A STRATEGY TO STOP MASS ATROCITIES:
THE U.S. PEACEKEEPING EXPERIENCE’S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN
SAVING LIVES THROUGH INTERVENTION

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Masters of Arts in
Security Studies

By

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Washington, D.C.
April 15, 2011
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ABSTRACT

This analysis evaluates potential strategies for military operations to halt mass atrocities, also known as Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO). Examining the strategy and outcomes of six U.S. humanitarian interventions in Iraq, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, the analysis evaluates whether operations were more successful when they sought to provide short-term humanitarian aid or when they focused on resolving long-term issues of governance and political security of the victim group. The analysis concludes that missions focusing on short-term needs were universally successful and that policy makers frequently underestimated the resources and effort required to resolve long-term issues of political security, leading to strategic failures. Military planners and policy makers are advised to constrain military goals to minimize opposition from the perpetrator group when the aim is to save the most lives with a minimal commitment of national will and resources.
Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Air Force, the Department of the Defense, or any other US government agency.

MATTHEW WILLIAMS
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The Responsibility to Protect

In the past decades, U.S. military forces, along with coalition forces sponsored by the United Nations and regional groups, have been called upon to respond to instances of mass atrocities around the world, typically after the incidents have shocked the conscience of the international community and well after the majority of the crimes had been committed. Even involving ourselves in the internal affairs of faraway nations when it comes to atrocities is a relatively new concept, owing to the Westphalian ideal of sovereignty that led us to act only when our national interests were at stake and led other nations to expect that their internal affairs weren’t open to criticism from outsiders. Over time, however, U.S. leaders have slowly come to embrace what is termed the “responsibility to protect,” which holds that if a nation fails to protect the welfare of its citizens, the international community and individual nations have the obligation to step in to stop mass atrocities.

While President Clinton tasked the military to carry out several “humanitarian interventions” and President George W. Bush signed on to the concept in public statements, President Obama is the first American leader to plan to stop mass atrocities, both through preventative measures in vulnerable nations and through specific diplomatic and military action once a crisis emerges. This paper will focus on that last element – military action to halt an imminent or ongoing atrocity – and how the government should plan and prepare its forces for that use.

The reality shaping the President’s pledge to take action to stop mass killing is that nearly a decade of continuous deployment of troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, along
with a financial downturn, places limits on the appetite of military leaders, politicians and the public to commit forces to a large-scale intervention overseas. So how should policy makers square the desire for options with the limits of an already taxed military structure?

The solution is to look to past experiences to evaluate what strategies led to successful interventions to stop mass atrocities. Specifically, in past interventions, was the U.S. military more successful when it aimed to provide short-term humanitarian aid to victims or when it attempted to improve the victims’ long-term security and political situation?

**Definitions**

There is no commonly accepted definition of what constitutes a “mass atrocity.” Even the use of the term “genocide,” specifically defined by a UN convention agreed to by almost every nation, is fervently disputed whenever it is applied to a real-life example.¹ The Director of National Intelligence, in an annual intelligence assessment to the Senate, defined “mass killings” as the “deliberate killing of at least 1,000 unarmed civilians of a particular political identity by state or state-sponsored actors in a single event or over a sustained period.”² However, this definition is not shared by many Defense and State Department officials or non-governmental organizations that deal with mass atrocities.³ Alternatively, the 1998 Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court defined the concept of “crimes against humanity” as killing, enslavement, rape, torture or displacement of a civilian population that is a “widespread or systematic

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¹ The Genocide Convention and its definition will be covered in the Literature Review section of this document.
³ There is disagreement over the DNI’s definition because it was not crafted through interagency consensus and some view the figure of 1,000 as an arbitrary benchmark.
attack.” The United States initially signed the treaty under the Clinton Administration, and then withdrew its signature during Bush’s term in office. Thus the definition has no legal significance in the United States, though it may shape the decisions of the United Nations and allies that would assist us in a military intervention.

This paper will not attempt to settle any disputes about which cases should be considered mass atrocities or set a threshold for its application. In practice, its definition is similar to Justice Potter Stewart’s construction that “I know it when I see it.” Specifically, the military will be tasked to respond to a mass atrocity when the President makes the evaluation that one is taking place and a response is necessary. Key to the guidance provided by policymakers is a clear direction of what they want the military to accomplish. For instance, the President could direct the military to prioritize its efforts on preventing murder and rape at the expense of not trying to stop mass displacement. Similarly, the mission might also include “nation-building” goals in addition to the immediate need to stop mass atrocities.

There are also common elements that are cited in definitions that also applied in past U.S. interventions. There has to be a “large-scale” loss of life or mass suffering. The loss of life is the result of either purposeful violence or the willful neglect by the government of basic needs. Often the aim of the atrocity is “ethnic cleansing” through killing, rape or displacement, though the victim group may be targeted because of religious or other characteristics. The definition typically includes only civilian or non-

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5 The reference comes from an opinion in the Supreme court case of Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184, where Stewart wrote that he couldn’t define what was hardcore pornography, “[b]ut I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.”
combatant deaths, so as to exclude deaths from conventional wars. In this paper, I will use “mass atrocity” as the broad term that also includes genocide.

There is also no clear, red line that separates objectives that serve the victim group’s short-term humanitarian needs versus their long-term political security and viability. Along a spectrum between the two, policy makers can employ actions that address acute needs such as providing food or medical aid in the case of privation or physical protection in the case of violence. Veering toward long-term solutions to the problem of genocide would be changing the political dynamic in favor of the victim group by offering and independent homeland from the perpetrator, removing the perpetrator from power or as simple as arming the victim group to the extent they can achieve those goals themselves.

There are cogent arguments for providing for both the victim group’s short and long-term goals. Ignore the short-term needs and people starve or die now. Don’t solve the long-term problem and the victim group lives in continual fear of a reoccurrence and the perpetrators are never brought to justice. The paper seeks to address how planning should accommodate the spectrum of possible mission sets.

**CASES EXAMINED**

For this analysis, I examine U.S. interventions in three theatres of conflict that took place during the 1990’s. Each conflict examined has the benefit of having been the subject of different phases of intervention on the part of the U.S. military. This provides an opportunity to compare strategy and effects within each case and across the three conflicts.
The first case examined is the protection of the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq following the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The U.S. military launched Operation PROVIDE COMFORT to provide direct aid and facilitate the delivery of outside aid to Kurdish refugees, and later push back the Iraqi Army in order to create safe havens for the refugees to return home.

Next examined are the three phases of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, operations PROVIDE RELIEF and RESTORE HOPE, and the U.S. contribution to the second United Nations mission in Somalia (UNOSOM II). The first mission bypassed the militias that controlled the east African country to airlift aid supplies to rural, inland areas. The second attempted to rebuild infrastructure in the country’s urban areas, mainly Mogadishu, in order to facilitate the delivery of aid by ship. The final phase expanded its scope to fixing the country’s political system, and attempted to defeat a major warlord that controlled the capitol.

Finally, I will examine two operations in the former republic of Yugoslavia that aimed to deter mass killings or compel the perpetrators to the bargaining table. The 1995 Operation DELIBERATE FORCE was a NATO air campaign aimed at breaking the siege of Sarajevo. In 1999, the United States led its NATO partners to launch an air campaign to prevent the “cleansing” of ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province of Kosovo.

These cases were selected because they are examples of U.S. or U.S.-led operations that sought to stop mass atrocities. Several cases of intervention were mounted as a part of, or parallel with, United Nations operations that may have had different goals and strategies. The research will reference UN operations and goals, but will focus on the
U.S. operations since the paper is aimed at shaping future U.S. policy. The cases also cover a broad spectrum in terms of the primary cause of death, the strategy chosen, the means to carry out the strategy and the success of the outcome.

Within these case studies, I will seek to draw the connection between strategy, goals and end states and the ultimate success of the mission. Therefore, the strategy, goals and end states will serve as the independent variable, with the dependent variable being the success of the mission.\(^6\) Success in these cases is often hard to define, and was done differently at the time of each case. To simplify, I will judge success in two ways: lives saved and the political security and stability of the victim group. Measuring the number of lives saved is subjective, since it relies on comparing to the counterfactual realities where the intervention did not take place. In addition, an operation that saves 1,000 lives in the context of 100,000 killed could be judged successful for saving the thousand or a failure for not preventing the rest. Political resolution is also subjective, since it depends on a judgment of whether the intervention “solved” the societal problem that fueled the atrocity. No historical analysis can provide absolute conclusions about future outcomes, only subjective data points to help us made more informed decisions in the future.

The weakness in comparing interventions across conflicts arises because the dependent variable, success, was different in each case, along with the root causes of the conflict and the political environment. I will attempt to mitigate this weakness by

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\(^6\) In Department of Defense terminology, an end state is “the set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander's objectives.” From Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, February 13, 2008. End states are the desired destination of the military action envisioned during the planning process and are to be distinguished from the results or product of the operation that actually takes place. In this way, the planning “end state” is what commanders seek to achieve, while the results of the operation are what actually happens.
drawing comparisons within-case to the strategy and goals of the conflict’s other operations. In addition, drawing on a wide spectrum of examples helps ensure that the conclusions are applicable to an equally broad potential set of future interventions.
The Basis for Humanitarian Intervention

THE PRESIDENT’S POLICY

Priming the contemporary discussion on humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect is the stated policy of the United States. President Barack Obama’s National Security Strategy, released in May 2010, strikes a multilateral tone that recognizes the United States’ unique role as the indispensable world leader, but emphasizes the need to steer the current of collective action in a positive direction rather than taking matters into one’s own hands.7

In a section marked “Prevent Genocide and Mass Atrocities,” the strategy specifically cites the “responsibility to protect,” first emphasizing nations’ intrinsic duty to protect their citizens and later extending a helping hand in advance of an emerging crisis by working with allies to build the civil capacity of at-risk nations. Only if those first two falter and a crisis emerges does the President endorse more potent action; “In the event that prevention fails, the United States will work both multilaterally and bilaterally to mobilize diplomatic, humanitarian, financial, and—in certain instances—military means to prevent and respond to genocide and mass atrocities.”8 So in other words, sending in the troops is the last resort should all of the international community’s best efforts fail, but it is an option that the President retains and expects to be ready should the need arise.9

GENOCIDE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

8 Ibid, 48.
9 President Bush, in his 2006 National Security Strategy, makes a similar case for military intervention: only if peaceful measures fail first and preferably with an international mandate and partners.
Obama’s statement of policy follows 60 years of debate over the problem of genocide and mass atrocities, starting with the idea that mass killings were a special kind of crime that merited attention from the wider world and shouldn’t be shrouded in the cloak of state sovereignty. After the Nazi-led holocaust of six million Jews and another five million members of European religious and ethnic groups, Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” and pushed for the adoption at the United Nations of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” in 1948. It defined the term to include acts committed “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,” and made it a crime for individuals or countries that commit, facilitate or incite such acts.

Though the Convention wasn’t first applied to a crime until 50 years later, to the Rwandan massacre, and the United States held out from ratifying the treaty until 1988, its adoption marked the idea that nations had a duty to prevent genocide from occurring, and that unlike regular murder, mass killings were important for the international community to respond to.

Codifying this corollary to the Genocide Convention was the work of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001. Sponsored by the Canadian Government and the United Nations, the commission sought to map the boundaries of the rights of nations and the right of people to be free from harm. The result is a two-part construct; “State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself…Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or

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state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect.”

The report continues to detail when the international response should manifest itself through military action. Using force to stop mass killing is appropriate only when there is a large-scale loss of life, it is the last resort, there is a reasonable prospect of success and when the intervention is authorized by the United Nations Security Council. Writers concerned with the grant of authority bestowed on interveners, such as Alex de Waal, argued that the ICISS report would be abused and used as a cover by stronger countries for imperialism. Intervention to stop mass killing, de Waal writes, is no different from “just war,” which is still war. Australian Gareth Evans, the commission’s co-chair and its leading spokesman, defends the commission’s report and repeatedly makes the point that the emphasis should be on prevention rather than countries being spring-loaded to take coercive military action. Even when prevention fails and mass killing is imminent, Evans calls first for the same soft power steps as Obama does in the National Security Strategy: the use of political, diplomatic, economic and legal pressure.

**Military Action to Halt Mass Atrocities**

With the anticipation that a new president could bring a renewed focus on the prevention of genocide and mass killing, former Clinton Administration cabinet members Madeleine Albright and William Cohen led a task force recommending that the 44th president adopt

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an American version of the Responsibility to Protect, emphasizing early prevention, early warning, preventative diplomacy and military action as a last resort. While it largely echoes the ICISS report, it goes further into detail about the gaps in military guidance, planning and doctrine when it comes to operations to halt mass atrocities. Even though President George W. Bush’s 2006 National Security Strategy called for military options to stop genocide, the task force “found no clear evidence of corresponding high-level or internal military follow-on guidance to prepare for such a situation, such as within corresponding defense planning scenarios or planning directed either by the Joint Staff or led by the regional commands.”  

Without this guidance, the report notes that the U.S. military would still have the ability to respond, as they did in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. But without existing plans, guidance and doctrine, those interventions will be designed in a crisis response mode, rather than a deliberate process. In reality, each intervention will be unique and require crisis action planning, but many of the thorny issues of how best to intervene apply across potential cases. These are the missing pieces that this thesis aims to explore.

Sarah Sewall, a former Clinton-era deputy assistant secretary of defense for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, criticizes the Albright/Perry task force for focusing too much on prevention, but advocates for similar changes in military guidance and doctrine to prepare forces for a future humanitarian crisis. Sewall’s Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO) Project at Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy

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15 Ibid.

produced a handbook advocating for adoption of MARO as a core mission for the military to prepare and train.

The handbook, developed with the Army War College, distinguishes MARO from similar established military missions, such as Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), Peace Operations, and Counterinsurgency. First, there is a multiparty dynamic between the perpetrators, the victims, the intervener and other interested actors that make planning more complicated than the typical “red vs. blue” war-gamed scenarios of conventional conflicts. Second, there is the problem of impartiality, where the intervener’s stated goal of stopping actions is interpreted by the perpetrator and its allies as “taking sides” in an internal conflict. Finally, there is an escalatory dynamic that favors speed over mass when it comes to deterring and preventing a mass killing. Because it is in a perpetrator’s interest to ramp up and quickly execute a genocidal wave before the outside world can respond, the typical urge to attempt all other options and mass forces may come much too late to save lives.17

Taking a more positivistic look at humanitarian interventions in the 1990’s, Taylor Seybolt examines 17 attempts at humanitarian intervention in six conflict-torn countries to see which are successful. Seybolt measures success by the humanitarian standard of lives saved, rather than a political standard of long-term stability.18 Seybolt also establishes a typology (Figure 1) of interventions to categorize the various cases built on a matrix of humanitarian and political considerations.19

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18 By this standard, the 1991 U.S. intervention to protect Kurds in Northern Iraq succeeded because it saved lives, even though it did not result in the Kurds’ permanent emancipation from the control of Saddam Hussein.
### Political considerations

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*Figure 1: Seybolt’s typology of military interventions*

From this survey, Seybolt concludes that military intervention succeeded more often than it failed, with only four cases where the intervention did not save lives and only two of those where the intervention made life worse for the victims. That said, Seybolt notes that the cases of Rwanda and Somalia stand out as overall failures because the small successes in saving lives “pale in comparison to the overall tragedy of the genocide.”

When it comes to recommending one strategy over another, Seybolt notes that each of his four types has experienced its share of successes and failures. “The appropriate question is not which works best, but which has the strongest chance of success given a set of circumstances,” he writes. To do this, a military planner should first determine the primary cause of death and displacement; like in Somalia, if the killing is achieved through famine, it may be possible to stop killing through type (a) interventions to supply aid. Second, the intervener must find the best way to implement that course of action, which is often informed by the intervener’s capabilities. Finally, he

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20 Ibid, 271.
21 Ibid, 274-6.
writes that an intervener must weigh its interests against the military and political risks of acting, matching the type and intensity of response to what the intervening country is willing to accept in blood and treasure.
Saddam Hussein’s Repression of Iraqi Kurds (1991)

Having seen their country’s ruling dictator defeated and much of his feared Republican Guard destroyed by American and European firepower, Kurdish political groups in Iraq saw an opening. Saddam Hussein’s miscalculation in invading Kuwait and President George H. W. Bush’s exhortation for the Iraqi people to “take matters into their own hands” led to a widespread revolt in the north against the Sunni Arab leaders of Iraq. By March 19, an assorted collection of Kurdish militias included 100,000 fighters, moving from rural areas to take cities as far south as Kirkuk.

With no national home and their ethnic group spread across national boundaries in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, the Kurds had been an oppressed minority population under successive Iraqi governments, including the Baathist Saddam. But the Kurdish opposition miscalculated the regime’s weakness following the defeat. The U.S.-led coalition left Saddam in power, and the dictator quickly redeployed his remaining forces to quell uprisings in the Shiite South and the Kurdish North. Just nine days after the rebels took Kirkuk, remnants of the Iraqi Republican Guard along with bombers and helicopter gunships retook the city as they moved north towards the mountainous border with Turkey and Iran. A reported 100,000 Kurds, fighters and noncombatants alike, were seized by forces, with as many as 20,000 killed. With the fresh memory of Saddam’s brutal repression of the Kurds in the 1980’s, about half of the 3.5-4.8 million Kurds in

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22 Presidential Statement, 15 February 1991, as reported by Reuters News Agency.
24 Ibid., 373. Estimates of the total number of people killed in the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings range from 20,000 to 100,000 dead. See Thomas G. Weiss, *Military-Civilian Interactions* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield), 44.
Iraq fled their homes. About 1.5 million left for the Iranian border, while 500,000 massed at the border with Turkey.\textsuperscript{25}

The refugees were welcomed into Iran, but the Islamic Republic was ill prepared to handle the logistics of such a large influx. Because of the political sensitivities of assisting the Iranian government, most Western aid and attention focused on the Kurds headed towards Turkey, a NATO member. With its own problems dealing with Kurdish separatists and refugees from past conflicts, the government of Turkey was reluctant to move the refugees inland much past the mountainous border crossings.\textsuperscript{26} The refugees, most of whom had only the possessions they were able to carry by hand, encamped in the high mountains on both sides of the border with little food. Subject to exposure, starvation and disease from poor sanitation, it was clear that the refugees could not be sustained in their present location.\textsuperscript{27} On April 5, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 688, condemning the Iraqi repression of its people. The same night, President Bush met at a California hotel with his Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor and CJCS Gen. Colin Powell to lay out the objectives for what would become Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. According to Powell, the mission was “an interim measure designed to meet an immediate, penetrating humanitarian need.”\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{THE PLAN}

\textsuperscript{25} Weiss, 44.
\textsuperscript{26} Gordon Rudd, \textit{Humanitarian Intervention: Assisting the Iraqi Kurds} (Washington: Department of the Army), 36. Weiss, 44.
\textsuperscript{27} Estimates varied widely over mortality rates among the refugees along the Turkish border. Weiss cites the figure of 400-1000 per day, but reports at the end of the crisis estimate that 6,000-7,000 died over the entire crisis period. U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, \textit{Kurdish Relief and Repatriation: The AID-OFDA Kurdish Response After Action Report} (Washington, D.C., December 1991), 8.
\textsuperscript{28} Rudd interview with CJCS Gen. Colin Powell, 3 September 1992, as quoted in Rudd, 42.
The military’s mission, as communicated to EUCOM, consisted of three sequential tasks. First, stop the dying and suffering in the mountain camps. Second, establish a safe area inside Northern Iraq and resettle the refugees in temporary camps. Third, allow the Kurds to return to their homes safely.29

In announcing the second and third phases of PROVIDE COMFORT on April 16, President Bush stressed the temporary nature of the mission and couched it as a purely humanitarian endeavor. At no point did he raise the prospect of establishing a permanent solution to the Kurds’ ongoing repression or suggest empowering the group to maintain its own security. From the start, Bush wanted to avoid the prospect of a long-term mission, saying in a press conference “the United States is not going to intervene militarily in Iraq’s internal affairs and risk being drawn into a Vietnam-style quagmire.”30

Though, in reality, the United States and its allies would have to send combat troops into Iraq uninvited in order to resettle the Kurds, political leaders were careful not to attach goals to the operation beyond the humanitarian need to move the refugees out of their untenable mountain camps. British Prime Minister John Major initially conceived the security zone in Iraq to be an “enclave,” but later changed his terminology to “safe havens” after the Foreign Office grew concerned that the former term indicated a much larger breach of Iraq’s sovereignty.31 Even though the U.S. had roundly defeated Iraq only months earlier, the narrowly proscribed goals and missions indicate that the U.S. didn’t want to give Saddam a reason to oppose the U.S. mission. Had Bush proposed an

autonomous Kurdish region or empowered Kurdish militias or political parties in hopes of a long-term solution, Saddam might have more reason put up a fight.

**THE MISSION**

Thanks to an already deployed force in Turkey leftover from the Persian Gulf War, the military dropped its first bundle of aid supplies to the mountain camps on April 7, just two days after the President decided to intervene. The operation’s first task, stopping the deaths of refugees from disease and starvation, started with parachute airdrops but quickly transitioned to helicopter delivery and overland transport as additional forces shifted to the theater. Providing aid to the refugees and bringing order to the camps was left to PROVIDE COMFORT’s Joint Task Force Alpha, which at its peak numbered 2,700 U.S. and allied troops. Special Operations Forces originally tasked with rescuing downed airmen during the Persian Gulf War shifted to humanitarian operations, working with Kurdish elders in the camps to facilitate aid distribution. Civil engineers from the Army and Air Force set up aid distribution hubs and built sanitary facilities for the mountain camps. The soldiers found that the principal cause of death for the displaced Kurds was poor sanitation and starvation rather than violence.\(^32\)

Meanwhile, a second force dubbed Joint Task Force Bravo formed to enter Iraq, clear a security zone and establish temporary refugee camps. JTF-B eventually grew to about 13,000 troops, centered around a Marine Expeditionary Unit, its supporting helicopters, a U.S. Army airborne infantry battalion along with several European units.

JTF-Bravo was an invasion force, but undertaken with careful diplomatic coordination with Iraqis, the U.S. was able to establish a security zone, resettle the refugees and withdraw without firing a shot in anger. On April 19, PROVIDE

\(^{32}\) Rudd, 86-87.
COMFORT Commander LTG John Shalikashvili met with an Iraqi general to issue a
démarche calling for Iraqi troops to withdraw south from the border town of Zahko. The
next day, JTF-Bravo Commander MG Jay Garner began to insert his troops into Iraq. In
just a few weeks, the force spread out, clearing Iraqi troops from a 30-mile zone along the
northern border and building temporary camps to receive refugees from the mountain
redoubts. By May 30, 400,000 refugees from the Turkish border area passed through the
security zone and resettled in their homes.\(^{33}\)

Throughout the operation in Iraq, military commanders sought to put narrow
boundaries on the mission, lest it stray from humanitarian grounds to the more sensitive
issue of Kurdish autonomy and political security or reopen direct combat with Iraqi
forces. Garner and Shalikashvili coordinated with the Iraqi military to ensure they
withdrew forces ahead of U.S. advances. When Iraqi units were slow to move or reluctant
to withdraw, U.S. forces would cautiously approach, make contact with a commanding
officer, and send the Iraqis on their way.\(^{34}\) Army Col. Richard Naab, who was JTF-
Bravo’s liaison officer to the Iraqi Army, said in an interview that the Iraq’s main goal
was to have foreign forces leave their country. Thus he kept the Iraqis informed of the
coalition’s operations and got cooperation when they felt it would allow the U.S. to
achieve its goals and leave.\(^{35}\)

Part of keeping the Iraqis convinced that U.S. goals were benign was not altering
the political balance by empowering Kurdish opposition groups through long-term
security guarantees. Kurdish *peshmerga* forces met with Garner looking for a promise of
security from the U.S. before they would encourage the refugees to leave the Turkish

\(^{33}\) Rudd, 193.


\(^{35}\) Interview with Naab cited in Rudd, 179-80.
mountain camps. Garner declined to make any long-term guarantees. The same démarches that prohibited possession of weapons by the Iraqi army also applied to Kurdish rebels, keeping cities from becoming inviting targets for Iraqi reprisals. After most of the refugees had been resettled and the coalition prepared to withdraw, Garner and Shalikashvili met with representatives of the two major Kurdish political parties. The Kurdish groups asked for coalition forces to stay to provide protection. Shalikashvili repeated that the coalition had achieved its mission and suggested the groups negotiate with the Iraqi government.

With a final edict to the Iraqis to keep their military clear of the security zone, JTF-Bravo forces began their withdrawal and left the country on July 13. For three more months, the U.S. left a small ground force on the Turkish side of the border as an alert force should the Iraqis retake the Kurdish areas. The only persistent coalition presence in Northern Iraq were air patrols of the Iraqi no-fly zone, north of the 36th parallel. That mission transitioned to Operation NORTHERN WATCH in 1997 and continued until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Results

Like any hypothetical situation, it is impossible to know how many of the Kurdish refugees would have died from privation or killed by Iraqi forces had the United States not intervened in the crisis. There are several “what-ifs”; If Turkey had resettled the refugees further inland, they may have escaped death but may not have eventually

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36 Rudd, 171.
returned to their homes. Would the Iraqi Army and Air Force have killed more fleeing Kurds if the United States had not imposed the no-fly zone on April 7?

What we can evaluate is how the humanitarian situation changed after PROVIDE COMFORT began. The initial death rate from disease and starvation was as high as 400 per day, and at least 6,700 people died in the period from late-March through May.\footnote{Seybolt, 48. OFDA report, 8.} Weiss compliments the speed of the assistance for sharply reducing death rates by the end of April, falling from 400 per day to 50 per day in a period of less than a month. By the time the Kurds were resettled, the death rate was below prewar levels.\footnote{Weiss, 50.}

Putting a definite figure on the lives saved is impossible because it relies on evaluating the second and third order effects of the security zone in Iraq. A report by one of the U.S. civilian aid groups estimated that the overall death toll from this type of crisis could have been as much as 450,000.\footnote{Weiss, 52.} Only figuring for the decrease in mortality rates, Seybolt estimates the military intervention saved 7,000 lives.\footnote{Seybolt, 48.}

While the operation undoubtedly resulted in lives saved, the impact of the intervention on the Kurds’ long-term security and stability was mixed. Since the operation never set a goal of political stability, it didn’t fail on that account. President Bush set the goal of returning Kurds to their homes, but he never promised them a “homeland.” The best that can be said is that after the resettlement, the Iraqi Kurds had a tenuous autonomy from Saddam but not full security from repression.

Immediately after the withdrawal of JTF-Bravo, Kurdish and Iraqi forces resumed fighting but later reached a cease-fire in October under diplomatic pressure from the U.S.
and Europe. Over the next decade, the Kurds were subject to economic isolation and occasional military attacks from Baghdad but carved out a limited autonomy. Though it was not an explicit goal of the original operation, the Kurds did gain some measure of security from the implicit protection of the United States, even if that threat was over the horizon.

**LINKAGES BETWEEN GOALS, STRATEGY AND SUCCESS**

Clearly defined goals and the ability to avoid mission creep allowed U.S. and allied forces to quickly get in, reduce mortality, resettle the refugees and exit, all without firing a shot. Especially in the second phase of the operation, the decision to remain firm in the goal of creating a security zone while accommodating Iraqi concerns allowed both sides to get what it wanted; the U.S. saved lives and resettled the refugees, while the Iraqis got the foreign troops out of their country as quickly as possible.

For the JTF-Alpha troops, the only “enemy” that stood between them and their goal of providing aid was the terrain. The forces acted quickly and moved past obstacles, both physical and logistical, proving the utility of military forces in a place where civilian aid groups were unable to fill the need.

The JTF-Bravo troops undoubtedly benefited from the shadow of the Persian Gulf War. But instead of assuming that they could achieve anything against the defeated Iraqi forces, U.S. commanders universally kept their mission limited and managed to keep their forces from triggering real “enemy” opposition. As the future National Security Advisor and then 24th MEU Commander James Jones writes, the U.S. message to Iraq was explicit: “the mission was to be humanitarian; there was no intent to engage Iraqi

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43 Weiss, 50.
44 Freedman and Boren make the same assertion that the U.S. action strengthened the Kurds, but did not free them from oppression under the Saddam regime.
forces; Iraqi forces were to offer no resistance;“\(^{45}\) Even when the forces were offered a chance to achieve “extra” objectives, they held back. Upon reaching one of Saddam’s presidential palaces in the security zone, commanders agreed not to take possession of the site as long as the Iraqis withdrew all but a small number of security guards.\(^ {46}\)

Thus we see that the mission achieved success in both the JTF-A and JTF-B missions by limiting the scope of the mission to purely humanitarian concerns. Especially in the resettlement phase, it might have been tempting to capitalize on the weakness of the Iraqi position to improve the Kurds’ political situation. But by safeguarding and resettling the Kurds and making a swift exit, the U.S. managed to achieve its primary goal while allowing Saddam to win by getting foreign troops off his soil without partitioning his country.

\(^{45}\) Jones, 100.
\(^{46}\) Jones, 104.

After its U.S.-backed leader fled the country in January 1991, Somalia essentially limped along as a country without a real government. Following Mohammed Siad Barre’s two decades in power, clan leadership was the highest level of functioning political power in the country, with no faction exercising real control over the territory in a practical, sovereign sense.

Unlike the clear-cut mass atrocities of Nazi Germany and later Rwanda, where government actors violently murdered civilians, Somalia’s victims suffered from privation at the hands of their own competing clans, who turned food aid into a currency that fueled their internecine struggle.47 A study conducted after the conflict estimated that between 200,000 and 240,000 excess deaths occurred in the 1992 famine, out of a total population of only 5 million.48 Aid organizations and foreign governments were surprised that aid wasn’t getting past the militias to people in need as it had in previous famines during civil wars.

Given the nature of this case, does it fit the definition of a mass atrocity that the president has pledged to halt? By the ICISS standard, the outside world is obligated to intervene since whatever state structure remained was unable to protect civilians from the effects of “internal war” or “state failure.”49 Though there was no government to object, the three phases of U.S. intervention certainly entered into the country’s internal affairs and would be considered a breach of sovereignty if any had existed in the country.

49 ICISS Report, p. XI.
In those three phases, what was the relationship between the U.S. government’s stated goals, their strategy, and the success in saving lives and facilitating a resolution to the conflict?

**OPERATION PROVIDE RELIEF (AUGUST 1992 - FEBRUARY 1993)**

After reading staff reports and diplomatic cables detailing the perilous situation in Somalia, President George H. W. Bush met on August 14, 1992 with Secretary of State James Baker, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft to authorize U.S. military units to assist in the airlift of food aid into rural Somalia.\(^5\) State Department staffers pushed the military to expand the mission to include “points of security,” where ground troops would clear an area of clan interference to allow the safe distribution of food to needy civilians. The idea was shelved amid pushback from the Joint Staff, and the interagency later concluded that it would take thousands of troops to secure passage of aid on the ground. Although no document at the time detailed the explicit goals and strategy the president approved, the interagency preparation and execution indicates that the president aimed solely to alleviate suffering by providing aid, and had no intent to defeat or degrade Somalia’s armed gangs or seek a long-term political solution to the conflict.

When the airlift began on 28 August from its staging ground in Kenya, the mission’s concept of operations was to avoid conflict by bypassing clan strongholds and deliver food aid to rural airstrips in Somalia’s interior. U.S. Air Force aircraft and crews performed the missions, but they carried no weapons and their aircraft were emblazoned with the insignia of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which was

coordinating with the effort. After the supplies were offloaded, no further support was provided to the NGO’s tasked with distributing the aid. The gangs that allowed the aircraft to land stole some food and extorted money from aid organizations in order to permit distribution to the public. In the end, the airlift provided 28,000 tons of food aid to the Somali interior, though the percentage of aid that escaped banditry remains unknown.

Thus, the effect of the operation remains unknowable in the context of a famine where estimates of even the total number of deaths vary widely. Because the airlift bypassed the main port of Mogadishu, where relief supplies were heavily pilfered by warlords, the aid had a much greater chance of reaching vulnerable inland populations. According to a report by the Refugee Policy Group and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, by November 1992 the combination of the military airlift and overland delivery of food by NGOs dramatically drove down the price of food as it became more available in rural areas. The report concludes that foreign food aid from all sources reached over a million Somalis (about a quarter of the population), and that approximately 40,000 lives were saved during the period of PROVIDE RELIEF. The proportion of lives attributable to the U.S. airlift is unknowable, but Seybolt estimates that about a quarter of the amount saved, or 10,000 people, survived the famine because of the operation.

The impact of the airlift on the broader political situation is more easily evaluated. Although concurrent U.N. operations sought political resolution to the conflict, President

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51 As an insurance policy to protect the airlift, another aircraft carrying Special Forces soldiers circled overhead in case the aircrew came under fire during the offload. Kenneth Rutherford, *Humanitarianism Under Fire: The U.S. and UN Intervention in Somalia* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2008), 49.

52 Rutherford, 53.

53 Seybolt, 60.
Bush set no goal of bringing order to Somalia. At the end of the airlift, warlords continued to control the entire country. The impact of the food deliveries had a mixed impact on the power of gangs, simultaneously feeding “currency” to fighters while also driving down the market price of food. The most important indicator that the airlift didn’t solve the broader political situation was that the perception of a continuing crisis led to the president’s decision to follow it with a more ambitious intervention.

**Operation Restore Hope (December 1992 – May 1993)**

After President Bush lost his bid for re-election, the continuing conflict in Somalia convinced U.S. leaders that more vigorous action was needed. Although mortality statistics would later show that deaths from the famine were tailing off by the end of 1992, images of dying children on television news and the inability of the UN to bypass warlords led the president to consider a broadened mission. The National Security Council’s Deputies Committee considered three options: 1) Air and sea support to a UN mission; 2) The “Ball Peen Hammer” option, temporarily providing 5,000 ground troops to secure ports and lines of communication as a bridge to a permanent United Nations force; and 3) The “sledgehammer” option, with a division of 15,000 troops (later expanded to two divisions) to provide security for aid groups and guard convoys. The Deputies Committee recommended the “ball peen” option, but on the eve of the November 25 meeting with President Bush, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Colin Powell recommended the larger “sledgehammer” option, which the president approved.

After negotiations with the United Nations over command relationships, Powell issued a warning order on 1 December to CENTCOM Commander Gen. Joseph Hoar to prepare to conduct military operations in Somalia “to secure the major food distribution

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54 Menkhaus, 6.
points and air/sea ports, guard relief convoys and relief organization operations, and assist relief organizations in providing humanitarian relief in Somalia…” On 9 December, the first Marine units of Operation RESTORE HOPE landed on the shores at Mogadishu. The operation was a UN sanctioned but U.S.-led mission, also known as the Unified Task Force or UNITAF.

The operation represented a significant expansion of the military means the U.S. was willing to commit, but the goal of supporting the delivery of aid remained the same. While the Provide Relief airlift avoided contact with the “enemy” clan forces, Restore Hope used the passive deterrence of a strong U.S. force to move past armed gangs that had impeded aid deliveries when only weak U.N. observers were present. Like the first operation, the focus was on delivering aid, not neutralizing the warlords’ influence or crafting political compromises. U.S. Special Envoy to Somalia Robert Oakley negotiated with the warring clan leaders to permit the flow of food and medicine, but called any political progress in the negotiations “ancillary benefits” to the main mission of providing aid.55

The aversion to pursuing political goals was reflected in the short time horizon for the operation, which from the outset aimed to transfer responsibility to a United Nations force after 180 days.56 During the Restore Hope period, when the United States was solely in command, there was frequent pressure from the United Nations to add political goals to Restore Hope’s mission set, typically over the issue of disarming militias. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked President Bush on 8 December to have his forces neutralize the warlord’s heavy weapons and “create a secure environment

56 Poole, 25.
The CENTCOM commander, Gen. Hoar, pushed back on those requests, ordering his forces to only disarm Somalia’s gangs to the extent necessary to facilitate the protection of aid groups and convoys.

In practice, this meant that factions were able to keep their small arms if they gave the Americans space to accomplish their mission. Heavy, crew-served weapons such as the pickup-truck mounted machine guns known as “technicals” were left in warlords’ hands but confined to cantonments where they could be monitored. This arrangement gave the factions room to not oppose the U.S. mission because it didn’t jeopardize their standing in regards to the other factions. Joint Staff historian Walter Poole said that UNITAF succeeded in intimidating warlords but refrained from directly challenging them.\textsuperscript{58}

What was the impact of the mission on the famine? The Refugee Policy Group’s analysis found that the Restore Hope/UNITAF operation made it possible for NGOs to reach more needy civilians that were inaccessible in the previous security environment. However, the famine was reaching the end of its bell curve, so deaths were already decreasing before the operation went into action. At best, the report concludes, the operation and the civilian relief efforts accelerated the end of the famine by a month, saving 10,000 lives. In addition, an unknowable number of lives were saved because of the temporary security benefits of the cantonment of warlords’ weapons. “By reducing the presence and activity of ‘technicals’ the UNITAF forces induced a calm and level of safety that allowed merchants and farmers to establish some trade,” the report concludes.

\textsuperscript{57} Poole, 23.  
\textsuperscript{58} Poole, 40.
“Because new famine waves did not begin in late 1992 and early 1993, it is plausible that UNITAF prevented large numbers of starvation deaths.” 59

Because it set out to achieve few political goals, it could be said that Restore Hope met expectations but did not deliver lasting gains. By the time UNITAF turned over responsibility to its successor, UNOSOM II, the country was secure and stable enough for a UN-led mission to manage its affairs. That calm would not last long, as the warring clans still had the ability to fight.

**UNOSOM II (MAY 1993 – MARCH 1994)**

In May 1993, the United States shifted from having nearly complete control over operations in Somalia to serving in a supporting role to the United Nations, though still a major one. With that shift of control came an expansion of the mission and goals of the operation. While the first two phases avoided tackling overtly political missions such as disarmament and government building, UNOSOM II made those the central focus. The Security Council Resolution authorizing the mission mentions providing humanitarian assistance, but focuses mainly on assisting the people of Somalia “in rehabilitating their political institutions and economy and promoting political settlement and national reconciliation.” 60

This shift in goals was not simply foisted on the United States, as the newly elected Clinton Administration was actively involved in the drafting of the resolution and supported the expanded mission set of UNOSOM II. Kenneth Rutherford writes “the Clinton administration’s support for UNOSOM II changed the American interest in Somalia from a simple feeding operation to a large mandate to nation-build.” But he

notes that the administration gave the new mission fewer troops and fewer resources to accomplish these larger goals, since it figured that the hard work was completed.  

As one of 19 countries contributing troops to the mission, the U.S. was responsible for two distinct missions. First, a force of four thousand logistical troops would enable the operations of the partner militaries under the control of the UN commander, Turkish Gen. Cevik Bir. Second, a quick-reaction force under the control of CENTCOM would provide on-call force projection as needed for the lightly armed UN peacekeepers.

Special Envoy Oakley writes in a 1995 book that it was inevitable that the leading Somali warlord, Mohammad Aideed, would test the UNOSOM II force in a way that he hadn’t when U.S.-led forces operated in Mogadishu. The UN forces were more lightly armed, and Aideed was convinced that the UN’s mission, and Boutrous-Ghali personally, challenged his ability to stay in power. The first major test came a month into the operation, when Pakistani troops inspecting a weapons cantonment were ambushed by Aideed’s militia. Twenty-four Pakistani soldiers were killed, with many having their bodies mutilated and dragged through the street.

The attack cemented a change in mission that made military operations increasingly focused on capturing Aideed; military action rather than political reconciliation became the mission of UNOSOM II. Instead of fielding a deterrent force to protect aid operations, the U.S. and UN forces over the summer began offensive raids against Aideed’s Somali National Alliance (SNA). The fighting left hundreds of Somalis dead, with the SNA killing small numbers of U.S. and coalition partner forces.

61 Rutherford, 121.
After months of attempts to degrade the SNA and capture Aideed, an interagency debate in the U.S. resulted in a recommendation to ratchet back the hunt for Aideed and press the UN to reopen political discussions that would accommodate Somali clan leaders. That change in policy was not reflected in ongoing military operations. On October 3, a special operations force of Army Rangers and Delta Force mounted a raid on a meeting of SNA leadership in Mogadishu. The forces succeeded in capturing the leaders, but Somali militiamen downed two MH-60 Blackhawk helicopters covering the U.S. force. The resulting firefight ended with 18 U.S. soldiers dead and an unknown number of Somalis killed, potentially over 1,000. Television news outlets broadcast video of Somali fighters dragging the mutilated corpse of a dead U.S. soldier through the streets of Mogadishu.

Four days later, President Clinton announced that the U.S. would send an additional 5,300 troops to Somalia to “finish the work we set out to do” and withdraw by April 2004. In reality, U.S. forces stopped regular patrols and focused primarily on force protection. Menkhaus and Ortmayer call Clinton’s decision “a face-saving gesture intended to cover a U.S. exit strategy.” The last U.S. forces left Somalia in March 2004.

In summary, did UNOSOM II help save lives? Seybolt credits the intervention with saving 2,000 lives by blunting a cholera outbreak, but weighs that against the thousands of Somalis killed as a result of fighting between UNOSOM II and Aideed’s forces. “It is possible that foreign troops killed or wounded as many people after March 1993 as humanitarian organizations managed to save during operations Provide Relief and Restore Hope,” Seybolt writes.

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63 Menkhaus, 21.
64 Seybolt, 60.
withdrawal of Restore Hope forces, and the fighting made the country less stable than it had been months before.

The political outcome of UNOSOM II was universally a failure. The mission did not succeed in promoting reconciliation or creating civil administration or disarmament. Instead, by challenging the interests of Aideed and later personalizing the conflict against him, the UN and U.S. disrupted what minimal stability existed as a byproduct of the Restore Hope operation. Eighteen years after the mission, Somalia remains essentially an ungoverned state.

**GOALS AND SUCCESS IN SOMALIA**

Comparing the three phases of U.S. intervention, it is evident that U.S. forces were more successful in saving lives when they limited their mission to strictly short-term humanitarian goals and avoided pursuing political solutions. Had the United States responded more quickly and more vigorously in the early stages of the famine, more lives could have been saved. But given the situation, Provide Relief and Restore Hope resulted in fewer deaths than what could be expected. UNOSOM II, however, fails the ICISS standard of intervention, in that it likely resulted in more deaths than it saved. On a political level, the first two missions didn’t attempt to find long-term solutions, while the third managed to stoke the conflict further. No strategy attempted in Somalia resulted in political success.

What explains the difference in outcomes in terms of lives saved? The first operations were crafted to provide aid without challenging the interests of the atrocity’s perpetrators, namely the armed gangs. Because the deaths of ordinary Somalis from starvation were not the rival clan’s primary goal, U.S. forces could achieve their mission
of providing aid without making enemies out of the clans. The airlift achieved this through an avoidance strategy, bypassing armed gangs by air and offloading supplies where there was minimal resistance. Restore Hope was more direct, relying on deterrent shows of force while giving clans a reason not to take up arms against U.S. troops. UNOSOM II changed that dynamic, making the U.S. and UN presence a direct threat to the armed gangs and warlords. By making disarmament and the creation of a new political system, the UN made its aim the defeat of the clan power structure, creating enemies out of the gangs that were until then merely an obstacle to providing aid.

In conclusion, Operations in Somalia were successful when they focused on providing civilians with humanitarian aid and failed when they tried to provide political reform.
Coercive Airpower in Yugoslavia (1995, 1999)

Unlike the Iraqi Kurdish expulsion, which developed over a month, and the Somalia crisis, which came to a head over a period of a summer, the conflict in the former Republic of Yugoslavia endured for three years before the United States fully committed to military intervention to stop mass atrocities. From the time Yugoslavia split in 1991 and 1992 until the conflict ended in 1995, the three main ethnic factions, Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians waged a fierce campaign of outright war, intimidation, forced expulsion and “ethnic cleansing.” Most of the fighting took place in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the minority ethnic Serbs and Croats supported by their neighboring republics fought to secure more territory away from the numerically superior but militarily weaker Bosnians.

Four years later, a seeming echo from the earlier conflict emerged in Serbia itself. This time, the ethnically Bosnian province of Kosovo battled with the Serbian central government for autonomy and independence, resulting in a familiar pattern of killings, refugees, and ethnic cleansing.

During the conflict, NGO’s and the United Nations mounted multiple peacekeeping and humanitarian missions that had a mixed level of success. Peacekeepers sent to monitor the conflict for human rights violations were generally ineffective in stopping atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre. UN troops were able to facilitate aid shipments into besieged Bosnian areas such as Sarajevo, reducing the effects of privation on the civilian population.  

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Seybolt argues that the UN airlift of aid into Sarajevo saved an unknown “thousands” of lives, while an approximate 5,000 people died in the city due to privation. This paper does not focus on the operation.
This paper will examine two U.S.-led NATO operations that were decisive in the conflict, Operation DELIBERATE FORCE in Bosnia and Operation ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo. Each was an operation that sought to protect the victims from physical harm and force a political resolution to the conflict through a coercive bombing campaign directed at the aggressor. The operations goals and strategy will be compared to the overall success in the campaign.

**OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1995)**

In 1995, three years into the conflict, momentum was beginning to shift against the forces of the Bosnian Serbs. Supported by neighboring Serbia and its president, Slobodan Milosevic, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) had expanded its reach to occupy 70 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first years of the war. The attempt to fence off territory for ethnic Serbs came with a brutal campaign to kill and displace Muslim Bosnians and Catholic Croats. As Seybolt describes the Serbian strategy, “in an effort to establish demographic dominance before a diplomatic settlement could reduce their military gains, the Serbs engaged in murder, rape, and other forms of violence to drive Bosnian Muslims from their homes and into ever smaller enclaves.”

The BSA laid siege on the capital city of Sarajevo from the surrounding mountains for three years.

That initial success was beginning to reverse, with the Bosnian Army (BiH) and the Croatian Armed Forces (HVO) joining up to retake lost territory from the BSA and ethnic Serbs in Croatia. The Bosnian cause was also buoyed by support from Western countries, who generally viewed the Serbs as the aggressors. That perception was

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66 Seybolt, 63.

reinforced by the fall of the “safe area” of Srebrenica in July 1995, when Bosnian Serb forces separated 8,000 men and boys of fighting age from the population and slaughtered them while Dutch UN peacekeepers were unable to intervene. Later that month, NATO leaders meeting in London laid out a strategy for more decisive military action since the massacre demonstrated that UN peacekeepers alone were unable to stop the conflict. Later that month, NATO leaders meeting in London laid out a strategy for more decisive military action since the massacre demonstrated that UN peacekeepers alone were unable to stop the conflict.  

Military planning was set in motion while peace talks stalled between the warring parties. The trigger for the NATO airstrikes came August 28, when two mortar shells fired from BSA positions exploded in a Sarajevo market, killing 37 people and wounding 85. The first NATO airstrikes launched two days later, striking Bosnian Serb targets around Sarajevo.

**PLANNING FOR THE AIRSTRIKES**

Deliberate Force had two related but distinct objectives: First, stop Serb attacks against Bosnian safe areas and, second, alter the balance of power against the Serbs so they return to the negotiating table and sue for peace. The first addressed the short-term safety from harm of the Bosnians while the second tried to use force to achieve a long-term settlement of the conflict.

Publicly, the campaign was billed by NATO members as solely aiming to achieve the first objective, but it clearly was influenced by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke’s desire for military action to “level the playing field” between the factions. The U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, told Air Force historians after the conflict that

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68 Seybolt, 67.
69 Mueller in Deliberate Force, 26.
70 Holbrooke called for a 6-12 month bombing campaign against the Serbs during an appearance on Meet The Press a day before the Sarajevo marketplace shelling. As quoted in Mueller, 28. See also Mark McLaughlin, “Assessing the Effectiveness of Deliberate Force: Harnessing the Political-Military Connection” in Deliberate Force, 190.
“the bombing ha[d] to be ‘represented’ merely as an effort to protect the safe areas,” even though “it would be naïve to think that the air attacks would not undermine the Serbs’ military power and coerce them diplomatically.”

Thus, the military planners’ own military objective was the following:

“[A] robust NATO air campaign that adversely alters the BSA’s advantage in conducting successful military operations against the BiH; desired end state: Bosnian Serbs sue for cessation of military operations, comply with UN mandates and negotiate”

Linking the two together, Lt. Gen. Michael Ryan, the operational commander of the air strikes said the operation was “not intended to defeat the BSA but to convince the BSA to stop attacking Sarajevo—to take away military capability, not lives.” In other words, the safe areas would be protected both because the BSA lacked the ability to kill effectively and because its leaders would stop fighting and return to the negotiating table.

The indirect strategy of striking the BSA at large rather than the forces directly threatening the safe areas was somewhat a result of the air-centric nature of the operation. Lt. Col. Robert Pollack writes in an Air Force study that NATO and UN leaders thought the operation would directly target the snipers and mortar teams around the safe areas. “American air commanders wanted an ‘indirect’ campaign that targeted more easily located things, such as bridges and supply bunkers, to coerce the Serbians to stop shelling the UN safe areas.”

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71 Owen in Deliberate Force, 495. Col. Mark Bucknam, writing in an Air Force study of the operations’ commanders, also notes the disconnect between the public statements about defending safe areas and the actual military mission, which focused on leveling the military advantages of the Bosnian Serbs. Bucknam, Responsibility of Command (Maxwell AFB: Air University, 2003), 290.

72 The end state was extracted from a then NATO SECRET briefing by AIRSOUTH, the NATO command responsible for executing deliberate force. The information was unclassified and published in Deliberate Force, 107.

73 McLaughlin in Deliberate Force, 190.

**The Operation**

Operation DELIBERATE FORCE began with nighttime raids two days after the Sarajevo mortar attack. The first targets attacked were the BSA’s formidable air defense system, which would have to be disabled before aircraft could direct their attacks on ground forces. Attacks on ground forces centered on ammunition bunkers and command nodes around Sarajevo. After two days of attacks, the UN asked NATO to suspend its bombing for four days to restart attempts at negotiation. When the Bosnian Serbs failed to comply with the UN’s terms, the airstrikes resumed on 5 September. Holbrooke credits the resumption of bombings as the “most critical moment” of the operation, saying it shocked Serb leaders and drove them to make later concessions.\(^{75}\)

By 7 September, Admiral Smith reported to NATO leaders that the combination of close air support strikes and artillery fire from a UN Rapid Reaction force in Sarajevo had suppressed shelling of the Bosnian capitol. NATO expanded their target sets to include BSA forces in northwest Bosnia, eventually crippling the army’s ability to coordinate its actions and shift forces as needed. Meanwhile, Holbrooke continued negotiations during the campaign, eventually extracting an agreement from Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to issue a cease fire and withdraw heavy weapons from exclusion zones around the safe havens, including Sarajevo.

**The Results**

Evaluating the impact of the air campaign on the immediate well-being of civilians in Sarajevo and other enclaves requires a judgment on what contributed to the end of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia. The Dayton Peace Accords and the peacekeeping efforts that followed clearly contributed to a long-term decrease in violence.

\(^{75}\) Deliberate Force, 114.
and killing in the region. However, in 1995, more forces than just the airstrikes led Serbian leaders to bargain for an end to the conflict. The tide of ground combat was turning against the Bosnian Serbs in the months leading to the NATO intervention. Croatia was able to regain territory from its contingent of breakaway Serbs earlier that summer without international assistance. Ambassador Holbrooke already established a diplomatic structure to take advantage of the Serbs’ increasing willingness to settle. So the NATO air campaign’s role could be argued as coercing an enemy force that was already losing ground to relent and sue for peace.

If it is argued that Deliberate Force was a necessary element of the conflict’s resolution, then it can be credited with saving unknown thousands of lives that would have been lost if the fighting had continued. Even if the operation is credited with merely expediting the Bosnian Serbs’ concessions, its implementation ensured that no more safe areas experienced the fate of Srebrenica while Serb forces withdrew, thus saving thousands of lives.

The operation’s role in ensuring the Bosnians’ long-term stability and security is equally shared with those same factors. Present-day Bosnia owes its relative security to a long-term peacekeeping force carrying out the Dayton Accords, which was made possible by Holbrooke’s negotiations during the bombing campaign. That diplomacy was unlikely to succeed without the Bosnian and Croat offensive or the airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs.

**OPERATION ALLIED FORCE (MARCH-JUNE 1999)**

The Dayton Accords ended fighting between ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosnians over the secession of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina from the former Republic of
Yugoslavia. But the negotiations did not address the fate of the Kosovo region, which remained with Serbia and Montenegro in a country then known as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Populated mostly by ethnically Albanian Muslims, Kosovo had been given autonomy for most of the Cold War but had its autonomy revoked by the FRY’s dominant Serb majority.

Under FRY President Slobodan Milosevic, the forces of Serb nationalism confronted a persistent Kosovar independence movement. After non-violent resistance movements failed to deliver greater autonomy, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged advocating violence against the Serbian governance of the region. Serbian crackdowns against the KLA prompted responses from Europe and the United States. In October 1998, the KLA and FRY agreed to a cease-fire and deployment of unarmed monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

During that period, both the KLA and the FRY security forces regrouped and occasionally battled each other despite the international monitors. In January 1999, following a KLA attack, Serbian forces entered the village of Racak and killed 45 people. The simmering conflict also resulted in the displacement of 150,000 to 200,000 Kosovar refugees in the months after the cease-fire. U.S. and European leaders proposed a peace settlement (the Rambouillet agreement) between the FRY and Kosovar leaders that would require the removal of Serbian security forces in favor of NATO ground forces, establish Kosovar autonomy, but keep the province as a part of sovereign Yugoslavia. Kosovo leaders accepted the agreement after reassurances from the U.S. that a referendum would determine the region’s final status. Serbian leaders rejected the

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agreement, with U.S. negotiators believing that Milosevic feared the NATO force would be used to challenge his rule or grant Kosovo its independence.77

NATO leaders, and especially U.S. politicians, had threatened military action against Serbia if it did not reach an agreement over Kosovo. Thus the failure of the Rambouillet talks led to a potential impairment of the alliance’s credibility if it didn’t carry out the threat. For his part, Milosevic began pouring more Serbian troops into the province, using the strategy that a slow advance across Kosovo would keep Western leaders from the trigger they needed to begin airstrikes against the FRY. U.S. leaders figured that a show of force and a few days of bombing would bring Milosevic back to the table like it did in 1995 leading to the Dayton Peace Accords.78 Both miscalculated, with the bombing lasting almost 78 days and accelerating the murder of thousands of Kosovars and the expulsion of most of the civilian population.

**THE OPERATION**

As Daalder and O’Hanlon note of NATO planning for ALLIED FORCE, only President Clinton’s two goals were clear when NATO launched its air campaign. Clinton said in the prelude to the bombing, “our objective in Kosovo remains clear: to stop the killing and achieve a durable peace that restores Kosovars to self-government.”79 How the airstrikes intended to accomplish this was much less explicit.

The attitude among NATO political and military leaders was that a mere “show of force” would be enough to bring Milosevic to an agreement along the lines of the earlier DELIBERATE FORCE airstrikes. Daalder and O’Hanlon write that the lack of a

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79 Daalder and O’Hanlon, 90.
comprehensive strategy to prevent harm to the Kosovars is reflected in the assumption that coercion would win without the need to actually defeat or degrade Serb forces. They conclude that the U.S. didn’t plan to deliver hard-hitting attacks and only made available a third of the aircraft that it would eventually have on hand at the end of the strikes. Even the coercive messaging lacked credibility, since the U.S. sent home an aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean while the crisis built because its crew had served out its planned tour. “Operation Allied Force was in its early weeks a textbook case of how not to wage war. The blindness of NATO’s major members to the possibility that the war might not end quickly was astounding,” Daalder and O’Hanlon write.\

Even when Milosevic responded to the airstrikes by surging Serbian security forces into Kosovo in order to expel the Muslim population, NATO stuck with their strategy of coercing the Serbs to stop their attacks against civilians rather than protecting the civilians directly. Airstrikes began on March 24 with Phase I targets, mostly air defense units that posed a threat to NATO aircraft but played no role in attacking civilians. Later the airstrikes shifted to Phase II targets, which were mainly military infrastructure targets.

Political and tactical decisions made it impossible for the air campaign to achieve any success at directly stopping attacks against Kosovars. Serbian air defense systems led air planners to require bombing to take place from above 15,000 feet, making it difficult to identify and attack fielded Serb forces, especially because the U.S. lacked ground forces to spot targets. Thus the only available targets were fixed logistics infrastructure. Even then, NATO leaders limited forces from direct attacks, approving airstrikes against empty Serb barracks but denying requests to attack occupied buildings, “out of expressed

80 Ibid., 18-19.
concern over causing too many casualties among helpless enemy conscripts.”\textsuperscript{81} German Gen. Klaus Naumann, who headed NATO’s Military Committee, said the inability to directly protect civilians was a result of the air-only strategy. Naumann said after the war, “They are asking for the impossible, they want us to stop the individual murderer going with his knife from village to village and carving up some Kosovars; that you cannot do from the air…”\textsuperscript{82}

At a Washington summit celebrating NATO’s 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary in late April, alliance leaders decided to broaden the airstrikes to focus on weakening Milosevic’s political base. According to a RAND report, “Once the call for a substantially expanded target list had prevailed, the new goal became punishing Belgrade’s political and military elites, weakening Milosevic’s domestic power base, and demonstrating by force of example that he and his fellow perpetrators of the abuses in Kosovo would find no sanctuary.”\textsuperscript{83}

By May, the operation had become a strategic bombing campaign reminiscent of the European Theater in World War II. Heavily influenced by that experience, air planners destroyed factories, refineries and infrastructure targets in the Serbian cities of Belgrade and Novi Sad, bringing hardship to the Serbian public and aiming at weakening Milosevic’s domestic power.\textsuperscript{84} Attacks targeted political parties and the state-owned broadcast system, run by Milosevic’s wife and a key instrument for whipping up nationalist fervor.

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\textsuperscript{81} Benjamin Lambeth, \textit{NATO’s Air War For Kosovo} (Washington: RAND Institute, 2001), 36.
\textsuperscript{82} Henricksen, 192.
\textsuperscript{83} Lambeth, 38-39.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, 41.
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After more than a month of intensified strategic bombing on Serbian targets, on June 10 Milosevic finally settled on an agreement with NATO, supported by Serbia’s ally Russia, to withdraw FRY troops from Kosovo, allow a NATO-led peacekeeping force and have the province administered by the United Nations.

**THE RESULTS**

If the overall goal of the operation was to protect lives and restore self-governance to Kosovo, it is clear that the first aim failed miserably on the road to achieving the second. As Daalder and O’Hanlon write, “Although the alliance in the end achieved the fundamental objective that propelled the use of force in the first place, that achievement came at a very high cost for Kosovo and the people who lived there.”

Several groups, including the U.S. State Department, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control each estimate that about 10,000 Kosovars were killed by Serbian security forces between March and June 1999. The reports indicate that the majority of the killings occurred in the first three weeks of the bombing campaign, when NATO still assumed that Milosevic would relent after a brief show of force. In addition, 863,000 refugees were displaced from Kosovo; altogether 90% of the population was displaced from their homes between 1998 and the end of the conflict. Casualties due to NATO’s military strikes were much smaller. No NATO airmen lost their lives in the conflict, and the FRY claimed to have lost 600 soldiers during the conflict, of which 300 died while fighting the KLA. In addition, some 500 Yugoslav civilians died due to NATO airstrikes.

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85 Daalder and O’Hanlon, 90.
87 Ibid, 304.
88 Ibid, 94.
With regard to the Kosovars’ long-term security and stability, the impact of the intervention is more upbeat. Since the conflict, most of the refugees have returned to the province and have not been subjected to ethnic violence from Serbia. Under the protection of a UN administration, Kosovo has operated independently while legally a part of the FRY’s successor state, The Republic of Serbia and Montenegro. In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence, but has not been formally admitted to the United Nations.

**Comparing Bosnia and Kosovo**

On the measure of their long-term goals, both of NATO’s air campaigns examined here resulted in a diplomatic agreement that ended ethnic conflict and permitted the self-rule of an ethnic group from Serbian aggression. But why was one operation successful at stopping the deaths of thousands in Bosnia, while the other accelerated the murder and expulsion of thousands more in Kosovo?

The first explanation comes from comparing their stated goals with the resultant military force that came to bear on the aggressor. Deliberate Force had as its first objective to halt attacks on safe areas; likewise in 1999, President Clinton said the airstrikes in Kosovo aimed to stop the killing there. The difference is that in Bosnia, NATO designed airstrikes whose primary purpose was to degrade the ability of fielded forces to fight and kill civilians. Together with the UN Rapid Reaction Force’s artillery counter-fire in Sarajevo and the resurgent Bosnian and Croatian offensive, Deliberate Force reduced the Bosnian Serb Army’s advantages enough that it was unable to subject civilians to harm. In Kosovo, the presumption that only a “show of force” would be necessary meant that NATO wasn’t prepared to inflict enough damage on Serb forces to
keep them from carrying out the forced expulsion. Even when the strikes intensified and focused on strategic targets, the emphasis was on coercing Milosevic through punishment rather than impeding the security forces’ field operations. Although the murder and expulsion of the Kosovars clearly came as a result of the FRY forces’ explicit plan, NATO’s decision to focus on deterrence and later coercion rather than action to directly protect civilians from harm bears the responsibility for allowing the mass atrocities to occur.

Secondly, NATO had momentum on its side against the Bosnian Serb Army, where all it had to do was frustrate the efforts of a military force and its political leaders who were exhausted from years of war, were losing ground against the Bosnian and Croat forces, and were isolated from world opinion and being urged by their main ally (at the time, Milosevic) to negotiate a settlement. In Kosovo, negotiations failed and military action was launched before major fighting began, while both the KLA and Serbian security forces were escalating, and when both sides had opposite negotiating positions on the sovereignty of Kosovo.

In summary, both interventions succeeded in promoting the long-term political needs of the victim groups. But in Kosovo, the intervention failed in preventing or stopping the mass atrocity from developing. Even in Bosnia, the political mission succeeded only with the assistance of the Bosnian and Croatian ground offensives and a perpetrator that was already edging closer to a negotiated settlement.
Analysis

SUCCESS IN SHORT-TERM NEEDS

In the three conflicts examined, interventions were successful in saving lives when they made providing humanitarian aid their primary goal. The “aid delivery” phases of intervention all contributed to reduced mortality and suffering among the victim group and faced little to no opposition from the perpetrators of the mass atrocities.

In Northern Iraq, the U.S. forces of JTF-A operated unopposed along the mountain border of Iraq and Turkey. There the logistical prowess of the military and the skill of Army special operations forces in organizing the refugee camps was successful in reducing mortality levels due to privation. Later in Somalia, the use of an avoidance strategy and the Air Force’s mobility capability allowed the Provide Relief airlifts to bypass port and border bottlenecks that diverted much of the food aid away from the hungry. In the Restore Hope operation, U.S. forces facilitated aid delivery by restoring port operations and providing deterrent force protection for convoys and feeding centers.

It might be tempting to take these cases and ask why the U.S. military should take on missions that are normally handled by NGO’s and private charities. In both conflicts, non-military organizations quickly responded with more than enough food to satisfy the needs of the victim groups. The lesson for planners looking to maximize benefit for the victims while preserving resources is that U.S. forces made their greatest impact providing unique capabilities that leveraged private aid. In Iraq, it was not simply American money buying food, delivering it and feeding it to hungry Kurds. The decisive contributions were the soldiers that brought order to the camps, military engineers bringing sanitation, and transportation logistics to bring aid the last few miles into the
rough mountain terrain. In the fall of 1992, NGO’s overland delivery of food into Somalia wasn’t reaching hungry civilians; the Air Force’s contribution was the logistics to bypass warlords with an airlift. Later, charities had plenty of food waiting to be offloaded from ships; the U.S. military was the only actor able to open the derelict ports and provide security for the aid groups. In these cases, overwhelming firepower was not the unique capability that differentiated the U.S. military from private aid groups. It was logistics.

Speed was also an important factor in the success of the “aid delivery” missions in Iraq and Somalia. In both cases, the most of the lives saved occurred from the resources quickly inserted into the conflict while the U.S. and allies sought consensus and massed forces for the “political resolution” phase of the conflict. Somalia provides the clearest example: The two stopgap missions that took place while the U.S. corralled commitments from allies saved an estimated 20,000 lives, while UNOSOM II can’t claim to have improved mortality at all. Even between the two U.S.-led missions, the thinly resourced airlift saved as many lives as the full-scale deployment of ground troops because it went into effect almost immediately while the famine was at its peak. Thus, the $20 million Provide Comfort operation was 35 times less expensive per life saved as was Restore Hope, which cost $692 million.89 This could potentially relate to the “escalation dynamic” identified by Hinote, where the perpetrator has the incentive to carry out a genocidal campaign quickly before the international community can respond. Whether the source of mortality is violence or privation, more lives could be saved if the U.S.

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speeds forces to provide short-term aid, even while it builds consensus and masses forces to resolve larger political issues.\textsuperscript{90}

It should be noted that the United States participated in NATO and UN missions to provide food and medical aid during the Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, and that aid likely ensured that privation was not the primary cause of death in the Yugoslav conflict. But those aid operations were not decisive, and the feeding of civilians who were subject to widespread violence led to the operations being decisively described as catering to the “well-fed dead.”\textsuperscript{91} In the two operations examined in this study, only the Bosnian operation had within its strategy the actual protection of civilians. Carried out by a British-led artillery force on the ground in Sarajevo and by NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb positions around the “safe areas,” those phases kept the perpetrator from harming civilians while the wider strategic mission achieved its aim. The Kosovo operation had no plan to protect civilians from violence, leaving Serbian security forces free to attack civilians and rebels in Kosovo while airstrikes overhead focused on strategic targets elsewhere.

**Mixed Success in Long-Term Goals**

In contrast to the success in providing for the short-term humanitarian needs of the victim group, the “political resolution” phases of intervention had mixed levels of success. In Iraq, the Kurds were resettled into their homeland with almost no fighting. In Somalia, that mission was a complete failure. In Bosnia, intervention contributed to


conditions that led to a lasting peace process. In Kosovo, the attempt to force a political settlement led to an escalation of the atrocities that the U.S. was unable to prevent, even though it eventually led to a political settlement.

Why were humanitarian goals accomplished with minimal opposition and little to no combat action, while the attempts at political settlements required open combat with the perpetrators? Contrary to the image of masterminds of mass genocide being dedicated to murdering as many people as possible, none of the perpetrator groups made maximizing the deaths of the victim groups their main goal.

In Iraq, Saddam killed and displaced thousands of Kurds in the north and Shia in the south in order to quash uprisings against his rule. While he was capable of great brutality and his actions against Kurds throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s fit the definition of genocide, the action was more an attempt to quell a revolt than to kill as many as possible. In Somalia, deaths from privation were a byproduct of the chaos caused by a civil war, not the war’s primary goal. Even in the former Yugoslavia, where ethnic violence was at its most explicit, the fighting and centered on gaining territory for ethnic homelands, with killing as much an intimidation tactic as an end in itself.

Thus when the United States intervened with the aim of reducing mortality, its goal could be achieved without denying the perpetrator its own victory. In Iraq, political and military leaders resisted any action that would expand the mission beyond feeding and resettling the Kurds. Military operations ensured that Kurdish lives were protected, but did not alter the balance of power enough to generate opposition from the Iraqis. Thus the U.S. was able to achieve its mission while giving the Iraqis what they wanted: U.S. troops out of their country. In Somalia, Aideed welcomed the U.S. Restore Hope
intervention while later opposing the UN-led UNOSOM II; the U.S. mission didn’t challenge his political standing while the UN aimed to reshape the political system at the expense of warlords like Aideed.

In the Bosnia intervention, the Bosnian Serbs were convinced to settle for peace when the momentum of fighting was against them and when presented with a compromise that would preserve the autonomy of some Serbian areas. The airstrikes only needed to tip the balance of power enough to convince the BSA to cut their losses. To the extent that the Kosovo intervention failed to stop the murder and displacement of the Muslim minority, it was that the proposed political settlement was so heavily favored to the Kosovars that agreeing to it would jeopardize Milosevic’s standing as a Serb nationalist. Only later, after the bulk of the atrocities were committed, did strategic bombing actually threaten Milosevic’s hold on power did he agree to a political settlement.

In the cases studied, the United States had the least success when it sought to achieve political goals on behalf of the victim group that directly opposed the interests of the perpetrator, such as threatening prosecution for humanitarian crimes or promising independent homelands. Where the U.S. had its greatest success, resettling 400,000 Kurds with almost no violence, goals were tailored to minimize the threat to the perpetrator’s interest of remaining in power.

The conclusion may seem on the surface to be tautological; of course it is easier to achieve smaller, limited goals and more difficult to solve the bigger problems. Unfortunately, in practice the United States has repeatedly underestimated the effort required to change political dynamics. In Somalia, the Clinton Administration supported
a broadened mandate for UNOSOM II to rebuild the country’s governance and prosecute the ruling warlords for violations of humanitarian law. Yet it halved the number of supporting forces and reduced its financial backing for the mission. Either policy makers had excessive confidence in the UN’s abilities, or they assumed that the nation-building mission would be an easier task than opening ports and protecting aid convoys. Either way, the U.S. underestimated how much the goal of reshaping governance would generate opposition from the power centers in the country that benefited from chaos.

Later in Kosovo, U.S. and NATO leaders were convinced that a demonstration of unity on the alliance’s part and a few days of bombing missions would drive Milosevic to capitulate as he did earlier during the Bosnian airstrikes. But the lesson from the 1995 case was that airstrikes hastened the end of an exhausted conflict that was turning against the perpetrators. At best, those strikes convinced the Bosnian Serbs to act in their own best interests, locking in the territorial gains they might have lost if they persisted in fighting. In 1999, NATO leaders wrongly assumed that they could achieve the same result when Milosevic had the upper hand, was fighting for his country’s own territory and would only lose by capitulating. In the end, NATO was able to muster enough pressure to convince Milosevic to cede Kosovo in order to preserve his rule over the rest of Serbia. But the victory in political terms for Kosovo came too late for the thousands of civilians killed during Allied Force.

For future operations, it is important for the president and policy makers to be clear in their guidance to military leaders whether the ultimate outcome desired is the preservation of innocent life or the political resolution of the conflict. If the priority is saving lives, military planners can design operations that minimize opposition from the
perpetrators by avoiding thornier political issues. However, if the real goal is to resolve broader political conflicts, such as removing the perpetrator from power or independence for the victim group, policy makers should recognize the increase in difficulty and acknowledge that the objective may be at odds with the goal of simply saving lives.
Policy Implications and Lessons

The conclusions of this analysis point to the continual challenge of policymakers and planners to marry appropriate strategy with available resources. This is easy when the interests at stake are existential. When all of the United States’ military power and political will is engaged, it is hard to envision a conflict in which the country would not prevail. Unfortunately, in preventing mass atrocities overseas, the interests at stake are important but not vital; the will to intervene is present but not unlimited.

The result should be an embrace of modesty in setting expectations to match the political reality that the U.S. cannot go “all out” in every situation. If tasked with saving lives, the case studies indicate that military operations can succeed when they do not seek to change the political balance in favor of the victim group. The findings argue for military operations to be guided by tightly constrained goals and to avoid the tendency of “mission creep” that brings U.S. goals into direct conflict with the perpetrator of the mass atrocity.

Less ambitious goals had the negative aspect of leaving Saddam in power and failing to resolve persistence governance problems in Somalia. Policy makers might criticize modest goals in intervention because they don’t solve long-term problems of poor governance, ethnic tensions, or bringing perpetrators to justice. But the narrow focus in Iraq and Somalia did enable U.S. forces to mitigate humanitarian suffering at a minimal cost in U.S. lives and treasure. Operations that seek to go further in terms of resolving political disputes should only be undertaken with the understanding that they require a much greater commitment of resources and will.
The embrace of operations with limited aims frees policy makers to support an intervention in cases when it might otherwise see the potential costs as outweighing the humanitarian benefits. In a country with limited strategic impact on the United States, the President might opt not to intervene if the only option is to send troops to remove the country’s regime and resolve long-term political issues. With multiple ongoing conflicts, political leaders are hesitant to invoke the “Pottery Barn Rule” formulated by former Secretary of State Colin Powell – *you break it, you own it.*\(^\text{92}\) But if we reshape our formulation of military action away from disabling and towards enabling, we can save lives without having to “break” a country first.

The unique character of a MARO and the perceived limited public will to launch interventions argues for a approach to military planning that contrasts with the standard doctrine of overwhelming force. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations,* directs commanders to seize the initiative by “directing operations immediately against enemy centers of gravity.” In the interventions examined, when military force attacked the perpetrators’ center of gravity in Somalia and Kosovo, the result was more opposition and violence and deleterious effects on the victim group.

Instead, in some situations, the commander of a MARO should be advised instead to respect, influence or leverage the center of gravity of a perpetrator in order to create space for a humanitarian mission. In Iraq, commanders minimized opposition from Saddam by not empowering the Kurds and withdrawing from the country quickly. In the early stages of the Somali intervention, commanders ensured the cooperation of warlords by resisting UN requests that U.S. troops disarm militias. Only later, when the UN mission challenged Mohammad Aideed’s center of gravity, did the mission devolve into

a shooting war. The recognition that defeating the perpetrator is not the most efficient route to saving lived leads to a more effective strategy that leverages his core interests to allow for a successful humanitarian mission. Yielding to the interests of the perpetrator may not be the popular answer, but it may lead to the best possible outcome given the resources available.

This acknowledgement of the perpetrator’s interests might be construed as supporting the idea that interveners should seek to be seen as impartial actors. In the military’s established doctrine for the mass atrocity response mission, Joint Publication 3-07.3, Peace Operations, impartiality is described as distinguishing peace operations from other types of combat. “Impartiality requires the PO force to act on behalf of the peace process and mandate, and not show preference for any faction or group over another.”

In none of the interventions studied in this analysis was the United States viewed by the perpetrator or the international community as an impartial actor. In each case, it was clear which side the U.S. supported. Sewall, Raymond and Chin’s MARO planning handbook recognizes the “illusion of impartiality;” In reality, the determinant of the perpetrator’s response is never a question of what side we were on but whether our actions threatened their interests.

The challenge for policy makers and military commanders is to resist the temptation to stretch an intervention’s goals to provide justice or tip the scales in favor of a victim group that may have suffered unthinkable tragedies. The United States may decide that resolving long-term conflicts is in its interest, but if the mandate is simply to

94 Sewall, Mass Atrocity Response Operations, 27.
save as many lives as possible, those goals may prove to be beyond reach for even a superpower that has a limited stomach for more costly operations overseas.
Bibliography


