign Policy.” Speech. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, November 19, 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, 15 March 2002, available from <http://www.csis.org/html/sp98hamilton.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Crabb and Holt, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Hamilton.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

The perceived need for immediate and decisive action contributed to the acceptance of executive dominance in most aspects of foreign policy.”¹⁵⁹ The Constitution is somewhat vague about the president’s span of control with respect to foreign policy, but he has “emerged as the ‘ultimate decider’ or the ‘decision maker of last resort.’”¹⁶⁰ Over 200 years of American history has established “executive pre-eminence in nearly every aspect of the foreign policy process.”¹⁶¹ Yet, as we shall see, this power is not without limitation.

The Constitution is more specific about the president’s role with respect to the military. Article II specifically states that “the President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States....”¹⁶² Legislators generated vigorous debate about the amount of power this comprised, and “early American presidents moved strongly to establish the precedent in their favor. Time and again they led the country into limited conflict....”¹⁶³ In due course, it became “generally agreed that the Commander in Chief role gives the President power to repel attacks against the United States and makes him responsible for leading the armed forces.”¹⁶⁴ As such, “presidents since the Washington administration have time and again ordered the armed forces to carry out missions in distant parts of the world.”¹⁶⁵

The Legislative branch of the United States government does have constitutionally mandated powers with respect to foreign policy. These include the power to appropriate funds and the power to declare war, powers shared by both Houses. The Senate, due to its authority to review and ratify treaties and presidential appointments, its longer terms of office, and usually larger constituencies, has generally been the body more concerned with the conduct of foreign affairs, while the House of Representatives has typically been “content to play a subordinate role in the foreign

¹⁵⁹ David M. Abshire and Ralph D. Nurnberger, eds., *The Growing Power of Congress*, (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981), 7.

¹⁶⁰ Crabb and Holt, 5.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶² *The United States Constitution*, Article II, Section 2, Clause 1.

¹⁶³ Abshire and Nurnberger, 44.

¹⁶⁴ Richard F. Grimmett, *War Powers Resolution: Presidential Compliance*, Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 8 January 2002), 1.

policy process.”¹⁶⁶ The power to declare war has not prevented modern presidents from deploying troops around the globe, though routine efforts to make the executive branch more responsive to the legislative cluster around this intended separation of powers. The real base of legislative power in the foreign policy process comes indirectly through the exclusive role of appropriating funds, a function that has “historically been called ‘the power of the purse.’ In reality, this is two interrelated powers: congressional control over the *sources of revenue* available to the national government (such as taxation, tariff revenues, and loans); and--in accordance with the constitutional requirement (Article I, Section 9) that ‘No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law’--legislative approval for government *expenditures* (italics in original).”¹⁶⁷ Congress may “refuse to grant funds for programs and policies in the foreign policy field...(or) provide the required funds only when certain conditions have been met abroad.”¹⁶⁸ In addition, Congress may use this power of the purse to influence the manner in which the president uses the military in support of policy. In the past, Congress has used a variety of methods in its attempts to shape foreign policy. These have included passing non-binding resolutions of support or denial of support for explicit actions, withholding funds for specific operations, and direct legislative action attempting to limit presidential authority.

Shortly after the beginning of the Korean War, President Truman “announced approval of a ‘substantial increase’ in American forces in Europe over the two American divisions already in Germany.”¹⁶⁹ A number of Senators objected to United States troops being committed to the defense of NATO before evaluating whether all alliance partners were paying their fair share of the burden. Non-binding resolutions passed communicating the Senate’s views on the deployment in “an assertion of Senate prerogatives that distressed the Truman administration.”¹⁷⁰ While the Senate took no legislative action, it made clear its views on the president’s foreign policy, implicitly

¹⁶⁵ Crabb and Holt, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 122.

threatening more action should its concerns not be addressed. In 1971, the Senate once again sent a message to the president regarding the deployment of troops in Europe. This time proposed resolutions limited the amount of money available for military forces there. Had they passed, this would have caused a *de facto* reduction in the number of troops the president had available for use in Europe.¹⁷¹ Congress's strongest overt effort to limit presidential authority came in 1973 with the passage of the War Powers Resolution.

The War Powers Resolution. On 2 August 1964, North Vietnam initiated the first of two attacks on United States Navy ships, including the destroyer *USS Maddox*, on a routine mission sailing in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. President Johnson went to Congress requesting “a joint resolution affirming support of ‘all necessary action to protect our Armed Forces and to assist nations covered by the SEATO Treaty.’”¹⁷² The House passed the resolution by a vote of 414-0 and the Senate passed it with an 88-2 vote. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution gave President Johnson a free hand to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia as he saw fit, without requiring further consultation with Congress. As the war progressed to a stalemate, “a serious question developed of whether or not the resolution had passed Congress under false pretenses. A review of Navy documents by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee revealed that the *Maddox* had not been on a routine patrol at all, but rather on a sensitive and provocative intelligence mission. There was even some doubt whether one of the attacks even occurred.”¹⁷³ Increasing dissatisfaction with the situation in Vietnam led to the repeal of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in 1971. By 1973, opposition to the war in Congress grew to the point that it passed a law “to constrain the president and assert its own constitutional authority.”¹⁷⁴

Congress's assertion of its authority took form with the passage of Public Law 93-148, the War Powers Resolution. This action was a direct response to the Executive's

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 122-123.

¹⁷² Congressional *Quarterly Almanac*, 88th Congress 2nd Session....1964, Volume XX. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1965, p. 332.

¹⁷³ Crabb and Holt, 125.

¹⁷⁴ Stephen W. Hook, and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 15th Ed. (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000), 146.

dominance in the foreign policy arena and “alleged abuse of its authority” that led to the perception of an ‘imperial presidency.’¹⁷⁵ The War Powers Resolution was enacted to “ensure that Congress and the President share in making decisions that may get the U.S. involved in hostilities.”¹⁷⁶

It seems that the intent of the founding fathers was to prevent either the Executive or Legislative branches from involving the United States in a war with due consultation with each other. During the Korean and Vietnam wars, the United States found itself involved for many years in undeclared wars. Many Members of Congress became concerned with the erosion of congressional authority to decide when the United States should become involved in a war or the use of armed forces that might lead to war.¹⁷⁷

The War Powers Resolution became law on November 7, 1973. It is of no mean consequence that the president was at a nadir of authority following Watergate allegations, and seizing this opportune moment, Congress passed the law over President Richard Nixon’s veto. The War Powers Resolution states that:

the President’s powers as Commander-in-Chief to introduce U.S. forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities are exercised only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war; (2) specific statutory authorization; or (3) a national emergency created by an attack on the United States or its forces. It requires the President in every possible instance to consult with Congress before introducing American armed forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities unless there has been a declaration of war or other specific congressional authorization. It also requires the President to report to Congress any introduction of forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities, Section 4(a)(1); into foreign territory while equipped for combat, Section 4(a)(2); or in numbers which substantially enlarge U.S. forces equipped for combat already in a foreign nation, Section 4(a)(3). Once a report is submitted ‘or required to be submitted’ under Section 4(a)(1), Congress must authorize the use of forces within 60 to 90 days or the forces must be withdrawn.¹⁷⁸

It is clear that Congress sought to clarify what it perceived as a gray area in the

¹⁷⁵ Hook and Spanier, 146.

¹⁷⁶ Grimmett, ii.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

Constitution regarding presidential power to employ the armed forces, but its application has been weak and inconsistent. It has been “rejected by...presidents as unconstitutional and rarely invoked by Congress.”¹⁷⁹ Since passage, adherence has varied with each president and the particular circumstances of the crises they faced. In all, presidents have submitted ninety-two reports to Congress because of the requirements of the War Powers Resolution. President Ford submitted four, President Carter one, President Reagan fourteen, President G. H. W. Bush seven, President Clinton fifty-eight, and, through his first year in office, President G. W. Bush six.¹⁸⁰ The reports cover military actions from embassy evacuations to full-scale combat, including the Persian Gulf War, Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, and the anti-terrorism actions in Afghanistan.¹⁸¹ Only one of these ninety-two reports, that of the *Mayaguez* Incident by President Ford, referenced Section 4(a)(1), which involves the introduction of forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities. This is significant because declaration of hostilities or imminent hostilities triggers the 60 to 90-day limitation on the length of the military’s engagement. By avoiding that section of the law, presidents have been able to maintain maximum flexibility in the potential duration of the military action. By not establishing a starting point, the president makes it more difficult for Congress to mandate a withdrawal date. Instead of filing reports in advance of military action and asking permission, presidents have filed them either right before or after military action has taken place.

Congress’s response to the deployment of American troops to Lebanon in 1983 illustrates the real weakness of the law. President Reagan chose not to comply with the War Powers Resolution’s provisions, so Congress acted on its own to determine the date that the law should have gone into effect. This action produced a tense situation between the president and Congress. In a compromise solution, President Reagan signed legislation invoking the War Powers Resolution for the first time, and Congress authorized United States Marine presence in Lebanon for 18 months. The action had little effect since President Reagan had established a withdrawal date for the Marines

¹⁷⁹ Hook and Spanier, 146.

¹⁸⁰ Grimmett, 11.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, i.

prior to the date set by the legislation.¹⁸² In a clear example of the ongoing power struggle between executive and legislative branches, President George Bush notified Congress of his intentions regarding military deployment prior to the Persian Gulf War, but did so as a courtesy, pointedly *not* citing Section 4(a)(1), asserting that hostilities were not imminent.¹⁸³ Both houses of Congress subsequently passed legislation supporting United Nations sanctioned action against Iraq, but Congressional leaders were very clear in stating that the president did not have Gulf of Tonkin-like freedom of action. Congress attempted to insert some of its members into a formal consultation process with the White House, but the president rebuffed these overtures.¹⁸⁴ Congress's desire to be consulted prior to the use of force may be understandable, but in a crisis it is impractical. President Ford discovered this during the evacuation of American citizens and refugees from Da Nang in 1975. The crisis occurred during Congress's Easter recess, and when he tried to contact key bipartisan Congressional leaders, not one was in Washington.¹⁸⁵ Crises often require quick decisions and action. "Critical world events, especially military operations, seldom wait for the Congress to meet."¹⁸⁶

In the 1990s, President Clinton faced numerous potential Congressional limitations with regard to actions in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and elsewhere. A now Republican-dominated Congress, with long-standing philosophical disagreements with the Democratic-engineered War Powers Resolution, still chose to act influentially in the foreign policy process. The ultimate effect of these attempts, despite the fact that the Resolution was invoked more times for President Clinton than for all other presidents combined, was equivocal. Although Congress did manage to set limits for the amount of time United States military forces could be deployed in support of these actions, in every case where a joint resolution actually passed, it was a compromise that did not limit the president's original intent of the intervention.

In evaluating the utility of the War Powers Resolution, it is clear that "the record

¹⁸² Ibid., 15.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸⁵ Gerald R. Ford, "The War Powers Resolution: Striking a Balance Between the Executive and Legislative Branches," in Abshire and Nurnberger, *The Growing Power of Congress*, 322.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

to date of compliance...is poor.”¹⁸⁷ Over the same time that the ninety-two reports were made to Congress, there are arguably *at least* eighteen more instances in which the president should have reported in accordance with the resolution.¹⁸⁸ The number could easily be higher, depending on the interpretation of numerous other situations involving United States military forces. The end result is that the War Powers Resolution has not significantly reduced presidential power with respect to the use of armed force. In fact, former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake asserts that the War Powers Resolution had no effect on decisions made by the Executive branch.¹⁸⁹ Whether or not the resolution has made Congress more participatory in the decision to use United States military force is also debatable: “Some observers contend that (it) has not significantly increased congressional participation, while others emphasize that it has promoted consultation and served as leverage.”¹⁹⁰

While the War Powers Resolution may be on shaky Constitutional ground, Congress has not hesitated to use its other Constitutional powers. Prior to 1994, the Democratic Party held a majority in Congress for forty years. During the 1980s, these “Democratic majorities...enacted numerous provisions that sought to block what (Republican) Presidents Reagan and Bush hoped to accomplish overseas.”¹⁹¹ When challenged on their recalcitrance, “Democratic leaders defended congressional prerogatives.”¹⁹² When the Republican Party won majorities in both houses of Congress in 1994, Democratic President Clinton faced the same difficulties, with the Republicans “merely giving as good as they (had) got.”¹⁹³

The end of the Cold War fostered an isolationist sentiment perhaps stronger than any in almost fifty years. While true isolationism was a minority position, “isolationist sentiment ...helps explain why Congress cut spending on international affairs programs

¹⁸⁷ Enid Sterling-Conner, “The War Powers Resolution: Does It Make A Difference?” in Abshire and Nurnberger, *The Growing Power of Congress*, 301.

¹⁸⁸ Grimmett, 69.

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 21 February 2002.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, i.

¹⁹¹ James M. Lindsay, “End of an Era: Congress and Foreign Policy after the Cold War,” in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, 3rd ed., eds. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 175.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

from \$20.6 billion in FY 1993 to less than \$19 billion in FY 1998.”¹⁹⁴ Even so, Congress’s approach to foreign policy had a distinctly internationalist cast. The issue between Congress and the president was not “*whether* the United States should be involved in international affairs but rather *how* it should be involved (italics in original)...President Clinton favored a multilateral approach that emphasized collective action through international institutions such as the United Nations. In contrast, many congressional Republicans preferred a unilateral approach to foreign policy.”¹⁹⁵

Congress’s increased participation in foreign policy cut deeper than mere partisan politics. The end of the Cold War removed the last major perceived external threat to the United States. The lack of an external threat removed the strongest reason for a unified governmental front on the international stage. This transition did not coincide precisely with the final disintegration of the Soviet Union, but it was tied directly to that country’s position on the world stage.

“The declining perception of external threat largely explains why the United States experienced a resurgence of congressional activism on foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s after a nearly two-decade-long slumber. The tragic course of the Vietnam War convinced many Americans (and many members of Congress) that communist revolutions in the third world posed no direct threat to U.S. core security interests, just as *détente* persuaded many people that Brezhnev’s Soviet Union posed less of a threat than did Stalin’s and Krushchev’s.”¹⁹⁶

The fall of the Soviet Union merely accelerated this trend, and “with no threat of similar magnitude looming on the horizon, legislators are more likely to disagree with the White House over what constitutes America’s vital interests...The result is much greater congressional activism and with it greater constraints on the president.”¹⁹⁷ This increased activism means that future presidents will face more, tougher challenges from Congress on foreign policy issues.¹⁹⁸ Former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake believes

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 177.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 178.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

that a rise in partisan politics has increased friction between the president and Congress.¹⁹⁹ In the 1990s, Congress made three distinct forays into foreign policy. In 1991, Congress radically cut numerous high-profile defense programs that the president requested, and funded others, the F-117 among them, that the president wanted cancelled.²⁰⁰ Also in 1991, Congressman Les Aspin (D-Wis.) proposed spending \$1 billion of the defense budget on aid to the former Soviet Union. Several senators succeeded in passing a bipartisan bill providing \$500 million in aid. After initial resistance, President Bush acquiesced and the total aid was increased to \$645 million.²⁰¹ Finally, in 1992 Congress reduced military aid to El Salvador by fifty percent and linked future aid to progress in peace talks between the government and FMLN rebels. This combined with threats of discontinuing aid altogether forced the El Salvadoran government to the negotiating table, ending a decade-long civil war.²⁰² These three events illustrate direct Congressional intervention into the foreign policy process by exercising its control of the budget, markedly shaping American policy.

Congress has increased its role in the foreign policy process. While overt actions like the War Powers Resolution have not fulfilled their promise, more traditional methods like exercising the power of the purse have been more effective. As the trend of globalization continues in the world and the lines separating domestic and foreign policy blurs, increased partisan difficulties will continue to spill from domestic to foreign policy.²⁰³ Congress's voice is becoming more of a factor in the president's foreign policy decisions, including intervention.

The Media

Another aspect of the domestic political scene that has changed since the beginning of the Vietnam War is the nature of media coverage of military conflict.

¹⁹⁹ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 24 April 2002.

²⁰⁰ Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay, "Foreign Defense Policy in Congress: An Overview and Preview," in *Congress Resurgent: Foreign and Defense Policy on Capitol Hill*, eds. Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 5.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 13.

Immediate, 24-hour coverage of interventions has altered the manner in which Americans digest information. From half-hour nightly synopses, delivered consistently from a favored network or news anchor, concerned citizens now get in-depth, raw information as it unfolds, supplemented by *ad hoc* punditry from a plethora of politically biased sources. These essential changes have raised questions about the effect of media reporting on public opinion as well as its effect on the foreign policy process in America. The process actually began well before the Vietnam War, but the days of Ernie Pyle-style World War II battle reports appearing in newspapers well after the action was over had disappeared by the Tet Offensive in 1968.

Vietnam was...the first 'television war'. Television 'newsreels' having played a rather minor role in reporting the Korean War (1950-3), Vietnam was the first conflict to receive sustained, almost nightly, coverage on the US networks over a period of several years. It was also the first war to benefit from certain technological advances - the use of satellites especially - which made reporting more immediate, and this at a time when American network news first assumed a half-hour format. Americans regarded television as their primary source of news during the 1960s...²⁰⁴

There developed a strong belief that television coverage had played a major role in declining popular and congressional support for the Vietnam War. Even President Nixon questioned whether America would ever be able to muster the strength and unity of purpose to fight a war overseas again.²⁰⁵ In the years that followed, the capacity to report news from around the globe continually improved. By the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Americans (and the rest of the world) could watch the news twenty-four hours a day, broadcast on CNN. The world was able to watch the war in real-time, as it was fought, right from downtown Baghdad. While the magnitude of the effect of this coverage on the American public is open to question, similar coverage of the ill-fated intervention in Somalia in 1993 seemed at first to have a significant effect not only on public opinion, but also on United States foreign policy.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Susan L Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 108.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Fred Halliday, "Manipulation and Limits: Media Coverage of the Gulf War, 1990-1991," in *The*

Government officials, legislators, media professionals, and scholars have voiced growing concern that journalists are exercising an irresistible control over western foreign policy. It is said that dramatic images of starving masses, shelled populations, or dead American soldiers spark ill-considered public demands for action from elected officials. These temporary emotional responses may conflict with the more considered judgment of foreign policy officials, forcing them to take action that will soon have to be reversed or modified.²⁰⁷

This phenomenon was labeled the ‘CNN effect.’ In sum, it is “a loss of policy control on the part of government policymakers. CNN, it is said, makes, or at least exercises inordinate influence on, policy.”²⁰⁸ The events leading up to, during, and following the military action in both Somalia and Bosnia (in 1995) seemed to support strongly the existence of the CNN effect. “It is widely accepted that television images of starving civilians, especially children, forced President Bush to dispatch U.S. military forces to Somalia.”²⁰⁹ It is also believed that “media images of the mistreatment of dead U.S. servicemen were responsible for the public’s desire to withdraw from Somalia.”²¹⁰ Closer examination, however, refutes both of these assertions. The reason President Bush chose to intervene was that he believed it “would be low in costs, especially casualties, and high in (political) benefit.”²¹¹ Media coverage of the situation in Somalia was actually very sparse until *after* the decision to intervene was announced.²¹² The broadcast images of a dead United States Army Ranger being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu was shocking to the United States public, but it was not the sole or even primary reason for the United States’ exit. The Clinton administration “had been considering scaling down and then abandoning” the operation in Somalia for some time,

Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence, eds., Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (London, England: Zed Books, 1999), 145.

²⁰⁷ Warren P. Strobel, “The Media and U.S. Policies Toward Intervention: A Closer Look at the ‘CNN Effect’,” in *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy: Readings and Cases*, ed. Bruce W. Jentleson (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 172.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 174.

²¹⁰ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 71.

²¹¹ Strobel, 175.

²¹² Larson, 45.

and the event simply provided the opportunity to withdraw.²¹³

At the time of the Somalia intervention, President Bush was also facing a crisis in the Balkans. A brutal civil war was being fought in the former Yugoslavia. The administration believed that intervention there “would require tens of thousands of U.S. ground troops.”²¹⁴ President Bush decided not to intervene and candidate Clinton criticized him for that decision in the upcoming presidential election. Clinton would soon get his opportunity to face that decision himself. In February 1994, a mortar shell landed in a crowded marketplace in Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding over 200 others.²¹⁵ Images of the massacre were broadcast around the world, and the United States abandoned its hands-off policy toward Bosnia soon after. Clinton may have been the United States’ most media-driven president, yet powerful though they were, the images were probably not the sole reason for United States intervention. The Clinton administration “had been moving toward a more active role in the Balkans, for reasons that included intense pressure from France and U.S. concern that the inability to affect the conflict was eroding the Atlantic alliance and American leadership.”²¹⁶ Specifically, “the U.S. commitment was born out of a fundamental reassessment of U.S. national interests at the time, not because of media coverage.”²¹⁷ Media reports served to provide fuel for those advocating intervention and focus public attention on the gravity of the situation (making it easier to explain the need for United States action), but on their own appear not to have caused the United States to change its foreign policy toward the Balkans.²¹⁸

The most telling illustration of the media’s lack of direct impact on foreign policy may have come during the Rwanda crisis in 1994. Horrific images of “people being hacked to death and piles of bodies and cadavers floating down rivers” were broadcast across the world, and yet there was no move by any major government to intervene.²¹⁹ While some calls were made at the time, and many more since, that the United States

²¹³ Carruthers, 224.

²¹⁴ Strobel, 175.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 179.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Nik Gowing, “*Media Coverage: Help or Hinderance In Conflict Prevention*,” September 1997, n.p. on-line, Internet, 20 December 2001, available from <http://www.ccpdc.org/pubs/media/media/htm>.

²¹⁸ Strobel, 180.

²¹⁹ Gowing.

failed in its duty to mitigate the Tutsi-Hutu conflict, most impartial observers conclude that there was little the United States could have done given geopolitical realities and military capabilities available at the time. Hence, the United States government response did not come until the genocide was completed, and what was left was a humanitarian mission that was “a clear, quick task that could be performed, one requiring logistics available only to the U.S. military.”²²⁰

While the media does not *drive* foreign policy, it can have an impact on the policy development process. Around-the-clock news, available now from numerous CNN-like cable and satellite networks or through other media sources such as the Internet, has made breaking news instantly available to the world public. This has had the effect of compressing policy makers’ decision time. Instead of having a full 24-hour news cycle in which to form a policy response to a crisis, officials are now expected to have an *instantaneous* response.²²¹ “This speed, it is said, overwhelms the traditional policy making structures, forcing decisions that might not otherwise be made, perhaps before all the facts are in.”²²² Instantaneous news also grants political opponents instant ability to air their contrary views. It gives them, “whether in the U.S. Congress or in the streets of Mogadishu - a platform to make their views known instantly, thus complicating the life of today’s policymaker.”²²³ This ability exposes the real impact of the media on foreign policy. “If officials do not have a firm and well-considered policy or have failed to communicate their views in such a way as to garner the support of the American people, the news media will fill this vacuum (often by giving greater time and attention to the criticisms or policy preferences of its [sic] opponents).”²²⁴

“There seems little doubt that CNN and its brethren have made (foreign policy) leadership more difficult.”²²⁵ Decreased response time has created a situation where solid policy must be rapidly forthcoming in time of crisis. If it is not, opponents have instant access to the public (at least those paying attention) with contrary views. This can

²²⁰ Strobel, 178.

²²¹ Carruthers, 200.

²²² Strobel, 179.

²²³ Ibid., 181.

²²⁴ Ibid., 173.

²²⁵ Ibid., 180.

expose policy differences within the government, which will adversely affect public support for the foreign policy, especially if it leads to a military intervention.²²⁶ The American public are not automatons, but “leadership consensus or dissensus can figure prominently both in building and maintaining support for U.S. military operations and in influencing preferences on policy and strategy.”²²⁷ With greater exposure of dissenting leadership views, obviously, dissent in the public becomes more likely.

Conclusion

The American president had to deal with two rising influences upon his foreign policy in the fifty years following the Korean War. Congress’s overt attempts to increase its participation in the foreign policy process and the rise of instant media reporting both appeared initially to have a greater impact than eventually proved out. However, Congress’s influence in the foreign policy process is on the rise once again. More traditional tactics such as exercising the power of the purse are directly impacting policy. The president must pay increasing attention to the wishes of Congress on foreign policy issues in order to ensure the health of his domestic policy. From the days of the ‘imperial presidency’ where his was the only voice on foreign policy, the president’s decision to intervene is harder now with respect to domestic politics. Congress is more active, and the rise of 24-hour media has given ample voice to supporters and opponents alike. American domestic politics now has a greater influence on the conduct of foreign policy. Congress’s cooperation, however, does not guarantee that the president will decide to intervene. He must also consider whether military force is both appropriate and capable of achieving the desired foreign policy goal.

²²⁶ Larson, xx-xxi.

²²⁷ Ibid., 78.

Chapter 4

Will it Work? The Prospects for Success

Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive one; it is man and not materials that counts.

- Mao Tse-tung
Lecture, 1938

A critical part of the decision to use force is determining if military means alone, or in concert with other means, can attain the political objective. During a crisis, the president can employ several options to get a satisfactory solution, including diplomatic, informational, economic and military coercion. Circumstances dictate the most appropriate option to employ. In a situation where diplomacy and finesse are required, domestic or international sensitivity may preclude the use of force and military action may not provide the best solution. In addition, the mission may be something for which the military is not equipped or trained. If, in fact, force is deemed appropriate, the president must next consider the prospects for military success. If the chances of success are less than favorable, the president's tolerance of or aversion to risk comes into play. The American public also considers the chances of military success, especially when less than vital interests are at stake, and has shown a remarkable range of support from fanatic patriotism through complete intolerance for military intervention. Sustaining positive levels of support, likewise, depends on a continuing assessment of this prospect for success as the operation unfolds.

The Military Decision

In his analysis of presidential decisions to go to war in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, Gary Hess outlines how each president brought the nation to arms. In each case, there is obvious consideration of whether there were "reasonable prospects that the anticipated deployment of military power could achieve (the) objectives."²²⁸ Each

²²⁸ Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore,

president made assumptions about the chances of military victory and the effect of that victory on the overall situation. In the Korean War, President Truman fully believed that “once American determination was evident and power properly employed in Korea, the adversary would back down.”²²⁹ In Vietnam, President Johnson and his advisors clearly believed that “U.S. resistance to communist expansion would ‘nip aggression in the bud’ and prevent a larger war.”²³⁰ Military force was the obvious way to accomplish that objective.

In the Persian Gulf War, President Bush faced a more complex situation. After Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, economic sanctions and international diplomatic pressures were brought to bear against Saddam Hussein’s regime. When it became apparent that these measures were not producing the desired result of removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the president and his advisors began considering other measures. Offensive military action was an obvious option. It was not universally favored and there was dissent about whether military force could successfully restore the legitimate Kuwaiti government. When the National Security Council met on August 3, 1990, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, Under Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft all supported the position that military force was the only way that Iraq’s control of the region could be averted. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell “remained skeptical of the feasibility of the military option beyond the defense of Saudi Arabia.”²³¹ Eventually a consensus was reached, but it is obvious that due consideration was given to the ability of military force to attain the desired objectives, just as it had been given for Korea and Vietnam.

The potential success of the intervention also has a bearing on how strongly the public will support the action. “The higher the probability that the intervention will successfully achieve its objectives, the higher the probability is that the intervention will be supported.”²³² During World War II, a conflict that was both lengthy and costly in

Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 5.

²²⁹ Ibid., 23.

²³⁰ Ibid., 79.

²³¹ Ibid., 165.

²³² Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*. RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 11.

terms of casualties, the American public sustained a high level of support for the effort because there was little doubt of eventual victory.²³³ In the Korean War, public support remained high initially as the North Koreans were pushed back north from Pusan following the success of the Inchon invasion. However, China's entry into the war altered the public's perception that the war would be short and that victory was assured. This caused a corresponding decrease in public support for the war.²³⁴ President Johnson faced a similar decrease in support during the Vietnam War. In order to avoid a larger war with China or the Soviet Union, he

carefully avoided a military solution in North Vietnam, which in turn made stalemate inevitable. And a stalemate was certain to turn U.S. public opinion...against the war, just as had happened in Korea. Johnson's only hope of avoiding a political disaster was to arrange a negotiated settlement favorable to the West within a reasonably short period of time, but Hanoi refused to cooperate despite the massive punishment heaped on the North by U.S. air power. Therefore, the war dragged on without a solution.²³⁵

In short, "a year after Johnson intervened in Vietnam, the mighty military machine we had dispatched proved inappropriate and ineffective for that war."²³⁶ As the realization grew that there would be no quick solution in Vietnam, public support began a gradual decline, and by 1969 reached levels similar to those observed during the Korean War.²³⁷

The Persian Gulf War, while shorter than both Korea and Vietnam, offers more evidence that the American public varies its support as the prospects for success change, this time in a positive direction. As discussed earlier, there were early high levels of support for the war, although there was some concern over the actual objective of the operation. "There seemed to be little doubt among members of the public that the United States would beat Iraq; the major questions were about the costs and risks of the

²³³ Ibid., 16.

²³⁴ John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 51.

²³⁵ Donald E. Nuechterlein *National Interests and Presidential Leadership: The Setting of Priorities* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), 91.

²³⁶ Hess, x.

²³⁷ Mueller, 56.

operation and whether they were worth bearing.”²³⁸ Once the war started, “early military successes in the air war...greatly boosted optimism about its outcome: those anticipating that the war might resemble Vietnam fell precipitously..., those expecting a short war rose..., and those anticipating there would be a high number of American deaths dropped....”²³⁹

Smaller interventions also show the same trends. In Panama, where America’s objectives were clear and achieved quickly, public support remained high, even in the face of 23 deaths during the operation.²⁴⁰ As addressed earlier, during America’s involvement in Lebanon in 1982, there was some question as to whether or not the area held vital interests for the country. There is little evidence that Americans “thought the objectives being promoted...were either very important or likely to be achieved,”²⁴¹ and support for the operation was low.²⁴² Interestingly, after the bombing of the Marine barracks, public support rallied and then dropped again.²⁴³ Somalia presents an interesting case where initially “near-certain accomplishment of a limited humanitarian objective at low to no cost”²⁴⁴ seemed highly likely. However, once the mission changed to ‘warlord hunting’ and Aidid continued to evade capture, public support fell. This, in concert with an unexpected number of American casualties, created “a situation in which few believed that what might be accomplished was worth additional losses.”²⁴⁵ It indicated how much the American public was interested in tranquility in remote parts of the globe. “When Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer was rather close to zero.”²⁴⁶ From the evidence, it is clear that if the president is able to create conditions where the prospect for military success is high, the American public will be more likely to support the intervention. If casualties

²³⁸ Larson, 35.

²³⁹ Mueller, John E. *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*. Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 70.

²⁴⁰ Larson, 42.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

²⁴² Ibid., 48.

²⁴³ Ibid., 49.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 47.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ John E. Mueller, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The People’s ‘Common Sense’,” in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, 3rd ed., eds. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 54.

begin to mount, however, the public will reconsider its support based on the importance of the interests involved.

Estimating Success

Estimating the probability of military success can be extremely difficult. The inherent fog, friction, and chance of war can confound attempts to determine a victor prior to the end of hostilities. However, two factors can give an indication of which side holds an advantage: technological capability and force size. The larger force is generally considered more powerful, but superior technological capability can make up for shortfalls in force structure. During the Cold War, America maintained an armed force that was significantly smaller than the Soviets in terms of both personnel and equipment. America took great pains to maintain a technological edge, but the Soviets seemed to match every advance. First to develop both the atomic and hydrogen bombs, America saw the Soviets follow suit, and their larger force posed a more significant threat. The apparent ‘Bomber Gap’ of the 1950s and the ‘Missile Gap’ of the 1960s provided great impetus to the development of new weapons to try to achieve some numerical parity while advancing technologically. In the 1970s, the America built its armed forces specifically to counter a Soviet invasion of Europe through the Fulda Gap. It pursued a strategy to “exploit technology to develop superior forces to offset the larger numbers of the Warsaw Pact forces.”²⁴⁷ This offset strategy led to the development of numerous technological capabilities, stealth aircraft and precision weapons among them, which were designed to counter the Soviet Union’s numerical superiority on the battlefield.

Stealth Aircraft. The 1973 Yom Kippur War was a wake up call for a complacent American military. Israeli-flown, United States-built aircraft fared poorly against Soviet-built air defenses operated by Egypt and Syria. Soviet surface-to-air missile systems employed in an integrated air defense system produced deadly results, and the Israeli difficulties highlighted known weaknesses in USAF operations against Soviet-supplied North Vietnamese missile systems. This dismal performance was

²⁴⁷ Paul G. Kaminski, “Low Observables: the Air Force and Stealth,” in *Technology and the Air Force: A Retrospective Assessment*, eds. Jacob Neufeld, George M. Watson, and David Chenowith, (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), 299.

perceived as a critical capabilities test in an anticipated future war in Europe with the Soviet Union. So bleak was the outlook that predictions were made that allied defensive efforts in such a war would last only seventeen days before being overwhelmed.²⁴⁸ It was clear that integrated air defenses posed a significant threat to American air forces, and that the United States needed to develop a counter to this recent, deadly capability.

The United States Air Force (USAF) and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) began searching for a way to develop a stealth aircraft that would be able to defeat Soviet radar.²⁴⁹ In April 1975, a Lockheed engineer named Denys Overholser stumbled across the work of a Soviet radar engineer that would change combat aviation forever. The Soviet had discovered a way to calculate the radar cross section (RCS) of a compound shape in two dimensions.²⁵⁰ This allowed for the accurate calculation of the RCS of different shape combinations so that they could minimize radar reflection. From these optimized combinations, an aircraft could be designed that would be extremely difficult to detect with radar. This breakthrough led directly to the development of the F-117 Nighthawk.

Concepts for the employment of stealth aircraft varied greatly: “Many saw stealth technology as a silver bullet in the form of a limited number of aircraft that could blow a hole through (Soviet) defenses to create penetration corridors for other aircraft.”²⁵¹ Others saw the possibility of developing a long range, deep strike penetrating bomber. Because it was simpler, General Lew Allen, the USAF Chief of Staff, and General David Jones, the Chairman of the JCS chose the first approach. It was thought that much could be learned from a smaller program that would later apply to other applications.²⁵² Research continued on the latter option, however, and the deep strike bomber idea eventually became the B-2 program.

The F-117 was developed and fielded under cover of extreme classification. It became operational in 1983, flying out of Tonopah AB in Nevada. Initial plans were to

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 300.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ben R. Rich and Leo Janos, *Skunk Works: A Personal Memoir of My Years at Lockheed* (Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., Ltd., 1994), 20.

²⁵¹ Kaminski, 300.

²⁵² Ibid., 303.

employ the aircraft in Operation El Dorado Canyon, the strike on Tripoli in 1986, but Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger decided against their use at the last minute. He rationalized that it was too soon to reveal such a revolutionary capability to the Soviets.²⁵³ Two years later, in 1988, the existence of the program was acknowledged, but many details remained classified. With the likelihood of a major war with the Soviet Union rapidly receding and the existence of the technology already announced, stealth technology needed a coming out party. The F-117 first saw action on December 20, 1989 on the opening night of Operation Just Cause in Panama. Two aircraft flew in and struck their targets without being detected. Poor weather conditions caused a change in aimpoints right before the mission and, although the pilots hit what they were aiming at, the desired effects were not achieved. Afterward, the press reported that the targets had been missed, and stealth's public persona got off to an unjustified bad start.²⁵⁴ The true strength and capabilities of stealth aircraft were soon to be revealed, however, halfway across the globe in Iraq.

When Operation Desert Shield kicked off in August 1990, F-117s began deploying to the Persian Gulf Region. Eventually, a total of forty-two would participate in the air war. The F-117s conducted the first bombing raids of Operation Desert Storm on January 17, 1991, striking the air defense heart of the country in downtown Baghdad. Although they could be detected, the Iraqis could not track the aircraft and thus could not shoot them down.²⁵⁵ In all, over twelve hundred sorties were eventually flown, one third of those over the heavily defended city of Baghdad.²⁵⁶ The F-117s experienced phenomenal success in the Persian Gulf War. Although they flew just two percent of the total attack sorties, they struck forty percent of the strategic targets that were hit. Moreover, the F-117 and Tomahawk cruise missile were responsible for all of the strikes on downtown Baghdad.²⁵⁷ Precisely as envisioned, they decimated the Iraqi integrated

²⁵³ Rich and Janos, 96.

²⁵⁴ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 75.

²⁵⁵ Barry Horne, quoted in Ben R. Rich and Leo Janos, *Skunk Works: A Personal Memoir of My Years at Lockheed* (Toronto, Canada: Little, Brown & Co., Ltd., 1994), 101.

²⁵⁶ Thomas Houlihan, *Gulf War: The Complete History* (New London, N.H.: Schrenker Military Publishing, 1999), 25.

²⁵⁷ Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf*

air defense system, opening the way for conventional strike aircraft to attack their targets in a significantly reduced threat environment. The F-117s consistently flew against the most highly defended targets in the war and, in spite of this, suffered no losses. The immaculate loss record combined with graphic video recordings of successful strike missions contributed to what was to become an “aura of invincibility” that soon surrounded the weapon system.²⁵⁸ In assessing the impact of the F-117 on the war, Thomas Keaney and Eliot Cohen, key authors of the *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, stated:

stealthy, low-observable platforms were the keystones of Coalition attacks against the Iraqi air defense system, leadership, and communication targets early on the first day of the war, even in heavily defended areas...(They) needed minimal support from other aircraft but were able to provide stealth to a much larger force by disabling the enemy’s air defense system, thus making all Coalition aircraft harder to detect and attack.²⁵⁹

In all, only twenty-seven United States aircraft were lost during the war, and just eleven by allied air forces, astonishingly low figures given the number of sorties flown.²⁶⁰

The F-117’s next opportunity for combat came during Operation Deliberate Force. Six aircraft were to deploy to Aviano Air Base in Italy and conduct airstrikes from there. Unfortunately, the Italian government disapproved the bed down of the aircraft in their country for political reasons.²⁶¹ The F-117’s opportunity to operate in the Balkans would be delayed only four years, however. Operation Allied Force against the Bosnian Serbs gave the F-117 another chance to shine. They, and the recently fielded B-2 stealth bomber, flew against the most highly defended Serb targets, once again concentrating on the IADS and strategic targets.²⁶² Unfortunately, the loss record was not as clean as that during the Persian Gulf War. On March 28, the fourth night of the

(Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 190.

²⁵⁸ Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 202.

²⁵⁹ Keaney and Cohen, 189.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

²⁶¹ Col. Robert C. Owen, ed. *Deliberate Force a Study in Effective Air Campaigning: Final Report of the Air University Balkans Air Campaign Study* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000), 151-153.

²⁶² Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, RAND

war, an F-117 was lost roughly thirty miles northwest of Belgrade. The cause of the loss is still unclear, but the pilot was quickly rescued and brought back to safety. Still, that one incident represented half of the aircraft losses during the air campaign. The only other loss was an F-16, which was shot down by a surface-to-air missile. Incredibly, these were the only two aircraft lost in over 9,200 sorties flown by fighters and bombers, a fact directly attributable to stealth technology and the neutralization of Serbian radar.²⁶³ More significantly, even with those two losses, not a single allied life was lost to hostile fire during the entire 78-day operation.

The air campaign over Kosovo marked the first use of the newest generation stealth aircraft, the B-2. With the ability to strike sixteen separate targets on one mission, the B-2 soon became the darling of the war and “surpassed all expectations during its combat debut.”²⁶⁴ Both the F-117 and B-2 proved once again that stealth aircraft could penetrate the most highly defended areas on earth to deliver their weapons accurately, while tremendously reducing the risk to American airmen.

Precision Weapons. Soon after military men took to the air, they began trying to destroy targets on the ground. Getting a bomb to hit the ground proved easy--the law of gravity is strict. Hitting a specific target proved far more difficult. The problem grew as aircraft increased their altitude to minimize the risk of being shot down by ground fire. The role of the bombardier became a highly technical specialty, with an array of calculating tools and weapons sites to assist in accurate targeting. By World War II, the United States was using the Norden bombsight in its strategic bombers and bombing from above 20,000 feet.²⁶⁵ While a great improvement over earlier efforts, it still did not supply the desired level of precision. This lack of precision meant that large numbers of bombs, carried by large numbers of aircraft, had to be dropped in order to produce a reasonable probability of destroying a given target. A review of the *US Strategic Bombing Survey* shows that performance during World War II was far less than that

Report MR-1365 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), 90.

²⁶³ Headquarters US Air Force, *Air War Over Serbia Fact Sheet* (Washington DC: USAF, October 2000), 6.

²⁶⁴ Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 159.

²⁶⁵ Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 64.

desired.²⁶⁶ In order to guarantee a hit on one 60 foot by 100 foot target with one bomb, 1,500 B-17s had to drop 9,000 250 pound bombs. The circular error probable (CEP) was a huge 3,000 feet.²⁶⁷ This was hardly precision. Experiments conducted with radio-controlled bombs produced encouraging results, but there were not enough of them to make a significant contribution to the war.²⁶⁸

Between the Korean and Vietnam Wars, research efforts focused on nuclear weapons, but some advances in precision conventional weapons were made.²⁶⁹ Vietnam saw the use of both radio- and optically-controlled weapons. Although highly task-intensive for the aircrew, these methods brought a significant increase in the precision of airdropped weapons. They were, however, too light to destroy heavier targets, such as cement bridges. The most significant development in precision munitions was the laser-guided bomb (LGB). These weapons had sensors on the front end of the bomb that tracked a laser spot on a designated target. The sensor on the bomb gave commands to a set of flight controls, steering it to the target. Importantly, the sensor and the flight controls could be installed on larger bombs, including 2,000 and 3,000 pound versions, significantly increasing destructive power.²⁷⁰ The most vivid example of the advantage brought by LGBs in the Vietnam War involved the Than Hoa Bridge, which spanned the Song Ma River in North Vietnam. The bridge, completed in 1964, was extremely robust, heavily defended, and carried the main highway as well as the only railroad south of Hanoi.²⁷¹ During three years of Rolling Thunder hundreds of sorties were flown against the bridge in an effort to destroy it. A total of eleven aircraft were shot down. Numerous types of munitions were tried, from unguided bombs to lightweight optically guided weapons, but none were able to drop a single span of the bridge and no damage put it out

²⁶⁶ Franklin D'Olier, et al., eds. *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European and Pacific Wars)* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1987 (reprint)), 110.

²⁶⁷ David R. Mets, "History of Armament," (presentation, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 2002), 9.

²⁶⁸ David R. Mets, *The Long Search for a Surgical Strike: Precision Munitions and the Revolution in Military Affairs*, USAF CADRE Paper No. 12 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, Air University, 2001), 11.

²⁶⁹ C. R. Anderegg, *Sierra Hotel: Flying Air Force Fighters in the Decade After Vietnam* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001), 120.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁷¹ Wayne Thompson, *To Hanoi and Back: The United States Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966-1972* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 234.

of commission for very long. In May 1972, F-4s carrying 2,000-pound and 3,000-pound LGBs from the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing attacked the bridge and dropped one of its spans, putting it out of commission.²⁷² The strike was a watershed event for precision bombing. By the end of the war, bombing accuracy had increased dramatically. It now averaged only thirty F-4s dropping one hundred and seventy six 500-pound bombs to destroy one target. The CEP was four hundred feet, compared to three thousand feet in World War II.²⁷³

The accuracy afforded by the LGB meant that fewer aircraft needed to be sent into battle to attack a specific target. It also meant that aircraft could attack more than one target per raid, further reducing the number of aircraft exposed to the threat. This lowered the risk to American aircrews and reduced losses dramatically.²⁷⁴ Early versions of the LGB were not an optimal solution, however. They required good weather and adequate visibility, which limited their effectiveness at night. American weapons research after the Vietnam War focused on improving the success of precision guided munitions, and the fruits of those labors were realized in the Persian Gulf War.

During the Gulf War, one quarter the number of precision munitions were dropped as in the Vietnam War, but their impact on American and world public opinion was vastly greater. Their success had a profound effect on the future structure of American military forces and on the doctrine that guides their use. The roughly 14,000 PGMs dropped represented just nine percent of the total number of munitions expended, but their impact was much more significant than these relatively small numbers would seem to indicate. The LGB was the only weapon dropped by the F-117, which was able to destroy the most highly defended targets in the theater, setting the stage for successful follow-on conventional strikes. The accuracy afforded by the F-117 armed with LGBs was phenomenal. It took only one F-117 and one 2,000-pound bomb to destroy a target. The CEP was an amazing ten feet. Since the F-117 carries two bombs, two targets could be destroyed in one sortie.²⁷⁵ Compared with World War II and Vietnam, this level of accuracy is truly astounding (see Table 1).

²⁷² Ibid., 234-235.

²⁷³ Mets, "History of Armament," 12.

²⁷⁴ Andereg, 124.

LGBs also gave the United States its only capability to destroy the extensive

Table 1

Historical Bombing Accuracy

War	Number of Bombs	Number of Sorties	CEP (in feet)
World War II	9,000	1,500	3,300
Vietnam	176	30	400
Persian Gulf	2	0.5	10

Source: David R. Mets, "History of Armament," (presentation, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 2002), 9-14.

system of Iraqi bunkers and hardened aircraft shelters, vulnerable only to a precision bomb with a penetrating warhead. Along with other precision weapons like the Maverick, they were essential to the successful destruction of the dug-in Iraqi armor in

the Kuwaiti theater.²⁷⁶ The effectiveness of these new precision weapons far outpaced those used during the Vietnam War. LGB accuracy had increased to the point that it was no longer a question of hitting the right building, but of which window on which floor. Some of the most vivid images broadcast from the theater during the Gulf War were of precision guided munitions striking their targets with startling accuracy. This amazing precision and the ability to observe it at home on the television brought "the Western public [to] come to think of war like laser surgery."²⁷⁷ This degree of accuracy stands in stark contrast to the Combined Bomber Offensive during World War II, where waves of Allied bombers hurled themselves through vicious German air defenses in an attempt to destroy a single target.

During Operation Allied Force, precision weapons once again played a key role. The air campaign was much longer than the previous Bosnian action (Operation

²⁷⁵ Mets, "History of Armament," 14.

²⁷⁶ Keaney and Cohen, 192.

²⁷⁷ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 92.

Deliberate Force), and only twenty-nine percent of the munitions used were precision guided.²⁷⁸ However, in comparison to Desert Storm, where only nine percent of the munitions were precision guided, the number in Allied Force represented a significant increase in use and dependence on the high tech weapons. Secretary of Defense William Cohen called Operation Allied Force “undoubtedly the most precise air and missile combat operation in history.”²⁷⁹ The Kosovo operation marked the debut of a new class of precision munitions—global positioning system (GPS) guided. GPS guided weapons, such as the Joint Direct Attack Mission (JDAM) (carried by the B-2), use signals transmitted from space to establish their own position. They then fly to the geographic coordinates of their target, allowing aircraft to bomb fixed targets extremely accurately in all weather conditions, day or night. This was a major increase in capability. “In Kosovo, NATO forces operated under conditions in which there was at least 50 percent cloud cover more than 70 percent of the time, and yet were able to continue the operation.”²⁸⁰ While GPS weapons are classed as ‘near precision,’ they were accurate enough to significantly reduce the level of risk to civilians on the ground. Because this weapon does not require guidance support after launch, the employing aircraft can turn away from threats earlier, further reducing the risk to the aircrew. Another weapon, the Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW), “has a kinematically efficient airframe that provides standoff outside point defenses,” and can be launched from even farther ranges, keeping airplanes and crews farther from possible harm.²⁸¹ In Kosovo, the JSOW was very early in production and saw only limited action. It was carried only by US Navy F-18s.²⁸²

This new class of weapon does have drawbacks. It is possible to inadvertently attack the wrong target by simply entering the wrong coordinates in the bomb’s guidance system. Similarly, the exact coordinates must be known in order to hit the desired target.

²⁷⁸ Headquarters US Air Force, *The One Year Report of the Air War Over Serbia: Aerospace Power in Operation Allied Force, Vol. I, Decisive Aerospace Operations (U)* (Washington DC: Headquarters US Air Force, October 2000), 513. (Secret NOFORN) Information extracted is unclassified.

²⁷⁹ United States Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, Report to Congress (Washington DC: United States Department of Defense), xxiii.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁸² Headquarters US Air Force, *The One Year Report of the Air War Over Serbia: Aerospace Power in Operation Allied Force, Vol. I, Decisive Aerospace Operations (U)*, 516. (Secret NOFORN) Information extracted is unclassified.

If the incorrect coordinates are used, not only will the desired target not be hit, but another target may unintentionally be hit. An error similar to this was responsible for the inadvertent bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.²⁸³ Even with these limitations, GPS guided bombs greatly increase the precision bombing capability of air forces.

Force Size. America pursued stealth and precision weapons as a means to offset numerical inferiority against the Warsaw Pact. During the Cold War, it was a near certainty that the United States would be outnumbered in a fight against the Soviet Union.²⁸⁴ This numerical imbalance would prove to be the rule from the end of the Korean War until the end of the Cold War, three decades later.

In 1955, right after the Korean War and just before a major drawdown in forces, the United States had 2.94 million personnel in its active military forces (see Table 2 for a summary of force figures).²⁸⁵ At the same time, the Soviet Union had forces numbering 5.76 million.²⁸⁶ By 1960, parity had almost been reached, with the United States fielding a force of 2.51 million and the Soviets countering with 2.42 million.²⁸⁷ While the United States would build its forces to fight the war in Vietnam and then drastically reduce them once again after the war, the Soviets would continue to build their force strength.²⁸⁸ In 1988, the culmination of the Cold War, America had rebuilt its forces to a new peacetime high of 2.16 million personnel.²⁸⁹ In contrast, the Soviet Union had grown to an incredible strength of 5.25 million active forces, with a probable reserve of 55 million.²⁹⁰ In 1989, the United States once again began a force drawdown. The Persian Gulf War occurred in the midst of this reduction. Although the number of Iraqi forces engaged in

²⁸³ Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, 144.

²⁸⁴ Kaminski, 299.

²⁸⁵ S. H. Steinberg, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1956*, 93rd ed. (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1956), 586-592.

²⁸⁶ John Paxton, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1980-81*, 117th ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 1214.

²⁸⁷ S. H. Steinberg, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1960-1961*, 97th ed. (New York, N.Y.: St Martin's Press, 1961), 605-612; Paxton, *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1980-81*, 117th ed., 1214.

²⁸⁸ US Department of Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 120th Ed. Washington DC: Economics and Statistics Administration, 2000, p. 366. Includes Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force.

²⁸⁹ John Paxton, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1988-89*, 125th ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 1387-1394.

²⁹⁰ John Paxton, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1990-91*, 127th ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 1230.

the war is unclear, Iraq possessed a total estimated force of 1.2 million.²⁹¹ Coalition

Table 2

American and Soviet Armed Force Size (personnel in millions)

Year	United States	Soviet Union
1955	2.94	5.76
1960	2.51	2.42
1988	2.16	5.25
1995	1.64	1.29
2000	1.45	0.72

Sources: S. H. Steinberg et al., eds., *The Statesman's Yearbook*, 93rd, 97th, 117th, 125th, 127th, 132nd, and 136th eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press).

forces numbering 660,000 faced them down in a titanic technological victory.²⁹² Although possibly outnumbered, the Coalition did not face a force anywhere near the size that the Soviets could be expected to field, and the combination of near parity and overwhelming technological superiority proved to be unstoppable. After the end of the Cold War, most of the former-Soviet armed force was adopted by Russia. By 1995, the once-mighty force had declined to 1.29 million, and the days of their military dominance had ended.²⁹³ American forces totaled 1.64 million at that time.²⁹⁴ The United States now possessed a force that was not only vastly in technology superior, it was also numerically superior to its former mighty foe. By 1997, American military strength decreased thirty percent from its peacetime high in 1987.²⁹⁵ By the year 2000, the United States total active force equaled 1.45 million and the Russian's a mere 0.78 million. However, another large force existed on the globe. The Chinese possessed an armed force of 2.84 million, reiterating the need to maintain a military technological advantage

²⁹¹ Keaney and Cohen, 9; Paxton, *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1990-91*, 127th ed., 715.

²⁹² Keaney and Cohen, 7.

²⁹³ Brian Hunter, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1995-96*, 132nd ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 371-374.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 1404-1412.

to ensure American national security.²⁹⁶

Conclusion

The United States' long investment in technology created a tremendously capable fighting force. The offset strategy to advance technological capability in the face of superior numbers paid tremendous dividends. By the Persian Gulf War, the marriage of stealth aircraft and precision weapons proved to be a formidable combination, able to strike virtually any stationary target with near certainty. It has been so successful that it has come to represent America's military might. The end of the Cold War signaled the beginning of a reduction in military forces that is not yet complete, erasing the one significant disadvantage America faced on the battlefield. Numerical parity or superiority is assured against almost any possible opponent. The United States now finds itself with one of the largest and by far the most capable armed forces on the planet. When committed correctly, military success seems almost assured. This not only makes the president's decision to use force easier, it makes it more likely that the American public will support the action (which in turn makes the president's decision even easier). The influence of stealth and precision on the president and public opinion is not limited, however, to just increasing the chance of military success. Its impact is felt across several other factors in the president's decision to use force.

²⁹⁵ US Department of Commerce. 369.

²⁹⁶ Barry Turner, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook, 2000: The Politics, Cultures and Economies of the World*, 136th ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 446-1726.

Chapter 5

The Cost of Intervention: Casualties and Risk

But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding go out to meet it.

- Thucydides

The Peloponnesian War (Funeral Oration of Pericles)

In a democratic society, government leaders depend on solid public support to maintain national resolve in a crisis. Without consensus, legitimacy falters and the democratic state is unable to act. Continuing public support, however, allows the government to marshal the necessary military and diplomatic means to resolve the situation. When considering the role of military force in a crisis, the president of the United States must assess the nature and depth of the public's support, as it currently exists and over time. The depth of support for military action is evident in the public's tolerance for casualties, both military and civilian.

Casualty Tolerance

Americans' long embrace of the liberal democratic method of governing has incurred a sense of broad participation in government action. This means that each citizen – in some personal and meaningful way – shares in the responsibility for decisions to use violence abroad. Perhaps for this reason, the majority of the American public shows deep concern for the number of actual and potential casualties when considering whether to support a specific intervention.²⁹⁷ In fact, “all else being equal, prospective and observed (public) support for a U.S. military intervention decline as expected or actual casualties increase.”²⁹⁸ The higher the expected or actual casualties, the lower the anticipated level of public support. This inverse relationship has been evident in both large and small scale interventions.

²⁹⁷ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 7.

²⁹⁸ Ibid..

Casualties and Support. Since the end of World War II, the United States has committed to large-scale military intervention three times: the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. Each one had similarities in the amount of public support at the outset. The perceived objectives and interests in the Korean War initially brought strong bipartisan support for President Truman's decision to intervene.²⁹⁹ After the Chinese entered the war, public support dropped precipitously, corresponding to a large increase in the number of battle casualties.³⁰⁰ The Vietnam War, another limited conflict, began with similar high levels of support. Unlike Korea, there was no single event that caused a steep drop in support, but by the end of the Tet Offensive in 1968, public support levels had sunk to similarly low levels. "Casualties, especially war dead, had increasingly become the single most troubling aspect of the Vietnam War."³⁰¹ America's next, and so far last, commitment of major military forces occurred in the Persian Gulf War in 1990-1991. This war did not have the overriding national objective of battling communism, but there was strong support for military action. The support, however, was somewhat complex. There was strong support for upholding the principle that international disputes should not be decided with violence, and in the cases where violence does occur, it is the aggressor who is wrong. There was much less support for a war that could be characterized as trading lives for the free flow of oil.³⁰² Nevertheless, the general level of public support for offensive military action prior to the outbreak of hostilities was high. Still, anxieties were evident and support drooped when the popular press began to prepare Americans for the possibility of an extended, Vietnam-like campaign with up to 50,000 dead Americans. Once the air campaign started, and the collective public realization that Allied casualties would be very light, there was a surge in public support which continued through the end of the war.³⁰³ "The success of the war and the U.S. efforts to minimize casualties were rewarded with high levels of support, and most found the costs that had been incurred to have been worth what was

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 28-29.

³⁰² Ibid., 35.

³⁰³ Ibid., 34-35.

accomplished.”³⁰⁴

America concurrently engaged in a number of smaller military actions, and a similar pattern regarding public support and casualties emerged. The 1989 intervention in Panama revealed a pattern that was similar to those from the *Mayaguez* Incident and Grenada. The public considered the objectives important enough to warrant military action, and as casualties were few and objectives for each were quickly achieved, public support remained high throughout the operations.³⁰⁵ The United States’ humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1993 demonstrated what could happen when casualties are greater than anticipated, and objectives are unclear or difficult to achieve quickly. Initially, in part due to its overwhelmingly humanitarian impetus, the intervention received high levels of bipartisan and public support. As the mission dragged on, however, the objectives shifted away from the initial humanitarian to political ones, and coincident with of unanticipated levels of American military casualties, public support dropped off. Perceived (and actual) costs rose above the limited returns expected, and the operation could not be supported.³⁰⁶ The result of this rapidly declining support and escalating American (and Somali) casualties was President Clinton’s decision to withdraw the forces from Somalia with the mission left unfinished.³⁰⁷ “When Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer was rather close to zero.”³⁰⁸ President Reagan faced a similar phenomenon regarding the United States’ action in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Unclear objectives and uncertain interests denied him strong public support from the beginning of the operation. Public support rose in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks, but dropped once again soon after.³⁰⁹

The importance and clarity of the objectives of an intervention play an important

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 40.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 40-42.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 43-45.

³⁰⁷ Nina M. Serafino, *Military Interventions by U.S. Forces from Vietnam to Bosnia: Background, Outcomes, and ‘Lessons Learned’ for Kosovo*, Congressional Research Report for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1999), 20.

³⁰⁸ John E. Mueller, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The People’s ‘Common Sense’,” in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, 3rd ed., eds. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 54.

³⁰⁹ Larson, 48-49.

role in public support for military action. Limited objectives are going to justify limited means, and correspondingly limited costs. War for national survival (sometimes dubbed unlimited war) could bear unrestricted costs, including casualties.³¹⁰ The costs borne for World War II are a case in point. They included casualties, of course, and there is scant evidence that the American public's resolve might have waned had casualties gone significantly higher than the half million dead that historically occurred. Preparations were under way, for example, to be able to sustain up to half a million more casualties in a direct assault on the Japanese main islands.³¹¹ Indeed, one could argue that in a war of national survival, as World War II was, the greater the number of casualties the greater the resolve of the American people. Fortunately, we have no empirical proof of the claim.

In the past 57 years, the United States has not been involved in a conflict that has justified a similar, unrestrained cost to obtain its objectives. The Cold War rhetoric of nuclear weaponry, perversely keeping the world safe from World War III by the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction (the MAD policies of the super-powers), could be cited but the abstract level of destruction was mercifully always in the hypothetical realm.³¹² Without the vital national interest of survival to drive it, the American public has been correspondingly less willing to accept casualties in the pursuit of those objectives. Since World War II, when an intervention has suffered a change in objectives and along with it an increase in the length of time engaged, American casualties have caused a drop in public support for the intervention. When the interventions have achieved their objectives quickly with no significant change, casualties have produced no significant drop in public support. Assuming the objectives are clear, understood, and quickly achievable, the president can obtain and increase public support by taking steps to reduce the probable number of casualties in advance of intervention, and can help prevent that support from eroding by limiting them during the fighting. Two advances in military technology, stealth aircraft and precision-guided munitions, have markedly reduced

³¹⁰ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1977), 252.

³¹¹ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 520.

³¹² Rhodes, Edward, *Power and MADness: The Logic of Nuclear Coercion* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1989), 1.

casualties, both military and civilian, greatly aiding the president in this process.

Stealth Aircraft and Casualties. Stealth aircraft technology has had its greatest effect on public support by reducing casualties associated with military action, specifically when airpower is used. Air operations have long been part of the American way of war. From the strategic bombing offenses during World War II through Korea and Vietnam, the United States has attempted to exploit the third dimension to its advantage. Air combat has been romanticized by the exploits of great aerial aces, such as Baron Manfred von Richtofen and Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, and the image of two warriors battling to the death in the sky has become ingrained in American culture. During the two World Wars, the public showed great interest in the mounting victory totals of its combat pilots.³¹³ Air-to-air combat, though, comprises only a small part of most air wars. It may be the most romantic, but it is not the most dangerous. The threat of loss from ground fire has long been greater than loss due to air-to-air combat. For example, during the Korean War, 147 aircraft were lost in air-to-air combat while 816 were lost to hostile ground fire.³¹⁴ The advent of the IADS increased the lethality of surface-to-air systems, and stealth provided an opportunity to counter that advantage and minimize losses.³¹⁵

Stealth technology has reduced the risk to airmen during conflict. It has decreased the chance of detecting a penetrating aircraft, and increased aircraft survivability against enemy radar-directed surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).³¹⁶ The magnitude of the impact of this technology is seen in the amazing combat record of the F-117 and B-2. The F-117 suffered only one loss during thousands of sorties in Panama, the Persian Gulf War, and Operation Allied Force. The Persian Gulf War and Operation Allied Force were monumental air efforts, each on the scale of a major regional conflict.³¹⁷ The B-2, employed in Operation Allied Force and in Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom, has suffered no combat losses. Stealth technology

³¹³ Lee Kennett, *The First War in the Air, 1914-1918* (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1991), 163.

³¹⁴ Robert F. Futtrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953*, Revised ed. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983), 692.

³¹⁵ Paul G. Kaminski, "Low Observables: the Air Force and Stealth," in *Technology and the Air Force: A Retrospective Assessment*, eds. Jacob Neufeld, George M. Watson, and David Chenoweth, (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), 299.

protected the lives of scores of American aviators while they attacked the most important, highly defended targets in hostile territory. Properly employed, stealth aircraft allow commanders to “conduct precision attacks with near impunity against an opponent’s core instruments of power, whether they be deployed forces or infrastructure targets.”³¹⁸ But stealth technology decreases risk to airmen flying other aircraft without stealth capability.

Of equal significance, stealth has reduced the need to mass aircraft in large, mutually supporting packages in order to attack highly defended targets.³¹⁹

A typical nonstealth attack package in Desert Storm required 38 Air Force, Navy, Marine, and Saudi aircraft to enable 8 of those aircraft to deliver bombs on three aim points. Yet at the same time, only 20 stealthy F-117s simultaneously attacked 37 aim points successfully in the face of a far more challenging Iraqi surface-to-air defensive threat. The difference was more than a 1,200-percent increase in target coverage with 47-percent fewer aircraft.³²⁰

Stealth aircraft require less support aircraft in order to attack more targets. This means that fewer aviators are put directly in harm’s way. The ability to destroy air defenses and enable conventional aircraft to attack with a reduced threat has also decreased the risk to American (or allied) airmen. The F-117s brought more than precision targeting to the Persian Gulf War. They enabled conventional aircraft to accomplish their missions in greater safety. “(They) needed minimal support from other aircraft but were able to provide stealth to a much larger force by disabling the enemy’s air defense system, thus making all Coalition aircraft harder to detect and attack.”³²¹ The impact of this capability borders on revolutionary. Table 3 shows the number of American aircraft lost to hostile fire during post-World War II combat. Of significance is the comparison between Korea and Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War and Operation Allied Force. All four represented

³¹⁶ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 155.

³¹⁷ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, RAND Report MR-1365 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), 172.

³¹⁸ Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 158.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

³²¹ Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 189.

Table 3

American Combat and Fixed-Wing Aircraft Losses

War or Crisis	Total American combat deaths	American fixed-wing aircraft combat losses	American airmen lives lost
Korean War	33,870 ³²²	1,041 ³²³	Over 2,000 ³²⁴
Vietnam War	47,356 ³²⁵	1,737 ³²⁶	1,968 ³²⁷
Mayaguez Incident ³²⁸	41	0	0
Lebanon ³²⁹	278	2	1
Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury) ³³⁰	19	0	0
Libya (Operation El Dorado Canyon) ³³¹	2	1	2
Panama (Operation Just Cause) ³³²	26	0	0
Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm)	148 ³³³	27 ³³⁴	~25 ³³⁵
Somalia (Operation Restore Hope) ³³⁶	29	0 ³³⁷	0
Haiti (Operation Restore Democracy) ³³⁸	1	0	0
Bosnia (Operation Deliberate Force) ³³⁹	0	0	0
Kosovo (Operation Allied Force)	0	2	0

Sources: See footnotes for specific sources for casualty and aircraft loss numbers.³⁴⁰

³²² Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991* (London, England: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1992), 1216.

³²³ Futtrell, 692.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Clodfelter, 1322.

³²⁶ John Schlight, *A War Too Long: The History of the USAF in Southeast Asia* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), 103.

³²⁷ Clodfelter, 1323.

³²⁸ Ibid., 1141.

³²⁹ Ibid., 1076.

³³⁰ Ibid., 1180.

³³¹ Ibid., 1010.

³³² Ibid., 1181.

³³³ Ibid., 1085.

³³⁴ Keaney and Cohen, 273. This shows only American losses. In all, thirty eight coalition aircraft were lost during hostilities.

³³⁵ John Whiteclay Chambers, II, et al, ed. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), 546.

³³⁶ Serafino, 20.

³³⁷ Several helicopters were lost in combat, resulting in the deaths of some airmen. They are included in the total death toll.

³³⁸ Serafino, 23.

³³⁹ Ibid., 26.

³⁴⁰ This table does not include rotary-wing (helicopter) losses. It also does not include the Iran hostage rescue attempt. Although lives and aircraft were lost there, they were not as a direct result of enemy

large-scale air operations. During the Gulf War, stealth aircraft, coupled with a dominant degree of air superiority, led to an air war in which only 38 aircraft were lost to hostile fire. This represents 0.00032 aircraft lost per sortie.³⁴¹ In Kosovo, the first F-117 was lost in combat. The only other combat loss was an F-16, bringing the total aircraft lost during the 78-day war to two. This equals approximately 0.00004 aircraft lost per sortie.³⁴² Comparatively, the per-sortie loss rate in Vietnam was over 6 times that of Desert Storm and almost 50 times that of Operation Allied Force.³⁴³ While stealth aircraft helped create this dramatic reduction in combat losses and commensurate increase in the effectiveness of airpower, they were not the only factor. Advances in training and weapons technology also reduced losses and improved effectiveness, increasing the prospects for successful military action in the face of a numerically superior enemy. The laser guided bomb, dropped from stealth aircraft, limits the number of aircraft necessary to destroy a target, but this is not the only benefit of precision.

Precision Weapons and Collateral Damage. Airpower has become the initial weapon of choice when America uses force. From the Persian Gulf War, where the ground campaign was preceded by a lengthy aerial onslaught, to Bosnia and Kosovo, where airpower was the only instrument employed, airpower has risen to play a key role in the American way of war. This is due in large part to the fact that the United States can attack from the air with less risk of friendly casualties than ever before, and precision weapons give us greater ability to destroy only those targets that we wish to. The United States plans and conducts military operations with high sensitivity to potential friendly casualties and with concern for minimizing collateral damage.³⁴⁴ “High tech warfare is governed by two constraints—avoiding civilian casualties and avoiding risks to pilots—

hostilities.

³⁴¹ Loss rate calculated by dividing 38 by 117,861, the total number of sorties flown during the war. The total includes non-combat and combat support sorties, but not CRAF sorties. Data extracted from Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 261.

³⁴² Sortie total of 46,062 derived from *Air War Over Serbia Fact Sheet* (U), Headquarters US Air Force (Washington DC: USAF, October 2000), 6.

³⁴³ Based on a total of 1,248,000 sorties flown and 2,561 fixed wing aircraft losses during the Vietnam War. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 13.

³⁴⁴ Matthew C. Waxman, *International Law and the Politics of Urban Air Operations*, RAND Report

that are in direct contradiction. To target effectively, you have to fly low. If you fly low, you lose pilots. Fly high and you get civilians.”³⁴⁵ Unintended civilian casualties have a negative effect on both domestic and international support. The startling images of LGBs destroying their targets during the Persian Gulf War established an almost unattainably high expectation for precision. This has led to an almost *zero* expectation of collateral damage on the part of the non-military American and world public. Therefore, when the friction of war does intervene and unintended casualties are suffered, it becomes fuel for domestic critics as well as the enemy’s propaganda machine.³⁴⁶

The United States’ recent emphasis on the use of precision weapons has largely been the result of the desire to limit civilian casualties. Airpower has been the delivery method of choice for these weapons. This fact shows the remarkable evolution of airpower from an extremely blunt instrument to something perceived as having laser-like precision.³⁴⁷ The emphasis on avoiding civilian casualties is a far cry from the targeting recommendations of Giulio Douhet, one of the first advocates of airpower, who proposed bombing certain segments of the civilian population with explosive, incendiary, and poison gas bombs.³⁴⁸ Recent conflicts have shown how avoiding civilian casualties has directly influenced military operations. During Operation Deliberate Force in Bosnia, “avoidance of casualties, even Bosnian Serb casualties, governed the careful selection of aiming points made personally by NATO’s American theater air commander.”³⁴⁹ After the two-week operation, in which precision weapons were used almost exclusively, NATO’s goals were fully met.³⁵⁰ During Operation Allied Force four years later, precision weapons once again played a key role. The air campaign was much longer than the previous Bosnian action, and only twenty-nine percent of the munitions used were

MR-1175-AF (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000), xi.

³⁴⁵ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 62.

³⁴⁶ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, RAND Report MR-1365 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), 139.

³⁴⁷ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 92.

³⁴⁸ Giulio Douhet, *Command of the Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1998), 20.

³⁴⁹ Wayne Thompson, *To Hanoi and Back: The United States Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966-1972* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 285.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

precision guided.³⁵¹ However, in comparison to Desert Storm, where only 9 percent of the munitions were precision guided, the number in Allied Force represented a significant increase in use and dependence on the high tech weapons. PGMs were specifically used against accuracy-sensitive, critical targets and represented sixty-four percent of the desired mean points of impact (DMPs) that were hit, and resulted in a collateral damage rate of only .0005 per sortie.³⁵² The dependence on precision has become so great that the Secretary of Defense identified numerous PGMs as preferred weapons because of their ability to “(increase) the probability of kill against a given target or ...significantly (improve) survivability of weapon platforms or crew.”³⁵³ This emphasis on the use and capability of precision weapons, however, has not come without a price.

“The international law of conflict obliges attackers and defenders to take precautions to reduce the risk of collateral damage and civilian injury...It further requires that attackers refrain from actions likely to cause civilian damage or injury disproportionate to the expected military gain.”³⁵⁴ America, in its pursuit of precision to fulfill this international requirement is becoming a victim of its own success. “In Desert Storm, the public saw a precision so amazing that some came to expect air warfare without any civilian casualties at all.”³⁵⁵ This has led to a condition where any civilian casualties, whether a result of a mistake or inappropriate enemy tactics, has a magnified negative effect on military operations. Targeting the enemy from high altitude can be very difficult. Identifying targets, especially when the enemy uses dual-use vehicles for its operations, is an enormous challenge. On occasion, mistakes are made and civilian targets are struck. Two incidents from recent conflicts highlight difficulties in targeting precision weapons. The first, an incident during Allied Force, highlighted the importance of accurate targeting. “By far the most consequential instance of unintended bomb damage...occurred on May 7, when three JDAMs intended for the headquarters of a

³⁵¹ HQ USAF, *The One Year Report of the Air War Over Serbia: Aerospace Power in Operation Allied Force, Vol. I, Decisive Aerospace Operations* (U), October 2000, p. 513. (Secret NOFORN) Information extracted is unclassified.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ The United States Secretary of Defense, *Report to Congress: Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report* (U) (Washington DC: Office of The Secretary of Defense, 31 January 2000), 89.

³⁵⁴ Matthew C. Waxman, *International Law and the Politics of Urban Air Operations*, RAND Report MR-1175-AF (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000), xi.

Yugoslav arms agency were dropped instead with unerring accuracy by a B-2 on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.”³⁵⁶ The event not only precipitated a major diplomatic incident between the United States and China, it hampered efforts at negotiating an end to the conflict, and prompted political leaders to call a halt to bombing targets in downtown Belgrade.³⁵⁷ Accurate targeting, however, does not obviate the risk of collateral damage. The second incident highlighted the need for timely, accurate intelligence.

On the night of February 13, 1991, two F-117s each dropped a 2,000-pound LGB into the Iraqi Al Firdos command-and-control bunker in downtown Baghdad. Unfortunately, numerous women and children, who, thinking it was safe, had been using the bunker as a bomb shelter, were killed.³⁵⁸ The housing of civilians in a legitimate military target was a clear violation of international law, but the incident caused a firestorm of protest. “The Bush administration publicly affirmed the legitimacy of the target, but feared that televised pictures of dead women and children might turn some Americans against the war.”³⁵⁹ The lack of knowledge of the presence of families in the bunker was determined to be an intelligence failure, but it had a dramatic effect on the war. “The negative publicity and propaganda value extracted by Iraq from the ill-fated attack prompted a decisive halt to allied air operations against Baghdad until the last few days of the war, with predictable consequences for the effectiveness of the so-called strategic air campaign.”³⁶⁰ Al Firdos demonstrated that even when it is the enemy’s fault, collateral casualties can have a direct impact, usually negative, on military operations. The fear of further incidents such as this occurring again has affected the American military’s approach to war. “Senior officials admit that it has influenced wartime decisions (and) some charge that obsessive attention to safeguarding civilians has undermined military effectiveness.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Thompson, *To Hanoi and Back: The United States Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966-1972*, 283.

³⁵⁶ Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, 144.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁵⁸ Wayne W. Thompson, “Al Firdos: The Last Two Weeks of Strategic Bombing in DESERT STORM,” *Air Power History* Vol. 43 (Summer 1996): 50-51.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁶⁰ Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Airpower*, 202.

³⁶¹ William M. Arkin, “Fear of Civilian Deaths May Have Undermined Effort,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16

Conclusion

The combination of stealth aircraft and precision weapons has significantly reduced the risk to American airmen in combat. They have given American forces the ability to attack the most highly defended targets and destroy them with greater reliability and efficiency. This has directly reduced the number of American casualties suffered during combat. Not only has the number of aircraft and aircrew losses dropped, but the total number of American casualties suffered has dropped. This is directly attributable to the fact that airpower is the weapon of first choice and first use in military action. Airpower can prepare the battlefield prior to a ground offensive, such as during the Persian Gulf War, or it can be the only military instrument, like in Kosovo. Stealth and precision have made airpower more effective and this, in turn, has made the entire American military force more effective. We are now able to intervene with confidence that we will not suffer casualties on the scale of World War II.

The reduction in the anticipated cost of intervention has made the president's decision to use military force much easier. No longer does he need to justify the commitment of military force with vital national interests. Public support for military action does not need to be as deep as it was during World War II, because fewer deaths are suffered. As long as casualties remain low, interventions for important or humanitarian interests will be tolerated. The reduction in cost is not limited to American lives. Stealth and precision have given United States forces the capability to almost exclusively destroy only the desired target. This has reduced the risk of harming enemy civilians in collateral damage incidents, further reducing the potential loss of human life in a military conflict. As the concern for incidents like the Al Firdos bunker or Chinese embassy are mitigated, even fewer civilian casualties will occur. This will remove one more eroding force from the base of public support. While increased precision comes with the price of expected infallibility, it is in the process of revolutionizing warfare. The

reduction in potential and actual casualties has domestically aided the president, but the influence does not stop at America's borders.

Chapter 6

The Foreign Factor: Alliances and Coalitions

Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none...

- Thomas Jefferson
First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1801)

The president's decision to intervene militarily is not governed by domestic factors alone. Other nations or states may be directly or indirectly affected by military action. The president must solicit major and regional allies to determine if they will support the planned action as well as determine the position of the United Nations.³⁶² These perceptions and opinions can dramatically limit the extent to which America is willing to act. Presently, the United States is the world's only superpower, capable of projecting and sustaining large-scale military operations anywhere in the world, and yet seems unable (or at the least, unwilling) to use that force unilaterally.³⁶³ "There are strong political and economic reasons why the United States can no longer act alone as 'the world's policeman.'"³⁶⁴ In the present, globalized world, actions by one country can be felt around the world. "Few major politico-economic events fail to have some effect on every country on the globe."³⁶⁵ As a result, coalitions and alliances have become a

³⁶² Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 5.

³⁶³ Maj. John D. Becker, "Combined and Coalition Warfighting: The American Experience," *Military Review*, Nov 1993, 25.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Laurence Martin, "Alliances and Alignments in a Globalizing World," in *The Global Century: Globalization and National Security*, Vol. II, ed. by Richard L. Kugler and Ellen L. Frost (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2001), 599.

critical element in the decision calculus that leads to international intervention.

Alliances and Coalitions: Organization and Roles

Alliances have existed since the beginning of politics. Traditionally, they “formalize alignments based on interests or coercion.”³⁶⁶ Countries align to improve their position globally, regionally, or domestically. Alliances generally focus on state security and they are usually oriented toward a common threat.³⁶⁷ The most significant aspect of alliances is that they are “characterized by agreement to regard ‘an attack upon any member...as an attack upon all.’”³⁶⁸ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an example of just such an agreement. While alliances are usually formed in peacetime for wartime execution, *coalitions* are usually associated with fighting a war. “Generally ad hoc, (coalitions) are established to fight a particular war or to counter a specific threat.”³⁶⁹

Alliances and coalitions provide three key elements to a military intervention: legitimacy, access, and cost sharing.³⁷⁰ Unilateral action can adversely affect the United States’ worldwide legitimacy. “This type of action leaves a bad impression on both involved and uninvolved states, especially in the Third World. Participation by a number of other states...provides an air of legitimacy that can be critical to long-term results.”³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 3.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶⁸ Jack C. Plano, and Milton Greenberg, *The American Political Dictionary*, 7th Ed. (New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985), 470.

³⁶⁹ Maj Jeffrey W. Yeager, “Coalition Warfare: Surrendering Sovereignty,” *Military Review*, Nov 1992, p. 52.

³⁷⁰ Lt Col Michael A. O’Halloran, “The Vulnerability of Coalitions,” *The US Naval Institute Proceedings* Vol. 126/9/1,171 (September 2000), p. 62.

³⁷¹ Yeager, 62.

Access is “the ability to visit and use strategically located areas.”³⁷² The United States has the ability to strike anywhere on the globe, but sustained military operations require forward basing, which must be allowed by other countries. Cost sharing is necessary because sustained major military operations are very expensive. Excessive drain on an economy in support of a war may cause domestic support problems.³⁷³

Prior to the twentieth century, coalitions were usually temporary, formed to fight a war and then disbanded. Recently, long-term alliances have formed, complementing short-term war fighting agreements.³⁷⁴ “All major wars in the 20th century have been coalition wars except for the Russo-Japanese and Iran-Iraq wars.”³⁷⁵ During the same time period, the United States only intervened militarily with coalition or alliance partnership, with a few small-action exceptions.³⁷⁶

Before the End of the Cold War. During the twentieth century, the United States learned how to fight effectively as a coalition partner, and these coalitions generally held to a consistent pattern. America was in charge of the coalition and set the agenda, action was against a well-defined adversary, the West followed because of a shared vision, and the United Nations was limited to providing a seal of legitimizing approval.³⁷⁷ America’s first major involvement with coalition warfare occurred during World War I. In that instance it was as a junior partner, and the expected contribution to

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Richard N. Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Washington DC: The Carnegie Endowment, 1994), 142.

³⁷⁴ Steve Bowman, “Historical and Cultural Influences on Coalition Operations,” in *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, ed. by Thomas J. Marshall, et. al. (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 1.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Nicaragua in the 1920s, the *Mayaguez* Incident, the Iran Hostage Rescue attempt, and the Panama invasion in 1989 are a few examples of unilateral American intervention. Most of them were comparatively small-scale military actions and, except for Nicaragua, were of short duration.

³⁷⁷ Anne M. Dixon, “The Whats and Whys of Coalitions,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Winter 1993-1994, p. 26.

the war was manpower.³⁷⁸ Since it was manpower and not just resources that the Allies needed, America played a more dominant role in the alliance than her late entry into the war might have dictated. General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, insisted on commanding his own troops, for example, determining where and how they would be used--a decidedly brash demand given the American's lack of combat experience. The Allies desperately needed the American forces, so they largely acquiesced.³⁷⁹ When America entered World War II, it was as an equal coalition partner. In the face of Nazi domination of the world, "the pooling of resources and military effort was clearly a better way to secure survival than going it alone."³⁸⁰ The United States was a primary source of both manpower and resources in the war against Hitler, and quickly secured the dominant position in the alliance. Dwight Eisenhower commanded the forces in the largest theater of operations (Europe), and in the Pacific, "despite contributions and input from 12 countries involved in the effort, the United States seldom relinquished any authority over the real strategy decisions in-theater."³⁸¹

Following its experiences in World War II, the United States once again took the military and diplomatic lead in the Korean War. "South Korea and the United States provided more than 90 percent of the manpower, but sixteen other governments sent forces of some kind...."³⁸² The Korean War saw the first major involvement of the United Nations in military conflict. Backed by a UN Security Council resolution to force North Korean forces back north of the 38th parallel, American General Douglas MacArthur was given command of the United Nations forces.³⁸³ However, the United

³⁷⁸ Yeager, 54.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 55.

³⁸⁰ Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 3.

³⁸¹ Yeager, 56.

³⁸² William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3.

³⁸³ Stueck, 12. The resolution was possible only because the Soviet Union was at that time boycotting UN meetings as they had devolved into a show of puppet-like support for American internationalist policy. As a

Nations kept in check American and South Korean desires with respect to the war's end state.³⁸⁴ Initially, as coalition forces pushed the North Korean forces toward the Chinese border, the UN reluctantly aligned its political goals with America and South Korea, who were pushing for unification of the peninsula. However, in the face of a Chinese invasion, it backed away from these goals. Once the military situation stabilized, coalition partners, notably Great Britain and France, pushed the United States to accept the less lofty goal of a cease-fire in lieu of unification. It was a clear example of how coalition members can force the dominant actor to alter its objective to maintain coalition cohesion.³⁸⁵

The Vietnam War was a much more unilateral action. The United States had military support from only a few regional actors, and the United Nations Security Council passed no resolutions on the conflict.³⁸⁶ America was able to pursue its political objectives (muddled as they were) because “the Johnson administration was unconstrained by the need to maintain consensus among...other allies.”³⁸⁷ The United States acted unilaterally in the *Mayaguez* Incident and Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, but these were reactions to direct threats to American citizens only. In 1982, the United States banded with Italian, French, and British forces to stabilize the situation in Lebanon. The operation suffered from a lack of American domestic support, a lack of

member of the Security Council, it could have unilaterally vetoed the action against its communist ally.

The Soviets did not make the mistake again, and the UN was incapable of marshalling a united war effort until Russia claimed the Soviet chair in the Council, and refused to veto action against Hussein in Iraq.

³⁸⁴ Yeager, 58.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 58-59.

³⁸⁶ Nina M. Serafino, *Military Interventions by U.S. Forces from Vietnam to Bosnia: Background, Outcomes, and 'Lessons Learned' for Kosovo*, Congressional Research Report for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1999), 11.

³⁸⁷ Jeffrey Record, *Serbia and Vietnam: A Preliminary Comparison of U.S. Decisions to Use Force*, Occasional Paper No. 8, Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, May 1999), p. 5.

clear political objectives with a clearly defined end state, and it dissolved soon after the loss of over three hundred coalition peacekeepers to terrorist activity.³⁸⁸ A principal cause of the failure of the intervention was “a lack of political consensus among the contributing nations.”³⁸⁹ For the invasion of Grenada in 1983, the goals were much clearer. President Reagan recruited the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, which, in addition to justifying his actions internationally and providing legitimacy to the operation, supported the American goals.³⁹⁰

The retaliatory raid on Libya for terrorist activity in 1986 highlighted the continuing need for support from other nations during an intervention, even when the balance of global military power was decidedly in the United States’ favor. While British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher authorized the use of British air bases to launch the attack, France and Spain refused overflight permission, and the striking aircraft were forced to fly a much longer route to their targets.³⁹¹ In fact, the Italians, a NATO ally, actually provided early warning of the attack, through Malta, to the Libyans.³⁹² Two American airmen were killed in the attack.

The final American intervention prior to the end of the Cold War was the 1989 invasion of Panama. While the apprehension of Manuel Noriega was a unilateral military action, President Bush “justified the action in a letter to Congress as necessary to protect...American citizens...and to fulfill U.S. treaty responsibilities regarding the

³⁸⁸ Serafino, 14.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Mark M. Lowenthal and Robert L. Goldich, eds., *Use of Force by the United States: Case Studies, 1950-1991*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1992), 67.

³⁹¹ William T. Y’Blood, “Peace is not Always Peaceful,” in *Winged Shield, Winged Sword: A History of the United States Air Force*, Vol. II. Ed. by Bernard C. Nalty (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997), 421.

³⁹² Ibid.

operation and defense of the Panama Canal.”³⁹³ In spite of this, the Organization of American States condemned the action and a United Nations Security Council draft resolution (which was vetoed by the United States, Great Britain, and France) was crafted demanding the immediate withdrawal of all troops.³⁹⁴ While the United States participated in many coalition military operations before the end of the Cold War, the nature of coalition action would soon change. The military dominance of the United States would remain, but the nature of its political dominance would change.

The Persian Gulf War. The coalition that fought the Persian Gulf War in 1991 was one of classic force building against a clearly defined adversary. For the United States, it was necessary, perhaps not from a force capability standpoint, but for the three benefits of a coalition: legitimacy, access, and cost sharing. Although President Carter had long before established stability in the area as a vital national interest, “most Arab nations were anxious to avoid outside interference...(because it) had often exacerbated regional tensions instead of relieving them.”³⁹⁵ While there was some dissention, an Arab league vote “condemning Iraq and committing troops (was) critical in casting the conflict as an international response, rather than a US vendetta against an Arab country.”³⁹⁶ The United Nations also passed numerous resolutions from condemning Iraq’s invasion to authorizing the use of force in removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait.³⁹⁷ With legitimacy established, American and allied troops were able to gain access to the region and conduct sustained major military operations. The Gulf War was a very expensive intervention, but the United States paid only \$7 billion out of an estimated total

³⁹³ Serafino, 16.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Elmer Plischke, ed., *Contemporary U.S. Foreign Policy: Documents and Commentary* (New York, N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1991), 199; Susan Rosegrant and Michael D. Watkins, “The Gulf Crisis: Building a Coalition for War,” in *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy: Readings and Cases*, ed. by Bruce W. Jentleson (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 234.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 236.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 237-238.

cost of \$61 billion.³⁹⁸ Facing a tight economic front at home, the United States convinced numerous other countries to help pay for the intervention, including nations that contributed nothing militarily, such as Germany and Japan.³⁹⁹ “The multinational coalition assembled against Saddam served US interests well. The geopolitical diversity as well as the sheer number of countries included in the alliance served as constant proof of a world united in outrage.”⁴⁰⁰

Post Cold War. After World War II, the United States joined NATO, the goal of which was twofold: “the deterrence of the Soviet Union and the resolution of the German problem.”⁴⁰¹ NATO is a conventional alliance from the aspect that it is “a military, collective security alliance system,” formed against a common enemy.⁴⁰² The United States began as the acknowledged leader of the alliance, and even with the original goal achieved, “the United States continues to be the preponderant power in European security affairs.”⁴⁰³ NATO played a critical role in several American interventions after the Cold War. There are a number of causes of friction in coalitions. Three principal ones are differences in goals, control or leadership of the coalition, and differences in capabilities (especially military capabilities).⁴⁰⁴ Several interventions in the 1990s were severely affected by these frictions.

Coalition Difficulties

Difficulties arise when a coalition’s goals are not of sufficient interest to a partner nation. The first major coalition operation after the Gulf War was United Nations

³⁹⁸ O’Halloran, 63.

³⁹⁹ Rosegrant, and Watkins, 240; O’Halloran, 63.

⁴⁰⁰ Rosegrant, and Watkins, 240.

⁴⁰¹ Amos Perlmutter, “The Corruption of NATO: The Alliance Moves East,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 23, no. 3 (September 2000), 129.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Christopher Layne, “US Hegemony and the Perpetuation of NATO,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 23, no. 3 (September 2000), 59.

⁴⁰⁴ Bowman, 2-3.

humanitarian relief to strife and famine-stricken Somalia. The first phase of the relief effort made little difference due to the extreme civil disarray and “failed in its efforts to monitor a cease-fire.”⁴⁰⁵ Subsequently, an American-led military operation imposed order on regions of the country and enabled the distribution of much-needed food and medical supplies, saving hundreds of thousands of lives.⁴⁰⁶ This operation was handed over to a second United Nations effort “charged with promoting political reconciliation, and reestablishing national and regional administrative, police, and judicial institutions.”⁴⁰⁷ The United States also participated in this effort, as well as in a unilateral military effort organized to support United Nations goals. The civil situation in Somalia continued to deteriorate and the UN mission expanded to include warlord hunting and nation-building. Military conflict increased and as the number of coalition casualties began to rise, American public and political support began to wane.⁴⁰⁸ There were no recognized vital American interests in Somalia, and commitment to the mission there faltered.⁴⁰⁹ The lack of national interest in the coalition goals caused the United States to withdraw from the operation.

Getting coalitions to act can be difficult, and once they do, attaining consensus to enable effective operations, especially military, may seem impossible. The two major interventions into the Balkans in the 1990s were prime examples of this. Prior to employing airstrikes in 1995, NATO and the United Nations tried a number of non-violent, coercive measures to stop the civil fighting in the former Yugoslavia. These measures ranged from economic sanctions against Bosnia to putting UN peacekeepers on the ground to try to stabilize the situation.⁴¹⁰ The peacekeepers soon found themselves

⁴⁰⁵ Serafino, 19.

⁴⁰⁶ Haass, 44.

⁴⁰⁷ Serafino, 20.

⁴⁰⁸ Haass, 45-46.

⁴⁰⁹ Lester H. Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, 1992-1998* (Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1998), 20.

⁴¹⁰ Karl Mueller, “The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia: Strategic Causes, Effects, and

under attack without an appropriate way to respond. Limited NATO air strikes were ineffective, having been severely restricted by UN commanders, and European members of NATO were not in favor of inserting ground troops to protect the UN troops. After a year of concerted effort, the United States was finally able to convince NATO and the UN that more positive military measures were required.⁴¹¹ This led to Operation Deliberate Force. The cause of the delay in acting was that “NATO and the UN, as corporate organizations, (were unable) to develop consensus between themselves and among their members on exactly what to do about Bosnia. Consensus was a necessary prelude action because both organizations are voluntary associations of sovereign states.”⁴¹² This inability to reach consensus caused much frustration in the Clinton administration, especially since the United States would take the lead of the eventual military operation.⁴¹³ Although considered a success, Deliberate Force was not the last time NATO would act in the Balkans.

On March 24, 1999, NATO once again intervened in the Balkans and began a bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs. The intent of the intervention was to “(1) compel Belgrade to reconsider its position and to accept (the) Rabouillet (agreement) and (2) deter the Serbs from expelling ethnic Albanians from Kosovo.”⁴¹⁴ Operation Allied Force would highlight the difficulties of leading a coalition to effective results. “In contrast to the relatively seamless performance by the coalition in Desert Storm, what unfolded during NATO’s air war for Kosovo was a highly dissatisfying application of air

Responses,” in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000), 17-21.

⁴¹¹ Anthony Lake, *6 Nightmares* (New York, N.Y.: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 142.

⁴¹² Col Robert C. Owen, “The Balkans Air Campaign Study: Part 1,” *Airpower Journal* Vol. XI, no. 2 (Summer 1997), p. 10.

⁴¹³ Lake, 142.

⁴¹⁴ Christopher Layne, “Blunder in the Balkans: The Clinton Administration’s Bungled War against Serbia,” *Policy Analysis* No. 345 (May 20 1999), The Cato Institute, on-line, Internet, 15 March 2002. Available from <http://www.cato.org>, 7.

power, which showed...the predictable fits and starts of trying to prosecute an air operation through an alliance of 19 members bound by a unanimity rule.”⁴¹⁵ Unfortunately, in a coalition, coalition politics and the need to maintain cohesion can override military logic.⁴¹⁶ Each country in the alliance had a vote on tactical considerations with the ability to approve or veto specific targets, and as such, Allied Force was administered by committee.⁴¹⁷ This set up made it very difficult for allied planners to conduct an efficient air campaign. It was bogged down by a slow pace, restricted target base, and rules of engagement that almost eliminated any serious application of airpower.⁴¹⁸ Indeed, the United States made at least seven distinct departures from established doctrine while executing the war in order to maintain coalition cohesion.⁴¹⁹ Ultimately, in spite of the extensive political meddling, the Bosnian Serbs capitulated and withdrew their forces from Kosovo.⁴²⁰ The difficulties with the operation, however, were not limited to coalition politics.

Coalitions and Technology. A major problem faced by the planners of Operation Allied Force was the difference in technological capability among the coalition partners. The differences caused a large number of interoperability problems that hampered the planning and execution of the operation. Many countries did not have the appropriate radios to allow them to communicate with American forces in a secure

⁴¹⁵ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, RAND Report MR-1365 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), xviii.

⁴¹⁶ Bowman, 8.

⁴¹⁷ Don D. Chipman, “The Balkan Wars: Diplomacy, Politics, and Coalition Warfare,” *Strategic Review* Vol. XXVIII, no. 1 (Winter 2000), 29.

⁴¹⁸ Lambeth, 180.

⁴¹⁹ *Kosovo Air Operations: Need to Maintain Alliance Cohesion Resulted in Doctrinal Departures*, United States General Accounting Office Report to Congressional Requesters, Report number GAO-01-784 (Washington DC: General Accounting Office, July 2001), 2.

⁴²⁰ Chipman, 30.

mode.⁴²¹ Another major factor was precision weapons. Only the Americans, British, Canadian, French, Spanish, and Dutch forces could drop LGBs without offboard assistance.⁴²² Four years earlier during Deliberate Force, sensitive diplomatic concerns and efforts to sustain coalition unity led UN and NATO leaders to attempt to limit collateral damage.⁴²³ Consequently, a large percentage of precision weapons were dropped proving that they could limit the amount of collateral damage during an airstrike. These results set a precedent for the war in Kosovo. Senior American leaders refused to send some coalition aircraft into harm's way because of concerns about collateral damage from inaccurately aimed weapons. In all, about 80 percent of all strike missions were flown by American aircraft.⁴²⁴

Another technological difficulty during Operation Allied Force was integration of the F-117 and B-2 into coalition air operations. Due to security concerns, specifics of their operations were not disclosed.⁴²⁵ This did not engender a feeling of trust between coalition members, and it caused much confusion during the planning and execution of the war.

Coalition aircraft performed admirably and contributed much to the success of the mission. However, the differences in capability mean that the United States should expect further complications in future coalition fights if the Europeans do not significantly modernize their military forces.⁴²⁶ If they do not, there is a risk that their lack of capability will become a serious hindrance to United States military operations. The potential impact stretches beyond the operational level, as well. The growing difference in capability could dilute relations between the United States and its European

⁴²¹ Lambeth, 166-167.

⁴²² Ibid., 168.

⁴²³ Chipman, 26.

⁴²⁴ Lambeth, 168.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 214.

⁴²⁶ *Operation Allied Force: Lessons for the Future*, RAND Research Brief RB75 (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), on-line, Internet, 15 March 2002. Available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB75/>.

allies for several reasons. “First, given its larger defense budget, the United States will be able to invest more than its allies in the experimental programs necessary to develop and integrate revolutionary technologies. Second, because the price tag associated with (technology) is so high and resources are scarce, the United States and its allies are assigning very different priorities to exploiting it. Third, and perhaps most important, the gap between the United States and its European allies could widen because technological innovations...are causing doctrinal and organizational changes within U. S. that are not being reflected in allied forces.”⁴²⁷ Taken to the extreme, America could decide to forego coalition action in the future and risk international wrath instead of becoming a high-priced mercenary force or one that is limited politically in disproportion to its relative military capability.

Conclusion

All of the interventions after the Cold War benefited from the positive aspects of the coalition: legitimacy, access, and cost sharing. However, friction increased in some areas that made coalition warfighting more difficult than in the past. Coalition fighting was certainly not new to the United States, but the nature of the fighting changed. Interventions such as Somalia showed how a mismatch in goals that do not line up with national interests can cause a coalition to come apart due to a lack of domestic support. The political complexities of the Bosnia and Kosovo campaigns illustrated how the United States, still the dominant military player, was held in check by coalition concerns to the detriment of effective military operations. The technological chasm between the United States and our next most capable ally is wide, and immediate measures must be taken to remedy it so that a level of inclusiveness is able to keep all coalition members relevant. It seems generally accepted that the United States will fight in a coalition if it is going to fight at all in the future.⁴²⁸ If a coalition is inevitable, all of these issues

⁴²⁷ Rachel Bronson and Daniel Goure, “The Diplomatic Consequences of the Coming RMA,” *Foreign Service Journal*, September 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, 4 May 2002, available from <http://www.csis.org/html/op980901.html>.

⁴²⁸ O’Halloran, 65.

influence the president's decision to intervene militarily. Some international considerations will take on greater significance in the decision process than they did before. Several new questions will need to be asked. Are the goals of the coalition sufficiently aligned with America's goals or interests such that it can be supported domestically? Is the sacrifice of military capability or efficiency too high a price to pay to justify the political sacrifices needed to maintain coalition cohesion? Can our potential coalition partners carry their weight during the military part of the operation so that it is not only American lives that are put at risk in pursuit of coalition goals? These questions do not necessarily make the president's decision to intervene easier or harder. They do, however, add a level of complexity to the decision that was not there before.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

It is easier to make war than peace.
- Georges Clemenceau
Speech, 1919

This discussion began with a question about whether advances in military technology *should* drive foreign policy. The answer to that is almost trite--of course not. Foreign policy should be carefully considered and well founded in attaining that which is best for the nation. It should not be reactive, shaped by what we *can* do militarily. The ability to intervene does not convey an automatic responsibility to do so. This, of course, supposes that we work and live in the sterile land of theory. In the real world, the ability to intervene can be seductive. Facing a situation where military intervention may stop needless suffering and potentially improve the human condition can create strong a impulse to *do something*. As such, technologies that can ease the difficulties of military intervention may lead to a more interventionist foreign policy. The key points of the logic presented in this thesis are that technology will drive policy, that states and statespersons should attempt to understand those drivers (in advance if possible), and that technology-driven policy is not necessarily a bad thing.

The president must be the one who ultimately makes the decision to intervene. Domestic and international elements sway that decision. Numerous factors influence the amount of dominion each element will have. Domestically, national interests, domestic politics, the prospects of success of intervening, and the potential and actual cost (primarily in lives) of intervening are all considered. Internationally, maintaining good relations with allies and friends forces consideration of their perspective, and alliance relationships may demand intervention in spite of domestic factors. The advent of both the F-117 and PGM have had a perhaps startling effect on many of these factors, directly affecting the ease of deciding to use military force.

National Interests and Support

The Soviet Union provided a focus for American foreign policy. NSC-68 clearly outlined a threat to the existence of the country, and provided a framework to shape America's global engagement strategy.⁴²⁹ It allowed the president to couch any situation where the Soviets (or Chinese) might take an opposing situation as being a vital American interest. The Korean War, Vietnam War (initially), and Persian Gulf War illustrated that the American public is willing to sustain some significant number of casualties in conflict if in pursuit of vital national interests.⁴³⁰ Many will argue that the term vital national interests was overused in support of intervening prior to the end of the Cold War.⁴³¹ This may be true, but the fact remains that American citizens' support of intervention is stronger when vital interests are perceived to be at stake.⁴³² This lack of a solid justification for intervention should have made the president's decision to use military force more difficult than it was during the Cold War. The demise of the Soviet Union should have signaled a period of decreased military intervention by the United States, but after the Cold War, America intervened more frequently than any time in the previous fifty years. The reasons for intervention were also startling, consisting of important and humanitarian interests. No single intervention in the 1990s could realistically be justified for vital national interests. Other conditions must have changed significantly to enable the president to risk American lives in pursuit of less-than-vital interests.

Domestic Politics

One of the most important aspects of the president's domestic support is his relationship with Congress. Former Clinton National Security Advisor Anthony Lake asserts that that relationship has become more acrimonious, especially in recent years.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 42.

⁴³⁰ Richard N. Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 1994), 72.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴³³ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 24

While this opinion may result from being the subject of that acrimony, Congress did make an overt attempt to limit the president's war-making power with the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973. The law has proven to be without teeth, but it has provided a point of departure for discussion when the president considers or does use military force. It provides those in Congress who object to presidential intervention a legitimate vehicle to express their dissent. While every president since its passage has questioned the Constitutionality and utility of the law, the fact that they consistently reported their actions to Congress shows that they considered the possible ramifications of ignoring it. More traditional Congressional methods, like exercising the power of the purse, have been more effective. As the trend of globalization continues in the world, the lines separating domestic and foreign policy blurs.⁴³⁴ Increased partisan difficulties will continue to spill from domestic to foreign policy, making Congress more a factor in presidential foreign policy decisions.

The rise of 'on-demand' news began shortly before the passage of the War Powers Resolution. Progressing rapidly from same-day reports from war zones to 24-hour, constantly available news, the news media has become ever more present in the public consciousness. Initial fears about inordinate ability to influence policy makers seem to be oversold, but the media *has* had a distinct effect on the domestic political scene. presidential detractors now have a much more accessible platform from which to express their dissent with current policy. This can have a negative effect on American public support for military intervention. If political leaders support an intervention, it is highly likely that the public will as well. However, perceived rifts in political support are just as likely to be mirrored in the public, and public support is an important factor considered by the president.⁴³⁵ The search for content for 24-hour news sources increases the likelihood of political divergence showing, and that divergence revealing itself in public opinion. The advent of the F-117 and PGM have had little direct effect on either

April 2002.

⁴³⁴ Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay, "Foreign Defense Policy in Congress: An Overview and Preview," in *Congress Resurgent: Foreign and Defense Policy on Capitol Hill*, eds. Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 13.

⁴³⁵ Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*. RAND Report MR-726-RC (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 12.

Congress's relationship with the president or the spread of the news media, but it is the advancement of broadcast technology that has accentuated both of those factors. Neither the War Powers Resolution or the rise of 24-hour media have made the decision to intervene harder, but they have mandated that the president have a solid foreign policy and justification for intervention. If that is not the case, unanticipated crises may create conditions where political support is difficult to rally, and, correspondingly, so with public support. Knowing in advance that support may be lacking may make the decision to use military force more difficult.

Prospects for Success

Both the president and the public consider the prospects for military success before deciding whether to support intervention. The president must determine first if military action is the correct vehicle to obtain his desired political goal. He must then ascertain if the military is capable of attaining that goal within the political constraints laid upon the action. The public is much more likely to support intervention if the perceived chance of success is high.⁴³⁶ America has always pursued a quality versus quantity strategy against our primary foes. This approach produced both the F-117 and precision guided weapons. It gave a tremendous technological advantage to American forces on the battlefield, intended to offset numerical inferiority. This technological advantage was realized in the Persian Gulf War and reinforced in both Bosnia and Kosovo. With the demise of the Soviet Army, America now has the advantage of greater size *and* capability on the battlefield over nearly any other country.

In the 1990s, airpower became the weapon of first choice. The outstanding record of effectiveness with minimal loss of American life has created an almost unreachable expectation of perfection in the minds of the American public. There is no question about whether our armed forces will succeed, but the expectation is for a bloodless victory. The proven combat record of the F-117 and PGM have made the president's decision to intervene much easier, and greatly increased the likelihood of public support, but have made the measure of success much more difficult. The loss of a single aircraft

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 11.

to hostile fire may become such a rare event that the intervention is considered a failure. The expectation of sure success makes the military more likely to be used, and goes a long way to ensuring public support.

The Cost of Intervention

The marriage of the F-117 and PGMs has had its greatest effect on the potential and actual costs, in terms of human lives, of military intervention. Both have significantly reduced the risk to American airmen in combat and have given United States forces the ability to attack the most highly defended targets and destroy them with greater reliability and efficiency. American casualties have been greatly reduced since the combat debut of the F-117. Fewer people die on both sides of the conflict when America uses airpower, and the F-117 and LGB combination are one major reason for this. Given that the American public shows concern with the potential and actual number of casualties when considering whether to support military action, stealth and precision's ability to decrease those casualties increases the chance of public support. This single fact gives the president a large degree of freedom regarding intervention. If no Americans die, he is able to intervene for less-than-vital interests. The perfect example of this is Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. There were no vital national interests at stake. European nations were reluctant to act militarily, so there were no alliance pressures compelling action. The American public was not tremendously concerned about another situation developing in the far-away Balkans, especially if the rest of Europe (in whose backyard this was occurring) did not care. Yet President Clinton was able to conduct a 78-day air operation that achieved his political goal. Stopping the barbaric ethnic-cleansing campaign in Kosovo was not in America's vital interest, but it was the right thing to do. America had the military capability to defeat the Bosnian Serbs and was able to do so. Since there were no combat deaths, public support did not falter enough to warrant stopping the operation.

In addition, stealth and precision have given United States forces the capability to almost exclusively destroy only the desired target. This has reduced the risk of harming enemy civilians in collateral damage incidents, further reducing the potential loss of human life in a military conflict. While this capability is in the process of revolutionizing

warfare, it comes with the price of expected infallibility. In addition to making the president's decision to intervene easier on the domestic front, internationally it has had an effect as well. Reduced collateral casualties look favorable in the eyes of our coalition allies. Less collateral damage means that there will be less to rebuild after the war is over, further reducing the financial burden of war.

Coalitions and Alliances

Coalitions and alliances were an integral part of American war fighting in the twentieth century. The United States has always held a dominant role (especially militarily) in these relationships. The Soviet Union provided a common enemy that focused not only the United States foreign policy, but that of our allies during the Cold War. That enabled us to put aside any number of differences and combine our efforts to stop the spread of Communism. The demise of the Soviet Union has created a more equal-partner relationship in American alliances. Whether through an actual shift in political power or American retreat from its former level of political dominance, the United States no longer throws its political weight around without due consideration of allied views. The Balkans in the 1990s, once again, showed this. America was unwilling to intervene unilaterally, although it possessed the military capability to do so. It was not until NATO agreed to act that we acted militarily.

Operationally, the United States' military capability is well ahead of any other nation on earth, allies included. This demands compromises when we act in a multi-lateral action. The United States must either compromise doctrinally, as in Kosovo, or operate alone, in parallel with allied operations. Neither of these situations promotes the effective, efficient use of military force. This, however, may be the price of admission on the world stage. In order to avoid becoming universally despised, the United States will still have to fight with other nations to gain the benefits of coalition warfare: legitimacy, access, and cost sharing. A distinct danger lurks, though. As the United States continues to develop its dominating military force and outstrip the military capabilities of its allies, the ability to act unilaterally grows. At some point, this extreme advantage may obviate the need for the benefits provided by fighting with a coalition. With the end of the Cold War, alliances such as NATO have found themselves looking for a unifying concept that

will continue to bind them. If they are unable to find this focus, the benefits of maintaining them may diminish to a point where they become relics of the Cold War and are no longer dominant factors in international politics. The political constraints on unilateral intervention may become too bothersome, causing the United States to act as it sees fit, perhaps not caring about the international political ramifications of its actions. Former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake feels that this is an impulse that must be checked, for the results could be grave.⁴³⁷ America's military technological advances have made the decision to intervene more complex for the president. In the past, we needed allies for military as well as political reasons. We could not face the Soviet Union alone on the battlefield. The absence of that threat gives us a unilateral capability that must be well-considered against the international political cost of alienating our friends.

The original intent of this paper was to determine if developments in military technology, specifically the F-117 and PGMs, had an effect on American intervention policy. Did it make it easier for the president to decide to use military force? Intuitively, the answer is yes. In reality, there is a strong correlation between the debut and continued use of these weapons systems and increased intervention, suggesting a causal relationship. Table 3 shows how the factors affecting the president's decision to intervene changed in the years since World War II. Technology was not a determinant in all factors, but in the ones in which it was fundamental – prospects for military success and cost of intervening – the effect was dramatic. Both of these factors directly affect the president's decision, as well as the American public's willingness to support military action. This public support is also a major factor for the president's decision. The effect of technological advances is multiplied by its effect on public support, and the subsequent effect of that support on the president's decision. Figure 2 shows this relationship graphically, with the heavier arrows representing how the effect of stealth and precision is compounded by the reinforcing effect of all other domestic factors on public support. By having a broad-ranging impact on numerous the decision factors, the benefits brought by stealth and precision have had a significant effect on the president's decision to

⁴³⁷ Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, interviewed by author, 24

intervene.

Table 4

**Military Technology's Impact on the Presidential
Decision to Intervene**

Factor	Military Technology Impact	Effect on Decision		
		Harder	Neutral	Easier
Domestic				
National Interests	<i>None</i>	<i>X</i>		
Domestic Politics	<i>None</i>	<i>X</i>		
Prospects for Success	<i>High</i>			<i>X</i>
Costs	<i>High</i>			<i>X</i>
Public Support	<i>High</i>			<i>X</i>
International				
Coalitions/Alliances	<i>Medium</i>		<i>X</i>	

As expressed in the beginning chapter, foreign policy should not be driven by capability, military or otherwise. It should be well considered, based on what is best for the nation first, then the rest of the world. It is evident, though, that during the 1990s, military capability gave us the opportunity to intervene in areas, like Somalia, where our foreign policy was shaped only by the fact that we anticipated a low-risk operation that would pay high political dividends. This case illustrates the peril of acting on capability and not within a larger strategy for global engagement. Capability must be considered when making policy, but it should not be the prime determinant. Nuclear weapons were a crucial part of our engagement strategy against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but they were an integral part of a larger plan. Just because we can, does not mean that we have to, or even should, intervene. In the end, military force must be the correct

option for the situation in order to be successful. That being said, it may not be

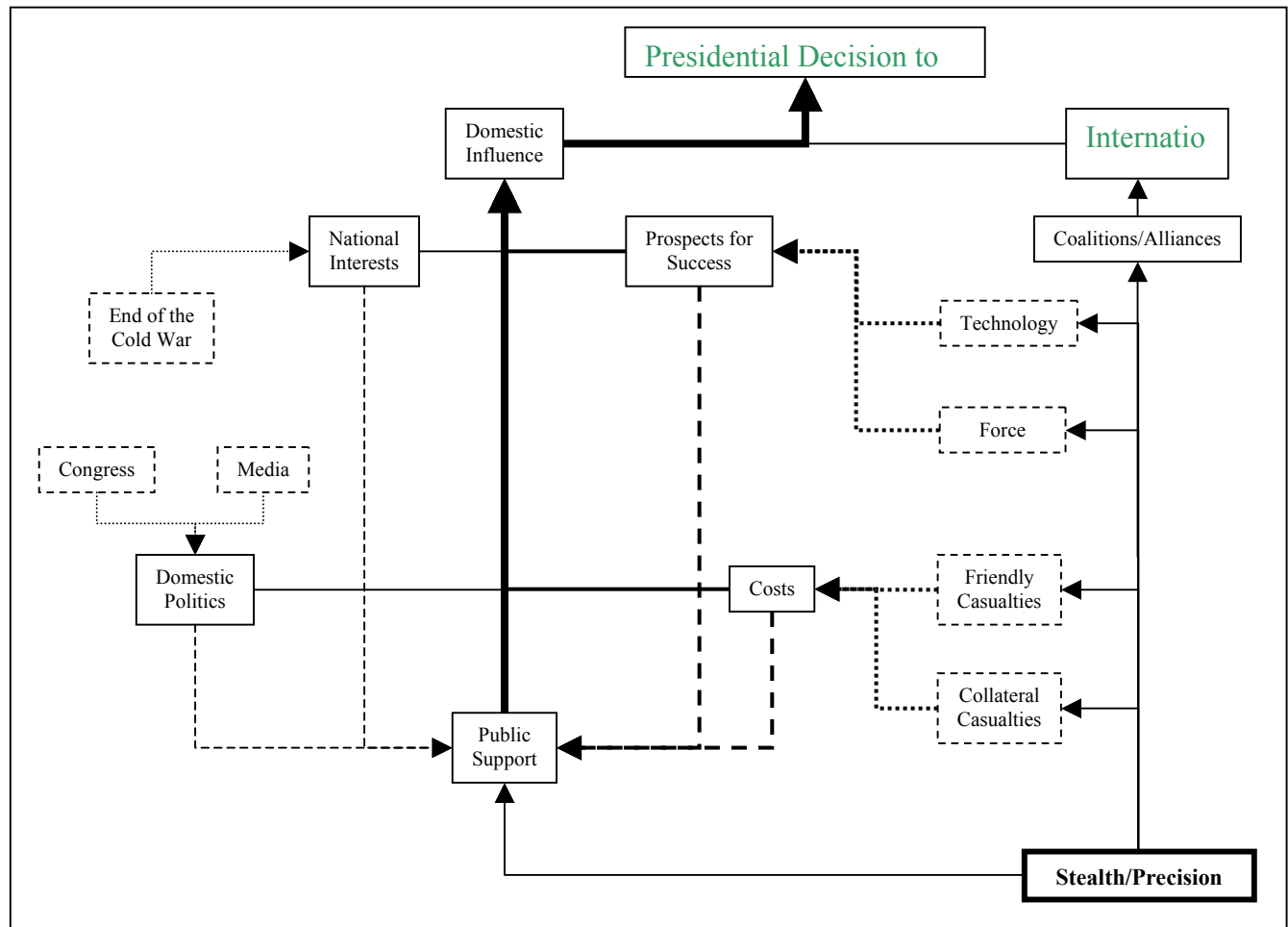


Figure 2. Stealth/Precision Influence on Presidential Decision to Intervene

altogether bad if capability provides impetus to act where otherwise lack of interest might preclude action.

The United States intervened in Somalia because there was little apparent risk, and the operation did some measure of good before it devolved. Operation Allied Force in Kosovo is another example where, because the cost (in lives) was virtually eliminated, America intervened when no vital interests were at risk and the Kosovar Albanians

benefited. In these situations, we intervened because we could, not because we had to. If this is to continue to be the case, however, it is crucial that policy makers acknowledge

their reasons for action. As shown, there are risks inherent in intervening where there is little public support. Lack of support for the Vietnam War cost President Johnson his office. As our capability continues to grow, there will certainly be situations like Rwanda in the 1990s where, after the fact, the world will condemn the lack of American intervention. As threats to our vital interests are eliminated, the decision to intervene may become more moral-based than interest-based, in which case the frenetic operational pace of the 1990s will seem a relative calm as we become the *de facto* world policeman.

Integrating technological capability into policy making is not easy, and it is fraught with danger, especially when that capability is in development and its full potential is not realized or understood. When the Nazis developed the V-2 rocket during World War II, they pursued a radical, expensive technology without considering how to integrate the capability it brought into their overall wartime strategy. Consequently they were unable to take advantage of their efforts in a strategic sense.⁴³⁸ The United States is pursuing a radical capability right now that requires consideration: space-based weapons. Advances such as this have impacts on policy, many of them unintended. The accuracy of the LGB, developed to reduce American airman exposure to risk during a bombing mission, has driven an almost obsessive policy of reducing collateral casualties during conflict. We view weaponizing space as a distinct technical possibility and there are those that assert we should pursue it because we can. But, we must consider the policy ramifications of such a decision. It is impossible to determine in advance what may or may not happen as a result of weaponizing space, but it is imperative to realize that there will be unanticipated policy complications and unintended consequences. Advances in military technology alone should not drive policy, but they have an impact. As long as we acknowledge that fact, we can try to anticipate some of the consequences of our decisions.

⁴³⁸ See Michael J. Nuefeld. *The Rocket and the Reich: Peenemunde and the Coming of the Ballistic Missile Era* (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1995).

Appendix

American Major Military Interventions (Post World War II)

Cold War	Post-Cold War
Korean War	Panama (Operation Just Cause)
Vietnam War	Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm)
Mayaguez Incident	Somalia (Operation Restore Hope)
Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt (Desert One)	Haiti (Operation Restore Democracy)
Lebanon	Bosnia (Operation Deliberate Force)
Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury)	Kosovo (Operation Allied Force)
Libya (Operation El Dorado Canyon)	Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom)

An intervention was considered major if it was a planned offensive action or American troops deployed with the specific purpose to fight. Also considered major were those peacekeeping or humanitarian operations that, through tragedy or mission creep, involved the loss of American lives as a direct result of the intervention.

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