Limited Liability Multilateralism:
The American Military, Armed Intervention, and IOs

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ABSTRACT

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Under what conditions and for what reasons do American leaders seek the endorsement of relevant international organizations (IOs) such as the UN or NATO for prospective military interventions? My central hypothesis is that U.S. government efforts to obtain IO approval for prospective interventions are frequently the result of significant bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining between hawkish policy leaders who emphasize the likely positive payoffs of a prompt use of force, on the one side, and skeptical officials—with the top military brass and war veterans in senior policy positions at the forefront—who highlight its potential downsides and long-term costs, on the other.

The military leaders—the chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the regional combatant commanders, and senior planners on the Joint Staff in Washington—are generally skeptical of humanitarian and other “idealist” interventions that aim to change the domestic politics of foreign countries; they naturally tend to consider all the potential downsides of intervention, given their operational focus; and they usually worry more than activist civilian policy officials about public and congressional support for protracted engagements. Assuming that the military leaders are not merely stooges of the civilian leadership, they are at first likely to altogether resist a prospective intervention, when they believe that no vital American interests are at stake and fear an open-ended deployment of U.S. troops. Given the military’s professional
expertise and their standing in American society, they come close to holding a de facto veto over prospective interventions they clearly oppose. I hypothesize that confronted with such great initial reluctance or opposition on the part of the military brass, civilian advocates of intervention from other government agencies will seek *inter alia* to obtain an advance endorsement from relevant IOs, so as to lock in international support and thereby reassure the military and their bureaucratic allies that the long-term costs to the United States in terms of postwar peacekeeping and stabilization will be limited. That, in turn, can be expected to help forge a winning bureaucratic coalition in Washington and persuade the president to authorize military action. United States multilateralism for military interventions is thus often a genuine policy *resultant*—the outcome of sustained bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining—and it may not actually reflect the initial preferences of any particular government agency or senior official.
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARICOM</td>
<td>Caribbean Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CENTCOM</td>
<td>U.S. Central Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUFOR</td>
<td>European Union Force (Bosnia)</td>
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<td>IFOR</td>
<td>NATO Implementation Force (Bosnia)</td>
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<td>INC</td>
<td>Iraqi National Council</td>
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<td>IO</td>
<td>International Organization</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
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<td>JS</td>
<td>Joint Staff</td>
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<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
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<td>KFOR</td>
<td>NATO Kosovo Force</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>North Atlantic Council</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<td>NIE</td>
<td>National Intelligence Estimate</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organization of American States</td>
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<td>OPLAN</td>
<td>Operation Plan</td>
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<td>OSD</td>
<td>Office of the Secretary of Defense</td>
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<td>SACEUR</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander Europe</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Security Council (United Nations)</td>
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<td>SCR</td>
<td>UN Security Council Resolution</td>
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<td>SHAPE</td>
<td>Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe</td>
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<td>UNMIH</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Haiti</td>
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<td>UNMOVIC</td>
<td>United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission</td>
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<td>UNPROFOR</td>
<td>United Nations Protection Force (Bosnia)</td>
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<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>UNSCOM</td>
<td>United Nations Special Commission (Iraq)</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>United States Army</td>
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<td>USAF</td>
<td>United States Air Force</td>
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<td>USMC</td>
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Introduction

American leaders worked hard to obtain the explicit endorsement of relevant international organizations (IOs), such as the UN or NATO, for the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent military interventions in Somalia (1992), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), Serbia (1999), Liberia (2003), and Libya (2011). At the same time, the United States made no such efforts, or only half-hearted efforts, to obtain explicit IO endorsement leading up to similar interventions in Panama (1989), Iraq from mid-1991 onward and culminating in the 2003 invasion, and for a number of counter-terrorism incursions over the last several years. The first goal of this dissertation is to explain this striking variation in post-cold war American efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for military interventions. Put differently, I seek to answer the following question: Under what circumstances is the United States likely to engage in significant efforts to obtain an explicit IO endorsement before intervening militarily abroad, and when can the U.S. instead be expected to straightforwardly intervene on its own or with only ad-hoc coalitions of likeminded allies?

Obtaining IO approval for armed interventions is typically costly to the United States: it requires protracted international negotiations and logrolling and can greatly reduce U.S. freedom of action. Therefore, American leaders can be expected to make meaningful efforts to obtain IO endorsement only if they anticipate significant positive payoffs. My argument, in a nutshell, is that U.S. efforts to obtain IO endorsement for military interventions are not only, and not even primarily, the result of norm internalization on the part of American leaders, or of Washington efforts to avert “soft balancing” in other issue-areas and build up popular support for the use of
force.\textsuperscript{1} Instead, I hypothesize (Chapter I) that the United States usually seeks IO approval for prospective interventions primarily because of the expected benefits in terms of policy implementation. The endorsement of relevant IOs, obtained before the launch of offensive operations, locks in international support and thereby reduces the costs to Washington of successfully implementing complex interventions, especially those that require open-ended troop commitments for post-combat peacekeeping and stabilization. Put differently, IO endorsement obtained from the outset facilitates burden sharing in the long run and therefore limits American liability.\textsuperscript{2} As former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott sums it up:

Particularly when it comes to intervening in either civil wars or failed states, it is much more sustainable if you have regional IOs and coalitions that are backed by global institutions to carry these things out, rather than having the United States with its much flaunted lift capability and military force come half around the world.\textsuperscript{3}

I further develop a bureaucratic politics theory (Chapter II) that explains how the preferences and concerns of specific U.S. policy leaders and governmental organizations can actually steer the Washington policy process toward institutionalized multilateralism. My central hypothesis is that U.S. government efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions are frequently the result of significant bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining between hawkish policy leaders who emphasize the likely positive payoffs of a


\textsuperscript{3} Author interview with Strobe Talbott, U.S. deputy secretary of state, 1994-2001 (July 9, 2009).
prompt use of force, on the one side, and skeptical officials—with the top military brass and war veterans in senior policy positions at the forefront—who highlight the potential downsides and long-term costs of armed intervention, on the other.

American military leaders—the chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the regional combatant commanders, and senior planners on the Joint Staff in Washington—are generally skeptical of humanitarian and other “idealist” interventions that aim to change the domestic politics of foreign countries. The military worry that such interventions will result in open-ended troop deployments; and they fear that in the absence of perceived vital threats to U.S. national security, Congress and the American public are unlikely to support such costly engagements overseas. The military also naturally tend to consider all the potential downsides of armed intervention, given their operational focus and the awareness that perceived failure on their part might among other things negatively affect the armed services’ institutional health and standing in American society. Hence assuming that the military leaders are not merely stooges of the civilian leadership, they are at first likely to resist prospective interventions aimed at changing the domestic politics of foreign countries, especially when they perceive that no vital American interests are at stake.

Research shows that faced with strong skepticism or outright opposition from the military leadership, U.S. presidents are in fact unlikely to order American troops into combat overseas. I hypothesize that under such circumstances, civilian advocates of intervention from other government agencies need to reassure the military leaders, or at least be able to show that the

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military’s concerns have been adequately addressed, in order to forge a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of intervention. Therefore, when the military brass initially opposes the use of force, fearing a protracted troop deployment overseas, the administration’s civilian activists are likely among other things to seek IO approval, so as to lock in international support and thus maximize the chances of significant post-combat burden sharing. The endorsement of relevant IOs, once obtained, can in turn be expected to reassure the uniformed leaders and their bureaucratic allies and persuade the president to move ahead with the use of force. United States multilateralism for military interventions is thus often a genuine policy resultant—the outcome of sustained bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining—and it may not actually reflect the initial preferences of any particular government agency or senior official.5

The argument that U.S. military leaders are the driving force behind Washington’s efforts to seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions is somewhat counter-intuitive: the conventional wisdom holds that American military planners oppose multilateral interventions as exceedingly burdensome and dysfunctional, in view of coordination problems magnified by doctrinal differences and the growing capabilities gap between the United States and its allies.6 One further implication of my theory is that when the military leaders strongly oppose a prospective intervention based on the expectation of high long-term costs, if the civilian activists are themselves not sufficiently influential inside government and cannot muster the necessary resources to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, the most likely outcome is U.S. procrastination and non-intervention. Sometimes, skeptical military leaders and their bureaucratic allies may also explicitly recommend that Washington obtain a mandate from

5 On policy outcome as a resultant of bureaucratic politics, see Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision, pp. 256, 294-95.

relevant IOs, when they know that key international partners are also reluctant to use force, so as to make U.S. intervention altogether less likely.

**Figure 1: Causal pathway to IO-based multilateralism/ non-intervention (a first cut)**

- 1. Activist policy leaders push for intervention
- 2. U.S. military brass and other skeptical officials oppose intervention. (Fearing an open-ended, costly troop deployment).
- Activist policy officials need to reassure military leaders and other skeptics about the long-term costs of intervention.
- Policy activists can muster necessary resources to obtain IO endorsement
- Multilateral intervention
- Policy activists cannot muster necessary resources to obtain IO endorsement
- Nonintervention

Finally, my theory predicts that if the military leaders and their bureaucratic allies readily support the use of force, the most hawkish policy officials will have few incentives to seek to obtain a formal multilateral endorsement, since reassuring the military won’t be necessary—hence the most likely outcome under such circumstances is U.S. *unilateral intervention*. The military leaders can be expected to readily support the use of force when either or both of the following conditions apply: first, they perceive that vital U.S. national interests are directly at stake; and second, they expect that a prospective intervention is highly unlikely to result in an open-ended deployment of ground troops. When the military perceive that vital national interests are indeed at stake, their focus is on quick and decisive action, their time horizon is shortened, and they are likely to agree with civilian hawks that the short-term costs of multilateralism in terms of reduced U.S. freedom of action exceed its longer-term benefits. But even in the absence of perceived vital threats to national security, when the military leaders do not anticipate long-term entanglements and costly troop deployments overseas, they can be expected to put up little resistance to armed intervention, in the face of a determined civilian leadership. Hence for quick
in-and-out missions, such as missile strikes, air raids, commando operations, and more generally for interventions anticipated to be limited in time and scope, the U.S. can be expected to intervene unilaterally or with only ad-hoc coalitions of allies.

Liberal theorists since John-Stuart Mill have argued that multilateralism is normatively desirable for the international use of force, because it constrains powerful states and makes blatantly self-serving interventions less likely.\(^7\) In this dissertation I seek to explain the value of multilateralism, not so much from the viewpoint of Mill’s impartial spectator, but rather from the perspective of very partial Washington policy officials, who are generally motivated by their own patriotism, their personal experiences, and the organizational interests of the bureaucracies they serve. By showing that IOs are a key factor in U.S. decision making on military intervention, I reject the traditional realist “null hypothesis,” according to which international institutions are merely epiphenomenal, i.e. have no independent impact on great-power politics in the field of international security.\(^8\)

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This dissertation is part of a growing body of scholarly literature which takes it for granted that IOs are consequential, including in the field of international security, and it seeks to contribute to our understanding of how precisely they can affect state behavior. I argue that when it comes to U.S. military intervention, in particular, IOs matter for reasons that are different from those typically theorized by institutionalist scholarship in IR.  

I further suggest that U.S. decisions to seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions cannot be fully accounted for by other existing theories. My research thus contributes to ongoing debates in IR about the conditions under which powerful states have incentives to rely on IOs to pursue their national security objectives under conditions of international anarchy.

**A theory of bureaucratic politics?**

By showing how U.S. efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions often result from sustained bureaucratic bargaining and deliberations in Washington, I also contribute to our understanding of bureaucratic politics in foreign-policy decision making. The central tenets of the bureaucratic politics paradigm, as developed by scholars like Graham Allison and Morton Halperin, are that (a) policy decisions are usually the outcome of bargaining and coalition building among officials from various agencies and departments, and (b) how those officials view the interests at stake in a given situation is substantially affected by their specific organizational membership (“where you stand depends on where you sit”).

Critics have emphasized that this approach may be able to explain individual decisions after the fact, but it cannot yield general explanatory theories. Where officials stand on

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any given issue is never completely determined by their organizational membership, and even assuming that it was, it would be exceedingly difficult to predict the outcome of bureaucratic bargaining. Proponents of the bureaucratic politics approach concede that it should be seen as a “research orientation” that serves to sensitize the analyst more than as a full-fledged theory.

My research however demonstrates that it is in fact possible to develop explanatory theories based on the bureaucratic politics paradigm, when the representatives of specific U.S. government organizations (e.g., the military leaders representing the armed services) always “stand” at roughly the same place on a particular matter, for roughly the same reasons, and have the ability to actually steer the Washington policy process in their preferred direction.

When it comes to debating armed intervention overseas, the U.S. military leaders indeed display fairly distinctive and persistent attitudes—i.e., they always stand at roughly the same place: they are typically concerned about the need for solid domestic political support in Congress and among the American public; they are skeptical of open-ended commitments overseas, and when they feel that no vital American interests are at stake, they usually counsel against using force altogether; but in the face of growing domestic pressure to intervene, they can be expected to insist on the need for clear and limited objectives, international burden sharing, and a clear exit strategy, to ensure that the bulk of American troops can be quickly withdrawn. The military’s overarching concern, which clearly reflects their organizational interests, is to limit the liability of the armed services and their troops.


12 Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 344.
Furthermore, the military leaders can exert an extraordinary amount of influence on Washington decision making about national security. To this end, they have numerous instruments at their disposal, ranging from intramural persuasion based on their professional expertise, to more straightforwardly political measures, such as press leaks, public appeals, threats of resignation, and alliances with members of Congress. When the Joint Chiefs feel strongly about a prospective intervention and explicitly declare that the limited U.S. interests at stake do not warrant the potentially high costs involved, it is likely to be politically very costly for the president to overrule the military. Therefore, when the military brass is greatly reluctant about or altogether opposed to a prospective intervention, it is in the interest of interventionist leaders in Washington to reassure the JCS about the policy’s long-term costs to the United States and its armed services. One way of achieving that is to seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs from the outset and thereby lock in the support of international partners.

Defining military intervention

The English word intervention is derived from the Latin “intervenire,” which literally means “to come between” conflicting parties. Hence a military intervention can first of all be understood as external interference, involving actual or anticipated combat, between two opposing sides in a civil war. That is arguably the most traditional understanding of military intervention, and it is how most classical theorists of international law and politics understood the term. A broader definition of intervention might also encompass forcible interference between a government (typically an oppressive ruler) and its people, even in the absence of any

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13 As Allison and Zelikow have written, “in the United States, no decision for a substantial use of force... will be made against [the military’s] advice, and without at least a delay during which an extensive record of consultation is prepared.” Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision, p. 312. See also Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 215.

violent local conflict. Such interference is usually aimed at influencing the domestic politics of a foreign country, including the nature of the domestic political regime. John Vincent adopts this broader definition in his classic work, *Nonintervention and International Order*, where he claims that military intervention is to be understood as “coercive interference aimed at the domestic authority structure of a target state,” or forcible “intrusion in domestic affairs.”

For the purpose of this dissertation, I adopt the latter, broader definition of intervention, which includes any kind of forcible interference in the domestic politics and/or authority structure of a foreign country. In other words, I define military intervention as the *cross-border deployment of military forces, involving actual or anticipated combat, targeted at the domestic politics and/or authority structure of a foreign country*.

Military intervention thus typically seeks to change to varying degrees the domestic politics and authority structure of a foreign country. The specific goal of intervention might be helping an oppressed population, ending a civil war, or neutralizing a specific threat emanating from within the target state. However, an intervention cannot seek to altogether eliminate the domestic authority structure of the target state; that is, its goal cannot be to permanently erase the national sovereignty or political independence of a foreign country. Traditional wars of conquest aimed at territorial annexation or colonial submission clearly go beyond any conventional understanding of intervention. Hitler’s occupation of Poland in 1939 was not an “intervention.” Likewise, the cross-border use of force aimed at liberating a country from foreign occupation and restoring a people’s national sovereignty exceeds any plausible definition of intervention. Thus, American combat operations against German forces in Normandy in 1944, or against Iraqi forces in Kuwait in 1991, were not interventions but traditional wars of collective self-defense.

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Finally, against one possible understanding of intervention as “limited war,” I argue that the scale of military operations should not matter to the definition. An intervention may be limited in both time and scope, involving even just a single air strike against a specific target; or it may involve a full-scale invasion of a foreign country aimed at changing its political regime and subsequently restoring political stability, with hundreds of thousands of outside troops deployed for several years. What matters to the definition of intervention espoused in this dissertation, once again, is that the use of force be targeted at the domestic politics and/or authority structure of a foreign country, but crucially without seeking to permanently eliminate that country’s national sovereignty altogether. Hence the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2003 Iraq war count as quintessential cases of military intervention, notwithstanding the fairly large-scale military operations involved.

**Figure 3. Definition of intervention vs. war**

- **Intervention**
  - Cross-border deployment of armed forces, involving actual or anticipated combat;
  - targets the domestic politics and/or authority structure of a foreign country;
  - does not seek to permanently eliminate the target’s national sovereignty;
  - goals may include helping an oppressed population, ending civil war, or neutralizing a threat emanating from within the target state;

- **Traditional inter-state war**
  - Cross-border deployment of armed forces, involving actual or anticipated combat;
  - targets a country’s national sovereignty, or foreign occupying troops on its territory;
  - aims at either territorial conquest, or undoing outside invasion (i.e., collective self-defense);
  - E.g. Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990; but also U.S. war against Iraq in 1991

**Defining multilateralism**

Scholars generally distinguish between two types of multilateralism, “quantitative” and “qualitative.” The former simply involves ad-hoc international coalitions, or “the practice of
coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states.‖¹⁶ The latter is more demanding and involves formal international organizations (IOs) that coordinate state behavior based on “certain generalized principles…which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions.”¹⁷

According to the quantitative definition, almost all U.S. military interventions beyond limited air strikes carried out since the end of WWII have been multilateral. For instance, U.S. interventions in Vietnam in the 1960s, or in Lebanon and Grenada in the 1980s, all involved the support and participation of ad-hoc coalitions of states.¹⁸ The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, too, was perfectly multilateral according to the quantitative definition: the invasion enjoyed the political support of a “coalition of the willing” made up of over thirty countries, representing every region of the planet, although only three of them (the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland) ended up contributing troops to the actual war effort.¹⁹ For instance, a former senior U.S. national security official insists on the multilateral character of the 2003 invasion, precisely by implicitly adopting a quantitative definition: “There is this fiction that the [George W. Bush] administration acted unilaterally on Iraq. But more than thirty countries were with us. The notion that it was unilateral comes from the fact that Germany, France, and Russia opposed this. That means that it was not unanimous, but that does not make it unilateral.”²⁰

For the purpose of this dissertation, however, I adopt the qualitative definition. Hence for U.S. military interventions to qualify as multilateral, they must be explicitly endorsed by relevant IOs with a mandate in the field of international security. (I sometimes use the expression “formal

²⁰ Author interview with senior national security official involved in decision making on Iraq (January 24, 2011).
multilateral endorsement,” precisely to indicate that the approval is obtained through institutions which operate according to generally accepted rules.) Relevant institutions do of course include the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which has primary responsibility for international peace and security under the UN Charter and is the only body that can legally authorize military interventions, apart from operations carried out in self-defense. But regional organizations, such as NATO or the OAS, also qualify as multilateral under the qualitative definition, since they likewise coordinate state behavior according to generalized principles of conduct. Decisions on the use of force, in particular, need to be adopted by the supreme political organs of those organizations, NATO’s North Atlantic Council (NAC) or the OAS Permanent Council, according to the principle of unanimity in the first case and by two-thirds majority in the latter.21

U.S. reliance on quantitative multilateralism, or ad-hoc coalitions of allies, is not particularly costly and therefore hardly surprising. The United States can virtually always cobble together some ad-hoc coalition of states at little cost, for the purpose of increasing U.S. popular support when the use of force is domestically controversial. As former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman confirms, “some coalition is always available.”22 In contrast, American efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, such as the UN or NATO, are more time consuming and politically (as well as often economically) costly. They involve persuading other powerful member states, who are typically least susceptible to material incentives offered by Washington and have global interests of their own that may conflict with those of the United States. Therefore, Washington’s efforts to obtain qualitative, or IO-based,


multilateral endorsement for prospective interventions constitute a puzzle and are worth studying in detail.

**Why focus on post-cold war interventions?**

This dissertation focuses specifically on post-cold war U.S. military interventions. There are several reasons for this choice. First, the UNSC was deadlocked for most of the cold-war period. The SC authorized the U.S. war in Korea in 1950, but subsequently the bipolar standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the resulting mutual vetoes, made the Council’s endorsement for U.S. interventions practically unavailable. By the late 1980s, however, the political deadlock at the SC was being gradually overcome, and President Gorbachev’s announcement in 1987 that the Soviet Union was prepared to reengage with the UN marked the beginning of a new era. In 1988, Moscow began paying its financial assessments for UN peacekeeping, and over the following two years, the SC became actively involved in managing political transitions and establishing multilateral peace missions in Angola, Namibia, and Nicaragua.23 By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the SC was once again available to endorse prospective U.S. military interventions, provided that Washington was willing to engage in usually protracted diplomatic deliberations and offer the necessary side-payments to bring the Council’s other members on board.

Furthermore, a number of scholars have argued that since the early 1990s, and especially following the 1991 Gulf War, new international norms have emerged and progressively become accepted by most states, which require the endorsement of relevant IOs to legitimize military

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interventions. It might be that U.S. leaders now genuinely believe in the need to obtain IO endorsement before the launch of military operations abroad out of “an internal sense of moral obligation.” Alternatively, Washington leaders might seek IO endorsement for strategic reasons, to reassure third-party states who do in fact believe in those norms, thereby reducing the likelihood of costly international opposition, or “soft balancing,” against the United States.

Finally, those norms of multilateralism might have become internalized by the American people, though not necessarily by their leaders. Compared with today, during the cold war it was usually easier for Washington leaders to generate U.S. domestic support for military interventions. Most American citizens believed that the United States was engaged in an existential struggle with the Soviet Union, which in their eyes justified U.S. military interventions to prevent Soviet encroachment in foreign countries. Today, the United States no longer faces any existential threat, and the demonization of foreign opponents has become more difficult, notwithstanding its short-lived revival following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Thus, it appears plausible that IO endorsement has become more valuable than ever to build up U.S. public support for prospective military interventions.

In short, by focusing specifically on the last two decades, I am able to test the relative explanatory power of prominent theories from the scholarly literature, which explain

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26 See footnote 1, above.


28 See footnote 2, above.
Washington’s efforts to seek IO approval for the use of force as the result of a post-cold war normative shift. These theories are for the most part alternative to my own causal argument. Without completely rejecting these existing explanations, my dissertation aims to show that they are ultimately flawed, incomplete, and therefore by themselves insufficient to explain post-cold war American efforts to obtain IO approval for prospective interventions.

**Figure 4. Existing theories vs. my bureaucratic politics theory**

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<tr>
<th>Post-cold war norms of multilateral legitimacy</th>
<th>Bureaucratic politics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Internalized by U.S. leaders (Compliance as a matter of moral obligation)</td>
<td>Activist policy leaders seek to reassure military brass about long-term costs of intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued by third-party states (Risk of soft-balancing if U.S. disregards)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalized by U.S. public (Compliance to boost domestic support)</td>
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**Methodology and data sources**

Small-N qualitative research in the social sciences generally starts from an outcome of interest (a “dependent variable”) and seeks to discover its causes. The outcome I first set out to explain were U.S. government efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening militarily abroad. In the course of my research, however, I increasingly focused on U.S. bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining as the main factor driving American efforts to obtain IO endorsement for prospective interventions. My focus on bureaucratic politics led me to conclude that there are actually three possible outcomes of interest, which my theory logically needs to encompass and should be able to explain: first, U.S. unilateral intervention (with no

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29 In contrast, the goal of large-N statistical research is typically to explain the mean effect of a given cause; hence the focus of such research is on the independent variable and only secondarily on the dependent variable. See Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, “Necessary Condition Logics, Research Design, and Theory,” in Goertz and Starr, eds., *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 15.
explicit IO endorsement); second, U.S. multilateral intervention (with IO endorsement); and third, U.S. nonintervention. Hence I conceptualize my dependent variable as a trichotomous variable.

Seeking to explain the outcome of U.S. bureaucratic bargaining on military intervention, with a specific focus on the question of multilateralism, poses the traditional challenges of a research puzzle with numerous variables and only a few relevant empirical cases. Therefore, for the purpose of theory testing, I rely on the method of structured-focused comparison of a few carefully chosen cases: my analysis is structured, in that I ask similar questions of each case under study, and it is focused, in that I deal only with specific aspects of the cases examined that are relevant for the purpose of theory testing.\(^{30}\) In addition, I rely on causal process tracing as a form of within-case analysis; that is, I reconstruct the sequence of decisions and the bureaucratic political processes leading to the outcome of interest in particular cases. Process tracing increases the number of theoretically relevant observations within particular cases, which is very valuable for the purpose of theory testing.\(^{31}\) Furthermore, process tracing makes it easier to understand interactions among different causal variables and to account for potential equifinality—i.e., multiple causal pathways to the same outcome.\(^{32}\)

I discovered at a fairly early stage in my research that the cases I study are not mutually independent: government officials are involved in a process of learning, defined as “experience-induced belief change,” and they apply the lessons of past experiences to subsequent decision


making. For instance, U.S. military leaders learned from the 1992 Somalia and 1994 Haiti interventions that IO endorsement, provided it is properly planned and implemented, can be helpful to lock in international support and thus limit the long-term liability of the armed services and their troops. If the lessons learned by the individual members of governmental agencies and departments are aggregated and become encoded in organizational routines, we can also speak of organizational learning. The qualitative research methodology I employ makes it possible to take into account such learning by senior U.S. decision makers and the bureaucratic organizations to which they belong. Thus, I am able to incorporate causal feedback from the dependent variable in earlier cases to explanatory variables in subsequent cases—all this while satisfying the criterion of conditional independence between causal variables and outcome.

I gather the information, or data, for my research from numerous sources in several languages. My most important source of information consists of almost one hundred personal interviews with current and former senior policy officials, mainly but not exclusively from the United States. Beyond that, I rely on memoirs of U.S. and European officials; public reports and recently declassified documents from relevant U.S. government agencies (the White House, State Department, and Department of Defense); records of congressional hearings; transcripts of relevant IO deliberations; and contemporaneous newspaper reports (mainly from the New York Times and the Washington Post, as well as from the Los Angles Times, The Guardian, and Le

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36 I use memoirs, newspaper articles, and official documents published in English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian. Documents in French and Spanish are especially helpful for my Haiti case study. On Bosnia and Kosovo, I also use memoirs of former European leaders published in German and Italian.
Monde). For each of my case studies, I have interviewed current and former senior U.S. officials from the NSC staff, the State Department, and the Department of Defense (with a particular focus on members of the armed services), as well as senior diplomats from important U.S. allies, and officials directly employed by relevant IOs. I have interviewed the most senior official available from each bureaucratic organization, typically at the level of assistant secretary or above. For instance, I have interviewed four former U.S. national security advisers (Colin Powell, Brent Scowcroft, Anthony Lake, and Stephen Hadley), one former secretary of state (Colin Powell), three former vice-chairmen of the JCS (David Jeremiah, William Owens, and Joseph Ralston), three former deputy secretaries of state (Strobe Talbott, Richard Armitage, and John Negroponte), and one former NATO Secretary-General (Javier Solana). Each interview lasted between twenty minutes and two hours, with an average of about fifty minutes. All the interviews were semi-structured, in the sense that they did not consist of free-flowing conversations about U.S. multilateralism and the use of force, but instead I asked each interviewee a number of specific questions aimed at testing relevant hypotheses. Some questions were standard (i.e., I asked some version of the same question to each interviewee), while others were targeted to the interviewee’s particular government background and the role he or she played on the policy under consideration.

Data gathered from interviews is of course frequently unreliable, because memories may be clouded by hindsight, interviewees may over-emphasize their own personal importance to specific decisions, and few officials are willing to candidly acknowledge that major foreign policy decisions were influenced by narrow organizational interests or political motives. Moreover, most government officials except those at very senior levels lack a comprehensive understanding of the bureaucratic deliberations, coalition building, and ultimate bargains that
result in specific national decisions. Nevertheless, students of decision making have long emphasized that candid, in-depth interviews with senior officials from various governmental agencies are probably the only valid method of reconstructing the particular motives and bureaucratic bargains that lie behind the adoption of specific policies.

Official government documents and memos, even when declassified and thus readily available, are inadequate sources of information for students of bureaucratic politics. The motivation mentioned in official government memos often just represents the common denominator; it is the argument that all senior officials involved can agree on for the written record. Richard Neustadt, having studied American politics for several decades, drew the following conclusion: “If I were forced to choose between the documents on the one hand, and late, limited, partial interviews with some of the principal participants on the other, I would be forced to discard the documents.” The task of the analyst, then, is to parse together from the often partial and incomplete perspective offered by individual interviewees the broader bureaucratic political process from which specific decisions emerged. When the perspectives offered by different interviewees overlap and the information gathered through interviews is also backed up by alternative sources of information, that naturally increases our confidence in the data.

**Case Selection and Plan of the dissertation**

The rest of this dissertation is structured as follows. In chapter one, I review and critique the principal existing explanations of U.S. multilateralism for the use of force, before suggesting that IO approval for military interventions is in fact valuable to the United States primarily

37 Author interview with Morton H. Halperin, head of policy planning at the U.S. State Department, 1998-2001 (March 10, 2010).
because of its expected benefits in terms of policy implementation. I discuss in particular how IO endorsement obtained from the outset can lock in international support for the long run and thereby facilitate the establishment of follow-on UN or NATO peace operations after the end of major hostilities.

Chapter two builds on the first and lays out my central theoretical argument: American efforts to obtain IO approval for prospective military interventions are often the result of sustained bureaucratic political deliberations and bargaining in Washington. I discuss in particular how the military brass, by at first opposing interventions that do not involve vital national interests and are likely to result in open-ended troop deployments, can steer the Washington policy process toward multilateralism. I have developed my theory and related hypotheses deductively from the literature on U.S. bureaucratic politics, civil-military relations, and IOs, as well as inductively from a number of conversations with former senior U.S. government officials. Throughout the chapter, I illustrate my theoretical claims by reference to anecdotal evidence from relevant post-cold war cases of U.S. military intervention.

The four subsequent empirical chapters (chapters three to six, on U.S. interventions in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq, respectively) are primarily devoted to theory testing. I begin each empirical chapter by reviewing the diplomatic and financial costs of institutionalized multilateralism to the United States in the particular case under examination. The central part of each chapter is devoted to testing my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism, as briefly outlined above and as presented in more detail in chapter two. Finally, each empirical chapter examines prominent alternative theories from the existing scholarly literature that explain American efforts to obtain IO endorsement as the result of norm internalization on the part of U.S. leaders or concerns about potential soft balancing against the United States.
I have carefully (i.e., nonrandomly) selected my case studies to ensure meaningful variation on my DV and hypothesized explanatory variables. The selected cases are also central to the contemporary debate about multilateralism and U.S. military interventions. Specifically, I devote individual chapters to U.S. decision making on a particular country: Haiti (chapter 3), Bosnia (chapter 4), Serbia/Kosovo (chapter 5), and Iraq (chapter 6). Each empirical chapter encompasses a time period of at least two, and often several, years. For instance, chapter four on Bosnia discusses U.S. decision making between 1992 and 1995. Chapter six on Iraq, while focusing primarily on the 2003 intervention aimed at toppling Saddam Hussein’s regime, also reviews prior U.S. policy during the 1990s and contains a mini-case study of Washington decision making on the 1998 “Desert Fox” air strikes. Therefore, each empirical chapter, while focused on U.S. policy vis-à-vis one particular country, in fact studies several discrete decisions about U.S. intervention (or non-intervention) surrounding the decision of principal interest.

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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Discrete decisions on U.S. intervention analyzed in the dissertation (main ones underlined)</th>
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*Intervention debated/attempted

*Intervention implemented
The dissertation includes three cases where the United States made significant, and ultimately successful, efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs: Haiti 1994, Bosnia 1995, and Kosovo 1999. I could have chosen other cases of post-cold war U.S. intervention where Washington successfully obtained the endorsement of relevant IOs (e.g. Somalia 1992, Liberia 2003, or Libya 2011). However, for Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, obtaining an IO endorsement was particularly time-consuming and burdensome to the United States, which makes these cases especially useful instances in view of analyzing the cost-benefit calculations of Washington decision makers and related bureaucratic bargaining. Furthermore, the selected cases allow me to study U.S. efforts to obtain the endorsement of different IOs, namely the UN, the OAS, and NATO. I find that leading up to U.S. interventions in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the military brass was at first either opposed to or greatly skeptical about armed intervention and played a central role in steering Washington policy toward relevant IOs.

In Chapter six, on Iraq, I first briefly examine U.S. decision making leading up to the 1998 Desert Fox air strikes. The evidence I gather suggests that in the face of a strong push for armed intervention from the civilian leadership, the Joint Chiefs quickly came on board, given their understanding that U.S. credibility was on the line and the expectation that no American ground troops would be deployed. In view of the anticipated limited benefits of multilateralism, Washington made no meaningful effort to obtain the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs.

The main part of chapter six, however, is devoted to a discussion of U.S. decision making leading up to the 2003 Iraq war. I show that in 2002-03, senior members of the armed services doubted that vital strategic interests were at stake. Military planners on the Joint Staff and at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) also recommended that the U.S. seek an explicit UN mandate for the use of force against Iraq, to maximize international buy-in and with it the
likelihood of post-combat burden sharing with allies and partners. However, the top military brass—CENTCOM commander Tommy Franks, as well as the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS, generals Richard Myers and Peter Pace—were for various reasons closely aligned with the Bush administration’s civilian hard-liners. In the absence of strongly voiced skepticism or opposition from the military leaders, and given the generally heightened threat perception in the country following the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001, the United States made only a limited and ultimately unsuccessful effort to obtain an explicit IO endorsement before the launch of offensive operations. Consequently, as Iraq descended into chaos following the U.S. invasion of March 2003, few international partners were willing to step in, and Washington had to bear virtually the entire burden of a costly stabilization effort over several years.

In conclusion, then, my dissertation suggests that a politically independent military leadership, which does not shy away from vigorously expressing its professional views about the use of force, is key to restraining civilian hard-liners and ensuring the successful implementation of armed interventions overseas. A vocal military leadership, as this dissertation shows, can also help steer U.S. policy on armed intervention toward relevant IOs, which can in turn facilitate post-combat burden sharing and limit American liability. Therefore, while the principle of ultimate civilian supremacy should be considered sacrosanct in a democracy, vigorous civil-military exchanges about the use of force—on matters of both policy and operations—undoubtedly have their value.39

Chapter I

The Value of Multilateral Legitimacy for U.S. Military Interventions

Why were U.S. military operations against Iraq in 1991 widely perceived as legitimate internationally, while the subsequent U.S. campaign in 2003 was condemned by most other major states? One important change, apart from the two wars’ different objectives (fighting Iraqi aggression in ‘91 vs. imposing regime change in ‘03), was the availability of explicit UN approval in the former case and its absence in the latter. Scholars and practitioners alike commonly acknowledge that multilateral approval, provided by relevant international organizations (IOs), is a key factor in legitimizing the international use of force. In the broadest sense, this legitimization effect appears to be the principal reason why powerful states frequently seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for offensive military operations abroad. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State Colin Powell straightforwardly

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explains, “if you can get multilateral support for a planned intervention, then you should seek it, in order to have the greatest possible legitimacy for the action.”

Scholars frequently distinguish between procedural legitimacy, which results from the exercise of power in accordance with generally accepted norms and procedures, and output legitimacy, which depends on the achievement of substantive results widely regarded as desirable or appropriate. IO endorsement has the ability to greatly enhance the perceived procedural legitimacy of military interventions, by constraining self-serving behavior on the part of powerful states and demonstrating that the use of force follows established international norms and procedures. The argument that military interventions which are not obviously in self-defense enjoy greater international legitimacy when endorsed by relevant IOs is compelling—if somewhat trivial. A more interesting question might be: Why precisely do powerful states and their leaders value such legitimacy for prospective military interventions?

Existing scholarship offers at least three different explanations as to why powerful states and the U.S. in particular might seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions. First, political leaders in the western world might inherently desire IO approval out of a sense of moral obligation, having internalized relevant international norms of legitimate behavior. Second, IO endorsement might be sought primarily as a means to signal benign

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41 Author interview with Gen. Colin L. Powell (February 2, 2011).
43 Ruth Wedgwood, “Unilateral Action in a Multilateral World,” in Steward Patrick and Shepard Forman, eds., Multilateralism and US Foreign Policy (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 173. As I will argue below, IO endorsement may also help increase output legitimacy in the long run, by facilitating the successful achievement of ambitious policy objectives. Even a hard-headed political realist such as Hans Morgenthau acknowledged (without elaborating) that “legitimate power…is likely to be more effective than equivalent illegitimate power”; and for this reason, “power exercised…in the name of the United Nations has a better chance to succeed than equivalent power exercised by an ‘aggressor’ nation.” Cf. Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, revised by Kenneth Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), p.32.
intentions to third-party states, thereby reducing the risk of costly soft balancing (i.e., the formation of international counter-coalitions aimed at thwarting the intervener’s policies in other issue-areas). Finally, policy leaders planning a military intervention might seek the endorsement of relevant IOs first and foremost to generate increased political support among their own domestic publics.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first review and test each of the aforementioned hypotheses. I show that when applied to the United States, they are insufficient to explain Washington’s efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions. Thereafter I lay out an alternative theory, which suggests that IO-based multilateralism for military interventions is valuable to the United States primarily because of its expected benefits in terms of policy implementation. I specifically hypothesize that IO endorsement, obtained before the launch of offensive operations, locks in international support, which in turn facilitates post-combat burden sharing and limits the liability of American troops.

1. Norm internalization and the logic of appropriateness

One prominent hypothesis set forth in the existing scholarly literature holds that states and their leaders seek IO endorsement for prospective military interventions primarily because they have internalized relevant norms and attendant rules of international legitimacy—i.e., they abide by those norms out of a genuinely felt sense of moral obligation. The hypothesis has been developed in particular by scholars associated with the social constructivist research program.

Social constructivists and other norm-oriented scholars in IR typically challenge more traditional research, which for heuristic purposes frequently takes states’ interests as a given and
then proceeds to study resulting patterns of international conflict and cooperation.\textsuperscript{34} Instead, the argument goes, states’ interests should always be treated as socially constructed, reflecting their particular national identities along with broader international norms and ideas.\textsuperscript{35} It follows from this conceptualization that as the international normative structure evolves, state’s social identities, their interests, and ultimately their behavior can also be expected to change in significant ways. As one scholar puts it, “shifts in [international] norms socialize states to want different things, and to behave differently in order to attain them.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{Compliance as a matter of moral obligation}

Key to the social constructivist research program is the hypothesis of “norm internalization.” It holds that over time, through precedent-setting and socialization, certain prominent norms and attendant rules become internalized by states. Standing international organizations, notably the United Nations, but also the WTO, NATO, and other regional bodies, can facilitate processes of norm diffusion and internalization.\textsuperscript{37} Once internalized by states, norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate.\textsuperscript{38} Compliance is then perceived as a matter of duty: in the words of Ian Hurd, it is motivated “by

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\textsuperscript{34}The critique has been directed especially at so-called neorealist and neoliberal scholarship, which reached its heyday in the 1980s and theorized the possibilities of cooperation among rational egoists with set interests. For an overview, see David A. Baldwin, ed., \textit{Neorealism and Neoliberalism} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
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an internal sense of moral obligation.”

Or, as Thomas Franck explains, internalized norms and associated rules of behavior exert an inherent “pull toward compliance on those addressed normatively,” reflecting a sense of “obligation [that] is…uniquely rooted in the notion of community.” In short, according to the norm internalization hypothesis, norms influence behavior at a deep level, by fundamentally shaping actors’ preferences more than any strategic calculus on their part.

Constructivist scholars typically agree that the modern international sovereignty regime and attendant legitimacy norms entail a strong prima facie duty of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of foreign countries. Those legitimacy norms underlying the regime, explains Hurd, are taken for granted—i.e., they have been internalized—by all status quo states, including the United States and its major allies. Related precepts are “very rarely challenged in a profound way;” and states generally comply out of “a belief in being bound.” State behavior with regard to the norms in question can thus be expected to conform to the “logic of appropriateness” more than the “logic of consequences,” which implies that policy leaders no longer constantly calculate whether observing the rules on specific occasions will be materially advantageous or not. The latter point is emphasized in the literature: “legitimacy implies a willingness to

49 Hurd, “Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics,” p. 387, 388
52 Hurd, “Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics,” p. 393. In fact, he continues, “the internalization of the norm of nonintervention helps to explain...that, despite the absence of deterrent forces, we generally do not see states calculating at every turn the self-interested payoff to invading their neighbors.” (ibid., p. 398).
53 Clark, Legitimacy in International Society, p. 23, emphasis in original; see also Hurd, After Anarchy, p. 7.
comply with rules or to accept a political order even if this goes against specific [material] interests.” 55 According to contemporary international legitimacy norms, cross-border intervention is admissible only on exceptional grounds, and it needs to be sanctioned by the international community of states. This normative structure, constructivists argue, explains why states generally comply with the requirement of multilateral (preferably UN) approval for the use of force, except when acting in self-defense: “Increasingly, legitimacy [has come] to be defined as institutional sanction, particularly in regard to the use of force.” 56

Social constructivist arguments about norm internalization are notoriously difficult to test empirically. Consider for instance Hurd’s claim that all “status quo states” have “internalize[ed]…the norm of nonintervention” and more generally “accept the legitimacy of the overall structure, and…the constraints of existing rules and institutions,” while revisionist states typically don’t. 57 The argument is extremely malleable and therefore virtually non-falsifiable. What counts as a status quo state is defined retrospectively based on observed evidence of norm-compliant behavior. Hence when a state observes relevant norms and attendant rules for an extended period of time, and “decision makers’ stated motives” emphasize compliance with international norms, that presumably validates the hypothesis of norm internalization. 58 But if the state in question then suddenly violates the norm in a blatant fashion, the theory can be saved by

56 Talentino, Military Intervention After the Cold War, p. 35; Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention, pp. 80-1.
claiming that the state has either (temporarily) reverted to a revisionist nature or had never internalized the norm to begin with.\footnote{Following the 2003 Iraq war, for instance, Hurd concluded somewhat ad-hoc that there were “strong reasons to doubt” the United States had internalized relevant international legitimacy norms requiring IO approval, though he stopped short of explicitly stating that the U.S. had become a revisionist state. Cf. Hurd, After Anarchy, p. 125.}

Assuming the United States and its major allies are in fact status quo states that accept “the legitimacy of the overall structure” and have internalized its underlying norms, compliance with the principle of multilateral endorsement for military intervention should be habitual and reflect a shared sense of duty. Among contemporary IR theorists, Thomas Risse has perhaps most explicitly and coherently applied the social constructivist argument about norm internalization to the issue of multilateral endorsement for military intervention: “Military interventions and the use of force in general,” he argues, “are no longer considered legitimate outside explicit approval by the [United Nations] Security Council… It is more and more inconceivable that any of the Western great powers will intervene militarily to pursue unilaterally defined strategic interests in any part of the world. Unilateral military interventions for whatever purpose appear to belong increasingly to the past.”\footnote{Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Between a New World Order and None: Explaining the Reemergence of the United Nations in World Politics,” in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., Critical Security Studies (Minnesota 1997), pp. 267, 288.} Risse’s assertion, by taking the social constructivist argument to its logical conclusion, comes closest to expressing a testable empirical hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1 (Norm internalization):** U.S. leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions primarily because they have internalized relevant legitimacy norms, which make formal multilateral endorsement a matter of moral duty.

*Is U.S. behavior compatible with the norm internalization hypothesis?*

The theory outlined above has several implications for U.S. behavior that one should be able to observe. Evidence of norm internalization first of all requires a high degree of...
consistency in state behavior across similar cases.\textsuperscript{61} Therefore, the United States should practically always seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening militarily abroad, except when it is clearly planning to act in self-defense. Second, when a prospective intervention is not clearly in self-defense and the United States cannot obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, American policy leaders should opt for non-intervention. That is, U.S. interventions in blatant violation of existing legitimacy norms should be virtually nonexistent. In addition, looking more specifically at the decision-making process in Washington, one should find that prominent U.S. policy leaders, especially liberal activists who are themselves pushing for intervention (e.g., on humanitarian grounds), perceive an obligation to comply with international norms and thus insist on IO endorsement as an all but necessary condition for military action. Finally, the requirement of IO endorsement should have become embedded in U.S. domestic institutions and political discourse more generally. As Harald Mueller explains, genuine internalization of international norms by individual states requires “nesting” in domestic law.\textsuperscript{62}

Even a cursory look at the empirical evidence suggests that support for the norm internalization hypothesis is scarce. First, as shown in Table Two (below), over the last two decades the United States has frequently intervened without explicitly seeking, let alone obtaining, the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs.\textsuperscript{63} For several of those cases (such as notably


\textsuperscript{63} The only instance where the U.S. arguably obtained an IO endorsement without explicitly seeking it was for the 2001 Afghanistan intervention. On September 12, 2001, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1368, which recognized for the first time that the traditional right to self-defense could also be invoked for military action against non-state terrorist threats. Furthermore, on the same day, NATO’s North Atlantic Council (NAC) endorsed U.S. military action and offered its support by invoking Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.
for the repeated air strikes against Iraq from 1991 to early 2003) the claim of self-defense was exceedingly tenuous.

Nevertheless, committed proponents of the norm internalization hypothesis might suggest that military action against Iraq from 1991 onward, though not explicitly endorsed by relevant IOs, was in fact “implicitly” authorized by UNSC Res. 687, the cease fire resolution adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War.64 In addition, one could argue that for the 2003 Iraq war, U.S. policy leaders made a genuine effort to obtain an explicit UN endorsement of military intervention, before deciding to move ahead without it once the stakes had simply become too high. In short, a flexible reading of the available evidence might lead to the conclusion that U.S. behavior since 1990 has, at least on the surface, been quite compatible with the norm internalization hypothesis. But it would be too easy and ultimately wrong to conclude that norm internalization has occurred merely because state behavior can be interpreted as consistent with existing international norms. What one would instead need to be able to observe, as Cortell and Davis have cogently argued, is evidence of norm internalization that is “independent of the particular behavioral outcome being explained.”65

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64 This interpretation, emphasized by several U.S. officials in interviews with the author, is problematic, since Resolution 687 (para. 34) states that the UNSC, and not individual member states, shall “take such further steps as may be required for the implementation of the present resolution and to secure peace and security in the area.” SCR 687, adopted on April 8, 1991.

65 Cortell and Davis, “Understanding the Domestic Impact of International Norms,” p. 70, emphasis added.
Examining the policy preferences of (activist) American leaders

Looking for additional evidence of norm internalization, it might be helpful to investigate the preferences and motives of U.S. policy leaders, especially activist ones who are pushing for military intervention. If policy leaders known to oppose intervention insist on the need for explicit IO approval, that hardly constitutes evidence of norm internalization. Opponents of intervention might at first simply expect that proceeding multilaterally will slow down the momentum toward military action, making it altogether less likely. If instead policy activists who are pushing for military intervention within an administration insist on the need to obtain an explicit IO endorsement, that is more likely to express a genuinely held belief.

In order to infer leaders’ private policy preferences, it is not sufficient to look at their public rhetoric, which may not necessarily reflect sincerely held beliefs. Hence “discourse analysis”—a favorite tool of constructivist authors—suffers from an inherent confirmatory bias.
when it comes to testing normative hypotheses, which makes it methodologically flawed. Nor should we uncritically rely on policy leaders’ own accounts of their motives after the fact, since those can be expected to be biased in the respondent’s favor. However, by drawing on and cross-checking with a number of different sources, such as interviews with (former) government officials, declassified documents, memoirs, and contemporaneous newspaper reports, we can seek to reconstruct the policy preferences privately held by an administration’s senior activists leading up to specific military interventions. For the norm internalization hypothesis to be corroborated, prominent U.S. policy activists should habitually want to comply with international legitimacy norms and view IO endorsement for military intervention as “a universal moral imperative.”

Arguments about international cooperation, multilateralism, and IOs are generally associated with liberal internationalist, or Wilsonian, beliefs. Therefore, among U.S. policy activists, those officials who self-identify as liberal internationalists should be most likely to have internalized relevant legitimacy norms requiring multilateral approval for military intervention. They should consistently argue during relevant policy debates in Washington that the United States needs the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening militarily abroad, unless such action is clearly in self-defense. However, the evidence from my case studies, presented in more detail in subsequent chapters, surprisingly points in a different direction. Liberal internationalist U.S. policy officials who publicly profess their principled

66 For constructivist scholarship that relies on policy leader’ public statements about the importance of norms to infer that those norms in fact greatly affect decision making on military intervention, see e.g. Nicholas Wheeler, Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Coleman, International Organizations and Peace Enforcement.


attachment to multilateralism frequently push for quick, decisive, and (partially as a result) unilateral American military action in private, when faced with serious human rights violations and perceived humanitarian emergencies abroad. From the point of view of liberal activists, obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs before the launch of offensive operations often imposes unacceptably high costs on the United States in terms of bargaining, delayed action, and operational constraints that might limit the effectiveness of intervention.

For instance, I show in chapter three that during the lead-up to the 1994 Haiti intervention, the principal policy activists inside the U.S. government (who were all committed liberal internationalists), such as National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, and his deputies Samuel Berger and Nancy Soderberg, never thought of IO endorsement as a necessary condition for the intervention’s legitimacy. In fact, from late 1993 onward, Lake and his staff repeatedly considered and even advocated U.S. unilateral military action, in view of quickly resolving what they perceived as a morally hideous and politically embarrassing humanitarian situation. In chapter four, I show that similarly, for Bosnia, the leading liberal activists—Madeleine Albright, then the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, as well as Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, and Vice-President Albert “Al” Gore—all insisted that in the face of European reluctance to intervene, the United States should unilaterally lift the UN arms embargo over Bosnia and strike Bosnian Serb military strongholds from the air, so as to strengthen the Bosnian Muslim faction on the ground and put an end to the genocidal violence that was being perpetrated against its members. Finally, in chapter five, I show that leading up to the 1999 Kosovo intervention, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her principal collaborators at first again pushed for U.S. unilateral military action, fearing that working through the UN or NATO would constrain the United States.
In short, the available evidence suggests that liberal internationalist policy officials in the United States might well have internalized universal human rights norms and related norms calling for humanitarian military intervention in the face of large-scale atrocities committed against civilians abroad; yet their attachment to the norm of IO endorsement for military interventions not explicitly in self-defense appears to be much weaker. In situations marked by an overt conflict of norms, U.S. liberal activists usually prioritize norms of humanitarian intervention over norms of multilateral legitimacy. More generally, as I show in subsequent chapters, there is no evidence that activist U.S. policy officials of any kind (not just liberal internationalists) have deeply internalized the requirement of IO endorsement for military intervention. It is usually pragmatic U.S. policy leaders who are skeptical of intervention, such the military commanders and other senior defense officials, who insist in the relevant bureaucratic debates that Washington seek an IO endorsement before intervening militarily abroad. But those pragmatic policy officials view multilateral endorsement as advantageous for their own purposes, because it may slow down the momentum towards armed intervention in the first place, and then is seen as helping with policy implementation if an intervention actually occurs. Put differently, I find that for those U.S. policy officials who actually steer the decision making process on military intervention toward multilateralism, the logic of (material) consequences typically trumps, or at any rate subsumes, the logic of appropriateness.

Do U.S. domestic institutions embody international norms?

Finally, if a state has fully internalized norms of international legitimacy, those norms should be “translated into domestic legislation.”69 That is, domestic legislation should itself

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require compliance with the international norms in question. Most liberal democracies, for instance, have internalized international human rights norms, by translating them into domestic constitutional and legislative principles. However, there is no evidence that the requirement of IO endorsement for military intervention has become embedded in U.S. domestic laws and institutions.

The United States constitution and American public laws embody a strong conception of national sovereignty, and they do not in any way require that U.S. military interventions be sanctioned by relevant IOs. That stands in marked contrast to the constitutional frameworks of European states such as Italy or Germany, which explicitly accept multilateral limitations on national sovereignty and outlaw any offensive military action not explicitly approved by the UN or NATO.70 As Edward Luck has persuasively shown, American support for multilateralism is qualified and contingent: U.S. leaders and their followers generally value multilateral organizations only to the extent that such bodies are viewed as accountable, allow for decisive action, and are compatible with American exceptionalism and the unfettered sovereignty of the American constitution.71 Such low domestic salience of international norms is incompatible with the hypothesis of deep norm internalization and decision making motivated by a concomitant sense of moral duty.72

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70 While the Italian constitution states that “Italy repudiates war…as a means for settling international disputes,” it has been generally interpreted as allowing for peace-keeping and peace-enforcement operations endorsed by relevant IOs. Similarly, the German constitution (“Grundgesetz”) outlaws offensive war; yet the German federal constitutional court (“Bunesverfassungsgericht”) ruled on July 12, 1994 that “the Federal Republic of Germany is at liberty to assign German armed forces in operations mounted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Western European Union (WEU) to implement resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations (UN).” For a discussion, see Russell A. Miller, “Germany’s Basic Law and the Use of Force,” Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies 17 (2), 2010, esp. pp. 200-202.


In conclusion, the social constructivist hypothesis of multilateral norm internalization might be accurate for most western European states, and especially for Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian nations, where offensive military action without IO endorsement has in fact become all but unthinkable. However, norm internalization can hardly be said to have occurred in the United States, where policy elites and the broader public are generally ambivalent toward multilateralism and the requirement of IO endorsement for military intervention is nowhere enshrined in domestic legislation.\(^{73}\)

2. Reducing the risk of “soft balancing” by other states

Another influential explanation of American efforts to seek IO endorsement for prospective interventions rests on the hypothesis that Washington leaders fear “soft balancing,” or costly international opposition to U.S. unilateralism, and thus they seek formal multilateral approval to signal benign intentions to other states. The hypothesis is broadly based on Stephen Walt’s balance-of-threat theory, which claims that states do not balance primarily against power but rather against foreign threats, as determined *inter alia* by perceived hostile intentions.\(^{74}\)

*How U.S. unilateralism might result in costly international opposition*

In recent years, a number of theorists associated with the realist tradition of IR scholarship have warned that unilateral U.S. military interventions might lead other states to form “soft balancing” coalitions against the United States.\(^{75}\) As long as American intentions are

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widely perceived as nonaggressive (i.e., U.S. actions are status-quo oriented, as demonstrated by compliance with broadly accepted legitimacy norms), second-tier states face incentives to cooperate and bandwagon with the unipolar power. But those incentives to cooperate with the United States may quickly dissipate if Washington pursues unilateral military interventions that change how most of the rest of the world views its intentions.76

Second-tier powers like China, Russia, or France may lack the economic resources and ultimately the motivation to engage in traditional “hard” balancing, involving military alliances and arms buildups, against the United States. However, fearing that their own security will suffer from aggressive American policies, such second-tier powers might nevertheless engage in coordinated opposition to Washington and rely on various “nonmilitary tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral U.S. military policies.”77 Specifically, second-tier powers might refuse landing, basing, and overflight rights to the American military; but they might also form diplomatic coalitions to more generally oppose American policy at the UN and elsewhere, and they might establish regional trading blocs that exclude the United States and impose heavy import duties on American products.78 Scholars have argued that even in the absence of such coordinated international opposition, “assertive hegemony erodes the willingness of allies to cooperate on a wide range of endeavors.”79 The crucial underlying variable expected to trigger

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79 Jervis, American Foreign Policy in a New Era, p. 105.
coordinated opposition to U.S. policies and/or reduced overall cooperation with the United States is “how others perceive the unipolar leader’s motives.”

Several non-realist scholars have come to broadly similar conclusions. Martha Finnemore for instance claims that contemporary states wishing to intervene militarily abroad need “to demonstrate that their purpose in intervening is not merely self-serving and particularistic,” and the failure to do so “may eventually have material consequences for intervenors.” Other theorists agree that widespread perceptions of illegitimacy among third-party states (and not just their narrow security concerns), “might alter regional alliance or trade patterns,” and “can be expected to lead regional states to balance” against the illegitimate intervener. Joseph Nye has suggested that blatant instances of U.S. unilateralism might lead even close American allies to oppose Washington in specific issue-areas: “allies may follow the American bandwagon on the largest security issues but form coalitions to balance American behavior in other areas such as trade or the environment.” Finally, unilateral U.S. military interventions, by explicitly challenging the modern rule-based international order, might undermine the hegemonic position that the United States has enjoyed for the last several decades and fasten America’s international decline.

81 Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention, p. 82.
Signaling benign intentions to foreign leaders and popular audiences

A number of scholars have built on the aforementioned body of theory in an effort to explain why the United States does in fact frequently seek IO endorsement for its military interventions.\(^8^5\) Straightforwardly put, the hypothesis is that U.S. leaders want to signal benign intentions vis-à-vis third-party states and legitimate American power, in view of preventing potentially costly “soft balancing” and reduced overall cooperation with the United States.\(^8^6\)

According to Alexander Thompson, who has developed the argument in greatest detail, a prospective intervener can reduce the risk of international opposition by working through relevant IOs, seeking their endorsement, and thereby signaling “benign intentions to leaders of third-party states.”\(^8^7\) However, Thompson acknowledges that reassuring foreign political leaders might not be sufficient. Whether third-party states cooperate with the intervener or broadly oppose it through issue-linkage, intentional noncompliance in shared regimes, and generally uncooperative behavior is also determined to a significant degree by the attitude of foreign publics.\(^8^8\) Again, IO endorsement can be helpful, by allowing the intervener to send what

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\(^8^5\) Michael Mastanduno was among the first to clearly develop this line of argument in the late 1990s: if “balancing is a response to threat,” he claimed, then “it is reasonable to expect that the dominant state in a unipolar setting will rely on multilateralism in its international undertakings. Multilateral decision-making procedures may be less efficient, [but they] are more reassuring to other states.” Cf. Mastanduno, “Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War,” \textit{International Security} 21 (4), 1997, p. 61.


\(^8^7\) Thompson, “Coercion Through IOs,” p. 11; and \textit{Channels of Power}, pp. 27-30.

\(^8^8\) Thompson, \textit{Channels of Power}, p. 19; and “Coercion Through IOs, p. 7.
Thompson calls “policy-relevant information” to foreign popular audiences and reassuring them that “the policy’s consequences will be broadly favorable to the international community.”

Thompson’s distinction between signaling benign intentions to foreign leaders, on the one hand, and informing foreign popular audiences about the policy’s benevolent consequences, on the other, is somewhat arbitrary and not derived from his theory. One could argue that foreign leaders, especially those of major allies and partners, are usually quite well informed about a prospective intervener’s intentions by the time offensive military action becomes a concrete possibility, regardless of whether the policy is multilaterally sanctioned or not. Furthermore, Thompson does not consider the possibility that the process of generating IO approval and related deliberations may merely reveal the prospective intervener’s intentions more clearly; but if those intentions are not actually benign and compatible with international norms to begin with, IOs can do precious little to whitewash the intervener’s intentions, especially in the eyes of foreign leaders. If as a result of multilateral deliberations, the leaders of third-party states conclude that the prospective intervener’s intentions are threatening to their own interests, they might become less likely to offer their affirmative vote in the decision-making bodies of relevant IOs. In short, the diplomatic and political constraints imposed on the prospective intervener by the process of engaging with relevant IOs, far from naturally revealing “benign intentions” to the leaders of third-party states, are themselves likely to be endogenous to perceptions of the intervener’s intentions among the leaders of other IO member states.

89 Thompson, Channels of Power, p. 32; and “Coercion Through IOs,” pp. 11-12.
90 For instance, in 1998 and 1999, once Russia gained a full understanding of the western powers’ intentions over Kosovo, partially as a result of UN diplomacy, it decided to oppose military action against Serbia at the Security Council. Similarly, in 2002 and early 2003, as France, Russia, and the Security Council’s non-permanent members increasingly understood that the Bush administration’s ultimate intention was not so much Iraqi disarmament, as forcible regime change, they adopted an increasingly oppositional stance vis-à-vis the United States.
The second part of Thompson’s argument, namely that prospective interveners seek IO endorsement to legitimize military intervention in the eyes of foreign popular audiences, which in turn might reduce the risk of costly international opposition, or soft balancing, appears more plausible. Thus, American leaders might seek the endorsement of the UN or NATO for prospective interventions to reassure popular audiences abroad and thereby make it possible for foreign political leaders to uphold general international cooperation with the United States.

**Hypothesis 2 (Avert soft balancing):** Washington policy leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs primarily because they want to signal benign American intentions to foreign audiences and thereby reduce the risk of costly international opposition, or reduced overall cooperation with the United States.

The hypothesis again has a number of observable implications that allow for empirical testing. First, American leaders should make the greatest effort to seek IO endorsement for interventions expected to be particularly controversial internationally, and little or no such effort for military action clearly in self-defense or for limited humanitarian interventions that enjoy widespread international legitimacy a priori. Second, U.S. interventions that are not a priori viewed as legitimate internationally and lack explicit IO endorsement should result in costly opposition by third-party states and reduced overall cooperation with the United States, beyond the intervention in question. Finally, American policy leaders involved in decision making on military intervention should declare that when Washington has actually sought the endorsement of relevant IOs over the last two decades, preventing soft balancing and upholding broader international cooperation with the United States has indeed been the main reason for multilateralizing the policy.
Does Washington seek IO endorsement for especially controversial interventions?

As a first test of whether soft-balancing concerns are in fact the principal determinant of U.S. efforts to seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions, one might look at the types of military action for which Washington generally seeks such external approval. Interventions clearly carried out in self-defense or for limited humanitarian purposes are usually seen as legitimate by foreign popular audiences, and they are at any rate unlikely to generate strong international opposition. Therefore, Washington should generally eschew the costly and time-consuming diplomatic efforts needed to gain an explicit IO endorsement for such interventions. Thompson himself writes that according to his theory, “we expect to see unilateralism…when the coercive goals are widely viewed a priori as legitimate (as in the cases of self-defense or humanitarian intervention).”91 Conversely, Washington should make the greatest efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for military interventions that are a priori considered to be illegitimate internationally, such as interventions for regime change, control of natural resources, and retaliatory strikes.

A quick review of the empirical record of U.S. intervention over the last two decades or so suggests that the evidence is mixed, at best. In line with the predictions of Thompson’s theory, the United States did not explicitly seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for its military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, which was widely regarded as a legitimate act of self-defense, and it did make some effort to obtain a UN mandate leading up to the 2003 Iraq war, which was expected to be internationally controversial. However, a number of other cases shed significant doubt on the theory. To begin with, Washington made no effort to seek a formal IO endorsement for several military interventions that were expected to be internationally

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91 Thompson, *Channels of Power*, p. 35.
controversial, such as the intervention aimed at changing Panama’s political regime in 1989, or the retaliatory missile strikes against Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. At the same time, in 1990, Washington went to great lengths to obtain a formal UNSC mandate for military operations against Iraq, although they were aimed at undoing Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait and would thus have been clearly legitimate as an act of collective self-defense under Art. 51 of the UN Charter, even without explicit multilateral approval.

Finally, Washington has sought the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs for virtually all humanitarian military interventions it has carried out since the early 1990s. That is particularly puzzling for Thompson’s and other similar theories based on the supposed soft-balancing concerns of American leaders. Of all putatively humanitarian U.S.-led military interventions over the last two decades, only the 1994 Haiti intervention (which involved restoring an elected leader to office), the 1995 air campaign over Bosnia (which involved taking sides in an ethnic civil war) and the 1999 Kosovo intervention (which involved military support for a secessionist movement), were internationally controversial, with the latter two strongly opposed by another great power, namely Russia. However, Washington also sought an explicit UNSC endorsement for more limited humanitarian interventions in Somalia in 1992 (delivery of food aid), Bosnia in 1993 (enforcing a no-fly zone), Liberia in 2003 (delivering food aid), and Libya in 2011


93 Those interventions were not strictly humanitarian; they involved significant elements of domestic political change, and thus they were a priori controversial under established rules of international legitimacy. For a discussion, see chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation, respectively.
(enforcing a no-fly zone). All those military operations were considered to be a priori legitimate by wide portions of the international community, and there was no fundamental opposition by any other great power that might have raised concerns about potential soft balancing. In short, the available evidence suggests that Washington does not generally make the greatest efforts to obtain the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs for those interventions that can be expected to be most controversial internationally and where the risk of soft balancing is presumably most acute.

**Have illegitimate U.S. interventions actually resulted in costly opposition?**

The hypothesis that American policy leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs to prevent soft balancing by third-party states also implies that blatantly illegitimate past U.S. interventions, carried out without formal multilateral endorsement, should in fact have produced costly international opposition and even some coordinated retaliation against the United States. If instead third-party states have generally limited their opposition to verbal protests and refusals to actively support the illegitimate intervention in question, while otherwise continuing to cooperate with the United States on various issues of common concern, then Washington policy leaders should have progressively updated their expectations and eventually ceased to worry about broader soft balancing altogether.

The available evidence suggests that even highly controversial past U.S. military interventions that were not endorsed by relevant IOs and blatantly contravened basic rules of international legitimacy did not result in costly retaliation, or reduced overall cooperation with Washington. Among major post-cold war U.S. military interventions, the most internationally controversial were the 1989 Panama intervention, the 1999 Kosovo intervention, and the 2003

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94 The 1992 Somalia intervention enjoyed widespread international support, including from the UN Secretary-General himself, months before the SC formally endorsed U.S.-led military action on December 3, 1992. In the cases of Bosnia 1993, Liberia 2003, and Libya 2011, by the time the SC authorized limited military operations, regional IOs (the OIC, ECOWAS, and the Arab League, respectively) had already called for U.S.-led intervention.
Iraq War. All aimed at either partially or entirely changing the domestic political structure of the target state and were thus a priori illegitimate under existing international rules.

The unilateral Panama invasion was formally censured by the UN General Assembly and the OAS. However, nobody in the western hemisphere or beyond took further retaliatory action against the United States, and indeed, Latin American cooperation with Washington increased steadily in subsequent years. The 1999 Kosovo intervention was strongly condemned by major global and regional powers, such as Russia, China, India, and South Africa, which disputed that NATO endorsement provided sufficient international legitimacy. Nevertheless, there were no instances of costly retaliation against the United States, neither during nor after the intervention—not even by Russia, whose interests were most directly affected—and general international cooperation with Washington continued unabated.

Of all post-cold war U.S. military interventions, the 2003 Iraq war most blatantly violated existing international legitimacy norms, resulting in particularly harsh and vociferous international condemnations. The widespread perceptions of illegitimacy among foreign popular audiences resulted in a near absence of cooperation on the war itself, in spite of Washington’s deployment of significant financial and diplomatic incentives to lure third-party states into its “coalition of the willing.”

95 Author interview with Michael Kozak, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs in 1989 (June 23, 2009).
96 For an overview of international reactions, see Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, Kosovo and the challenge of humanitarian intervention (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2000), esp. chaps. 7, 8, 14, 16, 17.
97 Moscow limited its opposition to an explicit veto threat at the UNSC and strong verbal condemnations in public; and Russian diplomacy was ultimately crucial in ending the war on NATO’s terms. See chap. 5 of this dissertation.
98 The 1989 Panama intervention had also been highly controversial, but a tenuous self-defense case could at least be made there, given that the security of U.S. citizens in the country was arguably at risk, following the killing of a U.S. soldier and General Noriega’s declaration that a state of war existed between Panama and the United States.
international cooperation with the United States on matters of international security and counterterrorism, trade, the environment, and various technical issues did not noticeably suffer, and by some counts it actually increased in subsequent years.\(^{100}\)

The reasons for this apparent lack of costly opposition by third-party states beyond refusals to cooperate on the illegitimate intervention in question are at least twofold. First, other great powers that have the capabilities to impose significant costs on the United States might not actually feel threatened by U.S. armed interventions in peripheral regions, regardless of whether such military actions are endorsed by relevant IOs and abide by basic norms of international legitimacy. American military interventions in recent years have been either humanitarian rescue operations, targeted at failing and collapsed states, or they have been aimed at weak states suspected of developing weapons of mass destruction and harboring global terrorist organizations. Such interventions may sometimes have run counter to the strategic interests of other great powers, but those probably “understand that the United States does not have offensive designs against them.”\(^{101}\) Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth have in fact shown that whenever other powerful states have acted contrary to American interests in recent years, such as in the field of arms transfers, regional security cooperation, or international policy toward Iraq and Iran, that simply reflected those states’ own contingent economic or strategic interests, more than any shared international concern about “hostile” U.S. intentions.\(^{102}\)

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Second, even limited soft balancing efforts and decisions to reduce cooperation with Washington can be very costly to third-party states. The U.S. remains the world’s leading military and economic power, and its diplomatic influence probably remains unmatched. Furthermore, as theories of hegemonic cooperation have long suggested, smaller states rely on the U.S. to improve and sustain generally beneficial global cooperation in less institutionalized issue areas.\(^{103}\) Therefore, “other states are generally much more dependent on [America] than it is on them.”\(^{104}\) Put differently, if third-party states reduce their overall cooperation with the United States on issues such as international finance, trade, the environment, and international security, they might end up hurting themselves much more than their intended target. This probably goes a long way in explaining why foreign leaders retain strong incentives to keep cooperating with the world’s only superpower on a plethora of issues, even in the face of widespread popular protests among their own domestic publics against unilateral U.S. military interventions.\(^{105}\)

There is no particular reason to expect that the aforementioned pattern should change in the near future, even assuming further U.S. military interventions in blatant violation of basic international legitimacy norms. However, American policy leaders might for various reasons misperceive the evidence about past international reactions and still fear that U.S. military intervention without the endorsement of relevant IOs might lead other states to adopt costly countermeasures.

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Are U.S. policy leaders (nevertheless) motivated by fears of soft balancing?

Political scientist Erik Voeten suggests that regardless of whether soft balancing against illegitimate U.S. interventions actually occurs, American leaders since the end of the cold war have often behaved “as if” international opposition were in fact to be expected for interventions without explicit IO endorsement and especially without UN approval. According to Voeten, American leaders have been motivated to seek such approval by fears that if “the United States exercises force in the absence of SC authorization,” third-party states might retaliate, “for instance, by reducing cooperation elsewhere.”106 Observed outward behavior however is an imperfect test of any actor’s motives. To determine whether concerns about potential soft balancing have in fact been the main cause of Washington efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, a more direct examination of U.S. decision makers’ motives would be necessary.

Among post-cold war U.S. combat operations overseas, those most widely discussed by theorists who explain American multilateralism as the result of efforts to avoid soft balancing are the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 Kosovo intervention, and the 2003 Iraq war. Thompson for instance claims that leading up to the 1991 war, “U.S. decision makers turned to the UN as an intentional strategy to minimize international political fallout” and were not primarily “motivated by burden sharing” or a desire to limit U.S. domestic political opposition.107 Following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the G.H.W. Bush administration spent several months building up multilateral and domestic support for a major U.S. military effort.108

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107 Thompson, Channels of Power, p. 51, 66, emphasis added.
However, senior U.S. officials involved in decision making at the time dispute that concerns about soft balancing, or about the future of American hegemony, drove Washington policy vis-à-vis the Security Council. The administration was fully aware that a legitimate case could have been made under existing international rules for swiftly undoing the Iraqi aggression without any explicit IO endorsement, based on the principle of collective self-defense enshrined in Art. 51 of the UN Charter, and the expectation was that most other states would have accepted such a justification. The decision to multilateralize the policy and seek an explicit UN endorsement for military action appears to have been motivated primarily by a desire to bring major allies on board, thereby sharing the burden of an operation expected to be very costly, and reduce U.S. domestic opposition from Congress and the reluctant military leadership.

The 1999 Kosovo intervention is in several regards a “most likely case” for the hypothesis that American efforts to gain IO endorsement are determined by concerns about costly international opposition, or soft balancing. The use of force over Kosovo was vociferously opposed by Russia, China, and influential members of the non-aligned movement, including India and South Africa; and Russian opposition in particular was of some concern to Washington during the lead-up to the intervention. Katharina Coleman specifically argues that Washington

109 Author interview with Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to the president, 1989-1993 (March 22, 2011). Scowcroft also insists that the international outcry over the unilateral Panama intervention in 1989 played no significant role in Washington’s subsequent decision to seek a SC approval for the 1991 Gulf War.


112 A theory’s failure in a most likely test case calls into question its more general validity. See George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development, pp. 121-22.

113 Author interview with Strobe Talbott, U.S. deputy secretary of state, 1994-2001 (July 9, 2009).
sought a NATO endorsement ahead of its intervention in order to maximize perceptions of international legitimacy among third-party states and ensure that “U.S. power [would] be seen as non-threatening by other states.” However, senior U.S. policy officials were quite aware during the lead-up to the Kosovo intervention that NATO endorsement would not reassure Moscow and other non-NATO members about American intentions or legitimize the use of force in their eyes; in fact, Russian leaders in particular feared a strong NATO, and the fact that the operation was channeled through NATO made them even more worried than they might otherwise have been. Yet the expectation in Washington was that the Kremlin would ultimately acquiesce in U.S.-led military action and stop short of reducing cooperation with the U.S. in other domains, mainly because of Russia’s economic dependence on the West. Political opposition from countries besides Russia never amounted to a serious concern in Washington, because of the understanding that “there was nothing they could do to help Serbia or harm [the United States].”

Finally, a number of scholars have argued that in 2002-03, U.S. policy leaders sought an explicit SC endorsement for military action against Iraq, once again not for the purpose of burden sharing or increasing U.S. domestic support, but “because they worried about the international political costs of intervening in Iraq,” and wanted to “reduce the likelihood of

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115 Author interview with Ronald Asmus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from 1997 to 2000 (April 21, 2010); and Peter Burleigh, Deputy U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN from August 1997 to December 1999, and Acting U.S. Representative from September 1998 to August 1999 (April 3, 2010).
116 Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-large and Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the new independent sates of the former Soviet Union, 1997–2001 (March 4, 2010).
117 Author interview with James Dobbins, Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for the Balkans, 1999-2001 (July 10, 2009).
President George W. Bush was persuaded to seek a UNSC endorsement for military action by Secretary of State Colin Powell, and to a lesser extent by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in the summer of 2002. Yet Powell himself insists that he personally never thought about negative reactions from third-party states in other issue areas as a potential consequence of U.S. unilateral intervention. His primary concern was that if the U.S. was “going to go into Iraq, it would be important to go in with the greatest possible international support” for the operation in question, to maximize domestic approval, and also in view of sharing the burden on postwar stabilization and reconstruction.

Stephen Hadley, deputy national security adviser to the president in 2002-03, confirms that leading up to the Iraq war, soft balancing was a secondary concern at best among the administration’s principal national security officials: “I don’t remember anybody making the argument that we needed international sanction on Iraq to keep people cooperating with the U.S. in other areas.”

In conclusion, there are good grounds for rejecting the hypothesis that concerns about potential soft balancing against the United States have been driving Washington’s post-cold war efforts to seek IO endorsement for prospective military interventions. First, Washington has not consistently sought the endorsement of relevant IOs for those interventions that were a priori most controversial internationally, and it has gone to considerable lengths to obtain IO endorsement for prospective interventions that enjoyed significant legitimacy to begin with.

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120 See chapter six of this dissertation for a further discussion.


122 The Bush administration, Hadley explains, had absorbed the lessons of previous interventions, such as Kosovo or “Bosnia, where [the U.S.] had conducted the air campaign without an explicit UN Security Council resolution, and that didn’t seem to adversely affect the willingness of the international community to deal with the United States in other areas.” Author interview with Stephen J. Hadley (January 24, 2011).
Second, American interventions carried out without IO endorsement and in blatant violation of international norms have not resulted in costly international opposition and reduced cooperation by third-party states in other issue areas. Finally, as just discussed, when American leaders have actually sought the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions, those leaders insist that signaling benign intentions to third-party states in view of preventing potentially costly soft balancing has not been among their principal motives. To understand why American leaders do in fact frequently seek IO endorsement for prospective military interventions, one needs to look elsewhere. It might be useful to move away from an exclusive focus on international systemic factors to also consider U.S. domestic political dynamics.

3. Increasing domestic support among the American public

A number of scholars have argued that when Washington policy leaders seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions, they do so primarily in order to bolster U.S. public support. Legitimizing U.S. military interventions domestically was relatively easy during the cold war. Back then, most Americans believed that the United States was engaged in an existential struggle against the Soviet Union, and Washington leaders could plausibly argue that military interventions were necessary in self-defense, to prevent communist takeovers abroad. However, that interpretive frame broke down in the late 1980s, and consequently the demonization of foreign opponents, which functioned as “the engine of [U.S.] interventionism…after World War II,” has become more difficult, notwithstanding its short-lived revival in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. As a result, today American presidents generally find it more challenging to build up and maintain popular support

for military interventions.\textsuperscript{124} Given this changed post-cold war political context, it appears plausible that the endorsement of relevant IOs has become more valuable than ever to legitimize U.S. military interventions domestically among the American public.

The most common hypotheses are that IO endorsement can help boost U.S. public support for the use of force, by validating the claims of Washington leaders about a foreign crisis,\textsuperscript{125} and/or by sending relevant information to the American public about the likely policy consequences of military intervention.\textsuperscript{126} Terrence Chapman, for instance, argues that IO endorsement can boost U.S. popular support for military action by sending relevant information to the American public about whether “good policies” are being planned, “in the sense that they conform closely to the public’s preferences.”\textsuperscript{127} The argument that IO endorsement reassures U.S. public opinion about the likely consequences of the policies planned by their leaders involves a significant leap of faith. What is a “good” policy with desirable consequences from the perspective of other influential IO member states may not necessarily be good for the

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American public. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that Washington policy leaders seek IO endorsement for prospective interventions due to the expectation that it will improve U.S. public support, possibly by signaling to American citizens that their leaders’ assessment of a foreign crisis is widely shared internationally (and therefore the burdens of military action, too, are likely to be shared), enjoys strong intuitive appeal.

Opinion polls over the last two decades have also regularly confirmed that large segments of the U.S. public feel uneasy about unfettered American primacy and in principle prefer multilateral over unilateral military interventions. For instance, a 2010 Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll found that 61 percent of Americans support contributing military forces to a hypothetical defense of South Korea from a North Korean attack together with other countries “as part of a UN-sponsored effort”; but only 40 percent of Americans support contributing U.S. forces without any multilateral participation.128

Hypothesis 3 (U.S. public support): Washington leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions primarily to increase U.S. public support.

The hypothesis that U.S. leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs such as the UN or NATO to improve domestic support among the American public again yields several implications that one ought to be able to observe. First, there should be evidence that the availability of IO endorsement systematically increases U.S. public support, not just for hypothetical military interventions (the “defense of South Korea from a North Korean attack”), but also for actually executed controversial interventions. Second, polling data should clearly and systematically indicate that the American public prefers explicit IO endorsement for military

interventions to either straightforward unilateralism or support form ad-hoc coalitions of allies. Third, Washington policy leaders should declare that when they have sought IO endorsement for prospective interventions, increasing U.S. public support was in fact a primary objective.

**Does IO endorsement systematically increase U.S. popular support?**

Research suggests that public opinion poll data about support for *hypothetical* military interventions is not necessarily a reliable predictor of popular attitudes vis-à-vis *actual* combat operations. First of all, polling data on public support for any hypothetical future policy should be treated with a dose of skepticism: even small changes in question wording, or in the order in which alternative responses are presented, can lead to changes of over fifteen percent in public support.129 Second, studies more specifically focused on popular attitudes about foreign policy have found that U.S. public support for multilateralism is as shallow and ambivalent as it is widespread.130 Meanwhile opposition to multilateralism and to the UN in particular by relatively narrow, vocal segments of the American public is usually intense and resilient, and the “vocal public” is known to have a disproportionately large impact on U.S. policy making.131

Third, there is significant evidence that regardless of whether U.S. citizens favor a military intervention in the abstract, once American soldiers are involved in combat abroad, the public tends to “rally around the flag” and support the president and the policy—at least, so long as the administration can compellingly frame an intervention as being in America’s national interest and U.S. government leaders are broadly supportive.132

Finally, in terms of U.S. public support for military interventions, output legitimacy (i.e., perceived policy success) appears to matter more than procedural legitimacy (i.e., respect of appropriate procedures, such as obtaining IO endorsement). Comparing all major instances of U.S. military intervention between 1981 and 2005, Richard Eichenberg finds that regardless of multilateral endorsement and of the level of American casualties suffered, high popular support generally results from perceived policy success, such as for the 1989 Panama intervention, the 1991 Gulf War, or the initial combat phase of the 2003 Iraq war.\textsuperscript{133} Therefore, IO endorsement does not systematically and reliably increase U.S. public support for actual military interventions: public support for blatantly unilateral interventions widely perceived as successful (such as Panama) is likely to be significantly higher than public support for a UN-mandated intervention that fails to achieve its long-term objectives (such as Somalia).\textsuperscript{134}

In short, polling data about hypothetical interventions that indicates strong popular support for multilateralism only partially reflects the actual incentives facing Washington policy officials. American leaders are usually aware that perceptions of success matter most in terms of generating popular support for the policy and for the administration more generally. As one former senior U.S. defense official explains: “Success determines the politics. If you’re successful in an intervention, then the politics work out, and if you’re not successful, then the


\textsuperscript{134} In line with this finding, a strong argument can be made that, “had the invasion [of Iraq in 2003] been a success by quickly establishing an effective government and by discovering banned and threatening weapons of mass destruction...the venture...would probably have been accepted as legitimate in time.” Cf. John Mueller, “Force, legitimacy, success, and Iraq,” \textit{Review of International Studies} 31, 2005, p. 109.
politics turn on you. In the end, no one will really judge you based on their initial attitude; what they will judge you on is whether you are successful or not.”

**Does the American public prefer IO endorsement to ad-hoc coalitions?**

Notwithstanding the aforementioned evidence, U.S. policy leaders might want to hedge their bets and seek the endorsement of relevant IOs, anticipating that *all else being equal*, multilateral interventions will enjoy higher support from the American public. Explicit IO endorsement might be desirable especially for humanitarian operations and other interventions that cannot clearly be framed as being in America’s vital national interest, given that baseline U.S. public support for such interventions is generally low. Washington policy leaders generally understand that “in terms of public opinion, where there is not a direct threat to national security that is either perceived or can be explained, if you can cloak the mission as part of a broad international undertaking, you can create a greater political logic on your part.”

However, one important question at this point is: Does the intervention necessarily have to be sanctioned by the UN or NATO to generate greater U.S. public support, or is the participation of foreign allies and partners in an ad-hoc international coalition sufficient for that purpose? Obtaining the participation of likeminded allies in ad-hoc coalitions is typically much less costly and time-consuming to Washington than obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs.

Terrence Chapman explicitly theorizes that U.S. public support for IO-endorsed interventions is generally higher than support for interventions undertaken with ad-hoc coalitions

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135 Author interview with John K. Veroneau, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs from 1999 to 2001 (April 7, 2010). Other former policy officials agree that “nothing in the end justifies the use of force, if the use of force is unsuccessful.” Author interview with Leon Fuerth, NS adviser to the Vice-President from 1993 to 2000 (March 9, 2010).


of allies. In addition, he claims that the UN and NATO differ in their ability to boost U.S. public support for military intervention. His underlying hypothesis is that when an IO is a priori less likely to endorse Washington policy, because the organization’s aggregate preferences are generally known to be distant from those of the United States (such as in the case of the UNSC), then when that body does actually back a U.S. intervention it sends “a powerful signal…that a policy is worth supporting,” which in turn boosts American public approval of military action.

In short, UNSC endorsement should generate the highest levels of U.S. public support, followed by NATO endorsement; and finally endorsement by ad-hoc coalitions should generate the lowest levels of U.S. public support for military action, given that it can be most easily obtained. According to Chapman, the available evidence supports his theory. Data from relevant U.S. military interventions, he claims, shows among other things that American “public support is consistently higher for working through the UN as opposed to NATO.”

It is in fact the case that when asked about using force in the abstract, without reference to specific cases, Americans display a mild preference for UN over NATO endorsement. However, the American public’s preference for UN endorsement over other forms of international support (through NATO or ad-hoc coalitions) all but disappears when the focus is

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139 Chapman, “Audience Beliefs and International Organization Legitimacy,” p. 736; see also Chapman, Securing Approval, pp. 8, 74.
140 Chapman’s use of empirical evidence is generally sloppy: for instance, he codes the Iraqi no-fly zones (not explicitly authorized by the UNSC), and the 1992 UNPROFOR peacekeeping deployment in Bosnia (which entailed no participation of U.S. troops), as instances of UN authorized American interventions. Meanwhile he leaves out the 1992 Somalia intervention, the Bosnian no-fly zone, the 2003 Liberia intervention, and the 2004 Haiti intervention, which were all explicitly UN authorized, U.S.-led military interventions. Cf. Securing Approval, p. 112.
141 Chapman, Securing Approval, p. 106; see also Chapman, “Audience Beliefs and International Organization Legitimacy,” p. 745. Yet the only evidence he cites in support of this sweeping assertion is an unspecified “2000 PIPA poll,” as well as a paper by Alexander Thompson that deals with the altogether different question of international (not U.S. domestic) legitimation (cf. Securing Approval, p. 106).
142 A July 2000 Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) poll found that “as a general rule,” 49% of Americans prefer the U.S. to intervene as part of a UN operation, 26% prefer NATO, and only 17% prefer the U.S. to act unilaterally. Source: http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/un/un_force1.cfm.
on concrete instances of prospective military intervention. For example, a September 2002 *CNN-USA Today-Gallup* poll found that 79 percent of Americans approved of invading Iraq, *either* with UN endorsement *or* with the participation of other countries, while only 38 percent of Americans approved of a prospective invasion without any kind of international support.\(^\text{143}\)

A detailed analysis by Richard Eichenberg confirms that Americans do not inherently prefer UN endorsement over other forms of international support. Eichenberg reviews hundreds of opinion surveys on U.S. public attitudes about past military interventions in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Iraq, and Liberia. He finds that on average, American citizens are about equally approving of military interventions endorsed by the UN or NATO or supported by ad-hoc coalitions of allies. His data even suggests that for some military operations, such as the 1994 Haiti intervention or the 2003 Iraq war, public support was marginally higher when the question only referred to international support in general, as opposed to specifically mentioning UN approval. A selection of his findings is reported in table 3, below.

\(^{143}\) Source: http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq19.htm. Similarly, a February 2003 Los Angeles Times poll found that 55% of Americans approved of military action against Iraq “with the support of some allies, such as Great Britain”—almost exactly the same level of approval (52%) identified by a PIPA poll taken at roughly the same time that explicitly mentioned UN endorsement. See http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/un/un_force1.cfm.
Table 3. The Effect of International Endorsement on U.S. Public Support for Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>No international endorsement</th>
<th>UN endorsement</th>
<th>NATO endorsement</th>
<th>Any international support (incl. ad-hoc coalitions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991 Gulf War</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti 1994</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq 1992-2003</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia 2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, opinion surveys about U.S. armed intervention show that for military operations that cannot clearly be framed as acts of self-defense, the American public generally prefers some form of international endorsement and support to straightforward unilateralism. But crucially, the public does not consistently prefer UN approval to either NATO endorsement or simple support from ad-hoc coalitions of allies.\(^\text{144}\)

**Do Washington leaders misperceive the opinion poll data?**

It might still be the case that Washington policy leaders misperceive the preferences of the American public when it comes to prospective military interventions. Specifically, U.S. policy officials might seek the endorsement of relevant IOs, and of the UN in particular, in the mistaken belief that U.S. public support benefits more from such formal multilateral approval than from just the backing of ad-hoc coalitions of states.

However, most of the Washington leaders I have interviewed do in fact interpret the polling data correctly. For instance, former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake explains

\(^{144}\) For a similar conclusion see also Christopher Paul, *Marines on the Beach*, p. 159.
that in terms of increasing American public support, “when considering interventions, allies are more important than the UN.”

Similarly, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe affirms that especially for humanitarian interventions, which may be widely perceived as marginal to American interests, to build up U.S. public support it is “important to have, not UN support, and not NATO qua NATO, but to have other countries participate in the operation.”

The underlying reason, other officials speculate, might be that the American public ultimately cares most about burden sharing through multi-national coalitions, while “there is a lot of skepticism about the UN as the validator of good and just things in the United States.”

Some even go so far as to speculate that “the American people have little confidence in the UN and essentially…don’t care whether the UN is involved or not.”

With domestic political support in mind, Washington policy leaders actually tend to prefer NATO endorsement to a UNSC mandate, anticipating that the former will be viewed more favorably by the American public and especially on Capitol Hill.

American policy leaders are generally confident that if necessary, given the very significant economic resources available to the United States and its resulting diplomatic clout, Washington can always assemble some token international coalition in support of military intervention to assuage U.S. public opinion—regardless of whether the operation is also formally endorsed by the United Nations.

145 Author interview with Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for NS Affairs, 1993-1997 (June 26, 2009).

146 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010). James Rubin, Marc Grossman, and Kori Schake confirmed the same analysis in interviews with the author on April 9, 2010, January 13, 2011, and January 21, 2011, respectively.


149 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (June 09, 2011). Previous research confirms that U.S. members of Congress generally prefer NATO to UN endorsement for military interventions. See Kull and Destler, Misreading the Public, pp. 66-67.
endorsed by relevant IOs. The 2003 Iraq war is an eloquent case in point. As Marc Grossman, undersecretary of state for policy in 2002-03, candidly explains, “some coalition is always available.”

Undoubtedly, having a formal UN or NATO endorsement can be helpful in terms of persuading major democratic allies, such as Britain, Germany, or France, to join a U.S.-led coalition, and Washington leaders are clearly aware of that. However, the formal endorsement of relevant IOs is secondary at best in terms of the size of the coalition backing Washington policy, which ultimately appears to matter most for building up U.S. public support. For smaller countries, especially from the developing world, the lack of overarching international legitimacy can easily be offset through material incentives offered by the United States. One former senior military official who was involved in international coalition management at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) during the 2003 Iraq war puts it bluntly:

If you are one of those tiny little countries, and the United States is going to give you armored personnel carriers, or if you are an Eastern European country and the U.S. is sponsoring NATO membership for you at some point down the road, then the overarching international legitimacy resulting from a UN mandate matters less. But by having those countries send their representative to the coalition village at CENTCOM, we [the United States] could then say, we now have thirty-odd partners supporting us. How much they actually contributed didn’t matter much.

In conclusion, there is little evidence that U.S. policy leaders seek IO endorsement for prospective interventions primarily to increase American public support. First, for actual military interventions, other factors appear to be more important than IO endorsement in terms of generating U.S. public approval. In particular, perceived output legitimacy (i.e., policy success)

151 Author interviews with Strobe Talbott (July 9, 2009), and Colin Powell (February 2, 2011). See also Finnemore, “Fights about rules,” p. 202; and Thompson, Channels of Power, pp. 31-33.
matters more to the American public than procedural legitimacy (which results among other things from compliance with international norms). Second, polling data indicates that on average, the American public does not clearly prefer UN or NATO endorsement to support form ad-hoc international coalitions. Hence if the goal is merely increasing U.S. public approval, Washington leaders should generally prefer ad-hoc coalitions, given that their political support is typically much easier to obtain than explicit IO endorsement. Finally, my own research suggests that American policy leaders do in fact correctly interpret the aforementioned polling data. They understand that the American public is generally supportive of acting with partners in international coalitions, especially for interventions that are marginal to U.S. national interests. But they also understand that IO endorsement, and especially a formal UNSC mandate, are not necessarily more valuable than ad-hoc coalitions in terms of building up U.S. public support for domestically controversial interventions.

Summing up, when IO endorsement can be obtained swiftly and at little cost to the United States, then Washington policy leaders might view it as an effective means of quickly putting together a broad international coalition of states, for the purpose of generating “the appearance of burden sharing among allies” and boosting U.S. popular support. But when it is clear from the outset that a UN or NATO endorsement will be difficult to obtain, then in terms of building up American public support for military action, Washington policy leaders should generally prefer an ad-hoc multinational coalition without any explicit IO endorsement as a much less costly and equally effective alternative.

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If norm internalization by American leaders, fears of soft balancing, or concerns about U.S. popular support cannot fully explain Washington’s efforts to seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions, then the question remains: What does? In the remaining part of this chapter I outline a theory that explains how IO endorsement, obtained before the launch of offensive military operations, can be advantageous to the United States in terms of policy implementation. The endorsement of relevant IOs, I argue, can lock in third-party state support for long-term peacekeeping and stabilization; and that, in turn, facilitates burden sharing and greatly reduces the costs of protracted interventions to the United States and its armed services in particular. In short, IO approval limits American liability in the long run.

4. Policy benefits: Burden sharing in combat and post-combat

I hypothesize that IO endorsement of U.S. military intervention and the resulting international legitimacy are valuable from Washington’s standpoint primarily because they reduce the long-term costs of implementing a given policy and achieving set targets. Scholarship has long recognized that IOs facilitate burden sharing, or what David Lake calls the creation of “joint production economies,” in foreign affairs, thereby reducing the cost to individual member states of achieving specific objectives. However, with regard to foreign armed interventions, research to-date has done little to clarify through what mechanisms the advance endorsement of relevant IOs can facilitate burden sharing in a way that reassures skeptical Washington officials about the foreseeable (long-term) costs of military action.

Overcoming popular opposition abroad to actively supporting U.S. policy

The endorsement of relevant IOs—whether the United Nations, NATO, or regional organizations from the part of the world targeted by an intervention (such as the OAS, the African Union, ECOWAS, or the Arab League)—helps legitimize U.S. military action in the eyes of foreign popular audiences. That, in turn, can be expected to make it politically easier for the leaders of foreign partner states, and especially for the leaders of fellow democracies, to openly back the United States on specific interventions. In the language of two-level games, IO endorsement can help the U.S. expand the domestic win-sets of foreign leaders (i.e., the breadth of policies those foreign leaders are able to “sell” to their own domestic publics), thereby making it easier for foreign partner states to cooperate with the United States on terms favorable to Washington.155

For instance, public opinion in Europe and Latin America strongly believes in the UN Security Council as a legitimizing organ for international military action. Hence political leaders from Europe and Latin America, although generally sympathetic to the United States and keenly aware of their nation’s interest in maintaining friendly relations with Washington, find it exceedingly difficult to openly support U.S. military interventions, let alone contribute troops and resources, in the absence of an authorizing SC resolution.156 Thompson sums up the argument as follows: “Even if other state leaders determine that supporting the coercive policy is in their national interest, they may face domestic barriers to doing so. They must convince their


own publics that supporting another state’s exercise of power is justified. IO approval helps overcome this additional obstacle.”  

For a variety of reasons, the UN Security Council is best equipped to provide this kind of international legitimation. That may seem puzzling in several regards: SC approval of military action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter is the result of eminently political decisions, produced through the votes of sovereign states, and it frequently reflects significant bargaining and ethically questionable side deals. The Council itself is in many ways a flawed, secretive, and arguably unrepresentative body. The special prerogatives of its five veto-wielding permanent members (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France) clearly reflect the global distribution of power at the end of WWII and stand in permanent tension with the principle of sovereign equality. That hardly makes the Council legitimate according to abstract normative standards of fairness, proportionality, and democratic accountability.

Nevertheless, the SC is treated by most political leaders in most countries of the world, and as a result also by their followers, as an authoritative institution that effectively represents the community of nations. As Inis Claude put it in his seminal analysis of the UN, “what the United Nations actually represents is less important than the fact that statesmen have conferred


the function of collective legitimization primarily upon that organization.” Furthermore, the Security Council offers at least some (however weak) institutional checks on great-power military adventurism, given its reluctance to authorize blatantly self-serving foreign interventions; and that arguably further increases the perceived international legitimacy of those interventions it does actually endorse. Finally, the Security Council is the only body that can authorize military action not clearly in self-defense under international law, and in many parts of the world, conformity with general legal principles is seen as the default test of international legitimacy. Hence the argument made by a number of scholars, according to which the SC, because it is itself illegitimate according to abstract normative standards of democratic representation and accountability, cannot plausibly legitimize international military action, is based on a fundamental confusion between legitimacy as a normative ideal and legitimacy as a social construct. The latter, not the former, is what ultimately matters in view of generating political support abroad.

Beyond the United Nations, regional IOs can also legitimize U.S. military action in the eyes of popular audiences abroad, thus facilitating active third-party state support for American interventions. Among regional IOs, NATO occupies an especially prominent position, given the

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165 This confusion is most evident in Alexander Thompson, “Coercion Through IOs,” pp. 26-27; but see also Erik Voeten, “The Political Origins…,” pp. 537-39.

unique capabilities and democratic nature of its members. Not surprisingly, NATO contributes little to legitimating U.S. intervention in the eyes of non-Western audiences: given widespread perceptions of American dominance within the organization, the legitimation effect of NATO endorsement is generally limited to the organization’s area of membership.\textsuperscript{167} Nevertheless, NATO endorsement of prospective U.S. military interventions can be extremely valuable from Washington’s standpoint, because it increases perceptions of legitimacy among the organization’s own members and activates the “pull” of alliance solidarity. Even apart from popular perceptions of legitimacy, once NATO has formally endorsed a U.S. intervention, America’s political leverage over its closest allies is greatly increased: Washington can more easily persuade the leaders of other member states to rally their domestic publics behind military action, as the U.S. insists that the broader transatlantic security tie is potentially at stake.\textsuperscript{168} That, in turn, makes it much easier for Washington to generate concrete international support for policy implementation.

Finally, the endorsement of U.S. military action by a regional IO that has among its members a state directly targeted by the intervention (such as the Arab League, the African Union, or the OAS, for interventions in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, respectively) signals some politically valuable form of local consent. That can contribute to legitimizing the use of force beyond the organization’s area of membership—\textit{provided} the

\textsuperscript{167} As I show in chapter five, NATO endorsement of U.S. intervention over Kosovo did little to legitimize the military campaign among non-Western audiences. More generally, as an independent international commission concluded soon after the Kosovo intervention, “the growing global power of NATO creates a feeling of vulnerability in other parts of the world, especially … where NATO claims a right to bypass the United Nations Security Council.” See Independent International Commission on Kosovo (IICK), \textit{The Kosovo Report} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 11.

\textsuperscript{168} See chapter five; and more generally, Pierre Martin and Mark R. Brawley, ed., \textit{Alliance Politics, Kosovo, and NATO’s War: Allied Force or Forced Allies?} (New York: Palgrave, 2000).
regional backing is not blatantly seen as the result of U.S. pressure.\textsuperscript{169} While the resulting international legitimacy may be insufficient by itself to overcome domestic reluctance in non-member states to actively support a U.S. military intervention, the endorsement of such regional IOs generally undermines arguments about “American imperialism” and greatly facilitates the adoption of a UNSC resolution formally approving the use of force.\textsuperscript{170} For instance, in the spring of 2011, two regional organizations, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League, endorsed a U.S.-led military intervention in Libya aimed at protecting the civilian population there, and that greatly facilitated the subsequent adoption of a SC resolution authorizing the use of force.\textsuperscript{171}

**Burden sharing during the active combat phase?**

As argued above, advance endorsement of U.S. military interventions through relevant IOs reduces domestic political barriers in third-party states to actively supporting American policy. Insofar as scholars have tackled the question of what concrete policy benefits can accrue from this to the United States, they have suggested that IO endorsement makes it easier for foreign partner states to join U.S.-led combat coalitions or otherwise offer valuable support to Washington during the active combat phase.

The underlying assumption in much extant scholarship is that the operational combat support of international allies and partners continues to be valuable from Washington’s standpoint and is generally sought to limit the burden on American troops. Byman and Waxman,\textsuperscript{169}


for instance, suggest that the key advantage of a coalition-based approach “with respect to coercive operations is the members’ pooling of military…efforts against a common adversary. Coalitions can bring additional assets to the table.”\textsuperscript{172} Put differently, the argument is that combat coalitions are desirable from a U.S. standpoint because they aggregate the capabilities of participating nations and thus allow Washington to share the burdens of combat. Other scholars have emphasized that even when international partners do not directly contribute to war fighting operations, the legitimation effect of IO endorsement can mobilize their support during the active combat phase and allow “the broad exercise of basing rights, and the employment of diplomatic and economic levers to terminate a conflict.”\textsuperscript{173}

However, the aforementioned claims are problematic in several regards and lack clear empirical support. First, the armed forces of major U.S. allies and partners are typically constrained by their own domestic public opinion from meaningfully contributing to high-risk combat operations overseas. European public opinion, in particular, is highly risk-averse when it comes to foreign military intervention. IO endorsement and the resulting international legitimacy might be sufficient to allow the leaders of foreign allies to overcome domestic opposition to politically backing the United States in public; yet in the absence of a common threat perception, the actual contribution to U.S.-led combat operations is usually limited to logistics, or at best high-altitude air strikes, with only a few states, such as Britain or Australia, regularly deploying combat troops on the ground.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Byman and Waxman, \textit{The Dynamics of Coercion}, p. 154. On how IO endorsement facilitates the formation of broad combat coalitions, see also Ruth Wedgwood, “Unilateral Action in a Multilateral World,” p. 173.


Second, U.S. armed interventions are increasingly technology intensive. The growing “capabilities gap” between the United States and even its major partners makes coalition warfare increasingly costly and inefficient from an operational standpoint, quite apart from doctrinal differences and political constraints that further limit the employability of allied resources. For instance, U.S. weapons and communications systems can often not be readily integrated with those of international partners who invest much less in weapons development and procurement, resulting in serious problems of interoperability that can undermine military effectiveness. Furthermore, most international partners lack the strategic lift capabilities that may be needed to quickly transport their combat assets to the theater of operations, thus making them de facto dependent on American resources for transportation and logistics. Finally, for ground combat operations, the U.S. increasingly relies on small, highly mobile units made up of special forces, which cannot easily be integrated with troops from international partners. Partially for these reasons, in September 2001 the G.W. Bush administration declined NATO’s offer of active military support for combat operations in Afghanistan, instead preferring to carry out the initial phase of its “war against terror” unilaterally.

Finally, there is little evidence that the advance endorsement of U.S. military interventions by relevant IOs and the resulting international legitimacy systematically facilitate the granting of overflight rights, American access to foreign military bases and port facilities, and the activation of foreign diplomatic levers to facilitate conflict termination on American terms. For instance, during the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, the German government was among the war’s most strident opponents; yet Germany nevertheless privately offered transit and overflight rights to

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176 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
U.S. forces and even contributed AWACS airplanes to the protection of Turkey. With regard to basing rights on the territory of U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, it was clear from early 2002 onward that they would be granted regardless of UN endorsement, provided that the U.S. firmly committed itself to ousting Saddam Hussein from power. Finally, during the Kosovo conflict in 1999, Russia ultimately offered its diplomatic support to Washington, crucially helping to terminate the war on terms broadly favorable to the United States—yet Moscow’s assistance was offered in spite of, and not because of, NATO’s endorsement of the war, which Russia had previously denounced in unmistakable terms.

In sum, even assuming that international allies and partners are willing to actively participate in U.S.-led combat operations, from a military operational standpoint, foreign participation is at best only marginally helpful to the United States and at worst actively counterproductive. Therefore, ensuring the combat support of international allies and partners is unlikely to be a major factor driving American efforts to secure the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions. As to non-combat support on diplomacy and logistics, given U.S. leverage over its allies and partners, in most instances such cooperation can be obtained regardless of whether the intervention is endorsed by relevant IOs to begin with.

**Sharing the burden post-combat**

I hypothesize that the greatest benefit of IO endorsement from Washington’s standpoint is that it “locks in” the support of foreign allies and partners for the long run. G. John Ikenberry has developed a theory suggesting that IOs can help states maintain their policy commitments in the long run, thereby facilitating sustained international cooperation. By channeling their policies

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through relevant IOs, he argues, “states…lock in their commitments and relationships, to the extent that this can be done by sovereign states.”\textsuperscript{180} Extrapolating from Ikenberry’s theory, I expect that the endorsement of standing IOs, obtained before the initiation of offensive military action, is advantageous from Washington’s standpoint precisely because it locks in the support of foreign allies and partners or of the UN as an institution; and that, in turn, allows the U.S. to reduce its own troop contribution over time and ensures significant burden sharing on post-combat peacekeeping and stabilization. In short, IO endorsement has the ability to greatly reduce the long-term liability of American troops and of the armed services more generally. Conversely, if the United States violates international norms and intervenes militarily without the explicit approval of relevant IOs, it is likely to be difficult for Washington to subsequently recruit international allies and partners for post-combat stabilization, as suggested for instance by the recent U.S. experience in Iraq since 2003. In this latter case, “the failure to achieve greater political consensus within the United Nations or even NATO…resulted in a lack of cooperation in efforts to stabilize and rebuild postwar Iraq.”\textsuperscript{181}

There are several ways in which advance IO endorsement for U.S. military intervention can lock in international support, thereby facilitating post-combat burden sharing and limiting the liability of American troops. The promise of long-term burden sharing can be (A) very explicit, when the authorizing UN resolution itself expressly foresees the establishment of a follow-on UN peace operation. Alternatively, IO endorsement can offer less explicit reassurances of limited liability, based on: (B) UN legitimation obtained from the outset.


combined with public commitments of support from international partners, or (C) political buy-in and U.S. leverage achieved through allied state participation in U.S.-led NATO interventions.

A) Explicit guarantees about the establishment of a follow-on UN mission

The most explicit promise of post-combat burden sharing can be obtained when a U.S. intervention is endorsed by the UNSC, and the authorizing resolution itself expressly foresees the swift establishment of a follow-on UN peace force after the end of major hostilities. To be sure, a reduced contingent of American troops might still be required to participate in the follow-on force. Furthermore, troops for the follow-on UN force have to be recruited on an ad-hoc basis; and while the UN force will be financed through assessed UN peacekeeping funds, the U.S. portion of assessed contributions to the overall UN peacekeeping budget remains significant. Nevertheless, when the authorizing SC resolution expressly foresees the establishment of a follow-on force, the UN as an institution is locked in and committed to the process, which offers the promise of greatly reducing America’s long-term contribution to peacekeeping and stabilization, thereby limiting U.S. liability.

For instance, SCR 940, which authorized the U.S.-led intervention in Haiti in July 1994, included a paragraph explicitly foreseeing that a follow-on UN peacekeeping mission would be established and “assume the full range of its functions” in the field of long-term stabilization as soon as basic security in the country had been restored. In recent years, the language of

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183 As of 2010, developing countries, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Nigeria, provided well over two-thirds of troops for UN peacekeeping operations. See DPKO, “Background Note: United Nations Peacekeeping.” (Available at: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/backgroundnote.pdf).

relevant paragraphs included in SC resolutions authorizing U.S. intervention has become increasingly detailed, often mentioning specific timelines for the UN transfer. That has offered the United States even more explicit guarantees of a rapid hand-off to multilateral stabilization missions. For example, SCR 1497, which authorized a U.S.-led intervention in Liberia in the summer of 2003, included an explicit commitment on the part of the Council “to establish…a follow-on United Nations stabilization force” within a timeframe of no more than two months.\textsuperscript{185} Similarly, SCR 1529, authorizing a renewed intervention in Haiti in 2004, explicitly foresaw that the deployment of a U.S.-led coalition would be limited to “a period of not more than three months,” after which a “follow-on United Nations stabilization force” would take over.\textsuperscript{186}

\textit{B) Less explicit reassurances about burden sharing: commitment, legality, and legitimacy}

Even in the absence of explicit guarantees about a UN handoff in the authorizing SC resolution, UN approval of the initial military intervention greatly facilitates the smooth establishment of multilateral peace operations, as well as more generally post-combat burden sharing with allies and partners. To begin with, a SC resolution authorizing Washington’s use of “all necessary means” (UN jargon for force) involves a public commitment on the part of all those Council members who have offered their affirmative vote to back U.S. policy and support its underlying objectives. Therefore, subsequent resistance by those members to further UN initiatives required to successfully complete the mission becomes unlikely. In short, even putting aside questions of international legitimacy, a SC endorsement for military intervention obtained at the outset greatly reduces the costs to the United States in terms of bargaining and potential

\textsuperscript{185} UNSC Res. 1497, adopted on August 1, 2003, para 2.

\textsuperscript{186} The resolution further requested that the UN Secretary-General submit a detailed plan for deploying such a follow-on force within thirty days from the adoption of the resolution. UN Security Council Res. 1529, adopted on February 29, 2004, para 2 and 3. The SC duly authorized the deployment of a 6,700-strong UN follow-on mission (MINUSTAH) in Res. 1542, adopted on April 30, 2004.
side-payments of subsequently establishing a follow-on UN force or more generally of involving the UN in long-term stabilization efforts.\footnote{For a similar argument, see also Krisch, “The Security Council and the Great Powers,” p. 144.}

Furthermore, an explicit SC mandate authorizing U.S. intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (on enforcement measures) results in a binding legal obligation on all UN member states to help restore international peace and security.\footnote{Antonio Cassese, \textit{International Law}, second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), chaps. 16, 17.} That may create additional incentives for third-party states to subsequently cooperate with Washington on postwar stabilization. It certainly makes it politically difficult even for those SC members that did not actively cooperate and ultimately abstained on the initial use-of-force authorization to stand in the way of further UN involvement.

There is possibly one additional benefit. Explicit SC endorsement of a U.S. intervention, as argued above, commits the Council’s other permanent members who supported the authorizing resolution to politically, if not necessarily materially, supporting Washington in its subsequent endeavors related to the original endorsement. That, in turn, may create incentives for weaker third-party states that are in a dependent relationship with one of those other permanent members (though not necessarily with the U.S. itself) to cooperate with Washington or at least to not actively oppose American efforts at long-term stabilization. For instance, the U.S.-led intervention in Liberia in 2003 was authorized by the SC, with an affirmative vote from France as one of the Council’s five permanent members. France thereby publicly committed itself to politically supporting the intervention. Such highly visible French backing presumably made it exceedingly difficult for francophone states in West Africa with close political and economic ties to Paris to seek to undermine the U.S.-led mission in Liberia; and indeed it might have motivated those francophone states to support Washington in various ways. Similarly, had the U.S.
invasion of Iraq in 2003 been formally authorized by the SC, third-party states such as Syria and especially Iran, which in various ways are dependent on the diplomatic and financial patronage of other powerful Council members (notably Russia and China), might have been more cooperative with the United States on the issue of reestablishing long-term stability in Iraq.

Finally, as previously argued, multilateral endorsement of prospective U.S. interventions through relevant IOs (not only the UNSC, but also NATO, or organizations from the region of the world actually targeted by military action, such as the Arab League, the AU, or the OAS), makes it politically easier for the leaders of states already aligned with Washington to openly support the United States from the outset. Such widespread perceptions of legitimacy, particularly when combined with public expressions of international approval, can help lock in the support of allies and partners for the long run. As one former senior U.S. defense official explains: “many countries take the position that, they won’t participate in a peacekeeping, post-conflict type operation unless the original intervention has been authorized by the UN.”

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C) Why a lock-in through NATO may require active allied participation from the outset

A SC mandate for military intervention typically imposes few operational constraints on the United States. It allows Washington to carry out initial combat operations largely on its own, which may be especially advantageous for limited interventions, where the U.S. increasingly relies on advanced capabilities that no other country possesses. Once international support is locked in through the initial UN authorization, foreign allies and partners can then be brought in for post-combat peacekeeping and stabilization. As one former senior State Department official explains, “there is a difference between whether you are asking for an endorsement which carries no command-and-control burdens, and whether you are trying to multinationalize an operation

189 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
[from the outset] to the point where it significantly affects unity of command.”

For instance, in 1994, after the prospective U.S. intervention in Haiti had been authorized by the SC, American troops at first intervened without any participation from foreign allies and partners, and only in subsequent weeks and months was the operation gradually internationalized. In short, advance SC approval allows the United States to combine broad operational flexibility during the initial combat phase with maximum burden sharing on postwar stabilization and reconstruction.

But sometimes an explicit SC mandate is expected to be simply too costly to obtain, due to deeply diverging strategic interests among the Council’s permanent members. Under such circumstances, to mobilize and lock in allied support, Washington can instead seek to obtain the endorsement of NATO. The U.S., for instance, judged that a UN mandate authorizing military intervention over Kosovo would have been exceedingly costly to obtain, due to a threatened Russian veto at the Security Council, and thus Washington chose to seek the support of NATO. However, just NATO’s political endorsement might not by itself be sufficient to reassure skeptical U.S. leaders about the availability of sizable and reliable support for post-combat stabilization. NATO, unlike the UN, has no strong institutional commitment to peacekeeping, although it has accumulated significant expertise in this field over the last fifteen years. In particular, NATO lacks any system of assessed funding and a permanent institutional structure specifically devoted to sustaining post-combat stabilization missions.

Therefore, when Washington leaders choose to seek a NATO endorsement for U.S. military interventions as an alternative to UN approval, they have strong incentives to more actively involve allied nations from the outset. Specifically, Washington leaders may find it in their interest to have as many NATO members as possible actually participate in the initial

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190 Author interview with James Dobbins, former U.S. special envoy to Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan (July 10, 2009).
combat phase, and cede some degree of control to allied nations, by giving them some voice over operational matters, so as to maximize their buy-in and provide them with a stake in the outcome. The participation of other NATO allies in combat operations with their own aircraft and armed forces appears to be key to maximizing their political buy-in and thus locking in their support for the long term, even though the allies’ concrete military contribution in the short run may be negligible and the management of broad combat coalitions might in fact complicate matters from a U.S. standpoint. Furthermore, involving NATO institutional structures from the outset, as previously argued, activates the “pull” of alliance solidarity and thus greatly increases Washington’s political leverage over its allies.

In short, whenever a military intervention is channeled through NATO, Washington may have to sacrifice significant operational independence during the initial combat phase, so as to fully lock in its major allies and be able to limit U.S. liability during the subsequent stabilization and reconstruction phase. The U.S. followed this model of behavior quite closely for its air campaigns over Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999. On both occasions, NATO not only politically endorsed the use of force, but all the most important military decisions—including those to threaten airstrikes, initiate airstrikes, and approve increasingly more controversial targets—were taken through a fully integrated NATO command structure.

As one former senior U.S. defense official involved in Washington policy debates and military planning for the Bosnia intervention recalls: “We wanted to have the European allies as part of the air campaign and involve them in planning and operations at all levels, even though frankly they were not adding very much, because it was our view that they should be the ones to take it forward and take the lead for subsequent peacekeeping activities on the ground.”

both Bosnia and Kosovo, closely involving NATO partners from the outset proved to be advantageous to Washington in the long run. The United States began by contributing about one-third of the initially 60,000 stabilization forces in Bosnia and then gradually reduced its contribution, until U.S. troops were entirely withdrawn in 2004.\(^{192}\) For Kosovo, the U.S. contribution of peacekeeping troops and other post-combat assets never exceeded fifteen percent of the total to begin with.\(^{193}\)

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From a policy implementation standpoint, when U.S. leaders decide that multilateralizing the policy might be valuable, they typically prefer a SC endorsement, given that it allows Washington to lock in international support for the long run while maximizing short-term operational flexibility.\(^{194}\) Once a UN mandate has been obtained that provides the desired international legitimacy, it might then be possible to bring in NATO assets and capabilities at a subsequent stage, for post-combat stabilization and reconstruction.\(^{195}\) But if a SC mandate authorizing military intervention cannot be obtained from the outset at a diplomatic and financial cost that the United States is willing to pay, then to lock in third-party state support for the long run, Washington leaders can seek an advance endorsement through NATO, preferably to be combined with active allied participation in combat and a unified command from the outset. As one former senior U.S. defense official sums it up: “NATO is the minimum level; but a United

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193 James Dobbins et al., \textit{America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq} (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), pp. 115-16.

194 Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011).

195 To some extent, that is what has happened in Afghanistan since 2001: the initial U.S. military intervention there enjoyed broad international legitimacy and support (although it was not explicitly authorized by the SC), and that subsequently facilitated the establishment of a NATO stabilization mission (ISAF) in 2002.
Nations mandate is always preferred in terms of political authority for military action, and NATO can then play an important stabilization role after the end of a military campaign.”

Hypothesis 4 (Multilateral lock-in): U.S. leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for military interventions primarily because it locks in international support, thus ensuring significant burden sharing for post-combat stabilization and limiting American liability.

The aforementioned hypothesis yields several observable implications that allow for empirical testing. First, U.S. policy leaders should make the greatest effort to seek IO endorsement for prospective interventions that do not involve important American interests (making the United States particularly risk-averse) and that at the same time are expected to require open-ended deployments for peacekeeping and stabilization. Second, U.S. leaders should acknowledge in interviews that whenever they sought the endorsement of relevant IOs before launching an armed intervention abroad, locking in international support, in view of facilitating post-combat burden sharing and limiting the liability of American troops, was indeed among their principal motivations. Finally, all else being equal, U.S. interventions endorsed by relevant IOs from the outset should display higher levels of post-combat burden sharing, when compared to similar interventions without IO endorsement.

In chapters three to six, I test the hypothesis that Washington seeks the endorsement of relevant IOs primarily for the expected benefits in terms of multilateral lock-in. Before that, however, I want to lay out in more detail my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism.

196 Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).
Chapter II

A Bureaucratic Politics Theory of U.S. Multilateralism for Military Interventions

The U.S. military leadership was initially highly reluctant to intervene in Somalia, Haiti, or the Balkans in the 1990s and more recently in Liberia (2003) and Libya (2011). In each case, the argument was that no vital American interests were at stake and that a costly, open-ended U.S. troop deployment would ensue. However, in each case, the top military brass ultimately came on board, once the United States had clearly defined its objectives and obtained an explicit IO endorsement for the use of force that promised significant burden sharing in the long run. To what extent was U.S. multilateralism in those instances a result of the military leaders’ initial reluctance or opposition to intervene?

This chapter lays out a bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism for armed interventions. The essence of my argument is that U.S. government efforts to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective interventions are typically the result of significant bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining between hawkish policy leaders who emphasize the likely positive payoffs of a prompt use of force, on the one side, and skeptical officials—with the top military brass and war veterans in senior policy positions at the forefront—who highlight its potential downsides and long-term costs, on the other. In the eyes of the civilian hawks, multilateralism is often a costly diversion the United States can ill afford; meanwhile for those skeptical of the use of force, efforts to forge multilateral consensus are a welcome means of delaying or averting armed intervention and maximizing the chances that if the U.S. ultimately intervenes, the burden of postwar stabilization and reconstruction will be shared internationally.
The chapter is structured as follows: I first briefly review the principal insights of the scholarly literature on bureaucratic politics, as well as relevant findings from research on civil-military relations. Since the American failure in Vietnam, the U.S. military leadership has become increasingly reluctant to support armed interventions overseas, in the absence of perceived vital threats to national security. The armed services are particularly skeptical of humanitarian and other “idealist” interventions aimed at promoting domestic political change abroad, given that such operations typically result in costly, open-ended troop deployments and entail a high risk of failure. The military naturally tend to consider all the potential downsides of armed intervention; and they usually worry much more than activist civilian leaders about public and congressional support for protracted engagements overseas.

In view of the military’s professional expertise and their high standing in American society, they can exert an extraordinary amount of influence on Washington decision making about the use of force. Faced with strong skepticism or outright opposition from the military leadership and their bureaucratic allies, U.S. presidents are very unlikely to order American troops into combat overseas—hence the military come close to holding a de facto veto over prospective interventions they clearly oppose.

In the second part of the chapter, I build on the aforementioned insights to develop my own bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism. I discuss how the military brass—the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), but also the combatant commanders, and senior planners on the Joint Staff—can in fact influence Washington to seek the endorsement of relevant IOs, such as the UN or NATO, before intervening overseas. Assuming that the Joint Chiefs are not merely stooges of the civilian leadership, they are at first likely to altogether resist a prospective intervention, when they believe that no vital American interests are at stake and fear an open-ended deployment of
U.S. troops. I hypothesize that confronted with such great initial reluctance or opposition on the part of the military brass, civilian advocates of intervention from other government agencies need to reassure the military leaders, or at least be able to show that the military’s concerns have been adequately addressed, in order to forge a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of intervention and persuade the president to move ahead with the use of force.

During the ensuing bureaucratic debates, the military may indicate that they might be willing to reduce their opposition, provided the civilian activists can reassure them that force is a last resort, its objectives are clear, and the long-term costs to the armed services and their troops will be kept to a minimum. Hence activist policy officials can be expected to among other things seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, so as to lock in international support and thus maximize the chances of significant post-combat burden sharing. That, in turn, is likely to reassure the military and their bureaucratic allies and persuade the president to authorize the use of force. United States multilateralism for military interventions is thus often a genuine policy resultant—the outcome of protracted bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining—and it may not actually reflect the initial preferences of any particular government agency or senior official.

There are two further implications of the theory outlined in this chapter. First, if the policy activists themselves are not sufficiently influential and cannot muster the necessary resources to obtain the advance endorsement of relevant IOs, when the military staunchly oppose a prospective intervention based on the expectation of high long-term costs, the most likely outcome is U.S. procrastination and nonintervention. Second, if the military brass readily supports the use of force, based on the view that vital national interests are at stake and/or a long-term entanglement is unlikely, there will be few incentives for policy activists to seek to obtain a formal multilateral endorsement—hence the most likely outcome is U.S. unilateral intervention.
1. Foreign-policy decision making as a bureaucratic political game

International relations theorists have traditionally conceived of foreign policy as the outcome of rational decision making by a unitary actor (the head of government representing “the State”) in pursuit of the national interest. Hans Morgenthau, for instance, theorized foreign-policy decision making as follows: the successful statesman first determines national objectives in light of the power available; he then assesses the capabilities and intentions of other nations; and finally he employs the means best suited to the pursuit of the identified national objectives—either persuasion, or compromise, or force.\(^{197}\) For the most part, the traditional paradigm rests on a deliberate simplification of political reality, which has allowed generations of scholars to fruitfully theorize international strategic interaction.\(^{198}\)

However, the traditional paradigm becomes inadequate as soon as one’s analysis moves down from the level of international systemic interaction to that of foreign-policy decision making.\(^{199}\) Unless the external environment is extremely compelling, working with the assumption of a unitary actor who pursues a given conception of the national interest makes it impossible to explain the origin of complex foreign policy decisions. More often than not, foreign policy results from the interaction of disparate forces and individuals at the domestic political level. What constitutes the national interest is itself frequently contested. Building on these fundamental insights, as well as on extant research in public administration, in the early


\(^{198}\) Waltz insists that theory-building requires deliberate simplification, which among other things involves “leaving some things aside in order to concentrate on others” and “proceeding as though perfection were attained even though it can’t.” Cf. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 38.

\(^{199}\) Arguably the unitary, rational actor model cannot adequately explain international systemic interaction, either, because seemingly “irrational” behavior by the national leader may in fact be the result of prior political compromises at the domestic level. See e.g. Peter Evans, Harold Jacobson, and Robert Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
1970s scholars like Graham Allison and Morton Halperin set out to develop a new approach to the study of international politics.\textsuperscript{200}

The “bureaucratic politics” paradigm—as the alternative approach has since become known—rests on three central propositions. First, there is no central, unitary actor who rationally decides what is to be done in pursuit of the national interest. Instead, \textit{many agencies and individuals participate in government decision making and compete for influence on policy outcomes}.\textsuperscript{201} The bureaucratic politics paradigm is therefore based on a pluralist view of decision making.

Second, the officials representing different agencies and departments frequently adopt a particular outlook on matters of policy reflecting their organization’s parochial interests. In other words, \textit{where policy officials stand on any given issue and what they see as being at stake is significantly influenced by their organizational membership}. This proposition is summarized in the aphorism “where you stand depends on where you sit”—also known as Miles’ law.\textsuperscript{202}

Bureaucratic agencies and departments typically lack a constitutional base and thus have no

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\textsuperscript{201} This insight appears particularly apt to explaining the origins of American foreign policy decisions, given the open and decentralized nature of the U.S. political system, which makes it possible for many different players to participate and vie for influence. Samy Cohen, “Decision Making, Power and Rationality in Foreign Policy Analysis,” in Marie-Claude Smouts, ed., \textit{The New International Relations} (London: Palgrave, 2001).

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guaranteed existence. In consequence, they constantly vie for power and resources to ensure their own vitality, relevance, and ultimately their survival. This struggle for power produces a common intra-agency bureaucratic culture—a distinctive internal mindset or perspective within each agency.²⁰³

Career officials become gradually socialized into their organization’s bureaucratic culture and frequently come to believe that “the health of their organization is vital to the national interest.”²⁰⁴ Besides, bureaucrats also have rational incentives to faithfully “represent” the organization of which they are a member in interagency debates, given that their prospects for promotion depend in large measure on being seen as advancing their organization’s parochial interests. Accordingly, officials from the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA (as well as frequently from particular sub-branches of those organizations), either have particular conceptions of the national interest or particular views on how best to translate it into effective policy, and to a significant degree those views reflect their organizational membership and priorities.²⁰⁵

Third, the bureaucratic politics paradigm holds that as a result of the competition among agencies and departments, with their different interests, values, and perspectives on the national interest, decision making is not a matter of maximizing efficiency and solving problems logically. Instead, decisions are usually the outcome of bargaining and coalition building among


²⁰⁵ Cabinet officials are usually not wedded to any specific bureaucratic take on the national interest; yet they also generally need to be faithful to their organization’s viewpoint and bureaucratic interests if they are to keep their subordinates happy and avoid the emergence of noxious intra-organizational tensions. Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, pp. 86-96.
the relevant powers that be – they reflect “the pulling and hauling that is politics.” Advocates of a specific course of action frequently need to modify their original proposal, make concessions, and engage in logrolling, to reassure various skeptics and ultimately persuade the president to approve the policy. Coalition building is crucial. With different organizations and individuals pulling in different directions, the policy outcome is frequently a genuine resultant—something nobody had originally intended in that particular form.

2. Understanding the U.S. military’s bureaucratic interests and concerns

Critics of the bureaucratic politics paradigm have repeatedly challenged the hypothesis that “where you stand depends on where you sit.” The policy outlook of top-level government officials, notably cabinet members and other political appointees, is frequently affected less by their organizational membership than by their previous experiences outside government and their party political affiliation (which they usually share with the president). However, for the most part this criticism does not apply to permanent career officials in senior positions, including the military. In fact, military officials usually retain their bureaucratic allegiance even when they are appointed to top-level positions from which they can exert significant influence on policy.

American military leaders—members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), but also the regional combatant commanders, and senior planners on the Joint Staff—are thus perhaps the

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206 Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision, p. 255.
207 The test of a policy is usually not whether it is in fact the most rational means for achieving an agreed-upon objective, but rather whether “enough of the people and organizations having a stake in the policy and holding power agree to the policy.” Roger Hilsman, with Laura Gaughran and Patricia Weitsman, The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs: Conceptual Models and Bureaucratic Politics, third ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 72.
208 Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision, pp. 256, 294-5
most bureaucratic senior national security officials in the United States government. The military officials with the greatest ability to influence Washington policy making are the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS, who since the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (the “Goldwater-Nichols Act”) have regularly participated in National Security Council (NSC) debates and directly advised the president and his administration on military affairs.\textsuperscript{210} Richard Betts concluded in his landmark study of U.S. civil-military relations that although members of the JCS are likely to be “less parochial than colonels or others lower in rank,” since they recognize that their decisions have political impact, their “latent political function is still secondary to their manifest professional identity.”\textsuperscript{211} In other words: the highest-ranking military officials who participate in NSC debates on a par with cabinet-level appointees are clearly more parochial than their civilian counterparts.\textsuperscript{212}

True, the president and to a lesser degree the secretary of defense can seek to ensure the support of the Chiefs by appointing individuals anticipated to be loyal and known to share the administration’s political orientation. However, while the president can certainly influence the selection process and veto candidates he outright opposes, it is difficult for him to straightforwardly select a close political follower to the JCS. The services would be embittered, opposing such perceived corruption of their professional autonomy, and the U.S. Senate, which has an institutional interest in preserving professional military independence, might be unlikely

\textsuperscript{210} Before Goldwater-Nichols, the JCS advised the president jointly, but ever since the role of the service chiefs has been limited to that of force providers. Furthermore, since 1986, the commanders of the unified commands (the combatant commanders, until recently also known as “CINCs”) have enjoyed growing influence thanks to their direct access to the secretary of defense and the JCS chairman, as well as the significant financial and personnel resources available to them. See Sam C. Sarkesian, John Allen Williams, and Stephen J. Cimbala, “The Military Establishment, the President, and Congress,” in Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford, Jr, American Defense Policy, eight edition (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 140; see also Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{211} Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{212} Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 55.
to confirm such blatantly political appointments.\textsuperscript{213} In recent years, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld challenged this practice by personally vetting candidates for senior military posts, managing promotions, and frequently appointing close personal aides to strategically important positions.\textsuperscript{214} That resulted in high tensions with the services and made for an overall ineffective Department of Defense. When Rumsfeld was asked to resign in November 2006, the ostensible reason was his failure to successfully manage the ongoing wars in Afghanistan in Iraq—yet the fact that a number of retired military leaders had publicly denounced the Secretary’s \textit{modus operandi} in previous months may have contributed to the president’s decision to fire him.\textsuperscript{215}

\textbf{The Powell Doctrine and the lessons of Vietnam}

The military leaders’ organizational membership and related bureaucratic interests also affect where they “stand” on matters pertaining to the international use of force. The traditional view on the radical left, which was very influential during the Vietnam War has recently gained a new lease on life, is that American military leaders, in an unholy alliance with the U.S. arms industry, put strong and persistent pressure on the nation’s political leadership to undertake adventurous and protracted military interventions abroad.\textsuperscript{216} However, the evidence does in fact overwhelmingly point in the opposite direction: U.S. military leaders are exceedingly reluctant to

\textsuperscript{213} Betts, \textit{Soldiers, Statemen, and Cold War Crises}, pp. 55f.


commit American combat troops abroad, especially when they anticipate that victory is uncertain and believe no vital U.S. national interests are at stake.

Samuel Huntington was the first modern political scientist to theorize that most military leaders are in fact reluctant warriors: the typical “military man,” Huntington wrote in the 1950s, believes that “war should not be resorted to except as a final recourse, and only when the outcome is a virtual certainty;” but since the latter condition is met only when a powerful state fights a much weaker opponent in traditional warfare, “the military man rarely favors war.”

During the decades immediately following WWII, the evidence initially seemed somewhat mixed, suggesting that U.S. military leaders were not exceedingly risk averse and on average neither more nor less bellicose than their civilian counterparts. Subsequently however the pattern changed quite dramatically, vindicating Huntington’s original intuition. Following the chastening experience of America’s war in Vietnam, as well as subsequent botched interventions in Lebanon in the 1980s and Somalia in the early 1990s, U.S. commanders in the armed forces have in general become clearly less willing to intervene militarily abroad than civilian authorities.

With regard to Vietnam, the military leaders concluded, several fundamental mistakes were made: first, the president’s decision to intervene in a domestic political conflict on the side of a losing faction that lacked meaningful support among the local population; second, the civilian authorities’ insistence on fighting a limited war that responded to enemy provocations in a tit-for-tat manner, without a clear strategic vision, instead of approving the decisive escalation

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218 Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, p. 4.
of U.S. combat operations that alone could have led to victory; and finally, and most difficult for
the military leaders to come to terms with, the Joint Chiefs’ own acquiescence with this ill-fated
policy.\textsuperscript{220} The antiwar movement resulting from the failure in Vietnam gave birth to broader U.S.
anti-militarism. That, in turn, harmed the armed services and their institutional standing in
American society—at least until the perceived stunning U.S. military success in the 1991 Persian
Gulf War. But the reputational damage suffered in the aftermath of Vietnam has had a lasting
impact on the armed services, making their leaders extremely skeptical about direct intervention
in foreign political conflicts, particularly when no vital American interests are perceived to be at
stake. The military’s greatest fear has been a progressive escalation of U.S. involvement in the
absence of clear strategic objectives and without solid domestic political support, resulting in
high long-term costs for the services and their troops.\textsuperscript{221}

In October 1983, following the death of 241 American soldiers during a stabilization
mission in Beirut, Lebanon, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger publicly outlined a set of
rules that ought to govern U.S. military interventions to avoid similar quagmires in the future.\textsuperscript{222}
According to what came to be known as the “Weinberger Doctrine,” the United States should
commit forces to combat overseas only if the following conditions are fulfilled: military
intervention is a last resort; vital U.S. national interests are involved; the intervention is intended
to pursue “clearly defined political and military objectives;” and there is a “reasonable

\textsuperscript{220} H. R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to
and Cold War Crises, pp. 2-30.

\textsuperscript{221} Author interview with LTG David S. Weisman, USA (ret.), Deputy Director for Strategic Plans and Policy (J5)
on the Joint Staff, 1996-1998; and U.S. Representative to the NATO Military Committee, 1998-2001 (February 16,
2011).

assurance” that the troops will enjoy the support of the American public and of Congress.\textsuperscript{223} Weinberger, while expressing his own views, also lent the legitimacy of official policy to the military establishment’s principal conclusions from the failures in Vietnam and Lebanon.\textsuperscript{224}

Among those who influenced Weinberger’s thinking in the 1980s was (then) Major-General Colin L. Powell, a U.S. Army Vietnam veteran who then served a stint as senior military assistant to the secretary of defense.\textsuperscript{225} In his subsequent capacity as JCS chairman from 1989 to 1993, General Powell added two principles to Weinberger’s list. First, when the United States intervenes militarily abroad, “decisive means” are to be preferred, so as to quickly overwhelm and defeat the enemy.\textsuperscript{226} Second, before U.S. troops are committed to combat, policy officials must “think through how it will end and what happens at the end.”\textsuperscript{227} In other words, the United States should have a clear exit strategy—there ought to be plans to complete the mission and withdraw American troops within a reasonable timeframe.\textsuperscript{228} The key tenets of the “Powell Doctrine” are still widely shared at the top of the U.S. military hierarchy today.\textsuperscript{229} That remains true in spite of occasional challenges by interventionist regional combatant commanders, such as

\begin{itemize}
\item Colin L. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” Foreign Affairs 72 (1), 1992, p. 40. On this point, Powell merely seems to have effectively synthesized and expressed a long-held preference of U.S. military leaders. See Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 5.
\item Author interview with Colin L. Powell (February 2, 2011). Powell denies ever explicitly using the notion of an “exit strategy,” although the concept clearly reflects his own thinking. See also Wolf Blitzer, “CNN Interview with Colin Powell on Anti-Terrorism Campaign,” 16 September 2001, available online at: http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/colinpowellcnn91601.htm.
\item LaFeber, “The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine,” p. 76.
\item Feaver and Gelpi, Choosing Your Battles, pp. 26ff; see also Desch, “Bush and the Generals,” p. 101.
\end{itemize}
Generals Wesley K. Clark or Tommy L. Franks, who strongly supported the use of force against Serbia and Iraq, respectively.\textsuperscript{230}

The administration of President G.H.W. Bush, during which Powell served as chairman of the JCS, closely followed the Powell Doctrine for its intervention in Panama in 1989 and the 1991 Gulf War. With regard to Panama, Powell insisted that an overwhelming contingent of 24,000 American troops be deployed to remove local strongman Manuel Noriega from power, after U.S. soldiers deployed in the Canal region had come under fire.\textsuperscript{231} Similarly in 1991, before going to war against Iraq, President Bush built up solid domestic political support for military action, and then he committed overwhelming force—about half a million troops—to achieve a clear and limited strategic objective, the liberation of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{232}

The military’s preference for clear and achievable objectives, to be pursued with overwhelming force, is a manifestation of their patriotic pride and natural wish to succeed at what they do. But it also reflects the services’ general risk aversion and deep-rooted desire for institutional self-preservation. As typical bureaucratic actors, the military want to preserve the health, vitality, and social prestige of their organization, which might get undermined by protracted engagements abroad with unclear objectives, lukewarm domestic political support, and (partially as a result) a high risk of failure. As Huntington put it several decades ago,

\textsuperscript{230} The personal prestige of combatant commanders typically soars in the aftermath of successful military operations; and partially for this reason, the responsible regional commanders have been more likely than members of the Joint Chiefs or representatives of the services to readily support the use of force.


“whether victorious or not, war is more unsettling to military institutions than to others.”\textsuperscript{233} More recently, David Petraeus has forcefully restated this viewpoint: “It is, after all, \textit{the senior military’s institutions}—the services to which the officers have devoted their lives—that have the most to risk in foreign intervention.”\textsuperscript{234}

3. The military as flag-bearers of limited liability

With the end of the cold war, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the risk that limited U.S. intervention overseas might escalate into global confrontation quickly faded. That emboldened activist policy officials in Washington to recommend military intervention in pursuit of various political and strategic objectives. Beginning with the humanitarian operation in Somalia in late 1992, U.S. interventions overseas have frequently aimed less at defending vital national interests than at defending and promoting American \textit{values}, such as human rights, democracy, and freedom from genocidal violence.

U.S. humanitarian and idealist interventions typically reflect classical liberal internationalist, or Wilsonian, beliefs. These beliefs, which permeate U.S. political culture, encourage ambitious foreign-policy goals, notably concerning the promotion of human rights, open markets, and liberal-democratic institutions abroad.\textsuperscript{235} But as Colin Dueck has argued, America’s political culture produces two contradictory impulses in foreign policy: namely, the

\textsuperscript{233} Huntington, \textit{The Soldier and the State}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{234} Petraeus, “Military Influence and the Post-Vietnam Use of Force,” p. 498, emphasis added. For similar conclusions, see also Halperin and Klapp, \textit{Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy}, p. 59.

aforementioned tendency toward *assertive (liberal) internationalism*, on one side, and a countervailing tendency toward risk-aversion, or *limited liability*, on the other.²³⁶

I argue that within the U.S. executive branch, different agencies and individuals typically embody these countervailing tendencies toward assertive internationalism and limited liability. Humanitarian activists, liberal internationalists, and so-called neoconservatives—such as Madeleine Albright, Anthony Lake, or Paul Wolfowitz—are usually the ones who push for U.S. military interventions to uphold American values and promote domestic political change abroad. In contrast, the military leaders, as well as civilian policy officials with significant prior experience in the armed services (i.e., war veterans), such as Brent Scowcroft or Colin Powell, are usually pragmatic realists. They seek to limit American liability and remain highly skeptical of putting the lives of American soldiers at risk in the pursuit of humanitarian or other idealist objectives.²³⁷ Armed interventions driven by idealist motives usually take place in fragile or war-torn societies and involve significant interference in the domestic politics of the target country. As a consequence, the exit strategy for U.S. troops frequently looks unclear, evoking the specter of Vietnam and subsequent failed interventions in the minds of military leaders.

That does not mean that U.S. generals and admirals are always fundamentally opposed to intervening overseas to stop mass atrocities and stabilize war-torn societies. Most military commanders and war veterans, though reluctant in principle about intervening abroad in the absence of vital threats to American security, recognize that those “humanitarian, duty-to-protect type operations are legitimate, up to a point.”²³⁸ The military leaders however have been adamant

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²³⁸ Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, 1994-2001 (March 11, 2010).
that political authorities provide them with clear guidelines, a narrowly defined mandate, and some reassurance that longer-term peacekeeping and stabilization tasks will be shared with international allies and partners.

**Longer time horizons result in high risk aversion**

Research has found that policy activists pushing for military intervention typically focus on short-term challenges, without giving much consideration to questions of longer-term feasibility.\(^{239}\) That may explain frequent instances of wishful thinking on their part, as well as the tendency to disregard the lessons of past failures.\(^{240}\) William Owens, who served as vice-chairman of the JCS in the mid-1990s, sums it up as follows: “There is a tendency among civilian leaders to try to use the military lightheartedly and assume that everything is going to be rosy. It is the Paul Wolfowitz phenomenon on Iraq; but this thinking also marked the initially somewhat ideological Clinton administration.”\(^{241}\)

Perhaps the best known example of a civilian leader in the Clinton administration who had no military experience and displayed a tendency to want to use armed force lightheartedly in the pursuit of humanitarian objectives was Madeleine Albright. In the course of debates over intervention in Bosnia at the National Security Council, Albright famously became irritated at Colin Powell’s repeated insistence that intervention in the Balkans would be extremely costly.

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and might result in an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces, and she eventually asked him: “What are we saving this superb military for, Colin, if we can’t use it?”242 (Confronted with such strategic naiveté, Powell thought he was “going to have an aneurysm”).243

Commanders in the armed forces, as the natural planners and executors of military action, are much less prone to the aforementioned tendency to discount the future and underestimate the longer-term implications of armed intervention.244 This is in line with research in clinical psychology, which has found that individuals who focus on how an action should be implemented tend to closely consider questions of feasibility and examine the action’s implications at a concrete operational level. Meanwhile individuals focusing on why a specific course of action should be taken (such as pro-intervention civilian officials), typically consider the implications of that action from a more abstract viewpoint and think primarily about the desirability of the expected payoffs.245

The armed services, like most specialized bureaucracies, approach planning for their activities according to standard operating procedures, which involve the elaboration of detailed operational maps that are reviewed at different levels in the organization’s hierarchy.246 Furthermore, as career officials, the military are not tied to political timelines and can thus

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242 Madeleine Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 182.
243 Powell, My American Journey, p. 576
244 One notable exception was CENTCOM commander General Tommy Franks, who neglected to adequately plan for stability operations in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq war. For a discussion, see chap. 6 of this dissertation.
246 Typically, planning cells at one of the U.S. unified combatant commands initiate contingency planning under the overall guidance of the combatant commander, a four-star general or admiral. Additional planning may be done by the Joint Staff in Washington, as well as by the individual services (Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy). Operational plans are then reviewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and senior officials at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Finally, the president of the United States, after consultations with his closest advisers, decides whether and when to implement specific plans for military action. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1995), pp. l/6ff.
naturally take a longer-term perspective. As Betts has written, the military’s “natural professional impulse is towards worst-case contingency planning for every possible disaster.”\textsuperscript{247} This makes them extremely risk-averse, as opposed to political leaders who think about intervention in more abstract terms and have to be sensitive to competing nonmilitary needs. The desire of senior military officials to limit their service’s liability for cross-border interventions is hardly exclusive to United States generals and admirals. For instance, the British chiefs of staff in the 1930s opposed a potentially costly entanglement in continental European affairs, insisting that when a nation intervenes overseas, it is virtually “impossible to limit the liability once [it is] committed to any theatre of operations.”\textsuperscript{248} Contemporary U.S. military leaders are probably even more risk-averse than their British colleagues were during the interwar period, given that the sense of national urgency in the United States today is incomparably lower.

Among U.S. military leaders, the most consistently cautious concerning cross-border intervention have been Army generals and commanders of the Marine Corps.\textsuperscript{249} Army generals are usually the most skeptical, given that their service bears the greatest burden in terms of ground combat, logistics, and postwar stabilization. The Army’s greatest fear is “getting stuck” in open-ended stabilization and counterinsurgency missions overseas—with dwindling domestic political support.\textsuperscript{250} Air force leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to support foreign interventions, given that air war is typically less burdensome and debilitating than the kind of war fought by the Army and the Marine Corps.\textsuperscript{251} Air force generals also tend to be confident

\textsuperscript{247} Betts, \textit{Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises}, p. 160.


\textsuperscript{249} Army generals are usually the most skeptical, given that their service bears the greatest burden in terms of ground combat, logistics, and postwar stabilization.

\textsuperscript{250} Author interview with LTG David S. Weisman (February 16, 2011).

\textsuperscript{251} Betts, \textit{Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises}, pp. 116ff. See also Halperin and Klapp, \textit{Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy}, pp. 32ff. One possible exception is the long-term enforcement of no-fly zones overseas.

\textit{The military’s distinctive concern about congressional support}

Given the military leaders’ specific focus on the challenges of implementing complex operations and their concern for the health and vitality of the services, they are also typically quite anxious about congressional support for armed intervention—or rather about the \textit{dissolution} of such support in the face of protracted deployments overseas without clear evidence of success. Extrapolating from experience of Vietnam and Lebanon thereafter, U.S. generals and admirals fear that “things won’t go well for the military once political support is lost for the mission,” meaning that unless Congress and the public perceive vital interests to be at stake, even a few casualties may be sufficient for U.S. troops to be withdrawn in dishonor, with attendant long-term costs for the services’ financial well-being and institutional prestige.\footnote{Author interview with John K. Veroneau, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, 1999-2001 (April 7, 2010).}

Congress rarely has much direct impact on U.S. decision making concerning the international use of force. The American president, as commander in chief, enjoys significant
freedom of maneuver in the field of international security; and although the U.S. constitution technically reserves for Congress the “power to… declare War” (Article 1, section 8), presidents since the early years of the republic have repeatedly deployed U.S. troops in combat abroad without congressional authorization. Even the 1973 War Powers resolution, intended to reassert congressional authority on these matters, has changed remarkably little.

As long as the president of the United States is committed to an intervention, Congress is extremely unlikely to constrain an administration through binding legislation. Legislators generally aim at “blame avoidance” when it comes to the international use of force: they prefer to neither explicitly vote for a military intervention, ceding control entirely to the executive branch, with the additional risk of sharing the blame in case of failure, nor to explicitly vote against an intervention and risk being blamed for the failure of U.S. coercive diplomacy (which, in turn, might make actual military intervention more likely). Therefore, Congress largely limits itself to adopting “Sense of the Senate” and “Sense of the House” resolutions, which allow it to voice its concerns without formally constraining the president. Congress adopted binding legislation requiring a withdrawal of U.S. troops within a specified time frame only once, during the 1983 Lebanon intervention. On two other occasions, for Vietnam in 1973 and Somalia in 1993, Congress cut off funding for ongoing foreign military operations; yet in both cases it did

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255 For a critical analysis and helpful discussion, see Louis Fisher, Presidential War Power, second revised edition (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2004).


so only after significant divisions had emerged within the executive branch.\(^\text{258}\)

Nevertheless, since the end of the cold war, Congress has become more assertive overall on national security affairs and individual members have become more willing to challenge presidential decisions to intervene militarily abroad. Congress has continued to largely defer to the president on matters pertaining to the use of force when important U.S. national interests are widely perceived to be at stake. But presidents have become more “likely to confront concerted congressional opposition when they contemplate using force to promote U.S. values (e.g. democracy, rule of law, a halt to genocide).”\(^\text{259}\) Congress can also frame how the American public perceives an issue and thereby affect broader popular support for an intervention. This largely appears to be due to the fact that the U.S. news media, and especially the local media, which have fewer resources for independent analyses of foreign policy, generally “index” the slant of their coverage of international crises involving the United States to reflect the range of opinion that exists within Congress.\(^\text{260}\)

Political scientists William Howell and Jon Pevehouse argue that through its impact on public opinion, Congress in fact affects U.S. presidential decision making on military intervention.\(^\text{261}\) They find that over the past several decades, presidents have used force more often when they enjoyed strong political support in Congress.\(^\text{262}\) In their view, this statistical


\(^{262}\) Howell and Pevehouse, *While Dangers Gather*, chaps. 3, 4.
finding suggests that “early congressional discussions about impending military action sen[d] valuable signals to the president” about the likelihood of domestic political support for “protracted or costly” interventions.263

However, Howell and Pevehouse provide no direct evidence from interviews with former U.S. policy officials or archival records, and they engage in little causal process tracing to assess whether, and if so, how, the president’s own concerns about congressional opposition have in fact directly affected his decisions on the use of force. My own research suggests that U.S. civilian leaders favorably inclined toward the use of force are in fact rarely constrained in their decision making on military intervention by expectations of long-term congressional or broader public opposition. Activist U.S. policy officials—including activist presidents—generally have great confidence in the ability of decisive leadership and bold initiatives to generate their own domestic political support. Former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, who in the 1980s was a strong supporter of American interventions overseas, eloquently expressed the activists’ belief as follows: “Use of force need not enjoy public support when first announced; it will acquire that support if the action is consonant with America’s interests and moral values.”264

To the extent that congressional sentiment actually affects an administration’s policy on armed intervention, it is likely that the U.S. military leaders and their bureaucratic allies constitute a crucial transmission belt. First, as previously argued, the military leaders are themselves highly skeptical of open-ended troop deployments to uphold American values and change the domestic politics of foreign countries, and they share this concern with a majority of congressional leaders from both political parties. Second, the military have a longer time horizon

263 Howell and Pevehouse, While Dangers Gather, pp. 26, 21.

than their activist civilian peers; hence they are more likely than the latter to clearly perceive the long-term costs of armed intervention, which in turn makes them more concerned about maintaining congressional support.\textsuperscript{265} Army generals and joint forces commanders are especially aware of the need to secure and maintain congressional support for open-ended deployments.\textsuperscript{266}

Particularly in situations where no vital U.S. national interests are at stake, the military have a habit of assertively communicating their concerns to the president and his civilian advisors. Other senior administration officials, including the president, frequently become aware of the likelihood of a protracted troop deployment overseas, with implications for congressional support, only \textit{after} the military leaders have made it clear that a surgical intervention or quick in-and-out mission is in fact impossible, given the administration’s goals and the domestic structure of the target country. For instance, this pattern clearly occurred leading up to U.S. interventions in Haiti and Bosnia in the 1990s: on both occasions, the military made it clear—challenging the rosy assumptions of civilian activists—that open-ended troop deployments would be necessary to restore long-term stability, with attendant challenges in terms of maintaining congressional support.\textsuperscript{267}

As General Joseph Ralston, formerly vice chairman of the JCS, explains: “The military don’t want to get started with an intervention and then suddenly have the Congress say, ‘well wait a minute, we’re not going to support that!’—because then you don’t have a way to

\textsuperscript{265} Former senior State Department officials confirm that compared to their colleagues from the military and Pentagon officials more generally, senior American diplomats are usually not particularly concerned about congressional support for the use of force. Author interviews with Morton H. Halperin, director of policy planning the \textit{Department of State}, 1998-2001 (March 10, 2010); and James L. Rubin, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, 1997 - 2000 (April 9, 2010).


\textsuperscript{267} See chapters three and four of this dissertation.
succeed.” The military leaders understand that in the short run, when U.S. forces are deployed in risky combat missions abroad, the American public may “rally behind the flag” and support the president and the troops. But U.S. military commanders worry that in the long run, unless important national interests are widely perceived to be at stake or other nations are seen to be shouldering a significant portion of the burden, Congress and the American public might not support the protracted stabilization effort that may be necessary to accomplish the mission.

**The military’s growing insistence on post-combat burden sharing**

Deploying highly skilled American combat troops in protracted peacekeeping and stabilization missions overseas has significant opportunity costs, given that those troops will not be available for potentially more serious contingencies. Furthermore, deploying just 50,000 U.S. troops on long-term missions around the world, out of a total of almost 1.5 million on active duty, taxes the armed services because of the so-called tooth-to-tail ratio: in the Army, for instance, it takes up to 5 additional military personnel (“tail”) to support the deployment of one combat soldier (“tooth”) overseas. Finally, as argued above, the military leaders are typically more concerned than activist civilian policy officials about congressional support for open-ended troop deployments overseas.

Hence the U.S. military are “anxious not to have the main burden” for protracted stabilization missions overseas, and “in fact they want to have as little of the burden as possible.”

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International burden sharing on post-combat stabilization is not only highly desirable from the military’s standpoint; it also appears eminently feasible. Although only a few major American allies, such as Britain, France, or Canada, have much to contribute to U.S.-led combat operations in terms of advanced war fighting capabilities, many more foreign partner countries have the required capabilities to contribute to lower-stakes peacekeeping and stabilization missions.

Ideally, once basic security has been restored, U.S. military leaders will want to hand off longer-term stabilization tasks to a follow-on multilateral mission, so that American troops can be gradually withdrawn, as peacekeepers from other countries deploy. American military leaders have traditionally been reluctant to deploy U.S. troops as part of blue-helmeted UN peace operations, unless American officers have commanded the mission; yet increasingly in recent years, creative arrangements have been devised whereby United States forces have effectively served under the operational control of foreign UN commanders. In low-stakes peace operations where no vital U.S. interests are involved, the military’s desire for burden sharing has clearly won out over more doctrinal issues of command and control. For higher-stakes missions, where the possibility of protracted combat and counterinsurgency operations is anticipated and more important American interests are involved, the armed services’ preference has been to

271 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
273 For instance, as of mid-2011, U.S. troops were serving under foreign operational command as part of the UN observer mission in the Sinai (UNTSO), UN stabilization missions in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Liberia (UNMIL), and the NATO stabilization force in Kosovo (KFOR). Source: United Nations, Current Peacekeeping Operations, available online at: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/current.shtml.
involve NATO instead of the UN, given the more advanced capabilities of NATO members and the U.S. military’s greater familiarity with and influence over NATO structures.\textsuperscript{274}

The military’s preference for post-combat burden sharing on peacekeeping and stabilization was elevated into official U.S. government doctrine in 1994, when President Clinton signed an executive order known as “Presidential Decision Directive 25” (PDD 25).\textsuperscript{275} The document emphasizes that longer-term military operations aimed at stabilizing war-torn societies should be carried out multilaterally with allies and partners, because “in such cases, the U.S. benefits from having to bear only a share of the burden.”\textsuperscript{276} Furthermore, according to PDD 25, stabilization missions should not be open-ended commitments but instead should be linked to concrete political objectives that can be realistically achieved within a reasonable time frame; that is, there should be a clear exit strategy available before U.S. troops are deployed.\textsuperscript{277}

This marked preference for post-combat burden sharing was not just typical of U.S. military leaders during the immediate post-cold war period. If anything, the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War has further convinced already skeptical military leaders that the United States cannot bear the burdens of long-term stabilization all by itself. For Army leaders in particular, the lesson of Iraq has been that U.S. policy needs to rely on “what the doctrine calls a comprehensive approach: you have to start engaging allies and the UN from the beginning,


\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., pp. 2-3. The document also emphasizes that American presidents should be careful about putting U.S. troops under UN operational control, while at the same time recognizing that such arrangements may have value, not least in terms of minimizing U.S. participation, and should thus be considered on a case-by-case basis (pp. 9-11).
otherwise there is no securing of the peace that you went in there to achieve in the first place.”

General John P. Abizaid, who as head of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) from 2003 to 2007 oversaw all U.S. military operations in Iraq, sums it up as follows: “As combat operations are over and you move towards stabilization, the force structure should be robust and it should be increasingly international. American troops are best employed when decisive military force needs to be applied; but tying down U.S. troops in long-term occupations is not in the national interest.”

4. Sources of the military’s bureaucratic leverage

Much recent scholarship on civil-military relations takes as its point of departure Huntington’s model of objective (civilian) control, which prescribes a division of authority whereby military leaders concentrate on the art and science of warfare and policymaking is left to elected or appointed civilians. In Huntington’s own words, “politics is beyond the scope of military competence, and the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism. [Hence] the military officer must remain neutral politically.”

The model encapsulates a putative normative ideal, but it never provided an accurate description of civil-military relations in the United States. There is evidence that even during

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280 Huntington’s model reflects the normative assumptions of traditional administrative theory, which depicted politics and administration as two separate realms: elected leaders and political appointees establish policy; meanwhile politically neutral career bureaucrats execute the politicians’ decisions. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 32; Kozak, “The Bureaucratic Politics Approach,” p. 4.

281 Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 71.

282 Writing in the early 1960s, Huntington himself provided a detailed analysis of growing political activism on the part of the U.S. armed services. Samuel Huntington, “Interservice Competition and the Political Roles of the Armed Services,” American Political Science Review 55 (1), 1961, pp. 43-4.
the cold war period, members of the JCS explicitly disagreed on several occasions with civilian leaders not only about operational questions, but also about whether force should be used in the first place. For instance, the top military brass was initially opposed to U.S. intervention in Korea in 1950. In 1954, Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway opposed military intervention in Indochina; and according to Betts, this “professional soldier’s advice, in fact, was crucial in forestalling United States entry into Indochina in 1954.” Furthermore, the JCS opposed limited intervention in Laos in 1961, were skeptical about U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1982, and played a key role in forestalling overt U.S. deployments of combat troops in Central America and Libya in the 1980s.

However, during the cold war period, the military’s dissent was for the most part voiced in private, during the intramural debates. As Michael Desch has shown, since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989—with a lower threat environment and activist civilian officials more likely to want to use force for humanitarian and other idealist reasons—the military leaders have more frequently expressed their dissent in public. In addition, since the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the JCS chairman and vice-chairman have been able to speak more authoritatively on behalf of all the services, and they have regularly participated in NSC meetings. They are now the only permanent military advisers to the president, with the service chiefs (the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and the Air Force, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commander of the Marine

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283 Hence Robert Art’s argument that decisions about intervention during the cold war were generally uncontroversial and “almost none of the top executive decision makers questioned the need to resort to military force” is unpersuasive. Cf. Art, “Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique,” pp. 480-81.

284 They reportedly acquiesced only after President Truman agreed to also defend Taiwan, which they saw as much more central to U.S. national interests. See Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 60.

285 Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 17.

286 On Laos, see Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 60; Lebanon, Central America, and Libya, see Petraeus, “Military Influence and the Post-Vietnam Use of Force,” p. 491.

287 Michael C. Desch, Civilian Control of the Military (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 22ff.
Corps) relegated to a subordinate role as force providers. Thus, while interservice differences have hardly disappeared since 1986, it has now become more difficult for civilian leaders to exploit divisions among the services to weaken the military’s political influence.

Finally, the widespread perception of a stunning U.S. military success in the 1991 Gulf War validated the Weinberger-Powell doctrine of using overwhelming force in the pursuit of limited, clearly defined objectives. The Gulf War also provided the occasion, as Powell himself put it, when “the American people fell in love again with their armed forces.”288 The U.S. military regained the social standing that they had lost in the aftermath of Vietnam, and with increased social standing came greater latent political influence. As Risa Brooks has most recently written, because of their popularity and professional reputation in American society, the military leaders and their organizations “can wield substantial influence over policy outcomes.”289

The military leaders can influence the Washington policy process in broadly two ways. First, they can seek to quietly persuade civilian authorities, relying on their acknowledged professional expertise in the intramural debates. Second, they can adopt a more confrontational bargaining strategy, by threatening to publicize their opposition and sometimes launching actual appeals to the public, and by generally relying on alliances with powerful outside supporters.

288 Powell, My American Journey, p. 532.
Persuasion through professional expertise

Decision making in American government, not only in the field of national security, is characterized by deference to expert opinion. The military’s professional expertise on matters pertaining to the use of force is universally acknowledged and has always provided them with a significant amount of influence in the intramural bureaucratic debates on national security. But their ability to draw on their expertise as a means to exert leverage over their civilian peers has probably never been greater than today, given that increasingly fewer civilian policy officials in the United States have had any formal training or direct experience in the field of military affairs.

The military leaders, notably the JCS chairman and the commanders of the unified commands, can seek to directly influence decision making on national security by explicitly recommending a specific course of action to the president and the administration. The authority and credibility resulting from the military’s professional expertise usually lends their recommendations extraordinary weight. Beyond the JCS chairman and vice-chairman and the commanders of the unified commands, senior military planners on the Joint Staff in Washington (notably the J-3 director for operations and the J-5 director for strategic plans and policy) are important bureaucratic players. They can quietly influence the policy process in more subtle and indirect ways, through their control of operations and their monopoly of information on which civilian decision making ultimately relies. The military can de facto rule out certain policy

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290 One reason for this deference can be found in the belief that the professional analysis by which experts reach their conclusions is exceedingly complicated and impenetrable to outsiders. Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 151.

291 As Huntington succinctly put it, “a distinct sphere of military competence does exist which is common to all, or almost all, officers and which distinguishes them from all, or almost all, civilians. This central skill is... successful armed combat.” Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 11.
options, by arguing that they are either unfeasible or that their implementation would entail excessive risks or costs.\textsuperscript{292}

If the military leaders disagree with a specific use-of-force option, they can artificially inflate the required troop numbers and anticipated costs of the operation so as to make it appear politically unfeasible. The tactic is known among critics as “McClellanism”, after General George McClellan, who first employed it during the American civil war.\textsuperscript{293} For instance, the military planners’ assumption in the late 1990s that an invasion of Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime would require a long-term deployment of about half a million American troops made that option appear politically unfeasible, until Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld vigorously challenged the assumption in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.\textsuperscript{294} Contingency plans produced by the military can more generally push options as well as preclude them, thus constricting the policy choices of political authorities who rely on professional advice. As one former senior military planner explains, in the absence of strong presidential leadership, “if the military discount an option, it will not be resourced. If it is not resourced, it quickly dies.”\textsuperscript{295}

Finally, the military can help civilian policy officials think through all the likely consequences and possible longer-term implications of various courses of action. As Lt. Gen. Donald L. Kerrick, who served a brief spell as deputy national security adviser to President Clinton in the 1990s, explains: “The military are very good at making the civilian leadership think all the way down the line in the interagency discussions and helping them understand the

\textsuperscript{292} Betts, \textit{Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises}, pp. 5, 154.
\textsuperscript{293} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
\textsuperscript{294} For a discussion, see chapter six of this dissertation.
implications of their actions.²⁹⁶ By illustrating worst-case scenarios and emphasizing the potential downsides of a specific policy, the military can again push decision making in a particular direction. For instance, leading up to interventions in Bosnia and Serbia in the 1990s, as well as for the recent intervention in Libya, the military brass raised awareness among the civilian leadership that initiating apparently low-risk air strikes would put American credibility at stake, which might well drag the United States into a costly ground war in case air power alone should prove to be ineffective. In each of those instances, that made the civilian leadership, including the president, more reluctant to intervene in the first place.²⁹⁷

Senior civilian officials at the Pentagon, including the secretary of defense, typically share the military establishment’s viewpoint on matters of policy and magnify the military’s concerns vis-à-vis the president and other government agencies. Research has found that military attitudes and mind-sets in fact penetrate the civilian component of the Pentagon bureaucracy. Civilian Pentagon officials become socialized into the military’s own way of thinking and learn to look at complex political realities from the military’s viewpoint. Furthermore, the Pentagon’s civilian leaders usually understand that their organization’s health and effectiveness depends on keeping the broader membership happy.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, on those rare occasions when the secretary of defense disagrees with the military leaders on matters of policy, the military’s political influence is significantly weakened, and the president himself may not even hear about the military’s concerns, unless the JCS chairman has the fortitude to openly disagree with the secretary. For instance, in 2002-03, a significant portion of the military establishment was

²⁹⁸ Sarkesian, Williams, and Cimbala, “The Military Establishment, the President, and Congress,” p. 142. See also Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, pp. 89-96.
skeptical of plans for U.S. intervention in Iraq. Yet with the top civilian leadership at the Pentagon, including Secretary Rumsfeld, strongly supporting armed intervention (and the JCS chairman, Gen. Richard Myers, not daring to openly disagree with the secretary), the military’s influence was limited and their concerns rarely reached the president’s ear. 299

**Pressure through (the threat of) public appeals and resignation**

The military’s influence on policy debates about national security and armed intervention in particular is not only the result of expertise-based persuasion in the intramural bureaucratic debates. Top-level military officials can also behave as more explicitly *political* players, by taking advantage of the substantial popularity and social prestige that the armed services enjoy in the United States. 300 The military leaders can derive significant bargaining leverage from the threat of going public in their opposition to specific policies. In essence, the military can intimidate an administration into following their preferred line of action on issues about which they feel strongly, by threatening to publicly speak out and embarrass the president—especially when the policy under discussion is already controversial domestically. 301 On most occasions, the threat of public opposition voiced in the intramural debates is sufficiently potent to persuade the military’s civilian opponents to compromise on the policy. 302

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299 Author interviews with Gen. John P. Abizaid (January 27, 2011); and Franklin C. Miller (February 23, 2011).

300 Data from public opinion polls regularly suggests that the American public rates the armed forces higher than other U.S. government institutions, including Congress. See Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activity in Democracies,” p. 232; Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain,” p. 251.


302 John Hamre, who served as deputy secretary of defense in the late 1990s, confirms that “the military almost never take their disagreements public. Instead they bring excruciating detail to the internal deliberations about why a specific course of action is perilous. That usually signals to the civilian leaders that they can anticipate a political fight if it does go public and the military won’t be lock-step on their side.” Email to the author (February 17, 2010). See also David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), p. 415.
When the military leaders actually do choose to make their views public to increase their bargaining leverage vis-à-vis civilian authorities, their first step is usually to leak the armed services’ specific viewpoint and reservations to the press.\(^{303}\) For instance, during the lead-up to U.S. interventions in Haiti and the Balkans in the 1990s, there were frequent reports in the media about anonymous “military planners” or “senior Pentagon officials” being skeptical of armed intervention and fearing the long-term burdens of peacekeeping and stabilization.\(^{304}\) Similarly, leading up to the 2003 Iraq war, there were occasional leaks to the press of military leaders and Army planners in particular being concerned about the civilian authorities’ haste to resort to force.\(^{305}\) Press leaks are a fairly standard bureaucratic maneuver in the United States.\(^{306}\) Leaking is a relatively low-risk activity for the officials involved, so long as their individual identity remains undisclosed. On the other hand, the armed services as institutions may have an interest in being clearly associated with specific leaks, in view of signaling to their bureaucratic opponents the threat of more explicit public opposition unless some compromise solution is achieved that satisfies the military’s concerns.

A less frequent tactic on the part of the military leaders, which is usually adopted following a failed intimidation approach, is to launch direct public appeals, by relying on formal

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\(^{303}\) The military can also leak the stand taken in the internal debates by their bureaucratic opponents in (e.g., activist State Department or White House officials), to warn the public of the great risks and dangerous consequences that would follow from a decision to implement the activists’ preferred policy.


\(^{306}\) Leaking can be accomplished in several ways, such as private and off-the-record interviews, vague tips to reporters to look into a particular subject, or surreptitiously handing off official policy papers to a reporter. Halperin and Klapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 182.
statements, on-the-record interviews, or opinion-laden commentary to convey the armed services’ own judgment of a specific government policy that is being debated in Washington. Typically, because this tactic borders on insubordination to civilian authorities and carries with it the risk of escalating civil-military tension, only the chairman of the JCS can afford to take a public stance on specific policies in the absence of previous coordination with the civilian leadership. Alternatively, the secretary of defense may speak out publicly on behalf of the armed services. But a popular JCS chairman who uses public appeals sparingly and wisely can greatly increase the military’s bargaining leverage vis-à-vis civilian policy leaders. For instance, during the 1992 presidential election season, Chairman Powell granted an interview to the New York Times and then published an op-ed in the same newspaper, in which he openly declared the military’s opposition to armed intervention in Bosnia. It appears that Powell’s appeals, as well as military foot-dragging more generally, played a significant role in forestalling any meaningful U.S. armed intervention in Bosnia until mid-1995. Because of the military’s public prestige and recognized expertise in matters concerning the use of force, when the JCS take a public stance on such questions, the political cost to the president of overruling the armed services increases substantially.

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308 It is politically very costly for the president to fire an unwanted member of the JCS, let alone the chairman, which is why on most occasions even nettlesome military leaders are allowed to complete their terms. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 61.


311 Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, pp. 193, 214.
Another means for the Joint Chiefs to increase their leverage vis-à-vis civilian authorities is to force a showdown by threatening their resignation, either individually or collectively.\footnote{312} As Risa Brooks has written, “resignation, in this context, is the military equivalent of a vote of no confidence in the political leadership.”\footnote{313} It can seriously compromise domestic support for the president and his administration. Actual resignations by senior military officials are extremely rare, and since 1945 none of the Chiefs has ever resigned.\footnote{314} However, the JCS are believed to have threatened to resign collectively on at least two occasions, in 1966\footnote{315} and 1993.\footnote{316} William Owens, the former JCS vice chairman, also claims that in the early 1990s he threatened that he would resign, if the Clinton administration was going to send U.S. combat troops into Bosnia in the absence of a peace agreement accepted by the parties.\footnote{317} The military’s success at exerting political leverage in this way suggests that embattled presidents are willing to do almost anything to prevent the resignation of top-ranking military officials.\footnote{318}

\footnote{312} The most potent threat that the military leaders can make is clearly to have all of the JCS resign collectively. Halperin and Klapp, p. 235.

\footnote{313} Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activity in Democracies,” p. 220.


\footnote{315} In 1966, the JCS threatened to resign unless the White House approved higher budgets for new programs that the services wanted, prompting President Johnson to accept most of their requests. See Halperin and Klapp, \textit{Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy}, p. 235; Mark Perry, \textit{Four Stars: The Inside Story of the Forty-Year Battle Between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and America’s Civilian Leaders} (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), pp. 163-7.

\footnote{316} In 1993, during a standoff with civilian authorities over lifting existing prohibitions on homosexuals serving in the military, the Joint Chiefs “hinted at the possibility of resigning in protest,” following which the Clinton administration swiftly abandoned its plans. Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain,” pp. 248-49.


\footnote{318} In another similar standoff in the fall of 2009, the JCS increased tensions with the White House by requesting an additional 40,000 U.S. troops for the ongoing stabilization effort in Afghanistan. Reportedly, after Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who was publicly known to represent the military’s view on this issue, indicated that he might resign, the president accepted most of the military’s demands and agreed to deploy an additional 30,000 American troops. See Bob Woodward, \textit{Obama’s Wars} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), p. 304.
Mobilizing external allies

The bureaucratic politics approach as originally developed underestimated the degree to which in the United States, government agencies and departments tend to develop strong ties to clientele groups, either in Congress, private industry, or civil society. The armed services, more than other government bureaucracies, can greatly increase their policy leverage by mobilizing their alliances with influential groups outside the executive branch, such as veterans’ associations, newspaper editors, policy think-tanks, and especially members of Congress.

The 1947 National Security Act ensures the military’s access to Congress, and congressional committees regularly encourage representatives of the armed services who are called to testify on Capitol Hill to inform the legislative branch of the military’s disagreements with civilian administration officials. In this way, Congress seeks to offset the president’s significant informational advantage in the field of national security and “oversees the executive by dividing it against itself.” For instance, during the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki was called to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Prompted by members of Congress, he expressed the view that a large external stabilization force would be needed after the end of major combat operations, thus publicly

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321 Finer called the resulting incentives for the military to voice their disagreements with civilian authorities in congressional hearings a system of “legalized insubordination.” Finer, The Man on Horseback, p. 143.

322 Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 45; see also Stephen K. Scroggs, Army Relations With Congress (Westport, CT: Preager, 2000), p. 31.
challenging the rosy predictions of the administration’s civilian hawks, which were ostensibly based on information not available outside the executive branch.\textsuperscript{323}

Beyond these established channels of communication with Congress, the military brass can also rely on more informal contacts with congressional leaders to shape the legislative branch’s conception of the national interest and its specific policy preferences. For instance, during the lead-up to the 1991 Gulf War, JCS chairman Powell and other uniformed leaders had extensive private contacts with members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, during which the military expressed their concerns about the president’s exceedingly bellicose stance towards Iraq and quietly sought to gain congressional support in restraining the administration and forging a large international coalition.\textsuperscript{324} Likewise, leading up to humanitarian interventions in Haiti and Bosnia, the JCS contributed to shaping the policy outlook of key congressional leaders, thus magnifying the military’s own leverage vis-à-vis the president and senior civilian officials.\textsuperscript{325} Such explicit lobbying of Congress is technically illegal. However, by relying on informal channels of communication, the military are generally able to influence the legislative branch without leaving their fingerprints.\textsuperscript{326}

Every U.S. president knows that an overly contentious relationship with Congress can negatively affect domestic support for the policy he wishes to pursue, as well as his broader ability to implement his legislative agenda and be reelected. Therefore, as journalist Dana Priest has written, when the military strongly oppose a policy, including the prospective use of force,

\textsuperscript{323} Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, p. 96f.
\textsuperscript{324} Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, p. 62; see also Powell, \textit{My American Journey}, pp. 493, 541-42.
\textsuperscript{325} As one former vice-chairman of the JCS recalls with some understatement, members of Congress “were quite amenable to the kinds of arguments that [the military] brought up.” Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).
\textsuperscript{326} Priest, \textit{The Mission}, p. 47.
they can seek to utilize their “networks… to thwart the White House in Congress.” In short, through their professional expertise, their threats to go public and their occasional public opposition, as well as their alliance with Congress, military leaders in the United States can exert an extraordinary amount of influence on decision making in the field of national security. As a result, when the military feel strongly about a prospective intervention and explicitly declare that the limited U.S. interests at stake do not warrant the potentially high costs involved, the Joint Chiefs come close to having a veto over decisions to deploy American combat troops abroad.

5. How bureaucratic bargaining steers U.S. policy toward multilateralism

If the United States had to bear no meaningful costs to obtain UN or NATO endorsement for its military interventions overseas, then American efforts to seek such endorsements would hardly be puzzling. Even U.S. policy leaders who are not known for their multilateralist instincts generally acknowledge that the endorsement of standing IOs may be beneficial at the margins in

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327 Priest, The Mission, p. 46.

328 As Allison and Zelikow have written, “in the United States, no decision for a substantial use of force… will be made against [the military’s] advice, and without at least a delay during which an extensive record of consultation is prepared.” Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision, p. 312. See also Halperin and Klapp, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, p. 215.
Terms of public relations, for “selling” U.S. policy to relevant audiences both domestically and internationally. Therefore, if obtaining IO approval entailed no political, diplomatic, or financial cost, the United States should virtually always seek such endorsement before intervening militarily abroad.

_The costs of formal multilateral endorsement_

However, U.S. behavior in this field displays significant variation. The U.S. has initiated military interventions on more than twenty occasions in the post-cold war period. Yet Washington has sought explicit IO endorsement for only ten of those interventions—that is, less than half the time. (Excluding noncombatant evacuation missions and covert operations, which are always unilateral). This evidence clearly disconfirms recent scholarly arguments according to which U.S. “military intervention without some effort to gain multilateral approval is now virtually obsolete.”

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<th>Table 4: Post-cold war U.S. military interventions</th>
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<th>Explicit IO endorsement sought (UNSC or NATO)</th>
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<td>- Somalia 1992 (Restore Hope)</td>
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<td>- Libya 2011 (Odyssey Dawn)</td>
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<td>- Panama 1989 (Operation Just Cause)</td>
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* Numerous air strikes until 2003.
** Numerous air strikes and occasional commando incursions thereafter.

329 Thompson, _Channels of Power_, p. viii.
The primary reason for this striking variation in American behavior, I argue, is that obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs is generally quite costly to the United States. First, it involves protracted international negotiations and bargaining with other IO member states, which make a quick military response exceedingly difficult and eliminate any element of surprise. In the case of Bosnia, for instance, it took the United States several years, from 1993 until 1995, to forge a consensus with the NATO allies to use significant air power against the Bosnian Serbs. In addition, protracted diplomacy aimed at obtaining an IO endorsement often brings international disagreements to the fore, and the resulting public cacophony of voices might reduce America’s coercive leverage. For instance, leading up to the 1994 Haiti intervention, Washington’s effort to involve the United Nations publicized international disagreements on the use of force, arguably making it more difficult for the United States to achieve a negotiated solution to the crisis.

Furthermore, even once an IO endorsement has been obtained, multilateralism can continue to constrain U.S. freedom of action, if the available mandate restricts targeting options and the goals for which force can be used. For instance, NATO air strikes over Kosovo in 1999 remained exceedingly limited and ineffectual for several weeks, in the face of European resistance to authorize the bombing of dual-use infrastructure and other strategic targets. Finally, obtaining a formal multilateral endorsement for the use of force often requires logrolling bargains and substantial side-payments to other IO member states that threaten to withhold their affirmative vote. For instance, leading up to both the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq war, Washington offered economic side-payments to other members of the UNSC, seeking to obtain their affirmative vote. In 1994, to obtain Russia’s support at the Security Council for armed intervention in Haiti, the United States had to agree to give up opposition to UN endorsement of
a Russian peacekeeping mission in Georgia, which arguably harmed broader American strategic

As former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott sums it up: “Multilateralism is hell, and it can be a real pain in the neck. Getting a consensus takes a long time. It often drives you towards the lowest common denominator. There is a lot of logrolling, and one may end up with not very sensible outcomes that are necessary to keep everybody on board.”\footnote{Author interview with Strobe Talbott, U.S. deputy secretary of state, 1994-2001 (July 9, 2009).} Therefore, I argue, hawkish U.S. civilian leaders who advocate the use of force as an urgent measure to defend American values or interests abroad typically agree to seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs only if they realize that such a path is necessary to push their preferred policy of armed intervention through the Washington bureaucracy.

My guiding assumption is that the United States, as the most powerful country in the world, can almost always obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening militarily abroad, provided that it is willing to pay the necessary costs in terms of protracted diplomacy, loss of secrecy and coercive leverage, side-payments, and reduced freedom of action. For instance, as I discuss in chapter 6, a strong argument can be made that even for the 2003 Iraq War, the United States could have obtained an explicit SC authorization, if only the Bush administration had allowed more time for negotiations and for the weapons inspections process, instead of hastily discontinuing its diplomatic effort in favor of military action.
Contesting the national interest

In the face of a foreign crisis that attracts the attention of senior U.S. national security officials, the bureaucratic debate in Washington will focus, first, on the degree to which American interests are involved, and second, on what the most appropriate course of action might be. If the security of American citizens or close U.S. allies appears to be directly at risk—such as in the face of foreign aggression, or when there is credible intelligence about an imminent foreign attack—a bureaucratic consensus in favor of quick action, possibly including the use of force, is likely to emerge fairly soon. Furthermore, serious international crises affecting vital U.S. interests are likely to result in decisive presidential leadership; hence under such circumstances, remaining skeptics in government can be expected to be overruled by the president. However, such periods of supreme national emergency are exceedingly rare. The immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, when further attacks appeared very likely, is probably the only example in recent years.

Overall, from a U.S. standpoint, for the last two decades the international threat environment has been much less challenging than it used to be during the cold war. The United States as a nation faces no existential threat today. As Robert Jervis explains, “in the absence of a clear danger, let alone a clear and present danger, our external environment does not require that we be guided by one set of values rather than another.” That generally leaves ample room for

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interagency bickering and competition in foreign affairs, including on matters pertaining to the international use of force.\footnote{Robert Art summed it up as follows: “In foreign policy, politics may ‘stop at the water’s edge’; but there certainly is a lot of it before we reach the coast lines.” Cf. Art, “Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy,” p. 469.}

Hence in the absence of a vital threat, senior policy officials from various U.S. government agencies, such as the NSC staff, the State Department, and the Pentagon will typically disagree about whether the foreign crisis at issue affects important national interests, whether the United States should become involved, and whether direct U.S. military intervention should be considered. Simplifying a bit for the purpose of theory building, on such occasions there are usually two opposing camps in the intramural bureaucratic debates. On the one side, there are activist civilian policy leaders who claim that American interests or values are threatened and argue that direct U.S. engagement, including prompt military intervention, may be needed. On the other side, there are reluctant senior officials—with the military leaders and war veterans in senior policy positions at the forefront—who insist that no vital American interests are at stake which could warrant the potentially high costs of direct U.S. engagement, let alone armed intervention.

The president is rarely committed to any particular course of action from the outset, and he generally seeks to keep all options open for as long as possible.\footnote{For a discussion of presidential efforts to maintain flexibility, see Goldgeier, \textit{Not Whether But When}, p. 8.} Unless the security of American citizens or key foreign allies is imminently at risk, the commander-in-chief may not even participate in most of the relevant policy debates, thus partially delegating decision-making authority to his principal national security advisors or their deputies. For instance, Presidents George H.W. Bush (“Bush 41”), William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush (“Bush 43”) did not take part in most of the relevant policy debates leading up to U.S. military interventions in
Somalia in 1992, Haiti in 1994, and Liberia in 2003, respectively. Such absence of presidential leadership allows for an extraordinary degree of bureaucratic infighting and bargaining: various elements of the national security bureaucracy will be portraying the national interest in different ways, pulling and hauling U.S. policy in different directions based on their competing interests and values, and relying on their external clientele groups for added leverage, until the president takes a final decision. Usually, for humanitarian crises that do not involve significant U.S. strategic interests, the debate is at first structured against the use of force. That provides the military skeptics and their allies with an inherent advantage; and the activists inside government first need to gain the president’s attention, reassure the skeptics, and forge a large-enough bureaucratic coalition, before the use of force becomes a concrete possibility.

**Hypothesis 5 (Reassuring skeptics):** In the face of a foreign crisis that does not pose a vital threat to U.S. national security, policy leaders in Washington typically disagree about whether direct military intervention should be considered. Hawkish policy officials first need to reassure their skeptical colleagues and forge a large-enough bureaucratic coalition, in order to persuade the president to authorize military intervention.

**Unilateralist civilian activists**

I hypothesize that for civilian policy leaders who push for military intervention as an urgent measure to protect or promote American values and interests abroad, the endorsement of relevant IOs is typically not a priority. Their priority is swift and decisive action, regardless of their underlying motivation. Liberal activists in government such as Anthony Lake and Madeleine Albright during the 1990s, or more recently Anne-Marie Slaughter, may want the United States to intervene militarily abroad for humanitarian purposes, to fight genocide and

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ethnic cleansing. Meanwhile neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle may advocate U.S. intervention to topple tyranny and promote democracy abroad. The former usually proclaim their attachment to international institutions in principle and recognize that "multilateralism...has its place as a foreign policy tool." The latter are in general more ideologically opposed to working with relevant IOs: in the early 1990s, for instance, Wolfowitz, who was then a senior Pentagon official, drafted a defense policy document that explicitly rejected a collective, institutions-based approach to international security and laid out a strategy of unfettered American primacy.

Yet what unites all the aforementioned activists beyond their disagreements on matters of principle is their concern that in the face of foreign crises to which they think the United States should respond swiftly and forcefully, multilateral bargaining at the UN or NATO may result in weak and delayed action based on the lowest common denominator or no action at all. Put differently, activist policy officials focus on what they perceive to be urgent challenges—hence they are likely to have a short time horizon. They will focus on the expected payoffs of their preferred line of action in fairly abstract terms, without much regard to questions of feasibility and generally underestimating the long-term costs of the policy they advocate. From that

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337 On Lake and Albright, see chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation. On Slaughter’s views, see Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, “A Duty To Prevent,” Foreign Affairs 83 (1), 2004, esp. p. 149 (Where the authors explicitly recommend reliance on “unilateral action or coalitions of the willing,” to prevent the spread of WMD to rogue regimes, if IO endorsement for coercive military action is unavailable).


339 The document emphasized that “the United States should be postured to act independently” and that one “should expect future [international] coalitions to be ad hoc assemblies, often not lasting beyond the crisis being confronted.” The document was later released by the Pentagon in revised form, after a leaked version of the initial draft sparked a public controversy. For the original draft, see Patrick E. Tyler, “U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop,” New York Times, March 8, 1992. For the official document subsequently released by the Pentagon, see Dick Cheney, “Defense Strategy for the 1990s: Regional Defense Strategy,” U.S. Department of Defense, January 1993.
viewpoint, obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening may impose unnecessary costs and constraints on the United States.\footnote{See e.g. Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Good Reasons for Going Around the U.N.,” \textit{New York Times}, March 18, 2003.}

Albright, for instance, advocated U.S. \textit{unilateral} military action against Serbia in the spring of 1998, fearing that working through NATO would constrain the United States, and she subsequently opposed even trying to obtain a UN mandate for U.S. intervention over Kosovo, worrying that it would set a precedent which might allow Russia and China to constrain Washington in the future.\footnote{Author interview with Robert Gelbard, U.S. special envoy for the Balkans, 1996-1999 (March 22, 2010). See also Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 30; Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 384; and chapter 5 in this dissertation.} As I will show in subsequent chapters, over the last two decades, hawkish policy leaders advocating military intervention abroad—whether in response to a perceived threat or to protect and promote liberal values—have at first frequently pushed for U.S. unilateral action, precisely because they thought that proceeding multilaterally through the UN or NATO would be exceedingly time consuming and might preclude the decisive response they sought. It appears that even for hawkish liberal advocates of humanitarian intervention, such as Albright or Slaughter, humanitarian norms usually trump the norm of multilateralism.

\textit{Multilateralism as a policy resultant}

American military leaders, as previously discussed, are extremely skeptical about humanitarian interventions and other interventions aimed at changing the domestic politics of foreign countries, in the absence of vital threats to U.S. national security. The uniformed leaders are typically concerned that success is frequently elusive in such operations; they usually anticipate open-ended and costly deployments of ground troops; and they fear that perceived
failure on their part may harm the institutional standing and prestige of the armed services, which in turn might undermine their ability to respond effectively to more serious crises down the road.

Therefore, assuming that the Joint Chiefs are not merely stooges of the civilian leadership, they are at first likely to altogether resist a prospective intervention, when they believe that no vital American interests are at stake and fear an open-ended deployment of U.S. troops. American presidents are extremely unlikely to order U.S. troops into combat abroad to pursue secondary national interests in the face of explicit opposition from the military leadership. First of all, the president may be genuinely persuaded by the military that the prospects of achieving a specific objective through force are exceedingly low, and that the limited interests at stake simply do not warrant the costs and significant risks of an open-ended U.S. military commitment to stabilize a foreign nation. In addition, the president may fear that an open rupture with the Joint Chiefs might undermine domestic support for the policy in question, as well as for the administration more generally, and potentially even harm his prospects of being reelected.  

In the face of strong skepticism or opposition from the uniformed leaders, civilian advocates of intervention need to be able to address the military’s concerns and mollify the top brass, in order to forge a large-enough bureaucratic coalition in favor of the use of force. Specifically, the military need to be reassured that the use of force is indeed a last resort; that their mission is clearly and narrowly defined; that there is a viable exit strategy for U.S. troops; and that the long-term costs to the services resulting from the intervention will be kept to a minimum and are going to be shared with international partners to the greatest possible degree. In the course of the resulting back-and-forth bureaucratic debates, civilian advocates of intervention frequently have to change their proposals and make concessions, clarifying and

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limiting the goals of military action and more generally seeking to reduce attendant risks and the foreseeable burden on American troops. Resulting changes to the policy may not actually be consciously thought out by the participants in advance.\textsuperscript{343} The ultimate goal is to make the policy more palatable to the Joint Chiefs and the military brass more generally. At the very least, once a sizeable bureaucratic coalition has been forged in support of intervention, the administration’s activists need to get the Joint Chiefs (as well as their civilian allies at the Pentagon) to a point where they are no longer explicitly opposed, which will make it significantly easier for the president to truncate the bureaucratic debate and authorize military action.

But in order to form a large-enough coalition within the bureaucracy, activist senior policy officials first need to be able to defeat or at least weaken the arguments put forward by skeptical military leaders about the excessive risks and long-term costs of armed intervention. For instance, when Secretary Albright was pushing for U.S. intervention over Kosovo in 1998 and early 1999, the Joint Chiefs and the Pentagon leadership more generally were initially resisting her, suggesting that U.S. military action would result in an open-ended and exceedingly costly commitment of American ground troops. Albright herself recalls that “to forge a consensus” on intervention within the U.S. government was “not an easy task.”\textsuperscript{344} More specifically, Albright’s former executive assistant explains that in the face of such initial opposition, “to the extent that the Secretary could reject the Pentagon’s argument,” by making a persuasive case that the operation would be limited and any long-term deployment of American

\textsuperscript{343} Halperin and Klapp, \textit{Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{344} Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 383.
troops would be kept to a minimum, “that certainly helped [the activists] in the interagency debate.”

As activist civilian officials are confronted with the challenge of reassuring skeptical military leaders and countering their claims in the internal bureaucratic debates, they have to take their opponents’ arguments very seriously. Generally the goal of a skilled bureaucratic actor is to reassure one’s opponents in view of reducing their obstructionism, while at the same time persuading other bureaucratic players and ultimately the president that the skeptics’ claims about the policy’s likely risks and costs are overblown. Hence the activists, to prove the feasibility of their preferred course of action, need to move beyond what may initially have been a rather abstract advocacy of military intervention, and they need to adopt a longer time horizon, carefully thinking through the possible consequences of what they propose. In other words, as a result of bureaucratic politics, activist policy officials are forced to grapple with operational matters in significantly more detail than they may have previously done, which typically leads them to adopt a more pragmatic and less ideological outlook. They need to be able to show persuasively that their policy objectives are in fact sufficiently narrow, so that limited force will be able to achieve them; and they need to persuade skeptics within the bureaucracy and ultimately the president that any longer-term commitment of American troops overseas will be limited and that congressional support can be secured. For instance, policy activists from the administrations of G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush recall that leading up to humanitarian interventions in Somalia in 1992, Bosnia in 1995, and Liberia in 2003, in order to persuade the president to authorize the use of force, it was crucial to defeat the Joint Chiefs’ and more

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345 Author interview with Alejandro Wolff, Executive assistant to the secretary of state, 1998-2000 (March 31, 2010).
generally the Pentagon’s skeptical arguments, by carefully working out all the relevant policy details and making a persuasive case that America’s long-term liability would be limited.\(^{346}\)

My hypothesis is that in the course of these extensive bureaucratic debates, if the civilian activists are themselves sufficiently committed and influential within the administration to keep military intervention on the agenda, the U.S. policy process gradually shifts towards multilateralism. In short, as plans of action are repeatedly updated in direct response to the military’s skepticism and concerns, activist policy officials who had initially pushed for quick U.S. military intervention and may have considered multilateralism as a costly distraction will increasingly come to value the benefits of IO endorsement. Channeling military intervention through relevant IOs, while costly in the short run, increases the prospects for locking in international support. That, in turn, provides the best guarantee of significant post-combat burden sharing and limited liability for the armed services. Therefore, obtaining an explicit IO endorsement for the use of force can be seen as part of a broader bureaucratic strategy on the part of civilian policy activists aimed at reassuring the military leaders that the costs of intervention will be limited and shared internationally.

Morton Halperin, who served as a senior State Department official leading up to the Kosovo intervention, remembers the bureaucratic political dynamics that led the policy activists to progressively endorse multilateralism as follows: “We preferred a UN mandate at the outset, but if we couldn’t get the UN mandate we at least wanted NATO. We wanted this as a shared burden, and we wanted the U.S. forces to get out as quickly as possible. Getting NATO on board and knowing that NATO forces were going to go in later made it easier to sell the policy to the

U.S. government and particularly to the Joint Chiefs.” In short, U.S. multilateralism for cross-border military interventions is frequently the outcome of sustained bureaucratic political interactions, a genuine policy resultant that nobody may originally have intended in that particular form. The ultimate pace at which the shift towards multilateralism occurs during the internal bureaucratic debates is likely to be influenced by a number of factors, including: other recent experiences of U.S. intervention, the administration’s general risk-aversion, and how the activists themselves trade off the potential advantages of IO endorsement versus its anticipated costs.

Hypothesis 6 (multilateralism as a policy resultant): U.S. efforts to seek IO endorsement ahead of military intervention are frequently the outcome of sustained bureaucratic exchanges, during which policy activists seek to reassure the JCS and other government skeptics about the likelihood of post-combat burden sharing with allies and partners.

The military leaders generally insist on the need for limited liability, congressional support, and post-combat burden sharing. Yet the armed services have no deep doctrinal attachment to multilateral institutions as such. The standard view among American generals and admirals is that whether the U.S. seeks an explicit IO endorsement before intervening “is a political matter, and it is up to the political leadership to ultimately decide it.” What the military leaders desire is some reassurance that the American people will support the intervention and that large numbers of U.S. troops won’t be deployed in costly peacekeeping and stabilization missions for the indefinite future. The endorsement of relevant IOs can be very helpful, insofar as it locks in international support and increases the likelihood of significant

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347 Author interview with Morton H. Halperin, head of policy planning at the U.S. State Department, 1998-2001 (March 10, 2010).

348 For instance, leading up to recent humanitarian interventions in Liberia (2003) and Libya (2011), the U.S. policy debate appears to have shifted to multilateralism fairly quickly, given the lessons learned from ongoing interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and Washington’s increased awareness of the potential long-term costs of unilateralism.

burden sharing on postwar stabilization. But it is usually civilian policy leaders—frequently the very activists who initially opposed a multilateral path—who ultimately work to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, as a means to reassure the military brass and forge a large bureaucratic coalition favoring armed intervention.

Based on my theory as laid out so far, the outcome of interest (i.e., U.S. multilateralism for military interventions) is caused by a combination of factors: first, senior policy officials pushing for U.S. intervention; second, military leaders who at first resist the prospect of armed intervention, based on the belief that no vital American interests are at stake that would warrant the anticipated open-ended U.S. troop deployment; third, a president who is initially uncommitted (which is typically the case when no vital American interests are at stake); and fourth, activist officials who are sufficiently influential to be able to muster the necessary resources to obtain an IO endorsement, in view of reassuring the military leaders and forging a large-enough bureaucratic coalition in favor of intervention. In other words, I hypothesize that the military leaders’ skepticism about or opposition to armed intervention is sufficient to determine the outcome of interest only in combination with the aforementioned other causal elements. These individual causal elements are what methods scholars call INUS causes: they are insufficient but necessary parts of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the outcome. Put differently, this is a classic case of conjunctural causation. I hypothesize that the conjunction, or joint occurrence, of the individual causal elements is sufficient but by no means necessary to determine the outcome of interest. Put differently, there is no deterministic

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assumption of causality underlying my theory, as one can certainly envision other causal pathways to the outcome of interest (so-called “equifinality”).

*When the military explicitly insist on IO endorsement*

Sometimes, the military leaders and their skeptical allies in government may also more explicitly recommend that relevant IOs should be involved. For senior government officials who are reluctant to intervene, U.S. efforts to seek IO endorsement may be a welcome means of delaying or averting armed intervention—especially when key international partners are also known to be opposed to military action. For instance, during the early 1990s, U.S. policy leaders who were skeptical of the use of American air power over Bosnia—notably the military brass and other senior Pentagon officials—insisted that Washington should coordinate the use of force with its European allies and seek an explicit NATO endorsement, partially out of the expectation that that would make armed intervention altogether less likely. Similarly, in 2002, the Bush administration’s leading war veteran, Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage, recommended that Washington seek to obtain a UN mandate for the use of force against Iraq, first and foremost because they “wanted to avoid the war.”

In addition, senior military planners on the Joint Staff and at the regional combatant commands—especially the J5 directors for strategic planning—sometimes also explicitly recommend that the U.S. seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs before intervening, in view of locking in international support for post-combat stabilization. Especially leading up to prospective humanitarian interventions in regions of little or no strategic interest to the United States, such as for peace-enforcement operations in Africa, military planners laying out various

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options typically recommend that an advance UNSC approval of U.S. intervention should be obtained. They may also advise that the approving resolution itself should contain an express commitment on the part of the UN to quickly establish a follow-on multilateral stabilization mission, so as to relieve the burden on American troops. The JCS chairman and vice-chairman, as well as civilian Pentagon officials, can be expected to magnify the military planners’ recommendations and concerns in the interagency debates.\footnote{Author interviews with Gen. Walter Kross (USAF, ret.), Director of the Joint Staff, July 1994-July 1996 (February 11, 2011); and Col. William J. Flavin (USA, ret.), Director of the Doctrine, Concepts, and Training Division at the Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, U.S. Army War College (January 18, 2011).}

For instance, leading up to U.S. humanitarian interventions in Haiti in 1994 and Liberia in 2003, the military brass and Pentagon leaders more generally made it clear that they would staunchly oppose any deployment of American combat troops, unless a UN mandate was obtained beforehand that explicitly foresaw a handoff to a multilateral follow-on force within a reasonably short timeframe. William Owens, the former vice chairman of the JCS, remembers that on Haiti, in the summer of 1994 the military strongly recommended that Washington seek to obtain a commitment from the Security Council before intervening that “a United Nations force would come in… to do this for the long term, because it wasn’t going to get fixed in the short term.”\footnote{Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).}
The thinking at the Pentagon and especially among the military leadership was similar leading up to the Liberia intervention of August 2003, under a different administration:

There was significant interest in ensuring that there was a handoff capability in a reasonably short period of time. We did not want to go in without a commitment that there would be a UN force generated that we could hand it off to. There was a lot of push on that, [because] there was a potential there for a long-term presence in a policing role, which would lead to mission creep into nation-building.\footnote{Author interview with Gen. Bantz J. Craddock (USA, ret.), Senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense, August 2002- 2004 (February 16, 2011).}
Proponents of U.S. intervention in Liberia at the State Department and on the NSC staff remember that leading up to the operation, they worked very hard to obtain a commitment from the SC and regional partner states in the region to quickly establish a follow-on multilateral force: “We wanted an answer for every argument that DOD was going to spring at us. We wanted to show that we weren’t going to get trapped; so this wasn’t going to be unilateral.”

The first important precedent in this regard was set by the experience of U.S. intervention in Somalia in 1992. On that occasion, too, the Joint Chiefs had insisted that an explicit UN mandate should be obtained in advance of the intervention. Senior military officials reportedly declared in the internal administration debates during the fall of 1992: “until we hear from the UN, our plans are nothing more than drafts.” National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, himself a war veteran with significant combat experience, readily agreed with the military that a SC authorization should be obtained and Washington should seek specific reassurances from the UN and international partners that the operation could quickly be transferred to a follow-on UN force. Reportedly, UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali offered verbal reassurances to Washington that a follow-on UN force would in fact quickly take over; yet he also requested that some U.S. troops remain available for the long term in case of need.

The Somalia intervention ultimately ended in a quagmire, after President Clinton, far from withdrawing American troops, changed their mission to peace-enforcement in 1993, which

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356 Author interview with Walter H. Kansteiner, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, June 2001-November 2003 (January 18, 2011). This same analysis was shared with the author by Jendayi Frazer, NSC Director for African Affairs, 2001-2004 (January 27, 2011).


resulted in a series of deadly clashes with Somali militias and culminated in the death of eighteen U.S. Army Rangers in October 1993. The U.S. military leaders and especially planners on the Joint Staff and in the services learned two important lessons from the failure in Somalia: first, before launching humanitarian interventions in regions of little or no strategic importance to the United States, Washington should obtain a written commitment from the United Nations that there will be a rapid handoff to a follow-on multilateral mission, and those reassurances should possibly be contained in the authorizing SC resolution itself; and second, the transition to follow-on multilateral missions needs to be better planned in advance, so that when U.S. troops depart, the follow-on forces can in fact maintain stability and Washington won’t be drawn back in.

**How lack of multilateral approval can result in U.S. nonintervention**

The argument thus far has been that in the face of initial reluctance or opposition from the military brass, and partially following the military’s explicit advice, proponents of intervention from other government agencies may seek *inter alia* to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, to lock in international support and thereby reassure the uniformed leaders that the long-term costs of intervention to the armed services will be limited. In order to actually obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, however, the activist officials pushing for intervention have to be able to extract the necessary diplomatic and financial resources from the U.S. political system. If the activists are themselves not sufficiently committed or influential within an administration to muster the necessary resources to obtain an IO approval, in the face of strong initial opposition to

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361 Author interviews with Col. William Flavin, Officer working for the deputy chief of operations on the Army Staff, 1992-1994 (January 18, 2011) and Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011). A recent U.S Army field manual points out that for humanitarian interventions, the transfer of authority to follow-on forces “should be accomplished as early as possible,” and “the timing of the transfer must be part of the initial negotiations.” U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army in Multinational Operations*, FM 3-16 (FM 100-8), May 2010, section 3, p.16.
the use of force from the military leaders, based on expectations of high long-term costs, the policy outcome is likely to be nonintervention.

**Hypothesis 7 (Nonintervention):** When the military brass and other influential policy leaders oppose a prospective intervention, anticipating an open-ended troop commitment, and activist officials cannot muster the necessary resources to obtain the advance endorsement of relevant IOs, the most likely outcome is nonintervention.

Sometimes, as previously argued, the military leaders and other skeptical policy officials may also directly insist that an explicit IO endorsement be obtained, anticipating that international opposition will in fact restrain the United States and ideally result in non-intervention. In particular, senior policy officials who have strong reservations about intervention may choose to pursue this strategy when an explicit public opposition to the use of force on their part would either make them domestically unpopular or marginalize them within the administration, in the face of a growing bureaucratic coalition that favors intervention.

There are probably numerous instances of potential U.S. military interventions being debated within the national security bureaucracy, where the option of using force is then discarded for various reasons, including the high anticipated costs and likely absence of multilateral support. Unless such policy options are debated at the highest levels of the bureaucracy, among the president’s principal national security advisers or their deputies, the resulting “non-intervention” decisions may not even be recorded, let alone publicly reported. However, there are a few specific examples of U.S. military intervention being debated at the highest bureaucratic levels, and where the use-of-force option was either permanently or temporarily shelved, among other things because of the lack of multilateral support.

For example, between 1992 and 1994, activist policy officials in Washington were pushing for U.S. intervention in Bosnia. Yet the uniformed leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon, anticipating that UN or NATO endorsement for significant military action would not
be forthcoming, strongly insisted that force should only be used multilaterally. Given considerable European reluctance about the use of force, until mid-1995 the resulting policy was in fact essentially U.S. nonintervention. It was only following the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995, which resulted in greater multilateral support for decisive military action at the UN and NATO, that the Pentagon skeptics ultimately came on board and the U.S. was able to take the lead in a broader NATO air campaign.

Similarly, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, hard-line policy officials in Washington were pushing for U.S. military intervention in Iraq. However, JCS Chairman Shelton and Secretary of State Powell were adamantly opposed to attacking Iraq in 2001. They managed to avert a U.S. intervention on that occasion, voicing concerns that there would be no multilateral support for such an endeavor and that the long-term costs to the United States would be exceedingly high. Finally, in 2005 and 2006, activist policy officials in Washington were pushing for a U.S. humanitarian intervention in Darfur, to support African Union (AU) peacekeepers already deployed on the ground. Hoping to mollify the Pentagon’s opposition to armed intervention, and apparently following the recommendation of senior U.S. military officials, President Bush advanced the idea of “NATO stewardship” for Darfur. But when the administration’s activists were subsequently unable to garner NATO support for a more muscular approach, the policy outcome was once again U.S. nonintervention.

362 Shelton, Without Hesitation, p. 444; Bob Woodward, Bush at War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), pp. 84-87. (In this case, it appears that U.S. policy shifted from non-intervention in 2001 to unilateral action in 2003 not so much because of changed circumstances on the ground, but primarily because of changes in the U.S. military leadership).

One implication of the theory outlined in this chapter is that when the military brass agrees with a proposed intervention from early on, in the face of a decisive push for using force from the civilian leadership, the United States is likely to circumvent relevant IOs and act unilaterally or with only token coalitions of allies. The military leaders can be expected to have few qualms about using force under two circumstances: first, when they perceive that vital U.S. national interests, involving the security of American citizens or close allies, are imminently at risk; and second, when they anticipate that a prospective intervention will be limited in time and scope, entailing no costly deployment of ground troops.

**U.S. unilateralism when vital national interests are perceived to be at stake**

Scholars who view U.S. multilateralism for the use of force as the result of cost-benefit calculations on the part of Washington leaders generally concur that the least likely scenario for American multilateralism is “associated with immediate, military attacks on the homeland, a
Pearl Harbor or 9/11 style of attack.” In the face of a direct attack on the homeland or a foreign crisis threatening the security of American citizens or key allies, there will be incentives for quick and decisive action. The endorsement of relevant IOs has tangible long-term benefits, as discussed above; but in the short run it imposes restrictions on American freedom of action (resulting from the need to negotiate, consult, and find a mutually agreeable compromise with other IO member states) that may appear exceedingly costly in times of crisis. Heightened threat perception shortens leaders’ time horizon, meaning that they are likely to focus on the most immediate challenges to security. Policy leaders who concentrate on devising a quick response to vital threats will value present gains over potential future costs, thus discounting the potential longer-term implications of U.S. military intervention. Under such circumstances, the long-term benefits of IO endorsement will not be central to their thinking.

Furthermore, in the face of a perceived vital threat, the public usually rallies around the flag and is willing to shoulder significant costs to defend the national interest. Congress, too, can be expected to explicitly endorse military action in the face of a serious international threat, and congressional support may reassure remaining skeptics within the administration about using force. In short, the urge to limit liability abates under conditions of rising threat, and government bureaucracies can be expected to put their own particularistic interests aside. When the military leaders, too, agree that vital U.S. national interests are at stake, their thinking will increasingly resemble that of the hawkish policy officials they usually oppose—they will become more risk acceptant, their time horizons will be shortened, and they will focus primarily on the perceived imminent threat, worrying less about the potential longer-term costs of intervention.

364 Kreps, Coalitions of Convenience, p. 7; see also Thompson, Channels of Power, p. 34.
Even when the military leaders are fully aware that the use of force aimed at neutralizing a vital threat might result in an open-ended troop commitment overseas, they are likely to conclude—again agreeing with their activist civilian colleagues—that the short-term costs of seeking to obtain a formal IO endorsement would outweigh any longer-term benefits in terms of greater international buy-in. As General Powell sums up the cost-benefit calculus of U.S. policy leaders under such circumstances: “When you are invoking your inherent right of self-defense you don’t need the international community, and frankly you don’t have time to round them up.”

**Hypothesis 8** (unilateralism to defend vital interests): *When the military leaders, as well as most other senior policy officials, agree that vital national interests are at stake, the expected short-term costs of multilateralism will outweigh its longer-term benefits. Thus, the U.S. is likely to intervene unilaterally or with only token coalitions of allies.*

One obvious example is the process of U.S. decision making leading up to the 2001 Afghanistan intervention. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11/2001 killed almost 3,000 American citizens. During the days immediately following the attacks, U.S. policy leaders at the NSC scrambled to develop a decisive military response aimed at reducing the terrorist threat and satisfying the nation’s desire for retaliation. The administration quickly agreed to intervene militarily in Afghanistan, ostensibly to kill or capture the individuals who had been involved in planning the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and then leave. There was at first no consideration of a long-term nation building effort.

Focusing on short-term security challenges, the president and his senior advisers did not adequately consider the possibility that once the U.S. had intervened, it might end up “owning” Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. It appears that some military planners, notably on the

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368 Hoffmann, *Chaos and Violence*, p. 149; see also Woodward, *Bush at War*, pp. 75ff.
369 The administration’s policy outlook was also shaped by its doctrinal aversion to nation building overseas. Author interview with Marc Grossman, undersecretary of state for political affairs, 2001-2005 (January 13, 2011).
Army staff, raised related concerns; yet most of the military leaders, including the JCS Chairman, supported a quick U.S. response and were not particularly worried at the time about limiting U.S. liability.\textsuperscript{370} The president himself was strongly committed to a rapid armed response to confront what appeared to be a vital threat to American security.\textsuperscript{371} As Stephen J. Hadley, at the time the deputy U.S. national security advisor, recalls: “We had a threat arising out of Afghanistan that had just killed more American civilians than any single military engagement, and it was widely predicted that this was the first of a series of attacks that might involve weapons of mass destruction. So the priority was to eliminate the threat. We did not anticipate that we would still be in Afghanistan ten years later.”\textsuperscript{372}

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks there was widespread international solidarity with the United States. On September 12, 2001, the UNSC acting under French initiative adopted res. 1368, which implicitly recognized for the first time that the traditional right of self-defense enshrined in Art. 51 of the Charter could be invoked for military action against terrorist threats. On that same day, NATO also invoked article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, offering Washington broad political and military support.\textsuperscript{373} However, senior policy officials in Washington, including the military leaders, were more interested in maximizing U.S. freedom of maneuver than in locking in third-party state support for the long term. Therefore, the United States stopped short of requesting an explicit SC endorsement of military action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, anticipating that it would have been somewhat costly to obtain.

\textsuperscript{370} Author interview with Col. William Flavin (January 18, 2011). See also Shelton, Without Hesitation, pp. 436ff.

\textsuperscript{371} Bush, Decision Points, pp. 183ff.

\textsuperscript{372} Author interview with Stephen J. Hadley, deputy national security adviser to the president, 2001-2005; and national security adviser, 2005-2009 (January 24, 2011)

and might have limited U.S. policy flexibility.\textsuperscript{374} Also, in its focus on short-term security challenges, the administration decided to conduct initial combat operations in Afghanistan largely on its own, relying on a combination of Army special forces and CIA units.\textsuperscript{375} In retrospect, a closer involvement of NATO and the UN from the outset might have helped the United States to maintain greater European and international support for stability operations in Afghanistan over the years.\textsuperscript{376} However, limiting long-term U.S. liability was decidedly not Washington’s focus in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. As a former senior U.S. government official recalls: “We felt that we had been attacked and wanted to conduct the operation under the mandate and ground rules that we were setting for ourselves. We didn’t want this to be consultative.”\textsuperscript{377}

In the years since 9/11/2001, on various occasions the United States has launched unilateral air strikes or commando raids abroad in countries such as Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan to kill or capture suspected members of terrorist organizations. Unilateral U.S. military action in defense of perceived vital interests is unlikely to disappear in the future. President Barack Obama recently declared that in line with previous American presidents, he will “never hesitate to use [the American] military swiftly, decisively, and unilaterally” to defend the American people, their homeland, and their allies.\textsuperscript{378}


\textsuperscript{375} Undoubtedly involving NATO assets in such complex operations would have imposed tangible costs on the U.S. in the short run.

\textsuperscript{376} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010). See also Hoffmann, Chaos and Violence, p. 147.

\textsuperscript{377} Author interview with William B. Wood (January 25, 2011).

**U.S. unilateralism when long-term costs are widely anticipated to be low**

The theory laid out in this chapter has one further implication. Even in the absence of perceived vital threats to U.S. national security, the United States is likely to intervene militarily overseas without seeking the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs, provided that two conditions apply: (a) there is a broad coalition of senior U.S. policy officials, crucially including the president, that is committed to armed intervention; and (b) U.S. military leaders, including the JCS and the commander of the relevant regional command, expect that the prospective intervention will not result in a costly entanglement and open-ended troop commitment overseas.

In the absence of vital threats to American national security, both conditions are necessary, and together they are sufficient, to produce a U.S. unilateral intervention.

When the military leaders do not anticipate long-term entanglements and costly troop deployments for counterinsurgency, peacekeeping, and stabilization, they can be expected to put up little resistance, in the face of a strong push for armed intervention from senior civilian policy officials. Hence under such circumstances, the administration’s civilian hard-liners do not need to reassure the military brass that the long-term costs of intervention will be limited, by among other things seeking to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs. Put differently, when senior U.S. policy officials—crucially including the military—do not anticipate a protracted troop deployment, the predominant view in Washington is likely to be that the policy payoffs of multilateralism are negligible, given that long-term international buy-in is unnecessary.

Consequently, the administration as a whole can be expected to conclude that the costs of obtaining an explicit IO endorsement, in terms of protracted diplomacy, possible side-payments, and constraints on U.S. freedom of action are unacceptably high. As a result, for quick in-and-out missions, such as missile strikes, air raids, commando operations, and more generally for
interventions anticipated to be limited in time and scope, the United States is likely to intervene unilaterally or with only ad-hoc coalitions of allies:

**Hypothesis 9** (unilateralism for limited operations): *In the absence of vital threats, the U.S. is likely to intervene without seeking IOs endorsement when (a) senior civilian policy officials, including the president, are committed to armed intervention, and (b) the military leaders do not anticipate a protracted and costly troop deployment.*

For instance, in the fall of 1989, President G.H.W. Bush and most of his senior civilian advisers became increasingly committed to a military intervention in Panama to oust local strongman Manuel Noriega from power. By December of that year, the Joint Chiefs, too, unanimously supported a unilateral U.S. intervention, although it was far from clear that vital American interests were at stake. The military leaders crucially anticipated that the operation would be limited and was unlikely to result in a long-term entanglement: in fact, the expectation was that a friendlier new government would take office in Panama “within hours” of the initial American landing, allowing most U.S. forces to be withdrawn soon thereafter.379 Given the expectation of low operational costs and the prospect of a swift and successful completion of the mission, the lack of international legitimacy and support was not a concern.380

Similarly, between 1991 and 2003, three successive U.S. administrations conducted numerous air strikes against Iraq to police two no-fly zones aimed at protecting the country’s Kurdish population in the North and the Shi’a population in the South. These were essentially humanitarian missions, with no vital U.S. national interests at stake. But although the UK (and until 1996, France) participated in those operations on an ad-hoc basis, there was never an

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379 Powell, *My American Journey*, pp. 422-24. The immediate post-conflict transition was still somewhat chaotic, partially because General Maxwell R. Thurman, the responsible SOUTHCOM Commander, had been overly optimistic and thus had not adequately planned for the task. See William Flavin, “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success,” *Parameters*, Autumn 2003, pp. 108-09.

380 The JCS and other administration leaders correctly anticipated that the intervention would be “roundly condemned by people in the international community;” and in fact the UN General Assembly and the OAS formally censured the United States. Author interview with Colin Powell (February 2, 2011).
explicit SC authorization for enforcing the no-fly zones. Boutros-Boutros Ghali, who served as UN Secretary-General from 1992 to 1996, confirms that the no-fly zones over Iraq were “imposed unilaterally by the United States and its allies.” Also, in 1993, 1996, and 1998 the Clinton administration carried out more substantial air strikes against Iraq without explicit UN authorization. As I seek to demonstrate in chapter six, Washington could probably have obtained explicit SC authorizations for each of those interventions, including for the Clinton administration’s significant bombing campaign against Iraq in 1998, code-named Operation Desert Fox—provided that the United States had been willing to pay the necessary price in terms of protracted international negotiations and side-payments to other Council members such as Russia and France. However, the military leaders readily supported the air strikes against Iraq, based on the expectation that no American ground troops would be drawn into the conflict, and thus the lack of explicit IO endorsement was never a major concern in Washington.

In many regards, a similar dynamic occurred leading up to the 2003 Iraq war. During the course of 2002, President Bush and several of his top civilian advisors became increasingly committed to overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime by military force. The expectation among hard-line advocates of armed intervention, such as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and his collaborators, was that the military operation would be short and impose no major burden on American troops. Hence the hard-liners felt it unnecessary and indeed counterproductive to

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382 The 1993 strike was in retaliation for an alleged Iraqi attempt to assassinate former President G.H.W. Bush. In 1996, the U.S. cruise missiles hit Iraq’s southern regions in retaliation for Iraqi attacks on the Kurdish population in the North. The 1998 strikes, code-named Operation Desert Fox, were ostensibly aimed at degrading Iraq’s military capability. Malone, *The International Struggle*, pp. 100, 160; Wedgwood, p. 180; and Ghali, pp. 296-97.

383 Author interviews with Walter B. Slocombe (March 9, 2010).

384 Although some U.S. leaders, such as Vice President Richard Cheney, also believed at the time that vital U.S. interests were at stake.
invest precious time and resources into seeking to obtain an explicit UN endorsement, aimed at locking in international support.

Senior U.S. military planners, for their part, had significant doubts about the hard-liners’ rosy assumptions on the postwar transition and cautioned that a long-term troop commitment would be needed, which in turn made broad international support highly desirable in their eyes. This analysis was also shared by Secretary of State Powell, the Bush administration’s leading war veteran, who explicitly recommended that the president seek to obtain a UN endorsement for armed intervention. On that occasion, however, the nation’s top military authorities, Generals Richard Myers and Peter Pace, respectively the chairman and vice chairman of the JCS, as well as CENTCOM commander Tommy Franks, were for various reasons closely aligned with the administration’s civilian hawks and never openly challenged the hard-liners’ exceedingly optimistic assumptions about postwar Iraq. In the absence of strongly voiced skepticism or outright opposition to armed intervention from the top military brass, the American effort to seek a UN endorsement was always half-hearted, and it was completely abandoned in early 2003, as it became clear that the SC was unwilling to hastily rubber-stamp a U.S. invasion aimed at changing a foreign political regime.

**Figure 7: Hypothesized causal pathways to U.S. unilateralism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Activist policy officials, including the president, push for intervention. +</th>
<th>Activist policy officials do not need to reassure military leaders that long-term costs of intervention will be limited (Positive payoffs of multilateralism will appear negligible, and its costs exceedingly high).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Military leaders believe that vital U.S. national interests are at stake (e.g. Afghanistan 2001).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Activist policy officials, including the president, push for intervention. +</td>
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[*Or do not challenge the optimistic assumptions of civilian authorities.*]
Observable implications of the theory

My principal hypothesis is that U.S. multilateralism for military interventions is frequently the outcome of significant bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining in Washington between hawkish civilian leaders who emphasize the likely positive payoffs of a prompt use of force, on the one side, and skeptical officials—with the top military brass and war veterans in senior policy positions at the forefront—who highlight the potential downsides and long-term costs of armed intervention, on the other. The theory implies that relevant bureaucratic players should modify their preferences and policy stances over time, as a result of mutual persuasion and strategic adjustment.

Specifically, in those cases where the U.S. ultimately obtains the advance endorsement of relevant IOs, the bureaucratic game should evolve roughly as follows. First, in the face of a foreign crisis, there should be some evidence of activist civilian policy leaders pushing for armed intervention, initially without much concern for IO endorsement, or even expressing open aversion to multilateralism. That initial push for (unilateral) intervention should result in expressions of skepticism or opposition on the part of the military brass and its bureaucratic allies, based on their belief that no vital U.S. national interests are at stake that would warrant the anticipated open-ended troop deployment. Only thereafter, hawkish civilian officials seek to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs, in view of reassuring the military and forging a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of armed intervention. Finally, once IO endorsement has been obtained, the military leaders, in turn, should visibly change their attitude towards intervention and offer at least their tacit assent. The strongest type of evidence for my theory would consist in subsequent acknowledgments by activist senior officials that overcoming the military’s opposition to armed intervention was in fact among the administration’s principal reasons for
seeking IO approval in the first place. In short, to test my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism for military interventions, it will be crucial to identify the preferences of relevant bureaucratic players at different times in the policy process, seeking to determine whether the temporal evolution of those preferences actually matches the evolution of the policy itself.
Chapter III:

Haiti, 1993-94: Securing a UN handoff before going in

In September 1994, the United States intervened militarily in Haiti to restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the nation’s exiled leader, to the presidency. Before launching the intervention, the administration of President William J. Clinton worked hard to obtain an explicit endorsement of military action through relevant IOs. After it became clear that a hemispheric mandate from the Organization of American States (OAS) would be unattainable, the administration concentrated its efforts on the UN Security Council. Obtaining a UN mandate for military action was exceedingly costly to the United States: it required a month-long international negotiation effort that involved logrolling bargains and strained relations with foreign partners. Furthermore, the publicly voiced international disagreements leading up to the UN vote significantly reduced the effectiveness of U.S. coercive diplomacy, making Washington less likely to achieve its objectives short of actual military intervention. The question I seek to answer, then, is the following: Why did the United States seek to garner multilateral approval through the UNSC? Or, to put it differently: What were the material or non-material benefits that senior administration officials anticipated from an explicit multilateral endorsement of military intervention?

The main argument of this chapter is that the U.S. military leaders, who were extremely skeptical of armed intervention and notably feared an open-ended commitment of American troops, drove the Washington policy process toward the SC in the summer of 1994. Activist policy officials on the NSC staff and at the State Department, who were pushing for military
intervention, did at first not worry about seeking any explicit multilateral endorsement for the use of force. However, the activists soon realized that in order to forge a large-enough bureaucratic coalition supporting armed intervention and persuade President Clinton to authorize the use of force, they needed among other things to reassure the military brass that a follow-on UN force would quickly take over responsibility for longer-term peacekeeping and stabilization, so that the majority of U.S. troops could be withdrawn. For that reason, activist policy officials agreed to seek a SC mandate for the use of force that also explicitly foresaw the establishment of a follow-on UN mission within a short time frame. While troops for the follow-on mission would still have to be subsequently recruited among member states, the authorizing SC resolution committed the United Nations to the process. That reassured the uniformed leaders that a viable exit strategy for American troops was available. Thus, the military brass reluctantly came on board behind the use of force. In short, working through the SC was part of a multipronged strategy on the part of advocates of military intervention in the Clinton administration aimed at reducing bureaucratic opposition to the use of force, notably from the military leaders and their allies in government.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows. I first provide a short overview of U.S. policy on Haiti during the years and months preceding the military intervention. Thereafter, I show in more detail that obtaining an explicit UNSC endorsement for the use of force entailed significant costs for the United States. In the central part of the chapter, I discuss how U.S. bureaucratic politics, and specifically deliberations and bargaining between the skeptical military leaders and activist civilian officials, drove the Washington policy process toward multilateralism. The chapter ends with an examination of two alternative hypotheses on U.S. multilateralism for the use of force derived from the scholarly literature. I first examine social-
constructivist theories, which in their strongest and most distinctive version claim that U.S. policy leaders have internalized norms of international legitimacy requiring multilateral endorsement as a matter of moral duty. Thereafter, I examine the argument that U.S. leaders seek the endorsement of relevant IOs in order to signal benign intentions to other states and thereby reduce the risk of costly international opposition, or “soft balancing,” against the United States.

1. Origins and evolution of the Haitian crisis

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a leftist Catholic priest, was elected to the presidency of Haiti in December 1990, with a staggering 67 percent of the popular vote. The Haitian people were eager for a radical break with decades of corrupt authoritarian rule. However, Haiti’s economic and military elites feared that the new radical president would put their wealth and political privileges in jeopardy. Aristide’s populism and his encouragement of violent street-mobs, as well as his firing of the entire military high command soon after his accession to power, did anything but reassure his domestic opponents. Thus, on September 29, 1991, Aristide was overthrown in a military coup, after having been in power for only eight months. The presidency was taken over by a military junta, headed by Lieutenant-General Raoul Cédras, whom Aristide himself had earlier appointed to the command of the Haitian army. Aristide was sent into exile and received political asylum in the United States.\(^{388}\)

*The Bush administration’s hands-off approach, 1991-1992*

The administration of President George H. W. Bush was initially quick to condemn the coup. On September 30, 1991 Secretary of State James Baker unambiguously declared at an emergency meeting of the OAS: “We do not and we will not recognize this outlaw regime. Until

President Aristide’s government is restored, this junta will be treated as a pariah throughout this hemisphere.” A few days later, however, the administration began to back away from unqualified support for Aristide, citing concerns over his human rights record and insisting that he “must publicly disavow mob violence and work toward sharing power with the Parliament.”

The U.S. military brass under JCS Chairman Colin Powell strongly opposed the possibility of an armed intervention, fearing a repeat of 1915, when a planned short-term deployment of Marines, aimed at reasserting political order in Haiti, turned into a protracted and costly American occupation that lasted until 1934. But there was more generally little enthusiasm for military intervention in the Bush administration. The view gradually took hold among senior administration officials that while efforts should be made to restore democracy in Haiti, Aristide himself ought not necessarily to be a part of the solution. The only senior U.S. official who kept pushing for Aristide’s return behind the scenes was Bernard “Bernie” Aronson, an avowed liberal internationalist who was serving as assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs at the time. Aronson repeatedly prodded the Joint Chiefs and the administration as a whole to consider a U.S. intervention to restore Aristide, but each time he was unambiguously rebuffed.

The political situation in Haiti and its humanitarian implications subsequently became an important topic in the 1992 U.S. presidential election campaign. Candidate William J. Clinton had chosen to single out Haiti as one of the few issues on which to criticize the Bush

392 Author interview with John Christiansen, OSD desk officer for the Caribbean region during the G.H.W. Bush administration (July 15, 2009).
administration’s foreign policy. For most of 1992, the Bush administration’s policy vis-à-vis Haiti had focused on intercepting Haitian boats carrying migrants headed for the United States on the high seas and returning all undocumented passengers. Clinton called the Bush administration’s forced repatriation of Haitian migrants “cruel” and “criminal” and pledged that if elected he would not be shipping those people back.\(^{393}\)

**Washington’s missed opportunity for a diplomatic solution in 1993**

Following Clinton’s election to the presidency, however, his engagement in favor of Haiti initially fell short of his vigorous campaign rhetoric. Fearing a massive influx of economic migrants from the Caribbean Island, the president-elect declared in January 1993 that the forced repatriation policy would temporarily remain in place.\(^{394}\) Thereafter, for most of 1993, the new administration pursued a low-key diplomatic effort vis-à-vis Haiti. Washington’s goal was to cajole the reluctant Haitian military rulers, on the one side, and an equally skeptical Aristide, on the other, into a power-sharing arrangement. The administration was engaged in a difficult balancing act: to satisfy Aristide’s liberal backers in the United States, it wanted to restore the deposed Haitian leader as quickly as possible; yet at the same time, to facilitate a political compromise among the Haitian parties and allay powerful Aristide skeptics at the Pentagon and

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in Congress, the administration’s policy was to bring Aristide back “in some way that significantly reduced his role, in fact, ideally, to that of a figurehead.”

By the summer of 1993, the Haitian crisis appeared to be close to a political solution. In late June and early July, during a week of intense negotiations between the Haitian parties held on Governor’s Island in New York City, U.S. and UN diplomats brokered a compromise agreement that foresaw Aristide’s restoration to the presidency of Haiti, in return for his agreement to nominate a new prime minister, issue an amnesty decree, and engage in a political dialogue with his domestic opponents. The agreement also crucially foresaw that a UN assistance mission would be deployed under American leadership, in view of retraining the Haitian army and establishing an independent police force. On September 23, in preparation for Aristide’s return, the SC authorized the deployment of the UN assistance mission in Haiti (UNMIH), to be composed of several hundred international police monitors, as well as military trainers and engineers. Although the international military and police trainers were to be only lightly armed, the UN special representative for Haiti, Dante Caputo, publicly referred to the prospective deployment as a “dissuasive force.” The UN resolution itself called UNMIH a “peace-keeping mission,” thus making for a somewhat ambivalent mandate.

395 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin, Haiti policy director on the NSC staff, 1993-94 (July 25, 2009). For a detailed account of the international mediation effort in the first half of 1993, see also Ralph Pezzullo, PLUNGING INTO HAITI (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), esp. pp. 61-7.


397 The full text of the Governor’s Island Agreement is reproduced in the UN Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly and the Security Council of July 12, 1993 (UN Doc. A/47/975-S/26063).

398 UN Security Council Resolution 867 (1993), see esp. paragraphs 1 and 5. On Caputo’s views, see Pezzullo, PLUNGING INTO HAITI, p. 182. The UN mission had the consent of Robert Malval, the new prime minister in Port-au-Prince who had been appointed by Aristide under the terms of the Governor’s Island Agreement. See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, LES NATIONS UNIES ET HAITI 1990-1996, UN Blue book series, volume XI (New York: UN Department of Public Information, 1996), p. 46-7.
In Washington, members of the military brass, who had never been enthusiastic about restoring Aristide in the first place, strongly resented the idea of sending lightly armed U.S. military trainers to Haiti with an ill-defined mandate that ostensibly aimed at “stopping bad things from happening just by their presence.” Pentagon fears about the prospective Haiti deployment were greatly exacerbated following an ambush in Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 3, 1993, when eighteen U.S. Army Rangers were killed, seventy-five were wounded, and one helicopter pilot was taken hostage in the context of a UN sanctioned peace-enforcement mission.

On the morning of October 11, 1993 the USS Harlan County, a navy ship carrying 200 lightly armed American soldiers and twenty-five Canadian military trainers that should have constituted the first sizeable contribution to the UN mission, arrived in the harbor of the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. The ship could not immediately dock, since its berth at the pier had been occupied by an old Cuban tanker. While the ship was waiting, a mob of drunken Haitian thugs, some of them armed, arrived at the pier. They started to jump around wildly, waving their arms, and screaming: “Somalia, Somalia!” The entire scene was broadcast live by American television crews that had arrived in Haiti to document the arrival of the Harlan County. There was no immediate threat to American lives, and the thugs would probably have dispersed at the first sign of U.S. assertiveness. However, under pressure from a risk-averse Pentagon, and following the recommendation of his closest political advisors, President Clinton ordered the Harlan County

399 Author interview with Michael Kozak, U.S. deputy special advisor on Haiti, 1993-94 (June 24, 2009).

400 Author interview with John Christiansen, Director of the OSD Haiti task group, U.S. Department of Defense, 1993-97 (July 15, 2009).


The \textit{Harlan County} incident seriously damaged the Clinton administration’s international credibility. As one of the president’s closest foreign-policy advisors candidly admits, “that image came to symbolize the weakness of the Clinton foreign policy— an image that came to represent his early presidency.”\footnote{Nancy Soderberg, \textit{The Superpower Myth: The Use and Misuse of American Might} (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006), p. 44.} But at least in the short run, it was in Haiti itself that the image of American soldiers retreating at the slightest sign of resistance had its most deleterious effect. The incident significantly undermined the administration’s diplomatic leverage toward the Haitian de facto rulers. As a former State Department envoy recalls, after the \textit{Harlan County} incident, “a negotiated solution to bring Aristide back to power had practically no chance of succeeding.”\footnote{Author interview with Michael Kozak (June 23, 2009).}

\textbf{Why President Clinton authorized a military intervention in 1994}

The military junta led by General Cédras was ruling Haiti with an iron fist. However, there was no widespread starvation or large-scale violence against civilians on the Caribbean island in 1993 and 1994 that might have warranted a humanitarian military intervention. Nor was the political situation in Haiti of major strategic importance to the United States. Why, then, did President Clinton authorize a U.S. military intervention in September 1994 aimed at restoring Aristide? For several weeks in late 1993 and early 1994, with diplomacy at a standstill following the \textit{Harlan County} incident, the NSC in Washington discussed the possibility of restoring democracy in Haiti without Aristide. As one former administration official recalls, such a
political compromise appeared to be the only solution left, short of a U.S. military intervention: "The dynamic was becoming, get rid of Cédras, get rid of his military dictatorship, and then hold national elections without Aristide".\footnote{Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009). See also Soderberg, The Superpower Myth, p. 46; and Gwen Ifill, “U.S. Reassess Support for Haiti’s Exiled President,” New York Times, January 6, 1994.}

However, in the spring of 1994, Aristide himself moved on to the political offensive. On February 8, 1994, he publicly criticized the U.S. practice of forced repatriation of migrants, comparing it to a "floating Berlin Wall."\footnote{Steven Greenhouse, “Clinton-Aristide Ties Worsen Amid New Dispute,” New York Times, February 10, 1994.} Several weeks later, he stepped up the pressure by giving the Clinton administration six months’ notice of termination of a 1981 bilateral agreement that allowed the U.S. to automatically repatriate Haitian migrants.\footnote{Aristide had a group of experienced congressional lobbyists and political strategists working for him, whose services he could afford thanks to his access to millions of U.S. dollars in seized Haitian government funds. See Philippe Girard, “Haitian payments to U.S. lobbying firms and lawyers,” in Id., Clinton in Haiti: The 1994 U.S. Invasion of Haiti (London: Palgrave, 2004), p. 177; see also Pezzullo, Plunging into Haiti, p. 229.} Aristide’s U.S. domestic political backers also began to mobilize in his favor. In late March, Aristide supporters in the Hollywood community, the U.S. Congress, and the human rights NGO world began to strongly criticize the Clinton administration’s policy on Haiti. Movie stars and producers such as Julia Roberts, Robin Williams, Paul Newman, and Jonathan Demme turned up the heat on the administration through several open letters and public statements. Furthermore, the pro-Aristide lobby in Congress made its influence increasingly felt: liberal congressmen such as Joseph Kennedy, and especially the Congressional Black Caucus, which had recently grown in size and political clout, began pressing the administration to change its policy on Haiti, hinting that there was an underlying racial prejudice in Clinton’s forced repatriation of (black) Haitian migrants.\footnote{Author interview with Major Owens, Head of the Congressional Black Caucus Haiti task force, 1993-94 (July 12, 2009). See also Kweisi Mfume, No Free Ride (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), p. 343.}

Finally, in April 1994 Randall Robinson, executive director of Trans Africa, an influential
human-rights lobby group, attained high visibility through a protracted hunger strike directed against the administration’s Haiti policy. Robinson did not mince his words, calling the U.S. practice of forced repatriation “cruel,… and profoundly racist.”

To defuse the political pressure, in early May the administration chose to strengthen economic sanctions, supporting the adoption of a UNSC resolution that banned all non-commercial flights to Haiti and imposed a near-total trade embargo. Washington also changed its policy on Haitian migrants. On May 8, President Clinton announced that U.S. immigration processing centers would soon be set up on American ships anchored off the Haitian coast or in nearby Caribbean countries, so that henceforth no Haitian would be repatriated without being given a chance to make the case for asylum. The administration expected that the number of Haitian refugees actually admitted to the United States would increase only marginally. However, over the next several weeks, the numbers of Haitian boat people seeking to reach the United States virtually exploded. That greatly increased the leverage of activist policy officials in Washington who were calling for a resolution of the crisis through military force. From mid-June to early July 1994, close to 15,000 Haitian migrants were picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard. The processing system at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, was soon overwhelmed.

Strobe Talbott, at the time the deputy U.S. secretary of state, acknowledges that the economic

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410 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009). See also Lake, Six Nightmares, pp. 132-4. On the international sanctions, see also Malone, Decision-Making in the UN Security Council, pp. 105ff; and Boutros-Ghali, Les Nations Unies et Haïti, p. 58.


412 In a desperate attempt to keep Haitian boat people out of the United States, the administration hastily sought to persuade Panama and several Caribbean countries to temporarily accept Haitian migrants; but the policy that was only partially successful and could have offered only short-term relief. See Tom Masland, “Should We Invade Haiti?” Newsweek, July 18, 1994; see also Michael R. Gordon, “Standoff in Haiti: U.S. Strategy; U.S. Troops Stage Military Exercise with Eye on Haiti,” New York Times, July 7, 1994; and Pezzullo, Plunging Into Haiti, p. 259.
migrants were “frankly one of the reasons why [American forces] had to go in. The refugee issue was getting totally out of control, and where we didn’t want them coming was Florida. That was a big driver here.”

Finally, by the summer of 1994, Clinton’s lackluster foreign-policy performance was increasingly affecting his overall political standing among the American people. There had been the disaster in Somalia in October 1993, followed by the Harlan County debacle. Furthermore, U.S. policy towards Bosnia was deadlocked, and most recently the world’s only superpower had failed to intervene in the Rwandan genocide in the spring of 1994, as an estimated 800,000 died in one of the worst instances of ethnic violence of the twentieth century. These images of American weakness or outright inaction in the face of large-scale human rights violations abroad were particularly costly for a Democratic administration that had abundantly relied on values-based internationalist rhetoric to legitimize its foreign policy. With congressional midterm elections scheduled for November 1994, national security heavyweights associated with the Republican Party, such as Henry Kissinger, James Baker, and Richard Cheney, were calling into question the administration’s competence to effectively tackle some of the most pressing international challenges of the day.

Thus, quite apart from the refugee challenge, the administration had strong political incentives to try to find a solution to the Haitian crisis, by using force if necessary. After all, the Haitian problem appeared to be one of the most tractable foreign policy conundrums the

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413 Author interview with Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State, 1994-2001 (July 9, 2009).
administration was facing, compared with the situations in North Korea, Bosnia, Rwanda, or Iraq. Senior White House advisors had long convinced themselves that a forcible removal of the Haitian military junta was not only feasible, but that it would indeed be relatively easy.\textsuperscript{416} Richard Feinberg, at the time a senior NSC staffer dealing with inter-American affairs, offers a candid assessment of the administration’s political calculus:

Looking strategically around the world, in 1993-94, what did we see? Frustration in Somalia, frustration in Bosnia; North Korea being difficult — and we couldn’t bring any of these difficult problems to a solution. We were frustrated everywhere, and there were the upcoming midterm elections. The White House was thinking: we need at a minimum to show that we can remove one of these frustrations from the table.\textsuperscript{417}

Yet in spite of these strong political incentives to act, President Clinton himself hesitated for most of the summer to authorize U.S. military action. The president was fully aware that after Somalia, his administration could ill afford another botched military operation.\textsuperscript{418} Most importantly, with no domestic consensus that vital American interests were involved, the president was unwilling to authorize the use of force in the face of serious concerns from the Pentagon leadership and the military establishment in particular. Hence Clinton waited until the end of the summer, and he authorized a U.S. military intervention—Operation Uphold Democracy—only on August 26, 1994, once the United States had obtained an explicit SC endorsement and most of the Pentagon’s concerns had been effectively addressed.\textsuperscript{419}

\textsuperscript{416} Author interview with Lawrence Pezzullo (June 24, 2009).
\textsuperscript{417} Author interview with Richard Feinberg, Senior director for Inter-American affairs on the NSC staff, 1993-96 (June 22, 2009).
\textsuperscript{418} Author interview with Leon Fuerth, National Security Adviser to the Vice President, 1993-2001 (March 9, 2010).
\textsuperscript{419} Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).
2. The costs of U.S. multilateralism on Haiti

One obvious regional IO that the United States might have lobbied for an endorsement of military intervention in Haiti was the OAS. The OAS had in fact been deeply involved in managing the Haitian crisis from early on: the OAS Permanent Council unanimously condemned the Cédras coup one day after it took place, on September 30, 1991, and the OAS foreign ministers subsequently called for the imposition of tough multilateral sanctions against the de facto regime. Moreover, following intense U.S. lobbying, at a meeting held in Belem, Brazil, in June 1994, the OAS formally endorsed a strengthening of the planned UN peacekeeping and training mission for Haiti. However, leading up to the invasion, senior Clinton administration officials understood that most Latin American states would be unable to straightforwardly endorse a U.S. military intervention in the hemisphere. Washington would have had to obtain a two-thirds majority vote on the OAS Permanent Council, making for a high threshold. Harriet Babbitt, the U.S. permanent representative to the OAS at the time, suggests that it would have been “unthinkable” to obtain an explicit OAS endorsement of the intervention and subsequently bring in an OAS peacekeeping force under American leadership, because “there is too much history, too much precedent of unwelcome [U.S.] intervention” in the hemisphere. Therefore,


422 Author interview with Harriett Babbitt, U.S. permanent representative to the OAS, 1993-97 (July 7, 2009). Richard Feinberg, former NSC Senior Director for Latin America, and Alexander F. Watson, former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, confirmed this assessment during interviews with the author, held respectively on June 22 and June 23, 2009.
the Clinton administration chose to look elsewhere for an explicit IO endorsement of its military intervention in Haiti and focused its efforts on the UNSC in New York.

Obtaining an explicit SC endorsement for the use of force involved a high cost to the United States. First, it required a sustained diplomatic effort that delayed the intervention by several weeks and constrained U.S. freedom of action. Second, Washington had to engage in significant bargaining and international logrolling, notably with Russia, which arguably negatively affected broader U.S. strategic interests beyond the hemisphere. Finally, the lengthy UN deliberations produced a number of often conflicting public statements by various foreign capitals. The resulting cacophony of voices undermined U.S. coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis the Haitian military rulers, arguably making a peaceful resolution of the crisis more difficult during the final weeks preceding the intervention.

It took the Clinton administration more than one month to secure an explicit mandate authorizing military intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Madeleine Albright, the U.S. permanent representative to the UN at the time, remembers that she “spent most of July 1994 persuading the Security Council to authorize the use of ‘all necessary means’—code for force—to restore Haitian democracy.” Albright’s first challenge in the summer of 1994 was to convince UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, with whom she notoriously had a rocky relationship, to support the intervention.

The UN Secretary-General of course had to accept any decision by the Security Council, the UN’s supreme body on matters of international peace and security. However, any less-than-wholehearted cooperation on Boutros-Ghali’s part would have made a positive vote at the SC more difficult to achieve, and it might subsequently have increased frictions during the

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implementation phase. Thus, the Clinton administration and Ambassador Albright in particular took Boutros-Ghali’s concerns very seriously and partially revised U.S. intervention plans to gain his acquiescence. Washington’s preferred solution would have been for the SC not only to authorize the use of force, but to actually establish a large blue-helmeted UN peacekeeping mission for Haiti soon after the initial combat phase, so as to quickly relieve the bulk of American troops.\footnote{424} However, Boutros-Ghali and his staff were fundamentally opposed to quickly bringing in a UN blue helmet mission after the U.S. invasion.

The Secretary-General thought that the United Nations simply did not have the logistical capacities to organize such a complex stabilization mission within the short timeframe laid out by the United States. Furthermore, Washington insisted on commanding the entire operation, and Boutros-Ghali was concerned that a UN mission under American command and with a high proportion of U.S. troops, deployed in the United States’ own regional backyard, would have tarnished the reputation of UN peacekeepers for independence from great-power political interests.\footnote{425} Hence the Clinton administration and the UN secretariat agreed on a compromise solution: following the initial U.S. military intervention, an interim multi-national force (MNF) would be quickly deployed under American leadership. The MNF, while authorized by the SC, would remain under complete U.S. command and control, and it would be funded exclusively through U.S. government funds and ad-hoc contributions from other participating countries. Only after several months, once a “secure and stable environment” had been reestablished on the ground, would a formal UN follow-on mission take over peacekeeping responsibilities in


\footnote{425} Alain Frachon, “L’administration Clinton semble prête à intervenir militairement,” \textit{Le Monde}, July 15, 1994. See also Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, pp. 157-8
Haiti. Thus, in the short run, Washington would have to shoulder most of the military and financial burden and practically all of the related political risk.

**Persuading China and Brazil to abstain at the Security Council**

The next challenge for the Clinton administration consisted in actually convincing the Security Council, and especially the other four veto-wielding permanent members (China, Russia, Great Britain, and France), to endorse the aforementioned compromise agreement and authorize a U.S.-led military intervention. The most recalcitrant SC members at the time were China, Russia, and Brazil. They all initially opposed a U.S. military intervention aimed at restoring Aristide, although for different reasons. The Chinese government was actively opposed to Aristide, given that the latter had officially recognized Taiwan during his short-lived presidency in 1991; and there was significant concern that China might in fact have vetoed any resolution authorizing the use of force to restore him to office. For more than two years following the September 1991 coup, Chinese opposition at the SC had prevented the adoption of any resolution condemning the de facto regime in Haiti.

The Brazilian government, for its part, was opposed to U.S. military intervention in the western hemisphere as a matter of principle. At an OAS foreign ministers’ meeting held in early June 1994, the Brazilian representative reiterated his government’s firm commitment to the search for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Finally, Russia had no intrinsic interest either in Haiti or in U.S. policy in the western hemisphere. However, the Yeltsin government held a

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428 OAS, Réunion ad hoc de ministros de relaciones exteriores (Haiti), Acta de la séptima sesión, June 6, 1994 (OEA/Ser. F/V.1; MRE/ACTA 7/94), p. 31.
grudge against the United States at the time, due to the Clinton administration’s recent unwillingness to support a UN mandate for Russia’s own military intervention in Georgia, and thus a positive Russian vote appeared in turn unlikely.  

For all of the aforementioned reasons, it was anything but certain in the summer of 1994 that a SC mandate authorizing a U.S. military intervention in Haiti could actually be obtained. Yet the Chinese government, while strongly opposed to Aristide, had little interest in Haiti as such or in the politics of the western hemisphere more generally. Throughout the early 1990s, China had kept a low profile at the SC. On the occasion of several previous UN votes concerning the international use of force, the Chinese representative had spoken out for non-intervention in principle, while subsequently abstaining on the relevant votes authorizing U.S.-led military action in Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia. In the summer of 1994, realizing that the Clinton administration was increasingly committed to a military intervention in Haiti, Chinese pragmatism again prevailed. The Chinese government signaled its willingness to abstain on the crucial SC vote, provided that the UN Latin American caucus was not uniformly opposed to the prospect of U.S. military intervention.  

Undoubtedly, the Chinese government perceived a strong self-interest in upholding good bilateral relations with the U.S. at a time of growing economic interdependence. Also, the U.S. was able to allay Chinese fears about setting a precedent for pro-democracy intervention, by inserting an explicit passage in the UN resolution

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emphasizing the “unique character” of the situation in Haiti and its “extraordinary nature, requiring an exceptional response.”

Brazilian authorities made it clear that they would vote against any explicit authorization of U.S. military action, unless Aristide, the elected president of Haiti, was going to explicitly call for a deployment of American troops. The prospect of a negative vote from Brazil was particularly worrisome, because it would in turn have made a Chinese veto very likely. But Aristide was reluctant to be seen as explicitly calling for a U.S. intervention, which he feared might delegitimize him in the eyes of the Haitian people. As late as June 1994, he said he would “never, never, and never again” agree to be restored by a U.S. invasion. With Aristide’s endorsement remaining in question, the Brazilian government was subjected to strong bilateral diplomatic pressure from Washington. Several leading officials from the Clinton administration, including senior NSC staffer Richard Feinberg and Undersecretary of State Peter Tarnoff, traveled to Brasilia to deliver not-so-veiled threats that good relations with the U.S. and increasing economic integration should not be taken for granted. Ultimately, Aristide himself offered a vague endorsement of military action on July 29, only hours before the scheduled SC vote. That, combined with significant lobbying on the part of Washington, convinced Brazil,

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434 Quoted in Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 159.


436 The Haitian ambassador to the UN further assured everyone that Aristide did in fact explicitly support the draft resolution. See Boutros-Ghali, in Les Nations Unies et Haïti, p. 62; and Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 159.
and by implication, China, to abstain on the crucial SC vote—although both countries let it be known in public that they remained skeptical of the planned intervention. 437

**Washington’s logrolling bargain with the Russians**

The Clinton administration had to pay a greater cost to obtain Russia’s cooperation at the SC. The Russians, as former Ambassador Albright recalls, “didn’t care much about what [the U.S.] did in Haiti, but they were determined to play a little diplomatic poker.” 438 The Russian ambassador, Yuli Vorontsov, told Albright that Moscow’s support at the SC for the planned U.S. intervention would depend on Washington’s endorsement of a similar UN mandate for Russian “peacekeepers” that had been deployed in the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia earlier that year. 439 Moscow appeared quite determined not to budge on this issue. 440

Thus, following some intense backroom diplomacy, the United States and Russia agreed to accommodate each other’s respective concerns: on July 21, the U.S. endorsed a SC resolution that commended and welcomed “the contribution made by the Russian Federation,… of a peacekeeping force” in Georgia. Ten days later, Russia reciprocated by supporting the draft resolution authorizing the use of “all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership,… [and] the prompt return of the legitimately elected President.” 441 Furthermore, given that the Clinton administration had insisted on independent UN monitoring of Russian troops in Georgia, the Yeltsin government required that UN observers also supervise the U.S.-led

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438 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 158.
439 Ibid.
440 Author interview with David Malone, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN in New York, 1993-94 (December 8, 2009)
multinational force in Haiti.\textsuperscript{442} This logrolling bargain was reminiscent of nineteenth-century diplomacy and appeared to many like a revival of the classical spheres-of-influence approach to international relations: it was harshly criticized in the international press; it legitimized Russia’s continued military interference in Central Asia, arguably undermining U.S. interests in the region; and it probably encouraged the Russians to more assertively defend their own interests at the UN, after an interlude of relative passivity on their part in the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{443}

\textit{The cacophony of international voices undermines Washington’s coercive leverage}

The aforementioned diplomatic efforts and bargains, which put significant strain on U.S. bilateral relations with important partners, do not exhaust the costs that the Clinton administration had to pay for its multilateral approach. The UN negotiations on Haiti, by exposing serious international divisions, also appear to have undermined the effectiveness of U.S. coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis the Haitian de facto rulers. Robert Malval, who served as Haiti’s interim prime minister at the time, points out that for most of the spring and early summer of 1994, the de facto rulers in Port-au-Prince drew comfort from China’s well-known anti-Aristide stance and Russia’s publicly declared skepticism about military intervention in Haiti. The military junta concluded that the UN would never authorize the use of force, and therefore American threats of military intervention should not be taken seriously.\textsuperscript{444}

Even as it became clear that the SC would in fact endorse the use of force in late July, a significant number of Latin American states remained opposed to the prospect of U.S. military


\textsuperscript{443} James Bone, “U.S. and Russia broker Haiti invasion deal,” \textit{The Times} (London), August 1, 1994; see also “L’ONU autorise les Etats-Unis à intervenir en Haïti: un précédent,” \textit{Le Monde}, August 2, 1994.

intervention, and their leaders said so in public. The representatives of Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Nicaragua spoke out against the draft resolution at a meeting of the UN Latin American caucus (Grulac) shortly before the vote. After the resolution was actually adopted, the aforementioned states all remained opposed, and they were now joined by Peru and Bolivia in publicly condemning the prospective invasion.\textsuperscript{445} This image of half-hearted international support, combined with the Clinton administration’s strong multilateralist rhetoric, seems to have persuaded the Haitian de facto rulers that U.S. threats of military intervention should not be taken too seriously.\textsuperscript{446} Paradoxically, if the United States had clearly signaled its disregard for multilateralism and announced its intention to intervene unilaterally from the outset, the threat of military action would have been more credible, and Washington might have been able to broker a political compromise agreement without actually having to deploy large numbers of combat troops.

3. U.S. multilateralism as the result of bureaucratic politics

On July 31, 1994, the UNSC adopted Resolution 940, which authorized the use of force aimed at restoring Aristide to the Haitian presidency. The foregoing discussion, however, has shown that obtaining a formal multilateral endorsement involved significant costs to the United States. Why, then, did Washington pursue such an endorsement in the first place?

I hypothesize that the Clinton administration’s efforts to seek a SC endorsement for its military intervention in Haiti were the result of sustained bureaucratic deliberations and

\textsuperscript{445} Malone, \textit{Decision-Making in the UN Security Council}, p. 109; Statement by the permanent mission of Peru to the OAS, addressed to the chairman of the OAS Permanent Council, August 4, 1994; and letter by the permanent mission of Bolivia to the OAS, addressed to the OAS Secretary General, August 5, 1994.

\textsuperscript{446} Malval, \textit{L’Année de toutes les duperies}, p. 475; see also Afsane Bassir Pour and Alain Frachon, “En dépit d’une forte opposition des pays d’Amérique latine le Conseil la sécurité de l’ONU autorise les États-Unis à intervenir en Haïti,” \textit{Le Monde}, August 2, 1994.
bargaining in Washington. The U.S. not only obtained an explicit SC endorsement for the use of force in July 1994—the authorizing resolution also expressly foresaw that the United States would hand off primary responsibility for maintaining a “secure and stable environment” in Haiti to a follow-on UN force within a short time frame. That offered the prospect of a quick exit for the majority of American troops and could be expected to limit American liability. Based on my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism, I expect that supporters of military intervention at the White House and the State Department sought to obtain precisely such an explicit SC endorsement with a built-in mechanism for a UN handoff, in order to reassure their skeptical administration colleagues, notably from the Pentagon, and thereby forge an interagency consensus on the use of force.

Supposing that U.S. bureaucratic deliberations and bargaining in fact largely determined the Clinton administration’s effort to obtain a formal multilateral mandate for the use of force in 1994, one ought to be able to observe the following political dynamics. First, there should be evidence of activist policy leaders in Washington initially pushing for armed intervention without much regard for multilateral endorsement, and possibly counseling against efforts to obtain it, based on the fear that it might unnecessarily constrain the United States. Second, other senior U.S. policy officials, notably the military leaders and their bureaucratic allies, should at first have viewed the prospect of armed intervention with great skepticism, based on the fear that American troops might get bogged down in an open-ended and costly stabilization effort unwarranted by the low U.S. interests at stake. Furthermore, as the policy debate in Washington evolved and the political pressure toward military intervention increased, the skeptics should have stepped up their opposition in the internal bureaucratic debates, as well as possibly in public. They should have made it clear that they would only support the use of force if specific
reassurances were obtained before the launch of offensive operations that international allies and partners would subsequently share the burden of peacekeeping and stabilization in Haiti.

Faced with such staunch bureaucratic resistance, the administration’s leading activists should in turn have realized that obtaining an explicit IO endorsement for military intervention, along with a specific commitment from the UN to establish a follow-on peacekeeping mission soon after the invasion, would help reassure the skeptical military leaders and overcome their opposition. Put differently, the timing of successive steps in U.S. policy planning and implementation should confirm that interagency disagreements within the administration largely drove the overall U.S. effort to obtain an explicit SC mandate for the intervention. If in addition to that, former senior administration officials who advocated the use of force acknowledged that bureaucratic politics and interagency disagreements indeed largely drove the administration’s effort to multilateralize the policy, that would further support for my theory.

**Bureaucratic disagreements on the use of force**

It is well known that international affairs were not a priority for President Clinton.\(^{447}\) Seeking to be “internationalist on the cheap,” the president typically resisted escalating America’s commitment to foreign crises until they had become a domestic political liability, and even then he rarely took a decisive lead and usually left it to his senior advisors to set the course of U.S. policy. This pronounced lack of presidential leadership resulted in an overall weak and reactive foreign policy, marked by frequent bureaucratic infighting and intense competition

\(^{447}\) Political strategist David Gergen, who has worked for a number of administrations of different ideological persuasion, thinks that most American presidents typically spend about 60 percent of their time on foreign policy; but Clinton, because of his lack of interest, brought it down in the early years of his administration to 25 percent. Quoted in David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 242.
among various agencies and senior officials, who sought to convince the president that their preferred course of action was worth pursuing at the expense of alternative options.448

Interagency disagreements and bureaucratic infighting were especially pronounced over the Haitian crisis of 1993-94. The president was largely uninterested in Haiti throughout his first year in office, notwithstanding his strong statements on the plight of Haitians during the 1992 presidential election campaign. For most of 1993, the administration’s policy vis-à-vis Haiti was limited to the imposition of economic sanctions and a low-key diplomatic effort aimed at brokering a political compromise solution. In October of that year, Clinton himself did not even participate in the crucial policy debates that led to a hasty withdrawal of the Harlan County, the U.S. navy ship bound for Haiti carrying American and Canadian military and police trainers.449 In subsequent months, under pressure from a powerful pro-Aristide lobby in Congress and U.S. civil society, President Clinton progressively escalated America’s commitment to the restoration of Aristide to office, until military intervention increasingly appeared the least bad solution. However, as former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali pointedly recalls, leading up to the intervention “the State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA each seemed to have its own position and to be conducting its own policy in Haiti.”450 Boutros-Ghali should probably have added the NSC staff, which under Lake’s guidance played a leading role on U.S. policy vis-à-vis Haiti and consistently advocated a force-based strategy from the spring of 1993 onwards.

Already during one of the administration’s first NSC meetings in March 1993, Lake raised the possibility of a U.S. military intervention to restore Aristide to office.451 Subsequently

450 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 199.
451 Author interview with Lawrence Pezzullo (June 24, 2009). See also Nancy Soderberg, The Superpower Myth (New York: Wiley, 2005), p. 46; Pezzullo, Plunging into Haiti, p. 9; and Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 157.
Lake and his staff, notably his deputies Samuel Berger and Nancy Soderberg and Haiti policy director Lawrence Rossin, became increasingly convinced that no meaningful progress would be possible unless the U.S. clearly put the threat of military force on the table. Lake and his fellow interventionists on the NSC staff initially did not worry at all about the need to obtain multilateral endorsement for U.S. military action. As Rossin explains, “dealing with Lake and Berger, I don’t remember that they ever agonized over whether or not there was international approval for this intervention.”

In October 1993, when the Harlan County was met by protesting Haitian thugs at the Port-au-Prince harbor, Lake explicitly called for a U.S. display of force to disperse the Haitian thugs and land the American and Canadian trainers. While skeptical officials in Washington feared that the result would have been a unilateral U.S. invasion of Haiti, Lake bemoans in his memoirs that at the time “there was little—too little—debate in our meetings about whether to use force to compel Cédras’ compliance.”

Subsequently, from about March 1994 onward, Lake became increasingly outspoken in his advocacy of U.S. armed intervention aimed at restoring Aristide to power. However, until the late summer of that year, the president remained unwilling to follow Lake’s advice, mainly due to strongly voiced skepticism about any use-of-force option from the Joint Chiefs and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Pentagon’s civilian policy branch. “It’s not like there was a great deal of enthusiasm for this in the bureaucracy,” Rossin recalls with diplomatic

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452 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009). Lawrence Pezzullo confirmed the same conclusion in an interview with the author on June 24, 2009.


454 Lake, Six Nightmares, p. 131; see also Soderberg, The Superpower Myth, p. 46.

understatement. “So the threat of force option was put on the table, but it wasn’t yet picked up.”

The State Department leadership, for its part, accepted that Aristide should be brought back to Haiti and restored to the presidency. However, Secretary Christopher, along with Special Haiti Advisor Lawrence Pezzullo and Alexander Watson, the assistant secretary for Latin American affairs, had a strong preference for a negotiated political solution that should result in a power-sharing agreement between the main Haitian parties. In the spring of 1994, those State Department officials came to strongly resent what they saw as an effort on the part of the NSC staff to work behind their backs: Pezzullo and other senior U.S. diplomats complained that by unconditionally endorsing Aristide in public, Lake and his collaborators changed U.S. policy in the absence of a prior interagency debate and made a negotiated political solution to the crisis de facto impossible. Until April or May 1994, most of the State Department, including Secretary Christopher himself, opposed the use of force to restore Aristide to office and insisted that international economic sanctions should be given more time to achieve their desired effect. However, the U.S. diplomatic community was itself internally divided, and in the spring of 1994, the State Department gradually shifted towards a pro-interventionist stance. Pezzullo, the most ardent opponent of military action, resigned from his position of U.S. special envoy to Haiti in April 1994. Strobe Talbott, a liberal Democrat who had become the new deputy secretary of state in February 1994, was quite receptive to the idea of a force-based policy on Haiti, and so

456 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009). See also Lake, Six Nightmares, pp. 132-4.
457 Author interviews with Alexander F. Watson and Lawrence Pezzullo, respectively on June 23 and June 24, 2009.
were UN ambassador Madeleine Albright and the State Department’s new Haiti policy coordinator, James Dobbins.\(^{459}\)

During the spring of 1994, Talbott and Dobbins increasingly became the leading figures on Haiti at the State Department, and they gradually brought the rest of the U.S. diplomatic community around to support a possible U.S. invasion, if only reluctantly. Thus, as the prospect of armed intervention in Haiti became increasingly likely in the summer of 1994, there was no meaningful opposition to the use of force from the State Department. Crucially, the department’s leading officials did not think that an explicit multilateral mandate would be necessary, and the U.S. diplomatic community was in fact internally divided over whether the endorsement of relevant IOs should be sought at all. Dobbins, in particular, straightforwardly opposed the idea of even trying to obtain a UN mandate. He thought the effort would be exceedingly costly and time-consuming. Washington, he argued, could live with the consequences of a unilateral invasion. The worst possible outcome in his view would be a failed American attempt to obtain a SC mandate (e.g., because of a Russian or Chinese veto), which by dramatically exposing the lack of international legitimacy, would empower those within the bureaucracy and the American Congress who opposed military action altogether. Dobbins insisted that rather than taking this risk, the United States should intervene unilaterally or only with an ad-hoc coalition of the willing.\(^{460}\) For several weeks in the spring of 1994, Dobbins’s views reportedly enjoyed significant support inside the State Department.\(^{461}\)


\(^{460}\) Author interview with James Dobbins, Special Haiti Coordinator, U.S. Department of State, 1994-95 (July 9, 2009).

\(^{461}\) Branch, \textit{The Clinton Tapes}, pp. 190-191.
The strongest and most effective bureaucratic opposition to American military intervention in Haiti was put up by the U.S. defense establishment, through the OSD and the JCS. The defense establishment first of all was convinced that there were no vital U.S. national interests at stake in Haiti that would have warranted the high costs and risks of military action. Furthermore, the Pentagon had serious reservations about Aristide, whom it saw as a firebrand politician likely to destabilize the country upon his return. “Most of us at the Pentagon actually thought that restoring Aristide was not a good idea,” recalls a former senior U.S. defense official. The Pentagon’s reservations were fuelled by U.S. intelligence reports that characterized the exiled Haitian leader as mentally unstable and essentially a psychopath. Meanwhile, the CIA’s Latin America division had described Cédras and his military junta as a source of political stability and “the most promising group of Haitian leaders to emerge” in several years.

Finally, the Pentagon leadership and the top military brass in particular feared that any forcible U.S. intervention in Haiti would result in an open-ended occupation with attendant high costs and risks. Perhaps the strongest opponent of U.S. military intervention in Haiti was General Colin Powell, a Bush appointee who continued to serve as JCS chairman until October 1993. Powell’s attitude on the Haiti question had essentially remained unchanged since 1991: “We can take the place in an afternoon with a company or two of marines,” he believed, “but the problem will be getting out.”

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In the fall of 1993, Powell and the OSD had expressed great skepticism about the planned deployment of U.S. military and police trainers to Haiti aimed at facilitating Aristide’s return. The hasty withdrawal of the *Harlan County*, as recounted above, appears to have been determined to a significant degree by the Pentagon’s opposition to a forcible U.S. deployment at the time. Following the incident, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin suggested that the Clinton administration withdraw its support from Aristide altogether. At about the same time, senior defense department official Walter Slocombe declared at a party that he strongly resented the idea of risking American lives “to put that psychopath back in power.” Such publicly expressed skepticism about Aristide on the part of senior defense officials, combined with their outright opposition to the use of force, made it difficult for President Clinton to build up domestic political support for armed intervention among Congress and the American public.

**U.S. defense leaders emphasize the need for an exit strategy before going in**

In 1994, under the new Secretary of Defense William Perry (who replaced Aspin) and the new JCS chairman, John Shalikashvili (who replaced Powell), the defense establishment was slowly brought around on the idea of restoring Aristide to office. However, for several months the OSD and JCS continued to remain highly skeptical of U.S. military intervention in Haiti, fearing the prospect of an open-ended commitment that would involve American troops in costly counterinsurgency operations and nation-building for several years. The military brass continued to believe that invading the Caribbean island, with its ragtag army of about 5,000 poorly trained men that lacked virtually any functioning heavy equipment, would be easy. Yet “getting out”

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467 John Christiansen, who in 1993-94 chaired the Haiti task group at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), recalls that “the underlying perspective of DOD was, first, we don’t want to go into Haiti; and second, we don’t want to see Aristide return to Haiti.” Author interview with John Christiansen (July 15, 1994).
would be a serious problem.\textsuperscript{468} Hence the uniformed leaders, supported by OSD, insisted that a political compromise solution should be found, which would obviate the need for a massive U.S. invasion. As a former senior Joint Staff official recalls, the Clinton administration’s failure in Somalia in 1993 “caused the military leaders to be very risk-averse, particularly if there were unknowns. And there were many unknowns in Haiti.”\textsuperscript{469}

If there was going to be an armed intervention at all, it was essential to the U.S. defense community, and the uniformed leaders in particular, that Washington develop a clear exit strategy for American troops before the launch of offensive operations. The view among military planners on the Joint Staff in Washington was that as part of the exit strategy, political stabilization and nation-building tasks in Haiti should be handed over to a follow-on UN mission as quickly as possible. That would relieve the burden on the United States, allowing the bulk of American troops to be rapidly withdrawn as peacekeepers from other nations moved in. The U.S. military planners wanted to ensure that the transition to a follow-on UN mission, which had been poorly planned and executed in the recent case of Somalia, would be better prepared this time around. Hence the Joint Staff, in cooperation with the U.S. Atlantic Command, developed a matrix of specific tasks to be accomplished by American forces, before longer-term stabilization and nation building could be handed off to the United Nations.\textsuperscript{470}

In order for this exit strategy to be successfully implemented, however, the military leaders emphasized that a commitment would have to be obtained from the United Nations in

\textsuperscript{468} Author interview with Frank Wisner, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, 1993-94 (July 16, 2009).

\textsuperscript{469} Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (USAF, ret.), Director of the Joint Staff, July 1994 -July 1996 (February 11, 2011).

\textsuperscript{470} Author interview with Col. William J. Flavin (USA, ret.), Officer working for the deputy chief of operations on the Army Staff, 1992-1994 (January 18, 2011).
advance of the intervention to establish a follow-on UN force shortly thereafter. As Admiral William Owens, at the time the vice chairman of the JCS, recalls:

> We felt strongly that without that kind of commitment from the United Nations, one could not envision an American occupying force going in. There were two elements [to the strategy]. First, we needed strong intragovernment support, from the State Department, the Treasury, from the Justice Department. And then once America had gone in, there needed to be a United Nations force that would come in and be committed in size and texture to do this for the long term, because it wasn’t going to get fixed in the short term.\(^{471}\)

The military leaders proceeded in close coordination with senior officials at OSD, in order to maximize their leverage vis-à-vis the rest of the administration. “The interagency coordination from the perspective of the Pentagon was done shoulder to shoulder between the OSD staff and the Joint Staff,” remembers a former senior military planner.\(^{472}\) During the relevant interagency meetings, the Pentagon representatives advised that if there was going to be a U.S. military intervention at all, an explicit UNSC mandate should be obtained in advance, with a specific commitment that a follow-on UN force would be quickly established. John Christiansen, the former chair of the OSD Haiti task group, recalls how the defense leaders worried that it would be exceedingly difficult “to get the UN eventually to come in,” unless an explicit SC endorsement was obtained for the actual invasion, along with written guarantees of a rapid handoff. “That was absolutely critical. The Pentagon would have strenuously objected to going into Haiti by ourselves, without having the commitment of a follow-on [UN] force.”\(^{473}\) General Walter Kross, who directed the Joint Staff at the time, confirms that whenever the military brass briefed the president and the NSC, “the UN sanction upfront would certainly be in


\(^{472}\) Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).

\(^{473}\) Author interview with John Christiansen (July 15, 2009).
the recommended option.\footnote{474} In sum, the defense leaders saw the quick handover of peacekeeping responsibilities to a follow-on UN mission as crucial to avoid what they considered the worst possible outcome, namely an open-ended U.S. stabilization effort with no exit in sight. “The UN resolution, and the commitment from the UN to start the process [of establishing a follow-on UN force] were really central elements of the exit strategy,” recalls General Kross.\footnote{475}

As previously pointed out, during the spring of 1994 the greatest impetus for shifting toward a force-based strategy on Haiti came from the NSC staff. Lake and his collaborators viewed the threat of force primarily as a coercive instrument; but there was little doubt in their minds that the United States would have to actually follow through on its threat to use force in case the Haitian de facto rulers refused to step down. Until May or early June 1994, however, the NSC staffers who most strongly advocated a force-based strategy on Haiti either did not explicitly consider the prospect of a protracted U.S. occupation of Haiti or did not see it as a major concern. Rossin, the NSC policy director for Haiti, does not remember “any particular preoccupation” among the NSC staff about U.S. troops getting stuck in Haiti:

That was not a particular preoccupation. There was at one point a discussion about several different ways of restoring Aristide, ranging from a proper military intervention with a longer-term presence, to just putting special forces in to take him back to the palace and leave. But the idea that we would somehow get stuck there and therefore needed to have an exit strategy before we got in was not something that was part of the discussion until pretty late in the day.\footnote{476}

That confirms the theory, discussed in chapter two, according to which activist officials usually focus their attention on the expected short-term payoffs of the policy they advocate and

\footnote{474} Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).  
\footnote{475} Kross interview.  
\footnote{476} Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).
do not adequately consider the policy’s longer-term feasibility. It was the Pentagon and the military leaders in particular that drew the administration’s attention to the need for an exit strategy as a prerequisite for military intervention. Admiral Owens recalls attending several NSC meetings on Haiti, “where the idealism of senior administration officials was running rampant,” and the military were cautioning against the view that “everything was going to be rosy after [the U.S.] had gotten in and reestablished the leader.”

**How the military pushed the U.S. policy process towards multilateralism**

Taking a closer look at the timing of successive steps in U.S. policy planning and implementation further clarifies the military’s crucial role. The Joint Chiefs had been asked to develop contingency plans for a U.S. invasion of Haiti in late 1993, following the *Harlan County* incident. Thus, a secret operational planning cell was set up at the U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) in Norfolk, Virginia. Under the supervision of Major General Michael J. Byron, the cell developed a draft operations plan (codenamed OPLAN 2370), which was completed in late February 1994: the plan foresaw a twenty-four day U.S. military operation in Haiti, after which longer-term stabilization tasks would be handed off to a multinational (preferably UN) follow-on force. Thus, from the earliest days of military planning, the military leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon considered that a quick handoff to a follow-on multilateral mission would be all but essential. As former Undersecretary of Defense Frank Wisner recalls, there was

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“practically a doctrinal assumption” among the U.S. military that the mission would need to be internationalized from the beginning, to secure a quick exit for American troops.479

Senior defense officials made it clear that unless a commitment could be obtained from the United Nations in advance of the intervention that a follow-on UN mission would be quickly established thereafter, they would remain opposed to any full-scale U.S. invasion of Haiti. The military brass also crucially warned that if such a policy was nevertheless going to be forced upon them by the president, the most likely outcome would be failure. First, the U.S. military lacked sufficient nation-building skills and experience. Second, there would be little domestic political support for such a protracted stabilization effort. The JCS, in the absence of clear presidential guidelines to the contrary, had been explicitly planning for a short-term U.S. military involvement. That put significant pressure on the rest of the administration to cooperate in devising a viable exit strategy for American troops.

During an NSC principals’ meeting on May 7, 1994, Lake suggested that it would be “useful” to take a decision on the shift towards a force-based strategy. Thereupon JCS chairman Shalikashvili, who was not as inherently hostile to the possibility of military intervention as some of his colleagues from the armed services, informed the president and the administration’s other top officials that the military had plans to go in if needed and neutralize the Haitian defense forces. But he insisted that the military planners, on their own, could not “deliver… a plan on how to get out” and made it clear that in the absence of a clear exit strategy for U.S. troops he would advise against moving ahead with the operation.480 In previous days, high-level military officials had gone public in their opposition to a U.S. invasion of Haiti. Given President Clinton’s recent policy shift and his now unequivocal support for the exiled Haitian leader, the

479 Author interview with Frank Wisner (July 16, 2009).
480 Quoted in Nancy Soderberg, The Superpower Myth, p. 49.
military brass could no longer afford to directly attack Aristide, which would have forced a showdown with the civilian leadership. Instead, the skeptical military officials now emphasized problems of policy implementation: they mentioned as one important reason for their resistance the fear that no standing IO, neither the UN nor the OAS, would endorse the intervention, which might result in American troops having to police the island for several years.\footnote{\textcopyright{} Barton Gellman and Ruth Marcus, “U.S. Boosts Pressure On Haitians: Use of Force Not Ruled Out, President Declares,” \textit{Washington Post}, May 4, 1994.}

By June 1994, senior military leaders at USACOM publicly announced that they “assumed” any military intervention in Haiti would be conducted with a UN Security Council mandate, thereby suggesting that they considered such a mandate essential to the operation’s overall success.\footnote{\textcopyright{} Ann Devroy and Barton Gellmann, “Exodus From Haiti Strains U.S. Policy: Military Intervention Considered,” \textit{Washington Post}, July 2, 1994.} Also in June, Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch invited Strobe Talbott, his equal in rank from the State Department, and James Steinberg, the State Department’s policy planning chief, to several informal conversations with the JCS and other top military officials. Over the following weeks, Talbott in particular, who had for several months been a staunch advocate of military intervention, became much more aware of what the military planners viewed as the operation’s principal risks.\footnote{\textcopyright{} Ann Devroy and R. Jeffrey Smith, “Debate Over Risks Split Administration,” \textit{Washington Post}, September 25, 1994.} Thus, by the end of June, U.S. defense leaders had successfully convinced other senior figures within the administration that serious efforts should be made to obtain an explicit SC mandate for the use of force, because that alone would effectively guarantee a quick handover to a UN follow-on mission and thereby offer a smooth exit strategy for American troops.

In retrospect, former Deputy Secretary of State Talbott has little doubt that the main reason why the Clinton administration sought to obtain an explicit SC mandate for the use of
force in Haiti was to have a virtual certainty before going in that there would be a rapid transfer of post-combat stabilization tasks to a follow-on UN mission. That, in turn, was considered essential to appease skeptics at OSD and the JCS: “Our principal reason for wanting to do a handoff to the UN as quickly as possible was that our military really wanted it. It was not so much about dealing with many skeptics in Congress. It really had to do with Shalikashvili.”\textsuperscript{484} Similarly, Morton Halperin, at the time a senior NSC staffer, recalls that “the deal that was brokered with the UN was very much to get the military to go in; [because] they were concerned about how quickly they could get out.”\textsuperscript{485} It was only in mid-August 1994, once a formal UN mandate had been obtained and most of the Pentagon’s concerns had been addressed, that Secretary of Defense Perry reportedly told his staff: “That’s it, we’re not going to mess around any more” by opposing military intervention.\textsuperscript{486} The UN mandate, which explicitly foresaw a rapid handoff to a follow-on UN force, had contributed to reassuring the military brass. Senior military planners in Washington understood that international troops for the follow-on force would still have to be recruited, but what reassured them was “the commitment from the UN to start that process.”\textsuperscript{487}

A few days later, on August 26, President Clinton finally decided to authorize an invasion of Haiti aimed at ousting the Cédras junta and restoring Aristide to office. Unnamed senior administration officials subsequently confirmed to the \textit{Washington Post} that “he [Clinton] waited

\begin{footnotes}
\item[484] Author interview with Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State, 1994-97 (July 8, 2009).
\item[485] Author interview with Morton H. Halperin, Senior director for democracy on the NSC staff, 1994-1996 (March 10, 2010).
\item[487] Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).
\end{footnotes}
until September to satisfy Pentagon reservations.”488 On September 10, the president delivered a nationally televised ultimatum to the Haitian de facto authorities: “Your time is up. Leave now, or we will force you from power.”489 But having issued a clear coercive threat, Clinton decided to have one last try at diplomacy: on September 17, with American invasion forces already on their way toward Haiti, a negotiating team composed of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, retired General Colin Powell, and the Chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, Samuel Nunn, landed in Haiti. In little more than twenty-four hours, the American negotiators persuaded the Haitian de facto rulers to agree to step down and consent to a peaceful deployment of international troops. The diplomatic agreement did not explicitly foresee as full-fledged invasion; yet it created an opening that allowed roughly 20,000 U.S. troops to deploy without combat beginning on September 19. Within a few days the Haitian military forces had been effectively neutralized.490

By the end of September, American troops were joined by a small contingent of 295 Caribbean soldiers. One month later, a Bangladeshi peacekeeping contingent of 1,100, as well as roughly 200 international police monitors from Argentina, Jordan, and various Caribbean nations, had also been deployed.491 General Cédras resigned on October 10 and was granted


490 Robert Pastor, at the time Carter’s senior political advisor, informed Lake from Haiti that there had only been an agreement to deploy a few hundred international troops. Yet Powell advised to seize the opening in order to create facts on the ground and “go in hard” to neutralize the Haitian armed forces as quickly as possible. See Papers of Anthony Lake, Manuscript Division, U.S. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 43 (1994).

491 A total of about 2,000 non-U.S. troops and 600 police monitors from several nations would deploy as part of the multi-national force (MNF) in Haiti. See statement by Undersecretary of Defense Walter Slocombe, Hearing Before the House Committee on Armed Services, 103 Cong., 2 sess. (Washington, D.C.: October 7, 1994), p. 13-14; and statement by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Hearing Before the Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and Peace Corps Affairs, 104 Cong., 1 sess. (Washington, D.C.: March 9, 1995), p. 8; see also John R. Ballard, Upholding Democracy, pp. 113, 124, 127.
political sanctuary in Panama. By October 15, the situation had become sufficiently stable for Aristide to return to Haiti and resume the presidency.\footnote{Boutros-Ghali, Les Nations Unies et Haïti, p. 65.} For several months, the U.S. had to shoulder virtually the entire cost of the multi-national force (MNF) in Haiti.\footnote{The specific arrangement was that the U.S. would cover all incremental costs resulting from the deployment of troops from non-OECD countries. See communication from Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch, reprinted in Hearing Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 103 Cong., 2 sess. (Washington, D.C.: September 28, 1994), pp. 17-19.} However, by the end of March 1995, the U.S. was able to hand off all peacekeeping responsibilities to a follow-on UN mission of 6,000 men, which was composed of a majority of non-U.S. troops and supported itself through assessed UN peacekeeping funds. Thanks to the smooth handover to a follow-on UN mission, the specter of a large number of American troops getting “stuck” in Haiti for the indefinite future was successfully averted.

**Understanding the Pentagon’s bureaucratic political influence**

U.S. defense leaders and the military brass in particular influenced the Clinton administration’s policy making on Haiti in two ways. First, they managed to genuinely persuade several of their colleagues in other agencies, such as Talbott and Lake, that devising an exit strategy for American troops in advance was essential to the operation’s overall success. The Joint Chiefs convinced their colleagues within the administration that *some* type of longer-term military presence would be necessary to stabilize the situation on the ground; but it was unlikely that Congress and the American people would support a large-scale U.S. military deployment in Haiti for the indefinite future. Since late 1993, the Joint Chiefs had been developing contingency plans for a short-term U.S. military operation, with a rapid handover of stabilization and reconstruction functions to the international community. In the spring and summer of 1994, those plans came to set the framework for the administration’s overall policy toward Haiti.
Second, the Joint Chiefs and their civilian allies at OSD could leverage the Clinton administration in more indirect ways. So long as the president remained undecided and did not publicly commit the nation to a given course of action, opponents of the use of force from the defense establishment (who were able to speak on those issues with great authority) could further undermine an already weak popular support for military intervention by means of critical public statements and deliberate press leaks. That created significant problems for their counterparts from other agencies, who were trying to build up momentum for an invasion of Haiti. Frank Wisner, undersecretary of defense for policy in 1993-94, describes the opening that Clinton’s lack of decisiveness created for bureaucratic opponents of a force-based strategy as follows:

If the president had decided that he wanted to go to Haiti and invade the country then the Pentagon would have carried it out. In the face of a decision by the president that is clear, the Secretary of Defense is going to carry out the decision, whether or not he himself has second thoughts. The Pentagon will follow—provided that there is a clear mission that has been approved by the president. But here’s the problem: the Haiti issue was a contested issue, and we were far from having an overwhelming and clear consensus.

The president’s awareness that another botched military operation after Somalia might be extremely costly in domestic political terms, and his resulting overall indecisiveness on what the administration’s policy on Haiti should be, allowed the powerful U.S. defense community to set the parameters for any military action in Haiti to a higher degree than might otherwise have been the case. As a former senior national security official recalls: “The deaths of thirteen American servicemen in Mogadishu led to a very sharp response in the public and the Congress. As we debated the use of force elsewhere, there was a concern that a similar incident would be like an

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494 Lawrence Rossin, Haiti policy director on the NSC staff, remembers numerous press leaks, revealing sensitive information from inter-agency meetings, which were clearly attributable to the Pentagon or the services and greatly annoyed Lake and his staff. Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).

495 Author interview with Frank Wisner (July 16, 2009).
anaphylactic shock. The first bee-sting you’re OK, the second bee-sting you’re dead.”496 The president, moreover, felt clearly uncomfortable taking on the military leaders, with whom as a draft evader he had always had a somewhat awkward relationship. As General Kross recalls:

After Somalia, Clinton began paying a lot of attention to risk-averse military advice. And there are numerous instances starting in Haiti, where he was following all the advice, about focusing on the exit strategy and all that. There are lots of examples where President Clinton actually overrode a conclusion or an opinion by his NSC staff, in favor of the Pentagon.497

It should also be noted that obtaining an explicit SC mandate for military intervention, and thereby ensuring that a UN follow-on mission would quickly take over, was only one, albeit crucial, dimension of a multi-faceted strategy on the part of civilian activists aimed at averting a showdown with the Pentagon and with the military leaders in particular. Other elements of that strategy included: a CIA-led covert operation in the late summer of 1994 aimed at promoting an internal army coup in Haiti,498 as well as systematic efforts to bribe the Haitian army leaders into exile by offering sizeable financial incentives499—two approaches which, if successful, might have allowed UN peacekeepers to deploy immediately and without combat; and finally the aforementioned last-ditch diplomatic mission led by former President Carter, which was able to avert a forcible entry of U.S. troops, but at the cost of a muddled political agreement, which, had it been fully implemented, would have allowed Cédras and his fellow junta leaders to remain in

496 Author interview with Leon Fuerth (March 9, 2010).
Haiti after stepping down from office and even stand for election to the presidency in the future.500

4. The importance of domestic political factors: public opinion and Congress

In the foregoing pages I have shown that the military leaders were much more anxious than civilian policy officials from other U.S. government agencies about the need to develop a clear exit strategy for American troops in advance of offensive operations. One important reason for the military’s concern about protracted peacekeeping and nation-building commitments overseas is their fear that such open-ended deployments will not be supported by the will of the American people, as expressed notably through Congress. In the case of Haiti, too, because of the military’s focus on the operation’s long-term feasibility, they worried more than other policy officials about the prospects for public and congressional support in case of a protracted and costly stabilization effort.501

U.S. popular preferences for intervening with allies and partners

Some scholars have suggested that the Clinton administration’s concerns about U.S. popular support for the use of force were in fact the most important factor behind Washington’s effort to obtain an explicit SC mandate in July 1994. Sarah Kreps, for instance, suggests that: “Perhaps the only way that the Clinton administration could execute the Haiti mission and not be punished by its domestic political audience was to conduct the mission multilaterally.”502


As discussed in chapter one, U.S. public opinion polls generally suggest a clear preference among Americans for multilateral, as opposed to unilateral, military interventions. However, what appears to matter most to the American public is not so much IO endorsement, as participation by other states in U.S.-led coalitions. Opinion polls taken during the summer of 1994 confirm this general finding: while popular support for military intervention in Haiti was generally low, Americans were significantly more likely to support a multinational, U.S.-led intervention, rather than a straightforwardly unilateral one. U.S. public opinion polls taken between July 1, 1994 and September 15, 1994, suggest that 45.5 percent of Americans supported a multinational, or coalition-based military intervention led by the United States. Significantly, explicit references to UN endorsement did not meaningfully increase U.S. public support on average. Yet if poll questions expressly characterized the intervention as a U.S. unilateral operation, without any kind of international participation or endorsement, popular support dropped to as low as 23 percent on average.503

Senior foreign policy officials from the Clinton administration appear to have been well aware during the lead-up to the Haiti intervention that explicit UN endorsement would not have been particularly helpful in terms of increasing U.S. popular support for the use of force. It was believed that in the aftermath of the Somalia debacle, the American public was at best highly ambivalent about U.S. participation in UN-sponsored enforcement operations abroad.504 According to Lake, the president’s foreign policy team interpreted public opinion polls at the time as suggesting significant “American support for the UN in principle;” yet it was also clear to most senior foreign policy officials that the UN “doesn’t make a pivotal difference [in terms

503 Data averaged from about two dozen opinion polls by Gallup/CNN/USA Today; ABC News; CBS News/NYT; Times/CNN/Yankelovich Partners; ABC News/Washington Post; July 1, 1994 – September 15, 1994.

504 On public reservations about UN performance in the aftermath of the Somalia intervention, see also Kull and Destler, *Misreading the Public*, pp. 67-9.
of public support] when considering interventions.” Lake and his colleagues correctly interpreted the polls as suggesting that for U.S. popular support, the participation of other states in a U.S.-led coalition would be more important than the endorsement of relevant IOs. In short, the prevailing view was that “allies are more important than the UN."505

Still, a UN mandate for military intervention should in principle have made it easier to persuade other states to join a U.S.-led coalition, which in turn might have helped with the American public. But the evidence suggests that this was not actually the case. To begin with, senior U.S. officials working on Haiti knew all along that regardless of a UN mandate, it would be extremely difficult for any Latin American nation to participate actively by contributing troops to a U.S.-led invasion.506 Only the Argentine government, eager to improve relations with the United States, at one point considered the possibility of contributing troops to the U.S.-led multinational force; yet it soon had to back away in the face of strong domestic opposition from parliament and its own defense establishment.507

States outside of the western hemisphere were not interested in contributing militarily to what they essentially saw as an intervention dictated by U.S. domestic political concerns. The only states that had pledged their virtually unconditional support for a U.S.-led military intervention were Haiti’s Caribbean neighbors. The Caribbean states were themselves greatly affected by the Haitian refugee crisis, which was putting a serious strain on their fragile national economies. Thus, in order to stop the refugee flow, the sub-regional community of Caribbean states, CARICOM, had called for the use of “all necessary means” (code for force) to restore

505 Author interview with Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1993-97 (June 26, 2009).
506 Author interviews with Richard Feinberg (June 22, 2009), and Harriet Babbitt (July 10, 2009).
Aristide to office already in late 1991—that is, long before the UNSC approved military action. In the summer of 1994, the Caribbean nations strongly backed U.S. military intervention plans, again regardless of any formal UN endorsement.\textsuperscript{508} Subsequently the Caribbean nations, led by Jamaica, were the first to offer some active operational support, by deploying several hundred peacekeepers a few days after U.S. combat troops had successfully taken over the island.\textsuperscript{509}

Hence in the summer of 1994 it was clear to foreign policy leaders in Washington that a SC mandate for military action would add few, if any, international partners and would therefore offer only scant benefits in terms of U.S. public support. But it appears that senior Clinton administration officials who were pushing for armed intervention did not worry too much in the first place about the need for multinational participation to increase public support. First, Clinton’s strategic advisers counseled that given the skeptical mood in the country about the administration’s foreign policy overall, it would be virtually impossible for the White House to build up public approval for the invasion before U.S. troops were actually going to be deployed.\textsuperscript{510} At the same time, the president and his advisers expected that once the invasion had started, with American soldiers engaged in potentially deadly combat, the nation would rally behind the president and the troops, regardless of multi-national support. The Clinton administration had already benefitted from this “rally around the flag” effect once before: in June 1993, following a cruise-missile attack against Baghdad, the president’s approval ratings had jumped by fifteen points. Apparently the expectation at the White House was that a similar short-term rally would again occur in 1994, provided that U.S. casualties remained low and

\textsuperscript{508} CARICOM’s 1991 request for the use of “all necessary means,” addressed to the UN Secretary General, is reprinted in Boutros-Ghali, \textit{Les Nations Unies et Haïti}, p. 205. In the spring of 1994, during private conversations with Madeleine Albright, the Caribbean states again offered their virtually unconditional support for a U.S. intervention. See Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 157.

\textsuperscript{509} Ballard, \textit{Upholding Democracy}, p. 89.

government elites united behind the troops.\textsuperscript{511} As early as May 1994, UN Special Advisor Dante Caputo reported in a confidential note addressed to the Secretary-General, based on conversations with senior U.S. officials, that the predominant view in Washington was “that the current opposition of public opinion to an armed intervention [in Haiti] will change radically, once it will have taken place.”\textsuperscript{512}

Nevertheless, senior policy officials in Washington might have viewed explicit UN endorsement, to be obtained before the launch of offensive operations, as helpful in terms of preserving U.S. popular support \textit{for the long run}, in the event of a protracted military deployment. Yet as previously shown, the most activist policy officials who pushed for military intervention in the spring and early summer of 1994, especially at the White House and State Department, focused primarily on the short-term payoffs of a military intervention. The activists did initially not worry too much about the possibility of an open-ended stabilization effort; and hence they were not particularly concerned about the challenges of maintaining U.S. popular support in the long run. As General Kross recalls, leading up to the intervention, policy proposals developed by the NSC staff, in particular, reflected “superficial, wishful thinking—they were just not thinking through the risks of failure.”\textsuperscript{513} It was the military brass who drew the administration’s attention to the need for a protracted peacekeeping and stabilization effort. The uniformed leaders, because of their focus on long-term policy implementation, also emphasized more than other administration officials the importance of maintaining U.S. domestic political


\textsuperscript{513} Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).
support for any protracted deployment of American troops. However, the military focused less on public opinion polls than on the political mood in Congress. That is consistent with the general tendency of senior policy officials to view congressional sentiment as a pragmatic substitute for public opinion—since it is Congress, and not the general public, that those officials must depend on day after day for legislation and funding.\textsuperscript{514}

\textit{IO endorsement to keep Congress on board}

To what extent did concerns about congressional support influence the Clinton administration’s effort to obtain a UNSC endorsement for military action? Some scholars suggest that fears of congressional opposition in fact drove the administration to multilateralize its policy on Haiti in the summer of 1994.\textsuperscript{515} There is little doubt that throughout the spring and summer of 1994, Congress, if formally asked, would have refused to authorize U.S. armed intervention in Haiti.\textsuperscript{516} Not only were Republicans on Capitol Hill almost unanimously opposed, but centrist Democrats, too, became more outspoken in their criticism as a military operation appeared increasingly likely in July and August 1994. However, while Congress appeared very unlikely to explicitly endorse the use of force in Haiti, it was equally unlikely to formally oppose it, especially through any binding resolutions. Congressional leaders on both sides understood that such binding measures would greatly undermine the credibility of U.S. coercive threats and thus make a full-scale military invasion more, and not less, likely. Also, Democrats still controlled both branches of Congress in 1994, and they were unwilling to take the risk of constraining (and

\textsuperscript{514} See Neustadt, \textit{Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents}, p. 75.


\textsuperscript{516} Stephanopoulos, \textit{All Too Human}, p. 307.
thereby humiliating) their president on such a high visibility foreign-policy issue during the lead-up to congressional mid-term elections.\textsuperscript{517} In short, the most likely scenario was that during the lead-up to the intervention, Congress would adopt a classic risk-avoidance strategy by shifting responsibility for the use of force more or less entirely to the executive branch.

Between May and July 1994, Republicans in the House and Senate sponsored various resolutions and amendments opposing the use of force in Haiti. But all efforts to limit the executive’s freedom of maneuver were rejected by the Democratic majority in Congress, often with the support of senior Republicans who were unwilling to constrain the president on foreign policy.\textsuperscript{518} On June 29, 1994 freshman Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) proposed an amendment to the 1995 foreign operations bill that would have required the president to seek congressional authorization before ordering military action against Haiti. But the Gregg amendment was defeated 34-65, with several Republicans voting against it. Subsequently the Senate adopted (93-4) a much milder, non-binding amendment that in general terms called on the president to seek congressional approval before committing troops to Haiti.\textsuperscript{519} The Senate rejected two further Republican-inspired amendments, which would have prohibited Clinton from deploying troops to Haiti in the absence of congressional authorization, on July 14 and August 5.\textsuperscript{520} The House, for its part, voted 223-201 on May 24 in favor of a non-binding amendment tabled by congressman Porter Gross (R-FL), which urged Clinton not to invade Haiti in the absence of a “clear and present danger” to U.S. citizens and interests. However, about two weeks later that

\textsuperscript{517} Author interview with Christopher Kojm, senior foreign policy staffer to congressman Lee Hamilton, chairman of the House foreign affairs committee, 1993-94 (August 9, 2009); see also Carroll Doherty, “Haiti Invasion Looms Larger,” \textit{CQ Weekly}, July 16, 1994.


\textsuperscript{519} Senior Republican senators, such as John McCain, also opposed limiting the president’s authority as commander in chief. See Carroll Doherty, “Senate Defeats GOP Proposal to Limit Clinton on Haiti,” \textit{CQ Weekly}, July 2, 1994.

\textsuperscript{520} “Special Legislative Outlook,” \textit{CQ Weekly}, September 10, 1994; and Hendrickson, \textit{The Clinton Wars}, pp. 55-6.
same proposal was rejected in a second vote (195-226), after twenty-five House Democrats had switched their position under pressure from their party’s leadership.\textsuperscript{521}

Based on the aforementioned congressional votes on Haiti during the spring and early summer of 1994, most Clinton administration officials—but especially those who favored military action—expected that congressional opposition, while sometimes boisterous, would remain politically manageable.\textsuperscript{522} Furthermore, senior administration officials anticipated that opposition from Capitol Hill would soften once the president had fully committed America’s prestige to the use of force, and especially once U.S. combat troops were actually going to be deployed.\textsuperscript{523} In fact, shortly after U.S. troops had landed in Haiti, House Democrats quite easily defeated (205-225) a resolution sponsored by congressman Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) calling for the “immediate withdrawal of American troops” from Haiti. Subsequently both the House and the Senate approved resolutions that, without explicitly commending the administration on the use of force, expressed support for the president and the troops.\textsuperscript{524}

Under those circumstances, an explicit UNSC mandate for the use of force offered few advantages to the administration in its relations vis-à-vis Congress, at least in the short run. Democratic representatives were ultimately expected to support the president’s policy regardless of multilateral approval, on grounds of partisan loyalty. But the Republican minority, too, was extremely unlikely to withdraw its support from U.S. troops once they were deployed in combat operations abroad—so long as the operation was going to proceed without major complications.

\textsuperscript{521} Hendrickson, \textit{The Clinton Wars}, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{522} Author interviews with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009) and Strobe Talbott (July 9, 2009).


If the intervention had manifestly failed to achieve its stated objectives and there had been significant casualties, even an explicit SC mandate would probably not have prevented Congress from rapidly withdrawing its support—as the recent Somalia experience suggested.\(^{525}\)

Following the Clinton administration’s debacle in Somalia and the ensuing heavy-handed scapegoating of the United Nations in U.S. foreign-policy circles, senior White House officials had come to the conclusion that “with a lot of the Congress, having a UN cover was not particularly useful.”\(^{526}\) For this reason, during the lead-up to the military intervention in Haiti, the White House actually sought to downplay reliance on the UN in its relations with Congress. Lake remembers that “we were walking away from the UN as much as we were wrapping ourselves in that mantle”—hence from the point of view of the NSC staff, at least, concerns about congressional opposition “were not an important consideration” in the choice to seek to obtain a SC mandate for military action.\(^{527}\) Talbott suggests that at the State Department, too, obtaining an explicit SC endorsement was not viewed as particularly helpful in view of mollifying critics in Congress, “because a lot of those domestic critics weren’t very crazy about the UN, either.”\(^{528}\) Finally, as previously shown, the Clinton administration’s leading activists on Haiti from the NSC staff and the State Department initially did not envision an open-ended stabilization mission in Haiti, and hence they were not particularly concerned about the need for international burden sharing in view of securing congressional support for such a protracted deployment. Lake in fact points out that he never envisioned a protracted U.S. military presence in Haiti, in which American forces could get trapped. His principled view was that after the

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\(^{525}\) Author interview with Leon Fuerth (March 9, 2010).

\(^{526}\) Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).

\(^{527}\) Lake interview.

\(^{528}\) Author interview with Strobe Talbott (July 9, 2009).
United States had restored Aristide to the presidency, the Haitian nation would need to “sort out its own affairs,” without Washington assuming long-term responsibility.529

Among senior policy officials in Washington, only the military leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon understood from early on that U.S. armed intervention would most likely result in an open-ended peacekeeping and stabilization mission. Hence the military leaders also emphasized, more than their civilian colleagues from other agencies, the need to secure a viable exit strategy and more generally to limit the liability of American troops, in view of securing congressional funding and support for the long run. During the spring and early summer of 1994, members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee, who bear primary responsibility for approving funding for overseas military deployments, insisted in meetings with the uniformed leaders that any U.S. intervention in Haiti would have to be limited and should be kept as short as possible. “The Senate Armed Services Committee really had to be promised that we had our strategy together on this intervention,” remembers General Kross. “Admiral Owens and General Shalikashvili were often on the phone with congressional leaders. Owens was every bit as involved in this as was the chairman. And the big discussion was, don’t get bogged down, have an exit strategy.”530

At the same time, congressional leaders helped the military magnify their own concerns about the prospective intervention vis-à-vis the rest of the administration. Owens recalls that since congressional leaders were mostly skeptical about the administration’s drive towards armed intervention, they were also “quite amenable to the kinds of arguments that [the military] brought up”—including on “the need for UN authorization first.”531 Especially in the specialized

529 Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).
530 Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).
531 Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).
House and Senate committees on foreign affairs/foreign relations and armed services, several representatives, both Republican and Democrat, spoke out repeatedly against the use of force. First, they emphasized that no vital U.S. interests were involved in Haiti that warranted a high-risk military intervention. Second, they worried about a costly U.S. commitment to political stabilization and nation-building in Haiti for the indefinite future. As a military intervention appeared increasingly likely in May and June 1994, the focus of congressional leaders—mirroring the military’s concerns—increasingly shifted to securing a quick exit for the majority of American troops.\footnote{Author interview with Christopher Kojm (August 9, 2009).} For instance, during a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on June 8, congressman Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) questioned the Clinton administration’s special adviser on Haiti, William Gray, about the likelihood that a multilateral follow-up mission would be deployed anytime soon after the initial invasion, and he linked this explicitly to the question of a U.S. “exit policy.”\footnote{Benjamin Gilman, \textit{Hearing Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs}, 103 Cong., 2 sess. (Washington, D.C.: June 8, 1994), p. 12.} During the same hearing, congressman Albert Russell Wynn (D-MD) similarly asked “whether there is a firm commitment from the UN mission to move in and perform the long-term peacekeeping function… so that in the event of a U.S. intervention we would not also have to perform the follow-up functions.”\footnote{Albert Russell Wynn, \textit{Ibid}, p. 35.}

In short, to the extent that concerns about congressional opposition influenced the Clinton administration’s efforts to seek a UN mandate for armed intervention in Haiti, it appears that the military leaders functioned as a crucial transmission belt. The military leaders and senior U.S. defense officials more generally, who initially strongly opposed the prospect of armed intervention in Haiti for their own set of reasons (notably the lack of vital U.S. interests involved and of clear strategic objectives), drew the attention of their colleagues from other administration
branches to the challenges of maintaining long-term domestic political support. This allowed Pentagon leaders to somewhat moderate the enthusiasm for military intervention of their more hawkish colleagues from other branches of the administration, and it created a stronger sense of urgency within the administration as a whole that a quick handover of peacekeeping functions to a UN follow-on mission would be desirable to secure the operation’s long-term success.

5. Alternative explanations of U.S. multilateralism in Haiti

In the final part of this chapter I examine two prominent alternative hypotheses, derived from the scholarly literature, as to why the United States might have sought an explicit UN endorsement for the 1994 Haiti intervention. First, U.S. policy leaders might have internalized international legal or moral norms that require IO endorsement as a condition for appropriate military action. Second, the Clinton administration might have sought to reassure third-party states of American motives, in order to prevent potentially costly “soft balancing” against the United States, or reduced cooperation with Washington in other issue areas.

**Multilateral legitimacy as an end (U.S. leaders have internalized relevant norms)**

Scholars in the social constructivist tradition claim that over the last two decades or so foreign policy leaders in the western world have internalized new international legitimacy norms, which require multilateral endorsement for the use of force as a matter of moral obligation.535 Even if statesmen have not yet fully internalized relevant rules of legitimate behavior, the argument goes, they cannot for all practical purposes conceive of rule-deviant behavior, because they inherently desire the international social approval that results from being seen by others as

acting legitimately.\textsuperscript{536} In short, as discussed in chapter one, the social constructivist logic predicts that foreign policy leaders should always desire to comply with the norms and rules of international legitimacy (except perhaps under conditions of supreme emergency), regardless of the domestic or international material consequences. As one IR theorist explains, “compliance is no longer motivated by the simple fear of retribution, or by a calculation of self-interest, but instead by an internal sense of moral obligation”\textsuperscript{537}

With specific regard to U.S. decision making on military intervention, for the aforementioned theoretical claims to be confirmed, the following implications would have to be observed. First, U.S. policy leaders, desirous to comply with a perceived international duty, should seek the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs as an all but necessary condition for proceeding with the use of force. They should acknowledge as much, especially in intramural policy debates and ex-post facto analyses. Furthermore, the endorsement of military action through the SC or regional IOs should be sought as an end in itself, regardless of the political and strategic advantages it offers at the domestic or international levels.

The most widely accepted rules of international legitimacy are, almost by definition, those enshrined in formal legal conventions. Therefore, the first question that needs to be answered is: To what extent did fundamental concerns about international legality determine the Clinton administration’s efforts to obtain an explicit SC endorsement of military intervention in 1994? The short and straightforward answer is: not very much. Throughout the Haitian crisis, concerns about international legality were secondary at best to the leading U.S. foreign policy officials. Lake candidly admits that “in the internal [foreign-policy] meetings, I don’t recall us

\textsuperscript{536} Coleman, \textit{International Organizations and Peace Enforcement}, especially p. 38.

\textsuperscript{537} Hurd, Legitimacy and Authority,” p. 38.
talking about international law.” 538 William Gray, the administration’s special Haiti adviser at the time, denied during a congressional hearing in June 1994 that considerations about international legality should play any role in driving the administration’s policy:

Ultimately the decision to use a military option must be made by the President of the United States, not by an international body… So from a legal point of view the ultimate decision of whether or not to use the military option would be up to the President … based upon what he believes are the best interests of the United States. 539

The only officials who genuinely cared about compliance with international legal norms were, not surprisingly, the administration’s juridical advisors. Secretary of State Christopher, himself a lawyer, also took some interest in the debate about the international legality of a prospective U.S. military intervention in Haiti. 540 But overall, as one former NSC staffer recalls, concerns about international legality “never intruded into the main discussion.” 541 Furthermore, once Aristide, the elected president of Haiti, had formally consented to the international use of force, the argument could be made that even in the absence of a UN mandate, a U.S. military intervention would not have breached international law. Foreign military intervention based on host government consent has been traditionally seen as unproblematic under international law, although it is unclear whether a government in exile (even if internationally recognized) retains the legal authority to extend such an invitation. 542

But even though senior Clinton administration officials were not motivated by concerns about compliance with international legal rules, perhaps they had internalized relevant moral

538 Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).
540 Email exchange with Michael Matheson, Principal deputy legal adviser to the U.S. State Department, 1989-96 (July 30, 2009).
541 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).
norms requiring IO endorsement for the use of force. Planning for U.S. intervention in Haiti was largely driven by the White House and especially by the NSC staff until the mid-summer of 1994, when a formal interagency planning cell was eventually established. Thus, it is essential to seek to establish first and foremost the normative convictions of President Clinton and his NSC staff with regard to multilateralism and the use of force. Did those individuals sincerely believe that an explicit multilateral endorsement of military intervention through the UN or the OAS would have to be obtained as a necessary condition for international legitimacy, quite apart from its expected political and strategic benefits? Put differently, if Clinton and his advisors inherently believed in the normative value of multilateral legitimacy, it should have been difficult for them to even conceive of the possibility of intervening without explicit IO endorsement.

However, Rossin, the Haiti policy director on the NSC staff in 1993-1994, suggests that Lake and Berger never “agonized over whether or not there was international approval for this intervention.” Indeed, the administration’s leading civilian policy activists on Haiti never considered that an explicit multilateral endorsement through the UN or the OAS would be a necessary, or nearly necessary, condition for military intervention. Lake, as previously argued, had been pushing behind the scenes for a more assertive U.S. strategy potentially involving the use of force since the earliest days of the Clinton administration. In October 1993, when the Harlan County was met by protesting Haitian thugs at the Port-au-Prince harbor, Lake and some senior State Department officials called for a U.S. display of force to disperse the Haitian thugs and land the American and Canadian military trainers aboard the ship. Only in the face of strong opposition from the top military brass, who feared being dragged into a high-risk unilateral

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543 Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).
544 Rossin interview.
invasion, the U.S. national security team eventually backed down. Over the following months, Lake became one of the strongest advocates within the administration of U.S. military intervention to restore Aristide to power. He repeatedly made the case for moving toward a force-based strategy in late 1993 and early 1994, long before there was any talk of seeking a UN mandate for military intervention.

Following the Harlan County incident, President Clinton himself, exhorted by his senior political advisor David Gergen, came close to authorizing a U.S. unilateral intervention. Apparently, Clinton’s belief at the time was that regardless of UN endorsement, a strong U.S. display of military force would have been beneficial to the administration’s domestic political standing and to Washington’s tarnished international reputation for resolve. President Clinton was extrapolating from Ronald Reagan’s experience in 1983, when the latter had chosen to invade Grenada shortly after 250 U.S. marines were killed in a terrorist attack in Beirut, Lebanon. “The Reagan people were much better at the politics of foreign policy than we are,” Clinton reportedly told his national security team. “Look at Lebanon. They went into Grenada two days later and fixed it.” In the eyes of Clinton and some of his political advisors, the Grenada invasion had significantly reduced the negative domestic political fallout from the Beirut disaster. Now Clinton was musing about whether a U.S. invasion of Haiti following the Harlan County incident and the earlier humiliation in Somalia might not similarly benefit his administration. In short, in late 1993 and early 1994, senior White House officials—crucially

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545 Author interviews with John Christiansen (July 15, 2009) and Walter Kross (February 11, 2011). See also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 271-2.


547 Quoted in Stephanopoulos, All Too Human, p. 217.

548 Ibid.
including the president—were not particularly concerned about multilateral endorsement for a prospective U.S. intervention in Haiti, and they certainly did not consider it a matter of moral obligation.

Even as a full-scale U.S. invasion appeared increasingly likely in the spring and early summer of 1994, few, if any, of the president’s senior advisors seem to have thought that a formal SC endorsement would be necessary on grounds of moral duty. In May and June 1994, Lake insisted that Washington had to show a willingness to use force unilaterally, in order to minimize the likelihood that the most recalcitrant SC members at the time, notably Russia, China, and Brazil, would cast a negative vote. The assumption was that if the United States credibly signaled its willingness to intervene unilaterally, other Council members could be persuaded to come on board and approve the use of force.\(^{549}\) There was a virtual consensus inside the administration that in order to maintain U.S. credibility at the SC into the future, the threat would have to be carried out if necessary—that is, if the world body had not authorized the use of force, the United States would have intervened unilaterally.\(^{550}\) Soderberg, at the time one of Lake’s deputies on the NSC staff, confirms that the administration never viewed a formal UN endorsement as necessary on grounds of moral duty:

Had the UN not been willing to do it [authorize U.S. military intervention], we would probably still have done it. I think we would have done it anyway, because we had to do

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\(^{550}\) Author interview with Strobe Talbott (July 9, 2009). Soon after the invasion, Talbott was asked during a congressional hearing whether the U.S. would have gone ahead in the absence of a UN mandate, to which he replied: “Had the President determined that it was in the vital interests of the United States to act alone in this instance, the answer is emphatically yes.” Talbott, *Hearing Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 103 Cong., 2 sess. (Washington, D.C.: September 27, 1994), p. 23.
something. We were not going to let the UN dictate our [policy] — especially in Haiti! We would probably have cobbled together some coalition of the willing.\footnote{Author interview with Nancy Soderberg (July 29, 2009). Soderberg’s former NSC colleague Lawrence Rossin doesn’t “remember any discussion where it was considered that getting a UNSC resolution authorizing it [the use of force] was an essential factor.” Author interview with Lawrence Rossin (July 25, 2009).}

Finally, as previously pointed out, some leading officials at the State Department even opposed the very attempt to seek to obtain a SC mandate for armed intervention. Dobbins, in particular, recalls that he opposed making the effort, because he thought it would be exceedingly costly and time-consuming for Washington to obtain an explicit SC endorsement.\footnote{Author interview with James Dobbins (July 10, 2009).} The administration’s activists ultimately agreed that a serious effort should be made to obtain an explicit UNSC mandate, but they did so only after it became clear that they would otherwise not have been able to push their preferred policy of armed intervention through the national security bureaucracy. That is incompatible with the notion of compliance with international legitimacy norms based on a sense of moral duty.

\textit{Multilateralism to reduce costly international opposition (Prevent “soft balancing”).}

Nevertheless, Washington policy officials might have sought the endorsement of relevant IOs to satisfy the beliefs about legitimate behavior held by foreign countries, in view of avoiding potentially costly international countermeasures, or “soft balancing,” against the United States. Prominent IR scholars argue that unilateral military interventions, carried out without the formal endorsement of relevant IOs, are likely to signal revisionist intentions and arouse widespread international opposition. That might in turn lead third-party states to reduce their cooperation...
with the intervener in other issue-areas, or, worse, form soft balancing coalitions aimed at frustrating and undermining the intervener’s foreign policy more generally.\footnote{553 Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States,” p. 10; see also Nye, The Paradox of American Power, pp. 16-17; Stephen Walt, Taming American Power; Jervis, American Foreign Policy in a New Era, pp. 104, 110; and Hoffmann, Chaos and Violence, p. 18.}

If soft balancing concerns had driven U.S. behavior on Haiti, one ought to be able to observe the following implications. First, Washington policy officials should indicate that they were in fact deeply concerned about potential international opposition to the use of force, because of the anticipated material consequences in terms of reduced international cooperation with the United States or outright efforts to frustrate U.S. policies. Second, those same American officials should acknowledge that reducing third-party state opposition to U.S. military intervention was, in fact, a significant reason for seeking to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs. Finally, the endorsement of relevant IOs, once obtained, should have persuaded initially skeptical third-party states that U.S. intentions were indeed benign, and consequently international opposition to the use of force should have visibly diminished.

In the spring of 1994 it became apparent to the Clinton administration that any principled international opposition to a U.S. military intervention in Haiti would be concentrated in the western hemisphere, and specifically in Latin America. With the notable exceptions of France, the former colonial power in Haiti, and Russia, which appeared willing to create problems at the UNSC to increase its own bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the United States, political leaders and their publics outside of the western hemisphere had little or no interests in Haiti. Few states outside of the Americas actively supported the use of force to restore Aristide to the presidency; but at the same time, virtually no foreign leader outside of the hemisphere was willing to openly oppose what appeared to be an increasingly likely U.S. military operation, thereby upsetting bilateral relations with Washington. The only third-party states that cared strongly about U.S.
military intervention in the hemisphere were the Latin American nations. As the use of force in Haiti appeared increasingly likely, several Latin American governments publicly expressed their opposition to U.S. intervention. Furthermore, although the Cédras regime enjoyed little sympathy in the hemisphere, most Latin American leaders felt uneasy about restoring Aristide, an unpredictable political radical who had never taken liberal constitutional principles very seriously.

On the occasion of an ad-hoc meeting of OAS foreign ministers held in Belem, Brazil, in June 1994, several Latin American governments went on record as emphatically opposing any use-of-force option to restore Aristide to the presidency. The representatives of the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, and Brazil denied that the situation in Haiti at the time constituted a threat to international peace and security (in the absence of which there can be no justification for intervention under the UN Charter). Several of them further suggested that the international use of force in Haiti would blatantly violate the hemispheric rule of non-intervention solemnly enshrined in the OAS Charter. Some Latin American states, such as Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela, went so far as to state explicitly that for those reasons, they would oppose any U.S.-led military action in Haiti, “no matter whether unilaterial or multilateral.”

A few weeks later, the Parlamento Latinoamericano, a regional assembly representing eighteen national legislatures and largely unaffected by geo-political calculations, came closest to expressing popular sentiment in the region: first, it objected to any kind of

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554 The OAS Charter states that: “No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference…” (Art. 19).

555 OAS, Réunion ad hoc de ministros de relaciones exteriores (Haiti), Acta de la séptima sesión, June 6, 1994 (OEA/Ser. F/V.1; MRE/ACTA 7/94), pp. 35 (Paraguay), 48-49 (Uruguay), 32 (Venezuela), 27 and 34; emph added.
outside military intervention in Haiti; and second, it explicitly called on Aristide to resign and allow new presidential elections to be held.\textsuperscript{556}

Widespread Latin American skepticism about U.S. military intervention in Haiti did not come as a surprise to the Clinton administration’s leading foreign policy officials. After all, most Latin American states had strongly condemned previous U.S. military interventions, notably the most recent ones in Grenada and Panama. The latter had even been formally censured by the OAS in a vote of 20 to 1.\textsuperscript{557} Thus, in 1994, most of the administration’s foreign-policy officials anticipated significant Latin American protests over U.S. military action in Haiti, long before the above-mentioned states openly spoke out against it. Alexander Watson, who led U.S. diplomacy on Latin America at the time, was not in the least surprised that several states in the hemisphere were opposed to any potential U.S. military intervention. After all, he explains, “nobody on the planet has more experience with U.S. military intervention than the Latin Americans.”\textsuperscript{558}

However, it was equally clear to most senior Clinton administration officials dealing with Haiti that Latin American opposition to U.S. military intervention was largely a matter of principle, aimed primarily at appeasing restless domestic audiences, and had little to do with perceptions of threatening American motives or fears of a revamped “Yankee imperialism.” Richard Feinberg, at the time a senior NSC staffer dealing with inter-American affairs, candidly recalls that he and most of his colleagues from the administration saw Latin American hostility to U.S. military action in Haiti as “just part of the background noise.”\textsuperscript{559} In other words, there


\textsuperscript{558} Author interview with Alexander Fletcher Watson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, 1993-96 (June 23, 2009).

\textsuperscript{559} Author interview with Richard Feinberg (June 22, 2009).
was never much doubt among senior Clinton administration officials that hemispheric opposition to the use of force would largely remain confined to the level of rhetoric and would have no negative consequences for wider U.S.-Latin American relations.

First, the historical record of U.S. military intervention in the hemisphere allowed for some useful and quite reassuring extrapolations. About half a decade earlier, in December 1989, most Latin American governments had protested loudly against U.S. military intervention in Panama; but they had done so largely to appease their own outraged domestic audiences. In private conversations with Washington, several Latin American leaders had acknowledged leading up to the Panama intervention that they did in fact have few qualms about the forcible removal from office of general Noriega, the Panamanian dictator. Significantly, in the aftermath of the Panama intervention, nobody in the hemisphere took any retaliatory measures against the United States, regardless of the blatantly unilateral character of the U.S. invasion, and indeed, Latin American cooperation with Washington increased steadily in subsequent years.\(^{560}\) During the lead-up to the Haiti intervention in 1994, the Panama precedent was interpreted in Washington as suggesting that regardless of formal multilateral approval, Latin American nations were unlikely to react to a renewed U.S. pro-democracy intervention in the hemisphere by seeking to punish the United States and reducing their cooperation with the U.S. in other issue areas.\(^{561}\)

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\(^{560}\) Author interview with Michael Kozak, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs in 1989, as well as Head of the State Department’s Haiti working group in 1994 (June 23, 2009).

\(^{561}\) Most Latin American countries actually cared less about Haiti and its international sovereignty than they had previously cared about Panama. Harriet Babbitt, the U.S. ambassador to the OAS in 1994, explains that “by-and-large, the Latin American countries don’t care about Haiti. It wasn’t as if we were about to invade a Latin American country; we were about to invade a very poor, very black country of interest to us and of no interest to them. Haiti just geographically happened to be enough in their neighborhood so that they had a stake in the process, but not very much in the outcome.” Author interview with Harriett Babbitt (July 10, 2009).
Second, by the mid-1990s, most Latin American states were deeply enmeshed in mutually beneficial political and economic relationships with the United States. Foreign-policy leaders in Washington expected that their Latin American counterparts would be pragmatic enough to understand that they would pay the highest price from a deterioration of those relationships. The Clinton administration had actively sought since early 1993 to promote free trade agreements, liberal market reforms, and U.S. private investment in the region, while also increasing the overall amount of U.S. development assistance to its southern neighbors.\textsuperscript{562} NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, had just come into force in January 1994; and by calling for the first Summit of the Americas to be held in Miami, Florida, in December 1994, the Clinton administration had announced its intention to further promote cross-border economic integration in the hemisphere as a whole. Senior administration officials at the time never made a secret of the fact that the White House would “work a lot harder to get a trade agreement through Congress with a country that had cooperated with [the U.S. government] on issues that mattered to [the United States].”\textsuperscript{563}

In short, most senior officials in Washington took it essentially for granted that even those Latin American states which during the spring and early summer of 1994 had most loudly opposed the prospect of U.S. military intervention in Haiti would refrain from actively trying to disrupt U.S. policy—and certainly they would not deliberately reduce their cooperation with the United States in other issue-areas. Latin American leaders would have little to benefit and potentially a great deal to lose from upsetting the regional hegemon, upon whose benevolence


\textsuperscript{563} Author interview with Harriet Babbitt (July 10, 2009).
their own nations’ prosperity and democratic consolidation depended to a greater degree than ever.

There was also no expectation among senior U.S. policy officials at the time that a SC mandate explicitly authorizing the use of force could lead those Latin American states that had most strongly opposed the prospect of U.S. military intervention during the spring and early summer of 1994, such as Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela, to subsequently reduce their rhetorical opposition in any meaningful way. Lake recalls that he didn’t “expect them [the skeptical Latin Americans], practically under any circumstances, to be in favor of an American intervention in the hemisphere, because of history.” William Gray, the administration’s special Haiti advisor at the time, similarly predicted in congressional testimony that “under no circumstances would [some Latin American states] favor military intervention.”

Lake and his colleagues were right in their expectation that an explicit UN mandate would have little impact on hemispheric opposition to the use of force. As negotiations at the SC entered their crucial phase in late July 1994, those Latin American nations that had most strongly opposed the prospect of U.S. military intervention earlier on made it clear that they would inexorably condemn the use of force, regardless of whether the UN was going to endorse it or not. On July 31, on the occasion of a debate at the SC immediately preceding the adoption of Resolution 940, which authorized U.S. military intervention, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela (the same states that had been most unmistakably critical of any U.S. military action at the OAS meeting held in Brazil several weeks earlier) asked to speak again. Now joined by Cuba, they insisted that in their view, the situation in Haiti did not constitute a threat to international peace.

564 Author interviews with Alexander Watson and Frank Wisner, respectively on June 23 and July 16, 2009.
565 Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).
and security, which made it impossible for them to support a U.S.-led military intervention. The 
Venezuelan representative, capturing the political mood among several of his Latin American 
colleagues, plainly stated that his government could “not support unilaterial or multilateral 
military actions in any nation of the hemisphere.”

Among Latin America’s group of skeptical states, Brazil was the only one to be 
represented on the UNSC. The Brazilian government instructed its representative at the UN to
abstain on the crucial vote, instead of voting against the resolution, having been subjected to
significant political pressure by Washington in previous days. Yet the Brazilian representative
nevertheless criticized the resolution’s text as “not felicitous” and acknowledged that his
government had “serious difficulties” with its content. SCR 940, which authorized the use of
“all necessary means” to restore democracy in Haiti, was adopted with twelve favorable votes
and two abstentions (Brazil and China, while the representative of Rwanda was absent).
Following the resolution’s adoption, the governments of Peru and Bolivia joined their
aforementioned Latin American neighbors in publicly condemning the prospective U.S. military
intervention.

In conclusion, the Clinton administration’s top foreign policy officials expected
significant verbal opposition to military intervention in Haiti from Latin American governments.
However, it was clear from the outset that nobody in the hemisphere would seek to actively
undermine U.S. policy on Haiti. Even the loudest public protests would have practically no

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567 UN Security Council, Transcript of the 3413th meeting, held on July 31, 1994 (UN Document S/PV.3413), p. 8; emphasis added.
569 Statements by the permanent missions of Peru and Bolivia to the OAS, on August 4 and August 5, 1994, respectively. See also AfSane Bassir Pour and Alain Frachon, “En dépit d’une forte opposition des pays d’Amérique latine le Conseil the sécurité de l’ONU autorise les Etats-Unis à intervenir en Haïti,” Le Monde, August 2, 1994.
consequence in terms of overall political and economic cooperation between the U.S. and its regional partners. Crucially, senior Clinton administration officials anticipated that even a formal endorsement of military intervention by the UNSC would not be particularly helpful in terms of reducing the principled opposition of several Latin American states. Therefore, it appears unlikely that concerns about potentially costly international opposition were a primary determinant of Washington’s effort to seek an explicit SC mandate for military intervention in the summer of 1994. Ultimately, once a UN endorsement was obtained, it did little to change the attitude of those governments that in previous months had most strongly objected to the prospect of a U.S. military intervention. At the same time, as most U.S. leaders had expected, there was no “soft balancing” against the United States or any other type of retaliatory activity. Indeed, in subsequent years overall political and economic relations between the United States and its hemispheric partners continued to improve.

**Summary and conclusion**

A detailed analysis of U.S. decision making on Haiti in 1994 confirms that bureaucratic politics in Washington, more than anything else, determined the Clinton administration’s effort to obtain an explicit SC mandate for the use of force. By skillfully deploying their bureaucratic and political influence, the military leaders, in cooperation with OSD, successfully convinced the rest of the administration that a serious effort should be made to obtain an explicit UN mandate for the use of force, because that alone would effectively guarantee a quick handover to a follow-on UN mission and thereby offer a smooth exit strategy for American troops.

At the same time, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that international legitimacy norms, or concerns about potentially costly international opposition, played at best a secondary role in Washington’s decision to multilateralize its policy on Haiti. Finally, U.S.
domestic political factors, such as concerns about broader popular and congressional support for a longer-term deployment, played a significant but indirect role. Concerns about potential congressional opposition, in particular, arose only after the military leaders had emphasized in the intramural debates that a U.S. invasion would almost certainly have to be followed by a protracted peacekeeping and stabilization mission in Haiti. Also, as I have shown, the military brass quietly encouraged congressional leaders to be outspoken in expressing their concerns—since the uniformed leaders expected that that would increase their own leverage vis-à-vis the rest of the administration. This only reinforces my central argument that the U.S. defense establishment, notably the JCS and their civilian allies at OSD, played a very significant and hitherto unacknowledged role in steering Washington policy on Haiti toward the United Nations in the summer of 1994.
Chapter IV

Bosnia, 1992-95: We did not want to “own” it

The Bosnian war between 1992 and 1995 was marked by ethnic and religious violence on a scale unseen in Europe since the end of World War II. Soon after the fighting erupted, liberal activists in the United States began calling for armed intervention to relieve the suffering of the Bosnian Muslims and bring an end to the genocidal violence on the ground. However, the U.S. military leaders and the Pentagon more generally put up a staunch bureaucratic resistance to armed intervention in the Balkans. The military were adamantly opposed to deploying American ground troops to Bosnia in a combat role. Their argument was that the limited U.S. strategic interests at stake in the region did not warrant the risk to American lives. But the uniformed leaders were also skeptical of using air power: they claimed that even limited air strikes would put America’s credibility at stake, and in the absence of meaningful results, Washington would then have to escalate, by deploying U.S. ground troops in a dangerous peace-enforcement role.

The main thesis of this chapter is that between 1993 and 1995, bureaucratic resistance to the use of force from the Department of Defense and from the military leadership in particular kept U.S. Bosnia policy on a steady multilateral track. In 1993 and 1994, the top military brass agreed in principle to limited air strikes aimed at protecting several so-called UN safe areas, provided that the attacks were carried out multilaterally through NATO. However, Washington’s

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570 Research carried out under the auspices of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has estimated the total death toll to slightly over 100,000. See ICTY Demographic Unit, “Victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), 1992-1995,” Final report (The Hague, 2010); Available online at: http://www.icty.org/sid/10591.
European allies were initially reluctant to move ahead with the bombing, given that they were highly skeptical of the Bosnian Muslim faction. Also, several western European countries had already deployed thousands of their own troops to Bosnia as part of a UN peacekeeping force (UNPROFOR), which would be vulnerable to Serb retaliation in the face of NATO air strikes. In subsequent months the Clinton administration’s humanitarian activists, led by Madeleine Albright, began to insist that Washington had a moral duty to intervene unilaterally in the face of European inaction. But the top U.S. military brass remained vehemently opposed. Over and over in the internal bureaucratic debates, the military leaders insisted that if the United States acted on its own, Britain and France would almost certainly withdraw their troops from the UN peacekeeping force, and Washington would then be left with full responsibility for Bosnia—meaning that American ground troops would almost certainly have to be deployed. The result of this effort on the part of the military leaders and the Pentagon more generally to limit U.S. liability was a strictly multilateral, if largely ineffectual, American policy until well into 1995.

Things began to change only in the summer of 1995, when a Serb assault on the UN-protected enclave of Srebrenica killed more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian crisis had now become a serious domestic political liability for President Clinton. But the U.S. military leaders remained adamant that Washington should continue to follow a multilateral course of action through NATO, whose credibility was now at risk. In late August and early September 1995, Washington was finally able to cajole its European partners into launching a broader NATO air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, *Operation Deliberate Force*, which facilitated a negotiated settlement of the Bosnian war. The military brass in Washington insisted that the largest possible number of NATO allies should be actively involved in the air campaign, by contributing their own aircraft and participating in the bombing—the expectation being that
while this would reduce U.S. freedom of action, it would commit the European allies to
protecting the Bosnian Muslim population and lock in their support for Bosnia’s long-term
stabilization. The Pentagon’s goal was to entirely hand off postwar stabilization and
reconstruction to the European allies after a short period of time—possibly by the end of 1996.

This chapter is structured as follows. After briefly setting the context, I highlight the very
significant costs to Washington of channeling U.S. Bosnia policy through the UN and NATO.
Thereafter, I describe U.S. bureaucratic disagreements on the use of force in more detail and
focus in particular on the military’s preferences and concerns. I seek to demonstrate that the top
military brass, by asserting itself and seeking to limit American liability for events on the ground
in Bosnia, played a decisive role in keeping the United States on a steady multilateral course of
action from 1993 to 1995. In the final part of the chapter, I briefly consider two possible
alternative explanations of Washington’s efforts channel its Bosnia policy through relevant IOs.
First, U.S. leaders may have internalized new international norms which, quite apart from
strategic or political considerations, require that armed interventions be multilaterally approved.
Second, Washington may have sought to reassure third-party states about American motives, in
view of preventing costly international countermeasures, or “soft balancing,” in other issue areas.

1. Limiting U.S. liability by staying out of it, 1992-93.

The Yugoslav Federation began to unravel in June 1991, following the secession of
Slovenia and Croatia and their hasty international recognition, led by Germany. In early 1992,
fighting broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina between Bosnian Serb military units (supported by
elements of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army) and Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian
Croat militias.\textsuperscript{571} By the fall of 1992, the Bosnian Serb faction (roughly one-third of Bosnia’s total population), had gained control of about 70 percent of Bosnian territory, with assistance from Belgrade. The Bosnian Serb offensive soon culminated in the siege of Sarajevo, a formerly thriving multicultural city, and the resulting humanitarian tragedy was broadcast live by television networks all over the world—creating pressure on western governments to act.\textsuperscript{572}

Already in the fall of 1991, the UN Security Council had imposed a weapons embargo on the entire former Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{573} During the Bosnian war the embargo hit the Muslim population hardest, given that the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats had their arsenals refueled through illicit transfers from Belgrade and Zagreb, respectively. A UN peacekeeping operation—known as UNPROFOR—was established under European initiative as early as 1992, with the limited goal of facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina (henceforth: Bosnia).\textsuperscript{574} The United States did not contribute any troops to UNPROFOR, as U.S. military leaders were staunchly opposed to any deployment of American ground troops to Bosnia. “The U.S. military were not that anxious to get into what looked like a real swamp,” recalls General Colin Powell, at the time the JCS chairman.\textsuperscript{575} The administration of President George H.W. Bush more generally viewed the breakup of Yugoslavia as a regional, or European, problem that did not affect major U.S. strategic interests. “We don’t have a ‘dog’ in

\textsuperscript{571} On the outbreak of violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Steven L. Burg and Paul L. Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention} (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), chap. 3.


\textsuperscript{573} UNSC Res. 713, adopted unanimously on September 25, 1991.

\textsuperscript{574} The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was initially deployed to parts of Croatia in early 1992. Subsequently its mandate was extended to Bosnia-Herzegovina, at first to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and then also to protect various UN “safe areas.” The relevant SCR (770) was adopted in August 1992 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which typically suggests international enforcement action. Yet for the next two years, UNPROFOR operated according to the most classical peacekeeping principles of neutrality and consent.

\textsuperscript{575} Author interview with Gen. Colin Powell (USA, ret.), Chairman of the JCS, October 1989 – September 1993 (February 2, 2011).
this fight,” was the famously dismissive analysis of Secretary of State James Baker.\textsuperscript{576} U.S. foreign policy at the time focused on ostensibly more important geo-strategic challenges, namely the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, with the nascent containment regime for Iraq, and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

During the 1992 U.S. presidential election campaign, candidate William “Bill” Clinton strongly criticized the Bush administration’s passive approach on Bosnia and called for greater American involvement. Clinton insisted on the need for Washington to show “real leadership,” and while he stopped short of calling for the deployment of American ground troops, he suggested that the U.S. might take the lead on launching air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs and lifting the arms embargo.\textsuperscript{577} Once in office, however, Clinton backtracked on his forceful campaign rhetoric. President Clinton, inexperienced in foreign policy and focused on his domestic political agenda, was reluctant to spend precious resources and political capital on a faraway ethnic conflict. Hence the new administration, seeking to limit American liability, wanted to be internationalist on the cheap: it adopted a tough stance in public, desirous to appease various domestic constituencies that were calling for greater U.S. leadership on Bosnia, while at the same time continuing to minimize America’s actual military and political involvement. Significantly, in 1993 the Clinton administration declined to support the Vance-Owen peace plan, the diplomatic proposal then on the table, claiming that it was too favorable to the Bosnian Serbs and thus arguably contributing to its failure.\textsuperscript{578}


As part of Washington’s effort to appear politically active while minimizing its own exposure, the United States also sought to involve relevant multilateral bodies from early on. Soon after the breakout of the Bosnian war in the spring of 1992, the U.S. government had chosen to involve the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was then in search of a new strategic identity. In mid-1992, NATO began a low-key effort to monitor, and subsequently enforce, the UN arms and trade embargo on the Adriatic Sea.\(^{579}\) When the UN imposed a ban on all military flights over Bosnia in late 1992, NATO also started to monitor and then (following the adoption of SCR 816 in March 1993) enforce the no-fly zone, by activating *Operation Deny Flight*. In February 1994, this led NATO to become engaged in its first combat action ever, when two U.S. F-16 fighter airplanes shot down four Bosnian Serb Galeb aircraft that had violated the no-fly zone.\(^{580}\) Washington also supported the adoption of relevant SC resolutions, including on the establishment of UNPROFOR, although the administration’s position was that no American soldiers should be deployed to Bosnia until after a peace agreement had been negotiated and accepted by the local parties. As journalist Bob Woodward explains, those multilateral instruments, “the United Nations and NATO… somewhat insulated [the Bush team and then for some time] the Clinton administration from full responsibility in Bosnia.”\(^{581}\)


2. The costs of U.S. multilateralism on Bosnia

Clinging to a multilateral consensus on Bosnia through NATO and the UN allowed Washington to limit its own exposure and liability. However, the policy was anything but costless to the United States. First, it required that Washington channel any use of airpower through a cumbersome mechanism of UN authorization and oversight, known as the “dual key” arrangement, which greatly reduced U.S. freedom of action and undermined U.S. coercive diplomacy. Second, internal NATO disagreements over the use of air power resulted in growing and quite serious transatlantic tensions. Finally, by the spring and early summer of 1995, the Clinton administration’s strategy of proceeding multilaterally and adopting a tough rhetorical stance in public while shifting most of the actual burden (and the blame) to the UN and the European allies had become a serious political burden for President Clinton.

Limited and ineffectual air strikes

The use of airpower became a topic of contention between Washington and its European allies from the spring of 1993 onwards. In April and May of that year, the UNSC—with Washington’s support—proclaimed the Bosnian towns of Srebrenica, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihac, as well as the capital, Sarajevo as “safe areas.” The ostensible goal was to prevent the Bosnian Serbs from taking control of those Muslim enclaves under siege. Several weeks later, on June 4, 1993 the SC adopted Resolution 836, which authorized “member states, acting nationally or through regional organizations,” to take “all necessary measures, through the use of air power” to support UNPROFOR in deterring attacks against the safe areas.


583 Subsequently Res. 836 was interpreted as also providing NATO with the authority to offer “close air support” to UNPROFOR in its own self-defense throughout Bosnia, and thus not only in or around the safe areas. See Leurdiik, The United Nations and NATO… , p.45; Schulte, “Former Yugoslavia and the New NATO,” p. 21.
Neither the United States nor its European allies were willing to mount a full-fledged defense of the safe areas. Yet President Clinton, under domestic political pressure, was advocating a policy of limited NATO air strikes to repel and deter Serb attacks against the UN enclaves. The Europeans, and notably the British and French, who had thousands of their own troops deployed as UN peacekeepers on the ground, were reluctant, fearing possible Serb acts of reprisal. Former U.S. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake recalls that Washington’s European “allies were somewhere between strongly opposed and apoplectic about… heavier bombing, [since] such a measure could imperil their troops in UNPROFOR.”584 Furthermore, the Europeans were hesitant to appear to openly take sides in the conflict on the part of the Bosnian Muslims. “The Bosniak [Bosnian Muslim] tactic of course was to induce the United Nations into the war,” explains Walter Slocombe, at the time a senior Pentagon official. The Bosnian Muslims were using the “safe areas” as staging grounds for their own military offensives, which inevitably resulted in Serb counterattacks that put large numbers of civilians at risk. Meanwhile the United States, under pressure from Congress and public opinion, was taking a more openly pro-Muslim stance and clearly identified the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressor.585

The French attitude, in particular, was more or less openly pro-Serb, reflecting longstanding historical ties, at least until the spring of 1995, when Jacques Chirac replaced Francois Mitterrand at the Elysée Palace. The British government under John Major was fundamentally constrained by a highly risk-averse Tory Party, which opposed taking a tougher line on Bosnia and insisted that UNPROFOR stick to its mandate of neutral peacekeeping until a negotiated solution to the conflict was found. Germany under Helmut Kohl, finally, was opposed

to any coercive action due to the constraints of a coalition-based government, the memory of Nazi atrocities committed against the Serbs during the occupation of Yugoslavia in WWII, and the generally pacifist instincts of contemporary German public opinion.\footnote{For an overview, see Brian Rathburn, \textit{Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).}

The Europeans’ reluctance to openly take sides against the Bosnian Serbs was compounded by the United Nations’ own culture of neutrality and ingrained institutional preference for consensual operations. Among senior UN officials, the Secretary-General’s special representative for the Former Yugoslavia, Japanese diplomat Yashushi Akashi, was particularly attached to the idea of traditional peacekeeping based on neutrality and consent.\footnote{Author interview with Ian Johnstone, Legal adviser, Office of the UN Secretary-General, 1994-1995 (April 2, 2010).} Akashi’s extreme reluctance to authorize NATO air strikes on various occasions earned him strong international criticism, particularly after the Srebrenica massacre of 1995.\footnote{Leading up to the Serb assault on Srebrenica, the Dutch commander of UN peacekeepers there repeatedly requested NATO air support, which SRSG Akashi initially declined to authorize. When Akashi finally gave his go-ahead, the Dutch peacekeepers had already come within range of Serb gunfire, prompting the Dutch minister of defense to request that NATO air operations be discontinued. See Srebrenica Report, pp. 67f; and Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 24.} At the same time, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and especially Kofi Annan, the head of UN peacekeeping at the time, were more forward leaning and would probably have approved of forceful action from early on, if the Security Council had endorsed a robust mandate for peace-enforcement and member nations, including the United States, had been willing to contribute the necessary troops.\footnote{Author interview with Ian Johnstone (April 2, 2010). The UN’s \textit{Agenda For Peace}, published in 1993, strongly endorsed the Clinton administration’s policy of “assertive multilateralism” and peace-enforcement as a last resort in the pursuit of the Charter’s objectives. Only following the UN’s dismal experiences in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, Boutros-Ghali formally backtracked, expressing great concern at “the consequences of using force, other than for self-defence, in a peace-keeping context.” See Boutros-Ghali, \textit{Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization} (UN Doc. A/50/60 - S/1995/1), January 3, 1995, para.79.} Therefore, if the UN Secretariat in New York largely supported Akashi’s cautious approach until the summer of 1995, that largely reflected the aforementioned
fundamental divisions between Washington, on the one side, and its chief European allies, Britain and France, on the other.590

By late July 1993, the Bosnian Serbs appeared close to capturing Mount Igman near Sarajevo. If Mount Igman fell, the strangulation of the Bosnian capital would be complete. For several weeks, the Europeans continued to resist Washington’s calls for NATO air strikes, citing the risk of reprisals to their peacekeepers.591 Only in August 1993 the main European capitals eventually agreed to support NATO air strikes in principle. But their acquiescence came at a heavy price: the decision on whether to conduct specific air strikes would be shared by NATO and the UN, thereby giving both organizations an effective veto.592 The exceedingly cumbersome “dual key” arrangement was thus born, under which air strikes would have to be approved by NATO’s Southern Command in Naples, on the one side, and the UN Secretary-General or his designated representative acting in consultation with the Security Council, on the other.593 Given dominant British and French roles in the UNPROFOR command, the dual-key allowed London and Paris to manipulate the air strikes threat for their own purposes; and over the next two years the Europeans agreed to air strikes against specific targets only with extreme reluctance.594

592 Barton Gellman and Trevor Rowe, “NATO Prepares Bosnia Target Lists; But Major Disputes Remain Over Control or Extent of Air strikes,” Washington Post, August 4, 1993.
593 Close air support more narrowly aimed at the protection of UNPROFOR could be requested by the UN force commander on the ground, though it, too, had to be approved by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Bosnia, Yashushi Akashi. See Dan Sarooshi, “The Security Council’s Authorization of Regional Arrangements to Use Force: The Case of NATO,” in Vaughan Lowe et al., The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 233ss; and Schulte, “Former Yugoslavia and the New NATO,” p. 22; see also Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, pp. 90-1; and Leurdijk, The United Nations and NATO..., pp. 47f.
Growing tensions within NATO

The French and the British played what Robert Hunter, at the time the U.S. permanent representative to NATO, calls a “double game” with regard to the use of air power: under pressure from Washington, on several occasions London and Paris reluctantly agreed “to turn NATO’s key, but each time they were then going to Boutros-Ghali and telling him not to turn the UN key.”595 The growing frictions within NATO, fuelled by the Europeans’ reluctance to shift to peace-enforcement, on the one side, and the Clinton administration’s insistence on air strikes combined with its staunch opposition to deploying American ground troops, on the other, greatly jeopardized the security of the “safe areas” that the allies had solemnly pledged to protect.

Transatlantic disagreements over the use of air power resulted in a serious transatlantic crisis in the fall of 1994. In October of that year, Bosnian Muslim forces had launched an offensive out of the UN-protected enclave of Bihac, but they were soon pushed back by a Bosnian Serb counterattack, and the “safe area” came under heavy shelling.596 By mid-November, Bihac risked being overrun by Serb troops, and France and Britain reluctantly gave in to Washington’s prodding to launch limited NATO air strikes.597 Yet the Serbs, far from withdrawing, escalated the crisis by taking about 250 UN peacekeepers hostage. Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, threatened that if NATO air strikes continued, UNPROFOR troops would no longer be treated as peacekeepers but instead be dealt with as hostile forces.598

595 Author interview with Robert Hunter, U.S. permanent representative to NATO, 1993-98 (March 11, 2010). See also Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, p. 32.
When in subsequent days Washington insisted on a further and tougher use of NATO airpower, the French and the British reacted furiously: “It’s nice to say you want to help the victims against the aggressors, but it bears no relation to what is happening on the ground,” a senior French military official told the American media, before adding: “The Americans say they know what is right and what we should do, but they don’t even dare to put their troops on the line.”599 The British defense minister concurred, pointing out that the United States should “match words [with] deeds and that doesn’t include just a few aircraft.”600 British and French leaders increasingly saw U.S. behavior as reckless, given the Clinton administration’s apparent willingness to put at risk the lives of European, but not American, soldiers. Over the following days, London and Paris began to openly question the reliability of American security commitments in Europe and thus ultimately the viability of NATO.601 With the alliance at breaking point, the Clinton administration retracted its call for further NATO air strikes. Several analysts suggest that the transatlantic quarrel over air strikes in November 1994 was the worst crisis the alliance had faced since Suez 1956.602

In early December, President Clinton made a costly pledge to reaffirm America’s security commitment to Europe and persuade the allies to keep their troops in Bosnia: if the peacekeeping forces of NATO allies came under fire and had to be withdrawn, he promised, the United States would be prepared to supply up to 25,000 of its own troops for an emergency extraction


operation. But as the situation on the ground in Bosnia rapidly deteriorated in subsequent months, the prospect became increasingly real that the U.S. might have to actually carry out the promise (a failure to do so in case of need would have probably sealed NATO’s fate for good). Thus, in the spring of 1995, the Clinton administration was getting closer to being drawn into precisely the situation it had doggedly sought to avoid over the previous two years—U.S. ground troops deployed into Bosnia, and that under the most dangerous of circumstances. Only the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, as I will show below, finally galvanized the allies into united action and arguably saved NATO from suffering permanent damage. As Richard Holbrooke, then the assistant secretary of state for European affairs, sums it up, by 1995, “keeping the Atlantic Alliance, the main pillar of American foreign policy for over half a century, from coming apart over Bosnia” had become one of the administration’s “greatest foreign policy challenges.”

**A growing political burden for the president**

Finally, by the spring and early summer of 1995, the Clinton administration’s tentative multilateral approach to Bosnia had become a serious domestic political burden. In previous years, Washington’s tough rhetorical stance against Serb aggression and public support for the Bosnian Muslims had quite visibly emboldened the latter faction, making it militarily more daring and less willing to compromise at the negotiating table. At the same time, the Clinton administration’s unwillingness to deploy U.S. ground troops to Bosnia in a peace-enforcement operation.
role led the Bosnian Serbs under Radovan Karadzic to react to Muslim provocations in an increasingly brutal fashion.\footnote{In view of this, David Owen, a former British foreign secretary and the EU’s chief Balkan negotiator during the Bosnian war, pungently concludes that “from the spring of 1993 to the summer of 1995, … the effect of US policy … was to prolong the war of the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.” Owen, \textit{Balkan Odyssey} (New York: Mariner Books, 1997), p. 408. For a similar conclusion, see also Alan J. Kuperman, “The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans,” \textit{International Studies Quarterly} 52, 2008, pp. 49–80.} This vicious circle reached its climax in the summer of 1995, when the Bosnian Serb army led by Ratko Mladic overran the “safe area” of Srebrenica, brutally killing over 7,000 Bosnian Muslims in a few days.

Soon after the Srebrenica massacre, Jacques Chirac, the newly elected French leader, challenged President Clinton: he offered to deploy around 1,000 French rapid reaction troops to the threatened Muslim enclave of Gorazde and explicitly called for Washington’s assistance in the operation. When Washington hesitated, Chirac noted in a grandstanding move that regrettably, France stood “alone in wanting to take action” and compared the situation to the time in 1938 when the West had appeased Hitler.\footnote{Halberstam, \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, p. 316; Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, p. 68-69; Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 326.} President Clinton was clearly annoyed that Chirac had seized the initiative – and the limelight. “I’m getting creamed on Bosnia,” Clinton fumed on July 14 1995, in the presence of two senior national security aides.\footnote{The two aides were Samuel Berger and Nancy Soderberg, who were standing next to a visibly upset Clinton while he was chipping golf balls on the White House putting green. See Nancy Soderberg, \textit{The Superpower Myth} (New York: Wiley, 2005), p. 67; Woodward, \textit{The Choice}, p. 261; Halberstam, \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, p. 317.}

The deteriorating situation in Bosnia and the administration’s hesitant approach were increasingly affecting the president’s domestic political standing, and his approval ratings on foreign policy were falling.\footnote{See Nancy Soderberg, \textit{The Superpower Myth}, p. 81; Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 20; and Woodward, \textit{The Choice}, p. 255.} Few Americans were going to vote one way or another in the 1996 presidential election because of events in Sarajevo or Srebrenica. Yet the more open the sore, the less this was about the specific foreign policy crisis in Bosnia and the more it was about general
presidential effectiveness. “The political damage resulting from the portrayal of the president and the administration as being inept and allowing something like this to happen was no longer acceptable,” remembers a former senior aide to the president.611 Unless the violence in Bosnia was ended soon, Clinton feared, the decision would be “dropped in during the middle of the [upcoming presidential] campaign.”612

Furthermore, Robert Dole, the Republican Senate majority leader and a likely 1996 presidential candidate, was an outspoken activist on Bosnia and had long been pushing for a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo, creating significant political problems for the administration. On July 26, 1995 the Senate voted 69-29 to end U.S. participation in the arms embargo. The House followed suit on August 1, by a vote of 298-128. President Clinton vetoed the arms embargo bill on August 11—yet both bills had passed with enough votes to override a presidential veto in the future, once Congress came back from its summer recess in September. That, in turn, would in all likelihood have precipitated a withdrawal of European troops from UNPROFOR.613 Had the U.S. and its European partners not finally been able to overcome their disagreements following the massacre at Srebrenica and facilitate an ending of the Bosnian war, the Clinton administration’s half-hearted approach and its unwillingness from 1993 onward to decisively challenge the Europeans over airstrikes might well have exacted a heavy political toll on the president.614

611 Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald Kerrick, Director of European Affairs on the NSC staff, 1994-95 (March 22, 2010).

612 Quoted in Stephanopoulos, All Too Human, p. 383; see also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 306-07.


614 For a good discussion of how Bosnia eventually became an acute political liability for Clinton, see Elizabeth Drew, On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency (New York: Touchstone, 1995), Chap. 10.
3. The U.S. military insisting on multilateral consensus, 1993-95

The Clinton administration’s principal national security officials shaping U.S. Bosnia policy from 1993 onward were: National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, who chaired the relevant NSC meetings; Secretary of State Warren Christopher; Secretary of Defense Les Aspin (replaced by William Perry in early 1994); U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright; JCS Chairman Colin Powell (replaced by John Shalikashvili at the end of 1993), and Director of Central Intelligence James Woosley (replaced by John Deutch in early 1995). Vice President Albert “Al” Gore and his national security adviser, Leon Fuerth, also played an important role in the intramural debates. Soon after the administration entered office in early 1993, it became apparent that there was no consensus among its senior officials on greater U.S. involvement in Bosnia. In the absence of decisive presidential leadership, sometimes heavy bureaucratic infighting ensued, and for the next two-and-a-half years, Clinton’s campaign promise of a more assertive American policy on the Balkans remained unfulfilled.

For the bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism laid out in chapter two of this dissertation to be corroborated, one ought to be able to observe the following dynamics. First, there should be evidence that leading civilian activists in the Clinton administration were at first unconcerned by the need for IO approval and maybe even pushing for U.S. unilateral intervention, because of the expectation that multilateralism would be exceedingly constraining. Second, the top military brass should have been highly skeptical about armed intervention in Bosnia and altogether opposed to U.S. unilateral intervention. The military’s principal concern should have been that American troops might end up owning responsibility for Bosnia—i.e., they might get bogged down in a costly, protracted, and exceedingly dangerous enforcement and

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615 Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 196; Daalder, p. 13; Holbrooke, To End a War, pp. 88f.
stabilization mission on the ground. Third, the uniformed leaders should have made it clear that the only kind of military action they were willing to countenance was a limited use of force endorsed by relevant IOs, such as the UN or NATO. There should be evidence that skeptical military leaders, relying on intramural persuasion and political leverage, were able to constrain more hawkish civilian policy officials. Fourth, the Clinton administration’s civilian activists themselves should have gradually realized that the only type of military intervention they could push through the Washington bureaucracy was strictly limited and multilateral. If those activists acknowledged that the military leaders in fact constrained them and played a key role in keeping U.S. policy on a multilateral track, that would offer further strong support for my theory.

A deeply divided administration

The administration’s leading interventionists on Bosnia were Albright, Lake, Gore, and Fuerth. More than anyone else in the administration, Albright championed U.S. military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs. She had spent part of her childhood in Yugoslavia and saw the conflict there in highly moralistic terms. Lake, too, was an avowed activist on Bosnia, although his overall attitude was quite pragmatic. Initially, at least, he sought to proceed by means of a consensus with the other principals, reflecting his institutional role as the administration’s chief foreign policy coordinator. Secretary Christopher clearly had reservations about military intervention and always proceeded with great caution, trying to understand and reflect what the president wanted. But below Christopher, the State Department

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616 Albright, Madam Secretary (New York: Miramax, 2005), pp.177-80; and Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 13.
617 On the principals’ different viewpoints, see also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 196-7; and Gibbs, First Do No Harm, p. 149.
bureaucracy was generally quite hawkish—and it became more so after Richard Holbrooke was appointed as assistant secretary for European affairs in 1994.\textsuperscript{618}

From the administration’s earliest days, Albright, Gore, and Lake advocated a policy that came to be known as “lift and strike”: the United States, they claimed, should lift the arms embargo, thus enabling the Bosnian Muslims to better defend themselves, and strike Bosnian Serb strongholds from the air. As one former senior administration official who was skeptical of the policy recalls, they “wanted to end the fighting in Bosnia without having to send in ground troops, and believed that by using a combination of air power and extra assistance to the Bosnian Muslims it could be done.”\textsuperscript{619} From mid-1993 onward, Albright, subsequently joined by Holbrooke, insisted on several occasions that if the European allies were not willing to go along with the policy, the U.S. should simply move ahead on its own and use force unilaterally as a last resort, to seek to bring the humanitarian catastrophe to an end.\textsuperscript{620}

Meanwhile the Pentagon, with the military leaders at the forefront, was the main locus of bureaucratic resistance to greater U.S. involvement in Bosnia. Most senior officials at the Defense Department saw lift and strike as an ill-thought-out and dangerous policy that might well drag American ground troops into Bosnia, where they would potentially face a Vietnam-style quagmire. Powell, a highly respected and influential public figure who had been held over from the previous administration as JCS Chairman, vehemently and publicly opposed any deeper

\textsuperscript{618} Senior State Department officials also sometimes acted on their own initiative: in early 1994, for instance, then U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith circumvented the State Department’s chain of command and only consulted with Lake, a declared activist, to initiate a covert program aimed at strengthening the Croats and Bosnian Muslims militarily. See Halberstam, \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, pp. 333f; Gibbs, \textit{First Do No Harm}, pp. 155f; and Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 338.

\textsuperscript{619} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).

\textsuperscript{620} For a detailed discussion, see section 6 of this chapter. See also Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 19-21; and Leurdkijk, \textit{The United Nations and NATO…}, pp. 47f.
U.S. involvement in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{621} The military leaders were not necessarily opposed to intervention in Bosnia on political or ideological grounds (unlike for the case of Haiti, where the top brass had long been ideologically opposed to restoring Aristide). In the case of Bosnia, Senior Pentagon leaders acknowledged that there was a serious humanitarian emergency and that stopping the bloodshed would be desirable.\textsuperscript{622} But the Pentagon and especially the Joint Chiefs were skeptical of military intervention as a policy: they believed it would entail unwarranted risks and costs, in view of the limited U.S. national interests at stake. As Secretary Perry put it, “while Bosnia is in our interest, it is not in our vital interest and therefore it does not…warrant the risk of the lives of thousands of troops.”\textsuperscript{623}

**Understanding the military’s skepticism about U.S. intervention in Bosnia**

The Pentagon and the military leaders in particular were, first, staunchly opposed to any deployment of U.S. ground forces in a combat role. Given that there was no peace to keep, they insisted, American troops might soon find themselves caught up in a Vietnam-style quagmire. “Madeleine [Albright] was very aggressive in this area, and that was very concerning to us,” remembers General Walter Kross, at the time director of the Joint Staff in Washington. “We were very worried we were going to get stuck in there.”\textsuperscript{624} Most U.S. military leaders based their pessimistic assessment on the ferocity and skill with which Yugoslav partisan guerrillas had fought the Germans during WWII. Invading Americans, the argument went, might now trigger a


\textsuperscript{622} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).


similar guerrilla-type resistance by the Serbs and the Yugoslav army. Hence the top military brass saw any deployment of American combat troops to enforce peace in Bosnia as anathema. “If we had made the decision to move to a full military intervention in the Balkans—that would have been the point at which I would have resigned,” explains Admiral William Owens, who served as Vice Chairman of the JCS during the Bosnia crisis. 

In the spring of 1993 General Powell, who had always ruled out the possibility of deploying U.S. ground troops to enforce peace in Bosnia, told the NSC that Washington’s “choices ranged from limited air strikes around Sarajevo to heavy bombing of the Serbs throughout the theater.” Powell then went on to emphasize the risks of military action, insisting that none of these options was guaranteed to change Serb behavior, and “it would be easy for the Serbs to respond by seizing UN humanitarian personnel as hostages.” Throughout 1993 and 1994, the military insisted that the only realistic option on the table was the use of tactical airpower against Serb artillery positions and airfields. The president himself quickly concluded that without solid support from the uniformed leaders, Congress and the American people would not support “military deployments in faraway places not vital to [U.S.] national interests.” He therefore decided that under no circumstances short of a comprehensive peace settlement that was voluntarily accepted by the parties should U.S. troops be deployed to Bosnia.

The administration’s hope was that limited air strikes might be sufficient to placate an increasingly interventionist American public, without provoking the Bosnian Serbs into retaliation against UNPROFOR and thereby putting the lives of European peacekeepers at

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626 Powell, My American Journey, p. 576.
628 Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 10.
However, that raised a number of questions about military effectiveness, American credibility, and the ultimate purpose for which airpower should be used. Walter Slocombe, at the time a senior policy official at the Pentagon, recalls the military’s concerns about the effectiveness of limited airpower as follows: “The military position was that there was no reason to believe that at the first whiff of gunpowder [Yugoslav president] Milosevic and [Bosnian Serb General Ratko] Mladic and [Bosnian Serb leader Radovan] Karadzic would cave. And we would have to explain that there is no example of quickly bombing somebody into submission. And we needed to have a plan for what to do next.”

As U.S. domestic political pressure to use limited airpower increased in the spring of 1993, General John Shalikashvili, then the Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR) at NATO, publicly emphasized the risks of tactical air strikes against Bosnian Serb military positions, pointing out that they would be largely ineffective, given that the Serbs could easily move around and hide their artillery.

The use of airpower would also considerably increase America’s commitment to Bosnia. If tactical air strikes were ineffective, the United States would sooner or later have to escalate, and it might even be forced to deploy ground troops to prevent a wholesale massacre of the Bosnian Muslims and maintain the credibility of its armed forces. Thus, Powell and the other generals warned, even limited military action from the air, while seemingly low-cost, might drag the United States into a prolonged and indefinite commitment of ground forces to the region.

General John J. Sheehan, then director for operations at the Joint Staff, declared in public that he

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629 Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 8.

630 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).

631 Daniel Williams, “White House Defers Action on Balkans for Several Days,” Washington Post, April 21, 1993. Powell similarly explained to his fellow principals within the administration that “faced with limited air strikes, the Serbs would have little difficulty hiding tanks and artillery in the woods and fog of Bosnia. Cf. Powell, My American Journey, p. 576.

found it difficult to fathom how after launching air strikes over Bosnia the U.S. could possibly “declare victory and walk off the battlefield” without sending in ground forces.\textsuperscript{633}

The military leaders were not as categorically opposed to airstrikes as they were to the use of ground troops. The JCS in particular understood that the administration was under growing political pressure to react in some way to the violence and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Thus, for instance, Owens thought at the time that “if there were limited strikes, not strategic strikes, but limited strikes to teach them a lesson, that was a reasonable thing; [because] there was a lot of pressure to do something. But it would have to be very surgical, so as not to get [the United States] in deeper.”\textsuperscript{634} At the same time, the military leaders cautioned that given the limited U.S. strategic interests at stake in Bosnia, even tactical air strikes might exact an excessively high price from the administration, by unnecessarily and dangerously increasing America’s commitment. Hence the best policy to follow from the military’s standpoint would have been for the administration to simply hold its nose and accept Serb territorial gains, while at the same time seeking to persuade the Bosnian Muslims to sign a permanent cease-fire along the existing lines of confrontation. For the entire duration of the Bosnian conflict, the military brass and its civilian allies at the Pentagon argued that this would be an effective, relatively low-cost way of quickly ending a brutal ethnic war, according to the principle of lesser evil.\textsuperscript{635}

In the eyes of the administration’s leading hawks like Albright and Fuerth and influential constituencies within Congress and U.S. civil society, the Pentagon’s suggestion that Washington ought to accept the results of ethnic cleansing on the ground as a means to stabilize


\textsuperscript{634}Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).

\textsuperscript{635}Author interviews with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010); and Alexander Vershbow, NSC Senior Director for European Affairs, 1994-97 (April 2, 2010); see also Daulder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 12, 105.
Bosnia was altogether unacceptable. The United States, Albright and her followers insisted, had a moral obligation “to resist evil.” Therefore, the United States should seek to reverse Serb territorial gains and deploy its formidable military muscle to help the Bosnian Muslims recover lost territory. For the administration’s leading activists, in other words, increasing America’s commitment by using airpower—unilaterally if needed—was precisely desirable. “What are you saving this superb military for,” Albright famously asked Colin Powell, “if we can’t use it?”

How the military kept U.S. policy on a steady multilateral path

The military leaders, while skeptical about air strikes in general, were staunchly opposed to the possibility of any U.S. unilateral implementation of lift and strike outside of a NATO consensus. Partially, by insisting on the need to maintain a NATO consensus, the military brass hoped to be able to avert U.S. armed intervention altogether. But the argument the American generals proffered in the interagency meetings in Washington was that unilateral initiatives should be avoided, because the European allies might react to a further escalation of the conflict by withdrawing their UNPROFOR peacekeepers from Bosnia. That, in turn, would leave the United States fully responsible for the humanitarian and political crisis, and Washington might be forced to deploy American combat troops on the ground. As General Kross recalls, the U.S. military leadership really “didn’t want UNPROFOR to leave. This was a potential quagmire, and we were briefing the NSC and the White House every week on this.”

636 Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 177.

637 Madeleine Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 182. On Albright’s views concerning the use of force more generally, see also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 378-86.

A Pentagon paper authored by (then) Lieutenant General Wesley Clark, the director for strategic plans and policy on the Joint Staff, provided a detailed analysis to back up the military’s view that lifting the arms embargo and conducting unilateral air strikes would “be very dangerous, in view of the prospect for UNPROFOR withdrawal.” So long as the European allies kept their UN peacekeepers in Bosnia, that would ensure some form of buffer on the ground and greatly reduce the risk that American troops would have to be deployed. Kerrick summarizes the prevailing view at the time among the military leaders and their civilian Pentagon allies as follows: “UNPROFOR was there, the view was that they were ineffective, but at least they were trying to do something.” The principal concern, Kerrick further explains, was that if Washington implemented lift and strike unilaterally, “one, it could endanger UNPROFOR on the ground; two, it could cause UNPROFOR to withdraw—and then we would really own it.”

As early as May 1993, after several weeks of lobbying by the administration’s activists and in view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Bosnia, President Clinton agreed in principle to a policy of lift and strike. But the Pentagon and particularly the Joined Chiefs remained extremely wary and recommended that at a minimum, the NATO allies had to be brought on board. It was of course known in Washington that the Europeans remained altogether opposed to lifting the arms embargo and were hesitant about implementing air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, fearing it would intensify the fighting on the ground and possibly lead to Serb retaliation against the lightly armed peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. In May 1993, Secretary Christopher was dispatched across the Atlantic with instructions to “consult” with the European allies about lift and strike. Yet the Europeans, used to American secretaries of state

640 Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald Kerrick (March 22, 2010).
politely “informing” them of what U.S. presidents had decided, were left unpersuaded by Christopher’s consultative and almost tentative style, which reflected internal divisions within the Clinton administration. Upon returning from his fruitless consultations across the Atlantic, Christopher reported to the president that the allies “will only be persuaded by the raw power approach. That is, we have to tell them that we have firmly decided to go ahead... and that we expect them to support us.” But that would have required American willingness to actually move ahead and carry out the air strikes unilaterally as a last resort—otherwise, if the threat turned out to be hollow, it would have undermined U.S. credibility in the future.

By then, however, the top military brass had persuaded several key players in the administration, including Christopher and Lake, that U.S. unilateral intervention would be out of the question. In June of 1993, with Sarajevo under siege, the Clinton administration’s activists—with Albright at the forefront—explicitly insisted that the United States should threaten to proceed unilaterally unless the European allies came on board, and indeed Washington issued vague warnings pointing in this direction. But as one former senior American diplomat remembers: “That policy survived for about three days.” Christopher and especially Lake had joined the administration believing that in principle, to stabilize the situation in the Balkans and keep the president’s electoral promise, the U.S. should lift the arms embargo and combine this...

641 One senior U.S. official who witnessed Christopher’s consultations in Brussels recalls: “Christopher wasn’t there advocating lift and strike; ...he almost seemed to be looking for reasons not to do it. I think that reflected internal divisions within the administration.” Author interview with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010). See also Warren Christopher, In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 346; Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 225f; and Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 16f.

642 Christopher, In the Stream of History, pp. 346-7; see also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 15; and Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 224-29.

643 Author interview with Anthony Lake, National Security Adviser to the President, 1993-97 (June 26, 2009).


645 Author interview with Robert Hunter, U.S. permanent representative to NATO, 1993-98 (March 11, 2010).
with limited air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. Yet in the face of a barrage of criticism from the military, who insisted that this policy, if implemented unilaterally, would almost certainly draw American ground troops into the conflict, the secretary of state and national security advisor quickly came to the conclusion that the administration would have to proceed by means of a multilateral consensus through NATO and be careful not to antagonize the European allies.

By April 1993, Christopher, who had always been risk-averse and politically cautious, agreed that “anything that increases the level of fighting there may well cause [the] allies to draw back, indeed maybe pull out their humanitarian efforts,” with potentially costly consequences for the United States. Lake, while an interventionist by instinct, also acknowledges that it was important to proceed multilaterally to keep U.S. troops out of Bosnia and satisfy the Defense Department’s concerns: “It was certainly necessary to work on it vis-à-vis the Pentagon—they were very hesitant about stronger action in Bosnia.” With Christopher and Lake persuaded that unilateral U.S. military action—even if initially limited to air strikes—might be exceedingly costly, the president soon followed suit: “I was reluctant to go [ahead with] unilaterally lifting the arms embargo,” Clinton recalls. “I also didn’t want to divide the NATO alliance by

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646 Drew, On the Edge, pp. 149-55; and Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 13-15.
647 According to Owens, who was fairly close to Christopher, a fellow North Dakotan, the military had in fact persuaded the Secretary of State to adopt a more “prudent” position on Bosnia. Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011). For Lakes views on the matter, see Lake, Six Nightmares, pp. 144f.
648 Quoted in Daniel Williams, “White House Defers Action on Balkans for Several Days,” Washington Post, April 21, 1993. See also Christopher, In the Stream of History, p. 345; and Lake, Six Nightmares, pp. 142-44; and Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 60.
649 Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).
unilaterally bombing Serb military positions, especially since there were European, but no American, soldiers on the ground.”

Further specific examples of the military’s insistence on multilateralism

Throughout 1993 and early 1994, NATO issued only vague threats of military action. Then, following more insistent American pressure, in the late spring of 1994 the alliance began carrying out a few very limited bombing raids on Bosnian Serb military installations, which were decried as ineffective “pinpricks” by Albright and her fellow activists. “It was really just the odd bomb here and there,” as one former senior State Department official recalls. Then, in November 1994, in the face of rapid Serb advances against the Bihac “safe area,” Washington again began prodding its European allies to support broader NATO air strikes. The French and British, as previously argued, eventually came on board, and the bombing began. However, instead of pulling back, the Bosnian Serbs almost immediately took about 250 UN peacekeepers hostage. At that point, the distressed Europeans were clearly unwilling to escalate further. Yet several of the Clinton administration’s activists, led by Albright and Holbrooke, now also joined by Lake, insisted that the air strikes should be expanded further. Over the following weeks, tensions among the allies soared and a serious transatlantic crisis ensued.

As the quarrel between the United States and its European allies was becoming more acute in the final days of November 1994, Secretary of Defense Perry, reflecting the growing

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650 Clinton, My Life, p. 513; see also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 15-18; Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, 224; and Woodward, The Choice, p. 256.

651 Author interview with Robert Hunter (March 11, 2010). NATO aircraft carried out their first limited bombing raid in April 1994, in response to intensifying Serb attacks against the Gorazde “safe area.” Srebrenica Report, p. 34.

652 In previous weeks President Clinton, acting under congressional pressure and having suffered a serious setback at the congressional midterm elections, had also announced that the U.S. would stop enforcing the arms embargo, which further soured relations with the allies. Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 7-8, 31-33; Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 285; Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 42; and Daniel Williams, “U.S. to Stop Enforcing Bosnia Ban,” Washington Post, November 11, 1994.
anxieties of the top military brass about triggering an UNPROFOR withdrawal, seized the
initiative. Perry, joined by Secretary of State Christopher, took a firm stance and convinced Lake
and the president that the policy of using air strikes to pressure the Serbs should be abandoned. Perry was now publicly challenging the administration’s hawks: he insisted that air strikes were no longer useful and declared on national television that the U.S. should once and for all accept the existing status quo on the ground, before adding that anyway, the Bosnian Muslims had “no prospect” of winning back the territory they had lost.湖毛 Lake, outflanked by opponents of military intervention at the Pentagon, seriously thought of resigning during those tense November days。湖毛

The Pentagon subsequently flexed its bureaucratic muscle to constrain the administration’s hawks on at least one further occasion. In the spring of 1995, the Bosnian Serb army once again began shelling Sarajevo. Albright, Holbrooke, and lower-ranking civilian activists in the administration pushed for NATO air strikes. Now it was Albright who tried to outmaneuver her opponents within the bureaucracy, by directly appealing to the public and proclaiming: “We do not understand why air power is not appropriate at this time。”湖毛 With U.S. public sentiment favorable to air strikes, the civilian hawks won the first round of the bureaucratic debate。湖毛 Under American pressure, the Europeans reluctantly agreed to limited air strikes, and on May 25, NATO bombers went into action, destroying two ammunition sites near the Bosnian Serb town of Pale. But the Bosnian Serbs reacted swiftly, this time taking almost

655 Burg and Shoup, The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina, p. 340; Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 185.
656 Sobel, The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy, pp. 189f.
400 UN peacekeepers hostage, and chaining several of them to telephone poles and using them as human shields. The spectacle of French, Canadian, and other UN peacekeepers being held hostage, broadcast live on television networks across the globe, was deeply humiliating to UNPROFOR and the troop contributing countries.657

Holbrooke now boldly recommended that Washington issue an ultimatum of forty-eight hours for the release of all hostages and threaten massive air strikes against Pale in case of noncompliance.658 Given staunch European opposition to further air strikes as long as the peacekeepers were kept hostage, the bombing would clearly have been a U.S. unilateral affair. But without rebuking Holbrooke in public, Perry and JCS Chairman Shalikashvili, again joined by Christopher, firmly insisted that U.S. demands for NATO air strikes should be “quietly” abandoned. The Pentagon’s longstanding concerns about keeping American soldiers out of Bosnia were now heightened by the president’s pledge, made in December 1994, that the U.S. would contribute up to 25,000 troops to assist in the withdrawal of UNPROFOR if needed. President Clinton was acutely aware of the Pentagon’s disquiet and the potentially disastrous broader political implications. Hence he quickly agreed that any talk of U.S. air strikes should be abandoned, after British Prime Minister Major and the newly elected French president, Jacques Chirac, called him on the telephone and explained in unmistakable terms that UNPROFOR’s continued deployment was on the line.659

658 Holbrooke, p. 64; Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 42.
4. Endgame: NATO air strikes and a NATO-led stabilization force

In the late spring of 1995, Lake and his senior Balkans aide Alexander Vershbow had begun to develop a comprehensive policy proposal for Bosnia, which became known as the “Endgame Strategy.” The thrust of the new proposal set forth by the NSC staff was that Washington should launch a major new diplomatic initiative, backed up by an array of carrots and sticks, to get a peace settlement before the end of the year that would preserve Bosnia as a viable state and reduce the Serb-controlled area to about 49 percent of Bosnian territory.\footnote{This envisioned territorial division was based on an existing Contact Group plan developed by the allies in 1994, which assigned 51% of Bosnian territory to a Muslim-Croat federation and 49% to the Bosnian Serbs. See Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 28, 30; Lake, \textit{Six Nightmares}, p. 148; and Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 6.} If a negotiated settlement could be achieved, the United States would then deploy about 20,000 troops as part of an international peace-implementation force. But if this final diplomatic effort failed, Washington should facilitate a withdrawal of UNPROFOR, lift the arms embargo, and begin arming and training the Bosnian Muslims. Also, if a negotiated settlement could not be achieved, the U.S. should conduct air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets for several months until a more stable balance of power emerged on the ground. After the crisis over Bihac in November 1994, Lake and his staff had concluded that what Washington needed to avoid was no longer UNPROFOR’s withdrawal \textit{as such}, but only being blamed for the departure, because that would make the U.S. rather than Europe primarily responsible for the situation in Bosnia.\footnote{Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 60, 92-95 and 99-100; see also Woodward, \textit{The Choice}, p. 258, and Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 20.}

\textit{The policy changes after Srebrenica}

President Clinton finally came to agree that a dramatic change in policy was necessary, when in the days following July 11, 1995 the Bosnian Serb army led by Ratko Mladic overran the UN “safe area” of Srebrenica and more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed. In July and
early August 1995, Lake exploited his physical proximity to the president and pushed the endgame strategy through the Washington bureaucracy. For the first time, Lake acted as a genuine policy entrepreneur and partially circumvented the formal interagency process, which until then had yielded an overly reactive and piecemeal approach to the crisis in Bosnia. At a foreign policy team meeting on July 17, Lake disclosed the complete endgame strategy to Christopher, Perry, Shalikashvili, and Albright. But the national security advisor had previously shown a draft of the strategy to Clinton, and when the president said he liked it, Lake had asked him to drop by the meeting to voice his support.\(^{662}\)

During the meeting on July 17, the Pentagon initially expressed strong reservations at the prospect of implementing lift, arm, train, and strike in case the diplomacy failed. Perry and Shalikashvili had come to support the use of airpower in Bosnia for clearly defined purposes. In fact, they now considered that firm military action from the air, aimed at defending the remaining safe areas, had become necessary to prevent an imminent UNPROFOR withdrawal, which in turn would have required U.S. troops to assist in a potentially dangerous evacuation.\(^{663}\) However, at the same time, Perry and Shalikashvili thought that U.S. strategic interests were not sufficiently engaged for Washington to become more actively involved in the conflict on the side of the Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, the Pentagon leaders insisted, even with the arms embargo lifted, the Bosnian Muslims would not be able to defend themselves for a long period of time. Hence U.S. air strikes would almost inevitably result in an incremental escalation, a demand to send in trainers and air support liaison staff at first and then increasing numbers of American forces.


\(^{663}\) Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 325-26, 329; Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 69-70, 74; see also Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 71.
Yet towards the end of the meeting, Clinton appeared, as previously arranged with Lake. “I don’t like where we are now,” the president said. “This policy is doing enormous damage to the United States and to our standing in the world. We look weak.” Without a change, he anticipated more trouble. “And it can only get worse down the road.” Then Clinton left. No decision had yet been taken, but the president, with Lake’s orchestration, had come as close as he ever had to exercising real leadership on Bosnia.

On August 8, the NSC met to discuss the merits of the endgame strategy one last time before taking a final decision. By then, Clinton had clearly indicated his support for the approach outlined by Lake and his staff. The Pentagon leaders, preferring to avoid a showdown with the president and sensing that in the aftermath of Srebrenica, the Europeans, too, were coming on board, no longer explicitly opposed the policy. The NSC staff again went through the details of the policy proposal on the table: there would be a last-ditch effort to get a comprehensive peace settlement that year, involving a diplomatic shuttle by a senior presidential envoy; but if the diplomatic effort failed, the U.S. would lift the arms embargo, arm and train the Bosnian Muslims, and rely on air strikes during a nine-months transition period. Lake would travel to Europe and inform the allies of the president’s decision, making it clear that their support would be very much desired but not necessary. Yet the sense in the administration was that unlike in 1993, the European allies would now welcome Washington’s proposal and follow the American

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664 The Pentagon saw in arm, train, and strike the shadows of Vietnam and thus reiterated its longstanding preference for a de facto partition of Bosnia along the existing confrontation line. Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 105, 108; Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 326; Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, pp. 39f.


666 In previous days, Shalikashvili had met with several of his European counterparts, and at a special meeting held in London on July 21, 1995, the principal NATO allies had all expressed their support for broader air strikes in defense of the safe areas. See Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 70, 74fn, 74; Christopher, In the Stream of History, p. 348; Burg and Shoup, The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina, pp. 343-45; Soderberg, The Superpower Myth, p. 82.

667 Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 107-13; Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, pp. 41-44.
lead. Clinton himself mused during the crucial meeting on August 8: “We’re not asking for something the Europeans won’t like. This time we’ll be pushing on an open door.”

The Croatian ground offensive: brutal yet valuable to the negotiations

By the time President Clinton formally endorsed the NSC staff’s endgame strategy on August 8 and dispatched Lake to Europe, the situation on the ground in Bosnia had also begun to change significantly. On July 22, the presidents of Bosnia and Croatia, Alija Izetbegovic and Franjo Tudjman, had met in Split, Croatia and agreed to defend the Bihac pocket in Bosnia jointly against Serb advances. Peter Galbraith, the U.S. Ambassador in Zagreb, attended the meeting and may even have engineered it. Over the previous year, the Clinton administration had promoted an alliance between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, known as the “Federation agreement,” and relied on third-party states (notably Iran) to funnel covert arms shipments to Bosnia and Croatia. Also, several retired U.S. generals had trained the Croatian army since late 1994 with the Clinton administration’s tacit support.

On July 25, 1995 Croatian forces launched an offensive into Bosnia near Bihac, and reinforced by Bosnian Muslim troops, they easily overran the Serb military, sending an estimated 8,000 Serb troops and civilians fleeing. On August 4, the Croatians, emboldened by their quick success in Bihac and by Washington’s tacit approval, launched a much broader offensive, codenamed Operation Storm, against the Serb-held Krajina region in Croatia. Serb forces fled

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668 Vershbow recalls predicting “that the Europeans would breathe a sigh of relief at the sight of U.S. leadership and would come along.” Author interview with Alexander Vershbow (April 5, 2010).


670 The Pentagon was skeptical that a Croatian offensive into Bihac, let alone into the Krajina region of Croatia (which everyone understood was Tudjman’s real goal), could succeed and predicted trouble for the U.S. in case it failed. But several of the administration’s activists, like Albright, Lake, Holbrooke, and Galbraith himself, believed the risk was worth taking. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 120-22; Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, p. 35.


largely without a fight, leaving almost 200,000 civilians exposed to one of the worst instances of ethnic cleansing of the Balkan wars.  

Once it became clear that Milosevic, the Serb leader, had written off the Kraijna Serbs, senior U.S. officials, including from the Pentagon, began to openly endorse the Croatian offensive. Secretary of Defense Perry was among the most explicit in welcoming the offensive and publicly declared: “We hope that it is successful.” President Clinton more cautiously and somewhat awkwardly expressed the hope on August 7 that the offensive “will turn out to be something that will give us an avenue to a quicker diplomatic solution.” It is was not until several weeks later that the Croatian army, again supported by Bosnian Muslim troops, actually launched a significant ground offensive into western Bosnia that went much beyond the Bihac pocket and reversed most Serb territorial gains from previous years. Yet when President Clinton approved the NSC staff’s endgame strategy on August 8, 1995, for the first time in years, there was widespread hope in the administration that the hitherto recalcitrant Serbs might become more amenable to negotiations. Holbrooke confirms that “the Croatian offensive, while brutal…was valuable to the negotiating process.”

673 Serb president Milosevic was willing to sacrifice most Serb territorial gains to get the international sanctions lifted. According to some sources, Milosevic and Tudjman had “cut a deal” to end the war, which ensured that Belgrade would not intervene. Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 123; see also Holbrooke, To End a War, pp. 72f; and Danner, “Operation Storm.”


675 Quoted in Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 123.

676 An all-out Croat ground offensive into Bosnia was not actually launched until September 9, 1995. See Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. xviii.

677 Holbrooke, To End a War, p. 86.
Planning for a NATO-led stabilization force

The endgame strategy worked out by the NSC staff under Lake foresees that successful negotiations on a peace agreement for Bosnia would result in the deployment of an international stabilization force and significant economic assistance for postwar reconstruction. But it was inconceivable to the administration and the Pentagon in particular that the United States should have shouldered most of the burden for postwar stabilization and reconstruction in Bosnia, given that this was after all a European security problem. The Joint Chiefs were adamant that the United States should continue to limit its liability and avoid “owning” the situation, especially from a military standpoint.

During the initial discussions in Washington on postwar stabilization, the JCS insisted that a European Union (EU) peace implementation force should be established with American assistance; and failing that, following a peace agreement, a NATO force composed largely of European troops should be deployed. The military’s “view was that this was a European situation,” remembers Admiral Owens. Therefore, the best solution from their standpoint would have been to deploy a “European peacekeeping force,” or at any rate a predominantly “European presence supplemented by the United States on the edges.” The European allies, however, insisted on a sizeable American contribution, at least for the initial peace implementation phase. The Bosnian Muslims, too, made it clear that they would not sign any peace agreement with the Serbs, unless there was a firm U.S. commitment to help implement the agreement and guarantee their security. Hence the focus of U.S. military planners increasingly shifted to a NATO

678 Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 100.
680 Warren Christopher, U.S. Policy Toward the Former Yugoslavia, Hearings before the House Committee on National Security, 104 Cong. 1 sess., October 18, 1995, p. 164.
implementation force, in which the Americans would play an initially significant but then rapidly diminishing role.

By late June 1995, Secretary Perry conceded that the Pentagon would be willing to envision a deployment of U.S. troops for a limited period of time, in a multilateral context, “as a part of a NATO force to help implement a peace settlement.”681 The top military brass, too, had come to the conclusion that to avoid further tarnishing the image of American leadership, the U.S. would have to contribute a sizeable number of troops to help stabilize the situation on the ground in Bosnia once a settlement had been achieved. But senior Defense Department officials, with the Joint Chiefs at the forefront, made it clear that they would recommend deploying U.S. troops only in a peace-implementation role, and only in a multilateral NATO context. The military’s idea was that while a U.S.-led NATO force would be charged with postwar stabilization in the short run, that task would then largely be handed off to a European force in the near future—possibly after a single year. As one former U.S. defense official explains: “There was a general expectation that the United States would go in heavy upfront, and the Europeans and other partners would take up more of the burden as the force went down.”682

The military leaders had also made it clear that in case the diplomacy failed to produce a settlement and the administration chose to move ahead with lift, arm, train, and strike, they would have strenuously objected to deploying U.S. ground troops in any combat or other active support role on the side of the Bosnian Muslims. The Europeans, too, would have been unlikely to contribute ground troops in the absence of a peace agreement, to support the Bosnian Muslims


682 Author interview with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010).
in the implementation of arm, train, and strike.\textsuperscript{683} Hence the Clinton foreign policy team debated for some time the possibility of deploying a more robust successor force to UNPROFOR, composed of troops from moderate Muslim states and \textit{without U.S. participation}, as a possible alternative to a NATO deployment. “We had some discussions with Indonesia and Turkey [about] a Muslim peacekeeping force,” remembers Owens. “We could have provided intelligence to them, and combined it with limited strikes to force the Serbs into compliance.”\textsuperscript{684}

\textbf{The August 1995 NATO air campaign: locking in the European allies}

In the course of August 1995, following the adoption of the endgame strategy, several of the administration’s civilian activists appear to have concluded that more assertive air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, combined with the Muslim-Croat ground offensive, could significantly boost the prospects of a negotiated solution to the Bosnian conflict.\textsuperscript{685} The top U.S. military brass and Pentagon leaders more generally understood in the aftermath of Srebrenica that air power would have to be used more assertively to defend the remaining safe areas. As Perry explains, “we just believed that the consequences of [air strikes to defend the safe areas] could not be as serious as the consequences of sending [American] NATO forces to pull out the UN forces in disgrace.”\textsuperscript{686} However, Shalikashvili and the other members of the JCS remained skeptical of moving beyond limited air strikes and initiating a broader strategic air campaign.

\textsuperscript{683} Lake’s trip to Europe in August 1995 had focused largely on the diplomatic side of the endgame strategy, which the NATO allies willingly endorsed, but there was never much enthusiasm in Europe for the backup—arm, train, and strike. Author interview with Alexander Vershbow (April 5, 2010). See also Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, p. 111.

\textsuperscript{684} Author interview with William Owens (January 27, 2011). See also Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 104, 114fn.

\textsuperscript{685} Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 349-50; Gibbs, \textit{First Do No Harm}, p. 166; and Danner, “Operation Storm.” Holbrooke (\textit{To End a War}, p. 104) suggests that at the time he began the new mediation effort in mid-August 1995, nobody in Washington anticipated that the diplomacy would be accompanied by a NATO bombing campaign. However, Holbrooke had not taken part in the relevant NSC meetings, and as Danner and others have pointed out, his claim is not credible.

\textsuperscript{686} Quoted in Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 30.
aimed at coercing the Bosnian Serbs into a peace settlement—at least as long as there was no clear agreement with the European allies and other international partners about burden sharing on postwar stabilization.\textsuperscript{687}

As Strobe Talbott, at the time the U.S. deputy secretary of state and a key liaison person between the military brass and the administration’s civilian activists, explains: “We recognized in advance of military action that the United States and its international partners would have to maintain a significant presence in Bosnia for a long time.”\textsuperscript{688} For that reason, the Pentagon and the U.S. military in particular insisted on obtaining an explicit IO endorsement through NATO or the UN for any broader air campaign. They advised that a close multilateral consensus should be maintained with the European allies until the very end, so secure their support on postwar stabilization. That was “absolutely central” to the Pentagon’s thinking, remembers Slocombe.\textsuperscript{689}

Already in late July, following the Srebrenica massacre, NATO’s European partners had agreed that airpower should be used more decisively in defense of the remaining UN “safe areas.” At a special conference held in London on July 21, 1995, the United States and its principal European allies decided to streamline the “dual key” authorization process for air strikes. The United States would have preferred a complete elimination of the UN key. Yet in view of maintaining a transatlantic consensus, Washington agreed to the Europeans’ request that the UN key should merely be transferred downwards, from UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and his Special Representative Akashi to the overall UN force commander in the theater, French


\textsuperscript{689} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
General Bertrand Janvier (who could then further delegate it to the UNPROFOR commander on the ground, British Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith). 690

Following the London conference, at a meeting of NATO’s supreme political body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Europeans had also agreed that UN and NATO military commanders would now have the authority to call for air strikes not only against specific Serb military positions involved in attacking a UN safe area (so-called “Option One” targets), but also more generally against weapons in the affected sector of Bosnia not directly involved in an attack, as well as command-and-control facilities, radars, and ammunition depots (so-called “Option Two” targets). However, the French in particular were reluctant to envision any broader strategic bombing against Serb troop concentrations or equipment throughout Bosnia, including civilian infrastructure like power grids (so-called “Option Three” targets). Paris remained adamant that such broader strategic bombing would require a further explicit approval from both the NAC and the UN Secretary-General, who would probably defer any related decision to the UN Security Council (where the Russians, traditionally aligned with Serbia, could be expected to cast their veto). 691 In short, Washington’s European allies were willing in the aftermath of Srebrenica to put in place a somewhat more credible NATO deterrent against further Serb attacks on the remaining “safe areas,” but they were unwilling to follow Washington’s civilian activists down the path toward full-fledged strategic bombing.

The uneasy compromise that had emerged out of the London conference and subsequent NAC meetings was put to a test in late August 1995. In the morning of August 28, 1995 an

690 Boutros-Ghali himself agreed to transfer the UN “key,” in the face of a united front among the NATO countries. Author interview with Ian Johnstone; see also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 75-78; and Dana Priest, “NATO Leaders Divided Over Bombing Authority,” Washington Post, July 25, 1995.

691 The U.S. opposed the French stance, and in the absence of a consensus, the NAC deferred any decision to authorize strikes against “Option Three” targets. But that effectively meant that NATO lacked any authority to strike broader strategic targets in Bosnia. See Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, pp. 32f; Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 75fn, 78; and Bourg and Shoup, The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina, p. 348.
artillery shell landed on the crowded Sarajevo marketplace, leaving thirty-eight dead and about ninety wounded. As soon as UN investigators had determined that the shell was in fact fired from a Serb-held area, the UNPROFOR commander on the ground, British Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, turned the UN key.\textsuperscript{692} France, Britain, and Germany now joined the United States and backed NATO air strikes in response to the shelling. That allowed NATO to launch its broadest air campaign up to that point, code-named \textit{Operation Deliberate Force}, two days later.\textsuperscript{693} Because of Russian opposition at the UNSC, Washington and its European allies had not been able in previous weeks to obtain an explicit UN mandate for a broader air campaign.\textsuperscript{694} Yet UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, under the pressure of events and facing a united front between the United States and the main troop contributors to UNPROFOR, ultimately agreed with NATO’s standpoint that the bombing was authorized under SCR 836 (on the “safe areas”), which dated back to 1993.\textsuperscript{695}

President Clinton, after talking to his principal advisers, had reportedly insisted: “We have to hit ‘em hard.”\textsuperscript{696} The ostensible objective of the air campaign, as NATO’s Secretary-General Willy Claes explained at the time, was merely “to reduce the threat to Sarajevo and to deter further attacks on the safe areas.”\textsuperscript{697} But the civilian activists in Washington clearly saw the

\textsuperscript{692} The overall UN commander in the theater, General Janvier, was attending his son’s wedding in France and had temporarily delegated the key to his British subordinate. See Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 130-31; and “UN Srebrenica Report,” p. 94.


\textsuperscript{696} Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, 60. President Clinton’s own determination appears to have reflected the views of senior administration officials, who had immediately come to see the situation as a test of American resolve. See Woodward, \textit{The Choice}, p. 269-70; and Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, pp. 92f.

air strikes as a coercive instrument that could support the diplomatic process of which Holbrooke had taken charge two weeks earlier.\textsuperscript{698} At the same time, the U.S. military leaders insisted on proceeding in close cooperation with the European allies throughout. For that reason, as one former senior U.S. diplomat explains, tight political control was maintained over the conduct of the air campaign; NATO’s bombing was limited to military targets, and dual-use “Option Three” targets remained always off-limits.\textsuperscript{699} Indeed, under pressure from the Joint Chiefs, Washington decided to end the bombing on September 14, 1995, several days sooner than had initially been planned and than the Clinton administration’s civilian activists would have preferred, after “Option Two” targets had been exhausted. This was deemed necessary to maintain a full multilateral consensus with the European NATO allies, who were growing increasingly jittery and were clearly unwilling to move on to “Option Three.”\textsuperscript{700}

The U.S. military leaders actually believed that the air campaign, if managed multilaterally, could help lock in the European allies and ensure that they would feel committed to protecting the Bosnian Muslims and securing Bosnia’s long-term stabilization. For this reason, the military brass insisted that as many of the European allies as possible should actively participate in the bombing with their own aircraft and otherwise be involved in logistical matters, although that clearly limited Washington’s own freedom of action. “We wanted to get their

\textsuperscript{698} Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, p. 104; Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 352.


\textsuperscript{700} In a meeting with President Clinton on September 11, Adm. Owens pointed out that NATO would run out of Option Two targets within a few days. Based on this discussion, Secretary Christopher ordered Holbrooke and his negotiating team back to the region four days earlier than originally planned, with the goal of securing Serb agreement to NATO’s conditions before the air strikes might have to be shut down. See Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, p. 146. On the divisions within NATO about moving to “Option Three,” see also Rick Atkinson, “NATO Weighs Risks of Attacking More Targets,” \textit{Washington Post}, September 10, 1995.
hands dirty in there so that they felt they had a real dog in the fight to keep that area stable,” explains General Kross.\textsuperscript{701}

Seven European NATO members (the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, Germany, and Italy) ultimately contributed aircraft to \textit{Operation Deliberate Force}, though several of those nations, like Germany and Italy, merely flew support missions and did not actively participate in the bombing.\textsuperscript{702} By the time the campaign ended on September 14, a total of 3,515 sorties had been flown and NATO aircraft had delivered 1,026 explosive ammunitions against Bosnian Serb targets. The United States contributed 45 percent of coalition aircraft, flew about 65 percent of all sorties, and delivered the vast majority of precision-guided munitions.\textsuperscript{703} What mattered most to the U.S. military leaders, however, was a sense that the European allies had now been locked in, and it appeared very likely that they would take a leading role on postwar peacekeeping and stabilization. As Admiral Owens explains:

Even though the United States contributed about 98 percent of the precision bombing, it was very important to have the Europeans as a central element of the air campaign. Our view was that they should be the ones to take it forward— that any peacekeeping activities on the ground would be dependent on the Europeans. So you really needed to have them as part of the air campaign, even though they were not adding frankly very much and it was hard to incorporate them in the plan.\textsuperscript{704}

\textbf{An EU peace force as the American exit strategy}

By late September 1995, a negotiated agreement appeared increasingly likely. Hence the focus of the U.S. military brass had firmly shifted to peace implementation. With the Powell doctrine still very much on their minds, the JCS insisted on deploying a large, overwhelming

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{701} Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).
\item \textsuperscript{703} Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, p. 131; Richard Sargent, “Aircraft Used in Deliberate Force,” in Robert Owen, ed., \textit{Deliberate Force}, p. 204; and Gibbs, \textit{First Do No Harm}, p. 166.
\item \textsuperscript{704} Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).
\end{itemize}
stabilization force with a robust enforcement capability that could rapidly quash any local resistance if needed.\textsuperscript{705} The plan that eventually emerged foresaw a NATO-led implementation force (IFOR), with additional troop contributions from other (mainly Muslim) countries, such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia, and Pakistan. The uniformed leaders also insisted that IFOR’s mandate should be circumscribed to strictly military matters and ought to exclude tasks like reconstruction, refugee resettlement, and humanitarian relief. The military put down their feet on this point, leading to significant friction with State Department officials like Holbrooke, who wanted IFOR to also take on some basic reconstruction tasks. SACEUR General George Joulwan “felt that NATO was going to win or lose based on how they were going to come out of Bosnia,” remembers a senior U.S. Army officer who was involved in planning the operation. “And his view was that if NATO stuck to the military part of the operation, they stood a good chance of succeeding.”\textsuperscript{706} Ultimately the military leaders had it their way: they obtained a narrow mandate for IFOR, limited to separating the former warring parties and ensuring a period of stability to arm and train Muslim and Croat forces in view of establishing a balance of power on the ground\textsuperscript{707}.

The Joint Chiefs were fundamentally convinced (and had persuaded the White House) that Congress and the American people would not support a U.S. military involvement in Bosnia without a clear exit strategy based on a specified timeframe. The top military brass were in frequent communication with congressional leaders, especially from the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. Based on those interactions, the JCS were genuinely concerned,

\textsuperscript{705} Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{706} Author interview with Col. William J. Flavin (USA, ret.), Deputy Director of Special Operations for the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), 1995 to 1999 (January 18, 2011).

\textsuperscript{707} Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, pp. 146-7; see also Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, pp. 216-17; and James Dobbins et al., eds, \textit{America’s Role In Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq} (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999), pp. 93-97.
more than the administration’s activists, about the willingness of Congress to support any costly and protracted deployment of American troops in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{708} Throughout the Bosnian war, there had been significant bipartisan backing from congressional leaders for air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs.\textsuperscript{709} However, it was equally clear that after the killing of eighteen American soldiers in Somalia in the fall of 1993, and following the Republican Party’s sweeping victory at the November 1994 congressional midterm elections, Capitol Hill was extremely wary of any renewed commitment of American troops in a peacekeeping or peace-enforcement role.\textsuperscript{710}

“We needed to convince Congress that we had an exit strategy,” remembers Kross. “And the final element of the exit strategy was: hand it over to the Europeans on the ground.”\textsuperscript{711} Hence Washington’s official policy line became that U.S. troops would remain in Bosnia for about a year as part of IFOR and would then for the most part be withdrawn by the end of 1996. IFOR was in fact given only a one-year mandate, which ran from December 1995 to December 1996. The U.S. military leaders hoped that a European force would take over thereafter.\textsuperscript{712} The Pentagon actually sought to extract a commitment from the European allies that if the United States offered a large troop contribution upfront, European forces would then take up most of the burden by the end of 1996: “We were pushing the Europeans as much as we could to get their commitment that they would take it from there,” remembers Owens.\textsuperscript{713} From the late summer of 1995 onward, the JCS developed all their plans for postwar stabilization in close cooperation

\textsuperscript{708} The administration’s activists were generally less focused on the operation’s long-term feasibility. Also, on Capitol Hill, the activists mainly interacted with the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees, which are more internationalist in outlook than the Armed Services committees. Author interview with Barbara Larkin, Senior congressional aide on foreign affairs, 1986-1995 (April 2, 2010).

\textsuperscript{709} Hendrickson, The Clinton Wars, pp. 77-78, 85.

\textsuperscript{710} Ibid, pp. 83ff.

\textsuperscript{711} Author interview with Gen. Walter Kross (February 11, 2011).

\textsuperscript{712} Author interview with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010). See also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 149-50; Holbrooke, To End a War, pp. 210-11.

\textsuperscript{713} Author interview with Adm. William Owens (January 27, 2011).
with allied military representatives at NATO headquarters, to ensure the maximum possible level of burden- and risk sharing compatible with an effective operation.714

In short, the military leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon were adamant on limiting the liability of American troops and of the United States more generally. Towards this end, the Joint Chiefs insisted on: (a) narrowly circumscribing IFOR’s mandate, (b) developing a clear exit strategy before American troops were actually deployed, and (c) involving a large number of international allies and partners from NATO and non-NATO countries. Throughout, the working assumption in Washington and especially at the Pentagon was that while the U.S. would make a significant initial contribution to the military aspects of peace-implementation, from the get-go all civilian aspects would be managed and largely paid for by the European allies.715 NATO ultimately assembled 60,000 troops for IFOR, which entered Bosnia between December 1995 and January 1996, soon after the successful conclusion of the peace negotiations in Dayton, Ohio. Yet by the end of 1996, peace in Bosnia remained exceedingly fragile, in spite of significant progress on the ground. The European allies, while willing to step up their own contribution, were not yet ready to take over entirely. Given the risk that a precipitous American withdrawal might have derailed the entire operation, the JCS reluctantly agreed to an extension of the U.S. military deployment in Bosnia and cooperated in securing congressional funding for the follow-on NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR).716 The U.S. contribution to SFOR in 1998 was 8,500 troops (making up 30 percent of a total NATO force of slightly over 27,000 troops) – down from an initial U.S. contribution to IFOR of 20,000 troops (roughly 40 percent of the total

714 Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 142-3, and esp. 143fn.
716 Author interviews with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010) and Robert Hunter (March 11, 2010). See also Dobbins et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building, p. 95.
NATO component).\textsuperscript{717} Smaller contingents of U.S. forces remained in Bosnia for nearly a decade, until December 2004, when a European Union peacekeeping force of roughly 6,000 troops (EUFOR) finally took over from NATO.\textsuperscript{718}

5. Understanding the military’s bureaucratic political influence

Once it became clear in early August 1995 that the president was strongly committed to moving ahead with the endgame strategy developed by the NSC staff, the Joint Chiefs grudgingly came on board.\textsuperscript{719} But the military leaders had greatly constrained Washington’s Bosnia policy over the previous two years and continued to do so thereafter, notably on the question of using air power for coercive purposes. Crucially, between 1993 and 1995, the military’s skepticism about armed intervention, their outright opposition to any deployment of U.S. ground troops in a combat role, and their desire to limit American liability for events on the ground, maintained the Clinton administration on a steady multilateral course of action.

Furthermore, although Operation Deliberate Force, combined with the Croat ground offensive, allowed the Bosnian Muslims to recover large swaths of territory previously lost to the Bosnian Serbs, the final peace settlement negotiated at Dayton and signed in Paris in December 1995 recognized the existence of a quasi-independent Serb political entity in Bosnia, the Republika Srpska, and it practically ratified the results of ethnic cleansing on the ground—precisely what the Pentagon had advocated since 1992.\textsuperscript{720} With the endgame strategy developed


\textsuperscript{719} President Clinton did thus not formally overrule the Secretary of Defense and JCS chairman during the crucial Oval Office meeting on August 8. See Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{720} On the resulting problems of this de facto but not de jure partition for subsequent peace-building in Bosnia, see Sumantra Bose, Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention (New York: Oxford
by the NSC staff under Lake, the Clinton administration had in fact rejected the uncompromising
stance of Albright and Fuerth, who had continued to resist any concessions to the Bosnian Serbs.
Thereafter, U.S. policy moved from one-sided support for the Bosnian Muslims to a recognition
of the need to address the often conflicting interests of all sides.\footnote{The Endgame strategy developed by the NSC included several important “carrots” for the Serbs: the U.S. accepted an exchange of the Bosnian government-held enclave of Gorazde for territory around Sarajevo, a widening of the strategic Serb-held northern corridor, and most important, some form of confederation between a Bosnian Serb entity and Serbia proper. Burg and Shoup, The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina, pp. 330f and 334; see also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, pp. 39, 100.} The question, then, is: How did the military leaders manage to influence U.S. policy on Bosnia to such a striking degree?

Persuasion through professional expertise

The top U.S. military brass had several instruments at their disposal to influence the Clinton administration’s Bosnia policy. In part, as Richard Betts has argued, during the debates about intervention in Bosnia the “military leaders constrained decisions by the substance of their intramural arguments.”\footnote{Betts, “Are Civil-Military Relations Still a Problem?” in Nielsen and Snider, eds., American Civil-Military Relations, p. 30.} In other words, the military leaders brought a wealth of professional experience and detailed technical knowledge to the internal bureaucratic debates. That led to fruitful deliberation among the Clinton administration’s foreign policy principals and greatly affected the civilians’ understanding of what an effective and domestically sustainable U.S. policy on Bosnia might look like. For instance, by the summer of 1995, even some of the most hawkish Clinton administration officials, such as Holbrooke, who in previous years had insisted on bombing Bosnian Serb strongholds unilaterally, had come to recognize that close multilateral coordination with the NATO allies on the use of force would be valuable in terms of ensuring

their subsequent support on peace implementation: “We must never forget that we will need them all if there is ever a settlement,” Holbrooke wrote in a note to Christopher on August 23. “The EU for economic assistance, our NATO allies for the new post-UN peacekeeping force, the UN for legitimizing resolutions.”

The generals’ professional expertise also gave them a more direct type of leverage. If the military leaders disagreed with a specific use-of-force option, they could inflate the required number of troops and the costs of the operation so as to make it appear politically unfeasible. Fuerth, who was clearly constrained in his interventionist impulses on Bosnia by a skeptical Pentagon, remembers related conversations with the military commanders as follows:

Only the military could tell the civilians how much force would be needed, but in order to tell them how much force would be needed there had to be a common definition of the objective. To achieve a common definition of the objective, the civilians needed some idea of the military consequences of the decision to go forward. So you needed to get to the point where the military officers, who could tell you what it would take to accomplish an objective by force, felt sufficiently confident about how you would use that knowledge to give it to you. If they were afraid that the civilians were too prone to go off and use the knowledge, they might inflate the number of troops and the costs.

Bureaucratic leverage through political activism

The military leaders’ influence on the rest of the administration was not only the result of quiet persuasion and effective argumentation in the intramural debates. The U.S. military leaders, as discussed in chapter two, can also act as more straightforwardly political actors—and on Bosnia they did so frequently and with astonishing effectiveness. General Powell’s public

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723 Holbrooke, To End a War, p. 84. On Holbrooke’s earlier support for unilateral bombing (his recommended targets would have been unacceptable to Washington’s European allies), see ibid., pp. 52, 64.

724 This tactic, known as “McClellanism” (after General George McClellan, who first employed it during the American civil war), can be fully effective only if the military leaders are united in their opposition to the policy. During the Bosnia crisis, the important role played by more activist but lower ranking American generals, such as Donald Kerrick on the NSC staff and Wesley Clark at the Joint Staff, made it more difficult for the JCS to inflate the troop requirements. Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald Kerrick (March 22, 2010). See also Holbrooke, p. 218; and Clark, Waging Modern War, pp. 55-56.

725 Author interview with Leon Fuerth, National Security Adviser to the Vice President, 1993-2001 (March 9, 2010).
insistence in 1992 and early 1993 that any U.S. deployment of ground troops in Bosnia might result in a costly quagmire greatly undermined popular and especially congressional support for American military intervention. It had an extraordinary impact on the administration’s policy and played a key role in forestalling any meaningful U.S. armed intervention in Bosnia until mid-1995.726 Between 1993 and early 1995, U.S. military leaders, and more generally senior Pentagon officials who largely reflected the military’s views, used various congressional testimonies and media appearances to publicly express their skepticism about American intervention in Bosnia and point out the dangers that a U.S. military engagement (especially if uncoordinated with the NATO allies) would entail. The fact that President Clinton himself was largely absent from the internal debates on Bosnia and exercised little leadership until mid-1995 further increased the military’s influence. But more than the military’s actual public statements, it was the constantly present threat that they might vent their disagreements and concerns in public, which gave them extraordinary leverage in the internal bureaucratic debates.727

Furthermore, the relationship between the military brass and Congress on U.S. Bosnia policy was a complex and dynamic one throughout. On the one hand, the military leaders’ active cooperation was needed to successfully “sell” any U.S. troop deployment to the American Congress. Holbrooke for instance recalls that the military’s influence over Congress provided them with a great deal of leverage over the administration during the debate over IFOR’s mandate: “The White House was understandably averse to a direct confrontation with the military. If the military openly opposed the deployment, our political difficulties would be vastly increased. We had to have their backing to get congressional and public support for the mission,


727 As David Halberstam points out, the military’s “leverage was a great card as long as it was never really played. It was the threat of it which gave the military power.” Cf. Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 415.
which meant that they had the upper hand in the debate over what their mission would be.\footnote{Holbrooke, To End a War, p. 219; see also Daalder, Getting to Dayton, p. 146.} On the other hand, as I previously discussed, the Joint Chiefs insisted more than other U.S. policy leaders on the risk that Congress might refuse to fund any large-scale deployment of American troops to pacify and stabilize the Balkans. It may be, as one scholar has argued, that Washington leaders anticipated that a NATO mandate for any U.S. troop deployment in Bosnia would limit congressional opposition.\footnote{Yet is highly unlikely that, as one scholar has argued, the Clinton administration’s deliberate purpose in channeling its Bosnia policy through NATO was to commit the United States and tie the president’s hands, so as to limit subsequent congressional opposition. NATO’s credibility did not become an issue until late 1994, after NATO had been involved in Bosnia for over two years. See Schultz, “Tying Hands and Washing Hands,” pp. 118f, 132f.} However, to the extent that anticipated congressional opposition to any large-scale U.S. troop deployment in Bosnia contributed to keeping the Clinton administration on a steady multilateral track, the military leaders functioned as a crucial transmission belt. The military’s role in this matter was very similar to that played over Haiti in 1994: the military brass, more than civilian officials, saw cooperation with international partners as an effective means of limiting U.S. liability and, thereby, keeping Capitol Hill on board.

Finally, by the time a final settlement in Bosnia appeared within reach, the administration’s civilian activists themselves could rely on relevant experience from previous U.S. military interventions, and notably from the recent Haiti operation in 1994. One important lesson the activists had learned was that proceeding multilaterally through global or regional IOs could significantly reduce the military’s opposition to intervening, and notably to deploying U.S. forces in a peacekeeping and stabilization role overseas. In the case of Haiti, as discussed in chapter three, an explicit UN endorsement of military intervention ensured international buy-in and subsequently made it possible to withdraw the bulk of American troops within a matter of months. Fuerth recalls that the administration as a whole had “learned a lot in the course of
figuring out what to do about Haiti,” notably about how working with international partners could reassure the military leaders, “and that was reapplied when thinking about what to do about Bosnia.”

6. Testing alternative explanations for U.S. multilateralism on Bosnia

In the final part of this chapter I want to again test two prominent alternative explanations, derived from the scholarly literature, as to why the United States may have sought to channel its Bosnia policy through standing IOs between 1993 and 1995. First, quite apart from strategic or political considerations, U.S. policy leaders might have been driven by international moral norms requiring that armed interventions be multilaterally endorsed through relevant IOs. Another possibility is that U.S. leaders sought to reassure third-party states in other parts of the world of Washington’s motives, in view of preventing potentially costly international countermeasures, or “soft balancing,” aimed at thwarting U.S. foreign policy in other issue areas.

*Multilateral legitimacy as an end (U.S. leaders have internalized relevant norms)*

Prominent social constructivists and other sociologically oriented scholars of international relations claim that over the last two decades or so, foreign policy leaders in the western world have internalized new international legitimacy norms and attendant rules of appropriate behavior that require multilateral endorsement for the use of force. Hence those policy leaders should seek the endorsement of relevant IOs for prospective military interventions out of a genuinely felt sense of moral obligation. Thomas Risse-Kappen is perhaps most explicit in his argument: in the eyes of the western leaders who were planning international policy on

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730 Author interview with Leon Fuerth (March 9, 2010).
Bosnia, he claims, it was “inconceivable” that they could “intervene militarily to pursue unilaterally defined strategic interests.” 731

The norm internalization hypothesis is closely related to the frequently heard assertion that senior officials in the Clinton administration were convinced multilateralists who abhorred unilateral military action, as opposed to officials in the subsequent administration of President George W. Bush, for instance, who were ostensibly more unilateralist in outlook. 732 Put differently, there seems to be a fairly widespread opinion that even if not all post-cold war American leaders across political parties have internalized relevant moral norms of multilateral behavior, this may well have been the case for self-proclaimed liberal internationalists in the Clinton administration. Indeed, the Clinton administration, given its heavy reliance on multilateralist rhetoric, is what methods scholars call a “most likely case” for the norm internalization hypothesis—it easily ought to confirm it. It follows that if the hypothesis does not hold with regard to the Clinton administration, its more general validity is called into question. 733

For the norm internalization hypothesis to be confirmed with specific regard to the Bosnia case, one ought to be able to observe the following dynamics. First, U.S. policy leaders should have sought the endorsement of relevant IOs as a matter of moral duty—i.e., they should have seen such endorsement as an all but necessary condition for the international use of force. Unilateral action, in short, should have been unthinkable to them. This should be evident not only from their public pronouncements, but also from their private arguments during relevant

732 For a partisan version of this argument, see e.g. Soderberg, The Superpower Myth. For more scholarly formulations, see Ruggie, “Doctrinal Unilateralism and Its Limits;” and Michael Hirsh, “Bush and the World,” Foreign Affairs 81 (5), 2002, pp. 18-43.
733 On “most likely” cases, see George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development..., pp. 253ff.
bureaucratic debates. Second, U.S. leaders should have sought the endorsement of the UN Security Council or NATO primarily for intrinsic normative reasons, regardless of its political and strategic benefits at the domestic or international levels.

Yet a careful review of internal bureaucratic debates among the Clinton administration’s foreign policy leaders suggests that few, if any, of them had internalized relevant norms that make unilateral military action unthinkable. It appears that the most prominent liberal internationalists within the administration, such as Albright, Lake, and Holbrooke, were no more attached to multilateralism as a matter of moral principle than their more skeptical and pragmatic colleagues. In fact, the liberal internationalists, because of their overall hawkish attitude on Bosnia, were more willing than others to compromise the norm of multilateralism in favor of humanitarian principles.

Albright, the Clinton administration’s leading activist on Bosnia, probably thought that a multilateral endorsement of military intervention through the UN or NATO would be desirable, all things being equal. But she could certainly very much conceive of U.S. unilateral military options, and she never thought that channeling the threat or use of force through relevant IOs would be a necessary, or near-necessary, condition for American intervention. Indeed, it seems that Albright and her fellow humanitarian activists at the State Department had concluded as early as April 1993 that obtaining an explicit multilateral endorsement through NATO or the UN would be unnecessary.\(^{734}\) Albright insisted that Washington ought to be ready to carry out air

\(^{734}\) During the debate over air power in Washington in April 1993, State Department lawyers argued that air strikes were already implicitly authorized by UNSC Res. 770 of August 1992, which had been adopted under Chap. VII of the UN Charter and authorized member states to take “all measures necessary to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.” However, the SC had clarified in September 1992 that Res. 770 provided only for “protective support” of UNHCR convoys by UNPROFOR, thus excluding the use of air strikes. Britain, France, and Russia, all permanent members of the UNSC, remained staunchly opposed to coercive military action at the time. See Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO...*, pp. 23-4; and Daniel Williams, “Prior UN Action Allows Use of Force, Senator Told,” *Washington Post*, April 22, 1993.
strikes against the Bosnian Serbs *unilaterally*, if the NATO allies or the UN were unwilling to explicitly endorse them or sought to impose too restrictive conditions for their use. Albright’s approach to the Balkans, as previously indicated, was highly moralistic and deeply influenced by her childhood experience in the region, and the only moral norm she appears to have been intent on complying with at virtually any cost was the obligation to “resist evil” as she saw it.

Lake, probably the most influential among the administration’s activists on Bosnia, appears to have been no more attached to the principle of multilateralism as a fundamental matter of morality. Undoubtedly Lake was more pragmatic than Albright, as well as somewhat less hawkish in his attitude. To some extent, this can be explained by his institutional role as the administration’s chief foreign policy coordinator, which required that he carefully take the views of other senior policy officials into account when formulating advice to the president. In line with Lake’s focus on forging a policy consensus within the administration, his overall preference for multilateralism on Bosnia appears to have been less the reflection of an inherent normative conviction than the result of contingent cost-benefit calculations. Given Lake’s almost daily interactions with the top military brass, he fairly rapidly came to the conclusion that multilateral support would generally be desirable for U.S. intervention in civil-war contexts where lengthy peacekeeping and military stabilization missions could be anticipated. In short, he came to support multilateralism because, in his own words, “the more you involve others, the more you reduce the burden on the United States—and it was certainly necessary to work on this vis-à-vis the Pentagon.” But he always remained convinced that if the costs of proceeding multilaterally became excessive, the United States could and should intervene on its own.

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735 Lake, *Six Nightmares*, p. 13
736 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 177.
737 Author interview with Anthony Lake (June 26, 2009).
With specific regard to Bosnia, by the time Lake finalized the administration’s endgame strategy in the summer of 1995, he had precisely concluded that the costs to the United States of continued multilateral action were starting to outweigh the benefits. Lake’s analysis was that increasingly, America’s global leadership and the administration’s political future were at stake. Hence the U.S. should do everything possible to end the war in Bosnia by the end of the year, and that included bombing the Bosnian Serbs unilaterally if needed. As Lake remembers, “it had to be made clear to the allies that they had no veto over our approach; we would act with or without them.”

Senior political advisors to the president were of the same opinion, counseling U.S. unilateral military action as a last resort.

Finally, among the administration’s leading activists on Bosnia, Holbrooke appears to have been the least attached to multilateralism as a matter of moral principle. As early as 1993, Holbrooke had come to the conclusion that bombing “Serbia proper” (i.e., the Republic of Serbia, and not just Serb strongholds inside Bosnia) would be a useful tool of coercive diplomacy that might allow Washington to “send the proper message.” Yet such a policy would have been utterly unacceptable to the NATO allies and could only have been carried out unilaterally by the United States. Similarly, in May 1995, after the Bosnian Serbs had taken hundreds of UN peacekeepers hostage, Holbrooke insisted that to reassert American leadership and credibility, Washington should issue a forty-eight hour ultimatum for the release of all

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739 In July 1995, with opinion polls showing support for bombing, political consultant Richard Morris had started agitating for bold military action within the administration, reportedly asking: “Why can’t Clinton just bomb Bosnia on his own?” Quoted in Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human*, p. 381.

740 Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 53. By the summer of 1995, Lake, too, had become convinced that threatening and potentially carrying out American air strikes against Belgrade would crucially help to make the Serbs more cooperative in the negotiations. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 100.

741 As Robert Hunter, then the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, explains: “That option never came up at NATO. It would have been totally unacceptable to the allies.” Author interview with Robert Hunter (March 22, 2010). See also Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human*, p. 381.
hostages and then bomb the Bosnian Serb headquarters at Pale in case of noncompliance. Because “the Europeans will oppose this,” he continued, the U.S. would have to proceed unilaterally.\footnote{Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, p. 64. Holbrooke had also favored further U.S. bombing, in spite of strong European objections, during the transatlantic standoff in November 1994. See Clark, \textit{Waging Modern War}, p. 42.} It is only by the summer of 1995, once Holbrooke had been named chief U.S. negotiator for the Balkans, and after repeated (and sometimes tense) interactions with the Joint Chiefs, that he fully acknowledged the value of maintaining a close multilateral consensus with the NATO allies, as a means to ensure the greatest possible amount of burden sharing during the subsequent peace-implementation and stabilization phase.\footnote{Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, p. 84.}

In short, the most prominent liberal internationalists in the Clinton administration appear to have felt no distinctive attachment to multilateralism as a matter of moral obligation. Instead, they saw multilateralism largely as a tool, which could either be beneficial or exceedingly costly to the United States, depending on the circumstances. Revealingly, given the activists’ commitment to forcible humanitarian action, with regard to Bosnia they tended to see multilateralism as overall less beneficial and useful than other, more skeptical and pragmatic leaders, notably from the Department of Defense.

\textit{Multilateralism to reduce costly international opposition (Prevent “soft balancing”)}

Another possibility is that Washington leaders value multilateral legitimacy for international strategic reasons that go beyond the effective implementation of the actual intervention. Prominent international relations scholars argue that unilateral U.S. military interventions, carried out \textit{without} the formal endorsement of global or regional IOs, signal revisionist American intentions to the world. That, in turn, might lead third-party states to reduce their cooperation with the United States in other issue-areas, such as finance and trade, or, worse,
form “soft balancing” coalitions aimed at frustrating and undermining U.S. foreign policy more generally.\textsuperscript{744} According to this line of argument, U.S policy leaders typically seek the endorsement of relevant global or regional IOs to signal benign intentions vis-à-vis third-party states and thereby reduce the likelihood of costly international opposition.\textsuperscript{745}

In order for the above-outlined “soft balancing” theory of American multilateralism to be corroborated, one ought to be able to observe the following implications. First, Washington policy leaders should acknowledge that leading up to the use of force they were deeply concerned about global opposition to U.S. armed intervention, because of the potential material costs to the United States. Second, those same policy leaders should declare that signaling benign intentions and thereby reducing third-party state opposition to American behavior was, in fact, among the principal reasons for seeking to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs. Finally, the endorsement of U.S. military action through relevant IOs should actually have persuaded initially skeptical third-party states that U.S. intentions were benign, and in consequence international opposition to the use of force should have visibly diminished.

The aforementioned implications of the theory, however, cannot be observed in the Bosnia case. American military intervention in Bosnia enjoyed widespread support across the globe regardless of UN or NATO endorsement, including from countries that are often highly skeptical of U.S. intentions. Muslim public opinion and Islamic states, in particular, were strongly supportive of international military action against the Bosnian Serbs from early on. The Organization of the Islamic Conference, a grouping of over fifty states mainly from North

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\textsuperscript{744} Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States,” p. 10; see also Nye, The Paradox of American Power, pp. 16-17; Walt, Taming American Power; Jervis, American Foreign Policy in a New Era, pp. 104, 110; and Hoffmann, Chaos and Violence, p. 18.

\end{footnotesize}
Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, had been pressing the Clinton administration to adopt a tougher stance on Bosnia from 1993 onwards.\footnote{Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 181; Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, p. 71.}

The only states that were strongly opposed to greater U.S. military action on Bosnia and to air strikes in particular were: first, the European NATO members, which had deployed their own lightly armed peacekeepers in Bosnia as part of UNPROFOR and feared an escalation of the conflict; and second, the Russian Federation, which for ethnic, religious, and historical reasons was closely aligned with the Serbs. By definition, the European countries were not “third party states,” given their nature as NATO allies and their deep involvement in Bosnia. Also, the Europeans were extremely unlikely to retaliate against the United States, their main international ally, in other issue-areas in case of U.S. unilateral intervention. Thus, the Russian Federation was the only genuine third-party state whose opposition to U.S. military action might have been of concern to Washington for its potential broader implications beyond the region.

Russia had been among the sponsors of SCR 836, adopted in June 1993, which authorized the use of air power in Bosnia to protect UNPROFOR and deter attacks against the safe areas.\footnote{Srebrenica Report, p. 24.} However, Moscow favored a narrow interpretation of the resolution, and over the subsequent two years, Russian officials issued numerous public statements strongly denouncing the use of air power. A few examples may help clarify the persistent nature of Russian opposition. In the spring of 1994, Moscow disputed NATO’s authority to establish a weapons-exclusion zone around Sarajevo and threaten air strikes in case of Serb noncompliance, insisting that those measures were not authorized under existing UN resolutions.\footnote{Talbott, The Russia Hand, pp. 121-22; Leurdijk, The United Nations and NATO..., p. 55; Sarooshi, “The Security Council’s Authorization...,” p. 237.} More than a year later, at the London conference held in July 1995, in the aftermath of the Srebrenica massacre, Russian
foreign minister Kozyrev and defense minister Grachev still publicly rejected the use of air power against the Bosnian Serbs and refused to sign the final communiqué advocating air strikes to defend the remaining safe areas.\textsuperscript{749} Finally, in September 1995, after NATO had launched \textit{Operation Deliberate Force}, the Russians were more assertive than ever and furiously denounced the air strikes in various public statements. Moscow even sponsored a SC resolution calling for an immediate suspension of the bombing, without however being able to secure its adoption.\textsuperscript{750}

At the same time, Russia’s public denunciation never actually stopped the United States from carrying out air strikes whenever there was a consensus within NATO. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Perry remembers that to most American officials dealing with Bosnia, Russia seemed at worst “like an unnecessary complication” with little potential for undermining broader U.S. global interests.\textsuperscript{751} In Washington, the tough public statements of Russian officials condemning the air strikes were largely seen as reflecting an attempt by the Yeltsin government to defuse mounting domestic political pressure from lawmakers and the general public.\textsuperscript{752} Furthermore, Russian officials were not nearly as vehement in private conversations with Washington leaders as they were in public.\textsuperscript{753} Leon Fuert, who as Vice-President Gore’s national security adviser was much involved in US-Russian relations, remembers that in private “the Russians were willing to extend themselves. Maybe they didn’t feel that they had much

\textsuperscript{749} Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 344; Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, 76.

\textsuperscript{750} Burg and Shoup, \textit{The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, p. 357; Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War}, p. 144; Srebrenica Report, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{751} Carter and Perry, \textit{Preventive Defense}, p. 36.


\textsuperscript{753} During the London conference of July 1995, for instance, the Russians expressed strong reservations about air strikes in public, but in private talks, defense minister Grachev acquiesced to the U.S. proposal. Talbott, \textit{The Russia Hand}, p. 171; see also Daalder, \textit{Getting to Dayton}, p. 76 fn; Chollet, \textit{The Road to the Dayton Accords}, p. 45.
choice, given their economics and internal position.” Therefore, while Washington took Moscow’s objections to the air strikes seriously, given in particular Russia’s ability to undermine U.S.-led diplomatic efforts in the region, the Yeltsin government never came close to having a veto over U.S. decisions concerning Bosnia.\footnote{Author interview with Leon Fuerth (March 9, 2010). Also, in 1994 and 1995, negotiations were in full course on the admission of Russia to the G-7 summit of industrialized countries, which led to the emergence of the G-8 in 1997. Given Yeltsin’s strong personal interest in this matter, the U.S. had an important additional source of leverage over Russia. Talbott, The Russia Hand, p. 124-28.}

Crucially, in 1994 and 1995, channeling American coercive threats and actual aerial attacks through NATO, a regional IO, did nothing to reassure Moscow of Washington’s intentions. NATO, far from legitimizing military intervention in Russian eyes, was viewed in Moscow as an instrument of American regional hegemony and thus as inherently threatening to Russia’s security interests. The announcement in late 1994 that NATO would expand eastward had created a storm in Moscow. Russian nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky warned at the time that he and his parliamentary allies would consider NATO military action against the Bosnian Serbs akin to a declaration of war against Russia.\footnote{In the fall of 1995, when the Russians vehemently condemned Operation Deliberate Force, the Clinton administration dispatched an emissary to Moscow without in any way changing the policy. See Talbott, The Russia Hand, pp. 172f; Holbrooke, To End a War, p. 144.}

Even mainstream Russian elites were suspicious at the time that the Balkans might become “a staging area for the expansion of American power right up to the border of Russia itself.”\footnote{Daniel Williams, “Russian Minister Balks at NATO’s Expansion Plans,” Washington Post, December 2, 1994; Carter and Perry, Preventive Defense, pp. 28-31; Talbott, The Russia Hand, p. 121; and Talbott, The Great Experiment, p. 304.} In view of Moscow’s deep-seated suspicion of NATO, one former senior U.S. official who at the time was coordinating the alliance’s Balkans policy speculates that “the Russians would probably have been happier if the

\footnote{Talbott, The Russia Hand, p. 77; see also David Hoffmann, “Yeltsin Links Bigger NATO to New War,” Washington Post, September 9, 1995; and Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 57.}
U.S. had just intervened unilaterally, had worked with them. With the Warsaw Pact gone, the first threat to Russia was the expansion of NATO.\textsuperscript{758}

The fact that NATO’s repeated use of airpower in Bosnia, leading up to and including \textit{Operation Deliberate Force}, was ostensibly authorized under existing SC resolutions (notably Res. 836, of which Russia had been a co-sponsor), also seems to have had little or no reassuring effect on Moscow. In fact, Russian officials repeatedly insisted, not without some reason, that there was no explicit SC authorization for offensive military action; hence in Moscow’s eyes, the U.S. and NATO had stretched Res. 836 on the safe areas beyond recognition, in blatant disregard of the Council’s original intent.\textsuperscript{759} The SC was one of the few remaining international platforms that allowed Russia to interact with the world’s other major powers on an equal footing; and the West’s ability to largely disregard Russia’s opposition to the use of air power on the Council must have been deeply troubling to Moscow. Indeed, one of Moscow’s greatest concerns at the time was the perception, shared by many Russians, that their nation was being increasingly sidelined and excluded from the concert of great powers.\textsuperscript{760} It was not until Russian forces were given a visible role in the NATO-led peace implementation force (IFOR), following protracted and difficult negotiations between Secretary Perry and his Russian counterpart Grachev, that Moscow developed a somewhat more cooperative attitude toward U.S. policy in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{761}

\textsuperscript{758} Author interview with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010).

\textsuperscript{759} During an emergency meeting of the SC in September 1995, the Russian permanent representative rhetorically asked: “Can we call the daily, planned destruction of the military potential of the Bosnian Serbs ‘deterrence’, as described in resolution 836 (1993), when the military potential of the Bosnian Serbs has been systematically destroyed over many days?” Quoted in UN doc S/PV.3575 of September 8, 1995, p. 2; see also Sarooshi, “The Security Council’s Authorization…,” p. 241.

\textsuperscript{760} The Clinton administration was acutely aware of this problem. See Talbott, \textit{The Russia Hand}, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{761} For a description of the negotiations and the final arrangement, by which a Russian commander would participate in overall “operational control” over the Russian contingent, while “tactical control,” that is, the minute-by-minute management of forces, would be left to NATO, see Carter and Perry, \textit{Preventive Defense}, pp. 33-44.
In conclusion, therefore, the case of Bosnia—similarly to the previous Haiti case—refutes the hypothesis that channeling U.S. military action through international institutions can reassure third-party states who are strongly concerned about American intentions. The only state that was greatly concerned about American intentions at the time was Russia. But channeling the use of force through NATO, far from reassuring Russia, may actually have further increased Moscow’s concerns about U.S. intentions and Washington’s long-term strategy toward the region. In October 1995, the Russian military commander in charge of operational planning at Moscow’s ministry of defense told his American counterpart, General Wesley Clark: “We know what you Americans are up to. You are coming into Bosnia because it’s in our part of Europe and you want to be there.”762 This raises serious doubts in particular about the ability of regional IOs, such as NATO, to legitimize the use of force internationally beyond the actual community of member states.763

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762 Quoted in Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 57.

763 Several authors have argued in recent years that the approval of regional IOs can legitimize the use of force internationally beyond the community of members. See esp. Coleman, International Organizations and Peace Enforcement, pp. 48-57; and Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention, pp. 80-82.
Chapter V

Kosovo, 1998-99: Europe’s buy-in through NATO reassures the JCS

On March 24, 1999, NATO member states launched a sustained air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Allied bombers from fourteen countries pounded Yugoslavia for 78 consecutive days, in an effort to force President Slobodan Milosevic to stop his systematic oppression and mass expulsion of the Kosovar Albanian population. The United States contributed the lion’s share of the military hardware and technological capabilities to the air campaign. However, all the most important decisions, including those to threaten airstrikes, initiate airstrikes, and approve increasingly more controversial targets, were taken through a fully integrated NATO command structure. That made the Kosovo air war, in the words of one analyst, “the most multilateral campaign ever.”

Seeking NATO’s explicit endorsement of armed intervention and proceeding by means of a multilateral consensus with the allies entailed significant costs to the United States. To begin with, NATO’s half-hearted approach leading up to the air campaign greatly weakened Washington’s coercive leverage vis-à-vis Milosevic. Furthermore, once the bombing actually began, serious political constraints on the use of air power allowed the Yugoslav leader to dramatically escalate his campaign of ethnic cleaning on the ground, and for several weeks he was left with a reasonable hope that he might be able to prevail in the contest of wills. Therefore, Washington’s decision to channel its coercive strategy through NATO and stick with the alliance in the face of mounting difficulties constitutes a puzzle. The question that needs to be answered,

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then, is the following: What were the expected benefits of institutionalized multilateralism in the eyes of U.S. policy leaders that presumably outweighed its costs?

In the spring of 1998, soon after the violence flared up in Kosovo, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her staff emerged as the Clinton administration’s leading activists. By April 1998, Albright and U.S. Balkans envoy Robert Gelbard began to insist that in the face of European hesitations about the use of force, Washington should issue a unilateral threat of armed intervention against Yugoslavia and then proceed with targeted air strikes if necessary. The top U.S. military brass, however, adamantly rejected those arguments. First, the military leaders were skeptical that limited air strikes, let alone the mere threat of force, could effectively solve the Kosovo problem. The military staunchly opposed the introduction of American ground troops in a peace-enforcement role; and they were concerned that even if limited air strikes could help achieve a negotiated solution to the crisis, similarly to what had happened in Bosnia, a sizable international stabilization force would then have to be deployed for several years. Finally, the uniformed leaders insisted that since no significant American interests were at stake in the Balkans, the Western European allies should be left to take the lead in resolving the problem.

The central argument of this chapter is that U.S. multilateralism over Kosovo was to a significant degree the result of bureaucratic political deliberations and bargaining between the skeptical military leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon, on the one side, and activist policy officials pushing for armed intervention, on the other. The Clinton administration’s activist policy officials needed at least the military’s acquiescence, in order to form a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of armed intervention and persuade the president to move ahead with the use of force. Hence the activists had to be able to reassure the military leaders that Washington’s commitment would be limited and that the European allies would in fact take the
lead on postwar stabilization, bearing most of the burden. In the course of the bureaucratic debate, activist policy officials, led by Albright, concluded that the explicit endorsement of armed intervention through NATO and a close involvement of the alliance in military planning throughout could reduce the Pentagon’s opposition, notably by locking in European support for Kosovo’s long-term stabilization.

The chapter is structured as follows: I first provide more evidence that channeling the threat and ultimate use of force through NATO indeed entailed significant costs to the United States. Thereafter I seek to show that from early 1998 onward, the military leaders, through their reluctance about armed intervention, in fact drove the Washington policy process toward institutionalized multilateralism. The military brass came on board only in late January 1999, once it was clear that Washington’s European allies had been locked in through NATO and would shoulder most of the burden for Kosovo’s long-term stabilization. In the final part of the chapter, I test two prominent alternative hypotheses derived from the scholarly literature about the determinants of U.S. multilateralism for armed intervention. First, U.S. policy leaders may have sought the endorsement of relevant IOs simply because they had internalized new post-cold war norms of international legitimacy. Second, Washington may have sought IO endorsement in order to signal benign intentions to third-party states and thereby avert potentially costly international opposition in other issue areas, or “soft balancing,” against the United States.

1. Background to the crisis

The Serbs have long viewed Kosovo as the historical birthplace of their nation and as the site of the most important event in Serb national history, the battle of Kosovo Polje (Field of the Blackbirds) of 1389, which resulted in nearly five centuries of Ottoman Muslim rule. At the same time, Kosovo has for centuries been inhabited by a substantial ethnic Albanian population
(over two-thirds of total residents in recent decades) that considers the region a natural part of greater Albania.\textsuperscript{765} By the time NATO launched its military intervention, \textit{Operation Allied Force}, in the spring of 1999, the province had already been on the international community’s radar screen for roughly a decade. In 1989, Serb president Milosevic, seeking to consolidate his power, stripped Kosovo of its regional autonomy. In an effort to change the province’s demographics, he then encouraged unemployed Serbs to move to Kosovo by guaranteeing them local jobs. After the outbreak of war in neighboring Bosnia in 1992, Kosovo’s delicate ethnic balance was at risk of breaking down completely.\textsuperscript{766}

In late 1992, the administration of President George H.W. Bush, fearing a broader regional destabilization, warned Milosevic that any violent Serb crackdown in Kosovo would result in U.S. unilateral military action. The State Department’s understanding at the time was that, given Europe’s failure to quell the escalating conflict in Bosnia, Milosevic would respect only a U.S. unilateral threat.\textsuperscript{767} Thus, on Christmas Eve 1992, U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger sent a classified cable to Belgrade that read as follows: “In the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the U.S. will be prepared to employ military force against Serbians in Kosovo and in Serbia proper.”\textsuperscript{768} After President Clinton and his administration came

\textsuperscript{765} On Kosovo’s history and its interpretation through opposing national myths, see Tim Judah, \textit{Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. chap. 3.


\textsuperscript{767} Robert Frowick, the State Department’s envoy to the region, had reportedly recommended issuing a U.S. unilateral threat. Author interview with James O’Brien, U.S. State Department lawyer working on the Balkans from 1992 to 2000 and senior legal adviser to Madeleine Albright from 1994 onward (March 9, 2010).

to office in early 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher repeated the “Christmas warning” to Milosevic twice, in February and July of that year.  

However, in 1995, the Kosovo issue was deliberately left out of the Dayton peace talks with Milosevic, in order to avoid further complicating the negotiations over Bosnia. Many Kosovar Albanians seem to have concluded from this that only violent resistance would beget sufficient international attention to advance their national cause. In 1996 a previously unknown group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), began to engage in sporadic attacks against Serb policemen and other central government representatives. As Hashim Thaci, a key figure in the resistance movement, explains, the KLA leadership understood that “any armed action [the organization] undertook would bring retaliation against civilians.” But such tactics were deemed necessary, or at any rate expedient, to bring about increased international attention and ideally trigger a U.S. military intervention. Following a series of brazen KLA attacks in early 1998, Serb police and military units launched a brutal counterinsurgency campaign, which deliberately targeted civilians in view of intimidating the local population and withdrawing support from the insurgents. The violence reached a critical threshold in early March 1998, when Serb security forces killed fifty-eight ethnic Albanians in the Drenice region.

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772 For further background on this period, see *The Kosovo Report*, p. 68; Daalder and O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 11. Wolfgang Petritsch, the former chief EU negotiator, offers his own insightful account in Wolfgang Petritsch and Robert Pichler, *Kosovo-Kosova: Der Lange Weg zum Frieden* (Klagenfurt: Wieser Verlag, 2004), pp. 104-06.
2. The Costs of U.S. Multilateralism over Kosovo

In the United States, Secretary of State Albright firmly condemned the Serb crackdown. She had concluded almost immediately after the first massacres in February 1998 that international diplomacy vis-à-vis Milosevic, to be effective, would have to be backed up by a credible threat of military intervention. Washington’s European allies, however, were skeptical of the KLA; they insisted on even-handed mediation and were at first hesitant to impose even moderate sanctions on Serbia.

Given those differences, proceeding by means of a multilateral consensus with the NATO allies entailed significant costs for Washington. First, during the months leading up to the bombing, Washington’s strong rhetorical support for the Kosovar Albanians emboldened the KLA to step up its guerrilla-type activities; and at the same time, the alliance’s hesitations about military action allowed the Serb authorities to engage in increasingly violent repression. Arguably, if instead of pursuing a half-hearted multilateral strategy, Washington had either adopted a completely hands-off approach from early on, or had credibly threatened unilateral military action in the first part of 1998, a deadly spiral of violence might have been averted. Furthermore, even after a NATO air campaign was actually launched in March 1999, Washington’s freedom of action remained greatly constrained; and for several weeks, constant

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773 The Kosovo Report, p. 139.


775 Indeed, the growing violence in Kosovo and the ensuing international condemnations produced a nationalist backlash in Serbia that appears to have strengthened Milosevic domestically. The Kosovo Report, p. 71.

allied bickering over target selection made for a very ineffective use of air power. The alliance’s waging of war by consensus brought its strikingly close to failure and meanwhile allowed the Yugoslav leader to dramatically escalate his campaign of ethnic cleansing on the ground.

**NATO’s internal divisions lead to a spiral of violence on the ground**

By late May 1998, Russia had threatened to veto any UNSC resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force against Yugoslavia. Thereafter the Clinton administration, sensing that an explicit SC mandate for armed intervention would be exceedingly difficult to obtain, chose instead to channel its policy on Kosovo through NATO. Meeting in Luxembourg on May 28-29, 1998 NATO’s foreign ministers agreed to initiate planning for preventive military deployments into Albania and Macedonia, aimed at avoiding a regional spill-over of the crisis. A few weeks later, NATO’s defense ministers also directed their military authorities to develop a full range of options to halt the campaign of violent repression and expulsion in Kosovo. However, the alliance was far from a consensus on actually threatening, let alone using, military force against Serbia. As a former senior U.S. official explains: “At the ministerial meeting in Luxembourg, the U.S. had already started advocating military planning for airstrikes. But a lot of allies said, this has to be part of a larger comprehensive effort—so even the planning was controversial.”

By June 1998, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was the only European head of government who wholeheartedly agreed with Albright on the need to back up the diplomacy with

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1. Author interview with Peter Burleigh, Deputy U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN from August 1997 to December 1999, and Acting U.S. Representative from September 1998 to August 1999 (April 3, 2010).
3. Author interview with Gregory Schulte, Director of the Balkans task force at NATO, 1992-98; and Special Assistant to the President for Balkans policy on the NSC staff from late 1998 to 1999 (March 9, 2010).
a credible threat of force. Most other European allies, including France, Italy, Germany, and Denmark, insisted that any threat of force, let alone its actual use, had to be explicitly authorized by the UNSC. The British, too, would have strongly preferred acting under a UN mandate and actually tabled a draft resolution at the SC in early June. The European position was in line with Article 53 of the UN Charter, according to which “no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council.” As a consequence of the Europeans’ insistence on a UN mandate and Russia’s threat to veto a SC resolution, “NATO was paralyzed...throughout the summer and into the early fall of 1998,” remembers former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

Meanwhile the Kosovo Albanians were greatly emboldened by NATO’s tough rhetorical stance against the Milosevic regime. The KLA in fact exploited Serbia’s relative restraint in the summer of 1998, which was largely the result of Russian pressure on Belgrade, to launch a major military offensive. By mid-July, the KLA had set up numerous checkpoints in the region and claimed control of as much as forty percent of Kosovo’s territory. Thereupon even moderate ethnic Albanian leaders, aware that the KLA could not defeat the Yugoslav security forces on its own, began to openly call for a U.S. or NATO military intervention, in the hope that it would

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781 Yet Blair, prodded by the U.S. State Department, quickly came to agree that a UN mandate was not strictly required. See R. Jeffrey Smith, “Officials Seek Kosovo Intervention; British Draft of U.N. Resolution Urges ‘All Necessary Measures’,” Washington Post, June 6, 1998; Bellamy, Kosovo and International Society, p. 89; and James Rubin, “Countdown to a Very Personal War.”


783 On Moscow’s behavior, which aimed at averting a greater NATO role in the region, see Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 119-22.

784 Burg, “Coercive Diplomacy in the Balkans,” p. 79; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 116-17; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 35
pave the way for Kosovo’s independence. But at the end of July Milosevic, convinced that NATO would not act in the absence of a UN resolution, ordered his security forces to crush the KLA militarily. Within a month, over 200,000 ethnic Albanians had either fled to neighboring countries or ended up as displaced persons inside Kosovo.

The same pattern repeated itself again later that year. On September 23, 1998 the SC adopted Resolution 1199, demanding an end to Serb repression, as well as Serb facilitation of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The resolution was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and identified the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo as a “threat to international peace and security,” but it contained no ultimatum and no explicit authorization of force in case of Serb noncompliance. By mid-October, following intense negotiations led by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, and under significant pressure from Moscow, Milosevic again agreed to cease the violence and consented to the deployment of unarmed international monitors inside Kosovo. The Holbrooke-Milosevic agreement of October 1998 facilitated the return of displaced people inside Kosovo to their villages and may have saved the lives of up to several thousands of ethnic Albanians. However, the October agreement had one crucial flaw: its focus was entirely on Serb compliance, and it placed no demands on the Kosovar Albanian side. Furthermore, no attempt was made by a divided West to interdict the flow of arms and money to

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788 On Russia’s role in securing Milosevic’s compliance, see Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 250-51; and more generally, Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 50.

the KLA. In subsequent weeks, the KLA once again took advantage of Serb restraint to reorganize itself and regain control of parts of Kosovo from which it had been recently expelled. By mid-November, the KLA was again engaged in systematic attacks against Serb targets in Kosovo. According to the EU’s special envoy for Kosovo, Wolfgang Petritsch, those attacks were clearly intended to bring about increased Serb repression, in view of ultimately triggering a U.S. or NATO military intervention.

The Serb crackdown was particularly harsh this time around, and it again deliberately targeted elements of the civilian population. NATO, however, at first appeared more divided than ever. Several European nations hinted that the KLA had brought this upon itself, which in turn further emboldened Milosevic to step up his offensive. On January 15, 1999 Serb paramilitary forces killed forty-five people, most of them civilians, in the village of Racak in southern Kosovo. There had been worse civilian massacres in Kosovo over the previous year; yet the events at Racak produced a hitherto unseen sense of outrage in the West, in large part due to the vivid scenes of the massacre shown in the media. Following the Racak killing, the U.S. State Department favored immediate military action, in the form of a punitive cruise missile strike on Serbia. But the Europeans were still unwilling in January 1999 to lash out militarily

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790 The Kosovo Report, p. 150; see also Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 147-48; and Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, pp. 57-9.
793 Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, pp. 409-410; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, pp. 63f; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 159f.
794 Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 71; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, p. 166.
against Belgrade. “The key allies weren’t ready,” explains Alexander Vershbow, then the U.S. ambassador to NATO.795

The western European nations insisted on a further round of negotiations. Only on January 30, after the United States had agreed to their request, NATO agreed in principle to “take whatever measures are necessary in the light of both parties’ compliance.”796 Representatives of Serbia, the Kosovar Albanians, the United States, and its chief European allies then met on February 6 in Rambouillet, France, for final negotiations aimed at achieving a political settlement. Serbia was asked to withdraw most of its security forces from Kosovo, grant substantial autonomy to the province, and accept the presence of armed international peacekeepers. The official negotiating position was that Kosovo’s final status would be decided after a three-year transitional period. However, during the negotiations, Secretary Albright signed a secret side-agreement with the Kosovar Albanians, which promised that Kosovo could hold a referendum on independence after three years.797 On March 18, 1999 the Kosovar Albanians accepted the comprehensive proposal.798 In contrast, political authorities in Belgrade, while accepting most elements of the proposal, adamantly rejected the presence of armed international peacekeepers, fearing that this would in fact eliminate any form of Serb sovereign control over Kosovo.799

796 Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, pp. 76-77; Bellamy, Kosovo and International Society, pp. 126f; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 169f; Cordesman, Lessons and Non-Lessons, pp. 14f.
797 The Kosovo Report, p. 155; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 82; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 168, 189, 195f, 223; see also Albright, Madam Secretary, pp. 202f.
798 Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 82; Albright, Madam Secretary, pp. 202-03.
On March 24, 1999, with diplomacy having reached a dead end, NATO launched Operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia. Milosevic must have known that he had no chance of prevailing militarily against the most powerful alliance in history. So why did he choose to stand up to NATO, instead of yielding at Rambouillet? In part, the Yugoslav leader’s choice reflected the importance of Kosovo, which stirred so many emotions in all Serbs, to his own political survival. But it also appears that Milosevic, faced with a constantly squabbling Atlantic alliance, never took the threat of NATO air strikes very seriously. General Klaus Naumann, who chaired NATO’s military committee at the time, suggests that by the beginning of 1999, NATO’s “stick had been transformed into a rubber baton.” The allies “had threatened too often and hadn’t done anything.” Albright, too, admits that working multilaterally significantly reduced the effectiveness of U.S. coercive diplomacy: Milosevic, she explains, possibly “thought that we were bluffing.”

The costs of war fighting by coalition

After the negotiations at Rambouillet had failed, NATO reached a consensus that force needed to be used. But in the absence of a direct threat to the allies’ vital strategic interests (nobody among them had been directly attacked), the consensus behind air strikes remained exceedingly tenuous. The predominant assumption was that NATO would fight a short, limited war. The goal was not to compel the Serbs to leave Kosovo by crushing them militarily, but rather to employ moderate amounts of force to persuade Milosevic to move back to the negotiating table. Wesley Clark, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR) had only

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800 Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 387.
802 Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 406. For similar conclusions, see also Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, p. 208; Cordesman, Lessons and Non-Lessons, p. 17; and Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 420.
developed plans for a short air campaign of no more than two weeks—a far cry from the 78 days, or two-and-a-half months, that it ultimately took to break Milosevic’s will to resist.\textsuperscript{803}

The NATO coalition used force only in limited and incremental amounts. U.S. military commanders would in principle have preferred to hit Milosevic hard from the beginning, applying overwhelming force in the pursuit of clearly defined objectives. “That’s what air force doctrine calls for—figure out where your opponent’s center of gravity is and knock the hell out of it,” explains Col. Gregory Kaufmann, a retired U.S. Army aviation officer who headed the Pentagon’s Balkans task force in 1998 and 1999.\textsuperscript{804} But the political imperative of holding together a fractious multinational coalition outweighed immediate considerations of military effectiveness. Secretary of Defense William Cohen, asked at the time why NATO did not launch a more robust air campaign from the beginning, candidly admitted: “Acting unilaterally,... that’s precisely the kind of air campaign that you’d want—hit fast and hard, and cripple Milosevic’s forces as soon as possible. The difference here, of course, is that we’re acting as an alliance.”\textsuperscript{805}

The thirteen non-U.S. allies that actively participated in the air campaign (i.e., twelve European nations plus Canada) dropped only twenty percent of all bombs, launched barely ten percent of all cruise missiles, and conducted less than ten percent of the crucial electronic warfare and reconnaissance missions.\textsuperscript{806} As former Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre explains, the United States “had 600 aircraft in the theater that could sustain night-time combat


operations, whereas the total contribution of the [other] NATO allies was only twelve aircraft that could fly fully at night.”

Thus, from a pure capabilities point of view, the U.S. could easily have executed the Kosovo air campaign unilaterally and would probably have done so more effectively.

The NATO coalition was also extremely risk-averse. To avoid Yugoslav air defenses, alliance aircraft generally flew at an altitude of about 15,000 feet. Consequently the pilots’ ability to reliably identify and hit relevant Serb military targets was significantly curtailed, especially in bad weather. Bombing from 15,000 feet also increased the risk of “collateral damage,” such as when NATO hit a passenger train crossing a bridge, or mistook a convoy of Kosovar Albanian refugees for an armored column. Based on a report by Human Rights Watch, an estimated 500 Serb and ethnic Albanian civilians died as a result of the NATO bombing.

Furthermore, allied concerns about bombing sensitive facilities resulted in a highly cumbersome and micromanaged targeting process, which further undermined the campaign’s strategic effectiveness. Many European NATO members, unlike the United States, had signed the 1977 additional protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which bars attacks on “objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.” Thus, most European allies were either reluctant about or outright opposed to striking dual-use infrastructure in Serbia, including electrical grids and fuel storage facilities. Some European nations also wanted to have a say in the overall selection of targets, making for an exceedingly cumbersome campaign.

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management. European sensitivities also were one important reason why at the outset of the air campaign, NATO leaders excluded the possibility of a ground invasion of Kosovo or of arming the KLA. As Gregory Schulte, at the time a senior NSC staffer working on the Balkans, recalls, “getting the decision on air strikes was hard for NATO. And there was a real concern that if you added to that the possibility of ground troops being introduced, you wouldn’t even get air strikes.”

The fractiousness of the alliance and the limited, incremental way in which NATO fought may well have convinced Milosevic that he might be able to ride it out. “You want to hold the group together,” explains one former senior State Department official. “But it’s a perverse, or at any rate very difficult situation. You had a very savvy interlocutor, who initially thought nothing bad was going to happen [to him].” According to a former senior U.S. military official, in all likelihood NATO’s tentative and incremental approach to war fighting “prolonged the problem.” Albright, too, admitted while the war was still ongoing that “not everything may be

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811 Britain had special concerns about targets struck by B-52 bombers operating from British bases. Meanwhile France wanted to have a say in decisions to bomb dual-use targets such as bridges and other infrastructure, fearing that such attacks might strengthen rather than weaken Milosevic. Other European allies, such as Italy, simply refrained from participating in air strikes on those controversial targets. See Massimo D’Alema (interviewed by Federico Rampini), *Kosovo: Gli italiani e la guerra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), p. 39; Daalder and O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 123.


815 Author interview with James O’Brien, principal deputy director of policy planning at the U.S. State Department and special Balkans envoy, 1997-2001 (March 9, 2010).

moving as rapidly as it would unilaterally”—thus finding herself vindicated in the skepticism of multilateralism that she had expressed one year earlier, in the spring of 1998.  

How NATO’s half-hearted approach worsened the plight of ethnic Albanian civilians

Finally, the alliance’s hesitations and its explicit ruling out of a ground combat option at the outset of the war probably emboldened Milosevic to step up his own military offensive against the Kosovar Albanians. During the first ten days of the air campaign, Serbian security forces, largely unimpeded by NATO aircraft, forcibly expelled half a million Kosovars across the border into Albania and Macedonia, creating a massive humanitarian emergency that overshadowed anything seen over the previous year. By the end of the war, approximately 860,000 Kosovar civilians had been expelled from the country and another 590,000 were internally displaced.

NATO’s intelligence analysts did not fully predict the scale of Milosevic’s planned ethnic cleansing campaign in response to an allied air attack (according to one source, the alliance anticipated “merely” 200,000 new Kosovar refugees). However, NATO leaders clearly anticipated that the Yugoslav president would dramatically step up his assault against the ethnic Albanian population. The following dialogue, which took place on March 6, 1999 between SACEUR Clark and Secretary Albright, is illustrative in this regard:

Albright: “If we commence the strikes, will the Serbs attack the population?”
Clark: “Almost certainly they will attack the civilian population. This is what they are promising to do.”
Albright: “So what should we do? How can we prevent their striking the civilians?”
Clark: “We can’t. … it’s not going to be pleasant.”

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818 Together, these figures imply that possibly over ninety percent of the Kosovar Albanian population had been displaced from their homes. See The Kosovo Report, p. 90; Moskowitz and Lantis, “Conflict in the Balkans,” p. 264.
Albright: “But you think we should go ahead?”
Clark: “Yes, we have to... We have to follow through and make it work.”
Albright: “Yes, I think so, too.”

NATO’s official line was that there was little the alliance could have done to stop Milosevic, anyway. A few days after the launch of the air campaign, German intelligence claimed to have found evidence of plans for a Serbian *Operation Horseshoe*, which Milosevic had allegedly approved already in late 1998 to cleanse Kosovo of virtually the entire ethnic Albanian population. But after the war, it emerged that the Horseshoe allegations were based on thin evidence and may actually have been fabricated from run-of-the-mill Bulgarian intelligence reports. Undoubtedly the Serbs had been planning for a large-scale expulsion of Kosovar Albanians—otherwise they could not have implemented it so quickly after the start of NATO bombings. However, one cannot infer from the existence of a plan the firm political intention to carry it out. It is in fact unlikely that Milosevic would have given the go-ahead for such a massive forced population resettlement, in the face of a credible threat of overwhelming, swift retaliation by external powers.

Furthermore, German intelligence officials had informed NATO authorities of the alleged Serb plan for *Operation Horseshoe* already in late February 1999—that is, several weeks before the air campaign was actually launched. Assuming that Washington considered the intelligence to be reliable, the United States could have prevented a major humanitarian disaster, by proceeding in either of two ways: Washington could have yielded to European reluctance and

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821 The plan allegedly foresaw a coordinated attack on broad swaths of territory in the shape of a horseshoe, hence the codename. See Daalder and O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, pp. 58, 112; Garton Ash, “Kosovo: Was It Worth It?”
822 According to German Brigadier General Heinz Loquai, German officials turned a vague report from Sofia into a ‘plan,’ and even coined the name Horseshoe. Cf. Heinz Loquai, Der Kosovo-Konflikt: Wege in einen vermeidbaren Krieg (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000), chap. 8; see also Gibbs, *First Do No Harm*, p. 192.
called off the bombing altogether; or it could have unilaterally launched a more decisive air campaign against Serb strategic targets from early on, which might quickly have forced Milosevic to stop the ethnic violence. Instead, Washington chose to proceed by means of a multilateral consensus with its European allies through NATO, which greatly constrained the use of air power and allowed the ethnic cleansing on the ground to proceed virtually unhampered for several weeks. While most of the refugees were later able to return, an estimated 10,000 Kosovar Albanians perished at the hands of Serb security forces during the NATO bombings. It was only by late April 1999, as European defense leaders became aware that a failure over Kosovo might have called into question NATO’s future viability and America’s security commitment to the continent, that the alliance as a whole agreed to step up the air campaign by deploying additional aircraft and significantly expanding the target set. That, combined with a Russian diplomatic initiative in early June, eventually broke Milosevic’s will to resist.

3. The military’s pushback against U.S. unilateral intervention

My central hypothesis is that the top military brass in Washington contributed more than other senior policy officials to keeping the United States on a steady multilateral track. To corroborate my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism, the following implications ought to be observed. First, there should be evidence of interventionist senior policy officials in Washington initially disregarding the need for IO endorsement, or even pushing for U.S. unilateral intervention in the face of European reluctance about the use of force. Second, the top

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824 The Kosovo Report, p. 2.
U.S. military brass should have been skeptical of armed intervention and outright opposed to unilateral intervention, based on the concern that Washington might then have been held responsible for Kosovo’s long-term stabilization. Third, activist civilian leaders intent on reassuring the military should gradually have steered the Washington policy process toward relevant IOs, in view of locking in the support of foreign allies and partners. If those activists retrospectively acknowledged that U.S. multilateralism over Kosovo was in fact largely a result of the military’s concern about limiting American liability, that would constitute strong confirmatory evidence for my theory. Finally, the temporal evolution of U.S. policy, and of the preferences held by relevant actors, should more generally confirm that the military’s privately and publicly voiced skepticism about the (unilateral) use of force in fact largely drove the Clinton administration’s effort to channel its coercive strategy through NATO.

**Albright, the Munich analogy, and the duty to resist evil**

The principal U.S. national security officials shaping Washington’s Kosovo policy were Secretary of State Albright, National Security Adviser Samuel “Sandy” Berger, Secretary of Defense William “Bill” Cohen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Henry “Hugh” Shelton, and SACEUR Wesley “Wes” Clark. The State Department was the main source of U.S. bureaucratic activism over Kosovo, under the leadership of Secretary Albright and her advisers Marc Grossman, James Rubin, Robert Gelbard, Christopher Hill, and Richard Holbrooke.827

As soon as the violence in Kosovo began to flare up in early 1998, Albright emerged as the Clinton administration’s leading hawk. The same moral fervor that had driven Albright on

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827 Grossman was the assistant secretary of state for European affairs. Rubin was the assistant secretary for public affairs and Albright’s spin doctor, or public communications director. Gelbard was the U.S. special Balkans envoy, but in the course of 1998 he was increasingly sidelined by Holbrooke, who took over the Kosovo portfolio at the State Department. Hill was the U.S. ambassador to Macedonia and led the proximity talks on the ground between the Belgrade government and the Kosovar Albanians.
Bosnia now also motivated her over Kosovo. Indeed, the Bosnia experience had convinced her that Milosevic was an absolutely evil, ruthless individual who could not be trusted and with whom one could not meaningfully negotiate. One of Albright’s closest aides at the time summarizes the secretary’s views as follows: “Albright believed very early on that the lessons of Bosnia were that Milosevic would respond only to the use of force. And she began to talk about that, publicly. In the middle of 1998, the State Department was certainly the only department considering the use of force.”

For the reluctant Pentagon leaders, who insisted on the risks and high potential costs of military action, the dominant reference point was the American quagmire in Vietnam. Meanwhile for Albright, the more compelling analogy was Munich: there could be no appeasement in the face of aggression and attempted genocide.

During the previous crisis over Bosnia, Albright’s influence in Washington had been limited, given her junior Cabinet position as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. But in President Clinton’s second term, she had become the administration’s top foreign policy official. Now she used her new bully pulpit and her greatly increased influence to advocate a decisive response to Milosevic’s crackdown in Kosovo. Throughout 1998, President Clinton focused much of his energy and attention on deflecting accusations that he had engaged in sexual misconduct with Monica Lewinsky, a young White House intern. Albright quite skillfully took advantage of the resulting power vacuum within the administration to advance her cause.

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828 Author interview with James Rubin, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, 1997 - 2000 (April 9, 2010).


830 As those allegations were substantiated, in December 1998, Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives on grounds of perjury; but the Senate subsequently acquitted him on February 12, 1999. See Peter Baker and Helen Dewar, “The Senate Acquits President Clinton,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1999.

The Secretary of State not only pushed her own views assertively during internal administration debates. Albright also publicly went out ahead of her fellow national security principals in terms of rhetoric, seeking to increase the administration’s commitment to doing whatever she thought necessary to resolve the crisis in Kosovo. For instance, as early as March 1998, she put American credibility on the line, by solemnly declaring at a news conference in Rome: “We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia.”

During subsequent months, she behaved as the quintessential policy entrepreneur: she sought to change the attitude of her colleagues from other government agencies, and she gradually forged an interagency consensus on the need to threaten and potentially use military force. Ronald Asmus, at the time a senior State Department official responsible for European affairs, assesses the secretary’s influence as follows:

The intervention never would have happened without Albright. When those pictures showed up on CNN about the internment camps [of Kosovar Albanians], she said, ‘it reminds me of the Holocaust. This is unacceptable.’ Almost everyone in the U.S. government opposed her in the beginning. She had to first convince Berger, than Clinton. She convinced them through her tenacity. But she had made up her mind when she looked at those pictures and said: this is evil.

The other leading American activist among senior government officials was SACEUR Clark. He had been a member of Holbrooke’s negotiating team in 1995 that ended the Bosnian war, and like Albright, he had been profoundly shaped by his first-hand experience of dealing with Milosevic over Bosnia. As early as March 1998, Clark became certain that Milosevic could only be stopped through either the use or the credible threat of force. As the senior U.S. military commander in Europe, Clark wielded considerable influence in Washington and other

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832 Quoted in Barton Gellman, “The Path To Crisis: How the United States and Its Allies Went To War,” Washington Post, April 18, 1999; see also Michael Hirsh, “At War With Ourselves,” p. 64.

833 Ronald Asmus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1997-2000 (email to the author, April 5, 2010).

allied capitals. Yet Clark’s activism over Kosovo resulted in serious tensions between him and the top military brass in Washington, notably the Joint Chiefs, who were highly skeptical of a renewed armed intervention in the Balkans and tried to cut off Clark’s access to the administration’s civilian leaders. Secretary of Defense Cohen, himself highly risk-averse, sided with the JCS and was suspicious of Clark’s push for military action.\textsuperscript{835} From the spring of 1998 onwards, Clark’s chief bureaucratic ally in the administration was Secretary Albright. Together, Albright and Clark sought to outmaneuver their opponents, in view of persuading the president to authorize armed intervention. Asmus, who accompanied Albright on several trips to Europe, recalls that:

> Wes [Clark] and Madeleine [Albright] were, I don’t want to say they were conspiring together, but they saw eye-to-eye. We would often fly to [NATO HQ in] Brussels and they would go off in the corner one-on-one, and talk for a very long time with no note takers and no one present. We all suspected that they were talking about how to outmaneuver various opponents in the bureaucratic process who were opposed to what they wanted to do.\textsuperscript{836}

\textit{April – May 1998: debating a U.S. unilateral intervention}

During the first half of 1998, senior State Department officials insisted that given the reluctance of major European allies to envision the use of force, the United States might have to bomb Serbia unilaterally, to stop Milosevic’s crackdown on the Kosovar Albanians. The administration’s Balkans envoy, Robert Gelbard, and U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia Christopher Hill, an influential voice on American policy towards the region, insisted from early 1998 onward that Washington ought to publicly re-emphasize the “Christmas warning” vis-à-vis


\textsuperscript{836} Author interview with Ronald Asmus (April 21, 2010).
Milosevic—i.e., the threat of U.S. unilateral military action first issued in late 1992. Clark, though well aware of the Pentagon’s determination to resist a further U.S. military engagement in the Balkans, largely agreed with the State Department’s hawks. Indeed, by mid-April 1998, Clark, acting in coordination with Gelbard, had quietly developed a list of Yugoslav targets that the U.S. could hit unilaterally from the air. Strikingly, therefore, NATO’s supreme commander was willing to bypass the alliance for the sake of issuing a more credible threat, to be followed by a unilateral U.S. military strike if necessary.

Towards April 20, Gelbard outlined a new policy proposal to Secretary Albright that explicitly foresaw the possibility of a U.S. unilateral strike. Gelbard’s specific recommendation was that a high-level emissary, ideally the secretary of state or her deputy, be dispatched to Belgrade with a letter from President Clinton threatening military action. Milosevic should be given an ultimatum of between three and five days to remove most of his security forces from Kosovo, and in case of noncompliance the United States should then “use Tomahawk missiles, and in the middle of one night, destroy the [Yugoslav] ministry of defense and the ministry of interior.” Thereafter, U.S. diplomats would go back to resume negotiations with Milosevic. Asked about the role of NATO and the European allies, Gelbard emphasizes: “I am not even sure we ever thought about the other allies at the time.”

Albright herself was frustrated by the slow pace of multilateral diplomacy in the Contact Group, the diplomatic forum on the Balkans including the U.S. and its European partners. “I am

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838 Clark, Waging Modern War, pp. 108-09, and 113-14. On Clark’s early development of a target list, in cooperation with Ambassador Gelbard, see Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p 30; and Elaine Sciolino and Ethan Bronner, “Crisis in the Balkans.”
839 Author interview with Robert Gelbard (March 22, 2010).
840 Gelbard interview.
sick and tired of going to meeting after meeting. Now I can see how Bosnia happened,” she privately vented her frustration with the multilateral diplomacy as early as March 1998.\textsuperscript{841} By late April, the secretary of state appears to have concluded that a U.S. unilateral intervention might in fact be necessary. The Contact Group, she recalls, “agreed on essentially nothing… I felt it urgent that we again raise the possibility of bombing.”\textsuperscript{842} A former senior State Department official further explains Albright’s views at the time:

\begin{quote}
Because of where Secretary Albright was coming from, she thought there are some times when you need to do it [i.e., threaten and potentially use military force] regardless of multilateral support. And partially because of her own personal background, she had very strong feelings about what was happening in the Balkans and the role the U.S. could and should play.\textsuperscript{843}
\end{quote}

Albright was sympathetic to Gelbard’s proposal of a U.S. ultimatum and potential unilateral air strike, and she suggested that they discuss the idea with Berger at the White House. On April 23, 1998, Gelbard, backed by Albright, laid out his proposal to Clinton’s national security advisor. But Berger, having listened to Gelbard, summarily rejected the idea of bombing Serb infrastructure or administrative facilities. As the discussion progressed, with Gelbard and Albright insisting, the national security advisor eventually lost his temper: “So you want to bomb some goddamn bridge?” Berger reportedly shouted. “Well, what if that doesn’t work? Do you bomb another goddamn bridge?”\textsuperscript{844} Berger was wary about threatening force and absolutely opposed to doing so unilaterally. Once issued, the threat might well have to be executed. Then, assuming that a limited cruise missile strike would not break Milosevic’s resolve, the

\textsuperscript{841} Quoted in Rubin, “Countdown to a Very Personal War”.

\textsuperscript{842} Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 383.

\textsuperscript{843} Author interview with Barbara Larkin, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs from 1996 to 1999 (April 2, 2010).

\textsuperscript{844} Author interview with Robert Gelbard (March 22, 2010). See also Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p.383; Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 30; Halberstam, \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, p. 376; Sciolino and Bronner, “Crisis in the Balkans.”
administration would have to escalate further, with the risk of getting dragged into an intractable civil conflict. Berger also wanted to protect the president, in view of the impeachment scandal that had just exploded on the national political scene.\textsuperscript{845}

Berger’s own skepticism about armed intervention appears to have been shaped to a significant degree during his frequent interactions with the military brass in Washington. Prior to the aforementioned meeting at the White House on April 23, U.S. defense planners at the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), aware of Gelbard’s and Clark’s planning behind the scenes, had made it clear that they strongly opposed unilateral U.S. military action in the Balkans. “We used to talk to Sandy [Berger] a lot,” remembers Lieutenant General David Weisman, at the time the deputy head of strategic planning on the Joint Staff. “Bob Gelbard had no idea about how to deploy military force.”\textsuperscript{846} The military leaders in Washington doubted that air power alone would lead Milosevic to acquiesce; and they had strong reservations about the feasibility of another large-scale U.S. troop commitment to the Balkans.\textsuperscript{847} During subsequent discussions with the State Department, Berger reportedly expressed concerns that were strikingly similar to those voiced by the military leadership: “This will be our Vietnam,” Berger reportedly said. “This will destroy the Clinton administration, and we will not let you do that.”\textsuperscript{848}

Over the following weeks the Clinton administration’s hawks realized that to achieve a bureaucratic consensus in Washington on the use of force, the European allies first had to be brought on board. Berger himself had hinted as much during the April 23 meeting: the administration should “avoid empty rhetoric,” he had counseled, while it “tried to multilateralize

\textsuperscript{845} Author interview with Robert Gelbard (March 22, 2010). See also Halberstam, \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, p. 376.
\textsuperscript{846} Author interview with Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011). See also Gellmann, “The Path To Crisis.”
\textsuperscript{847} Author interview with General Charles Wald (March 8, 2010).
the threat of force." Albright and her fellow activists needed to be able to offer reasonable guarantees to their skeptical colleagues in Washington that following the success of coercive diplomacy, the European allies would in fact shoulder most of the burden for long-term peacekeeping and stabilization in Kosovo. The best way of achieving this was to maximize the European allies’ political buy-in from early on, by working through NATO—the multilateral institution where America’s leverage has traditionally been greatest. In many regards, therefore, for the administration’s activists, cooperating with the Europeans on the diplomacy through NATO and the Contact Group was a means to an end: the goal was “to nurse European willingness to make this a high priority, until the point where the Europeans realized, this [i.e. the diplomacy] is not going to work, and then we would be able to lead, exercise American leadership, with European support.”

The Pentagon’s concerns about another protracted entanglement in the Balkans

The military leaders and their civilian allies at the Pentagon believed there were no major U.S. strategic interests at stake in Kosovo that warranted the likely risks and high costs of armed intervention. Secretary Cohen himself thought that Kosovo was an obscure place, and he didn’t see it as the American military’s responsibility to stop violent repression in faraway places. Cohen always believed that the pure humanitarian argument proves too much: it would quickly lead the United States to overextend itself militarily. Furthermore, having grown up in the

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849 Quoted in Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 30.
850 Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-large and Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the new independent sates of the former Soviet Union, 1997 – 2001 (March 4, 2010).
851 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
Vietnam era, Cohen was inherently suspicious of military intervention as a means to achieve domestic political change in foreign countries.\textsuperscript{852}

Hence the Pentagon leadership was extremely reluctant about the prospect of humanitarian military intervention over Kosovo. “We weren’t totally opposed, but we were very reluctant,” recalls a former Joint Staff official. He then adds that undoubtedly, there was opposition “to a ground combat role to force the Serbs out of Kosovo.”\textsuperscript{853} The Joint Chiefs for the most part saw pitfalls, things that could go wrong, and Secretary Cohen reflected their views. To begin with, the military cautioned that the mere threat of force was unlikely to succeed, and once American credibility was put on the line, Washington would then have to follow through with actual air strikes, and ultimately U.S. ground troops might be drawn into the conflict.\textsuperscript{854} The military brass and the civilian policy leaders at OSD challenged the view that, since limited airstrikes had succeeded in Bosnia, one could now expect the same pattern to repeat itself over Kosovo. First, they pointed out, in the case of Bosnia the joint Croat-Muslim ground offensive of August and September 1995 had played a crucial role in persuading the Serbs to negotiate. But in the case of Kosovo, the ragtag KLA army was not even close to posing a comparable challenge to Milosevic. Furthermore, most Serbs considered Kosovo to be an inalienable part of their national homeland, which would make it significantly more difficult for Milosevic to compromise this time around.\textsuperscript{855} Joseph Ralston, at the time the vice-chairman of the JCS, recalls the bureaucratic debates between skeptical military leaders and civilian hawks in Washington as follows:

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{852} Halberstam. \textit{War in a Time of Peace}, p. 441.
\textsuperscript{853} Author interview with Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011).
\textsuperscript{854} Author interview with Col. Gregory Kaufmann (March 10, 2010).
\textsuperscript{855} Author interviews with Walter Slocombe (March 11, 2010) and Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011).
\end{footnotes}
People would say, OK just the threat of air strikes will work. Well, then we’d ask, what if it doesn’t? OK, they replied, then, if you drop one or two bombs, it will solve the problem. Well, we continued, what if it doesn’t? Then you’d have to go to the next step. Ultimately, you’d have to be prepared to introduce ground forces, or do whatever is needed.856

If the United States ended up deploying ground combat troops to Kosovo, in what the Pentagon viewed as a civil war, they might quickly get caught up in a Vietnam-style quagmire. Failure over Kosovo would not only be exceedingly costly in terms of human and material resources; it might also sap the nation’s morale and support for the armed services more generally, thereby making it more difficult to intervene militarily in the future where significant U.S. national interests might actually be at stake.857 Hence U.S. defense leaders were adamant that force should be used only as a last resort, after all other possible avenues of resolving the problem peacefully had been exhausted; and the introduction of American ground troops in a combat role should always remain off limits.858

*The need to devise an exit strategy before going in*

Senior Pentagon officials and the military brass in particular also insisted much sooner and more emphatically than other policy leaders in Washington that the Clinton administration needed to devise a viable exit strategy for American troops *before* explicitly threatening, let alone actually using, force against Yugoslavia. The U.S. military at the time were still very much influenced by the Powell doctrine, which among other things prescribes that force should be used

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858 Ralston interview.
only in the pursuit of clear and attainable objectives and in the presence of a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement abroad.\footnote{Ralston interview.}

The uniformed leaders were fundamentally skeptical about using force in the pursuit of a goal, regional autonomy for Kosovo, that appeared to be eminently political in nature and could not be linked to precise military objectives. As a former senior Pentagon official explains, “the warfighters want clear military objectives: capture this hill, occupy this city. But with regard to Kosovo, they were asking: What is my mission?”\footnote{Author interview with John Veroneau, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, 1999-2001 (April 7, 2010).} In other words, the top brass worried that because the military objectives were vague, the exit strategy, too, could not be clearly defined. The question they asked over and over again was: “How do we define success here?”\footnote{Veroneau interview.} The military leaders worried that ultimately, the United States might be supporting Kosovar independence, which would require a long-term armed international presence on the ground.\footnote{Author interview with Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011).}

The Pentagon leadership also more generally feared that even if air power persuaded Milosevic to accede to Washington’s demands, and Kosovo was granted significant autonomy within Yugoslavia, ultimate success would require the deployment of a sizeable foreign military presence on the ground for several years—if only because the Kosovar Albanians themselves would want a credible outside security guarantee. Senior defense officials, who naturally focused on the feasibility and likely implications of various military options, had come to this conclusion as early as the spring of 1998, when the possibility of U.S. intervention was first seriously discussed. As Gregory Kaufmann, who at the time headed the OSD Balkans task force, explains:

We very much looking at SFOR [i.e., the NATO-led stabilization force in Bosnia]. Our thought was that we would have to deploy a similar kind of force in Kosovo. Certainly
that was the first way that people at OSD were looking at this—that any eventual mission if the coercive diplomacy worked would be more like a peace-keeping or peace-enforcement mission.\textsuperscript{863}

The military leaders in particular worried that there would not be sufficient U.S. congressional support for another protracted deployment in the Balkans after Bosnia, and they expressed this concern repeatedly in the interagency debate. As Ralston recalls, “the military didn’t want to find themselves in a situation where we get started in this and then suddenly the Congress says: ‘well, wait a minute, we’re not going to support that.’ Because then you don’t have a way to succeed.”\textsuperscript{864} The military commanders had learned from Vietnam and the more recent sobering experience of Somalia that maintaining domestic political support for the entire duration of a foreign military engagement is critical to its success.\textsuperscript{865} Former senior State Department officials confirm that, compared to their Pentagon colleagues, during the lead-up to the Kosovo intervention, they focused less on the need to secure congressional support for any protracted military deployment.\textsuperscript{866}

In part, the different sensitivities between the State Department and the Department of Defense on this matter are a reflection of each agency’s different congressional constituencies. The State Department largely deals with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who are typically quite internationalist in outlook. Meanwhile the Pentagon interacts primarily with members of the House and Senate armed services committees, who play a key role in the defense appropriations and authorization process and are traditionally more reluctant to commit

\textsuperscript{863} Author interview with Col. Gregory Kaufmann (March 10, 2010). See also Clark, \textit{Waging Modern War}, p. 307; Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{864} Author interview with Gen. Joseph Ralston (March 17, 2010).

\textsuperscript{865} Author interview with John K. Veroneau (April 7, 2010). See also Clark, \textit{Waging Modern War}, p. 184.

\textsuperscript{866} Author interviews with Barbara Larkin (April 2, 2010), James Rubin (April 9, 2010), and Morton H. Halperin, Director of policy planning the \textit{Department of State}, 1998-2001(March 10, 2010).
U.S. troops. (Secretary Cohen himself had long been a member of the armed services committee in the Senate and thus understood the concerns of its members particularly well). \textsuperscript{867}

Another crucial difference was that Senior State Department officials, especially the most hawkish ones like Albright and Gelbard, tended to be much more optimistic than their Pentagon colleagues about the prospects that the coercive diplomacy might succeed. The administration’s chief diplomats initially believed that if the right incentives were brought to the table, Milosevic would become more cooperative, and a largely self-sustaining autonomy arrangement for Kosovo might be achieved. In short, the prevailing view at State throughout the first part of 1998 was that while some international presence might well be necessary to stabilize the situation after a political settlement was accepted by the parties, that presence would mainly consist of aid workers, observers, and maybe a police force—but once Milosevic withdrew his own troops from the province, there would be no need for a large international military contingent. \textsuperscript{868}

Not until late August 1998 did the first senior State Department official, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Alexander Vershbow, make the case in an influential cable to Washington that the “only way” of keeping any peace would be “by putting an armed NATO peacekeeping force on the ground, as we did in Bosnia.” \textsuperscript{869} In contrast, the uniformed leaders insisted from early on that the political goals of sustainable peace and autonomy for Kosovo could not be achieved within a short time frame and without an open-ended international military presence on the ground. Hence, from the military’s standpoint, there was only one viable exit strategy for the United States that would also secure long-term congressional support: the burden of

\textsuperscript{867} Author interview with Barbara Larkin (April 2, 2010).

\textsuperscript{868} Author interview with James O’Brien, principal deputy director of policy planning at the U.S. State Department and special Balkans envoy from 1998 to 2001 (March 9, 2010).

\textsuperscript{869} Author interview with Alexander Vershbow (April 5, 2010). See also Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, pp.54f.
implementing and policing any political settlement on the ground had to be shifted as much as possible to the European allies. Walter Slocombe, the undersecretary of defense for policy at the time, remembers the Pentagon’s standpoint in the internal bureaucratic deliberations as follows: “The only way you could have a deal which would be real was if there was, effectively, an occupation. So there had to be an international force, and the U.S. military was very anxious that we not have the main burden—in fact, we wanted to have as little of the burden as we could possibly have.”

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As Milosevic stepped up his campaign of violent repression in the fall of 1998 and U.S. military action became increasingly likely, the Pentagon continued to insist that the European allies would have to bear primary responsibility for postwar stabilization. Secretary Cohen declared in early October: “It is my recommendation and my—I would almost say insistence—that it be largely, if not wholly, European in nature, given [that U.S. forces] will be carrying the bulk of the load” in any air campaign.871 Thus, the Clinton administration’s senior defense officials made it clear that the European allies would have to be involved, and reassurances would have to be obtained that the allies, rather than Washington, were going to bear primary responsibility for longer-term peacekeeping and stabilization.872

4. How bureaucratic bargaining drove Washington’s policy toward NATO

Between the spring of 1998 and late March 1999 (when NATO launched Operation Allied Force), the primary goal of Secretary Albright and her fellow activists was to convince

870 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
President Clinton to “make the right decision” by authorizing military action. However, to persuade the president, the administration’s civilian hawks first needed to be able to reassure the military brass and forge a large bureaucratic coalition in favor of armed intervention. Rubin, at the time a close aide to Secretary Albright, acknowledges that “we could never have issued threats [of military action] in 1998, if the Pentagon had been opposed to it.”

The military’s political leverage

The president understood that public opposition from the uniformed leaders could have potentially disastrous implications in terms of public and congressional support for the policy. Furthermore, with the impeachment process in 1998, Clinton’s vulnerability in other areas went up immediately, and that made him particularly keen to avoid a public confrontation with the military. Undoubtedly, with specific regard to Kosovo, the military’s political leverage was somewhat reduced by the fact that General Clark, the U.S. regional commander for Europe and NATO’s chief military official, was himself an avowed hawk. “That made a huge difference in terms of how the internal debate unfolded,” explains Rubin, at the time a close aide to Secretary Albright. Yet Clark was fairly isolated within the Pentagon, and the Joint Chiefs actively sought to undermine his influence.

On Kosovo, the military brass largely voiced their disagreements privately in the intramural bureaucratic debates, but they clearly signaled to the administration that there would be a political fight unless their concerns were taken seriously. In other words, more than on previous occasions, it was the military’s threat of voicing their opposition in public that gave

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873 Author interview with Ronald Asmus (April 21, 2010).
874 Rubin interview.
875 Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 375.
876 Author interview with James Rubin (April 9, 2010). See also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 436.
them significant leverage inside the administration. The military could also establish informal coalitions with members of Congress, particularly from the armed services committees, to advance their bureaucratic interests or oppose a particular policy. For instance, during the early fall of 1998, Congress initially pressed the administration to take stronger action on Kosovo, but after being briefed by skeptical military leaders, previously hawkish members of the legislature became much more reluctant to call for military action against Serbia. “Do the military have backchannels to the Congress? Of course they do,” explains a former senior OSD official. On Kosovo, like for previous humanitarian interventions, those backchannels greatly increased the military’s leverage: “That’s why there was a lot of emphasis on making sure that the European allies came along on this thing, the uniformed pounded on it”—and they explicitly linked burden-sharing on Kosovo’s stabilization to the issue of congressional support.

**Involving NATO to reassure the military brass**

The military leaders forced their more hawkish colleagues from the State Department to more systematically consider the potential downsides of armed intervention, including the possibility that limited air strikes might fail to achieve Washington’s desired objective. Rubin acknowledges that most advocates of forceful action at the State Department at first “didn’t want to spend a lot of time thinking about what would happen if it didn’t work—that’s true.” This is

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879 Author interview with Col. Gregory Kaufmann (March 10, 2010).

880 Rubin interview.
consistent with the evidence from the other cases discussed in this dissertation, where civilian activists rarely focused on issues of feasibility leading up to the use of force.881

But regardless of whether the administration’s activists fully agreed with the military leaders’ analysis, they had to be able to answer the military’s criticisms in view of persuading other skeptics and forging a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of intervention. By late April 1998, as recounted above, Berger had come to share most of the Pentagon’s concerns about a potentially open-ended U.S. military commitment. Berger, in turn, was reflecting but also influenced President Clinton’s own political caution: “To know what Clinton felt,” as one analyst explains, “you only needed to know what Berger felt.”882 Hence the administration’s activists had to be able to persuade the Pentagon, as well as Berger and ultimately the president, that any prospective U.S. contribution of ground troops to a long-term stabilization force for Kosovo could be kept to a minimum. Officials at the State Department understood that would be necessary “in order to win the policy argument internally.”883 As long as the Pentagon remained very skeptical or outright opposed, the president himself would remain reluctant and possibly altogether unwilling to authorize military intervention. As one former senior adviser to Secretary Albright explains, “our assumption was that we had to find ways to minimize the percentage of American troops… if there was any hope of getting the Pentagon... to buy it.”884

Senior military planners on the Joint Staff insisted from early on that if force was going to be used, the main challenge would not be winning the war, but “winning the peace

881 As I show in chapter six, for instance, leading up to the 2003 Iraq war, hard-liners in the U.S. government systematically developed only best-case scenarios for the consequences of military intervention.


884 Quoted in Barton Gellman, “The Path to Crisis.”
afterwards.” ⁸⁸⁵ Some of the military planners also explicitly suggested that it would be helpful to obtain a NATO endorsement of armed intervention, and to consistently coordinate the policy on Kosovo with the European allies, in order to maximize their buy-in. As Lieutenant-General Weisman recalls: “If there was going to be a military solution, we wanted to make sure that the allies were on board. We needed the NATO endorsement. NATO had to take the lead, so that everybody would be involved, not only with the operation, but also with the peace afterwards—in fact, that’s the most important part.” ⁸⁸⁶

Policy officials at the State Department, for their part, especially those with significant experience in the field of transatlantic relations, clearly understood that involving the alliance and working through NATO’s institutional structure would maximize Washington’s leverage over its European allies. After all, the Europeans had historically benefited most from a thriving NATO, which embodied America’s commitment to transatlantic security. ⁸⁸⁷ The expectation among activist policy officials at the State Department was that involving the alliance over Kosovo and obtaining its explicit endorsement of the use of force would maximize the likelihood “that NATO forces were going to go in later;” and that, in turn, would in turn make it significantly “easier to sell the policy to the U.S. government and particularly to the Joint Chiefs.” ⁸⁸⁸ Furthermore, the administration was working to provide NATO with a new strategic purpose, and the admission of several new members was planned for early 1999, which made an

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⁸⁸⁶ Weisman interview.
⁸⁸⁸ Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).
involvement of the alliance over Kosovo particularly attractive to the State Department’s senior Atlanticists.\textsuperscript{889}

Initially, Washington also considered the possibility of seeking to obtain a UNSC mandate as a complement or alternative to NATO endorsement. State Department officials were fully aware that a UN authorization of military action would make it much easier for other countries and especially for the European partners to follow Washington’s lead. As Morton Halperin, at the time the State Department’s head of policy planning, explains, “from our point of view, if we had had a UN Security Council resolution to do it, getting the Europeans involved would have been much easier.”\textsuperscript{890} However, by the fall of 1998, U.S. policy leaders understood that it would be exceedingly difficult to persuade Russia to abstain at the SC on any use-of-force resolution. Hence the Clinton administration focused its diplomatic efforts on the Atlantic alliance and sought to obtain an endorsement of military action from NATO’s supreme political organ, the North Atlantic Council (NAC). But it appears that some senior officials at the State Department, crucially including Secretary Albright, may actually have wanted to bypass the UNSC, in order to test NATO’s ability to agree on the use force in the absence of an explicit UN mandate.\textsuperscript{891}

An integrated NATO coalition

By the fall of 1998, senior State Department officials, possibly after consultations with Clark and military planners on the Joint Staff, had also come to the conclusion that to effectively lock in the European allies, the NAC should not merely endorse U.S. air strikes politically, as the

\textsuperscript{889} Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011).
\textsuperscript{890} Halperin interview.
\textsuperscript{891} “If a UN resolution passed,” Albright explains, “we would have set a precedent that NATO required Security Council authorization before it could act. This would give Russia, not to mention China, a veto over NATO. Cf. Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 384.
UNSC had endorsed previous U.S. interventions in Somalia or Haiti. Instead, air strikes against Serbia should be carried out by a fully integrated NATO coalition, with a unified command and the largest possible multinational participation from the outset.\textsuperscript{892} The military planners, for their part, strongly believed that it would be helpful to have as many NATO members as possible directly participate in the air campaign, to maximize the allies’ buy-in and ensure that they would have “a stake in the outcome,” although it was understood that their combat contribution would be “negligible, with the exception of France and Great Britain.”\textsuperscript{893}

The expectation was that having the non-U.S. allies directly participate in the air campaign would effectively lock them into NATO’s formal decision-making structure, where the United States traditionally enjoys great political leverage. That, in turn, would maximize the likelihood of the European allies subsequently taking the lead on postwar peacekeeping and stabilization. The strategic pull of NATO solidarity would also presumably make it much easier for European political leaders to justify significant contributions of peacekeeping troops before their own skeptical domestic audiences.\textsuperscript{894} Former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who in many regards functioned as a liaison person between the president and the military leaders, confirms that the Clinton administration came to see a clear link between the allies’ participation in the air campaign and their subsequent contribution to peacekeeping and reconstruction: the goal, he argues, was to enlist “as much participation in the war as possible from allies and ad hoc partners in order to ensure their participation in the reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{895}

\textsuperscript{892} Author interview with James O’Brien (March 9, 2010).
\textsuperscript{893} Author interview with Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011).
\textsuperscript{894} Author interviews with James O’Brien (March 9, 2010) and Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).
\textsuperscript{895} Strobe Talbott, foreword, in Norris, \textit{Collision Course}, p. xii, emphasis added.
Some former State Department officials involved in decision making over Kosovo downplay the impact of Washington bureaucratic politics in steering U.S. policy toward a multilateral track. Given that NATO had been successfully involved in Bosnia, they argue, there was simply a presumption that any coercive strategy over Kosovo should also be channeled through the Atlantic alliance.\textsuperscript{896} The argument however does not hold up to detailed scrutiny: as previously shown, in the spring of 1998 Albright and Gelbard were pushing for a U.S. unilateral military option with no involvement of NATO whatsoever, before being rebuffed by the Pentagon and the White House. Another potential criticism of my argument is that some fairly significant European participation in long-term peacekeeping and stabilization might well have been secured regardless of the allies’ active participation in the air campaign. However, the U.S. military leaders and the Pentagon more generally would not have been happy with just some European participation—they wanted the European allies to contribute a very large majority of troops and material resources for long-term stabilization. General Clark remembers that throughout the early fall of 1998, “there had been continuing questions from the Pentagon about… whether there could be a NATO ground force without United States participation.”\textsuperscript{897} Asmus, the former senior State Department official, concedes that the real question was: How much were the Europeans ultimately going to contribute to peace implementation?\textsuperscript{898}

Finally, if the goal had been simply to boost U.S. public support for military action, the NAC could simply have endorsed the use of force politically. The air campaign could then have been conducted by a loose coalition of the major allies—e.g. the United States, Great Britain, France, and Canada, which carried out the vast majority of airstrikes anyway—but crucially

\begin{footnotes}
\item[896] Author interview with Ronald Asmus (April 21, 2010).
\item[897] Clark, \textit{Waging Modern War}, p. 142, emphasis added, see also p. 137.
\item[898] Author interview with Ronald Asmus (April 21, 2010).
\end{footnotes}
without relying on a cumbersome and very inflexible integrated command structure. Slocombe confirms that for the purpose of increasing U.S. public support “it was important to have, not UN support and not NATO qua NATO, but to have other countries participate in the operation.”

At the Pentagon, nobody ever seriously considered the possibility of having an ad-hoc coalition of states carry out the air strikes, with the NAC’s political endorsement but without a unified command. The option was briefly considered at the State Department during the early summer of 1998, when officials there—while desirous of involving the alliance at some level, in view of its ongoing strategic transformation—feared that an integrated NATO command structure would be exceedingly constraining. But even at the State Department, the option was subsequently dismissed, as it became clear to everyone in the administration that an open-ended international stabilization mission in Kosovo would probably be necessary. By the fall of 1998, policy leaders at the State Department understood that Washington “needed a long-term European coalition,” explains Asmus, echoing the military leaders, because “it wasn’t just about winning the war—it was about winning the peace.”

January 1999: The military leaders reluctantly come on board

The Joint Chiefs and the OSD gradually reduced their opposition to the use of force between late 1998 and early 1999, as a consensus emerged within NATO on the need to threaten and potentially carry out air strikes. But before giving their final go-ahead, the Pentagon leaders first wanted to be reasonably sure that the other NATO allies would in fact carry most of the postwar burden.

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899 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
900 Slocombe interview.
901 Author interview with James O’Brien (March 9, 2010).
902 Author interview with Ronald Asmus (April 21, 2010).
The U.S. military leaders first reluctantly agreed to issue an explicit threat of air strikes in October 1998—though at that point they were fairly confident that the use of force was not imminent. By then, the NATO allies had reached a consensus on threatening air strikes against Yugoslavia, to buttress the diplomatic effort led by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke on the ground. On October 13, 1998 the NAC issued an Activation Order (ACTORD) for air strikes. But there was no transatlantic consensus at the time on actually carrying out air strikes in case of Serb noncompliance with Holbrooke’s demands. Javier Solana, at the time NATO’s secretary-general, recalls that the first ACTORD was primarily aimed at generating consensus within the alliance, but it was still “very far away from action.” In fact, NATO adopted the activation order one day after Milosevic had agreed to comply with Holbrooke’s demands; hence the alliance’s goal was primarily to keep the threat of air strikes alive in the Yugoslav leader’s mind. But the first ACTORD can also be seen as part of an ongoing effort on the part of activist U.S. policy officials to gradually develop a consensus at the NAC (and by implication, in Washington) on military intervention.

The bureaucratic balance of power began to more clearly shift away from the Pentagon in early 1999. On January 15, Serb security forces killed forty-five people at the village of Racak in southern Kosovo. With the violence on the ground flaring up again, the failure of Holbrooke’s October agreement became apparent. The Atlantic alliance, which had committed itself to

903 Author interview with Col. Gregory Kaufmann (March 10, 2010).
905 Author interview with Alexander Vershbow (April 5, 2010). Holbrooke had sought Milosevic’s acceptance of the terms of SCR 1199, adopted in late September. The specific requirements entailed the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces from Kosovo, facilitation of the return of refugees, and the enabling of effective international monitoring. Milosevic accepted all of Holbrooke’s terms on October 12. Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 250ff; Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 144. On the Holbrooke negotiations more generally, see also Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, pp. 45-48; Clark, Waging Modern War, pp. 137-145; Cordesman, Lessons and Non-Lessons, p. 12; and Burg, “Coercive Diplomacy in the Balkans,” p. 80.
906 Author interviews with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010) and Alexander Vershbow (April 5, 2010).
enforcing the agreement, now needed to defend its credibility. “It wasn’t until Racak in 1999 that the use of force became real,” recalls a former senior State Department official. “Before that it was very notional, it was the beginning of the discussions and the different positions were being laid out.” During the days immediately following the Racak massacre, Albright and her staff developed a new comprehensive policy proposal. The strategy, which Albright presented to her colleagues at the NSC on January 19, foresaw that the conflicting parties (the authorities in Belgrade and the Kosovar Albanians) should be given an ultimatum to accept an interim settlement by a date certain. If both parties agreed to the settlement, NATO would then deploy peacekeepers to implement it on the ground. If Belgrade agreed and the Kosovars didn’t, the international community would stop supporting the latter and withdraw. But if only the Kosovars agreed, NATO would launch a phased air campaign to force Milosevic into compliance.

After Albright had laid out the new strategy proposal, Secretary Cohen and JCS Chairman Shelton vigorously argued against any U.S. participation in a peacekeeping force for Kosovo. They said they were concerned about getting caught in the middle of a civil war and doubted that Congress would support the deployment. But the political tide had clearly shifted in favor of the activists, and nobody could come up with a better alternative to Albright’s proposal, given that the administration’s and NATO’s credibility were increasingly perceived to be on the line. “We were sitting at the table,” remembers a former senior OSD official, “and at some point we realized, well we’re going to lose this argument, we need to start thinking about the next step. And change occurred because of that process.”

907 Author interview with James Rubin (April 9, 2010).
909 Albright, Madam Secretary, pp. 394-95.
910 Author interview with Col. Gregory Kaufmann (March 10, 2010).
With Berger and the president signaling support for the new policy proposal, the Pentagon leaders, unwilling to force a public showdown with the rest of the administration, reluctantly came on board. By January 23, the Pentagon leaders, too, supported the strategy of direct negotiations backed by the threat of air strikes, and they endorsed a NATO-led peacekeeping force with U.S. participation “possible.”911 However, as one analyst points out, the interagency “consensus was, at best, extremely flimsy,” and leaving the issue of U.S. participation in a peacekeeping force open for the time being appears to have been necessary to obtain the Pentagon’s approval of the overall strategy.912 Undoubtedly, the perception after Racak and the blatant failure of the October 1998 agreement that NATO’s credibility and America’s leadership role within the alliance were on the line helped bring the Pentagon on board.913 Former State Department activists recall insisting a lot in the interagency debates on NATO’s credibility being at stake, based on the belief that such arguments certainly “favored those who wanted to see military intervention.”914 The perception that NATO’s credibility was at stake also helped mobilize support for Albright’s strategy among key Republican leaders on Capitol Hill—and that, in turn, somewhat reduced the military leaders’ concerns about congressional support.915

911 Albright writes that an interagency consensus on the new strategy did not emerge until January 23, but other sources suggest that President Clinton signed off on it already on January 20. See Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 395; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 72; Soderberg, The Superpower Myth, pp. 89f. See also Elaine Sciolino and Ethan Bronner, “Crisis in the Balkans: The Road to War,” New York Times, April 18, 1999.


913 John Hamre, email to the author (February 17, 2010). The Pentagon’s own after-action report on the Kosovo air campaign also acknowledges the importance of NATO credibility: “Milosevic’s conduct leading up to Operation Allied Force directly challenged the credibility of NATO. … Had NATO not eventually responded …, its credibility, as well as the credibility of the United States, would have been called into question.” Cf. U.S. Department of Defense, Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report to Congress, January 31, 2000, p. 4.

914 Author interviews with Alejandro Wolff, Executive assistant to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, 1998-2000 (March 31, 2010) and James Rubin (April 9, 2010). See also Gibbs, First Do No Harm, p. 194.

915 Author interview with Leon Fuerth (March 9, 2010). Richard Lugar, a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spoke for several of his colleagues when suggesting that while purely humanitarian concerns
Crucially, however, what ultimately led the Pentagon and especially the military to agree to Albright’s proposal was the understanding by late January 1999 that the European allies were in fact willing to fully support the strategy and to generate the vast majority of troops for Kosovo’s long-term stabilization. Washington policy officials had to privately assure the other allies that the United States would contribute at least a limited troop contingent to a NATO stabilization force.\footnote{Dana Priest, “Allies Balk At Bombing Yugoslavia; Europeans Want U.S. in Ground Force,” \textit{Washington Post}, January 23, 1999. On the allies’ earlier insistence on U.S. participation in any stabilization force for Kosovo, see also Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, pp. 53-7.} But as David Weisman, at the time the U.S. representative to NATO’s military committee, explains, by the time the Clinton administration endorsed Albright’s strategy on January 23, a transatlantic consensus had already been reached that if force was going to be used, there would be an implicit division of tasks: the United States would contribute most of the military capabilities for the air strikes; meanwhile the European allies would shoulder most of the burden for long-term peacekeeping and reconstruction.\footnote{Author interview with Lt. Gen. David Weisman (February 16, 2011).} On January 29, at a Contact Group meeting in London, the principal European allies formally endorsed Albright’s new policy proposal. One day later, the NAC backed up the negotiating strategy by explicitly endorsing military action as a last resort.\footnote{Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 76.} The Clinton administration’s formal approval of the strategy on January 23, in advance of the final vote at NATO, simply helped to lock in the transatlantic consensus that had already emerged during the days following the events at Racak.\footnote{Weisman interview.}
Further Pentagon efforts to limit U.S. participation

Even after an agreement of principle had been reached between the allies, the Pentagon leadership continued to seek to minimize U.S. participation in a NATO stabilization force. More in-depth transatlantic discussions on the tasks, size, and shape of such a stabilization force began soon after the new comprehensive strategy had been approved. On February 1, Secretary Cohen once again emphasized that the “European allies must bear a substantial burden in terms of dealing with Kosovo and that any participation by the United States should be as small as it could be.” General Shelton, meeting with the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 3, pointed out that the Joint Chiefs aimed at a U.S. contribution of between 2,000 and 4,000 troops, out of an anticipated peacekeeping force of roughly 30,000. Furthermore, following the Bosnia experience, the military leaders wanted to keep KFOR’s mandate narrowly focused on security and deterrence. Policing, law enforcement, and reconstruction should be left to civilian agencies, so as to narrowly circumscribe the liability of the armed services and their troops.

On February 13, 1999 President Clinton finally announced in public that once a political settlement was reached, the United States would contribute “a little less than 4,000” troops to a NATO stabilization force for Kosovo (KFOR).

Throughout February and most of March 1999, while U.S. and European diplomats scrambled to find a negotiated solution to the crisis, the military leaders in Washington also relied on their close ties to key congressional leaders in order to gain additional leverage over

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both the administration and the NATO allies. General Ralston, the vice chairman of the JCS, negotiated an agreement with congressional leaders, based on which the United States would not provide more than fifteen percent of the total troops for KFOR. In part, Ralston explains, the agreement aimed to ensure that there would be sufficient congressional support for any deployment of U.S. troops:

The Congress of the United States didn’t like the fact that when we went into Bosnia, out of the initial 60,000 troops, 20,000 were American. So we cut that down by more than half, to the fifteen percent level, and that was OK. If we had gone above that threshold, I think there would have been great reluctance in the Congress to support the operation.\footnote{Author interview with Joseph Ralston (March 17, 2010).}

But Ralston’s agreement with Congress was also a convenient way of increasing the military’s own bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the rest of the administration. As a former senior defense official candidly points out, skeptical leaders “at the Pentagon, including Ralston, Shelton, and Cohen, could use it to say: look we can’t go further, this is the end of our political rope.”\footnote{Author interview with John Veroneau (April 7, 2010).} Furthermore, the agreement became an effective tool that U.S. diplomats could subsequently deploy in a classical two-level game to extract the maximum possible contribution from the European NATO allies: given that Washington’s domestic win-set was limited and that both sides had an interest in the alliance’s future viability, the Europeans had little choice but to accept the Pentagon’s stance.\footnote{Author interview with James O’Brien (March 9, 2010). On two-level games, see also Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” \textit{International Organization} 42, 1988, pp. 427-46.} In the long run, Washington’s effort to proceed by means of a close multilateral consensus with the European allies from mid-1998 onward and channel the use of force through an integrated NATO coalition bore the intended fruits. Almost immediately after the successful completion of the air campaign, the European allies took the lead in post-war
peacekeeping and reconstruction.\textsuperscript{927} KFOR reached its full strength of roughly 50,000 troops by late 1999, with the U.S. contributing a mere 7,000 soldiers.\textsuperscript{928} The total U.S. contribution of troops and funding for peacekeeping and reconstruction never exceeded sixteen percent of the total—as foreseen by the military’s agreement with Congress.\textsuperscript{929} By June 2011, more than a decade after the completion of \textit{Operation Allied Force}, KFOR was still on the ground, but the U.S. contribution had shrunk to 800 soldiers, or slightly more than ten percent of a total remaining force of 6,000.\textsuperscript{930}

5. \textbf{June 1999: A U.S.-led ground invasion without NATO endorsement?}

On March 24, 1999 President Clinton announced the imminent start of the NATO bombing campaign in a televised address to the nation. He crucially declared on that occasion that he did “not intend to put our [i.e., American] troops into Kosovo to fight a war.”\textsuperscript{931} Over the preceding two months, as previously shown, defense leaders at the Pentagon had adamantly opposed the idea of a ground invasion.\textsuperscript{932} “The Joint Chiefs had put this as a condition of their support,” explains Halperin, before adding: “It was clear to us that the president had met with the Chiefs and had made a political deal with them.”\textsuperscript{933} However, Clinton’s public ruling out of a


\textsuperscript{928} Moskovitz and Lantis, “Conflict in the Balkans,” p. 265.

\textsuperscript{929} James Dobbins et al., \textit{America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq} (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), pp. 115-16.


\textsuperscript{932} American troops, the Pentagon had insisted, should be introduced only in a “permissive environment” — that is, with Belgrade’s explicit consent. Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 395; Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{933} Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).
ground invasion at the start of the war seriously undermined NATO’s coercive leverage. As a former senior NATO official explains, it “allowed Milosevic to… speculate that there might be a chance for him” to ride it out.\(^{934}\)

**April 1999: Secret planning for a ground invasion without NAC endorsement**

By mid-April, after several weeks of bombing, U.S. officials began to worry that air strikes alone might not be sufficient to coerce Milosevic into submission. Hence the administration’s leading activists, General Clark and Secretary Albright, as well as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering and special Balkans adviser James Dobbins, began to push for a reconsideration of the ground option. At first, they were rebuffed in the internal bureaucratic debates by their Pentagon colleagues, who anticipated that a ground invasion would be extremely dangerous and costly.\(^{935}\) But in subsequent weeks the possibility of a U.S.-led ground invasion became increasingly real, as Albright and Clark were joined by British Prime Minister Blair, who lobbied President Clinton to reconsider the ground option.\(^{936}\)

At a long-planned summit of NATO heads of government on April 23-25, the subject of a possible ground invasion was not formally broached, to avoid a potentially divisive debate among the allies. However, on Blair’s prodding, a few days before the summit, Berger had persuaded NATO Secretary-General Solana to authorize secret planning for a possible ground invasion by American and British officials at the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in

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\(^{935}\) Norris, *Collision Course*, p. 29; Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 414f. See also Clark, *Waging Modern War*, p. 397.

Europe (SHAPE)—the central command of NATO military forces. Crucially, the planning had not been authorized by the NAC, reflecting a lack of consensus within the alliance. But the effect of the secret U.S.-British decision was to give SACEUR Clark a virtual carte blanche to plan for the eventuality of a ground invasion. Meanwhile the Joint Chiefs remained extremely skeptical, and the planning greatly increased tensions between Clark and the top U.S. military brass in Washington, contributing to the SACEUR’s premature dismissal soon after the war.

By mid-May, Clark had finalized plans for a 175,000-strong invasion force that would enter Kosovo mainly from the south through Albania, with the purpose of driving Serb security forces out and establishing an international protectorate. Taking into account that ground operations would have had to be completed before the winter and that the military planners and logistics experts needed at least ninety days of preparation time, it was widely anticipated that the initial deployment order had to be given by June 10.

**NATO endorsement unlikely (but European support for KFOR had already been secured)**

It is unlikely that there would have been any NAC approval for a ground invasion, and few European allies would probably have participated in the operations. The British were strong supporters, and a significant participation on their part could virtually be taken for granted. In Washington, the administration increasingly recognized that U.S. credibility was on the line and a ground invasion might be necessary to avoid a humiliating defeat. “By late May,…I was ready

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938 Cordesman, *Lessons and Non-Lessons*, p. 244


to send troops in if necessary,” former President Clinton remembers.\(^{942}\) The Pentagon remained extremely reluctant, but Secretary Cohen and the top military brass understood what was at stake. Also, the Joint Chiefs understood that regardless of whether NATO was going to explicitly endorse a potential final ground phase of the war, the European allies were already locked in and their leadership within KFOR and on postwar reconstruction more generally had been secured.\(^{943}\)

However, the other NATO allies were much less sanguine about the prospect of a ground invasion.\(^{944}\) Germany had always been the most reluctant among the major allies, with almost 80 percent of the German public opposed to a ground war.\(^{945}\) Former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, personally a declared activist on Kosovo, acknowledges that for his country any “participation in the ground war was completely out of the question, given unequivocal opposition in parliament and among the general public.”\(^{946}\) The German national parliament, the Bundestag, opposed even the possibility of German political support for a ground invasion at the NAC. Chancellor Schroeder publicly suggested that Germany would in fact block a NAC authorization.\(^{947}\) The political leadership in Paris and Rome, too, remained highly skeptical, with

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\(^{943}\) Author interviews with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010) and Gen. Joseph Ralston (March 17, 2010).

\(^{944}\) At a secret meeting of NATO defense ministers held in Bonn on May 27, 1999, the British pledged some 50,000 troops, and Germany, Italy, and France appeared more cooperative than in previous discussions. France and Italy even made a preliminary offer of at least 10,000 troops each. But the discussions in late May among NATO defense leaders appear to have been out of step with the predominant political sentiment in allied capitals. Cordesman, Lessons and Non-Lessons, p. 245; Scognamiglio, La Guerra del Kosovo, p. 158; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, pp. 157-58.


the latter constrained by an exceedingly fragile domestic coalition. Albright summarizes the positions of the principal allies as follows: “The British favored the ground option, Germany and Italy were against, and the French would support it only in the unlikely event that it was authorized by the [UN] Security Council.”

In view of those fundamental divisions within the alliance, it appears almost unthinkable that a ground invasion of Kosovo could have been carried out as an integrated NATO coalition operation. Indeed, given staunch opposition by Germany and other minor allies, the NAC would probably not even have been able to politically endorse a ground invasion. As former U.S. Defense Secretary Cohen recalls, “it was never a close call in getting a consensus to put land forces in… Out of the 19 total [alliance members], I doubt very much whether we could have gotten the consensus. I’m convinced we could not have.” Therefore, had there actually been a ground invasion, it would almost certainly have been carried out by an informal coalition of the willing, without any explicit IO endorsement.

By late May, Washington appeared increasingly determined to move ahead with the ground invasion if needed, even on a U.S—UK bilateral basis. “It was perfectly clear to me that we were going to send in ground troops,” explains Slocombe, suggesting that the Pentagon, too, was gradually coming on board. Once the United States had staked its prestige as the world’s leading military power on a successful outcome of the war, there was no turning back. From the perspective of senior U.S. policy officials and President Clinton himself, major strategic interests were now at stake. That made the administration as a whole more risk-acceptant and willing to

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949 Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 415.

950 Cohen, interview, PBS frontline: War in Europe.

951 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010).
move ahead with a potentially costly ground invasion as a last resort. The prospect that NATO would not formally endorse the participation was a secondary concern, given that the alliance’s support on postwar stabilization had already been secured. As Berger recalls, “the president,… had made clear to me in principle that we could not lose.”\footnote{Quoted in Norris, \textit{Collision Course}, p. 191.} Therefore, victory would be secured “in or outside NATO,” Berger told a group of U.S. national security experts on June 2, before adding: “A consensus in NATO is valuable. But it is not a sine qua non. We want to move with NATO, but it can’t prevent us from moving.”\footnote{Quoted in Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, p. 160; see also Norris, \textit{Collision Course}, p. 182.}

President Clinton was scheduled to meet with the Joint Chiefs on June 3, in view of taking a preliminary decision on a U.S.-led ground invasion.\footnote{Cordesman, \textit{Lessons and Non-Lessons}, p. 246.} However, earlier that day, Milosevic finally yielded to NATO’s demands as presented by the European and Russian envoys, Martti Ahtisaari and Victor Chernomyrdin. Milosevic’s decision, as a former senior State Department official persuasively puts it, saved the Clinton administration from “having to roll over” the dissent of several NATO allies.\footnote{Stephen Sestanovich, “American Maximalism,” \textit{The National Interest} 79, Spring 2005, p. 21.} There are indications that Milosevic, kept abreast of internal NATO deliberations by Russian intelligence, was in fact quite aware of the evolving plans for a U.S.-led ground invasion, which may have affected his decision to capitulate.\footnote{Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 11, 2010). See also Cordesman, \textit{Lessons and Non-Lessons}, p. 246; Daalder and O’Hanlon, \textit{Winning Ugly}, pp. 203f.}

\section*{6. Testing alternative explanations of U.S. multilateralism}

In the final part of this chapter I again briefly examine two prominent alternative explanations, derived from the scholarly literature, of why the United States might have sought
to channel the threat and use of force over Kosovo through NATO. First, U.S. policy leaders might have internalized international legal or moral norms requiring that cross-border military intervention be multilaterally endorsed through relevant IOs. Another possibility is that Washington sought to reassure third-party states of American motives, in order to prevent potentially costly international countermeasures in other issue areas, or “soft balancing” against the United States.

Multilateral legitimacy as a matter of duty (U.S. leaders have internalized new norms)

Prominent IR scholars in the social constructivist tradition claim that leaders in the western world have internalized new international norms and attendant rules that require multilateral endorsement for the use of force as a matter of moral duty. For this theory to be supported with specific regard to the Kosovo case, one ought to be able to observe several implications. First, in 1998 and 1999, U.S. policy leaders should have sought the endorsement of relevant IOs as an all but necessary condition for military intervention—that is, they should have been unwilling to take the prospect of U.S. unilateral intervention seriously. Second, American leaders should have sought the endorsement of the UNSC or NATO primarily for intrinsic normative reasons, regardless of its political and strategic benefits at the domestic or international levels.

Given that the norm of multilateralism is frequently associated with liberal internationalism as a political doctrine, and that senior Clinton administration officials are often portrayed as staunch liberal internationalists, the Kosovo case ought to offer strong support for

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957 See e.g. Hurd, “Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics;” and Risse-Kappen, “Between a New World Order and None.”
the norm internalization hypothesis.\textsuperscript{958} However, there is little evidence that the most activist U.S. officials on Kosovo saw formal multilateral endorsement as a \textit{sine qua non} condition for the use of force. Nor is there much evidence that they sought to channel the threat and potential use of force through standing IOs primarily due to intrinsic normative considerations.

To begin with, the Clinton administration’s leading activists on Kosovo were not greatly concerned about compliance with international \textit{legal} norms for military intervention in the Balkans. Only an explicit UN authorization could have made a U.S.-led military intervention internationally legal, given that no plausible argument could be made for individual or collective self-defense.\textsuperscript{959} Secretary Albright displayed a lack of concern for international law bordering on contempt. When British foreign secretary Robin Cook cited “problems with our lawyers” over using force in the absence of UN authorization, Albright bluntly told him: “Get new lawyers.”\textsuperscript{960} Furthermore, Albright believed at the time that a UN mandate, had it actually been available, would have been exceedingly constraining and was therefore undesirable: “If a UN resolution passed,” she explains, “we would have set a precedent that NATO required Security Council authorization before it could act. This would give Russia, not to mention China, a veto over NATO.”\textsuperscript{961}

To General Clark, probably the second most influential U.S. activist on Kosovo, international law appears to have mattered only insofar as it was of concern to the European leaders with whom he had to interact on a frequent basis. Beyond that, Clark displays a striking degree of ignorance concerning the international legal regulation of the use of force. In his


\textsuperscript{959} \textit{The Kosovo Report}, pp. 166-73.

\textsuperscript{960} Quoted in James Rubin, “A Very Personal War – Countdown to a Very Personal War,” \textit{Financial Times}, September 30, 2000, p. 9; see also Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 384.

\textsuperscript{961} Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 384.
memoir, he writes that SCR 1199, adopted on September 23, 1998, effectively authorized NATO’s use of force over Kosovo. However, the resolution, while adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, did not ipso facto authorize military intervention and in fact nowhere endorsed the “use of all necessary means.” Indeed, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian ambassador to the UN, emphasized shortly before voting in support of the resolution that “no use of force and no sanctions are being imposed by the Council at the present stage.”

The State Department’s own lawyers, following instructions by Albright, agreed to abandoning any suggestion that military intervention absent UN authorization would be illegal, although they never went so far as to suggest that it would actually be legal. Most other senior officials at the State Department and beyond were not particularly concerned about international legality, either on intrinsic normative or on political and strategic grounds. “The American public doesn’t care much about international legality,” explains James O’Brien, a former senior adviser to Secretary Albright. “The American public wants to see Americans fight a good fight. Certainly self-defense is one of the best fights. Beating down a bully is another great fight. The legal is merely a proxy for the first two.”

According to one former senior White House official, the only legal matter that seriously concerned the administration’s lawyers during the lead-up to the use of force was whether President Clinton had the domestic constitutional authority to initiate military action in the absence of formal congressional support: “When the White House, DOD, and State lawyers got together, they weren’t focused on whether or not there

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962 Clark, Waging Modern War, p. 134.
963 UN Doc. S/PV.3930, Record of the 3930th Meeting of the UN Security Council, held on September 23, 1998, p. 3; see also the text of UN Security Council Res. 1199, adopted on September 23, 1998, § 17.
964 Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).
965 Author interview with James O’Brien (March 9, 2010).
was a Security Council resolution. That didn’t matter to them. They were focused on whether the U.S. president had the authority to order U.S. troops into combat under the U.S. constitution.”

But even if the Clinton administration’s leading activists did not care much about international legal rules, they might still have internalized relevant moral principles requiring that military intervention be endorsed by relevant IOs in order to be legitimate. Again, the available evidence does not support this hypothesis. Albright, a declared liberal internationalist, never thought that multilateral endorsement through NATO (or the UN) would be necessary to legitimate the use of force over Kosovo. In her eyes, the humanitarian purpose of military action appears to have been a sufficient source of normative legitimacy. Put differently, she seems to have thought that human rights norms and the putative duty to prevent genocide trump international norms requiring multilateral approval of military action. According to the former secretary of state, multilateralism—far from being a matter of duty—actually has no intrinsic value whatsoever. While sometimes useful, multilateralism is merely a “tool” of foreign policy in Albright’s eyes. The term “multilateralism” itself, she writes, is ultimately “without appeal.” That is in line with Albright’s argument in the spring of 1998 that in the face of European reluctance to consider the use of force, the United States should have intervened unilaterally.

As previously discussed, in the spring of 1998 several other senior State Department officials, notably U.S. Balkans envoy Robert Gelbard and the chief negotiator for Kosovo, Christopher Hill, also advocated threatening and if necessary implementing U.S. unilateral air strikes. The State Department’s hawks changed course only after they were rebuffed by their

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966 Author interview with Gregory Schulte (March 9, 2010).
967 Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 176.
colleagues from the Pentagon and it became clear that President Clinton would not authorize a U.S. unilateral intervention.

**Multilateralism to reduce costly international opposition (Prevent “soft balancing”)**

Another possible explanation of U.S. multilateralism over Kosovo is that Washington policy leaders valued IO endorsement for international strategic reasons that go beyond the effective implementation of the intervention itself. Prominent international relations scholars argue that U.S policy leaders seek the endorsement of standing IOs in order to signal benign intentions to third-party states, thereby reducing the likelihood of costly international opposition, or “soft balancing” against the United States.968 Katharina Coleman applies this argument specifically to the U.S.-led Kosovo intervention: “At a minimum,” she argues, “US power had to be seen as non-threatening by other states… [But] NATO also provided an excellent base for lobbying non-NATO members for their endorsement of Operation Allied Force.”969

For the “soft balancing” theory of U.S. multilateralism to be supported in the Kosovo case, one ought to be able to observe the following implications. First, Washington policy leaders should indicate that leading up to the use of force they were in fact deeply concerned about global opposition to U.S. military intervention, because of the potential reputational and ultimately material costs to the United States. Second, those same policy leaders should acknowledge that signaling benign intentions and thereby reducing third-party state opposition to American behavior was in fact among the principal reasons for seeking to obtain the endorsement of relevant IOs. Finally, IO endorsement of military action should actually have


persuaded initially skeptical third-party states that U.S. intentions were benign, and consequently international opposition should have visibly diminished.

The broader international community of non-NATO member states was divided about the Kosovo intervention. On the one side there were major global and regional powers such as Russia, China, India, and South Africa, which strongly opposed what they perceived as an instance of blatant and unjustified aggression against a sovereign state. On March 24, 1999—the day the air campaign began—President Boris Yeltsin declared from Moscow that “Russia is profoundly outraged by NATO’s military action against sovereign Yugoslavia, which is nothing less than an act of open aggression.” The Chinese UN ambassador similarly condemned NATO’s intervention as “a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter and of the accepted norms of international law.” Russia and China had their own unresolved ethnic conflicts in places like Chechnya, Tibet, and Xinjiang, and they were greatly concerned that the world’s most powerful military alliance was intervening on behalf of oppressed minorities abroad. As Talbott explains, “the Chinese did not like the idea of NATO bombing a capital of a country on behalf of a Muslim minority, and the Russians could not have been more explicit about analogies to Chechnya.”

Leading members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), such as India and South Africa, opposed the very idea of “humanitarian” military intervention, which they viewed as a dangerous encroachment on state sovereignty, especially in the absence of explicit SC authorization. But the NAM was internally divided, with several of its 114 members unwilling to

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970 For an overview of international reactions to the Kosovo war, see Schnabel and Thakur, Kosovo and the challenge of humanitarian intervention, esp. chaps. 7, 8, 14, 16, 17.
972 Ibid., p. 12. India’s representative to the UN, too, called the intervention an “arbitrary, unauthorized, and illegal military action [that] should be stopped immediately.” Ibid., p. 16.
973 Author interview with Strobe Talbott (July 9, 2009).
explicitly condemn the use of force over Kosovo. The reason was not that NATO’s endorsement reassured developing-country leaders about Washington’s motives and legitimized the intervention in their eyes. NATO’s self-proclaimed right to intervene militarily abroad without SC authorization—far from legitimizing U.S. power—raised significant concerns throughout the developing world. However, most Arab and Islamic countries were simply unwilling to condemn the intervention, given its ostensible purpose of protecting an oppressed Muslim population. Thus, to the extent that several developing country leaders remained ambivalent about Operation Allied Force, it was because they saw this specific intervention as substantively, if not procedurally, legitimate to some degree. Contrary to Coleman’s assertion, NATO endorsement as such did not provide a particularly helpful base for reassuring non-NATO members about U.S. intentions.

Senior State Department officials anticipated during the lead-up to the intervention that most Muslim countries would be unwilling to condemn the use of force. Also, it soon became clear that apart from Russia, most former Soviet republics—such as Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—would welcome an assertion of American power in Moscow’s traditional sphere of influence. NATO candidate countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, were likewise expected to support the intervention. However, it was equally clear to Washington that regardless of whether NATO endorsed the use of force or not, it would be impossible to get a majority of the world’s countries to explicitly support the Kosovo

974 The Kosovo Report, p. 11.
975 Author interview with Ian Johnstone (April 2, 2010).
976 Several months later, on the occasion of a general meeting held in Cartagena, Colombia, the NAM reaffirmed its longstanding principled opposition to humanitarian intervention: “We reject the so-called ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention, which has no legal basis in the UN Charter or in the general principles of international law.” See Non-Aligned Movement, “Final Document: XIII Ministerial Conference,” Cartagena, 8 - 9 April, 2000. Available online at: http://www.nam.gov.za/xiiiiminconf/minconf.pdf (last accessed on July 15, 2010).
977 Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich (March 4, 2010).
intervention. For this reason, the U.S. declined to seek a formal vote on the use of force at the UN General Assembly. Such a vote, if successful, could have fully legitimized the intervention in the eyes of world public opinion, under a procedure first used in 1950 and known as the ‘‘Uniting for Peace’’ resolution.\textsuperscript{978} Halperin, who at the time of the Kosovo intervention was the State Department’s head of policy planning, explains that ‘‘Uniting for Peace was a very good idea when [the U.S.] had an automatic majority in the General Assembly. But we now have an automatic majority against us in the General Assembly. [Hence] there is no interest in it today in the U.S. government.’’\textsuperscript{979}

Overall, however, during the lead-up to the Kosovo intervention, U.S. policy leaders were not particularly concerned about international opposition from developing countries. Dobbins, the State Department’s special Balkans adviser at the time, offers a particularly candid and matter-of-fact assessment: ‘‘The only state outside NATO that was of serious concern was Russia. The assumption was that the Chinese would go along with whatever the Russians would go along with. So the pivotal state was Russia. As to the NAM, there wasn’t anything they could do to help Serbia or harm us.’’\textsuperscript{980} Halperin essentially concurs, suggesting that in all the State Department and interagency meetings in which he participated, third-party state opposition beyond Russia ‘‘was not on the screen at all.’’\textsuperscript{981} Thus, it appears that Washington leaders worried little about potential negative consequences to America’s international reputation and standing and were entirely unconcerned about soft balancing from the developing world.

\textsuperscript{978} Reportedly Canada, chairing the SC in early 1999, informally raised the issue of the ‘‘UfP’’ Resolution over Kosovo, but there was no support from Washington. Jean Krasno and Mitushi Das, ‘‘The Uniting for Peace Resolution and other ways of circumventing the authority of the Security Council,’’ in Bruce Cronin and Ian Hurd, eds., \textit{The UN Security Council and the Politics of International Authority} (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 187.

\textsuperscript{979} Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).

\textsuperscript{980} Author interview with James Dobbins (July 10, 1999).

\textsuperscript{981} Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010).
How much of a concern, then, was Russian opposition to the use of force? Furthermore, was there an expectation in Washington that NATO’s endorsement would reassure Russian authorities about American motives? Moscow had long had a fairly close political relationship with Belgrade, based on strong ties of ethnic and religious kinship. Therefore, Russian authorities made it clear already in the summer of 1998 that they would be unable to support a SC resolution authorizing the use of force against Yugoslavia. When NATO subsequently launched its air campaign in March 1999, Russian leaders vehemently condemned the bombings, seeking to placate their own angry public.

However, in private Russian authorities proved remarkably cooperative with the West during the lead-up to the use of force. On October 8, 1998 foreign ministers of the Balkans Contact Group (which included Russia) met at the VIP lounge of Heathrow Airport in London to discuss the Kosovo issue. Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov repeated on that occasion that his government could not publicly endorse the use of force at the SC. But Ivanov also indicated that Moscow was privately willing to acquiesce in NATO’s decision to threaten air strikes. According to Holbrooke, who was present at the meeting, Ivanov said: “If you take it to the UN, we’ll veto it. If you don’t we’ll just denounce you.”

By January 1999, the use of force over Kosovo was becoming an increasingly realistic possibility. On January 27, Secretary Albright, accompanied by a few close advisors, joined Russian foreign minister Ivanov at the Bolshoi opera house in Moscow for a performance of

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982 Although Milosevic himself had lost popularity in Moscow during the late 1990s. See Oleg Levitin, “Inside Moscow’s Kosovo Muddle,” Survival 42 (1), 2000, p. 137.

983 Author interview with Peter Burleigh (April 3, 2010).

984 Levitin, “Inside Moscow’s Kosovo Muddle,” p. 137; Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 413; Daalder and O’Hanlon, Winning Ugly, p. 127.

985 Quoted in Bellamy, Kosovo and International Society, p. 93; see also Talbott, The Russia Hand, p. 302; Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 398; and Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, pp. 134-35.
Verdi’s La Traviata. During the intermission, the American delegation made NATO’s intentions with regard to Kosovo unmistakably clear to the Russians. The alliance was going to threaten force to support a last-ditch negotiating effort at Rambouillet. There was going to be a short deadline, and in the absence of an agreement, the alliance would start bombing Yugoslavia and continue until Serb troops withdrew from Kosovo and an international peacekeeping force was let in. “We were very explicit,” remembers Halperin, who was part of the U.S. delegation at the Bolshoi. “The Russians’ response was, we can’t endorse this. But there was not any hint of a threat that they would be on the other side. They knew what we were doing. They accepted that it was the only way to stop Milosevic.”

Russia at the time was recovering from a serious financial crisis, and Moscow’s political leaders were keenly aware of their nation’s dependence on western economic aid. Hence the Russian government under Yeltsin was trying to walk a fine line, opposing the use of force in public to keep the domestic nationalist opposition in check, while for the most part acquiescing to NATO’s strategy in private. The United States had offered $5.4 billion in bilateral economic support to Russia between 1992 and 1998, without counting significant U.S. contributions to multilateral economic assistance totaling more than $100 billion. In late 1998 and early 1999, precisely as the Kosovo crisis was reaching its climax, Russia was engaged in delicate negotiations with the IMF over a major economic loan. Given Washington’s preponderant

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986 Author interview with Morton Halperin (March 10, 2010). See also Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 396-97; and Rubin, “A Very Personal War – Countdown to a Very Personal War.”
987 Stephen Sestanovich, “Russia’s Foreign Policy Objectives: What Are They?” Hearing before the House Committee on International Relations, 106th Congr., 1st session, May 12, 1999, p. 78.
988 Ibid., p. 13.
influence on IMF loan disbursements, Moscow political authorities had strong incentives to be cooperative with the U.S. in private.\footnote{For an indirect measure of U.S. influence on IMF lending, see Axel Dreher Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland, “Global Horse Trading: IMF loans for votes in the United Nations Security Council,” European Economic Review 53 (7), 2009, pp. 742–757. On Russia’s economic dependence on the West and how it affected Moscow’s behavior during the Kosovo crisis, see also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 473; Norris, Collision Course, p. 31; Petritsch and Pichler, Kosovo-Kosova, p. 135.}

In sum, during the lead-up to the use of force, senior Clinton administration officials saw Russian public opposition to the use of force as a problem, but one that could be managed with skillful diplomacy. “Nobody in the U.S. government argued against intervention out of concern for Russia’s reaction,” remembers Stephen Sestanovich, at the time the secretary of state’s special adviser for the former Soviet Union. Sestanovich further explains:

During the lead-up to the use of force, the Russians were difficult. They did not like the way in which the U.S. and the West had established a kind of hegemony in the Balkans. Everybody expected them to be difficult, and maybe even more so over Kosovo [than over Bosnia], because of their emotional ties with Serbia. But that just meant, we have a problem—we have to deal with it, we have to work on it patiently through our diplomacy.\footnote{Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich (March 4, 2010).}

Senior American officials were quite aware that channeling the threat and potential use of force through NATO would not at all reassure the Russians—in fact quite the opposite. Moscow’s national security leaders at the time still saw NATO as very much antagonistic to their own interests. As a former senior State Department official explains, “NATO was expanding at the time into their former sphere of influence. They would certainly have liked NATO to fail in its effort over Kosovo.”\footnote{Author interview with Peter Burleigh (April 3, 2010).} In Russian defense and intelligence circles, most of the senior staff members were former cold warriors, who throughout their careers had been taught to oppose NATO and fight NATO. It was hard to imagine that suddenly, those same individuals could perceive NATO as signaling “benign” American intentions. Senior Clinton administration
officials in fact understood that to many Russians at the time, NATO appeared as a catalyst for Washington’s hegemonic aspirations—a means for empowering rather than constraining the United States.\textsuperscript{992} Therefore, if the goal was to placate Russian concerns about U.S.-led military action in Moscow’s traditional sphere of influence, channeling the use of force through NATO was hardly part of the solution. Most senior policy officials in Washington understood that well.

\textit{Conclusion}

In conclusion, then, it appears that neither norm internalization by U.S. policy leaders, nor concerns about soft balancing in other issue areas, can explain Washington’s efforts to seek a NATO endorsement for military action over Kosovo and proceed by means of a close multilateral consensus with the European allies. As I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, American multilateralism over Kosovo was primarily the result of bureaucratic political deliberations and bargaining in Washington between the military leaders and their governmental allies, on the one side, who were highly skeptical of armed intervention, and civilian hawks at the State Department, on the other, who sought to reassure the military brass and forge a winning bureaucratic coalition in favor of the use of force.

The Clinton administration’s activist policy officials, led by Secretary Albright, needed to be able to convince their colleagues at the Pentagon and the White House that American liability would be limited and that the western European partners would in fact shoulder most of the burden for Kosovo’s long-term stabilization. In the course of 1998, the activists concluded that involving the Atlantic alliance, by obtaining its explicit endorsement of armed intervention and channeling the use of force through an integrated NATO coalition, would be helpful in view of reassuring skeptical policy officials in Washington and gradually shifting the bureaucratic

\textsuperscript{992} Author interview with John Norris (April 26, 2010).
balance of power in favor of armed intervention. Therefore, the Kosovo case offers strong support for my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism for military intervention.
Chapter VI

Iraq, 1998-2003: The policy is regime change (on the cheap)

OSD believed strongly that it was going to be a cakewalk. We had proven it in Afghanistan, we were the superpower. It was going to be simple and it wasn’t going to cost very much. The Iraqis were all going to stand up and cheer. You didn’t need allies or the UN for this.  

On March 19, 2003, American and British forces crossed into Iraq and launched Operation Iraqi Freedom, the invasion aimed at changing the political regime in Baghdad. For over a decade, the United States had sought to weaken Saddam Hussein’s grip on power, relying on a combination of economic sanctions, occasional bombing, and financing of various Iraqi opposition movements, hoping that the regime would eventually collapse from within. However, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the administration of President George W. Bush concluded that Saddam’s regime, believed to hold weapons of mass destruction (WMD), constituted a vital threat to the United States. Furthermore, hawkish U.S. officials, led by Vice President Richard Cheney, believed that removing the Iraqi dictator from power would send a powerful signal of American resolve to other actual and potential proliferators around the world.

Nevertheless, as an invasion of Iraq appeared increasingly likely, in the fall of 2002 the administration at first sought to obtain an endorsement of military action from the UN Security

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Council. Secretary of State Colin Powell, as well as senior military planners at the Joint Staff in Washington, advised that a UN-based approach would be helpful to lock in international support for the war and especially for its aftermath. In the short run, President Bush heeded Powell’s advice and the administration decided to engage the United Nations. But the president also seems to have agreed with Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that the UN process would be valuable only insofar as it could quickly grant an international stamp of legitimacy to what Washington was going to do anyway—namely forcibly remove Saddam Hussein from power. In November 2002, the SC unanimously approved Resolution 1441, which established a UN new weapons inspections regime and threatened “serious consequences” in case of Iraqi noncompliance. SCR 1441 did not explicitly authorize military action, as U.S. authorities acknowledged at the time of its adoption. But as I show in this chapter, after SCR 1441 was approved, President Bush and his team never made a serious effort to obtain a second UN resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force.

What explains this half-hearted U.S. effort vis-à-vis the United Nations leading up to the 2003 Iraq war? The Bush administration’s most influential national security officials, I argue, shared a high threat perception in the aftermath of 9/11 that shortened their time horizon and greatly increased their risk acceptance in foreign affairs. Furthermore, those same officials—Rumsfeld, Cheney, and their respective subordinates—believed that the Iraqi regime could be toppled “on the cheap;” i.e., at a limited cost to the United States. Therefore, the hard-liners felt little incentive to seek to obtain an explicit UN approval of military action and indeed thought that the costs of multilateralism would be unacceptably high.

Among the American military, there was a widespread belief in 2002-03 that regime change in Iraq would be difficult, and that the postwar stabilization phase in particular would be
much costlier and more protracted than the civilian hard-liners anticipated. Therefore, senior military planners on the Joint Staff in Washington and at CENTCOM in Tampa, Florida, recommended among other things that the administration seek an explicit UN endorsement before the launch of hostilities, to maximize international buy-in. However, Secretary Rumsfeld generally disregarded the uniformed leaders’ advice, and rather than magnifying the military’s own concerns vis-à-vis the president—as previous secretaries of defense had done—he tended to impose his own views on the military brass. Furthermore, the nation’s top military leaders, Generals Myers and Pace, the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS, as well as CENTCOM commander Tommy Franks, were for various reasons closely aligned with the administration’s civilian hard-liners. In particular, Myers, Franks, and Pace never openly challenged the administration’s optimistic assumptions about the war and its aftermath. Therefore, the administration’s civilian hawks did not have to reassure the JCS, and the bureaucratic political dynamics that had decisively pushed the Washington policy process toward IO-based multilateralism on other occasions were not activated leading up to the 2003 Iraq war.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. I first briefly discuss U.S. decision making leading up to the 1998 “Desert Fox” airstrikes. That allows me to show that the Bush administration’s attitude vis-à-vis the UN in 2002 and 2003 represented less of a break with previous American policy than is often believed. Thereafter I focus in more detail on interagency debates leading up to the 2003 Iraq war. In the final part of the chapter, I engage in a counterfactual thought experiment: I argue that Washington might well have obtained an explicit UN endorsement for military action, provided that U.S. authorities had been willing to seriously engage with international partners, devoting more time and resources to the diplomatic effort.
1. Prologue: the 1998 “Desert Fox” airstrikes

In the aftermath of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United States and its partners embarked on an ambitious policy of containment vis-à-vis Iraq. The policy consisted of stringent international sanctions, a UN inspections regime aimed at identifying and destroying Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD), two no-fly zones imposed over the north and south of the country, and a stepped-up U.S. military aid program to build up the defensive capabilities of Iraq’s neighbors in the Gulf. From the outset, this approach had a twofold objective: first, reducing the Iraqi threat to regional stability; and second, weakening and frustrating Saddam Hussein’s domestic regime to foment internal political change. The assumption in Washington was that the Iraqi dictator, weakened domestically by his crushing military defeat, would not be able to survive politically for much longer. But the goal of regime change enjoyed little international support and was therefore downplayed in public for several years.995

Disarmament vs. regime change – the origins of the transatlantic divide on Iraq

To effectively disarm Iraq of its presumed chemical and biological weapons, the UN Security Council set up a special organ, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). Meanwhile responsibility for Iraqi nuclear capabilities fell to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As an incentive for Iraq to cooperate with the weapons inspectors and conform to its broader disarmament obligations, SCR 687, adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War, envisaged that economic sanctions would be lifted in return for “Iraq’s compliance... and

general progress toward the control of armaments in the region." In subsequent years Iraqi authorities never cooperated fully, and on numerous occasions they prevented the inspectors from accessing suspected weapons sites. Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, Iraq had been effectively disarmed of most of its nuclear and chemical capabilities. After General Hussein Kamel Hassan, the Iraqi dictator’s son-in-law, defected to Jordan on August 20, 1995 and revealed extensive details of proscribed Iraqi weapons programs, Iraq’s remaining biological capabilities were also for the most part destroyed.

At the same time, by the middle of the decade, growing international opposition had materialized to the economic sanctions, which were widely perceived as indiscriminately punishing Iraqi civilians, while reinforcing Saddam’s grip on power. France, Russia, and several other European countries began to advocate a change of policy: they insisted that Iraq no longer posed a serious military threat; sanctions would never achieve Saddam’s full compliance with the UN resolutions—let alone his overthrow; and the only viable long-term solution was to gradually reintegrate Iraq into the community of nations through trade, investment, and a normalization of diplomatic relations. French and Russian oil companies also had significant economic interests in seeing sanctions permanently lifted. But UN Secretary-General Kofi


999 French and Russian oil companies had signed potentially lucrative exploration and development contracts with the Iraqi regime, which could not be realized as long as sanctions remained in place. On France, see Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 78; on Russia, see Stephen Sestanovich, “Dual Frustration: America, Russia, and the Persian Gulf,” The National Interest 70 (Winter 2002/2003), p. 155.
Annan, too, privately shared the goal of lifting economic sanctions and gradually ending Iraq’s decade-long isolation.1000

The political mood in Washington, meanwhile, pointed in the opposite direction. Since Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, U.S. policy leaders had publicly demonized Saddam Hussein and his regime to such a degree that Iraq’s straightforward reintegration into the international community was now a non-starter politically in Washington—especially in view of Iraq’s at best lukewarm cooperation with UNSCOM.1001 In 1996, the Clinton administration supported a reform of the UN sanctions regime to reduce their adverse humanitarian impact; and the resulting Oil-for-Food program, in spite of serious problems of corruption, reportedly helped reduce malnutrition among Iraqi children by fifty percent in subsequent years.1002

Several months later, however, American leaders publicly emphasized for the first time that regime change, rather than mere disarmament, was in fact Washington’s principal policy objective vis-à-vis Iraq. On March 26, 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright defied existing UN resolutions, by declaring: “We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted.”1003 Lest there be any doubts about U.S. intentions, later that year, President Clinton insisted that “the sanctions will be there…as long as he lasts.”1004 This explicit embrace of regime change as a policy goal put the


1002 Malone, The International Struggle Over Iraq, pp. 118f.

http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/970326.html

1004 Quoted in Malone, The International Struggle Over Iraq, p. 122.
United States on an increasing path of collision with its international partners. It apparently also removed from Saddam Hussein whatever limited incentives he may previously have felt to cooperate with the UN inspectors, and Iraqi obstructionism grew significantly in subsequent months.

The U.S. and the UN playing cat-and-mouse with Iraqi authorities

On November 3, 1997, Iraq blocked UNSCOM inspection of a suspicious missile site, claiming that the international team contained too many Americans who were allegedly working as undercover U.S. intelligence agents. Soon thereafter the Iraqi government expelled six inspectors of U.S. nationality. In response, President Clinton dispatched an aircraft carrier to the region, and Washington explicitly threatened military action. A further escalation was avoided on that occasion, thanks to an agreement brokered by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov that allowed all UNSCOM inspectors to return. Another similar crisis ensued in January 1998, when Iraq blocked several UN inspections teams, again on the pretext that they included too many Americans. This time, following a renewed U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf, UN Secretary-General Annan stepped in; and he, too, was able to secure Iraq’s agreement to comply with existing SC resolutions and cooperate with UNSCOM. On March 2, 1998, the SC adopted Resolution 1154, which threatened that Iraq would face the “severest consequences” if it did not comply with its international obligations. Although Resolution 1154

1005 It was subsequently revealed that CIA agents had in fact secretly participated in the UNSCOM inspections, receiving full briefings from the UN inspectors, but also spying on the inspectors to ensure that U.S. intelligence was getting as full a picture as possible. See Goshko, “Iraq Dilemma Erodes Annan’s Bond With U.S.,” Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 245; Malone, The International Struggle Over Iraq, pp. 157, 160.

1006 Albright, Madam Secretary, pp. 277-280; Malone, The International Struggle Over Iraq, p. 158f.

1007 Malone, The International Struggle Over Iraq, pp. 158f; Albright, Madam Secretary, pp. 281-3.
did not explicitly authorize military action, the Clinton administration publicly declared that it had obtained UN authority to use force if Iraq opposed further inspections.\footnote{Barbara Crossette, “UN Rebuffs U.S. Threat to Iraq If It Breaks Pact,” \textit{New York Times}, March 3, 1998; for a discussion see also Thompson, \textit{Channels of Power}, p. 113.}

Several months later, on September 19, the administration—under pressure from Congress—adopted the Iraq Liberation Act, which elevated regime change into an official U.S. policy objective and authorized $97 million to provide military support to the Iraqi opposition.\footnote{Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 43; Haass, \textit{War of Necessity, War of Choice}, p. 166.} Thereafter, Iraq’s relationship with the inspectors rapidly collapsed, and on October 31, Iraq ceased all cooperation with UNSCOM.\footnote{Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 284; Thompson, \textit{Channels of Power}, p. 115.} President Clinton, now faced with complete Iraqi noncooperation, ordered a substantial bombing campaign on November 14. Yet once again, virtually at the last minute (U.S. and British warplanes were already in the air) Iraqi authorities pledged in a letter to the UN Secretary-General that they would resume cooperation with UNSCOM.\footnote{Albright, \textit{Madam Secretary}, p. 285.} Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Albright were adamant that the bombing proceed anyway.\footnote{Bob Woodward, \textit{Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 492; see also Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies at War}, p. 42.} However, British authorities made it clear that they would no longer participate in the air strikes, which in their view were no longer justified, and thus President Clinton chose to call off the bombing. Clinton was plainly willing to order military action without an explicit UN endorsement, but like President Bush several years later, he was reluctant to use significant force without at least British participation.\footnote{Author interviews with Walter Slocombe, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, 1994-2001 (March 10, 2010); and Jeremy Greenstock, UK permanent representative to the United Nations, 1998–July 2003 (March 30, 2011).}

Yet by mid-December 1998, the time for diplomatic compromise had definitively run out. On December 15, chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler reported to the Security Council...
that in previous days Iraq had once again not fully cooperated with UNSCOM: the Iraqi authorities had obstructed one further inspection and failed to turn over documents pertaining to their chemical and biological weapons programs. President Clinton had approved the revised plans for a massive U.S.-UK attack already in early December; and several days before the Butler report was issued, Clinton’s national security team unanimously recommended that Washington move ahead with the air campaign. The decision to wait until after the publication of Butler’s report was taken in consultation with British authorities. As a former senior British diplomat recalls, “although the Americans were cutting corners, we were trying to show that the action was justified under the resolutions, which President Clinton hadn’t been particularly concerned about in November or earlier.” The joint U.S.-UK air campaign, code-named Operation Desert Fox, began on the day following Butler’s report to the Council. The bombing lasted barely four days, until December 19, but it was the most robust military action against Iraq since the 1991 Gulf War: over 400 cruise missiles and 600 bombs hit a total of 97 Iraqi sites, most of them military command centers, missile factories, and airfields.

**Appearing tough while moving on: the goals of Operation Desert Fox**

The goals of the bombing campaign were threefold. First, degrade Iraqi military capabilities; second, reassert American credibility and presidential leadership; and finally, allow
the United States to end the inspections regime, which by then had become ineffective and a
nuisance, while shifting the blame to Baghdad.

The U.S. had credible intelligence in the fall of 1998 that Iraq, with assistance from North
Korea and Iran, was developing intermediate-range missiles in violation of SCR 687. Stopping
Iraq’s active missile program, a potential threat to American allies and U.S. troops in the region,
was the air campaign’s principal military objective. Furthermore, administration officials
publicly emphasized the threat from Iraq’s putative WMD capabilities. Secretary Cohen, for
instance, declared in front of the news media that the goal was “to degrade Saddam Hussein’s
ability to make and use weapons of mass destruction [and] wage war against his neighbors.”
However, former Clinton administration officials privately acknowledge that by the late 1990s,
Iraqi WMD capabilities were in fact no longer considered a strategic threat.

Second, the air strikes’ primary strategic (as opposed to narrowly military) objective was
to reassert America’s international credibility, which in the eyes of senior administration officials
had been tarnished by the prolonged cat-and-mouse game with Iraq. Secretary Cohen, a key
advocate of the bombing, told the president in early December that following repeated threats of
military action over the preceding year, U.S. credibility was now on the line. The president,
for his part, was politically weakened by the impeachment proceedings against him in the
Monica Lewinsky affair. Public criticism of the air strikes focused on the possibility that Clinton
had ordered military action as a diversionary maneuver, to postpone or frustrate the impeachment

1018 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, 1994-2001 (March 10, 2010). On the
Iraqi missile program, see also Shelton, Without Hesitation, p. 365.
1020 Author interview with Bruce Riedel (December 15, 2010).
1021 Woodward, Shadow, p. 493; see also Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace, p. 375.
proceedings. But in fact, failure to act on Clinton’s part would have raised serious questions about his continued ability to lead, given the circumstances; and it was this sense of the president’s vulnerability that allowed his hard-line advisers to prevail.

Finally, the 1998 air strikes were aimed at quietly ending the UN inspections regime, which by then was yielding few results and had become a constant irritant in Washington’s eyes. NS adviser Berger declared in concomitance with the attack that “UNSCOM has been inefficient for some time” and continuing with the inspections under existing circumstances “doesn’t make much sense.” President Clinton and his team understood leading up to the bombing campaign that the air strikes would probably mean the end of UNSCOM’s work, since the Iraqi regime would permanently withdraw its cooperation. But far from deterring the administration, the prospect of terminating the inspections without having to openly take responsibility appears to have been one of Washington’s principal motives. Bruce Riedel, at the time a senior national security official working on the Middle East, explains the administration’s calculus as follows:

I would describe the Desert Fox air strikes as providing a pivot point for the administration to put an end to the endless cat-and-mouse game with the Iraqis. Because it was draining American foreign policy, it was a constant irritant, which frequently made the administration look weak. [The goal was] to find a way to end inspections and just let sanctions stay in place. Close that chapter, and move on. After 1998, there was a yearlong debate in the UNSC about creating a new inspections regime, in which the United States was remarkably uninterested.

There was of course no illusion in Washington that a limited, four-day air campaign would bring the Iraqi regime to its knees or otherwise produce fundamental political change on

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1022 The House of Representatives nevertheless voted to impeach the president on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice on December 19, 1998; but Clinton was subsequently acquitted by the Senate on February 12, 1999.


1024 Gellman, “U.S. Strikes at Iraqi Targets.”

1025 Author interview with Bruce Riedel (December 15, 2010).
the ground. Yet the air strikes would open a new chapter: they might embolden oppositional forces inside Iraq, and ideally they would force a deeper re-thinking of international policy. Most fundamentally, the attack and the subsequent removal of UNSCOM resolved the inherent contradiction of calling for Saddam to comply with international demands (which implied the promise of lifting sanctions if he did so), while at the same time calling for his ouster (which reduced any incentive he may have felt to comply with UN resolutions in the first place).\textsuperscript{1026}

\textit{The U.S. military brass, though reluctant, endorse limited air strikes}

The top U.S. military brass expressed some reluctance leading up to the Desert Fox air campaign, but there was never the kind of fundamental opposition from the uniformed leaders that had been voiced prior to earlier American interventions in Haiti or the Balkans. General Anthony Zinni, at the time the commander of CENTCOM, the responsible regional command, expressed some concern that the air strikes might antagonize the Iraqi regular army, which the U.S. was planning to rely upon to maintain stability in case of an internal uprising and overthrow of Saddam Hussein.\textsuperscript{1027} Furthermore, JCS Chairman Henry “Hugh” Shelton had reservations about the timing of the bombing campaign, given the president’s political vulnerability. Secretary of Defense Cohen, however, adamantly supported the planned air strikes, as well as their timing just before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He insisted that reasserting American credibility was a “vital” national interest. Ultimately, in the course of a thirty-minute private meeting in early December, Cohen brought Chairman Shelton fully on board.\textsuperscript{1028}

The uniformed leaders never voiced more fundamental opposition and ended up supporting the bombing, because the campaign’s military objectives were quite narrowly defined

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\textsuperscript{1026} Haass, \textit{War of Necessity, War of Choice}, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{1027} Author interview with Gen. Charles F. Wald (March 8, 2010).

\textsuperscript{1028} Woodward, \textit{Shadow}, pp. 492f.
as “disrupting and degrading Iraq’s missile capability for some period of time.”\textsuperscript{1029} In other words, the military brass understood that the armed services’ liability would be limited and there was no risk of a costly, open-ended ground campaign.\textsuperscript{1030} Furthermore, the military were reassured by indications of solid domestic political support for armed intervention in Congress and among the American public.\textsuperscript{1031} For several weeks, leaders in the Republican-dominated Congress had been calling for a tougher U.S. response against Iraqi interference with the weapons inspections.\textsuperscript{1032} Public opinion polls in November also showed that over sixty percent of the American public supported U.S. military action against Iraq.\textsuperscript{1033}

The uniformed leaders and senior Pentagon officials more generally, however, strongly opposed any move beyond limited air strikes. The available CENTCOM plan for invading Iraq at the time, OPLAN 1003, developed under General Zinni, called for a force of half a million American troops.\textsuperscript{1034} There are indications that the required troop numbers were artificially inflated to some degree, in order to make it practically impossible for President Clinton or the more activist members of his administration to sell such a policy domestically in the United States.\textsuperscript{1035} Thus, in the late 1990s, the military leaders effectively removed the possibility of a

\textsuperscript{1029} Author interview with Gen. Joseph Ralston (USA, ret.), Vice-chairman of the JCS, 1996-2000 (March 17, 2009).

\textsuperscript{1030} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 10, 2010).

\textsuperscript{1031} Author interview with John J. Hamre, Deputy U.S. Secretary of Defense, 1997-2000 (February 17, 2010).


\textsuperscript{1033} A November 12 Fox News poll found that 61\% of Americans supported the use of “prolonged military force” against Iraq. Similarly, a November 22 ABC News poll found that a total of 66\% of Americans supported a “bombing attack” against Iraq. See http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq19.htm. Once the air strikes began, U.S. public support surged to over 75\% in most polls, in a clear instance of rally-around-the-flag effect. See Russ Buettner, “Attack on Iraq Backed in Polls,” \textit{New York Daily News}, December 18, 1998.


\textsuperscript{1035} Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald L. Kerrick (USA, ret.), Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, January 1997-August 1999 (March 22, 2010).
full-scale invasion of Iraq from the political agenda in Washington. Even Albright, the Clinton administration’s chief interventionist, acknowledges that “no serious consideration was given to actually invading Iraq.”

The military leaders also strongly opposed the idea of deploying smaller contingents of American ground troops to support Iraqi opposition forces. One influential plan, developed by Iraqi expatriates under Ahmed Chalabi and their neoconservative U.S. ally Paul Wolfowitz, foresaw the introduction of American ground forces to create a secure enclave in southern Iraq, similar to the semi-free Kurdish zone in the north, aimed at allowing the Iraqi opposition to form a provisional government and mobilize to overthrow Saddam’s regime. President Clinton was initially not altogether opposed to the idea, although it would inevitably have been implemented unilaterally by the United States. But the military leaders quickly disabused Clinton of any notion that the project could be carried out. The Iraqi opposition forces would probably be attacked and massacred by Saddam’s army, which in turn might draw the United States into an all-out unilateral ground war, with an attendant massive military burden. As former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter B. Slocombe recalls, the military and the Pentagon more generally “had no use for such fantasies.”

**Why the U.S. never sought an explicit UN endorsement for the air strikes**

Leading up to the Desert Fox air campaign, neither the JCS nor any other policy leader in Washington pushed for an explicit multilateral endorsement through the UN or NATO. The chief underlying reason appears to have been that no senior administration official expected an open-

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1036 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 277.


1038 Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald L. Kerrick (March 22, 2010). See also Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 23.

1039 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 10, 2010).
ended military engagement, let alone a costly stabilization effort, which made it unnecessary to lock in international support by seeking the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs. Secretary Cohen’s insistence on preserving U.S. credibility as a “vital” national interest also appears to have convinced the uniformed leadership that quick military action was in fact required. Finally, senior administration officials, including the military leaders, were quite confident that as long as the mission was going to be seen as successful, it would generate its own legitimacy and support—especially among the American people.  

In terms of international support, military commanders at CENTCOM felt that all they needed was the private backing, or at least the acquiescence, of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf monarchies. Most of the Gulf region’s political leaders made it clear that they could not openly support the bombing campaign and indeed would publicly oppose it. But they privately reassured the administration that U.S. strategic interests in the Gulf would not be negatively affected, regardless of whether the air strikes were going to be explicitly endorsed by the UN Security Council. Once the joint U.S.-UK bombings began, they were in fact vehemently condemned as a blatant violation of international law in public statements by leaders throughout the Middle East, as well as by Russia, China, and the 113-member Non-Aligned

1040 Author interview with Lt. Gen. Donald L. Kerrick (March 22, 2010).
1041 Author interview with Gen. Charles F. Wald (March 8, 2010).
1042 Albright, Madam Secretary, p. 278
1043 Author interviews with Walter B. Slocombe (March 10, 2010) and Bruce Riedel (December 15, 2010).
Broader U.S. economic and diplomatic interests in the Gulf region, however, remained largely unharmed.

The argument made by policy analysts close to the Clinton administration, according to whom “in 1997 and 1998, the United States was unwilling to use force in Iraq without broad international support” is therefore not substantiated by the evidence. Washington and London never explored the possibility of seeking an explicit UNSC mandate for the use of force against Iraq in the fall of 1998. Given the absence of serious concerns about a protracted military engagement and strong U.S. domestic support for military action, Washington was simply unwilling to engage in lengthy negotiations and offer significant side-payments to other IO member states in order to obtain an explicit SC endorsement. The administration wanted to act quickly, seizing the window of opportunity between the publication of Butler’s report on December 15, 1998, and the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan a few days later.

Obtaining an explicit SC authorization of “all necessary means” would undoubtedly have been difficult, and it would probably have required significant side-payments to Moscow aimed at preventing a Russian veto. French support, too, could not be taken for granted, although Paris was not necessarily opposed to military action in private and might well have abstained at

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1045 Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 10, 2010).

1046 Gordon and Shapiro, Allies at War, p. 45.


1048 The expectation in Washington was that China would follow the Russians on this matter. Author interview with Bruce Riedel (December 15, 2010).
the Council. Greenstock, the British UN ambassador at the time, confirms that Washington and London never even thought about circulating a draft resolution aimed at authorizing the use of force at the SC. Moscow, he thinks, would have been unlikely to go along with such a resolution in November or December 1998. But he leaves open the possibility that a Russian abstention could have been obtained at a subsequent stage, after “a comprehensive review by the Security Council of Iraq’s performance against the benchmarks set in the resolutions to-date.” Such a review had in fact been prescribed by the Council earlier on in 1998, and it could have been completed within a matter of months. However, Greenstock laconically concludes, “the Americans cut through that with the bombing in December.”

Stephen Sestanovich, at the time the top U.S. diplomat dealing with Russian affairs, agrees that the Russians might have been persuaded to abstain on the authorization of “all necessary means” at the Security Council. However, he adds, Washington “never explored the question of what the Russians’ price might be.” No American official ever offered a serious *quid pro quo* for Russian support; or warned of the consequences of not cooperating. “The most obvious economic inducements that Russia sought were those associated with an end to sanctions.” In short, it appears that if Washington had sufficiently valued an explicit SC endorsement for the air campaign, it could have obtained it through an intense diplomatic effort and the willingness to enter into a grand bargain: full multilateral endorsement for military action

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1049 The French military even cooperated to some degree by helping to identify suitable targets for the air strikes. See Paul Webster, “French planes helped to select targets,” *The Guardian (London)*, December 23, 1998.

1050 Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).


1052 Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).

1053 Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-large and Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the new independent states of the former Soviet Union, 1997 – 2001 (March 4, 2010).

aimed at punishing Iraq for its immediate noncooperation, in exchange for a subsequent gradual lifting of economic sanctions. The lifting of sanctions, however, was clearly too high a price for the United States to pay. Sanctions symbolized Washington’s tough policy vis-à-vis Iraq; they enjoyed widespread U.S. domestic support; and their removal would have been a politically near-impossible feat for an already embattled President Clinton.\textsuperscript{1055}

The Clinton administration’s approach on the 1998 air strikes, whereby Washington did not seek an explicit Security Council authorization but claimed that military action was justified under existing UN resolutions threatening “severe consequences,” set a precedent that would be seized four years later by President George W. Bush and his administration. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush became willing to more wholeheartedly embrace the U.S. policy of regime change, which President Clinton before him had somewhat tentatively approved as a matter of principle. But the U.S. \textit{modus operandi} on Iraq vis-à-vis the Security Council had clearly been set by the Clinton administration in the late 1990s. With the benefit of hindsight, James O’Brien, a senior State Department official responsible for policy planning in the Clinton administration, considers that the decision in 1998 to “move ahead to use force without the explicit endorsement of the Security Council was a mistake, because it made it easier for something like the invasion of Iraq to happen a few years later.”\textsuperscript{1056}

\section*{2. The Bush administration, 2001-2003: Iraq as a vital threat}

President George W. Bush took up office in early 2001, after having promised during his election campaign that he would pursue a “humble” foreign policy that would eschew ambitious

\textsuperscript{1055} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1056} Author interview with James O’Brien, Principal Deputy Director of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of State, 1997-2000 (March 9, 2010).
interventions and nation building projects abroad. Until September 2001, the Bush administration’s Iraq policy focused primarily on reviving the international sanctions regime. The sense in Washington was that France and Russia were working behind the scenes to pull the sanctions regime apart, while Iraq’s immediate neighbors, including Jordan, Syria, and Turkey, were increasingly ignoring the economic embargo altogether. “That’s why [Secretary of State] Colin Powell tried smart sanctions,” recalls Stephen J. Hadley, at the time the deputy U.S. national security adviser. “Narrow the sanctions, easing the pressure on the civilian population, and thereby save the sanctions regime.” President Bush eventually signed off on this new policy initiative developed at the State Department, yet persuading him was far from easy. “The Pentagon civilians fought us tooth and nail,” recalls former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

The new administration’s leading hard-liners on Iraq, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, and Lewis “Scooter” Libby, the national security adviser to Vice President Cheney, had been insisting from the spring of 2001 onward on the need to put Washington’s goal of regime change into practice. Before 9/11, the hard-liners were unable to convince the administration as a whole that Iraq warranted urgent

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1057 “When it comes to foreign policy,” candidate Bush had declared during a televised presidential debate on October 12, 2000, “we've got to be humble, and yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom.” Transcript available online at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec00/for-policy_10-12.html


1061 Wolfowitz also tried to push again his idea of creating an autonomous enclave in southern Iraq, with U.S. military protection, where opposition forces might be able to organize for overthrowing the regime. See Woodward, Plan of Attack, pp. 21f; Douglas J. Feith, War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism (New York: Harper, 2008), p. 203, 208.
military action. Yet the bureaucratic debate over smart sanctions in many regards prefigured future, increasingly acrimonious differences over Iraq policy between the State Department, on the one side, and civilian leaders at the Pentagon and the office of the vice president, on the other. In the remainder of this section I first describe how 9/11 radically changed the Washington policy debate on Iraq. Then I show how the heightened threat perception of U.S. leaders shortened their time horizons, making them more risk-acceptant and allergic to multilateral constraints.

9/11 changes everything

Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the administration’s hard-liners found themselves suddenly empowered. During an emergency meeting of the administration’s national security principals on September 12, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, reflecting a widespread feeling among his civilian subordinates at the Pentagon, asked whether the terrorist attacks did not represent an “opportunity” to launch military action against Iraq. Three days later, debating U.S. policy options with the president at Camp David, Wolfowitz and Libby more vigorously asserted that the administration should in fact confront Iraq and forcefully topple Saddam Hussein during the first round of the administration’s war on terror.

Secretary of State Powell and JCS Chairman Shelton strongly pushed back against attacking Iraq as a response to September 11. The evidence available to the CIA and briefed to the NSC by its director, George Tenet, clearly pointed to al-Quaeda, an Islamic terrorist

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organization that had no relationship with the secular Iraqi regime. In view of that, Powell and Shelton insisted that the administration’s primary focus should be on Afghanistan, a country known to harbor terrorist training camps and Islamic militants linked to Al Qaeda. The rapidly forming international coalition supporting the United States, they argued, would all but unravel if the administration were to attack Iraq—and Washington would have to carry the entire burden of its new war against terror on its own. With CIA director Tenet also recommending that Afghanistan should be the initial target, President Bush agreed to postpone the question of going after Iraq. “We’re going to get that guy [Saddam Hussein], but we’re going to get him at a time and place of our own choosing,” the president reportedly said. As one former military adviser to Secretary Rumsfeld recalls the discussions during those crucial days after September 11:

It was clear that we had to do first things first, and the first thing to do was go after Al Qaeda. We knew they were in Afghanistan, not in Iraq. And even though Dr. Wolfowitz made a very forceful case that we should take this opportunity to get rid of Saddam, the decision was made by the president, with the support of Secretary Powell, that no, this is not the time to do it.

The president, however, had merely postponed the question of toppling Saddam Hussein’s regime. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, President Bush quickly concluded that “keeping Saddam in a box looked less and less feasible.” According to Riedel, a Clinton appointee who continued to serve as a senior national security official in the new administration for roughly a year, “the Bush-Cheney decision to invade Iraq was made shortly after 9-11; and

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1066 Shelton, Without Hesitation, p. 444.
1067 Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (USA, ret), Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, July 2001-2005 (January 19, 2011).
1068 Quoted in Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 27.
the goal was to invade Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein, not to disarm Iraq.”

In fact, during the aforementioned Camp David meeting on September 15, President Bush told General Shelton, his senior military adviser until late 2001, that he intended to take out Saddam Hussein before the end of his first term in office. Therefore, by the end of 2001, it was largely a question of timing—not whether, but when to invade Iraq.

Meanwhile, from early October 2001 onwards, the administration had launched a military operation in Afghanistan, aimed at killing or capturing suspected terrorists and defeating the Taliban regime. But already on November 21, barely a week after the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance had driven the Taliban from Kabul, President Bush instructed Secretary Rumsfeld to secretly start working on an updated invasion plan for Iraq. The other national security principals (including Powell and Tenet) were not brought into the loop until late December 2001, when CENTCOM commander General Tommy Franks updated the NSC on the latest military plans. In subsequent months President Bush, while denying that any decision had been taken on military action, began to prepare the nation for war. His State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, was read by many as an effort to gradually shift the public’s attention from Afghanistan towards Iraq. In his speech, the president identified an “axis of evil” composed of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, hostile regimes pursuing weapons of mass destruction, and their putative terrorist allies. The president also made it understood that the administration, facing a heightened threat environment, would act fairly soon: “Time is not on our side,” Bush explained. “I will not wait on events, while dangers gather… The United States of America will not permit

1069 Author interview with Bruce Riedel (December 15, 2010).


the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most dangerous weapons.”

**Heightened threat perception and shorter time horizons**

There was a genuine belief across the Bush administration that since the UN weapons inspectors had left Iraq in 1998, Saddam had reconstituted his WMD program. The almost unanimous view was that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons stockpiles and was working to reconstitute its nuclear program. “The intelligence indicated that there were WMD and that the Iraqis were willing to use them, if not themselves, then by handing them over to other people,” explains Stephen P. Bucci, a former Pentagon official who used to brief Secretary Rumsfeld about related reports almost on a daily basis. The information on which the CIA was relying implied a significant degree of inference, given that no anthrax or chemical weapons samples had recently been discovered in Iraq. Yet the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate, which has since been partially declassified, dryly assessed that “Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons; [and] if left unchecked, it will probably have a nuclear weapon during this decade.” In December 2002, CIA director George Tenet eliminated any remaining doubts

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1076 First, the agency relied on what the UNSCOM inspectors had discovered between 1991 and 1998, when much more WMD material was found than had initially been anticipated. The CIA’s second stream of information, obtained since 1998, relied on a combination of signals intelligence (mainly interceptions of communications), imagery intelligence (aerial and satellite pictures), and human intelligence (mainly reports from Iraqi opposition figures). Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011). See also Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p. 245f.

among the administration’s top national security officials, when he reassuringly told President Bush, “it’s a slam dunk”—meaning there was absolute certainty.\footnote{1078} Iraq’s putative WMD programs were first of all considered a serious threat to regional security. The administration’s hard-liners, like Feith, argued that the administration could not afford to wait for much longer, because “if Saddam were to invade Kuwait again—or attack Saudi Arabia or Jordan, for example—Iraq’s WMD would become an argument for not opposing that aggression.”\footnote{1079} Senior Pentagon officials were further concerned that in the face of a growing Iraqi threat, the United States would have to keep large troop contingents in Saudi Arabia, which might further fuel Al Qaeda’s terrorist propaganda.\footnote{1080} But what worried the administration’s activists most was the possibility of more direct, operational ties between the terrorist network and Iraq. The most vital threat to the United States, Feith believed, stemmed from the danger that “Saddam might soon provide terrorists with WMD—biological weapons, for example.”\footnote{1081} As a former senior aide to Feith recalls: “Feith was a conspiratist. He believed people were against us and out to get us.”\footnote{1082} Vice President Cheney and Wolfowitz were also extremely concerned by the idea of a potential “nexus” between terrorist groups, WMD, and Iraq. In the aftermath of 9/11, the vice president developed “a real fever,” as Secretary Powell

\footnote{1079} Feith, War and Decision, p. 308.  
\footnote{1080} Rumsfeld, Known and Unknown, p. 422.  
\footnote{1081} Feith, War and Decision, pp. 225, 261f; Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 290.  
\footnote{1082} Author interview with Col. Michael W. Trahan (USA, ret.), Senior Military Assistant to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, June 2000-September 2001; Deputy Director of Operations (J-3), U.S. Central Command, September 2001- June 2003 (January 26, 2011).}
and White House strategist Karl Rove put it.\textsuperscript{1083} President Bush himself recalls that he genuinely came to fear “the destruction possible if an enemy dictator passed his WMD to terrorists.”\textsuperscript{1084}

By the end of 2001, Secretary Rumsfeld, who had initially been sitting on the fence, appears to have decided to back Wolfowitz and Feith wholeheartedly on the need for a quick military confrontation with Iraq. Rumsfeld and his fellow OSD hard-liners, with support from the vice president’s office, came to dominate the interagency process leading up to the Iraq war: they essentially took over the agenda-setting role from National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her staff.\textsuperscript{1085} Perhaps the most influential advocate of toppling the Iraqi regime through military force, however, was the vice president himself. Cheney had no statutory policy responsibilities, and he could thus focus all his energies and attention on a few issues of his choosing, so long as President Bush did not object. The vice president’s personal staff had grown considerably since the 1990s, and Cheney could now draw on a dozen national security aides, who ensured that his views would be represented in most relevant meetings at various levels.\textsuperscript{1086}

The vice president and his staff held significant sway over the administration with their argument that decisive U.S. military action against Iraq could have a significant “demonstration effect.” Of course, they insisted, there were other hostile states developing WMD, like North Korea, Libya, or Iran. Yet effectively dealing with one of them would help reestablish deterrence, by sending a powerful message to other actual or potential proliferators about Washington’s determination and the likely consequences of openly challenging vital American


\textsuperscript{1084} Bush, \textit{Decision Points}, p. 229.

\textsuperscript{1085} Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1086} Haass, \textit{War of Necessity, War of Choice}, p. 183; and DeYoung, \textit{Soldier}, p. 314.
Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, too, agreed that U.S. deterrence had been seriously weakened as a consequence of the timid responses to terrorism and WMD proliferation under the previous Democratic administration, and therefore a bold new initiative was called for to enhance U.S. national security.\textsuperscript{1088}

In short, the Bush administration’s leading hard-liners on Iraq—Cheney, Wolfowitz, Feith, and several of their subordinates—perceived a very high threat to U.S. national security in the aftermath of 9/11 and believed that the danger of WMD proliferation had to be tackled swiftly and decisively. Undoubtedly the vice president, like several of the administration’s other senior officials, was prepared to somewhat bend the truth when making his case to the public; yet it appears that Cheney was in fact deeply convinced that the risks to U.S. national security were mortal and real.\textsuperscript{1089} This heightened threat perception clearly shortened the hard-liners’ time horizon: “time is not on our side,” Cheney declared in late August 2002, and “the risks of inaction are far greater than the risks of action.”\textsuperscript{1090} Furthermore, in their almost missionary zeal, senior officials like Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Feith, as well as Rumsfeld, became unusually risk acceptant and willing to experiment with broad policies of revolutionary political transformation in the Middle East. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who loyally followed the Bush administration in its headlong march to war, recalls from his interactions with senior administration officials following 9/11 that “the U.S. attitude to risk had been turned upside

\textsuperscript{1087}Gellman, \textit{Angler}, p. 231


\textsuperscript{1089} Gellman, \textit{Angler}, p. 227.

down”—a usually risk-averse nation was now clearly willing to sacrifice its blood and treasure to tackle a perceived vital security threat.\footnote{Tony Blair, A Journey: My Political Life (New York: Knopf, 2010), p. 398.}

The prevailing view among the Bush administration’s hard-liners was that the threat stemming from Iraqi WMD proliferation had to be dealt with sooner rather than later, through a policy of preventive war that left little room for consensus building with foreign partners through relevant IOs, such as the UN or NATO. Senior Pentagon officials had been publicly talking about preventive war since the immediate aftermath of 9/11.\footnote{Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 133; Rumsfeld, Known and Unknown, p. 423.} By early June 2002, President Bush himself articulated the new doctrine of “preemption” in a speech at West Point, where he emphasized that containment was no longer a feasible strategy in the face of hostile regimes with WMD that could secretly provide those weapons to terrorists.\footnote{George W. Bush, “Graduation Speech at West Point,” United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, June 1, 2002. Available online at: http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html} The doctrine’s implications were more fully fleshed out in the summer of 2002 by Feith and his team, in a secret memo titled “Sovereignty and Anticipatory Self-Defense.”\footnote{OSD Policy, “Sovereignty and Anticipatory Self-Defense,” August 24, 2002 [declassified].} The document claims that in a world where hostile states might covertly use terrorist groups to deliver WMD “in an unattributable, and hence undeterrable, manner,” the United States should no longer have to wait until it is actually attacked before being able to launch military action in self-defense.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 1-2.} These insights, Faith and his colleagues conclude, “lead inevitably to a doctrine of anticipatory self-defense,” whereby the cross-border use of U.S. military force can be checked exclusively by the American constitution, and not “by a requirement for international approval of some kind (e.g., from the UN).”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 3-4.}
Finally, in their short-term focus on tackling a perceived imminent threat, the Bush administration’s hard-liners did not adequately consider the longer-term feasibility of the policy of forcible regime change, which they derived from the new doctrine of anticipatory self-defense. As one former NSC staffer in the Bush administration recalls, due to the pressure to act quickly to neutralize the putative Iraqi danger, “everyone was so focused on the initial phases of the plan that people weren’t pressing to see what would happen several weeks into the invasion.”1097 In fact, the administration’s hard-liners appear to have fallen prey to a type of short-sighted, wishful thinking that is typical of the most zealous policy activists: while focusing on the immediate payoffs of the policy they advocated, they tended to systematically develop best-case scenarios as far as the policy’s (longer-term) feasibility was concerned, thereby radically underestimating potential pitfalls along the path they were advocating.1098 As former Secretary of State Powell, who went along with the policy only reluctantly and half-heartedly, recalls, his civilian colleagues at the Pentagon and the office of the vice president proceeded on the basis of “wishful thinking and dreamy, dreamy assumptions that had no basis in reality.”1099

3. The hard-liners’ rosy expectations and aversion to multilateralism

The administration’s civilian hard-liners from the Pentagon and the office of the vice president believed that a relatively small number of American combat troops could quickly and successfully topple Saddam Hussein’s regime. But it is with regard to the post-combat phase that the activists’ predictions were most exceedingly optimistic. Their expectation of a short and relatively painless occupation rested on a number best-case assumptions: invading American

1098 For further discussion of these psychological tendencies, see chapter three of the dissertation.
troops would be welcomed as liberators by a friendly Iraqi populace; a new democratic Iraqi
government composed of former expatriates would quickly take over; the Iraqi administrative
structure and security apparatus would remain largely intact; and finally, with international
sanctions lifted, postwar reconstruction could largely be financed through sales of Iraqi oil.
These optimistic assumptions about the postwar transition added to the activists’ aversion to
paying significant costs in view of obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs. As a senior NSC
staffer who was responsible for international coalition management on Iraq explains, the
administration’s hard-liners “didn’t have an extended stabilization period in mind. So they didn’t
make the argument, we need a UN resolution because that’s the only way to durably hold the
allies three years from now—because they didn’t envision it three years from now.”

A running start with 20,000 troops – or proving the Powell Doctrine wrong

Secretary Rumsfeld and his staff at OSD were adamant that significantly fewer troops
would be needed to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein’s regime than the existing U.S. war
plans foresaw. The off-the-shelf war plan, OPLAN 1003-98 developed by General Zinni in the
late 1990s, envisioned a lengthy seven-month buildup of nearly 400,000 troops in the Middle
East before offensive operations could be launched. But from late 2001 onward, Rumsfeld
pushed the new CENTCOM commander, General Franks, to repeatedly slash the required troop
numbers. By mid-2002, CENTCOM’s “running start” plan foresaw a possible launch of
offensive operations against Iraq without a lengthy buildup, and using only one heavy division,
or less than 20,000 troops, combined with massive air support. Rumsfeld’s goal was to

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1100 Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011).
1102 Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, pp. 50, 54; and Ricks, Fiasco, p. 34; see also Tommy Franks, American Soldier
(New York: Regan Books, 2004), p. 373. After significant pushback from the armed services, Rumsfeld and his
substitute speed, surprise, and advanced technological capabilities for the U.S. military’s
traditional emphasis on sheer mass. As Col. Michael Trahan, at the time a senior military planner
at CENTCOM, recalls: “There was very clear pressure from OSD. Traditional military planning
requires overwhelming force—the typical ratio of combat forces in an offense is between seven
to one and four to one. But we were told that we wouldn’t need that, because technology could
serve as a force multiplier.”\textsuperscript{1103}

The civilians’ optimism was partially justified by the fact that Iraq’s army in 2002 was
only about a third of the size it had been during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and its combat
effectiveness had been seriously degraded by a decade of international sanctions.\textsuperscript{1104} As Walter
Slocombe, a former senior defense official who had dealt with Iraq for eight years during the
Clinton administration and who subsequently advised the Bush administration on postwar
reconstruction in Iraq, recalls: “Rumsfeld had this initial fantasy of invading Iraq with 20,000
troops—and it might have been enough for the initial combat phase of the war, given that
Saddam had probably decided, sensibly, that he was not going to fight the American army this
time.”\textsuperscript{1105} But Rumsfeld and his staff also had a broader, more ideological agenda. Conservative
hard-liners in Washington had long viewed the “Powell doctrine” of overwhelming force as an
impediment to deploying American power. The civilians at OSD now wanted to show that the

\textsuperscript{1103} Author interview with Col. Michael W. Trahan (January 26, 2011).
\textsuperscript{1105} Author interview with Walter B. Slocombe (March 10, 2010).
Powell doctrine was outdated, and to prove their point they were willing to assume significant risks.1106

**Iraq will be a bastion of democracy in the region**

But it was on the war’s aftermath that the hard-liners were willing to take the greatest risks. Their planning for the postwar transition was driven by almost outlandishly optimistic assumptions, which led them to disregard anything but the rosiest scenarios. To begin with, serious postwar planning did not begin until November 2002, after CENTCOM and OSD had been finessing the main invasion plan for almost a year. Franklin C. Miller, a senior defense official in the Bush administration, recalls that the administration “had concentrated very heavily on phases 1, 2, and 3 [i.e., the force deployment and combat phases] of the war from August until November 2002, because there were things that had to be done, under a presumed time pressure.”1107 As to the postwar planning that was subsequently carried out before the launch of the invasion in March 2003, for the most part it focused on short-term humanitarian issues, like preventing starvation among the Iraqi civilian population and assisting potential refugees.1108 There was only very limited, last-minute planning for administering postwar Iraq, and the possibility that American troops might have to assume primary responsibility for maintaining (let alone re-establishing) political order was hardly considered at all.1109 As former President Bush

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1107 Author interview with Franklin C. Miller, Senior NSC Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control, 2001-2005 (February 23, 2011).


now admits, the possibility that Iraq might descend into a state of anarchy following the invasion “was one important contingency for which [the administration] had not adequately prepared.”¹¹¹⁰

The administration’s chief activists, led in this matter by Wolfowitz and Feith, had long expected that it might be possible to entirely skip the intermediate step of a transitional U.S. administration after the war, by almost immediately handing off power and responsibility to a new interim government formed of former Iraqi expatriates.¹¹¹¹ American forces, Wolfowitz insisted, would be welcomed as liberators by a friendly Shi’a populace. Hence the Americans’ task would be limited to enabling the Iraqis to help themselves; and for this purpose, a small number of stabilization forces, deployed for a short period of time, would be sufficient.¹¹¹² The deputy secretary of defense did not just make this argument in public, but during private NSC meetings, too, “he portrayed a very welcoming Iraqi populace made up of Shias who would throw palm fronds and flowers in front of the tanks as they rolled into Baghdad. And he had a wealth of Iraqi expatriates who supported that view.”¹¹¹³ The leading influence in this context was Ahmed Chalabi, an ambitious Iraqi expatriate who had built up a close relationship to Wolfowitz and Feith going back to the 1990s, and who headed the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella Iraqi opposition group. Senior officials at OSD and the vice president’s office “listened to Ahmed Chalabi very closely,” explains Armitage. “And Chalabi’s siren tune was:

¹¹¹⁰ Bush, Decision Points, p. 258.
¹¹¹¹ See Feith, War and Decision, p. 369.
¹¹¹³ Author interview with Gen. Bantz J. Craddock (USA, ret.), Senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense, August 2002-2004 (February 16, 2011).
the people of Iraq are hungry for democracy; Iraq will be the bastion of democracy in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{1114}

\textit{The country’s administrative structure and security apparatus will remain intact}

Furthermore, leading up to the war, the administration’s chief activists effectively made the case that once U.S. occupation forces had removed the top layer of Baath party officials, Iraq’s administrative structure would continue to function. The nation’s army and police apparatus, too, would remain largely intact and could be used to stabilize the country. As Hadley explains, “we assumed that we would have about 135,000 Iraqi army forces available to help us maintain post-conflict order, and that we would use them to help us with post-conflict reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{1115} Therefore, the expectation was that no large-scale U.S. peacekeeping and reconstruction effort would be necessary. This conclusion further strengthened the conviction that U.S. forces would merely need to assist Iraqi authorities for a short period of time.\textsuperscript{1116}

These highly optimistic assumptions were largely developed by civilian policy officials at OSD.\textsuperscript{1117} Leading up to the war, senior OSD officials asserted that by August 2003—that is, less than half a year after the invasion—the number of American troops in Iraq would be scaled back to about thirty-four thousand. CENTCOM’s war plan, developed under strict guidelines from OSD, foresaw that three years later, only a small U.S. assistance force of about 5,000 troops

\textsuperscript{1114} Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011). On Chalabi’s impact on the administration’s hawks, see also Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, pp. 56f; and Woodward, \textit{Plan of Attack}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{1116} Bensahel, “Mission not accomplished,” p. 131.
\textsuperscript{1117} Author interview with Gen. John P. Abizaid, (USA, ret.), Director of the Joint Staff, October 2001- November 2002; Deputy commander, U.S. Central Command, November 2002-July 2003 (January 20, 2011). Feith blames the CIA for these flawed best-case assumptions, but even if that were the case, he and his colleagues at OSD willingly, if not to say enthusiastically, embraced those assumptions. Cf. Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, p. 363.
would remain in the country. The administration had similarly planned to send only about 1,500 police advisers to train Iraqi officers for a short transitional period. Following the invasion, of course, Iraq’s administrative structure and security apparatus largely collapsed, and the country rapidly descended into chaos. These problems were significantly compounded by the decision of Paul Bremer, the U.S. civil administrator, to entirely disband the Iraqi army and implement a deep cutting de-Baathification policy in late May 2003.

**Iraqi oil will pay for it all**

Finally, the administration’s leading activists expected that the limited reconstruction work that might be necessary would largely be paid for through Iraq’s own oil reserves. Wolfowitz publicly insisted that once international sanctions were going to be lifted, Iraq could rely on annual oil exports worth $15 billion to $20 billion. “To assume we’re going to pay for this is just wrong,” he passionately asserted during a congressional hearing. In the administration’s internal policy meetings, too, “Wolfowitz was very compelling in his argument that the Iraqi oil was going to pay for this, and he said it over and over.” The deputy secretary of defense even commissioned a small group of people to work through the oil issues and project Iraq’s future oil production in barrels per day, of course assuming the absence of major internal

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1120 As one former CENTCOM official bitterly concludes: “We created the insurgency. There was no insurgency until we disbanded the Iraqi army.” Author interview with Col. John F. Agoglia (USA, ret.), Deputy Chief of Planning (J5), U.S. Central Command, 2011-May 2003 (February 1, 2003). See also Ricks, *Fiasco*, pp.162f.

1121 Schmitt, “Military Spending: Pentagon Contradicts General...”

1122 Author interview with Gen. Bantz J. Craddock (February 16, 2011).
instability. “He built a very convincing argument that the cost to [the United States] was going to be major combat operations and then it would be paid for.”

To some extent, these best-case assumptions about postwar Iraq appear to have reflected an effort on the part of the administration’s hard-liners to square an ardent desire to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime, on the one side, with a staunch ideological opposition to nation-building, on the other. “It was an ideological bend of the administration,” recalls a former military officer seconded to Rumsfeld’s office.1124 According to the administration’s conservative leaders, crucially including the president, the purpose of the American military was to fight and win the nation’s wars, and not to preserve stability or promote reconstruction in their aftermath.1125 During the 2002 election campaign, future National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice had famously declared, “We don’t need to have the 82nd airborne escorting kids to the kindergarten.”1126 This ideological aversion to stability operations and nation-building might also partially explain why few of the administration’s top officials, with the exception of Secretary Powell, ever questioned the hard-liners’ rosy assumptions leading up to the war.

**International buy-in for postwar reconstruction won’t be needed**

The Bush administration’s hard-liners, anticipating a small U.S. invasion force, no costly reconstruction effort, and no need for an open-ended stabilization mission, saw little incentive to seek the cooperation of foreign allies and partners, let alone to lock them in by obtaining the endorsement of relevant IOs from the outset. As one former Pentagon aide candidly concludes:

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1123 Craddock interview.
1124 Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011).
We probably misunderstood the length of the commitment that we were getting into and the difficulties that would occur, which would then have required that kind of long-term support and participation from our allies. We had no idea how brittle the Iraqi infrastructure was both physically and intellectually. We thought we could go in there, get rid of Saddam and his buddies, put nicer people in place, and have a functioning country.\textsuperscript{1127}

Furthermore, the administration’s activists were confident that insofar as outside help from allies and partners might be advantageous in the invasion’s aftermath, it would be forthcoming, anyway: other nations would follow in the “slipstream” of American leadership, as President Bush himself liked to put it, and provide relevant assistance as needed.\textsuperscript{1128} This was the lesson that Rumsfeld and his OSD staff, in particular, had taken away from the recent Afghanistan experience, where the NATO allies had indeed jumped on the American bandwagon, providing troops and funding for long-term stabilization after U.S. forces had successfully defeated the Taliban regime.\textsuperscript{1129} The administration’s hardliners, however, did not adequately consider that on Afghanistan (unlike Iraq) the NATO allies had unanimously supported U.S. objectives from the outset, with the North Atlantic Council endorsing U.S. military action as early as September 12, 2001, and the UNSC expressing its general support on that same day.\textsuperscript{1130}

\textsuperscript{1127} Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011).


\textsuperscript{1129} Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011). See also Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{1130} SC Res. 1368, adopted unanimously on September 12, 2001, did not explicitly endorse U.S. military action, but it recognized for the first time that terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security and that military action to oppose it falls under the right of individual and collective self-defense.
4. Powell’s push for a UN-based approach and the silence of the JCS

Not all of the Bush administration’s national security leaders shared the hard-liners’ optimistic assumptions regarding the war and its aftermath, or the aforementioned sense of urgency about the threat stemming from Iraq. Senior State Department officials and military planners, in particular, opposed the administration’s rush to war and repeatedly expressed major concerns about: the limited troop numbers foreseen for the invasion; the view that the Iraqi externals could quickly form a viable government; and finally the assumption that no large-scale U.S. stabilization force would be needed after the war. Consequently, they believed that a UN endorsement, obtained before the launch of offensive operations, would be valuable to lock in the support of foreign allies and partners. In this section I first describe the State Department’s concerns and related policy suggestions, before discussing more specifically the military planners’ attitude. Finally, I show how hard-liners at OSD were able to minimize opposition from the uniformed leadership, by either co-opting or intimidating senior military officials in key positions. The result was a half-hearted and ultimately unsuccessful U.S. policy vis-à-vis the UN.

The State Department’s concerns about the postwar transition

Senior policy officials at the Department of State were not fundamentally opposed to the idea of military action against Iraq. The administration’s leading diplomats, with Powell and Armitage at the forefront, saw the Iraqi regime as a growing threat that would have to be dealt with effectively at some point down the road. However, senior State Department officials questioned the existence of operational ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. Hence they also disputed that military action would have to happen quickly, leaving no time to engage key allies and partners through the UN. “My objection had to do with timing, not with the fact of the war,” says Armitage. “I wanted to get Afghanistan a better place and thought we would be
better served waiting until after President Bush was reelected in the fall of 2004.”\textsuperscript{1131} Marc Grossman, the Bush administration’s undersecretary of state for policy, shared a similar view: “I wasn’t for not fighting,” he explains. “I just wasn’t for fighting him [Saddam Hussein] off the top of the list.\textsuperscript{1132} In short, Senior State Department officials wanted to slow down the hard-liners’ rush to military action; but they weren’t opposed to war—there was no fundamental matter of principle involved. Powell himself, while reluctant, never explicitly recommended against the war, either in public or privately to the president.\textsuperscript{1133}

The senior diplomats’ insistence that a rush to war should be avoided reflected their understanding that Iraq, though a threat, was not an \textit{imminent} threat to the United States; and there were other, more urgent issues that should be dealt with first. Furthermore, several months would be needed to build up broad international support for military action. Grossman’s view in mid-2002 was that Saddam should have been contained for at least another year, so that “in the fall of 2003, if you had to use force, you could do so as the leader of a UN-backed coalition like we had done in 1991.”\textsuperscript{1134} The State Department’s leaders anticipated a much more complex and burdensome reconstruction effort, compared to their colleagues at OSD. They questioned that regime change in Iraq could be implemented “on the cheap.”\textsuperscript{1135} Consequently, they insisted, it could not be done unilaterally: the United States should make significant efforts to obtain an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1131} Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011). See also DeYoung, \textit{Soldier}, pp. 376, 399.
\item \textsuperscript{1132} Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011).
\item \textsuperscript{1134} Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011).
\item \textsuperscript{1135} Grossman testified before Congress that even under the best of circumstances, a considerable contingent of outside military forces would have to remain deployed for at least two years after the invasion to maintain stability and ensure the provision of basic public services. James Dao, “Postwar Goals: American Officials Disclose 2-Year Plan to Rebuild Iraq,” \textit{New York Times}, February 12, 2003.
\end{itemize}
explicit UN endorsement before the launch of offensive operations, in view of locking in the assistance of foreign allies and partners.

The State Department was skeptical that Iraqi expatriates, led by Chalabi, could quickly form a transitional government, thereby obviating the need for a multi-year period of U.S.-led trusteeship. Powell and his staff felt that a government formed largely of expatriates would hardly be representative; hence it would not be perceived as legitimate by the local population, and it would be unhelpful in terms of stabilizing Iraq. As Grossman explains, the State Department’s “view was that the future of Iraq needed to be decided by Iraqis and not just by Iraqi exiles. Therefore you needed to find a way, even if it took a little extra time, to enfranchise Iraqis living in Iraq to participate in this conversation as well.” President Bush, lobbied by OSD, initially disregarded the State Department’s proposal of a transitional international authority, or trusteeship structure, for postwar Iraq. It was not until after the 2003 invasion, when it became clear that Chalabi’s “externals” were nowhere ready to take over and Iraq’s administrative structure began to implode, that Washington scrambled to quickly establish a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under Ambassador Bremer, which incorporated several elements of the trusteeship proposals developed at the State Department several months earlier. As one self-critical former OSD official recalls, “we thought those expatriates were going to ride in on white horses right behind our tanks, they would be welcomed with open arms, and they would take over. I think the State Department understood a little better that that was not necessarily a good assumption.”

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1136 Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011). For an OSD perspective on this debate, see also Feith, War and Decision, pp. 253-279, and 373-385.
1138 Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011).
Powell tells Bush, “We are going to own it, so let’s involve the UN”

In the summer of 2002, the administration’s hard-liners stepped up their rhetorical and bureaucratic push to war. By then, it was clear even to mid-ranking officials at the State Department that President Bush had decided to move ahead with regime change in Iraq, making a military showdown increasingly likely. On August 5, 2002, Powell met with the president for a private conversation at the White House, which the Secretary of State had requested to express his concerns. As Powell himself recalls: “I took it to the president on the fifth of August and told him that when we break this we’re going to own it. And when the government falls [in Iraq] we’re going to be the government. And you may not want to be the government of this country. So let’s try to get the UN resolution.” Involving the United Nations, Powell elaborated further, might provide an alternative to war, if Saddam cooperated. But it would also be crucial in case there was going to be a military confrontation, to maximize support from international allies and partners for both combat and postwar stabilization. Former President Bush recalls that during the conversation, Powell “was more passionate than I had seen him at any NSC meeting. He told me…the military strike would be the easy part. Then America would ‘own’ Iraq… [and] a UN resolution was the only way to get any support from the rest of the world.”

In previous weeks, State Department officials had already begun to argue in various interagency meetings that Washington should make a serious effort to return the UN weapons inspectors to Iraq and obtain a SC endorsement for military action. According to Armitage, most

1141 Author interview with Colin L. Powell (February 2, 2011). See also DeYoung, Soldier, pp. 401f.
1142 Bush, Decision Points, p. 238.
senior officials at the State Department agreed with Powell, and the reasons why they wanted to involve the UN were: “first, avoid the war if possible; and second, get international support should [the U.S.] have to go to war.” Crucially, policy officials at the State Department increasingly “worried about what would happen after the war,” given that OSD had done very little planning for postwar stabilization; and they believed that obtaining a UN endorsement from the outset would be important “to get friends and allies on board, to help with the burden.”

UN endorsement was considered less relevant in terms of generating concrete operational support for major combat from international partners, and notably to obtain access to bases, air corridors, and port facilities in the Persian Gulf. The expectation was that such support would be available regardless of IO involvement. General Franks had in fact confirmed to President Bush in the early afternoon of August 5 (with Powell present, and before Powell made his pitch to the president for seeking UN endorsement later that day) that CENTCOM had already successfully concluded preliminary access, basing, and overflight agreements with relevant partners in the Persian Gulf. Nor did domestic political concerns play a major role: “The United Nations is not a domestic political factor here,” explains Grossman. The administration understood that political backing from allies and partners would be valuable in terms of strengthening U.S. public support; yet senior State Department officials expected that such backing from an ad-hoc “coalition of the willing” would be available even without an explicit UN endorsement. Furthermore, the issue of domestic support became practically moot after Congress adopted a joint resolution authorizing the use of force in early October 2002—that is, almost an entire

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1143 Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011).
1144 Bush, Decision Points, p. 235; Franks, American Soldier, p. 387. On Powell’s presence at Franks’s briefing, see DeYoung, Soldier, p. 401. For further confirmation that Gulf State support was independent of UN involvement, see also Feith, War and Decision, p. 305.
1145 Author interview with Marc Grossman (January 13, 2011).
1146 Grossman interview.
month before the first UN resolution was approved. Finally, it appears that concerns about reduced overall international cooperation with Washington, or soft balancing against the United States, did not motivate the State Department leadership to seek to engage the UN. “I did not expand the problem out to cooperation on counterterrorism and Afghanistan and things like that—I didn’t think through all of that,” Powell explains. Nor did other senior administration officials worry about soft balancing as a potential consequence of a U.S. invasion without UN endorsement. “I don’t remember anybody making the argument that we needed international sanction on Iraq to keep people cooperating with the U.S. in other areas,” explains Hadley.

Military planners worry about the rush to war and challenge OSD’s optimistic assumptions

What role, if any, did senior military officers play in multilateralizing U.S. policy leading up to the 2003 Iraq war? Over the following pages, I show that the traditional military establishment was in fact highly skeptical of invading Iraq in 2002-03, based on the belief that no vital U.S. national interests were at stake that might have warranted the high costs of an open-ended occupation. Senior military planners on the Joint Staff (JS) and at CENTCOM, who were responsible for developing the relevant war plans, recommended a multilateral approach, in view of limiting U.S. liability. But the Pentagon’s civilian leaders were staunchly opposed to involving the United Nations, and the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS, Generals Myers and Pace, as well as CENTCOM commander Franks, were for various reasons closely aligned with their civilian masters. Therefore, the military planners’ impact on Washington policy debates was limited.

1148 Author interview with Colin L. Powell (February 2, 2011).
1149 Author interview with Stephen J. Hadley (January 24, 2011).
To begin with, several retired general officers, especially former Army and Marine Corps leaders, opposed the administration’s push for war in 2002 and doubted that Iraq constituted an imminent, vital threat to the United States. Zinni, a retired Marine Corps general and former CENTCOM commander, had retired in the summer of 2000 believing that the international sanctions, combined with the enforcement of the no-fly zones and occasional bombing, had reduced Saddam Hussein’s regime to a secondary threat. Under Zinni’s tenure at CENTCOM, the Iraqi army had not only visibly shrunk in size—by the late 1990s, the general recalls, it was also “dealing with obsolete equipment, ill-trained troops, dissatisfaction in the ranks, a lot of absenteeism.” As the momentum towards military action was building up in the fall of 2002, Zinni expressed his doubts in public, insisting that Washington should continue to contain Iraq and there were other priorities in U.S. national security policy. Similarly, General Norman Schwarzkopf, another former CENTCOM leader who had commanded coalition forces in the 1991 Gulf War, spoke out against attacking Iraq in early 2003. Schwarzkopf openly worried about the costs of postwar stabilization and insisted that continued containment would be the best course to follow. But it appears that the retired military brass were merely giving a public voice to the concerns that many active-duty officers, some of them closely involved in Iraq war planning, harbored in private. In late July 2002, the Washington Post carried a front-page story based on off-the-record interviews, saying that many senior military officers favored containment and did not consider Iraq an imminent threat. By January 2003, TIME Magazine

1150 Quoted in Ricks, Fiasco, p. 13. See also Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, p. 27.
1151 Ricks, Fiasco, p. 51.
1152 Ricks, Fiasco, p. 81f.
reported that “as many as 1 in 3 senior officers questions the wisdom of a preemptive war with Iraq.”

Senior military planners on the Joint Staff, who had closely reviewed the war plans, were particularly concerned. General John Abizaid, director of the JS until late 2002, and subsequently deputy commander at CENTCOM leading up to the war, held a view similar to that of senior State Department officials: Iraq constituted a problem that would have to be dealt with at some point down the road, but it posed no imminent, vital threat to the United States. The view among senior planners on the JS, Abizaid recalls, “was that even if the Iraqis was moving towards weapons of mass destruction, it would be a while before they would really constitute a big enough threat. So there seemed to be plenty of time.” Similarly, planners at CENTCOM and active-duty U.S. Army leaders believed that Iraq constituted no imminent threat. Therefore, containment remained a viable strategy for the time being, although given that the international sanctions were crumbling, there were some concerns about the strategy’s longer-term viability.

The military planners’ first concern was that a war against Iraq in 2002 or 2003 would divert the nation’s attention and scarce resources away from the strategic threat of transnational terrorism. Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold, head of operations on the Joint Staff until late 2002, and one of the few senior officers on active duty who staunchly opposed the war (which eventually contributed to his early retirement), recalls related debates among the military brass as follows:

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1156 Author interviews with Col. Paul Hughes (USA, ret.), Director of national security policy on the Army staff, 2000-2002 (April 1, 2011); and Col. Michael W. Trahan (January 26, 2011). On the Army leadership’s preference for containment, see also Ricks, *Fiasco*, p. 33.
After 9/11 occurred, the focus was on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and Afghanistan, and that’s where all the effort and mental focus of the military naturally began to concentrate. But very quickly people in OSD, Secretary Rumsfeld and others, began talking about Iraq. And the military’s reaction—as you can imagine, I had extensive contacts with other senior American officers around the world, as well as in Washington—the reaction was confusion. Why Iraq? Although nobody had any affection or regard for Saddam Hussein, we all thought it was a side-show, irrelevant to the key issue, and that was Al-Qaeda.\footnote{Author interview with Lt. Gen. Gregory S. Newbold (USMC, ret.), Director for Operations (J3) on the Joint Staff, October 2000 – October 2002 (January 25, 2011).}

Furthermore, as the administration’s march to war appeared increasingly unstoppable from mid-2002 onwards, the military planners, as well as a number of troop commanders, were concerned that the invasion would be much costlier than civilian hard-liners anticipated. Rumsfeld’s insistence on repeatedly cutting the troop numbers for both combat operations and postwar stabilization was viewed as a dangerous gamble, which would needlessly expose the armed services should the administration’s highly optimistic assumptions turn out to be incorrect.\footnote{Author interview with Franklin C. Miller (February 23, 2011).}

Army leaders were particularly concerned, given that their service would bear the heaviest burden and they would largely “own” postwar stability operations in Iraq. “It was clear to everybody that not only did we have the wrong capability on the front end, but certainly the wrong capability on the back end,” remembers one former troop commander.\footnote{Author interview with Maj. Gen. John Batiste Batiste (USA, ret.), Senior military assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, 2001-August 2002; Commander of the First Infantry Division, United States Army, 2002-2005 (February 22, 2011). See also Shelton, Without Hesitation, p. 481.} In the fall of 2002, General Eric Shinseki, the Chief of Staff of the Army, privately expressed his concerns about the lack of sufficient troops for both combat and post-combat stabilization to Secretary Rumsfeld.\footnote{Ricks, Fiasco, p. 73.} Furthermore, finding that OSD was all but deaf to his pleas, Shinseki also repeatedly voiced his concerns to senior staffers on the NSC, who relayed those views to Rice.
and Hadley. In early 2003, shortly before the invasion, General Shinseki, who had previously commanded U.S. stabilization forces in Bosnia, openly challenged the hard-liners’ optimistic assumptions about postwar Iraq. During a congressional hearing, the Army chief insisted that “several hundred thousand soldiers” would be required for post-combat stabilization.

Senior military planners on the JS and at CENTCOM for the most part shared the Army leaders’ concerns. CENTCOM planners worried about the “hybrid” war plan, towards which Rumsfeld had pushed them by early August 2002. The plan foresaw only a very short buildup of roughly two weeks before the launch of offensive operations, which would leave the United States with less than 50,000 troops available to secure all of Iraq ten days into the ground war. As Col. John Agoglia, CENTCOM’s deputy head of plans leading up to the war, recalls:

We as planners talked about how best to maintain control of the civilian population after the invasion. We believed that the Iraqi army could potentially surrender en masse, or desert. The answer was, quite frankly, more force. We were constantly fighting for those additional forces. We told General Franks that we had some real concerns with the hybrid plan, and we were concerned particularly about OSD trying to cut the follow-on forces.

By the fall of 2002, senior members of the JS in Washington, who regularly reviewed the war plans developed at CENTCOM based on guidelines from OSD, were seriously concerned about the low troop numbers and more generally the lack of detailed planning for postwar stabilization. Under directions from Abizaid, in late September the JS conducted a classified

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1161 Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011).
1164 Author interview with Col. John F. Agoglia (February 1, 2003).
1165 Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, p. 140.
war game, code-named “Prominent Hammer II,” which highlighted significant shortages in war planning and force allocation. This computer-based simulation eventually persuaded the Pentagon’s civilian leadership to increase the troop numbers and gradually move away from the belief that an invasion of Iraq could be launched with much less than 100,000 troops.\textsuperscript{1166}

\textit{The Joint Staff and CENTCOM planners counsel multilateralism}

The military planners, anticipating that the invasion would be followed by an open-ended and costly stabilization phase, recommended that the administration obtain reassurances about postwar burden sharing from international allies and partners \textit{before} the launch of offensive operations. To this end, they explicitly counseled on several occasions that a UN endorsement of the war might be helpful. The planners’ hope was that international troops might at least partially substitute for low U.S. force levels during the postwar occupation phase and thus help avert a major strategic disaster. Senior JS officials like Abizaid, General George Casey, the director for strategic plans and policy, and Newbold, the director for operations, shared a “strong feeling that the UN had to be part of the decision-making process, endorsing what action [the U.S.] would take.”\textsuperscript{1167}

General Abizaid recalls that the JS leaders saw a UN-backed coalition as particularly valuable for “burden sharing on postwar stabilization, because none of us thought that the postwar planning assumptions [dictated by OSD] were very robust.”\textsuperscript{1168} The senior military planners were pragmatists who did not have a strong doctrinal preference for UN endorsement


\textsuperscript{1167} Author interview with Lt. Gen. Gregory S. Newbold (January 25, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1168} Author interview with Gen. John P. Abizaid (January 20, 2011).
over support from ad-hoc coalitions: how to bind in the allies was seen as a political issue, not a military one. Nevertheless, the JS leaders clearly understood that a UN mandate could be very helpful in terms of locking in foreign allies and partners for the long run. From the early summer of 2002 onwards, those senior military planners insisted on the desirability of multilateralizing the policy with Generals Myers and Pace, the chairman and vice chairman of the JCS, as well as in meetings of the administration’s NSC Deputies Committee, the highest level interagency committee dealing with issues of national security policy outside the cabinet.

The planners at CENTCOM shared similar concerns leading up to the war and formulated comparable recommendations. Agoglia remembers that he and his colleagues counseled from late 2001 onward—that is, beginning with the earliest iterations of the war plan—that a UN endorsement might be helpful in terms of obtaining greater support from foreign partners. But it was in June of 2002, when Rumsfeld had pushed the war planning towards a “running start” concept that significantly shortened the deployment phase while slashing the troop numbers, that the discussion at CENTCOM more specifically focused on the desirability of a UN mandate. “We knew that the greater level of international support we had, the better it would be for the post-conflict side of the equation,” explains Agoglia. “We got more into the UN discussion in the summer of 2002, in late June and July, as we started doing the running start. We would go in

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1169 Abizaid interview.


1171 The “running start” concept, briefed to President Bush on June 19, 2002, replaced the previous “generated start” plan. The latter had foreseen a gradual troop buildup over several months and the involvement of some 275,000 troops in the invasion, while the former eliminated the long buildup and foresaw the possibility of an initial attack with as few as 18,000 troops. See Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, pp. 36, 50-54. On the running start, see also Franks, *American Soldier*, pp. 367f.
faster, we would have less force there, so additional allies would be helpful.”1172 The military planners expressed their sentiment on the desirability of a UN mandate, aimed at achieving greater international buy-in, to OSD representatives at CENTCOM, who further relayed those views to Feith, the Pentagon’s undersecretary for policy. Feith, however, was notoriously hostile to the United Nations and to multilateralism more generally.1173 Agoglia and his colleagues also expressed the same recommendations to General Franks, but it is unclear whether the CENTCOM commander then conveyed those concerns to Rumsfeld or the president.1174

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the military planners on the JS and at CENTCOM, as well as the armed services more generally, had at least some impact on the administration’s subsequent decision to involve the United Nations. First, senior JS officials expressed their concerns in the NSC Deputies Committee, which crucially contributed to formulating the administration’s policy on Iraq. Furthermore, the military brass maintained various informal channels of communication with Secretary Powell and his deputy, Armitage.1175 It may not be a coincidence that Powell made his case to President Bush for involving the UNSC in the evening of August 5, only a few hours after Franks had briefed the latest “hybrid” war plan to the president—a plan worked out in previous weeks under pressure from OSD, and which further increased the already significant worries among military planners about the ability of American forces to maintain public order following the invasion.1176

1172 Author interview with Col. John F. Agoglia (February 1, 2003).
1173 Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011). See also Feith, War and Decision, pp. 299, 301.
1174 Author interview with Col. John F. Agoglia (February 1, 2003).
1175 As one former senior State Department official responsible for political-military affairs recalls: “Secretary Powell and Armitage were always as well informed as anyone in the NS circle about military matters, even though they often didn’t let on how well informed they were.” Author interview with Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, 2001-2005 (April 7, 2011).
1176 On the timing of Franks’s and Powell’s presentations, respectively, see DeYoung, Soldier, p. 401.
Armitage acknowledges that senior military officers often called him to express their concerns about troop numbers, the administration’s perceived rush to war, the lack of multilateral involvement, and more generally the inadequate planning for postwar occupation: “You usually get through to the deputy,” he explains, “that leaves less fingerprints.”1177 Powell himself was very much concerned leading up to the war that the Pentagon’s civilian leaders were taking unnecessary risks by forcing a cut-down in the number of combat and occupation troops that went beyond what most of the military commanders felt comfortable with.1178 As a former JCS Chairman who was now serving as Secretary of State, Powell was in a delicate position: he could not admit to be formally speaking on behalf of the armed services in cabinet-level meetings—it would have been improper, and Rumsfeld in particular was highly sensitive about the State Department’s known contacts to the military.1179 Directly questioned about it, Powell denies that he was speaking for the military during the August 5 meeting, when he made his case to the president for involving the UN: “it was my concern,” he insists, though it was certainly influenced by his “own personal experience as a soldier of thirty-five years.”1180

Yes-men at the top: understanding the military’s limited influence on Iraq policy

Under normal circumstances, the military planners should not have had to rely on the Secretary of State or on various NSC staffers to convey their concerns to the president. Since the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act, the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS are supposed to speak for the military and represent the military’s interests and concerns vis-à-vis the president and the NSC. However, civil-military relations during the administration of President G.W. Bush

1178 DeYoung, Soldier, p. 397; Franks, American Soldier, p. 394; Bush, Decision Points, p. 251.
1180 Author interview with Colin L. Powell (February 2, 2011).
did not follow this pattern. Generals Myers and Pace, the chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS, lacked the personal fortitude of previous JCS chairmen. It appears that Rumsfeld had in fact chosen them for the top military posts largely because of their known malleability.\textsuperscript{1181} They were closely aligned with the Pentagon’s civilian leadership on most policy issues, and they never dared to challenge or contradict Rumsfeld in front of either the president or the cabinet.\textsuperscript{1182} Rumsfeld was convinced that the military had gained too much authority in matters of policy in previous years, and he took up his post as defense secretary in 2001 determined to quash the authority of the Joint Chiefs.\textsuperscript{1183} As one former senior military officer with direct experience at OSD recalls: “Secretary Rumsfeld wanted yes-men around him, and that’s what he got.”\textsuperscript{1184}

Reportedly, Powell and Armitage had in fact asked Generals Myers and Pace to back them at the NSC on troop numbers and the need for multilateral involvement: “But there wasn’t any support from the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, and that was extremely irritating to Secretary Powell and Armitage. In fact, Secretary Powell challenged General Myers to be more assertive—that was a point of real friction between them.”\textsuperscript{1185} The unwillingness of Myers and Pace to forcefully convey the concerns of military planners and troop commanders to the president (and to the NSC more generally) made it extremely difficult for the military to have any independent impact on Washington policy debates leading up to the Iraq war.\textsuperscript{1186}


\textsuperscript{1182} Author interview with Gen. Bantz J. Craddock (February 16, 2011). See also Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, p. 89; Woodward, \textit{State of Denial}, p. 72.


\textsuperscript{1184} Author interview with Maj. Gen. John Batiste (February 22, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1185} Author interview with Lt. Gen. Gregory S. Newbold (January 25, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1186} Newbold interview.
The only other senior military official who regularly talked to the president leading up to the war was General Franks, the CENTCOM commander. Certainly Franks did not lack the opportunity to convey the concerns of his own military planners to the commander-in-chief. However, in his eagerness to please his civilian superiors, Franks seems to have followed OSD’s guidance with little questioning and largely brushed aside his own planners’ concerns, especially on post-combat stabilization. As one former senior CENTCOM official recalls: “we knew there had to be additional forces for nation building; and we said all along there would be more forces required. But Rumsfeld didn’t want the forces there, and Franks followed his boss.”

It also appears that Rumsfeld exploited Franks’s somewhat cocky personality, by encouraging the CENTCOM commander to disregard criticism or advice from the Joint Staff. “This was going direct OSD to CENTCOM and it was bypassing the Joint Staff,” recalls Abizaid. “This was highly compartmentalized activity that was outside the norm.”

Furthermore, Franks had little personal interest in planning for postwar stabilization. “As he saw it, CENTCOM was going to fight the war and then go home,” recalls a former senior military planner. Panning for postwar stabilization (so-called “Phase IV”) is supposed to be doctrinally part of any war plan; yet the Joint Staff was never briefed on a complete Phase IV plan by CENTCOM leading up to the war. Franks knew from December 2001 onward that he was going to retire from CENTCOM by the summer of 2003. The war was unlikely to start before February 2003. In fact, CENTCOM plans briefed to the president in August 2002 already

1187 Author interview with Col. Michael W. Trahan (January 26, 2011).
1189 Author interview with Col. Michael W. Trahan (January 26, 2011). See also Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, pp. 138f.
1191 Franks, American Soldier, p. 360.
foresaw a start of the invasion by February or early March of the subsequent year. Therefore, Franks focused almost exclusively on the combat phase of the war, which he knew was going to be executed under his watch and where victory appeared almost certain, and he seems to have accepted OSD’s rosy assumptions about the post-combat transition without much questioning. “That’s why the whole Phase IV planning received so little attention,” explains Col. Michael Trahan, who worked for Franks at CENTCOM. “He wasn’t going to be the one responsible for executing it, and so he didn’t have to take ownership.” Following the invasion of Iraq, Franks in fact left CENTCOM in July 2003 and retired from the Army in August.

With little or no support from the JCS chairman and vice-chairman or from General Franks, and with the Pentagon’s civilian leadership agitating for war, it was exceedingly difficult for other general officers, including the service chiefs and senior JS officials, to convey their views to the president and the NSC. In principle, the chief of staff of the Army and the Marine Corps, Generals Shinseki and James Jones (who both harbored serious concerns about the war plans), could have requested a personal meeting with the president to directly convey their views. However, that would have been an extreme measure for the service chiefs to take. Their role is that of force providers, and they don’t usually advise the president on matters of policy. “The individual and collective character of the JCS,” explains one former senior Joint Staff official, “was such that they would not take their concerns to the president. With different people, it might have been a different story.” Shinseki in particular was a low-key general officer who preferred to defer to the political leadership on matters of policy, and he publicly spoke out on

1193 Author interview with Col. Michael W. Trahan (January 26, 2011).
1194 Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 413.
1195 Author interviews with Col. Paul Hughes (April 1, 2011)
the issue of troop numbers only when directly questioned about it during a hearing on Capitol Hill.\footnote{Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011). On the February 2003 hearing, see Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, pp. 96f.}

Finally, two factors explain why skeptical general officers below the JCS level never spoke out more assertively, either privately inside the administration, or in public by leaking their views to the press. First, Secretary Rumsfeld and his civilian staffers at OSD made it very clear that loyalty on the part of the top military brass would be rewarded and there would be a price to pay for opposition. In a striking departure from previous practice, Rumsfeld interfered with military promotions and personally decided on all the assignments for three- and four-star general officers.\footnote{Author interview with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011).} Franklin Miller, a former senior defense official on the NSC, is scathing in his assessment: “Rumsfeld was a tyrant. He suppressed any form of dissent in the building. By personally interviewing any nominee for flag rank, Rumsfeld made it clear that he was going to be the one deciding who was going to be promoted and who wasn’t. He was politicizing the promotion system and making it very clear [to the senior officers] that if they crossed the line, their career was over.”\footnote{Author interview with Franklin C. Miller (February 23, 2011).}

In addition, there never was a high-level policy debate inside the administration about whether the U.S. should in fact invade Iraq, which would have allowed the military to express their views more assertively, including through public leaks. President Bush, as previously argued, appears to have decided soon after September 11, 2001 that Saddam had to be forcibly removed from power. Throughout the first part of 2002, the military planning was kept secret, but among senior officials involved, “there seemed to have been an assumption there would be
war.”1200 By June 2002, the president told General Franks and his CENTCOM planners that the policy debate was essentially over.1201 “There wasn’t open opposition [from the military] because there wasn’t a decision,” explains Newbold.1202 In previous years, leading up to other armed interventions, the military brass had usually leaked their concerns to the press or conveyed their skepticism to Congress before a decision was taken. But once the president decides, the military usually fall in line, so as not to undercut government policy. If individual officers remain fundamentally opposed, their only alternative is to resign.1203 The military brass had also been genuinely shocked by the events of 9/11, 2001, which added to their reluctance to publicly oppose a policy that the civilian leadership was presenting as part and parcel of the administration’s war against terrorism.1204

Summing up, senior military planners and force commanders at CENTCOM, the Joint Staff, and at the Army staff were very much concerned about the lack of Phase IV planning leading up to the Iraq war, and there was a widespread view that the administration should have made a greater effort to lock in the support of foreign allies and partners for postwar reconstruction. However, the nation’s top military leaders, Myers and Pace, as well as CENTCOM commander Franks—who were the only uniformed officials to enjoy regular access to the president—were closely aligned with the Pentagon’s civilian leadership and loyally echoed Secretary Rumsfeld’s views in front of the president and the cabinet. Other general officers who

1201 Author interview with Col. John F. Agoglia (February 1, 2003).
1203 Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011).
were concerned about the war plans lacked either the personal fortitude or the opportunity to convey their views to the president and the NSC.

In the absence of vigorous military opposition or publicly expressed skepticism about the policy and the war plans, the bureaucratic political dynamics that had decisively pushed the Washington policy process toward IO-based multilateralism on other occasions were not activated leading up to the 2003 Iraq war. The administration’s civilian hard-liners lacked strong incentives to seek the endorsement of relevant IOs, in view of locking in the support of foreign allies and partners and thereby reassuring the JCS about postwar stabilization, because the JCS were either fully on board with the policy to begin with or never made it clear that they weren’t.

5. The outcome: A half-hearted attempt at the United Nations

The Bush administration’s limited efforts to engage the United Nations in the fall of 2002 were largely the result of Secretary Powell’s personal insistence (though the Secretary of State, as previously argued, was undoubtedly aware of the military’s preferences and concerns). Following Powell’s meeting with the president on August 5, 2002, the administration’s chief diplomat repeated his arguments for involving the UN in front of the entire NSC on August 16, and then again on September 7. Secretary Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney pushed back on both occasions: working through the UN would mean bringing the international weapons inspectors back into Iraq, and as a result, they argued, the U.S. would be tied down in a never-ending diplomatic process. Furthermore, given the hard-liners’ optimistic assumptions about the war and its aftermath, they believed that the invasion would generate its own legitimacy and an explicit endorsement from the UN Security Council would be unnecessary. Hence a UN

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1206 Bush, Decision Points, p. 237; Woodward, Plan of Attack, pp. 157, 176, 180; DeYoung, Soldier, p. 375
mandate should not be sought—unless the SC could be persuaded to swiftly approve military action on the administration’s terms and at little cost to the United States.1207 “They fought us every inch, by every manner possible,” recalls Armitage, who was pushing for the UN along with Powell.1208

Towards Resolution 1441

President Bush shared the hard-liners’ aforementioned skepticism about the United Nations. Nevertheless, Secretary Powell persuaded him that the administration should not appear to be completely sidelining the UN leading up to the war. At the NSC meeting on September 7, the president declared that he would work with the UN and seek a SC resolution to bring back the weapons inspectors and obtain an expression of support for military intervention as a last resort.1209 In previous weeks and months, Tony Blair, the British prime minister, had also repeatedly urged President Bush to seek UN authority for the use of force. The British leader—committed as he was to participating in the war—badly needed a UN endorsement for his own domestic political audience.1210

However, the Bush administration’s commitment to and patience with the UN process was always limited. John Negroponte, at the time the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, thinks that “the effort to get an inspections resolution was half-hearted at best from the point of view of the president of the United States in the fall of 2002. The administration didn’t really focus much on diplomacy with the other Security Council

1207 Author interviews with Col. Stephen P. Bucci (January 19, 2011) and Kori Schake (January 21, 2011).
1208 Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011).
1210 Blair had first pushed for seeking a UN endorsement during an April 2002 meeting with President Bush at the latter’s farm in Crawford, Texas. See Blair, A Journey, pp. 399, 404; Bush, Decision Points, p. 232; DeYoung, Soldier, pp. 403-406.
members leading up to the Iraq war."  The president heeded Powell’s advice to involve the United Nations, but he also seems to have agreed with the hard-liners that the UN process would be valuable only insofar as it could quickly grant an international stamp of legitimacy to what Washington wanted to do anyway—namely forcibly remove Saddam Hussein from power. Negroponte recalls that the president and his hawkish advisors were “very impatient” in this regard.

The negotiations on a SC resolution began in mid-September, after President Bush had committed in a speech before the UN General Assembly on September 12 that he would work with the United Nations. By the end of the month, the U.S. delegation in New York circulated a first draft resolution. But the text was very harsh and seemed to be aimed at little more than quickly providing a pretext for war. Cheney and Rumsfeld had successfully lobbied for draconian requirements that foresaw: the creation of no-fly and even no-drive zones along the UN inspection routes; the deployment of American inspection teams and armed guards to accompany the UN inspectors; and the right to take Iraqi scientists who might have worked on WMD programs abroad for interrogation. Iraq’s failure to comply in full would have automatically authorized “all necessary means.” It quickly became evident, however, that such a draconian draft had virtually no support at the SC beyond the United States, with France and Russia vehemently opposed and even the British quite skeptical. Greenstock, the British UN ambassador, recalls that “the Russians were very opposed to that for the first few weeks of

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1212 Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).
1213 “Mr. Bush lays out his case,” The Economist, September 12, 2002.
1215 Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 221; DeYoung, Soldier, p. 417.
negotiations, and then the French took over from the first or second week of October.”1216 The French government’s view, shared by several of the Council’s non-permanent members, was that a tough UN resolution ought to be adopted to disarm Iraq of whatever WMD it still possessed. But the resolution should not include an explicit, automatic authorization of force in case of Iraqi noncompliance. Only the UN weapons inspectors themselves, and not individual member states, should be able to determine Iraqi “material breach,” or noncompliance with its disarmament obligations; and before using force, a second resolution would be necessary with an explicit authorization of military action.1217

By late October, the Bush administration finally agreed to drop any reference to “all necessary means” in the initial UN resolution.1218 That did not happen, however, until after another vigorous debate between Powell and Wolfowitz (who was replacing Rumsfeld on that occasion) during an NSC meeting on October 15, where the OSD representative insisted that Washington should force a vote on the initial draft and then move ahead with using force unilaterally if needed, since “there are worse things than having our…draft defeated or vetoed by France.”1219 But President Bush and Rice agreed with Powell that it was too early to completely abandon the UN track, given the president’s public pledge to work with the UN and Iraq’s recent declaration that the weapons inspectors could return without preconditions.1220

1216 Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).
1218 Blix, Disarming Iraq, p. 84; Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 11; DeYoung, Soldier, p. 418.
1219 Feith, War and Decision, p. 315.
On November 8, 2002, after almost seven weeks of intense negotiations, the SC unanimously adopted Resolution 1441.\textsuperscript{1221} The resolution offered Iraq a “final opportunity” to comply with its disarmament obligations, established a new UN inspections regime to verify Baghdad’s compliance, and threatened “serious consequences” in case of Iraqi noncooperation. Furthermore, the resolution explicitly foresaw—in an apparent concession to France—that any failure by Iraq to comply with its obligations would be immediately reported to the Council by the inspectors, after which the Council would decide on further measures to be taken.\textsuperscript{1222} As Negroponte declared at the time, “this resolution contains no ‘hidden triggers’ and no ‘automaticity’ with respect to the use of force.”\textsuperscript{1223} With hindsight, even the administration’s hard-liners concede that “Resolution 1441 was not an authorization for war.”\textsuperscript{1224}

The administration however felt that it had achieved what it needed in terms of legitimacy for military action. “We didn’t feel as though an additional resolution would be necessary for a military operation,” recalls William Wood, who as a senior State Department official had been heavily involved in negotiating the resolution.\textsuperscript{1225} Powell and his staff reckoned that the world’s headlines would focus on the fact that an international consensus on Iraq had been achieved and the SC had unanimously threatened “serious consequences.” The general public would not read the resolution’s technical details or understand its fairly complicated language.\textsuperscript{1226} Furthermore, senior administration officials understood that SCR 1441 would help make the case that President Bush was not hell-bent on military action, and war would be a “last

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1221] Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 112.
\item[1222] UNSC Resolution 1441, adopted on November 8, 2002, esp. para. 4, 11, and 12.
\item[1223] UN Security Council, “Document S/PV.4644” (Minutes of 4644\textsuperscript{th} meeting, held on November 8, 2002), p. 3.
\item[1224] Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, p. 335.
\end{footnotes}
Finally, in view of Iraq’s record over the previous decade, nobody in the administration expected that Iraq would fully cooperate; and Powell had made it clear to the other SC members during the negotiations that for Washington, “nonperformance means war.”

**The UN inspections regime—pretext for war?**

The UN weapons inspectors re-entered Iraq in late November 2002, for the first time since 1998, and they immediately began their work. On December 7, as required by SCR 1441, Iraq provided a lengthy declaration (11,807 pages of mostly old and incomplete data) on its chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, which it said proved that it had no illicit weapons. Thereupon Vice President Cheney, who had insisted on the requirement for such a declaration in the first place, claimed that since the Iraqi statements were blatantly false, the administration should simply declare “material breach” and move ahead with military action in short order. Negroponte recalls that the administration’s hard-liners had indeed been “waiting for the declaration with bated breath,” and it was clear to him that “anything that was wrong with it, they were going to use as a pretext for material breach.” Yet nobody among the other SC members—crucially including the British—agreed with this interpretation.

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1227 Zalmay Khalilzad, at the time a senior NS official dealing with the Middle East, explains: “You didn’t want to create an impression of the inevitability of military action regardless of what Saddam does.” Author interview with Zalmay Khalilzad (January 20, 2011).

1228 Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011). The French had privately agreed during the negotiations on 1441 that Washington would be able to move ahead with the use of force without a second resolution in case of Iraqi noncompliance, “but only after the inspectors had determined material breach.” Author interview with Jean-Marc de La Sablière (May 18, 2011).

1229 Blix, Disarming Iraq, pp. 95f; Woodward, Plan of Attack, p. 234.

1230 Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 115; Woodward, Plan of Attack, pp. 234f.

1231 Woodward, Plan of Attack, pp. 222, 234; DeYoung, Soldier, p. 428.

1232 Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).

1233 Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, pp. 116f.
inspector Hans Blix asked for seven weeks, until January 27, 2003, to study the voluminous Iraqi declaration. Since General Franks was not yet ready to launch military operations anyway, the administration concluded that the UN process should not be precipitously abandoned.\footnote{Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, p. 339; see also DeYoung, \textit{Soldier}, p. 428; Woodward, \textit{Plan of Attack}, p.235.}

Throughout December 2002 and until mid-January 2003, most foreign leaders, including senior British and French officials, believed that Iraqi cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNSCOM), the tough new inspections regime headed by Blix, might still avoid a military confrontation.\footnote{Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, pp. 117f.} The inspections, backed by the threat of force, were in fact off to a reasonably good start: UNSCOM teams were conducting some 300 inspections a month, many of them unannounced, including on suspicious sites pointed out by U.S. and allied intelligence.\footnote{Blix, \textit{Disarming Iraq}, p. 156; Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 143.} No illicit weapons material was discovered, but in the course of the inspections process about seventy Iraqi “Al-Samoud” missiles, which exceeded the allowed range, were destroyed under UNMOVIC supervision.\footnote{Blix, \textit{Disarming Iraq}, p. 190.} Blix’s first report to the SC, on January 27, 2003, had pointed out some shortcomings in Iraq’s cooperation, although there were no concrete instances of violation. By February 14, Blix was able to report that “the situation has improved,” and although many prohibited weapons remained unaccounted for, the chief weapons inspector insisted that with full Iraqi cooperation, the period of disarmament could be short.\footnote{Blix, \textit{Disarming Iraq}, pp. 176-78; Thompson, \textit{Channels of Power}, pp. 146-8; Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, pp. 143f.}

However, in Washington the administration’s patience was clearly limited. By December 2002, given the pace of military preparations and the large U.S. force buildup in the Persian Gulf, war had become a virtual necessity. Withdrawing American forces without first having
removed Saddam Hussein from power would have been politically extremely difficult for President Bush. In late November, General Franks had set in motion the deployment of a full invasion force of almost 130,000 American troops. That came on top of the tens of thousands of troops that had already been silently deployed to the Persian Gulf under orders from Rumsfeld since August 2002, under the guise of training exercises and increasing the theater capacity for Afghanistan. Rumsfeld, in short, had set the nation on a default path towards military action; and he eventually warned that the president couldn’t “leave 150,000 troops sitting on Iraq’s border forever.”

On December 18, 2002, shortly after the Iraqi weapons declaration, President Bush said during an NSC meeting: “I think war is inevitable.” Secretary Powell himself, understanding where the administration was headed, suggested during that same NSC meeting (i.e., less than three weeks after the UN inspectors had moved back into Iraq) that soon after Blix’s report to the Security Council on January 27, 2003, the United States should declare Saddam Hussein to be in material breach and quickly drive the UN process to a conclusion. Blix subsequently sought to reassure Powell that if Iraq cooperated further, the remaining weapons questions could be resolved by April 15, 2003. Powell, however, told him that would be too late. From the point of view of an administration that was determined to go to war, further inspections were becoming a political liability: reports of increasing Iraqi disarmament and cooperation risked

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1245 DeYoung, *Soldier*, p. 455.
destroying the administration’s ostensible \textit{casus belli} and might undermine public support for the war. Hadley candidly explains that a continuation of the UN inspections, “rather than being the basis for a resolution to go to war, would basically have prevented us from going to war.”

From Washington’s standpoint, the UN inspections regime was thus never more than a side-show, to be tolerated until the point in early March 2003 when General Franks would be ready to launch the invasion.\textsuperscript{1247} The Bush administration was “never interested in the inspections, really,” concludes Greenstock, the British ambassador in New York. “They were just looking for a degree of legitimacy that they could milk out of the system.”\textsuperscript{1248} Negroponte, his former American colleague, develops the analysis further:

The president had probably already made up his mind to go to war even before we got the resolution. So he wasn’t really prepared to give the inspections regime much of a chance. If you set up a UN institution to carry out a regime of inspections and you are serious about it it’s a little bit silly to expect that you are going to produce results in two or three months.\textsuperscript{1249}

\textbf{6. Could a second UN resolution have been obtained?}

Pundits close to the Bush administration have claimed that Washington made a serious effort to get a second UN resolution authorizing military action in February and early March 2003, but obtaining such a resolution was in fact impossible due to French and Russian obstructionism at the SC.\textsuperscript{1250} I argue that this conclusion relies on a revisionist interpretation of history that is not supported by the evidence. A reasonable counterfactual argument can be made

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1246} Author interview with Stephen J. Hadley (January 24, 2011).
\bibitem{1248} Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).
\bibitem{1249} Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).
\end{thebibliography}
that the Bush administration could in fact have obtained a second resolution authorizing military action, provided there had been no rush to war and U.S. authorities had been willing to devote more time and resources to the diplomatic effort.

In the course of January 2003, Washington’s international partners realized that the Bush administration’s march to war was in fact unstoppable. On January 13, 2003, French President Chirac dispatched his diplomatic adviser, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, to Washington for consultations with senior Bush administration officials. The French envoy suggested that the UN inspectors be given more time to complete their work, and he left open the possibility of French support for military action down the road. But National Security Advisor Rice straightforwardly told him that U.S. credibility was now at stake and the administration could not wait for much longer.1251 “After Gourdault-Monagne’s visit to Washington,” recalls a French diplomat who personally attended the meetings, “it became very clear to people in Paris that the U.S. administration was going to go to war no matter what happened.1252 During the visit, Gourdault-Montagne had suggested that if military action was deemed necessary in Washington, the United States should simply move ahead on the basis of SCR 1441, without coming back to the Council for a second resolution, and Paris would acquiesce in the decision.1253 Subsequently Jean-David Levitte, the French ambassador to Washington, repeated the same point to Hadley: in view of avoiding a public fallout between the allies, the U.S. should avoid coming back to the SC.1254

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1251 Nouzille, *Dans le secret des presidents*, p. 395; see also Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies At War*, pp. 119f.
1253 Errera interview.
Tony Blair needs a second UN resolution

As previously argued, following the adoption of SCR 1441, the Bush administration had at first not intended to come back to the Council for a second resolution, which it deemed unnecessary. It was Blair, the British leader, who in late January 2003 insisted that Washington and London should come back to the SC and seek a second resolution, and he persuaded President Bush, against the explicit recommendation of most of the latter’s senior policy advisers, including Rice and Powell. Blair had promised a skeptical British public in December 2002 that he would only support military action against Iraq with a UN mandate or if “the spirit of the UN resolution was broken because an unreasonable veto was put down.” In other words, British authorities needed to be able to persuade their domestic public that they had exhausted the UN process and at least made a serious effort to obtain a second SC resolution authorizing military action.

From late January to early March 2003, London scrambled to obtain a second UN resolution authorizing the use of force, but Washington’s support for the effort was lukewarm, at best. In Greenstock’s words, the United States for the most part simply “condoned a certain amount of time for the British to make the effort.” In early 2003, the American president hardly ever spoke to either Chirac or the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, thus never putting his full personal weight behind seeking to obtain their abstention at the Council. Secretary Powell, too, largely focused on the domestic political front once SCR 1441 was adopted, and

1255 Author interview with William B. Wood (January 25, 2011).
1256 Bush, Decision Points, p. 244; Woodward, Plan of Attack, pp. 296f.; see also DeYoung, Soldier, p. 454;
1257 Quoted in Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 146.
1258 Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011).
1259 Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).
(contrary to his French counterpart, Dominique de Villepin) he did not personally travel to the capitals of undecided Council members, leaving the job to lower-ranking State Department officials.\textsuperscript{1261} “Contrast the way that the Bush administration handled the second resolution in 2003 with Jim Baker’s effort on the first Gulf War,” suggests Ambassador Negroponte, and it becomes clear that in 2002-03, the administration “didn’t really focus much on diplomacy with the other Security Council members leading up to the Iraq war.”\textsuperscript{1262} In 1990-91, President G.H.W. Bush had been personally deeply involved in diplomacy with key international partners, and Secretary of State James Baker had visited forty-one countries on five continents (frequently offering significant financial side-payments and diplomatic incentives), in view of building up international support for military action on the Security Council and beyond.\textsuperscript{1263}

\textit{Seeking a numerical majority on the Council}

French foreign minister de Villepin had already hinted in an interview on January 20, 2003 that under the existing circumstances, his country would oppose a second resolution explicitly authorizing military action.\textsuperscript{1264} Policy officials in London and Washington, however, expected that if at least nine out of the Council’s fifteen members could be persuaded to vote for a second resolution, Paris would have abstained instead of vetoing the resolution.\textsuperscript{1265} France had

\textsuperscript{1261} DeYoung, \textit{Soldier}, p. 456; Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 173.

\textsuperscript{1262} Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).


\textsuperscript{1264} Asked by journalist about France’s attitude vis-à-vis a second resolution on military action, de Villepin said that “as far as respect for principles is concerned, France will go to the very end.” See Nouzille, \textit{Dans le secret des presidents}, p. 397; and for reactions in Washington, see DeYoung, \textit{Soldier}, pp. 433f; and Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{1265} Author interview with William B. Wood (January 25, 2011).
in fact not cast a veto at the Security Council in opposition to either of its two major allies since the mid-1970s.\footnote{1266}

But by early February 2003, the Bush administration could count only on itself and Britain among the Council’s five permanent members, plus Spain and Bulgaria among the current ten nonpermanent members. Among the P5, France, Russia, and China were opposed to an immediate authorization of military action, believing that the UNSCOM inspections were making progress. That put all the weight on the remaining six nonpermanent members, who for the time being remained undecided: namely, Mexico, Chile, Pakistan, Angola, Cameroon, and Guinea. If Washington and London could persuade five out of the six undecided nations to support military action, then France, as well as Russia and China, would probably have abstained, and a second resolution authorizing military action could in all likelihood have been adopted at the Council.\footnote{1267}

On February 24, the British, with acquiescence from Washington, circulated a draft resolution in New York, which stated that Iraq had not complied with its international obligations and therefore “failed to take the final opportunity afforded it in Resolution 1441.”\footnote{1268} The draft was clearly interpreted by everyone on the Council as an attempt to authorize the “serious consequences” that had merely been threatened in resolution 1441.\footnote{1269} In previous weeks, British and American diplomats had put significant pressure on the six undecided Council members, in view of obtaining their affirmative vote. Walter Kansteiner, at the time the assistant

\footnote{1266} The last time France cast a SC veto in opposition to its allies was on February 6, 1976, over a dispute involving the French-held territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean. See Celine Nahory, Gigi Gya and Misaki Watanabe, “Subjects of UN Security Council Vetoes,” Global Policy Forum, 2011 (available online at: http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/196/40069.html).

\footnote{1267} Author interviews with Richard Armitage and other senior State Department officials.


\footnote{1269} Author interview with Jean-Marc de La Sablière (May 18, 2011).
secretary of state for Africa, and his British counterpart, Valerie Amos, had personally met with
the leaders of Angola, Guinea, and Cameroon, and by mid-February, all three of them had promised to support the British-American draft.\footnote{1270}

By the end of February, Chile and Mexico, too, were shifting towards an affirmative vote. At that point, a personal visit by President Bush nor Secretary Powell, combined with significant financial incentives (or not-so-veiled threats) from the United States, might well have locked in their support. Instead, as a favor to Blair, President Bush merely called Vincente Fox, the Mexican president, on the telephone, and there is no evidence of explicit side-payments having been offered.\footnote{1271} The Pakistani government was expected to support the United States, given its financial dependence on Washington.\footnote{1272} While neither Mexico, nor Chile, or Pakistan had formally assured their affirmative vote, American diplomats involved in the UN negotiations are confident that if the United States government had put its full diplomatic weight behind the February 24 draft resolution and forced a vote, a nine-member majority could indeed have been obtained, with likely abstentions from France, Russia, and China.\footnote{1273}

\textit{Chirac says “non”}

The window of opportunity that had emerged by late February, however, closed again in early March, as Iraq’s cooperation with the weapons inspectors further improved and world public opinion increasingly turned against the war. Millions of people participated in public

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\footnote{1273} Author interviews with two senior State Department officials, at the time political advisors at the US Mission to the United Nations (June 2011).
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marches against the war in several European capitals, including London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, and Madrid.\textsuperscript{1274} By then, President Chirac, an instinctive politician, had also become more vocal in his public opposition to the war.\textsuperscript{1275} On March 5, the foreign ministers of France, Russia, and Germany met in Paris and issued a joint declaration stating that they would “not allow a proposed resolution to pass that authorizes the resort to force.”\textsuperscript{1276} A few days later, on March 10, Chirac went one step further, declaring in a televised interview that France would veto any explicit authorization of military action “whatever the circumstances”—by which he meant, regardless of how many nonpermanent members were going to vote for the resolution.\textsuperscript{1277}

For Chirac, the veto threat was both a matter of principle (the Council should not rubber-stamp what he believed would be an illegitimate war) and of political expediency (the war was deeply unpopular among European publics and among French Muslims in particular). But there was also a tactical dimension involved. French political authorities had concluded that by making the veto threat explicit, they could take the political pressure off the nonpermanent members, offering them political cover, and thereby prevent Washington and London from obtaining a nine-member majority on the Council. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, the French UN ambassador at the time, remembers that at the end of February 2003, the UN representatives of Chile and Mexico came to see him and mentioned: “the Americans are saying that you will abstain.” When

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\textsuperscript{1274} Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{1275} “President Chirac himself was the one who wanted to take this furthest,” while several of his advisers were warning against the potential fallout of a public escalation in terms of Franco-American relations, remembers a senior French diplomat involved in bilateral relations between Paris and Washington at the time. Author interview with senior French diplomat.
\textsuperscript{1276} Quoted in Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{1277} Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, pp. 152f; Nouzille, Dans le secret des presidents, p. 407.
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de La Sablière sought to reassure them that France would in fact veto any explicit authorization of force at this stage, they asked: “well, could you make it public?”

By early March—that is, before Chirac issued his explicit veto threat on March 10—the six undecided nations had again become much more uncertain about whether to support a second resolution authorizing force. Their view was that the inspectors should be allowed more time to complete their work and the SC should establish specific benchmarks, against which Iraq’s compliance could then more clearly be measured. Most of them believed that another thirty to sixty days should be allowed for that purpose. “The fact was that they [the undecided six] felt that the Americans were rushing it beyond the logic of the situation,” explains Greenstock. “So in the end, they started to march backwards and moved away from what they were being asked to do. The Africans, too, fell away. And that movement was accentuated when the French said they were going to veto.”

The last-minute benchmarks proposal

Between March 8 and March 12, 2003, Greenstock launched a last-minute effort to find a compromise agreement with the six uncommitted nations, by working out a list of five benchmarks that Iraq would have had to meet within a short time frame. Specific requirements included cooperation with the UN inspectors on taking Iraqi scientists and their families abroad for interviews, as well as accounting for anthrax, alleged stores of VX nerve gas, ballistic missiles, and remotely piloted aircraft. Washington reluctantly allowed the British to move ahead with the proposal but was unwilling to allow more than a single week for Iraq’s full

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1278 Author interview with Jean-Marc de La Sablière (May 18, 2011).
1279 Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).
1280 Blix, Disarming Iraq, p. 245; Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 152.
compliance—hence the final deadline had to be March 17.\textsuperscript{1281} The six uncommitted members, for their part, were open to finding a compromise solution but felt that the benchmarks should not be a mere pretext for war. “The six liked the idea, but they had requirements on which Greenstock was never able to deliver,” explains de La Sablière.\textsuperscript{1282} The six uncommitted nations insisted on a longer deadline and asked that there be no ultimatum or “automaticity”—that is, the Council would have to assess the implementation of the benchmarks after the deadline, based on a report from the inspectors.\textsuperscript{1283} Greenstock himself explains the ultimate failure of the benchmarks proposal as follows:

The middle ground six, the Africans, the Pakistanis, and the Latin Americans, went along tentatively with the idea of setting benchmarks. But they wanted to stipulate a much greater length of time for Saddam to meet those benchmarks than the Americans were prepared to concede. They [the six] stipulated forty-five days to me, and we couldn’t bridge the gap between one week and forty-five days.\textsuperscript{1284}

France and Russia, for their part, would most likely have gone along with the benchmarks proposal, so long as the SC retained the ultimate authority to decide on military action.\textsuperscript{1285} As one senior French diplomat explains: “Whether we were going to accept it sincerely or because we had no other choice, that’s another question. But I think we would have accepted it.”\textsuperscript{1286} Assuming that Washington had consented to a 45-day deadline, a benchmarks resolution could have been adopted around March 12 or 13, 2003. The Council would then have decided by the end of April, based on reports from the inspectors, whether Iraq had complied, or whether the use of force was instead warranted. With hindsight, it would have been exceedingly difficult for

\textsuperscript{1281}Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011). Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{1282}Author interview with Jean-Marc de La Sablière (May 18, 2011).
\textsuperscript{1283}Blix, \textit{Disarming Iraq}, p. 248.
\textsuperscript{1284}Author interview with Jeremy Greenstock (March 30, 2011).
\textsuperscript{1285}Author interview with Jean-Marc de La Sablière (May 18, 2011). See also Blix, \textit{Disarming Iraq}, pp. 181, 246.
\textsuperscript{1286}Author interview with Philippe Errera (January 22, 2011).
the Iraqi government to comply with the benchmarks. Baghdad could hardly have accounted for its outstanding anthrax and of VX nerve gas stores, given that the relevant documentation had probably been destroyed years earlier. Furthermore, Iraqi scientists interviewed abroad might have told indicting stories of Saddam’s attempts to deceive the international community about his WMD programs. Would that have been sufficient to achieve a consensus behind authorizing force on the Council? Javier Solana, at the time the EU’s high representative for foreign policy, believes that France in particular would have come on board if a longer timeline had been offered: “The French were willing to get out of the mess. There’s no doubt about that. But the impression was that the Americans were very decided.”

In short, what prevented an agreement on a new benchmarks resolution at the SC was not principled opposition from either France, Russia, or any of the nonpermanent members, but rather Washington’s unwillingness to consider a longer timeline for Iraqi compliance. Negroponte remembers that by the time the benchmarks proposal was being discussed, “it was obvious to me that Washington had decided to move on.” With Greenstock unable to offer the six nonpermanent members any compromise agreement regarding the deadline, the benchmarks negotiations had collapsed by Friday, March 14. On Monday, March 17, Washington and London formally declared Security Council negotiations to be over. Three days later, on March

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Philippe Errera, a senior diplomat at the French embassy in Washington at the time, agrees that France would probably have come on board behind the use of force, if another two months or so had been set aside for diplomacy: “you can then argue that we would have done it because we wouldn’t have had a choice, but the answer is yes. The Americans were either too impatient or just really didn’t care about the SC authorization.” Author interview with Philippe Errera (January 22, 2011).

1288 Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).

1289 Blix, Disarming Iraq, p. 248; see also Gordon and Shapiro, Allies At War, p. 153. For background information on the final effort to persuade the undecided six, see also Ronan Bennett, “Ten days to war,” The Guardian, March 8, 2008.
19. President Bush gave the order to execute Operation Iraqi Freedom, and soon thereafter the first U.S. special operations teams crossed into Iraq.\textsuperscript{1290}

\textbf{Conclusion: What could have been done differently?}

Implicit in the aforementioned paragraphs is the argument that Washington and London could probably have obtained a further UN resolution authorizing military action, if the Bush administration had been willing to allow for more time and make a greater diplomatic effort. General Abizaid, who by early 2003 was deputy commander at CENTCOM, rejects the argument sometimes made by civilian Bush administration officials that U.S. military leaders pushed Washington to go to war by March 2003, because American forces would have been incapable of fighting in the Iraqi summer heat. Even in the summer, U.S. forces equipped with advanced technological capabilities could have avoided the heat by fighting at night (as they had already partially done during the 1991 Gulf War):

It would have been a problem, but it was not an insurmountable problem. I believe it was not a military decision, it was a political decision, and then some of the political leadership came up with this idea that it couldn’t be done later. Of course it could be done. It could be done anytime. I didn’t feel any great pressure from our military commanders on the ground. I believe that they were on a political timeline.\textsuperscript{1291}

Armitage, a former Navy officer who had served three combat tours in Vietnam, remembers explicitly telling the president not to feel pressured by rising temperatures in Iraq. “I said, Mr. President, don’t be rushed in your decision by rising daytime temperatures, because we own the night—and it’s a lot cooler then.”\textsuperscript{1292}

\textsuperscript{1290} Woodward, \textit{Plan of Attack}, p. 279.

\textsuperscript{1291} Author interview with Gen. John P. Abizaid (January 20, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1292} Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011).
It appears that the decision to go to war in March 2003, as opposed to waiting another two months to try to forge a diplomatic consensus at the Security Council, was based on a fairly clear cost-benefit assessment in Washington. From a U.S. domestic political standpoint, support for military action was highest in February 2003, following a public presentation by Secretary Powell at the Security Council on February 5. By waiting for much longer, the president risked appearing indecisive vis-à-vis an opponent that he and his administration had increasingly portrayed as a vital, imminent threat to the United States. “We were so leaning forward,” explains Armitage. “The momentum that had built in the administration didn’t favor waiting at all.” With strong domestic political support for military action, and most members of the administration expecting that toppling Saddam Hussein and stabilizing Iraq thereafter would be easy, the president and his advisers saw little reason to engage in further costly diplomacy, with the additional disincentive that the final outcome at the Security Council would still have been less than certain. By early March, furthermore, Washington’s chief ally, Tony Blair, was overcoming his own domestic political problems, as British Attorney General Peter Goldsmith, reversing his own earlier opinion, declared on March 7 that military action would be legal based on existing UN resolutions. With Britain’s support for the war no longer in doubt, the

1293 Powell’s presentation at the Security Council, ostensibly aimed at persuading reluctant international partners, was in fact largely targeted at U.S. public opinion and left much of the world underwhelmed. See DeYoung, Soldier, p. 450; Ricks, Fiasco, p. 93.
1294 Author interview with Richard L. Armitage (January 31, 2011).
administration in Washington appears to have lost any interest in the UN process whatsoever. By early March, Negroponte recalls, “our minds were on other things.”\footnote{1296}{Author interview with John D. Negroponte (February 15, 2011).}

Apart from the aforementioned missed opportunity to force a vote in late February, and the subsequent last-minute scramble over benchmarks, an explicit UN mandate for military action might well have been obtained if a different strategy had been followed from the outset. To begin with, President Bush could have instructed his administration and senior OSD officials in particular to adopt a less abrasive diplomatic style, by seriously engaging and consulting with major international partners from early on, instead of treating them in a patronizing manner that frequently bordered on outright contempt. As one former member of the administration recalls, even in private discussions, senior policy officials like “Douglas Feith and Secretary Rumsfeld were just destructively reckless in how they talked about the allies.”\footnote{1297}{Author interview with Kori Schake (January 21, 2011).} These officials, as previously shown, genuinely believed that forging an international consensus leading up to the war would be unnecessary. Their harsh public rhetoric vis-à-vis major international partners—such as Rumsfeld’s dismissal of French and German concerns about a rush to war as the views of “old Europe”—increased diplomatic frictions and significantly narrowed whatever space there might have been to achieve a UN consensus in the short run.\footnote{1298}{Gordon and Shapiro, \textit{Allies At War}, 128, 164, 73.}

Finally, a better functioning interagency process, with NS adviser Rice promoting a frank debate among the president’s senior advisors leading up to the war, could have made a significant difference. Several former administration officials interviewed for this dissertation agree that Rice took a backseat in NSC discussions leading up to the war. She generally sought to resolve debates by blending the views of different senior policy officials, instead of clarifying
divergent positions for the president. That allowed the most committed and hard-line officials, with Rumsfeld and Cheney at the forefront, to dominate the interagency process and largely set the agenda on Iraq. The dysfunctional NSC process also made it easier for the hard-liners to initiate covert force deployments as early as mid-2002, without any cabinet-level decision about whether there should be a war in the first place. Rumsfeld and his staff were thus able to lead the nation along a default path toward military action, which eventually made it politically unfeasible to postpone the war beyond early 2003.

A frank NSC debate about war strategy during the first half of 2002, for instance, might have persuaded the president to follow the suggestion of senior officials from the State Department and the Joint Staff, such as Armitage, Grossman, and Abizaid, according to whom the administration should not have aimed for military action before the fall of 2003. Such an alternative approach might have allowed the administration to forge a consensus at the UN Security Council and bring key international partners on board behind military action, before a U.S. invasion appeared all but inevitable in foreign capitals. Like Grossman, Abizaid believes that if the Bush administration had taken the time, the United States could have put together a UN-backed coalition, similar to the one forged in 1991, “both for combat operations and for activities afterwards.” Alas, he concludes, “there was this rush to move quickly and that rush didn’t come from the military, it came from the civilian government.”

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Conclusion

The foregoing empirical chapters corroborate my bureaucratic politics theory of U.S. multilateralism for armed interventions. In the cases of Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the military leaders by-and-large acted as politically independent professionals. The chairman and vice-chairman of the JCS were initially opposed to or highly skeptical about using force for the purpose of changing the domestic politics of foreign countries. The military’s principal concerns were that U.S. objectives were either unclear or exceedingly ambitious; hence armed intervention would most likely result in costly, open-ended troop deployments; and in the absence of perceived vital threats to American interests, U.S. public and congressional support could not be taken for granted. Civilian advocates of intervention, confronted with great initial reluctance or opposition from the military brass, needed to reassure the military leaders, or at least be able to show that the military’s concerns had been adequately addressed, in order to forge a broad bureaucratic coalition in favor of intervention and persuade the president to move ahead with the use of force. The ensuing bureaucratic bargaining and deliberations in Washington increasingly drove the U.S. policy process toward relevant IOs—the UN in the case of Haiti, and NATO in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo.

These bureaucratic political dynamics were not exclusive to the Clinton administration: as briefly discussed in chapter two, the military leaders and their governmental allies also pushed the Washington policy process toward multilateralism leading up to U.S. interventions in Somalia in 1992, Liberia in 2003, and Libya in 2011. In all those cases, activist policy officials sought to obtain the advance endorsement of relevant IOs as part of a broader strategy aimed at reassuring the military leaders and persuading the president to move ahead with the use of force.
Hence the military leaders, through their concern about open-ended troop commitments overseas, have fundamentally steered the Washington policy process toward multilateralism leading up to humanitarian and other idealist interventions.

The 2003 Iraq case is more complex. As I showed in chapter six, leading up to the Iraq war, several high-ranking military officials, notably on the Joint Staff and in the services, doubted that Saddam Hussein’s regime constituted an imminent, vital threat to the United States; and they perceived the Bush administration’s drive to war as largely reflecting political and ideological motives. The military planners also expected that a long-term U.S. troop commitment would be needed for postwar stabilization, which in turn made broad international support highly desirable in their eyes. This analysis was also shared by Secretary of State Powell, the Bush administration’s leading war veteran, who explicitly recommended that the president seek to obtain a UN endorsement for military action.

On Iraq, however, the nation’s top military authorities, Generals Myers and Pace, respectively the chairman and vice chairman of the JCS, as well as CENTCOM commander Tommy Franks, were closely aligned with the administration’s civilian hawks and never openly challenged the hard-liners’ exceedingly optimistic assumptions about postwar Iraq. With little or no support from the JCS chairman and vice-chairman or from General Franks, and with the Pentagon’s civilian leadership agitating for war, it was exceedingly difficult for other U.S. general officers to convey their views to the president and the NSC. Furthermore, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld deliberately sought to limit the military’s political influence, by appointing loyalists to top positions, silencing dissenters, and frequently brushing aside unwelcome military advice on matters of policy and operations. In the absence of vigorous military opposition or publicly expressed skepticism about the policy and the war plans, the bureaucratic political
dynamics that had decisively pushed the Washington policy process toward IO-based multilateralism on other occasions were not activated leading up to the 2003 Iraq war. Hence the American effort to seek a UN endorsement for the use of force against Iraq was always half-hearted, and it was completely abandoned in early 2003, as it became clear that the SC was unwilling to hastily rubber stamp a U.S. invasion aimed at regime change. In consequence, with little international buy-in, the United States has had to shoulder a very large proportion of the postwar stabilization and reconstruction burden in Iraq on its own, at an estimated cost of well over one trillion dollars to the American taxpayer.\textsuperscript{1302}

\textit{The future of U.S. multilateralism for military interventions}

Based on the theory and overall analysis presented in this dissertation, several cautious predictions can be made about the future of U.S. military intervention and multilateralism. First, after the disastrous interlude of near-complete military subservience to civilian interests during the administration of President George W. Bush, the U.S. military brass can be expected to reassert their professional independence, offering their own vigorous contribution to Washington policy debates about armed intervention. The military’s professional viewpoint, for instance, already appears to have had a significant impact on the Obama administration’s policies on armed intervention in Afghanistan and Libya, preventing a precipitous troop withdrawal that might have harmed U.S. credibility in the first case, and persuading the administration to minimize its own involvement in the latter. The military’s staunch opposition to further interventions aimed at changing the domestic politics of foreign countries also appears to have

contributed to keeping a potential U.S.-led intervention in Syria almost entirely off the political agenda in Washington.\textsuperscript{1303}

Moreover, given the high long-term costs of the unilateral Iraq invasion, civilian leaders in Washington are likely to more readily follow the military’s advice in the foreseeable future, seeking to limit American liability, by either keeping U.S. ground troops entirely out of foreign political conflicts, or intervening only after having obtained the endorsement of relevant IOs. As political scientist John Mueller has written, in U.S. national security circles, the injunction “no more Vietnams” is already being replaced, or updated, by “no more Iraqs.”\textsuperscript{1304} Hence for the foreseeable future, the United States is unlikely to intervene unilaterally to promote domestic political change abroad, in the absence of direct threats to American citizens or key allies.

At the same time, it might become increasingly difficult for the United States to obtain the explicit endorsement of relevant IOs, and notably of the UNSC, for military interventions in the future. Paradoxically, the diffusion of democratic political regimes, which the United States generally supports, will make it more difficult for the United States to garner IO endorsement for armed interventions overseas. In the past, it used to be fairly easy for the United States to obtain affirmative votes on the SC from foreign autocrats who depended on Washington for military, diplomatic, and financial assistance. As foreign countries increasingly democratize, however, their leaders must take into account the preferences of their people to a greater degree, if they are to survive politically—and U.S. military interventions are often extremely unpopular among


domestic audiences in Latin America, Asia, and even Western Europe. John Ruggie, for instance, cogently reminds us that “in the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War the United States had the most trouble not with authoritarian states or kleptocracies but with other democracies—and not only in ‘old Europe’ France and Germany, but also in Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Turkey.” In line with this argument, one recent study has found that the preference gap between the United States and the rest of the world, as measured by voting patterns at the UN General Assembly, has widened at a constant rate since the end of the cold war.

Furthermore, the diffusion of global power away from the United States is likely to increase the cost to Washington of persuading states like China, Russia, India, or Brazil to either vote in favor of prospective U.S. military interventions at the SC or at least to not explicitly oppose them. Rising powers like China, India, and Brazil—also known as leaders of the “Non-Aligned Movement” (NAM)—all espouse a fairly traditionalist conception of state sovereignty, which does not fit easily with notions of humanitarian military intervention and more generally armed interference in the domestic politics of foreign countries. Following the U.S.-led Kosovo intervention in 1999, for instance, the 100-odd members of the NAM unanimously adopted a declaration stating: “We reject the so-called ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention, which has no legal basis in the UN Charter or in the general principles of international law.”

What are the most likely implications of the aforementioned international political changes for U.S. decision making on military intervention? According to some analysts, given that explicit approval from the SC will be increasingly difficult to obtain, the United States can

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be expected to rely more on ad-hoc coalitions of the willing or seek the endorsement of regional IOs in the future. Support from ad-hoc coalitions may be helpful for the purpose of boosting U.S. domestic political approval of military action. Yet by definition, ad-hoc coalitions lack an institutionalized mechanism to lock in international support; and thus the endorsement of ad-hoc coalitions cannot reassure skeptical policy officials in Washington about longer-term burden sharing. Put differently, when the military leaders and their bureaucratic allies strongly oppose a prospective intervention, due to the expectation of a costly entanglement and open-ended troop commitment, merely the support of ad-hoc coalitions is unlikely to reassure them and reduce their opposition.

In principle, the United States could rely on regional IOs, first and foremost NATO, as a viable substitute to SC endorsement. However, barring a direct external attack on a NATO member state, Washington’s European allies are highly unlikely to endorse, let alone actively support, a U.S.-led military intervention overseas, in the absence of a prior authorization from the SC. The Kosovo experience of 1999, where NATO reluctantly endorsed a U.S.-led military intervention without UN cover, after months of pushing and prodding from Washington, will probably remain the exception. Major European states such as Germany, Italy, and France arguably had important national interests at stake in the Balkans; but the Balkans are being gradually stabilized, with the prospect of EU membership down the road offering a powerful incentive for peaceful conflict management in the region. Given how difficult it was to achieve a NATO consensus over Kosovo, and taking into account the growing “intervention fatigue” among European publics following a decade-long military engagement in Afghanistan, it is hard

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to imagine that the alliance could endorse any future “out of area” interventions in Central Asia, Africa, or the Middle East, without a prior SC mandate. Other regional IOs, such as the OAS, the African Union, or the Arab League, are even less likely to endorse U.S.-led military interventions targeting any of their own members in the absence of prior UN authorization, given persistent sensitivities in most of the developing world to western interference. In short, in the foreseeable future, endorsement from regional organizations might usefully supplement UNSC approval of U.S. interventions and help further lock in international support for post-combat peacekeeping and reconstruction, but it is unlikely to become a viable substitute to SC approval.

If the military leaders and their bureaucratic allies in Washington oppose a prospective intervention based on the expectation of high long-term costs, there are few alternatives for those wishing to forge an interagency consensus on the use of force to obtaining the explicit approval of the UN Security Council. However, given that SC approval is likely to become more difficult to obtain, in the future we are probably going to see more vote-trading initiated and side-payments offered by the United States, as Washington seeks to persuade skeptical member states to vote in favor of military action. Put differently, in the face of a resurgent Russia and rising China, the SC will function even more than has hitherto been the case like a classical great-power concert or security regime, based on reciprocity, logrolling, and mutual accommodation among its principal members. At the same time, given the growing costs of UN endorsement, hawkish policy officials in Washington will more frequently than in the past be unable to muster the necessary resources to obtain an explicit SC mandate. That, in turn, can be expected to make

it more difficult for activist U.S. leaders to reassure the skeptical military and forge winning bureaucratic coalitions in favor of armed intervention.

The shift of global power away from the U.S. and its allies also implies that other powerful states might be able to react more forcefully in the future to American interventions they fundamentally oppose. For instance, twenty years from now, in the aftermath of U.S. interventions widely perceived as internationally illegitimate, rising democracies like India or Brazil might choose to cooperate less with the United States on issues of concern to Washington. Put differently, “soft balancing” against the United States, while not a concern to American leaders at present, might further constrain Washington policy making in the future. Presumably, even mere threats of international retaliation, or reduced cooperation with the United States, as a consequence of unilateral military action, would add further ammunition to those policy officials in Washington who are skeptical about a prospective intervention to begin with. In short, then, over the next few decades the United States is likely to become more multilateralist in outlook on matters pertaining to the use of force, but given the growing costs of obtaining explicit IO approval, U.S. humanitarian and other idealist interventions aimed at changing the domestic politics of foreign countries will probably become altogether less frequent.
List of officials interviewed
(with relevant positions held and date of interview)


Asmus, Ronald D., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1997-2000. April 5, 2010; and April 21, 2010


Bloomfield, Lincoln P., Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, 2001-2005. April 7, 2011


Halperin, Morton H., Consultant to the secretary of defense, 1993; Senior director for democracy on the NSC staff, 1994-1996; and Director of policy planning the Department of State, 1998-2001. March 10, 2010


Hughes, Col. Paul (USA, ret.), Director of national security policy on the U.S. Army staff, 2000-2002; and Senior staff officer for the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (OHRA) and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, January - August 2003. April 1, 2011


Johnstone, Ian, Legal advisor, Office of the UN Secretary-General, 1994-1995; Senior political officer, Office of the UN Secretary-General, 1997-2000. April 2, 2010

February 2, 2011


January 18, 2011

Kaufmann, Col. Gregory (USA, ret.), Chief of staff and Director of the Balkans task force in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), 1997-98 and 1999-2000, respectively.

March 10, 2010

Kerrick, Lt. Gen. Donald L. (USA, ret.), Director of European Affairs on the NSC staff, 1994-95; and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, January 1997-August 1999.

March 22, 2010


January 20, 2011


August 9, 2009


June 23, 2009


February 11, 2011


June 26, 2009

Larkin, Barbara, Senior congressional aide on foreign affairs, 1986-1995; and Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, 1996 - 1999.

April 2, 2010


December 8, 2009

Miller, Franklin C., Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the NSC staff, 2001-2005. February 23, 2011


Norris, John, Director of communications for the Deputy Secretary of State, 1999-2001. April 26, 2010


Pastor, Robert, Senior political advisor to the Carter-Powell-Nunn diplomatic mission to Haiti, September 1994. June 23, 2009


December 15, 2010


July 25, 2009

Rubin, James P., Senior Advisor to the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, May 1993-August 1996; Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, August 1997– April 2000.

April 9, 2010


January 21, 2011


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March 22, 2011


March 4, 2010


March 11, 2010; and June 9, 2011


July 29, 2009; and July 30, 2009


March 24, 2011


July 9, 2009


January 26, 2011
Vendrell, Francesc, Senior political advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Haiti, December 1992 - July 1993; and Head of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan, January 2000 - December 2001.  


Ward, George F., Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization affairs, 1992-1996.  


Wolff, Alejandro, Executive assistant to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, 1998-2000.  


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