

TWO-LEVEL WAR GAMES
THE DOMESTIC FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PRESIDENTIAL
DECISIONMAKING TO USE FORCE IN MINOR CONFLICTS

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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Research that has analyzed presidential decisions to commit to military force have traditionally either focused on international trends or, if considering domestic trends, have generally focused on major conflicts. While certain domestic factors such as economic conditions, in group/out group sociological hypotheses, and presidential popularity may all plausibly apply to the use of force in major conflicts it is more difficult to determine how strongly these might hold up in minor conflicts where the goals and application of force is limited and when there is usually little direct threat to the homeland itself. This paper will look into the domestic influences upon presidential decisions to use force in minor conflicts using the war in Bosnia and Kosovo air campaigns as a case study with additional consideration given to the recent campaign in Libya. These cases will provide insight into a situation where the decision to use force considered through declined (Bosnia) and a situation where use of force was applied (Kosovo). In each case, a set of domestic considerations will be analyzed to determine what weight was brought to bear on President Clinton's decision to use force or not.

This paper concludes by speculating that presidents generally come to believe that force is necessary or not because of international reasons, but that the specific conduct of those interventions is largely governed by domestic constraints. Furthermore, the administration's perception of those constraints governs its conduct almost as much as the constraints themselves. This may indicate that policymakers attempt to anticipate future opposition to their conduct or that they may also err too greatly on the side of caution when evaluating possible actions. This may further indicate that presidents are more greatly constrained in the use of military force than is widely understood. Furthermore, this seems to indicate the idea that military force can be used as a distraction from domestic issues (at least in democracies) is probably not grounded in historical analysis. If anything, foreign policy crises are difficult for presidents to exploit for domestic gain and more often than not a lose-lose proposition. This is especially true if the opposition party controls Congress and seeks to use the foreign policy crises as a way to exploit a president's possible weaknesses.

This will contribute to the relevant literature because while most studies that have analyzed this subject have drawn from empirical analyses, this paper will instead rely on historical analysis. While empirical analyses often draw evidence that is more a result of correlation than causation, a historical analysis will be able to more clearly draw causal links between domestic conditions and the president's decision to use force. This paper will also only consider minor uses of force since the domestic dynamics that lead to the use of force in major conflicts are different, under-analyzed, and more prone to conditions where a diversionary use of force may be expected. The fact that the option of force is not as strong as it might be in a major conflict allows for a greater possible range of policy responses and therefore a greater possibility that factors, such as domestic influences, may affect the president's decision to use force.

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Introduction

The decision to use military force is one of the most intensely studied subjects in the field of international relations. That it should be used in response to a national security threat should be obvious enough. Other factors that theorists have used to hypothesize when a state will resort to violence to accomplish its policy goals include in-group/out-group sociological hypotheses, liberal ideological theories, and the variety of realist theories with their grounding in national interests and state security. It is more ambiguous as to when force should be used in minor conflicts when there is no direct threat to the state or its allies. Few of the theories are concerned with the composition of the state itself and how domestic forces may exert themselves upon a state's action on the international stage. Considering that since the end of the Cold War, the majority of conflicts involving large powers have been minor, generally humanitarian in nature, and limited in their aims, a better understanding of how states decide to use force in these situations, beyond the "right to protect" doctrine, is required. Since the majority of these large powers are democracies and therefore at least conceptually receptive to domestic pressures, a better understanding of how states interpret these domestic pressures in the decision to use force will also be required. Consequently, in order to determine when a state may choose to use military force in such circumstances, a different set of metrics must be used in place of the metrics used to guide the decision to use force in major conflicts.

One of the most common theories of the domestic influence of presidential decision-making, and probably the one that is held by most of the general public, is that force is used as a "diversion" in order to distract the electorate from the president's poor domestic performance. To this end, some have speculated that the diversionary tactic is likely to be used when the president's popularity is low, when the president's popularity with his political base is slipping,

when the economy is performing poorly, or in an election year, as well as other possible factors. The diversionary theory consequently assumes that the use of military force abroad will produce a “rally-round-the-flag” effect whereby the public will rush to support the president’s role as commander-in-chief and leading the armed forces.

The difficulty with the diversionary theory is that the rally effect is brief and superficial. In fact, as this paper will explain, there are remarkably few electoral incentives for the president to use force abroad in minor conflicts. Since the diversionary theory rests on the assumption that the president uses military force in the hope of a quick popularity boost at best or a distraction at a minimum, the fact that the rally effect is negligible and that military force is a risky policy it seems unlikely that presidents, likely aware of the costs and benefits, use force with the idea of creating a distraction. The diversionary theory also assumes that there is a causal relationship between the president’s domestic shortcomings and the decision to use military force, but most of the empirical studies have only considered sets where the president used force while there were simultaneously troublesome domestic issues, failing to consider that the data may indicate correlation rather than causation. If the diversionary theory were legitimate, then there would be documentary evidence to support the hypothesis and to shift the correlation into causation—the fact that the hypothesis has not yet been supported by much documentary evidence to buttress the empirical evidence would indicate that the correlations are nothing more than that, or that the empirical evidence has uncovered insight into the subconscious workings of the presidents.

If military force is not intended to be a diversion from domestic issues then the domestic issues that influence the decision to use force must be investigated. This study will focus on case studies rather than empirical analysis because of the documentary insight that is provided by the deliberations which may more clearly demonstrate a causal link between any domestic factors

and the decision to use force or not. The difficulty with documentary evidence is that it is often incomplete and frequently suffers from a selection bias in the sense that evidence which is provided by the administration may seek to present itself in a positive light. In order to help guard against this bias, in keeping with many of the existing studies of the domestic influences on the president's decision to use force, this study will also look at certain domestic factors to see if any of the factors that previous studies identified may have exerted an unspoken pressure upon the president and his staff. The presence of mitigating domestic factors will provide additional support for those hypotheses while a lack of such domestic influences may demonstrate that they suggest the aforementioned correlation rather than causation.

Bosnia is a useful case study because it is an example where force was considered, initially by President George H.W. Bush, but decided against until the very last moment. In this case, the domestic factors (if any) that motivated the decisions of Presidents Bush and Clinton must be analyzed in order to determine if those factors had any impact on the decision to use options short of military force. Conversely, Kosovo is a case where limited military force was agreed upon relatively early though there were other options considered and provides a useful counterpoint to investigate if any domestic factors influenced President Clinton's decision to use force in this case rather than in Bosnia. Both conflicts received extensive media coverage which pressured the relevant administrations towards action. A complicating factor in using these as case studies is that in a sense they are an extension of the same conflict if one considers that the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic was the antagonist in both cases and it has been suggested that exhaustion with Milosevic was a prime motivator in the American decision to use air strikes against Serbia. For the purposes of this paper, it will be relevant if the exhaustion was

evident among the electorate and extended to the president and his advisors rather than if the exhaustion with Milosevic was evident only in the White House.

This study will also briefly consider Somalia in 1991 to determine if and what variety of force was considered in response to these crises, to determine public pressure upon the president to act (if any) and to determine if any of the exogenous domestic factors, such as presidential popularity or economic anxiety, that have commonly been cited as inducing a president to use force abroad were present and if they weighed at all on the president's decision to use force or not.

This study will begin by first demonstrating that domestic influences exert pressure upon presidential decision-making and then by considering the various types of domestic pressure that may apply and have been commonly cited as exerting pressure upon presidential decision-making. This section will review the relevant literature on the topic to analyze the popular scholarly theories and their empirical results in order to create a list of possible factors that may have influenced presidents in crises. The paper will then analyze the presidential deliberations using secondary sources such as interviews and articles, during each crisis to see which factors influenced their decision to act or not and how far domestic factors influenced their thinking, and to see how far any of these influences may represent trends that can be applied to a possible theory of how presidents chose to use force in minor conflicts. In each, the findings from the relevant literature will be compared against the deliberations and relevant exogenous conditions such as presidential popularity and economic conditions to determine if the empirical findings are supported by the historical record.

The relevance of this study will be to compare the existing empirical literature to historical cases in order to determine if the domestic factors that have so far been identified by the literature bore any conscious or unconscious pressure upon the president, with the goal of determining whether, as stated above, the presence of such factors indicates correlation or causation. In so doing, this study will contribute to the relevant literature by hopefully helping to focus research away from possible red herrings, and focusing research on more promising areas or on areas that need more investigation.

The broader goal of the study is a better understanding of the interaction between domestic forces and presidential decision-making in foreign policy crises. The expression that politics should “stop at the water’s edge” may be a hope for disentangling foreign relations from the vicissitudes of domestic partisan politics but it must find a balance with the reality that domestic affairs have a significant effect on policymakers responsible for determining their state’s foreign affairs. In democracies there is at least a conceptual responsibility for policymakers to be receptive to domestic concerns but realities of bureaucratic politics and influence of elite cliques have provided a buffer between the direct application of domestic influence on foreign policy and the platonic ideal of how policy should be formed in democracies. In the United States, which will be the focus of this study, the debate about how the president may exercise war powers in conjunction with Congress (or not) is a very real and very relevant example of how this debate has direct implications on policy. This paper will of course not attempt to resolve the tension once and for all, but it will hopefully elucidate what domestic pressures impact presidential decision-making and to what extent, if any. If there is no domestic pressure exerted on the president, then this may have the difficult implication that the president is cut off from his electorate when he considers decisions to use force, indicating that

the creation of foreign policy is largely undemocratic. If the president uses force as a diversion from domestic issues such as low popularity or economic anxiety, then this would have the troubling implication that the use of force is a cynical ploy to use war to accomplish domestic priorities. If the president is attuned to domestic opinion, realizes its pressure, and seeks to act responsively, then this would indicate an informal, ad-hoc application of domestic pressure since it exists only if the president is listening and receptive. Additionally, any pressure by the public on a foreign policy issue is usually the product of media coverage and rarely indicates the public's objective analysis of the international situation. Violent images like the body of an American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, rail-thin internment camp victims in Bosnia, or toddlers with limbs hacked off in Sierra Leone will capture public attention more than crises that are not covered on the evening news, even if those crises may be more threatening to the United States or more deadly to their victims.

In short, it is almost impossible to determine a way to divine public opinion when their information, like those of their policymakers, is imperfect, biased, and with no direct channel of influence. Not to mention the presence of innumerable international factors such as allied pressure, that policymakers also must contend with. Consequently, this has led policymakers to be almost disdainful or manipulative of public opinion at worst since it is a nebulous but powerful item to contend with—no one who holds elected office will want to run counter to public opinion for too long and must develop convincing counterarguments in order to do so. But attempting to determine what the public wants on a given issue in international relations is often painfully difficult to determine as some of the polls presented in this study will indicate. The frustration that this can create has often led to public opinion being dismissed and while the urge is understandable considering the policymakers must often make unpopular but hopefully

correct decisions, it has led to a concurrent urge among students of international relations to separate domestic interests from international interests and it is only relatively recently that academics have begun to reconsider the relevance of domestic forces upon policymakers. But in the era of the clichéd “24-hour news cycle” domestic opinions have become more pointed and develop more quickly than when most theories were first considered and academia is correct to reevaluate the role of domestic pressures upon policymakers since the trend will only continue. Richard Sobel suggests a worthwhile caveat that even media reporting of public opinion in foreign policy crises is limited and biased towards the opposition, and he points out that while most polls supported humanitarian intervention the media primarily reported the opposition which was usually louder and the tendency to frame stories in particular ways.¹

Many past studies have also not made distinction between minor and major uses of force. Any distinction will be ultimately arbitrary but necessary in considering the topic. Extremely small uses of force, like sending logistical support for an international peacekeeping mission or dispatching military advisors overseas, may not generate the media necessary to attract public attention, while the dynamics of major conflicts such as the Iraq War and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan create dynamics that are completely different from minor conflicts because of the scale, duration, possible loss of life, and severe national security threat that presumably led to the war. For the purposes of this paper, a minor conflict will be defined as one where more than 10,000 but less than 100,000 ground troops were deployed or if an aerial bombing campaign was sustained over a period of more than one week. This will eliminate major conflicts like the Gulf War and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and will also eliminate short uses of air power such as Operation Desert Fox (1998) and Operation Infinite Reach

¹ Richard Sobel, “Portraying Public Opinion Toward the Bosnia Crisis,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, March 1998, vol. 3, no. 2, 16-33.

(1998). The remaining cases, which include Operation Restore Hope in Somalia (1992-3), Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti (1994-5), as well as air campaigns in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Libya, will be large enough to draw the requisite public attention but still limited enough to fall into the “major” conflict category.

The point of the reanalysis is not to determine, at last, the proper measure to which domestic pressure should be exerted upon policymakers but to determine what the pressures specifically look like and how policymakers have responded in the past in order to make these pressures more predictable and shear away some of the supposed vicissitudes of domestic pressure.

Chapter 1: The Relationship between the Public and Foreign Policy

Theoretical Background

It was simple to determine who the decision-makers were when states were autocratic—in most cases it was the autocrat, or in some cases an especially influential advisor or clique, but even these were easy to identify, target, and understand. Understanding the attitudes and vicissitudes of the autocrat may not necessarily have always been easy but at least the decision-maker could be identified. Not only did it make it easy to determine who was making the decisions, but it also made it easier for states to act and easier to expect what states might do if there were no national legislatures to contend with or public opinion to mollify. This made it easier for theorists to develop a “black box” conception of the state where a state’s internal workings are more or less irrelevant to how the state would act in the international arena and therefore not usually worth studying when trying to conceptualize the mechanics of the international system. But as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries progressed and more, if not most, of the great powers became democracies whose policymaking infrastructures were more complex and decision-makers—no longer a single individual—were still identifiable but were now accountable to pressures which their predecessors did not need to contend with. This complicated the picture for classical realists since they lamented the fact that the proliferation of new actors that demanded accountability inhibited statesmen from their previous ability to preserve the balance of power.² The recalibration of national decision-making did not invalidate realist theory, but it required that it adapt to the changing climate. Michael Howard wrote that it was the hope of eighteenth and nineteenth century liberal philosophers that removing war-

² Jeffery W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, “Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the state, and foreign policy,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffery Taliaferro, eds, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 27.

making decisions away from monarchs and feudal lords and into the democratic control of the nation state that wars would cease since citizens would never take upon themselves a decision that would cause them so much suffering, essentially assuming that democratic reason would eliminate.³

Eckart Kehr, a German historian who wrote during the Weimar period, was one of the first to offer a refutation of the idea that foreign policy was objective and autonomous, an idea that had been a bulwark of the historiography of the new German state. As he wrote in his essay, “Anglophobia and *Weltpolitik*,” “The fundamental issue is not whether domestic political considerations sometimes cause foreign policy to deviate from its predetermined course in minor details; it goes further than that. It is the extent to which prewar foreign policy was determined all along the line by the social structure of the Reich.”⁴ If one accepted the autonomous primacy of foreign policy then all motives for a state’s international behavior would be grounded in foreign policy with a shared foundation through all elements of the state.⁵ But if there are disputes within the state about a foreign policy, then the primacy of one policy over the other must take into account considerations that can only be explained through the prism of internal politics. At the same time, governments are not completely at the will of public opinion, and Kehr argues that if the German government was able to stand firm on the issue of a tariff policy that faced mass opposition then it is impossible to assume that a state would bend to all matters of public opinion on foreign policy issues.⁶ This would seem to lead to a conclusion that there is

³ Michael Howard, “War and the Nation State,” in *The Causes of Wars*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, 25.

⁴ Eckart Kehr, “Anglophobia and *Weltpolitik*,” in *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 23.

⁵ *Ibid*, 30.

⁶ *Ibid*, 33-34.

an element of rational choice when a state considers domestic pressure and foreign policy, accepting domestic costs for international gain in some cases but not others.

E.H. Carr also described these new developments in the beginning of his work *The Twenty Years Crisis* when he wrote “In democratic countries, foreign policy was traditionally regarded as outside the scope of party politics; and the representative organs did not feel themselves competent to exercise any close control over the mysterious operations of the foreign offices... There was no general desire to take the conduct of international affairs out of the hands of the professionals or even to pay systematic attention to what they were doing”⁷ before arguing that the study of international politics began due to a popular demand in response to the secret treaties that were a feature leading up to World War I. Early theorists or political thinkers, such as Jeremy Bentham, tackled the role that public opinion should play in politics and assigned it a certain “right reason” that made it almost infallible. Carr identified two threads in nineteenth century public opinion that he believed impacted the international stage: that public opinion will ultimately prevail in all cases and that (the “Benthamite” idea) public opinion is always right.⁸ Carr was being dismissive rather than laudatory in his judgment since he believed that a hyper-reliance on the infallibility of public opinion was naïve and dangerously utopian, writing that “in international affairs, public opinion was almost as often wrong-headed as it was impotent.”⁹ This does not mean that Carr discounted the relevance of public opinion at all, but that he was concerned that improper applications of appeals to public opinion were a leading factor of the diplomatic failures that followed World War I. Michael Howard offered his own refutation:

Loyalty to the Crown was always to some degree contractual: an evil prince could be disowned, allegiance could be renounced or limited. But how could this

⁷ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 1939, 3.

⁸ *Ibid*, 32.

⁹ *Ibid*, 37.

*be done with a Nation which was simply you and your own general will? What the Nation willed was its own justification: there were no limits to the demands it might make on its members.*¹⁰ (Italics original)

Howard also noted that while democracies and nation states made war the “business of people,” to use Carl von Clausewitz’s expression, the shift to nuclear arms and advanced weapons systems have actually alienated the public from war.¹¹ The technical complexity of the weapons and the level of secrecy involved required that governments keep war affairs away from the “citizen soldier” that had dominated war from the eighteenth century until World War II, and the public itself did not even want to be associated with the destructive capabilities of the weapons.¹² Taking into consideration the elimination of the draft as well, the government and the public have been increasingly alienated from each other in terms of military affairs.

According to Clausewitz, there must be direct link between politics and military affairs which must remain under political control, essentially alluding to his famous expression that “War is merely the continuation of policy by other means.”¹³ He continued later in *On War* that “Policy is nothing in itself, it is simply the trustee for all...interests [of a particular society, including its “spiritual” values] against the outside world...we can only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community.”¹⁴ Clausewitz established war’s essentially political character and while he did not discuss the extent to which domestic public concerns may impact the political considerations of war (though he spent considerable explaining the force that the public exerts upon war itself), he devotes an entire chapter to the necessity of policy’s ascendancy over military affairs.

¹⁰ Howard, 26.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 30.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, 86.

¹⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, book 1, chapter 1, page 75, quoted in Peter Paret, “Clausewitz” in *The Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, 210.

If policy is ascendant over military affairs and if policy is set by a domestic constituency as it is in democracies, then it should follow that constituencies should have a role in the political decision to use force. In other words, the composition of the state itself should not be inconsequential in the calculus of using force. The problem with the aforementioned historical interpretations of the pressures of public opinion is that decision-making itself continues to be basically understood as a “black box” affair: vague, generalized public pressure is exerted but does not change the essential calculations of the final decision to use force. For many theorists that is exactly the point—the concerns of international security take precedence over the composition of the state itself. At the same time, this approach is insufficient because the nature of decision-making changed so dramatically from unitary individuals or cliques to large, complex bureaucratic machines and elected officials ostensibly responsible to their constituents. The issue is not even theoretical—Bernard C. Cohen noted that in the late 1960s and 1970s that most State Department officials believed that public opinion was pointless and would remark “to hell with public opinion,” instead hoping for public acquiescence.¹⁵ This attitude has since changed markedly with the State Department, military establishments, and other policymakers all receptive to public opinion, all hoping to either follow it or lead it. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman wrote that “It is apparently counterproductive for foreign policy leaders to pretend that their domestic political circumstances are different from what they really are.”¹⁶ Nuances must be added to the existing theoretical frameworks in order for these theories to remain relevant and to reflect the changing dynamics of decision-making.

¹⁵ Ronald H. Hinckley, *People, Polls, and Policymakers: American Public Opinion and National Security*, New York: Lexington Books, 1992, 4.

¹⁶ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, “Domestic Opposition and Foreign War,” *American Political Science Review*, September 1990, quoted in Hinckley, 6.

Neoclassical realism is one attempt to recalibrate these theories by accounting for the influence of domestic factors upon the state's decision-makers. Neoclassical realist theory recognizes a "two-level game" that leaders face when making policy because of the need to respond to both the international environment and the domestic environment from which they need political and economic resources and to work through in order to maintain the support of key stakeholders.¹⁷ In neoclassical realist theory, the foreign policy executive (FPE) is a unitary actor that sits at the intersection of the domestic and international political systems. The FPE, along with other societal elites, is also largely responsible for identifying which foreign states may constitute a national threat.¹⁸

Modern Understandings of How the Public Influences Foreign Policy

Studies have hypothesized upon different domestic pressures that may induce the president to use force abroad. Charles Ostrom and Brian Job, in their 1986 study "The President and the Political Use of Force" were one of the first to analyze the influence of domestic factors upon a president's decision to use force. In constructing their study, they posit a series of "decision premises" which, according to Ostrom and Job, a decision-maker will establish as the basis of their responsibilities in three major roles: the commander-in-chief, the chief executive, and political leader, and all of which identify the president as operating on a "tripartite" international, domestic, and political leader.¹⁹ Ostrom and Job's decision premises for their paper include:

¹⁷ Taliaferro, et. al, 7.

¹⁸ Lobell, 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 545.

- International:
 - The propensity of the president to use force will increase during times of international tension in order to demonstrate resolve, though the president may also be inclined to express only a *willingness* to use force in order show restraint,
 - The president will be less willing to use force if the United States is strategically dominant since an unsuccessful use of force may erode that dominance and the associated costs of action may be greater than the potential gains,
 - As American involvement in a war intensifies, the president will be less likely to use force to avoid overextending the military in other engagements.

- Domestic:
 - Higher levels of international tension will reduce the president’s propensity to use force in response to public pressure because of the high consequences of failure,
 - The propensity to use force will decrease during periods following a “shooting war” (sometimes referred to as the “Vietnam effect”),
 - As the economy worsens, the president will be more likely to use force.

- Political:
 - Presidents will use force if they have higher approval ratings, expecting that the president can afford to lose if they possess a “popularity buffer,”
 - A decline in presidential success will increase the president’s risk acceptance and therefore the propensity to use force,
 - The propensity to use force will increase during presidential election campaigns.²⁰

These points suggest that the public is generally risk-averse and only supportive of the use of force when the stakes are low and the odds of success are high, while the president may be either risk-acceptant or risk-averse. Neither are considered to be risk-seeking even though hypotheses could be made for either the public or the president to be risk-seeking if they perceive a significant enough threat to national security, and the president might be risk-seeking if he determines that the potential benefits of action justify the risks—certainly a key component of national security leadership.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 545-50.

They concluded that presidents make decisions to use force influenced by the international, political, and domestic environments that they operate in, that international variables are not the single most important determinant of these decisions, and that the effect of international variables is greatly altered when domestic factors are accounted for.²¹ They also found that the propensity to use force varied significantly between presidents—for example, Kennedy was seen to be three times more likely than Truman to use force for political purposes—and that absolute and relative levels of popular support appear to be the most important determinant in the presidential decision to use force.²² While certain elements of their argument and their assumptions will be discussed later in this paper, at the very least their study was successful in demonstrating that domestic influences affect presidential decision-making rather than exclusively international influences, but they also endorse the idea that force has a diversionary incentive for presidents.

Patrick James and John R. Oneal critiqued the formulation of Ostrom and Job's study, and construct their own model. They accepted Ostrom and Job's consideration of only major uses of force since minor levels of force would not offer the president the popularity boost that they might expect, though they indicate that Ostrom and Job's study does not indicate or suggest what level of force to use, which they use to create a second decision rule for their study.²³ Their paper concludes that the severity of an international crisis is more determinative upon presidential use of force than any of the international variables that Ostrom and Job's study.²⁴ At the same time, they found that the influence of the domestic variables that they established—

²¹ Charles W. Ostrom, Jr. and Brian L. Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (June, 1986), pp. 559.

²² *Ibid*, 560.

²³ Patrick James and John R. Oneal, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2, *Democracy and Foreign Policy: Community and Constraint* (June, 1991), pp. 316.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 326.

presidential popularity, presidential success, and voter's perceptions of their wellbeing—were at least as important a factor as the international situation, strongly indicating a political character in the president's decision to use force.²⁵ Importantly, they also found that the “rally effect” is “neither certain nor strong;” in fact, in the 45 situations that they expected to produce a rally effect, 20 percent actually led to a *drop* in the president's popularity., largely because of public fear that any use of force overseas will led to a protracted conflict, similar to Vietnam, and consequently has a negative effect on the president's support.²⁶

T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers also use the diversionary thesis in their 1992 study, “Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force.” They employ the assumption that an external threat creates domestic cohesion consistent with the sociological in-group/out-group hypothesis and cite that the hypothesis has been empirically supported by demonstrating a temporary surge in support following the use of force overseas.²⁷ They hypothesized, using a sample from 1953-1976, that it is more likely that a national leader will use force abroad if faced with a drop in support among its ruling coalition or political base.²⁸ Their findings even found that for each percentage point decrease in approval reduces the expected time to the next foreign policy incident by a matter of 15 days.²⁹

Benjamin Fordham took a slightly different approach to the influence of domestic factors upon presidential decision-making when he considered whether certain political and domestic conditions make military force or a more or less attractive policy option, in other words, certain

²⁵ *Ibid*, 327.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 328.

²⁷ T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers, “Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1992), pp. 26.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 36.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 47.

conditions may bias judgments about threat perception.³⁰ For example, he argues that economic conditions are an important factor in elections and a poor economy could incentivize the use of force in order to create a diversion or it may also worsen inflation, depress international financial markets, and increase the costs of other future financial commitments.³¹ Fordham concluded that high unemployment, strong investor confidence, no other ongoing wars, and an upcoming presidential election reduce the costs of using force while high inflation, strong presidential support, economic growth, and a high number of perceived threats will make the use of force more costly, they may also induce the president to use force if it is decided that the benefits are worth the costs.³² In other words, Fordham argues that presidents may “see” more opportunities to use force overseas when the domestic situation is poor.

All of these different hypotheses share the idea that the president uses force abroad in order to create a diversion from domestic political problems or to solidify his domestic standing. Evidence that would seem to confirm this would be the 18-point boost that President George H.W. Bush received following the start of Operation Desert Storm.³³ Donald Kagan writes that this idea has an ancient genealogy, going back as far as Pericles, whose enemies accused him of starting a war in order to divert attention from a domestic scandal.³⁴ Steven E. Lobell writes that a foreign policy executive (FPE) can act abroad with the goal of manipulating the domestic situation in order to divert attention, increase internal solidarity by producing the “rally-round-

³⁰ Benjamin Fordham, “The Politics of Threat Perception and the Use of Force: A Political Economy Model of U.S. Uses of Force, 1949-1994,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (September, 1998), pp. 567-590.

³¹ *Ibid*, 1998.

³² *Ibid*, 1998.

³³ Larry Hugick and Alec M. Gallup, “Rally Events and Presidential Approval,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, 1991, quoted in Bradley Lian and John R. Oneal, “Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (June, 1993), pp. 277-300

³⁴ Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, New York: Anchor Books, 1995, 69.

the-flag” effect, and to expand the power of the state over society.³⁵ An FPE may also manipulate the domestic actors in a foreign state through arms sales for example with the idea of making one domestic faction ascendant over the other as Britain attempted to do when it tried to strengthen moderates over hardliners in its policies towards Germany and Japan in the 1930s.³⁶ Finally, an FPE may attempt to use a state’s domestic issues to draw in other large powers.³⁷ This again alludes to the idea that FPEs will use international disputes as a diversion from domestic conflict. In this perspective, a state’s foreign policy does not reflect the national interest so much as it reflects the ability of certain domestic coalitions to manipulate state power in favor of their own particular interests, or even that an FPE is influenced by domestic rather than international concerns when considering the use of force.³⁸ Even then, the diversionary theory does not account for the fact that the public, for whatever reason, may agree with the use of force because they see it as an important, useful decision and instead assumes that public will support a use of force simply because force is being used. As a result, the diversionary theory treats *all* uses of force as diversionary and public support as rallying-around-the-flag and does not prove whether the president would receive a boost if a use of force was intentionally diversionary or not.

The Mechanisms through which Domestic Factors Influence Foreign Policy

As described in the introduction, this idea is difficult to demonstrate in practice.

Thucydides described Pericles’s case not because he believed that Pericles went to war to distract

³⁵ Steven E. Lobell, “Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy: neoclassical realist model,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffery Taliaferro, eds, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 52.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 53-4.

³⁸ Colin Dudek, “Neoclassical realism and the national interest: presidents, domestic politics, and major military interventions,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffery Taliaferro, eds, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 142-3.

from domestic issues but because Thucydides wanted to dismiss simplistic explanations such as that.³⁹ For one, any “rally effect” is temporary and superficial.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the chances that a conflict will be protracted and costly an unpopular prospect for voters and support for any military intervention—and the FPE as well—will inexorably decline⁴¹ In fact, no American president over the past century has campaigned on a pro-war platform during peacetime⁴² and when war is mentioned in campaigns, usually in reference to an existing war, the focus is towards ending the war either victoriously or by minimizing further losses. This idea was alluded to by Time magazine’s chief political correspondent Margaret Carlson in June 1999 when she remarked that “[the potential benefit of the Kosovo bombing is] not as big a plus as it would have been a minus [if the conflict had gone poorly]” while CNN’s chief political commentator, Jeff Greenfield noted that “The engagement of Americans in harm’s way usually...produces more of a downside threat to a president than an upside possibility of rallying around the flag.”⁴³ Using the American case, if the president decides to begin a major military intervention then he will invest a significant effort in building public support for his action.⁴⁴ If anything, electoral and domestic political incentives would appear to dissuade rather than induce the FPE from using military force for political gain.

Bradley Lian and John R. Oneal study the rally effect more closely in “Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion.” They limit their study to only major uses of force because it meets the three criteria set out by John Mueller in a 1970 paper to meet the

³⁹ Kagan, 68.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Matthew A. Baum, “Going Private: Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and the Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in Foreign Policy Crises,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol., 48, No. 5, (October 2004), pp. 603-631.

⁴⁴ Dudek, 147, Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 348-50; Jon Western, *Selling Intervention and War: the Presidency, the Media, and the American Public*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, 4-5, 16-17.

requirement for an event that could generate a rally effect: it must be international because “only developments confronting the nation as a whole are likely to generate a rally,” it must involve the United States and the president directly since other international events would be irrelevant to the average American, and a rally event must be specific, dramatic, and focused since it would be too difficult, and possibly even irrelevant, to demonstrate causality from events that evolve slowly.⁴⁵ Lian and Oneal conclude that for an event to generate a rally, the American public must be aware of the event and it must have been consequential for American interests.⁴⁶ Even then, the actual effect of the rally event was only a 1 percent boost for the president’s approval rating, even among his supporters. They found that a president would receive a popularity boost in cases where the United States was faced with a severe crisis and the president’s actions were prominently reported. Furthermore, the president would be more likely to receive a boost if the United States was not already at war or experiencing war fatigue, when the president’s approval was already low, and if there is bipartisan support for his actions.⁴⁷ Interestingly, they also found that the outcome of the use of force had no significant effect on presidential popularity and that any presidential attempt to manipulate these events for his own popularity was mitigated by other institutions such as the media and the opposition party.⁴⁸

Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer found interesting results in their study of presidential approval ratings following the 2003 Iraq War. Rather than find in support of the rally effect, they found that public support changed depending on particular signals such as casualties.⁴⁹ This

⁴⁵ Bradley Lian and John R. Oneal, “Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (June, 1993), pp. 277-300, John E. Mueller, “Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson,” *American Political Science Review* 64: 18-34, 1970.

⁴⁶ Lian and Oneal, 1993.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer, “Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 6, Dec., 2006, pp. 809-830.

finding is supported by Richard C. Eichenberg who wrote that the public is willing to accept casualties provided that the outcome of the military effort is successful.⁵⁰

For its part, Congress can apply the most direct pressure to presidential decision-making because of the powers vested to it under the Constitution and War Powers Resolution, and because of its control of the “power of the purse.” Understandably, while Congress seems not to constrain the president when there is not much public attention because of the low audience costs and low risks to their own roles as members of Congress.⁵¹ However, there are three possible ways that Congress can limit the president’s room for manoeuver and increase their leverage over the president’s decision-making: it can work against the president by cutting funding for the military operations, conveying political resolve by publically opposing the president’s moves and arguments for using force or not, thereby undermining the president’s credibility, and by moving public opinion through its influence of the political debate.⁵² Indeed, there is an interesting thesis that the spectrum of the debate in the media reflects that of the debate in Washington, meaning that members of Congress can play a very significant role in shaping public perceptions and understanding of the international conflict that faces the president.⁵³ Congress may either oppose, support, or ignore the president’s decision depending on the credibility of the arguments for or against the use of force, if a member of Congress’s electoral future is somehow tied to the electoral future of the president, and if they are interested in currying presidential favor.⁵⁴ This would lead to the obvious conclusion that members from the president’s party will support the

⁵⁰ Richard C. Eichenberg, “Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981-2005,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 140-177.

⁵¹ William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse, “Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force,” *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 209-232

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Jonathan Mermin, *Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, Lance W. Bennett, “Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the U.S.,” *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 40, no. 1, 1990, 103-115.

⁵⁴ Howell and Pevehouse, 2005.

president while the opposition party may either support or oppose the president, and this may support the findings of Morgan and Bickers who argued that the president 's decision to use force may depend on his standing within his own party. This could also lead to the conclusion that the president will be more likely to use force as his party's share of congressional seats increases.⁵⁵

Domestic politics matter less in terms of exerting pressure upon the FPE to use force but rather as a consideration for the FPE to take into account once a national security threat has been identified.⁵⁶ The fact that domestic issues may be either constraining or enabling upon the FPE which consequently leads to how the FPE will design the precise mechanics of a military intervention, including duration, conduct, and timing.⁵⁷ Furthermore, there is also the important corollary that the president will be less inclined to consider force if he even anticipates pressure from public opinion or Congress, applying an implicit influence since the exogenous factors may influence the president's choice of options before he may even be faced with a decision and making a significant part of the president's decision-making to be anticipatory rather than reactionary.

The tools that Congress possesses to constrain presidential behavior have also proven to be awkward to wield. Congressional powers of the use of force have diminished increasingly even after the enactment of the 1973 War Powers Resolution as presidents have become more proactive in interpreting congressional consent to the use of military force and since the remaining tools, such as the power of the purse, have proven to be insufficient in constraining presidential action compared with congressional tools over other elements of policy—as Senator

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Dudek, 139.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Patrick Leahy once said, “Using the power of the purse to stop an undeclared war is just too difficult.”⁵⁸

David Brule has hypothesized that the president’s proclivity to use force overseas may actually *increase* if he faces congressional opposition rather than support if economic conditions are deteriorating using samples from 1946-2000.⁵⁹ This leads from an earlier thesis that leaders use force overseas not as a diversion but as a way to demonstrate competency.⁶⁰ According to Brule, the reason is that Congress prevents the president from demonstrating his leadership capabilities during periods of economic decline because most of the macroeconomic tools capable of addressing the economy are with Congress rather than the president, thereby leading presidents to substitute the use of military force overseas as a way of demonstrating leadership.⁶¹ Conversely, this conclusion argues that if the president enjoys strong congressional support then he will be less inclined to use force overseas since he will have an easier time with the domestic legislative agenda and will have no need to demonstrate competency in other areas.

Conclusion

While there has been a general understanding that foreign policy is not autonomous and isolated from domestic influences, attempts to uncover the mechanisms through which this function are relatively recent, beginning after World War I as the study of international affairs

⁵⁸ Christopher J. Deering, “Congress, the President, and Military Policy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 499, September 1988, 136-147.

⁵⁹ David Brule, “Congressional Opposition, the Economy, and U.S. Dispute Resolution, 1946-2000,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 4, August 2006, 463-483.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Diana Richards, T. Clifton Morgan, Rick Wilson, Valerie Schwebach, and Garry Young, “Good times, bad times, and the diversionary use of force: A tale of some not so free agents,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, 1993, 504-35.

became a science. Key studies like the work of Eckart Kehr and Ostrom and Job's "The President and the Political Use of Force" have demonstrated that the idea that domestic factors exert pressure on presidential decision-making is both conceptually and empirically valid—the "black box" concept of the state in international relations theory may explain particular factors on a certain level of analysis, but this model cannot explain every question and a consideration of domestic influences is necessary in determining a more holistic picture of how foreign policy is created and functions. There is now a wealth of literature on the topic and while this chapter could not hope to summarize all of the relevant work it is possible use the literature presented to create a general list of the domestic factors that influence presidential decisions to use force abroad:

- Presidential popularity/approval ratings,
- Domestic perceptions of foreign threats,
 - In-group/out-group hypothesis
- Domestic perceptions of the use of force,
 - "Vietnam effect"
- Electoral cycle,
- Economic wellbeing,
- Congressional support.

Samantha Power offered a simpler set of factors that particularly influenced Clinton's decision to avoid using force in Bosnia: first, the advice of the military, a commitment to multilateral solutions by his foreign policy principals, and concern about public opinion.⁶²

⁶² Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2002, 304-3.

Virtually all of the studies described in this chapter have used empirical analysis to demonstrate their conclusions, hoping to uncover a correlation between certain domestic conditions and use of force overseas. These studies have produced interesting and useful results, but as discussed earlier, have not demonstrated strong causal links between the events. The use of historical case studies will help to determine how much, if at all, any of the above factors bore upon the decision-making process. Since the influence of these factors may be implicit rather than explicit, the following case studies will also consider how strong or weak the economy or presidential approval may have been in order to infer the influence of these factors. This obviously will not be as convincing as an explicit link, but it will still help to support or discredit the empirical studies.

The above studies have also primarily focused on the idea that domestic influences weigh upon presidential decision-making only so far as he may be interested in creating a “rally effect” or demonstrating leadership capability. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the rally effect is only superficial, temporary, and does not necessarily outweigh the risks of using force, and that any competent president must be aware of this fact. Other theories about why presidents consider the use of force in relation to domestic factors, such as demonstrating leadership or Erckart Kehr’s theory of class conflict expressed through bureaucratic structures, are themselves unconvincing and not thoroughly researched. This would seem to indicate that the president’s motivations for considering the use of force overseas in response to domestic influences require additional research since this study will only consider the domestic influences upon the president rather than his motivations.

Minor conflicts must also be distinguished from major conflicts for several other reasons. Most obvious is that there is usually no direct threat presented to national security. In certain

cases, such as in Haiti in 1994, there may be limited threats, or there may be the possibility of an opponent taking advantage of a minor conflict in order to seek gain as in the skirmishes throughout Latin American during the Cold War, but in many cases—including the ones presented in this study—no direct threat to the belligerents’ security was presented. There is no need to develop an in-group/out-group dynamic since the application of force is so limited—as will be seen during the discussion of the war in Bosnia, American public opinion held each side responsible and did not credit or accuse either side of being more responsible than the other. While uses of major force are often considered to be unacceptable, particularly in cases where nuclear weapons may be used, the use of force in minor conflicts is at least not unacceptable. Additionally, some literature has already addressed the issue of domestic influences upon the use of force in major cases, but has not applied an analysis of case studies where minor force was used or considered.⁶³

⁶³ Dudek, 168.

Chapter 2: Bosnia

Background

The war that dissolved Yugoslavia has been written about sufficiently to not require a complete retelling for the purposes of this paper. This paper will instead consider an analysis of the domestic deliberations about the use force which reveal a preoccupation with the success or failure of recent American involvement in conflicts overseas among policymakers, the administration's frustration with congressional restrictions on possible action, and the White House's interest in public opinion polls that informed their deliberations while not dictating them. It would also appear that the president's partisans in Congress and the administration advocated action while his opponents sought to constrain the president from acting, though the split is imperfect and may be inconsequential. At the very least, it appears that domestic pressure was certainly felt by the White House and seems to have been a constraint rather than an enabling factor.

An important caveat must first be made about how the United States viewed the conflict. While toward the height of the war and certainly in retrospect it may seem naïve, but many if not most U.S. policymakers believed that the war was fought between coequals rather than as a campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Republika Srpska and orchestrated by the Yugoslavian government of Slobodan Milosevic. This was a view that was also shared by the American public, who in 1994 did not significantly favor one participant over the other with 6.24 percent hoping to see the Muslims win, 3.60 percent hoping to see the Serbs win and 81.17 percent unsure.⁶⁴ A 1995 poll, conducted well into the war and once much more information about the

⁶⁴ Gallup Brain, "Question qn12 from U.S. Action In Bosnia," (<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=9373&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=wa>)

conflict had become available, 79.6 percent of Americans polled believed that the United States should remain neutral rather than sell arms to the Bosnian Muslims.⁶⁵ This was also reinforced by the fact that journalists who covering the conflict wanted to ensure balanced and objective reporting and therefore sought to portray all sides as equally responsible.⁶⁶ This caveat is important because it significantly informs the way that policymakers and the public viewed the policy options that were available to them since it was interpreted as a civil war rather than a humanitarian crisis, and Richard Eichenberg has theorized that the public is more sanguine to the use of force in humanitarian crises than civil wars.⁶⁷ It is likely that the United States may have been more willing to use force in response to the conflict if it had judged that a clear belligerent could be targeted in defense of a clear victim, but American deference to neutrality clearly muddled what the United States may have believed was proper and effective at resolving the conflict.

When the severity of the conflict became apparent to President George H.W. Bush in 1991 he opposed using American power to stop the conflict partly because he believed that it finally gave the Europeans a chance to show their mettle at resolving international crises, particularly those on their own continent, and because with no direct threats to American national security were at stake, Bush did not believe that the American public would support an intervention.⁶⁸ As secretary of state James Baker later wrote, “It was time to make the

r%20bosnia%20rather%20muslims%20win%20serbians%20win%20not%20sure), February 7, 1994, Accessed January 6, 2012.

⁶⁵ Gallup Brain, “Question qn44a from June Wave 1”,

(<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=73622&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=united%20states%20government%20currently%20not%20sell%20weapons%20either%20side%20fighting%20bosnia%20%20view%20united%20states%20sell%20arms%20bosnian%20muslims%20help%20defend%20themselves%20against%20serbs%20united%20states%20remain%20neutral>), June 5-6, 1995, Accessed January 6, 2012.

⁶⁶ Western, 151.

⁶⁷ Eichenberg, 2005.

⁶⁸ Dennis Ross, *Statecraft: And How to Restore America's Standing in the World*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007, 50-51.

Europeans step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power...Yugoslavia was as good a test as any.”⁶⁹ But Bill Clinton, upon assuming office in 1993, discovered that the European Union had no plan for resolving the crisis and little intention of doing so.⁷⁰ It began to appear that Bush’s tentativeness was trumped only by Europe’s, and Clinton must have begun to realize that his administration would have to take the lead in finding a solution. Clinton’s own actions did little to encourage the Europeans, as Lawrence Freedman writes: “In early 1993, just as the Clinton administration appeared to lead its NATO partners down the route of tough action on behalf of the United Nations, it got cold feet, thereby creating a reputation for vacillation as soon as its policies faced resistance.”⁷¹ With Europe on the sidelines, it became apparent that the conflict could only be solved by American leadership and likely with American military force.

Bush’s threshold for American intervention was essentially the “Powell Doctrine,” named for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell who believed that in any intervention there should be a clear objective before operations begin and a clear understanding of when operations may end. Furthermore, the Bush administration was already dealing with the Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was already faced with accusations of focusing on foreign policy issues at the expense of domestic policy. The administration’s attitude was summed up by John Bolton, then undersecretary of state for international organization affairs, during testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s Subcommittees on International Operations and on Human Rights and International Organizations when he said “Our domestic

⁶⁹ James A. Baker III with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992*, New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995, 637.

⁷⁰ Mark Wintz, *Transatlantic Diplomacy and the Use of Military Force in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 58.

⁷¹ Lawrence Freedman, *Military Intervention in European Conflict*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, 9.

problems are myriad and cry out for attention. We want somebody—anybody—to take over the load overseas.”⁷²

The Bush administration began to support a policy that would contain the conflict and prevent it from spreading to places of greater geostrategic interest, such as Albania, Greece, and Turkey. The public generally supported this policy, being only ambivalent about the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.⁷³ The administration was able to draw public support by portraying the crisis in the starkest terms of “ancient hatreds” and “intractable inter-ethnic fighting,” buttressed by military estimates that in order to safely facilitate a humanitarian airlift into the Sarajevo airport would require 50,000 troops to establish a perimeter of 30 miles.⁷⁴ One administration official was explicit in his concerns about what an operation in Bosnia would require and how different it was from the recent, extremely successful, 1991 Gulf War: “There’s no single army to confront and defeat. This is another Vietnam or Beirut—easy to get in, damn hard to get out. The American people have no taste for that.”⁷⁵

At the same time, Bush was also faced with a crisis in Somalia that was drawing public attention, suffering from famine, and, like Bosnia, racked with inter-ethnic conflict. The Bush administration was initially as reluctant to enter Somalia as it was Bosnia, with National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft describing it as “another collapsed state with no effective government and no U.S. interests. This was clearly an issue for the United Nations, not for us” even after more reports about the conditions in Somalia made it into the media and led to congressional and

⁷² Evelyn Farkas, *Fractured States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, Ethiopia, and Bosnia in the 1990s*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 80.

⁷³ Western, 149.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 150.

⁷⁵ “Relief: What is Bush Waiting For?” *Newsweek*, July 6, 1992.

public outrage about the plight of the victims.⁷⁶ The military was also as skeptical about involvement in Somalia as it was in Bosnia because, like in Bosnia, the terrain was inhospitable and it was primarily a deep-rooted civil war where the combatants were often indistinguishable.⁷⁷ But with criticism mounting on the administration for its inaction regarding both Bosnia and Somalia, which presidential challenger Clinton used as a point on which to attack Bush (to be discussed below), Bush reversed his position on Somalia and began exploring American options to intervene—the ploy was somewhat successful, because after Bush made the announcement of airlifts to Somalia, coverage of Bosnia dropped to the point that it was outnumbered by mentions of the Somalia crisis.⁷⁸ This, coupled with Clinton’s election and impending ascension to the White House, convinced the administration, and particularly the military, to pursue intervention in Somalia.⁷⁹ The military’s abrupt change of position took the rest of the foreign policy principals by surprise—Scowcroft remembers being struck by “the alacrity with which Colin Powell changed gears” while during the meeting where the military announced their support, Herman Cohen, then assistant secretary of state for African affairs turned to someone and said “They’re ready to go to Somalia because they are afraid of Bosnia.”⁸⁰ Somalia simply seemed to be the least bad of two undesirable options. Jon Western argues that Powell’s sudden change was because he was concerned that Clinton would overcommit military force to solve the humanitarian crises, based on his campaign rhetoric, and decided that if the United States would intervene somewhere, then Somalia was the preferable of the two.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Western, 152, 153.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 155.

⁷⁸ Data from Network Evening News Abstracts, Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University, Accessed February 2, 2012.

⁷⁹ Western 171-2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 172.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 174.

The Bush administration's reluctance on Bosnia gave Clinton an issue with which to attack Bush during the 1992 presidential election, and Clinton called for air strikes against the Bosnian-Serbs to support the humanitarian missions and further argued that a failure to act would jeopardize American leadership.⁸² When the discovery of Serb concentration camps added a new visual understanding of the war that brought uncomfortable reminders of the Holocaust, Clinton began to aggressively attack the Bush administration for its inaction, stating "If the horrors of the Holocaust taught us anything, it is the high cost of remaining silent and paralyzed in the face of genocide."⁸³ Furthermore, the evening news began to give extensive attention to Clinton's arguments against Bush's inaction.⁸⁴ Even then, Clinton was deferential to the UN for action and while he supported a more aggressive policy than what Bush had pursued he believed that the UN should be the primary actor in ending the conflict.⁸⁵

However, Clinton's chief campaign focus was on domestic issues, and when he entered office he preferred to delegate foreign policy issues to the "principals' committee." This committee, consisting of the national security advisor, secretary of state, secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other foreign policy principals, would intensively deliberate issues but Clinton's aloofness from these debates would prevent the development of an assertive course of action.⁸⁶ The Principals' Committee was generally divided on the issue of Bosnia: Secretary of Defense Les Aspin and Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were both reluctant to use force in a region where the United States had no real security interest and where there was a possibility that American troops could find themselves caught in a

⁸² David Mitchell: *Making Foreign Policy: Presidential Management of the Decision-Making Process*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005, 145-7.

⁸³ Western, 158.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ Power, 274.

⁸⁶ Mitchell, 141.

quagmire like Vietnam with no real exit strategy, while National Security Advisor Anthony Lake believed that the moral imperative to end the violence was a viable national security issue, a position shared by Madeline Albright who was serving as ambassador to the United Nations.⁸⁷ For his part, Clinton was heavily influenced by his pollster, Stan Greenberg who told the president that the public was not in favor of American intervention in Bosnia and that any action should be conducted multilaterally.⁸⁸ The only option that was not considered was the deployment of American combat troops.⁸⁹

Meanwhile the administration was hounded by significant failed humanitarian interventions in Somalia (where the administration was “suddenly and shockingly bloodied”⁹⁰) and Haiti (where American forces had pulled back after being confronted by “dockside thugs”⁹¹) and was being criticized for weakness and misplaced sympathy while the *Washington Post* alleged that the administration “lacked a coherent foreign policy.”⁹² With the Europeans reluctant to take assertive action on an issue that was becoming increasingly dire, not least for the fact that outside powers had been able to come up with a meaningful response, Clinton was forced into a situation where he would need to burn considerable amounts of political capital which could further jeopardize his already imperiled domestic agenda.⁹³

It was Somalia that presented him with the greatest domestic challenge. Though Bush and Powell had ultimately decided to intervene in Somalia because they thought it would be the easier of the two crises, American casualties began to mount. Though casualties had been

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 143-4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 149

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 150.

⁹⁰ Farkas, 81.

⁹¹ Branch, 62.

⁹² Taylor Branch, *The Clinton Tapes: Wrestling History with the President*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009, 62.

⁹³ Mitchell, 152.

increasing for months after Somali warlord Mohammad Farrah Aideed told his forces to “kill all Americans,” culminating with the famous “Black Hawk Down” incident of October 3, 1993 that killed eighteen Americans, Clinton found himself dealing with unbearable public pressure to withdraw.⁹⁴ After consulting with leaders of Congress, Clinton announced the end of the hunt for Aideed (which had led to the fighting and casualties), saying that the UN had made a mistake by seeking his capture, and that all U.S. forces would be withdrawn by March 31, 1994.⁹⁵ Clinton’s first attempt at humanitarian intervention became a disaster that would influence his thinking about foreign policy interventions for the rest of his administration.

The Role of Congress

Congress had taken a particularly firm stand on Bosnia, demanding assertive action by the president while simultaneously seeking to constrain him. Congress had originally been ambivalent about the Bosnia question but took more notice once the concentration camps were first reported in 1992 and the severity of the crisis became impossible to deny.⁹⁶ Congress’s frustration with the Bush administration’s policy towards Bosnia reached its climax when Congressman Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor, challenged Assistant Secretary of State Tom Niles when he told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the government could not confirm the existence of the camps even though State Department spokesman Richard Boucher had done exactly that in a press conference earlier that day.⁹⁷ Lantos responded to Niles by saying, “You remember the old excuse that while gas chambers were in full blast killing innocent people, we

⁹⁴ Lester H. Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia 1992-1998*, Claremont: Regina Books, 1998, 31-32.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

⁹⁶ Western, 157.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 156-157.

could say, not very honestly, ‘We don’t know’...Now, either Mr. Boucher is lying or you are lying but you are both working for Jim Baker.’⁹⁸

The contours of the debate about resolving the crisis focused around the idea of “lift and strike” where the United States would unilaterally “lift” the arms embargo against the belligerents, evening the balance between the combatants since the Serbs had almost the entire Yugoslav National Army’s (JNA) arsenal at their disposal, and NATO or the U.S. would “strike” key Bosnian Serb targets that would allow peacekeepers and aid agencies to do their work and slow the Bosnian Serbs’ gains. The idea was initially proposed by Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic in a meeting with Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who first introduced a lift-and-strike measure in late 1992 but no further action was taken following its introduction.⁹⁹ Clinton had actually adopted the idea as a presidential candidate to apply pressure on the Bush administration but discovered the policy’s complications once it had assumed office.¹⁰⁰ Initially, the Europeans were reluctant to implement the policy because they believed that it would escalate the war and threaten UN peacekeepers who were already on the ground.¹⁰¹ The administration’s other problem with a unilateral lift of the arms embargo was that Russia, who supported the Serbs, might have interpreted it as an American attempt to arm the Bosnian Muslims as a hedge against Russian influence in the Balkans and the Russians would respond with arms sales to the Serbs. In order to guard against this, the administration preferred to work through the United Nations to secure multilateral support for lifting the arms embargo which

⁹⁸ Clifford Krauss, “U.S. Backs away from Charge of Atrocities in Bosnia Camps,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1992.

⁹⁹ S.Res.341, “A resolution calling for the termination of the arms embargo imposed on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia,” 102nd Congress, 2nd Session, September 16, 1992.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Gordon, “A democratic leader on foreign policy, in Iraq and the Balkans,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2008.

¹⁰¹ Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America’s Bosnia Policy*, Washington: The Brookings Institution Press, 2000, 14-18.

would undercut Russian concerns. A UN role would also provide Clinton with the cover act more assertively in Bosnia and push back against congressional accusations that he was not doing enough.¹⁰²

Congress, and Senator Bob Dole in particular, supported the lift-and-strike option but congressional pressure and advocacy had the effect of annoying rather than enabling Clinton. This was best typified by Clinton's acid response when someone mentioned Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's support for lift-and-strike and Clinton retorted, "That's just a freebie for him and he knows it."¹⁰³ Clinton believed that Moynihan's position allowed him to sound tough without risking much—essentially letting Moynihan take an assertive position on the Bosnia issue with no risk to himself.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Clinton must have known that the costs of an assertive policy included drawing the ire of the American public (and likely Congress) for putting American forces into a conflict with a thin connection to national interests and possibly tempt an insecure and anxious Russia into an opportunity to restore their international credibility. Furthermore, Congress supported allowing the Bosnian Muslims to have weapons but offered no suggestions about where they would obtain them or if the U.S. would provide weapons or funding to support their cause and consequently the policy's supporters appeared to be simply trying to embarrass the president.¹⁰⁵ This is an ideal example of the "two-level game" described by neo-classical interests since Clinton was accountable to both international interests and domestic interests; Congress was only directly accountable to its domestic constituencies.

¹⁰² Branch, 269.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 139.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 140.

¹⁰⁵ Brune, 112. Additionally, Clinton appears to have known that the Bosnian Muslims were receiving arms from the Middle East, particularly Iran, and it is interesting to imagine what Congress might have done with this information had they been informed.

Moynihan, as a Democrat, was an exception in his prodding of the administration. Most of the congressional pressure on Bosnia came from the opposition Republicans and the so-called “Republican Revolution” of 1994 allowed the newly Republican-controlled House of Representatives to begin to apply their own pressure on the administration. For example, the House undermined the credibility of the United States’ sponsorship of the peace process by passing a resolution that prohibited the deployment of American ground troops to assist NATO in enforcing the terms of a future peace settlement, with Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich citing a “comprehensive mistrust of the president.”¹⁰⁶ Senate Majority Leader Dole passed a measure of his own that expressed support for American forces in Bosnia, but expressing doubt in the value of the mission, “laying a marker” in case Bosnia turned into a worst-case scenario—but Dole was also campaigning against Clinton in the presidential election, and Clinton knew that Dole understood that his chances were slim unless the economy stumbled or if the Bosnia mission fell apart.¹⁰⁷ In response to these moves by Congress, Clinton and even French President Jacques Chirac held impromptu negotiations with Gingrich and Dole to try to convince them that their actions were helping the Serbs rather than the Bosnians.¹⁰⁸ But beyond chamber leadership, there were few congressional appeals to solve the crisis. Samantha Power, in her book *A Problem from Hell*, recounts the case of Congressman Frank McCloskey who traveled to Bosnia several times throughout the war to document the atrocities but encountered apathy among his fellow legislators; “[P]eople looked at you like you were living on the moon... They would say to me, ‘But that has nothing to do with Decatur, Illinois,’ or ‘My constituency isn’t interested in that’” and he was even criticized as a “warmonger” by the chair of the House

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁰⁸ Derek Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 16.

Armed Services Committee.¹⁰⁹ But even then, the Senate approved the President's request for peacekeepers 69-30 in December 1995 in preparation to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement and Clinton was able to deploy the peacekeepers even though the House did not support the deployment itself.¹¹⁰

Evelyn Farkas has produced an interesting investigation of the impact of domestic advocacy groups on Congress. Bosnian-Americans contracted the lobbying firms of the Sawyer Miller Group and the Wexler Group to encourage Congress to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims and to help foster grassroots awareness efforts and media campaigns.¹¹¹ Bosnian interests in the United States received a significant source of support in 1992 when, following media reports of internment camps in Bosnia, several major Jewish organizations (B'nai B'rith, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee) took out a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* in support of the Bosnian Muslims and against the Serbs, which lobbying industry observers credited to the efforts of the firm of Ruder Finn which had also been hired to lobby on behalf of Bosnian Muslims.¹¹² As for Serbian-Americans, they enjoyed the assistance of the Greek-American community (who sympathized with the Serbs as fellow Orthodox Christians) and hired the Greek-American lobbying firm of Manatos and Manatos to lobby on the Serbs' behalf.¹¹³ The resulting lobbying efforts were very aggressive and resulted in \$63,353 in contributions to congressional candidates from 1991-1995.¹¹⁴ More specifically, Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Lee Hamilton received 47,101 in itemized contributions from 1993-95 from the Serbian-American

¹⁰⁹ Power, 298-300.

¹¹⁰ Sobel, 1998.

¹¹¹ Farkas, 99.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 101-2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

and Greek-American communities who also made contributions to Senator Spencer Abraham, Senator Phil Graham (for his presidential campaign), Representatives Dan Burton, Bill Baker, Richard Chrysler, and Joe Kollenberg.¹¹⁵ In terms of congressional action on the Bosnian conflict, in 1992 only one resolution regarding the embargo came to the floor for a vote, while in 1995 Congress had held seven votes on bills, amendments, and resolutions related to the arms embargo before the summer recess alone.¹¹⁶

While it is clear that the lobbying efforts were aggressive, it is less clear if these efforts were successful in changing policy or influencing members. In many ways this alludes to the aforementioned American and congressional desire for neutrality. According to one author, “it would be fair to say that the [lobbying] success depended less on its lobbying power and more on the predisposition and willingness of influential actors to tolerate seemingly ‘balanced’ and nonviolent solutions to the conflict in Bosnia,” which explains the willingness of Congress to give hearings, meetings, and incorporate talking points into their statements.¹¹⁷ Lee Hamilton, who was a specific target of Serbian-American lobbying efforts, worked against lifting the embargo against the Bosnian Muslims but was specifically opposed to *unilaterally* lifting the embargo, consistent with Clinton’s position (as a member of Congress, a unilateral American lift of the embargo was the only embargo that he could have a position on). Like Clinton, Hamilton supported a diplomatic solution to the conflict and did not seem to support the dissolution of Bosnia as the Serbian-American lobby may have hoped for.¹¹⁸ The increase in the number of votes in Congress related to the arms embargo is concurrent with the increase in the American public interest about the war in Bosnia, and uncovering a causal linkage between lobbying and

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

response to public pressure is difficult. Evelyn Farkas summarizes her research by writing “The opinion of the Bosnian or Balkan ethnic group lobbies did not cause a radical shift in U.S. policy regarding Bosnia... They might shape the dialogue, successfully confusing the policy debate by asserting moral equivalence between the parties to the conflict. Yet, even if they win over powerful legislators, that is, those who set the legislative agendas, their indirect impact is limited.”¹¹⁹

Public Opinion on Clinton and Bosnia

As for public pressure, tracking American opinions about the conflict in Bosnia reveals the conundrum faced by policymakers vis-à-vis public opinion. Firstly, the public remained relatively well-informed of the crisis, with around 64-69 percent of the population following the situation in Bosnia either “very closely” or “somewhat closely” in 1993-4, dropping to around 55 percent in 1995 (ironically following the Srebrenica massacre and once the United States was most involved in the conflict).¹²⁰ As for the course of action that the American public preferred, it was generally tepid and favored American involvement in ending the crisis, preferably in conjunction with the UN or NATO and with no ground troops if possible. Public approval of how Bush and Clinton handled the crisis was also tepid, and peaked at 54 percent and 47 percent in April and June 1994 respectively, but generally ranged between 37 percent in August 1992

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 105, 121-22.

¹²⁰ Gallup Brain, “Question qn2 U.S. Action in Bosnia,”

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=9316&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=overall%20closely%20followed%20situation%20bosnia>, February 7, 1994, Accessed January 6, 2012, Gallup Brain, “Question qn2 June Wave 1,”

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=73608&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=first%20closely%20following%20situation%20bosnia%20%20closely%20somewhat%20closely%20not%20closely%20not%20closely>, June 6, 1995, Accessed January 6, 2012.

(when Bush was still in office) to 43 percent in February 1994.¹²¹ Despite the public support, even if only tepid, it appears that policymakers were tentative in their policies towards Bosnia out of a fear that public opinion might turn against them. While the American public was indeed opposed to ground forces, it supported multilateral peacekeeping efforts through NATO or the UN. But public support was not reflected in the pundits' debate, with a *New York Times* editorial alleging that “neither in the Congress, nor in the population at large, is there any real constituency for U.S. military engagement.” (Interestingly, the editorial supported the use of military force in Bosnia).¹²² Furthermore, only one percent of articles about Bosnia also mentioned public opinion and of those, 83 percent reported that public opinion was opposed to American intervention.¹²³ This alludes to the idea that was discussed in chapter 1, that the debate in Washington is mirrored in the media's coverage—if there is a heavy debate with firm opposition from key members of Congress or other stakeholders, then their opposition will be reported, partially nullifying the public support which went largely unreported.

President Clinton's overall approval rating had risen steadily over 1993, climbing from a low of 37 percent in June 1993 (Clinton's lowest approval rating as president), until it had peaked at 58 percent in January 1994.¹²⁴ From there it declined again to a low of 38 percent in September before modestly recovering again to 46 percent in February 1995 and holding

¹²¹ Gallup Brain, “Bosnia, Bush, and Clinton,” <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=NEWSWEEK305023>, August 7, 1992, Accessed January 6, 2012.

¹²² “Debate Force on Bosnia. Now.” *The New York Times*, April 13, 1993.

¹²³ Sobel 1998.

¹²⁴ Gallup, “Presidential Job Approval Center,” <http://www.gallup.com/poll/124922/Presidential-Approval-Center.aspx>, Accessed January 29, 2012.

reasonably steady between 44 percent and 51 percent throughout the year.¹²⁵ There was a sharp and temporary drop in January 1996 where his approval dropped to 42 percent.¹²⁶

Correlating the sharpest jumps and drops in his approval rating with events in Bosnia is difficult. For example, the first use of American force in Bosnia occurred in April 1994 when two American F-16 fighters bombed a Serbian military command center under the auspices of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and in defense of the safe area of Goražde. In retaliation, the Serbs took 150 UN personnel hostage and eventually broke the Bosnian army's lines around the city later that month. The involvement of American forces, coupled with the relative failure of their objectives of defending the safe area, resulted in relatively no change in President Clinton's approval ratings which held between 48 percent and 51 percent throughout the month.¹²⁷ The following month, the Senate adopted Senator Dole's bill to unilaterally lift the arms embargo which President Clinton repudiated—his approval ratings for May were again stable at around 51 percent, though dropped to 46 percent in June.¹²⁸ Limited NATO airstrikes continued through the summer of 1994, but President Clinton's approval declined until it bottomed out at 39 percent in September.¹²⁹ In 1995, NATO bombing continued while the Serbs committed the massacre at Srebrenica in July and which was possibly the war's lowest point (and certainly a turning point in the minds of policymakers) while Clinton's popularity held between 46 percent and 48 percent throughout the summer even after the beginning of NATO's Operation Storm in August which captured the Krajina for the Croatians and turned the military tide of the war.¹³⁰ Finally, the Dayton Peace Agreement, which was being negotiated with

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

varying success between September and November, was formally signed on December 14.

During this period, Clinton's popularity climbed from 44 percent in September to 51 percent in December.¹³¹

Meanwhile, spikes or drops in Clinton's popularity of at least 5 percent (within the range of the "rally effect")¹³² bore little correlation to events in Bosnia or to changes in United States policy towards the conflict and those that do (such as the 1993 UN resolution extending UNPROFOR's authorization to protect safe areas) did not result in concurrent spikes or drops in public opinion of Clinton's Bosnia policy—in fact, in Gallup poll questions in May 1993 and through the summer which saw Clinton's popularity drop to the lowest level of the presidency, the public's opinions of Bosnia policy were generally consistent with Clinton's policy. While this may indicate that Clinton may have allowed public opinion to restrict his Bosnia policy to prevent an even greater drop, there is only inferential evidence to support the idea that Clinton's Bosnia policy was influenced by public opinion during this period. Additional key drops (May-June 1994, June-July 1994, February 1995, and December-January 1994-5) do not indicate any correlation between public opinion and a change in Clinton's policy that would indicate a rally effect. Furthermore, key spikes in Clinton's popularity, such as in September 1993, September-November 1994, and April 1995 correlate more closely to domestic events rather than international events. Presidential scandals such as Whitewater or the White House Travel Office scandal, or key policy failures like those regarding health care reform or "don't ask, don't tell" do not correlate to a change in Clinton's policy towards Bosnia, indicating that he did not seek to

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, These events occurred in June 1993 (44 percent to 37 percent and back to 46 percent), September 1993 (46 percent to 56 percent to 46 percent in October), May-June 1994 (51 percent to 46 percent), June-July 1994 (49 percent to 42 percent), September 1994 (39 percent to 44 percent), October-November 1994 (41 percent to 48 percent), December-January 1994-5 (41 percent to 47 percent), February 1995 (49 percent to 42 percent), April 1995 (46 percent to 51 percent), and December-January 1994-5 (51 percent to 42 percent).

use the crisis as a rally point to restore an image of competence as a leader or to exploit a rally effect.

Other Domestic Factors

As for Fordham's argument that a weak economy will incentivize the president to use force, it does not appear that the economic incentives were in place for Clinton to risk the use of military force in Bosnia. American GDP grew from \$8.150.7 in the first quarter of 1992 to \$9.176.4 in 1995 Q4 when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed while the Dow Jones Industrial Average grew from around 3000 to 5000 over the same period and was beginning its historic climb.¹³³ As for domestic confidence in the economy, in 1992 the people who rated the economy as "poor" averaged 45.9 percent while in 1995 the average had dropped to 21 percent while roughly 30 percent rated the economy as "excellent."¹³⁴

As for the "Vietnam effect" which hypothesizes that the United States will not risk casualties in overseas conflicts, two Gallup polls in 1993 both indicated that a plurality of the public believed that American troop deployment to Bosnia would be more like the 1991 Gulf War than the Vietnam War or the intervention in Somalia.¹³⁵ At the same time, the public's acceptance of possible casualties was low since support for possible ground forces plummeted from 67.5 percent to 31.4 percent while a Gallup question changed the casualty threshold from

¹³³ United States Commerce Department, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "GDP-Real (Adjusted) United States)," <http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/data/GDPC1.txt>, Accessed January 29, 2012, StockCharts.com, "Dow Jones Industrial Average, 1980-2000 (Daily)," <http://stockcharts.com/freecharts/historical/djia19802000.html>, Accessed January 29, 2012.

¹³⁴ Gallup, "Historic Gallup Data: Consumer Confidence—Current Conditions," <http://www.gallup.com/poll/110821/Gallup-Daily-US-Economic-Conditions.aspx>, Accessed January 6, 2012.

¹³⁵ Gallup Brain, "Vietnam/Clinton Honeymoon," <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=cnn322043>, January 26, 1993, Accessed January 6, 2012.

none to 25.¹³⁶ The Vietnam Effect, whether real or imagined, certainly carried gravity for policymakers and if they believed that the public would not tolerate casualties as the Gallup poll seems to indicate, then they might have believed that the domestic political costs of force may have been too great.

Conclusion

An analysis of overall presidential popularity, public opinions of the conflict and the possible American response, the state of the economy and domestic opinions of their economic wellbeing, congressional action, and analysis of presidential decision-making do not seem to offer a strong correlation in the creation of Clinton's policy towards the war in Bosnia, and appears to offer almost no evidence of direct causation. He did not seek to use Bosnia to create a domestic rally effect even though he suffered his lowest popularity ratings and several well-publicized scandals and policy failures that may have created conditions where a rally effect may have been possible. He did not appear to seek a more aggressive policy on Bosnia depending on the composition of Congress or because of his domestic approval rating, while the growing economy certainly did not offer any incentive to use force and his support among his Democratic base remained strong throughout the period under consideration. A possible debate about armed intervention, which seems to have received only limited support from all channels, was also sublimated into a milder debate about whether to unilaterally lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims and it was through this that Senator Dole sought to challenge Clinton's Bosnia

¹³⁶ Gallup Brain, "Race Relations, Question qn8A, qn8B," [48](http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=72846&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=su ppose%20knew%20united%20states%20sent%20%20%20troops%20bosnia%20part%20international%20%20%20f orce%2025%20american%20soldiers%20killed%20%20mind%20favor%20oppose%20sending%20%20%20troops %20bosnia, October 22, 1995, Accessed January 6, 2012.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

policy and where Democrats broke with Clinton following the Srebrenica massacre—the domestic situation did not compel Clinton to seek an intervention because domestic forces had uncovered another outlet. In other words, there were no enabling factors to induce Clinton to use force in Bosnia and what possible enabling factors existed did not appear to change Clinton’s general calculus towards the conflict.

At the same time, it appears that there may have been certain factors that restrained Clinton from using force, such as Congressman Gingrich’s assertive House legislation that explicitly attempted to check the president, public opposition to the use of ground forces to restore calm until the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, and a widespread belief among the public and policymakers that the United States should maintain a position of neutrality in the conflict. Defense Secretary William Perry summarized this particular view when he said “Many people, while sympathizing with the Bosnian Muslims, find the situation too confusing, too complicated, and too frustrating...[there is] no support, either in the public, or in the Congress, for taking sides in this war as a combatant so we will not.”¹³⁷ But Perry was wrong—there was support for intervention among the public, and it may be that the support was either underreported, trumped by the noisier opposition coming from Congress, or the administration convinced themselves that support would not be there. Samantha Power argues that the Clinton Administration should have led the public to support intervention rather than adopting a “policy of nonconfrontation,” but Clinton consistently and unequivocally argued in support of an American peacekeeping role, specifically in a *Newsweek* column on November 15, 1995.¹³⁸ Richard Sobel argues that the reason that the media underreported public support for the war was because the “Vietnam effect” had biased them into reporting opposition to military force and

¹³⁷ Power, 305.

¹³⁸ Sobel, 1998.

because certain key stakeholders in the policy debate, such as the military, were themselves strenuously opposed to intervention.¹³⁹ Moreover, the intensity of the opposition may have convinced policymakers that the opposition was stronger than it was in truth.¹⁴⁰ Considering the public's low casualty tolerance, the tepid public support for intervention, and the micromanaging and stubbornness from Congress, and the skepticism about the success of a possible campaign, it is understandable why Clinton may have been risk-averse in this situation: from a domestic standpoint, the costs of intervention were greater than the benefits. The instances where intervention had failed—Somalia and Haiti—had led to harsh criticism and popularity drops while the instances where intervening action had been successful—such as the Dayton Peace Agreement—led to only small and temporary gains. At the same time, with the economy strong and confidence increasing, and with consistently strong support from his base, Clinton may have decided that there may have been no domestic incentives to intervene. An analysis of the Kosovo case will present an example of when an American president decided to intervene and if he was motivated to do so by any domestic interests.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

Chapter 3: Kosovo

Background

American interest in Kosovo's role in the breakup of Yugoslavia goes back farther than 1998 because of the potential of the region to cause a regional, if not international, conflagration. This idea goes back at least as far as President Bush's 1992 "Christmas warning" when then acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger had told Milosevic that the United States would be "prepared to employ military force against the Serbs and in Serbia proper."¹⁴¹ Secretary of State Warren Christopher publically expressed concerns that fighting in Kosovo could draw in regional actors such as Greece, Albania, or Turkey and would "as happened before, [broaden] into a world war."¹⁴² Furthermore, the Clinton administration had grown increasingly impatient with crimes against humanity following the protracted Bosnia crisis, and Srebrenica in particular, along with the genocide in Rwanda and began to see the emerging crisis in Kosovo in 1998 as a way to redeem themselves for past failures.¹⁴³ The administration had acquired six years of experience in dealing with the Milosevic regime which was now a "repeat offender," and the Clinton administration was now familiar with Milosevic's approach to negotiations, equivocations, and ability to stall international intervention.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ "Hearing of the House International Relations Committee on Kosovo and Possible Deployment of U.S. Troops," Federal News Service, March 10, 1999.

¹⁴² Stephan Engleberg, "Weighing Stakes in Bosnia, U.S. Warns of Wider War," *New York Times*, April 25, 1993.

¹⁴³ Power, 447.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 449.

Public Opinion and the Decision to Avoid Ground Forces

Though the administration was determined to show resolve in the face of a humanitarian crisis in the Balkans, it imposed a significant constraint on NATO's response when it committed itself to not using ground troops in the conflict in order to avoid casualties. This forced NATO aircraft to conduct attacks at fifteen thousand feet which was high enough to avoid Serbian anti-aircraft weapons but too high to actually cause much meaningful damage to Serbian positions or operations.¹⁴⁵ Secretary of Defense William Cohen explained the decision to Congress: "[T]here was great discontent up here on Capitol Hill. If I had come to you at that time and requested authorization to put a ground force in—U.S., unilaterally, acting alone—I can imagine the nature of the questions I would have received...[and that] probably would have received an overwhelming rejection from the committee."¹⁴⁶ Cohen also stated that "I saw no consensus or support for [ground forces] in Congress. It was hard enough going up to the Hill even talking about a peacekeeping mission at the time."¹⁴⁷ However, Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon argue that the United States would not have used ground forces unilaterally, as claimed by Cohen, because the British would have likely offered their support. Furthermore, the administration would probably not have gone to Congress to ask for authorization because it had never asked before,¹⁴⁸ although Clinton had pledged to secure congressional support before a ground invasion of Kosovo.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, many rank-and-file members of Congress (predominantly Republican) publically expressed their opposition to the use of ground forces in

¹⁴⁵ David N. Gibbs: *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009, 197.

¹⁴⁶ Cohen Statement, *U.S. Policy Regarding Kosovo, and a Revised Strategic Concept for NATO*, Senate Committee on Armed Services, 106th Congress, April 15, 1999.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in, Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, 97.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 54-55.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid* 162.

Kosovo, likely stoking the administration's anxiety about congressional approval.¹⁵⁰ Daalder and O'Hanlon instead argue that the administration itself was responsible for ruling out ground forces since the administration rejected their use in the summer of 1998,¹⁵¹ and if the administration had made a stronger case on the basis of humanitarian and moral grounds—which carried salience among the public—then its case would have been stronger rather than preemptively ruling out ground forces on the assumption that Congress would have opposed them. It appears that Cohen's concerns may have been anticipatory instead of actual.

As with Bosnia, it appears that there was mild public support for the administration's actions in Kosovo. The public was slightly opposed to NATO intervention in Kosovo in February 1999, when the atrocities were becoming apparent and before the bombing campaign took place in March.¹⁵² Once NATO bombing began, a majority of respondents (65.28 percent) to a Gallup poll believed that the atrocities committed against the Kosovar Albanians required the use of American troops but in the same questionnaire 56.54 percent of respondents were opposed to the use of ground forces if the bombing campaign did not achieve its goals.¹⁵³ In a separate April 1999 poll, 50.37 percent believed that the action was a worthwhile goal even if there were a few casualties but 67.85 percent did not believe casualties would be worthwhile if

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵² Gallup Brain, "GPNS February II Special Interest Survey, Question qn11,"

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=4020&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=peace%20agreement%20not%20reached%20yugoslavian%20serbs%20kosovo%27%27s%20ethnic%20albanian%20majority%20nato%20carry%20air%20missile%20attacks%20against%20serb%20military%20installations%20%20favor%20oppose%20%20%20part%20military%20action>, February 19, 1999, Accessed January 31, 2012.

¹⁵³ Gallup Brain, "March Wave 2, Question qn13a, Question qn8,"

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=21742&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=next%20i%27%27m%20going%20read%20possible%20reasons%20%20%20military%20involvement%20yugoslavia%20%20one%20please%20say%20whether%20think%20situation%20exists%20extent%20justifies%20%20%20troops%20region%20%20%20need%20protect%20innocent%20civilians%20kosovo%20serbian%20aggression>, March 30, 1999, Accessed January 31, 2012.

the conflict became protracted or drawn-out.¹⁵⁴ Generally, Americans seemed to support Clinton's policy towards the crisis and approval ratings of the President's actions averaged 56.53 percent from just after the bombing began in April 1999 to when the campaign ended in June.

Despite the public support for the war in Kosovo, Clinton did not enjoy anything close to a rally effect even though it has been cynically suggested that he began the bombing in order to distract from his impeachment in December 1998 (he was acquitted by the Senate in February, one month before the bombing campaign began). In fact, it has been suggested that Clinton was actually so preoccupied with the scandal that the formulation of the administration's Kosovo policy was delegated to Secretary of State Madeline Albright.¹⁵⁵ In the months before the bombing, Clinton's popularity had ranged between the mid-high sixties, peaking at 73 percent in December 1998. Over the period of the bombing, Clinton's popularity dropped from 64 percent at the outset to 60 percent at its conclusion.¹⁵⁶ While it may have been that Clinton expected to increase his public support through the bombing and miscalculated, he was already enjoying unusually high approval ratings, especially from his base. As for economic conditions, since it has been suggested that Clinton began the war in order to provide a boost to Wall Street,¹⁵⁷ it is true that the markets had dropped in response to the 1998 Asian financial crisis, but they had begun a rally well before the end of 1998 and had already roughly recovered to pre-crisis levels before the bombing began.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, an average of 67 percent of Americans believed that

¹⁵⁴ Gallup Brain, "April Wave 1, Question qn20, Question qn21," <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=3776&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=think%20goal%20worth%20having%20american%20casualties%20lengthy%20military%20action>, April 4, 1999, Accessed January 31, 2012.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Wintz, *Transatlantic Diplomacy and the Use of Military Force in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 140.

¹⁵⁶ Gallup, "Presidential Approval Center," <http://www.gallup.com/poll/124922/Presidential-Approval-Center.aspx>, Accessed January 31, 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Gibbs, 213.

¹⁵⁸ StockCharts.com, Accessed January 31, 2012.

the economy was “excellent” or “good” from September 1998 to August 1999 and the number of Americans that believed the economy was getting better increased almost 10 percent from October 1998 to June 1999.¹⁵⁹ Unemployment was also low at the beginning of 1998 (4.6 percent) and dropped to 4.4 percent when the Kosovo operations began.¹⁶⁰ The economy offered Clinton no incentives to use force, as was the case in Bosnia, but in this case he chose to use force relatively quickly unlike in Bosnia, indicating that the decision to use force was independent of the economy. Furthermore, Clinton was already domestically popular, unlike the situation with Bosnia, and while the diversionary theory may have expected Clinton to use force rapidly in Bosnia and not Kosovo, the opposite is true.

The Role of Congress

While Clinton was enjoying broad public support and a strong economy, he also had to deal with a stubborn Republican-controlled Congress that saw the Kosovo crisis as a way to exploit a possible weakness. Congressman Tom DeLay, who was then serving as House Majority Whip, accused Clinton’s foreign policy for being “with no focus...formulated by the Unabomber.”¹⁶¹ Clinton himself began to view the House Republicans as analogous to the ultranationalists in the Russian Duma that were pushing back against Yelstin, “always snarling at strangers to rally some negative mandate.”¹⁶² The attacks extended to Vice President Al Gore, who was then running for the presidency, and Clinton mused that if he announced that the Kosovo war was over then the Republicans would plant doubts about Gore’s involvement,

¹⁵⁹ Gallup, “Historical Gallup Data: Consumer Confidence—Future Expectations,” Accessed January 6, 2012.

¹⁶⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, “Unemployment Rate,” Accessed January 31, 2012.

¹⁶¹ Branch, 542.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 543.

arguing instead that Gore was too preoccupied with campaigning to be involved in critical foreign policy issues and that the press would run with the Republicans' version of the story.¹⁶³ In terms of legislative action, the day before the bombing began, then-Senator Joe Biden introduced a resolution in the Senate that offered authorization for the upcoming use of force, and while it passed the Senate it failed to pass the House despite receiving an equal number of yeas and nays—although the House did not consider the measure until one *month* later.¹⁶⁴ House Republicans also tried to block funds for four thousand peacekeepers if needed.¹⁶⁵ On April 29, Congress rejected a measure to require the president to end the operations, but then failed to signal its support for the campaign by tying their vote on the question—and then approved the funds for an operation that it neither supported nor opposed.¹⁶⁶

The sum of congressional intransigence put Clinton into a difficult situation but he seemed willing to accept the risks of congressional opposition if it led to a successful result. Throughout the war, Clinton had avoided the introduction of ground troops but maintained that all options were available. When it became possible that the Serbs, whose forces had proven to be more resilient than expected in the face of NATO attacks, might actually thwart NATO's objectives, Clinton was faced with a dilemma of introducing ground troops and risking a situation similar to Somalia where casualties would cause public support to evaporate, or he would have accept the possibility of defeat or compromise with an old nemesis.¹⁶⁷ Though the impeachment scandal had passed and he was no longer worried about losing office, Clinton was instead concerned that an escalation of the war would embolden his antiwar critics in Congress

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 555.

¹⁶⁴ A concurrent resolution authorizing the President of the United States to conduct military air operations and missile strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), S.Con.Res.21, 106th Congress, 1999.

¹⁶⁵ Branch, 542.

¹⁶⁶ Daalder & O'Hanlon, 161.

¹⁶⁷ Wintz, 140.

and that Republicans would take control of his foreign policy agenda.¹⁶⁸ As a result, it only became possible to consider escalation once Clinton was confronted with the possible embarrassment of defeat and he seems to have decided that the risk of employing ground forces was better than managing another failed intervention. With little support for the war in Congress and skepticism from the press, pundits, and public, once Clinton had committed himself to force the costs of defeat were too great to back and when a reporter asked him how long the United States would tolerate the “senseless slaughter” Clinton replied, “As long as it takes.”¹⁶⁹ This thinking was actually supported by key members of Congress—Democrat and Republican—who believed that NATO had to succeed once it had committed itself to the conflict.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

The administration’s actions, particularly regarding the use of ground forces, reveal that Clinton was constrained almost as much by *perceived* constraints almost as much as he was by *actual* constraints. As the statements by Clinton and Cohen both indicate, the administration’s concerns about possible congressional opposition meant that it was set against the use of ground forces almost until they could not win the war without them. This is consistent with Richard Sobel’s study on Bosnia reporting, whereby policymakers focused too heavily on public opposition and consequently over-accounted for an exaggerated phenomenon. But with the support of key members like Senator Chuck Hagel and Richard Lugar, the administration could probably have received congressional acquiescence if it had sought it, while it may have been possible for the public to be “brought around” on the issue if the use of ground forces had led to

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 138.

¹⁶⁹ Branch, 547.

¹⁷⁰ Daalder & O’Hanlon, 132.

a quick and decisive victory. But that is all counterfactual, and the reality is that the administration forced itself into a dangerous position where it did not consider all of its options until late in the conflict for nothing more than abstract, perceived concerns that it may have easily addressed. This does not mean that the administration's concerns about congressional opposition to ground forces was unfounded—after all, Clinton had barely survived his tenure in office in 1998—but it should have made it more incumbent upon the administration to make the case. Instead, perceptions rather than reality seem to have been the guiding factor in determining the scale of force to apply. Clinton's attitude towards intervening in Kosovo as atonement for his past failures to address crises in Bosnia and Rwanda is also reminiscent of the Bush administration's logic about intervention in Somalia. This may mean that the domestic factors themselves are not the issue, but that policymakers' interpretations of domestic factors are the critical issue. In any case, Clinton appears to have been motivated to intervene by international factors, and it was these same factors that led him to end the conflict, but it was domestic factors that determined the conduct of that operation.

Conclusion

The lesson from these cases, buttressed with the theoretical analysis, is that the decision to use military force abroad is influenced largely by international concerns but that the specific conduct and application of that force is heavily influenced by domestic concerns. This was most explicit in the case of the Kosovo conflict, where Clinton ruled out the use of ground forces because of concerns about public and congressional opposition until it was almost too late. This was less apparent in Bosnia, where Clinton avoided the use of military force in deference to a desire for neutrality and a commitment to a peaceful, multilateral solution. Even in this case, public aversion to casualties in a conflict where Americans felt sympathy and generally supported American intervention and Clinton delayed the use of military force until the conflict reached its most gruesome ebb with Srebrenica. The one contrary case is from the Bush administration, which intervened in Somalia precisely because public opinion was wearing thin with the administration's reluctance to solve two ongoing humanitarian crises. Brent Scowcroft even dismissed the need to foster public opinion for the administration's policy because public opinion was one of the very reasons they began to intervene in the first place.¹⁷¹ Clinton's decision to intervene in Kosovo may also be similar in this sense, considering that he had presided over genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, but in this case the difference is that Bush appeared to avoid intervention until it was politically untenable while Clinton was led by international concerns and domestic concerns appear to be ancillary.

What is interesting is that domestic constraints are almost as perceptual as they are real. While public opinion may not have overwhelmingly supported action in any of the cases and may have only been mildly supportive, they were certainly not overwhelmingly opposed. In

¹⁷¹ Western, 173.

fact, public support was almost entirely dependent on the outcome—when Clinton failed in Somalia the public’s disappointment was obvious, but when Clinton was able to succeed in Bosnia the public was supportive or at the very least acquiescent. Clinton may have lamented that the public didn’t know that the war in Kosovo was over and may not have appreciated his accomplishments in resolving the conflict as much as Clinton liked, but it was a far better outcome than when intervention had gone wrong in Haiti or Somalia.

Furthermore, Sobel’s analysis of how the media portrayed public opinion in the Bosnia crisis seems to support the hypothesis that the media debate reflects the elite debate in Washington rather than the public’s opinion of the issue. Indeed, in every case the role of the media was the “dark matter” of the deliberations: its role was never explicit and it was only ancillary to the other factors, but it exerted an unseen force on all the factors considered in this paper. Not only may it have shaped public opinion, but the media’s portrayal of public opinion appears to have fed back into the policy debates as policymakers seemed to believe its force was greater than it in fact was. Sobel speculated that the media overplayed the opposition views partly because of the “Vietnam effect,” which may ironically explain why public opinion was pressuring the Bush administration to intervene in Bosnia and Somalia: in those cases, the most recent major military engagement was the phenomenally successful Gulf War, which some even speculated had finally put the Vietnam effect to rest, and it may have been easier for the public to encourage armed intervention. As Brune described in his discussion of the early stages of Clinton’s deliberations on Bosnia, the issue for the administration was less about whether the military should be involved and more about how it should be involved—the pressure to limit forces and objectives came from Powell and the Joint Chiefs of Staff rather than Clinton himself who wanted to take action but deferred to the military on the details. But as the Somalia

operation faced disaster at the same time that the Bosnia crisis was unfolding, it appears that Clinton began to retrace his steps on military interventions and began to consult with Congress and defer more heavily to polls. Clinton was already in a fight with the military over the “don’t ask don’t tell” policy, was expending political capital on the healthcare debate, and could not risk further blowback against a military who was already losing patience with the new president and a Congress that could not be counted on give Clinton everything he wanted on every issue. In other words, the “Vietnam effect” was in this case more of a “Somalia effect,” rapidly erasing the enthusiasm from the Gulf War and restoring the previous concerns about how the public would react to the use of military force overseas. This explains why Clinton was willing to intervene because of international conditions but was more concerned about the conduct of the operations themselves because of a casualty-averse public. Additionally, Clinton’s decision-making was informed more by past experience than by current conditions.

This all leads to the possibility that the domestic constraints that appear to have limited the president’s freedom of action in these crises might mostly be perceptual. This does not mean that the constraints are imagined—they are real, but their effects have less to do with their actual pressure and more to do with how they influence the various stakeholders throughout the policymaking process. In the case of Bosnia, the public actually supported American action but a combination of media bias and past experiences with intervention combined with international factors to dissuade Clinton from intervening until the crisis had reached unbearable proportions after Srebrenica. In the case of Kosovo, it led to Clinton ruling out ground forces until the very last moment even though this again had public support along with the support of key members of Congress from both parties. Perceptions of the opposition made the administration risk-averse in each case and likely made the policy formulation more complicated than it needed to be. The

point is not that policymakers should be flippant about domestic factors by downplaying past failures and trusting that the public will support them as long as they are successful, especially since that philosophy contributed in no small part to two large, controversial, and largely unsuccessful wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The point is that policymakers may be less constrained in their decision-making than they think that they may be and that they may need to develop a less fatalistic view of the domestic influences.

At the very least, these cases make clear that there are few domestic incentives for the president to use force overseas to bolster his domestic popularity—if anything, foreign policy issues such as these were lose-lose propositions for President Clinton and would likely be the same for any other president. Proponents of the rally effect and the diversionary theory have not adequately considered that the costs of military intervention are greater than the benefits. Whatever boosts in popularity that Clinton enjoyed from his even limited interventions in Bosnia or Kosovo were short-lived and it appears that Clinton’s motivations vis-à-vis public opinion were less about winning public support than they were about avoiding a loss. Examples that display an *ex post* rally effect, such as the 1991 Iraq War, Panama, and others, were policy successes rather than failures, inferring the mundane conclusion that the public only supports successful uses of force in keeping with Richard Eichenberg’s conclusions¹⁷². Regarding Kosovo, the only variable that made Clinton begin to consider the ground forces that he had earlier ruled out was the prospect that NATO might lose the conflict—in this case, a successful mission trumped public opinion, or rather Clinton new that the public opinion losses would be greater from a loss than from the use of ground forces. This may lead to another, more reassuring, conclusion is that if policymakers understand that the public will only rally behind

¹⁷² Eichenberg, 2005.

successful ventures then they should not pursue strategies with a high risk of failure or they will ensure that their efforts will ensure a successful outcome. In this sense, the rally effect should be considered a check more than a diversion.

As for Congress, even if congressional advocacy of an international issue is not disingenuous, foreign policy crises are, to use Clinton's expression, "freebies" since Congress can claim plenty of credit and incur almost no loss at all. This is consistent with the author's experiences as a Senate staffer when dealing with the various Iran embargo bills: it provided members of Congress with an issue that they could look assertive and defiant on before their constituents with only a superficial concern about the international ramifications about their positions. While it may be an obvious point, it is worth remembering that members of Congress have no international constituencies. This allowed the Republican-controlled Congresses to use the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo as a way to score political points against the president by questioning his leadership of the issue and by attempting to take the foreign policy agenda away from him. In Bosnia, this centered around the lift-and-strike debate which Senate Dole exploited to call into question Clinton's decisiveness on the Bosnian crisis, while in the case of Kosovo the Republican-controlled Congress was able to effectively raise the costs of the use of ground forces so as to make Clinton remove the option from the table almost until the point when it was absolutely necessary, and in turn take the initiative away from Clinton on the Kosovo issue. Each of these cases were easy for Congress to exploit because, outside of congressional and committee leadership, there was no cost to the congressmen for taking the positions that they did—their positions were less about the international issues themselves about more about exploiting questions about the president's ability to lead.

At the same time, while there may be no “cost” to the public on international issues, there *is* gravity. Public attitudes on foreign policy questions may not have been determinative in the decision to use force or not, but they were clearly informative. Americans’ recommendations for resolving foreign policy crises may have been tepid or inconsistent, but they were consistently aware of the international issues before the United States and interested in seeing some sort of American attempt to resolve the crises. This means that presidents cannot ignore public awareness of international issues. They can hope to lead the debate or follow the debate, but they cannot act in isolation of it. Bush may have refused to follow the public debates until the end, and Clinton seems to have been reluctant to lead the debates. In the cases that this paper considered, public opinion weighed heavily on the decision-making of Clinton, to the point where it almost divorced him from the debates of his principals’ committee. This may be an extreme case, but it is certainly evident that Clinton used public opinion to determine the conduct of the Kosovo war, believing that the public would not tolerate many casualties for a conflict in which they had so few national interests. While in each case international issues created the impetus for beginning and ending the conflicts, the conduct of the operations themselves relied upon perceptions of public opinion.

The key question is whether this public pressure is useful and helps to produce successful policy outcomes, or if it obfuscates policymakers’ thinking and allows for a rationale to use force (or not) at the expense of other considerations which might weigh more directly on the issue at hand. While clearly horrors like Srebrenica or Rwanda may have been averted if the United States was more willing to act aggressively, it is uncertain if a more assertive use of force would have led to a more desirable political outcome. In both Bosnia and Kosovo, the peace agreements that concluded the conflicts were sufficient in ending the hostilities but deep, almost

existential issues about each state remain unresolved after more than a decade of international involvement in each entity. There is no question that stopping the slaughter of innocent civilians is a worthwhile goal if it can be attained, but it should be hoped that international interventions commit to more than just cosmetic band-aids that end the immediate hostilities but leave the deeper issues unresolved. It is unlikely that if the domestic constraints were removed that either Bosnia or Kosovo would be in a more stable condition because those decisions are more matters of international politics than international interventions. Administrations should be encouraged—they are still responsible for ensuring a successful outcome to a crisis. However, they are also responsible if the solution fails. Fortunately for them, the public and Congress will have likely tuned-out on those issues by the time the failure becomes apparent.

This study also contained obvious limitations. Most glaring is the fact that conflicts in Haiti and Rwanda were left out although each was a humanitarian crisis with Rwanda rising to the level of genocide. A consideration of these crises must be made in order for a study of uses of force in minor conflicts to be complete. This paper chose to consider the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia over these other conflicts because of the depth of media coverage: for example, from 1991-1995 Bosnia was mentioned on the evening news 2,575 times while Rwanda was mentioned 260 times over the same period—almost one tenth of the coverage that Bosnia received.¹⁷³ For further comparison, Haiti was mentioned 729 times, Somalia was mentioned 678 times, and Kosovo was mentioned 1,236 times.¹⁷⁴ To use another measure, the Bosnia conflict generated 141 survey items and the conflict in Kosovo generated 99 while Haiti

¹⁷³ Data from Network Evening News Abstracts, Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University, Accessed February 2, 2012.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

generated 40, Somalia generated 41, and Rwanda generated merely three survey points.¹⁷⁵

Clinton himself lamented that fewer people cared about the Rwandan genocide because CNN transmitted fewer images of it.¹⁷⁶ This would seem to indicate that media coverage plays a determinative role in the formulation of public opinion and consequently upon presidential decision-making. It will be useful for future studies to more fully consider the media's role and whether its apparent bias towards the Balkan conflicts affected either public opinion, presidential decision-making, or both.

The second limitation is that this paper largely only considered the actions of a single administration. This is because the paper only considered foreign policy crises since the end of the Cold War because the role of the Soviet Union was no longer an intervening variable in the decision to use force and at least in theory allowed administrations to have a freer hand when deciding to employ force overseas. The problem is that this allows for relatively few samples of conflicts that qualify for consideration under the scope of this paper and only three administrations to consider, one of whom is still in office. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are considered to be major conflicts that used forces in excess of the scope of this study while the Libya operation was too recent to generate enough literature to allow for a meaningful consideration and the Syria crisis is ongoing at the time of this writing, making a useful consideration of that case almost useless since it could become outdated so quickly. Unfortunately for this study, the available cases where a useful analysis could be made were largely limited to the Clinton administration and leads to the problem that the trends in this paper may be restricted to the Clinton administration rather than drawing any broader trends of Executive Branch decision-making. Any future study of this topic would especially require a

¹⁷⁵ Eichenberg, 2005.

¹⁷⁶ Branch, 133.

thorough consideration of the Libyan and Syrian cases because of the fact that force was used in one case and not the other despite the similarities of the two crises.

The final limitation of this paper is the consistent inability to draw concrete causal relations between public opinion, congressional action, and presidential decision-making. At no point did Clinton or any of his advisers explicitly reveal that their positions were being guided by public opinion (it would be silly to expect them to admit as such) and congressional action was only informative in the case of using ground troops in Kosovo and it has been demonstrated that the constraint in this case may largely have been imagined by the administration. It is clear that presidential policy and public opinion feed off of and influence each other, but it is less clear how much public opinion has a direct bearing on the presidential decisions to use force. This paper has suggested that the decision is primarily influenced by international concerns and this idea has been supported by other papers in the literature. This paper has also hopefully demonstrated that the correlations suggested by the empirical studies are also insufficient in determining the president's decision to use force and it should be clear that there are a multitude of factors that influence presidents and it is not always clear where one influence ends and another begins. If nothing else, it is impossible to isolate a single variable and hold that as demonstrative of an affect as significant as the decision to use military force.

This paper should have made clear how complex domestic influences are—on the one hand, the public supports an assertive foreign policy and active engagements to maintain the global standing of the United States, while at the same time placing a debilitatingly low threshold on the number of casualties that they are willing to incur in order to maintain that status.

William Cohen, secretary of defense during the Kosovo bombing, summarized the administration's view of this conundrum well: “[T]he hearts that beats so loudly and

enthusiastically to do something, to intervene in areas where there is not an immediate threat to our vital interests, when those hearts that had beaten so loudly see those coffins, then they switch, and they say, ‘What are we doing there?’”¹⁷⁷ Policymakers—not even those as polling-obsessed as Clinton—are surely all aware of the domestic constraints upon their ability to act to solve international crises. The temptation to ignore or dismiss domestic pressures may remain in an abstract, *ceteris paribus* world, but if mere perceptions of domestic pressures are enough to change the entire conduct of a war then the constraints of real pressures must be even more significant. If nothing else, domestic factors constrain, not enable, policymakers in minor conflicts.

¹⁷⁷ Confirmation hearing of former Senator William Cohen to be secretary of defense, Senate Armed Services Committee, January 22, 1997.

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