U.S. and Russian Policymaking With Respect to the Use of Force

Edited by Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin
Preface

This volume is an outgrowth of a September 27–28, 1995 conference at which Russian and American policymakers and policy analysts discussed specially prepared case studies of U.S. and Russian policymaking with respect to the use of force. The conference, held in Washington, D.C., was jointly sponsored by RAND's Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, and the Center for Ethnopolitical and Regional Research in Moscow, as part of a multiyear program of collaborative research, training, and institution-building that began in October 1994.

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Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, both the United States and Russia are in a position to use force more selectively and with less risk. Absent a global superpower rivalry, neither feels the same compulsion to intervene almost everywhere to protect or secure a competitive advantage. At the same time, intervention almost anywhere is now safer because there is no danger of escalation to apocalyptic levels. Despite these similarities, however, the differences in the respective post-Cold War security circumstances of the two countries are more striking than the similarities and have weighed more heavily in their intervention decisionmaking.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Communism left the United States as the world’s only superpower—a status that, for some Americans, entailed a responsibility to create a “new world order,” if need be by periodic resorts to force to curb regional instability. In contrast, post-Soviet Russia emerged from the disintegration of the old order with a sharply reduced international power position and an extended zone of instability along its southern and western flanks, as well as with internal threats to its own territorial integrity. In consequence, Russia has used force exclusively within the former Soviet Union, while the United States has intervened in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America.

At the same time that differences in power and reach between Russia and the United States have become more pronounced, the institutional and procedural differences between them have diminished as a result of Russia’s slow but continuing democratization. How far this process of convergence has gone in the area of intervention and force employment decisionmaking is one of the central issues examined in the concluding chapter of this book. The earlier chapters present case studies of nine instances of regional military intervention undertaken by the two countries since 1991, and one analogous case study from the late Cold War era—of American peacekeeping in Lebanon in 1982–1984. For the United States, in addition to the intervention in Lebanon, these case studies cover the former Yugoslavia, Panama, Haiti, and Africa, as well as a cross-cutting look at how the Bush administration approached its intervention and force employment decisionmaking. For Russia, the case studies describe the decision-making process that led to the use of force in Ossetia-Ingushetia, Trans-Dniestria, Tadjikistan, Abkhazia, and Chechnya.
These case studies are, first and foremost, descriptive in that they revisit events chronologically and highlight the issues at stake, as well as the interplay of individuals and institutions that accounted for the flow of events. However, they are written from an analytic perspective with a view to the formulation of useful generalizations about the decision-making practices of the two countries. Their value as inputs to such an undertaking is enhanced by the fact that their authors were either direct participants in or first-hand observers of the events described.

A word is in order about one important unexamined case: Operation Desert Storm, which provides an all but prototypical example of “mature” intervention decision-making with respect to such key considerations as objectives planning, consensus-building, coalition formation, and operational discipline. It has been excluded from consideration here because the force employed was quantitatively and qualitatively different by several orders of magnitude from that employed in all other post-Cold War instances.

Since most of the interventions described below have not previously been subjected to detailed analysis from a decision-making perspective, this volume should fill an important gap in the scholarly literature on post-Cold War crisis interventions. Hopefully, it will also provide Russian and American policymakers with a better understanding of how decisions on security issues are made in the other’s country. If so, it may help not only to avert misunderstandings but also to strengthen cooperative security relations between the two countries. Nuclear issues excepted, neither country is a pivotal factor in the other’s security planning today. This may not be true in the future, however, and now is certainly an appropriate time to capitalize on unprecedented opportunities to forge close links between security analysts and practitioners in the two countries and to break down barriers of ignorance and mistrust that could complicate bilateral relations and prevent the emergence of a meaningful security partnership.
1. Ossetia-Ingushetia

by Alan Ch. Kasaev*

Introduction

The conflict between Ossetia and Ingushetia that exploded on October 30–November 6, 1992 was the first large-scale ethnic war on the territory of the newly-reconstituted Russian Federation. The basic source of this conflict was the prolonged dispute between the local populations and authorities of North Ossetia and Ingushetia concerning the administrative status of the Frigorodny region. The immediate precipitant was the unwise application of the Russian "state of emergency" statute in the Frigorodny region of North Ossetia (now the Alanly Republic of North Ossetia). After the bloodshed subsided and the conflict dissipated, the Russian government faced problems that it had never dealt with, or even thought about, before. These included:

- defining the legal status and organizing the return of refugees and displaced peoples;
- restoring residential areas and vital infrastructures that its forces had destroyed; and
- re-establishing political and socio-psychological bonds between and among the diverse peoples of the Russian Federation and between the federal government and subjects of the federation.

Historical Origins

To understand the fundamental sources of the conflict that broke out between the Ossetian and Ingushetian communities in the fall of 1992, and the circumstances that led the Russian leadership to suppress the unrest by force, we need to briefly examine the history of Ossetian-Ingushetian relations. Until 1917, these relations were relatively calm and stable.¹ With the Bolshevik revolution in 1917,

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however, their relations sharply deteriorated. The majority of Ossetians, who received more privileged treatment than the other nations from the Tsarist government, supported the anti-Bolshevik “White Guards.” The people of Ingushetia, in contrast, reacted positively to the Bolshevik appeal to redistribute land and property. In August 1918, the trans-Caucasus were the locus of intense fighting between “White Guard” troops, who were defending the Tsarist regime, (consisting mostly in this region of Ossetians), and Bolshevik units, which included many Ingushetians. The Bolshevik victory led to bloody repression against the “White Guards” and their supporters; Ossetians tended to view this repression as “the slaughter of Ossetians by Ingushetia.”

Something similar, but with an opposite effect, took place during World War II. In 1944, the Ingushetians and the Chechens, with whom they shared a so-called autonomous republic, were among several ethnic groups of the Caucasus that were forcibly relocated to the eastern regions of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). One of the consequences of these deportations was the transfer to the North Ossetian autonomous republic of the Prigorodny region, which had been inhabited almost entirely by Ingushetians but was now resettled by Ossetians. As a result, the Ingushetians concluded that they were victims of an Ossetian conspiracy—a conclusion supported by rumors that Stalin and several of his closest advisors were of Ossetian origin.

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev subsequently allowed the Ingushetians (along with the Chechens and the other peoples who were similarly subjected to repression by Stalin) to return to their native lands. This, however, was not accompanied by a decision to return the Prigorodny region to the Chechen-Ingushetian Republic. As a result, the majority of Ingushetians continued to believe that Ossetians enjoyed “privileges” at their direct expense.

*The Political Bombshell: “Territorial Rehabilitation”*

Throughout the waning years of the Gorbachev era and early post-Soviet transitional period, the political climate shifted in favor of the peoples that had been subjected to mass repression and deportations during the Stalinist period. Most liberal Russian politicians advocated not only the political rehabilitation of these people—i.e., return of all the rights of which they had been deprived, including the rights to own land and property—but also their territorial administrative rehabilitation—i.e., their right to communal control over their

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ethnic homelands. In this climate, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted a statute on "The Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples" that proclaimed the restoration "in accordance with the will of the previously repressed peoples" of the nation-state borders that had existed prior to the unconstitutional Soviet policies of deportation and relocation. Unfortunately, in an omission that was typical for this period, this statute, which was adopted in April 1991, failed to specify how it was to be implemented or how and to what extent the will of other peoples now living on the disputed territory was to be taken into account. In short, by restoring rights to the victims of previous discriminations, the statute, in practice, raised the specter of gross violations of the rights of other citizens, who were not responsible for committing the original unlawful acts. In fall 1991, this specter became a reality when Ingushetian extremists attempted to reclaim the territory of the Prigorodny region by force, thereby transforming latent Ossetian-Ingushetian animosities into a bloody conflict and confirming the warnings of the many independent experts who had predicted that territorial-administrative rehabilitation would cause an explosion of competing territorial claims and create a real threat to the internal stability of the Russian Federation.

A Republic Without Borders Or An Administrative Apparatus

Another ingredient in the tragic breakdown in Ossetian-Ingushetian relations was the dismemberment of the Chechen-Ingush Republic as a result of Chechnya's de facto separation from the Russian Federation following Dudayev's rise to power in the fall of 1991. For many months thereafter, Ingushetia lacked any legitimate governing authority since Moscow refused to recognize Dudaev's regime (which it expected to collapse in short order), and was content to leave Ingushetia in legal limbo.\(^4\) In consequence, Ingushetia was not included among those Russian regions that, at the end of February 1992, signed the Union Treaty, which provided the legal basis for the coexistence of regions and republics of the Russian Federation, and which stipulated that the borders of the constituent parts of the federation could not be amended without popular consent.\(^5\) This left the Ingushetians completely free of any constitutional or legal constraint in pressing their claims for control over the Prigorodny region.

\(^4\) In February 1992, in the absence of a formally demarcated Ingush republic, Special Representatives of the Russian President and Parliament General Ermakov and Deputy Kostoev (who had been appointed by Moscow), respectively, served as the de facto governing authorities in the region. They did not show any capacity, however, to control the situation in the territory.

\(^5\) Rossiyskaya Vesti', February 12, 1992. On December 10, 1992, the status of Ingushetia was finally clarified by the decree of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies that proclaimed the formation of the Chechen and Ingush republics as constituent parts of the Russian Federation. This occurred, however, only five months after the bloody Ossetian-Ingushetian confrontation erupted in the Prigorodny region.
The Politics Of Military Intervention

The Course Of Events

During the summer and early fall of 1992, there was a steady increase in the militancy of Ingushetian nationalists, culminating in an October 1992 decision by an ad hoc meeting of “representative governing authorities of Ingushetia” (including Ingushetian communities in North Ossetia) to implement the statute on “Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples” by force. More precisely, it was decided “to form armed detachments in all Ingushetian communities in North Ossetia . . . [in order to ensure] that all the Ingushetian territories seized by Stalin are returned to the Ingush Republic.” At the same time, there was a steady increase in incidents of organized harassment against Ingushetian inhabitants of North Ossetia by their North Ossetian neighbors and North Ossetian police. Instead of reacting promptly to prevent a full-scale explosion, however, Moscow temporized, relying on the attempts of local authorities to stabilize the situation through half-hearted negotiations. As a result, the conflict continued to escalate, until, by the end of October, Ingushetian separatists were in control of a sizable part of the Prigorodny region, large numbers of Ingushetians from elsewhere in North Ossetia had been forcibly evicted from their homes, pitched battles between Ossetian and Ingushetian military formations were raging on the outskirts of the North Ossetian capital (Vladikavkaz), and Ingushetian volunteers were pouring across the Ingushetian-North Ossetian border. It was only at this point that Moscow finally decided to take action.

On October 31, a high-level Russian delegation, comprised of Deputy Prime Minister Gregory Khiza, Chief of General Staff Colonel-General Mikhail Kolesnikov, Deputy Commander of the Air Force Major General Aleksey Chindarov, and the Commander of the Internal Forces Lieutenant-General Yury Savvin, arrived in Vladikavkaz, along with nearly 8,000 troops from the Pskov airborne division and special forces and police units from Komi, Nizny Novgorod, and Tula. Even then, however, the mission of these forces remained unclear. While the press reported that they were to be deployed as militarily proactive peacemakers on the basis of a presidential decree that had been signed that very day (October 31), no such decree was officially published until November 2. It is unclear whether this further delay was the result of last-minute doubts on President Yeltsin’s part about using Russian troops to suppress a domestic conflict (the sort of doubts that had led him to repeal an earlier (October 1991) decree deploying troops in Chechnya) or whether it was the result of last-minute changes that Yeltsin was persuaded to make in response to the objections of Kremlin enemies of Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai, who
had almost certainly drawn up the original decree and may well have incorporated both a larger role for himself than his enemies wished him to have, and a more evenhanded approach to the conflict than his generally anti-Ingushetian enemies desired. Whatever the explanation for the delayed publication of the presidential decree, however, the first deployment of Russian peacekeepers did not begin until early November.

When federal forces did finally deploy, they took up positions on the border between North Ossetia and Ingushetia. By doing so, they did more than symbolically underscore the clear implication of the November 2 presidential decree that the Prigorodny region was to remain part of North Ossetia (an implication that may not have been so clear in the original decree of October 31). They also cut off any possibility that the Ingushetian insurgents in North Ossetia could receive significant supplies or reinforcements from Ingushetia, and virtually guaranteed that Ingushetian communities in North Ossetia would be subjected to brutal reprisals, if not ethnic cleansing. Although Russian troops often intervened to prevent horrendous acts of violence by Ossetian police and republican guards, the stance of the Russian peace-keeping force as such was strongly pro-Ossetian not only objectively as a result of its deployment, but subjectively as well.

The prevailing viewpoint of the Russian leadership was well expressed by Deputy Prime Minister Gregorg Khiza, who was appointed to oversee the peace-keeping operation on behalf of the Kremlin. According to Khiza, the conflict he was charged to terminate was caused by "an aggressive armed attack by Ingushetian forces on a sovereign state . . . that is part of Russia" and that Russia was required to repel, "so that nobody else will infringe on his neighbor's land."6 Lurking behind this simplistic understanding of the origins of the conflict was an assumption, shared by many of Russia's senior military and political leaders, that North Ossetia was more reliable than Ingushetia and the other North Caucasus republics because the Ossetians were Christian and "the others" were Muslim—an assumption that North Ossetian President Galazov did his best to confirm by repeated declarations of loyalty to Moscow. Assumptions and declarations apart, moreover, North Ossetia actually became an important Russian outpost after the de facto secession of Chechnya, when the North Ossetian cities of Vladikavkaz and Mozdok became the primary Russian military bases in the region.7 For all these reasons, it was almost inevitable that most Russian leaders

6 "In the Fog on the Verge of Disaster," Vladikavkaz, 1994, p. 684.
7 After the fighting started, the "Chechen card" came into play in a different fashion. As early as November 1992, Chechen leaders suggested that Russian troops were deployed in the Ossetian-Ingushetian combat zone in preparation for an assault on Chechnya. The plan was supposed to for
would favor the "always loyal Ossetians" over the "permanently discontented Ingushetians," especially at a time when even the democrats among them had shed their romantic illusions about the unqualified benefits of national self-determination.\endnote{8}

**The Political Consequences Of Armed Intervention In the Conflict**

The deployment of Russian peacemakers brought a close to mass violence in the Prigorodny region, but it did not resolve the underlying Ingushetian-Ossetian conflict. Nor have Russia's subsequent diplomatic efforts to broker a political settlement enjoyed much success. Rather predictably, they have foundered on two key issues: the return of refugees, and the status of the Prigorodny region.

The hostilities and reprisals in North Ossetia produced between 40,000-60,000 Ingushetian refugees, almost all of whom fled to Ingushetia. Although pressure from Moscow finally induced the North Ossetian authorities to allow refugees from four settlements in the Prigorodny region to return to their homes, the return of most refugees has been blocked by North Ossetia's insistence that "the time has not yet come for Ossetians and Ingushetians to try again to live together" and its demand that Ingushetia officially acknowledge its responsibility for initiating hostilities. Meanwhile, the erstwhile homes and settlements of these refugees are gradually being occupied by South Ossetian refugees who have fled war and persecution in Georgia and whom the North Ossetians are now resettling in the Prigorodny region—despite Ingushetian protests.

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\textit{Russian airborne units to move rapidly through the territory of Ingushetia, enter Chechnya and capture the capital (Grozny).} The absence of an established border between Chechnya and Ingushetia, as well as the fact that the Dudaev regime in Chechnya was not recognized officially by federal authorities, were offered as the grounds for legitimizing the incursion. Although there was no evidence to confirm such ambitions of the federal authorities at the time, Russian tanks, in alleged hot pursuit of Ingushetian fighters, advanced all the way to the Ingushetian border with Chechnya. Therefore, it is difficult to exclude the possibility that an improvised decision was made at some executive level (for instance, by the High Command of the Ministry of Defense) to "expand" the military operation and to use it to demonstrate Russia's military power to the Chechen separatists. That such an improvisation could take place (if in fact it did) shows the existence of serious problems in the federal government's procedures for formulating and implementing key decisions with respect to ethnic conflicts.

\endnote{8}{The Russian media, spearheaded by democratically-oriented newspapers and magazines, were generally critical of the position assumed by the Russian leadership. Many independent-minded journalists were put off by the striking solidarity between the Kremlin and the "White House" (i.e., the Russian Parliament) on the issue. The latter, despite its opposition to President Yeltsin, preferred "not to mention" the behavior of Russian armed forces during the conflict, or the fact that units under the command of the Ministry of Defense had no legal right to participate in a domestic conflict. Hence, in many leading publications, the terrifying descriptions of the slaughter carried out by Ossetian fighters was described as having been organized and supported by the Russian Army. This negative reaction of the press (along with the pressure applied by Ingushetian President Aushev) prompted Yeltsin's decision to discharge Khiza and to appoint Shakhrai as a deputy prime minister.}
While negotiations on the return of refugees have made at least some progress, negotiations on the status of Frigorodny region have been deadlocked from the start. Indeed, the North Ossetians have continued to insist that such negotiations are unacceptable in principle, since the region’s status as an unalienable part of North Ossetia is authoritatively recognized in the Russian constitution. For their part, the Ingushetians took until July 1995 to drop their demand that the region be returned to Ingushetia under the terms of the ill-fated statute “On the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples,” and have since held out for subordinating the region to direct federal control—a proposal that the North Ossetians have adamantly rejected.

**Conclusion**

Moscow’s decision to preside over drawn out Ossetian-Ingushetian negotiations rather than impose a settlement indicates how much its outlook and behavior have changed in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In assessing the magnitude of this change, however, one must take account of Moscow’s fear that Ingushetia could become “another Chechnya” if it lost all hope of redressing its grievances through negotiations. This fear has undoubtedly played an important role in the belated and partial rectification of Moscow’s earlier pro-Ossetian tilt, and present indications are that it will continue to play a role for the foreseeable future. Given past history, however, it will take a very long time indeed to convince the Ingushetians that Moscow is really able and willing to act as an honest broker in resolving their conflict with the Ossetians. Even allowing for the distinct possibility that Moscow has drawn valuable lessons from its erratic, arbitrary, and heavy-handed efforts to manage the Ossetian-Ingushetian conflict, and has made progress in creating and institutionalizing a more rational and responsible policy-making process, Ingushetia is likely to be a zone of instability and potential flash point for many years to come.
2. Chechnya

by Emil A. Payin and Arkady A. Popov*

Introduction

The Russian leadership’s decision to use force against General Dudaev’s self-proclaimed Chechen Republic, like no other episode in modern Russian history, revealed all of the flaws of Russia’s fledgling democracy. The motives behind and methods employed in the formulation and implementation of this decision, as well as the politics that precipitated the escalation of the Chechen constitutional crisis to an armed conflict, provide grist for analysis of the current “transitional” status of Russia’s state and society.

The instability of the transition process has affected the character of Russian policymaking in many respects. First, it has slowed the replacement of anachronistic, monolithic governance structures by legitimate forms of federalism and mechanisms for managing inter-ethnic relations. To date the Russian government has failed to specify limits to the autonomy of its constituent parts or the legal standing of various sub-national actors. Second, the confusion has militated against the institutionalization of legitimate norms and conventions for preventing and regulating the use of Russian armed forces in domestic conflicts. Third, this instability has thwarted the development of a well-defined and effective decision-making system capable of managing competition between different governmental agencies and monitoring the flow of information to the leadership. Fourth, this state of uncertainty has fostered both a low level of professionalism among those agents responsible for implementing the leadership’s policies and the absence of a “rule of law” as a disciplining factor in domestic politics. Finally, the inchoate domestic political transition in Russia has led to the utter absence of civic accord and responsibility among purported governing agents. As a result, the current policy-making culture is intolerant of opposition and debate, provoking a “siege mentality” among the Russian

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intelligentsia and mass media that, in turn, has led to the estrangement of the Russian government from society.

All this does not mean, however, that we are witnessing a restoration of the totalitarian system in Russia, as was presumed by many authors after the outbreak of full-scale war in Chechnya. Instead, Moscow’s policy toward Chechnya, particularly during the culmination of the crisis in fall and winter 1994-1995, reveals the bizarre and often paradoxical way in which elements of both the new democratic and old socialist thinking and behavior commingle to determine the actions of the current Russian executive and legislative branches of government.

Undoubtedly, the Chechen war was a painful setback to Russian democracy, and its negative consequences will most likely reverberate for a long time. It is also obvious that the self-interests of several key political groups drove many decisions by the Russian government on the Chechen issue. Still, radical critics of the Kremlin are hardly correct when they see in these intrigues a manifestation of a calculated plot to stymie democratic reforms in Russia and to restore totalitarian order. Moreover, there is no basis for claims that the “Chechen war” is only a link in a chain of far-reaching plans to coerce the reunification of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Nothing, in our opinion, could be further from the truth than the suggestion that contemporary Russian policy, which is struggling to climb out of the old institutional rubble and ancient prejudices, can in any way be planned or implemented in a conspiratorial spirit. It would be much closer to the truth, and much more productive, to understand Russian decisionmaking in the more prosaic terms of “chaos theory.”

**Background**

The conflict between Russia and Chechnya has a long history. Russian imperialism in the Caucasus lasted several centuries and met its most determined and well-organized resistance on the territory of Chechnya and the bordering regions of Dagestan. There, for a quarter of a century, Shamil’s Islamic proto-state fought the Russian army until 1864. The Republic of the North Caucasus, that included Chechnya, declared independence soon after the Bolshevik revolution in May 1918 (after September 1919 it was called the North Caucasian Emirate) and fought a brutal war against the Tsarist army commanded by General Denikin.1 According to Denikin, however, only the

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1 See, for example, A. Avtokhanov, “The Murder of the Chechen and Ingush People,” *Karta* (Russian independent historic and human rights magazine), Ryazan, No. 9, p. 12.
Chechens from the Bolshevik-backed mountainous regions resisted the Tsarist forces, while the Chechens from the plains fought on the side of the anti-Bolshevik army. After Denikin’s defeat, the Red Army entered Chechnya in early 1920, and a new rebellion erupted, this time against the Bolsheviks. This revolt was not suppressed until fall 1921.

The Congress of the Mountain People that convened in the trans-Caucasus in January 1921 (chaired by Stalin, the People’s Commissar of Nationalities at the time) declared the formation of the Mountainous Soviet Republic of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Over the ensuing three years, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and a number of other autonomous oblasts of the Northern Caucasus became independent. A brief period of relative tranquillity was cut short by the mass political repression of the collectivization campaign during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This sparked a new wave of anti-Soviet uprisings in Chechnya that continued for the next ten years, gradually taking on the character of guerrilla warfare. The crises intensified at the onset of World War II, with the creation of the rebel government of Israilov and Sheripov. In June 1942, this government issued an “Appeal to the Chechen-Ingush People,” to “wait for the Germans as [welcome] guests.” The government declared that the Germans would be greeted with hospitality if they acknowledged the independence of the Chechen republic. This was later used by the Stalinist leadership as a pretext for the complete deportation of the Chechen and Ingush population to the eastern parts of the country. (The deportation of other people of the Caucasus—Balkars, Meshedin Turks, and Kurds—was conducted without any such pretext.)

Thus, prior to the middle of the 20th century, the Chechens, particularly those residing in Islamic mountainous regions, never fully accepted Russian domination. The perceived illegitimacy of Russia’s claims notwithstanding, prior to the early 1990s there were no serious conflicts in Russian-Chechen relations following the return of Chechens to their homeland and the restoration of a Chechno-Ingush autonomous republic in 1957.

There is no doubt that many Chechens throughout the 1960s-1980s believed that the USSR constituted a “Russian state” in a different guise. The memories of deportation, as well the unwillingness of Soviet authorities to acknowledge full

\footnote{A.I. Denikin, 	extit{Essays of the Russian Time of Troubles}, Moscow, 1991, p. 194. One may note that Avtorkhanov, who is well familiar with this book and quotes it as necessity arises, nevertheless chooses to remain silent about the “unpatriotic” position of the Chechens from the plains, as well as about the Sheik Uzun-Khadzhi against the traitors. Yet he acknowledges that the Bolsheviks did provide military and material aid to Uzun-Khadzhi’s government out of political considerations.}

\footnote{A. Avtorkhanov, p. 12.}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 21.}
responsibility for these actions, remained deep-seated. Yet, such caution and enmity were also characteristic of many other Muslim minorities within the Soviet Union, especially among those that had been subjected to mass purges in the previous decades. There is no data to suggest that Chechen animosities were noticeably different from those harbored by the Ingushetians, Karachaevans, or any other repressed peoples. Furthermore, many authors point to the fact that the forced "dispersion" of ethnic Chechens across the territory of the USSR and the attendant emergence of a Chechen Diaspora in many Soviet cities promoted a more active integration of Chechens into the Soviet and Russian economy, and a rapid assimilation of values and lifestyles, as compared to that of other mountainous peoples that had been "left alone" by the Soviet government.

Partly for this reason, Moscow paid little attention to the November 1990 adoption by the Supreme Soviet of the Chechno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of a "Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Chechen-Ingush Republic," proclaiming the latter a sovereign state that was going to participate in union and federation treaties on equal footing with the then-Soviet republics. Analogous declarations were adopted by all of the union and autonomous republics at that time. Despite the fact that many points of these declarations openly contradicted USSR and RSFSR constitutions, no one paid heed to them in the heat of the intensifying struggle between the Russian (Yeltsin) and Soviet (Gorbachev) leaderships.

At the same time, the emergence of the National Congress of the Chechen People (NCCP) on the Caucasian political scene also went practically unnoticed by Moscow, despite the fact that its first congress began adopting openly separatist resolutions. (On June 9, 1991, the second NCCP Congress announced that the Chechen Republic, arbitrarily carved out of Chechno-Ingush Republic, was planning to secede from the USSR and RSFSR.) One has to keep in mind that it was a time of inflammatory, revolutionary slogans of an impassioned anti-imperial and anti-Communist character. These slogans, to a large degree, served as a basis for Boris Yeltsin's campaign for office as the first Russian president. In an attempt to garner votes from the non-Russian population in the provinces, Yeltsin's team promised to maximize the autonomy of Russia's constituent republics, and was willing to ignore the anti-constitutional games played by republican authorities and nationalist movements that advocated different versions of ethnic sovereignty. This tactic brought about the expected short-term results in Chechnya, as more than 80 percent of the voters in the Chechno-Ingush Republic voted for Yeltsin on June 12, 1991.

Clearly, no one could even think of the possibility of using force to terminate the activities of the NCCP under the prevailing circumstances. The Russian
leadership had neither the political interest nor logistical capabilities for such an
operation (military and police structures were still entirely under control of the
Union government). As for the Union government, Gorbachev’s team wanted to
exploit the issue of republican separatism within Russia as a weapon to be
wielded against the Russian leadership headed by Yeltsin.

In November 1990, the draft version of the Union Treaty that was developed by
the leadership of the USSR and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)
was first published. The draft conferred rights upon “republics that are parts of
other republics” (i.e., republics that are a part of Russia), to participate in the
Union Treaty on an equal footing with respective Soviet republics. These plans,
which directly contradicted the standing USSR and RSFSR constitutions and
were clearly designed to put political pressure on Yeltsin, exacerbated the
separatist tendencies in Russia’s autonomous districts, including the Chechno-
Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).

In other words, the tug-of-war between the Russian and Soviet governments, and
their intense competition for votes and the political support of the Russian
provinces decisively precluded any possibility of military intervention in the
Chechen-Ingush Republic. Meanwhile, by mid-1991, separatist pressures began
to intensify within the republic.

The “Chechen Revolution” and the First Attempt To
Introduce A “State of Emergency”

In summer 1991, the NCCP, led by a new charismatic leader, retired Air Force
General Dzhokhar Dudaev, proclaimed itself the supreme authority of the
Republic of Chechnya. It created its own armed “national guard” and began to
take practical steps toward the seizure of power in Grozny. Ironically, the
August coup in Moscow benefited Dudaev. The Supreme Soviet of the Chechno-
Ingush Republic, headed by its former Communist leader, Doku Zavgaev,
supported (or at least did not publicly renounce) the anti-Yeltsin coup plotters,
thus creating favorable conditions for its own demise. Taking advantage of the
mass demonstrations against the coup, the “national guard” stormed the
Parliament building in early September, and, with the support of Russia’s
Supreme Soviet, forced the deputies of the “counter-revolutionary” Supreme
Soviet of Chechno-Ingushetia to dissolve the republican Parliament. Moreover,
the speaker of the Russian Parliament at the time, Ruslan Khasbulatov, arrived in

\[5\] Pravda, November 24, 1990.
Grozny to further the cause by announcing new elections to the republican Supreme Soviet.

Much to its chagrin, the Russian leadership’s expectations that the Chechen revolution would remain under its control, and that the Chechen “revolutionary fever” would be short-lived, did not come true. Dudaev seized all of the important assets and took control of the local security structures in a matter of weeks. In a series of measures, he rejected the offer of “guardianship” from the federal authorities, abolished the Provisional Council (the transitional authority that had been created in cooperation with Moscow) and declared that both parliamentary and presidential elections would be held in the republic. Belated attempts on the part of the Russian leadership to counter these actions and to obstruct the NCCP’s development and legitimation were futile. One week before the elections, Yeltsin issued an ultimatum demanding that Dudaev’s people disarm their illegal military formations and release all captured buildings. As far as we know, however (before November 1991), the issue regarding the use of military force to pacify Dudaev’s “national guards” was not yet considered a serious option.

Under these conditions, nothing prevented Dudaev from ignoring Yeltsin’s ultimatum and triumphantly holding and winning republican presidential and parliamentary elections. It is important to note that these elections were not legitimate, especially given the context of formal legal chaos that pervaded Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) at the time. First, they took place on territory that was arbitrarily designated as the “Republic of Chechnya.” As a result, the population of six (out of fourteen) regions of the Chechno-Ingush Republic that disagreed with this scheme were, in effect, excluded from the election process. Second, the election campaign period only lasted two weeks. This did not provide sufficient time to organize a full-fledged campaign. Moreover, given that the elections took place under conditions of a “state of emergency,” the NCCP was in an advantageous position. Thus, it comes as no surprise that there were numerous violations of election procedures (for instance, the representatives of the Chechen Diaspora, who were not permanent residents of Chechnya, were allowed to vote).

Only in the aftermath of the elections did the thought of declaring a “state of emergency” in Chechnya arise for the first time. The operation of the political “kitchen cabinet” of the former USSR was always a secret process. This tradition, though in a more informal guise, persists in post-Soviet Russian policymaking. Nevertheless, we know a few things about President Yeltsin’s sensational decree of November 7 that declared a “state of emergency” in the Chechno-Ingush Republic, removed Dudaev from power, and placed the republic under the
control of Akhmet Arsanov, who had been one of the Chechno-Ingush Republic’s deputies to the Federal Parliament.

It is now known that Arsanov, who had been previously appointed as the representative of the Russian president in Chechno-Ingushetia on October 27, was the formal sponsor of the decree. On November 6 (i.e., only several hours before Yeltsin’s decree was announced)\(^6\) Arsanov sent the Russian president a desperate telegram from Grozny in which he insisted on an immediate declaration of a “state of emergency” in order to restore law and order in the republic. Arsanov’s involvement was implicitly confirmed by President Yeltsin, who, two days after his decree was rejected by the Russian Parliament, issued another decree. This new decree removed Arsanov as the presidential representative on the basis of his complicity in the disinformation campaign that led to the declaration of a “state of emergency” in the Chechno-Ingush Republic.\(^7\) Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that such an important document could have been prepared that night. More likely, the outline, and perhaps even the full text of the decree, had already been prepared in anticipation of an opportune moment to issue it. Arsanov's telegram proved to be just such an occasion.\(^8\)

The timing of the November decree could not have been worse. As the authors have already tried to prove in a number of publications,\(^9\) in November, after the last remnants of federal governmental bodies and law enforcement agencies in Chechnya were dissolved and Dudaev was elected president, it was no longer possible to suppress Chechen separatism by force. Moreover, Yeltsin’s decree caused an explosion of anti-Russian sentiments in Chechnya and radically

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\(^7\)“The Representative Power,” in *Political Russia Today*, Moscow: 1993, p. 20.

\(^8\) There is an opinion (though not confirmed by official documents) that the actual author of the decree was Sergei Shakhrai, one of Yeltsin’s closest advisors. Shakhrai, the Russian State Legal Policy Advisor, was one of a few democratically-oriented politicians who tried consistently to implement the idea of Russian statehood and to counteract the ethnic separatism that was developing under the guise of “the national revival of ‘native’ people.” It is also known that Vice President Alexander Rutskoi actively endorsed the decree; as many presumed that he was the decree’s sponsor. This seems probable because in October 1991, upon returning from rancorous negotiations with Dudaev in Grozny, he boldly announced that the Chechen president was a “real gangster,” and that it was “the right time to put Chechno-Ingushetia back in line.” When Rutskoi subsequently turned against President Yeltsin, not only did he continue to “push through” the decree, but he even thought highly of his actions. Rutskoi blamed Yeltsin and his democratic entourage for lacking the commitment and fortitude for resolving the Chechen crisis in a timely fashion and “with little bloodshed.” Many people, including Speaker of the Council of Federation of the Russian Parliament Vladimir Shumeiko, think that then-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Khashbulatov also supported the declaration of the State of Emergency in Chechnya (see the report of the meeting of the Council of Federation in the book *Chechnya: The Russian Tragedy*, Moscow, 1995, p. 18).

increased the number of people that supported Dudaev and Chechen independence.  

In this context, units from the USSR and RSFSR interior ministries that landed on an airfield near Grozny were met with stiff resistance. They were rebuffed not only by the "national guard" but also by members of the people's volunteer corps that had been assembled out of Chechen civilians who took up arms for the first time in their lives. Consequently, there was a real threat that the Russian troops would retaliate against the Chechen population. In other words, there was a real possibility that a mere police operation would turn into a war between the army and the people, as was the case three years later. Because of this threat, the Congress of People's Deputies—the highest Russian legislative body—refused to ratify the Russian president's decree when it convened four days later, stripping it of its legal standing. Under fire from democratic circles, Yeltsin retreated from a dispute with the Parliament and, in fact, agreed that the decree, if not plainly misguided, was at least ill-prepared and warranted revocation.

It should be noted that not all democratic political factions advocated rescinding the decree. Nikolai Travkin, the creator of the first mass non-Communist party in modern Russian history—the Democratic Party of Russia—and one of the most prominent supporters of reform, for example, insisted firmly on the execution of the decree. He argued that it was necessary to follow strictly the Russian Constitution and to suppress decisively all attempts by local elites to incite ethnic separatism for their parochial interests. His arguments, however, were not understood by his democratic colleagues, most of whom supported the unconditional rights of any nationality to sue for self-determination. Moreover, many democrats were put off by Travkin's excessive "formalism," as well as by his readiness to accept drastic measures for the sake of promoting legal reform. Following the universal indignation concerning the previous show of force by Soviet authorities in Tbilisi, Baku, Vilnius, and Riga, any military involvement in ethnic-based conflicts became a real "taboo" for Russian anti-Communists.

During their fight with the Communist-dominated USSR bureaucratic structures, all non-Russian movements of an anti-imperial nature appeared to be natural allies of Russian democracy. It was not commonplace at the time to pay attention to "trivial" matters, such as the methods of obtaining power and authority used by these allies. That was why the condition for self-determination put forward by Travkin—to carry out a referendum in the republic aspiring to self-determination—was considered by many as a sign of "imperial thinking," especially since soon thereafter Travkin revealed another proof of his

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“backwardness,” namely, his opposition to the Belovezhsky Treaty that abolished the USSR. Nevertheless, the leader of the Democratic Party was prophetic in suggesting that by avoiding “a little blood” at the outset of the Chechen crisis, Russia would have to spill “a lot of blood” in the future.

The failure of the first attempt by post-Communist Russia to play hardball with the rebellious Chechen Republic was a painful blow to President Yeltsin’s self-esteem and became a permanent reminder that any decisive actions in the sphere of ethnic policy were very unpopular. One can say that this peculiar “political vaccine” had its effect. Prior to November 1992, when the Russian Army intervened (though there was a long delay) to quell the Ossetian-Ingushetian hostilities, Russian policy toward inter-ethnic relations was pursued not only without resort to military force but even without any punitive actions against the many extreme nationalist organizations and leaders that were proliferating at the time. The merits of this ambivalence are difficult to assess; in doing so one must take into account that under the specific conditions of the “transitional period” in Russia any decisive action, irrespective of its legal and moral validity, would inevitably be transformed into an unlawful and uncivilized activity. This was confirmed by the tragic events of the “Chechen war” that materialized at the end of 1994.

The Prerequisites For Imposing A Military Solution To the Chechen Crisis

From the end of 1991 to the end of 1994, the Chechen Republic’s drive toward political independence came to fruition. In January 1992, the newly-elected Parliament of the Chechen Republic called for the ouster of the RSFSR People’s Deputies from Chechno-Ingushetia. In February, as a result of attacks on the Russian military bases and arms depots in Grozny, Dudaev seized a large cache of weapons that became the foundation for his own army. In March, a new constitution was passed that confirmed the independence of the Chechen Republic; the following month, it was decreed that all Russian military units stationed on the republic’s territory “must be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Chechen Republic.” In June, all of these troops were removed hastily from Chechnya under pressure from the local population, leaving 80 percent of their heavy armaments and 75 percent of their smaller arms.\textsuperscript{11} Previously, during fall 1991, the local police and KGB organs were disbanded and reconstituted as part of Dudaev’s network of security personnel. In other words, only six months after

\textsuperscript{11} Izvestiya, January 12, 1995.
Dudaev's political ascendancy, Russia had little political or military leverage with which to affect the situation in Chechnya. Thus, the Russian leadership faced a dilemma: it either had to take decisive actions to "suppress the revolt," or to ignore the events that were transpiring in Chechnya in the hopes that the revolutionary fervor would dissipate and that Dudaev or his successors could be persuaded to re-subordinate the republic to the governing authority of the Russian Federation.

Until fall 1994, the Kremlin opted for the second approach—a peaceful-temporizing strategy. It did so for several different reasons. First, a basic tenet of the democratic movement included the decisive rejection of military solutions to ethnic conflicts. The vast majority of democrats in Moscow were convinced that the "Chechen problem" was an ethnic issue. Several shrewd politicians from the democratic camp (such as Travkin) tried to distinguish between good and bad elements, drawing attention to the fact that long-standing political intrigues lay at the root of the "national-liberation movement" in the Russian republics (as in the majority of the other CIS countries). These attempts, however, were considered by intellectuals in Moscow to be a practical betrayal of democratic ideals, and symbolic of a renegade shift toward imperial, nationalistic, patriotism. The facts show that the social base of Dudaev's regime consisted mostly of a marginal strata of society that were looking for social revenge via revolution; and that all of the respected and responsible individuals were removed from the ruling structure of the Chechen regime and were replaced by real criminals. By spring 1993, the internal political struggle in Grozny forced the dissolution of all elected bodies and the suppression of the political opposition. However, these facts were either simply ignored by those in Moscow that supported the "Chechen national revolution," or were justified in a patronizing manner as the "drawbacks of growth" and the reflection of a "Caucasian peculiarity."

Second, following Dudaev's election in November 1991, any Russian military attempt to intervene in Chechnya could no longer be limited to a mere police action, and was certain to lead to heavy casualties. The only window of opportunity to carry out a decisive action to disarm Dudaev's national guard occurred in September 1991. At this time, there was an upswell of popular dismay over the criminal behavior of Dudaev's entourage. At that time, however, nobody in the Yeltsin camp was thinking about how to counteract Dudaev—partly because they had other business to attend to (such as the

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12 For a more detailed discussion of the reasons for the "temporizing-peaceful" disposition of the Russian leadership with regard to the Chechen problem, see E. Payin, A. Popov, Ibid., pp. 20–23.
liquidation of Gorbachev's governmental structures), and partly because they hoped that Dudaev would be a reliable ally in their anti-imperial (and therefore, supposedly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet) struggle. They understood this error too late, as demonstrated by the unsuccessful November attempt to impose a "state of emergency" in Chechnya.

Third, prior to summer 1994, the Russian leaders relied on the possibility that Chechnya would peacefully adopt a more pragmatic policy. They were apparently waiting for the blatant failures of Dudaev's adventurist economic, social, and diplomatic policies to discredit his regime in the eyes of the Chechen people. The leadership in Moscow hoped that at that point the implacable "General-President" would be removed by a domestic opponent that would be more inclined to compromise with Moscow. Since the Kremlin did not want to increase Dudaev's authority or his popular legitimacy, the Russian government opted not to negotiate with Dudaev directly, but with other influential persons (including his rivals) within the Chechen leadership. It should be noted that this was hardly a well thought out or consistent strategy. Nevertheless, there was someone in the government who could form such a strategy and present it to "the top." This was Sergei Shakrai, chairman of the Russian State Committee on Ethnic Policy, who was an ardent proponent of isolating Dudaev and delegitimizing his domestic political standing.

As we now know, in February 1994, Shakrai personally inserted a section into the Annual Presidential Address to the Russian Parliament that stressed directly the illegitimate nature of the existing governing bodies in Chechnya and demanded free elections and the initiation of negotiations that left no space for Chechnya's independence. Subsequently, at Shakrai's behest, a virulent anti-Dudaev formulation calling for a diversified policy, premised on consultations with all Chechen political groups, including the opposition, was included as part of a special resolution of the State Duma that was passed in March 1994.15

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13 Later on (during summer 1994), Dudaev himself demonstrated the naivete of these hopes. He invited a delegation of the "communist-patriotic" Russian National Council, headed by the former KGB General Alexander Sterligov, to Grozny to discuss a proposal to hold in Grozny the meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, under the chairmanship of Mikhail Gorbachev and Anatoly Lukyanov, to denounce the Belovezsky Treaty and to recreate the USSR. Obviously, this utopian and absurd idea was doomed from the start. But one can suggest that it caused more than just a burst of indignation in the Kremlin; it might have become the "last straw" for Yeltsin that motivated him to get rid of the Chechen "anti-imperialist champion" at any cost.

14 The address of the Russian President to the Federal Assembly, "On the Strengthening of the Russian State (the Main Directions of the Domestic and International Policy)," Moscow, 1994, p. 44.

Despite Shakrai's efforts, Russian policy toward Chechnya did not officially change until the beginning of 1994. Supporters of alternative approaches to the Chechen problem, including a military option, were also present at the senior echelons of the Russian leadership. The events of fall 1992, including the threat of confrontation between Russian and Chechen armies at the Chechen-Ingushetian border, revealed indirectly that not only Vice President Rus'koi but also high-ranking military officials were among the supporters of a military solution. While there were no influential advocates in either the Russian government or Parliament of granting Chechnya official independence, a number of senior officials were interested in preserving the status quo in the "quasi-separated," crime-ridden, Chechen Republic—a status quo which made it possible for them to make fortunes through bank fraud and illegal oil and arms deals.

With the strategy of excluding Dudaev from the process of negotiations in abeyance, negotiations between Russian and Chechen representatives (including those that were sanctioned initially by Dudaev) produced only deadlock. At the first attempt at negotiations during the spring of 1992, for example, the Chechen delegation, headed by one of Dudaev's minions, refused to discuss anything other than a prospective interstate treaty. It was only after more influential Chechen politicians, and those less dependent on Dudaev, such as Yaraghi Mamodaev (the de facto head of the government at the time) and Yusup Soslambekev (who was both the de facto leader of the Parliament and the head of the militarized Confederation of the Caucasian Peoples), began to participate in the negotiations that some progress was finally achieved.

In December 1992, with the participation of the above-mentioned politicians, the two sides successfully drafted the "Treaty on the Separation of Power and Authorities Between the State Governing Bodies of the Russian Federation and the Governing Bodies of the Chechen Republic." Dudaev, however, immediately repudiated all of the arrangements and dismissed the negotiations as a "private initiative." In January 1993, under Dudaev's pressure, the NCCP announced that the draft of the treaty "did not comply with the letter or spirit" of the documents that affirm the principle of state independence of the Chechen Republic. When the Russian delegation, headed by Shakrai and Abdulatipov, subsequently arrived in Grozny to meet the leadership of the Parliament of the Chechen Republic, they were rebuffed by Dudaev's guards.

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A May 1993 attempt to resume negotiations with the participation of Chairman of the Chechen Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security General Ibragim Suleimenov (one of the founders of the "National Guard" in Chechnya) was equally unproductive. Dudaev again interrupted these promising talks, accusing the Chechen Parliament of causing "the complete failure" of the negotiations. At this time, tensions between the Chechen president and Parliament reached a climax, with the armed forces taking the initiative to dissolve the Chechen legislature at the beginning of June. Eventually, all of the above mentioned Chechen politicians—Mamodaev, Soslambekov, and Suleymanov—turned against Dudaev and joined the opposition. After the opposition rally in Grozny was dispersed by force, all of the remaining prominent members of the opposition were driven out of Chechnya and were subsequently deprived of "the right to live on sacred Chechen territory." Hence, by the middle of 1993, there appeared to be nobody in Chechnya with whom the Russian government could conduct serious negotiations so long as he was unwilling to accept Dudyayev's demand that he agree in advance to officially recognize Chechnya's independence.

Nevertheless, in April 1994, Yeltsin instructed the government to open new negotiations, and the Russian government began forming a delegation headed by Shakrai. This development, in turn, coincided with the unexpected appearance of a new player on the Chechen political scene, the Provisional Council of the Chechen Republic, headed by Umar Avturkhano, the former mayor of Nadtercheny region, which had remained loyal to federal authorities, had never obeyed Dudaev, and had sheltered the leading opposition movements that had been driven out of Grozny.

Naturally, the Kremlin welcomed this turn of events, especially after the oppositionist Peoples' Congress of the Chechen Republic acknowledged the Provisional Council as "the highest governing body in the Chechen Republic," while demanding Dudaev's resignation, calling for new elections to the Chechen Parliament, and promising the citizens of the republic a "return to a time when the Chechen people were part of multi-ethnic Russia." However, it is not only incorrect but also naive to maintain that this union of anti-Dudaev opposition forces was merely a creation of the Russian security services, as it is often

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20 Everyone who accused Yeltsin and other Russian leaders of preferring contacts with the leaders of the Chechen Parliament to the direct negotiations with Dudaev needs to know that, according to the Constitution of the Chechen Republic (Part 3, Article 62), the issues of "determining domestic and international policy of the Chechen Republic" and its "state system" are the exclusive responsibility of the Parliament, not the President (the Constitution of the Chechen Republic, Grozny: 1992).
asserted by critics of the Kremlin’s policy toward Chechnya. These same security services were nowhere to be found during the first three years of the Chechen revolution, and they were powerless to contain the upswell of ethno-political sentiment in the Caucasus. One of Dudaev’s first actions immediately upon taking power was the dismantling of the KGB organizational structures that were previously active in Chechnya. In the aftermath, the Russian Special Security Services could never create in Chechnya a full or complete network of agents. At the same time, it is possible that Dudaev managed to co-opt some former KGB agents, and through them gained access to Moscow’s plans.\textsuperscript{21} Even though it is possible to imagine the existence of some sort of “patronage” network between Russian security services and criminals, such as Labazanov and Gantemirov, it is hard to imagine that such an independent, successful politician as academician Salambek Khadzhev would be a KGB agent. Equally unbelievable is the suggestion that Ruslan Khasbulatov, who by 1993 emerged as one of the staunchest opponents of Yeltsin, was a year later creating his anti-Dudaev movement at the behest of the Russian Special Security Services. Dudaev personally created the opposition through his own efforts. On the other hand, acting upon a request by the political leadership in Moscow, the Russian Secret Services tried to exploit a certain part of the opposition, but as we know now, they were quite inept and ineffective in doing so.

Although the formation of the Provisional Council opened a potentially promising new negotiating track for the Russian government, it soon became clear that negotiations were at best a second-order priority for some Russian officials. While it is difficult to pinpoint the timing and individuals responsible for the massive covert arming of the anti-Dudaev opposition, the idea was familiar, since during 1992 alone it had been successfully tried in the Caucasus on two occasions. All of the details of the overthrow of Presidents Gamsakhurdia (in Georgia) and Elchibe (in Azerbaijan) were known to the Russian Secret Services so well that it is doubtful that they would have looked for outside expertise in formulating scenarios to overthrow Dudaev. In any case, there are no grounds to suggest, as have a number of Russian authors and politicians, that the idea to oust Dudaev was first suggested in 1994 by the President’s Analytical Center. As employees of this center, the authors of this chapter prepared a report in early September 1994 entitled “On the Political Situation in the Chechen Republic.” This report outlined a number of proposals for resolving the Chechen crisis. Among other points, it drew the attention of the leadership to the necessity for clearly defining its position toward those legitimate local authorities that remained loyal to the Russian Federation in the Nadterechny region.

\textsuperscript{21} See also, Izvestiya, February 7, 1995.
However, this report explicitly cautioned against providing the latter with military assistance. Taking advantage of the fact that the three years of “revolution” in Dudaev-controlled territories had devastated the public infrastructure (social services, public health care system, education, pensions, law enforcement), the report recommended the immediate reconstruction, without making any reference to Dudaev’s status, of the social infrastructure in those regions whose authorities and populations openly declared themselves to be part of the Russian Federation. After one year, when Dudaev’s tenure elapsed, the citizens of the republic could have made a rational choice as to which regime they preferred. This proposal, however, was not considered by the senior Russian political leadership at the time.22

The extension of federal patronage to Dudaev’s local opposition would have required adequate protection from his attempts to use force against it, as had been the case numerous time before. Yet there was absolutely nothing in the Analytical Center’s proposals that called for turning the Nadterechny region into a staging point for an assault on Grozny. Together with a number of other experts, members of the Analytical Center stressed repeatedly that even the slightest threat of Russian military intervention would embolden Dudaev and demoralize the opposition. This, in fact, is exactly what occurred both in November 1991, when a “state of emergency” decree was issued, and in 1992, when Russian tanks appeared at the Chechen border during the suppression of the Ingushetian-Ossetian riots.

Another argument in support of strictly aiding the political opposition was the fact that only a diplomatic approach could hope to neutralize the influence of the so-called “armed opposition,” consisting of former Dudaev henchmen who had quarreled with the president and subsequently became independent warlords. The bloody clashes of summer 1994 between these “opposition” leaders and Dudaev’s forces pushed Chechnya to the brink of civil war, with death tolls climbing into the hundreds.23 Given the mounting tension with the Cossacks, it became clear that it was going to be impossible to prevent the region from exploding merely by tough rhetoric, such as Moscow’s July 29 announcement on the “possibility of drastic measures . . . ” in response to acts of violence committed against Russian citizens. Thus, by fall 1994, the situation permitted neither military intervention nor the continuation of a passive policy toward Dudaev’s regime.

23 The Chechen opposition leaders themselves drew attention to this.
While the Russian leadership was quick to appreciate the latter, it failed to grasp the former. The relative successes of the Labazanov and Gantemirov armed formations (including the latter’s capture of the Grozny airport for a period of time in early October and issuance of an ultimatum to Dudaev) created a false impression of Dudaev’s weakness and, consequently, of the possibility of his removal by an armed opposition. Meanwhile, Yeltsin’s main political enemy at the time, former-Speaker of the Russian Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov, was busy forming his own militia. Khasbulatov had recently returned to Chechnya and offered his services as a unifying force for the domestic opposition. He was the only leader in Chechnya whose popularity among the people was on par with that enjoyed by Dudaev.

Perhaps it was the threat of strengthening Khasbulatov’s position that made the Kremlin decide to strengthen significantly the position of Avturkhanoz (and Khadziev, who had joined the latter in early fall) in the opposition alliance. In any event, the Russian government began to provide covert military support, thereby ensuring that the acclaim for expected future military victory over Dudaev, and, consequently, power in Grozny, would not fall into the hands of a hostile Khasbulatov or an unpredictable Gantemirov but, rather, into the hands of “our people.” Moreover, in an attempt to upgrade the effectiveness of local opposition forces, the Russian leadership approved the delivery of Russian tanks and combat personnel to the region.

The November 26 operation, which was planned and organized by the Russian Federal Security Services, was a total fiasco. Russian tanks on the streets of Grozny were separated from supporting infantry and fell easy prey to Chechen grenade launchers, and crews were either destroyed or taken prisoner (60 people). The facts surfaced immediately and became the subject of sharp criticism in the Russian Parliament and media. Journalists and deputies were incensed by the performance of the heads of the Russian Federal Security Services and the Ministry of Defense, who feigned ignorance of the operation (Defense Minister Grachev, for instance, had initially stated that he “knew nothing” of the participation of Russian military personnel in the storming of Grozny). Only later, when the names of those killed in action or taken prisoner (who were released after the Parliament Deputies’ trip to Grozny) were published, did the power ministers “confess” to complicity in the decision.

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24 Suggestions that the operation of arming the opposition and organizing the November armored march on Grozny was organized by the army, rather than the security services, became irrelevant to anyone who had observed the condescending smile on the face of Defense Minister Grachev on Russian television when he responded to the failure of the operation by saying that had the army been in charge, the task would have been solved by “one airborne regiment in two hours.” Yet it is also clear that Grachev had had to sanction the transfer of army equipment to the opposition.
Nevertheless, the specific roles played by the different agencies and officials in this affair remain unclear.

The Chechen War: How the Decision Was Made

On November 29, 1994, three days after the failed tank assault on Grozny, a closed meeting of the Russian Security Council allegedly made the fateful decision to send federal troops into Chechnya. Right after this meeting, President Yeltsin gave a speech in which he demanded that both sides in the conflict (i.e., Dudaev and the opposition) reach a cease-fire, release prisoners of war, and disband armed formation within two days. There is no doubt that Kremlin politicians knew that Dudaev would reject this ultimatum. This suggests that the Russian leadership at that time was ready to respond to the Chechen leader’s presumed rejection by dispatching the Russian army.

What explains this volte face in Russian policy? Why was it that in fall 1994 Russian authorities suddenly decided to go ahead with this extraordinarily risky military expedition, despite the fact that for the preceding three years Moscow countenanced making large concessions to the Chechen Republic and other nationally assertive regions? The most common presumption among Western political scientists is that the Russian leadership started the war in Chechnya to secure the construction and operation of the Caspian Sea pipeline across Chechnya. This explanation, however, is problematic. First, there was no pressing need to “pacify” the Chechen section of the Baku-Stavropol pipeline. At the outbreak of hostilities, the pipeline’s bypass section that cut across Northern Dagestan was already in place. Second, it is common knowledge that senior government officials, who represented the interests of the Russian oil and gas industry, actively protested against the war and were the original proponents of negotiations.

A more likely explanation of the decision to invade has to do with Yeltsin’s belief that “a small and triumphant war” would improve his prospects for reelection, despite the predictable outrage that a resort to force would induce in certain quarters. By early 1994, the “love affair” between the president and liberal public opinion had entered the phase of “forced cohabitation.” On the one hand, the president had increasingly allied himself with “state-builders” (gosudarstveniki) and allowed their nationalist attitudes to influence his rhetoric and political practices. At the same time, many liberals also felt that they could do without Yeltsin and could, in fact, fare better by criticizing him and blaming the Kremlin. Indeed, it appeared as though the political forces that had supported the president for three years began to seek a cause to break ranks with him,
especially as more and more influential members of the president’s own entourage defected and launched political movements with slogans that characterized Yeltsin’s leadership as a “dominion ship” bent on seizing “total power.” The question remains, however, why Yeltsin expected that military intervention in Chechnya would result in a quick and easy victory.

The fact that all major decisions connected with Russia’s military actions in Chechnya were made by the Russian Security Council necessitates a thorough examination of its decision-making role. First, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Security Council, despite its important appearance, is not an independent decision-making organ. All decisions by the Security Council acquire executive standing only after the president, who is simultaneously the chairman of the Security Council, signs an appropriate decree. From both a legal and practical standpoint, the Security Council is an advisory body to the president. If the Security Council adopts a certain decision, it only means that the chairman of the Security Council has signed the document (the signatures of other members do not matter in practice) and that the chairman, this time in the capacity of president, intends to translate this decision into a formal decree (ukaz), although nothing obliges him to do so.25 Therefore, the proper question is not how the Security Council reached its “decision” but what its various members, beginning with the “power ministers” advised President Yeltsin and whose advice he heeded. Since the Security Council’s proceedings were conducted behind tightly closed doors, however, this is an almost impossible question to answer.

The extreme difficulties encountered by the first Russian combat troops sent into Chechnya suggest that the decision to launch the “Chechen campaign” was not formulated within the Ministry of Defense. The unusually sharp criticisms that were expressed shortly after the outbreak of hostilities by Deputy Defense Ministers Gromov and Kondratiev affirms this conclusion.26 This also indicates that this policy option most likely had not even been discussed at the Defense Ministry’s Collegium. Many observers and military experts maintain that the campaign was hastily and poorly prepared, and that the only possible

25 Furthermore, the dialectic of the Russian political system creates yet another bizarre twist: the votes of the Security Council members are divided into “decisive” and “advisory” categories. The former belongs to the President (who is also the Security Council Chairman), Security Council Secretary, Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Federation Council, and the Speaker of the State Duma. Yet to the question: “What happens if the vote of the Chairman is in the minority among the five decisive votes?” the staff of the Security Council smile and say, “this never happens.”

26 This disagreement later cost them their jobs.
explanation for this is the fact that it had been planned behind the back of the "High Command" and was presented to them as a fait accompli.\textsuperscript{27}

It is unlikely that the impetus for a military invasion originated from the Federal Security Service (FSB), if only because agencies do not usually come up with new risky proposals three days after the failure of a previous recommendation. Moreover, the proposal to begin the military operation in Chechnya immediately came as a surprise to Sergei Stepashin, the director of the FSB.

Only one person could suggest such drastic policy options—the president. Those who prepared the plan for him (quite possibly on his order) did not: necessarily have to participate in the Security Council meeting. They also did not have to be experts on inter-ethnic relations or military issues. All that was required was that they belong to the president’s inner circle, in which Chief of the President’s Security Service General Alexander Korzhakov was the dominant figure.

According to a number of press reports, Korzhakov had reportedly created his own analytical center to explore possible options for resolving the Chechen problem "by force"\textsuperscript{28} and had been a prime mover behind the appointment of the extremely "hawkish" former governor of the Krasnodar region, Nikolai Yegorov, as Russian Minister of Nationalities and Deputy Prime Minister, in place of the considerably more "doveish" Sergei Shakhrai.\textsuperscript{29}

Whatever the confusion and mystery surrounding the decision to invade Chechnya, it is possible to discern one very important underlying trend—the absence not only of a system for making key decisions on vital matters of

\textsuperscript{27} That some of the troops began to arrive at military bases in North Ossetia in late November does not imply that there was a coherent operational plan of military action. The troops could have been deployed, for instance, to blockade the Chechen border, coerce a "favorable negotiating background" (as described by a number of Yeltsin's advisors at the time), or sent in as a last resort.


\textsuperscript{29} From this vantage point, everything seems to be straightforward—a new course required different policymakers. Yet, in June 1995, in an interview granted to a Moscow newspaper, State Duma Representative Valery Borshch told the following story. Upon his return to the city of Budyonnovsk, where Shamil Basiev's infamous terrorist act had been committed a few days earlier, he met with President Yeltsin to inform him of the details of the tragedy. Sergei Shakhrai was present, and as he tried to interject a point in the conversation, Yeltsin allegedly "cut him off abruptly and reminded him that he, Shakhrai, was one of the initiators of the war in Chechnya." (Vechernye Moskva, July 10, 1995.) It is difficult to interpret the subtlety to this exchange. There is no reason to doubt Borshch's integrity or motivations. Moreover, the thought that the president could have confused one of his closest, long-time advisors with someone else is absurd. But if Shakhrai indeed was one of the initiators of the war, then what was the point of replacing him with Yegorov? Or maybe the "Yegorov Plan" (or "Stepashin-Yegorov Plan") did not go beyond the arming of the opposition and organizing the November march on Grozny; and when the storming of the city failed suddenly and miserably, there was again a need to "summon Shakhrai" to restore the status quo ante. Yegorov, in an effort to restore his own credibility, then offered (or, more likely, actively supported and developed) the new policy: to crack down on Chechnya with the full force of Russia’s military might.
national security, but the lack of an established political tradition of civilized and
democratic interaction between high-ranking policymakers. There is no code of
conduct or established set of norms (formal or informal) to discipline risky
"improvisation" on the part of the leadership and incompetent bureaucraticism
on the part of government functionaries. Under these circumstances, intuition
and improvisation dominated the decision-making process. These methods
worked well in the stormy days of the struggle of 1991, especially during the
critical days of the August revolution, when the charismatic leader of the Russian
democrats battled the Communist party's nomenklatura. In a political situation,
which was gradually stabilizing but simultaneously becoming increasingly
complex, however, these methods began to produce significant failures.

Meanwhile, it turned out that there was no political force in Russia capable of
effectively challenging the plans of the Kremlin. Dissenters from the decision to
start the war, like former-Minister of Justice Yuri Kalmykov, simply had to
resign. Sensible voices of doubt (that included Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev
and Chief of Foreign Intelligence Service Yevgeny Primakov) were lost in the
chorus of obsequious approval, while the leaders of the Ministries of Defense and
Interior, as well as the director of the FSB, after overcoming their own initial
reservations, blindly endorsed the policy and began to convince everyone who
had doubts that their units would be capable of suppressing Dudaev in the
shortest period of time.\footnote{According to the human rights activist Sergei Kovalyov, Foreign Minister Kozyrev later
admitted in conversation that "the military people convinced us in the Security Council meeting that
it was going to be almost a "bloodless Krieg" that would not last any longer than December 20. In
return they demanded carte blanche from the civilian leadership, and everything said and done
afterwards was aimed at making their task as easy as possible.}

In late December 1994, in a desperate attempt to prevent the impending attack on
Grozny, a number of advisors from the Presidential Analytical Center and the
Presidential Staff managed to contact Yeltsin and advise him to halt troop
movements on the outskirts of Grozny and establish direct contact with Dudaev.
That same week, eight members of the President's Council, one of the authors
among them, turned to the president with a request to convene an emergency
session of the Presidential Council in order to analyze the situation and prevent
the escalation of the crisis. This appeal, however, fell on deaf ears.

Finally, on December 27, the members of the Presidential Analytical Council (not
to be confused with the Presidential Council or Security Council), having
analyzed the report by Security Council Secretary O. Lobov, and having become
convinced of the complete inability of the latter to answer any basic questions,
unanimously expressed doubts about the impending plan for "liberating
Grozny.” The only reaction to this meeting was, perhaps, Yeltsin’s remark in a conversation with the prime minister about the need to “listen to the experts more.” Yet, in reality, he felt no need for any expert opinions, and blindly relied upon the assurances of his military commanders who promised a quick and decisive victory.

Much has been written on the storming of Grozny and the enormous losses that were incurred by the Chechen population and the Russian soldiers due to the incompetence and helplessness of their commander. It is important for us to notice how the logic of “improvisation” led President Yeltsin to unwillingly, but logically, become a hostage to the irresponsible actions of his subordinates. A typical example of this situation was the deliberately cynical refusal on the part of the military to follow Yeltsin’s orders to stop the bombing of towns and villages. Numerous witnesses, including many military experts, attest to the fact that, despite Grachev’s assurances at the end of December that the Russians were only flying reconnaissance missions, the bombings continued in full force.31

The problem of policy implementation by freelancing political and military bureaucrats is a separate topic. Everything that became public about the behavior of the Russian army, which was sent to Chechnya “to restore constitutional order,” reflects not only a very low level of professionalism and moral standards of the people who had organized and implemented this action, but also points to the ignorance and disorientation of the political leaders who trusted them. These leaders displayed an almost complete inability to listen to the critical opinion of the public and press that received the news of “the new Afghanistan” with little optimism. In other words, all of the flaws of the existing practice of decisionmaking and policy implementation in Russia were revealed during the Chechen war.

Conclusion

President Yeltsin and the government of Russia turned out to be ill-suited to manage the crisis in Chechnya. The society as a whole, including its representatives in Parliament, were also not “up to the task.” Even after the president, in December, asked the Duma to get involved in the process of pacifying Chechnya, the deputies preferred to resort to acrimonious exchanges, caring above all about their reputations and prospects for re-election. “Calls for

negotiations were half-hearted—neither chamber ever defined its position on key issues such as who should negotiate with whom, on what conditions or without conditions; whether to cease hostilities and when—immediately or after the disarmament of the Chechen side.\textsuperscript{32} The first resolution on the Chechen issue was adopted by the Federation Council on December 8—at a point when everything was already clear to everyone—and merely advised the president to “take constitutional measures to normalize the situation in the Chechen Republic in order to “secure the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation,” while “avoiding the use of force on the territory of the Chechen Republic until the decision in that regard is made by the competent bodies according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation.”\textsuperscript{33} Even if the president wanted to follow the recommendations of the legislators, what could he possibly get from such ambivalent advice?

The confession by Foreign Minister Kozyrev, made public by Sergei Kovalyov, that “we all know that we messed up in Chechnya—not only I understand this, the President understands this now,” fairly accurately reflects the atmosphere of depression and confusion that pervaded the highest levels of government during the first months of 1995. “But, if we admit the mistake, it means that someone has to be responsible for it. Then the President will head the guilty list, and no one will reelect him, and then Zhirinovsky will come,”\textsuperscript{34} complained the head of Russian diplomacy. Such logic reveals the Russian leadership’s propensity to justify its behavior as it became increasingly mired in the bloody war in Chechnya.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Izvestiya}, February 10, 1995.


\textsuperscript{34} Transcript of the plenary session of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, July 13, 1995 (handwritten version).
3. Tadjikistan

*by Arkady Yu. Dubnov*

Introduction

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence by the former Soviet republics, Tadjikistan acquired national sovereignty for the time in history. Inexperience, in conjunction with a particular clan-oriented, regional-based, political culture established the foundation for the prolonged conflict that ensued in post-Soviet Tadjikistan. The intensity of this conflict has been further fueled by the ethnic and historical externalities of the unresolved political situation in Afghanistan.

Today, Russia's interests in Tadjikistan center around preserving its economic and geopolitical position in Central Asia. These interests, however, conflict with those of the newly independent states in the region which are focused on preventing Tadjikistan from becoming a "Russian protectorate." Not only the countries bordering this region, but others as well, seek to exploit this contradiction for their own interests. In this respect, resolution of the civil war in Tadjikistan is part of the broader problems of reconstituting global spheres of influence and establishing a "new world order" in the wake of the Soviet collapse.

In addition to the seemingly obvious military, strategic, and geopolitical factors, there are critical economic issues that underlie Russia's interests in retaining Tadjikistan within its sphere of influence. Tadjikistan is a mountainous country, rich in fuel and mineral deposits. Tadjikistan's potential to generate hydroelectric power is second only to Russia among CIS member states. Moreover, not so long ago, Tadjikistan was Moscow's main supplier of aluminum, titanio oxidant and vanadium catalysts, bismuth, animony and barium, as well as cotton. Finally, the country has the resources and infrastructure to become a major industrial power in the region.

The Kremlin's posture toward the civil war in Tadjikistan, which began prior to perestroika, has been one of gradual military intervention. This process has

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evolved in three phases. First, there was the stage of “latent intervention” (February 1990–May 1992), as Russia’s involvement in the political struggle in Dushanbe was carried out indirectly through regional party organs and special services that were becoming increasingly independent from the central government in Moscow. The second phase of “impulsive-spontaneous involvement” (May 1992–August 1993), was characterized by the gradual involvement in the civil war of Russian troops stationed in Tadjikistan. Finally, there was the phase of “active engagement” (from August 1993 until the present), marked by Russia’s concerted, though uncoordinated, attempts to establish a political and military presence in Tadjikistan.

The ideological and political foundations for Russia’s involvement in the crisis in Tadjikistan were weakly rooted at each stage. Many of Moscow’s critical decisions in the course of the development of events in Tadjikistan were made, it appears, out of conflicting and ambiguous considerations. Moreover, the process of decisionmaking in Moscow has been thoroughly concealed from the public. As a consequence, it is extremely difficult to discern the basic political motivations and objectives for “Moscow’s policy toward Tadjikistan.”

The Path To Military Intervention: February 1990-May 1992

The Beginning Of the “Tadjikistan Disturbance (‘Smuta’)”: The Communists In Moscow and Dushanbe Unite

The origins of the conflict in Tadjikistan lie in the stormy events of February 11–12, 1990, when mass demonstrations and major political upheavals racked the republic. These events were the by-product of the Soviet government’s campaign to prevent the political ascendance of anti-Communist and national-democratic opposition groups in the republics of the USSR. Regional Soviet political leaders, in efforts to shore up their own local positions, exploited this intervention by the central government to alter the political landscape in Tadjikistan, thereby fueling local instability.

One such manipulation concerned rumors of an influx of Armenian refugees into Tadjikistan. It is well-known that in January 1990 a wave of pogroms took place in Baku (the capital of Azerbaijan). Following these events, Soviet troops were dispatched to Baku. Rumors circulated that the Armenian refugees would receive apartments in Dushanbe that were previously allocated for the local Tadik residents by the state. A spontaneous demonstration took place near the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Tadjik Communist Party
demanding an official clarification of the issue. The government, however, assumed a belligerent posture and fired upon the demonstrators, killing three Russian-speaking residents.

That same day, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Tadzik Communist Party Kahar Makhamov (after reporting to Moscow on the situation on the ground), received permission to declare a “state of emergency” in Dushanbe. According to Abdullo Habibov, a retired major in the Tadzik KGB, tanks of the Soviet 201st division (stationed in Dushanbe) were brought into the streets of the city. During the following 24 hours, reinforcements, consisting of several airborne units, arrived from other divisions stationed in Russia. Shortly thereafter, shooting broke out across the city killing 26 people and wounding several hundred.¹

Amidst the chaos and looting that ensued in Dushanbe, Russian-speaking residents were singled out and beaten. Pogroms were carried out by youth gangs, led by the famous Dushanbe racketeer Yakub Salimov. Salimov, who was detained at the time, went on to become one of the “field commanders” of the pro-Communist National Front, and, following the party’s subsequent ascendance, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Tadzik Republic.

On February 12, Boris Pugo, chairman of the Party Control Committee of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, arrived in Dushanbe. (Later, Boris Pugo was appointed the Minister of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs). According to an eyewitness account,² Pugo essentially removed Makhamov from power and assumed personal control over managing the crisis in the city. The next day, Makhamov addressed the residents of the city, and in a speech in Russian, called upon them to form a “self-defense” force. This appeal was interpreted by the local Russians as a threat.

It can be argued that the rise of anti-Russian sentiments in the republic benefited the regional Communist government. The existence of such animosities and threats to the status quo would ensure Moscow’s support for the regional government in its struggle against the local opposition, which was blamed for inciting such tensions. The subsequent intervention by the Soviet government, however, altered this scenario as it became the actual basis for the anti-Russian sentiments that took root in a certain part of Tadzik society, thus undermining the legitimacy of those local political organs that allied with Moscow.

¹Nezavisimaya Gazeta, March 7, 1992.
²Ibid.
The commission, created by the Tadjik Supreme Soviet and chaired by the Transport Prosecutor Safarali Kendzhaev, was not able to attribute responsibility for the tragedy in Dushanbe. The most widely accepted interpretation of the events was that the “provocation” was initiated by Tadjikistan officials with the aid of the Soviet government in an attempt to undermine the growing opposition. This was the opinion, for example, of Buri Karimov, who was at that time the chairman of the republic’s Gosplan (State Planning Committee). At the request of the demonstrators, he became the head of the commission on the talks with the Tadjikistan leaders. In his book, The Victim of the Double Strike, Karimov cites evidence of KGB snipers firing on the demonstrators, and offers proof that “the February events were planned in detail in the depths of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and KGB.”

The elections to the Tadjik Supreme Soviet, which were held on February 24, only a few days after the riots in Dushanbe, indirectly revealed that the Tadjik government provoked the crisis in order to prevent the growing influence of the local opposition. By this time, the popular movement Rastokhiz (Revival) had gained considerable popularity among the people. During January and February, representatives of the movement constantly picketed the Central Committee of the Tadjik Communist Party, demanding that the party leadership repeal Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution (the article pertaining to the supreme role of the Communist Party in Soviet society). Immediately before the elections, the government-controlled regional press was replete with articles about the destructive role played by the opposition during the crisis in Dushanbe. As a result, 95 percent of the deputies elected were representatives of the Communist Party and economic nomenklatura.

The fact that those responsible for the February tragedy went unpunished alienated a significant portion of the Tadjik public from the republican government. This, in turn, fueled mounting radicalism among both Russian-speaking and native residents. The Russian population, in particular, perceived the crisis as a growing threat to their standing and livelihood in Tadjikistan. In fact, their emigration from Tadjikistan increased tremendously, as they “started to feel themselves here as people of an inferior sort.” Moreover, they referred to the draft of the new republican constitution, which started with the words: “We, the Tadjiks . . .,” and made no mention of dual citizenship or Russian as an official language, as evidence of this growing threat.

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"The Islamic Threat" As A Weapon In the Fight Against the Anti-Communist Opposition

The events of February 1990 intensified the antagonism between the republican government and the increasingly popular opposition movement. Tadjikistan was the only republic of Soviet Central Asia where Gorbachev's perestroika lead to the formation of mass socio-political organizations and parties. The largest of these groups were Rastokhez, comprised of members of the Tadjik intelligentsia; the Democratic Party of Tadjikistan (DPT), headed by Shodmon Yusuf and enjoying widespread support among the non-Tadjik peoples; and the Islamic Revival Party (IPV), which was popular in rural districts and had been operating as a covert organization for a long time prior to the events in Dushanbe under the leadership of Said Abdullo Nuri. The core membership of the latter party consisted of the so-called "unregistered priests," who had directed the party's independence from the All-Union Islamic Revival Party in 1990. The followers of Hodzhi Akbara, the kazikolon (spiritual leader) of the Tadjik Muslims at the time, also numbered among the Islamic groups of Tadjikistan that were active at the time.

A common thread among the various opposition party's was the pursuit of a democratic, progressive, and anti-Communist political agenda. This included demands for the annulment of the leading role of Communist Party in Tadjik society, freedom of action for parties and movements, freedom of press, freedom of conscience, return to the national values of Tadjik people, and establishment of Tadjik as an official language of the republic (together with Russian). For the most part, the anti-communism of the intelligentsia-democrats was purely secular, while that espoused by the Muslim groups carried religious overtones. This religious commitment, however, was rather moderate and the attempts to intensify it found little support among the opposition, even among the Muslims groups. Indeed, the kazikolon himself in the beginning protested the establishment of the Islamic Revival Party, believing that religious leaders should not be involved in politics (this later prompted Geidar Dzhemil', the leader of the All-Union IPV, to brand him as "the traitor of the mission of Islam."5) Yusuf, the leader of the DPT, declared in 1989, "I am disgusted that you unite the culture of my nation with Islam."6 In a similar vein, the future Tadjik presidential candidate from the democratic-Islamic opposition, Davlat Khudonazarov, said, "A lot of what Islam has brought into the national mentality

5 Den', No. 21, 1991.
of the people of Central Asia undoubtedly hinders our spiritual and social development."7

In short, it was anti-Communism and the yearning for democracy, not Islam, that united the Tadjik democrats and followers of Islam in opposition to the republican government. As a result, the Communist government in Tadjikistan, unlike the other republics in the Soviet Central Asia, faced the specter of a consolidated opposition that was gaining momentum and support in the local society. In response to this formidable threat to their control, officials in Dushanbe resorted to the tactic of hyping the "threat of Islamic fundamentalism." This proved sufficiently effective to arouse popular anxieties that, in turn prompted the Tadjikistan Supreme Soviet in 1990 to pass a resolution on "The Prohibition of the Activities of IPV on the Republic's Territory." As a result of this propaganda campaign, almost all of the Russian-speaking population (about 300,000 people) voted for the Communists in the Supreme Soviet elections of February 1990.

The government played the "anti-Islamic" card more blatantly in September 1991, in response to the prolonged demonstrations in Dushanbe that were conducted by the opposition. The demonstrations were directed against the return to power (after the brief anti-Communist euphoria that followed the failure of the Moscow putsch of the State Emergency Committee) of Communist sympathizers. Rumors circulated that the demonstrators were demanding the formation of an Islamic republic. These rumors were intended to turn the Russian population against the opposition, and consequently lay the foundation for an appropriate reaction from Moscow. In response, the opposition leaders issued statements to the contrary in Russian, while the kuzikolon of the republic explained on television that, "the creation of an Islamic republic goes against the democratic principles of the Tadjikistan development."8

In Moscow, the official attitude toward the "Islamic threat" was never publicly aired during 1990-1991. However, within the context of the prevailing norms in Soviet center-periphery relations, the silence conveyed Moscow's complete agreement with its "young Communist partners" in Tadjikistan. The only difference might have been that, unlike the officials in Dushanbe, who knew the actual nature of the "Islamic threat" in Tadjikistan, Moscow might have really believed in its existence.

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8 "With the Help of Allah and Democracy We Will Win," Nezavisimaya Gazeta, September 26, 1991.
Moscow's misperception of the "Islamic threat" is illustrated by an episode that centered on the comments made by Davlat Khudonazarov. As he later related to the author, the arrival in Tadikistan of certain analysts who were close to Gorbachev had serious consequences for Khudonazarov's presidential campaign in the fall of 1991. During one of the meetings with the leaders of Islamic-democratic opposition, Khudonazarov began to discuss, among other things, the right of Tadiks to freely practice their religion. He was interrupted by Turandzhonzoda who said: "Let us express the point of view of the believers ourselves." Based on this incident, Khudonazarov asserts that Gorbachev's advisers, who witnessed this exchange, reported to the Soviet president that the balance of power in the Tadikistan opposition had shifted. They suggested that "Khudonazarov was only a cover for the Muslims in Tadikistan, and if elected president, he [would] be quickly pushed aside and the real power would be transferred to the Islamic clergy." Reportedly (based on Khudonazarov's trusted source in the Kremlin), it was following this conversation that Gorbachev finally decided to back Rahmon Nabiev.

Clan Fighting As An Instrument For Restoring Communist Power and Distracting the Kremlin

The August 1991 putsch attempt sharply exacerbated affairs in Tadikistan. Specifically, the struggle for power between the USSR and the Russian leadership distracted and paralyzed Moscow's control over the course of events in the distant Central Asian republic.

The government of Tadikistan, which supported the State Emergency Committee in Moscow, was heavily criticized by the Islamic-democratic opposition. During the first days of the putsch, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tadikistan, Mahkamov, gave an interview to Pravda in which he expressed his unconditional support for the organizers of the State Emergency Committee. Khudonazarov got a hold of the recorded tape of this interview and used his connections with Gorbachev insiders to force Mahkamov's resignation in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt.

Kadriddin Aslonov, the Chairmen of the Supreme Soviet at the time, was elected Mahhamov's successor. One of Aslonov's first actions as leader was to sign an edict calling for the cessation of all activities of the Communist Party on the territory of Tadikistan and the nationalization of the party's property. The Congress of the Tadikistan Communist Party subsequently convened in the second half of September 1991 to announce the dissolution of the republican
Communist party. In an emotional outburst that reflected the anti-Soviet mood prevalent during the period, a local crowd gathered to dismantle the Lenin monument in the center of Dushanbe.

Although this state of affairs seemed to further the cause of democracy in Tadzhikistan, it gave rise to an unexpected factor that muddled the course of transition. Specifically, the vacuum of power that was left in the wake of the dissolution of the Communist party exacerbated regional-clan conflicts. This factor, while difficult for Moscow to comprehend, was all too familiar to Tadzhik society.

The regional clan tensions in Tadzhik society were clearly demonstrated following a March 1992 meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Tadzhikistan, broadcast live on Tadzhik television, at which Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Safarali Kendzhaev accused the head of the republican Ministry of Internal Affairs, Navdzhuvanov, of exploiting his position for personal gain. Kendzhaev specifically insulted Navdzhuvanov's Pamir heritage. In reaction, protests by Pamir clan members broke out in Dushanbe. These protests, in turn, precipitated a series of rallies in which the followers of the Democratic bloc supported the offended people of Pamir origin (these rallies lasted for almost a month and included more than 300,000 participants). The demonstrators demanded that Kendzhaev resign. They were subsequently joined by sympathizers in the city of Horog, located in the center of the Gorno-Badahshanskaya (Pamir) autonomous region.

To counter these rallies, the leaders of Kulyab pro-Communist movement organized an alternative demonstration in a different section of Dushanbe. At this rally the protesters used slogans such as "Long Live CPSU! (Communist Party of the Soviet Union)"; "Death to Islam"; "Death to Turadzhonzoda and to Yusuf"; etc. One of the prominent leaders of the Leninabad clan, Abdumalik Abdullodzhanov, offered considerable financial and organizational support to the Kulyab rally. Both Leninabad and Kulyab clans worried that their positions would be threatened by the success of the opposition Pamir and Garm regional clans.

The antagonism vented during the two sets of rallies led to chaos within the Tadzhik government, which struggled to comply with the mutually exclusive demands of the competing groups. In the end, President Nabiev formed a 'Presidential Battalion' comprised of the pro-Communist Kulyabs, and armed them with 1,700 machine-guns. These weapons were taken from the arsenal of
the 201st division, according to a Russian colonel in that division. The next day, a fierce skirmish erupted between the battalion and the supporters of the opposition. These events constituted the beginning of the civil war in Tadjikistan. Accordingly, they also marked the beginning of Russia’s military intervention into the civil strife in Tadjikistan. At first, this intervention was spontaneous, but over time Russian involvement became increasingly directed by Moscow.

The Army As A “Spontaneous Subject” Of Politics: May 1992–August 1993

A new state of affairs in Russian-Tadjik relations took shape in May 1992 and lasted until August 1993. This phase was characterized primarily by the fact that the decisions regarding the involvement of Russian troops in the inter-Tadjik conflict were made either by mid-level and junior military officers or via coordination between the Tadjik government and the local Russian commanders. According to the former commander of the 201st Russian Division, Vyacheslav Zabolotry and President Nabiev personally encouraged the intervention of the Russian military on several occasions.

The escalation of the Russian military’s involvement in the civil war in Tadjikistan was the result of several factors, including the extremely chaotic and inconsistent nature of the domestic political terrain in Tadjikistan, the inconsistencies of Moscow’s policies toward Tadjikistan and Central Asia in general, and the poor level of military discipline among the Russian units stationed in the republic. At times the Russian military became involved as “independent suppliers” of military forces, while on other occasions it acted as a “junior partner” of the Tashkent military-political machine, paying only lip-service to Moscow’s official policy of neutrality. It was only as the Russian government began to gradually clarify its political priorities in the region (i.e., at the end of August 1993) that it became increasingly obvious to Moscow that the Russian troops in Tadjikistan were one of the major sources of support for the pro-Communist (the People’s Front) movement.

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9 "The Address Of the Executive Director of Helsinki ‘Watch’ To the President of Russia,” November 1, 1993. Choroi Raz, No. 1, 1994.

10 ITAR-TASS, August 5, 1992.
The Spontaneous Involvement Of the Russian Army In the Conflict

As was the case with other post-Soviet republics of Central Asia, Tadjikistan did not have a political tradition of formal constitutionalism that guaranteed popular representation or interest group mediation. Consequently, violence, that was previously contained by authoritarian means of governance, became the main form of political struggle. Different popular groups that were traditionally divided along regional lines became both the victims and perpetrators of this violence.

With the absence of a powerful professional army, however, the instrument of violence became mostly criminal groups, united on the basis of regional “zemlyacheski” (fellow countrymen) ties. The conflict assumed the character of “us versus them”—or Leninabad residents attacking those of Garm, the Kulyab people attacking those of Pamir ancestry. At first, the regional clan leaders exploited these criminal organizations to gain control over certain industrial production facilities and political structures. Subsequently, however, the criminal authorities assumed the role of field commanders with increasingly independent control over the course of violence. Moreover, they were incorporated into governing structures that, in turn, became increasingly dependent on their military support.

The prominence of criminal leaders and groups was largely a result of the fact that Tadjikistan was virtually the only post-Soviet republic that did not immediately form a national army upon declaring independence. Mahkamov, who was the leader of the republic until September 1991, refused to create a Tadjik Ministry of Defense. Many believe he feared a resurgence of violent regional conflicts that risked embroiling Tadjikistan in a full-scale civil war.

For a long time, the Tadjik government relied exclusively on the Soviet federal government to maintain stability in the republic. This ensured that the republican leadership could maintain its position of power even in the face of acute internal instability, as was the case in February 1990. In the new situation that emerged in spring 1992, however, it was no longer possible to rely on Moscow. As a result, Nabiev created a militia that was responsible directly to him—the Presidential Battalion. It should be noted that, even after August 1991, he refused Moscow’s offer to place the 201st division (stationed in Tadjikistan) under his jurisdiction. Nabiev justified this refusal on the grounds that the republic lacked the financial resources needed to train and maintain the division. It is possible, however, that the pragmatic Communist leader rebuffed the
proposal out of concerns that he could not depend on the loyalty of the “foreign” army.

Meanwhile, the events of 1992-1992 evolved in such a way that the intervention of Russian troops became virtually inevitable. Moscow’s policy was neither well thought out nor consistent. On the one hand, Moscow could not devise a clear set of objectives or missions for its troops in the region; on the other hand, its was predisposed to keep the division in Tadjikistan. Consequently, the intervention that ultimately took shape was haphazard and woefully unorganized. The combat effectiveness of the Russian troops was severely degraded by the barbarian methods of fighting that were used by both sides of the Tadjik civil war. Nonetheless, Russian forces became increasingly involved.

The character of the leading figures in the clan-political conflict (that developed after May 1992) created an additional political barrier to a negotiated settlement of the crisis. For the most part, these leaders were criminals, such as Sangak Safarov, who had spent 23 years in prison and subsequently became the leader of the pro-Communist People’s Front that assumed the reins of power in November 1992;11 and Yakub Salimov, one of the leaders of Dushanbe racketeers, who became the Minister of Internal Affairs in President Emomalii Rahmonov’s government. Both Safarov and Salimov represented the Southern Kulyab clan.

It was not only the pro-Communist forces, however, that employed violence as a means for achieving political objectives. On April 20, 1992, supporters of the opposition seized the Supreme Soviet building in Dushanbe. They took several deputies and government officials hostage, and demanded the resignation of Speaker of the Parliament Safarali Kendzhaev. On May 5, they occupied the offices of the national television station and the Dushanbe airport. For the next three months, a senseless and bloody civil war engulfed the country. At the end of August, a “youth group” of opposition supporters burst into the presidential palace and took hostages, including three deputy prime ministers of the government. In the process, they killed the Deputy Chairmen of the Kulyab Regional Executive Committee (ispolkom). On September 7, the “Youth of Dushanbe” took Nabiev hostage at the Dushanbe airport and coerced his resignation. The first of the ten “youth” representatives, who acted as a witness to Nabiev’s resignation, was also a criminal—one of the local racket leaders.12

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11 Safarov’s “star” had originally ascended at the beginning of the civil war, when became one of the leaders of the “Presidential Battalion” that had fiercely dealt with those residents of the Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyubinsky regions, who migrated from other regions of Tadjikistan. These people were part of the hundreds of thousands of those people were forced to leave Tadjikistan to flee from the persecution of the People’s Front fighters. They constituted the Tadjik refugees that moved to Afghanistan and other republics of the CIS.

12 Nasoye Vremya.
Throughout this period, the Russian army actively took part in the crisis. Russian troops, for example, directly supported the actions of the People’s Front. By their own admission, Russian servicemen used their tanks and armored vehicles in the July 1992 clashes in the Kurgan-Tyube region. At the end of September 1992, Kulyab fighters seized the regional center of Kurgan-Tyube with the assistance of Russian tanks. (According to Vice President Iskandar, these [Russian] tanks were subsequently destroyed by Russian bombers.)

The obvious bias of the Russian servicemen stationed in Tadjikistan toward the People’s Front fighters can be explained primarily by ethno-psychological and ideological factors. The fact of the matter was that most of the junior officers of the Russian troops closely identified themselves with the Russian-speaking residents of Tadjikistan. The latter regarded the opposition’s drive to oust the government by force as a threat to their own existence. The Dushanbe government, which understood this very well, masterfully and successfully played the “Russian card” to its own advantage. Although, at times, it was assisted by the counter-productive acts committed by the opposition.

The atmosphere of the “anti-Russian hysteria” that imbued the conflict in Tadjikistan was manipulated by the pro-Communist Tadjik government as grounds for the imposition of a “state of emergency” in the republic. The spontaneous change in attitude among the indigenous population can only partially explain this intense anti-Russia mood. Rather, these sentiments were the product of calculated and politically-motivated propaganda campaigns that were employed by both the Tadjik government and the opposition movement.

The infamous statement by the DPT leader, Shodmon Yusuf, at a May 10, 1992 press conference inflamed the anti-Russian spirit in the republic. He warned specifically that “if the CIS troops continued to intervene in the inter-Tadjik conflict, the opposition would be unable to ensure the safety of the Russian-speaking population in the republic.” He also declared at that time that the leaders of the opposition were prepared to solicit assistance from Afghanistan and Iran.

Despite Yusuf’s apology the very next day, the damage was done. His statement was regarded by the Russian-speaking population as another threat against

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13 “The address of the executive director of Helsinki ‘watch’ to the President of Russia,” op. cit.
them, this time a direct one. They began to panic, causing a frenzied rush to leave the republic by all possible means of transportation.

Furthermore, Yusuf soon issued another set of ultimatums to the Russian population of Tadjikistan in which he declared explicitly that “Russia must get out of Tadjikistan!” thus supporting the accusations that the opposition encouraged the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

These accusations had a direct effect on the official position of the Russian leadership. Russian military leaders in particular (who were always more susceptible to such comments than the liberal-democrats of Yeltsin’s entourage at the time) became extremely sensitive to claims about the need to protect “Russian-speaking people.” These themes were also exploited by the Communist-patriotic camp in Moscow, as well as by the leaders of the People’s Front in Tadjikistan as a rallying point for their respective movements.

The dialogue that took place in fall 1992 between the deputy commander of the Russian ground forces, General Eduard Vorob’ev, and the leader of People’s Front, Sanhak Safarov, typifies the pejorative references to nationality in political discourse at the time. In response to Vorob’ev’s statement, “Just wait, Sangak, the bear will wake up soon,” Safarov retorted, “No, the bear is dead, but we, the bear cubs, will complete his project here and in Russia.” In the same address, Safarov openly declared that, “We broke the back of democracy in Tadjikistan and will drive this scum so far that it will never rise again, neither in Central Asia, nor in Russia.”

Thus, it was no accident that Soviet flags were hoisted on the “Sangak” and Russian tanks that were stolen from the 201st division and used to shoot at the “opposition” kishlaks (villages) and armed formations. As the ideological conflict between the “pro-Russian Communists” and the “anti-Russian Muslims” intensified, the Russian troops increasingly assisted those groups fighting under the slogans of rebuilding of the Soviet Union and suppressing “Islamic fundamentalism.”

The hardening attitudes of the Russian-speaking residents in Tadjikistan, who were rapidly becoming a direct party to the civil war, also escalated national antagonisms within the republic. In Kulyab, for example, the local Russians organized rallies urging President Yeltsin to supply them with the weapons necessary for “self-defense.” That these appeals fell on deaf ears in Moscow only

17 Novoye Vremya, No. 4, 1993.
fostered greater sympathy and support within the ranks of the Russian army units based in Tadjikistan for the cause of the regional pro-Communist forces.

In addition to these ideological motives, there was a "pragmatic" reason for the proliferation of Russian weapons in the conflict in Tadjikistan. In particular, there was a high rate of corruption and theft within the forward-based Russian army. There were many episodes involving illicit sales or theft of Russian armored vehicles, tanks, and equipment. Some Russian servicemen sold and rented military supplies directly to the guerrillas. One officer of the Kulyab regiment, for instance, cavalierly stated that, "I'll sell an armored vehicle and buy myself a home in Russia. I do need a place to live afterwards."

Such occurrences, of course, worried the Russian commanders. Despite this anxiety, however, there were essentially no measures adopted to stop them. As the deputy commander of the Russian ground forces, General Sokolov, told the author, the only measure taken to stem the deterioration of troop morale was to raise the wages of the Russian troops stationed in "hot spots." Defense Minister Grachev personally prepared a directive that called for increasing salaries and equating one year of service in the region to three years of peacetime service. Moreover, a decision was made to hire additional volunteer servicemen to perform duties in "hot spots" such as Tadjikistan.

The Russian leadership at the time avoided commenting officially on the situation in Tadjikistan. Only at the beginning of October 1992, following the Bishkek meeting of the leaders of the CIS states that dealt with Tadjik problem, did Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar arrive in Dushanbe to meet with representatives of the Tadjik government. In the course of these negotiations, he promised economic assistance to the coalition government in Dushanbe and the de facto cessation of Russian military involvement in the civil war in support of the People's Front.

Apparently, Gaidar's refusal to sanction the de facto alliance between Russian servicemen and the pro-Communist People's Front made the commanders of the 201st division hesitant about opposing the "Islamo-democrats." This became clear during the October 1992 putsch attempt by the People's Front.

On the night of October 24, about 150 People's Front guerrillas, led by former Speaker of the Tadjik Parliament, Kendzhaev, occupied the buildings of the government and the Parliament in Dushanbe. The national television studio and the Ministry of Communications, as well as the airport and train stations, however, remained protected by the 201st Russian division. The Russian military command insisted on preserving its neutrality and refused to submit to the demands of the guerrillas. A fierce firefight ensued between the putschists.
and the supporters of the coalition government, who succeeded in liberating the occupied buildings. Talks between Vice President Iskandarov and Kendzhaev were subsequently held in the garrison of the 201st division. The negotiations concluded with an agreement calling for the surrender of weapons by the attackers and their withdrawal from Dushanbe. Kendzhaev was personally driven out of Dushanbe in a Russian tank.18

The fact that the Russian army did not participate in the October putsch prompted Iskandarov to form the Tadjikistan State Soviet and make the commander of the 201st division, Muhitdin Ashurov, a member. For their part, the Communist opponents of the coalition government reacted by turning away from Moscow and looking to Tashkent for support.

Following the Lead Of Tashkent’s Politics

The uncertainty and inconsistencies that marred Moscow’s policy toward Tadjikistan in 1992 placed the Russian 201st division, which was by far the strongest armed force in the region, in the awkward position of taking actions that were, in essence, imposed by Tashkent. The influence of Uzbekistan on the situation in Tadjikistan following its attainment of independence should be regarded as one of the decisive factors in the crisis. The leaders of the Leninabad clan always took their lead from the political leadership in Uzbekistan. Naturally, Tashkent was satisfied with this state of affairs.

At this juncture, the policy pursued by Uzbek President Islam Karimov was in transition from its earlier endorsement of Rahmon Nabiev (as the leader of Leninabad clan) to one of military support for the leaders of the Kulyab clan, which, he hoped, would be more aggressive in dealing with the Islamo-democratic opposition in Tadjikistan. With the creation of the Government of National Reconciliation in Dushanbe in spring 1992, however, Uzbek President Karimov publicly lambasted President Nabiev for his “weakness” in allowing the

18 The author ascertained details about the preparations for the putsch from one of the senior executives of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as from other well-informed sources, that shed a different light on the role played by the Russian military in this incident. Before initiating the assault, Kendzhaev received assurances from the Russian Ambassador in Dushanbe, Melcheslav Senkevich, that once the putschists entered the city, the Russian troops would support them. (This explained the relatively small number of the attackers.) Senkevich, in a report sent to his supervisors in Moscow, solicited the Kremlin’s endorsement for the plan. One of the arguments Senkevich employed was that the Russian-speaking population of Tadjikistan was supposedly threatened by the “Islamo-democratic” opposition and needed protection. In Moscow, however, the Russian ambassador’s commitment to support Kendzhaev was rejected. The only message that arrived from the Ministry of Defense to Dushanbe was an order to the commander of the 201st division to protect vital assets in the Tadjik capital. As a result, the attempt of the People’s Front to topple the government via the ‘hands’ of the Russian military failed.
“Islamists” [Muslims] to become part of his Government. More importantly, at a meeting of the leaders of the CIS states that took place on May 15, 1992, in Tashkent, Karimov abandoned his former opposition to the formation of a CIS defense force in return for an agreement that called for the intervention of CIS combat troops in the Tadjik civil war. This agreement not only legitimized the presence of the Russian 201st division in Tadjikistan but also sanctioned Uzbek military intervention. When it had become clear (during the failed October putsch) that Russia was not yet willing to overtly support a Kulyab-dominated government, Tashkent decided that the time had come for it to pursue an independent track.

A session of the Tadjikistan Supreme Soviet was organized in November-December 1992 in Hudzhande, under the protection of the Uzbek army (including armored units). During this session decisions were made to allow the Kulyab clan to assume power in Tadjikistan. The session called for the dismissals of President Nabiev and Speaker of the Parliament Iskanderov, as well as for the appointment of Emomali Rahmonov, one of the field commanders of the People’s Front who was the former chairman of the Kulyab Regional Executive Committee, as the new head of state (Chairman of the Supreme Soviet).

Despite Rahmanov’s promise not to persecute the supporters of the opposition, a full-scale war was immediately initiated against them. This decision was taken at the conference of the field commanders of the People’s Front with the military and political leaders of Uzbekistan. This conference took place before the end of the parliamentary session in the Uzbek city of Termez. Several units of People’s Front, who had been trained in Uzbekistan, entered Dushanbe on December 10 with tanks that were supplied by the Uzbek government. They defeated the opposition with the aid of the Uzbek air force. The new Dushanbe government openly stated that the "sorties were flown in connection with an official request from the Tadjik leaders."

Moscow officially reacted to the incursion with silence, which was quite revealing in its own right. The protests by the Moscow democrats against what amounted to the involvement of Russian troops in the suppression of the "Islamo-democratic" opposition were not "heard" by the government and were lost amidst Yeltsin’s more immediate pressures of quelling the recalcitrant

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21 Ibid.
22 Novoye Vremya, No. 4, 1993.
Russian Supreme Soviet which was dominated by a “Communist-patriotic”
majority that naturally voiced no objections whatsoever to the policy of
supporting the neo-Communist Dushanbe government.

Thus, Russia was locked into deferring to political decisions made by the Uzbek
government. Russia had to deal with political elites in Tadjikistan that were
hand-picked by Tashkent and not directly beholden to the Kremlin or submissive
to its preferences for handling the crisis. Moreover, the “political” conflicts
between the different “branches of power” in Moscow further muddled the
political terrain, thus exacerbating the ambiguity in Russia’s policy toward the
civil war in Tadjikistan.

The only thing that Moscow seemed to be able to do at the time was to “put a
good face on the matter.” It assumed the role of Dushanbe’s “strategic ally,” at
the same time that it embraced the role as peacekeeper in the conflict. Such an
inextricably contradictory and ambiguous position was the logical extension of
the previous policy of helpless and unprincipled “neutrality.”

Between an “Ally” and a “Peacekeeper”

By the beginning of 1993, Russia began to lobby international organizations to
accept its future role as the primary “peacekeeper” in the post-Soviet space. On
February 28, Yeltsin declared that “the time has come for the . . . U.N. to confer
on Russia special authorities as the guarantor of peace and stability on the
territory of the former USSR.” Moscow had already conducted successful peace-
keeping operations in the trans-Dniester region and South Ossetia. This
experience seemed to warrant application in the Tadjik crisis. In Tadjikistan,
however, there were fewer grounds than probably anywhere else to expect that
the Russian military would be able to remain neutral.

By the beginning of January 1993, Russian border guards, together with Uzbek
pilots, began shooting refugees that tried to cross the Pyandzh border into
Afghanistan. Hundreds of civilians were killed.23 In addition, approximately
sixty Russian soldiers cooperated with the Tadjik government forces in missions
aimed at “clearing” the regions to the east of Dushanbe of supporters of the
opposition.24 Also, during the summer, the Russian and Uzbek air forces
conducted raids on the opposition’s positions in Tadjikistan. Moreover, the
Russian military provided support for a large-scale Tadjik government offensive

23 Novaya Vremya, No. 4, 1993.
24 “The Address Of the Executive Director of Helsinki ‘Watch’ To the President of Russia,”
on the Gorno-Badahshan autonomous region. Armored vehicles, driven by Russian servicemen of the 201st division, were used in this assault. Such were the “subjective realities” that supported Russia’s claims as a peacekeeper.

In fact, Russia assumed more the role of an accomplice than a neutral peacekeeper. On May 25, 1993, the Russian-Tadjik Friendship Treaty was signed. According to this document, Russian troops were to be left in Tadzhikistan until the Tadjik government formed its own border guard troops. From that point forward, Russia’s involvement in the civil war took on the character of an interested party and ally of the Tadjik government. As Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev stated during his September 1993 visit to the Tadjik-Afghan border, “Russia will not leave Tadzhikistan in trouble.” The Tadjik Deputy Prime Minister’s reaction to this promise was rather peculiar. In particular, he said that, “Your personal point of view encourages us to undertake new efforts.” This type of rhetoric by Russian officials encouraged the Kulyab leaders to reject a peaceful solution to the conflict and resume fighting until they had completely eliminated the opposition. In the words of Ubaydullaev, “Holding talks with the opposition is impossible. They are all enemies of the people.”

In a subsequent attempt to disavow the implications of his earlier statements, Kozyrev declared that “it would be ridiculous to depict the democrats in the Russian government as supportive of the so-called pro-Communist regime in Tadzhikistan. This is an incorrect interpretation. We simply want to promote the search for a ‘territorial-ethnic’ consensus in this country.” But the meaning of “consensus” became clear in July, after radical members of the opposition attacked a Russian border patrol, killing 25 border guards. At that time, Boris Yeltsin, for the first time officially articulated an explicit Russian “Tadjik” policy, declaring that “everybody should understand that the border is essentially Russian and not Tadjik.” Meanwhile, Russian defense minister Grachev stated that “my task consists of the development and pursuit of measures that ensure that our adversary is put under control and destroyed in such a way that nobody will dare to lift their hand against the Russians in the future.” 25 Three days later, in an affirmation of these words, Russian and Tadjik government troops began to shell the Afghanistan kishlaks where the camps of the Tadjik opposition were located. 26

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25 Ibid.
26 Charogi Ruz, May, 1995; “The address of the executive director of Helsinki ‘watch’ to the President of Russia,” op. cit.

Only after the Russian servicemen in Tadjikistan suffered many losses in the summer of 1993 did Russia’s “Tadjik” policy begin to take a distinct form. The first dimension of the revised policy centered on the strengthening of the Russian “fist” in Tadjikistan as a means to contain the opposition’s armed forces and protect the Rahmonov regime. The second aspect of the policy consisted of an attempt to coerce the Tadjik government into a political dialogue with the opposition. This was done by forcing the Tadjiks to assume the lion’s share of the military burden of directly confronting the opposition. Finally, Russia strove to “offload” the burden of supporting the government in Dushanbe onto those CIS member states that bordered Tadjikistan. In an effort to explore these prospects, the Kremlin convened an emergency session of the leaders of the CIS in Moscow on August 7, 1993.

The Military Versus the Diplomats and the Intelligence Service

From the beginning there were serious contradictions embedded in Russia’s new policy. On one hand, Moscow considered the Tadjik civil war to be an exclusively military problem involving the delineation of international borders; on the other hand, Moscow admitted that this problem could be solved only through political compromise with the opposition that was acting both inside and outside of Tadjikistan. The fact that Yeltsin appointed Foreign Minister Kozyrev to be the “coordinator of the Russian policy toward settling the situation on the Tadjik-Afghanistan border” reflected this contradiction. Moreover, the attempts by the various Russian government agencies to conduct their own “peace-keeping” activities should be interpreted in the same light (since in doing so these agencies were pursuing independent and contradictory interests).

The principal impediment to Russia’s “Tadjik policy” by the beginning of 1994 was the absence of reliable information concerning the military and political situation on the ground. There were no reliable channels of contact with the opposition that would allow Moscow to assess the real intentions of the local leaders. Moscow’s political judgments and decisions were usually based on the information supplied either by military sources that were sympathetic to the Tadjik government or by the republican regime’s direct representatives.

It is important to note that Andrei Kozyrev concluded in fall 1993 (during a discussion with the author) that press reports suggesting that the leaders of the opposition wanted to meet with the Russian leadership prior to establishing
contact with the government in Dushanbe were false. The minister interpreted
this as mere “speculation” and as a desire to “make an enemy out of Russia,”
with whom “one has to negotiate.” Such a conclusion indicated that Russia was
already at that point refusing to admit its partiality and favoritism toward one
side of the conflict.

The indecisiveness of Russian diplomacy allowed the Russian commander of the
CIS “peace-keeping” force (CPF) in Tadjikistan to seize the initiative in
negotiations with the opposition. The CPF commander, General-Colonel Boris
P’yankov, met with the leadership of the opposition Coordination Center of
Tadjik Democratic Forces in the CIS to try to pit democratic leaders against each
other, and the “moderates” against the “hard-liners.” These attempts were (as
predicted) unsuccessful, leading General P’yankov to deliver an address that
chided and threatened the Tadjik opposition movement. Moreover, he
announced that a series of CPF military exercises in Tadjikistan were scheduled
to take place in March. He made it understood that these maneuvers were
intended to demonstrate the readiness of Russian troops to fight against the
Tadjik opposition.

This “stalemate” situation was unexpectedly salvaged by the head of the Russian
Foreign Intelligence Service, Evgeniy Primakov. In November 1993, he met with
the leader of Tadjik opposition, Abdullo Nuri, in Teheran. Nuri was satisfied
with the outcome of the meeting, according to his deputy, Akbar
Turadzhonzoda.27 Afterwards, the opposition’s point of view was for the first
time reported in the Russian media, including statements that it acknowledged
Russia’s geo-political interests in Tadjikistan and accepted the continued Russian
presence on Tadjik territory.28

In the beginning of March 1994, Russia’s First Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoliy
Adamishin met with another opposition leader, Akbar Turadzhonzoda. At that
meeting, an agreement was reached to initiate inter-Tadjik talks in Moscow,
under the aegis of the U.N. It is important to note that during the meeting,
Adamishin admitted that the Russian military “often overstepped its mandate”
in Tadjikistan. He also subtly confirmed Russia’s military involvement in the
inter-Tadjik conflict.29

The political leadership in Dushanbe took umbrage at these contacts, declaring
that the dialogue with the opposition was “poorly timed” because of the terrorist

27 Chorogi Rus, January, 1994. Ibid.
action against Deputy Prime Minister Nazarshoev. (Nazarshoev was killed right
after the Teheran meeting that took place between Adamishin and Nuri.)
Dushanbe’s position was fully supported by the Russian “High Command.”
During a meeting with Akbar Turanzhonzod in Moscow, for example, the
Deputy Minister of Defense, Boris Gromov, was completely uninformed of the
opposition’s intentions. Gromov blamed the opposition for striving to sever all
ties with Russia, and stressed that the army would protect the Russian-speaking
population under any circumstances.30

Such behavior by Moscow and Dushanbe reflected domestic political demands.
On the one hand, the Russian leadership needed to demonstrate to its domestic
“nationalist-patriotic” opposition that it was appropriately tough in protecting
Russia’s “national interests”; on the other hand, the Tadjik leadership had to
reassure “field commanders” by showing that merely “talking about the
negotiations” did not compromise their position.

Between Negotiations and War

Due to pressure from Moscow, negotiations between the Tadjik government and
opposition finally got underway in April 1994 under the aegis of a special
representative of the U.N. General Secretary. The talks, which took place in
Moscow without the participation of the senior leadership of either side, resulted
in an agreed-upon agenda that consisted of 27 points. These points were divided
into three categories—measures directed at a political settlement of the civil war;
measures aimed at a resolution of the problem of refugees and those who were
forced to resettle; and measures pertaining to the drafting of the Tadjikistan
Constitution and the consolidation of Tadjikistan’s sovereignty. Finally, it was
agreed that the next round of talks would take place in Teheran.

At the same time, General-Colonel Valeriy Patrkeev replaced Boris P’yankov as
the Commander of the CPF in Tadjikistan. This resulted in an abatement of the
bellicose rhetoric emanating from the Russian military. By May–June, however,
a wave of terror resurfaced in Dushanbe, with Russian servicemen suffering
heavy casualties in their attempts to police the city. Russian Deputy Foreign
Minister Adamishin stated that “there were many signs that the opposition had
its hand in this [affair].” He hastened to add, however, that “at that moment
there [was] not a single case where it was possible to tell for sure that this was
carried out by the opposition, and that it was not the government of

Although the opposition denied involvement, the Tadji government was able to stymie the second (June) round of talks in Teheran, as it had no need to fear any sanctions issued by Moscow. As a consequence, the centerpiece of the diplomatic agenda—a cease-fire agreement—was not realized. Dushanbe refused to guarantee a process of reconciliation that was to include the releasing of political prisoners, a repeal of the ban on the activities of the parties, and a free press.

A decision by Dushanbe to conduct presidential elections further intensified the conflict. As became clear later, Moscow had been consulted in advance about this decision and had agreed to support Dushanbe's effort to legitimize the incumbent Tadji government. Since Moscow had no doubt that Rahmonov would win the elections, there was confidence that Russia would be able to offer more effective help to a legitimate president. Moscow's position could be characterized as follows: the stability and predictability of the existing regime, even though it might not have been the most sensible or democratic, was preferable to the uncertainty and redistribution of power that was bound to occur if the regime changed.

The previous agreement about a joint discussion of the constitutional provisions for a new election was circumvented. In response, opposition fighters attacked a unit of government forces stationed in Tavil'dar region, taking fifty-three servicemen prisoner. The fighters declared that this attack was not a terrorist action, but rather a continuation of the armed struggle against the Dushanbe regime that refused to embrace the notion of political compromise.

Following the postponement of the elections due to the pressure applied upon Dushanbe by Tashkent, the inter-Tadji dialogue continued. In September, the sides signed a "Temporary Cease-Fire Agreement" in Tehran. This allowed the U.N. to station military observers in Tadji and legitimized the presence of the opposition's armed groups on the territory of Tadji. In the course of the following rounds of negotiations, which took place in Islamabad in October-November of 1994, the sides strove to agree to extend the duration of the Teheran Agreement. The opposition insisted that Moscow promise to abide by the agreement and prevent violations committed by combat troops and border guards deployed in Tadji.

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32 "The Agreement of a temporary cease-fire and the halt of other hostile actions on the Tadji-Afghanistan border and inside the country for the duration of the talks." September 17, 1994.
opposition leaders averred, would force the movement to “take all of the necessary measures.”

The commander of Russia’s border guards group in Tadjikistan, General Anatoliy Chechulin, however, sent a letter of protest to the U.N. mission in Dushanbe. He defended the actions of the Russian border-guards as in complete compliance with the “Russian-Tadjik Treaty of Joint Border Protection” that was concluded in May 1993. Thus, the Russian commander refused to order his troops to follow the provisions of the Teheran Agreement. This meant that the border guards, acting in accordance with the treaty with the Dushanbe government, would regard the opposition groups (wherever they were located) as hostile forces—with all that entailed. Such an approach, in effect, undermined the agreement, as was noted by the U.N. military observers in their reports. It became apparent that the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation (which was formally responsible for the coordination of the Russian policy with regard to Tadjikistan), was not capable of controlling the border guard command or preventing it from undertaking independent actions.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty of the mandate ceded to the Russian border guard troops by the Teheran Agreement and its rather free interpretation by the Tadjik leadership further escalated the conflict on the Tadjik-Afghanistan border. In January 1995, U.N. military observers noted a violation of the agreement—351 government troops were deployed by helicopters to the regions of Gornuy Badashan. Two months later, these units attacked the opposition’s force, which was regarded by the U.N. Mission as a violation of the agreement. For a few weeks prior to this action, the opposition units remained under siege and were essentially cut off from their leaders. A week later, as a column of Russian and Kazakh border-guards moved toward this region, they were attacked by an opposition border patrol that interpreted the mission of the “peace-keeping” troops as one of reinforcing the Tadjik government’s forces.

In Tashkent, President Karimov met with the leaders of the opposition several days prior to the incident. In his discussion with the author, one of the executives of the Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs interpreted these events as a joint provocation on the part of the Russian border guards and the Dushanbe government that was intended to undermine the agreements signed in Tashkent.

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36 Ibid.
Not surprisingly, Emomali Rahmonov sent a private message to Boris Yeltsin on April 10 that requested the “provision of help and assistance, in particular through the increase of the military supplies, in order to ensure the effective protection of the Southern borders of the CIS.”

The provocations at the beginning of April were severely criticized by the Commander of the CPF in Tadzhikistan, General Patrikeev. In his address during the meeting of the Council of CIS Defense Ministers in Moscow on April 19, he declared that “the Tadzhik government’s attempt to reinforce its military presence in Gorniy Balaqshan represent[ed] a violation of the Teheran Agreement, which prohibits any movement of troops.” The general also said that “for their part, the border guard troops of the Russian Federation started a border reinforcement operation, which was also interpreted by the leaders of Gornuy Badahshan defense units as a violation of the armistice agreement.”

The new inter-Tadzhik consultations that began in Moscow on April 19, 1995 came very close to ending in a scandal following an extremely strident address delivered by Foreign Minister Kozyrev, who assigned responsibility for the border crisis to the Tadzhik opposition and warned that, if such actions continue, “Russia will use all available military forces and resources against the opposition.” The head of the opposition’s delegation, Turazhonzod, replied that “his delegation considers it untenable to continue the consultations in such an atmosphere.” Only due to the mediation of the U.N. representative was this incident settled and the consultations continued. Meanwhile, Kozyrev’s deputy, Albert Chernushev, declared that “Russia does not consider itself in any way a part of the inter-Tadzhik conflict.”

By this time, the Russian leadership had openly distanced itself from the Central-Asian leaders’ attempts to facilitate an inter-Tadzhik dialogue. In Moscow’s opinion, these leaders were mesmerized by the present Tadzhik leadership and, therefore, were “playing into the hand” of the Tadzhik opposition. Meanwhile, Moscow still retained extensive influence on Dushanbe. Moscow used this influence to prevent the consolidation of the post-Soviet Central Asia under the aegis of regional leaders such as Islam Karimov or Nursultan Nazarbaev.

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38 Interfax, April 10, 1995.
41 Interfax, April 27, 1995.
Conclusion

On November 11, 1994, the author was invited as a Central Asian expert to a foreign policy conference that was conducted by Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Among those participating in the conference were: Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Andrei Kozyrev, the President's Assistant on International Affairs Dmitriy Ryurikov, First Assistant to the President Viktor Ilyushin, several members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Board, and members of the Presidential Council. While expressing his evaluations of the Tadjikistan situation and answering the questions of President Yeltsin, the author once again became convinced that the information the Russian president receives about the situation in the region, as well as about the motives guiding the actions of the primary players on the ground, is considerably distorted and one-sided.

It appears that the Russian policy in Tadjikistan had been based not on assessments of long-term Russian interests in the region, but rather on ad hoc evaluations, as well as on personal preferences and antipathies. In the future, such an approach to policymaking can lead to a sharp decline in Russia's role in this strategically important region. Moreover, this process threatens to embroil Russia deeper into regional conflicts, putting Russian servicemen and Russian-speaking residents of this region in ever greater danger.
4. Trans-Dniestria

by Irina F. Selivanova*

The principal reason that Russia was drawn into the conflict between the Moldovan government and the armed forces of the breakaway trans-Dniester region is all too typical for the majority of the conflicts in the post-Soviet period: the presence of a Russian army in the region as a legacy from the Soviet Union.

Although Russia clearly had objective strategic, political, and economic interests in the region, these interests were not the defining factor in Moscow’s decision to allow the 14th Army to intervene in the conflict in Moldova. Rather, Moscow had no choice. The essence of the “14th Army phenomenon” is that even at the apogee of the armed conflict in the trans-Dniester region, the 14th Army was not so much the object but the subject of politics. It is possible to say with only slight exaggeration that Moscow did not control its military units, but that these units, on their own initiative, “amended” Moscow’s political agenda in the region.

This phenomenon, which was revisited in the crises in Tadjikistan and Abkhazia, was a product of the political transition that was underway in Moscow at the time. Russia’s new, post-Communist leadership lacked both clearly-defined concepts of national interests and security and well-defined rules of conduct toward the newly independent states. As a result, the Russian military, and especially those units stationed in the territories of the former Soviet republics, were for all intents and purpose left to their own devices. On the one hand, this led to the organizational breakdown of the chain of command, and the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons and stocks from forward-based garrisons. On the other hand, this political decapitation left local Russian army units free to assume political roles independent of the supervision of legitimate political authorities in either Moscow or the newly formed states.

The dominant characteristic of the 14th Army (unlike analogous Russian military units in Tadjikistan and the Caucasus) was that it was capable of resisting the temptation to take sides, and, due to its firepower, was able to assume the role of an “amateur” peace-making force. This aroused suspicions on both sides of the conflict and presented the Russian government with a series of delicate issues in

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its search for a mutually acceptable resolution of the conflict. In particular, the Russian leadership had to balance limitation of the unsanctioned (although subsequently approved) military-political activity of its expeditionary armed forces against the realities of ethnic conflict in the region. As it turned out, however, none of the possible solutions to the problem—such as the assignment of a peace-keeping mandate to the 14th Army, retention of the army in Moldova, or withdrawal of the army—were realized.

The primary reason for this failure (excluding the technical difficulties associated with controlling, training, and withdrawing such an armed force) stemmed from the political and ethnic nature of the conflict in the trans-Dniester region. The ethnic dimension, in particular, made this conflict extremely important for nationalist opposition movements in both Moldova and Russia. For nationalists in Kishinev the conflict could be presented as part of a Russian imperialist offensive aimed at keeping Moldova in Moscow’s sphere of influence indirectly through the control of its separatist minions in Tiraspol. Similarly, nationalists in Russia could depict the conflict as a struggle by the Russian-speaking people of the trans-Dniester region to resist Moldova’s forced “Romanianization” campaign. In Russia, calls to employ the 14th Army “to defend our countrymen in the trans-Dniester region” were popular in the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) that was controlled by the anti-Yeltsin opposition. Given the acute struggle waged between the Executive and Legislative branches of the Russian government, the Kremlin could ill-afford to disregard these sentiments.

At the same time, the Russian leadership could not discount international public opinion, not to mention the West’s position, or the insistence by its CIS neighbors on strict adherence to the standards of civilized political behavior. In order to observe these constraints without giving the domestic opposition a political “trump card,” Russia observed three principles in managing the 14th Army and the settlement of the conflict in the trans-Dniester region. First, Moscow strove for recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within the administrative borders of the former Moldovan SSR, thus observing both the spirit of the accords signed in Belovezhskaya Puscha, and the principles of international law as stated in the bylaws of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the U.N. charter. Second, the Yeltsin leadership demonstrated a readiness to resolve the status of Russia’s 14th Army through peaceful negotiations with the legitimate leadership in Kishinev. Finally, Moscow sought protection of the rights of ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population in Moldova.

The Russian leadership’s ability to realize these principles faced two obstacles. First, the majority in the Russian Parliament had its own approach to resolving
these issues—one that often did not coincide with that of the Executive Branch. Second, the situation was complicated by the fact that only Russia’s 14th Army could prevent a full-scale civil war from erupting in Moldova. Despite these obstacles, and unlike in all other “hot spots” in the former USSR, the Russian leadership was successful at attaining a cease-fire among local belligerents and in creating a real basis for the peaceful resolution of the broader conflict.

The Historical Setting Of Russia’s Involvement In the Conflict

The Russian Federation, in its efforts to resolve the conflict in the trans-Dniester region, had to deal with a fracturing Moldovan state. As was the case in other former Soviet republics, perestroika during the second half of 1980s gave rise to national movements that were bent primarily on restoring indigenous cultures and languages. Those involved in this cultural renaissance used methods that expressed national self-identification through the persecution of “enemies,” “aliens,” and “invaders.” Their activities quickly led to the disintegration of Moldovan society into warring nationalist factions.¹

The political leadership of Moldova, comprised mostly of representatives of the former Communist nomenklatura, embraced the nationalist resurgence. Following the results of the elections held on February 25, 1990, the nationalists of the Moldovan Popular Front acquired a greater voice in the republic’s Parliament. As a result, republican authorities gave up attempts to represent the interests of the politically and ethnically diverse peoples of Moldova and focused primarily on protecting the interests of the titular nationality.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was also accompanied by the disintegration of Moldova’s administrative and territorial cohesion. In the fall of 1990, two self-proclaimed states emerged on Moldovan territory—Gagauzia, which proclaimed independence on August 19, and the Pridnestrovian-Moldovan SSR, later renamed the Pridnestrovia-Moldova Republic (PMR). At the beginning of 1993, the president of Moldova, Mircha Snegur, acknowledged that Soviet Moldova was in many respects artificially created. He averred that the territories and people of Moldova were not homogenous “in any historical, ethno-psychological and cultural sense,” thus acknowledging the objective basis for a split in the society.

At this time, it was possible to detect in the words of the Moldovan president de facto legitimacy for the rejection by certain segments of Moldova of the creation of an “ethnocratic” state and future incorporation of Moldova into an enlarged Romanian state. The fact is that the trans-Dniester region, unlike Bessarabia (Pravoberezhye), was never part of the so called “historic Romanian territories.” Moldovans, furthermore, never comprised the majority of the local population. At the end of the eighteenth century, the territory of the trans-Dniester region once and for all became part of the Russian empire, and its people identified themselves with the Russian state. Bessarabia, on the other hand, was annexed by Russia in 1912 following a treaty with Turkey. In 1918, Bessarabian authorities decided to join Romania. Refusing to acknowledge the loss of the territory, in 1924 the government of the USSR announced the creation of the Moldovan ASSR (on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR) on the left bank of the Dniester River, where ethnic Moldovans comprised less than one-third of the population.

In 1940, as a result of an ultimatum presented by the USSR (with Germany’s consent), Bessarabia was re-incorporated into the Soviet Union. In creating the Moldovan SSR, Bessarabia was once again divided, severely undermining its historical and economic integrity. Several southern regions, including Northern Bukovina, and access points to the Black Sea through the mouth of the Danube River (the city of Ismail) and Dniester estuary (the city of Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy) were ceded to Ukraine.

Within the framework of the Soviet Union, changes in the borders of the constituent republics carried little political significance. Beginning with Gorbachev’s perestroika, however, when the possibility arose for the people to choose their own course of development, historical and territorial, as well as ethno-political, issues came to the forefront of social and political life. This, in turn, created a number of serious conflicts, some of which would affect the fate of the future Republic of Moldova.

In the early 1990s, Kishinev tried to distance itself from Moscow. It did so by refusing to carry out a republican referendum on the fate of the USSR, as well as by ignoring the invitation to participate in the crafting of a new Union Treaty. This effort to exit the Soviet Union was accompanied by the infusion of “Russophobia” at the governmental and popular levels. The most extremist elements of the national-unionist movement (the supporters of uniting Moldova and Romania, even before the abolition of the USSR), introduced a new political

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2 Moldova Republic: Chronicle of the Pridnestrovsky Conflict, Kentavr, 1994, No. 4, p. 145.
program that stressed Moldova’s immediate withdrawal from the Soviet Union, the disbanding of the “army of invaders,” and consolidation within the borders of Moldova of “all previously occupied Romanian territories—such as Bessarabia, the trans-Dniester region, Northern Bukovina and a number of other regions in Southern Ukraine—and the subsequent unification with Romania. On August 27, 1991, immediately following the failed coup attempt in Moscow, Moldova declared its independence.

The leaders of the trans-Dniester region categorically rejected Moldova’s new state symbols. They also rejected the Latin-based alphabet that was akin to the Romanian alphabet, and preserved Russian as an official language in the region. In the fall of 1990, the regional government began to disregard Kishinev’s legal authority in the trans-Dniester region. This precipitated a series of armed conflicts with Kishinev-backed groups that ultimately led to bloodshed. The first such incident took place on November 2, 1990, in the city of Dubossary, where Moldovan police, in an attempt to liberate the district council, court house, and district attorney’s office (all of which were seized by the people), opened fire and killed three people. By early 1992, Kishinev lost control over the PMR and, for all intents and purposes, found itself entangled in an undeclared war.

In Moldova, this kind of separatism was perceived exclusively in light of Moscow’s “imperial intrigues.” It was attributed to the dominance of newcomers from Russia in Tiraspol and their seizure of power in this “historically Moldovan territory,” as well as to a “conspiracy of the Russian political elite.” President Snegur referred to the government of the PMR as a “fascist regime”; its separatism as “mutiny”; and its armed forces as “gangs.” As far as the PMR is concerned, he said, “It would be too much to give up this part of heaven in favor of those who arrived from who knows where. . . . Let Igor Smirnov (PMR president) make his own republic in Kamchatka, where he resided before settling in Tiraspol.” President Snegur, consistent with all of the anti-Tiraspol propaganda in Moldova, said nothing about a December 1, 1991 referendum regarding the independence of the PMR in which 98 percent of the voters (representing 78 percent of the total population of the PMR), including Moldovans, voted for the PMR’s independence.4

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3 Snegur probably had in mind the fact that the trans-Dniester region (home to less than 20 percent of Moldovan population), produced about 40 percent of the net national product and almost 90 percent of the republic’s electrical power. It was these figures, coupled with the fact that there are more Slavic peoples living in the trans-Dniester region—Russians comprised 25 percent; Ukrainians comprised 28 percent—that accounted for the Tiraspol leaders’ switch to the conscious strategy towards independence.

This, in sum, reflected the general tenor of politics that was inherited, at least initially, by the leadership of the new and independent Russia.

**Russia’s Search For An Intervention Policy:**

“Rutskoi’s Line” Versus “Kozyrev’s Line”

By spring of 1992, armed conflicts between the government forces of Moldova and the trans-Dniester region became increasingly frequent and violent. Both sides deliberately inflamed the situation in order to alter the existing balance of power and to attain their goals under the fluid circumstances. Kishinev viewed Moldova’s admission into the U.N., its recognition by more than 100 states, and its establishment of diplomatic relations with Russia as indications of the international community’s extension of carte blanche to Kishinev to assert its authority across the territory of the former Soviet Moldovan republic, including the trans-Dniester region. As a consequence, the laws “On Defense,” “On Military,” and “On Military Service for the Citizens of Moldova,” were hastily adopted in Moldova. Moreover, on March 28, 1992, a “state of emergency” decree was issued by President Snegur in which all state bodies were charged with taking all necessary steps “to liquidate and disarm illegal formations.”

For its part, Tiraspol, having formed its own Republican Guard in September 1991, strengthened ties with Cossack units that arrived from the Don and Kuban regions, and garnered the moral and military support of the 14th Army (90 percent of which were stationed in the trans-Dniester region). It declined Kishinev’s offer to grant the trans-Dniester region the status of a free economic zone once Moldovan state sovereignty was established.\(^5\) Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the PMR Grigoryi Marakutsa commented that “we would like to live in Moldova with a federal constitution. Moldova should recognize that for centuries we have had stronger ties with Russia than with Romania.”\(^6\)

During this period, President Yeltsin issued a critical decree on April 1, 1992 that transferred the 14th Army to Russian jurisdiction. At this point, it was almost inevitable that the 14th Army would become embroiled in the military conflict. Finding itself in the middle of an escalating crisis, the 14th Army could maintain neutrality only with great difficulty. Its legal status following international recognition of Moldova’s independence became that of a foreign army illegally occupying the territory of a sovereign state. Kishinev insisted on the immediate withdrawal of the 14th Army from the territory of Moldova, as its presence

interfered with Kishinev’s plans to regain control over the trans-Dniester region. The situation was further complicated by popular agitation in the region, as local inhabitants persisted in lobbying the 14th Army for protection from the Moldovan authorities.

In an effort to signal its disposition, the Military Council of the Russian 14th Army published an address to the parliaments of Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia that placed the blame for the armed conflict on the republics of both sides. The address underscored the violations of rights of the Russian-speaking population, and the aspirations of several political groups to unite with Romania as factors which fueled the armed conflict. The Russian military saw an opportunity to stabilize the situation by deploying the 14th Army as “blue helmets” that could separate the warring sides, and by establishing the PMR as an independent autonomous region within Moldova. Marshall Yvgenyi Shaposhnikov, then Commander in Chief of the United Armed Forces of the CIS, considered this the only option if the army was not “to be dragged into the political and multinational conflict.” President Yeltsin concurred, and considered that such an option was acceptable if endorsed by the leaders of the CIS states.

During this period, Russia’s policy toward the trans-Dniester region proceeded along two diametrically opposed paths. On the one hand, there was the position of the Foreign Ministry that strove to accommodate the mutual interests of the warring parties to the greatest extent possible. On the other hand, there was the line promoted by Russian Vice President Rutskoi and the Supreme Soviet that openly supported Tiraspol.

In March 1992, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev took the initiative to reduce the intensity of the armed standoff in Moldova by actively pursuing a multilateral diplomatic track. During a session of the OSCE, convened on his initiative, the foreign ministers of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia jointly announced that “Russia, Ukraine, and Romania intend from now on to build relations with Moldova, based on respect for the territorial integrity and independence of this state.” The foreign ministers followed up by creating a multilateral commission to facilitate political consultations between the parties and to monitor and enforce a cease-fire and the disengagement of forces in the conflict. In addition, the Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, and Moldovan foreign ministers declared the trans-Dniester region a free economic zone.

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7 Komsomolskaya Pravda, April 4, 1992.
In this effort, Russia and Ukraine demonstrated near-complete solidarity with the Moldovan and Romanian positions. At the same time, understanding that he would have to withstand the pressure from many pro-Tiraspol Russian parliamentarians, Kozyrev cautiously raised the issue of granting the PMR the right to self determination in the advent of Moldova’s possible unification with Romania. The foreign minister, explaining the essence of this initiative in an interview with the French newspaper Le Monde, stated that it would be preferable if Moldova “rejected its unrealistic determination . . . to remain a unitary state at all costs, including regions such as trans-Dniester and the one where the Gagauz people live.” In his opinion, the trans-Dniester region warranted special political and legal status.

In the meantime, Russian Vice President Rutskoi, who had already demonstrated his nationalist-patriotic sentiments and opposition to President Yeltsin and the Russian government, unexpectedly paid a visit to Tiraspol, where he sharply denounced Kishinev, characterizing its policy toward the trans-Dniester region as “genocidal.” Compounding problems for the Russian government was that Rutskoi was accompanied by a presidential political advisor, Sergei Stankevich, who in practice associated himself with the vice president’s position. Moreover, it was during this visit that Rutskoi proposed his plan for a resolution of the trans-Dniester conflict that called for Moscow to protect Russian citizens living in the trans-Dniester region, to recognize the sovereignty and independence of the PMR, to deploy the 14th Army as a buffer between the warring sides, and to guarantee Tiraspol’s equal representation during all negotiations pertaining to the settlement of the conflict.

Rutskoi’s plan, however, was as incompetent as it was ambitious. From a legal point of view, people living in the trans-Dniester region could hardly be considered Russian citizens. Moreover, Moscow’s recognition of the PMR’s independence would have raised questions regarding Russia’s commitment to OSCE principles of respect for the integrity of borders in Europe, provoked a serious crisis within the CIS, and precipitated the uncontrollable explosion of separatist trends, especially within Russian borders. In addition, the proposal to use the 14th Army as a peacekeeping force was not only categorically unacceptable to Moldova, but intrinsically unpersuasive, since it was hard to believe in the neutrality of Russian soldiers and officers who, in most cases, resided or were born in the trans-Dniester region. Finally, the thought of including trans-Dniester regional representatives in the negotiating process was

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9 Izvestiya, June 8, 1992.
impractical under existing circumstances because it would legitimize the contested standing of the leaders of the self-proclaimed PMR.

Rutskoi’s pro-Tiraspol plan caused indignation in Kishinev and optimism in Tiraspol. Moscow managed to contain some of the fallout by establishing closer diplomatic ties with Moldova. At the same time, there were no indications that the Russian government, and especially President Yeltsin, was trying to dispel the militant mood incited by the vice president’s outbursts. That Stankevich, who always strove to be in the political mainstream, accompanied Rutskoi attests to the fact that the Russian president was ambivalent at that moment on the strategic course for resolving the trans-Dniester conflict.

As a result of this ambivalence in Moscow, not a single Russian initiative presented in March-April 1992 to regulate the trans-Dniester conflict positively affected the situation in Moldova. Disturbed by the danger of Russian interference, Kishinev tried to incite international condemnation of Russia, blaming Moscow for direct involvement in the trans-Dniester conflict in order to gain room for maneuver in its actions against Tiraspol. With this aim, Kishinev trumpeted the presence of Cossack military units (which were, indeed, comprised of Russian citizens, although the deployment and organization of such units were not sanctioned by the Kremlin) as examples of the “gross interference of Russian military formations in the internal affairs of a sovereign Moldova.”

Moreover, it exploited the May 1992 detection of T-72 tanks and armored personnel carriers that were seized by the trans-Dniester militia from the 14th Army’s arsenal in the vicinity of the city of Dubossary as proof of “Russia’s aggression against the Republic of Moldova.” Orders of the 14th Army to “answer fire with fire” in connection with the more frequent attacks on Russian army units by the Moldovan artillery were similarly viewed as a threat of direct intervention by Russia.

Romania was also encouraging assertiveness on the part of Moldovan leaders by publicly linking separatism in the trans-Dniester region to the ambitions of “certain powers in Moscow.” The newspaper AZ (“Today”), an organ of the ruling Front of National Salvation of Romania, published an article suggesting that “Moscow [is] interfering in the internal affairs of other states and [seeking] yet again to force its will [on them], oblivious to the fact that the USSR no longer exists.”

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Dniester River was “occupied by the 14th Army” and called upon Moldovans “to devote all their efforts to strengthening national unity and preparation for defending their Motherland.”14 The Parliament, which was then headed by Alexander Moshanu, a member of the National Front of Moldova and an ardent advocate of unification with Romania, reacted to the situation by adopting a resolution that depicted the actions of the 14th Army as a precursor to a full-scale Russian intervention.15

The Russian Army Enters the Armed Conflict: Standoff Between the Russian President and Parliament

After joining the PMR (via a local referendum), the city of Bendery, situated on the right bank of the Dniester River, became the stage for the tragic culmination of the festering conflict. By June 1992, political power in the city was divided between the municipal government and militia subordinated to Tiraspol and the Moldovan municipal police acting on orders from Kishinev. Using constant pleas for help by the police as a pretext for intervention, on June 19 Kishinev moved tanks, armored vehicles, and army personnel into the city. This “restoration of the legal organs of power” in the Bendery region resulted in numerous casualties, including non-combatants. Retaliatory strikes by the trans-Dniester militia were decisive and quick, and, with the support from units of the 14th Army, practically re-captured Bendery by June 21. According to information provided by the civil rights group “Memorial,” the PMR suffered 203 casualties, while Moldova lost 77 people, with up to 1000 people wounded in the course of battle from June 19 to July 3.16 (Other figures were given by the newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta—484 killed, 72 missing in action, more than 1,000 wounded.)17

General Lebed was sent to inspect the trans-Dniester region by the Russian Ministry of Defense on the eve of the crisis in order to clarify “on the spot” the level of involvement of the 14th Army in the military conflict. He was also dispatched to verify information received in Moscow regarding the theft of weapons from the army’s arsenals. It is interesting that in order to keep the mission anonymous, Lebed used the name of “Colonel Gusev.” Immediately following the outbreak of hostilities in Bendery, Lebed assumed operational

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17 Rossiyskaya Gazeta, June 29, 1992.
leadership of the army and managed to defeat decisively the Kishinev military offensive in about a day-and-a-half. Only after the success of this defensive operation was he officially appointed commander-in-chief of the 14th Army.

According to available information, there was no advanced planning undertaken by either the Kremlin or the Russian defense ministry for use of the 14th Army in the trans-Dniester conflict. We do not have any documented information from the Ministry of Defense or the various political leaderships that pertains to an order to this effect. According to a subsequent admission by Lebed, the Russian military spontaneously reacted to the unexpected large-scale offensive launched by Moldovan forces. Only following the news of such an offensive did the Kremlin approve the actions of the 14th Army and the appointment of Lebed as the de facto commander.

The tragedy in Bendery forced the belligerents in the trans-Dniester conflict to alter their positions. After a brief emotional outburst by politicians in Kishinev condemning the acts of Russian aggression and calling upon the international community to sever ties with Moscow and issue a 24-hour ultimatum for the withdrawal of the 14th Army, public opinion in Moldova became more balanced. The results of public opinion polls proved to be a "cold shower" for the republican leaders, as only 18 percent of those surveyed approved of Kishinev's use of force in the trans-Dniester conflict. Moreover, the moderate deputies forced the resignation of radical unionists, such as Minister of Defense Ilie Kostash, and Minister of National Defense Anatol Plugaru, from the government. It was also decided that a coalition government of Moldova would be formed that would include representatives from the trans-Dniester and Gagauzia regions.

In contrast to Kishinev's moderating position, however, Tiraspol's stand after the events in Bendery became more extreme and uncompromising. The president of the PMR declared that from that point forward the citizens of the trans-Dniester region would no longer agree to be "under Moldova." This meant that the trans-Dniester authorities were only willing, at best, to enter into a confederation with Moldova.

Under these circumstances Russia proceeded to embrace contradictory policies. First, as previously mentioned, Moscow appointed General Alexander Lebed as the commander of the 14th Army. Not only was Lebed popular with his troops, but he had previously served as a deputy commander-in-chief of the air force's

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black berets, and was known for his independent views and a tendency to criticize leading politicians. After only a few days at the helm, he successfully returned the soldiers to the barracks, curtailed the theft of weaponry, imposed a curfew in the PMR, and declared the neutrality of all Russian troops in the region.

Second, Russian Vice President Rutskoi visited Kishinev and Tiraspol in the middle of July and unexpectedly brokered a coalition government in the trans-Dniester region. He brought to Tiraspol a cease-fire proposal from the Moldovans that called for the disengagement of the armed formations, deployment of peace-keeping forces, and return of the deputies from the eastern regions to the Moldovan Parliament. The Moldovans thought these preliminary conditions would create opportunities for the creation of a coalition government, in which the trans-Dniester regional representatives would receive the positions of Minister of Finance, Minister of Industry, Minister for the Eastern Territories, as well as First Deputy Minister of Defense. Upon creating this government, Moldova was expected to start negotiations on the political status of the trans-Dniester region. Rutskoi’s mission established a basis for constructive negotiations.20 As reported by political analysts at the time, this was the first time in six months that the president and vice president of Russia “were united in their understanding of the trans-Dniester problem and the ways to resolve it.”21

Third, Moscow won international approval at a meeting in Istanbul of members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation zone for bilateral discussions between Russia and Moldova on the status of the 14th Army.

These measures reflected Moscow’s burgeoning reliance on its bilateral relationship with Kishinev to resolve the trans-Dniester conflict. The meeting between Yeltsin and Snegur in Kremlin on June 3, 1992 confirmed this new course. At this summit, the two presidents publicly aired the idea of creating a “safety corridor” controlled by designated peace-keeping forces.

In the meantime, the Russian Parliament, which was in opposition to Yeltsin, also decided to “take part” in the development of this idea, having adopted a special decision on July 8 that sanctioned the use of the 14th Army as a peace-keeping force in the trans-Dniester region until the presidents of Russia, Moldova, and Ukraine agreed on an inter-governmental peace-keeping force. This initiative was basically designed to break the Moldovan-Russian agreement on the creation

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of the "safety corridor," as it was well-known that Kishinev repeatedly refused to discuss issues dealing with converting the 14th Army into a peace-keeping force.

Evidence of the Russian Parliament's ulterior motives could be found in the statements issued by Congress of Peoples Deputy Zhigulin, a representative of the nationalist-patriotic movement. Specifically, Zhigulin recommended that the Parliament's decision be supplemented with the following ultimatum: if Moldova does not agree to the Parliament's initiative, the Supreme Soviet of Russia would discuss the question of the PMR's independence, including its absorption into Russia. This proposal was subsequently rejected out of the concerns voiced by many deputies that it could backfire and galvanize separatist trends within Russia.22

Fortunately, Kishinev had already learned to disregard the demonstrative acts of the Russian Parliament. On July 21, Snegur and Yeltsin signed an extremely important Agreement on the Regulation of the Trans-Dniester Conflict. This document provided for the deployment of a peace-keeping force (comprised of six Russian battalions, three Moldovan battalions, and two battalions of military forces stationed in trans-Dniester), the creation of a "safety corridor," and the gradual withdrawal of the 14th Army from the territory of Moldova. At the same time, the sides undertook to strictly respect the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, to observe human rights, and to define a special status for the trans-Dniester region in Moldova, providing the people of the region with the right to self-determination in the event of any changes to the status of the Republic of Moldova ("changes to the status" referred to the unification of Moldova and Romania).23

The Political Struggle Surrounding the Withdrawal of the 14th Army

Following the cease-fire agreement, the withdrawal of the 14th Army became the critical issue in the trans-Dniester conflict. By that time, the high command of the Russian 14th Army was a de facto independent force in the region with substantial influence on both sides of the conflict. General Lebed, who was convinced that the 14th Army was the only instrument for preserving peace in the area, was skeptical of the negotiations between the leaders of Russia and Moldova and acted as an obstacle to further progress toward shaping the

22 Izvestiya, July 9, 1992.
region's future via these diplomatic channels. At the same time, the Russian leadership had begun to question the utility of a prolonged deployment of the 14th Army in the trans-Dniester region and proposed to Kishinev that the withdrawal of the 14th Army proceed simultaneously with progress toward a political settlement of the trans-Dniester conflict.

In February 1994, President Yeltsin sent personal messages to Presidents Snegur and Smirnov (president of the trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic) recommending that proposals advanced by the OSCE be taken as a basis for the final political settlement of the crisis. These proposals envisioned granting to the trans-Dniester region formal autonomy with a broad spectrum of rights. Subsequently, Vladlen Vasiev, a plenipotentiary of the Russian president, brought to Kishinev Yeltsin's proposal for the creation of a special provisional commission that consisted of representatives from the opposing sides, as well as a Russian mediator. This idea was approved by the Moldovan president, and on February 28, both Snegur and Smirnov reached an agreement concerning the creation of a bilateral commission devoted to working out the details of the special status conferred upon the trans-Dniester region. They signed a document in which the president of Moldova officially concurred that "it is necessary to define a special state and legal status of the trans-Dniester region within the framework of a united and indivisible Moldova." From this point forward, Russian diplomats pursued a two-track policy toward the negotiations. First, a Special Ambassador of the President of Russia participated in the meetings conducted by the representatives of Kishinev and Tiraspol that were dedicated to the creation of the special status for the trans-Dniester region. Second, authorized representatives of the Russian Ministry of Defense conducted talks regarding the withdrawal of the 14th Army from Moldova.

After nine rounds of negotiations between senior Russian and Moldovan military officials, however, there was no significant progress. In August 1994, when Colonel-General Eduard Vorob'ev, the special representative of the Russian Ministry of Defense to the talks (who had a strong personal conviction for reaching a settlement) declared that Russia was ready to start an immediate withdrawal of its troops, it turned out that the Moldovan side was not ready for such a change. In fact, Moldovan authorities at that time depended on the presence of Russian troops to contain the separatist ambitions of Tiraspol. Given this predicament, Kishinev agreed finally to a three-year phased withdrawal of

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the 14th Army (as proposed by Moscow) that was synchronized with the political settlement of the trans-Dniester conflict.

On October 21, 1994, at a meeting of the leaders of the members of the CIS, an agreement was signed providing for a three-year withdrawal of the Russian army from the territory of Moldova. Understandably suspicious of Moscow's undertakings, Kishinev simultaneously began to seek international guarantees for the timely withdrawal of the Russian army. In particular, one idea was put forward concerning the creation of a special international body that would monitor the process of withdrawal. This entailed the possible stationing of international peace-keeping forces on the territory of the republic in place of the Russian 14th Army, which Kishinev could not be convinced would remain a neutral force. In an attempt to generate more active interest on the part of the OSCE toward the issue of the Russian military presence on the territory of Moldova (Kishinev submitted its application for becoming a member of the European Council as early as in the spring of 1993), the Moldovan representative to the Political Commission of the OSCE initiated proposals to condition Russia's admittance to the European body on the timely withdrawal of 14th Army. The Moldovan proposal, however, was rejected, and, contrary to the precedents established with the Baltic states, the withdrawal of troops from Moldova did not become a condition for Russia's membership in European security structures.26

The most decisive international support for the Moldovan position came from the United States. However, despite the assurances of U.S. Representative to the United Nations Madeleine Albright that "the departure of Russian troops from Moldova is still one of the major objectives of American policy in this region,"27 Washington's attitude was circumspect. Reports prior to President Sniekur's January 1995 visit to Washington claimed that the United States was ready to facilitate the peaceful removal of Russian military equipment from the trans-Dniester region, but President Clinton merely expressed a wish that "the process of negotiations between Moscow and Kishinev be conducted in the spirit of mutual understanding."28 In other words, Moldova was told that the issue of the withdrawal the 14th Army must be resolved in direct negotiations with Russia.

Against this backdrop, Moscow sought to advance an initiative that had been nurtured for a long time by the Russian military. In June 1995, during Russian Defense Minister Grachev's visit to Kishinev (and during the subsequent meeting between Presidents Yeltsin and Snegur in Moscow), the Russian Ministry of

Defense suddenly proposed the retention in the trans-Dniester region of “several mobile and highly effective combat units totaling 3,500 servicemen” as a Russian military base in Moldova. Meanwhile, the implementation of Moscow’s plans for the withdrawal of the 14th Army was, not surprisingly, being resisted by General Lebed, with some initial success. In April 1995, however, the 14th Army was transformed into an “operational military group,” and Lebed’s post as army commander was eliminated.

The Russian Duma (Parliament) protested this disruption of the status quo in the trans-Dniester region, citing the overwhelming negative results of a March 1995 survey of the population of the trans-Dniester region on the withdrawal of the Russian army from the area, and predicted financial and technical difficulties associated with the withdrawal of the army (in particular, data were cited showing that even a token transfer of combat equipment through the territory of Ukraine would cost 100 billion rubles). Duma officials also trumpeted General Lebed’s claims that the staff reduction in the command and control directorate of the army from 170 to 97 generals and officers was tantamount to the “decapitation of a smoothly running mechanism and was, in effect, a major crime that risked provoking a military conflict within Moldova over the division of the 14th Army’s “spoils.” Lebed also predicted that should a large-scale conflict flare up again in the trans-Dniester region, it would “ignite the whole Balkan-Caucasian arc of crisis, to the pleasure of the rest of Europe.” On May 24, 1995, the Duma passed the first reading of the federal resolution on the 14th Army. In effect, the documents imposed a ban on “both the structural re-organization of the command and control directorate, and the reduction and re-deployment of the 14th Army and its equipment.

Despite this parliamentary support, on June 14, General Lebed bowed to the inevitable and tendered his resignation from his post and from military service. He was replaced by General Valery Yevnevich, who had received a “Hero of Russia” award for his valor in the storming of the White House in October 1993. Kishinev was satisfied with Moscow’s assurances that Russian troops would be withdrawn in accordance with mutually accepted terms. Tiraspol, alternatively, banked on fruitful cooperation with the new army commander, who had early on impressed local authorities with his candor and accessibility. A commission from the Russian Ministry of Defense, headed by General Kobets, relieved initial tensions that had appeared in military units by applying a traditional “carrot and stick” approach. However, while politics and diplomacy ameliorated the festering problem of the Russian 14th Army, final settlement of the trans-Dniester
conflict remains elusive for the foreseeable future, as all sides have been slow to make the necessary compromises.
5. Georgia-Abkhazia∗

by Evgeny M. Kozhokin ∗

Background

The dissolution of the Russian empire in 1917 led to the declaration of Georgia's independence in May 1918. Following the establishment of Soviet Rule in the trans-Caucasus, Abkhazia was declared an Independent Soviet Socialist Republic in March 1921. By December 1921, Abkhazia signed a treaty of federation with Georgia. In February 1931, it became an autonomous republic of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Throughout the Soviet period, Abkhazian political elites had been dissatisfied with their position vis-à-vis Georgia. From their perspective, all major political, administrative, and economic decisions pertaining to the region were made in Tbilisi—beyond their direct control. This anxiety was compounded by an unfavorable demographic trend in Abkhazia. Specifically, the Georgian population in the region was growing at a faster rate than the Abkhazian (in 1959, Georgians made up 39.1 percent of the population; in 1979—43.9 percent, whereas in 1989—45.7 percent). The government in Tbilisi denied that this demographic trend was the product of a deliberate Georgian policy directed towards the assimilation of Abkhazia. Rather, it claimed that this process was the result of the economic needs of the republic, especially the demand for tourism and highly trained Georgian construction workers.

A major outburst of Abkhazian separatism occurred in 1989, touched off by the Georgian government's efforts to establish a branch of the Georgian State University in Sukhumi further exacerbated the situation (this branch was to replace the Georgian department of the Abkhazian university). As a result, Georgian and Abkhazian students clashed in the first round of what became ongoing hostilities between the different nationalist groups. A large-scale

∗This chapter has been heavily edited by both editors of this volume. In the process, numerous quotations from official Russian denials of Georgian charges of Russian military, economic, and political pressure on Georgia have been shortened or eliminated for reasons of both expository and analytical clarity. English- and Russian-language copies of the original text are available from the author or the editors on request.

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conflict was avoided at that time thanks only to the introduction of a "state of emergency" (a special regime for the 'citizens' behavior) in Abkhazia.

The ouster of Georgian President Gamsakhurdia in early 1992 directly fueled the Abkhazian separatist cause. Abkhazian Supreme Soviet Chairman Vladislav Ardzinba capitalized on the confusion in Tbilisi to promote the republic’s de facto independence. Numerous Georgian laws were nullified in Abkhazia; all local enterprises and organizations, including military and police units, were placed under regional jurisdiction; and a special regiment of internal troops was created and placed under the command of the Presidium of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet. Finally, in July 1992, the 1978 Constitution was repealed and replaced by the long-dormant 1925 Constitution that declared Abkhazia a sovereign republic with only alliance commitments to commitments to Georgia.¹

In response to this declaration of independence, the Georgian government deployed troops in Abkhazia. The Georgian military occupied all of the major cities of Abkhazia, including the capital, Sukhumi, forcing the Abkhazian leadership, headed by Ardzinba, to retreat to the regional center of Gudauta. After these initial advances, however, the Georgian assault on Abkhazia bogged down. Over the next year, the Abkhazians, who received substantial political and military assistance from volunteers from the Confederation of the Mountain People of the Caucasus (CMPC) and at least some assistance from local Russian military units,² were able to launch a counteroffensive and gradually re-establish control over "their" republic up to the Russian-Georgian border.

Due to the brutal persecution that accompanied this counteroffensive, most Georgians (about 240,000) left Abkhazia as refugees.

¹ The History of Abkhazia Gudauta, 1993, pp. 331–332.
² Not only Georgian sources testify to the fact that Russian military units, stationed in Abkhazia, were providing military support to the Ardzinba's regime. As example, Mr. V. Simonov, the former military intelligence commander of the 19th separate anti-aircraft defense army that was positioned in trans-Caucasus, cites particular instances of such help. According to his data, by August 14, 1992, the Abkhazians had already received, without any fighting, the armaments of the 643rd anti-aircraft missile regiment (about one thousand submachine guns, 18 machine-guns, half a million of cartridges, etc.). Also, according to Simonov, even before the Georgian troops were brought into Abkhazia, Abkhazians received several armored vehicles, machine-guns, hundreds of grenades and around 50,000 cartridges from the armaments of the Battalion of the Airport-Technical Supply in Gudauta. According to the estimate of this author, altogether during the war, Abkhazian forces spent no less than 1,000 railway cars of military supplies, most of which were received from the Russian supplies. (Absolutely Secret, No. 8, 1994, p. 3.) According to the opinion of the Stockholm International Institute of Peace experts, "the technical supply support provided by the Russian armed forces was crucial for the success of the Abkhazian party." (International Security and Disarmament, Annual Edition of CIPRI, 1994, p. 108.)
Russian Policy Toward the Georgian-Abkhazian War

Moscow's policy toward the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict was shaped by the dynamics of Russian domestic politics and was, therefore, far from uniform or consistent. While President Yeltsin declared his support for the territorial integrity of Georgia, the Parliament, with its Communist-patriotic majority, tried by all means to stimulate the Abkhazian separatist forces. (It is not by coincidence that the statement on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, issued by the Russia Supreme Soviet on September 25, 1992, made no reference to recognition of Georgia's territorial unity.) The Supreme Soviet leadership considered the Abkhazian separatist movement a convenient tool with which to pressure the Georgian government to bring Georgia into the CIS and agree to a permanent Russian military presence in Georgia; and, to pressure Yeltsin himself to shift his policy in the direction of neo-imperial "statehood." As we shall see, however, the Supreme Soviet was far from monolithic, and even the Executive Branch had no common point of view. This was demonstrated, for example, by a much-discussed February 23, 1993 television appearance by Russian Defense Minister Grachev, during which he claimed that Russian troops could not withdraw from Abkhazia and Adzharia because "Russia would lose the exit to the Black Sea" as a result.

After Georgian troops were dispatched to Abkhazia on August 14, 1992, the Russian government attempted to bring both sides to the negotiating table. As a result, both sides agreed to stop all fighting and troop movements by August 31, and to continued high level meetings in Moscow on October 3. Before this agreement could be tested in practice, however, the Russian Supreme Soviet dispatched a delegation to Gudauta to meet with Ardzinba, thereby expressing what was widely perceived as support for the Abkhazian separatists—an impression that was strengthened by the statements of Sergei Babwin, one of the leaders of the anti-Yeltsin opposition, who, though not an official member of the delegation, joined it unofficially, and made no secret of his pro-Abkhazian sentiments. A far more evenhanded message was conveyed by a second parliamentary delegation which was dispatched immediately after the first and which visited Tbilisi as well as Gudauta. However, even this delegation, which was headed by First Deputy Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet S.A. Filatov, and included the present author, seemed insufficiently neutral in Georgian eyes. It probably came as welcome news, therefore, when Yeltsin inserted himself directly into the process by inviting Shevardnadze and Arbindza to meet with him in Moscow on September 3.
Although Yeltsin utilized this meeting to chastise Shevardnadze for deploying heavy weapons against the Abkhazian separatists and for showing insufficient understanding of Abkhazia’s grievances, he also made it clear that he favored the preservation of a single Georgian state and had no interest in encouraging or abetting its violent dismemberment. Furthermore, he made it clear to Ardzinba that the Abkhazian separatists could not count on Russian support. As a result, he was able to persuade both Shevardnadze and Ardzinba to sign a tripartite agreement calling for an immediate cease-fire; a prompt exchange of prisoners of war; restoration of freedom of movement for goods, services, and people; the early restoration of functioning governmental bodies in Abkhazia; and the creation of a tripartite commission to jump-start the “restoration of security in the region.” While this agreement failed to address many important specifics and was certain to take time to implement, it was a promising first step in what Yeltsin viewed as a genuine effort to broker a just peace and a stable political settlement in a region in which Russia had vital interests but no imperial ambitions. As quickly became apparent, however, Yeltsin’s parliamentary opponents had no intention of allowing Yeltsin to prescribe Russia’s policy in the “near abroad”—least of all at a time when the Russian constitution still contained Soviet provisions that vested ultimate authority for foreign and security policy in the Supreme Soviet.

On September 25, 1992, the Supreme Soviet adopted a series of resolutions condemning the Georgian government for trying “to solve the complex problems of inter-ethnic relations by violent means,” demanding the immediate withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia, and proposing a contingent of Russian peace-keeping forces be deployed in Abkhazia “to ensure the safety of the civil population and protect railroads and industrial plants.” In addition, the Supreme Soviet called on Yeltsin to immediately suspend all arms transfers to Georgia from the local Russian military garrisons and abrogate all pending Russian arms sales. Moreover, it proposed that Yeltsin broker a new round of negotiations between the Georgian and Abkhazian leaders, thereby implicitly repudiating the agreement that Yeltsin had brokered only three weeks before.

Upon learning of the Supreme Soviet’s action, Shevardnadze professed to have no “serious concern [about such] . . . statements and resolutions because they constitute only recommendations, whereas the decisions of Russia’s president are binding.” To his dismay (though probably not to his complete surprise), however, Shevardnadze soon discovered that Yeltsin himself was prepared to bend, if not to bow, to parliamentary pressure when he found it politically expedient to do so. Following an October 1992 Abkhazian offensive that blatantly violated the aforementioned tripartite agreement, Yeltsin phoned
Shevardnadze and warned him that Tbilisi’s failure to uphold this agreement would compel Moscow to take all necessary measures to secure Russia’s interests. Shevardnadze’s protest that it was the Abkhazians who had violated the agreement seemed to fall on deaf ears, as did his charge that the Abkhazians had acted in response to what was virtually an invitation from the Russian Supreme Soviet and with the direct support of local Russian military commanders.

As they came to understand that Yeltsin and his government were fully prepared to “tilt” in pro-Abkhaz direction when it served their purposes, Shevardnadze and his government increasingly began to entertain and voice suspicions that local Russian military commanders were by no means acting entirely on their own initiative in supporting the Abkhazians. In December 1992, for example, Shevardnadze gave an interview to Izvestiya in which he asked:

“Why are Russian ‘peace-keeping troops operating on Georgian territory’ now that the Soviet military district to which these troops were formerly subordinate no longer exists? Who authorizes their actions and what kinds of actions are authorized?”

Soon thereafter, moreover, Georgian authorities launched a diplomatic and public relations campaign in which Moscow was clearly held responsible for what was accurately described as a purposeful and purposefully one-sided military intervention on behalf of Abkhazian separation. Thus, the Georgian government minced no words in blaming Moscow when Russian planes bombed Sukhumi in February 1993, or when a Russian army unit participated in an Abkhazian attack on Sukhumi a month later.

The Russian government not only flatly rejected these charges (claiming, for example, that the planes that bombed Sukhumi were actually bombers that the Georgians had acquired and painted with Russian markings in an effort to discredit the Russian armed forces), but accused the Georgians of regularly conducting violent raids on Russian military depots and barracks—raids that led it to “reserve the right to take all necessary steps to protect the lives and dignity of Russian soldiers and their families.” At the same time, it activated its efforts to broker what it considered an acceptable cease-fire agreement and settlement in Abkhazia, culminating with a July 5, 1993 announcement by Foreign Minister Kozyrev that “Moscow had developed a policy to guarantee the end of

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3 Izvestiya, December 21, 1993.
4 Diplomatic Bulletin, Nos. 7-8, April 1993, p. 59. This claim was exposed as groundless on March 18, 1993, when the Georgians shot down a Russian war plane over Sukhumi. The pilot was a Russian Marine—a regular officer from a Russian air force unit stationed in Abkhazia.
bloodshed in Abkhazia” and was prepared to use “intense pressure, including economic sanctions” to see that that policy was accepted and implemented.

Faced with this threat, as well as with an unwinnable and deteriorating situation on the ground, the Georgian government felt it had no choice but to sign the so-called Sachi Agreement (an “Agreement On a Cease-Fire in Abkhazia and On a Mechanism To Ensure Its Observance”). Signed on July 27, 1993, this agreement envisioned a cease-fire and a moratorium on the use of force; the creation of a trilateral Georgian-Abkhazian-Russian control group to monitor and enforce the cease-fire; the stationing of international observers and peace-keeping forces in consultation with the Secretary General and Security Council of the U.N. (according to Russian officials, the subsequent delay in the arrival of the international peacekeepers to the region made violations of the agreement inevitable). Moreover, the document called for the withdrawal of all Georgian and Abkhazian military units from the combat zone after 10-15 days; and, among other provisions, an immediate renewal of negotiations to prepare a final settlement of the conflict.

Within a matter of weeks (mid-September), however, Abkhazian forces launched a massive and successful offensive to capture Sukhumi. Although Moscow officials decried this latest Abkhazian act of seeming defiance and even imposed limited economic sanctions, it reneged on an initial offer to deploy Russian troops to separate the combatants on the transparently unconvincing grounds that riots in Sukhumi made deployments impossible. In fact, there is reason to believe that this offer (which Shevardnadze initially rejected as a thinly-veiled attempt by Moscow to occupy Georgian territory, but accepted two days later when it was clear that Georgian troops were being routed) was withdrawn in order to enable the victorious Abkhazians not only to capture Sukhumi but to reoccupy all of Abkhazia, and advance to the Inguri River (the Russian-Georgian border). Indeed, Shevardnadze was almost certainly on solid ground when he subsequently accused Moscow of instigating the Abkhazian attack and may well have been justified in claiming that Moscow actually organized and coordinated the offensive and ensured its success by opening the Russian border to allow unimpeded entry to Russian mercenaries and armaments. Despite angry Russian denials and counter-charges, Shevardnadze was looking for a scapegoat to blame for the failure of the Georgian army, these charges are entirely plausible and quite consistent with the available evidence.

Despite his conviction that Russia “had sold out the Georgian people” by supporting the Abkhaz separatists, Shevardnadze had but to try to make the most of the new situation with which he was confronted. Now that the Abkhazian separatists had defeated the Georgian army on the ground, his
highest priority was to prevent them from translating their military triumph into political independence. As a result, he had no choice except to try to reach an accommodation with Russia in the hope that it would use its leverage to ensure the preservation of a reasonable semblance of a single Georgian state.

By way of down payment on the price Russia was sure to exact, Shevardnadze agreed in December 1993 to enroll Georgia in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Furthermore, he agreed that a third party peace-keeping force should be deployed in Abkhazia, where Georgian and Abkhazian forces (including Georgian forces that Tbilisi admitted or claimed it could not control) continued to engage in periodic skirmishes, and where ruthless “ethnic cleansing” by Abkhazian authorities continued to generate large flows of Georgian refugees. And, in February 1994, he even endorsed a joint Russian-Georgian petition to the U.N. in which he agreed to the deployment of Russian troops as part of an international peace-keeping force under U.N. auspices. Unlike Moscow, however, which favored an essentially Russian operation conducted with the blessings of the U.N., Tbilisi was hoping against hope that the Western countries would support and participate in a truly multinational operation in which any Russian presence would be heavily diluted.

Despite the enormous respect and sympathy he enjoyed in the West in general, and the United States in particular, Shevardnadze quickly discovered that the idea of Western participation in a peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia was a non-starter. Britain and France made it clear that they were opposed to any intervention in a complicated ethnic conflict on the territory of the former USSR, while President Clinton indicated that the United States would support a U.N. decision to deploy an international peace-keeping force but would not allow U.S. troops to participate. Furthermore, President Clinton initially qualified his promise of support for a U.N. peace-keeping force by insisting that no Russian troops participate—a position that made the entire question moot since Russia was certain to veto any U.N. deployment from which its troops were largely or entirely excluded.

Following the failure of his March 1994 demarches on Eastern capitals, Shevardnadze had little choice but to do what he had warned his Western interlocutors he would have to do—namely, invite Russia to intervene unilaterally or to take the lead in a CIS-sponsored peace-keeping operation (an alternative that both he and Yeltsin preferred for purely symbolic reasons). Because he was now almost entirely at Russia’s mercy, moreover, he had little choice but to agree to drop his long-standing insistence that peacekeepers be deployed largely along the state border between Russia and Georgia (i.e., the border between Russia and Abkhazia) rather than along the internal border
between (ethnic) Georgia and Abkhazia—as the Abkhazians had long insisted and as Russia now demanded. Accordingly, he bit the bullet and on May 10, 1994 joined Ardzinba in asking the Council of Leaders of the CIS to deploy peace-keeping forces on the only terms available—terms that were spelled out in an agreement that was signed on May 14 and resulted, after a delay caused by unexpected political infighting in the Russian Parliament, in the deployment of 3,000 Russian troops (five battalions) along both sides of the Inguri River, the dividing line between Abkhazia and (ethnic) Georgia.

According to the May 14 agreements, this initial deployment of Russian troops was supposed to be supplemented in the fall of 1994 by the deployment of troops from other CIS countries. However, this second deployment, which would in any event have been purely symbolic, never occurred. The need for the (weak) cover of international legitimacy it would have provided was eliminated in July 1994 when the U.N. suddenly endorsed Russia’s intervention as a U.N. peace-keeping operation—an endorsement that was the direct result of a Russian threat to veto a U.N. endorsement of the planned U.S. intervention in Haiti.

Peacekeeping in Practice

Since the deployments of Russia’s peacekeepers, Georgian and Abkhazian forces have not engaged in hostile military actions. In this sense, the peace-keeping mission has been an unqualified success. However, little progress has been made toward a political settlement that would enable the peacekeepers to withdraw.

One issue holding up such a settlement is the return to their homes in Abkhazia of ethnic Georgian refugees. Although some 40,000 refugees have returned to their homes, an estimated 60,000 are still awaiting “repatriation,” and neither Russian nor U.N. efforts to speed the process have succeeded in overcoming Abkhazian obstructionism and resistance. Indeed, the Abkhazian authorities have not even lived up to their commitment to allow the organized return of 200 refugees per week. In Georgian eyes, this is the result of Russia’s unwillingness to apply sufficient pressure, but the return of refugees is always an extremely problematic and complicated process, as the example of Bosnia, among others, clearly attests.

Another outstanding issue, and one that is far more intractable, is Abkhazia’s ultimate political status. Under pressure from both Russia and the West, Tbilisi

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5 How much Shevardnadze was at Moscow’s mercy is indicated by his agreement in February 1994 to the establishment of three Russian military bases on Georgian territory.
has finally dropped its stubborn and counterproductive insistence that Georgia be a unitary state—a post-Soviet demand that was the single most important cause of the Abkhazian separatist insurgency. Similarly, the Abkhazian leadership has dropped its demand for Abkhazian independence—a demand that Russia never officially endorsed and for which, in the aftermath of Chechnya, it no longer has any sympathy. To date, however, the Abkhazians have refused to accept Tbilisi’s proposal to create a Georgian federation, and Tbilisi has rejected the loose conferral relationship proposed by the Abkhazians.

Whether, how, and when these issues will eventually be resolved is by no means certain. Judging by recent indications, however, there is some likelihood that continued Russian pressure will ultimately produce a settlement whereby the Abkhazians accept membership in a Georgian Federation in return for Georgian concessions on such matters as the formation of an Abkhazian military, and whereby the Abkhazians agree to permit the return of refugees to areas in Abkhazia that were inhabited largely by ethnic Georgians (e.g., the Galsky region) in return for Tbilisi’s agreement to resettle most refugees from other areas in Georgia proper. If such a settlement is reached, Russia’s intervention in Georgia may well be viewed by everyone concerned as an impressive success, despite the many controversies with which it has been surrounded.

by John H. Kelly *

Prologue

In Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, there is a Cedar of Lebanon. It stands over a small memorial. The Cedar marks the graves of some of the more than 300 American military, embassy, and civilian personnel who were killed in Beirut in the 1980s. On October 23 each year there is a remembrance service on the anniversary of the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks. I have had the sad honor of speaking at two of these remembrance services. Just as we remember our dead, it is worth remembering why we sent the Marines to Beirut and what we did wrong so that we can try to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

Introduction

American military intervention in Lebanon in the 1980s was influenced by the historical precedent of 1958, when the United States landed Marines in Beirut. In 1958, using the leverage provided by 14,000 troops put ashore, U.S. policymakers calmed civil disturbances, selected the next president of Lebanon, and extracted the force without significant incident or casualties. The U.S. deployment concluded after three months with only one American fatality, killed by a sniper. ¹

This use of force by President Dwight D. Eisenhower was widely viewed as a successful example of furthering American objectives by power projection. To some U.S. decisionmakers in 1982, the earlier precedent meant that the United States might be able to repeat the feat at reasonable cost—in money, lives, and prestige. To many Lebanese and regional players, it meant that the United States could be counted on to restore order and solve problems. This latter perception

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offered a convenient excuse for shifting responsibility onto American shoulders and avoiding the necessity of making difficult decisions.

The Lebanon of 1982 was, however, far different from that of 1958. With an active Israeli invasion of Lebanon underway, a besieged set of Palestinian fighters, a Syrian expeditionary force on the ground, and dozens of separate armed Lebanese factions already embroiled in lethal contests and active warfare for the previous seven years, Lebanon was a perilous land for well-meaning strangers.

As events unfolded, American decisions were reactive to actions in Lebanon. In many respects there was no clear policy—nothing but immediate tactical objectives and a mission never clearly enunciated for the troops who went ashore. Most dangerous of all was the presence of a variety of terrorist groups which were armed and capable of shaking American resolve.

Decisionmaking in Washington was further hampered by friction between Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and National Security Advisor Robert C. MacFarlane. Emotionalism and hope rather than clear purpose and cold analysis colored the decision-making process. Ultimately there was tragedy for the U.S. Marines and the French troops of the multinational force in Beirut, ignominious withdrawal, and broken promises by the West. After the departure there was a continued morass of war and bloodshed for the Lebanese.

It can also be argued that the Western failure in Lebanon fueled the forces of political Islam and terrorism that continue to threaten stability today and that will threaten well into the next century. It is reasonable to conclude that Saddam Hussein of Iraq also reached some views on American resolve from the Lebanon debacle, which may have fueled his appetite for Kuwait.

The Cold War dimension of the 1982–1984 intervention was far different from Eisenhower’s 1958 deployment of the Marines to Lebanon. The 1958 justifications were placed very much in the context of an East-West contest: militant Arab nationalist movements assisted by the Soviets versus pro-Western forces for stability backed by the United States.

In 1982–1984 the justifications were very much linked to regional acts and actors: the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Syrians, and the Lebanese factions. Certainly Washington and Moscow had their surrogates and the local actors had their patrons. Indeed, one crude indicator for identifying the loyalties of local fighters was to note whether they carried AK-47 or M-16 rifles. All parties intermittently cloaked their actions in Cold War rhetoric. Yet on several key votes on Lebanon
in the United Nations Security Council during the period, the United States and Moscow voted together. The essential factors driving events on the ground, however, were regional and local rather than East versus West.

In 1969, in Cairo the prime minister of Lebanon reached an agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that effectively endorsed Palestinian freedom of action in Lebanon to recruit, arm, train, and employ fighters against Israel. Fatah and other Palestinian factions had long been active among the 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanese camps. Through the 1960s the center for armed Palestinian activities had been in Jordan. Then, in 1970, King Hussein of Jordan decided to evict the bulk of armed Palestinians in three weeks of bloody fighting in what the Palestinians call “Black September.” One of the major results was the forced migration of a large number of Palestinian fighters from Jordan to Lebanon. There they based their military and economic activities in the fertile environment of the refugee camps. Soon the Palestinians were well on their way to creating what the Lebanese called “a State within the State.”

Under the guise of preparing armed resistance to Israel, Palestinians insisted on political, police, and economic control of the refugee camps, as well as access to large areas of South Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley that were used for training. This generated increasing friction with the Lebanese population. Clashes over who was in charge between the Palestinians and Lebanese security and military led to armed incidents flaring up all over Lebanon, as the Palestinians were operating from refugee camps in the South, in and around Beirut, and in the North.

Palestinian fighters mounted intermittent cross-border attacks against civilian and military targets in Israel. There were also international terrorist spectaculars, e.g., the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, perpetrated by groups based in Lebanon. In turn, the Israelis struck back at targets and groups across the border in Lebanon.

By 1975, relations between assorted Lebanese groups and the Palestinians had degenerated into open warfare. Lebanese militia groups armed themselves, ostensibly for self-protection from the Palestinians. Soon various Lebanese groups were fighting one another as old feuds revived and new atrocities demanded revenge. This fighting would continue in one form or another until 1990.

In 1976, the Lebanese Christian leadership invited the Syrian Army in for assistance in fighting the Palestinians. An Arab peace-keeping force (usually called the “Arab Deterrent Forces”) was subsequently deployed by the Arab League, incorporating into its ranks the Syrian forces. Intermittent cease-fires
were followed by new rounds of fighting. The civilian population of all faiths suffered greatly.

In March of 1978, Israel launched a major military incursion into South Lebanon. This prompted a formal statement of "United States Concern With the Territorial Integrity of Lebanon,"\(^2\) calling for Israeli withdrawal and discussing a U.N. role in Lebanon. On March 19, 1978, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 425\(^3\) calling for Israeli withdrawal and establishing an international peace-keeping force for South Lebanon, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), still deployed at this writing 17 years later. Israel withdrew in 1978, but the cross-border cycle of attack and retaliation continued sporadically.

Intermittent fighting continued in Lebanon, to the dismay of U.S. policymakers. The violence in Lebanon was discussed in the margins of the 1978 Camp David conference, as President Carter stated publicly on September 28, following the Camp David Agreement. Carter referred to the suffering in Lebanon, the involvement of foreign forces and governments, and added: "My commitment has been to strengthen the [President Elias] Sarkis government, politically, economically, and militarily."\(^4\) Carter said that he had discussed Lebanon with President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel. Carter went on to suggest a conference of the Lebanese factions and a "new charter for Lebanon."\(^5\)

Let us dissect Carter's comments for a moment, as they contain the seeds of what would continue in another administration under President Ronald Reagan: an imprecise description of American interests and intentions in Lebanon. \textit{Was the American interest:}

1. To relieve the suffering in Lebanon?
2. To strengthen the "government" against rebellious factions?
3. To support the Lebanese president against other political/military leaders?
4. To broker a deal among the foreign powers active in Lebanon?
5. To convene a conference of the Lebanese factions?
6. To foster a "new charter" for Lebanon (this refers to a reapportionment of political power to reflect demographic changes in the religious balance)?

\(^2\) Statement issued by the Department of State, March 16, 1978.
\(^5\) \textit{Ibid.}
At various times over the next decade the United States Government attempted to do all of the above, sometimes all at the same time, sometimes one task at a time. In the range of instruments that could be useful in achieving these goals was U.S. military involvement—as a tool to buttress diplomacy rather than to achieve a military victory. But American military involvement was to come about only as a result of a number of extraordinary events.

Most of the Lebanese factions and leaders already believed that the United States was deeply involved in Lebanon and that the United States was actively backing certain players. As the United States is the primary supplier of arms to Israel, many Lebanese and Palestinians in Lebanon counted the United States as an active player in Lebanon on the side of Israel. Intermittently the U.S. administration reported to the American Congress on “Israel’s Possible Violation of the Mutual Defense Agreement of 1952”\(^6\) between the United States and Israel. Such violations were identified as the use of aircraft, armor, artillery, and other equipment for offensive missions across the border in Lebanon, rather than self-defense. Successive Israeli governments maintained that all such raids and incursions were self-defense.

The belief that America was the tacit accomplice of Israel in Lebanon engendered hatred in Lebanese and Palestinian extremist circles. This enmity had fostered the kidnapping and assassination of American Ambassador Francis Melloy and his economic counselor, Robert Waring, in 1976, as they tried to cross the Green Line which separated primarily Muslim West Beirut from primarily Christian East Beirut.

The United States was also widely believed to be supporting the Lebanese Christian militia\(^7\) which received assistance and equipment from Israel. In addition, the United States was known to have a close relationship with the intelligence arm of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The United States was also seen as backing Lebanese President Elias Sarkis (viz. Carter statement above).

Thus, despite the best of intentions or assertions in Washington, the United States was not viewed in Lebanon as a neutral actor in the Lebanese equation. The United States was also widely seen as a power broker in selecting Lebanese presidents, as during the American military intervention of 1958 when the United States foreclosed a second term of office for President Camille Chamoun

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\(^6\) Proposed Arms Sales for Countries in the Middle East: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 96th Congress, 1st Session, p. 44.

\(^7\) The Christian militia was called the “Lebanese Forces” (LF), not to be confused with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).
and arranged the election of Army Commander General Fuad Shehab as president.\(^8\)

Early in the first term of President Ronald Reagan, the United States went to extraordinary lengths to publicly support Lebanese President Elias Sarkis and his government. In a public letter only months after taking office, Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig offered "respect and admiration for the courageous efforts . . . of President Sarkis in the face of renewed crises in Lebanon."\(^9\) On May 5, 1981, President Reagan appointed Ambassador Philip C. Habib as the president's special emissary to the Middle East, "in order to defuse the tensions and to create an atmosphere . . . for resolving the crisis by peaceful means and forestalling a confrontation."\(^10\) By that point the recurrent violence had included the Israeli Air Force shooting down Syrian helicopters, controversy over Syrian Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems deployed in Lebanon, and a high level of intra-factional fighting within Lebanon. In Washington, Syria was labeled as a Soviet surrogate in the Lebanese equation.

President Reagan chose as his emissary one of America's premier career diplomats and a notable Lebanese-American in the person of Philip Habib, who had recently retired after a distinguished record, primarily in East Asia. By naming an emissary, Reagan had increased the level of American involvement in Lebanon. Habib, widely admired for his activism and dynamism, was unlikely to diminish the American role.

Cross-border conflict between Israel and the various forces in Southern Lebanon had continued at differing levels of intensity since 1978 when U.N. Resolution 425 was adopted. Civilians on both sides and U.N. peacekeepers were killed as the fighting ebbed and flowed in the South. The Israeli-supported local Lebanese militia in the south under Saad Haddad regularly fought armed Palestinians with little regard for non-combatants. The U.S. government during the Carter administration had several times joined in U.N. condemnations of Israeli raids and reprisals in South Lebanon, always condemning simultaneously terrorist cross-border activities.

On July 20, 1981, Secretary Haig announced that the United States would "defer" delivery of ten F-16 fighter aircraft to Israel, partially in reaction to the June Israeli air attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor, but also to pressure Israel to reduce the level of violence in Lebanon (Israel had struck downtown Beirut with

\(^8\) See Quandt, *op. cit.*

\(^9\) Letter from the Secretary of State to Lebanese President Elias Sarkis, April 7, 1981; printed in Department of State *Bulletin*, May 1981, p. 54.

\(^10\) Statement Read by the Department of State Acting Spokesman (Passage), May 29, 1981.
bombing raids against PLO targets). Habib was in Israel negotiating a cease-
fire for the border area, and on July 24 he announced that all hostile military
action between Lebanese and Israeli territory in either direction would cease. That cease-fire across the border in South Lebanon held for the next eleven
months in spite of minor violations (Habib's description).

In early June of 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with massive force, driving all the
way to Beirut and putting the Palestinian fighters and residents, as well as the
Lebanese civilian population of that city, under siege. Amidst a great
international furor the scene was set for a Western military intervention. Israel
justified its breach of the previous cross-border cease-fire by citing the attempted
assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London and a build-up of Palestinian
armaments in South Lebanon.

On June 6, President Reagan, in France to meet with the G-7 Heads of
Government at the Versailles Economic Summit, dispatched Habib to Israel to try
to restore the cease-fire. That same day the United States joined a unanimous
U.N. Security Council Resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from Lebanon
and that the border cease-fire be observed by all parties.

As the fighting continued, the first public suggestion that U.S. military forces
might be deployed to Lebanon occurred midway through a June 9, 1982 press
conference by Secretary Haig in Bonn, Germany, where President Reagan was
making a State visit. Haig was asked whether in view of the role of U.S. forces in
the Sinai, might the United States contribute troops to UNIFIL? Haig responded:

"I think it's too early to say. . . . It would depend fundamentally upon the
mission, the composition of the force, the political mandate under which
such an American contribution might evolve. It isn't something that I
think we're leaning heavily in the direction of at all."  

Four days later, Haig was asked on a Sunday talk show: "To facilitate an Israeli
withdrawal . . . would you be willing to see American troops put into a peace-
keeping force?" Haig responded:

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11 Press Briefing by the Secretary of State (Haig), Ottawa, July 20, 1981; printed in Department of State Bulletin, August 1981, pp. 81-82.
13 This study will not argue the rights and wrongs of the different Lebanese, Palestinian, or Israeli actions. It will address the merits and process of the U.S. military intervention.
15 Press Conference by the Secretary of State (Haig), Bonn, June 9, 1982; Department of State Press Release 196, June 16, 1982.
"We have not given serious thought to U.S. participation in the peacekeeping in Lebanon . . . we're going to have to look very, very carefully at what will be necessary to provide a stable situation in Southern Lebanon."\(^ {16}\)

This was Haig's last public comment as secretary of state on the possible role of U.S. troops in Lebanon. In late June he resigned the office, to be replaced on July 16 by George P. Shultz.

Ambassador Philip Habib had been conducting intensive negotiations with the parties in the Lebanese conflict as Beirut continued under Israeli siege. One of the concepts for a negotiated end to the siege would be the deployment of a multinational force to oversee a cease-fire. On July 6, President Reagan announced that he had "agreed in principle to contribute a small contingent of U.S. personnel subject to certain [unspecified] conditions." Reagan placed that decision in the context of bringing "peace and stability to the Middle East . . . "\(^ {17}\)

Habib continued his negotiations throughout July and into August, as the siege of Beirut intensified. The United States joined with other U.N. Security Council members in demanding a cease-fire, voting to censure Israel on August 4. Finally Habib succeeded in negotiating the departure of Yassar Arafat and his PLO fighters.

An essential part of the deal would be the deployment of a Multinational Force (MNF) to facilitate the process. The MNF was to include 800 U.S., 800 French, and 400 Italian troops (the United Kingdom joined the force some months later). The mission of the MNF was described in the August 18 and August 20 Exchange of Diplomatic Notes\(^ {18}\) which constituted an agreement between the governments of Lebanon and the United States for the deployment of 800 military personnel to join the MNF in Beirut. The deployment was to be for 30 days or less.

The agreement (the language of which had been negotiated by Habib and approved in Washington) defined the mandate of the MNF as "to provide appropriate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces as they carry out" responsibilities for the safe evacuation of the departing PLO, the safety "of the persons in the area" (generally interpreted to mean the Palestinian non-combatants remaining in Beirut), and to "further the restoration of the sovereignty and authority of the Government of Lebanon over the Beirut area."

With regard to the safety of Palestinian non-combatants, the agreement stated

\(^ {16}\) Department of State Bulletin, July 1982, pp. 55-56.
\(^ {17}\) Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, July 12, 1982, p. 876.
\(^ {18}\) For the texts of both Notes, see Department of State Bulletin, September 1982, p. 4.
that "The Governments of Lebanon and the United States will provide appropriate guarantees of safety..." (emphasis added). In reality, the agreement was a vague and open-ended mandate for committing American military personnel.

The Note went on to say that "the American force will not engage in combat. It may, however, exercise the right of self-defense" (emphasis added). In explaining the MNF plan at an August 20 press conference, Secretary Shultz was asked if "a single shot [would] result in an American call-back?" Shultz responded that "... We will stay there as long... as the basic conditions envisaged for our forces remain in effect."19 Hours later, Defense Department Spokesman Henry Catto was asked repeatedly about the mission of the United States Marine Corps in Beirut and about hypothetical combat scenarios. Catto was careful to avoid specific responses, but did state: "Suffice it to say that the rules of engagement are adequate to protect our forces if they are fired upon."20

On August 25, the Marines went ashore in Beirut, four days after the French troops arrived. The PLO evacuation was completed without significant incident. The Marines redeployed to their ships on September 10. The MNF had succeeded—or had it?

On August 23, 1982, Bashir Gemayel, a Maronite Catholic and the leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF) Christian Militia, was elected president of Lebanon, to succeed Elias Sarkis. Before the inauguration could take place, President-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated in a bomb explosion in East Beirut on September 14. On September 15, Israeli forces moved forward into positions throughout much of West Beirut, prompting a White House call for Israeli withdrawal from West Beirut21 and a similar demand from the U.N. Security Council.22

On September 16-18, an estimated 700-800 Palestinian civilians were massacred in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut. The world reacted with shock and condemnation.

On September 20, a horrified President Reagan announced the formation of a new MNF in consultation with France and Italy. The force would return to Lebanon for a "limited period of time." He defined the mission as "enabling the Lebanese Government to resume full sovereignty over its capital." Reagan

continued that for the MNF "to succeed it is essential that Israel withdraw from Beirut." The president said that the purpose of the MNF was "not to act as a police force, but to make it possible for the lawful authorities of Lebanon to do so themselves."  

Thus a new decision re-launched American military involvement in Lebanon. The task to be accomplished was vague in the extreme. The decision was primarily a reflex to the massacre. The motivation was in part guilt that Palestinian non-combatants, whose safety the United States had guaranteed in the Habib plan, had been slaughtered by the hundreds. George Shultz said to a colleague: "The brutal fact is, we are partially responsible." There were voices that argued that had not the MNF withdrawn so hastily following the PLO departure, Sabra and Shatila would not have happened. Deputy National Security Advisor Robert C. McFarlane attributed the hasty pullout to Defense Secretary Weinberger: "... as soon as the last [Palestinian] fighter had left Beirut, Weinberger, without consultation or notification, ordered the Marines back aboard ship." McFarlane describes this as "criminally irresponsible."  

Weinberger, in turn, wrote that MacFarlane wanted to send in "a major force, of several American divisions. . . . I opposed the whole idea."  

There was no quick political plan or military objective that would pull Lebanon out of its agony. A military presence was a visible means of expressing our continued concern for Lebanon. There was hope that the MNF would stabilize the situation—but how it was to do so, none could say. Weinberger wrote: "... this MNF would not have any mission that could be defined."  

George Shultz was asked the next morning in a television interview: "During the deliberations on sending the Marines back, did any of you—you yourself, perhaps—have the feeling that you were getting on a slippery slope? Did any memories of Vietnam come to mind?" Shultz: "No, I don't think this has any analogous aspect of Vietnam at all." The truth was that there had been serious  

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26 Ibid., p. 211.  
28 Ibid.  
differences between Shultz and Defense Secretary Weinberger over the mission of the Marines.\textsuperscript{30}

That same day, Amine Gemayel, the older brother of assassinated President-elect Bashir Gemayel, was elected president of Lebanon. President Amine Gemayel was inaugurated on September 23.

The new MNF deployment required a new agreement between Lebanon and the United States. In the American exchange of diplomatic notes with Lebanon on September 25, the mandate of the MNF was spelled out: "The mandate of the MNF will be to provide an interposition force (emphasis added) at agreed locations and thereby provide the Multinational presence requested by the Lebanese Government to assist it and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the Beirut area."\textsuperscript{31} Again, the agreement stated that the American force would not engage in combat but might exercise the right of self-defense.

And so the mission of the Marines was to be an "interposition force"—a presence—in one of the most dangerous places on earth. Between whom? At locations agreed by whom? These questions were unanswered and would remain so.

President Gemayel of Lebanon tells us that there were significant differences from the start over the role and mission of the MNF. He writes in his account of his presidency that each MNF contributor country insisted on a different formulation in the agreement each signed with the Government of Lebanon. Thus, in the U.S. version the MNF was an "interposition" force and President Reagan so described it publicly, to which French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson responded haughtily: "The French President has never uttered the word 'interposition'; this is rather a mission of maintaining peace and protecting the civil population." U.S. Secretary of Defense Weinberger rebutted with: "The MNF is not a force to maintain peace, it is a deterrent force."\textsuperscript{32} The differences and confusion among the allies in the MNF were widely noted by friends and enemies in Lebanon but evoked little comment in Washington.

The administration's public demeanor was firm. President Reagan told a press conference on September 28: "And the Marines are going in there into a situation with a definite understanding as to what we're supposed to do. I believe that we are going to be successful in seeing the other foreign forces leave Lebanon. And

\textsuperscript{30} Shultz, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 107–110.

\textsuperscript{31} Department of State \textit{Bulletin}, November, 1982, pp. 50–51.

then at such time as Lebanon says that they have the situation well in hand, why, we’ll depart."33 In notifying the Congress of the deployment, President Reagan wrote, "Although isolated acts of violence can never be ruled out, all appropriate precautions have been taken to ensure the safety of U.S. military personnel during their temporary deployment in Lebanon."34

On September 29, the first elements of some 1,200 Marines began to arrive in Beirut. Over the next year the number would creep up to 1,800 or so. A month later the Marines’ mission seemed no better defined. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was asked at an October 28 press conference about the size and duration of the mission for the Marines in Beirut. Weinberger answered: "What we need is a multinational force until certain conditions have been achieved. Nobody knows when those conditions can be achieved. It is not an open-ended commitment. . . ."35

During the autumn of 1982, the presence of the Marines in Beirut began to take on an additional meaning which was never publicly acknowledged. The Marines became a bargaining chip in the complex international maneuvering that the United States was fostering. There were active negotiations among the United States, Israel, and Lebanon over the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the terms of a possible treaty between Lebanon and Israel. The presence of the Marines provided leverage in putting pressure on the Government of Lebanon to accede to Israeli demands. The presence implied some measure of protection for the Lebanese authorities against those Lebanese, Palestinians, and other Arabs who adamantly opposed any normalization between Lebanon and Israel.

There was a stillborn negotiation that was supposed to take place, at least in the American view, between Lebanon and Syria. This was supposed to arrange the departure of Syrian troops from Lebanon. However, the Lebanese government had little leverage with Syria and counted on the United States to pressure Syria to accept an eventual Lebanese-Israeli agreement and a Syrian withdrawal. The presence of the Marines and Sixth Fleet aircraft offshore was interpreted by the Lebanese government as some form of influence over and protection against Syria.

There was also a negotiation between the Palestinians and the Lebanese over the departure of Palestinian fighters from areas outside Beirut. The presence of the

34 Ibid., p. 1232.
Marines gave some implied muscle to the Lebanese Armed Forces in any potential confrontation with the Palestinian fighters and their supporters among the Druze and Muslim militias.

During the autumn President Gemayel asked that the size of the Marine deployment be increased. If the Marines were pulled out, President Gemayel and the Lebanese government would feel more exposed and less protected. To secure their Arab flank, they would become tougher negotiators with the Israelis, less likely to sign a treaty. Similarly, if the Marines went home, the Syrians and the Palestinians would be less likely to take seriously the weight of the Lebanese government’s positions. So as 1983 opened the Marines were an important but unacknowledged factor in the negotiations: a bargaining chip. This meant that the duration of the Marines’ deployment became in part hostage to the vagaries of Middle Eastern negotiations and politics.

There was also a humanitarian aspect to the Marine presence. In the harsh winter of 1982-1983 the MNF gave help to a lot of average Lebanese who had suffered too long. Marine helicopters rescued Lebanese trapped in the snow in high mountain passes. Isolated villages were re-supplied. Food was distributed in poorer areas. The Marines were the sign that America cared, that somehow America would make things better and end the war. So the Marines were a bargaining chip and a symbol, if also a fighting force without a defined mission.

By February of 1983, the Marines were involved in disturbing incidents as they guarded their perimeter around Beirut International Airport. On February 2, a Marine captain drew his sidearm as he blocked three Israeli tanks from penetrating his position. President Reagan was asked about this and whether the Marines might be in Lebanon for another year. The President said he could not set any time limit: “These incidents are the type of thing that can happen, and the best answer to them is for the Israelis, the Syrians and what remains of the PLO there are, to go back beyond their own borders.”36 This response reinforced the impression that the Marines would stay until the foreign forces departed Lebanon. That impression soon became explicit policy.

In a March 9 statement before a key Congressional Committee, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia Nicholas Veliotes testified: “It is our intention to phase out the multinational presence just as soon as the evacuation of Syrian, Israeli, and Palestinian forces is complete and the Lebanese

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Army is able to do its job countrywide.” 37 That statement even tacked on a new goal to be achieved before the departure of the Marines—that of waiting for the Lebanese Army to be able to do its job.

On April 18, a car bomb exploded at the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 17 U.S. foreign service and military personnel and over forty Lebanese employees and citizens. The technique employed—driving a vehicle packed with explosives to the front entrance for detonation there by a suicide bomber—had been used in 1981 to blow up the Iraqi embassy in Beirut. Few had focused on the technique, or how to protect against it, then.

On May 17, 1983, Lebanon and Israel signed an agreement ending the State of War between the two countries and providing for a phased Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, contingent on the withdrawal of Syrian and Palestinian forces. The agreement had been the result of intense American diplomatic efforts by Philip Habib and Morris Draper, his deputy. Their efforts were capped by an intensive period of shuttle diplomacy by Secretary of State George Shultz. The problem was that no one had obtained Syrian assent to withdraw.

A key provision of the May 17 agreement stated that Israel would not withdraw until Syria did. The Syrians adamantly opposed the agreement. Syria was backed publicly by the Soviet Union, which was busily replenishing the Syrian arsenal depleted in the 1982 battles with Israel. In Lebanon there was stalemate on the ground. Writing ten years later, former National Security Advisor McFarlane argued that the “United States ignor[ed] the implausibility of the Gemayel government enforcing such an agreement.” 38 Shultz flew out of Lebanon, leaving the implementation of the May 17 agreement to others.

The MNF soldiered on into a hot Beirut summer. On July 22, during a visit to Washington by Lebanese President Amine Gemayel, President Reagan announced the appointment of McFarlane to succeed Philip Habib as special emissary in the Middle East. McFarlane’s tour in Lebanon would last less than three months. In October, President Reagan selected McFarlane as national security advisor.

By late August the Marines of the MNF were caught up in firefights with armed elements outside their perimeter in the predominantly Shia suburbs of South Beirut. The Marines also received occasional fire from nearby mountain slopes,

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38 McFarlane, op. cit., p. 212.
largely held by Druze fighters, supplied by Syria. On August 28, fighting between the LAF and militia forces in South Beirut spilled over to the Marine positions. On August 29, Marine positions came under mortar, rocket, and small-arms fire. Two Marines were killed and fourteen wounded. The Marines returned fire with artillery, small-arms, and a helicopter gunship. President Reagan informed the Congress that the continued presence of U.S. forces in Lebanon was essential to the objective of helping to restore the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon.39

In the weeks following the attack on Marines at Beirut International Airport, U.S. ships of the Sixth Fleet responded with naval gunfire. Two more Marines were killed on September 6. Druze and Palestinian militia forces engaged in intense fighting against Christian forces over areas in the Shuf mountains evacuated by withdrawing Israeli forces. Shultz had wanted the Israelis to remain in the Shuf so as not to reward Syrian intransigence in refusing to accept the May 17 agreement.40

As the fighting between Lebanese Armed Forces and the militia groups intensified, McFarlane and his team at the American ambassador’s residence came under fire from the battle lines five kilometers away. McFarlane sent a flash cable to Washington stating that “there is a serious threat of a decisive military defeat which could involve the fall of the Government of Lebanon within twenty-four hours.” McFarlane urged that the rules of engagement for U.S. forces be modified “to allow our forces to fire in support of the Lebanese Army.”41 Despite Weinberger’s opposition (he described the message as “McFarlane’s ‘sky is falling’ cable”),42 President Reagan approved the recommendation. The Americans began to fire in support of the Lebanese Army.

Some of the naval gunfire was directed at Druze emplacements. This was widely and correctly viewed in Lebanon as U.S. intervention on the side of the Christians and the government. In mid-September the battleship New Jersey was dispatched to Lebanese waters to bring its sixteen-inch guns into play.

With the death of the two Marines on August 29, a furor arose in the American Congress as to whether or not the War Powers Resolution should be invoked to limit the duration of the Marine deployment in Lebanon. Some members sought a six-month limit. When it became clear that some limiting legislation would

40 Shultz, op. cit., p. 223.
41 McFarlane, op. cit., p. 251.
42 Weinberger, op. cit., p. 361.
pass, the administration held out for and won an eighteen-month authorization. Secretary Shultz defended the U.S. contribution to the MNF in hearings before the Foreign Relations Committees of both houses of Congress. He justified the presence as "to help insure the Lebanese Government's sovereignty and authority . . . to assure the safety of the people in the area and to end the violence. . . ." Shultz described U.S. intervention in the Shuf battles as due to concern "that key strategic positions in the vicinity of Beirut, which are vital to the safety of our Marines, of other American military and diplomatic personnel, and to the security of Beirut, have recently come under attack." 43

The testimony by Shultz did not square with what was discussed in private, as we now know. President Reagan wrote the truth in his diary on September 11:

"N. S. C. (National Security Council) is meeting . . . on Lebanon re a new cable from Bud McFarlane. Troops obviously PLO and Syrian have launched a new attack against the Lebanese Army. Our problem is do we expand our mission to aid the Lebanese Army with artillery and air support? This could be seen as putting us in the war."

". . . I've ordered the use of naval gunfire. My reasoning is that this can be explained as protection of our Marines hoping it might signal the Syrians to pull back." 44

Reagan wrote again in his diary on September 19 on how describe the Marines' role:

"N.S.C.: Our Navy guns turned loose in support of the Lebanese Army fighting to hold a position on a hill overlooking our Marines at the Beirut airport. This still comes under the head of defense." 45

In his congressional testimony Shultz went on to say of the Marines: "They are an important deterrent, a symbol of the international backing behind the legitimate Government of Lebanon, and an important weight in the scales. To remove the Marines would put both the Government, and what we are trying to achieve, in jeopardy." In response to a question at the hearing, Shultz replied: "... when America sends its forces to perform a legitimate mission... and then

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45 Ibid.
the minute some trouble arises we turn tail and beat it, I think that sends a gigantic message around the world . . . " 46

So the Marines were a "deterrent," a "symbol," and an "important weight." They were now involved in sporadic combat. U.S. Naval forces were shelling targets up to ten kilometers away from the Marines because the targets were "key strategic positions" in the words of Shultz. That was a misleading explanation. No matter how it was described in Washington, U.S. military forces in Lebanon had begun to use their fire in support of Lebanese government forces as the Reagan diary entries show. As Richard Haass wrote in his recent book on military intervention, "The Marines and the MNF as a whole had come to be perceived as a hand-maiden of Lebanon's Christian-dominated government . . . . As a result, the MNF became a de facto participant in Lebanon's internecine struggles." 47

In Lebanon it looked very much as if the United States had taken up arms in behalf of the Christians. That arguably might have been a legitimate policy option, but it was never identified as a policy to the American public. And as a policy choice, it would have profound repercussions. Instead, U.S. intervention in local battles was portrayed as reactive to local events. In justifying all this, the administration stretched logic. In signing into law the authorization for an additional 18 months for the Marines in Lebanon, President Reagan said on October 12 with reference to the deaths of the two Marines on August 29: " . . . the initiation of isolated or infrequent acts of violence against United States Armed Forces does not necessarily constitute actual or imminent involvement in hostilities, even if casualties to those forces result." 48 In October, McFarlane departed Lebanon after his brief mission which had irrevocably altered the role of the Marines. The deputy commander of the Lebanese Forces, a former advisor to President Sarkis, wrote of McFarlane: "His mission was a disastrous tragicomedy." 49

On October 23, just after dawn 241 Marines died when a truck packed with explosives blew up a Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport. At that same moment a similar explosion blew up a French military barracks a few kilometers away, killing 56 French troops. The October 23 suicide bombers used

the identical technique that had been used six months earlier to blow up the American embassy. The same technique would be used again on December 12 in Kuwait against the American and French embassies. It would be used again in September, 1984, in East Beirut at the American embassy, with 13 deaths. We did not learn very fast.

President Reagan addressed a grieving America the day following the tragedy of the 241 dead Marines. He said that the reasons U.S. forces must stay in Lebanon were clear: "We have vital interests in Lebanon . . . world peace . . . withdrawal of foreign forces . . . restore sovereignty . . . peace throughout the Middle East."\(^{50}\) There were hearings in the Congress. Shultz declared: "If we are driven out of Lebanon, radical and rejectionist elements will have scored a major victory."\(^{51}\)

President Reagan gave a nationally televised speech to the nation and once again tried to define the mission of the Marines:

> "What exactly is the operational mission of the Marines? The answer is, to secure a peace in Beirut, to keep order in their sector, and to prevent the area from becoming a battlefield. Our Marines are not just sitting in the airport. Part of their task is to guard that airport. Because of their presence, the airport has remained operational."\(^{52}\)

In mid-November France launched an air strike against Iranian Revolutionary Guard positions in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. This was retaliation for the bombing of the French barracks on October 23. On December 4, U.S. Navy aircraft from the Sixth Fleet launched a sizable air strike on Syrian air defense positions in Lebanon which had fired upon U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. Two U.S. aircraft were shot down, one pilot was killed, and one was taken prisoner by the Syrians. On the same day, shelling from the Shuf killed eight Marines and wounded two. Sporadic fighting continued through December and January.

In January, 1984, new hearings were held in the Congress. The administration continued to insist that it would not be forced to withdraw the Marines. In a January 22 television interview Secretary Shultz was asked if the Syrians believed they could outwait the United States. Shultz responded that Syrian Foreign Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam had said to American negotiators: "The United States is short of breath. You can always wait them out."\(^{53}\)

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\(^{50}\) *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, October 31, 1983, pp. 1482-1483.


\(^{52}\) *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, October 31, 1983, pp. 1497-1500.

In early February the Lebanese Army attempted to move into West and South Beirut against Druze and Muslim militia forces supported by Syria. Intense fighting broke out and lasted for weeks. U.S. Naval gunfire continued to support the Lebanese Army, but the situation of the Marines became daily more hazardous. On February 7, President Reagan announced that he had asked for a plan for redeployment of the Marines from Beirut to ships offshore. On February 7 and 8, more than 100 U.S. embassy employees and all embassy dependents were evacuated from Beirut. On Sunday, February 26, redeployment of the last Marines serving with the MNF from their positions in Beirut to ships offshore was completed. On March 5, the Government of Lebanon announced that it had canceled the May 17 (1983) agreement providing for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the end of the state of war with Israel.

What Went Wrong?

George Shultz blamed Syria, Israel, and Caspar Weinberger for the debacle: "Beginning with the first deployment of the MNF—the Pentagon restricted our Marines to a passive, tentative, and dangerously inward-looking role in Beirut. . . . The secretary of defense was reluctant to contemplate or cooperate with even a limited application of military force to bolster our diplomacy."55 In the last sentence lies a good part of the problem: the Marines were there to bolster diplomacy, as an interposition force, a deterrent, a bargaining chip, to stabilize, to support the Government of Lebanon, even to keep the airport open. No one ever translated this into clear tasks or military missions. No one seems to have thought through what the implications were if the Marines were seen as the "handmaiden" of the Lebanese government.

In his book, McFarlane blamed President Amine Gemayel for not leading Lebanon to reform and peace. He also blamed Weinberger and Habib for not being better negotiators, the State Department’s Near East Bureau for not anticipating the mess, Syria, and Israel. The Lebanese blamed the United States for walking away, Syria, and Israel. Weinberger blamed McFarlane and Shultz for not having a clear view or mission.

I find the finger-pointing by the Americans in their memoirs self-demeaning. By my reckoning they should all shoulder a portion of the blame. I find it striking that no one has focused on the quality of the actual decision-making process. From the record it is clear that a lot of the decisions were based on wishful

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thinking (e.g., the presence of the battleship New Jersey will somehow intimidate
the fighters into peace). There was a persistent habit of viewing ourselves as a
neutral actor and a concomitant delusion that all of the hostile forces in Lebanon
would so view us. There was also a continued tendency to confuse diplomatic
goals with military tasks. Few of the senior decisionmakers were complete or
truthful in their reports to Congress or the public the way that President Reagan
was to his diary.

The particular tragedy of the Marine barracks, like the repeated bombing of our
embassies, was the result of negligent and poor security measures. Even without
the loss of 241 dead Marines in one day, support for the Marine presence would
have evaporated over time as casualties continued, even if it took a few more
months. The result, I believe, would have been the same. A token military force
with a vague mission was probably a recipe for failure. The responsibility rests
finally with the leaders who made the decisions.
7. U.S. Policy in Africa in the 1990s

by Walter H. Kansteiner *

For many, Africa was an unlikely place for the United States to begin to define its international role in a post-Cold War world. But as a continent where East-West tensions were often played out in the 1960s-1980s, there is a certain logic that it was also the continent where the U.S. foreign policy-making machinery was tested in the early days of a new world order.

For most Americans, Somalia was a seldom heard of country somewhere on the Dark Continent. Liberia held a similar status except to a few who remembered Liberia as the place where freed American slaves were returned with the help of James Monroe and the American Colonization Society. But these two rather obscure countries, and how the United States Government decided to respond to their crises, offers us two interesting (and very different) examples of the use of force in the 1990s.

On December 4, 1992, President George Bush agreed to send almost 30,000 U.S. military forces to Somalia. The American forces would be dispatched to provide for the delivery of food and other emergency supplies, and the operation would have the full support and blessing of the United Nations (U.N.). In fact, Bush’s official and public decision came immediately after the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 794 calling for the U.N. Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to “use all necessary means to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief in Somalia.” One week later, U.S. Marines were landing on the beaches of Mogadishu under the spotlights of Dan Rather’s CBS “Evening News.”

In direct contrast to the Somalia example of a large, swift, and impressive use of force for humanitarian goals is the lesser known Liberia case. In December of 1989, a small band of rebels and criminals crossed the Liberian border from the Ivory Coast and began what was, and still is, a civil war that has claimed the lives of nearly ten percent of the population, displaced most of the rest, and all but destroyed the small West African nation’s economic infrastructure. The United States Government did engage in an early diplomatic effort to find a

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resolution to the Liberian civil war, but a large military intervention was ruled out.

These two case studies have very different historical backdrops, and the two crises came at two very different times in the larger geopolitical context (1990 vs. 1992), but the U.S. Government's response to these African crises, and how policies were developed and implemented, gives us a window into how the American foreign policy structure operates. If Somalia is a study in how the United States led a multilateral intervention in the name of humanitarian assistance, then Liberia is a case of non-intervention. What were the different inputs and how did the policy process unfold in order to bring about such radically different actions—or non-actions—by the U.S. Government?

**Principal Inputs**

All foreign policy decisions have their unique story, and Somalia and Liberia are no exceptions, but most foreign policy issues are susceptible to some basic influences: the media (particularly television); government bureaucracy (State Department, National Security Council (NSC), Defense Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Agency for International Development (AID), Congress); non-governmental pressures groups (in the case of Africa, Trans Africa wields an important stick); domestic politics (particularly important in the timing of the Somalia operation); and our allies and multilateral organizations (U.N., Organization of African Unity (OAU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)), all contributed to the decision to intervene in Somalia and not to intervene in Liberia.

U.S. interests and involvement in Somalia began long before President Bush gave the green light to “Operation Restore Hope” in early December 1992. During the Cold War, Somalia held some geopolitical importance, particularly with regard to its proximity to the Middle East. In the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union and the United States made a superpower “switch.” The United States, which had previously backed Ethiopia, now flipped its support to Somalia. Moscow did the reverse. The port of Berbera was of particular interest to the Soviet Union and then the United States, and both pumped money into building its naval and air infrastructure. But with the end of the Cold War, the Horn of Africa’s strategic value significantly declined.

By January 1991, Siad Barre, Somalia’s strongman president, had been overthrown and clan warfare was underway. (It is quite ironic that Somalia is one of Africa’s few ethnically homogeneous states, yet has succumbed to the
same type of tribal or clan rivalry that has destabilized other African states.) By mid-1992, man and nature had combined in war and drought to place nearly one-third of Somalia's seven million people in danger of starvation. During 1992 more than 300,000 Somalis died as a result of malnourishment or violence. By early 1992 the clan war was reaching into every corner of Somalia, and the country was slowly sliding into anarchy.

During 1991 and the early part of 1992, there was little more than the usual State Department and CIA "tracking" of political change in a relatively minor corner of the world. There were no "Deputies Meetings" (a process used in the Bush administration to discuss key foreign policy issues of the day, the meetings were normally chaired by Deputy National Security Adviser Bob Gates, and, later, Jonathan Howe), and no major interdepartmental discussions took place.

In May 1992, a very interesting cable came in from the U.S. embassy in Kenya. Ambassador Smith Hempstone, on a trip to the Kenyan-Somalian border, painted a picture of tragedy, devastation, and pending starvation at very extreme levels. His "Report from Hell" cable caught many in the bureaucracy's attention, partially because Ambassador Hempstone has a journalistic flare from his days as a Washington Times reporter, and partially because regular reports from Somalia had ceased since the January 1991 closure of the U.S. embassy in Mogadishu.

As director for African Affairs at the NSC, I forwarded part of this rather lengthy but interesting cable on to General Scowcroft and President Bush. Within a few days, President Bush returned the cable to me with a number of questions and comments scribbled in the margins. Bush had had an interest in Africa since his numerous visits as vice-president, and Somalia was now clearly on his radar screen.

By the early summer of 1992, Somalia was beginning to get some U.S. media coverage.\(^1\) CNN teams were filing stories and film footage of the starvation that was taking place, particularly in Baidoa and the south-central part of the country. In July 1992, the New York Times ran a front-page story from Baidoa that included photos which led other media to pursue the story. By late summer and into the fall, Somalia was becoming a regular feature on the evening news, a fact not lost on a White House engaged in a political campaign that did not have foreign policy as a major component.

On the Congressional front, Senators Nancy Kassebaum and Paul Simon traveled to Somalia in July 1992, which drew the Congress into the equation. Kassebaum and Simon held hearings on Somalia which contributed to keeping it on a short-list of major foreign policy issues that were being watched by both the Executive and Legislative branches.

Other pressure groups also weighed in, including Randal Robinson’s Trans Africa, and well-timed media events by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); one such UNICEF campaign very effectively used the actress Audrey Hepburn as a spokesperson. By the end of July, the U.N. Secretary General also weighed in with Boutros Ghali’s report to the Security Council. He openly complained about the West being more interested in “the rich man’s war” in Bosnia than the catastrophe in Somalia. A few days after Boutros Ghali’s public accusation, the U.N. approved an emergency airlift and the deployment of 500 peacekeepers.

The Bush administration offered to transport the U.N. peacekeepers (mostly Pakistanis) to Somalia in order to get them on the ground quickly to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid, but when it became clear late in August that the U.N. and the non-government organizations (NGOs) on the ground could not deliver food to some of the neediest regions of Somalia, President Bush ordered the U.S. military to begin delivering humanitarian supplies with U.S. aircraft. The August and September airlifts helped in the central and southern regions of Somalia, but by mid-November Mogadishu had crashed into complete anarchy with the airports and port being controlled by bandits and warring clan factions. By the third week of November, no food or humanitarian aid was getting out of Mogadishu.

Ironically, the media was taking less interest in Somalia in November 1992 than they had in August 1992, yet the political, social, and humanitarian situation was far more critical in November. Likewise, Congress had ceased being an input (Capitol Hill was vacant for the elections from early November thru January). Hence, the major inputs that led to President Bush’s December 4 decision to launch a military force of nearly 30,000 came from the Executive Branch’s foreign policy machinery and, to a lesser extent, the U.N. and our allies. It was only after Bush announced Operation Restore Hope that the media regained any interest in Somalia.

In contrast to Somalia, the key inputs into any decisions on Liberia were far fewer in number and considerably less public.

Soon after Charles Taylor and his rebel forces entered Liberia in late 1989 they began a guerrilla campaign that extended into a large part of the countryside. By
mid-1990, Liberia was increasingly making the short-list of foreign policy issues discussed at the Deputy Committee level. Unlike Somalia, there were few media reports, only the occasional piece appearing in the New York Times and Washington Post. The principle input for the Liberian decision-making process was the State Department-NSC-Defense Department-CIA machinery.

There was, however, one rather remarkable BBC report that had startling and gory pictures of the atrocities that all sides of the Liberian civil war engaged in. It was commonly known as the “skirts vs. the wigs tape,” because it accurately depicted how the two principle warring factions thoroughly believed in West African juju, or magic. One side routinely wore women’s summer dresses and skirts, and the other wore wigs, both in a belief that by wearing such accessories they became bulletproof. The importance of such a documentary is that many of the policymakers viewed this tape (State, Defense, and the NSC all had copies), and it clearly influenced some of the players’ attitudes toward and perceptions of the Liberian actors, and thus directly or indirectly influenced their policy decisions.

In the diplomatic community, there was very little input from our allies, as most of the Europeans assumed this was an “American problem” given Liberia’s historical and cultural ties to the United States. (The French and British have historically considered Liberia to be “America’s only African colony.”)

There was only brief interest from the Congress. Senator Kassebaum, with her long-term interest and genuine concern for Africa, raised the Liberia issue with Bush administration officials in late 1990, but her concern received very little Congressional support from either political party.

The Executive Branch policymakers were considering the Liberian situation from a number of different perspectives: Liberia had been a military staging base, and Roberts Field possessed an excellent facility for staging certain military supplies; its relative proximity to Angola had not been lost on many in the U.S. government in years past. Another issue was Libya’s role in supporting the Charles Taylor insurgency; the isolation of Libya remained a priority for some of the actors, and the apparent Libyan connection to Taylor was important.

For the policymakers that had responsibility for Africa, Liberia was a concern not only for obvious humanitarian reasons, but also because it threatened to destabilize an entire region. West Africa had enough economic and political problems to contend with. A full blown civil war in Liberia would most likely spill over into the neighboring countries.
Processes and Procedures for Intervention

Both the Somalia and Liberia case studies demonstrate how the U.S. government foreign and policy-making apparatus can function. With Somalia, the process was initially driven by a very open, public awareness and discussion of the humanitarian disaster that was unfolding before the eyes of the television-watching American public. With Liberia, as well as with the later stages of the Somalia case, the process was far less public and essentially played out within the confines of interagency debates that took place on secure phone lines, rather than on CNN television reports.

The first Deputies Meeting on Somalia that focused on possible U.S. intervention was in June 1992. Prior to June, there were interagency meetings, primarily attended by representatives from the State Department, AID, CIA, and Defense Department, that focused on humanitarian relief issues. Somalia’s interclan warfare had been extended through the country since the fall of President Siad Barre in early 1991. The humanitarian plight worsened throughout early 1992, and Somalia was on the top of AID’s disaster list. Hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies were being shipped by the United States, Europe, Japan, and other donor countries, and AID had the lead role in coordinating the logistics of U.S. government donations. But by the summer of 1992, foreign policymakers within the U.S. government realized that this “normal African humanitarian disaster” was increasingly problematic, and possibly in need of attention that went beyond P.L. 480 food shipments.

The media clearly played an important role in motivating the decision-making process. CNN’s pictures of starving Somali children with bloated stomachs and fly-infested feeding camps stoked the fire on which the foreign policy machinery pot was beginning to boil. I do not believe there would have been the intensity of interest on the part of higher-level decisionmakers if there had been no media reports from the starvation fields of Baidoa. It is important, however, to identify the difference between the media raising the consciousness of decisionmakers, and dictating specific policy actions. CNN certainly helped keep the Somalia issue high on the list of foreign policy concerns during the summer of 1992, but it was the policymakers themselves that assessed, formulated, and implemented the August airlift, followed in December by “Operation Restore Hope.”

There have been some academic critiques of the Somalia case that suggest that the Bush administration was caught by surprise by Secretary General Boutros Ghali’s July 22, 1992 report that accused the Security Council of ignoring Somalia and only being interested in the “rich man’s war” in Bosnia. In fact, Boutros Ghali had spoken with both State Department and NSC officials before he
released the report, and the U.S. government sympathized with the secretary
general’s concern for the deteriorating situation in Somalia. In early July 1992,
the Bush administration had quietly notified the secretary general’s office that
the United States was prepared to provide military airlift for humanitarian
supplies as well as airlift for peacekeepers that might be necessary in assisting
with the delivery of those supplies.

The interagency discussions that resulted in the support of a future U.N. peace-
keeping mission (500 Pakistanis to help safeguard the humanitarian efforts) was
led by the State Department. There was some initial reluctance on the part of the
Defense Department—it was their resources that would be spent—but the
Pentagon was readily agreeable when it was made clear that the military’s
participation would not go beyond airlift. The U.S. military airlifted the
Pakistani peacekeepers to Mogadishu and initiated a large-scale food airlift in
August.

The starvation that was so vividly portrayed in the CNN report in July began to
lessen significantly by the end of August. Large amounts of food and medicine
were being successfully shipped and delivered, U.N. peace-keeping forces were
continuing to arrive, and Somalia’s people were being fed. As the conditions in
Somalia improved, the media’s interest lessened. The policymakers also took a
break; their decisions concerning the airlifts had been successful and Somalia did
not need high-level U.S. government attention in September and October. By
mid-November, however, conditions on the ground in Somalia were rapidly
deteriorating. During the early days of November 1992, the Somali warlords,
particularly Mohammed Aideed, began to brazenly hijack humanitarian
supplies, both on the roads from Mogadishu to the interior as well as within the
city of Mogadishu itself. By the second week of November, the U.N.
peacekeepers in Mogadishu (mostly Pakistanis) were bottled up inside the
Mogadishu harbor, and the warlords were in effective control of the city,
including the port. All humanitarian supplies going into Mogadishu harbor
were being off-loaded and stolen by the warlords’ men, no supplies were getting
through to the interior, and the threat of large-scale starvation re-emerged. On
the political front, Mohammed Aideed and Ali Mahdi, and their two warring
factions, were terrorizing Mogadishu, not to mention the very visible
embarrassment to the U.N. peace-keeping force that was essentially being held
hostage by these warlords. (In November 1992, the notion of U.N. blue helmets
being held hostage was a far more unique and unacceptable situation than it is
today.)
The interagency process back in Washington quickly kicked into gear. The Deputies Committee met every day from November 19–25, examining options and preparing proposals to the NSC advisor and the president.

The State Department, Defense Department, NSC, AID, and CIA were the primary players in the decision-making process. A consensus quickly emerged that the United States was the only international actor that could quickly respond to these crises and effectively break the warlords’ siege on Mogadishu. The debate that remained was what type and size of force would be needed, and what would be the most opportune time to launch such a mission.

There were, of course, dissenters within the Bush administration. Ambassador Smith Hempstone wrote a cable from Nairobi, Kenya, that suggested that Somalia was nothing more than “a tar baby”; and “if you liked Beirut, you’ll love Mogadishu.” (This was the same Ambassador Hempstone who sent a cable five months earlier describing the awful plight of the Somali people.) The Hempstone “tar baby” cable was quickly leaked to the Washington press corps, most likely by those in the administration who opposed any military intervention.

But the Deputies Committee was heading for intervention, regardless of leaked cables and a few dissenters. The issues that had to be addressed now focused on how a U.S. military force would interact with the warlords. Should we choose sides, and back one faction over the other? (There were some in the administration that supported this option, citing history in Africa as their rationale.) Could U.S. forces be caught between the warlords’ forces? Would U.S. forces be welcomed or resisted?

In the course of those five or six days (November 19–25), most of these general intervention questions began to get answered for the Deputies Committee. The goal of the operation was clear: U.S. forces would break the humanitarian supply logjam in and around Mogadishu. The intervention vehicle would be a U.N.-sponsored resolution, and “Operation Restore Hope” would be a “blessed” operation. The military operation would initially consist of primarily U.S. forces, but a multilateral force would follow shortly behind the U.S. operation.

Shortly after the five-day string of Deputies Meetings, President Bush called for an Oval Office meeting with his top foreign policy advisors to make a final decision on the possible operation in Somalia. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, former Secretary of State and Chief of Staff James Baker, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell gathered with the president. President Bush clearly wanted to go forward with the operation, but he wanted to get his
top team on board and flesh out any questions or hesitations. The Office of the
Vice President (OVP) had raised some important questions in the days leading
up to the Oval Office meeting. The OVP questioned how "permissive" the
environment would be when the first wave of Marines landed. There were also
questions about possibly working with one clan faction over the other.
Ultimately, it was decided that the military operation would be "neutral," no
side would be favored, and both of the major clans would be consulted with
prior to U.S. forces landing on Mogadishu's beaches. (It became U.S. Special
Envoys Robert Oakley's task to "work with" the warlords on the ground in
preparation for the U.S. intervention.)

The Oval Office meeting discussed how large a force General Powell would need
to achieve the goal of getting the humanitarian aid flowing. The Pentagon was
often eager to test the policymakers' commitment to an operation, and would
usually suggest the higher end of the estimated total number of forces that would
be necessary. Any hesitation on the politicians' part would signal to the military
a lack of total commitment—something they needed for any U.S. military
operation. But in the case of Somalia, the 30,000 force number did not cause any
hesitation; President Bush simply asked if the Pentagon was comfortable with
that number, and if there might not be a need for larger forces.

The only remaining question was how to coordinate the operation with the U.N.,
and how quickly the Security Council could pass a resolution approving the use
of "all necessary means to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief
operations in Somalia." The Security Council put the last piece in place when
they passed such a resolution on December 3, 1992.

President Bush gave a speech from the Oval Office on December 4 and explained
to the American people his reasons for sending U.S. troops to Africa. The next
days were used for military preparations and the first wave of the Marines went
ashore a week after President Bush's Oval Office speech.

The Liberian decision-making process was quite different, and of far less interest
to the American public. It was also far less complex, with fewer actors in
Washington involved in the process.

In early 1990, Charles Taylor, a former procurement clerk in the Liberian army,
began his insurgency in Nimba County. President Doe sent his army to crush the
rebels, and in doing so the Liberian army stirred anti-government sentiment
throughout the countryside by indiscriminately attacking villages and murdering
civilians. Taylor's band of rebels responded with their own set of atrocities, and
the ugly spiral of violence had begun.
The unrest was quickly noted in Washington's Africa "watching circles." An interagency group, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Hank Cohen, was convened to review the situation. The State Department, CIA, Defense Department, and NSC were the primary participants.

There was very little media interest, however, and Congress took only casual note. The interagency meetings highlighted various bureaucratic interests and priorities. For the State Department, Liberia was a case screaming for help. With the long American historical link to the country, and its role in the West Africa region, Liberia represented an important country for some at the State Department. The CIA had different interests: Roberts Field Airport had been used for various staging operations in other parts of Africa, and there were certain communications assets in the country. The Defense Department had very little interest in getting involved, and was certainly not interested in spending resources in an area that was hardly considered of strategic importance. The NSC shared Defense's approach.

The State Department called for numerous interagency meetings, including a number of Deputies Committee meetings (most of which took place via secure television). The State Department had a difficult case to make for military involvement. There were no heroes in the Liberian conflict; all sides were committing atrocities, and the role of African juju (magic) was vividly depicted in the much-discussed "wigs vs. skirts" BBC documentary video that was viewed by numerous policymakers. If there was one single significant outside influence in the decision-making process, it was the BBC videotape.

At one point there were some discussions that Charles Taylor might be the lesser of two evils, and perhaps there was a way that the United States could quietly cooperate with him. Opponents of this approach within the administration quickly reminded everyone that Charles Taylor was actually an escaped convict from a Massachusetts prison, and wanted in the United States for embezzlement.

The general policy approach quietly became one of letting the Liberians work out their conflicts themselves, with the United States hoping to steer clear of any involvement.

As the situation in Monrovia deteriorated, and foreign embassies came under threat, the Bush administration decided in late May 1990 to deploy a task force of four U.S. Navy ships to assist in the evacuation of the embassies. There was never a serious consideration to move beyond evacuation assistance; the United States was not going to spend significant time or resources on any type of military intervention in Liberia.
Conclusion

The decision-making process that was used for Somalia and that which was used for Liberia was essentially the same at the initial stages. Liberia, however, never made it to the higher level of decisionmakers; it was “stuck” in the bureaucratic machinery, never reaching any higher than the Deputies Committee. Somalia, on the other hand, was on President Bush’s desk early in the crises, and remained an issue that was dealt with by the key decisionmakers in the Bush foreign policy apparatus. Outside influences and factors also contributed to the very different outcomes. The media was never a factor in Liberia but it clearly played a role, particularly in the early stages, in the Somalia case. Congress also had a great deal more interest in Somalia than in Liberia. There were numerous Congressional delegations that visited Somalia, and both the House and Senate held multiple Congressional hearings. Liberia, on the other hand, generated one poorly-attended Congressional hearing, and very little behind-the-scenes pressure on the Executive Branch.

Although these two African crises were only two years apart, their timing was vulnerable to post–Cold War world realities. Somalia came on the heels of a successful multilateral Persian Gulf War effort, while Liberia was occurring in the immediate shadow of the collapse of the Iron Curtain. U.S. domestic political realities were such that the Bush administration was a lame duck government that did not feel bound by political constraints when it came to the Somalia crises. Liberia, on the other hand, came in the early days of the Bush administration and there was a far greater reluctance to use military force in an obscure part of the geo-political world.

From a process perspective, Liberia never made it past a certain threshold that is necessary for top policymakers to focus on an issue. Somalia, on the other hand, was of interest to all senior cabinet members and the president throughout the crises.
8. The Caribbean Basin

by Robert A. Pastor *

Scholars of inter-American relations have devoted considerable efforts to try to locate the motive for U.S. involvement in the internal affairs of its neighbors. Instead of a single answer, they have amassed a collection of explanations that range from security (keep out rivals, maintain stability), political/ideological (promote democracy, prevent Communism or “alien” ideologies), economic (imperialism, access to investment or trade), to psychological (an impulse to dominate, a fear of insecurity, misperception). A particular explanation might be cogent for a case, but in trying to understand what moves the United States over time, one needs to look for patterns in the history of U.S. relations with the region.

One pattern is the way in which U.S. attention to the region has fluctuated between obsession and disinterest. I have referred to this pattern as a “whirlpool,” a swirling eddy, which occasionally sucks the United States into a vortex of crisis where it becomes preoccupied by small neighbors or their leaders. U.S. presidents react to these crises with security, political, and economic programs that have their historical antecedents even if the policymakers of the time are not aware of them. Then, almost as suddenly, U.S. interest and resources shift away from the region, and many Americans can hardly recall either their nemesis or the reason for their intervention. Americans then feel they have escaped the whirlpool, but history suggests that they are on the rim, only to be pulled into the vortex with the next crisis.

Although the history of U.S. relations with the Caribbean Basin is replete with examples of America’s drive to extract resources, uproot “alien” ideologies, implant a political philosophy, or prescribe an economic orthodoxy, this whirlpool pattern suggests that the dominant motive over time has been U.S. security. The United States has been motivated not so much to control the region but to keep things from veering out of control where they could be exploited by others viewed as hostile. The line separating a policy of control and a need to...

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keep things from veering out of control is not always easy to locate, but the moment to look would be after the passing of a crisis. If the U.S. motive was to control the nation, it would retain a military presence after the crisis; if the U.S. wanted just to keep rivals out, then it would withdraw after the crisis, as it has usually done in the Caribbean Basin.

The nations in the Caribbean Basin are too small and poor to merit an acquisitive policy or to constitute a direct threat to the United States; the threat that has moved the United States was that more powerful adversaries from Europe or Asia could forge a relationship with a small nation that would permit it to be used as a base to attack or harass the United States or its neighbors. When the threat diminishes, U.S. interest diminishes. That accounts for the apparent cycle between preoccupation at moments of intense geopolitical rivalry and neglect at times of geopolitical calm.

The end of the Cold War raises, once again, the question as to whether the United States has escaped the whirlpool of unproductive relations or whether it is just at its rim. Interest in the region has declined, but is it permanent? That question can only be addressed satisfactorily after we review the history of U.S. policy toward the Caribbean Basin and examine the changes that have occurred in the last two decades.

A Survey Of U.S. Policy

U.S. foreign policy toward the Caribbean Basin has been the sum of the answers to questions as to whether the United States ought to have a "special relationship" with the region and what that means; questions of how to preclude instability, discourage foreign penetration, defeat anti-American revolutionaries, promote peaceful political change, foment economic development, defend human rights, reinforce democracy, gain respect for U.S. investment, the American flag, and U.S. citizens, and maintain good relations with our neighbors. Answers to these questions have differed from one administration to the next, and particularly when there is a change in the party in power. But the differences have never been as much as the administration claims at its beginning, nor as little as it suggests when its power is waning or its policy is wanting, and it seeks strength by asserting continuity or bipartisanship. Nonetheless, in identifying the threads of continuity that have tied presidents as different as Carter and Reagan, one can better appreciate the elusive concept, "national interest." In discerning the changes in policy toward similar problems, we might better establish the boundaries of real choice.
In the twentieth century, U.S. foreign policy toward the Caribbean Basin can be divided into four periods: (1) the protectorate era, 1898-1933; (2) the Good Neighbor Policy, 1933-1953; (3) the Cold War, 1953-1990; and (4) the post-Cold War era.

**The Protectorate Era**

The United States has always been of two minds—realistic and idealistic—on how to relate to the Caribbean Basin. It has aimed to prevent foreign rivals from getting a foothold, but it has also sought ways to embody its idealism in policy. The tension between these two sides was captured in two Congressional amendments passed within three years of the other. The Teller Amendment to the Declaration of War against Spain in 1898 declared that the United States would not annex Cuba, the main prize of the war. In an age of imperialism, this was an unusual act of self-denial, and some leaders, notably Theodore Roosevelt, took pride in the amendment as proof that U.S. motives were different and purer than those of Europe.

The Platt Amendment was passed in 1901 to grant the United States rights to intervene in Cuba’s internal affairs to protect lives and property and preserve Cuban independence. This amendment not only appears self-contradictory—how can U.S. intervention preserve Cuban independence?—but it also appears to negate the Teller Amendment. In actuality, the amendments represented the two sides of the American perspective on Cuba and, more broadly, the Caribbean area. The United States wanted Cuba to be free, but it feared that too much freedom could cause instability and foreign—i.e., non-U.S.—intervention, and so it imposed limits.

Those limits were enunciated in President Theodore Roosevelt’s “Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,” a message to Congress in December 1904. Roosevelt wrote that “chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of ties of civilized society . . . may force the United States, however, reluctantly . . . to the exercise of an international police power.” Just three years before, Roosevelt allowed three European governments to intervene to collect debts from Venezuela provided no territory was acquired. His position changed for three reasons: the American public reacted very negatively to the European bombing of a fellow American republic; in 1903, the United States signed a treaty to build a Canal in Panama; and in 1904, the country with a debt problem was the Dominican Republic—a lot closer than Venezuela—and the Germans were the ones that wanted to collect the debt.
The construction of the Panama Canal—with an investment equivalent to one-third of the U.S. budget in 1914—was a sign of U.S. expansion and a motive for widening its arc of defense. U.S. presidents became preoccupied with protecting this strategic asset from the region’s instability and other foreign powers—to the extent that some historians referred to our entire policy toward the Caribbean Basin as “the Panama policy.”

Still, there were many different ways to defend the Panama Canal and U.S. interests in Latin America during the 20th century. Theodore Roosevelt and Elihu Root, his secretary of state, tried to preclude revolution by international treaties. William Howard Taft used Marines, dollars, and customs receiverships to help the countries remain solvent and stable. Woodrow Wilson replaced “dollar diplomacy” with the promotion of liberty but, like his predecessors, he continued to use the Marines. During the protectorate period, U.S. Marines intervened more than 20 times in the Caribbean area—repeatedly in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

On the eve of the First World War, U.S. fears of German activities in the region intensified. On July 29, 1915, President Wilson ordered U.S. Marines to occupy Haiti. “Though it [the United States] did not need and it did not want such a coaling station [in Haiti], it could not permit a European government to secure one,” wrote a former secretary of state to a Senate committee investigating the intervention. “The indications were that Germany intended to obtain one unless she was prevented from doing so by the United States.”

In 1916, the United States occupied the Dominican Republic, and on March 8, 1917, one month before the United States declared war against Germany, American forces intervened again to prevent civil war in Cuba. The stated cause of these interventions was instability in each country, and the purpose was to promote democracy, but the sense of urgency in the United States related more to events in Europe than in the Caribbean.

If the Spanish-American War heralded the arrival of the United States as the preeminent power in the Caribbean Basin, then the end of the First World War signaled that the United States had become the leading power in the world. The European powers, preoccupied with their own recovery, withdrew or sharply reduced their already limited economic and diplomatic presence in the

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Caribbean Basin. No power stood in the way of the United States. Realist
theories would argue that the United States would maintain and expand its
presence in the region and around the world, but the opposite happened. The
U.S. Senate rejected involvement in the international institutions that Woodrow
Wilson helped construct, and the 1920 election confirmed an America yearning
for "normalcy" and isolation. The United States also disengaged gradually from
the Caribbean, although this was also due to interventions in the region proving
more costly and less effective.

Just as the interventions tended to follow a similar pattern so too did the exits.
The Marines first helped establish an "apolitical" military guard. Then, with
some difficulty and military assistance, U.S. diplomats supervised elections that
legitimized a government. Most U.S. diplomats recognized the shallowness of
the new "democracies" and the threats that the new armies might try to seize
power, but Washington decided to withdraw the Marines, and with one
momentary reversal—in Nicaragua in 1925—U.S. soldiers went home, beginning
in 1921 and ending in 1934.

The Good Neighbor Policy

In an article in Foreign Affairs in 1928, Franklin D. Roosevelt criticized the
interventions of the previous decades: "By what right . . . other than the right of
main force, does the United States arrogate unto itself the privilege of intervening
alone in the internal affairs of another sovereign Republic? . . . Single-handed
intervention by us in the internal affairs of other nations must end."4 Elected
president four years later, Roosevelt used his inaugural address to repeat his
promise to Latin America to dismantle the old protectorate system and replace it
with a new "good neighbor" policy.

In practice, Roosevelt's policy had three components.5 First, he pledged non-
intervention in the internal affairs of Latin America. He withdrew the Marines
from the remaining countries in which they were still based and repealed the
dreaded Platt Treaties. Although Secretary of State Cordell Hull's statement on
non-intervention at the Montevideo Conference is often cited as the beginning of
the policy, the real test was passed by Hull and Roosevelt in 1933 when they
rejected at three different times the recommendation of U.S. Ambassador to

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1945, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; and Bryce Wood, The Making of the Good
Havana Sumner Welles to land Marines in Cuba, allegedly to protect American citizens, but really to control political events. One of the consequences of accepting the principle of non-intervention, however, was that it removed the principal impediment—the United States—from the path to power by military dictators like Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua, Fulgencio Batista of Cuba, and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic.

The second element of the policy was freer trade by Reciprocal Trade Agreements. As Congressman and Senator, Cordell Hull had been a vigorous advocate for free trade for many years, and he gave it highest priority when appointed secretary of state. With much of the world divided into trading blocs, the one region with the most countries eligible for such agreements was Latin America, and, as a result, by 1945, 16 of the 22 bilateral trade agreements signed by the United States were with hemispheric governments.

The third element of the Good Neighbor Policy was a systematic effort by the United States to consult with its Latin neighbors. Even before the storm clouds of war gathered over Europe, Roosevelt and Hull took the inter-American conferences seriously. The investment paid off when war began. Except Argentina, the region gave virtually complete support to U.S. war aims.

After Roosevelt died and the war ended, the broad outlines of the Good Neighbor Policy were maintained by President Harry Truman. Truman made a few changes, e.g., experimenting briefly with a more active policy to promote democracy and distance the United States from dictators. The Truman administration also took the lead in establishing a collective security structure, first in the Rio Pact of 1947, and the next year with the Pact of Bogota that established the Organization of American States (OAS). These institutions formalized the consultative process that Roosevelt and Hull had pursued in the pre-war period.

The Cold War

While some U.S. government officials were concerned about the spread of Communism in Latin America in the 1940s, the first serious intrusion of the Cold War occurred in Guatemala where the Eisenhower administration covertly tried to unseat the leftist Arbenz government in June 1954. As a colonel in the army, Jacobo Arbenz and several of his colleagues overthrew dictator Jorge Ubico in

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6 For an excellent account of U.S. policy toward Cuba when Welles was ambassador, see Bryce Wood, The Making of The Good Neighbor Policy, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, Chapters 2 and 3.
1944. A free election brought Juan Jose Arevalo to power as president, and he undertaken a program of reforms that unsettled the conservative establishment in the country. Arbenz was elected in 1951, and with the support of the Communist Party, he accelerated reforms into ever more sensitive areas, including the inequitable land tenure system.

The Truman administration was worried about Communist influence, and at one time the president had approved a covert plan coordinated by United Fruit Company officials to overthrow Arbenz. When Secretary of State Dean Acheson learned of the plan, however, he convinced Truman to drop it. The Eisenhower administration pursued a more vigorous anti-Communist posture both at home and abroad, and its officials saw the threat more seriously than its predecessor. The U.S. ambassador urged Arbenz to dismiss Communist party members from his government. A proud nationalist, who was dependent on the leftists for ideas and political support, Arbenz refused. The United States imposed an embargo on arms sales to the regime, and when a shipment of arms sailing to Guatemala from Eastern Europe was discovered, Eisenhower authorized a covert plan to overthrow Arbenz. The plan failed, but it catalyzed the Guatemalan military, already suspicious and alienated from the president, to take action against him.

The coup's significance was the message it conveyed across Latin America that the United States would not tolerate leftists—even if they came to power by free election—and that it would work closely with right-wing dictators like Somoza in order to stop Communism. This had the unfortunate effect of reducing the political space for democrats, encouraging leftists to revolt, and rightists to suppress any dissent.

Fidel Castro learned another lesson from Guatemala, one that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Allen Dulles did not grasp until the failure of the Bay of Pigs. After coming to power, Castro replaced the military with his own guerrilla army. Within a year, the U.S. government began a program aimed at overthrowing or assassinating Castro. These failed, and Castro consolidated power.

Nonetheless, the fear of "more Cubas" led President Eisenhower and then Kennedy to propose "Marshall Plan-type" schemes to facilitate the region's development. After resisting the idea of international commodity agreements and the establishment of the Inter-American Development Bank, Eisenhower

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finally accepted both in his last year in office. Kennedy's bold ten-year, $10 billion foreign aid program to Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, was aimed to foster development, support social and land reforms, and reinforce democracy. While it did not achieve its high expectations, it did energize the region in important ways.

The fear of Communism also led President Kennedy to pursue projects begun in the last year of the Eisenhower administration to try to remove dictators who were near Cuba and felt to be vulnerable to Cuban-backed insurgencies. In Haiti, "Papa Doc" Duvalier outlasted President Kennedy. In the Dominican Republic, CIA-supported conspirators assassinated Rafael Trujillo in May 1961. Within a year, an election was held, but the new President Juan Bosch was overthrown seven months later. In April 1965, civil war broke out as Bosch's followers tried to retake power. President Johnson sent 22,000 soldiers. While the Dominican Republic did not become another Cuba, most scholars of the intervention conclude that this was never likely; the only outcome with a high probability was that U.S. intervention would severely damage U.S. relations with Latin America, as it did.\(^8\)

Within a year of the intervention, and for more than a decade, American attention was diverted away from the Caribbean to war in Vietnam and the Middle East, and detente with the Soviet Union. By 1977, however, the United States could no longer ignore the resentment in Panama over obsolete Canal treaties, and Jimmy Carter took the unpopular decision of revising those treaties and modernizing U.S. relations with that small country.\(^9\) Carter also reoriented U.S. relations with the third world to place a high priority on human rights. The policy impelled dictators to release thousands of political prisoners in Haiti, Cuba, and elsewhere, and helped consolidate democracy in the Dominican Republic. An attempt to engage the Cuban government made some progress, particularly in the release of 3,000 political prisoners, but Cuba's expansionist ambitions in Africa precluded any further progress in the relationship.

The Carter administration also sought to fill the security vacuum that opened as the British departed the Caribbean. Beginning in 1962 and continuing through the 1980s, twelve small English-speaking islands or territories in or on the Caribbean became independent. The new nations were vulnerable, and Carter responded by launching the Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic

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Development under the auspices of the World Bank. The Caribbean Group was composed of 30 nations and 15 international institutions, and within four years it quadrupled the aid given to the region and coordinated it to encourage integration.

Nonetheless, a leftist coup occurred in 1979, almost by accident, in the small, English-speaking country of Grenada. The National Security Council met the day after the coup and decided to reinforce Grenada's uneasy neighbors. When Great Britain and the other islands decided to recognize the new regime based on its pledge to hold early and free elections, the United States accepted their approach, but decided to keep a watchful eye on the regime.\textsuperscript{10} Relations soon deteriorated because the regime did not keep its pledge and imported arms covertly from Cuba, but the Carter policy aimed to help Grenada's neighbors rather than to try to undermine or overthrow the regime.

The Carter administration anticipated the revolution in Nicaragua, but, despite considerable efforts, failed to prevent it. The Sandinista guerrillas were viewed by the administration as Marxists and anti-American, but the Somoza regime was indefensible and, indeed, was viewed as the cause of the problem. Therefore, the Carter administration first tried to liberalize the regime; then it mediated differences with the opposition under an OAS multilateral umbrella. When Somoza rejected the mediation, the Carter administration imposed sanctions.

The Sandinistas enjoyed widespread support throughout Latin America, and when the United States in June 1979 tried to gain agreements in the OAS to depose Somoza but interpose an inter-American peace force, most of the Latin American leaders accepted the first and rejected the second. Carter decided not to act alone, and the Sandinistas took power on July 20, 1979. The United States then worked with its friends in the region to provide aid to the Sandinista regime in the hope of moderating it. This strategy showed mixed results until the fall of 1980 when the Sandinistas decided to ignore warnings from Washington and support the leftist insurgency in El Salvador. When this was discovered in the last days of the Carter administration, the United States suspended economic aid to the regime.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} For a full description of U.S. policy and U.S.-Grenadian relations during the Carter and Reagan administrations, see Chapter 8 of my book, \textit{Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Latin America and the Caribbean}.

\textsuperscript{11} For a full development of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations, see my \textit{Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua}, Princeton University Press, 1987.
The Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions were joined in the minds of some Americans with the Iranian revolution and the taking of American diplomats as hostages, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Ethiopia. These events increased America’s frustration, and no one articulated the apprehension better than Ronald Reagan in the 1980 campaign.

The change in policies toward the Caribbean Basin from Carter to Reagan was as dramatic a shift as the United States had seen between two presidents in the twentieth century. While the Carter administration started with an interest in promoting economic development in the Caribbean but eventually returned to a concern for national security, the Reagan administration, reflecting a more traditional approach, made the same journey in the opposite direction. But this understates the different points of departure of the two presidents.

The Carter administration placed a high priority on multilateral approaches to security problems and respecting the sovereignty of small nations. President Reagan believed that the East-West struggle was paramount, and the small nations were important only to the extent that they were allies or enemies in this wider struggle. Reagan viewed “instability [as] being inflicted on some countries in the Caribbean by Cuba and the Soviet Union.” As he told the Wall Street Journal in 1980: “The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren’t engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn’t be any hot spots in the world.”

Reagan adopted a very confrontational approach to Grenada, and in October 1983, when one faction of the revolutionary government attacked another, he joined with six Caribbean nations to invade the island, arrest the revolutionaries, and restore a democratic government to power. The centerpiece of his East-West strategy in the region was his support for the Salvadoran government and the Nicaraguan contras. As with President Kennedy, however, Reagan was sensitive to criticism that his anti-Communist strategy lacked a positive component, and so he fashioned a development program, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and institutions, such as the National Endowment for Democracy, to promote democracy.

George Bush adopted a less ideological and belligerent approach than his predecessor. The Bipartisan Accord, negotiated by Secretary of State James A. Baker and Speaker of the House Jim Wright stopped military aid to the contras long enough to permit real negotiations to move forward. With the support of the Central American presidents, and the active mediation of the OAS, the United Nations (U.N.), and the Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government, chaired by former U.S. President Carter, Nicaragua held a free election in
February 1990, which foreclosed the contra war and permitted the first peaceful transfer of power in Nicaragua from an incumbent to his adversary in the country's history.

*The Post-Cold War Epoch*

In the Caribbean Basin, no conflict was solved automatically as a result of the implosion of the Soviet Union. The Nicaraguan conflict was resolved because the U.S. Congress rejected military aid to the contras, the Arias Plan provided a framework for negotiations, and Carter, the OAS, and the U.N. mediated a crucial election. The Salvadoran conflict was resolved because of U.N. mediation with U.S. support. But the Guatemalan and Colombian conflicts continued long after the Soviet Union disappeared, and Cuba used all of its energies to survive.

Although there was no longer a Soviet security threat in the hemisphere, the Bush administration intervened in Panama in 1989, and the Clinton administration intervened in Haiti in 1994.

General Manuel Antonio Noriega had been an ally of the Reagan administration in its war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, but in June 1987 a senior Panamanian military officer accused Noriega of killing a political leader, manipulating the 1984 election, and being deeply involved in drug-trafficking. President Reagan suspended aid and imposed sanctions. In the summer of 1988 the Reagan administration negotiated Noriega's departure, but it retreated from a deal because George Bush's previous association with Noriega was a political liability in an election year.

In May 1989, former President Carter observed the elections and denounced Noriega when he tried to manipulate them. The OAS foreign ministers then met and condemned Noriega's actions and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate his departure. In October 1989, the Bush administration hesitated to support a group of rebel officers who tried to seize power from General Noriega because of uncertainty as to the identity and goals of the coup plotters. Bush's failure to act proved an embarrassment, however, and so when a second opportunity presented itself in mid-December, the Bush administration decided to take advantage of it by intervening on December 20, 1989. There were three goals: to arrest Noriega and bring him to justice in the United States; to protect U.S. citizens (some of whom had been attacked by the Panamanian military); and to restore democracy. All three goals were achieved, but as the first unilateral military intervention in Latin America in 65 years, the invasion in Panama was roundly condemned in the OAS and the U.N., and, significantly, its impact was
felt as far as Moscow. When Secretary of State James A. Baker visited the Soviet Parliament two months later, a Latvian Deputy told him:

"I don't want to speak about the norms that the United States violated in Panama, but . . . you must have weighed the positive and the negative in taking these decisions. I would like to inform you of one negative aspect that you did not take into account.

In this country, we also have our hawks and doves, and the actions of the United States in Panama provided additional arguments to our hawks, especially after the Summit Meeting in Malta left the impression that our relations had undergone a qualitative change, and then all of a sudden your intervention in Panama happened. There is no question that this will complicate our Parliament's consideration of our proposal to proceed along the road of disarmament."\(^{12}\)

The circumstances surrounding the question of intervention in Haiti had a few points of similarity but many more differences with the other post-Cold War case. As in Panama, the precipitating issue concerned the legitimacy of the government. In December 1990, after numerous false starts, and in the presence of large numbers of observers from Carter's Council, the OAS, and the U.N., Haiti held a successful election in which Jean-Bertrand Aristide won by a large margin. On September 30, 1991, the military overthrew him and sent him into exile.

The OAS condemned the coup and recommended an embargo and diplomatic isolation. Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley told Secretary Baker: that the Caribbean would support a military effort to restore Aristide. After stemming the flow of refugees, however, and in the midst of a presidential election in which his lack of attention to domestic issues was a liability, President Bush decided to put the Haiti issue aside.

During the presidential campaign, Bill Clinton criticized President George Bush for repatriating the Haitian refugees, but after the November election, Clinton was persuaded to maintain the same policy, fearing that a change could unleash a flood of new refugees. At the same time, he earned Aristide's support for the policy by promising that he would use all his influence to assure Aristide's return to power. This promise was apparently made without consideration of its consequences and, as a result, U.S. rhetorical support for Aristide's return was not supported by U.S. actions. In October 1993, a U.S. ship bringing U.N. security forces to the island was not permitted to land in Port-au-Prince, and the

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embarrassment of turning the ship around compelled the Clinton administration to consider military action. The president, however, decided against it then.

In July 1994, the U.N. Security Council passed a Resolution permitting the use of force by member states to ensure Haitian military compliance with past U.N. resolutions calling for the restoration of constitutional government. On September 15, President Clinton warned the Haitian military leaders to step down from power immediately. Although he announced that all diplomatic options were exhausted, none had been explored in the previous six months, and, at the last minute, he asked former President Carter, Senator Sam Nunn, and General Colin Powell to negotiate the departure of the Haitian military leaders.

The Carter team succeeded in gaining the agreement of the provisional government for the entry into Haiti of a large multinational force led by the United States. On September 19, the day after the agreement was signed, 20,000 U.S. forces arrived to create a secure climate that would permit the restoration of President Aristide and the consolidation of democracy in Haiti.

**Patterns of Intervention and Non-Intervention**

Let us review seven cases of U.S. intervention in the Caribbean Basin in the post-World War II period (see Table 1).
Table 1
To Intervene Or Not in the Caribbean Basin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Not to Intervene</th>
<th>Intervene Indirectly</th>
<th>Invade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Guatemala</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cuba</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1960, 1961</td>
<td>1962&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grenada</td>
<td>1979, 1981</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Panama</td>
<td>October 1989</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>December 1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand the key patterns, one needs first to distinguish between direct intervention by U.S. forces and indirect intervention by supporting local or third-country forces. Secondly, one wants to distinguish between the decision to intervene and the decision not to intervene.

The question of what motivated U.S. policymakers to intervene in the Cold War period yields an unsurprising answer—fear of the spread of Communism. Legitimate questions can be raised as to whether the fear was justified in particular cases, whether the response was appropriate, and whether other concerns, e.g., business interests or democracy, were also important. But an intensive analysis of the five Cold War cases suggests that U.S. policymakers acted to prevent the spread of Communist influence.

There are two more interesting questions, however, than the one of motives during the Cold War. First, what were the reasons for not intervening during the Cold War?; and second, what were the motives for intervention in the post-Cold War period?

Table 1 probably omits many moments in the post-war period when the president’s advisors broached the issue of intervention, and the president rejected that option. The decisions that we know the president made not to intervene occurred in crises in Guatemala in 1951, Cuba in 1958, Nicaragua in

<sup>13</sup> During the Missile Crisis, the Kennedy administration made a tentative decision to invade Cuba if the quarantine failed.
1979, and Grenada in 1979 and 1981. As one looks at the broader sweep of U.S. foreign policy, the differences between Democratic and Republican approaches seem less significant. Democratic presidents chose not to intervene in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Grenada; Republican Presidents chose not to intervene in Cuba in 1958 and Grenada in 1981. A similar pattern holds for the decision to intervene.

In the cases of non-intervention, the level of perceived threat was quite low, and there was little public awareness of the crisis. The president evidently believed that it would be difficult for him to justify military intervention. In each of these cases, the “enemies” did not describe themselves as Marxists or Communists, but they were “leftists.” Moreover, the countries were small, and far bigger crises were preoccupying the United States at the time. In the case of Nicaragua, President Carter knew that his Latin American allies would strongly oppose intervention against the Sandinistas as they were supporting them at the time. In the other cases, the principal constraint was simply the president’s conscience and the American body politic.

The fact that the issue of intervention was broached made it easier for the president to consider indirect—and in a few cases, direct—intervention the next time. This was particularly true in the three most recent cases.

The business of identifying a single motive to a complicated national decision is not an easy assignment. In the Panamanian case during the post-Cold War era, in December 1989, the United States had interests in maintaining an open Panama Canal, protecting American citizens, and restoring democracy, but the Canal was not endangered, and there is reason to believe that American citizens would be threatened more by the invasion than without. Certainly, the personal embarrassment felt by President Bush because of his previous associations with Noriega was a contributing factor.

In the case of Haiti, the United States was initially motivated by a fear of refugees. When this concern was alleviated, the pressure to intervene diminished. Over time, however, President Clinton built multilateral support for intervention, and although he did not favor this option initially, he almost left himself no other option at the end. Still, the decision to forge an international coalition to restore democracy in Haiti was an unprecedented contribution to the construction of a collective defense of democracy.

An additional reason for both interventions was presidential credibility and fear of embarrassment. Both Bush and Clinton had pledged to rid themselves of the problem and a previous effort (in Panama, in October 1989; and in Haiti, in October 1993) had failed. Their credibility was at stake.
The factor of presidential credibility was also important during the Cold War. In the case of Grenada, the interesting question is not: why did President Reagan invade in 1983?; but rather why he did not invade in 1981. There was never any doubt that a U.S. invasion of that small island would be no more difficult than the takeover of Martha's Vineyard. But in 1981, a U.S. invasion would have been condemned by everyone, including Grenada's closest neighbors. In 1983, the execution of several Grenadian political leaders so repulsed the democratic leaders of the region that they changed their implicit veto of U.S. actions into an invitation. Still, the decision for the United States to invade needed other reasons. Although the U.S. medical students were in no danger of becoming hostages, some in the administration feared that could happen. Half-way across the world, the suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut provided a need to show that the United States could "stand tall" again.

Perhaps the motive is less important than the consequence of intervention—both for the country and the international community. In both cases, the post-Cold War intervention was positive in terms of improving the lives of the vast majority of the people of Panama and Haiti. The two interventions had different effects on international law and the wider community. In the case of Panama, the intervention was condemned as a unilateral violation of international law; in the case of Haiti, the intervention contributed to a broadening of international law as it had been sanctioned by U.N. Resolution.

The Ebbs and Flows of the Whirlpool: Defining Ends and Means

The process by which the United States Government makes the decision to intervene or not to intervene had been restricted generally to the president and his closest advisors in the confines of the National Security Council. Congress and public opinion are important to the decision, but in a very indirect manner. The president must calculate the effect of his decisions on Congress and the American people, but he rarely consults with more than a handful of Senators or Congressmen.

The decision of whether to go to war is one of those that sit on one end of the spectrum of Executive-Legislative decisionmaking. At the other end are amendments to the foreign aid law where Congress has primary responsibility, and the president is often on the edges trying to find a niche to influence the outcome.
During the 20th century, U.S. policies toward the Caribbean Basin have been anchored to a set of interests which have changed much less than the strategies formulated to pursue them. The motive for U.S. engagement sometimes has been altruistic—to promote democracy or development—but more often it has been fear, a disproportionate fear for such a large power in such a small sea, but a fear nonetheless that events could turn hostile to U.S. interests. It follows that American foreign policy in the Caribbean always has seemed to err on the anxious side. In the 19th century, the United States was anxious to prevent “another Haiti,” an independent black republic. In the early 20th century, the United States was anxious to prevent governments in the region from defaulting to European creditors lest that be used as a pretext for European intervention. During the Second World War, the United States was anxious to keep out Nazi Germany, and after that, Soviet Russia. After the Soviets turned up 90 miles offshore, the United States became anxious to avoid “another Cuba.”

Beyond this elemental security interest, the United States has also tried, at different times, to promote human rights, democracy, social reforms, and economic development. U.S. national interests are not immutable; they have changed over time, sometimes so slowly as to not be perceptible. For example, the Panama Canal is no longer a vital asset to the United States, although it remains vital for Panama. With the advent of aircraft carriers, which are too large to transit the canal, U.S. interests in the canal changed from being strategic to being primarily economic—from permitting the U.S. fleet to move rapidly between oceans to providing a marginal economic advantage in the shipment of supplies.

U.S. interests do not change radically from one administration to the next, but the value and priority that each administration attaches to these interests often changes quite markedly. Both Carter and Reagan, for example, promoted U.S. interests in human rights, but Carter gave a much higher priority than did Reagan. Both wanted to prevent Communist inroads in the hemisphere, but Reagan saw the threat as so dire that he was willing to support armies that committed atrocities.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Jimmy Carter pledged non-intervention and meant it. Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush violated their pledges of non-intervention because they perceived serious threats to U.S. security. Kennedy, Carter, Reagan, and Bush all proposed development programs in the area, although none had enough of an impact to lift the region up to the level of sustainable development.
Presidents defined U.S. interests differently; they also chose different means to defend them. Carter and Bush were more willing to consider multilateral approaches than Reagan, while Bush and Reagan gave more emphasis to military aid, invasions, and covert actions than Carter.

**Opening Spheres of Influence**

Where colonialism or imperialism were not options, major powers have asserted "spheres of influence"—areas of vital interest where sovereignty was grudgingly recognized, deviant behavior was proscribed, and other powers were unwelcome. When respected, such spheres reduced confrontations between major powers; conflict was not necessarily diminished, but it was contained within and among small nations.

Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin thought Franklin Roosevelt's vision of a world order without spheres of influence was quixotic. Privately, the two of them negotiated quotas of influence in Eastern Europe. Since the late 1940s, both the Soviet Union and the United States rejected each other's right to a sphere, even while asserting its own rights. Stalin secured his sphere in Eastern Europe. The United States secured its sphere in Latin America by negotiating the Rio Pact in 1947, by establishing the OAS in 1948, and, later, by covert actions.

U.S. critics noted the contradiction, if not the hypocrisy, between condemning Soviet control of Eastern Europe and asserting it in the western hemisphere, but only after Gorbachev could a Russian citizen match this self-criticism and write: "We rejected the concept of a division of spheres of influence in 'theory' yet pursued it in practice."14 The Brezhnev Doctrine, which asserted the right of the Soviet Union to compel its neighbors to remain Communist regardless of their preferences, made the Monroe Doctrine seem modest in comparison.

The Soviets were acutely sensitive to the slightest diminution of their control in Eastern Europe; the United States allowed more space for internal change but drew a line to preclude Marxist governments in Latin America. The hotter the Cold War, the more determined each superpower became to avoid any encroachments.

By letting Eastern Europe go its own way ("the Sinatra doctrine"), Gorbachev opened the door to the most profound, peaceful transformations in the postwar period. Within one year, free elections brought democratic, non-Communist

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governments to power in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany. Though the people in each of these countries had deep-seated anti-Soviet fears, which had been one of the reasons why Gorbachev's predecessors had been so loath to let go, the new governments were less anti-Soviet than his predecessors had expected.

A similar dynamic was at work in Central America. After a decade of U.S.-supported war in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas and many others thought their best political assets were the U.S.-backed contras, nationalism, and anti-Americanism. But the Nicaraguan people voted overwhelmingly for Violeta de Chamorro in part because they expected her to improve relations with the United States.

This is not to suggest that nationalism and anti-Americanism are spent forces in Latin America. Hardly. The new wave of democrats in the region have been pragmatists, but the next wave might very well be nationalists. Much depends on whether the current generation succeeds and how the United States responds. The history of U.S. relations with Latin America can be viewed as a grudging acceptance by the United States of the region's autonomy and a gradual recognition by Latin Americans that they were partly responsible for their own division and for inviting foreign intervention. The Cold War was just the most recent episode. U.S.-Russian cooperation has stopped exacerbating the region's conflicts, but these can only be resolved locally. The long-standing connection between civil war and foreign intervention will always be a danger in a region of small, open, vulnerable nations so close to the world's most powerful: until definitive steps are taken to sever that tie.

In September 1989, Eduard Shevardnadze, then Soviet foreign minister, outlined a world without spheres in a speech to the U.N.:

"It is no secret that we were not enthusiastic about the election setback of the Polish Communists . . . Nevertheless, we see nothing threatening in the fact that in accordance with the will of the Polish people a coalition government has been formed . . . Tolerance is the norm of civilized behavior. But if it is obligatory for us in our attitude toward the Government of Poland, why are others so intolerant toward, for example, Cuba? . . . The days of traditional demarcation lines are numbered."15

The Soviet Union long trailed behind the United States in its lack of respect for self-determination on its periphery. In denying that his country had any moral or political right to interfere in the affairs of its East European neighbors, however, Gorbachev leaped far ahead of the United States. Before Gorbachev's daring move, President Bush took two steps backwards, stating his intention to

help “the Soviets understand that we have very special interests in this hemisphere, particularly in Central America, and ... I don’t think they really have substantive interests in this part of the world, certainly none that rival ours.”

Like the aftermath of the first and second world wars, the end of the Cold War provides an opportunity for the international community to build new institutions and invigorate old ones. The aim should be to develop rules that restrain unilateral intervention but strengthen collective responsibility and action on behalf of peace and democracy. If the rules can secure each nation from outside intervention or inside subversion, then instability would no longer become a cause for tension by outside powers. Rather it would trigger collective mediation and action.

The heavy, negative weight of the Cold War has been lifted. But the hemisphere won’t escape the whirlpool until it understands that the central dilemma was not a function of the East-West conflict; more than anything, it was due to the chronic instability and vulnerability of the small nations of the region. If a group felt that its access to power was blocked, it would almost always seek support from outside. In the Caribbean, that meant either the United States or, if it were already supporting the government, then its enemy. Thus, internal strife was connected to international intervention.

Many condemned Washington, Moscow, or Havana for this predicament, but the real culprit was the absence of a framework for securing peaceful political change and the lack of resources to help nations improve the lives of their people. The way to untie the gordian knot connecting internal conflict with international intervention is by forging a new collective defense of democracy within a broader arrangement that will assist the process of development and the pursuit of social justice.

If governments in the region do not realize they are currently on the rim of the whirlpool, then they will find themselves recaptured someday. If they develop a strategy to preserve democracy and sustain development, then they can escape to a truly new world.

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9. Panama and Haiti

by Richard L. Millett*

Background

In many ways U.S. interventions in Panama in 1989 and in Haiti in 1994 fit the pattern of nearly a century of repeated uses of force and the threat of force by the United States in the Caribbean Basin. From the military ouster of Spain from Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898, through the proxy overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954, the United States acted as the ultimate arbiter of power throughout the region. In 1927, Under Secretary of State Robert Olds noted:

"... we do control the destinies of Central America and we do so for the reason that the national interest absolutely dictates such a course. There is no room for any outside influence other than ours in this region. We could not tolerate such a thing without incurring grave risks. ... Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power while those we do not recognize and support fall."¹

Olds’ words applied equally to the Latin Caribbean. While direct interventions became much less common after the 1920s threats of force, use of proxy forces, covert operations, and economic pressures were on occasion used to oust regimes of which the United States disapproved.² This pattern began to change in the 1960s. Kennedy administration efforts to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba and Francois Duvalier in Haiti failed. Proxy forces proved inadequate, economic and diplomatic sanctions were unavailing. In both cases, Washington went to the brink of intervening with military force but backed off at the last second.³ The global context of the Cold War, the influence of media-driven public opinion,

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¹ Confidential Memorandum by Under Secretary of State Robert Olds, January 2, 1927, National Archives, Record Group 59, Document 817.00/4456.

² Examples include Gerardo Machado in Cuba in 1933, Arnulfo Arias in Panama in 1941, Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, and Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1961.

³ In 1961, Kennedy refused to use U.S. forces when the exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) failed. In Haiti, in 1965, U.S. support for guerrillas was futile and efforts to involve the Dominican military only weakened that nation’s elected government. When reports indicated Duvalier was on the verge of fleeing the nation, U.S. Marines were actually dispatched to Port Au Prince by air, but hurriedly recalled when the rumors proved false.
and the need to cultivate political support from other hemispheric nations all led
to a growing reluctance to use direct, unilateral force. The fundamental
determination to remain preeminent in the region, however, endured.

These changes were evident in President Johnson's 1965 intervention in the
Dominican Republic. For the first time, the United States sought support from
other hemispheric nations for an intervention, ultimately getting the
Organization of American States (OAS) to approve the creation of an "Inter-
American Peace Force," nominally under the command of a Brazilian general.\(^4\)
An interim government was installed and relatively free elections were held.
While clearly American dominated, this operation represented a move away
from the traditional, unilateral approach to intervention.

The Carter administration's response to the 1979 Nicaraguan civil conflict
represented even greater movement away from unilateralism. Facing the
prospect of victory by the Marxist-dominated Sandinista Liberation Front, the
United States asked the OAS to send an Inter-American force to Nicaragua.
When it became clear that this proposal would be overwhelmingly defeated the
administration withdrew it and, instead of undertaking unilateral intervention,
turned to negotiations to deal with the situation.\(^5\)

The Reagan administration seemed, in many ways, to return to earlier patterns of
intervention with its use of a proxy force, the contras, to undermine the
Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and in the 1983 intervention in Grenada. But
with operations in Nicaragua constantly limited by pressures from the U.S.
Congress and opposition from much of Latin America and in Grenada, the
administration found it desirable to seek the support and participation of the
Commonwealth Caribbean. The prolonged and indecisive nature of the
Nicaraguan operations was especially illustrative of the growing limitations on
American interventionism as Washington ultimately accepted political
negotiations rather than force of arms as the means for dealing with the situation.

In its second term, the Reagan administration found itself confronting political
disorder in both Haiti and Panama. While these situations threatened efforts to
promote stability in the region, the possibility of direct military intervention was
not initially considered as an option in either case. In 1986, the United States
helped negotiate the departure of Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, but


found it much more difficult to promote a stable successor regime.\textsuperscript{6} Instability and military rule, however, was nothing new in Haiti and after Jean-Claude fled the administration was able to consign that nation to the back-burner. The situation in Panama proved much more intractable.

**Panama**

Panama provided a multitude of problems for the Reagan administration. Reagan’s opposition to the Panama Canal Treaties, the desire of Panama’s dictator, Omar Torrijos, to play an active role in the emerging Central American crisis, U.S. plans to use Panamanian bases to support operations in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and growing concerns over that nation’s role in the international narcotics trade all combined to make relations tense and potentially unstable.

The death of Torrijos in a 1981 plane crash removed one problem, but created another. A struggle for power broke out within the ranks of Panama’s combined military and police force (known first as the National Guard and later as the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF). In 1984 the most unscrupulous of the contenders, intelligence chief Manuel Antonio Noriega, emerged as the nation’s new strongman.

Panama has a long tradition of preferring negotiations, intrigue, and coalition-building to brute force in resolving disputes. In many ways, Noriega fit into that tradition. For a price he would work with anyone. He had long been on the CIA’s payroll, he provided Fidel Castro with technology and limited intelligence, he established links with Israel’s intelligence services, and he cut deals with Colombia’s drug cartels who found Panama not only a convenient transshipment point, but also an ideal place to conduct all kinds of business, including money laundering.\textsuperscript{7} Everybody found it useful to deal with Noriega; nobody trusted him.

Noriega was an embarrassment to U.S. policymakers, trying to portray Nicaragua as an island of totalitarianism in a sea of emerging democracies. Panama’s 1984 elections only made the situation worse for U.S. policymakers. The opposition to Noriega was led by octogenarian Arnulfo Arias, an erratic populist whose overthrow the United States had promoted in 1941. Noriega’s


hand-picked candidate, banker Nicolas Ardito Barletta, seemed to fit Washington's prescription for an ideal Panamanian president. The problem was that Noriega had to resort to massive fraud to secure his election. Hoping that Barletta could move the nation toward democracy, and convinced that the military would not tolerate an Arias presidency, the Reagan administration ignored the fraud and endorsed the official results.8

Barletta's presidency lasted only a year. In September 1985, the PDF murdered a leading Noriega critic, Dr. Hugo Spadafora. Spadafora had ties to Panama's traditional elite families and his death intensified their already strong opposition to military rule. When Barletta endorsed an investigation of the slaying, Noriega and the PDF forced him out of office, installing Vice President Eric Arturo Delvalle as the latest in a string of puppet civilian presidents. While U.S. Ambassador to Panama Everett Briggs and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliot Abrams urged support for Barletta, others, notably in the defense and intelligence communities, were less enthusiastic and the United States accepted the fait accompli.9 There seemed few viable alternatives to Noriega, especially since his second in command, Colonel Roberto Diaz Herrera, was perceived as a leftist sympathizer.

In the months that followed, relations slowly deteriorated. Opposition to Noriega grew in the U.S. Congress where Republican Senator Jesse Helms, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, and Democratic Congressmen Gus Yatron and Michael Barnes, chairs of subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, held 1986 hearings on the situation in Panama.10 Reports of Noriega's and the PDF's involvement with narcotics trafficking fueled the criticism.

In June 1987, Noriega retired Colonel Diaz Herrera, both creating a dangerous opponent and removing a major obstacle to stronger U.S. action. Diaz Herrera responded by detailing PDF responsibility for the 1984 electoral fraud and the Spadafora murder. Panama erupted in riots and much of the business class joined with opposition politicians in protesting military domination. The PDF ultimately restored order and sent Diaz Herrera into exile, but the publicity

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8 Scranton, pp. 75–78.
10 Situation in Panama, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress, Second Session, March 10 and April 21, 1986. Human Rights and Political Developments in Panama, Hearings before the Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations and on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Ninth Congress, Second Session, April 29 and July 23, 1986.
generated by these events combined with continuing opposition demonstrations and strikes led to a dramatic shift in U.S. policy. After considerable debate, administration officials agreed to “quietly ease” Noriega out of power. Emphasis was on persuasion, political and economic pressures, and encouragement of internal opposition.11 There is no indication that consideration was given to the possibility of the use of armed force to accomplish this objective.

On June 26, by a vote of 84 to 2, the U.S. Senate passed Resolution 239 calling on the Government of Panama to remove General Noriega from command. Panama’s rubber-stamp Legislative Assembly responded on June 29 by denouncing U.S. interference in its internal affairs and calling for the expulsion of U.S. Ambassador Arthur Davis. The next day a government-organized mob attacked the U.S. embassy.

A few hours after this attack, Elliot Abrams delivered a major speech on Panama which associated General Noriega with Castro and Nicaragua’s Sandinistas. While criticizing the PDF’s corruption and involvement in politics, Abrams also characterized the institution as “a vitally important part of the fabric of Panamanian society.”12 The United States was clearly trying to encourage the PDF to change its commander.

The campaign against Noriega encountered little international support. On July 1, the OAS approved a resolution which criticized “unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of Panama.”13 Undeterred, the United States turned to economic sanctions and, on July 23, froze military and economic assistance to Panama. Five months later Congress passed and President Reagan signed into law an Appropriations Bill which included bans on importation of Panamanian sugar, suspension of joint military exercises, and a requirement that U.S. representatives vote against loans to Panama by international financial organizations. Nothing the administration did had any evident effect on the Noriega, who continued to beat, arrest, and intimidate his domestic opponents. His use of force, however, was measured with few fatalities and a conspicuous lack of the tortures and disappearances which had characterized actions by erstwhile U.S. allies in Guatemala and El Salvador.14

14 For a description of opposition tactics and Noriega’s response, see Richard L. Millett, “The Failure of Panama’s Internal Opposition, 1987-1989,” in Conflict Resolution and Democratization in
Noriega’s efforts to deflect U.S. pressures were equally ineffective. Panama apologized for the June 30 attack on the U.S. embassy and paid for the damages, but this had no impact on policy. Noriega threatened that continued pressures would move Panama’s politics to the left and took several symbolic actions such as granting landing rights to Aeroflot in an attempt to drive this point home. This only strengthened the administration’s determination to force his resignation.

By late 1987, both sides seemed to be searching for a way out of the impasse. Retired Admiral Daniel J. Murphy, former deputy director of the CIA, traveled to Panama in August and November to sound out possible scenarios for a solution. Jose Blandon, Panama’s Consul General in New York, developed a plan which would allow Noriega to retire gracefully but would keep the Delvalle regime in office and the PDF in power. The extent to which either of these was operating with official sanction remains unclear and both efforts ultimately collapsed, but they did indicate that, in traditional Panamanian fashion, everybody was seeking to make the best deal possible.

By early 1988, the administration knew that two Florida grand juries were preparing indictments charging Noriega with narcotics trafficking. In an election year in which drugs were becoming a major issue, any effort to suppress or even hold up the indictments risked major political disaster. But once they were handed down, pressures for a tougher stance against Noriega would greatly increase. In an effort to avoid this dilemma, the administration sent Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage to Panama to urge a speedy solution and convince Noriega that he could not count on Pentagon support. The meetings produced no positive results and, in the view of Ambassador Davis, may even have been counter-productive.

The indictments were handed down on February 4, 1988, with the predictable effect. Removing Noriega became a domestic political issue whose urgency increased as elections drew closer. Still trying to work through existing authorities, the United States concentrated on getting President Delvalle to fire Noriega. On February 25, he attempted to do so but the PDF ignored him and the Legislative Assembly obediently voted to remove him, replacing him with Education Minister Manuel Solis Palma. Delvalle fled to a U.S. military base in


15 Scran, p. 121.
16 Scran, pp. 119–128.
17 Buckley, pp. 112-13.
Panama and the Reagan administration announced that it still considered him to be president.

Until this debacle, the United States had paid scant attention to Panama’s political opposition. If anything, their insistence that Noriega’s departure was non-negotiable and that the Delvalle administration should also be deposed had been perceived as hindering efforts to resolve the confrontation. The United States now wanted a united opposition front against Noriega, but this meant pressuring the opposition to accept Delvalle. Described by one Panamanian writer as “a political orphan,” Delvalle lacked credibility with all significant political factions. The PDF viewed him with disdain as an American puppet, Noriega’s political supporters saw him as a traitor who endangered their futures, and the opposition argued that he was the product of a fraudulent election who served Noriega until family pressures and threats to his sugar interests forced a change of course. By embracing him, the United States cost the opposition political credibility.

In the days following the Delvalle fiasco, the administration sought to create its own policy consensus. There was strong support for increasing economic sanctions, a tactic which was low cost but difficult to reverse. There was no apparent sentiment for the use of military force, despite the presence of over 10,000 U.S. troops stationed in Panama. General Fred Woerner, the Commanding General of the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), headquartered in Panama, was especially adamant on this point. Any use of force, he believed, would endanger U.S. dependents in Panama, many of whom lived off the military bases in Panamanian territory, and would damage military relations with nations where we had bilateral defense agreements. Woerner constantly argued that other, less costly, options were still available which could bring down Noriega. He was generally supported by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr. But while arguing against intervention they also began developing detailed plans for just such an operation, should the necessity ultimately arise.

There were widespread hopes that a coup within the PDF would bring down Noriega, but little consensus as to what the United States could or should do to

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19 Stephen Broening, “U.S. Policy Advisers Meet to Chart Path in Panama,” Baltimore Sun, March 1, 1988, pp. 1-2A.
encourage and support this. When an attempt did occur on March 16th, the administration seemed ill-prepared to take advantage of it and the effort failed. Its major impact was to give Noriega an excuse for purging the officer corps of actual or suspected opponents.

To increase pressure, the United States announced on April 1 that 1,300 additional troops would be dispatched to Panama. Elliot Abrams urged further military pressures and supported a variety of plans for seizing Noriega and transporting him to the United States. These ideas produced a growing rift with General Woerner and Admiral Crowe, who viewed them as dangerous bluffs or, even worse, ideas that could produce the military confrontation they were designed to avoid. Finally, at the urging of Secretary of State George Shultz, and with the support of the president, Washington again tried to arrange Noriega’s departure by negotiation. Pressures were mounting on both sides to cut a deal. In Panama, economic sanctions were beginning to bite and hopes that Noriega’s “friends” in the Pentagon and the CIA could shield him from escalating pressures were rapidly fading. In Washington, the approach of presidential elections and a growing tendency of Congress to adopt anti-Panamanian legislation made reaching a solution even more urgent.

By May, negotiations headed by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Michael Kozak seemed close to success. Agreement was reached that Noriega would resign, effective in August, and would not leave the country until after the 1989 elections. The United States would dismiss the indictments against him, lift sanctions, and provide economic assistance. Washington would continue to recognize Delvalle as president, but Solis Palma would continue occupying the presidential offices while a broad-based dialogue established conditions for the elections. Opinion as to whether Noriega would comply with such a deal was divided, with some, such as the U.S. Embassy’s Deputy Chief of Mission John Maisto arguing that he was playing for time, while others, such as Defense Attaché Colonel Al Cornell, insisted that he really wanted a deal. In any case, Noriega asked for more time. This infuriated Shultz, who was delaying a trip to Moscow in order to announce the anticipated agreement. Over Kozak’s

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22 For example, the Senate, on March 25, by a margin of 92-0, passed a resolution declaring that the administration “should act immediately to impose additional diplomatic, political and economic pressure on General Noriega and should obtain his extradition from Panama.” Six days later, by a 92-1 vote they urged the imposition of expanded economic sanctions. On May 17, by an 86-10 vote and over administration opposition, the Senate adopted a resolution condemning any negotiated dismissal of the indictments against Noriega.
objections, he ordered negotiations broken off. Why this effort failed is still in dispute. Some argue that Noriega always planned to scuttle arrangements at the last minute, others believed that pressures and threats from his own officers caused him to back off. Still others insist that Vice President George Bush, believing that any arrangement which gave Noriega immunity would jeopardize his chances in the U.S. presidential elections, manipulated policy to ensure that the deal fell through. Whatever the truth, and it is clear that strong elements in the PDF and among those in charge of the Bush campaign were extremely unhappy with the projected accord, the best chance to negotiate Noriega out of power came to nothing.

For the next eight months policy was put on hold, awaiting the inauguration of a new U.S. administration. Efforts continued to encourage potential dissidents within the PDF to mobilize international opposition and to create a unified political opposition for the May 1989 elections. This last effort was facilitated when Amílcar Carazo finally died in August 1988. The United States had little expectation that the elections would not be rigged, but hoped that Noriega would resort to blatant intimidation and fraud which would open the door for direct OAS involvement similar to that which had helped force Anastasio Somoza from power in Nicaragua a decade earlier. Noriega had long implied that he had a special relationship with George Bush and that once Eliot Abrams left the State Department a quick resolution of the dispute with the United States could be arranged. While this may have helped strengthen his support within the PDF, such rumors made it even more difficult for the new administration to negotiate any deal. Lacking other viable options, it concentrated on the 1989 elections, providing covert funding for the opposition, which had formed a coalition ticket headed by Amílcar Carazo’s former executive secretary, Guillermo Endara, and encouraging the dispatch of international observers headed by former U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, and former Belizean Prime Minister George Price. The willingness to work with Carter signaled a shift away from the partisan debates of the Reagan era to the search for some degree of bipartisan consensus on dealing with Panama. Noriega’s efforts to manipulate the electoral process was even less successful than expected and on election night it was clear that the opposition was heading for a massive victory. When the government tried to manipulate the count President Carter went on television,

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recognized the opposition's victory and declared that "the people of Panama are in the process of being defrauded of the votes they freely expressed."\textsuperscript{25}

With observers virtually unanimous in recognizing Endara’s victory, Noriega finally had the entire election annulled on the grounds of foreign interference. Opposition protests were brutally suppressed, producing dramatic pictures of bloodied candidates. Panama’s Roman Catholic Church joined the rising swell of denunciations of Noriega’s actions and, prodded by the United States, the OAS agreed to convene a Meeting of Foreign Ministers to discuss the situation.

At first glance, Noriega’s handling of the elections seemed to give the Bush administration exactly what it wanted. Bipartisan support for tougher measures seemed assured, and there was hope that the OAS might repeat its 1979 Nicaraguan performance. To further strengthen his hand, President Bush sent additional troops to Panama, recalled Ambassador Davis, and began removing U.S. dependents from the nation, especially those who lived off U.S. military bases.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, planning for possible intervention was resumed.

Unfortunately for the Bush administration and people of Panama, the OAS effort at resolving the dispute proved disastrously inept. In May, that body did adopt, by a vote of twenty to two with seven abstentions, a resolution calling for the peaceful transition of power “to a democratically elected government.”\textsuperscript{27} But it never explicitly recognized the opposition slate as that government. Instead, a mediation mission, headed by Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Diego Cordovez, tried to promote a political solution by treating Noriega’s puppets as fully legitimate and making avoidance of a U.S. intervention more important than the restoration of democracy. For Noriega, the mission provided him an opportunity to play for time, exacerbate divisions among his opposition, and pose as a champion of Latin American nationalism. Divisions within the OAS mission combined with a perceived lack of credibility for U.S. threats to convince Noriega that he could survive international pressures and continue in power.\textsuperscript{28} The mediation effort collapsed when Noriega rejected a proposal for a referendum on accepting or rejecting the May elections and installed yet another puppet president, Francisco Rodriguez, when Solis Palma’s term expired on September 1.

\textsuperscript{26}Scranton, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{27}Scranton, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{28}Interviews with Colonel Arturo Getalla (Guatemala), military advisor to the OAS mission and with Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Delgado, PDF.
By then, the United States was drifting toward the military intervention it had hoped to avoid. Upset by General Woerner's critique of possible military options, the administration decided to replace him with General Maxwell Thurman, an officer with no Latin American experience or sympathies.29 Thurman took over on September 30, and two days later another coup attempt was launched by dissident PDF officers. Confusion, inexperience, and unclear guidance all contributed to a fatal lack of American support for these officers, who at one point actually managed to capture Noriega. Thurman was suspicious that this was actually an elaborate Noriega plot to lure the United States into intervention, Panama's political opposition was completely out of the loop, and Noriega was able to turn the tables on his captors, rally military support, and ultimately have the leading plotters shot. In the aftermath, he again purged the officer corps and assigned his own men as bodyguards for ranking officers.30

Public criticism of U.S. failure to support this effort, coupled with a growing loss of faith in other options accelerated the momentum toward unilateral military intervention. The OAS had failed, and the opposition appeared disheartened and frustrated. Economic sanctions could not be lifted, but were doing more damage to Noriega's opponents than to his supporters. In the aftermath of the October uprising, prospects for the PDF removing its own commander seemed more distant than ever. The administration's own exaggerated rhetoric, portraying Noriega as a key to Latin America's drug trade and a menace to U.S. security, generated additional pressures for some quick, decisive action. Noriega's own performance had similar results. Frequent appearances loudly defying the United States were designed to bolster domestic support, but had the effect of creating a popular U.S. image of him as a mad, machete-waving tyrant. The bloodied images of opposition candidates which appeared around the world following the May elections added to this perception and gave the opposition a huge boost in credibility. Finally, his decision to launch a campaign of harassment against U.S. personnel in Panama, far from restraining U.S. pressures, produced a growing anger against him within the American military establishment.

Under pressure from Washington, General Thurman began hurriedly updating and revising plans for armed intervention. In the process he downplayed concerns over conditions within Panama and emphasized the rapid destruction of the PDF with a minimum of U.S. casualties.31 By the end of November it was

30 For a detailed description of the coup attempt, see Buckley, pp. 193-212.
clear that all it took to launch the operation was a credible excuse. Noriega soon provided that. On December 15, at his urging, the puppet National Assembly declared that because of continuing U.S. “aggression” Panama was “in a state of war.”32 The following day a U.S. officer, 1st Lt. Robert Paz, was killed by PDF soldiers. For the President this was all the provocation necessary. On the 17th he authorized Operation Just Cause, the military invasion of Panama. This began in the pre-dawn hours of December 20th, and, with a few exceptions, the PDF quickly collapsed. Scattered violence continued for several days, however, and Noriega, who took refuge in the Papal Nunciature, did not surrender until January 4. Sworn into office on a U.S. military base, the Endara administration was quickly installed to replace Noriega’s regime.

Criticism of the intervention by Latin America leaders was loud and sharp, but seemed to have little long-range effect of hemispheric relations. The OAS did adopt, by a vote of twenty to one with six abstentions, a resolution calling for U.S. withdrawal, but took no action to enforce this. U.S. fatalities were surprisingly low; Panamanian fatalities were notably higher, but still well under a thousand. For an operation the United States had tried so long to avoid, the negative repercussions seemed surprisingly few.

Haiti

Like Panama, the political crisis in Haiti endured through two different U.S. administrations. There, too, the United States encouraged election supervision and sought to involve the OAS in promoting a political transition. Both confrontations were with military regimes which refused to accept electoral results, violated human rights, and were suspected of narcotics trafficking. In both cases U.S. intervention resulted in the destruction of the existing military institution and the installation of an elected civilian government. But beneath these apparent similarities there are important differences. The fall of the Duvalier dynasty in 1986 brought neither stability nor democracy to Haiti. The poorest nation in the hemisphere, it was deeply divided along class/caste lines. A French-speaking mulatto elite dominated the nation while the black, Creole-speaking majority struggled to survive.

Haiti lacked any tradition of democracy, open elections, impartial judicial systems, limited power, or government accountability. Political parties were often groups of office seekers following some powerful individual. Described as “a nation occupied by the state,” the government’s main preoccupations seemed

32 Scranton, p. 199.
to be extorting taxes from the destitute peasantry and seizing opportunities for self aggrandizement. In much of rural Haiti, where eighty percent of the population lives, the government was represented only by tax collectors and soldiers.

Haiti’s armed forces (FADH) were the most predatory and least professional in the Americas. Combining police and military functions, this 7,000 man force was poorly equipped, badly trained and disciplined, and accustomed to the uninhibited use of force against its own population. In rural areas, military authority was supported by a network of army-appointed section chiefs (chefs seksyon) who acted as rural police and appointed their own deputies. Dating from the Duvalier era, there was also a network of para-military thugs, originally known as tonton macoutes, who functioned as agents of official terror.33

It was hardly surprising that the post-Duvalier era was marked by bloody power struggles. Elections scheduled for November 29, 1987, were marred by terrorist attacks, uninhibited by the FADH. Election day was an orgy of violence, leading to the suspension of the process after only three hours.34

The military rescheduled elections for December. The four principal candidates boycotted this farce and the United States characterized the process as “rigged,” but beyond suspending aid did nothing. The military declared that over a million votes had been cast and that their candidate, Dr. Leslie Manigat, had won. Sworn in on February 7, 1988, he would hold office for less than five months. Caught in an internal military feud over power and drug money, he was unceremoniously exiled on June 20. With Manigat’s own claim to office flawed and each side of the dispute accusing the other of being involved in narcotics trafficking, Washington could only deplore the continuing violence.

For over two years, while a dreary succession of military leaders tried to govern Haiti, pressures for a transition to a more democratic regime continued both on the international and on the domestic front. Within Haiti, opposition to military rule came to be symbolized by a radical priest, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The conservative Roman Catholic hierarchy tried to silence him, the tonton macoutes tried to kill him, but his popularity only increased. In 1989, the United States persuaded the incumbent military ruler, General Prosper Avril, to step down and allow Supreme Court Justice Ertha Pascale Trouillot to serve as interim president. With the support of the military’s new commander, General

Herard Abraham, she arranged relatively free elections for December 16. To the dismay of the military and Haiti's elite families, Father Aristide was elected president with two-thirds of the total vote.

Aristide took office on February 7, 1991, and was overthrown by the military on September 30, less than eight months later. His brief term in office was highlighted by his firing of General Abraham, whose support of elections had made possible his victory, and by conflicts with the Congress, the military, and Haiti's mulatto elite.

During Aristide's brief term in office the OAS General Assembly, by a vote of 34 to 0, had adopted Resolution 1080 which called for "the immediate convocation of the Permanent Council in the case of any event giving rise to the sudden or irregular interruption of the democratic political institutional process of the legitimate exercise of power by the democratically elected government in any of the Organization's member states." This reflected a new commitment to support elected governments against coups and a belated recognition of the dangers evident in the inability of the OAS to resolve the crisis in Panama. The coup in Haiti was the first test of this resolution and, with the strong urging of U.S. Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, the OAS moved quickly to implement its mandate. On October 2, 1991, a meeting of Foreign Ministers of OAS member states was hurriedly convened. Declaring that "a small group of willful, violent men have betrayed their uniform and their nation," U.S. Secretary of State Baker called on the delegates to "make clear that the assault on Haiti's constitutional government has no legitimacy and will not succeed." Announcing that the United States, Canada, Venezuela, France, and the European Community had suspended all assistance, he called on the multilateral agencies to do likewise and urged all OAS members "collectively to defend the legitimate government of President Aristide." The next day, the foreign ministers formally condemned the coup and called on member states to "suspend their economic, financial, and commercial ties with Haiti," and to "bring about the diplomatic isolation of those who hold power illegally." Haiti's military ignored this resolution and pressured the parliament into installing Supreme Court Justice Joseph Nerette as the new president. Real power, however, was in the hands of Army Commander

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General Raul Cedras and the rest of the high command. The Foreign Ministers Meeting responded with even stronger action, calling on member states to "freeze the assets of the Haitian State and to impose a trade embargo." They also dispatched a "civilian mission" to Haiti to negotiate Aristide's restoration. Some governments urged even stronger action. Argentine Foreign Minister Guido de Tellas suggested that the OAS create a multinational military force to return Aristide to power. Except for Venezuela, no other major hemispheric states showed any interest for this option.

Headed by former Colombian Foreign Minister Augusto Ramirez Ocampo, the OAS mission labored for months to produce an accord. The failure of the European Community and other nations to support the trade embargo, despite a United Nations General Assembly resolution endorsing OAS actions, weakened the negotiators' hand. U.S. enthusiasm for the return of Aristide also waned as the exiled president, supremely confident in the total righteousness of his cause, proved difficult to deal with. These factors, combined with the endless intrigues, rivalries, and double-dealings of the Haitian military and its political supporters, made reaching any accord a monumental task—and having all parties abide by any agreement even more problematical. President Bush also faced divisions within his administration when it came to dealing with Haiti. The CIA believed that Haiti had little value and that Aristide was unstable, untrustworthy, and anti-American. The military saw any commitment of resources to Haiti as a diversion from much more important areas. Many Republicans in Congress believed Aristide was a dangerous, pro-Castro radical and that involvement in Haiti could only harm their party's chances in the 1992 elections.

By the end of 1991, the administration was backing off from any immediate commitment to restore the exiled Haitian president. The tone of Ambassador Einaudi's remarks to the OAS Permanent Council on January 21, 1992, reflected this shift. While condemning the coup and calling for the restoration of democracy he stressed the need for an "arrangement reached among Haitians," adding that, "Reconciliation takes time. . . . Bridging deep social divisions takes time."

In the days following this statement the administration distanced itself even further from Aristide. As the crisis dragged on, Haitians by the thousands tried

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40 Ambito Financiero (Buenos Aires), October 9, 1991, p. 11.
to flee to Florida, creating a demand within that politically crucial state that Washington do something to control the influx. The Coast Guard had been picking up refugees and taking them to internment camps in Guantanamo Bay. With Guantanamo overflowing and Florida nervous at the prospect that the refugees might wind up there, President Bush ordered that refugees be returned directly to Haiti. He also announced that exemptions to the embargo would be granted to individual firms on a case-by-case basis.\(^{42}\)

On February 23, 1992, the OAS mediation effort finally appeared to bear fruit. Aristide and a delegation of Haitian parliamentarians signed the “Washington Protocol” which recognized him as head of state and provided for the creation of an interim government with Rene Theodore, leader of Haiti’s tiny Communist Party, as prime minister. Both sides also agreed to request the lifting of international sanctions and to “reject and condemn any intervention by foreign armed forces.”\(^{43}\)

The following month, under military pressure, Haiti’s Parliament refused to ratify the accord and the mediation effort collapsed. The military, the Parliament, and much of Haiti’s elite had become convinced that the administration’s growing disillusionment with Aristide would eventually lead to their acceptance of his ouster, providing an acceptable substitute could be found.\(^{44}\) To accomplish this, Marc Bazin, a former international banker who had been widely perceived as Washington’s favored candidate in the 1991 elections, was installed in June as Prime Minister. While the Bush administration never recognized Bazin’s government, they did pressure Aristide to negotiate with it. With U.S. elections approaching and a modicum of stability restored, the administration was more than ever willing to leave Haiti’s fate to negotiations among Haitians, assisted by international mediation. The OAS continued its efforts, but met with little success. By the December 1992 Foreign Ministers Meeting, most member states had decided that the only way to make the embargo effective and break the political stalemate was to involve the United Nations. OAS Secretary General Joao Baena Soares opposed this, but was overruled by the foreign ministers.\(^{45}\) Details were quickly worked out. Former Argentine Foreign Minister Dante Caputo was appointed by both secretary


\(^{45}\) Interview with Ambassador Lawrence Pezzullo, August, 1995.
generals as their special representative. He soon negotiated the establishment of an OAS/U.N. monitoring mission which began arriving in Haiti in early February, 1993.

Following the inauguration of Bill Clinton as president in January 1993, the stronger response from the international community seemed matched by a change in U.S. policy. Clinton publicly associated himself with Aristide and pledged a “much more aggressive effort” to return him to power. In March he appointed Ambassador Lawrence Pezullo as his special envoy to Haiti. Working closely, Caputo and Pezullo began seeking a formula to resolve the crisis.

While the OAS, in part because of Mexican opposition, could never develop a military component to its negotiating position, the U.N. and the Clinton administration were not so inhibited. They agreed that an international military/police presence, both to monitor the situation and to reorganize and train Haitian security forces, was an indispensable component of any solution. There was less consensus on the extent and nature of America’s participation, with Washington arguing for a leading U.S. role (along with French and Canadian participation), and the U.N. wanting a more diversified force under U.N. control. These problems were ultimately worked out and, in April, Caputo presented the Haitian authorities with a plan for restoring constitutional government and reforming the security forces. To the dismay of the U.N. and the United States, the plan was rejected. Haiti’s military still believed that they could wait out international pressures.

This placed the Clinton administration in a difficult position. Failure to respond decisively would anger important constituent groups, notably the Congressional Black Caucus, and would weaken the credibility of U.S. policy throughout the hemisphere. Exerting stronger pressure would run contrary to the advice of much of the intelligence and defense communities and might risk blundering into an unpopular military intervention. Again, the administration turned to the OAS and the U.N. On June 6, a Meeting of OAS Foreign Ministers adopted a resolution calling for an oil embargo and a suspension of commercial air service to Haiti. Ten days later, the U.N. Security Council voted to impose an oil and arms embargo and to freeze all foreign assets controlled by the de facto regime.

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46 Schulz and Marcella, p. 21.
47 For an example of U.S. military thinking on this subject, see William W. Mendel and Stephan K. Stewman, Planning for Haiti, Leavenworth, LA: Foreign Military Studies Office, Combined Arms Command, June 1, 1983.
Under this pressure the regime began to weaken. Bazin quit as prime minister and General Cedras agreed to meet with U.N. and OAS negotiators in New York. The United States, supported by three other “Friends of the Secretary General,” Canada, France, and Venezuela, participated in these talks as, reluctantly, did Aristide and his representatives. The result was the Governors Island Agreement of July 3. Aristide agreed to appoint a new prime minister (businessman Robert Malval) who would be approved by the Haitian Parliament. Once he was in office sanctions would be suspended. Cedras would resign and international trainers would separate the police and military and help train and reorganize both forces. Aristide would appoint a new military commander, decree an amnesty for all involved in the coup and return to Haiti by October 30. The international community would provide financial assistance to rebuild the shattered economy.\(^50\) This accord, hailed as a diplomatic triumph, soon began to unravel.\(^51\) Aristide and Malval quarreled and the promised amnesty decree was repeatedly delayed. The military and its allied thugs increased their violence against Aristide supporters. From July through September there were 118 confirmed or suspected political murders in Port Au Prince. Parliament couldn’t meet, Malval’s cabinet members did not dare go to their offices, and the mayor of Port Au Prince was prevented from reclaiming his office.\(^52\)

The Clinton administration stubbornly insisted that the Accords were “still on track,” and moved ahead with plans to deploy U.S. and Canadian trainers. Problems with the U.N. and disputes between the U.S. Defense and State Departments delayed this and it was not until October 11 that the U.S. Navy troop ship Harlan County arrived off Port Au Prince with 218 unarmed American and Canadian trainers and engineers. A mob of pro-government thugs took over the docks, threatening violence should the troops land. To the surprise of the mobs’ leaders, the Harlan County was ordered away, never to return. Coming at the same time as the U.S. military debacle in Somalia, the administration was unwilling to do anything which might risk American servicemen being killed by foreign mobs. The military and their supporters had, at little apparent cost, called the Clinton administration’s bluff and won.\(^53\)

The Haitian crisis would drag on for 11 more months until U.S. troops occupied the country. Sanctions would be expanded and tightened, and negotiations

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\(^{51}\) The Economist, September 4, 1993, pp. 41–2.

\(^{52}\) Martin, p. 82. Schulz and Marcella, pp. 25–26.

would be attempted with little success, but until troops were preparing to
embark for Haiti, the United States and the international community would not
be able to regain credibility for their determination to oust the military from
power. The administration tried a wide variety of approaches, in the process
often exacerbating perceptions of its inconsistency and lack of will. It
successfully pressed the U.N. to reinstate and tighten economic sanctions. It
launched a campaign to link the Haitian military with narcotics trafficking,
hoping that this would mobilize American public opinion against them the way
it had against Noriega in Panama.⁵⁴

When the October 30 date for Aristide’s return came and went with no sign that
the authorities in Haiti would back down Caputo and Pezullo tried to resume
negotiations, this time between Malval and Cedras. But there was little room for
compromise on either side.⁵⁵ In Washington, divisions within the administration
and between Republicans and Democrats increased, especially after a CIA report
that portrayed Aristide as mentally unstable was leaked. This in turn infuriated
the Black Caucus and led to the reassignment of the National Intelligence Officer
for Latin America. Reports that sanctions were contributing to Haiti’s infant
mortality further divided the administration, with U.S. National Security Council
officials expressing fears that Haiti would erupt into food riots if the stalemate
were prolonged. But the thought of intervening was equally unpalatable. The
only alternative was to keep seeking a negotiated settlement which none of the
major Haitian factions seemed to want.⁵⁶

By April, the administration was running out of options and the political need to
resolve the situation before the November Congressional elections was
increasing. After bitter internal debates, the decision was reached to stop
pressuring Aristide to compromise and concentrate instead on increasing
pressures on the military and its allies. This led to the dismissal of Ambassador
Pezullo, who believed this would transfer responsibility for a solution from Haiti
to the United States and risk an unnecessary military intervention.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Senator John Kerry, “Drugs and the Haitian Military,” in The Haiti Files: Decoiling the Crisis,
⁵⁵ Kahie Klarreich, “U.N. Tries to Get Haiti Peace Plan Back on Track,” Christian Science Monitor,
November 2, 1993, pp. 1 and 4.
⁵⁶ John M. Goshko, “U.S. Inaction Is Blamed in Haiti Impasse,” St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 3,
⁵⁷ Maureen Taft-Morales and Mark Sullivan, Chronology of Haiti’s Political Crisis, 1990-July, 1994,
Washington: Congressional Research Service, 1994, p. 5. Interview with Ambassador Pezullo,
In May, the U.N. expanded sanctions, including banning private flights to Haiti. Washington increased pressures on the Dominican Republic which had developed a lucrative trade in smuggling embargoed goods, notably fuel, across its border with Haiti. Ultimately international observers were dispatched to help stem this flow of vital supplies.

In May 1994, the administration produced Presidential Decision Directive 25 that included participation in international forces to restore democracy as a justifiable use of force. The United States then began sounding out allies about their possible participation in a Haitian “peace-keeping force.” Outside of Argentina, support in Latin America was minimal. Nevertheless, in early June, the administration had the Joint Chiefs of Staff issue orders to plan for the occupation of Haiti.58

The administration still hoped that intervention could be avoided if the Haitian military was convinced that their failure to yield power would produce this confrontation. A calculated series of statements and press leaks led to a wave of media speculation on the possibility of armed intervention. This had little discernible impact on Haiti’s rulers, but it unleashed a fierce debate in the United States.59 Members of Congress, such as Bill Richardson of New Mexico, traveled to Haiti to seek a possible political opening. Latin Americans looked in vain for some way to negotiate a political solution.60 Fearing the consequences should Aristide return, and hoping, if no longer firmly believing, that opposition to intervention in the United States would save them, Haiti’s military continued to hang tough.61 Even when the Security Council, at Washington’s request, authorized creation of a multinational force to restore Aristide to power, General Cedras and his supporters did not move.62

On September 10, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the order to execute “Operation Uphold Democracy,” the invasion of Haiti. It took several days to assemble the needed troops and equipment. On September 15, President Clinton delivered a

final ultimatum to Haiti's military: leave or be removed by force. At the same
time, after considerable debate and with the last-minute additions of General
Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn, Clinton agreed to a final mediation effort
by former President Carter. This made little initial progress until the Haitian
military became convinced that U.S. threats were credible and that force would
be used if negotiations failed. A deal was worked out, then almost collapsed
when the Haitian military reacted furiously to the news that U.S. troops were
already on their way to Haiti. Only frantic last-minute negotiations by Carter,
Nunn, and Powell produced a final agreement. The military leaders agreed not
to oppose the intervention and to resign in return for a general amnesty. On
September 19, U.S. forces began landing in Haiti. They encountered no
opposition.

The military probably believed that the negotiations with Carter insured the
institution's future, but they were soon proved wrong. Within a few weeks the
military was effectively disbanded. Several thousand continued on as interim
police, but long-range plans for creating a new force excluded most of these.
Leading military figures fled into exile and Aristide returned to govern a
battered and exhausted nation. After three years of escalating confrontations the
United States had achieved its goals in Haiti by force, but without significant
bloodshed.

Conclusions

In both Panama and Haiti the decision to employ military force came after years
of frustrating efforts to reach negotiated solutions to internal political conflicts.
Each decision to utilize force was reached reluctantly, in good part because of the
perception that all other options had been exhausted. Both interventions
removed repressive and corrupt military regimes and installed elected leaders
who had been forcibly prevented from exercising their mandate. In that sense,
both were successful. On another level, success is much more debatable. In
Panama, opposition to international narcotics trafficking was constantly cited as
a rationale for actions against the Noriega regime. But intervention had no
discernible impact on this traffic; indeed there is evidence that more drugs may
be passing through Panama now than when Noriega ruled. In Haiti, restoring
democracy was the most frequently proclaimed rationale for U.S. policy, but, as
recent elections have shown, democracy in Haiti is weak and imperfect, and how
democratic that nation's future will be remains to be seen.

63 Interview with Dr. Robert Pastor.
There are several lessons which can be drawn from these two case studies. Perhaps most obvious is that in the initial responses to these crises virtually no one in the policy community contemplated resorting to force. If a significant possibility of such an outcome had been perceived, it is probable that policy would have evolved quite differently.

Both cases demonstrate the capacity of policy to become hostage to rhetoric. In neither case was the actual threat to vital national interests clear. High officials resorted to exaggerated rhetoric, political demonizing, and public confrontations which put national prestige on the line. However, the more this was done the harder it was to back off or reach a compromise negotiated settlement. General Noriega is a case in point. By portraying him as the king of drug dealers the Reagan and Bush administrations rallied public opinion and limited political criticism of their policies. But, in the process, they also made it more and more difficult to negotiate, as evidenced by the Bush campaign’s extreme anxiety over the possibility of a deal which would drop indictments against Noriega.

Economic sanctions had a similar effect. Readily available at relatively low cost, both administrations and Congress found the temptation to employ sanctions in Panama and Haiti irresistible. But once employed they were difficult to abandon without paying a high price in credibility. When they didn’t work the inevitable temptation was to ratchet them up another notch. Using sanctions to oust an undesirable regime in a small, less-developed nation is like using a sledgehammer to kill a fly. You may eventually get the fly, but in the process you do an immense amount of undesired damage to the environment in which the fly operates—damage which you may ultimately have to pay for. Sanctions are very difficult to target and often damage those within a nation whom the policy is ostensibly designed to support. Ending this damage ultimately became a major argument in favor of military intervention, contributing to the very decision which sanctions were supposed to help avoid.

Policymaking was badly hampered by failures to understand the prevailing political culture. In Panama this meant, among other things, that actions taken with the expectation that they would divide the military often led to binding them closer to Noriega on the assumption that his fall meant a similar fate for them. In Haiti, as Washington Post correspondent Pamela Constable has observed, “to an astonishing degree American officials underestimated the cynicism, greed, ruthlessness, and deep hostility to Aristide among military leaders and their civilian confederates.”

\[64\] Constable, p. 110.
entrenched tendency to see Washington as omnipotent, to assume that for things to change all that was necessary was for the United States to decide to cause the change. As a result local opposition groups often spent more time and effort lobbying American policymakers than trying to resolve their own problems. In both nations the United States ultimately took responsibility for resolving disputes over political power.

Both Panama and Haiti provide classic examples of the capacity of domestic politics to shape, and even dominate, the foreign policy process. In Panama this was exemplified by the submerging of Panamanian realities into the domestic debate over narcotics trafficking. In Haiti the importance of refugees as a political issue, especially in Florida, played a crucial role. So too in the Clinton administration did the influence of the Congressional Black Caucus. Elections had strong but varying effects. The Reagan administration in its last months downplayed Panama in order to avoid embarrassing the Bush campaign. The Bush administration’s involvement in Haiti similarly declined during its last months in office. For the Clinton administration, however, resolving the Haitian crisis before 1994 congressional elections became increasingly important. The basic principle seems to be that the shorter the time to elections, the more dominant are domestic political factors in shaping policy decisions.

The international context is also significant. In Panama, initial confrontations with Noriega were strongly influenced by the need to gain support for policies in Central America. In Haiti, the death of U.S. servicemen in Somalia was critical in explaining the Harlan County debacle.

In each case, the effort to develop consistent and effective policies was hindered by divisions within each administration. Such divergent views reflected different perceptions of the nature of each situation and the potential for success of alternative policies as well as disputes over the political costs and benefits of various options. But they also derived from profound differences on the nature of U.S. international obligations and on the role of force in foreign policy. What is clear in both cases is that the Defense Department and the intelligence community were the least supportive of increased pressures, threats, or other actions which might eventually lead to the use of force. The military always saw the dangers inherent in such policies, while the State Department, the National Security Council, and political advisors were more likely to see escalated pressures as offering opportunities for avoiding a resort to force.

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Military opposition can have a powerful inhibiting impact on decisions to use force. It is politically very dangerous for any administration to send troops into combat situations against the counsel of its senior military advisors. This reflects both the military’s prestige and problems of presidential credibility, especially when under close media scrutiny and prolonged partisan criticism for policies in a particular situation. It also reflects internal debates over formulating policy guidelines for the use of force. These were particularly fierce between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger in the Reagan administration. With increasing frequency, such divisions have surfaced in the media, undermining credibility. This perception of divided councils helped convince both the Panamanian and Haitian militaries that they could wait out U.S. pressures. The weak credibility of threats undermined the 1992 effort to negotiate a settlement in Panama; by contrast, when the threat became overwhelmingly credible, President Carter’s last-minute negotiations in Haiti succeeded.

One important difference between Haiti and Panama was the extent to which the Bush and Clinton administrations were able to rally public support for the use of force. In Panama the use of force won approval by a four to one margin. Support over Haiti never approached these levels. This reflected both the impact of the experience in Somalia and a belief that dealing with narcotics trafficking was a much higher priority for the United States than promoting democracy in other nations.

In both these cases the United States backed into the use of force by exhausting or mishandling other options. The need to maintain administration credibility, the negative consequences of continuing economic sanctions, and the pressures of domestic politics combined to produce a situation where what was initially seen as a highly unlikely and undesirable option became the option of choice. A combination of luck, the weakness of the foes in question, and the excellent performance of the U.S. military on the ground meant that both these operations, in the short run at least, produced significant success at a limited cost. However, in the longer-run they reinforced negative trends in the region—the tendency to look to the United States to resolve domestic problems and, consequently, blame

68 John E. Reilly, “The Public Mood at Mid-Decade,” Foreign Policy, No. 98, Spring, 1995, p. 82. 80 percent of the public and 57 percent of leaders polled said anti-narcotics operations should be “a very important foreign policy goal,” but only 25 percent of the public and 21 percent of leaders felt the same about bringing democracy to other nations.
Washington for whatever goes wrong later—and in our own policy process reinforced the temptation of the United States to assume responsibility for resolving the problems of nations in the Caribbean Basin and to exaggerate the extent to which military force is an effective tool for this. It is worth noting that earlier U.S. interventions played a major role in shaping political culture in Panama and Haiti, just as interventions in Cuba and Nicaragua laid the political foundations for the rise of Castro and the Sandinistas. Whether our "successes" in Panama and Haiti will come back to haunt us too remains to be seen, but history gives us little reason to believe that costly U.S. involvement in these nations and their regional neighbors has finally come to an end.
10. Intervention Decisionmaking in the Bush Administration

by Arnold Kanter

The Bush administration faced a number of situations in which it had to decide whether, when, and how to intervene with military forces. This chapter is an attempt to describe this decision-making process from the perspective of a participant-observer and to record observations which can be treated as hypotheses for future research.\(^1\) It is limited to a consideration of post-Cold War ethnic, nationalist, and separatist conflicts (EN&SCs) during the period from about 1991 to January 1993.\(^2\) It includes consideration of methodologically difficult but instructive cases of "dogs that didn’t bark," e.g., conflicts in Sudan, Moldova, and Tadikistan, in which intervention was a theoretical possibility but never a serious option. It also attempts to account for the striking paucity of cases about intervention termination.

The Context: Characteristics and Implications of Post-Cold War Conflicts

The most obvious, yet central, characteristic of post-Cold War conflicts is that they do not take place in the context of superpower competition. The twin implications of this fact are paradoxical. On the one hand, absent a Cold War calculus, U.S. interests perceived to be at stake in a given EN&SC are typically seen to be lower than they might have been during the Cold War: as the connection between strife in far-off places and U.S. national security or other vital interests has become more problematic, the case for U.S. intervention in any given situation has become less compelling. One need only contrast Angola and

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\(^1\) Arnold Kanter is a senior fellow at RAND. He served as Special Assistant to the President for Defense Policy and Arms Control (1989–1991) and as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (1991–1993).

\(^2\) Given the limited objectives of this essay, no effort was made to conduct interviews or to research primary and secondary source material. That said, there is every reason to believe that the observations and records are probably general, rather than peculiar, to the Bush administration. Both for that reason, and as a stylistic convenience, it is written in the present tense.

\(^2\) On the one hand, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (ODS) falls outside the boundaries of EN&SCs. On the other hand, the ODS experience is relevant to an analysis of EN&SC decisionmaking if only because it is regularly invoked as a successful model and precedent when EN&SC interventions are being considered.
Afghanistan with Liberia and Tadjikistan. On the other hand, absent a superpower competitor, the perceived risks of intervention likewise seem to be lower: we no longer have to worry about confronting Soviet surrogates and the possibility that U.S. intervention could escalate into a superpower confrontation and conflict.\(^3\) This combination of lower stakes and lower risks tends to make intervention decisions more idiosyncratic and even less predictable than they were during the Cold War.

Another consequence of the end of the Cold War is that classic cases of inter-state aggression are being supplanted by ethnic, nationalist, and separatist conflicts.\(^4\) As noted above, U.S. interests at stake in such conflicts are more ambiguous. In addition, the political and legal grounds for intervention in such conflicts are unfamiliar and controversial. Traditionally, there has been a strong presumption in U.S. foreign policy against “interference in the internal affairs of others.” This presumption is reinforced by objections from governments whose political support we increasingly require, but who themselves may be worried about establishing precedents which might affect them in the future. Finally, the basis in international law for intervening in EN&SC is often problematic. That, in turn, is important because countries whose political support we seek will often insist that there be a solid international legal rationale for the proposed course of action.

Such political and legal considerations loom large in U.S. decisionmaking about whether and how to intervene in EN&SCs precisely because the end of the Cold War both increased the political need for support from other countries and eliminated our strongest claim on that support. One need look no farther than negotiations with our allies to establish “no-fly zones” over northern and southern Iraq and respond militarily to Iraqi defiance of U.N. inspection teams for evidence both of the importance the United States attaches to multinational support for intervention and of the price paid in the coin of constraints on U.S. action.

Plowing the unfamiliar ground of EN&SC in the post-Cold War world also gives rise to what might be called the “paradox of policy principles.” There is

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\(^3\) An important residual of Cold War thinking remains. There has been great sensitivity about getting involved in any conflict which is located on the Russian periphery or presents the likelihood of confronting Russian soldiers. This sensitivity all but ruled out serious consideration of intervening in Moldova, Georgia, or Tadjikistan. Russian officials did not hesitate to reinforce that sensitivity by such tactics as drawing analogies between the Monroe Doctrine and Russian “responsibilities” in countries on their periphery, i.e., in the “near-abroad.”

\(^4\) The actual number of EN&SCs has probably increased with the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, but it is also the case that these same factors permit, or in some cases require, the United States to pay more attention to EN&SCs.
considerable value—if not a clear necessity—to articulate some principles to
guide intervention decisions. These principles are needed to provide both
internal guidance to the bureaucracy and public rationales to explain the
intervention decisions taken—and not taken. At least at this early stage of the
post-Cold War world, however, it has proven to be very difficult, if not
impossible, to articulate a set of principles which the United States is prepared to
apply and invoke consistently. Nevertheless, decisions somehow get taken,
explained, and defended.

For example, if we are prepared to consider using force to uphold (or restore)
democracy in Haiti, why will we not do so in Angola, much less in Georgia? If
we are prepared to intervene to end the starvation borne of anarchy in Somalia,
why are we not willing to do the same in Sudan or Burundi? If we really do
support the principle of self-determination, why do we oppose the secession of
Nagorno-Karabakh, Trans-Dniester, etc., from the entities which emerged from
the breakup of the Soviet Union? Indeed, how do we reconcile our support for
the principle of self-determination with our own Civil War (a question Russian
officials take regular delight in asking)?

This “paradox of policy principles” can probably be explained by reference both
to the novelty of dealing with EN&SC in the post-Cold War world and the
ambiguity of U.S. interests at stake in any such conflict. Whatever the reasons,
however, this paradox imposes both internal and external costs. Internally, the
absence of a relatively consistent set of decision guidelines adds to the confusion
and controversy which surround any intervention issue. Externally, the absence
of a stable set of principles which can be invoked contributes to accusations of
inconsistency and hypocrisy which, in turn, reinforce internal confusion and
controversy and add to the time and other costs required to reach, implement,
and defend intervention decisions.

In brief, the central features of the post-Cold War world have made the decision-
making process related to intervention issues both more complicated and less
orderly. While there has always been some finite probability that a decision
about whether or not to intervene could have gone the other way, in the post-
Cold War world that uncertainty has substantially increased. This increased
unpredictability also has potentially significant implications for our ability to
deter EN&SC.
Characteristics of the Decision-making Process

If the uncharted territory of the post-Cold War world provided the context within which intervention issues were considered by the Bush administration, it may not be surprising that the decision-making process itself was something less than orderly and well-structured. It nevertheless is possible to identify the following characteristics of that process which can serve as hypotheses for future research.

1. *The manner in which “candidates” for intervention get on the decision agenda is relatively idiosyncratic and unpredictable.* As the contrasting responses to the seemingly similar Somalia and Sudan cases suggest, media coverage can have a significant impact. Media coverage helps to put the issue on the agenda of senior decisionmakers who, like the rest of us, watch television, read newspapers, and are prey to human emotion. Moreover, intensive media coverage—reinforced by questions at regularly scheduled press briefings and Congressional inquiries, hearings, and floor speeches—all but compels senior level decisionmakers to address the issue, whatever their personal predilections. As the Bosnia case illustrates, however, media coverage can substantially increase the chances that an issue will get onto the decision agenda, but it does not necessarily lead to a decision to intervene.

Ad hoc, self-generated assessments by officials about “what is at stake” is another way in which candidates for intervention get on and rise to the top of the decision agenda. For example, the ebb and flow in U.S. policy toward the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia can be explained in part by “the” issue being variously defined as a humanitarian tragedy, a test of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the post-Cold War world, a test of the European Community’s (EC) ability to act, a test of U.S. leadership, a risk of spillover and escalation, an important precedent for dealing with EN&SC in the post-Cold War world, and a clear signal to Russia about the constraints on its actions toward breakaway republics. The ways in which issues such as ex-Yugoslavia get defined, however, are highly idiosyncratic depending on factors such as who has access to senior level decisionmakers, who reads what, who talks with whom, and even the sequence in which seemingly diverse issues get addressed.

2. *Although the identity of the participants is fairly stable and predictable, the decision-making process itself is fairly ad hoc.* To some extent, this feature is simply a reflection of the decision-making process with respect to any “important” issue, particularly issues such as intervention decisions which are non-routine and often take place in a “crisis” atmosphere. It is also a reflection of the still inchoate “intervention policy.” We are still very much feeling our way toward a “new
world order" in the post-Cold War world, including the central questions about how various U.S. interests are engaged and how we should try to protect or advance them. We are in an inductive, "learning from experience" mode at this point, with little precedent, much less policy, to serve as a guide to action.

That said, it is important to add that "learning" almost certainly is taking place. Not only is there a growing body of precedent as we face more and more intervention decisions, but the criteria and checklists—the questions that get asked and answered with respect to potential interventions—are becoming increasingly standardized. Perhaps because of the unfamiliarity of both the issues and the context, the ideas and views of pundits, essayists, and scholars have played a significant role in this learning process.

3. The decision-making process with respect to intervention issues frequently begins at relatively senior levels and works up from there. During the Bush administration, issues related to basic policy decisions about whether or not to intervene with U.S. forces were often initially addressed by the Deputies Committee, an interagency group composed of second- and third-ranking officials from the concerned departments and agencies. Frequently, these senior-level interagency deliberations were not supported by substantial staffing or written analyses. This was due to several factors, including time constraints and a fear of leaks.

The issues were then referred to Cabinet-level officials for consideration before being presented to the president for decision. The Cabinet-level meetings tended to be relatively informal, unlike the formal, structured meetings of the National Security Council (NSC) or the Principals Committee (a group whose membership closely paralleled the NSC minus the president). No doubt in large part due to the level at which the process operates and paucity of staffing, the decisions which emerge often seem to be surprising, abrupt changes in policy. The decision to send a 30,000 man force to Somalia is a vivid case in point.

4. The process by which the military frames an issue and formulates its assessment and advice is a "black box" to most participants outside the Pentagon. The civilian leadership in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) may not be much better informed. While the Joint Staff routinely tasks the relevant command(s) for assessments, recommendations, and plans, it is not clear how much—or what kind of—guidance and context is provided with that tasking. It, likewise, is unclear how much and what kinds of informal communications between the field and Washington take place in service and other military channels. Finally, the joint impact on the process of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms and Colin Powell’s tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) is uncertain but appears to have been substantial. It often seemed to outsiders (i.e., civilian policymakers)
that General Powell had about as much latitude vis-à-vis the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense ordinarily exercise vis-à-vis their respective departments.

5. **There are relatively stable and distinguishable “agency perspectives” on issues related to intervention.** Cognizant of the pitfalls of generalizations, it nevertheless is possible to broadly characterize the positions which the key organizations tend to adopt. The State Department tends to be more willing than the other participants to threaten, deploy, and employ military forces. This approach is probably due in part to a perspective which views the threat and use of force as a key instrument of U.S. foreign policy and American leadership. It may also be attributed in part to the fact that the State Department is substantially insulated from the price—in blood as well as treasure—that military interventions exact.

In addition, the State Department tends to be more willing than the other participants to take risks. In part, this is a corollary to the observation that the State Department does not pay the price of military interventions, be they successful or unsuccessful. But it is also probably a reflection of a bureaucratic tactic to make intervention options more attractive by reducing their apparent force requirements.\(^5\)

The Pentagon—both civilian and military—tends to be much more conservative on “use of force” issues.\(^6\) This is particularly true of the JCS representatives.\(^7\) They are typically insistent that military forces should be deployed only if the president is ready to employ force. In contrast to the State Department, which views the threat and use of force as a complement to other force policy instruments, they are also more likely to view the use of force as a last resort, i.e., when diplomacy and other policy instruments have been tried and failed.

In addition, JCS representatives—beginning with General Powell himself—typically argue that if the United States is going to commit military forces, we should be prepared to bring overwhelming force to bear.\(^8\) In part, this position

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\(^5\) As will be seen below, military participants employ the opposite bureaucratic tactic of overstating the apparent force requirements. The result is mutual suspicion and reciprocal incentives to engage in bureaucratic gaming.

\(^6\) During the Bush administration, OSD and JCS made it a regular practice to arrive at a common position which they would then jointly present in the interagency process. This practice may have had the collateral consequence of muting any “pro-intervention” proclivities among senior OSD civilians.

\(^7\) In fact, it is very difficult to distinguish between JCS Chairman Powell’s approach to “use of force” issues and the positions taken by JCS representatives who participated at lower levels in the decision-making process.

\(^8\) At the same time, JCS representatives often worry aloud about the scarcity of critical force elements and the implications of a proposed military operation for our ability to deal with other contingencies. Likewise, the projected dollar cost of a proposed operation can be a substantial factor
reflects a thoroughly understandable desire to ensure victory. In part, it probably also reflects an effort to minimize casualties by intimidating would-be opponents and discouraging engagements. Finally, they clearly understand that if intervention options entail very large force requirements, it often has the practical political effect of virtually ruling out military intervention.\footnote{Needless to say, JCS recommendations about force requirements are rarely subject to second-guessing and carry enormous weight in the decision-making process, whatever other participants might suspect about what lay behind those stated requirements.}

Consideration during 1992 of options to provide convoy security in northern Iraq or to secure the route from Split to Sarajevo in ex-Yugoslavia are good illustrations of this process at work.

6. {	extit{Personalities matter.}} If the foregoing reflects the truism of bureaucratic behavior that “where you stand depends on where you sit,” there is a related truism that the higher one goes in an organization, the less one can predict positions on issues from a knowledge of organizational membership. Given the high level, ad hoc, informal nature of the process described above, however, the personal beliefs, experiences, and perceptions of the participants played an unusually large role in the decisions which emerged.

In understanding U.S. policy toward Bosnia, for example, one needs to give full weight to the “lessons” learned by Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger from their respective tours of duty in Yugoslavia,\footnote{Eagleburger served as American ambassador in Yugoslavia, and Scowcroft as defense attaché in Belgrade.} to General Powell’s views on the use of force and the commitment of forces, and to President Bush’s determination not to put U.S. ground forces into Bosnia under virtually any circumstances. More generally, President Bush was strongly inclined both to accept military recommendations regarding the forces required to accomplish the mission he had given them, and to grant broad operational latitude in the conduct of that mission. For his part, General Powell brought not only his forceful personality to the process, but the healthy discipline of regularly insisting on an answer to the question: “What is the military objective we are trying to accomplish?”

7. "\textit{Slippery slopes} are a frequent source of concern, in part because they really exist."

One of the arguments regularly invoked in interagency debates to oppose U.S. military involvement in an EN&SC is that our role, however modest initially, will start us down an uncontrollable “slippery slope” to growing politica.

in deciding whether or not to proceed. The combination of increasingly tight defense budgets and negligible allocations for “peacekeeping” requires either that other military capabilities—typically readiness—will be shortchanged to cover the costs of an unbudgeted intervention, or that the administration pay the political price of seeking a supplemental appropriation from Congress.
responsibility for the outcomes which emerge and increasing military intervention to ensure that the outcomes are satisfactory. Put differently, there is concern that we will lose control over our stakes and therefore over our involvement, specifically, that we will be unable to keep either one limited. An important corollary is that it becomes increasingly difficult to terminate U.S. military involvement short of having achieved “success” or setting an arbitrary deadline for withdrawal.

Although these “slippery slope” arguments may be invoked by bureaucratic participants who are opposed to U.S. intervention for other reasons, there is enough real world experience to preclude simply dismissing such objections out of hand. Somalia provides a good illustration. The U.S. airlift of relief supplies to a handful of Somali airfields seemed to be a relatively modest operation with clear limits, but it paved the way for the United Nations Task Force Somalia (UNITAF). Given the overwhelming U.S. role in and responsibility for UNITAF, it proved to be virtually impossible politically to do a clean hand-off to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNISOM).

It is easy to imagine how the United States could have found itself on an analogous slippery slope in Bosnia. In early 1992, the United States reached a consensus with several of its NATO allies to initiate an airlift of relief supplies to Sarajevo. Such an airlift required that the airport at Sarajevo be reopened, which in turn necessitated the deployment of air controllers, other technicians and experts, and a security force to protect them, i.e., a contingent totaling several hundred military personnel. The United States was prepared to provide this on-the-ground capability, but the French pre-empted its deployment with a contingent of its own.11 One is left to wonder whether subsequent U.S. policy toward Bosnia, particularly with respect to the use of military force, might have been different if U.S. rather than French ground personnel were sent to reopen and secure the Sarajevo airport.

8. Concerns about slippery slopes notwithstanding, planning paradoxically is often shortsighted. This may be due, in part, to a tendency to discount “slippery slope” objections to intervention as being little more than stalking horses for other, often unstated, objections. Thus, if a decision is made to intervene, the worries, concerns, and risks expressed by those who have been overruled tend to be forgotten or ignored. This tendency may be reinforced when the origins of an intervention decision stem from a seemingly irresistible pressure to “do

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11 The tacit competition between the United States and France over which would provide the personnel to reopen the Sarajevo airport was a reflection of intra-Alliance politics, intramural disputes about the “European security and defense identity,” and the respective roles for NATO and the European Community (EC) in expressing this identity.
something.” Whatever the reasons, decisionmakers often fail to look more than one or two moves ahead, and to take into account responses available to the other side.

9. **Decisionmaking is probabilistic and context-dependent.** It was argued above that the combination of the lower risks and reduced stakes which characterize U.S. intervention options in the post-Cold War world make it increasingly difficult to predict what the United States will decide and how it will respond in any given instance. Most of the characteristics of the decision-making process described here add to that uncertainty. The decision to intervene in Somalia in late 1992 with nearly 30,000 American troops caught most people, inside as well as outside the government, by surprise. A review of the record will likely show that “even” the decision to take military action to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait was neither certain nor obvious in advance. The net result of this unpredictability—reinforced by a long list of cases in which we did not intervene, e.g., Sudan, Georgia, Tadzikstan, Nagomo-Karabakh, Bosnia—is to undermine the deterrent effect of threats to intervene.

### Guidelines for Decision

Nothing like a set of formal policy guidelines for intervention decisions existed in the Bush administration. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from the record several informal “rules of thumb” which were used to structure the issues it faced and inform the choices it made.

1. **Do not intervene—especially on the ground—absent high confidence the intervention will be relatively brief, inexpensive, and cause minimal casualties and collateral damage.** This guideline reflects the intersection of ambiguous (but clearly less-than-vital) stakes and uncertain domestic political support for intervention. Quick, clean, and cheap interventions are more likely to be commensurate with the stakes, and are unlikely to generate significant domestic political problems. Conversely, the prospects for sustaining domestic political support over an extended period of time, especially as things go wrong, setbacks occur, and costs mount, usually appear foreboding.

2. **Do not intervene unless there is a high probability of success.** This guideline adds another condition to the ones listed above, *viz.*, if we intervene, we need to “win” or otherwise “succeed.” The implication of this added condition is that we

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12 As it enters its second year in office, the Clinton administration, likewise, has yet to issue a “Presidential Decision Directive” with its policy guidelines.
should not intervene simply to "raise the price of aggression" or send a message
to would-be aggressors. An important corollary is that the perceived costs of a
"failed" intervention are always seen to exceed the costs of inaction, both at
home and with respect to deterrence of future EN&SC. This perspective creates a
strong presumption that it is better to take no action than to launch an
intervention which risks failure. Finally, the application of this guideline tends
to equate the conditions for terminating the intervention with "success," i.e., the
intervention typically must continue until we "win." A distant second choice is
to set a fixed, but essentially arbitrary, deadline for withdrawal.

3. Avoid Congressional involvement in the decision process. The reluctance to inform
and involve Congress stems in part from a view about the respective roles of the
executive and legislative branches in foreign policy.13 It is also the result of a
pragmatic calculation that to involve Congress is to impose the requirement that
Congress support—rather than merely acquiesce in—the proposed
intervention.14 At best, the price of Congressional support will be a loss of
presidential flexibility. Depending on the specifics, of course, Congress could
well impose other conditions and costs. Taken together, these prospects tend to
discourage U.S. involvement in contingencies that carry a significant probability
of Congressional involvement.15

4. Minimize the need for political support and the risk of negative political consequences.
This guideline is an extension of the one above and is motivated by many of the
same considerations. Paradoxically, the desire to avoid an intervention issue
becoming fodder for political pundits is probably strengthened as a consequence
of the growing importance of domestic political considerations in foreign
policy.16 Put simply, the greater the chances of controversy, the lower the
probability that the United States will intervene, and the higher the premium on
keeping the intervention quick, clean, and cheap.

5. Insist that U.S. involvement is qualitatively different in political terms. The public
justification for this position is that because the United States is the world's only

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13 The recent debates about the "Byrd amendment" on U.S. involvement in Somalia and the
"Dole amendment" on U.S. involvement in Haiti are good contemporary examples of this issue.

14 Its public grumbling notwithstanding, Congress often welcomes the opportunity not to have
to take a formal position for or against controversial foreign policy decisions, including decisions
related to intervention.

15 Indeed, presidents sometimes establish Congressional approval as a condition for U.S.
intervention in order to avoid pressure from allies to become involved. Many analysts believe that
Eisenhower employed this tactic to deflect a French request for assistance in Indochina. Some
observers see the same tactic at play in the administration's insistence on Congressional approval of
any deployment of U.S. ground forces in Bosnia.

16 As the Bosnia case demonstrates, inaction by the United States can also become a source of
political controversy and grist for editorial writers.
remaining superpower, its participation—and especially any casualties it might suffer or inflict—has distinctive implications and consequences. Its involvement, therefore, should be the exception rather than the rule and it is perfectly appropriate for the United States to urge and expect others to go where we will not. This rationale was invoked to help explain why the United States would not contribute observers on the ground in Bosnia to help monitor the “no-fly zone” established by the U.N. Security Council.  

Whatever its legitimacy, the result of this perspective is to create yet another presumption against U.S. involvement.

6. **Avoid committing U.S. ground forces.** This guideline is usually applied by insisting that U.S. contributions be limited to when and where they would be “unique.” Typically, this has been interpreted to refer to unique or distinctive American military capabilities, e.g., strategic lift, intelligence, communications. The clear implication is that the United States has no comparative advantage in the ground forces which might be required as part of an intervention force and, therefore, would look to others to contribute these capabilities. The effect of this guideline is to increase the chances that the U.S. role in a given intervention will meet the standards of “quick, cheap, and clean.”

7. **Retain operational control over U.S. combat forces, particularly ground combat forces.** In part, this guideline reflects the increased stakes which result from the commitment of U.S. forces. It also reflects greater confidence in the competence of U.S. military leadership, certainly compared to third world commanders. Finally, and perhaps most important, it reflects an appreciation of the fact that the president will not only be held responsible for American casualties, no matter under whose command they occurred, but also that he is likely to be more severely criticized if those casualties occurred while American forces were carrying out the orders of a foreign (and, by implication, less capable or less caring) commander.

Whatever its origins and rationale, this guideline has the potentially perverse consequence of making U.S. military participation tantamount to an “all or nothing” proposition. If the United States insists that our forces may only serve under U.S. commanders, then other potential contributors may expect, and in any event will argue, that the United States should contribute the bulk of the forces. This means that if, for whatever reason, the United States determines that

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17 Undoubtedly, there were several other reservations about U.S. participation, including “slippery slope” concerns.

18 There is another sense in which U.S. capabilities can be unique, viz., when American participation is politically indispensable.
it is in its interest to have U.S. forces play some role in a given intervention, it will be under considerable pressure to play a substantial role.

8. Secure authorization by the U.N. or other international organizations. In the post-Cold War world in which only less-than-vital interests are militarily threatened, unilateral interventions such as Operation Just Cause may increasingly become rare exceptions to the rule of operations authorized by U.N. Security Council resolutions. In part, this requirement is imposed by allies as a condition of their participation. (See below.) In part, it is a condition imposed by the political rhetoric and realities at home. Whatever its origins, however, it is a source of additional legal and political constraints on U.S. action.

9. Obtain multilateral participation. This dictum might be considered to be a straightforward corollary to the guideline above, but that should not obscure the fact that it imposes an additional set of constraints. It is one thing for an ally to offer political support, such as voting in favor of a U.N. Security Council resolution, but it is quite another thing to agree to join with the United States in a military operation. The price of that participation is likely to be additional conditions and constraints on the operation (as well as perhaps "side payments" on other, unrelated issues). Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Southern Watch—the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq which are enforced by British and French as well as American aircraft—are good illustrations.

Conclusions

As should be clear from the foregoing description, there has not been (and probably still is not) an orderly, formal, well-structured decision-making process which culminates in decisions about whether or not to intervene in the contingency at hand. The distinguishing features of the post-Cold War world, which tend to reduce both the stakes and the risks of most interventions, only add to the complications and confusion. That said, it should also be clear that the informal decision-making process which does exist reveals relatively stable characteristics, and that "learning" in the form of convergence on tacit decision guidelines and rules of thumb is occurring.

The picture of the decision-making process which emerges from this examination of the early post-Cold War period is one which is, paradoxically, both very insular and highly constrained by external factors. It is also one which has strong, systemic biases against intervention. Indeed, the question is less why the United States decides to intervene in any particular instance than how it ever manages to overcome these strong, pervasive presumptions against intervention.
The most difficult and controversial issues typically concern the commitment of U.S. ground forces. Those decisions are qualitatively different than decisions about the commitment of "unique" U.S. capabilities such as strategic lift and intelligence. To overstate only slightly, U.S. decisionmaking about intervention is about decisions concerning the deployment of U.S. ground combat forces. Finally, "success" is the primary—if not sole—criterion for deciding when to terminate an intervention. On the one hand, this is a high standard which constitutes yet another obstacle to an intervention decision. On the other hand, it has profound implications for "termination decisionmaking" by making it very difficult to extricate ourselves from an intervention short of "victory."

by Warren Zimmermann

Background: 1945-1989

U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia was remarkably consistent during the Cold War. The United States and the United Kingdom had backed Josip Broz Tito during the closing years of World War Two in spite of his Communist affiliation and his never-disguised intention of turning Yugoslavia into a Communist country. Tito’s Yugoslav opposition, Draza Mihailovic, a Serbian general in the pre-war royalist regime, had decided that it was more important to oppose Tito’s Communist Partisans than to engage fully against the Germans. For the Allies, therefore, support for Tito was a pragmatic response to the need to tie down some 20 German divisions in the Balkans while the invasion of France was being prepared.

The same pragmatism guided U.S. policy when Tito was expelled from the Cominform by Stalin in 1948. The Truman administration decided to support the renegade Yugoslav Communist as a way to challenge Stalin, to deprive the Soviets of a sphere of influence on the Adriatic, and to ensure the survival of a possible magnet for further defections from the Soviet bloc. U.S. assistance to Tito included the provision of aircraft and other military equipment, plus a continuing economic aid program that won Yugoslavia a unique and favored position among all Communist countries.

The United States, of course, never bought into Tito’s heterodox ideology, although his rejection of such Soviet shibboleths as democratic centralism and a monopolistic role for the Communist Party made it easier for successive American administrations to maintain support. Moreover, Yugoslavia’s economic system was based on a (theoretically) decentralized “self-management” rather than on a Gosplan and a five-year planning cycle. Some economic decisions were in fact made at the factory level, though the Yugoslav party

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exercised considerable behind-the-scenes control. From the 1950s Yugoslavia’s borders were open to a remarkable degree for a Communist country; Tito, whose opportunism usually got the better of his Bolshevism, had seen the value of allowing Yugoslav workers to earn hard currency in the West. This openness impressed even Nikita Khrushchev, who remarked on it in his memoirs.

Following his famous rapprochement with Khrushchev in 1955, Tito kept his relations in balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. This balancing act caused numerous problems for American policy. For example, during the 1961 summit of Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade, the Soviets tested a high-megaton nuclear weapon. Despite his persistent criticism of U.S. nuclear testing, Tito rejected the advice of his foreign minister and decided not to criticize Moscow. This blatant favoritism was a factor in the U.S. Congress’s cut-off of aid to Yugoslavia in that year, over the strong objections of the then-Ambassador, George F. Kennan.

Successive U.S. governments chose to humor Yugoslavia when it ignored Western concerns rather than risk an increase in Soviet influence over Tito. For example, when a Yugoslav writer, Mihajlo Mihajlov, was arrested in 1965 for an American magazine piece sympathetic to dissidents in Russia, no U.S. protest was forthcoming. Sometimes the United States went to absurd lengths to stay in Tito’s good graces. When Yugoslav dissident Milovan Dijlas was released from prison in 1966, no American diplomat made contact with him. The British embassy, on the other hand, met Dijlas frequently, at no cost to itself. Tito’s key role in the non-aligned movement was also a thorn in the American side, but U.S. reactions to habitual non-aligned bashing of the “capitalists” and “imperialists” were usually tepid.

U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia in the entire Cold War period can be summed up in four words: independence, unity, territorial integrity. This mantra was a code for saying that we wanted to see Yugoslavia remain free of Soviet control or influence and that preservation of her unity was the best way to assure this. American interests included the following:

- Yugoslavia’s post-1948 independence from the Soviet Union was a major Western acquisition. Its return to the Soviet camp would amount to a Western defeat.
- Yugoslavia could be an example for other Eastern European Communist countries anxious to slip Moscow’s leash. The West had to show that independence would be rewarded.
Yugoslavia was geopolitically important, bordering on two NATO allies (Italy and Greece) and sporting a long coastline on the Adriatic.

The defense of Yugoslavia was never a formal commitment by the United States or by NATO. Still, there was calculated ambiguity in Washington's imprecision as to how it might react if Moscow tried to reincorporate Yugoslavia or carve off its Orthodox areas (Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia). While in 1968 the Soviets could move against Czechoslovakia in the near-certainty that there would be no U.S. military response, the same assurance could never be taken for granted with regard to Yugoslavia.

While the Cold War lasted, U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia, with some ups and downs, remained consistent over four full decades. Two factors in the decade of the 1980s radically changed the context in which that policy was made. The first was Tito's death in 1980. Tito, an autocrat if there ever was one, ensured that no autocrat would succeed him. The 1974 constitution, crafted while he was still alive, provided for a collective presidency rotating among republics, with the small treated equally with the large. Not only would there be no strong leader, but the dominant ethnic group, the Serbs, were denied the prospect of virtual hegemony which they had enjoyed during the interwar period. The groundwork for a serious Serbian grievance was thus laid.

The second factor was the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. These cataclysmic events removed the important place which Yugoslavia had occupied in the East-West balance. No longer could it be argued that Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity were essential to America's vital security interests. The basis for the four-decade consensus between U.S. administrations and the Congress was no longer in place. It now became possible for members of Congress to isolate and advance specific aspects of policy toward Yugoslavia, such as human rights and ethnic preferences or dislikes. With no Soviet Union to pick up the pieces of a fractured Yugoslavia, there was also less rationale for holding Yugoslavia together. With the election of George Bush as president in 1988, U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia entered successively three short and extremely dynamic phases—a Kosovo phase, a secession phase, and a Bosnia phase.

The Kosovo Phase

The "autonomous province" of Kosovo was linked loosely to Serbia by Tito's 1974 constitution. Kosovo was in fact sacred territory to Serbs. It was the heartland of medieval Serbia, the site of the most sacred Serbian churches and
monasteries. And it was inhabited overwhelmingly by infidels—Muslim Albanians who outnumbered the Serbian population by about nine to one. The Serbian analogy of choice was to Jerusalem; in fact the two issues had much in common. Probably with the aim of fragmenting Serbian power, Tito built up the Albanians, giving them considerable local power and awarding Kosovo a seat on the Yugoslav presidency. With another seat on the presidency going to Vojvodina, an area with a large Hungarian minority, Serbs could argue credibly that they could be outvoted two-to-one in their own supposed sphere of influence.

When Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Serbia in the late 1980s, his first actions were directed against Kosovo Albanian dominance in the province. He removed virtually all the Albanians’ rights—their leading role in the government, party, and Parliament; their control of the Albanian-language library; and their administration of the school system. Kosovo became a classic human rights case involving the deprivation of the rights of a minority. It was this aspect of the situation which first attracted the attention of the U.S. Congress. A pro-Albanian coalition formed among those who had ethnic Albanian constituents (Representative Joseph DioGuardi, an Albanian-American, and Senator Alphonse D’Amato), those who habitually cultivated the support of ethnic groups (Senator Bob Dole), and those who saw Kosovo more as a pure human rights problem (Representative Tom Lantos).

While it was the Congress which sensitized the Reagan and Bush administrations to Kosovo, the Executive Branch needed little prodding. Annual human rights reports submitted by the Department of State to the Congress catalogued massive human rights abuses by Serbian authorities. In hearings for his confirmation as deputy secretary of state on March 15, 1989, Lawrence Eagleburger criticized Milosevic on Kosovo and said that the U.S. government should be expressing its concern over the issue. The present writer, arriving in Belgrade the same month as U.S. ambassador, carried instructions voicing that concern. In my first public press interview, in June 1989, I made the issue public.

The Congress didn’t always speak with one voice on Kosovo. While most members were prepared to go along with non-binding resolutions attacking Serbia, Representative Helen Delich Bentley, a Serbian-American, was often successful in watering them down. She was not, however, able to charge the growing image of the Congress as anti-Serb and pro-Albanian. Many members of Congress, in fact, were prepared to go much further than the Bush administration on Kosovo. Reflecting an unnuanced bias toward democracy and self-determination, they advocated independence for Kosovo, referring to it in its Albanian-language spelling as “Kosova.” The Executive Branch, keen to keep
Yugoslavia together and nervous about a possible breakup of the Soviet Union, maintained that Kosovo remained a part of Serbia, albeit a much-abused one.

The Kosovo issue also provided a glimpse of the effect of ethnic lobbies on the Congress and the government. The Albanian lobby, despite its small size, managed to reach the ear—and the campaign coffers—of such influential legislators as Senator Dole. Except for Representative Bentley’s rear-guard actions, Serbian-Americans were not particularly influential, despite the existence of about one million of them in the United States. The reason was probably that they were divided over whether to support Milosevic, who was both a Communist and a nationalist. Those Serbian-Americans who were politically active tended to back Milosevic, on the merits a much harder job than Albanian-Americans faced in protesting against Milosevic’s human rights abuses. The Croatian lobby, representing about two million Croatian-Americans, got close to Senator Dole, but devoted most of its efforts to financing the election campaign of Franjo Tudjman, the nationalist who won Croatia’s first free election in 1990.

Despite the strong Congressional support for the Kosovo Albanians, at no time before Yugoslavia’s breakup was there any inclination, either in the Congress or in the Executive Branch, to defend them by force. This was the case even though Dole and others called for Kosovo’s independence—a condition which, if achieved, would have left the Albanian population there powerless against Serbian retribution.

The Secession Phase

At the outset of the Bush administration, it was clear that U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia needed a course correction. The country’s loss of prime geopolitical importance with the winding down of the Cold War, the non-democratic hangovers from the Tito era, and the post-Tito squabbling among ethnic groups called for some redefinitions. The message which I carried as the new U.S. ambassador in the spring of 1989 was that the United States would continue to support the unity, territorial integrity, and independence of Yugoslavia. However, other issues had become increasingly important. Democratization, for example, was proceeding apace in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary; economic assistance in Eastern Europe would be dependent on progress toward democracy.

In Yugoslavia’s case, we would not support unity if it were maintained at the expense of democracy or by force. Human rights would be a paramount issue.
Development toward a market economy would be an important test. Finally, specific issues of major concern to the United States, like terrorism (Yugoslavia had harbored known terrorists), would play a role in the bilateral relationship. Since there was no longer a Soviet adversary, any implied threat of force to protect Yugoslavia was even more remote in the new policy than it had been in the old.

There was no controversy within the U.S. government on the new approach. Nor did the Congress object to it. However, the Congress, with its more populist orientation, was less committed to unity than the Bush administration. From 1989 until the elections of 1990 unity and market reform came to be symbolized by the new Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic, a strong advocate of a Western economic system for his country. Markovic made a successful visit to the United States in October 1989. He met President Bush, Secretary of State Baker, Treasury Secretary Brady, Commerce Secretary Mosbacher, some Congressional leaders, and U.S. businessmen and bankers. During their meeting the President reaffirmed his strong support for Yugoslav independence, unity, and sovereignty, and welcomed Markovic's commitment to market-oriented economic reform and democratic pluralism.

The republic elections of 1990, welcomed universally in the United States, produced fissiparous tendencies in Yugoslavia. The elections brought into power in the republics nationalists of many stripes. In Slovenia and Croatia, the elections were won by politicians who, explicitly or implicitly, advocated the secession of their republics from Yugoslavia. In Serbia, the voters' confirmation of Milosevic threatened the smaller republics, including Slovenia and Croatia, with a Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia. The future of the country, and of U.S. policy, was clearly in trouble. In Washington, Yugoslavia became a front-burner issue.

The policy-making apparatus in the U.S. government by chance contained at the top considerable expertise on Yugoslavia. Eagleburger, the deputy secretary of state, had served eight years as a diplomat in the country, four as ambassador. Brent Scowcroft, President Bush's national security advisor, had served in Belgrade as an assistant air attaché. I was the fourth American ambassador in succession who was a career foreign service officer to have served two tours in Yugoslavia. President Bush had himself visited Yugoslavia and retained positive memories of it. This expertise had been mainly acquired in the Tito period; it was rooted in a strong belief that instability and violence would follow the shattering of Yugoslavia's unity.
Now, however, the preservation of Yugoslavia's unity meant something different. For the first time Yugoslavia's unity was being challenged from within, not from without. I phrased the U.S. position in a speech on May 28, 1990: "We hope that no constituent unit of Yugoslavia will seriously consider separation, just as we hope that no consideration will be given to using force to preserve unity." No threat of force was stated or implied.

The sharp rise of nationalism following the 1990 elections led Washington to pose two questions. First, what was the prospect of Yugoslavia's breaking up, and what would be the consequences of a breakup? Second, what should the United States do about it? All the major U.S. players recognized the possibility of a breakup, but the CIA, in a study prepared in September 1990, was the first to predict flatly that a breakup was inevitable. Ever since late 1989 it had been the shared view of the experts in the embassy in Belgrade and in the government in Washington that a breakup would almost certainly be violent and would probably lead to war. Among allies there was less concern, and Scowcroft and the NSC staff launched an effort during 1990 to alert the Europeans through NATO that stability in the Balkans was under serious stress and to encourage them to more purposeful diplomacy. Except for Italy, there was not much reaction in Western Europe.

What was the United States to do about this new danger? Within the administration there was little dissension: Prime Minister Markovic, as a democratic figure striving to hold the country together, should receive continued support. On a broader canvas, there was a collateral concern that the breakup of Yugoslavia might help to destroy Gorbachev's Soviet Union, which at that point the Bush administration was anxious to keep together. However, the relative values of unity and democracy in Yugoslavia underwent a subtle shift in U.S. government thinking and expression. There was a widely-shared official view that unity and democracy were inseparable. If unity was sacrificed on the altar of Slovenian or Croatian democratic self-determination, war would result, and democracy, as well as unity, would suffer. Conversely, if the Yugoslav army and Milosevic tried to hold the country together by force, there would be armed resistance from Slovenia and Croatia, and both democracy and unity would be sacrificed. Markovic, to the extent he was viable, squared this circle.

The problem was that Markovic's middle way became less and less viable during 1990 and early 1991. While the linkage of unity and democracy remained a staple of U.S. policy, democracy began to creep up the ladder of emphasis. For example, the State Department spokesman on October 19, 1990 (several months after the elections in Slovenia and Croatia) stated: "The United States firmly supports unity, democratic change, respect for human rights, and market
reform.” By 1991, democracy was receiving pride of place in the litany of U.S. principles on Yugoslavia. In a May 23 statement listing five principles, Secretary of State Baker put democracy first and unity last of the five.

Meanwhile, the Congress greeted the republican elections enthusiastically, with no misgivings for the rise of nationalism and the resultant weakening of Markovic, the man they had welcomed as a model democrat the year before. Only a few members showed concern about the possible breakup of the country. For the majority Yugoslavia was—like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary—a Communist state whose authoritarian leadership was being swept away by democratic elections. They failed to notice that Markovic had tried unsuccessfully to hold elections on a federal, as well as a republican, basis. Nor did they grasp that Yugoslavia was not a dictatorship of the center, as the other Eastern European countries had been. In fact the center was weak and ineffectual.

This analytical approach, plus the strong desire to punish Milosevic’s Serbia, led the Congress to a number of resolutions, mostly over Kosovo, which featured Milosevic’s human rights violations and downplayed, ignored, or even criticized the importance of Yugoslavia’s unity. The strongest of these was the Nickles-Bentley Amendment, sponsored by Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) and diluted somewhat by Rep. Bentley, Serbia’s chief defender in the Congress. The amendment, voted in November 1990, prohibited U.S. economic assistance to Yugoslavia in fiscal 1991 unless certain human rights conditions were met. The legislation, which had a six-month fuse (it was scheduled to go into effect May 5, 1991), affected only $5 million of assistance. In any case, Secretary Baker invoked his discretionary authority to prevent its taking effect. The amendment showed that the Congress, even in its great frustration, opted for economic over military sanctions.

While the Nickles-Bentley amendment became a dead letter, it did do some damage to a rational and understandable U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia. As Baker complained, it was aimed at the wrong target. To get at Serbia, it attacked Yugoslavia; it was as if the United Kingdom slapped an embargo on the United States in order to punish the transgressions of Maine. Worse, Markovic, the last hope for a peaceful and democratic solution, was made to look foolish. The administration, not for the first time, had stymied the application of a foolish congressional action. But the clarity and consistency of U.S. policy were sacrificed in the process.

During 1989 and 1990 no consideration was given, either by the administration or the Congress, to the use of force in dealing with Yugoslavia. Eagleburger visited
the country in February 1990 and held an unprecedented meeting at the
ambassador’s residence with opposition leaders from all the Yugoslav republics.
He expressed U.S. support for Yugoslavia’s unity, independence, and territorial
integrity, and he voiced concern about human rights abuses in Kosovo
(representatives of the Kosovo Albanians were present). But he also said that the
United States would live with any political outcome which Yugoslavs arrived at
peacefully. One of the Slovenian representatives, a separatist himself, later told
an embassy officer that the pro-independence Slovenes had taken Eagleburger’s
statement as an indication that the United States would not use force to stop a
Slovenian move to secede.

If those who wanted their republics to secede from Yugoslavia feared no
American use of force to stop them, those who wanted to prevent secession felt a
similar absence of threat. At no point before the actual declarations of
independence by Slovenia and Croatia did Washington threaten force against
either republic, against Serbia, or against the Yugoslavia army. On March 16,
1991, for example, in reaction to Milosevic’s efforts to provoke a crisis by
destroying the Yugoslav collective presidency, the State Department’s critical
statement said that those resorting to force would be “isolated.” Nor, so far as is
known, did any member of Congress urge force on the administration. Not even
the Congressional “hawks,” like Dole, Lantos, or Nickles, saw the engagement of
NATO or U.S. forces as called for in the complicated political scenario that was
unfolding in Yugoslavia.

Why not? Wouldn’t a credible threat of Western force have stopped the
downward spiral that led to three wars? The answer is not clear, even in
retrospect. For the administration all three sides—Serb, Slovene, and Croat—
were guilty of irresponsible behavior, though guilty in different ways and to
different degrees, with Serbia clearly the major malefactor. For the Congress
only the Serbs were guilty, but not to a point warranting intervention. Against
whom should an intervention be targeted? Against the renegade Slovenes and
Croats? This would have been seen in the Congress as a blow against self-
determination and would have been strongly opposed. Against Serbia and the
army? Before the actual independence declarations in late June, they had
committed no blatant acts of force; the Serb-Croat skirmishes in Croatia in the
first half of 1991 had been instigated by both sides, though probably more by the
Serbs.

It has been argued that this complex period was exactly the right time for a show
of Western muscle, since a credible threat of NATO force, perhaps directed at all
sides, could have arrested the slide toward violence. It is difficult to conclude
that even a massive show of force, assuming the targeting problems noted above
were solved, could have slowed the momentum of the Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian nationalisms, which were acting irrationally and without much regard for the eventual costs and consequences of their actions. In any case, such force was not considered; the West was a prisoner of what could be called “the paradox of prevention.” In the Yugoslav case, as in many other international situations, it is nearly impossible to mobilize governments to take risks for prevention, since it is impossible to prove that the events which are to be prevented will, in the absence of prevention, occur.

In the unpromising circumstances of June 1991, Secretary of State Baker visited Belgrade on June 21 to meet with Markovic and the six republican leaders. It was very late in the game; Slovenia’s declared deadline for secession fell only a week after Baker’s visit. The secretary of state’s visit would undoubtedly have been more useful if he had come six months earlier. One major reason why he did not was that he had been fully preoccupied with preparations for the Gulf War. A great power should be able to handle more than one crisis at a time; in reality this is harder than it appears. Baker’s approach was crafted at the State Department and the NSC. The Defense Department was not yet playing a role—another indication that force options were simply not on the radar screen.

Baker’s message, skillfully delivered, was entirely consistent with what the United States had been saying both publicly and privately all year. Baker urged the Croatian and Slovenian leaders to reconsider their decisions to secede. If they would not back down, he urged them to delay secession and to negotiate it with the Markovic government. To Milosevic he was sharply critical of the Serbian leader’s oppression of the Albanians in Kosovo and of the effort to prevent a Croat from taking the normal succession as president of Yugoslavia. Baker made it clear that we would not support the use of force to hold Yugoslavia together. To Markovic (and indirectly to the Yugoslav army) he said that if the United States were compelled to choose between unity and democracy it would always choose democracy.

Baker gave no “green light” to Milosevic and the army to attack Croatia and Slovenia, any more than he had given a “green light” to the two republics to secede. Nor did he give a “red light”: he didn’t say that aggressive action by Serbia or the Yugoslav army would provoke a Western military reaction. The failure of the United States to arrest the trend toward breakup and violence was not attributable to the messages conveyed. The failure was in the fact that the United States didn’t, and probably couldn’t, credibly threaten force to back up its objectives.
In public statements just after the Baker visit, the U.S. government left no doubt about the limits to its support of Yugoslav unity. A State Department statement of June 26 said that "the United States strongly opposes the use or threat of force." On the same day Baker himself said: "We will strongly oppose intimidation or the use of force." The next day Baker said that the United States "could support greater autonomy, some sort of sovereignty for the republics of Yugoslavia."

On June 27, hostilities broke out between Slovenia and the Yugoslav army. Each side upheld its own version of sovereignty—Slovenia in defense of self-determination, the army in defense of Yugoslavia's borders. While making clear that Slovenia's declaration of independence would not be recognized, on June 28 the State Department stated: "We particularly call upon the central government and the Yugoslav army to end the bloodshed." On July 2, Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokesman, criticized Slovenia for triggering violence by seceding but at the same time strongly condemned the actions of the army. And on the same day President Bush, in a message to the new Croatian President of Yugoslavia Stipe Mesic, encouraged him to "promote new constitutional arrangements providing greater autonomy and sovereignty to the republics."

Following Baker's unsuccessful visit, Yugoslavia descended into collapse and war. In a ten-day skirmish the Slovenes won the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army; their independence, though unrecognized, was effectively secure. Croatia, with a 12 percent Serbian minority, didn't escape so lightly. The last half of 1991 saw bloody military operations between the Yugoslav army and the green but growing Croatian forces. Baker, stung by his lack of influence, acquiesced readily when the European Community under the Dutch presidency took on the Yugoslav challenge as a European issue and as a test of a European foreign policy. While never inactive, the United States played a second rank role on Yugoslavia from July 1991 until March 1992, when Bosnia reached the brink of war.

During the first half of 1991 the Congress showed itself increasingly sympathetic to Croatian and Slovenian independence. There was also some discussion within the administration—in the NSC staff and State Department—as to whether the United States should recognize that Yugoslavia was doomed and should try to "manage" its breakup. Few people held this view, which foundered on the analysis accepted throughout the government that there was no way Yugoslavia could disintegrate except in violence. This analysis, of course, proved correct. When former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was appointed U.N. mediator for the war in Croatia in November 1991, he added his voice to those who opposed U.S. abandonment of Yugoslavia until the contending republics had defined their
relations with one another. British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, appointed at the same time as Vance and charged with mediating among republics, shared this view as well.

During the first few months of the 1991 war between Croatia and the Yugoslav army, the U.S. government did not consider the use of force. Whatever the constraining domestic reasons, the situation on the ground would have made Western intervention fiendishly difficult. Tudjman had been guilty of violating the rights of Serbs in Croatia. There was thus no clear-cut moral advantage on the Croatian side. The Yugoslav army claimed to be protecting the rights of Serbs; only later did it become clear that the army was seizing Serbian-occupied territory for permanent occupation. There was no element of "invasion" in this war; army units operated from barracks and bases in Croatia (including in its capital city of Zagreb) where they had been stationed since World War II. Moreover, Tudjman showed considerable ambiguity about the army's role. At times during the Croatian war he actually praised the defense minister to me.

The issue of Western use of force arose for the first time in the U.S. government in the autumn of 1991. The catalyst was the Yugoslav army's shelling of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik, a walled medieval town on the Adriatic and a U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-certified tourist attraction. The ease with which Yugoslav forces could be attacked—they were shelling Dubrovnik from a hill above the town and from gunboats—and the city's worldwide fame provoked a discussion in Washington. There were three views: to avoid force; to respond to the assault on Dubrovnik even at the risk that a Western response might not work; and to recognize that, if the United States were to engage militarily, it would have to do so with substantial force and with a clear determination to win. For the first time the U.S. military and the Defense Department were brought into the discussion; they argued against the use of force, as they were to do consistently thereafter. Although the U.S. Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General John Galvin made contingency plans for the defense of Dubrovnik, they were not used. President Bush decided against force.

The third Dubrovnik option—not to use force unless we were prepared to do so massively and with a willingness to escalate to ensure victory—became a principal theme in the debate over the U.S. role in the Balkans, particularly in the Bosnian war. It invoked the failure of Vietnam, where we had allegedly fought "with one arm tied behind our back" and the success of the Gulf War, where overwhelming U.S. force had ensured victory. The argument was typically used by those who didn't want the United States to get militarily involved. It was central to the U.S. military's position on Bosnia. Eagleburger, while in the
government and after, consistently expressed it, with the corollary that if we did get involved we would have to be prepared to see it through.

By late autumn of 1991, the two issues which were to bedevil the U.S. approach to Bosnia—support for Bosnia as an independent state and the use of force to defend it—were on the table. If force had been used to defend Dubrovnik, it's at least possible that the Serbs would have been deterred from their aggression in Bosnia. The question of Bosnia's recognition as an independent state, which was raised unilaterally by Germany, was even thornier. In any case, from December 17, 1991, when the EC, at Germany's urging, offered Bosnia a timetable for recognition, Bosnia dominated the foreign policy agendas of both the Bush and Clinton administrations.

The Bosnia Phase: Bush

The EC's decision to recognize Slovenia and Croatia and to offer recognition to Bosnia and Macedonia changed the whole Western approach to Yugoslavia as well as the context in which U.S. policy was made. The Bush administration had opposed any recognition until Carrington's efforts to work out a modus vivendi among the squabbling parties had run its course. The U.S. position was voiced publicly and was communicated to the EC, most notably by Bush in a meeting with German Chancellor Kohl in Rome in early November. But there was little punch in the American approach, and the Germans correctly calculated that the United States would quickly adjust to the change. Baker, in a 1994 interview with the Guardian, faulted U.S. policy for not having opposed the Germans more strongly.

Once it became clear that the Izetbegovic government in Bosnia was determined to pursue the EC's invitation for recognition, U.S. diplomacy entered a major questioning phase. The arguments for non-recognition of Slovenia and Croatia had grown weaker. Slovenia was virtually independent already, and by January 1992, the major bars to recognition of Croatia—the absence of a cease-fire and lack of a decision to introduce U.N. peacekeepers—had been lifted. The discussion of Bosnia was animated by two new factors. First, by early March 1992, Bosnia had fulfilled the EC's requirements for recognition, most notably via a referendum in which 64 percent voted for independence (almost all the Serbs boycotted). Second, the evidence had become virtually conclusive that Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, were planning a takeover of some two-thirds of Bosnian territory anyway. The view of the U.S. embassy in Belgrade, which won support in Washington, was that internationalizing the
Bosnian problem by recognizing Bosnia as a sovereign state might deter the imminent Serbian aggression.

These arguments brought U.S. diplomacy out of the torpor into which it had fallen since Baker’s Belgrade visit. In March 1992, the United States launched an effort within NATO to have all four republics recognized (Macedonia was later dropped because of Greek pressure). Western recognition came on April 6 and 7, but it came too late. The Serbian attacks had begun a few days earlier, and the ragtag Bosnian forces were soon on the run before the better trained and equipped Serbs. There was no debate in Washington over who had started the war: it was the Serbs. The issue was what to do about it. Throughout the spring Washington had instructed me to warn Milosevic that, if war came, we would assign major blame to him; Serbia would be isolated, a pariah. Again, force was not threatened.

Following the outbreak of hostilities, work began in Washington on possible economic sanctions which could be invoked against Serbia. The administration’s arguments against the Nickles-Bentley amendment were now overtaken; Yugoslavia had already dissolved. On another track the administration confirmed its support for EC peace efforts which Carrington had delegated to the Portuguese, then in the EC presidency. On May 12, as part of a coordinated NATO effort, the United States announced its intention to withdraw its ambassador from Belgrade. The embassy was left intact, headed by a chargé d’affaires. On May 30, the U.N., at American initiative, imposed an economic embargo on Serbia; it was similar to the embargo in force against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. The embargo was the main element in the U.S. effort to isolate Milosevic. There was little opposition to, or even discussion of, it in Washington. It seemed the least that should be done against Serbian aggression. The “most” that could be done—force—was a more difficult proposition.

The Bush administration had an immutable position on the force issue—no U.S. ground forces were to be used in Bosnia.

Other force issues—for example, force in support of humanitarian objectives or air power to dislodge the Serbian artillery around Sarajevo—were debatable and were in fact debated. But there was an overwhelming tendency—reflecting the views of the president himself—to declare force out of bounds altogether. None of the major shapers of U.S. policy toward Bosnia leaned toward force—not the president, not Scowcroft, not Baker, not Eagleburger, and, most emphatically, not Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, nor Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney.
Why this aversion to force? It seemed to have had three sources, not all of them articulated. The first was Vietnam. The "lesson" drawn from Vietnam was that even a minimum injection of American forces could swell inexorably into a major commitment and produce a quagmire. The second objection to force was the view that had prevailed during the successful prosecution of the Gulf War: there should be no U.S. military intervention unless the objectives were clear, the means applied to it would bring certain victory, there was an "exit strategy" (the earlier the better), and American casualties were sure to be minimal. The third factor was unexpressed: the coming presidential election of November 1992, which by the summer of 1992 undoubtedly bulked large in administration thinking. Pervading all these reasons was an almost obsessive fear of American casualties—an important change from the Gulf War, when large numbers of U.S. casualties were expected.

The Congress, though sharply critical of the Serbian aggression, did not clamor for force at the outset of the Bosnian war, nor did it afterwards. One of the few Congressional "hawks," Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) told the present writer in June 1995 that he was certain Bush could have stopped the Serbian advance if he had been willing to use force early on. Lantos believed that the Congress would have rallied around Bush, as it did during the Gulf War. The Congress did, in fact, support President Clinton when he elected to use force in the summer of 1995.

There were three areas in which the Bush administration considered force:

- The use of air strikes against Serbian artillery around Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia. This was urged by me in July 1992, and also by some of the middle level foreign service officers. While the State Department and NSC leaderships—notable under Bush for listening to contrary opinions—heard these views out, they never got close to accepting them.

- An air operation to rescue victims of Serbian concentration camps in Bosnia. When the existence of camps, accompanied by evidence of atrocities against their inmates, was uncovered by the press in August 1992, the administration found itself the target of broad criticism from many quarters. One mid-level State Department officer resigned over the issue. Presumably because of the major public content of this issue, both Baker and Scowcroft showed interest in a rescue operation. There is no sign, however, that the president ever did, and nothing was done.

- Air operations on behalf of humanitarian relief. Since the administration put great emphasis on the effective provision of relief, the argument for force in
its support carried great weight. As described below, some steps, however halting and partial, were taken to meet this perceived need.

The bureaucratic battleground for policy recommendations during the Bosnian war was the interagency system, particularly the so-called Deputies' Committee, chaired by Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathon Howe and comprising representatives, *inter alia*, of the State Department, Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and CIA. The Defense and Joint Chiefs representatives took a single, clear position throughout: no U.S. military personnel were to be put in harm's way. The Pentagon contingent sought to block the imposition of a no-fly zone, the initiation of a supply airlift to Sarajevo, the protection of land routes to Sarajevo and Mostar, and (during the Clinton administration) the institution of air drops to towns beyond the reach of aid convoys.

The Pentagon's tactic was never to say no, simply to raise objections which made proposals seem unworkable. The military argued that it would take 50,000 ground troops to protect the assistance route from Split to Sarajevo. When its opposition to a Sarajevo airlift was over-ridden, it urged a low limit to the goods flown in. It ridiculed air drops as completely unfeasible in view of Bosnia's mountainous terrain and uncertain weather. It opposed putting U.S. military observers on the ground in Bosnia to support a no-fly zone, recommending instead American foreign service officers or retired military personnel. At the heart of the military's visceral reaction against involvement was an understandable aversion to casualties, though this was taken to ludicrous lengths given U.S. interests (significant if not vital) in Bosnia and the fact that the U.S. military consists of volunteers who enlisted in the knowledge that they would run some risks. In the event, the United States has participated heavily in the no-fly zone, in the Sarajevo airlift, and in the air drops, with negligible casualties.

A broader explanation of the U.S. military's unwillingness to pick up the Bosnia burden was its intense aversion to conflicts which were not clear-cut. There was enough guilt among the Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats to allow the argument—embraced enthusiastically in the Pentagon and in part of the CIA—that this was a war of "ancient enmities" and the United States shouldn't get involved. It is true that the military never got very good answers to its incessant questioning of what was the precise military objective and what political end would be served by achieving it. But it is also true that Bosnia proved the United States incapable of managing a complex war requiring a limited use of force for limited objectives. The paradigm of the Gulf War was much more welcome; it proved that if you arrayed overwhelming force you probably wouldn't have to use it, or, if you did, your preponderance would be so great that you would win without significant
casualties. The trouble was that, with ethnic rivalries rampant in the post-Cold War world, future challenges were likely to look more like Bosnia than like the Gulf.

Having retreated from the brink in Bosnia, President Bush near the end of his administration made a surprising move on Kosovo. He dispatched a message to Milosevic threatening forceful retaliation if the Serbian leader tried a power play in Kosovo. The strong implication was that targets in Serbia proper would not be spared. The paradoxical nature of this threat came from the fact that Milosevic already controlled Kosovo. He had deployed a heavy military and police presence there. A further clampdown on the Albanian population could be accomplished in days if not hours, though subsequent guerrilla warfare and/or terrorism by the Albanians would be likely. It remains a mystery why the U.S. military would object so strenuously to punitive bombing against Serbian artillery in Bosnia, where Serbian control was still contested, while accepting it in Serbia, where Milosevic’s control was near total. It is not clear how seriously Milosevic took the threat.

The Bosnia Phase: Clinton

There is no doubt that Bill Clinton was dealt a bad hand in Bosnia. The best time for the United States to have made its mark on the Bosnian war was during the Bush administration. By the time Clinton took office, the Serbs had consolidated their hold on some 70 percent of the country and had put Sarajevo under siege. Clinton had sharply criticized Bush in the campaign for turning his back on human rights and democratic values. In the third week of his presidency, Clinton said that a failure to act in Bosnia “would be to give up American leadership.”

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in the administration’s first comprehensive statement on Bosnia on February 10, 1993, painted U.S. interests in wide brushstrokes. He said that the United States had “strategic concerns,” that the principle of internationally recognized borders was at issue, that the United States wanted to avoid the spread of hostilities and a river of refugees, and that Bosnia was a test of how the world “will address the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in the post-Cold War world.” Later in February the administration instituted a policy of air drops to besieged Bosnian towns. In this President Clinton had acted in the face of at least initial Pentagon opposition. The administration also refused to give early assent to the Vance-Owen Plan, assuming (incorrectly) that it was unacceptable to the Bosnian side, thus causing the Bosnians to expect more forceful help.
The early toughness on the part of the Clinton administration turned out to be ephemeral. The turning point was Secretary Christopher's ill-fated visit to Europe in May 1993 to sell the allies on a proposal to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and to simultaneously use air power to pin the Serbs down ("lift and strike"). There is debate over how hard Secretary Christopher pushed the proposal in Europe; in any case the allies weren't buying. According to Elizabeth Drew in "On the Edge," the president lost faith in the lift-and-strike approach while Secretary Christopher was still in Europe. On Christopher's return the administration lapsed into the familiar pattern of rhetorical toughness accompanied by an unwillingness to use force.

What made Clinton retreat from the muscular approach he had followed in the campaign and in the first few months of his presidency? One factor was Clinton's relationship with the U.S. military, still headed by Colin Powell. Clinton's failure to serve in Vietnam made him the first postwar American president with no military record. His already fragile relationship with the Pentagon was weakened further by his ill-fated attempt to take on the issue of gays in the military early in his mandate. Clinton was simply not in a strong enough position to override the Pentagon's opposition to the commitment of U.S. military forces to Bosnia. There was another factor as well—Clinton's distaste, or at least discomfort, with military solutions. A constant pattern through the first two years of the administration was the search for diplomatic solutions even when they were impossible or irrelevant.

During the rest of 1993 force options were occasionally considered and always discarded. The Defense Department opposed the use of ground troops in relief of Sarajevo during discussions in July. Air strikes, considered in August, led to second thoughts by the president and token moves by the Serbs allowing a U.S. backdown. The outcome of the up-and-down deliberations over the summer was the U.N.'s declaration of six "safe areas" (towns besieged by the Serbs), but with no strategy for protecting them.

Clinton's advisers, a combination of hawks and doves, never reached consensus on a consistent policy line. Vice President Al Gore and U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, the most consistent hawks, were usually joined by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake. The military was militantly dovish, particularly while Powell was at its head; Powell easily overrode the more militarily optimistic views of Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak. Defense Secretary Les Aspin favored a cease-fire, a humanitarian gesture acceptable more to the Serbs than to the Muslims. Secretary Christopher varied, but following his failed May 1993 visit tended to oppose the use of U.S. troops.
With such flickering advice, strong presidential views were needed. But they were never forthcoming. Clinton himself seemed torn about what to do. His and his aides’ rhetoric reflected the absence of strategy. How they described the Bosnian war naturally suggested how the United States should deal with it. The robust characterization by Secretary Christopher in his May 1993 press conference gave way to statements that Bosnia was a “European issue” or that it represented “ancient ethnic hostilities”—descriptions implying that there was nothing the United States could or should do. Moreover, the administration fell to using its support for lift-and-strike as an excuse for inaction—since the Europeans rejected it, the United States was stymied. Finally, the argument was made that, since the United States had no peace-keeping troops in Bosnia (in itself a sign of weakness), it was in a difficult position to urge the Europeans to get tough.

When it was not scrambling for reasons to avoid military intervention, the Clinton administration maintained the fairly consistent position that this was a war of aggression, the Serbs were the aggressors, and the Bosnians were the victims. This was also the overwhelming view of the U.S. Congress and the American press and public. The evidence supported this view. The first actions against Bosnia’s unity had been taken by Karadzic in proclaiming autonomous Serbian areas in Bosnia, in withdrawing Serbian members from the Bosnian government and Parliament, and in setting up rival institutions. The policy of ethnic cleansing—the first use of apartheid in Europe since World War II—was directly attributable to Karadzic. And the murder of combatants and civilians was far more prevalent on the Serbian side than on the Muslim or Croatian sides.

Moreover, the Yugoslav army had infiltrated its troops into Bosnia as the Croatian war wound down; through little more than a change of insignia, they became the nucleus of the 80,000-man Bosnian Serb army—a formidable military force dwarfing the Bosnian military. Milosevic’s complicity was apparent not only in the arms and equipment which the Yugoslav army supplied to the Bosnian Serbs throughout the war, but also in the fact that irregulars from Serbia were active in Bosnia during the early months of the war (in fact, they committed some of the worst atrocities). As with Bush, the issue with Clinton was not who was guilty, but what could the United States do about it.

There were of course real obstacles to the use of American force. They included: the risk to U.N. peacekeepers, the opposition of the U.N., the lack of consensus in NATO, the Russian support of the Serbs, and a Congress that was prepared to micromanage without a discernible strategy. Even so, one hawkish Congressional observer, Representative Lantos, felt that if the president had
sought the Congress's support early in his term for a U.S. military response to the Serbs he would have gotten it.

The Congress itself was divided. The reigning issue was whether to unilaterally lift the arms embargo—a move strongly backed by Senator Dole. Before the 1994 elections the Senate and House foreign affairs leaderships opposed lifting the arms embargo on the grounds that the peacekeepers would be endangered, NATO would be split, other embargoes (read Iraq) would be weakened, and the military advantages were not persuasive. Those in favor of lifting the arms embargo wanted to help the Bosnian government by leveling the playing field. In most cases they did not contemplate the need for direct U.S. military involvement. This gave the lift proposal something of the aspect of a "free lunch" wish—the Muslims would be helped militarily and the United States could stay out. These two objectives, in fact, described the views of both the Clinton administration and the Congress. The surreal aspect of wanting something but not being willing to pay for it helped explain the absence of a consistent Executive or Legislative strategy for Bosnia.

The televised pictures of the 68 deaths in a bombing of the Sarajevo market in February 1994 stirred the media-reactive administration into helping to spark a NATO threat to the Serbs to withdraw their artillery from around the city. Russia contributed significantly to the credibility of the threat by warning its Serbian friends that this time NATO was serious. Backed by the credibility of force, the threat worked; the artillery was not used for over a year. But the lesson that a genuine threat of force could work was not learned. Subsequent air strikes were inconsistent, episodic, and militarily unimportant; one strike in May 1995 produced massive hostage-taking by the Serbs.

The negotiating track was one approach that everyone in the government and Congress could rally around. Negotiations did lead to one substantial success—the Bosnian-Croatian federation, achieved by the dogged work of an American negotiator, Charles Redman. For the most part, however, U.S. diplomacy, in order to look active in pursuit of near-impossible goals, amounted to a string of ascending and ultimately humiliating concessions to Milosevic. The Serbs, who realized early that the United States would not use force, could afford to sit back and let the Americans come to them.

By mid-1995, the disparate elements of the administration finally coalesced around a tougher policy. The impending election undoubtedly played a role in this change of heart. More broadly, it had become clear that the feckless European approaches would go nowhere and Bosnia would remain a bleeding sore for which the United States would be blamed. The overrated "CNN effect,"
which had failed to ignite two administrations over three years, finally began to make itself felt. Two events in the summer of 1995 opened the way to a concerted application of American power. Tudjman, with or without American complicity (the issue is under debate), launched a lightning raid on the Krajina, the largest Serbian area of Croatia sealed off by the Yugoslav army in 1991. The blitzkrieg was spectacularly and surprisingly successful; nearly all the Serbs fled. The Croatian victory transformed the balance of forces in western Bosnia. The Bosnian Serb commander, General Ratko Mladic, had depended on the Krajina for both arms and men. Now the Bosnians and Croats began to win back territory they had lost earlier in the war. The second event was another mortar attack on the Sarajevo market, killing 38 people.

This time Clinton was ready. With the approach of a military equilibrium and the commission of another atrocious war crime, he won NATO’s support for air attacks on Bosnian Serb communications and command and control. The pinpoint bombing campaign was carried out from August 30 to September 14; it resulted in Serbian agreement to negotiate an end to the war. Miraculously, all the American objections to the use of air power melted away, as the U.S. intervention—without the use of a single soldier on the ground—delivered the desired political result. Skillful diplomacy by the American negotiator, Richard Holbrooke, produced the Dayton agreement.

Dayton reflected all the weaknesses and ambiguities that had characterized the war. The Bosnian Serbs, who had constituted less than one-third of the population of Bosnia before the war, won 49 percent of the territory of Bosnia and their own political unit—Republika Srpska. The Muslims won the fragile, and probably unworkable, framework of a unitary Bosnian state, plus an undivided Sarajevo. The Croats may have been the major gainers. With their entity merged into the Bosnian-Croat federation, they could continue to function as, in effect, a part of Croatia.

This combination of weaknesses and grievances ensured a shaky peace. The 60,000-man NATO force mandated by Dayton was thus essential. The president’s decision, made for electoral reasons, to limit American participation to a year verged on the irresponsible, since nobody considered a year to be enough time to get a genuine peace process started. The American commitment to arm the Bosnians was understandable in view of their weakness vis-à-vis the Serbs; on the other hand, it ran the risk of increasing Serbian incentives to renew hostilities after departure of the NATO force.

The presence of American troops was a major deterrent to a breakdown of the Dayton cease-fire. Their departure would increase dangers significantly. Either
a Clinton or a Dole administration would be faced with the difficult choice of how far to project American power into Bosnia's highly unstable future. Nobody wants an endless, Cyprus-like peace-keeping force; yet, a U.S. administration must be mindful of the destabilizing effects an American withdrawal might have. After withdrawal, it must be decided whether to maintain a residual threat of airpower against any violator of Dayton. Ideally, Bosnia should revert to becoming a European problem, but the history of Europe's failure there makes it unlikely that the United States can fully disengage.

**Conclusion**

The Bosnia issue contains a number of lessons for U.S. foreign policy. Perhaps most important is the likelihood that Bosnia will be a paradigm—perhaps already is—of the problems we will face in the early decades of the next century. If the United States doesn't lead in finding solutions to the general problem of ethnic conflict, nobody else will. For the world of peaceful commerce and investment and information exchange which President Clinton has projected, there will have to be some kind of "new world order" to prevent massive disruptions. This will require a much greater role for the international community, a reformed U.N., and an international mandate that recognizes the need on occasion to use force. The gratuitous U.N.-bashing currently indulged in by the U.S. Congress, and the administration's unhelpful restrictions on the U.S. role toward the U.N., are not hopeful signs that this reality has been grasped.

If more Bosnias are to be prevented, then an international preventive strategy must be explored. Here also the United States must lead. Prevention is inherently difficult, since, as noted, it must be undertaken before the circumstances which require it have arisen. But it is not impossible. After all, the Cold War was won primarily by a preventive strategy—deterrence. In the Bosnian crisis most of the deterrence has been self-deterrence by the West against its own actions.

A better understanding of the value of force must also be reached. The Serbs had a built-in advantage in Bosnia because they didn't shrink from force while the West did. Force, like diplomacy, must be an available tool. And, against common wisdom, sometimes it is better used early rather than after other remedies have been exhausted. This was true in the Bosnian war; U.S. air strikes in the summer of 1992 would almost certainly have brought the Serbs to a negotiated settlement and saved tens of thousands of lives.
Bosnia has also demonstrated how ineffectual the Congress can be in a complex foreign policy situation. Congress is capable neither of devising broad foreign policy strategies nor of micro-managing specific problems. It is a blunt instrument, preoccupied with posturing and short-term ends. Even when those ends are connected with such laudable principles as advancing democracy or defending human rights, the Congress is prone to act without sensitivity to longer-term consequences.

The Congress is useful and necessary in reflecting the mood of the country, but it is the president who must lead and act. Americans were divided over Bosnia—"a problem from Hell," as Secretary Christopher called it—but that is no excuse for lack of leadership. The country was divided over the Gulf, and President Bush led it through a successful war. It was divided over Haiti, and President Clinton took a risk that paid off. The president's decisive actions on Bosnia, late as they were, created a partial American consensus on that issue as well. The bottom line for Bosnia, as for all issues where the interests of the United States are engaged, is presidential leadership.
12. Russian and American Intervention Policy in Comparative Perspective

by Jeremy R. Azrael, Benjamin S. Lambeth, Emil A. Payin, and Arkady A. Popov

The preceding case studies have described and assessed the main instances of low-intensity force employment by the United States and Russia since the end of the Cold War. This overview revisits those cases from a comparative perspective in search of similarities and differences in the respective decisionmaking styles of the two countries. In particular, it considers comparisons and contrasts with respect to (1) opportunities and constraints; (2) motivations and goals; (3) organizational and bureaucratic practices; and (4) executive-legislative relations in each country. A brief concluding section speaks to some implications for Russian-American strategic relations.

Opportunities and Constraints

Because of its continued superpower status, the United States has both worldwide possibilities for the discretionary use of force and the strategic reach and sustainability required to follow through on them. In contrast, Russia has, at best, only regional intervention possibilities and limited incentives or capability to use force beyond the territory of the former Soviet Union. (This excludes the continued presence of large numbers of intercontinental-range nuclear weapons in Russia's military inventory, which are hardly pertinent to these situations.)

In contemplating force employment both countries face significant external and internal constraints. One is the attitudes of key foreign governments. With the end of the Cold War, neither country can justify force employment as a self-evidently necessary response to a demonized adversary. Both countries now need to be more sensitive to foreign perceptions of and likely reactions to their interventions. Anticipation of international responses to intervention has accordingly become more important to both countries.

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As a result of these changes, each country now has powerful incentives for moral, political, legal, and economic burden-sharing reasons to call on allied support and seek multilateral solutions to regional crises. The closer the locus of a conflict is to home, moreover, the greater is the need for international endorsement to negate any appearance of “imperialism.” At the same time, this heightened need for political support from other countries has been accompanied by a collapse of both countries’ strongest claim for such support in years past, namely, the need for united action against a common adversary.

Many U.S. allies have been reluctant partners in Washington’s efforts to build peace-keeping coalitions because of the end of any Cold War urgency and the increased costs in loss of trade and political acceptance in the affected regions. That reluctance has partly reflected inadequacies in American leadership, but the fact is that the United States can no longer count on its friends simply to fall into line whenever a summons to intervene abroad seems to beckon. As for Russia, the only allies it can call upon are some of the newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union, and most of these have proved to be reluctant and unreliable partners. This has forced Moscow more than once to act unilaterally in its efforts to control violence and maintain stability in its “near abroad,” as in the cases of Tadjikistan, Georgia, Abkhazia, and Transdniestria.

There is a related constraint that involves each country’s attitude toward the other. The U.S. government has put Moscow on notice that it will not lightly countenance any Russian encroachments that threaten the sovereignty of the newly-independent states. It also has declared that it will not look favorably on any Russian ambitions to claim suzerainty over Moscow’s former Central Asian republics, let alone over Ukraine or the Baltic states. Words only go so far, however, for Washington has made it equally clear to Moscow that it has no interest in being involved in any peace-keeping involvements in Russia’s “near abroad.”

Russia has similarly taken a strong declaratory stance against the United States and NATO for acting as though they have a natural right to intervene, especially in the former Yugoslavia. Yet there is little that Russia can do about this beyond complain, just as there is little the United States can do to prevent or substantially influence Russian peace-keeping operations in the “near abroad.”

Both countries face a broad incompatibility between the new global security environment and traditional military roles. The United States and Russia each have learned the hard way since the end of the Cold War that conventional armed forces perform poorly when put into harm’s way but prevented from reacting in the classic manner in which they have been trained. The functions for
which such forces have been designed do not include the crafting of domestic political institutions where such institutions are currently absent or fulfilling police roles where the parties in dispute are not committed to living by the terms of any settlement. The U.S. Army showed this clearly in Somalia, before operations there were terminated. For its part, the Russian military appears to have been less sensitive to such dangers, and more willing to inflict and suffer casualties. If anything, however, it has been even less successful than its American counterpart in regional peace-keeping operations, partly for this reason.

There are also resource constraints that limit each country’s latitude to engage in regional peace-keeping operations. Since the Cold War ended in 1991, American defense spending has declined by more than fifty percent. In a worst case possibility, it could bottom out as low as $150 billion annually by the year 2002 if, as seems likely, Congress passes a balanced budget amendment. Russia’s military funding crisis is more acute by far. Its defense budget is now in the $11–15 billion range, which puts it at only a twentieth of current U.S. defense spending. Because of the continuing resource shortage, a substantial gap has developed between the High Command’s declared requirements for a lean, efficient, mobile, and high-technology combat arm and the reality of Russia’s dilapidated military organization, low readiness and sustainability, sagging morale, and badly underfunded force modernization plans.

The phenomenon of spontaneous “mission creep” in peace-keeping operations constitutes yet another inhibiting factor in the intervention decisionmaking of both countries. As several Russian and American interventions have shown, initial non-combat roles have spilled over into counterinsurgency warfare, posing issues that did not figure in the original tactical objectives or mission planning. This phenomenon has become a major constraint on American intervention decisionmaking. It has been less constraining for Russia, as borne out by the latter’s continued difficulty in extricating itself from a bleeding war of attrition in Chechnya—a war former Defense Minister Pavel Grachev assured President Yeltsin would be over after a two-hour operation by one airborne regiment.

Fear of entrapment constitutes yet another constraint. Much like concern over “mission creep,” it has had a greater inhibiting effect on American than on Russian intervention deliberations, since Moscow has arguably had less discretionary room than Washington in the regional force employment challenges it has faced since the USSR’s demise. The U.S. government harbors an almost systemic bias against intervention for that very reason. In the case of Bosnia, for example, no serious consideration was given in 1989–1990 to the use
of force, either by the Bush administration or by Congress. There was discussion in the National Security Council and at the State Department over whether the United States should accept that Yugoslavia was doomed and try to manage the impending breakup. Few, however, supported the latter option, thanks to a belief—correct, as it turned out—that the only way Yugoslavia could disintegrate was violently. As the civil war escalated, there was further debate within the Bush administration over the potential benefits of using air power. But nobody was willing to consider putting in U.S. ground forces. On the contrary, there was a consensus against committing U.S. forces unless the objective was unambiguous and victory with a minimum of friendly casualties was certain.

The main constraint affecting American post-Cold War force employment decisionmaking, however, has been the fear of sustaining enough casualties to cause an erosion of popular support for peace-keeping commitments. This constraint has been aggravated by the 1991 Persian Gulf War’s successful outcome, the down side of which was that the astonishingly low incidence of allied lives lost to hostile fire became the norm for all future U.S. military interventions, tying the hands of policymakers almost irrespective of the stakes. Anything more than a few dozen American soldiers killed now routinely triggers a sharp public reaction, followed by vocal second-guessing over whether the game is worth the gamble.

In Russia, there is likewise a mounting popular sensitivity to casualties. Throughout the ten years of fighting in Afghanistan, the number of Soviet troops killed in action was a matter of great secrecy, as coffins bringing the war dead home were merely whispered about by friends and family. That has changed noticeably as public reaction to the enormous number of deaths sustained on both sides in Chechnya has forced Russia’s leaders to look harder at the possibility of a face-saving solution. If that reaction offers any key to where the Russian people’s limit lies, however, it suggests that the threshold of Russian intolerance to casualties today is more in the thousands, than dozens.

Motives

Since the end of the Cold War neither Russia nor the United States have employed force in response to a real or perceived threat from the other, let alone a threat to vital national interests. In fact, with the important exception of the Gulf War, the United States has not even claimed that its military interventions were motivated by direct threats to its security. At most, it has claimed that its security could or would eventually be affected adversely if instability was allowed to fester in a given country or region. For better or worse, however, such
remote threats have been a matter of genuine concern to key policymakers and were important motivating factors behind the U.S. interventions in Lebanon, Bosnia, and even in Nicaragua and Haiti.

Real or imagined security concerns have also played an important motivating role in Russia's post-Cold War interventions. In the eyes of many Russian decisionmakers, at least some of these interventions—e.g., in Chechnya—have been necessary responses to a clear and present danger to Russia's vital interests, up to and including its very survival as a single, integrated country. Even where there has been disagreement over the necessity or wisdom of using force, there has been widespread agreement that instability or conflict in the regions where force has been employed pose a direct, if not immediate, threat to Russia's own security. Furthermore, in Russia, perhaps even more than in the United States, there has been a preconditioned readiness in many quarters to subscribe to or go along with an expansive notion of security that has made military intervention seem an acceptable, if not necessarily desirable, response to even remote threats to national security.

Economic motivations have not been significant in the post-Cold War intervention decisions of either Washington or Moscow. Of course, the vast reserves of Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti oil made for a definite, if unarticulated, planning factor behind the U.S. organization and conduct of Operation Desert Storm. Strategic considerations, however, were at least as important in American and allied policy planning leading up to the Gulf War. The main motivation of the Bush administration was a determination that Iraq not be permitted to establish the dangerous precedent that unprovoked aggression against a richly-endowed but defenseless neighbor could go unpunished.

Likewise in the case of post-Cold War Russia, Moscow's ravaging of Chechnya has not been, first and foremost, a matter of interest in securing oil pipelines. The "energy lobby" in Moscow has had limited influence over President Yeltsin. Indeed, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is, to say the least, very close to Russia's gas and petroleum barons, has been a leading proponent of seeking a nonmilitary solution to the problem posed by Chechnya. In both the American and Russian cases of intervention and force employment assessed in this volume, economic considerations have been a planning factor only to the extent that they have been consistent with more overarching strategic and geopolitical concerns.

Simply the desire to appear to be "doing something" has been an unspoken drive behind intervention decisionmaking, at least in the case of the United States. As human rights violations in Bosnia reached full swing during the Clinton administration, the Department of State grew increasingly inclined to counsel
using force simply to project an image that the United States was “involved.” In particular, the State Department wanted to conduct punitive bombing against Serbian artillery in Bosnia. That would have been a gross misapplication of air power, and the military rightly saw the idea as an invitation to trouble. Nevertheless, such pressures eventually led to the early piecemeal employment of U.S. air power in Bosnia.

A related motivation behind the intervention decisions of both countries has been a felt need to “look good,” or to save face. There were serious divisions, for example, within the Bush administration over what to do about the problem posed by Haiti. The CIA saw Aristide as unreliable and the country offering little of value to the United States. The military, for its part, saw any American commitment to Haiti as a wasteful diversion of scarce resources needed for managing the defense drawdown. Naturally, there were disputes between the Departments of State and Defense over whether the United States should intervene. Eventually, the USS Harlan County was ordered to Port-au-Prince to demonstrate an American naval “presence.” It was met at pierside by a mob of thugs and retreated, never to return. That Haitian mob called President Clinton’s bluff and helped ensure the subsequent U.S. invasion, prompted in part by a desire by the administration to regain its lost credibility over the Harlan County incident.

Similar pressures to “look good” figured in the roles played by various actors leading up to Russia’s assault on Grozny in December 1994. At least parts of the Ministries of Defense and Internal Affairs, for example, reportedly worked overtime to prove that they could meet the challenges laid down by Yeltsin’s plan to invade Chechnya. Within the Kremlin, too, there was an evident desire to vindicate the loss of face suffered by Russia as a result of the badly botched clandestine incursions the previous month. A reported attempt by some staffers in the president’s Analytic Center and on the Security Council to propose that Yeltsin halt Russian troops at the outskirts of Grozny and negotiate with Dudayev under a threat of war never made it past the first hurdle. Members of the Presidential Council likewise submitted a request that Yeltsin convene a Council meeting. No response to this entreaty was ever received. The president evidently felt no need for expert opinion and relied on the assurances of Grachev, who had promised a quick and decisive resolution. There was a pronounced “they can’t do this to us” element to the final decision by Yeltsin and his lieutenants.

Finally, intervention decisions have been made in both countries from time to time for no more profound reason than the absence of any better ideas. Both the United States and Russia are configured toward unstructured and often
shortsighted policy planning, with a tendency to commit forces without clearly articulated aims. In particular, ad hoc and impromptu assessments of “what is at stake” often decide what ultimately gets placed on the U.S. intervention calendar. By way of example, one can cite the successive U.S. decisions in 1982–1984 that were wholly reactive to events, with no clear, top-down policy guidance and only immediate tactical objectives at stake.

Likewise in both Panama and Haiti, the U.S. government was reluctant to intervene and was prompted to do so, in the end, only out of a sense that all lesser options had been exhausted. In each case, the United States backed itself into using force by either foreclosing other options or trying them to no avail. And in both cases, the United States became hostage to its own rhetoric. No vital interests were at stake, yet Washington’s demonizing of the local opponents had the effect of putting America’s credibility on the line. Divided councils within the U.S. government helped convince the Panamanian and Haitian militaries that they could sit out U.S. pressures with impunity, further working to leave Washington with little choice but to intervene in the end.

The Machinery of Policymaking

The United States emerged from the Cold War with a well-established mechanism for intervention decisionmaking, along with a policy process that had routine practices with roots running well back into history. In contrast, Russia entered the post-Cold War era carrying multiple burdens of its 74-year Soviet heritage, beginning with a closed and secretive system of top-down decisionmaking and directed policy implementation. Despite the seeming stability and seeming orderliness of its governmental forms and mechanisms, however, American decisionmaking too is often marred by ad hoc pluralism. Ill-defined operating procedures frequently enable persons or institutions with their own agendas to elbow in, with the result that whoever has the president’s ear or the loudest or most persuasive voice is most likely to get heard. This contributes to a disorderly and nonpersuasive process of weighing options at the top, in which opposing views and other alternatives do not always get an adequate reception. Relatedly, there are no clear rules of the game or specific intervention guidelines observed by the U.S. government. This means that intervention decisions are often idiosyncratic and situation specific. The relative influence of senior Executive Branch appointees, elected legislators, career bureaucrats, lobbyists and other interest groups, and the media all depends heavily on the issue at hand.
Unlike the ad hoc pluralism of the U.S. approach to intervention decisionmaking, the Russian process is highly underregulated and underinstitutionalized. It fragments control of decisionmaking and obfuscates accountability. It further suffers many of the pathologies of a new and semi-developed democracy such as mass politics, zero-sum competition between elites of the old and new orders, and weak governmental capacity. As a result, parochial interests are often able to seize control of the intervention policy agenda and to dictate the actions of deployed military forces. The problem is not too much input into decisionmaking, but too little. There are some excellent examples to be drawn from Moscow's misadventure in Chechnya, an experience which has revealed striking flaws in Russia's fledgling democracy. Among them are a lack of any strategy for preventing and neutralizing internal conflicts; an absence of a well-defined and effective information support mechanism; a low level of professionalism among those members of the bureaucracy responsible for decisions, as well as a lack of any discipline of law within the bureaucracy that might displace the old discipline of fear, and the lack of a true culture of opposition and public debate. In contrast, American officials are better equipped to learn from their missteps thanks to a policy process that features a more stable allocation of roles and responsibilities and institutions that are flexible enough to respond to new demands and requirements with relative alacrity, albeit with a lag.

**Decisionmaking at the Top**

In both countries, the president is the ultimate decisionmaker, and the office of the president is the key locus of intervention policymaking. In the United States, the presidency is highly institutionalized, although it always bears the imprint of a given president's personality and style. In contrast, the underinstitutionalized Russian presidency is little more than an embodiment of Boris Yeltsin and his idiosyncratic way of doing business, with little or no engagement of the larger policy community, to say nothing of public opinion. Such an approach worked well enough during the stormy days of the USSR's initial unraveling in August 1991, but it is less appropriate to Russia's now more stable political system. Today it offers a recipe for policy failure.

In the end, in his deliberations over Chechnya, Yeltsin became a captive national leader, made hostage to the irresponsible acts of his subordinates. To cite but one example, there was a willful refusal by senior on-scene commanders, and possibly by Russian generals at higher levels as well, to honor Yeltsin's order to halt the bombing of Chechnya in late December 1994. This is but one of many instances of the price the Yeltsin government has had to pay in lost effectiveness
as a result of the sometimes aggressive voluntarism and noncompliance of its out-of-control military and civilian bureaucrats. The tragedy of Chechnya has starkly underscored all the shortcomings of Russia’s force employment repertoire by making its leaders look confused, uninformed, and unable to heed public opinion. Worse yet, as indicated above, the five cases of post-Cold War Russian intervention do not show much of a learning curve over time.

The principal decisions with respect to intervention in Chechnya are often said to have been made in the Russian Security Council, which was supposedly established in order to provide a high-level forum within which Russia’s president can interact directly and concurrently with his key ministers and agency heads. Like the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), however, the Russian Security Council is not a deliberative body that can arrive at decisions on its own. Kremlin decisions acquire force only after the president, who is the Security Council’s chairman, signs the appropriate executive order or decree. Nominally, the Security Council is a consultative body to the president. Any allusions to “collective decisions” made by the Security Council reflect a misunderstanding of where that organization stands in the constellation of Kremlin forces. Yet the hybrid nature of Russia’s emerging democratic process is such that the votes of some members are considered “decisive,” while those of others are only “advisory.”

In any event, the decision to go to war against Chechnya was ultimately made by President Yeltsin alone. Those who apparently made the final inputs into Yeltsin’s decision call were personal cronies. Yeltsin’s bodyguard and close friend Korzhakov had even formed, in great secrecy, his own “analytical center” within the Presidential Security Service expressly set up to deal with the impending assault on Chechnya. As a result, the campaign was hastily planned behind the backs of those Executive Branch institutions, most notably the Ministries of Defense and Internal Affairs and the involved service arms, whose combatants would have to bear the brunt of the Kremlin’s fateful miscalculations. The deputy defense minister at the time, General Boris Gromov, confirmed as much in his harsh *ex post facto* public criticism of the invasion.

The force of personality is also a notable factor in U.S. intervention decisionmaking. A striking example can be seen in the pivotal role played by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell in influencing the decision by the Bush administration to halt Operation Desert Storm after only 100 hours of ground fighting. General Powell also left a distinctive imprint on U.S. policy deliberations antecedent to the Gulf War by resisting the commitment of American forces until operational missions had been clearly defined and declared goals of the administration were deemed attainable. Earlier, during the
Reagan administration, the often intense personal rivalry between Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and National Security Adviser Robert MacFarlane made emotionalism rather than hard analysis the main drivers of decisionmaking on repeated occasion. The resultant indecision and policy inconsistency caused by the shifting ascendency of these three competing personalities had a decidedly negative impact on the effectiveness of American intervention policy in Lebanon. One unwelcome result was that Saddam Hussein may have learned a lesson about U.S. resolve from its debacle in Beirut in 1982, perhaps affecting his later decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990. In Russia, however, the impact of personality and the relative weight of individuals is more consequential because of the less-developed nature of Russia's policy-making process. There are no American cases, for example, in which personal ties between bureaucrats and generals with key local leaders not only determined decisions on the ground but of overall military and security policy in entire regions, as was the case in Ossetia-Ingushetia, Tadjikistan, Abkhazia, and Trans-Dniestria.

The Interagency Arena

Despite the persistence of closed decisionmaking at the top, Russia's mechanisms for force employment planning at the working level are beginning to look, on the surface at least, more and more like those of the United States. There are differences, however, in the intensity and timing of institutional conflicts over policy options within the Russian and American systems. In the United States, intrabureaucratic tugging and hauling tends to be greatest during the policy formulation stage. Once a policy course is set, government officials usually have incentives to get on board in the national interest and show solidarity with the president, with little tendency to mount rear guard actions in an effort to sabotage administration decisions. In Russia, by contrast, conflict tends to be most acute after a policy course has been set. Bureaucrats, even at very senior levels, feel less compulsion to show support for the president. Furthermore, the familiar adage "where you stand depends on where you sit" applies more in the case of the United States than in Russia, since the latter has less well-developed institutional cultures and interests. The often widely contrasting bureaucratic views of the U.S. State and Defense Departments when it comes to putting American forces in the line of fire, for example, do not appear to have a close analog in the outlooks of the Russian Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs.

In the United States, there are usually predictable and distinguishable "agency perspectives" on intervention issues. The Department of State, for example, views threats to commit the nation's military equities to possible action as a tool
in the panoply of America’s coercive diplomacy options. For its part, the U.S. defense establishment, including its civilian leadership, is typically not disposed to countenance American forces being sent into harm’s way until and unless the president is unquestionably ready to commit troops on a large scale and has clear goals and a concept of operations calculated to ensure a successful outcome. Often this adamant and unyielding bureaucratic stance has the effect, whether by intent or not, of ruling out intervention altogether. Because of differences like these, Executive Branch leaders often have a hard time forming a consensus within the bureaucracy. Offset setting this ingrained tendency toward immobilism at the working level, however, is the fact that the higher one goes in the various institutions and agencies of the American bureaucracy, the harder it becomes to predict a policymaker’s posture on policy issues simply by awareness of his organizational affiliation. In the higher reaches of Executive Branch governance, personal beliefs, experiences, and values typically overshadow and displace the more predictable inclinations of career bureaucrats.

In the American system, decisions to commit U.S. forces abroad are often set in motion by an interagency group of second- and third-echelon government bureaucrats. There have been notable instances, however, in which the decision process has been initiated at lower echelons. The intervention in Somalia offers a good example. No so-called Deputies Committee meetings were convened to consider the human rights violations that were being perpetrated in Mogadishu by gangs of armed thugs who were blocking food and medicine from getting to sick and starving citizens. Instead, a colorful cable from the American ambassador in nearby Kenya caught the attention of many in the bureaucracy and was forwarded by the NSC senior director for Africa to General Scowcroft and President Bush. Subsequent interagency talks concluded that the United States was the only actor with the necessary reach and resources to break the siege of Mogadishu.

As expected, the Department of Defense was initially reluctant to let itself get drawn into Somalia because of the drain on resources such an operation threatened at a time of severe budget and force reductions. True to form, the Pentagon lost little time testing the extent of the Bush administration’s commitment to Somalia by offering a high-end estimate of the number of U.S. troops that would be required. It only yielded after it was led to understand that demands on the military would entail nothing more than an airlift. “Mission creep,” however, soon affected the American troop deployment to Mogadishu, as many in the defense establishment had feared from the outset. This insidious trend was not reined in decisively until after more than a dozen U.S. servicemen had been killed and their bodies ignominiously dragged through the streets to
the eyes of a shocked world—and an outraged U.S. military command—by Somali thugs.

The Pentagon similarly had little interest in wasting scarce resources to grapple with an analogous situation in Liberia several years earlier. In the end, the possibility of intervention in Liberia never made it to the senior decisionmaker level, getting stuck and buried in lower echelons of the bureaucracy. Part of the reason why Somalia and not Liberia made it to the president’s desk was that, in the first case, the media spotlighted the appalling horrors that were being perpetrated against helpless civilians in Mogadishu, while largely ignoring the civil war in Liberia. Also, Congress exhibited more interest in Somalia than it did in the less-publicized case of Liberia.

Russia’s more closed “political kitchen” at the top makes it difficult to evaluate similarities and differences between Executive Branch processes in Moscow and Washington. It seems clear, however, that Russia’s international security policy agencies continue to bear the imprint of Soviet tradition and practice. Throughout the Soviet era, these agencies did not engage in bureaucratic politics as such. Rather, they worked more as executive agents of Kremlin fiat, relaying their “policy support” inputs to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, with few, if any, action recommendations. The ensuing process made for a well-functioning system of policy administration, which even included some internal checks and balances. Nevertheless, these bureaucracies, in the main, operated as transmission belts for state policy, not as independent actors in the formulation of that policy. As a result, such organizations as the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs have little experience of working together and coordinating with each other on issues in which they both have an interest.

The creation of an effective interagency network is further hampered by a Soviet-style propensity to compartmentalize classified information and minimize lateral (and sometimes vertical) information sharing. For these and other reasons, personality and personal access to senior decisionmakers remain more important determinants of a given agency’s role and influence in Russia than in the United States. Sometimes an important initiative will go straight to the president from the Foreign Ministry without being coordinated with, say, the Defense Ministry or the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). Ministers constantly strive to get a foot in the Kremlin’s door, without the prior concurrence of their colleagues in other state institutions. This contributes not to policy-making orderliness but to chaos.

To recall an example of the arbitrariness that often results, Yeltsin’s decision to invade Chechnya followed a breakdown in the policy process at the highest level. Thus, deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhray’s proposal to halt Russian forces at
the outskirts of Grozny as a signal to Dudayev got smothered in Kremlin intrigue before it ever reached the president’s desk. Because Shakhrai was young, ambitious, and respected by the president, his opponents in Yeltsin’s inner circle were prepared to block his initiative merely on the ground that he had proposed it. More recently, Aleksandr Lebed has encountered similar rear guard opposition in his efforts to bring an end to the war in Chechnya.

As these examples suggest, the United States and Russia differ markedly in the way they process and utilize information in making force-employment decisions. In 1990, a CIA assessment played at least an indirect part in shoring up the reluctance of the Bush administration to expose American forces to the impending crossfire of the Yugoslav civil war. (The CIA was the first government organization to predict flatly that a violent breakup of Yugoslavia was inevitable.) In contrast, Russia has no counterparts to the CIA’s national intelligence officers nor any structure at senior levels such as the U.S. National Intelligence Council for producing integrated intelligence assessments. Nor is there anything quite like the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessment in the Ministry of Defense or General Staff. Likewise, no mission-area analysis as Americans know it is done within the Russian armed forces. There is no known Russian counterpart to the U.S. Air Force’s Project CHECKMATE, which studies potential conflict regions around the world from an operational perspective in support of contingency planning.

To make matters worse, Russia’s leaders must often depend on unreliable sources for their information. Thus, intelligence coming to Moscow from Chechnya was compromised from the outset, because Dudayev had co-opted those KGB agents who had been stationed in Grozny before the collapse of Soviet Communism. The lack of good inside reporting may have contributed to the Kremlin’s unrealistic estimates of the situation, particularly with respect to the fighting capacity of Dudayev’s forces. Similarly, there were no reliable Russian contacts with members of the Tadzjik opposition whose real motives were never understood by Moscow. Instead, political judgments and decisions were based on information provided either by on-scene Russian commanders sympathetic to the Tadzjik government or by the latter’s own representatives. Invariably, such information was one-sided and distorted.

**The Role of the Military**

The U.S. defense establishment has considerable influence over the course and outcome of American intervention decisionmaking. Although it does not have a veto by any stretch, it has very strong leverage. One recurrent practice on its part
has been to oppose, as a matter of principle, interventions that might undermine the prestige and respectability that it has taken the U.S. armed forces two decades to reconstitute in the wake of the Vietnam war. In all the cases of U.S. force employment examined in this volume, the military was averse to going in because of the absence of clearly-defined goals and consequent concerns over spontaneous "mission creep." When intervention was being seriously weighed, the Pentagon's tactic was never to say "no" outright, but to table operational objections on operational or technical grounds that made any intervention proposal appear to be unworkable in practice. (The problem for others in the U.S. decision hierarchy, of course, was that such a hypercautious approach often became an excuse for taking no action at all.)

On the basis of presently available information, the Russian military seems far less hesitant to intervene than its American counterpart. What matters most in today's Russia, however, is not so much the military's policy outlook and breadth of influence on decisionmaking as its subordination and accountability. In Trans-Dniestria, the 14th Army under General Lebed acted entirely on its own in bringing force to bear to stop an incipient outbreak of local fighting within just a day and a half. Although his 14th Army played a stabilizing role rather than one of local interference, Lebed was not thinking of the interests of Russia but rather about the well-being of his own forces. No corresponding command was given by Moscow; there were no presidential decrees or parliamentary resolutions. Lebed acted on his own, in total defiance of his instructions from Moscow. Instead of controlling the 14th Army, Moscow found its agenda in Moldova being driven by Lebed's independent actions. In effect, Lebed privatized the 14th Army, an act that would have been not just impossible but unthinkable in the United States.

Similarly, the progressive involvement of Russian troops stationed in Tadzikistan in an inter-Tadzik armed dispute was almost wholly spontaneous and unmanaged by Moscow. Decisions regarding the use of force were made either by junior officers on the spot or else through coordination between the Tadzik government and on-scene Russian commanders, with only minimal and inconsistent guidance from Moscow until very late in the game. All of this points to a badly underdeveloped civil-military polity in Russia, with the military often acting in rogue fashion, in either indifference or outright disobedience to Moscow. This was most recently demonstrated yet again by the clear lack of coordination between Russian field commanders in Chechnya and Yeltsin's newly-appointed National Security Advisor Alexander Lebed.
Executive-Legislative Relations

One trait which the American and Russian Executive Branches have in common is a deep distrust of their respective legislatures and a strong inclination to exclude them from the shaping of intervention policy. There is a natural desire on the part of Executive Branch leaders in both countries to prevent meddling from without by hundreds of elected representatives, each of whom is convinced that he or she has a rightful voice in the formulation of national policy, yet none of whom is accountable for that policy’s content and consequences. Nevertheless, the gap between the Executive and Legislative branches is much narrower in the United States than in Russia, where there is no tradition of bipartisanship in Russia, and where the behavior of Duma deputies with respect to domestic and international conflict has been driven, at least so far, less by concern for the interests of constituents or the nation than by partisan and group interests, often with the express intent to antagonize executive power.

In the Ossetian-Ingush crisis, for example, the Russian legislature was even more at fault than the Executive Branch in sending misleading signals to the warring parties. In effect, it played a spoiler role, seeking to obstruct Yeltsin’s efforts to solve the conflict through talks. Similarly, Yeltsin’s efforts to maintain at least a semblance of neutrality in the mini-war in Abkhazia were constantly undermined by a parliamentary opposition that was outspokenly pro-Abkhaz and welcomed every opportunity to discredit Yeltsin’s leadership and embarrass him both domestically and internationally.

Prior to Russia’s adoption of a truly post-Soviet constitution in 1993, the Parliament had a contestable but defensible claim to be not only the ultimate arbiter of the country’s security policy but the principal locus of strategic decisionmaking. With the adoption of the current “presidential” constitution in 1993, however, the balance of power has tilted sharply toward the Executive Branch as regards decisions to employ force. In this respect, one could say that Russia has become more like America, where clear constitutional provisions narrowly circumscribe the role of Congress in foreign and security policymaking. Ironically, however, the supremacy of the Executive Branch is now so overwhelming in Russia that the Parliament has been freed to behave even more irresponsibly than before. By the same token, the Executive Branch has been freed of any need to seek the advice and consent of those politically independent “outsiders” and can therefore act even more arbitrarily than before. While strong presidential leadership is as essential to rational policymaking, it does not guarantee it and is subject to serious abuse in the absence of institutionalized checks and balances.
Implications for Russian-American Relations

The case studies in this volume offer at least a first-order answer to questions that Russia and America frequently ask about each other. For Russians, a key question is whether the United States is taking advantage of the disappearance of the Soviet Union to become a post-Cold War global hegemon—and hence a potential threat to Russia’s security. For their part, Americans ask whether Russia continues to harbor imperialistic ambitions or is finally becoming a post-imperial power, inclined to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem of international security. These questions are not just academic, for their answers carry major implications for how each country views the other’s emerging role in international politics, as well as for the prospects of the United States and Russia eventually forging effective cooperative security ties.

Although it would take a major study of each country to offer more conclusive answers to these controversial questions, there is nothing in any of the preceding case studies to suggest that either Washington or Moscow have particularly grandiose ambitions. If anything, the tendency in the United States has been toward isolationism rather than globalism. American military intervention in recent years have typically been reactive and even inertial rather than instrumental in pursuit of grand “strategic” goals. As for Russia, its force has been less reflective of any Russian “imperial” grand design than of a perceived need to ensure stability along the conflicted southwestern periphery of Russia and within Russia itself.

If the preceding case studies provide considerable reassurance against the likelihood of a U.S.-Russian confrontation in the foreseeable future, they raise substantial doubts about the near-term prospects for close cooperation, let alone genuine partnership in regional peace-keeping operations. The principal stumbling block is not an absence of common interests but a marked disparity in levels of political development. For all its vagaries, the highly institutionalized political system of the United States can be counted on to produce relatively transparent and responsible policies over time. In marked contrast, Russia’s “transitional” system is far less stable and far more prone to unpredictable and inconsistent behavior. The various instances of Russian force employment outlined above offer repeated testimony to opacity at the presidential level, rampant chaos throughout the interagency arena, recurrent military insubordination at lower echelons of the implementation system, virtually nonexistent legal and legislative checks and balances, and a persistent absence of more than the most vague accountability on the part of the president to the electorate. All of this points to a Russian political system that may not be ready
for some time to join Western partners in meaningful peacekeeping and other global security operations.