Unconventional Warfare as a Strategic Foreign Policy Tool:

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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Abstract

While there is much literature on the operational and tactical military histories of U.S. Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) within security studies, little analysis exists of their primary mission, unconventional warfare (UW), and its implementation within a greater national security strategy. As the primary and founding mission of Army SOF, UW receives scant attention as a tool of American foreign policy that supports our national interest.

This paper assesses U.S. unconventional warfare strategies employed during the 1990s in Iraq and Afghanistan and concludes that the United State ineffectively utilized UW as a strategic foreign policy tool in those two instances. It begins with a brief history of the development of UW doctrine, UW institutionalization within Army SOF, and the integration of SOF and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for UW operations. Clinton Administration's decision to implement UW with limited CIA assets is analyzed using prospect theory - a theory of decision-making under risk. The Administration's strategic objectives, while sound, were diminished by the president's lack of commitment to foreign policy, aversion to military solutions, and turbulent domestic politics. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, the president considered four foreign policy options, settling on limited UW. Operating in the domain of losses, President Clinton pursued risk prone behavior by intervening within a hostile state despite risk averse tendencies resulting from past military failures. Ultimately, the decision to implement a limited, disjointed UW campaign outside a greater national strategy contributed to mission ineptitude. Ultimately, further comprehensive strategic analysis is necessary to ensure that the lessons learned from past U.S. successes and failures inform better use of UW assets as an asymmetrical fighting force against like-minded U.S. opponents.

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Introduction

Given a rise in terrorism, extremist political factions, and the repression of democratic movements in second and third world states that characterized the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. government came to recognize the need for a flexible, highly trained military force ready for small-scale, complex, high-risk missions inside hostile states. The logical choice became the special operations forces (SOF) drawn down since the Vietnam era. Throughout its history, the Army SOF's core purpose has been unconventional warfare (UW) and although light infantry and paramilitary units may employ UW tactics, SOF remain the only doctrinally trained UW experts. As late as 1990, joint military doctrine remained in its infancy and few conventional commanders well understood the potential of the Special Forces on the battlefield or in peacetime. Many military and civilian leaders failed to appreciate how UW could achieve foreign policy goals at a strategic level, especially during peacetime engagement.

This paper assesses U.S. unconventional warfare strategies employed during the 1990s in Iraq and Afghanistan and concludes that the United State ineffectively utilized UW as a strategic foreign policy tool in those two instances. It begins with a brief history of the development of UW doctrine, UW institutionalization within Army SOF, and the integration of SOF and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for UW operations. Clinton Administration's decision to implement UW with limited CIA assets is analyzed using prospect theory - a theory of decision-making under risk. The Administration's strategic objectives, while sound, were diminished by the president's lack of commitment to foreign policy, aversion to military solutions, and turbulent domestic politics. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, the president considered four foreign policy options, settling on limited UW. Operating in the domain of losses, President

Clinton pursued risk prone behavior by intervening within a hostile state despite risk averse tendencies resulting from past military failures. Ultimately, the decision to implement a limited, disjointed UW campaign outside a greater national strategy contributed to mission ineptitude.

In "When Do Special Operations Succeed?" Colin Gray asserts that "special operations need to be studied as integral to the strategic history of conflict and war…the vast literature on special operations does little to advance understanding either of their utility in war as a whole, or of the conditions that promote their strategic value."[1] He calls for the development of strategic history to augment the current operational and tactical histories of specific unconventional conflicts. This paper aims to contribute to the body of strategic level analysis by focusing on UW as a largely untapped foreign policy instrument.

Unconventional Warfare

With the formation of the Special Forces in 1952 came the development of doctrine for three missions: unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare, and psychological operations (PSYOPS). Today SOF trace their founding mission of UW back to World War II and the UW campaigns conducted by the United States and Britain against German and Japanese forces. By the 1960s, President Kennedy advocated UW as a strategic tool to exploit insurgencies against communist regimes. Although the Vietnam War exposed the difficulties of UW implementation under political limitations, the Reagan Doctrine of the 1980s encouraged a resurgence of UW campaigns that contributed in part to the breakup of the Soviet Union. With end of the Cold War, SOF fought to prove its viability in the new world order by establishing a

new command structure and pursing joint operations to prove that its primary mission of UW

would remain a viable strategic alternative for future conflicts.

The Development of Doctrine

FM 3-05.20 (FM 31-20) Doctrine for Special Forces defines UW as:

> A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery (UAR).[2]

Unconventional warfare in the United States can be traced back to experiences of both

British and American forces during the 18th century. His Majesty's Independent Companies of

Rangers, dubbed "Roger's Rangers", conducted deep penetration raids into enemy territory to

sabotage and disrupt conventional forces during the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763). Only a

generation removed, British commanders renounced guerrilla tactics for traditional force-on-

force maneuvers against colonial troops during the Revolutionary War. Continental commanders

like Francis Marion, nicknamed the "Swamp Fox", organized guerrilla campaigns in British-held

South Carolina to paralyze disproportionate numbers of British forces trying to maintain their

foothold within the South. Within these early examples echo the traditional SOF role as UW

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[1] Colin S. Gray. "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?" *Parameters* 29, no.1 (1999): 2-24. Accessed February 23, 2003. Available from http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/welcome.html.
[2] U.S. Department of the Army. *FM 3-05.20: Special Forces Operations.* June 26, 2001. Accessed February 23, 2003. Available from http://www.adtdl.army.mil.

operators in denied areas, propagating support from local populations in an effort to overthrow a hostile regime.[3]

The American experience with UW faded until World War II when the United States followed the British lead in developing forces to aid underground movements in Europe against Germany. The United States first ventured into more formalized UW operations through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In 1942, General William J. Donovan modeled the OSS on the British intelligence services with the mission to conduct sabotage, subversion, direct action, and intelligence collection inside enemy held territory. The OSS concentrated its major efforts in France, with three operational units providing direct support to the French Resistance. In Burma, OSS Detachment 101 organized Kachin tribesmen into guerrilla troops to conduct raids and ambushes tying up large numbers of Japanese forces with UW tactics. While OSS contributions should not be overstated due to the haphazard and uncoordinated nature of its operations, the OSS's UW actions undoubtedly contributed to the enemy's fog and friction in war.[4]

Throughout WWII, Donovan faced fierce opposition from Army, Navy, and the FBI. Many theater commanders, including General Douglas MacArthur, refused to allow OSS operations within their areas of responsibility. "Despite a long and sometimes distinguished history in irregular warfare, the United States in this century has been a difficult home for the development of SOF. Britain and the Soviet Union, by contrast, had cultures that fostered a strategic approach to SOF."[5] Donovan succeeded in protecting his organization due to a close, personal relationship with President Roosevelt. After Roosevelt's death in 1945, however,

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[3] D. M. Giangreco. "Special Forces." *American Heritage* 53, no. 6 (2002): 50-60. Accessed April 3, 2003. Available from Expanded Academic.
[4] Alfred H. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, Rev. ed., Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 27-32.

President Truman disbanded the organization on the premise that such capabilities were unnecessary during times of peace.

Within months, Truman recanted, realizing the need for a strategic intelligence agency to counteract the growing Soviet threat. The National Security Act of 1947 created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which assumed many of the same responsibilities of the OSS. Besides coordinating intelligence collection among agencies, the CIA gained sole responsibility for conducting covert operations. CIA paramilitary capabilities expanded with operations in Korea and throughout the Far East. The Cold War impetus supplied an ideal environment to promote the growth of unconventional warfare capabilities.[6]

In the early 1950s, several members of Congress and the executive staff promoted UW forces as America's best answer to countering Soviet sponsored regimes in Europe and Asia. Many conventional Army leaders were wary of propagating an "elite" unit within the Army's force structure designed to act autonomously without conventional units. Several former OSS officers who relocated to the newly organized CIA supported the formation of an independent civilian agency responsible for guerrilla and insurgency warfare. When the CIA and the newly formed Air Force attempted to form unconventional warfare air and ground units, the Army countered by creating the Army Special Forces, initiating fierce interagency and interservice rivalries.[7]

In 1951, Brigadier General Robert McClure, supported by Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, founded the Psychological Warfare Center along with the Special Forces School to educate

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[5] Gray. "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?"
[6] Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, 39-40.
[7] Charles M. Simpson and Robert B. Rheault, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years, a History of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 14-7.

highly skilled soldiers across three mission profiles: unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and psychological operations. Today, the Special Forces still view UW as the organization's core purpose. "As a mission and as a concept, unconventional warfare is the heart and soul of the United States Army's Special Forces. …It provides the fundamental principles for SF organization, doctrine, training and recruitment."[8]

On 20 June 1952, the 10th Special Forces Group was formed with the mission to exploit resistance movements within the Soviet Union in the event that Russian forces invaded Western Europe. Throughout the 1950s, UW missions remained focused upon the enemies and conditions created during WWII. The conventional military remained similarly focused, preoccupied with planning for the nuclear holocaust of World War III against the Soviet Union. Few regular officers crossed over to the SOF world, knowing that long-term careers were not build around shadowy, secretive units.[9]

By the 1960s, third world states throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia faced new conflicts dubbed "wars of national liberation" brought about from communist insurgencies. The United States became increasingly concerned with halting the spread of communism and later, with rolling it back. Knowledgeable of the contributions and strategic implications of UW in combating hostile regimes, President Kennedy became the first presidential sponsor of SOF. Speaking at the United States Military Academy in 1962, he warned:

> [W]e need to be prepared to fight a different war. This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin, war by guerilla, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of combat, by infiltration instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It requires, in those situations

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[8] Colonel Gary M. Jones and Major Christopher Tone, "Unconventional Warfare: Core Purpose of Special Forces," *Special Warfare*, Summer, 1999, 4.
[9] Simpson and Rheault, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years, a History of the U.S. Army Special Forces*, 18-20.

where we encounter it, a whole new strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore, a new and wholly different kind of military training.[10]

The arrival of such a powerful patron helped establish special operations capabilities never previously evidenced in the American military. The war in Vietnam provided the context for Kennedy to promote SOF's UW capabilities. Frustrated with the lack of success in countering North Vietnamese infiltrations in South Vietnam, the president directed the CIA to work with military forces to organize and train indigenous groups to subvert, sabotage, and gather intelligence on NVA forces within enemy held territory. While many in Kennedy's cabinet focused primarily on defending against counterinsurgency in South Vietnam, the president remained equally dedicated to offensive UW campaigns against North Vietnam. Later, President Johnson placed extensive limitations upon UW actions, insisting that the US had no desire to overthrow the regime. But while the U.S. sought limited objectives and a return to the status quo, North Vietnam continued to fight a total war to achieve national reunification.[11]

Throughout the build up of SOF forces for the Vietnam War, SOF's unique UW capabilities bred resentment in the conventional army because of its secretive, highly skilled mission profile. Conventional military leaders discredited UW as a means of waging war considered dishonorable for a democracy. Characteristically, one Army general stated:

> Subversion, sabotage, and guerilla warfare are the weapons of the politically and materially weak. They have been considered by the American…wholly unworthy methods…the American military leadership, reflecting on the attitudes of Americans in general, expects to directly confront an adversary and overwhelm him with unlimited power.[12]

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[10] Giangreco. "Special Forces."
[11] Richard H. Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi: Kennedy's and Johnson's Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 3-4.
[12] Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997), 6-7.

The Vietnam conflict engendered deep distrust between the conventional military, SOF, and the intelligence community. The military leadership encouraged political leaders to restrict unconventional warfare and covert tactics to civilian agencies like CIA so that dirty tricks would not taint honorable military operations. By wars end, support for UW training and implementation dissipated due to a lack of political sponsorship and American war fatigue. SOF and CIA human intelligence (HUMINT) assets experienced dramatic cutbacks just as technological innovations expanded signals and imaging intelligence collection. The decline of investment in human capabilities ultimately resulted in the intelligence and SOF community's inability to respond effectively to events such as the Iranian Revolution, Desert One, and the bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon.

During the Reagan and first Bush Administrations, a resurgence in political support for SOF ensured the return of UW as a strategic instrument of national power. For the first time, the Executive, Congress, and the American public united behind an UW campaign by supporting the mujahidin forces against Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. President Reagan went on to launch several UW operations, including controversial support to the Contras in Nicaragua. Fortunately, the backlash from the Iran-Contra scandal had little impact on Congress's support for SOF capabilities and joint operations. President Reagan supported sweeping changes by Congress to establish U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in 1987. Two years later, the Army recognized the Special Forces as a separate branch by creating Army Special Operations Command (ARSOC). Other reforms made it possible for SOF officers to remain competitive across all services and branches ensuring that SOF would remain represented within the ranks of future general officers.

Despite Congress and the administrations favored expansion of SOF UW capabilities, many senior military leaders resisted full scale integration of conventional and unconventional forces, preferring to promote the technology of nuclear arsenals, aircraft fleets, and armored divisions as the best deterrents to the Soviet Empire and future adversaries.

Unconventional Warfare in the 1990s

Following successes in the conventionally waged Persian Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, many within the military establishment saw little need to retain the capabilities and training necessary to conduct UW. Vietnam-era leaders believed that unconventional tactics like those employed in the low intensity conflict (LIC) of Vietnam produced the quagmire that many attributed to self-imposed limitations on conventional weapons technology. National leaders believed that revolutionary ideologies would wither away with the demise of Soviet communism, rendering insurgency movements a relic of the past. Academics like Francis Fukuyama predicted "The End of History" as all states would converge on the sole viable option of a liberal democracy supported by a market economy, and abandon conflict or revolutionary options.

Still others foresaw the expanded future risk of low intensity conflict. The hope of a peaceful age emerging at the Cold War's close quickly dissipated with foreign policy concerns of regional instabilities engendered by ethnic conflict, humanitarian disasters, and failing states. The SOF community retained its belief in the strategic significance of UW operations, saw its relevance grow steadily through the 1980s, and strove to prove their viability during the course of the Persian Gulf War. To better integrate SOF into joint military doctrine, its leadership de-

emphasized the more controversial covert side of SOF capabilities to gain broader support from conventional military leaders.[13]

Air Marshall Giulio Douhet of Italy, who predicted the revolutionary change air power would bring to World War II, stated: "Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves until after those changes occur."[14] In 1995, Major General William Garrison reemphasized this notion in an article on doctrine as an engine of change: "We must leave behind this…period in which SOF doctrine has been reactive and move toward a period in which change is once again evolutionary, anticipated, accommodated, and driven by clear, systematically implemented doctrine."[15]

Through the 1990s and into the beginning of the 21st century, national leaders and those in the intelligence and SOF communities anticipated the changing nature of the post-Cold War world but stopped short of enacting the innovative foreign policy and flexible doctrines required to deal with evolving national security challenges. During the first Clinton Administration, foreign policy took a back seat to domestic and economic concerns.

Faced with residual Cold War battles and new conflicts, President Clinton grappled with low intensity conflict, peacekeeping, and humanitarian relief missions that his administration was unprepared to address. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States faced recurring threats, and the president worried that greater ones would follow if America did not respond in turn. President Clinton chose to respond by using UW methods but the strategy that resulted was piecemeal and largely ineffective. In these two cases, UW might have produced

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[13] See Marquis for a more lengthy discussion on the difficult relationship between conventional military leaders and the SOF leaders on pages 6-7.

more significant results if policy makers had understood its implementation within a greater national security framework.

George Shultz, Secretary of State under President Reagan, stated: "The conduct of foreign policy was not one thing after another but the same thing over and over."[16] As many of the same threats and challenges to national and international security today will continue to thrive and evolve, accordingly so must the use of military force evolve at the unconventional level. Units that conduct UW, like Army SOF, are often the nation's best answer to asymmetric threats, elusive enemies, and non-state actors.

Explaining the decision to intervene

In 1992, President Bill Clinton entered the White House at a time when post-Cold War turbulence gained momentum. Saddam Hussein, having avoided deposal during the Gulf War, returned to challenge the United States and the international community by threatening neighbors and his own people with largely intact military forces. After emerging as the leader in a brutal civil war largely due to the sponsorship of U.S. allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Taliban offered safe haven to rising Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations. These two cases would prove to be the first national security battles fought by the United States in the 21st century. Though the risks existed prior to 2001, U.S. foreign policy did not succeed in identifying or preventing them beforehand.

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[14] Major General William F. Garrison, "The USSOCOM View of Doctrine as an Engine of Change," in *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War.*, ed. Richard H. Shultz, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, and W. Bradley Stock (United States Special Operations Command, 1995), 175.
[15] Ibid.
[16] William G. Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 204.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, like many of his foreign policy challenges, President Clinton acted on a case by case basis, sometimes with diplomatic overtures, other times with short-lived strategic bombing campaigns. He increasingly understood that there was risk to allowing Saddam to go unchallenged. By 1998, he understood in part the threat Al-Qaeda posed to the United States and took seriously their claims to acquire greater means to strike from their safe haven in Afghanistan. The president needed to act, but how? He chose to implement a covert UW campaign with the mission to pursue high value targets with limited personnel and resources. Although the decision to utilize UW, especially under covert conditions, involves risk, the president perceived this option to be the least risky for the greatest gain.

Prospect theory, a theory of decision-making under conditions of risk, offers one explanation for why the President Clinton decided to conduct UW. Throughout his tenure, President Clinton operated within the domain of losses, which made him more susceptible to risky decision-making. Of the six courses of action available, however, President Clinton chose a risky option, but one that involved the least amount of risk for the best possible gains.

Prospect Theory

First formulated by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in 1979, prospect theory has become the leading alternative to expected utility theory, developed as a normative rational choice model. By examining the ways in which people consistently violated the principle axioms of rational choice, Kahneman and Tversky developed prospect theory to offer a more comprehensive explanation for decision-making behavior. Since its conception, prospect theory

has become a framework for elucidating political behavior and risk propensity in foreign policy.[17]

Prospect theory helps explain decision-making under risk. Everyday decisions involve a series a choices and their corresponding inherent risks. A sense of risk arises when one fears losing something of value or securing a desired end. The theory asks why a decision maker chooses to take extreme risks in one case while in a later scenario chooses not to secure easy gains. "Issues of risk are central to understanding decision-making in international politics."[18] Decisions made at the strategic level often involve uncertainty, ambiguity, and incomplete information. Greater risk occurs when the stakes for losses are high, when time is limited to secure a valuable prize, and tasks are increasingly more complex. In providing an understanding of how leaders perceive and react to conditions of risk when making decisions, risk analysis can explain and predict political outcomes based upon the present domain in which leaders find themselves. *Domain* refers the state in which the actor resides, that of losses or gains. If the actor feels he is in a position of relative strength, he is in the domain of gains, and conversely, if his position is weak, he is in the domain of losses.

In prospect theory, choices are evaluated in terms of the domain, also referred to as a *reference point*, rather than selected according to their expected value. This reference point is critical to determining loss or gain in a given situation. In general, the reference point resides at or near the current *status quo*. In some situations, actors desire a return to the *status quo*, especially following a loss. Therefore, it is important to understand how *framing* a particular

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[17] The development of prospect theory in this section is based primarily upon two sources: Barbara Farnham, *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

course of action in respect to a reference point affects one's determination of the corresponding result.[19] Risk orientation, based on loss aversion or loss acceptance, is an important factor determined by the framing of choices. Losses carry greater weight than comparable gains. "I hate to lose more than I like to win,"[20] stated tennis great Jimmy Conners. Decision makers generally are risk acceptant when residing in the domain of losses and risk averse when they are in domain of gains.

The process of choice involves two phases. The first, referred to as the *editing phase*, consists of identifying the courses of action available to the decision maker, the possible consequences of each action, and the risk level associated with each consequence. In this phase, the reference point is also identified, and the outcomes are framed in terms of gains and losses from that reference point. Kahneman and Tversky acknowledge that, "in complex choice situations, however, exactly how choice problems are edited is difficult to predict because the process is influenced by the 'norms, habits, and expectancies of the decision maker."[21]

In the second *evaluation phase*, decision makers evaluate the prospects for each option and make a choice by selecting the option of highest value. Value is determined through a combination of the value function and the probability weighing function, both of which take into consideration risk propensity (See Appendix A, Figures 1 and 2). Consequently, the risk to acquire a gain, when residing in the domain of gains, is undervalued in relation to a certain outcome (remaining at the *status quo*) resulting in risk aversion. In the domain of losses,

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[18] McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy*, 2.
[19] Farnham, *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict*, 7-12.
[20] Ibid., 11.
[21] Ibid., 16.

however, probabilities are underweighted, resulting in reduced perceived risk to outcomes and therefore increased risk acceptance.[22]

The application of prospect theory to the foreign policy arena requires operationalization of the variables. The independent variable of domain, relative to a reference point, is examined for causality with respect to the dependent variable: risk propensity. First, one assesses the domain of the foreign policy decision-maker. Second, one compares the decision maker's propensity for risk with the theory's predictions.[23]

In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, the president had six courses of action available to him (see options #1-6 on the following page): do nothing; economic and diplomatic sanctions; limited bombing; UW with CIA intelligence and paramilitary personnel; expanded UW and commando military operations; and a conventional military campaign. The options range from no risk in the case of no action to extreme risk in the case of a military campaign. (The details of each course of action and its assessed risk value will be addressed later in the chapter.)

Prospect theory provides two hypotheses to test in the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. First, if President Clinton operated in the domain of losses, he will exhibit risk prone behavior by choosing political or military intervention in another sovereign nation. Conversely, if the president operated in the domain of gains, he will exhibit risk averse behavior such as diplomatic measures or no action. Therefore, we expect to see riskier options chosen in the domain of losses and less risky options chosen in the domain of gains. On the following page, Figure 1 illustrates foreign policy options across the spectrum of risk.

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[22] Ibid., 16-18.
[23] McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy*, 34-7.
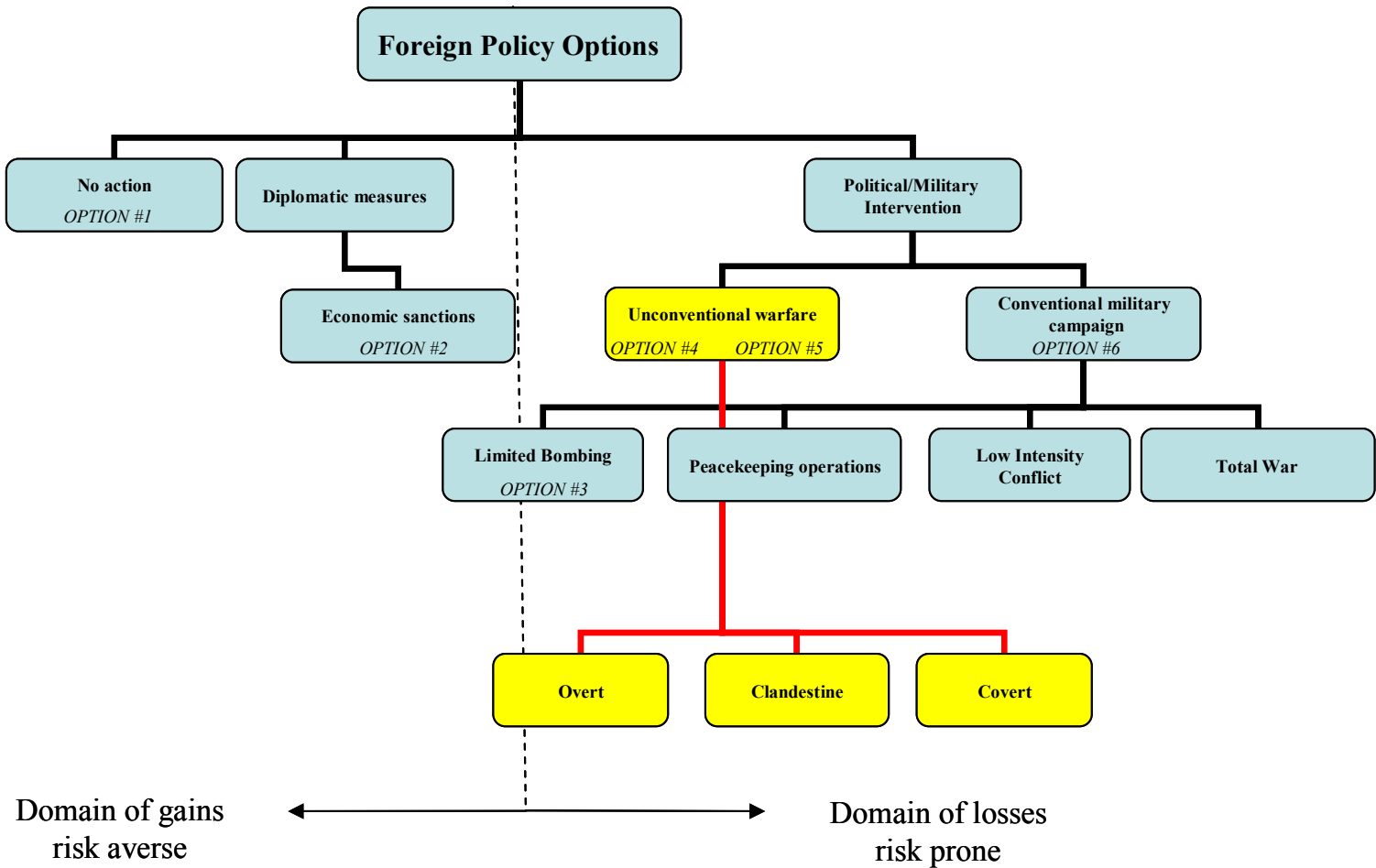
Figure 1. Illustration of foreign policy options across the spectrum of domain of gains to domain of losses based upon risk propensity.

While there is a spectrum of choice and therefore risk across the continuum of foreign policy decisions, the choice to intervene using UW options (highlighted in yellow) offers a different set of risks when compared to other conventional military options. Prospect theory can help predict when intervention is more likely to be chosen by examining the courses of action available during the decision-making process. Once the choice to intervene is made, an examination of the patterns and elements surrounding UW can be used to predict whether UW is the best strategic foreign policy tool.

Theory Application to the Clinton Administration

Prospect theory offers one possible explanation for why President Clinton risked interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first step is to prove the domain of loss Clinton resided in when he made the decision to intervene. In the case of this president, the domain of loss was created by a combination of three factors. First, from the beginning of his tenure, Clinton consistently put a higher priority on solving domestic problems than on developing a new national security strategy to govern consistent policy abroad. Second, the president's lack of experience with the military led to tense civil-military relations early on in cabinet decision-making as well as a genuine lack of confidence in deciding how and when to use force. Third, the administration suffered from one domestic scandal after another, bringing into question the president's credibility as a leader and diverting attention from international relations. These three factors acted in concert throughout the Clinton presidency, to affect his foreign policy agenda and caused him to operate from a position of weakness. The chapter concludes by examining in detail the six courses of action available to the president in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Foreign Policy Comes Second

From the beginning, Clinton displayed a lack of interest in devoting time to the foreign policy agenda, preferring to place domestic issues at the forefront of his priorities. Anthony Lake recalls that as the National Security Advisor, he reduced his daily exposure to cabinet meetings with the president: "[Lake] was told not to expect Clinton to invest much political capital on foreign matters."[24] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell, was one of the administration's most experienced members, having served during the two previous

administrations. In his memoirs, he voiced concerns over the cabinet's inability to focus and remain disciplined in its endeavors: "The discussions continued to meander like graduate student bull sessions or the think-tank seminars in which many of my colleagues had spent the last twelve years."[25] The lack of attention allocated to international politics placed the Clinton Administration in a position of weakness when deciding how to react to crises in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, and Bosnia as well as in Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

The team of the first administration held several common ideological views. First, they believed the balance of power calculus was ill-suited to determining U.S. national interests in the post-Cold War and the national agenda would instead be driven by furthering democracy, humanitarian intervention, and protection of human rights. The use of force was now justified for moral interests regardless of national security concerns with the decision to act driven by domestic and international support for a particular policy. Dubbed "pragmatic neo-Wilsonianism" by Lake, Clinton's staff pursued international engagement and collective security dictated by the "character of foreign regimes."[26] Although the cabinet operated comfortably under the President's Wilsonian vision, Clinton voiced centrist policies in his rhetoric. His dominant focus on the domestic agenda, however, gave the cabinet the opportunity to pursue foreign policy without coherent, vetted guidance from the President.[27]

Except for subtle differences from his predecessor's policies, President Clinton pursued similar national security and regional agendas in the Middle East and Central Asia. The administration astutely anticipated the increase in regional instabilities stemming from ethnic

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[24] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 20.
[25] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1995), 576.
[26] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 21.
[27] Ibid., 21-3.

conflicts, terrorism, international criminal organizations, and the proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction. As well, it accurately identified these emerging threats and formulated goals

similar to those of the previous Bush Administration:

1. Ensure the security and survival of the United States as an independent nation
2. Encourage economic growth, market access, and security of scarce resources
3. Promote the spread of democratic institutions and values abroad
4. Strengthen alliances to promote regional stability to counter the spread of WMD, terrorism, arms, and drug trafficking[28]

The two administrations adopted similar foreign policy goals with respect to the Middle

East and Central Asian regions:

1. Promote regional stability and security of Middle East alliances
2. Secure and stabilize resources, including the free flow of oil
3. Curb proliferation of WMD, discouraging destabilizing conventional arms sales and countering terrorism
4. Encourage the Arab-Israeli peace process
5. Promote democracy and prevent the oppression of the Iraqi people[29]

In his defense agenda, President Bush focused on the same principles of deterrence and

forward presence born during the Cold War, but doctrinal transformation and unconventional

military roles went unaddressed. While acknowledging the inevitable drawdown of military

forces, Bush emphasized the necessity of maintaining the technological advances of the

conventional force and improving current capabilities, but he did not speak to changing

methodology or implementation. When Clinton arrived in 1992, he continued to emphasize the

need for capable, modern military forces supported by effective intelligence, but he did not

advocate transformation of either institution until well into his second term. The levels of

conflict in his security strategy addressed only full-scale conventional war, peace building

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[28] George H. W. Bush. "National Security Strategy of the United States." August 1991. Accessed April 8, 2003. Available from http://www.fas.org, William J. Clinton. "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement." February 1996 (first released in 1994). Accessed April 8, 2003. Available from http://www.fas.org.
[29] Ibid.

operations, and crisis management. President Clinton was the first to elevate peacekeeping operations as a future military role and recognized it within the expanding nature of military operations other than war (MOOTW). Still, little was offered as to just how military and intelligence agencies should adapt their organizations to such new roles and missions within the context of low-intensity conflict. In her book <u>Unconventional Warfare</u>, Susan Marquis describes the difficulty the Defense Department had in the early 1990s shifting away from conventional military strategies:

> General Meyer [former Chief of Staff of the Army] had long tried to get the Defense Department to prepare for the most likely conflicts, those at the lower end of the spectrum, including guerrilla wars and terrorism…this concept would be part of a larger national policy for low-intensity conflict and possible American responses including non-military, political-economic approaches and the use of special operations forces.[30]

In 1997, President Clinton augmented his previous national security strategy with a summary of the administration's accomplishments but essentially retained unaltered national and regional goals. Noteworthy, however, was recognition of actions supporting democratic movements throughout the world: "We will promote responsible indigenous moves towards increasing political participation and enhancing the quality of governance and will continue to vigorously challenge many governments in the region to improve their dismal human rights records."[31] This declaration marked the first significant national policy reference to supporting Middle Eastern peoples and others in their struggle against oppressive governments after seven years of limited hostilities with Iraq.

Although President Clinton offered a clear vision of the foreign challenges that lay ahead for the 1990s and beyond, he fell short in formulating a comprehensive strategy to achieve

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[30] Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 184.

consistent foreign policy. His failures in Iraq and Afghanistan can be attributed to the low priority he placed upon foreign affairs, military, and intelligence reforms. Sweeping aside an incumbent president on a platform of domestic issues and the economy, Clinton saw little need to put international relations at the top of his agenda, especially if the American public showed little interest. "Clinton stumbled from crisis to crisis, trying to figure out what was popular, what would be effective, and what choices would pose the lowest risk to his presidency, and especially, to his reputation."[32] As a result, the president placed himself in the domain of losses by choosing to leave the international agenda to his cabinet members and by failing to develop consistent policies for dealing with recurring crises abroad.

Aversion to Military Solutions

A second factor that set President Clinton's position in the domain of losses was his uncomfortable stance toward the military and its implementation. "From the outset, Clinton was a prisoner of his own instinctive aversion to the use of military force; the administration invariably preferred various forms of economic or political sanctions."[33] Campaigning on a platform in favor of lifting the ban against homosexuality in the military, the president quickly became at odds with his military advisors. Four days after inauguration, the president met with the four military service chiefs to discuss what General Powell dubbed "the hottest social potato tossed to the Pentagon in a generation."[34] Although the military leadership had prepared to discuss the current Pentagon concerns, troop levels, and budgeting, the President and staff

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[31] William J. Clinton. "A National Security Strategy for a New Century." May 1997. Accessed April 8, 2003. Available from http://www.fas.org.
[32] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 203.
[33] Ibid., 200.

restricted the conversation to only lifting the ban to homosexual service. Later Clinton would compromise with the chiefs, a decision that "gave the impression that Clinton saw the military as another constituency to be wooed, one he was afraid to be tough with because of his own vulnerabilities."[35]

Denouncing President Bush's military intervention policies based on national interest during the election campaign, Clinton's initial Wilsonian rhetoric embraced the limited use of military forces to promote American ideals through humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, and nation-building. Despite Clinton's all-time low approval ratings for the first hundred days in office, his ratings shot up 11 percent after he launched retaliatory cruise missile strikes in July 1993 against Iraq for its role in the assassination attempt against former President Bush. The president was incensed that his popularity would increase due to military strikes rather than as a result of domestic policy changes. "This was precisely what the election had *not* been about."[36]

Throughout its first term, the Clinton Administration reacted to international issues with rushed, contradictory policies. After a botched attempt at nation-building in hostile Somalia, Clinton ignored Rwanda, sought a peaceful invasion in Haiti, and displayed a fitful commitment to a U.S. role in Bosnia. The experience in Somalia would further damage the Clinton Administration's relationship with the military by creating doubt that the United States would stay the course of its policy proposals in the face of increasing criticism. After sweeping wins by the Republicans in the House and Senate during the 1994 elections, Clinton reassessed his

[34] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 547.
[35] Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 48.
[36] Bob Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton Whitehouse* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 244.

previous foreign policy blunders. The Bush policies of pragmatic intervention based on national interests soon echoed in the language of President Clinton.[37]

Clinton framed his foreign policy choices in light of these past experiences, especially the failed military interventions. The three Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, John Shalikashvilli, and Hugh Shelton would later be characterized, ironically, as Clinton Generals, reluctant to order troops into harm's way. General Powell described his aversion to several proposed troop deployments:

> My constant, unwelcome message at all the meetings…was simply that we should not commit military forces until we had a clear political objective. [Secretary of Defense] Les Aspin shared this view. The debate exploded at one session when Madeleine Albright, our ambassador to the UN, asked me in frustration, 'What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?'[38]

By arguing against *ad hoc* military solutions, General Powell set a precedent that would dominate military decision-making for the remainder of the Clinton Presidency.

While Clinton offered a strong vision for his national security strategy, there was little direction for its implementation in the field, something that worried each Chairman who struggled with the administration's desires to use force without giving definitive guidance. Later, the paper will explore in greater detail the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan that gave rise to proposals by the president for an increased military presence and an expansion of the ongoing unconventional warfare campaigns.

One of the more influential members of the administration who helped formulate the foreign policy underpinnings of the Clinton Administration was the United Nations Ambassador, later Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Her behavior accorded with the

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[37] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 140.
[38] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 567.

Munich syndrome, an aversion to appeasing adversaries and dictators. Although favoring collective security options and legitimacy through the United Nations, she nevertheless demonstrated a willingness to pursue the use of force provided it was justified by the court of public opinion. In the summer of 1993, Albright argued, "that failure to disarm [Mohamed Farah] Aideed's forces would be 'appeasement.'"[39] Often appearing predisposed to military action if only as a show of force, Albright made similar remarks in reference to the Serbian leadership in the former Yugoslavia and to the Taliban.[40]

Together, the president and Albright would repeatedly question the Chairmen's best military advice that argued against any "boots on the ground" options. Given that three successive Secretaries of Defense - Les Aspin, William Perry, and William Cohen - all chose to back their military chiefs, Clinton had little national security depth in other areas of his administration to challenge a united Defense Department. While his instincts pulled him to do more with limited SOF or paramilitary in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, Clinton chose not to contradict his military advisors. Lacking credibility with the military and that being one of the few areas in which his knowledge was weak, Clinton did not pursue other military options. He continued to operate from the domain of loss when choosing to use force.

Turbulent Domestic Politics

Clinton's domain of losses was most affected by continuous disruption to his domestic agenda throughout his tenure. Beginning during the election campaign, critics delved into the President and First Lady's past financial and relationship blunders, issues that would return

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[39] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 57.
[40] Ibid., 21, 36, 57.

hauntingly during both terms. Bringing a Democratic administration to power after three

Republican terms proved difficult for the Clinton team who struggled to get their second, third,

and fourth-string nominees confirmed by a Democratic Congress. *Time* and *Newsweek* published

independent surveys during May 1993, in which the president received a 36 percent approval

rating, with 50 percent disapproval, the lowest historical figures for any president in the first four

months of office.[41]

In 1994, the electorate renounced the president's first two years in office by electing

Republicans to Congress in record numbers, taking control of both house for the first time since

1952. President Clinton reverted to increasingly centrist policies, using rhetoric similar to

moderate Republicans to speak to a wider audience. Clinton plodded cautiously ahead, trying to

avoid foreign policy confrontation with Republicans on Bosnia and the Arab-Israeli peace

process.[42]

Opinion polls governing foreign policy registered approval ratings of 54 percent

compared to a two year earlier low of 37 percent following a successful reelection campaign that

demonstrated renewed public confidence in their leader. Clinton refocused his foreign policy

agenda as based on pragmatism and national interest rather than Wilsonian idealism but he

remained fervent in his opposition to isolationism as indicated by his first State of the Union

Address following reelection: "the enemy of our time is inaction."[43] Foreign policy, however,

failed to play an important role throughout the presidential campaign, and despite numerous

setbacks during his first term, Clinton went largely unchallenged on this matter.[44]

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[41] Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton Whitehouse*, 227.
[42] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 137.
[43] Ibid., 150-2.
[44] Ibid., 150.

One year into his second term, the president faced new allegations of sexual misconduct, a charge that dominated the media's attention and gave Clinton opponents a way to sideline his domestic agenda. At the same time, Saddam Hussein still remained in power to defy UN weapons inspectors, rattle his neighbors, and gain support for ending sanctions. The full brunt of the Taliban's repression in Afghanistan spread throughout international news media, and Al-Qaeda launched twin attacks against American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Clinton considered attacks against both nations to counter the threat but faced heavy criticism.

> Many Washington analysts believed that [this scandal] could undermine Clinton's credibility if he did indeed order a military attack…such an attack would be a tough sell at home because it might appear to be an attempt to divert attention from the scandal, some analysts and members of Congress said.[45]

Facing impeachment in the House by the end of 1998, Clinton launched strategic air strikes in Afghanistan and the Sudan, and he ordered the heavy bombardment of Iraq, all without stating a clear strategic plan for military action. Neither the hawks of the right nor the critics of the left were satisfied with a plan that failed to link national security objectives with a show of force. For the remainder of his presidential term, Clinton would grow increasingly aware of the threats posed by Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the domestic scandals that surrounded his presidency would decrease his political leverage both domestically and abroad, further placing him within a domain of loss.

Examining the Courses of Action

In an effort to apply prospect theory to the Clinton Administration's policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the courses of action available to the president and his cabinet advisors are

examined in detail.[46] Each choice is then assessed according to its risk, determined either by the probability of success and/or by the utility of the outcome. How President Clinton framed each option is an important consideration. From the sources cited thus far, there is a general consensus on the courses of action available and their relative risk. Ultimately, the president would chose a risky option, but one that allowed him to use force with the least amount of risk possible from the domain of losses.

Throughout the crisis in Iraq and later in Afghanistan, six options were available. Beginning with the lowest risk level, the choices were to do nothing; pursue economic and diplomatic sanctions; carry out strategic bombing; conduct UW with CIA intelligence and paramilitary personnel; undertake expanded UW and commando military operations; and launch a full-scale conventional military strike. The risks for each of these are examined in turn. It is important to note when assessing risk that political and military risks as well as international and domestic political risks may be inversely related.

The first choice, to do nothing, and the sixth, to launch an all-out conventional intervention, were never supported by the administration. Clinton's U.S. critics would have charged him with incompetence for not reacting to the embassy bombings or to Hussein's increasingly defiant actions. On the other hand, the mobilization of thousands of troops for a conventional war would have been met with mixed support at best in Congress and the Pentagon and with certain dissention from previous coalition partners in the UN. A large-scale campaign in either situation would have ultimately led to the overthrow of each regime, leaving the United

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[45] Thomas W. Lippman, *Madeleine Albright and the New American Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 133-4.

States in another nation-building situation it was not willing to pursue. Although a conventional

military campaign carried minimal military risk in the short-term, nation-building would bring

about moderate political and military risks in the long-term given the possibilities for ethnic

conflict and insurgency warfare. Polling indicated a U.S. willingness to react to threats overseas

but showed a lack of confidence in Clinton's ability to lead extensive military campaigns.[47]

Therefore, options one and six were quickly ruled out as too politically risky.

The second option was to pursue diplomatic and economic sanctions against the Hussein

and Taliban regimes. This option was implemented on many occasions but yielded no

satisfactory results. Economic sanctions in Iraq generated frequent domestic and international

debate but few countries were willing to allow a noncompliant Hussein to win concessions.

Clinton's critics charged that his actions were pin-pricks and called for military action.[48]

Conversely, France and Russia led the fight in the UN to pressure the United States to end the

sanctions regime. This option posed moderate domestic and political risks but with little

probability for strategic success.

A third option called for strategic air strikes using precision guided weapons to attack

limited targets. Like the second, this option was implemented on numerous occasions but yielded

little strategic gain. "On June 26, [1993,] the United States launched 23 Tomahawk cruise

missiles at Baghdad, destroying the headquarters of Iraqi intelligence. It was the first time the

Clinton Administration used military force and the first such retaliation against terrorists in seven

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[46] This section was formulated using the following chapter, Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," in *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict*, ed. Barbara Farnham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
[47] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 150.
[48] Ibid., 177.

years."[49] Clinton would go on to approve strategic bombing again in Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, Sudan, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Like the first two options, option three held minimal military risks but resulted in mounting political ones. Although domestic opinion largely supported the president's actions, international opinion was especially critical of the civilian deaths caused by the strikes. "Several policy makers, especially from the State Department, where the foreign criticism of American actions was perceived most acutely, argued that the United States was increasingly seen as the world's mad bomber."[50] Additionally, except for success in the Balkans, bombing in Iraq and Afghanistan yielded no strategic victories. The probabilities of hitting Bin Laden or Hussein were incredibly small and the damage to their organizations minimal. The president needed to consider other intervention options.

The fourth option called for the conduct of unconventional warfare using the CIA's intelligence resources and paramilitary forces. This option required limited personnel to covertly collect intelligence and potentially apprehend key personnel. Although the mission itself was moderately risky, it generally involved no more people than traditional intelligence operations. Since the mission remained largely secret even to many inside the Clinton Administration, there was little political backlash either domestically or internationally.[51] The probability of capturing Bin Laden or aiding a coup against Hussein was very low but if successful, would have yielded exceptional utility for the Clinton White House. Thus, with low political and military risks, but the potential for tremendous gain, UW became the most viable option.

The fifth option enlarged the fourth, expanding the UW campaign with special operations forces, an option labeled as "boots on the ground." Both President Clinton and Secretary

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[49] Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2002), 222.
[50] Ibid., 284.

Albright supported an expansion of UW in a military capacity. Each defense secretary was united with their respective Chairman against option five on the grounds that it was too dangerous and difficult without a secure base nearby.

> Shelton rattled off the factors determining what the military would require to do the job. There was no reliable information…There was a great deal of uncertainty...would require tens of thousands of troops. One participant remembered the presentation as the Pentagon's 'usual two-division, \$2 billion option.' Another called it 'the canonical option.'[52]

National Security Advisor Sandy Berger recalled, "They didn't want to do it. They weren't crazy. There was just no enthusiasm and creativity. In this case, risk aversion and logic converged."[53] The military declared the risks too large to pursue such small probabilities for success no matter what the possibility for gain. While a breach of secrecy might result in moderate international alarm and some embarrassment, there was little domestic political risk at stake.

Of the six options, only the last three presented the possibility of capturing Bin Laden or overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Operating from the domain of losses, Clinton wanted to alter the status quo of Hussein remaining in power and Al-Qaeda's increasing ability to target Americans and allies. The key decision-makers generally agreed on the available options and the perceived risks associated with each. Option five became the most contentious because the president and his cabinet possessed a different threshold for risk than the military advisors. The president did not feel confident enough to override best military advice and did not pursue option five.

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[51] Ibid., 285.
[52] Ibid., 294.
[53] Ibid., 295.

Ultimately, Clinton chose to pursue political and economic sanctions and strategic bombing while adding a limited UW campaign.[54]

The Case of Iraq

The Persian Gulf War and Beyond

After 100 hours' decisive engagement of Iraqi forces, the United States declared a ceasefire which enabled roughly half of the Iraqi military to survive the flight back toward Baghdad.[55] As General Norman Schwartzkopf negotiated the surrender terms absent civilian guidance, the Executive scrambled to articulate its post-war Iraq foreign policy. In a prescient comment at the war's end, President Bush remarked, "I haven't felt this wonderfully euphoric feeling that many of the American people feel. I think it's that I want to see an end. And now we have Saddam Hussein still here."[56] Both Presidents Bush and Clinton framed Saddam's ability to remain in power as a loss to U.S. national security.

Although many in the administration considered Hussein unfinished business, both the civilian and military establishments proved risk-averse to U.S. involvement in internal Iraqi politics. In 1988, Iraq and Turkey had publicly denounced the U.S. State Department reception of a Kurdish delegation invited to detail Hussein's employment of chemical weapons. Rather than taking advantage of information and intelligence that might flow from maintaining Kurdish population sources and despite intelligence offers from the Kurdish underground operating

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[54] See generally Barton Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched after '98 Attacks," *Washington Post*, December 19, 2001, A1, Barton Gellman, "Struggles inside the Government Defined Campaign," *Washington Post*, December 20, 2001, A1, Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy,* Powell and Persico, *My American Journey.*

[55] Douglas Waller and John Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992.

[56] Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1999), 32.

across northern Iraq, Secretary of State George Shultz instituted a "no contacts" ban, which remained in place for the duration of the Gulf War.[57]

U.S. foreign policy on Iraq became further clouded when President Bush called for "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands - to force Saddam Hussein the dictator to step aside…and rejoin the family of nations."[58] Reiterate twice on February 15, two weeks before the cessation of hostilities, the CIA's anti-Baghdad, Saudi radio station repeatedly broadcast the statement until March 3.

Rather than relying on proactive policy to drive its decision-making process, the administration retained a reactive posture that rested on a number of faulty assumptions. First, the administration believed that coalition members might immediately denounce any U.S. military measures within Iraqi borders and induce collapse of the coalition. Second, U.S. political dealings with Iraqi opposition groups might offend Saudi Arabia and Turkey, the strongest U.S. regional allies. Third, the intelligence community believed limited ground-based HUMINT capabilities supplemented by extensive image (IMINT) and signal (SIGINT) intelligence would provide sufficient information on regime activities. Finally, the administration hoped for a "silver bullet" scenario: a faction insider might assassinate Hussein who would be replaced by another Ba'athist party leader of presumably lesser evil. Over the course of the subsequent decade, these assumptions would prove wishful thinking in unseating Saddam Hussein.

When the dust and the fog of war cleared from the trail of vehicles on the Highway of Death, the Bush Administration feared the potential backlash should U.S. forces further decimate

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[57] Ibid., 38.
[58] Ibid.

the Iraqi military. Already, press reports had begun decrying the American military's excessive use of force: "these were just lowly soldiers trying to get the hell out of there. It appears that this was a case of senseless slaughter."[59] General Colin Powell declared that to continue fighting would be "un-American and unchivalrous" and would taint the American victory so gallantly achieved. [60] But many suitable military targets remained untouched, intact, and poised to threaten Iraqi civilians and its neighbors for years to come.

As indigenous uprisings against Hussein arose upon cessation of allied hostilities, a number of Iraqi opposition leaders approached the U.S. government and its allies for support. At their peak, insurgency forces had gained control of fourteen of eighteen Iraqi provinces. The leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of two prominent Kurdish groups in northern Iraq, Jalal Talabani arrived at the State Department on February 28, the day of the ceasefire, intent on sharing information of the Kurdish uprising in the north. The United States turned him and his information away due to the "no contacts" ban still in effect. When questioned about the ability to capitalize on such a powerful resistance force, a senior White House Official stated, "Our policy is to get rid of Saddam, not his regime."[61]

Mohammad Taqi al-Khoie, son of the highest ranking Shi'ite cleric in Iraq, approached American troops in southern Iraq hopeful to receive at least moral, if not armed support from ground troops in the southern Shi'ite uprising. Refused access to the Americans, he sought the support from the French military leadership, which did not succeed in gaining acknowledgement from General Schwarzkopf. Opposition groups soon realized that Hussein's forces, once

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[59] Waller and Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War."
[60] Ibid.
[61] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 37.

reconsolidated after fleeing from Kuwait, still commanded sufficient heavy artillery and tanks numbering in the thousands to crush the planned insurgency.

Opposition groups' strengths lay both in their connectedness to the populace and in the employment of guerrilla tactics, but they could engage only with limited small arms and had no resupply capability. Even after their capture of Iraqi heavy equipment, opposition forces had little knowledge of its maintenance or effective battlefield deployment, and ammunition was in short supply. The insurgents also lacked the wherewithal to organize and maintain command and control advantage. Lacking the expertise of U.S. ground forces or air cover, they recognized the futility of their uprising within weeks. Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) declared, "Saddam is weak. But we are weaker."[62]

Although the United States asserted that its allies opposed U.S. political or military intervention, President Bush's statements supporting the uprisings confused both allied Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkish President Turgut Ozal, surprising Washington and Kurdish leaders alike, met for the first time in Turkish history with an Iraqi Kurdish delegation. U.S. officials meanwhile refused to meet with Kurdish leaders to avoid offending the Turkish government. Meetings between Turkish and Kurdish leaders began on March 8, three days after the start of the uprising when Washington had refused access to Talabani. "Within weeks Ozal was openly receiving Iraqi Kurdish leaders…Ozal was also true to his word in promptly recommending that the Bush Administration talk to the Kurds."[63]

The United States encouraged Saudi opposition to any potential support of the Shi'ite uprising in the south. According to the wartime ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Charles Freeman:

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[62] Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounters with Kurdistan*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 38.

"The behavior of the Iraqi Shi'ite in the Iran-Iraq war convinced the Saudis that the Shi'ite were not Iranian surrogates. Washington was obsessed by that idea, and attributed it to the Saudis."[64] In a meeting with U.S. officials, the head of Saudi foreign intelligence, Prince Turki bin Feisel asked how best to aid the Iraqi opposition. Shortly thereafter, the prince invited Kurdish delegates to Saudi Arabia for talks. By March 26, however, the Bush Administration had decided to watch the insurgency from afar, convinced that a power vacuum in Iraq posed greater danger than a weakened Saddam. Accordingly, U.S. officials flew to Saudi Arabia and convinced the Saudis to cease support for opposition groups. Several days later, Mohammad al-Khoie finally gained an audience with Prince Feisel only to be told, "We can't do anything to help you. [The Americans] say 'Saddam is under control. This is better than somebody we don't know about. We are worried about Iran.'"[65]

Consequently, reconsolidated Iraqi forces violently crushed rebellions in both the north and south, stemming the successful insurgencies. Under the ceasefire agreement, the Iraqis succeeded in terms permitting helicopters to move leadership freely throughout the country, a concession that allowed the Iraqis to attack civilians and armed rebels. The Iraqi use of helicopters to attack population centers had special significance to the Kurds who, beginning in 1988, had faced multiple poison gas attacks delivered via fixed-wing aircraft, rocket launchers, and helicopter assaults.[66] Even when U.S. leadership realized its concessionary mistake, however, it chose not to enforce or to alter the ceasefire agreement. One estimate placed the number of civilians killed during the coalition air war at 2,500-3,000 with civilians killed after

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[63] Ibid., 95.
[64] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 40.
[65] Ibid., 41.
[66] Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounters with Kurdistan*, 48.

the ceasefire from wounds or civil unrest at 100,000-120,000.[67] "With U.S. help, or even neutrality, the March uprising could have succeeded, thus avoiding the need for a second costly war."[68]

Operation Provide Comfort

The failure of the Kurdish uprising in the north triggered the flight of over one million Iraqi Kurds across the borders into Turkey and Iran. Political pressure from the American and European publics as well as the Turkish government convinced the Bush Administration to intervene with U.S. Army, SOF, and allied troops. In mid-April 1991, 21,000 allied troops stemmed the exodus out of Iraq as allied warplanes established a no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel. The SOF assets deployed to northern Iraq included civil affairs, psychological operations (PSYOPS), and Special Forces with engineering and medical specialties.[69] Although SOF operations necessitated intelligence gathering and contacts among the Kurdish population, SOF had no mission to conduct UW or to coordinate with CIA on its intelligence and paramilitary activities. The majority of ground troops departed only three months later while SOF troops remained until Saddam's invasion of the north in 1996.

On May 28, 1991, the CIA received a formal finding from President Bush authorizing a covert operation to remove Saddam Hussein from power. The CIA leadership was skeptical of its ability to plan such an operation given little integration with other government agencies. "We didn't have a single mechanism or combination of mechanisms with which I could create a plan

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[67] Waller and Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War."
[68] Peter W. Galbraith, "The Ghosts of 1991," *Washington Post*, April 12, 2003, 19.
[69] Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 248.

to get rid of Saddam at that time," [70] stated Frank Anderson, chief of the Near East Division in the Directorate of Operations. The lack of HUMINT intelligence capabilities throughout the region would lead to miscalculations and misperceptions about opposition groups and attempted coups against Saddam. In his account of CIA operations in Iraq, Robert Baer writes that "not only were there no human sources in [Iraq], the CIA didn't have any in the neighboring countries – Iran, Jordan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Like the rest of the U.S. government, its intelligence-gathering apparatus was blind when it came to Iraq."[71]

The election of President Clinton in 1992 meant transferal of the *ad hoc*, risk-averse policy. The new administration continued to confuse and infer the Shi'ite uprising as the promotion of an Iranian agenda and the Kurdish uprising as a civil war bent on autonomous independence for Kurds. All the while, the Executive ignored the intricacies of Ba'athist and tribal politics within the Sunni community. Allied warplanes controlled two thirds of Iraqi airspace and could have provided coverage to the remaining third. The CIA had contacts with many opposition groups and individuals throughout the regime and SOF were on the ground conducting humanitarian aid. No overarching national plan, however, coalesced among these agencies for a joint strategy to depose Saddam by exploiting the core asset to subvert and sabotage the regime: the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi Opposition

With northern Iraq stabilized under allied air patrols and humanitarian intervention, the UN voted in favor of an economic sanctions resolution against Iraq. "Up until now, the U.S. has

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[70] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 31.

tried to encourage a coup from the sidelines…no one had a clear plan as to how the longed-for event might be achieved…Frank Anderson was now being tasked to try a combination of these vague schemes in the hope that something would turn up."[72] The United States juggled its relationships with the various Iraqi opposition groups in a similarly disjointed fashion, at times supporting them with millions of dollars and at other times withdrawing total support. The Desert Shield deployment in 1990 was supplemented by a presidential finding authorizing the CIA to conduct covert operations designed to convince Saddam to leave Kuwait peacefully and to spread anti-Saddam propaganda throughout the region. Additionally, the Executive directed the CIA to conduct intelligence operations to support the military campaign.

Pursuing the presidential mandate, the CIA made initial contacts with the Iraqi National Accord (INA), founded by two high-level Ba'athist party officials, Salih Omar Ali al-Tikriti and Iyad Alawi, the latter of which defected from the regime while working in London. The INA worked with both British and Saudi intelligence to create the Voice of Free Iraq in Saudi Arabia and eventually became the favored organization of exiled Sunni Ba'athist and military leaders. One of the best-known members of the INA was former Iraqi General Adnan Nuri who became a CIA agent in 1992. Under his leadership, the INA attempted several coups against Hussein while working covertly with the CIA's London office and contacts remaining in Iraq.[73]

Meanwhile, Frank Anderson continued to doubt the feasibility of facilitating an internal Iraqi coup but allowed the London office to continue with its efforts throughout the early 1990s. At Langley, operators were more interested in Ahmad Chalabi, a leader who emerged after a

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[71] Robert Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 181.
[72] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 45-6.
[73] Ibid., 183.

large opposition gathering hosted by Saudi Arabia in Beirut in March 1991. The largest assembly

in the history of Iraqi opposition included people from all persuasions including Islamists, Kurds,

Iraqi Communists, and Ba'athists. Chalabi, a Shi'ite Iraqi in exile, had a controversial past,

convicted by Jordan in absentia for embezzling millions of dollars in a banking scandal. As early

as May 1991, the CIA had recruited him in hopes that his lack of political ties and designs for a

secular Iraq would serve as a counterweight to the religious and ethnically dominated opposition

groups. With the financial support of the CIA, Chalabi arranged a Vienna conference to mark the

founding of the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Together with INC leaders, Chalabi afterwards

met with Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, both of

whom expressed U.S. support for a democratic Iraq. "Thus the stage was set for a tragic

misunderstanding…the [INC] thought that they now had the unqualified backing of the United

States government in displacing Saddam."[74]

The INC proved beneficial to U.S. hopes for the INC's inclusion of the KDP and the

PUK to preclude the rival warlords from civil war or declarations of Kurdish independence.

Chalabi's credibility with the Kurds dated back to the 1970s when Chalabi, a Kurdish

sympathizer living in Beirut, warned Barzani of an impending settlement between Iran and Iraq

in which the Shah agreed to withdraw military and financial support to the Kurds in exchange for

control of Shatt al-Arab in 1974.[75] Chalabi did not possess the independent institutional or

financial means to provide sufficient incentives to bring the two Kurdish factions together

without the aid of a major power like the United States. After the failed 1995 uprising against

Saddam (summarized later), the United States no longer supported mediation efforts to unite the

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[74] Ibid., 57.
[75] Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounters with Kurdistan*, 165.

warring parties out of belief that the Kurdish leadership was more intent on mutual destruction than uniting against Saddam.

In 1994, the CIA deployed teams to establish a small base in northern Iraq with the mission to "collect and evaluate the information seeping out of Iraq" and to develop relationships among the opposition.[76] Presuming this team was the first from the CIA to set up a permanent office in northern Iraq, the question remains why the mission was not encouraged long before 1994. Washington's approach to the opposition groups rendered assistance without a U.S. signature. Confusion arose when the CIA and the State Department deliberated under divergent mandates with the opposition without coordination from higher levels of government. A striking example of administrative blundering is reported by Robert Baer who relates how State refused to work with the CIA in northern Iraq but promised, on behalf of, but unbeknownst to the CIA, the sum of $2 million to Chalabi for mediation efforts between the PUK and the KDP. "There was nothing [Chalabi] liked more than watching the U.S. government trip over its own feet."[77] Such confusion of purpose was to remain the status quo throughout the failed uprising of 1995.

A Second Uprising Fails

By early 1995, Chalabi had amassed a small army of supporters in the protective safe haven of northern Iraq. Working in concert with the CIA, Chalabi convinced Barzani and Talabani to declare a cease fire in their civil war in order to attack and seize the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. Barzani balked, unconvinced of U.S. support for such an incursion, and insisted on allied air cover for protection. Sources dispute whether CIA agent Robert Baer promised U.S.

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[76] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 172.
[77] Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*, 190.

support of the incursion. But moments before the INC ordered the units forward, leaders in

Washington declared their opposition to the insurgency: "The United States will not support this

operation militarily or in any other way. If you go ahead [with your operation], it will be without

U.S. involvement or support."[78] Barzani, now further convinced of U.S. betrayal, withdrew the

KDP from the operation, consequently severing ties between the KDP and the INC. Despite

American abandonment, Chalabi continued as planned to attack Saddam's forces and to

encourage defection of soldiers and officers by the thousands – now refugees to the north's safe

haven. The attack ended scarcely two weeks later with insurgent forces advancing as far as

Kirkuk. Although a failure, the unsuccessful advances gave Sunni opposition the will to conduct

its own strikes against the regime. U.S. support, however, evaporated for Chalabi, the INC, and

the northern safe haven.[79]

Subsequently, Washington entertained "hope that the government in Iraq could be

changed through a silver-bullet coup (covert action) rather than an insurgency (overt policy)."[80]

The INA's General Nuri warned against the 1995 northern insurgency and focused the

administration's attention on the Sunni elite within Iraq. In August 1995, General Hussein Kamel

defected to Jordan, thereby again forcing a change in U.S. strategy. Now, Washington worked

with the INA's Ba'athist exiled leadership rather than more representative opposition movements

like the INC. In January 1996, President Clinton authorized the renewal of covert action, this

time based in Jordan, and he approved $6 million for the support of INA activities. INA

promises, however, failed to materialize into a coup d'etat. Iraqi intelligence had penetrated the

[78] David Wurmser, *Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute Press, 1999), 15.
[79] Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 188-90.
[80] Wurmser, *Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein*, 20.

organization, captured CIA communications equipment, and executed hundreds of Iraqis suspected of participation in the organization's activities. Forced to close the compromised Jordanian office, the CIA continued to support the INA from Washington.

Already tentative in its support for the Iraqi opposition, the Clinton Administration showed increasing unease with indigenous forces drawing the United States into a conventional conflict in Iraq. From 1995 onward, the United States denied support to INC and Kurdish factions and disengaged entirely from northern Iraq. Civil war erupted with a renewed sense of betrayal between the KDP and the PUK after Barzani refused to participate in the 1995 uprising. The PUK, now seeking aid from Iran, upset the balance between the two by winning significant military gains over the KDP. The United States refused contact with Chalabi and Barzani, leaving the INC paralyzed to stop the civil war and allowing Iran, Syria, and Turkey to play out their politics in the north. The U.S. miscalculation of the implications of its withdrawal and its refusal to mediate between the Kurdish factions led a desperate Barzani to call on Saddam Hussein.

Saddam had carefully monitored INC growth in Kurdish safe haven. The Iranian regime's support of the PUK indicated that the United States was no longer an influence in northern Iraq. Encouraged by communication with Barzani, Saddam attacked northward, striking INC headquarters and capturing hundreds. The remaining humanitarian SOF elements and CIA officers fled to northern safe zones, evacuating thousands of INC members to haven in Guam. The illusion of the northern no-fly zones and political will against Saddam's aggression collapsed. The Clinton Administration deflected subsequent criticism aimed at the American failure to protect the north from invasion. "We gave [the Kurds] political protection…economic

and humanitarian assistance…a security zone in the north where they could run their affairs in a highly autonomous way. And the Kurds failed to meet the great historic opportunity."[81]

Throughout a decade of abortive coups, shifting support for opposition groups, and a failing weapons inspection process, the United States had exercised little apparent effect on Saddam's vice grip within Iraq. The INC and the CIA had lost their haven in northern Iraq and the Kurds continued in civil war. The CIA extracted its assets from Iraq and Jordan due to mistakes in the 1995 uprising debacle. Ultimately, the wavering U.S. support of insurgency movements and reliance on covert assassination attempts yielded little strategic success in deposing Saddam after an estimated $120 million spent.[82]

Although the CIA continued to fund and interact with diaspora Iraqi opposition groups, U.S. actions on the ground in Iraq would be limited to conventional, limited bombing campaigns to weaken Iraqi intelligence services, air defenses, and military centers using piecemeal attacks. It was increasingly apparent that the administration had no strategy for dealing with Saddam; it was rebounding from crisis to crisis, settling for one compromise after another."[83]

After ordering a four-day bombing campaign in December 1998, many critics charged the president with attempting to draw attention away from pending debates on his impeachment in the House. France, Russia, and China criticized American hegemony in the Middle East creating solidarity among many in the Security Council and further dividing the once strong Gulf War coalition. Arab nations who had given support to the United States during the war, moved to a more neutral position unsure of U.S. regional intent.[84] The president's pursuit of UW with *ad*

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[81] Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounters with Kurdistan*, 303.
[82] Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, 173.
[83] Ibid., 182.
[84] Ibid., 199.

hoc missions angered executive agencies trying to succeed in spite of policy incoherence. Finally, despite increasing concern for Saddam's potential chemical and biological weapons capabilities, Clinton continued to pursue sanctions and strategic bombing that served only to ignite domestic and international criticism against American intervention.

The Case of Afghanistan

United States and allied actions in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion would ultimately contribute to the development of radical Islamic factions. The United States would be slow to realize the implications of its actions; President Clinton did not frame Al-Qaeda as a significant threat to national security until after the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. A non-state, transnational terrorist organization, Al-Qaeda threatened the status quo of state-system by pursuing a radical agenda against the Western world and its allies. Despite this realization, the Clinton Administration would take only limited and random action against Bin Laden and his organization in the form of sanctions, strategic bombing, and limited unconventional warfare.

U.S. Policy in Afghanistan during the Soviet Era

The United States designed its foreign policy in Afghanistan from the 1970s onward to balance against the Soviet Union's actions in Central Asia. Started during the Carter administration and continued by President Reagan, U.S. policy sought to roll back Soviet expansion. In 1998, former Carter National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski remained dedicated to the decision to aid the covert mujahidin war in the late 1970s. "What was more

important in the world view of history? A few stirred up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"[85]

After the Soviet invasion in 1979, the CIA working through Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence directorate (ISI) provided U.S. money, arms, and military assistance to the Pashtun dominated mujahidin. Estimates of U.S. aid vary from $1 billion to $5 billion in the years 1980-1992.[86] U.S. intelligence services became dependent upon their Pakistani counterparts, a situation which allowed Pakistan's agenda to dominate U.S. decision-making. The United States ran its operations by willfully relying on Pakistani intelligence absent any independent analysis save satellite photography and a small group of diplomats assigned to Kabul.[87] The relationship would later prove fatal to U.S. comprehension of the Taliban movement and its sponsorship of Al-Qaeda.

Pakistan remained committed to supporting the most conservative Sunni Muslim groups and especially favored Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, an extremist mujahidin commander who became a divisive leader within the Pashtun organization, Hizb-e-Islami (Party of Islam). In 1979, most mullahs did not identify with extremist Islamic groups, who enjoyed little support from the populace. Local mullahs were drawn to more moderate factions but were unable to consolidate

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[85] Andrew Hartman, "The Red Template: US Policy in Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2002): 482.

[86] Saudi Arabia was the next biggest contributor to the mujahidin cause at $4 billion with unknown additional funds flowing through charities and NGOs. See Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 18, 197. See also Kenneth Katzman. *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy.* Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 7, 2003. Accessed November 7, 2003. Available from http://fpc.state.gov.

[87] Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 170-1.

power due to the money flowing from the ISI-CIA arms pipeline to radical leaders like Hikmetyar.[88]

During his rule from 1979-1988, Zia-al-Haq insisted U.S. support be directed at the radical Sunni Muslim groups, which initially included Hikmetyar and Ahmad Shah Massoud, a Tajik military and mujahidin commander. These two well-educated leaders were influenced by the power of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami Islamic Party formed by Abul-Ala Mauddudi in 1941 and which had been founded from the principles espoused by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood led by Hasan al-Banna beginning in 1928. Massoud eventually split the coalition owing to frustration over Pakistan's trying to control their actions and leaving Hikmetyar as the primary recipient of United States and Pakistani aid.[89] "Hikmetyar had 5 per cent of the popular support but 90 per cent of the military aid from the ISI."[90] Far from trying to unite factions under one leader, however, Pakistani leaders actively worked to keep all parties factionalized so it could play them against each other as necessary.

At the time, the United States remained committed to a strategic focus on the removal of the Soviet Union. The way in which the U.S. achieved its strategic objectives would later return to American soil in the form of terrorism.

> The mujahidin of the 1980s may have been canon fodder for U.S. interests, but their victory over the Soviets represented something far more to them. It was a morale boost that Muslims of the world had not experienced in quite some time. Afghanistan became a launching pad for jihad worldwide, and the USA, with its overreaching geopolitical goals, became the target.[91]

After succeeding in the ousting of the Soviets, the United States withdrew all support from the mujahidin forces and destroyed weapons caches still under their control resulting in a stalemate

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[88] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 84.
[89] Ibid., 85-6, 93.
[90] Ibid., 91.

between the factions and facilitating Soviet troop withdrawal. U.S. allies, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the mujahidin, were confused and angered by the sudden strategy change that complicated jihad advances on the capital and ended all monetary support.[92]

Tentative Taliban Support

After the Soviet withdrawal of troops in 1989 and the fall of President Najibullah's Communist regime in 1992, Afghanistan lost its strategic value to the United States. The Bush Administration insisted it lacked the capability to deliver a cease-fire from its mujahidin clients and Congressional support for covert activities began to wane with warming Soviet relations.[93] On September 13, 1991, the United States and the Soviet Union signed a bilateral agreement to end their support of rival Afghan factions by January 1, 1992. The United States maintained its contacts via Pakistan with several of the mujahidin Pashtun leaders; however, it is unclear whether the U.S. provided any monetary support to the factions before the Taliban takeover. Although the United States and Soviet Union openly urged an end to weapons supplies to the warring factions, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, and Iran continued to send arms.[94]

At a time when the responsibilities and costs for nation-building were unjustified to an American public, the United States instead supported UN peacebuilding efforts with minimal involvement.[95] The lack of international commitment to an Afghan solution meant a resumption

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[91] Hartman, "The Red Template: Us Policy in Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan," 485.
[92] Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin. *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story.* Afghan Books, 1992. Accessed October 25, 2003. Available from http://www.afghanbooks.com/beartrap/english/.
[93] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 109.
[94] David Hoffman, "U.S., Soviets Sign Afghan Arms Halt; Backing of Combatants Abandoned," *Washington Post*, September 14, 1991, A1. See also Edward Girardet and Jonathan Walter eds., *Afghanistan.*, Essential Field Guides to Humanitarian and Conflict Zones (Geneva: International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting, 1998), 16-7.
[95] Hartman, "The Red Template: US Policy in Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan," 483.

of civil war fueled by sectarian divisions. From 1992-1996, the United States, like most of the international community, ignored the civil war that ravaged the country.

In 1994, the Taliban seemingly emerged from nowhere as the strongest faction. Assembled by a group of Afghan Pashtun clerics who practice the ultra-orthodox Wahabi form of Islam, the Taliban quickly gathered strength by recruiting soldiers from madrasas in western Pakistan. Several prominent Taliban leaders gained prominence as mujahidin commanders and religious leaders during the Soviet occupation. Residual money and arms from the Soviet conflict gave the Taliban sufficient power to challenge other factions. Pashtuns represent approximately 40 percent of the Afghan population, dominate the south and east of the country, and maintain alliances with the Pashtun population in Pakistan.[96] The return of President Benazir Bhutto brought a shift in policy when Pakistan abandoned its previous client Hikmetyar for the new Afghan faction winners, the Taliban. With the help of the Pakistani ISI, which provided funds, weapons, and intelligence, the Taliban captured the cities of Kandahar in 1994, Herat in 1995, and Kabul in 1996 while most of the world stood by hoping that their victory would bring stability to the troubled nation.[97]

> Only a few years ago, some Americans in government…looked on the Taliban as crusading traditionalists. Their simple faith and moral rectitude might…purge Afghanistan of a militant Muslim "International Brigade" camped in the hills since the anti-Soviet war. At the same time, the Taliban vowed a crackdown on narcotics cultivation and trafficking."[98]

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[96] Only 15 percent of Pakistan's population is Pashtun but the majority is located along the western border with Afghanistan. Pashtuns represent 60 percent of the population in Baluchistan province and 70 percent in the North-West Frontier Province. See Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah. "Pashtun Identity Defies Colonial Line." *Chicago Tribune,* November 6, 2001. Accessed November 15, 2003. Available from http://www.chicagotribune.com, Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Factbook: Pakistan." August 1, 2003. Accessed November 20, 2003. Available from http://www.cia.gov.

[97] Katzman.

[98] Anthony Davis, "Wanted by Washington; a Saudi Recluse Is the Prime Bombings Suspect," *Asiaweek*, August 28, 1998, 32.

A lack of strategic planning characterized the Clinton Administration's policies towards the Taliban. The United States tentatively accepted the Taliban domination and was convinced by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that the fundamentalist party would prove strongest at maintaining law and order. Ahmed Rashid quotes a State Department official in an Islamabad interview on 20 January 1997: "The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did. There will be Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament, and lots of Shariah law. We can live with that."[99]

For the United States, the Taliban provided an anti-Iranian, anti-Shi'ite way to challenge Iran's regional influence and compete for untapped Central Asian natural resources through pipeline development. The large natural gas and oil deposits of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan remained largely undeveloped during Soviet domination. After the Cold War, the U.S.-Pakistani alliance encouraged U.S. oil companies to seek pipeline development with the Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan to Pakistan's coastline, bypassing both Russia and Iran.[100]

On 2 March 1995, the administration published Presidential Decision Directive (PPD) 35, laying out four priorities for intelligence collection. The first and second priorities required support to military operations (SMO) and intelligence analysis on adversarial nations respectively. Intelligence collection on terrorists, international criminal organizations, drug traffickers, and weapons of mass destruction remained a third tier priority.[101] Although the Clinton Administration was slow to respond during its first term in office to rising terrorist

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[99] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 179.
[100] For a discussion on UNOCAL, a U.S. oil company that pursued pipeline development in Central Asia which would have competed with Russian and Iranian oil, see Rashid, Appendix 4, Table 1; Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquiâe, *Forbidden Truth: U.S.-Taliban Secret Oil Diplomacy and the Failed Hunt for Bin Laden* (New York City: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002), Richard C. Hottelet, "Washington's Opportunity in Iran, Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 4, 1997, 19.
[101] PPD-35 remains classified today. See website "Pdd-35 Intelligence Requirements." March 2, 1995. Accessed December 15, 2003. Available from http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd35.htm.

threats, the second term marked the beginning of a push to reform intelligence agencies and increase budgeting for counterterrorism.

Until the 1998 bombings, the Clinton Administration and the intelligence community were unsure of possible connections or future ramifications of terrorist incidents like the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1995 Kobar Towers bombing in Riyadh, and several other unsuccessful plots that surfaced throughout the world. The domestic and foreign policy challenges of the first term did not convince the president that Afghanistan was of primary interest on the foreign policy agenda. Possible gains from oil and gas rich Central Asian states were not worth risking lives or dollars by promoting U.S. active measures to bring peace to Afghanistan. Although Clinton faced criticisms for his handing of foreign policy affairs, Afghanistan remained an insufficient threat to justify a significant force projection of U.S. military power.

Reversal of Policy

In 1997, the United States reversed its tepid Taliban support after public pressure to recognize the extent of the regime's brutality. The posting of Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, pressure from women's groups, and increasing intelligence connections tying Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda to terrorism convinced the United States to take action. "The U.S. acquiesced in supporting the Taliban because of our links to the Pakistan and Saudi governments who backed them. But we no longer do so and we have told them categorically that we need a settlement [of the conflict and Al-Qaeda]."[102] The United States was now allied with Russia,

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[102] Quote from U.S. State Department Official. Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 180.

India, and Iran who worked in parallel to counter Pakistan's support of the Taliban, the spread of Sunni fundamentalism, and the Taliban's violence against Shi'ite Hazara and Tajik minority groups.[103]

On 23 February 1998, Bin Laden issued a fatwa calling for war against America and its allies. U.S. media would later uncover plans by the CIA to launch covert raids into Afghanistan with the mission to capture Bin Laden and extradite him to the United States for trial although it is unclear whether such missions were ever attempted.[104] Later the same year on 7 August 1998, twin bombs exploded at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Within days, the United States confirmed Al-Qaeda's involvement and subsequently used diplomatic and military means to alienate the Taliban from the international community and target Al-Qaeda's infrastructure.

U.S. strategy towards the terrorist threat was not yet global or even regional as indicated by *ad hoc* actions such as the failed bombing campaign in Afghanistan and the Sudan, the implementation of economic sanctions, and covert support to insurgency groups. "Washington appeared to have a Bin Laden policy but not an Afghanistan policy. From supporting the Taliban, the USA had now moved to the other extreme of rejecting them completely."[105]

The response from the Clinton Administration remained measured and limited despite growing understanding of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda to the United States and its allies. Clinton authorized two missile strikes on targets in Khost, Afghanistan and Khartoum, Sudan. The majority of the American public and Congress supported the attacks on Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan although the strikes failed to hit key Al-Qaeda leadership. The bombing in Sudan, however, proved more problematic to justify. Despite strong intelligence linking Al-

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[103] Ibid., 134.
[104] James Risen, "Militant Leader Was a U.S. Target since the Spring," *New York Times*, September 6, 1998, 1.

Qaeda and the Sudanese government, many in the media chose instead to focus on a lack of definitive proof and a defensive administration with constantly mixed messages. Greatly adding to the skepticism was the breaking Lewinsky scandal and Clinton's appearance before a grand jury only three days prior to the missile attacks.[106] With such uniformly negative attacks on Clinton's performance and character, the president himself ordered a review of the intelligence and missile strikes. The findings concluded that the president's actions were correct and justified. His credibility for launching effective, legitimate uses of force, however, would remain in question throughout his presidency.

The Unconventional Warfare Campaign

In accordance with the 1974 Hughes-Ryan Amendment, President Clinton signed a finding to conduct "special activities," permitting the recruitment of three proxy forces operating in and around Taliban controlled areas in 1999: Pakistani commandos, an Uzbek counter-insurgency unit, and tribal militia units in the Northern Alliance. In addition, the president signed three subsequent memoranda of notification to expand the authority of covert operations. The first authorized the use of lethal force to capture or kill Bin Laden. The second added specific Al-Qaeda members to the target list. A third memorandum sanctioned operators to shoot down private aircraft if Al-Qaeda members were aboard.[107]

This directive led the way for CIA operatives to reconnect with factional leaders well known during the Soviet occupation. "The United States had been quietly giving non-lethal aid to anti-Taliban guerrillas of the United Front since 1998. Now it might begin giving them

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[105] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 182.
[106] Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 357-59.

weapons as well, one official said."[108] In August 1999, the British Broadcasting Service reported that U.S. military personnel landed in a remote airfield near Islamabad to plan strikes with Pakistani counterparts. According to the same report, the United States pressured Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to provide landing rights to U.S. military forces for launching an attack against Bin Laden including aerial bombardment and SOF ground actions. Sharif remained reluctant due to rising support for Bin Laden among Pashtun Islamic groups inside Pakistan that could further destabilize his tenuous hold on power.[109]

U.S. support to faction leaders inside Afghanistan was based upon their ability to strike Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden. Due to the logistical difficulties of inserting American operatives on the ground, the language and cultural barriers, and the inability of foreigners to discern friendly warlord from foe, the United States became overly reliant on questionable operatives without the ability to confirm their loyalty. The Clinton Administration, however, was not willing to risk an overt intervention with U.S. soldiers or to continue distant air strikes. The factions provided Washington a way to pursue action against Al-Qaeda with limited risk using U.S. money, technology, and intelligence to strengthen Northern Alliance capabilities. Correspondent Ahmed Rashid concluded, "In Washington it was perhaps not so much a covert policy as no policy. A covert policy involves planning, funding and making decisions, but there was no such process taking place at the highest levels in Washington on Afghanistan."[110]

Tensions between Islamabad and Washington increased after the bombing of the USS Cole in August 2000; however, the United States remained reluctant to expose Pakistani ISI

[107] Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched after '98 Attacks."
[108] Jonathan S. Landay, "Bush Weighs Raising Aid to Taliban Opposition," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 18, 2001, A7.

support of the Taliban hoping for their help in capturing Bin Laden. U.S. pressure on Saudi

Arabia to stop Taliban funding and aid in Bin Laden's extradition was also unsuccessful even as

U.S. intelligence uncovered connections between Saudi royals in the intelligence community

providing aid to members of the Bin Laden family.[111]

Combating Terrorism

Although some administration officials pushed for a strong, cohesive response to

terrorism and rising Al-Qaeda threats, most saw the world and their institutions as unripe for

transformation. Instead, minimal changes focused on defensive improvements to embassies, U.S.

government installations, and military bases. No government agency succeeded in furthering

policies to strike terrorists, to reduce their financial and military resources, and to limit their

access to weapons of mass destruction through rogue nations or private enterprise.[112]

Repeatedly, President Clinton approached General Shelton about using special mission

units in Afghanistan. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine

Albright also advocated the "boots on the ground" approach, asking for various Delta Force or

SOF options. "Shelton, a senior colleague said, 'wanted nothing to do' with a tiny incursion

known in the Special Forces community as 'going Hollywood.'"[113] Due its unsteady relationship

with the White House, the Pentagon grew wary of plans to conduct a military intervention. When

Shelton briefed the president on possible courses of action, he stated that a covert SOF option

posed too many obstacles to succeed. He believed that the administration's proposals for a small

[109] James P. Lucier and Sean Paige, "Is the United States Preparing to Strike Bin Laden?," *Insight on the News*, September 20, 1999, 6.
[110] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 180.
[111] Ibid., 138-9.

covert war were naïve. The president's military advisor offered only two scenarios: a continuation of the strategic bombing campaign or a massive commitment of conventional forces on the ground. In addition, Secretary of Defense William Cohen and General Shelton proposed a covert financial campaign to seize Al-Qaeda property and accounts.[114]

Each of these proposed actions attempted to strike out at rising terrorism without strategic direction or sufficient guidance. Despite a desire by the president and other key staff to implement a larger scale unconventional warfare campaign, defense staff and military advisors exhibited reluctance in leading such an effort. Their tentative nature was derived from a lack of strategic vision to guide operational action. Past military ventures in Somalia, Iraq, and Bosnia had shown the administrations weakness in defining the problem and issuing guidance. No military leader – Powell, Shalikashvilli, or Shelton was willing to commit troops to another campaign lacking direction. While at the time Shelton insisted that a larger scale joint operation would have been essential to mission's success in Afghanistan, today Shelton maintains, "Absolutely nothing prevented us from running the kind of operation we're running now, if there had been a commitment to do that."[115]

"As to whether the CIA was using all of the tools at its disposal to apprehend Bin Laden, only its top officials know the answer. …The White House told George Tenet on several occasions that covert operations against Al-Qaeda should not be limited because of resources."[116] It is impossible at this time to assess whether the Directorate of Operations effectively utilized all of the resources at its disposal. The budget for the CIA's counterterrorism center tripled and

[112] Gellman, "Struggles inside the Government Defined Campaign."
[113] Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched after '98 Attacks."
[114] Gellman, "Struggles inside the Government Defined Campaign."
[115] Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched after '98 Attacks."

across the administration, 40 departments doubled their spending on counterterrorism efforts.[117] Ultimately, the administration failed to impede Al-Qaeda's growth and effectiveness or apprehend key leaders.

Michael Sheehan who headed the State Department's counterterrorism center saw greater potential for a larger campaign. Although he advocated both law enforcement and intelligence measures to curb terrorism, he "argued that on their own, they made for 'a defensive, marginal strategy, like swatting mosquitoes'" and that "Washington…needed a strategy to 'drain the swamp.'"[118] Fighting terrorism, and even Al-Qaeda after 1998, remained a third tier priority for the administration when weighted against other foreign policy concerns.

Another figure who rose to prominence in the administration for his work on terrorism was Richard Clarke. Arriving to the National Security Council staff in 1992, he began to put together a working group in 1995 that formally became the Counterterrorism Strategy Group (CSG) from 1998-2002. "He was the first to draw effective attention to the risk that terrorists would acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons …and a dominant voice for spending money and covert resources against terrorists at a time when government was inclined to perceive them as a minor threat."[119] He fought hard for the arming of Predator drones to seek out and kill targets like Bin Laden. In April 2001, the Predator proved its capabilities for the first time but the CIA's directorate of operations resisted its deployment for such purposes until after 11 September 2001.

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[116] Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 285-6.
[117] Gellman, "Struggles inside the Government Defined Campaign."
[118] Ibid.
[119] Barton Gellman, "Anti-Terror Pioneer Turns in the Badge; after 11 Years, Clarke Leaves Legacy of Lasting Change -- and Enemies," *Washington Post*, March 13, 2003, A21.

"The lines Clinton opted not to cross continued to define U.S. policy in his successor's first eight months. Clinton stopped short of using more decisive military instruments, including U.S. ground forces, and declined to expand the reach of the war to the Taliban regime that hosted Bin Laden and his fighters after 1996."[120] Before the events of 11 September, the Bush Administration did little to change the inherited Clinton policies that condemned Al-Qaeda's actions and their Taliban sponsors without pursuing effective means to weaken them. Washington maintained its ties with key anti-Taliban leaders but was not prepared to launch offensive operations to change the status quo.

Lessons Learned

Key Theoretical Findings

Returning to the original hypotheses predicted by prospect theory, the first step was to establish the decision-maker's domain as one of gains or losses. As analyzed in Chapter 3, President Clinton's domain remained within the domain of loss throughout his presidency. Therefore, prospect theory predicted that the president would choose a course of action that demonstrated risk prone behavior such as Clinton's pursuit of military and political intervention. In Iraq, Clinton fully supported efforts to exploit the safe haven in northern Iraq, to conduct operations in Jordan, and to provide funds to various opposition groups in the hope of instigating a coup d'etat. In Afghanistan, the president repeatedly pushed his military staff to plan for ground attacks against Al-Qaeda, expanding the UW campaign from solely CIA paramilitary forces to SOF military ground forces.

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[120] Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched after '98 Attacks."

Prospect theory, however, is not capable of predicting the extent of risk propensity. Referring to Figure 1 on page 18, one can see a broad array of risky foreign policy choices ranging from strategic bombing to total war. While the theory can predict a dependent variable of risky versus safe behavior based upon the independent variable of domain, foreign policy choices involve degrees of risk rather than absolute risk. Therefore, the differences between options must be viewed contextually to gain a full appreciation of both domestic versus international political risks and political versus military risks.

The second way in which prospect theory is challenged is the extent to which previous experience and memory shape future decision-making. For instance, President Clinton was deeply affected by the failures in Somalia early in his first term which challenged his confidence in using military intervention to solve political goals, in this case for nation building. The haunting images of Somalis dragging dead U.S. soldiers in the street would remain with him, the military leadership, and the American public alike. The memory of past failure, however, is difficult to operationalize within the framework of prospect theory. While the theory does explain the president's strong desire to expand UW operations in Afghanistan, the theory does not explicate the president's willingness to follow best military advice to choose a less risky option. Although he selected a risky option with limited UW, he acted with the least amount of risk possible for the greatest gain, indicating that his propensity for risk was relatively low.

Key Policy Findings

The choice to implement a limited UW campaign in Iraq and Afghanistan produced neither short term nor long term strategic gains and eventually contributed to many of the same

security dilemmas faced by the incoming Bush Administration in 2000. Several political factors coalesced to inhibit success or expansion of UW operations.

First, the administration failed to construct a grand strategy for political-military intervention, which created a lack of cohesive policy both between U.S. agencies and for U.S. allies. For example, in the case of Iraq, U.S. agencies lacked clear intent from the president and staff resulting in conflicting policies from the State Department and the CIA. While the CIA chose to support the INC's efforts to unite the Kurds and organize the 1995 uprising, the State Department issued guidance refusing to support any popular revolt.

U.S. allies were also affected by the lack of a cohesive, consistent strategy. Before 1997, the United States had voiced little concern over the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, choosing to follow Pakistan's lead on regional issues. By the fall of 1997, however, the US publicly denounced the Taliban and led efforts in the Security Council to institute a sanctions regime. In Iraq, opposition groups to Saddam Hussein were shocked that the United States appeared to advocate revolt, but failed to enforce the no-fly zones, allowing Saddam's regime to retaliate against the uprising after the Gulf War. After demonstrating tentative support for the failed 1995 uprising, Clinton refused to provide further aid to popular revolts, preferring instead to give money to Iraqi diaspora opposition groups promoting a coup d'etat solution for replacing the Ba'athist dictator. The lack of grand strategy called into question the Clinton Administration's willingness to act decisively and showed a lack of commitment to long term military solutions.

The second challenge to implementing the UW strategy was the unwillingness of the military advisors support SOF military intervention. Despite the president's enthusiasm to expand UW campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, military advisors were reluctant to engage in

any small-scale military solutions, particularly those that involved independent SOF forces without the backing of a conventional force. The military remained skeptical of SOF's UW capabilities independent of any conventional command structure. In addition, the emphasis on combating terrorism as a law enforcement issue gave military leaders the perfect excuse for why such operations should remain under civilian control within an agency like the CIA rather than with the military.

The third challenge to Clinton's foreign policy decision-making was the lack of domestic interest in international affairs and international security. President Clinton campaigned for his first term solely on domestic and economic issues. Despite the debacle in Somalia, and the mixed results in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo the American populace remained concentrated on issues at home. There existed little debate on the peacekeeping and peace enforcement campaigns that remained in progress. Given its previous track record in foreign policy, the Clinton Administration would have found it difficult to raise support in Congress or from the American people for an overt, long-term military campaign in Iraq or Afghanistan. Additionally, there was little public attention devoted to the dangers of Al-Qaeda's terrorist strikes overseas and Saddam's belligerency to the United Nations.

Ultimately, the use of UW to connect with factions in Afghanistan and opposition groups in Iraq allowed the Clinton Administration to pursue action against Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein but with limited risk. The administration remained committed to finding a solution to these foreign policy concerns but neither had proven itself to be an imminent or even significant threat to U.S. security. Therefore, President Clinton chose an option with the possibility of reward but with relatively little risk.

Constraints on Implementing Unconventional Warfare

In addition to the policy findings listed above, the Clinton Administration faced a number of specific military constraints with UW implementation. Although UW has the potential to play a greater role in future strategic foreign policy, UW practitioners, are restricted by several factors. These factors include limited resources, a force structure that is reliant on the reserve component, legal restrictions, budget limitations, and political constraints specific to the use of covert force.[121]

Representing less than 2 percent of military manpower, SOF rely upon the conventional force structure to provide logistical and support elements in large-scale or long-term campaigns. Forces proficient in UW require years of uninterrupted training in their occupational specialties, language, and local culture. Leaders in the SOF community insist that the expertise, maturity, experience required of SOF personnel cannot be trained overnight in response to new threats. "[Special forces] will never be large enough or have sufficient resources to conduct all possible missions….We must focus on relevant capabilities."[122]

In addition to limited personnel, 81 percent of PSYOPS units are part of the reserve component.[123] PSYOPS works directly with UW operators to prepare local leaders and the population for arrival of SOF personnel and in conducting campaigns to win the "hearts and minds" during military campaigns. The reserves can only be activated by presidential order, generally in response to a crisis or war. Their predominantly reserve status, however, presents obstacles to civilian employers who are reluctant to support reoccurring deployments.

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[121] Russell D. Howard, "Army Special Operations Forces and the Pacific Century," in *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War.*, ed. Richard H. Shultz, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, and W. Bradley Stock (United States Special Operations Command, 1995), 139-141.
[122] Jones and Tone, "Unconventional Warfare: Core Purpose of Special Forces," 9.

Both SOF and CIA operators face legal limitations in the conduct of UW. Only by presidential exception can anyone other than the CIA conduct "special activities" and only SOF can conduct UW missions.[124] Other constraints include the Posse Comitatus Act that prohibits military involvement in police activities inside U.S. borders. Outside the United States, SOF face varying restrictions when training civilian police forces, a problem in many areas where local law enforcement is not distinct from military forces.[125]

The executive budgeting cycle requires that CIA and SOF fiscal plans be developed five years in advance. Unforeseen crises and deployments are not easily added once the fiscal year arrives and funds must be found by canceling planned events or training to compensate. Support for UW often plays out during the budgeting process and varies according to executive and congressional support.

Finally, many misperceptions surround CIA, SOF personnel, and covert operations resulting in political constraints. Much of the skepticism remains from the Vietnam era when the CIA and SOF worked in concert on the Phoenix Program or from the covert operations during the Reagan era Iran-Contra scandal.[126] Although SOF has worked to further its contributions to the conventional force structure, many military commanders still regard special forces as renegades that conduct war in less than honorable ways. Recent strides by Army SOF in Afghanistan after 11 September, however, have highlighted the unique skills that only UW

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[123] Global Security Website. "Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command." December 31, 2002. Accessed August 30, 2003. Available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/ca-psyop.htm.
[124] See Title 50 U.S. Code, Section 143b., "Presidential Approval and Reporting of Covert Actions." January 22, 2002. Accessed February 27, 2003. Available from http://www4.law.Cornell.edu/uscode/ and Title 10 U.S. Code, Section 167, "Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations Forces." January 22, 2002. Accessed February 27, 2003. Available from http://www4.law.Cornell.edu/uscode/.
[125] Howard, "Army Special Operations Forces and the Pacific Century," 140.
[126] Seymour Hersh, "Manhunt; the Bush Administration's New Strategy in the War against Terrorism," *The New Yorker*, December 23, 2002.

methods offer. A politically legitimate mission expands the strategic utility of UW operations because such a mission is defensible to the U.S. public and the world at large. [127] In a democracy, however, political constraints are likely to be affected by the inherent tension between an open society and the covert or clandestine use of force.

Challenges in Iraq

In addition to the various institutional and political constraints surrounding UW use, the Clinton Administration faced specific regional constraints to the expansion of UW in Iraq. The factors challenging increased intervention included access to regional bases, a limited human intelligence capability, and the fractional nature of the Iraqi opposition groups.

Basing for aircraft posed the greatest problem regionally for U.S. forces. Long range bombers and close air support were available for the no-fly zone patrols. An increase in SOF forces, however, would have required helicopter support for infiltration and extraction as well as combat search and rescue. Turkey and Jordan would have been the countries most likely to support U.S. actions but cooperation would have required mission disclosure and possibly might have invited disagreement on mission objectives.

Throughout the 1990s, HUMINT capabilities in Iraq were extremely limited and military counterintelligence tactics were geared towards Cold War enemies. Conversely, the Iraqis possessed a strong intelligence network readily able to infiltrate Iraqi opposition groups and U.S. military intelligence. U.S. intelligence contacts were restricted largely to the Kurd and Shi'ite communities. Although some Ba'athists or military officers defected, their contacts inside the

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[127] Gray. "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?"

regime were often compromised with their departure.[128] Had Hussein discovered U.S. SOF operations, he would have exploited the embarrassment to the United States, claimed increased civilian casualties, and found support among enraged Arab states.

Lastly, the diversity of opposition groups based on ethnic divisions would have made cooperation difficult. Even among common ethnic groups, divisions between clans like the KDP and PUK Kurdish groups would have been hard to overcome. Saddam Hussein perpetuated ethnic and religious cleavages throughout his reign as a way to remain in power, pitting one group against another. If opposition groups had managed to launch an effective insurgency, Hussein would have combated dissention by purging the ranks and launching a terror campaign of his own.

Challenges in Afghanistan

Expanding UW operations in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban required overcoming numerous factors, including those faced by SOF in the 2001-2002 campaign. Similar to Iraq, U.S. forces lacked bases for aviation and logistical support, timely HUMINT intelligence, and faced complicated fractional infighting.

The development of an air support capability posed great difficulty given the lack of strong U.S. allies in the region. The United States regarded Pakistan with skepticism as an ally who remained closely intertwined with the Taliban's successful takeover. Although the United States relied upon Pakistan's intelligence capabilities, it was doubtful Pakistan would have been willing to deliver Bin Laden to the Americans by allowing extensive base use. Naval air support

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[128] Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*, 181.

also would have required permission to fly through Pakistani airspace. Improved relations with Russia and several of its former Soviet states, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, might possibly have provided airfields, refueling, and search and rescue capabilities. Each of the Central Asian countries had their own domestic political situations and internal ethnic divisions to consider with any Afghan intervention since the Taliban had threatened many of their client populations.[129]

U.S. HUMINT intelligence in Central Asia was sparser than in the Middle East. Since the Carter era, U.S. intelligence community accepted its reliance upon the Pakistani ISI. By 1994, the United States realized that Pakistan's support of the Taliban likely tainted ISI information and intelligence. After rumors surfaced in Pakistan that U.S. SOF were training with Pakistani counterparts, one article commented, "any military strike would need at least the acquiescence of Bin Laden's Taliban hosts. That will not be forthcoming, not least because Bin Laden is a big contributor to the Taliban's war chest.[130] Pakistan remains the only nation with the intelligence network and knowledge of the political and physical terrain necessary to launch a military attack. Correspondent Ahmad Rashid insists, however, that the ISI and its Afghan Bureau, dominated by Pashtun leadership, readily supported the Taliban, although its contacts with Bin Laden are less certain. Pakistan would have had little to gain at the time by cooperating with the United States when it faced its own problems of an unstable dictatorship and rising fundamentalist parties who saw Bin Laden as a hero.[131]

Infighting between warlords in the Northern Alliance, Pashtun and Hazara factions continue to plague Afghanistan today despite the presence of an international military force,

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[129] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 77.
[130] Davis, "Wanted by Washington; a Saudi Recluse Is the Prime Bombings Suspect."

increased domestic security, and the growth of a new central government. In the late 1990s, however, the CIA and SOF would have faced the same hurdles in unifying factions against the Taliban, and more so if operations were to remain covert. In addition, the United States had few contacts among the Hazara factions in central Afghanistan, and the non-Taliban allied Pashtun groups in the south.[132]

Finally, a civil war had raged for almost twenty years leaving the country without state institutions, basic human services, or security apart from warlords. Well versed on Afghanistan's internal struggles, neighbors Russia, China, Iran, and India watched the country carefully. The United States would have needed exceptional diplomacy to avoid misunderstandings arising from any discovery of covert action. While a clandestine or overt UW would have multiplied the effects of the strategic bombing campaigns, the United States needed to assess potential cooperation or at least acquiescence from Afghanistan's neighbors first. Without Pakistan's full support, Al-Qaeda would have had intelligence to avoid U.S. strikes by moving freely along the Pakistani border in the Northwest Frontier Province. In addition, any media discovery of operations targeting Bin Laden would have launched Al-Qaeda's leader into rapid celebrity among his international supporters.

The Way Ahead

In the development of its foreign policy in the Islamic world, the United States fell short in identifying the mechanisms necessary to meet its strategic goals. The Clinton Administration did not implement strategic UW objectives as part of a comprehensive policy on Iraq or

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[131] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 138.
[132] Robin Moore, *The Hunt for Bin Laden: Task Force Dagger* (New York: Random House, 2003), 137, 192.

Afghanistan. The administration's strategic goals in the Middle East consisted of five major elements: promote regional stability and the security of U.S. alliances; secure and stabilize oil resources; curb proliferation of WMD; discourage destabilizing conventional arms sales and counter terrorism; encourage the Arab-Israeli peace process; and promote democracy and check the oppression of the Iraqi people. With the exception of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, UW implementation in Iraq and Afghanistan might have contributed to each of these strategic goals.[133]

UW is more likely to succeed when part of a greater national strategy. UW operators offer a variety of skills and capabilities that conventional forces do not possess. Working within the Army Special Forces mantra of "Through, With, and By [the people]", SOF will continue to remain relevant to today and tomorrow's security challenges.

When Unconventional Warfare Succeeds

A comprehensive strategy containing UW operations might have contributed to U.S. attainment of foreign policy goals in several respects. First, the small footprint of SOF permits the United States to exercise political influence in a situation without resorting to a large conventional presence. Second, UW acts as a force multiplier by training, equipping, and educating resistance movements in revolutionary methods while promoting unity of effort between various insurgency groups. Third, forces executing UW gather information and intelligence in denied areas from inaccessible sources. Finally, American SOF and paramilitary units promote American values of representative government and democracy through interaction with surrogate forces.

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[133] Clinton. "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement."

SOF and paramilitary forces are the most highly qualified to conduct UW owing to their understanding of political and military implications. Best introduced into areas where conventional military situations are less desirable or effective, small numbers of highly trained SOF forces form liaisons with indigenous leaders to advise and train those forces on UW techniques. SOF occupy a negligible logistical footprint and retain self-sufficiency by relying on available resources. Capitalizing upon loyal groups already pursing similar strategic objectives, SOF enable insurgents to shift the balance of power away from a regime's control and place it in the hands of the opposition. In this way, SOF does not attempt to lead or dictate policy for the opposition, only to guide the forces towards political success through guerrilla tactics. Through indoctrination in U.S. interests, insurgents come to understand the U.S. position and its commitment to the region's political future.

By operating with limited forces, SOF ensure that insurgents retain responsibility for their own successes and failures on the battlefield. In addition, other nations are less likely to view opposition leaders as American puppets given the limited U.S. ground force. With a reduced military presence, the United States is in a better position to convince proxy forces of a U.S. commitment to leave once achieving its strategic goals. In Iraq, SOF forces might have mediated differences between Kurdish groups to forestall infighting or participation in cross border raids into Turkey and Iran. If SOF conducts UW overtly, the United States can ensure that allies have reliable ground-based information on the political situation to help stabilize tensions across borders. Even limited HUMINT capability would contribute to the monitoring of the area political situation with respect to WMD and drug and arms trafficking through porous mountainous border regions as in northern Iraq and eastern Afghanistan.

The youngest military command, USSOCOM represents only 1.7 percent of military manpower and 1.1 percent of the Department of Defense budget.[134] As the SOF Truths reveal: "Humans are more important than hardware. Quality is more important that quantity. SOF can't be mass produced. Competent SOF can't be created after an emergency occurs."[135] SOF forces offer exceptional return on investment when the political situation does not permit or benefit from a large conventional force. With its minimal military presence, SOF are less likely to upset the balance of power in the region and therefore prove more politically acceptable. Their flexibility, minimal size, ease of deployment, and vast experience throughout the world combine to illustrate SOF's enormous strategic contributions.

Commanding General of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Major General William Boykin emphasized in a lecture at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy last October: "SOF provide training, advice, and assistance to existing indigenous organizations. SOF do not create resistance movements."[136] SOF act as force multipliers for insurgency movements by accelerating success and slowing defeat. Through liaison relationships, SOF seek out tribal leaders or commanders in opposition forces able to garner loyal support through tribal, ethnic, cultural, or religious linkages and maintain unit cohesion and focus. In the development of theater assets, SOF integrate the capabilities of both conventional forces and intelligence agencies for use in UW operations.

[134] General Carl W. Stiner, "Special Operations Forces: Strategic Potential for the Future," *Special Warfare*, May 1993.
[135] William P. Tangney. "Threats to Armed Forces Readiness: Testimony to the House Committee on Government Reform on the Critical Challenges Confronting National Security." May 16, 2002. Accessed April 12, 2003. Available from http://www.westlaw.com.
[136] Major General William G. Boykin, "Through, With and By: Unconventional Warfare," (Lecture presented at The Fletcher School, Medford, MA, October 30, 2002).

Over the course of the 1990s, U.S. emplacement of limited intelligence capabilities in the Middle East and Central Asian regions resulted not only in a lack of verifiable intelligence on the Hussein regime and Al-Qaeda but also limited understanding of regional politics. UW integrates intelligence collection into the support of opposition movements while exploiting HUMINT sources on the ground. "The British philosophy [of UW] had been to secure the cooperation of the people in acquiring intelligence, the decisive ingredient for victory…by identifying people who…were working for [the enemy] and they were offered incentives to cooperate in giving information."[137] Conversely, the United States withdrew many of its HUMINT assets after the fall of the Soviet Union, preferring to rely on SIGINT and IMINT technology.

An increase of intelligence assets contributes to better U.S. awareness of allied and opposition groups, and adversaries' concerns and interests with regard to U.S. intervention. In addition, the technological intelligence sources can be linked to SOF to conduct operational preparation of the battlefield with surrogate forces and best exploit enemy weaknesses. Long-term relationships between opposition leaders and SOF further greater understanding of social infrastructures, political attitudes, leadership personalities, military cohesion and composition that cannot be interpreted from technical collection methods. In addition, detailed HUMINT provides in depth area knowledge on geography, weather, and terrain.[138]

The spread of terrorism through fundamentalist Islamic groups and the proliferation of WMD, arms and drug trafficking all require HUMINT assets to ensure coverage of trouble spots. A UW mission in northern Iraq would have allowed SOF to investigate the development of extremist groups like Jund al-Islam, operating in Halabja and alleged to have trained in Al-Qaeda

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[137] Ernest Evans. "El Salvador's Lessons for Future U.S. Interventions." *World Affairs* 160, no.1 (1997): 43-9. Accessed April 3, 2003. Available from Expanded Academic.

camps. The presence of intelligence collectors would have contributed to more actionable intelligence confirming or denying ties between Saddam's regime and terrorist organizations operating in the largely ungoverned northern provinces.[139]

Through the promotion of democracy and representative leadership, SOF undercuts the legitimacy of an oppressive regime and attempts to topple it by proving that alternate methods of governing, given support, can prevail. Speaking before Congress in 1992, Secretary of Defense Cheney declared that: "To…promote stability in the Third World, we must have innovative strategies that support representative government, integrate security assistance and promote economic development."[140] The United States did not pursue a plan to meet any of these three objectives.

The United States can lend legitimacy to an evolving political process by supporting whichever leaders are chosen by the populace, not just those leaders the U.S. would prefer to pursue its own interests. In Iraq, UW conducted in pursuit of limited strategic goals might have offered a greater chance of success than support of covert coup attempts alone. In Afghanistan, SOF operating with Northern Alliance and local leaders would have challenged Taliban governance. By contributing to the effectiveness of the insurgency, UW works for the people who oppose the regime to further both their cause and U.S. interests.

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[138] Stiner, "Special Operations Forces: Strategic Potential for the Future."
[139] Adel Darwish and Ed Blanche. "Ousting Saddam." *The Middle East,* July-August 2002. Accessed April 2, 2003. Available from Expanded Academic.

Conclusion

While not without its challenges, unconventional warfare remains the best way to respond to unconventional threats. Rising numbers of subnational and non-state actors wishing to attack nation-states have quickly recognized their inability to fight against a large conventional military foe. Instead, their greatest impact is through asymmetrical strikes designed to affect the minds and hearts of the people within the states they target. Since the 1980s, the United States and its allies have been challenged by these attacks across five continents, in democracies and dictatorships alike.

Throughout the 1990s, U.S. national security objectives became progressively more threatened as the Hussein regime remained fully entrenched and Al-Qaeda operated from its safe haven in Afghanistan. The Clinton Administration policies of pursuing UW without a coherent strategic framework failed to address rising national security concerns. An expansion of UW operations might have contributed to a more comprehensive plan aimed at deposing the oppressive regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, meeting U.S. foreign policy goals.

Traditionally, American presidents have used SOF in political-military crisis, as a remedy that avoids the risk of a large-scale conventional military confrontation. While it is true that SOF offer economy of force with a low price tag, they also possess a broad array of talent in the form of language skills, cultural awareness, and tactical expertise. Still, that expertise can only be capitalized upon when implemented within a larger national security framework. "If SOF are to continue to function optimally as a national strategic asset, their future roles and missions must

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[140] James R. Locher, "Focusing on the Future: The Role of SOF in Emerging Defense Strategy," *Special Warfare*, March, 1992, 12.

be configured and employed in accordance with a U.S. national strategy which is an accurate reflection of the security environment, U.S. objectives, and core American values."[141]

Unconventional warfare is one of the tools best suited to waging the War on Terrorism and the challenges of the post-Cold War era. While most of the public documentation on UW focuses on the role of the CIA and the intelligence community with some limited mention of SOF, UW warfare as a foreign policy tool is less well understood by both military and civilian decision-makers. UW methods conducted by SOF expand the capabilities and options to decision-makers who have opted for unconventional conflict as a means to pursue strategic goals. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure that the successes and failures of past UW campaigns are captured for future review and strategic analysis.

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[141] H. Allen Holmes, "Special Operations Forces as a Strategic Asset in the 21st Century," in *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War.*, ed. W. Bradley Stock (United States Special Operations Command, 1995), 159.

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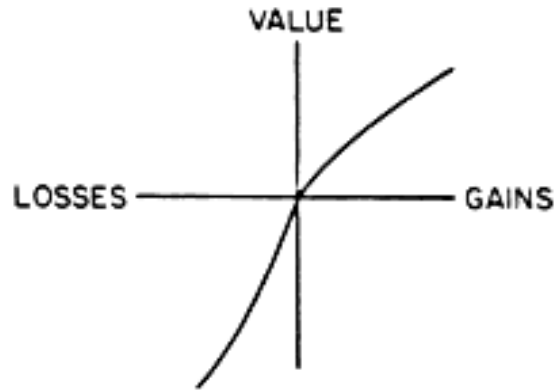
Appendix

Figure 1. Hypothetical value function. Reprinted from Barbara Farnham, *Avoiding
Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University
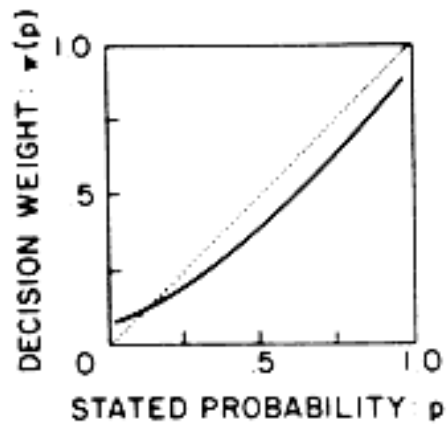of Michigan Press, 1994) 17.

Figure 2. Hypothetical weighing function. Reprinted from Barbara Farnham, *Avoiding
Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of
Michigan Press, 1994) 18.