Assessing Trade-Offs in U.S. Military Intervention Decisions

Whether, When, and with What Size Force to Intervene

BRYAN FREDERICK, JENNIFER KAVANAGH, STEPHANIE PEZARD,
ALEXANDRA STARK, NATHAN CHANDLER, JAMES HOOBLER, JOOEUN KIM

APPENDIX B: COUNTERFACTUAL CASES

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Preface

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Costs of Not Intervening*, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army.[1] The purpose of this project was to develop a framework to assess the trade-offs between delaying or forgoing interventions and intervening in the early stages of an armed conflict, in order to inform U.S. Army and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) planning and decisions regarding whether and when to initiate U.S. military interventions.

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[1]   The main report (Frederick et al., 2021) is available at www.rand.org/t/RR4293.

Contents

Tables

Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force Althea
FY	fiscal year
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IDP	internally displaced person
IFOR	Implementation Force
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army
KPA	Korean People's Army
MEK	Mojahedin-e Khalq
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
NTC	National Transitional Council
OHR	Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina
POW	prisoner of war
PRC	People's Republic of China

R2P	Responsibility to Protect
ROK	Republic of Korea
SFOR	Stabilization Force
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Counterfactual Cases

In this appendix, we present the results of our four detailed counterfactual case studies. The four studies are presented in the following order: Bosnia, 1992–1995; Iran, 1979; Korea, 1950; and Libya, 2012. Further analysis of these cases is presented in Chapter Five of the main report.[1]

Bosnia, 1992–1995

Introduction

In this case study, we imagine what an early intervention (beginning in 1992) in the war in Bosnia would look like. The counterfactual scenario, which involves a robust North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervention that is encouraged by U.S. leadership in late 1992 rather than late 1995, allows us to assess the costs for the United States of intervening late in the war as compared with intervening earlier.

We begin by briefly describing the gradually escalating intervention undertaken by NATO and the United Nations (UN) in Bosnia from April 1992, when the war began, until December 1995, when the Dayton Accords were signed and an international stabilization force was deployed to enforce the terms of the agreement. We give an overview of the key actors in the war and the international community and briefly describe their interests during the war and the actions that were shaped by those interests. We also identify the key factors that led to a successful settlement and a postsettlement peace in 1995. This section explains why a robust campaign of NATO air strikes occurred late in the war and reviews the costs for the United States (and for the host nation) of delaying the intervention.

In the second half of the case study, we outline the proposed counterfactual scenario in which the United States takes a leadership role in encouraging a robust international response that is backed by the use of force, including a NATO air campaign, naval enforcement of an embargo, the deployment of a rapid reaction force to protect UN peacekeepers, and several other measures. We then analyze how the interests and behavior of key actors, as well as the key factors that affected the outcome, would change in this counterfactual scenario. We conclude by analyzing how the costs of intervention would change for the host country and for the United States following the counterfactual early intervention, comparing these with the costs of the late intervention in the real-world scenario.

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[1]   The main report (Frederick et al., 2021) is available at www.rand.org/t/RR4293.

The end of the Cold War and the rise of ethnic nationalist leaders led to the dissolution of the six republics of Yugoslavia when Slovenia and Croatia seceded after brief wars in 1991. On March 1, 1992, Bosnia voted to secede from Yugoslavia, touching off a civil war when members of the Serb minority organized to resist the establishment of an independent state.[2] The war began as a three-way conflict among the Bosnian Serb Army, the army of the Bosnian government (predominantly Bosniak, or Muslim), and Bosnian Croat forces, although the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats joined forces in March 1994 at the urging of Washington. Between 1992 and 1995, the fighting was accompanied by *ethnic cleansing*, or the use of violence and intimidation against civilians for the purpose of creating an ethnically homogenous territory. The war generated the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, as well as widely documented war crimes, including genocide, mass rape, and the systematic mistreatment of civilians and prisoners of war.[3] The number of casualties is contested, but estimates suggest that between 100,000 and 300,000 people were killed, 1.2 million became refugees, and an additional 1.3 million Bosnians were internally displaced.[4]

The international community initially responded by providing humanitarian assistance and deploying UN peacekeeping forces (the UN Protection Force [UNPROFOR]) to protect humanitarian relief convoys and, later, to protect UN-designated "safe areas." This approach provided considerable humanitarian relief but failed to stop the conflict or prevent atrocities against civilians. The UN Security Council also voted to implement an arms embargo against Yugoslavia, which had the unintended consequence of preventing Bosnian Muslim forces from acquiring weapons to defend themselves against attacks by Bosnian Serb militias, who were supplied by the former Yugoslav national army (the Yugoslav People's Army [JNA]). NATO created and later began to actively enforce a no-fly zone and engaged in occasional air strikes in 1994 through mid-1995 that were derided as "pinprick" strikes because they inflicted little damage on their Bosnian Serb military targets. Nevertheless, Bosnian Serb forces took UNPROFOR troops hostage on multiple occasions, most dramatically in May 1995 in retaliation for air strikes, when they chained UNPROFOR troops to ammunition dumps and weapons storage sites as a deterrent against further NATO air strikes.[5]

Although President Bill Clinton supported a "lift-and-strike" approach beginning in spring 1993, which would involve lifting the arms embargo and conducting NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets to protect Bosnian Muslim forces while they acquired weapons and training, the approach was not implemented until late 1995.[6] Western European coun-

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[2]   We use "Bosnia" as shorthand for "Bosnia-Herzegovina" throughout.

[3]   Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 29.

[4]   Florian Bieber, *Post-War Bosnia: Ethnicity, Inequality and Public Sector Governance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 29.

[5]   Chuck Sudetic, "Conflict in the Balkans: The Hostages; Bosnian Serbs Set Free 43 U.N. Forces Held Hostage," *New York Times*, December 1, 1994.

[6]   Several advocates at the time also supported a lift-and-strike policy as the most feasible option to end the war without seeming to capitulate to the Bosnian Serbs by offering concessions of territory acquired by force. The arms embargo was applied impartially to all sides but, in practice, served to institutionalize the military imbalance, since the Bosnian Serbs were able to receive heavy weapons and other forms of support from Serbia and the former JNA, while the Bosniak forces did not have access to such support. Advocates for lift-and-strike believed that lifting the arms embargo, providing support to the Bosniaks in terms of weapons and training, and conducting air strikes that targeted Bosnian Serb forces was the best option to end the war short of a ground intervention. However, even supporters of the policy acknowledged that increas-

tries, particularly France and the United Kingdom (UK), were unwilling to allow NATO to conduct more-assertive strikes while their troops were deployed as part of UNPROFOR, fearing that Bosnian Serbs would retaliate against any intervention by the international community that they perceived to be biased against them. UNPROFOR was lightly armed and had a weak mandate, making UN forces especially vulnerable to retaliation by Bosnian Serb forces. European leaders would only agree to use force against the Bosnian Serbs if the United States agreed to put its own forces on the ground alongside UNPROFOR, which the Clinton administration was unwilling to do at the time.[7] This fundamental disagreement led to inertia in U.S. policy toward Bosnia from 1993 to 1995.

However, after Bosnian Serb forces overran the "safe area" of Srebrenica and massacred some 7,000 civilians in July 1995, U.S. and European leaders agreed that a new approach was warranted. At a conference of foreign ministers later that July, the allies agreed to use "substantial and decisive" air power in retaliation for future violations of safe areas and streamlined the authority to call in air strikes.[8] After Bosnian Serbs shelled a marketplace in Sarajevo in August 1995, NATO launched Operation Deliberate Force, conducting air strikes across the country on Bosnian Serb military targets. Deliberate Force's multinational force composition included 5,000 personnel from 15 countries and 414 aircraft (both NATO assigned and NATO non-assigned) available at any time, including 222 fighters. About 260 were land-based aircraft, based at Aviano Air Base in Italy, 18 other air bases across Europe, and three aircraft carriers in the Adriatic.[9]

On September 20, 1995, Bosnian Serb leaders agreed to participate in negotiations indirectly through Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, concluding with the signing of the Dayton Accords in December 1995.

On December 20, 1995, most of the UNPROFOR troops remaining in Bosnia changed helmets and became the Implementation Force (IFOR), supplemented by additional NATO forces, bringing the total force to 60,000. IFOR was nominally replaced by the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in December 1996, which in turn was replaced by the European Union Force Althea (EUFOR) in December 2004.

Our proposed counterfactual scenario, described in greater detail below, begins at the London Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, held from August 23 to 29, 1992, when representatives of the international community, neighboring countries, and the warring factions met to negotiate an end to the war in Bosnia. In the real-world case, the UN deployed peacekeeping forces to protect humanitarian aid convoys in September following the conference but was unable to secure heavy weaponry. Even at the close of the conference, international officials appeared to have little confidence that the Serbs would follow through on their promises

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ing the military capabilities of the Bosniak forces so that they were better positioned to defend themselves and so that the balance of forces on the ground would shift sufficiently to create incentives for all sides to negotiate would take some time, and they acknowledged that UN forces would likely need to be withdrawn in the interim, endangering some of the humanitarian relief efforts. For example, see Norman L. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing,"* College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1995.

[7]   David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals*, New York: Scribner, 2001, p. 199.

[8]   Warren Christopher, *In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998.

[9]   Richard L. Sargent, "Aircraft Used in Deliberate Force," in Robert C. Owen, ed., *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000, p. 200.

without deterrent measures taken by the international community: Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said at a news conference that "I don't have any particular evidence that [Milošević] will live up to the bargain, based on his philanthropic attitude."[10] The agreement quickly fell apart as Bosnian Serb forces continued shelling Sarajevo, killing 16 civilians in a marketplace on August 31, and the war continued unabated. The conference marked a turning point in the war because it signaled that the international community was unwilling to use force to deter Serb aggression and enforce its preferred outcomes in Bosnia. One U.S. diplomat who attended the conference later reflected that the conference "was perhaps the last chance to restore Western resolve before Bosnia-Herzegovina was destroyed irreparably."[11]

U.S. Participation in the NATO Intervention

This section outlines U.S. interests in Bosnia and why the intervention was delayed in spite of these interests. Additionally, it describes the U.S. commitment to the NATO intervention and the resulting costs for the United States in economic, domestic political, reputational, and strategic terms. In the second half of the case study, we compare these costs with the projected costs associated with the early intervention explored in the counterfactual scenario.

U.S. Interests in Bosnia

The United States had both normative and strategic interests in Bosnia by the time Operation Deliberate Force was launched in 1995. The intervention enforced international norms prohibiting atrocities against civilians and supporting democracy in the wake of the Bosnian referendum. The provision of assistance and nominal support for safe areas between 1992 and 1995 also affirmed humanitarian norms. In terms of strategic interests, the intervention and stabilization force supported regional stability in Europe and provided support to European allies.[12]

Why Did the Intervention Occur Late?

Both the Bush and Clinton administrations delayed intervening in Bosnia. At the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the European Community (EC) was willing to take up responsibility for the crisis, and the Bush administration preferred to let European countries take the lead on what those countries saw as a European problem.[13] Secretary of State James Baker later wrote that "[t]he Europeans wanted the lead and welcomed the chance to deal with the problem through the EC . . . . The conflict seemed to be one the EC could manage."[14] The Bush administration therefore allowed the EC to take responsibility for dealing with the crisis. The Bush administration also did not view humanitarian issues in central Europe as relevant to U.S. strategic interests in the Post–Cold War context. Additionally, President George H. W. Bush was facing elections in November 1992. Despite the apparent success of the Gulf War,

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[10]   Barbara Crossette, "Serbian Officials Back Wide Accord," *New York Times*, August 28, 1992.

[11]   Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of U.S. Diplomacy in Europe, 1989–1992*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997, p. 316.

[12]   See Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, Alexandra Stark, Nathan Chandler, Meagan L. Smith, Matthew Povlock, Lynn E. Davis, and Edward Geist, *Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-3062-A, 2019.

[13]   James B. Steinberg, "Turning Points in Bosnia and the West," in Zalmay Khalilzad, ed., *Lessons from Bosnia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CF-113-AF, 1993, p. 6.

[14]   James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992*, New York: Putnam, 1995, p. 636.

Bush's campaign advisers believed that voters were more concerned about domestic issues and advised him to pivot away from foreign policy issues.[15] This advice spoke to a broader sentiment that the public would not support an intervention in Bosnia: According to Baker, "There was never any thought at that time of using U.S. ground troops in Yugoslavia—the American people would never have supported it."[16] Finally, senior administration members also believed that international intervention would not be effective in ending the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. Lawrence Eagleburger, then Assistant Secretary of State, said in fall 1992, "Until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it."[17]

President Clinton supported intervention in Bosnia during his election campaign and expressed support for the lift-and-strike option when his administration came into office. However, a lack of agreement with European allies prevented the administration from moving forward with this plan until fall 1995.[18]

Additionally, under both administrations, the Joint Chiefs and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) officials suggested that any intervention in Bosnia would require an overwhelmingly large number of U.S. troops to succeed. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell argued that a minimum of 200,000 troops would be needed for a ground intervention.[19] Military planners testified before Congress in June 1992 that even a humanitarian airlift into Sarajevo would require 50,000 U.S. troops on the ground to secure the airport perimeter.[20] These projected numbers made policymakers reluctant to support military intervention. The deployment of U.S. forces in Bosnia also had little support among the American public or in Congress during both administrations, although a few key members of Congress, including Senator Bob Dole, advocated for a more forceful U.S. policy in Bosnia.[21] Both administrations were also concerned about the possibility of getting drawn into an intervention that could become a quagmire, with senior officials in both administrations analogizing a potential intervention to U.S. involvement in Vietnam.[22] Additionally, both administrations, along with EC leadership, hoped that the conflict could be ended with a negotiated agreement without the extended use of NATO forces.[23]

The international community gradually became more willing to use military force against the Bosnian Serbs over the course of the war, but it was unwilling to engage in a systematic campaign of air strikes until Operation Deliberate Force began in late August 1995 following the Srebrenica massacre. In November 1994, Bosnian Serb forces violated the no-fly

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[15] Halberstam, 2001, p. 34.

[16] Baker, 1995, pp. 635–636.

[17] Quoted in Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, revised ed., New York: Modern Library, 1999, p. 23.

[18] Christopher, 1998, p. 346.

[19] Halberstam, 2001, p. 45.

[20] Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Spring 2002, p. 121.

[21] Julie Kim, *Bosnia Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR): Activities of the 104th Congress*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 6, 1997.

[22] For example, see Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary*, New York: Hyperion, 2003, p. 265.

[23] Joyce P. Kaufman, *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia: Crisis, Conflict, and the Atlantic Alliance*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

zone, attacking Muslim and Croat positions in western Bosnia from an airfield in the Serb-controlled part of Croatia. In response, NATO launched air strikes on the Croatian air field. These strikes were derided in the press as "pinpricks" because the runway was repaired and operational within two days, but the strikes marked the first time that NATO used force directly against the Serbs in Bosnia.[24] However, after Bosnian Serb forces took UNPROFOR troops hostage in retaliation for the air strikes, NATO and the UN were unwilling to act again, fearing further retaliation against UNPROFOR, until late summer 1995.

NATO and the UN only became willing to intervene by using military force against the Bosnian Serbs after the massacre in Srebrenica, when other safe areas were also being threatened by Bosnian Serb forces and looked likely to fall. By this point, relations between the United States and its European allies were strained by the lack of agreement over Bosnia policy, and other strategic priorities were being neglected because of the ongoing fighting in Bosnia, placing increasing pressure on the international community to find a way to end the war. In summer 1995, the Clinton administration committed to contributing 20,000 U.S. troops to assist in the event that UNPROFOR forces needed to be evacuated. Additionally, in response to UNPROFOR troops being taken hostage in May, France, the UK, and the Netherlands began to deploy a rapid reaction force that would augment UNPROFOR's military capabilities. The rapid reaction force deployed to the outskirts of Sarajevo in July. The total force was around 10,000 troops and was drawn from British troops already in Bosnia and British, Dutch, and French reinforcements. Although no U.S. personnel were assigned to the rapid reaction force, the United States provided two U.S. merchant ships and 11 transport aircraft to assist with deployment.[25] The creation of the rapid reaction force was facilitated by the election of President Jacques Chirac in France in May 1995: Chirac was much more willing than his predecessor to use force in Bosnia and placed pressure on the UK to take a more assertive line as well.[26] The rapid reaction force and U.S. commitment to deploy ground troops helped ease the concerns of European leaders that UNPROFOR would face retaliation from the Bosnian Serbs that it was unprepared to counter or defend itself from. The massacre in Srebrenica, combined with a shift in U.S. and European leaders' willingness to deploy their forces to protect UNPROFOR, pushed the international community toward agreement on the need for a new Bosnia policy, and Operation Deliberate Force began soon after.[27]

U.S. Contributions

This section traces U.S. contributions to the real-world scenario from 1992 through the NATO-led postconflict stabilization force beginning in 1995. In the counterfactual section later in this case study, we outline the hypothetical U.S. contribution to the counterfactual intervention beginning in 1992.

During the war, the U.S. military contributed aircraft, crews, and supplies to humanitarian air drops in 1993–1994; naval forces to enforce the arms embargo; and aircraft to monitor the no-fly zone. The humanitarian airlift delivered more than 160,000 metric tons of food

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[24] Holbrooke, 1999, p. 61.

[25] Tom Dodd, *War and Peacekeeping in the Former Yugoslavia*, London: House of Commons Library, International Affairs and Defence Section, October 12, 1995.

[26] Halberstam, 2001, p. 306.

[27] Ivo H. Daalder, "Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended," Brookings Institution, December 1, 1998.

and medical supplies through Sarajevo throughout the course of the war.[28] During Operation Deny Flight, the no-fly zone that was implemented in April 1993, aircraft from the United States, France, and the Netherlands, with the support of 4,500 personnel from 12 NATO members, flew more than 100,000 sorties by the end of the operation's mandate in December 1995.[29] The NATO air campaign Operation Deliberate Force, which lasted from August 30 through September 20, 1995, involved 3,515 aircraft sorties that delivered 1,026 high-explosive ammunitions against 338 aim points on 48 targets.[30]

After the Dayton Accords were signed, the United States contributed 20,000 troops to IFOR beginning in December 1995. Clinton initially committed U.S. forces for only one year but decided to extend the commitment in 1996. As the security situation stabilized, the number of international forces was drawn down to 32,000 in 1998 and 600 EUFOR forces in 2012.[31] U.S. forces drew down concurrently: By 2004, there were about 1,800 U.S. forces left of a force of 12,000. Troop requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan beginning in the early 2000s led to an intensified pace of the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the transition to a European Union (EU) force.[32]

Costs of Intervention

U.S. forces did not sustain any casualties throughout the Bosnia intervention. Total DoD incremental costs related to U.S. contributions to the intervention are estimated to be $15.3736 billion from fiscal year (FY) 1992 through FY 2004. Of that total, just over $13 billion went to costs related to IFOR/SFOR, while about $1.7 billion was spent on other Bosnia-related operations, including humanitarian relief, the maritime embargo, and air support between 1992 and 1995.[33] Additionally, the United States provided just under $2 billion in economic aid to Bosnia between FY 1993 and FY 2010, with aid levels at their highest immediately after the war ended.[34] The bulk of the cost of intervention was therefore incurred during the post-conflict stabilization mission.

The impartial orientation of the intervention prior to late 1995 and the intervention's failure to end the war generated reputational and strategic costs for the United States. The continuation of the war "symbolized a blatant attack on Western values of peaceful conflict resolution, tolerance, equality and dignity of the individual," and NATO's ineffectiveness in

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[28] A. Martin Lidy, David Arthur, James Kunder, and Samuel H. Packer, *Bosnia Air Drop Study*, Alexandria, Va.: Institute for Defense Analyses, September 1999.

[29] Dick A. Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO in Former Yugoslavia, 1991–1996: Limits to Diplomacy and Force*, The Hague, Netherlands: Netherlands Atlantic Commission, 1996, p. 32.

[30] John A. Tirpak, "Deliberate Force," *Air Force Magazine*, October 1997. Breakdown of NATO sorties by mission type: 8.3 percent combat air patrol, 22.2 percent suppression of enemy air defense, 38.6 percent close air support and battlefield air interdiction, 8.8 percent reconnaissance, and 22.1 percent support. Sargent, 2000, p. 247.

[31] James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, and Anga R. Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1753-RC, 2003, p. 98; European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "About EUFOR," webpage, September 12, 2016.

[32] Steve Bowman, *Bosnia and Kosovo: U.S. Military Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 16, 2004.

[33] Bowman, 2004, p. 5.

[34] Steven Woehrel, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Current Issues and U.S. Policy," Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 24, 2013.

the face of this challenge eroded the U.S. reputation as a global leader and standard-bearer for these values.[35] The most dramatic illustration of this ineffectiveness came in May 1995, when Bosnian Serb forces took about 400 UN peacekeepers hostage in response to limited NATO air strikes on Bosnian ammunition dumps. The hostage-taking led European leaders to consider withdrawing from UNPROFOR, highlighting the failure of U.S. and European leadership to generate a coherent policy to end the fighting in Bosnia.

Between early 1992 and late 1995, U.S. relations with European allies deteriorated because of differences over policy toward Bosnia and an inability to stop the fighting. The growing tensions within the alliance were thought to be the worst division between the United States and Western allies since the Suez Crisis.[36] Furthermore, NATO's very purpose had been called into question as the Soviet Union dissolved and the Cold War ended, and the Alliance faced an identity crisis. The war in Bosnia further eroded NATO's "strength and effectiveness" by both highlighting and exacerbating "a growing divergence in perceptions of national interests and policy priorities between the United States and its European allies."[37] In 1993, NATO experts argued that "the simple fact is that if NATO does not address the primary security challenges facing Europe today, it will become increasingly irrelevant."[38] The ongoing war in Bosnia also limited the Clinton administration's ability to pursue other strategic goals, particularly the expansion of NATO membership to former Soviet states. NATO enlargement was a policy priority during the first term of the Clinton administration and emerged as an organizational priority at the NATO summit in January 1994.[39] Yet because NATO's very purpose was called into question by Bosnia, such strategic goals as NATO enlargement had to be placed on the back burner until the crisis was solved.[40]

In stark contrast, the unity of purpose demonstrated by NATO allies during Operation Deny Flight in 1995 and the success of the intervention in bringing the warring parties to the negotiating table revived the United States' reputation as a global leader and revitalized NATO as an institution. The operation and subsequent stabilization mission charted a new path for NATO in response to a rapidly changing security environment in the post–Cold War context as an organization that could conduct out-of-area operations to end substate violence that threatened regional stability. The successful conclusion of the Bosnia intervention cleared the way for the Clinton administration to pursue strategic goals, such as the expansion of NATO, which became a centerpiece of the administration's second-term foreign policy. Dialogues with potential new NATO members began in 1996 and 1997, and Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic formally entered in July 1998.[41] The Bosnia intervention also paved

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[35] Beverly Crawford, "The Bosnian Road to NATO Enlargement," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2000, p. 42.

[36] Halberstam, 2001, p. 285.

[37] Ronald D. Asmus, Robert D. Blackwill, and F. Stephen Larrabee, "Can NATO Survive?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 1996, p. 79.

[38] Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee, "Building a New NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4, September/October 1993, p. 31.

[39] Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, Spring 1997, p. 122.

[40] Derek Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, p. 200.

[41] Crawford, 2000, p. 56.

the way for NATO's air campaign in Kosovo in 1999, which facilitated the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and the deployment of an international security presence.[42] An expert on NATO later reflected that "NATO enlargement would never have happened absent the U.S. and NATO's all-out and eventually successful effort to stop the war raging in Bosnia."[43]

In terms of the host country's costs and benefits, the late intervention meant that many more civilian casualties were incurred, war crimes committed, and refugees forced to flee than had the conflict ended more quickly. Estimates of civilian casualties during the war vary widely, but violence and atrocities against civilians occurred throughout the conflict: In Srebrenica, to take a particularly egregious example, approximately 7,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. In July 1992, about 432,000 total refugees from the former Yugoslavia had fled into central and Western Europe; by April 1994, there were 692,000 Yugoslav refugees in Europe.[44] UNPROFOR personnel suffered 213 casualties during UNPROFOR's deployment.[45] Ending the conflict earlier would therefore have prevented some of the violence and displacement. Additionally, the violence hardened ethnic tensions over time and led to more ethnically homogenous regions within Bosnia, making postconflict refugee resettlement and other governance problems more difficult.

Key Actors and Interests

In this section, we identify the key actors in the Bosnian war, both among local parties to the conflict and in the international community; identify their interests in the conflict and how they might have shifted over time; and briefly describe key actions for each throughout the war.

Milošević: Slobodan Milošević, the President of Serbia, was a Serbian nationalist who at first hoped to forestall the dissolution of Yugoslavia by preventing the republics with significant Serb populations from seceding and later hoped to build a Greater Serbia that would bring together Serbia and Serb provinces in other republics. Milošević tried to distance himself from Bosnian Serb leadership in the eyes of the international community but, in reality, provided Bosnian Serb forces with logistical support and supplies, especially at the beginning of the war, when he allowed Bosnian Serb officers leaving the JNA to form Bosnian Serb militias and take some of the JNA's heavy weaponry and arms with them.[46] International sanctions on Serbia approved by the UN Security Council in May 1992 and additional sanctions imposed in 1993 caused large-scale inflation and social unrest within Serbia in addition to the increasing mobilization of Serbia's domestic opposition.[47] Milošević wanted international sanctions lifted to quell these domestic issues.[48] Milošević pushed Radovan Karadžić to sign the Vance-Owen peace plan in May 1993, but the Bosnian Serb parliament voted against the plan. Subse-

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[42] Brinkley, 1997, p. 123.

[43] Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 124.

[44] Woodward, 1995, p. 369.

[45] United Nations Peacekeeping, "Fatalities," online database, accessed June 25, 2018.

[46] Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers*, New York: Times Books, 1996.

[47] Robert Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 122.

[48] Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999, p. 176.

quently, Milošević, who believed that Karadžić had not supported the plan sufficiently, broke ties with Karadžić.[49]

Bosnian Serb forces: Bosnian Serb forces fought to create ethnically "pure" Serbian territory within Bosnia that could be governed autonomously by Bosnian Serbs. Nationalist Bosnian Serbs founded the so-called Army of Republika Srpska, or Bosnian Serb Army, soon after Bosnia voted to succeed from Yugoslavia. The Bosnian Serb Army was intended to serve as the army of the self-proclaimed secessionist Serb republic within Bosnia, Republika Srpska. Led by General Ratko Mladić, the backbone of the Bosnian Serb Army was formed by some 80,000 Bosnian Serb troops discharged from the JNA in addition to Bosnian Serb recruits and some foreign volunteers, mainly from Russia.[50] Strong ties between the command structures of the Bosnian Serb forces and the JNA, which became the Yugoslav Army, remained throughout the war.[51] Serb paramilitary groups, including the White Eagles and the Serbian Volunteer Guard, also operated during the war. According to an indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the Bosnian Serb Army "ethnically cleansed" Bosnian territory by interning Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat civilians in detention facilities, as well as through murder, rape, torture, and mass deportation.[52] Republika Srpska, led by President Karadžić, was the political entity associated with Bosnian Serb forces during the war. In August 1995, as Croat forces were poised to attack the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia, Karadžić attempted to demote Mladić but was rebuffed. Milošević represented the Republika Srpska leadership at the Dayton negotiation and was able to get them to agree to the terms of the Dayton Accords.[53] Both Mladić and Karadžić had by then been indicted on war crimes and were unable to travel abroad without risking arrest; both were later found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity by the ICTY.[54]

Bosniak forces: Bosniak forces fought against the Bosnian Serb forces' efforts to seize territory for their autonomous Republika Srpska, although the Bosniak forces were not effective at doing so until the Muslim-Croat federation was able to seize territory back from the Bosnian Serbs during an offensive in summer 1995. Bosniak leadership advocated for an ethnically mixed federal structure during peace negotiations. The Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the main Bosniak armed force during the war, composed primarily of Bosnian Muslims with a minority of Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb troops and with support from Bosniak paramilitary groups, such as the Patriotic League. President Alija Izetbegović led the government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosniak forces were ill-equipped and remained at a disadvantage to Serbian forces throughout much of the war because of the international arms embargo: In September 1992, Bosniak forces had two armored personnel carriers and two tanks, while Bosnian Serb forces had an estimated 300 tanks, 200 armored personnel carriers, 40 aircraft, and 800 artillery pieces (Bosnian Croat forces had

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[49] Woodward, 1995, p. 308.

[50] John Kifner, "Yugoslav Army Reported Fighting in Bosnia to Help Serbian Forces," *New York Times*, January 27, 1994.

[51] Thomas, 1999, p. 122.

[52] "UN Indictment: Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic," *The Guardian*, July 24, 1995.

[53] Doder and Branson, 1999, p. 223.

[54] Marlise Simons, "Radovan Karadzic, a Bosnian Serb, Is Convicted of Genocide," *New York Times*, March 24, 2016; "Ratko Mladic Jailed for Life over Bosnia War Genocide," BBC News, November 22, 2017.

approximately 50 tanks and 100 artillery pieces).[55] Bosniak forces received covert support in the form of weapons from Pakistan and Iran that were smuggled over the border through Croatia. U.S. officials turned a blind eye to these shipments despite the embargo.[56] The government of Croatia also supported Bosniak forces at the beginning of the war. Although Bosniak and Bosnian Croat forces fought against each another between May 1993 and March 1994, the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat leadership signed an agreement in Washington, D.C., in March 1994 to form the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosniak and Croat forces subsequently coordinated their efforts, with the encouragement of the United States, through the end of the conflict. Coordinated Bosniak-Croat offensives in the summer of 1995 effectively reversed Bosnian Serb territorial gains: Although the Bosnian Serbs had held about 70 percent of the territory of Bosnia since 1992, within weeks the offensive had reduced Serb territorial control to about 50 percent.[57]

Croatian forces: Croatian forces in Bosnia fought to create a Croatian territory within Bosnia with the support of the ethnic nationalist government of Croatia but later joined forces with the Bosniaks to take back territory that had been seized by the Bosnian Serbs. Croatian leadership were also determined to destroy the military forces associated with the Serbian breakaway enclave in Croatia called the Republic of Serbian Krajina and saw this goal as linked to the defeat of Bosnian Serb forces.[58] The Croatian Defense Council was the military force of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, the main political entity representing Bosnian Croats during the war. At the beginning of the war, the Croatian Defense Council fought alongside the Bosniak army, but the two forces fought one another from May 1993 until March 1994, when the Bosnian Croats joined the Bosniak-Croat federation. The government of Croatia, led by ethnic nationalist Franjo Tuđman, provided support to Croat forces through the provision of weapons and training, and the Croatian National Guard engaged Serb forces in Bosnia. The Croatian government hoped to create an autonomous Croat region in Bosnia that would be affiliated with the Croatian state.[59]

European leadership: At the beginning of the war, European leaders wanted to take the lead on responding to the Bosnian war, hoping to end the conflict and the humanitarian fallout. Western European countries also wanted to stem the flow of refugees from the former Yugoslavia: By July 1992, estimates suggested that 200,000 Yugoslav refugees had been admitted in Germany, 60,000 in Hungary, and 50,000 in Austria.[60] European countries also wanted to stem the flow of refugees from the former Yugoslavia into Western Europe and to prevent the war from spilling over Bosnia's borders into Kosovo and the wider region. EC officials were optimistic that European leaders could handle their own region's problems at the end of the

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[55] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, New York: New York University Press, 1994, p. 243.

[56] Roger Cohen, "Arms Trafficking to Bosnia Goes on Despite Embargo," *New York Times*, November 5, 1994.

[57] Lise Morjé Howard, "US Foreign Policy Habits in Ethnic Conflict," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 4, December 2015, p. 726.

[58] Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Office of Russian and European Analysis, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 364.

[59] Charles R. Shrader, *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia: A Military History, 1992–1994*, College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.

[60] Henry Kamm, "Yugoslav Refugee Crisis Europe's Worst Since 40's," *New York Times*, July 24, 1992.

Cold War and sought to take the lead on policy toward the breakup of Yugoslavia.[61] However, European leaders were unable to generate a coherent policy response as Yugoslavia dissolved: Germany supported the secession of Slovenia and Croatia and pushed to recognize Bosnia as an independent state, for example, and pressured the EC to support recognition in December 1991, while France and the UK joined the United States in opposing the dissolution of Yugoslavia.[62] European leaders also opposed lifting the international sanctions on Yugoslavia in the UN Security Council. The EU also contributed the majority of stabilization forces after the conflict ended, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe was tasked with supervising elections, promoting arms control, and overseeing human rights issues in postconflict Bosnia.

France and the UK: France and the UK were major troop contributors to UNPROFOR and pushed back against more-assertive NATO action in Bosnia until late in the war for fear that Bosnian Serb forces would retaliate by attacking the lightly armed UNPROFOR troops. According to General Wesley Clark, the Clinton administration's willingness to commit U.S. troops to efforts to withdraw UNPROFOR if needed and to enforce a peace agreement "was a decisive factor" in winning the support of European allies for air strikes: "Without this pledge the plan would never have gotten to first base with our allies."[63] Jacques Chirac was elected president of France in May 1995, replacing Francois Mitterand, who had opposed coercive action in Bosnia. Clinton later recalled a March 1993 meeting with President Mitterand in which "he made clear to me that, although he had sent five thousand French troops to Bosnia as part of a UN humanitarian force to deliver aid and contain the violence, he was more sympathetic to the Serbs than I was, and less willing to see a Muslim-led unified Bosnia."[64] Chirac declared the treatment of French UN peacekeeping hostages to be unacceptable and joined the Clinton administration in supporting the escalation of force in Bosnia.[65] In June 1995, France and the UK, along with the Netherlands, took steps to reinforce UNPROFOR by introducing a rapid-reaction capability equipped with artillery and armor.[66]

Russia: President Boris Yeltsin's government was more sympathetic to the Serbs than were other European leaders and therefore favored tightening the arms embargo on Yugoslavia and putting sanctions on Croatia in response to attacks on Serb enclaves. Russia also initially opposed air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. Yeltsin worried that public support for NATO air strikes or similar measures would undermine his domestic support and empower Russian hard-liners.[67] Nevertheless, according to Sabrina Ramet, Russia was "torn between its desire to reinforce its financially rewarding relationship with the United States and its confessionally rooted affinity for the Serbs."[68] Russia supported the imposition of UN sanctions against Serbia in 1992, participated in UNPROFOR in Croatia and later contributed troops to IFOR

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[61] Crawford, 2000, p. 44.

[62] Zimmermann, 1996, p. 177.

[63] Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat*, New York: Public Affairs, 2001, p. 52.

[64] Bill Clinton, *My Life*, New York: Vintage, 2005, p. 511.

[65] Leurdijk, 1996, p. 84.

[66] Gregory L. Schulte, "Former Yugoslavia and the New NATO," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1997, p. 23.

[67] Crawford, 2000, p. 42.

[68] Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002, p. 214.

that served under an American commander, and did not oppose the NATO air strikes in the UN Security Council. Russian officials were willing to cooperate with NATO efforts to end the war because they worried that being marginalized from the international efforts would be damaging to Russian prestige: According to Richard Holbrooke, "Moscow's primary goal was neither to run nor wreck the [Dayton] negotiations. Rather, what they wanted was a sense, however symbolic, that they still mattered in the world."[69]

UN: The UN deployed peacekeeping forces to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid in Bosnia, but UN officials favored an "impartiality" approach to the conflict and were therefore reluctant to single out any side for violations of agreements or for committing atrocities.[70] UN officials were mindful that UNPROFOR troops were lightly armed and ill-equipped to accomplish the mandate that the international community had given them, especially after they were tasked with protecting the six demilitarized safe areas in 1993. In an April 1993 memo, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan wrote that by taking responsibility for the safe areas, "UNPROFOR takes on a moral responsibility for the safety of the disarmed that it clearly does not have the military resources to honour beyond a point. . . . We understand, of course, that 145 peace-keepers cannot be expected to resist a full-scale invasion by the Bosnian Serb Army; and that, should heavy artillery shelling occur, UNPROFOR will take shelter like everyone else."[71] UN officials prevented NATO from carrying out air strikes called in by UNPROFOR in 1994 because they were one-half of the "dual-key" system through which both UN and NATO had to approve each air strike. UN officials reluctantly gave up their dual-key authority in 1995 after the Srebrenica massacre.[72]

U.S. Congress: There was little support in Congress for placing U.S. troops on the ground in Bosnia. However, a few key members of Congress, most notably Republican Senator Bob Dole, advocated for the Clinton administration to do more in Bosnia. Dole introduced legislation calling for the unilateral lifting of the arms embargo in summer 1995.[73] Clinton opposed the legislation even though he supported lift-and-strike because he feared that unilateral action would divide NATO.[74]

Bush administration: The Bush administration conveyed to Yugoslav leaders in 1991 that it favored Yugoslav unity but not at the expense of democracy: That is, the administration did not support unilateral secession of the Yugoslav republics, but it opposed the use of force or intimidation to keep Yugoslavia together and would support unilateral secession if it was the outcome of a democratic process.[75] Once the war in Bosnia began, most senior Bush administration officials opposed intervention in Bosnia, seeing the former Yugoslavia as falling outside of key U.S. strategic interests, although the administration did support measures including an

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[69] Quoted in Chollet, 2005, p. 83.

[70] Schulte, 1997.

[71] Kofi Annan, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, "Srebrenica," cable to Lars-Eric Wahlgren, Commander, United Nations Protection Force, New York, April 23, 1993.

[72] Robert C. Owen, "Summary," in Robert C. Owen, ed., *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000, p. 474.

[73] Alison Mitchell, "Rebuffing Clinton, Dole Seeks End to Bosnian Arms Embargo," *New York Times*, July 11, 1995.

[74] Clinton, 2005, p. 513.

[75] Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, March/April 1995.

arms embargo on Yugoslavia and international sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. The last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, recalls that National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft was open to considering air strikes but was dubious that they would be effective and was unwilling to put U.S. troops on the ground in the event that air strikes failed. Zimmermann was one of a few State Department officials who advocated for a more-forceful U.S. intervention in Bosnia. The Bush administration was also willing to let European leaders take the lead on Bosnia policy: Baker later reflected that U.S. leadership also believed that "[i]t was time to make the Europeans step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power."[76] Members of the administration considered the use of force in Bosnia several times in mid- to late 1992. For example, Baker requested a memo in June 1992 titled "Game Plan: Next Steps on Bosnia" that envisioned the use of multilateral air strikes "to create conditions for delivery of humanitarian relief" in addition to increased sanctions on Serbia and a naval blockade to enforce sanctions. Although the sanctions measures, embargo, and delivery of humanitarian aid were implemented multilaterally soon after, the use of force was not implemented before Bush left office.[77]

Clinton administration: During the 1992 election campaign, Clinton publicly supported taking more-assertive military action, such as air strikes, in Bosnia to provide support for the Bosniaks and stop Bosnian Serb atrocities. When the administration came into office in 1993, Clinton favored a more assertive approach, but administration officials were deeply divided over how to approach the war in Bosnia, especially in the face of opposition from European leaders. Some officials, including UN ambassador Madeleine Albright, argued forcefully that a bombing campaign could force the Serbs to negotiate, while others were more ambivalent: Secretary of State Warren Christopher reported to the president in May 1993 that, of the available policy options, "none seems attractive."[78]

Key Factors Affecting the Outcome

Four key factors contributed to the eventual success of the NATO intervention and subsequent stabilization mission in Bosnia:

- eventual unity among the United States and European allies
- the consent of the warring parties
- the success of the Bosniak-Croat ground offensive in summer 1995
- the number and capability of forces at each stage of the intervention.

U.S. participation in the international intervention in Bosnia between 1992 and 2008 can be divided into three phases:

- a neutrality phase from July 1992 to summer 1993
- the move from neutrality to the escalation of coercive force against the Bosnian Serbs from summer 1993 through December 1995
- the postconflict stabilization phase between December 1995 and 2008.

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[76] Quoted in Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, paperback ed., New York: Basic Books, 2007, p. 259.

[77] Baker, 1995, pp. 648–651.

[78] Christopher, 1998, p. 347.

In the first phase, from the time that war broke out in Bosnia in April 1992 through summer 1993, the United States (alongside European allies) pursued policies intended to provide humanitarian aid and to help end the war without appearing to favor any side. The United States provided support to Operation Provide Promise, a humanitarian and medical assistance mission, and Operation Sky Monitor, an effort to monitor a no-fly zone and log violations without taking on the responsibility of enforcement. In previous RAND research, these interventions are coded as successful because U.S. forces, with assistance from several European states, accomplished these discrete tasks even as they failed to end the war or curtail violence against civilians.[79] The extremely limited ambition of these tasks contributed to the success of the intervention, as did U.S. technical capacity in executing air drops in a nonpermissive environment. Although the UN's impartiality approach impeded efforts to end the war, it facilitated the provision of humanitarian and medical assistance because obtaining the consent of warring parties to deliver aid limited the number of attacks on humanitarian aid convoys.

In the second phase, between the summer of 1993 and December 1995, NATO gradually escalated the use of force to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate. NATO–Western EU forces successfully enforced economic sanctions and an arms embargo but were only partially successful in enforcing a no-fly zone. Limited NATO air strikes that were enabled under the dual-key system initially were unsuccessful, but escalation through Operation Deliberate Force in late 1995 led to successful negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, to end the war.

The lack of agreement among U.S. and European officials was the main factor inhibiting success between 1993 and 1995, as U.S. officials pushed for a lift-and-strike policy that was opposed by European leaders. The no-fly zone was also only partially enforced because of the UN and European allies' reluctance to antagonize the Serbs. However, consensus that airpower should be used more assertively after Srebrenica and the removal of the dual-key system for authorizing air strikes contributed to the eventual success of the campaign. U.S. and NATO air capabilities, the careful selection of targets, and the use of precision-guided missiles maximized the damage to Serb military targets while minimizing the risk to civilians. This consensus was facilitated by the deployment of the UNPROFOR rapid reaction force. During the air campaign, while UNPROFOR forces withdrew to defensible positions, British, Dutch, and French rapid reaction force artillery directed fire from their position on Mt. Igman against Bosnian Serb heavy weapons positioned within the Sarajevo exclusion zone. Within the first day of the NATO operation, the rapid reaction force "fired more than 1,000 rounds and reportedly destroyed 23 of the roughly 300 Bosnian Serb weapons positions around Sarajevo."[80] The withdrawal of regular UNPROFOR forces and deployment of the rapid reaction force solved the key issue that held European states back from endorsing a more assertive intervention: the safety of European forces deployed as part of UNPROFOR.

Additionally, an offensive by the Bosniak-Croat federation, facilitated by U.S. mediation and assistance, that took back a significant amount of territory in central and western Bosnia from the Serbs made the Serbs more willing to negotiate. In July 1995, an offensive by the Serbian Army of Krajina threatened the Bosnian city of Bihac, which had been under siege for three years and was declared a safe zone by the UN. The Croatian government had expressed that it was willing to fight to defend the enclave of Bihac and would not tolerate its fall to Serb

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[79] Kavanagh et al., 2019.

[80] CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 378.

forces. The Bosnian government therefore asked the Croat government for assistance defending Bihac, and the resulting Split Agreement of July 1995 resulted in Croat forces and Bosniak forces agreeing to cooperate and coordinate their activities. According to a CIA military history of the war, the agreement "proved to be one of the key events of the war" because it facilitated a joint offensive that "not only [brought] Croatia more openly and deeply into the Bosnian conflict, presaging direct Croatian military operations against Bosnia's Republika Srpska, but would also set the stage for Croatia's reconquest of its own territory usurped by [the Krajina Serb Army, a breakaway Serb state that had seized territory in Croatia]."[81] In Operation "Oluja," from August 4 through 8, 1995, the Croatian army defeated the Krajina Serb Army in a lightning operation. The sudden defeat of the Krajina Serbs had a "profound impact" on the thinking of the Bosnian Serb leadership because it "crystallized their belief that a political-military settlement had to be negotiated as soon as possible."[82]

Additionally, the coordination agreement allowed Croat and Bosniak forces to take back a significant amount of territory in Bosnia. The Croatian Army and its affiliated paramilitaries began an assault on Bosnia, and the Bosnian Army moved forward on several fronts in Bosnia in early September during the NATO air campaign. The Bosnian military also made advances and played an important role in tying up Bosnian Serb forces and making it difficult for the Serbs to shift their reserves to confront the Croatian offensive.[83] As the success of the offensive in taking back territory became increasingly clear, "it was now the Serbs who wanted to get a cease-fire as soon as possible, while the Bosnian Government wanted to continue fighting to gain as much territory as possible to lever its position in future bargaining over a territorial division."[84]

There is some dispute among analysts about whether the ground offensive or NATO air campaign played a more important causal role in ending the war.[85] Regardless of which carried more causal weight, each factor was likely necessary but insufficient on its own to end the conflict. According to the CIA's military history of the conflict, "Operation Deliberate Force undoubtedly was a major influence on the Bosnian Serbs' reluctant decision to withdraw their heavy weapons . . . but the concurrent ground offensives . . . also had a significant influence on Bosnian Serb decisionmaking. The [ground offensive] was gaining ground in western Bosnia at exactly the same time . . . as the NATO campaign was beginning to run out of targets. The air campaign was causing the [Bosnian Serbs] pain, but the [ground offensives], by capturing critical territory, were carving flesh and sinew from the body of Republika Srpska."[86] The successes of the ground offensive and air campaign were also causally linked. For instance, the CIA military history of the conflict finds that the progress made by the Bosnian army in fall 1995 was in part due to the demoralization of Serb forces during NATO's intervention.[87]

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[81]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 364.

[82]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 376.

[83]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 392.

[84]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 392.

[85]   For example, see Mark C. McLaughlin, "Assessing the Effectiveness of Deliberate Force: Harnessing the Political-Military Connection," in Robert C. Owen, ed., *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000.

[86]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 395.

[87]   CIA, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002, p. 388.

Finally, the existence of an ongoing diplomatic process and the terms that were offered by U.S. officials negotiating on behalf of the Contact Group allowed the war to end in a power-sharing agreement rather than a fight to the finish. The four members of the Contact Group—the United States, the UK, France, and Germany—agreed in October 1994 to a settlement plan that would split Bosnian territory along ethnic lines, with 51 percent held by the Muslim-Croat federation and 49 percent held by the Republika Srpska. This split did not reflect the balance of territorial control on the ground at the time, since the Serb Army held about 70 percent of Bosnia's territory. However, the ground offensives in 1995 shifted the on-the-ground balance of territorial control so that it was very close to the Contact Group's plan, facilitating the political negotiations, since neither side was required to give up significant territory.[88] The provision of two federal governments in the Dayton Accords was also an incentive for the Serbs, since political autonomy was one of their key objectives.[89]

In the third phase, beginning in December 1995, the international community deployed troops into Bosnia to stabilize the postconflict settlement; an international civilian agency, the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OHR), was tasked with civilian implementation. The international forces were able to successfully implement a cease-fire between belligerents, establish an independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina with sovereign borders, and create a zone of separation between the Bosniak-Croat federation and the Serb republic, the two federal entities of the state created in Dayton. However, refugee return was hindered by institutionalized ethnic division, and the international community struggled to consolidate authority in the central government. Two decades after the war ended, nationwide protests in February 2014 highlighted ongoing issues regarding governance and corruption.[90]

Implementation of civilian tasks initially was hindered by a lack of coordination between NATO and OHR, although they eventually developed a better working relationship. Three years of violent ethnic cleansing that generated high levels of displacement and hardened ethnic divisions also hindered implementation, and the pace of refugee return was sluggish as a result. In spite of some progress, today "most of Bosnia remains ethnically homogeneous with only small minorities from the other two nations."[91] Artificial timelines created by U.S. officials who feared mission creep led to early elections that returned many nationalist extremists to office. Additionally, the provisions of the Dayton Accords, although designed to gain consent from the parties, institutionalized ethnic divisions in politics. However, more-robust rules of engagement for IFOR as compared with UNPROFOR facilitated the separation of the warring parties and prevented the resumption of the war. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's control over electoral institutions also allowed international officials to remove individuals suspected of war crimes from the ballot while ensuring that this process remained apolitical. Finally, the existence of a peace agreement signed by all parties facilitated postconflict stabilization, lowering the incentives for the parties to resume the war. Table B.1 summarizes the key actors and their interests and actions in the Bosnian War.

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[88] Howard, 2015, pp. 725–726.

[89] Owen, 2000, p. 514.

[90] International Crisis Group, *Bosnia's Future*, Brussels, Belgium, July 10, 2014, p. 4.

[91]   Bieber, 2006, p. 31.

Table B.1
Bosnia: Actors and Interests in Real-World Case

Actors	Interests	Actions
Milošević	• "Greater Serbia" linking Serb territory in former Yugoslavia • Faced domestic opposition because of international sanctions	• Supported Bosnian Serbs • Seized 70 percent of territory in 1992 through fighting with Bosniaks and Croats
Bosnian Serb forces	• Autonomous Serb territory within Bosnia	• Engaged in ethnic cleansing
Bosniak forces	• End Bosnian Serb aggression • Multiethnic Bosnian state or potentially autonomous Bosniak territory within Bosnia	• Fought Bosnian Serbs to take back territory • Fought Croats before reaching a settlement in 1994
Croatian forces	• 1992–1993: Autonomous Croat territory within Bosnia affiliated with Croatian state • 1994 and later: Muslim-Croat territory within Bosnia	• Fought Bosnian Serbs • Fought Bosniaks before reaching a settlement in 1994
European leadership	• End the conflict and humanitarian fallout • Wanted to take the lead, but there were differences within the EC on approach • Stem the flow of refugees into Western Europe	• Contributions to UNPROFOR and humanitarian mission • Opposed air strikes before 1995 without U.S. troops on the ground • Contributed to post-1995 stabilization forces
Russia	• Domestic affinity for Serbs	• Supported impartiality approach (e.g., opposed lifting embargo) • Contributed to stabilization forces post-1995
UN	• Delivery of humanitarian aid • Stop the fighting but without provoking attacks on UN forces	• Deployed UNPROFOR to protect humanitarian aid and safe areas • Resisted NATO air strikes as part of dual-key system
U.S. Congress	• End war and humanitarian fallout	• Little support for U.S. ground intervention • Key members supported a more assertive approach, including lifting the arms embargo
Bush administration	• Unified, democratic Yugoslavia • Believed that there was not sufficient U.S. strategic interest in Bosnia	• Supported measures short of military intervention, e.g., arms embargo
Clinton administration	• End war and humanitarian fallout • Repair NATO relations	• Supported lift-and-strike • Committed U.S. ground troops to evacuate UNPROFOR • Contributed troops to stabilization forces

Counterfactual Scenario

What if the United States had made a different decision, instead choosing to take a leadership role in 1992 to implement a more robust intervention earlier in the war?

The counterfactual scenario begins to diverge from the real-world case in August 1992 at the London Conference.[92] As in the real-world scenario, the international parties to the

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[92]   The context for the London Conference was as follows: The UN Security Council had imposed an arms embargo on the former republics of Yugoslavia in September 1991 under UN Security Council Resolution 713, and the Security Council imposed international sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro in May 1992. In July 1992, ships from NATO's standing naval forces Standing Naval Force Mediterranean and Standing Naval Force Atlantic began patrolling international waters off the

London conference urge the parties involved to take several specific actions, including adhering to a cease-fire, lifting the sieges on cities and towns, agreeing to international supervision of all heavy weapons in Bosnia, establishing demilitarized cities and towns, withholding external assistance for the warring parties, deploying observers on the Bosnia-Serbia border, and extending humanitarian aid throughout the country with the cooperation of the warring parties.[93] Additionally, Bosnian Serb leaders agree to notify the UN within 96 hours of the positions of all heavy weaponry around the cities of Sarajevo, Bihac, Goradze, and Jajce, to place this heavy weaponry under the supervision of UN observers, and to engage in negotiations that would lead to Bosnian Serb withdrawal from some occupied territory.[94] The international community agrees to withhold external assistance to the warring parties, to deploy observers to the Bosnia-Serbia border, and to extend humanitarian aid throughout the country with the cooperation of the warring parties by deploying UN peacekeepers to accompany the aid convoys.

However, in the counterfactual scenario, the United States uses the London Conference to take the leadership role on the international community's response to Bosnia. U.S. officials engage in intensive diplomacy with NATO allies to ensure that European allies agree to steps to encourage Serbia, Croatia, and the warring parties in Bosnia to comply with their commitments. Prior to the conference, the United States takes the lead to gain support in the NATO North Atlantic Council for issuing a threat of the use of force. Instead of taking an impartial approach to deliver humanitarian aid and encourage the parties to stop fighting, NATO announces that it will use military force to enforce the London Conference agreements if necessary.

At the conclusion of the London Conference, the international community commits to the following consequences if all parties do not comply with their commitments:

1. Reinforce enforcement measures of the international embargo by authorizing NATO and Western EU naval forces currently monitoring the embargo to halt all inbound and outbound shipping to inspect and verify cargo, using force if necessary.
2. Deploy additional international troops to UNPROFOR, authorize them to use force if necessary to carry out the humanitarian relief mission or to act in self-defense, and arm them appropriately for this mission (additional troops would come from the top UNPROFOR contributors, including France, the UK, Canada, Spain, and the Netherlands).
3. Authorize the expanded UNPROFOR to protect humanitarian aid convoys.
4. Deploy expanded UNPROFOR forces to protect the demilitarized cities and towns created under the terms of the London Conference agreement.

Montenegrin Coast, while Western EU ships patrolled the Otranto Strait under Operation Maritime Monitor and Operation Sharp Vigilance to monitor compliance with the sanctions and embargo (Operation Maritime Guard, which replaced Operation Maritime Monitor, began to enforce the embargo in November 1992). In June 1992, under UN Security Council Resolution 758, UNPROFOR forces, which had been deployed in Croatia in February 1992, were also deployed to Bosnia to provide protection for the Sarajevo airport to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. On the ground, Bosnian Serb forces had seized about 70 percent of Bosnia's territory by August 1992. Earlier in the summer, the international media began to cover stories of atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and detention camps, where civilians were being held in poor humanitarian conditions.

[93] "Conference Statement on Bosnia: Text of the Final Declaration of the London Conference Regarding the Conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *The Independent*, August 28, 1992.

[94] Crossette, 1992.

5. Deploy a NATO rapid reaction force of ground troops equipped with artillery and armor to protect UNPROFOR from retaliation by the warring parties and to provide support to the NATO air campaign.
6. Ban all military flights in Bosnian air space; the no-fly zone would be enforced by NATO.
7. Authorize NATO to conduct air strikes against military air bases if they are being used for military flights in contravention of the no-fly zone.
8. Authorize NATO to conduct air strikes against artillery positions near cities and towns.
   a. If the conflict continues, NATO would gradually escalate the air campaign by expanding air strikes to include arms-making plants; munitions dumps; and targets related to lines of communication, military logistical support, fuel supply convoys, and headquarters and command facilities. If the conflict continues at this point, the air strikes would expand further to target noncompliant forces themselves.
9. Authorize NATO to provide close air support to UNPROFOR.
10. Affirm willingness to deploy NATO troops, including U.S. troops, to form a post-conflict stabilization force to conduct peacekeeping and implement the terms of the agreement once it has been reached.[95]

Immediately following the London Conference, the United States engages in intensive diplomacy designed to supplement the threat of the use of force by deterring warring party aggression and convincing the parties to negotiate in earnest under UN auspices. The United States uses diplomatic leverage to gain Russia's cooperation. Russia pressures Milošević to place pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to comply with a cease-fire and to negotiate. The United States also shepherds the passage of heightened sanctions against Serbia through the UN Security Council, and Russia abstains from the vote, thereby facilitating the resolution's passage. U.S. officials make it clear to Milošević that the sanctions will be lifted once the Bosnian Serbs sign a final agreement. The United States also demands that Milošević enforces the embargo on the Serbia-Bosnia border to prevent the Bosnian Serbs from accessing more Serbian weapons. Milošević promises to stop providing weapons, fuel, and other forms of support to the Bosnian Serbs. Although the provision of assistance across the border decreases, it is clear that Milošević is still providing covert support to the Bosnian Serbs

The United States also pressures Croatian President Franjo Tuđman to cut off support for the Bosnian Croats and to pressure the Bosnian Croats by threatening to impose international sanctions on Croatia if their support continues. The United States also encourages European

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[95] We chose these steps because many were already under discussion, or would soon be under discussion, at this stage of the war. Additionally, all of the steps listed here were eventually carried out by NATO and the UN over the course of the conflict, although some (such as the embargo and no-fly zone) were implemented sooner, whereas others (such as the air strikes and rapid reaction force) only took place later. This suggests that these steps were feasible, that it is plausible that they could have occurred in 1992, and that NATO and the UN had the resources to carry them out. Additionally, we propose the deployment of a rapid reaction force and the commitment to deploy U.S. troops because European leaders made this a condition for NATO to conduct more-assertive air strikes. In combination with diplomatic measures, the military intervention is designed to ratchet up pressure on the warring parties to negotiate by degrading their military capabilities and access to resources while protecting civilians and providing humanitarian aid. The steps are necessary in combination: For example, the air strikes on their own would have been less effective at coercing the parties to negotiate in the absence of a well-enforced arms embargo, since the parties would have been able to replenish the stock of weapons destroyed by the air strikes.

countries with an affinity for the Croats, especially Germany, to place diplomatic pressure on Tuđman for this purpose.

Within a few days of the conference, it becomes clear that the Bosnian Serbs do not plan to comply with the London Conference agreement. Shelling of Bosnian cities (including Sarajevo) continues, and an attack on a market in Sarajevo kills more than 20 civilians, generating outrage in the international media. With U.S. leadership, the UN Security Council approves the expanded deployment of UN peacekeepers to accompany humanitarian aid convoys in early September. In the meantime, the rapid reaction force is readied so that it can deploy prior to the start of the air campaign and as a deterrent signal to the warring parties that NATO is serious about the threatened use of force. A force of 20,000 U.S. troops also begins training for the postconflict stabilization mission, a signal of the U.S. commitment to ending the war in Bosnia and achieving a postconflict peace. NATO and Western EU naval forces that have been monitoring the international embargo are authorized to halt all inbound and outbound shipping to inspect and verify cargo, using force if necessary.

Within days of the deployment of UN peacekeepers in early October, Bosnian Serb forces appear to target humanitarian convoys crossing through their territory to reach Bosniak enclaves, killing five peacekeepers and two civilian aid workers. The attack on the peacekeepers and continued shelling of cities and towns triggers the NATO intervention.

Early one morning in the first week of October, NATO aircraft take off from two U.S. aircraft carriers stationed in the Adriatic Sea and from Aviano Air Base in Italy, striking Bosnian Serb artillery positions around Sarajevo. A rapid reaction force artillery group provides support by firing on Bosnian Serb artillery positions. NATO and UN officials hold a joint press conference later that afternoon demanding that the Bosnian Serbs lift the siege of Sarajevo and remove heavy weapons from exclusion zones around cities and towns. They make it clear that if the Bosnian Serbs do not comply with these demands, NATO air strikes will expand their targets. Bosnian Serb forces are given 72 hours to comply with these demands while the air campaign is halted. In the interim, NATO aircraft continue to fly missions to monitor the no-fly zone.

On the third day of the pause in air strikes, Bosnian Serb forces mass outside of Sarajevo and appear to be moving toward UNPROFOR forces nearby. At the same time, Bosnian Serb artillery positions begin shelling the UNPROFOR forces' position. The commander of UNPROFOR calls in NATO air strikes to provide air support, and NATO aircraft strike the Bosnian Serb forces, which are halted by the air strikes and eventually retreat to their original positions. After the 72-hour window has expired, NATO air strikes resume, this time targeting Bosnian Serb command-and-control targets, Bosnian Serb fuel supply convoys just after they have crossed the border from Serbia, headquarters and command facilities, targets related to lines of communication, and munitions dumps and arms manufacturing plants. Ongoing NATO air strikes prohibit the use of Bosnian Serb tanks and artillery by targeting fuel supply convoys and by preventing the ability of Bosnian Serb units to mass, move, and communicate. Lacking sufficient fuel and unable to receive orders, Bosnian Serb heavy weapons begin to suffer higher rates of attrition.

Although Serb artillery and forces are suffering from attrition, the Serbs refuse to come to the negotiating table. The Bosnian Serbs still hold about 70 percent of Bosnia's territory, and negotiating could mean conceding some of this territory. Additionally, because this territory is still ethnically mixed, it would "be impossible to separate and consolidate ethnic groups with-

out widespread population shifts, otherwise known as the war crime of ethnic cleansing."[96] Ethnic mixing would complicate a potential federal settlement. Although Serb forces are relatively fragmented, they continue to launch offensives and engage in skirmishes with NATO ground troops, leading to several NATO casualties.

The United States and NATO are forced to reconsider their approach when the air campaign does not coerce Serb forces into surrendering right away and NATO begins to experience casualties. Although Serb forces are largely in defensive positions because their attrition rate, they are still unwilling to submit to a cease-fire and negotiations without conditions. The Bush administration receives unfavorable press because NATO forces are seen as losing, and pundits publicly worry about getting bogged down in a Vietnam-style intervention without an exit strategy. Bush administration officials worry that the president has already received too much negative attention for his focus on foreign policy. Likewise, several NATO members who have contributed troops express reservations about continuing a strategy that will lead to more casualties. Other NATO members, including France, express resolve and a determination to continue the intervention. In November 1992, Clinton wins the presidential election, and the Bush administration becomes a lame-duck administration.

In response to the on-the-ground stalemate, U.S. and NATO leadership decide to escalate their efforts along several fronts, with a strategy of coercing Serb leaders into a willingness to negotiate a political settlement by creating a dynamic whereby Serb forces are losing territory and experiencing incapacitating attrition rates. The United States works with European leadership to intensify the sanctions on Serbia to escalate pressure on Milošević. The United States also moves up its deployment schedule, deploying U.S. forces as part of an UNPROFOR rapid reaction force that, with close air support from NATO, is authorized to engage Bosnian Serb forces as long as they remain within the demilitarized zones established at the London Conference. The Bush administration also commits additional U.S. forces to the UNPROFOR rapid reaction force. These forces do not coordinate with the Bosnians and Croatians directly; however, working in tacit coordination with U.S. and UN forces, Bosnian and Croatian forces begin an offensive to take back additional territory held by Serb forces. Pinned down by NATO air strikes, Serb mobility is significantly impaired, facilitating the Bosnian and Croatian ground advance.

Serb forces continue to skirmish with UNPROFOR forces, even though they are significantly eroded. As a result of several of these skirmishes and one friendly fire incident, the United States sustains 11 battle casualties from its ground forces. The casualties provoke a widening negative backlash among the U.S. public as civilians see images from the fighting on the nightly news. Public opinion creates pressure for the United States to withdraw, but the Bush administration decides to keep U.S. forces in place, at least until Clinton takes office.

Under these conditions, Bosnian Serb leaders' resolve to continue fighting is substantially eroded by early 1993, within a few months of the deployment of the rapid reaction force. They realize that they are unable to continue the fight as long as the air strikes continue and that attrition is closing off their potential paths to battlefield victory. If they agree to negotiate now, they might at least be able to retain a significant amount of the territory they have seized militarily. Bosnian Serb leaders therefore decide to accept the UN's offer to host negotiations in order to preserve their gains. The Bosniaks agree to negotiations because they have already lost

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[96] Howard, 2015, p. 725.

a great deal of territory and have few military resources at their disposal to begin with, making it very costly to continue the fight. The Bosnian Croats accept negotiations because they might be able to take back some of the territory lost to Bosnian Serb forces. Additionally, pressure placed on both the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats by their outside patrons makes it clear that it will be difficult to replenish troops or equipment from Serbia and Croatia, respectively. Serbia and Croatia might attempt to continue providing them covert support, but NATO air strikes could target convoys, and such support will have to be smaller in size to avoid detection.

Once all sides have agreed to a cease-fire and negotiations, leaders from all three warring parties travel to Geneva to participate in negotiations. UNPROFOR and rapid reaction forces are deployed along the front lines of the war to monitor and verify the cease-fire as the negotiations continue to prevent any side from using the cease-fire to recover and continue fighting. NATO aircraft continue to monitor the military no-fly zone and continue reconnaissance missions to determine that forces on the ground are staying in place. Additionally, Bosnian Serb forces remove artillery from exclusion zones surrounding cities and towns, and UN observers are deployed to monitor them. There are no major violations of the cease-fire lines, but minor skirmishing breaks out at one point when Bosnian Serb forces fire at nearby UNPROFOR forces. The skirmishing appears to be the result of a failure of command and control rather than a deliberate violation of the cease-fire. NATO carries out symbolic air strikes on a Bosnian Serb airfield, striking the runway. Cease-fire violations end after the retaliatory strike.

In Geneva, UN officials present a peace plan that consists of decentralized, ethnically based cantons or republics, united by a weak central government delineated by ethnically based power-sharing, similar to the Vance-Owen plan and others proposed over the course of the conflict. Under the terms of the agreement, the republics have authority over most governance functions, including policing, while the authority of the federal government is limited to foreign policy. The settlement allows for the right of return for refugees and the internally displaced. The parties negotiate over the division of territory among the three ethnic groups and eventually agree to a peace deal along these lines. Bosnian Serbs enter the negotiations controlling about 70 percent of Bosnia's territory and end up with somewhere between 49 percent of Bosnia's territory, which they were accorded under the terms of the Dayton Accords, and 70 percent, which they held in August 1992. The remaining territory would be divided between the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats or be governed by a Bosniak-Croat federation, at the encouragement of the international community.[97]

Finally, once the settlement is reached, UNPROFOR and the rapid reaction forces in place rehat and become a postconflict stabilization force tasked with implementation of the terms of the negotiated agreement. The stabilization forces remain in Bosnia for several years, drawing down gradually as the agreement is implemented.

Key Actors: Counterfactual

In the counterfactual scenario, we make several assumptions about the decisions of key actors. Of course, we cannot be certain that these actors would behave the way that we suggest they would in the counterfactual scenario. In this section, we provide supporting evidence for these

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[97] This scenario reflects the types of peace proposals that were under serious consideration by early 1993 in the real-world case: The UN-backed Vance-Owen peace plan proposed dividing Bosnia into ten semiautonomous districts, united under a loose federal structure and divided roughly along ethnic lines; Thom Shanker, "Serbs Kill Vance-Owen Peace Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1993.

assumptions, using information about these actors' views and actions from the real-world events.

Milošević: The counterfactual scenario assumes that Milošević would be sufficiently incentivized to cut off support for the Bosnian Serbs and to pressure them to negotiate following the counterfactual intervention. In the real-world case, there is evidence that Milošević suffered considerably in terms of his domestic support under the international sanctions. The sanctions and pressure of international opprobrium more generally led him to publicly support the Vance-Owen peace plan in April 1993 and to pressure the Bosnian Serb leadership to do so as well, although his efforts were unsuccessful in getting the Bosnian Serb parliament to ratify the plan.[98] This level of sensitivity to sanctions even in 1993 suggests that Milošević would have sought a face-saving way to end a war when facing a NATO intervention force and would have responded to such an intervention by pressuring the Bosnian Serbs. Additionally, facing a NATO intervention force with superior military capabilities that appeared to be resolved to escalate the use of force until negotiations began changes Milošević's calculations in the counterfactual, making him more likely to pressure the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate.

Bosnian Serbs: Another key assumption is that the Bosnian Serbs would have been willing to negotiate following the counterfactual intervention in 1992. In the real-world case, analysts have argued that the Bosniak-Croat offensive over summer 1995 is an important reason that the Bosnian Serbs were willing to negotiate. The offensive took back a significant amount of territory for the Bosnian Serbs, and part of the reason they decided to negotiate in 1995 was to forestall further losses. The Bosnian Serbs controlled about 70 percent of Bosnia's territory between the opening months of the conflict and summer 1995.[99] In the counterfactual, Bosnian Serb military capabilities are significantly degraded by NATO air strikes, eroding much of the military advantage held by the Bosnian Serbs because of their access to heavy weaponry provided by Milošević and the JNA before the war began. Although they do not agree to negotiations within the opening days of the air campaign, Bosnian Serb leadership is eventually coerced into an unconditional cease-fire and negotiations after several months of fighting with degraded capabilities while pinned down by the air campaign, after seeing Bosnian and Croatian forces begin to make advances, and with pressure from Milošević to negotiate (who in turn wants sanctions removed from Serbia).

The air strikes in our counterfactual scenario have severe effects on the ability of the Bosnian Serbs to continue to fight, both by targeting them directly and by limiting their mobility, mirroring the effects of a longer-lasting military stalemate. Additionally, the gradually escalating nature of the air strikes have a coercive effect, suggesting that noncompliance would lead to the infliction of greater losses that could otherwise be avoided. Furthermore, Bosnian Serb forces did not attempt to keep fighting in 1995 after several weeks of air strikes, partly because of the Bosnian-Croat offensive that had shifted the military balance on the ground and partly because the air strikes had degraded the Bosnian Serbs' mobility and command infrastructure.[100] Finally, in the real-world scenario, Bosnian Serb forces appeared to be testing Western resolve throughout the war, acting more forcefully when it became apparent that they would not face an escalation in the intervention. For example, "[t]he Serbs were emboldened further as it became clear that the British and French regarded their UNPROFOR contingents

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[98]   Doder and Branson, 1999, pp. 178–186.

[99]   Dobbins et al., 2003, p. 88.

[100] Owen, 2000.

as virtual hostages and therefore sought to avoid provocation. . . . Had the West shown early on that harming UNPROFOR personnel was intolerable and would be punished, subsequent taking of blue-helmeted hostages by the Serbs might well have been deterred."[101] In the face of a unified, resolved international response that credibly threatens to escalate, the Bosnian Serbs are more willing to concede in order to retain some of their territorial gains through negotiations. The degradation of Bosnian Serb military capabilities and a united, resolved NATO air campaign change the strategic calculus of the Bosnian Serb leadership. In the counterfactual, Bosnian Serb leadership realize, as they did in 1995, that their paths to victory were rapidly being closed off and that negotiations could ensure that they could maintain at least some of the territory they had won. Indeed, Ambassador Zimmermann later argued that although most Bush administration officials disagreed with him at the time, "[h]ad the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met that aggression with air strikes in the summer of 1992, I believe that a negotiated result would soon have followed."[102]

Bosniaks: Bosniak interests do not change substantially in the counterfactual scenario. Given that they have already lost considerable territory to the Bosnian Serbs, have substantially weaker military capabilities, and are under pressure from the international community, Bosniak leaders engage in negotiations to end the war, just as they were willing to negotiate in late 1995.

Bosnian Croats: Like the Bosnian Serbs, the willingness of the Bosnian Croats to negotiate is also an important question. Under pressure from the Croatian government and enforcement of the embargo, the Bosnian Croats are also willing to negotiate in the counterfactual.

European leadership: Another key assumption is that European allies, especially France and the UK, would be willing to support this more-assertive, NATO-led counterfactual intervention. In the real-world scenario, disagreement between the United States and the European allies prevented a more-assertive NATO intervention until the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, when the evidence of war crimes against civilians and UNPROFOR ineptitude in defending the safe areas forced them to act. From the time that the war began in 1992 through 1995, European leaders stated that they would only agree to a more-assertive intervention if the United States would deploy its troops on the ground to help protect UNPROFOR, which they feared would be the target of Bosnian Serb retaliation. In the counterfactual scenario, NATO deploys ground troops as part of a rapid reaction force to protect UNPROFOR, and the United States commits to deploying its troops in the event that an evacuation of UNPROFOR becomes necessary (i.e., if UNPROFOR faced significant retaliation).

In 1995, France, the UK, and the Netherlands began to deploy a rapid reaction force that augmented UNPROFOR's military capabilities. This force facilitated European leaders' agreement to more-assertive air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets, since it made their troops on the ground less vulnerable to retaliation by Bosnian Serb forces. This real-world result provides support for the counterfactual scenario, in which a similar rapid reaction force in 1992 allays those concerns. Additionally, NATO air strikes on forces in violation of the agreement and NATO close air support in the counterfactual help protect UNPROFOR, lessening its vulnerability to retaliation. The international community's clear demonstration that it is willing to forcefully retaliate through air strikes and the fact that Bosnian Serb forces are signifi-

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[101] David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars," in Richard H. Ullman, ed., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996, p. 133.

[102] Zimmermann, 1996, p. xii.

cantly degraded by NATO air strikes act as deterrents to attacks on UNPROFOR. Finally, the deployment of a rapid reaction force, headed by U.S. forces, as the bombing continues provides an additional layer of protection to UNPROFOR.

Russia: In the counterfactual scenario, the United States uses diplomatic leverage to gain the tacit support of Russia for the intervention and to get Russian officials to quietly pressure Milošević to cut off the Bosnian Serbs and support negotiation efforts. In the real-world scenario, Yeltsin was constrained by Russian domestic opinion and therefore did not want to be seen as cooperating with the West's retaliation against the Bosnian Serbs by supporting an intervention. Russia supported the Serbs because, according to Clinton's recollections, Yeltsin "was under a lot of pressure at home from the ultra-nationalists" over the international community's perceived aggression toward the Bosnian Serbs.[103] However, the United States has some diplomatic leverage that it uses to gain Russian cooperation with the counterfactual intervention in 1992. Yeltsin was making considerable efforts to cooperate diplomatically with the United States in 1992, including cooperation around strategic arms reduction, nonproliferation, and other arms control measures. In June 1992, Yeltsin made a state visit to the United States, where he and Bush agreed to continue these arms control initiatives and publicly declared their support for UN humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia. In exchange, the United States pledged to provide $4.5 billion in aid to support economic reform efforts in Russia, in addition to a U.S.-Russia trade agreement, bilateral investment, and other economic measures.[104] Additionally, Russia joined the United States in 1993 to urge Karadžić to accept the Vance-Owen peace plan. Thus, in the counterfactual, Yeltsin agrees to withdraw his support from the Serbs and to privately pressure Milošević to place pressure on Bosnian Serb leaders to reach a negotiated settlement.

UN: UN officials blocked more-assertive NATO air strikes in 1994 and 1995 through the dual-key system because, like European leaders, they feared retaliation against UNPROFOR forces that were not well-armed and had a weak mandate to use force. In the counterfactual, the deployment of the rapid reaction force, the assurance of U.S. support in evacuating UNPROFOR if necessary, and deterrence against retaliation assuages these concerns. The fact that UN officials eventually gave up their dual-key authority to NATO in the real-world case suggests that they would have been persuaded to do so in the case of a 1992 intervention.

United States: Although there was little support among U.S. officials for an intervention in Bosnia in late 1992, we assume for the sake of the counterfactual that the Bush administration strongly supported the 1992 intervention and took additional action, such as rallying international support through diplomatic efforts and approaching the North Atlantic Council to get approval for NATO air strikes. We also assume that there is sufficient support from Congress for the intervention to move forward. Although this is a decisive change from the real-world scenario, it is necessary to imagine what an early intervention counterfactual would look like. Finally, we assume that the Bush administration would choose to stay the course even after U.S. forces began to sustain casualties, in part because once November 1992 elections have passed, the administration's incentives to respond to public concerns about the conflict shift.

Table B.2 summarizes the assumptions and supporting evidence for these key actors in the counterfactual scenario.

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[103] Clinton, 2005, p. 675.

[104] U.S. Department of State, "United States Relations with Russia: After the Cold War," webpage, undated.

Table B.2
Bosnia: Assumptions and Supporting Evidence for Key Actors in the Counterfactual

Actors	Interests	Actions	Supporting Evidence
Milošević	• Faced domestic opposition because of international sanctions • Additional diplomatic pressure from international community	• Cut off support for Bosnian Serbs and enforce embargo along the border • Pressure Bosnian Serbs to negotiate under UN auspices	• Domestic economic disruption because of sanctions • Supported Vance-Owen in 1993
Bosnian Serb forces	• Autonomous Serb territory within Bosnia • End the fighting to preserve some gains	• Continue fighting after London Conference in August • Agree to negotiate after October 1992 intervention degrades military capabilities and support is cut off from Serbia	• Counterfactual intervention degrades military capabilities • Appeared to be testing UN and NATO resolve • Loss of Serbian support
Bosniak forces	• Autonomous Bosniak territory or multiethnic state within Bosnia • End fighting to stop Bosnian Serb aggression	• Agree to negotiate during London Conference	• Similar to 1995
Croatian forces	• Autonomous Croat territory or Bosniak-Croat territory	• Continue fighting after London Conference in August • Agree to negotiate after October 1992 intervention and support is cut off from Croatia	• Loss of Croatian support
European leadership	• End the conflict and humanitarian fallout • Stem the flow of refugees into Western Europe • Concern for UNPROFOR troops	• Contribute to UNPROFOR and humanitarian mission • Support for more-robust 1992 intervention • Contribute to post-1995 stabilization forces	• Rapid reaction force • U.S. promise to assist in evacuation if necessary • NATO close air support for UNPROFOR
Russia	• Domestic affinity for Serbs • Diplomatic pressure from United States	• Stop overt support for Serbia and pressure Milošević to place pressure on Bosnian Serbs • Contribute to stabilization forces post-1995	• Diplomatic cooperation, including over arms control • U.S. economic aid
UN	• Delivery of humanitarian aid • Stop the fighting • Ensure safety of UNPROFOR	• Deploy UNPROFOR to protect humanitarian aid and safe areas • Agree to more-robust intervention in exchange for rapid reaction force and U.S. agreement to deploy troops if necessary	• Rapid reaction force • U.S. promise to assist in evacuation if necessary • NATO close air support as a deterrent
Bush administration	• Permanently end the fighting in Bosnia • Keep the conflict from spilling over	• Take the lead on more-robust intervention in 1992, including diplomatic activities prior to intervention to shore up the support of the international community	• Counterfactual assumes Bush administration is willing to take a leadership role and is willing to keep U.S. forces committed even after sustaining battle casualties

Key Factors: Counterfactual

In this section, we analyze how four key factors that affected the outcome in the real-world intervention would change in the counterfactual scenario.

- **Lack of consensus:** The lack of agreement between the United States and European leaders about intervention impeded the actual intervention from 1992 through Operation Deliberate Force in 1995. European leaders were concerned that a more-assertive intervention, including air strikes, would provoke retaliation by Bosnian Serb forces against their troops in UNPROFOR. UNPROFOR was lightly armed and therefore vulnerable to retaliation. However, the measures taken to protect and potentially evacuate UNPROFOR as outlined above would likely be sufficient to persuade European leaders to support a NATO-led intervention. Thus, the early lack of consensus in the real-world case would change in the counterfactual scenario because European leaders would be more likely to support a NATO-led intervention if sufficient protections were in place for UNPROFOR.

- **Consent of warring parties:** In the real-world intervention, early efforts to implement a no-fly zone and embargo without enforcement mechanisms were not effective because they did not have the consent of the warring parties. The postconflict stabilization mission, in contrast, was able to maintain the peace because it had received the consent of the warring parties through the Dayton peace process. As outlined above, the counterfactual intervention, coupled with strong diplomatic support from the United States that shifted the calculations of Milošević, Tuđman, and the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat leadership, would likely be sufficient to get the warring parties to agree to a cease-fire and negotiations by early 1993, although the Serb forces would be comparatively more determined to continue fighting in hope of holding on to a favorable balance of territory and would be less inclined to negotiate than they were in the real-world scenario.

- **Success of the Bosniak-Croat ground offensive:** The on-the-ground situation looks different in the counterfactual scenario, since there is not enough time for a unified Bosniak-Croat offensive to take shape as it actually did several years into the fighting in the real-world scenario. Although this means that the NATO air campaign would last longer and require support from ground troops in the form of a rapid reaction force, the air campaign would have a similar effect over time by both degrading Serb capabilities and pinning down Serb forces in a manner that limits their mobility, allowing Bosniak and Croatian forces to gradually make territorial gains. Shifts in the distribution of territory would place additional pressure on the Serbs to negotiate, much like these dynamics did in the real-world scenario.

- **Number and quality of troops:** A NATO-led intervention in 1992 would involve a similar number and quality of troops as did the intervention in 1995, except that the reinforcement of UNPROFOR and the deployment of the rapid reaction force would strengthen the troops on the ground during the conflict phase of the intervention. The postconflict phase would involve a similar number of troops contributed by NATO and the United States. Additionally, a similar number and quality of NATO air capabilities (for example, carefully selected targets designed to degrade the parties' capabilities and will to continue the fight) would ensure that the air strikes were sufficient to convince the warring parties, especially the Bosnian Serbs, to negotiate.

These key factors are summarized in Table B.3.

Costs of Intervention: Counterfactual

In this section, we compare the costs (and benefits) of intervention under the counterfactual scenario with the costs of the real-world intervention as described in the first half of this case study. We consider three categories of variables: (1) the costs of intervention in terms of the trajectory of the conflict itself, (2) the costs of intervention in terms of the host nation's post-conflict trajectory, and (3) the costs of intervention to the United States in economic, domestic political, reputational, and strategic terms.

Conflict

Ending the war in Bosnia three years sooner would have saved many civilian lives and prevented the further displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Estimates of the number of casualties generated by the war vary widely, and it is therefore very difficult to say with any certainty the number of casualties that would have been avoided through an earlier intervention; however, because casualties from fighting and from ethnic cleansing war crimes continued throughout the course of the conflict, it is reasonable to conclude that a significant number of casualties would have been avoided. The actual war in Bosnia generated the highest number of displaced people and refugees since World War II. By the time the Dayton Accords were signed, more than half of Bosnia's total population had been displaced: 1.3 million were internally displaced, and 1.2 million had fled as refugees to neighboring countries or to Western Europe.[105] A good deal of the displacement occurred at the beginning of the war: A July 1992 estimate suggested that nearly 600,000 people had already been internally displaced in Bosnia.

Table B.3
Bosnia: Key Factors

Factors	Real-World Case	Counterfactual
Unity among United States and European allies	• Lack of agreement early in the war: European opposition to air strikes • Unity eventually facilitated Operation Deliberate Force	• European agreement is facilitated by U.S. agreement to deploy forces to evacuate UNPROFOR if necessary, by rapid reaction force, and by U.S. diplomacy • Unity makes NATO air strikes possible
Consent of warring parties	• Lack of consent of warring parties to agreements earlier in the war • Post-1995 peace facilitated by parties' agreement to Dayton Accords	• Lack of consent of parties prior to October intervention • Late-1992 peace process facilitates consent through peace agreement
Local ground offensive	• Success of Bosnian and Croat offensive on the ground helped bring Serbs to the negotiating table	• Absence of local ground offensive increased demands on U.S. forces to bring about a ceasefire
Number and capability of forces	• Facilitated humanitarian aid delivery throughout the war (e.g., airdrops) • Facilitated effectiveness of NATO air strikes (e.g., target selection)	• Facilitates humanitarian aid delivery throughout 1992 • Facilitates effectiveness of NATO air strikes (e.g., target selection)

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[105] Kirsten Young, "UNHCR and ICRC in the Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia-Herzegovina," *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 83, No. 843, September 2001, p. 783.

Nevertheless, had the war ended in late 1992, a significant amount of displacement could have been avoided. For example, about 600,000 fewer people would have been internally displaced, assuming that displacement ended soon or immediately after the peace agreement was reached.

Under the counterfactual scenario, the conflict would likely end much sooner: in late 1992 as opposed to late 1995. The overall trajectory of the conflict would otherwise be similar. Although the settlement in 1992 would not have been identical to the Dayton Accords, the conflict overall would have likely ended in a similar arrangement of ethnically defined republics united under a loose federal system; however, because less displacement would have occurred, these republics would likely be more ethnically diverse. This arrangement reflects the peace proposals that were on the table around this time or soon after, such as the Vance-Owen plan. The conflict would proceed at the same intensity between April and October 1992 but would end approximately three years sooner. The potential for the conflict to spill over into neighboring countries would likely not change significantly, since fighting had broken out in both Slovenia and Croatia before the war in Bosnia began.

Host-Nation Trajectory

Once the conflict ends, Bosnia's trajectory in the immediate postwar years would have differed somewhat from the real-world case, primarily because, had the conflict ended in 1992 rather than 1995, ethnic cleansing would not have proceeded as far as it did in the real-world scenario. This difference makes the political solution of two loosely related, relatively ethnically "pure" federal entities more complicated.

As in post-1995 Bosnia, NATO stabilization forces would likely be able to keep the factions from fighting because of their numbers and a robust mandate, but the same coordination issues that arose post-1995 between military forces commanded by NATO and OHR, tasked with implementing the civilian elements of the settlement, would likely have been the same. Additionally, because Bosnia would be governed largely at the level of the ethnically divided republics, with little authority invested in the federal government, the same issues surrounding the success of ethnonationalists in the postconflict elections, continuing institutionalization of ethnic divisions, and difficulties in apprehending those indicted for war crimes would likely have remained.

One difference between the real-world host-nation trajectory and the counterfactual trajectory would be refugee and IDP return: In the counterfactual, there are fewer refugees and IDPs but still a significant number. Although resettlement is always complicated, having a smaller number of refugees would have eased this process somewhat. Because fewer refugees and IDPs would have been generated by the end of 1992, returning refugees and IDPs to their homes would be less difficult.

On the other hand, because so much displacement had already occurred by summer 1992, returning refugees and IDPs to their communities might still prove difficult given that many would be returning to areas where they were now in the ethnic minority and could face violence or discrimination as a result. As occurred after the Dayton Accords in 1995, some ethnic cleansing and localized violence against ethnic minorities would still occur even after the settlement had been reached. Overall, quality of life indicators in Bosnia in the immediate postwar context would likely be similar.

Additionally, the ethnic diversity of local areas would have been higher at the end of the war in the counterfactual scenario. This would significantly complicate efforts to find a

political settlement agreeable to all sides. The plans generated by the international community revolved largely around an ethnic division of territory. During the Dayton negotiations, according to several witnesses, the parties "were obsessed with the map and the status of Brcko, and did not focus on the constitution or the governing structures it would create."[106] Rather than the two large federal entities that emerged through the Dayton negotiations, the political settlement in the counterfactual scenario would consist of smaller ethnically defined entities or cantons. Because these entities are more ethnically heterogeneous, there could be more intercommunal violence following the political settlement. However, the presence of NATO ground forces after the settlement is reached would help to quell this localized violence.

A more ethnically mixed political entity could also lead to a better long-term political outcome for the Bosnian state. In the real-world scenario, the Dayton Accords institutionalized the two main political entities along ethnic lines and created a rigid system of *ethnocratic* governance, with most political offices allotted by ethnic quota. This system has encouraged the development of patronage networks and corruption and has calcified ethnic divisions.[107] Bosnia is not even able to join the EU today in part because the constitution and institutions of the state are considered discriminatory: Bosnian citizens who are not ethnically Serb, Muslim, or Croat cannot run for higher office, for example, and political competition is organized along ethnic lines.[108] A more ethnically mixed Bosnia made up of smaller cantons could have a more democratic outcome in the long run.

United States

The costs of the counterfactual intervention would likely be larger than the real-world intervention, considering economic and other costs. In the actual intervention, the bulk of the economic costs for the United States (just over $13 billion) were related to contributions to the postconflict stabilization mission, whereas about $1.7 billion was spent on other Bosnia-related operations, including humanitarian relief, the maritime embargo, and air support between 1992 and 1995. In the counterfactual scenario, the duration of the kinetic component of the intervention would have been significantly shorter (a few months versus several years). Even if it took longer for Serb forces to agree to negotiate than it did in the real-world scenario once Operation Deliberate Force had begun, the economic costs of U.S. contributions to the NATO naval embargo monitoring force and the air campaign would have been smaller. However, the fighting in which the United States engaged in the counterfactual scenarios would have been more intense, with this higher tempo increasing the daily costs of operations.

The duration of the U.S. postconflict commitment would be shorter, however. Postconflict Bosnia would likely have been able to reach key milestones, such as the resettlement of refugees and displaced people, more quickly, requiring a shorter international presence. The NATO stabilization force would have more quickly changed over to an EU force, as it actually did in 2004, for this reason. Thus, the economic costs for the United States would have been smaller in the counterfactual scenario.

Perhaps most notably, the counterfactual scenario would be costlier to the United States in terms of military casualties. The sustained kinetic fighting would also take its toll on U.S.

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[106] Howard, 2015, p. 727.

[107] Patrice C. McMahon and Jon Western, "The Death of Dayton: How to Stop Bosnia from Falling Apart," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 5, September/October 2009, p. 73.

[108] Howard, 2015, p. 727.

public support, leaving the public even less inclined to support interventionist policies or a sustained focus on foreign policy issues than it was in the real-world case, which could have affected U.S. foreign policy over the remainder of the Clinton administration.

Even in the real-world scenario, the U.S. public in late 1992 was not particularly inclined to reward the Bush administration for its foreign policy successes. President Bush lost reelection in 1992 in spite of his administration's conduct through the 1991 Gulf War, which was viewed overwhelmingly as successful. Analysts have suggested that the U.S. public believed that the Bush administration was too preoccupied with foreign policy and that more of its time and resources should be devoted to domestic policy, particularly the economy, now that the Cold War had ended.[109] Additionally, in the real-world case, U.S. public support for sending ground forces to Bosnia remained low throughout the conflict: Even right after the Dayton Accord was signed, only 36 percent of Americans supported sending troops to Bosnia. It is difficult to imagine significantly higher levels of support among the American public for U.S. involvement in an intervention in Bosnia in 1992, even in the counterfactual scenario (in which the intervention is successful in ending the war), because of the ascendance of anti-interventionist sentiment and U.S. battle casualties sustained. It is possible that if the intervention had strong bipartisan support in Congress, the public would have expressed greater support for an earlier intervention, but even that response is likely to have been muted, given the context and lack of a direct threat to the United States.[110] Therefore, on balance, the counterfactual intervention would have had domestic political implications in the United States, but these pressures would only intensify existing sentiment, rather than pushing in a different causal direction.[111]

However, the counterfactual intervention would have had a more positive effect on the U.S. reputational and strategic situation. The U.S. reputation as a global leader that stood up for democracy and human rights and as the preeminent military power in the world was tarnished as the war wore on and the international community was unable to end the conflict. The 1992 counterfactual intervention would have prevented much of this reputational fallout from 1993 through 1995, although the successful NATO air strikes in late 1995 did much to reverse the tide of reputational damage.

The ongoing conflict in Bosnia in the real-world case also led to strategic costs for the United States. The counterfactual intervention in 1992 would have staved off the divisions that emerged within NATO from 1993 through 1995 as NATO leaders were unable to agree on a coherent policy toward Bosnia that could end the fighting. The counterfactual intervention proposed here would revitalize NATO earlier in the 1990s, allowing the organization to find a role more quickly in the post–Cold War world. A more resolute and more robust diplomatic response by the United States earlier in the conflict, as described in the counterfactual scenario, would have united NATO sooner and restored U.S. leadership within NATO. Avoiding tensions within NATO and restoring U.S. leadership would have allowed the U.S. administration to work toward other strategic priorities, such as NATO expansion, from an earlier date.

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[109] Halberstam, 2001, p. 139.

[110] Adam J. Berinsky, *In a Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq*, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

[111] Chollet, 2005, p. xi.

Note on the Outcome

The positive outcome of the counterfactual crucially depends on the counterfactual intervention successfully coercing Milošević, Tuđman, and the Bosnian Serbs and Croats to negotiate a political settlement. In the counterfactual, the pressure brought to bear on Milošević by Russian diplomatic pressure and international sanctions makes Milošević willing to pressure the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate; likewise, pressure from European states and the threat of international sanctions brings the Bosnia Croats to the negotiating table. Additionally, the Bosnian Serbs' military capabilities would be eroded by the NATO air campaign, making them more willing to negotiate.

However, some might conclude that the counterfactual intervention would not be sufficient to generate this outcome. In the case of a robust NATO and U.S. intervention in late 1992, it would be possible for the Bosnian Serb forces to continue fighting by breaking into smaller units and using the mountainous and forested terrain of Bosnia to seek cover from air strikes, rather than agreeing to a cease-fire and peace negotiations. Bush's Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger cited this possibility as a reason he thought that international intervention would not be successful in ending the war.[112] Additionally, in the real-world case, exhaustion from fighting for several years in what amounted to a military stalemate likely played a role in getting the Bosnian Serbs to allow Milošević to negotiate on their behalf in Dayton. This fatigue might not exist to a sufficient degree in late 1992 to erode the Bosnian Serbs' will to continue fighting. Finally, because of a lack of intelligence about the positioning of artillery and armored vehicles on the ground and because of Bosnia's mountainous and forested terrain, it might be difficult for air strikes to reach enough targets to significantly degrade the Bosnian Serbs' superior capabilities if Bosnian Serb forces were able to hide them successfully.

In this case, the fighting would likely continue for several months, if not years. The rapid reaction forces and UN peacekeepers would suffer significant numbers of casualties and would eventually be forced to withdraw as they continue to take casualties without seeing any sort of improvement in the conditions on the ground. Ethnic cleansing and atrocities against civilians would continue, and many more civilians would die without access to the humanitarian aid that UN convoys had provided. The fighting would continue until the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats reach a stalemate on the ground, effectively dividing Bosnia up between Serbia and Croatia.

This outcome would be worse for the host country and for the United States than the real-world scenario or the counterfactual outlined above. The conflict would be more violent and would have higher casualties because of fighting and atrocities committed against civilians. There would be a higher number of refugees fleeing the country into central and Western Europe and more IDPs. Bosniaks would be forced to live in enclaves within Serbia and Croatia and would be subject to considerable discrimination and violence, with little ability to defend themselves. The United States and NATO would suffer considerably in terms of reputational costs. The United States would be seen as allowing a genocide to happen on the periphery of Europe on its watch and as having stood by while Serbia and Croatia seized territory by force in contravention of international laws and norms. NATO's reputation would suffer considerably, since the alliance would be seen as having lost to militarily inferior forces. NATO would

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[112] Halberstam, 2001, p. 136.

be seen as purposeless in a post–Cold War world. Thus, in this negative outcome, the United States and the host country would suffer considerably higher costs from an early intervention as compared with waiting to intervene until the warring parties and their supporters had sufficiently exhausted themselves and international sanctions had time to create sufficient pressure on Milošević and other actors.

Conclusion

We have assessed what an earlier counterfactual intervention might have looked like in Bosnia, analyzing how the counterfactual intervention might have altered the outcome and changed the costs and benefits of an earlier intervention for the United States. We outlined a more robust and more assertive counterfactual intervention that could have occurred in late 1992 and that is successful in ending the war sooner. In short, as compared with the real-world scenario, the counterfactual intervention would not fundamentally shift the overall trajectory of the conflict or postconflict recovery, except to end the conflict sooner, with fewer civilian casualties and far less displacement. The United States would suffer less in terms of reputational loss and would gain some strategic ground (demonstrating the continued relevance and abilities of NATO along with U.S. international leadership and avoiding politically acrimonious debates with European allies about intervention), but the United States would suffer greater domestic political costs than in the real-world intervention. Economic costs would likely be similar, but U.S. military casualties would increase. The trade-offs for the United States would therefore involve weighing reduced strategic and reputational costs, in addition to the number of Bosnian lives saved, against increased direct costs for the United States and its partners.

The earlier counterfactual intervention that led to peace would have been advantageous to most other parties. European leaders also would have benefited reputationally by demonstrating their ability to deal with European problems with the assistance of NATO and the UN. An earlier intervention would have stemmed the tide of refugees flowing into Western Europe from Bosnia more quickly. Russia's interests would not have changed significantly: Although appearing to support the intervention might have led to a decline in domestic support, such a decline could have been partly offset by increased economic aid and offers of cooperation from the United States and Europe. Additionally, in the real-world case, Russia did not veto intervention at the UN Security Council and even contributed troops to the postconflict stabilization forces, so it is unlikely that there would be a significant difference in Russian domestic opinion as compared with the real-world case.

Ironically, the warring parties might also have been better off along some dimensions had the intervention occurred sooner. The Bosniaks would have ended up with less territory in the final agreement, but the atrocities being committed against Bosniak civilians would have ended sooner and events such as the massacre in Srebrenica would likely have been avoided entirely. The Bosnian Serb forces would have had less of an opportunity to use ethnic cleansing to consolidate authority over the territory that they had captured, but they would also likely have received a larger share of territory in the settlement than they did in 1995 because they would have controlled more territory when the intervention began. The Bosnian Croats would end up with an autonomous territory within Bosnia rather than sharing territory with the Bosniaks (as they did under the terms of the Dayton accords), which would likely be seen as a benefit from the perspective of Bosnian Croat leadership, although this territory would likely be less ethnically homogenous than their leadership had hoped.

Thus, although it is easier to judge in hindsight than it would have been for policymakers situated in 1992, an early intervention that was sufficiently robust to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table would have left most parties better off or about the same in comparison with the real-world scenario, excepting the higher direct costs borne by the United States, which were mitigated by intervening later in the historical case. From the beginning of the war, the international community committed to a low level of intervention without following through with sufficient military force and political resolve. As a result, the international community suffered reputational and strategic losses even as it gradually escalated the intervention over the course of more than three years. Of course, policymakers who decided not to intervene more forcefully in 1992 could not have known that they would end up escalating the intervention over the course of the subsequent years. But policymakers could have considered the costs that a delayed intervention would incur over time more carefully.

The war in Bosnia has a few features that differentiate it from other cases in terms of the costs of intervening. Having significant NATO assets already in place in the region, including the Aviano Air Base in Italy, facilitated the intervention. The United States was also closely allied with many countries in the region, which facilitated cooperation. U.S. participation in an intervention where there are not as many military bases or allies in the immediate region would significantly raise the costs of intervention, since it would be more logistically challenging to move U.S. personnel and equipment into theater. Additionally, the immediate post–Cold War environment was unusual historically in that it presaged a shift in international norms toward humanitarian intervention as an important foreign policy concern. In the real-world case, although the United States and European allies disagreed about what measures should be taken in Bosnia, they agreed on a fundamental level that the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia was of concern to the international community and that the international community should therefore do something about it. This shared concern about the humanitarian implications of the conflict eventually facilitated Operation Deliberate Force. However, differing perspectives regarding which conflicts pose a strategic threat to U.S. and allied interests and regarding when the use of force is appropriate could generate more disunity in other crisis situations.[113]

The context of the crisis itself likely would have made early intervention advantageous in this case. Because war crimes were ongoing throughout the conflict, ending it sooner would have prevented atrocities against civilians from being committed. Furthermore, ending the conflict sooner would have prevented ethnic cleansing from continuing, leaving territory that would be relatively more ethnically diverse. Early intervention would also have been advantageous in this case because the international community in the real-world scenario made a clear statement about its preferred outcome and chose to back up these preferences with weak intervention commitments. Because these commitments incurred reputational costs but were too weak to end the fighting, the international community ended up gradually escalating the level of intervention over time, from impartial monitoring, to enforcement of the embargo and a no-fly zone, to coercive air strikes.

Of course, much of this context is more apparent in retrospect, after the 1995 intervention and Dayton Accords demonstrated that a negotiated settlement following a robust NATO intervention was possible. In 1992, there was more uncertainty about the capabilities of the warring parties and how an intervention would affect their willingness to negotiate. An earlier

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[113] Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.

intervention would also have sustained greater costs for the United States and its allies, even as Bosnian lives were saved; although we assume otherwise for the purposes of this analysis, U.S. policymakers might have been unwilling to pay these costs in 1992. Nevertheless, the case demonstrates that when the United States and its allies make a clear statement about their preferred outcome while only committing to a partial or gradually escalating intervention, they should consider the full balance of potential costs of delaying intervention. Delaying intervention can have reputational and strategic costs outside of the costs involved with the conflict continuing, even if these delays might make the actual conduct of the intervention easier if the situation on the ground shifts in the interim.

Iran, 1979

Introduction

In this case study, we analyze the costs for the United States of not intervening in the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 that overthrew the Shah and installed an anti-Western conservative religious regime. We begin by briefly describing the real-world scenario, explaining why the United States did not intervene militarily in the crisis and the costs and benefits of the real-world outcome to the United States in terms of economic, strategic, reputational, and domestic-political factors. We also give an overview of the key actors in the crisis and their interests. Next, we outline the proposed counterfactual scenario, in which the United States encourages the Iranian military to implement a coup in November 1978 and intervenes to support the military government by deploying the 82nd Airborne and a marine expeditionary unit to assist with guarding oil installations in the south, moving carrier strike groups into the Indian Ocean, sending U.S. aircraft to air bases in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and deploying marines and helicopters to oversee the evacuation of the remaining U.S. citizens and embassy personnel. We then outline how the interests and behavior of the key actors would change under this counterfactual scenario and review the key factors that would affect the outcome of the proposed counterfactual. Finally, we present the costs and benefits to the United States of the counterfactual intervention, comparing them with the costs and benefits of the real-world scenario as outlined at the beginning of the case study.

On January 16, 1979, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran who had ruled since 1941, fled the country. He died of lymphatic cancer less than two years later, in July 1980, after seeking treatment in the United States. The Iranian Revolution, which took most western observers by surprise, began in January 1978 when protests in the Shi'ia holy city of Qom erupted after an article critical of the popular exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was published in a conservative newspaper. Police fired on the protestors, killing about 20. Over the course of 1978, the protest movement grew and spread across the country. By August, the protests had grown into rallies of hundreds of thousands of people. By late 1978, Iran was essentially immobilized by strikes and massive protests.[1] Although the protests began among conservative religious followers of Khomeini, they began to attract more-widespread support from the merchant class and major landowners, students, and other organized opposition groups.[2] After June 1978, when the urban poor began to join the demonstrations (spurred by inflation

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[1]   Although this article is often cited as the spark that set off the revolution, experts typically point to other, broader forces that facilitated the revolution: an inflation crisis and the regime's economic and political reform efforts. First, rampant inflation beginning in the early 1970s led the regime to blame the business community and to place strict controls on shopkeepers and small businesses. This led many business owners and members of the middle class to resent the regime and to look more favorably on the opposition. Second, the Shah began to implement a series of far-reaching economic, political, and social modernization efforts in 1963 known as the White Revolution, including the enfranchisement of women and land reform. These efforts generated considerable antagonism toward the Shah among the clergy and landed elites, motivating their participation in the revolution. Finally, the Carter administration came into office in 1977 with a human rights agenda. In response, seeking to maintain his special relationship with the United States, the Shah engaged in a few relatively small efforts at political reform, including allowing media criticism of the secret police, releasing political prisoners, and relaxing police controls. These reforms encouraged opposition groups to organize and to become more vocal in their criticism of the regime. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 496–529.

[2]   Steven R. Ward*, Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

and an ensuing economic recession), participation in protests rose from the tens of thousands to the hundreds of thousands and even the millions.[3]

As late as October 1978, U.S. officials believed that the Shah would be able to successfully put down the protests because the Iranian intelligence services had cracked down on opposition movements in the 1960s and early 1970s. But the Shah's tepid response to the protests was not sufficient to quell the revolution as it spread. Caught between hard-liners in the military leadership (who urged a violent crackdown on protestors) and the U.S. administration and others (who encouraged political reforms to appease the protestors), the Shah struck a middle path, introducing limited political reforms while refusing to give up a significant amount of his power, especially his control over the military. Although he discussed the option many times with U.S. officials and with his military leadership, the Shah also refused to allow the military, the one institution that remained staunchly loyal to the Shah throughout the revolution, to engage in a violent crackdown. Instead, he chastised military leadership and ordered security forces not to fire on protestors after 87 protestors were killed and 205 wounded in September 1978 by the military in Jaleh Square after martial law had been declared, an event known as Black Friday.[4]

The Shah appointed several new governments in close succession in an attempt to appease the protestors and restore law and order. He appointed Jafar Sharif-Emami, a former prime minister with ties to the clergy, to the post of prime minister in August 1978. Sharif-Emami's government instituted several reforms as concessions to the protestors, including legalizing political parties and releasing political prisoners, but the protests and strikes continued unabated. On November 6, the Shah appointed General Gholam-Reza Azhari as prime minister. Although his government was referred to as a military government, the majority of cabinet positions in practice were held by civilians. The protests subsided for a few weeks, but once the opposition realized that the Shah would restrain the military government from cracking down on protestors, the protests resumed in full force. By late 1978, the Shah attempted to negotiate with the opposition over the terms of a constitutional monarchy. However, most leaders of the opposition refused to negotiate with him, instead demanding that the Shah abdicate and leave the country. On December 28, the Shah reached an agreement with Shahpour Bakhtiar, a leader in the opposition National Front party: Bakhtiar agreed that he would form a government to replace the military government; in return, the Shah would leave the country.[5]

On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, who had become an important symbol of the revolution and had attracted widespread support from his exile in Iraq and (later) in France, returned to Iran and was greeted by crowds of millions.[6] Within ten days of his return and after fighting among the military, military defectors, and armed revolutionaries, Iran's military leadership declared that the military would subsequently remain neutral and withdrew to the barracks, the Bakhtiar government fell, and Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan to head an interim government.[7] In April 1979, 98.2 percent of voters approved the establishment of an

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[3]   Abrahamian, 1982, p. 510.

[4]   Abrahamian, 1982, p. 516.

[5]   Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

[6]   Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution," *Radical History Review*, No. 105, Fall 2009.

[7]   Abrahamian, 2009.

Islamic republic. In August 1979, Khomeini's followers won a majority of seats in the Assembly of Experts, which was tasked with drafting a new constitution. The constitution, which "was a product of Khomeini's concept of Islamic government and reflected the clerical domination of the Assembly of Experts and the levers of power," was adopted by referendum in December.[8] Over the next two years, the various factions of the opposition fought for authority, but Khomeini's fundamentalist Islamic regime had consolidated its authority over Iran by about 1983.

The Iranian Revolution had far-reaching consequences for the region and for U.S. foreign policy. Khomeini's regime replaced a long-standing ally of the United States with an oppositional regime that took U.S. embassy staff hostage and has since played an antagonistic role toward U.S. allies and policy preferences in the region. Furthermore, because the Shah's regime was at the center of U.S. strategy in the Middle East, his downfall triggered a fundamental rethinking of U.S. posture and strategy in the region. The Iranian Revolution, alongside other events around that time, including the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, led to the creation of U.S. Central Command, the buildup of U.S. military assets in the region, and the increased security assistance to regional allies that has been central to U.S. policy in the Middle East through the present day.[9]

The U.S. response to the Iranian Revolution was also restrained. Because of widespread intelligence failures, U.S. officials were not even aware of the severity of the crisis until late 1978, at which point some potential policy responses had already been closed off. The Carter administration was also hindered by a division among senior officials about how the United States should respond to the revolution, with some in the National Security Council (NSC) and DoD advocating for a military crackdown, while others at the State Department and the U.S. embassy in Tehran pushed for support for a transition to a moderate opposition government. The Carter administration repeatedly expressed support for the Shah and whatever policy he decided on without recommending any particular option. In January 1979, when it became apparent that the Shah would have to leave, the administration sent General Robert E. Huyser as an envoy to meet directly with senior Iranian military leadership. Although Huyser helped the Iranian military leadership develop contingency plans to be implemented if the Bakhtiar government fell, the plans were never carried out, and Huyser departed in late January before Khomeini's return.[10] At the same time, the U.S. ambassador to Tehran, William H. Sullivan, disagreed strongly with the administration's policies and began to freelance by meeting with members of the opposition without prior White House approval.[11]

In this case study, we outline a counterfactual in which the Carter administration encourages senior Iranian military officers to carry out a coup and instate a military government with the Shah remaining as a figurehead. Our proposed counterfactual scenario begins in November 1978, when the military government had failed to suppress widespread strikes and protests that paralyzed the country.

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[8]   Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 1984, p. 88.

[9]   Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

[10]   Robert E. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran,* New York: Harper and Row, 1986.

[11]   William H. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, New York: Norton, 1981. For more first-person accounts of the Carter administration's response to the Iranian Revolution, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983; Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran*, New York: Random House, 1985; and Vance, 1983.

Real-World Case: U.S. Policy Toward Iran

In this section, we review the real-world scenario, analyzing U.S. interests in Iran, why there was no U.S. intervention, and the costs of the revolution for the United States in the absence of intervention. As we discuss later, U.S. officials considered providing support to an Iranian military coup to replace the Shah's regime in December 1978 or January 1979 and discussed potential intervention measures, such as moving a carrier strike group nearby. However, U.S. policymakers did not seriously considered putting U.S. forces on the ground in Iran in support of a potential coup

U.S. Strategic Interests

The Shah's Iran was the cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Middle East region. After the end of World War II, the U.S. strategic interests in the region were supporting pro-Western governments, maintaining access to oil, and limiting the expansion of Soviet influence.[12] The Nixon administration's "twin pillars" policy identified Iran and Saudi Arabia as the two states that would maintain regional stability and represent U.S. interests in the region. The strategy entailed encouraging Iran and Saudi Arabia to invest in a significant military expansion so that they would be able to defend themselves and so that the United States could play an off-shore role rather than building bases or stationing assets in the region. As a result, the United States sold $8.3 billion in weapons to Iran between 1973 and 1976, making Iran the largest purchaser of U.S.-manufactured weapons at the time.[13] Additionally, the United States stationed thousands of military personnel and civilian advisers in Iran as part of the Military Assistance Advisory Group to help train and expand the Iranian military and intelligence services. Although the Carter administration attempted to reduce U.S. weapons sales elsewhere, the administration continued to approve large purchases by the Shah's Iran, including the controversial approval of the sale of seven Airborne Warning and Control Systems in May 1977.[14] U.S. officials were concerned with preventing sensitive military technology and intelligence from falling into unfriendly hands because of the Iranian military's technologically advanced weapons that were purchased from the United States and the presence of U.S. intelligence stations in Iran.[15]

In addition to its role in ensuring regional stability, U.S. officials saw Iran as a key bulwark against the expansion of Soviet influence in the region and as an important source of intelligence on Soviet rocket and missile facilities in the Soviet Central Asia.[16] Instability in Iran also concerned the administration because it appeared to provide an opportunity for Soviet interference: President Jimmy Carter's repeated warnings to President Leonid Brezhnev not to intervene in Iran during the crisis were an indicator of the severity of this concern.[17] Iran produced 10 percent of the world's oil production prior to the revolution and played an important role in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). U.S. officials

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[12]   Edward J. Marolda and Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War*, Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1998, p. 9.

[13]   Leslie M. Pryor, "Arms and the Shah," *Foreign Policy*, No. 31, Summer 1978.

[14]   Sick, 1985, pp. 25–27.

[15]   Vance, 1983, p. 342.

[16]   Sullivan, 1981, p. 99.

[17]   Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 1995, p. 449.

therefore worried that instability in Iran could cause a significant jump in global oil prices. Finally, U.S. officials were concerned about protecting the safety of U.S. citizens in Iran.[18]

Why Was There No U.S. Intervention?

U.S. officials did not seriously consider U.S. intervention in Iran during the revolution, although a few contingency options, including readying U.S. troops to occupy the southern oil fields and sending a carrier strike group to the Indian Ocean, were discussed at the margins. The Carter administration seriously considered the option of supporting an Iranian military coup but ultimately decided to support Bakhtiar's opposition government.

The administration was divided between two internal factions in late 1978 and January 1979 over how the United States should respond to the Iranian Revolution. One side, led by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski with support from Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and others, strongly supported "pressing the Shah hard to impose a firm military regime."[19] They believed that a military government (or, if the Shah was reluctant to impose one, a military coup) would be able to successfully restore law and order and break the strikes. They proposed that, once order had been restored, a military government could transition to a civilian government. Brzezinski also advocated for military measures that the United States could take to provide support to the regime: In early December 1978, Brzezinski "requested the Defense Department to initiate contingency plans for the deployment of U.S. forces, if necessary, in southern Iran so as to secure the oil fields."[20]

On the other side, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, U.S. Ambassador to Tehran William Sullivan, and other State Department officials, as well as Vice President Walter Mondale, advocated for a transition to a moderate opposition government. They opposed deeper military involvement in the government, arguing that the Iranian military had been discredited by its failure to appropriately manage the demonstrations. Instead, they thought that the military could be encouraged to reach some sort of accommodation with the moderate opposition. Sullivan pushed for U.S. officials to reach out directly to the opposition, including to Khomeini, to facilitate such negotiations. Vance later wrote that

> [p]ressures from the White House to encourage the shah to use the army to smash the opposition were becoming intense. I shared the judgement of Sullivan and my other advisers on Iran that such a move would be wrong, because it was likely to lead to disintegration of the army, which was more than 50 percent conscript. Still, I did not believe that we should abandon the shah or promote an arrangement between the generals and the religious hard-liners while there was still a chance that the shah might succeed in reaching an agreement with responsible members of the opposition on an orderly transition to a constitutional monarchy.[21]

This faction believed that a military coup and ensuing crackdown would generate large numbers of civilian casualties and that support for a crackdown would damage the subsequent

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[18]   Vance, 1983, p. 342.

[19]   Brzezinski, 1983, p. 371.

[20]   Brzezinski, 1983, p. 372.

[21]   Vance, 1983, p. 330.

U.S. relationship with the opposition government that would inevitably follow the Shah.[22] As early as November 9, 1978, Sullivan wrote a cable entitled "Thinking the Unthinkable" arguing that the United States should start planning its approach to a post-Shah Iran. Sullivan suggested that most of the senior military leadership should leave the country and that a younger generation of military leaders and the religious opposition could then reach an accommodation to write a constitution and form a new government.[23]

The struggle between these two factions impeded the White House from producing a more effective response to the Iranian Revolution. Carter chose a middle path between these two options, reassuring the Shah that the United States would support his decisions regardless of which direction he chose but refusing to weigh in on which option they would prefer, even after the Shah asked Sullivan and other U.S. officials repeatedly for their recommendation. Exemplifying this policy, Carter stated in a November 1978 interview, "We have made it clear . . . we support the Shah and support the present government, recognizing that we don't have any control over the decisions ultimately made by the Iranian people."[24]

Iranian officials also received contradictory messages from different senior members of the Carter administration, which appears to have heightened the Shah's indecision. The Shah later reflected in his memoirs that

> [t]he messages I received from the United States while all this was going on continued to be confusing and contradictory. Secretary of State Vance issued a statement endorsing my efforts to restore calm and encouraging the liberalization program. Such Herculean fantasies left me stunned. . . . Brzezinski, at least has his priorities straight. He called me in early November to urge that I establish law and order first, and only then continue our democratization program.[25]

According to Sullivan, however, during their frequent meetings in late 1978, the Shah

> often indicated that he had considered the use of the military option and rejected it. He felt he could suppress political dissidence by force and keep it suppressed so long as he was personally on the throne. But then . . . he said he would probably be turning over authority to his son, the crown prince, in the course of the next few years, and after his departure from the scene the young man would not be able to continue to rule by military force.[26]

Thus, although the Shah might have rejected the military option even with the strong encouragement and backing of U.S. officials, the mixed messages he was receiving from U.S. officials almost certainly did not make him more likely to select the military crackdown option.

By late December, most Carter administration officials on both sides of the debate had accepted that the Shah would not be able to remain in the country. In early January 1979, the administration sent Huyser, who was then serving as Deputy Commander of U.S. Forces in

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[22] Vance, 1983, p. 332.

[23] Sullivan, 1981, p. 202.

[24] Quoted in Brzezinski, 1983, p. 354.

[25] Quoted in Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution," *State, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Spring 1985, p. 12.

[26] Sullivan, 1981, p. 167.

Europe and had personal ties with the Iranian military leadership, on a secret mission to Iran to assess the state of Iran's military. Beyond this mission, Huyser's goals in Iran were muddied by the paralysis within the administration. General Alexander Haig, the Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe, later reflected that Huyser's "mission was murky. Subsequent conversations with officials in the White House suggested that his purpose was to make a military coup. This impression, however, was contradicted by other officials at State."[27] Despite events on the ground, the administration hoped that the Bakhtiar government could succeed: Carter later recounted in his memoirs that "[d]uring the early days of January 1979, it seemed possible for Bakhtiar to succeed in establishing a cabinet under the existing provisions of the Iranian constitution. Although Bakhtiar was never supported by Khomeini, I thought there was a chance for their relationship to improve."[28] Nevertheless, Huyser encouraged military leaders to develop contingency plans to be implemented if the Bakhtiar government collapsed, even while he repeatedly told military leaders, on instructions from the White House, that the United States would not support a military coup against the Bakhtiar government.

Even if senior U.S. policymakers had favored intervention in Iran, limited U.S. military assets in the region and U.S. public opinion about the use of force abroad following the withdrawal from Vietnam would have hindered a large-scale intervention effort. The United States also did not have any significant military assets in the region or the logistical capability to move a large number of troops and materiel into the region in an expedient manner.[29] An Office of the Secretary of Defense history notes that, during the Iranian Revolution and subsequent hostage crisis, "the United States had severely limited access to staging grounds or bases in the [Persian Gulf], which circumscribed U.S. ability to project power there."[30] The "twin pillar" strategy was designed to maintain stability in the region without a direct U.S. military presence. Allies in the region also refused to host permanent U.S. military bases for fear that this would create a domestic backlash. According to Navy historians Edward Marolda and Robert Schneller,

> Washington's Europe-Far East focus, reliance on British forces to defend Western interests in the region, limited U.S. military resources, and post-Vietnam reticence about overseas military commitments resulted in only a token presence of U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf region throughout the Cold War.[31]

In the late 1970s, the Navy maintained a three-to-five-ship Middle East Force, and Pacific Fleet carrier task forces moved into the Indian Ocean regularly but only for brief periods. The Navy also maintained a base on the British-owned atoll of Diego Garcia, but this base is 2,300

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[27] Alexander M. Haig, "Introduction," in Robert E. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, New York: Harper and Row, 1986, p. vii.

[28] Carter, 1995, p. 451.

[29] Indeed, the Iranian Revolution and other contemporaneous events in the region alerted the Carter administration of this deficit, leading to the development of a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force and airlift and sealift capacities that could move troops into the region quickly, as well as proposals for basing agreements in the region and the further development of the U.S. base at Diego Garcia.

[30] Edward C. Keefer, *Harold Brown: Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge, 1977–1981*, Washington, D.C.: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2017, pp. 332–333.

[31] Marolda and Schneller, 1998, p. 14.

miles away from the Persian Gulf.[32] The U.S. Air Force could also have accessed air bases in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and had air bases in Turkey, but these were all distant from Tehran, and staging forces and material from these countries would have been difficult for logistical and political reasons.[33] Additionally, because the crisis did not involve conventional forces, there were no targets available for air strikes.

The logistics of planning and implementing an intervention were further hindered by the structure of the U.S. military. Prior to the 1980s, the military was organized along the lines of the services, and Central Command had not yet been established. This structure created stovepiping between the services and made interservice coordination difficult. Indeed, deficiencies in interservice operability were blamed in part for the failure of the 1980 hostage rescue mission in Iran and led to the reorganization of DoD and the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Acts.[34] Deficiencies in interservice interoperability, especially in the Middle East region (where there was no unified combatant command structure), would likely have significantly impeded planning of an intervention.

In 1978, both the Carter administration and the American public were still deeply affected by the Vietnam War. The experience of withdrawing in 1975 after a costly defeat left the American public and U.S. decisionmakers reluctant to commit U.S. forces abroad, especially in a situation with no clear objective or exit strategy that could become a quagmire.[35] During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter criticized the Nixon and Ford administrations' handling of the Vietnam War, stating in a speech, "We have learned that never again should our country become involved in the internal affairs of another nation unless there is a direct and obvious threat to the security of the United States or its people."[36] The legacy of the intervention in Vietnam therefore hung heavily over the Carter administration's policy toward Iran during the revolution.

Finally, limited U.S. intelligence affected the timing of any potential U.S. intervention during the Iranian Revolution. U.S. officials were unaware of the magnitude of the threat until late 1978. U.S. intelligence agencies failed to predict how popular the revolution would become and did not know that the Shah's political foundation had become so shaky or that he was terminally ill. Iran possessed a large army that had access to advanced weapons through the United States, an efficient secret police service, a substantial and highly capable bureaucracy, and rents from oil income that allowed the regime to buy off potential competitors and expand its control over society. To U.S. officials, all of these factors appeared to make the Shah's regime as durable as ever in the late 1970s and capable of withstanding even significant protests, as it had as recently as 1963.[37] An August 1978 CIA assessment found that Iran "is

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[32] Marolda and Schneller, 1998, p. 16.

[33] Aircraft and personnel involved in the hostage rescue mission in April 1980 were staged at Wadi Kena, a small airbase in Egypt, and the Dhahran Airfield in Saudi Arabia. Helicopters also flew in from an aircraft carrier in the Gulf of Oman; see Keefer, 2017, p. 332.

[34] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Holloway Report*, Washington, D.C., August 23, 1980.

[35] Marvin Kalb, "It's Called the Vietnam Syndrome, and It's Back," Brookings Institution, January 22, 2013.

[36] Quoted in Robert J. McMahon, "Contested Memory: The Vietnam War and American Society, 1975–2001," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Spring 2002, p. 165.

[37] Abrahamian, 1982, p. 496.

not in a revolutionary or even a prerevolutionary situation."[38] Indeed, a history of then Secretary of Defense Harold Brown notes that "[t]he inability to foresee . . . that the shah's policies had unleashed opposition from both Islamic fundamentalists and the ranks of militant young Iranians was one of the great intelligence failures of the second half of the 20th century."[39]

The Carter administration was also preoccupied with other important foreign policy concerns at the time, including the Camp David process, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and U.S.-China negotiations. Senior officials tasked with Middle East policy were heavily involved in the Camp David process, a signature achievement of the Carter administration, and had little time to devote to Iran at a phase when intelligence sources did not indicate that the situation had reached a crisis point.[40] An intervention earlier in 1978, before the protests and strikes had spread so widely, would have a better chance of restoring order. However, by the time U.S. officials recognized the magnitude of the crisis and began discussing how to respond, the revolution had gained so much momentum and popularity that the barriers to a successful intervention to stabilize the Shah's regime became higher as each day passed.[41]

Costs and Benefits of Not Intervening

The Iranian Revolution and its aftermath, without U.S. military intervention, generated significant and long-lasting economic, strategic, reputational, and domestic-political costs for the United States. There were two important moments that shaped the costs and benefits for the United States following the Iranian Revolution: the fall of the Shah's regime and the hostage crisis. First, the fall of the Shah's regime meant the loss of a critical strategic partner in the region and led to the disruption of the oil market and other political, economic, and strategic consequences. Second, the hostage crisis shaped the U.S. relationship with the new regime: Although the Carter administration took an optimistic view of the Khomeini regime and was willing to make accommodations to create a positive relationship between the United States and the new regime, the hostage crisis soured the U.S. perspective on the regime and set the relationship on an antagonistic course. Thus, the fallout of the revolution, including the hostage crisis, meant that a friendly regime was replaced with an oppositional one, creating additional costs for the United States.

In economic terms, U.S. weapons manufacturers lost access to their largest market following the Iranian Revolution. Sanctions imposed by the United States during the hostage crisis, and later in 1987 and 1995, in addition to international sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council beginning in 2006, meant that the United States lost access to other Iranian markets. The Iranian Revolution also contributed to a global energy crisis. Iranian production declined from its peak of 6.5 million barrels per day to less than 700,000 barrels per day by December 1978, when exports of oil had stopped and the island of Kharg, where most of Iran's oil exports passed through, was shut down.[42] The decline in production and ensuing panic led to climbing oil prices and shortages in the United States, with long lines forming at

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[38] Carter, 1995, p. 446.

[39] Keefer, 2017, p. 291.

[40] Brzezinski, 1983, p. 358.

[41] According to Gary Sick, the principal White House aid on Iran from 1976 through 1981, the first high-level meeting in Washington about the protests in Iran occurred in early November 1978; Sick, 1985, p. 60.

[42] John Vinocur, "Iranian Oil Export Is Reported Halted as Output Plunges," *New York Times*, December 27, 1978.

gas pumps.[43] Oil prices remained high in 1980, when the Iran-Iraq War led to a cut in Iraqi oil production, whereas Iranian oil production rates remained low. The oil crisis was one of the causes of an economic recession in the United States between 1980 and 1982.[44]

The United States also faced significant reputational costs during the 1979–1980 hostage crisis, although these costs were short-term and mostly affected the Carter administration. The ongoing hostage crisis became a national media obsession, dominating the news that year. The failure of the hostage rescue attempt in April 1980 seemingly symbolized the Carter administration's inability to wield American power against the revolutionaries and made the administration appear inept.[45] The crisis also had distinct effects on domestic politics: The failure of the hostage rescue mission and the economic recession are both directly associated with Carter's loss in the November 1980 elections. In addition to domestic economic issues at the end of Carter's presidency, including high inflation and interest rates, the hostage crisis created for many the "image of a weak and indecisive leader."[46] The radical students occupying the U.S. embassy also seized many classified documents, eventually publishing them.

The revolution generated significant anti-American sentiment both within Iran and in the broader region. According to Bakhash, as the new government was forming in 1979, "Washington was seen as the Shah's friend and supporter. American imperialism was depicted as the cause of many of Iran's difficulties. The left-wing parties and Khomeini himself engaged in strong anti-American rhetoric."[47] This reputational damage to the United States facilitated the rise of Khomeini's anti-American government. It is also seen as linked to domestic instability in other countries in the region in this same period. In November and December 1979, a Wahabi extremist insurgent group violently took over the Grand Mosque compound in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, taking worshippers hostage and calling for the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy. Saudi special forces, with assistance from French and Pakistani commandos, were only able to reclaim the compound after a two-week siege. Although the Sunni Salafists had a different ideological orientation than the Shi'ia Iranian religious revolutionaries, their leadership was motivated by similar concerns about American influence and perceived imperialism in the region. This incident is seen as a precursor to and inspiration for the modern international jihadi terrorist movement.[48]

The revolution also created significant strategic costs for the United States. With the transition from the Shah to Khomeini's revolutionary regime, the United States lost a key regional ally and source of stability and acquired an opponent in its place. Brzezinski later reflected that the fall of the Shah's regime "was the Carter administration's greatest setback. . . . The fall of the Shah was disastrous strategically for the United States."[49] The revolution meant the loss

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[43] Leonard Ruder, "Police Ordered to Keep Watch at Gas Stations," *New York Times,* June 12, 1979.

[44] James D. Hamilton, "Oil and the Macroeconomy Since World War II," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 91, No. 2, April 1983.

[45] F. Gregory Gause, III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 56.

[46] Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2000, p. 260.

[47] Bakhash, 1984, p. 70.

[48] Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca: The 1979 Uprising at Islam's Holiest Shrine*, New York: Doubleday, 2007.

[49] Brzezinski, 1983, p. 354.

of a key source of intelligence about Soviet weapon capabilities and what officials viewed as a barrier against Soviet expansion. Brzezinski saw Iran as part of a "protected tier" that acted as a barrier shielding the oil-rich Persian Gulf from Soviet influence. He later argued, "Had the Shah not fallen, it is unlikely that the Soviets would have moved so openly into Afghanistan [in December 1979], transforming that neutral buffer into an offensive wedge."[50] The strategic loss also threatened to destabilize U.S. access to a key source of oil. According to Vance, prior to the revolution, Iran's "military strength ensured Western access to gulf oil. . . . Its influence in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) made it important to the American economy."[51]

This strategic loss had several consequences for U.S. policy and the stability of the region. First, the Iran-Iraq War was the direct result of the revolution: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was concerned by the revolutionary threat to his regime's stability, since Iraq had a Shi'ia majority, but the revolution also provided a window of military vulnerability in Iran and an opportunity to seize territorial concessions around the Shatt al-Arab, the river marking the border between Iran and Iraq.[52] The Iran-Iraq War had strategic implications for the United States and its allies. It increased the perception of threat among U.S. Sunni Arab allies in the region, who feared victory by either side because the victor would likely continue to seek regional hegemony. The Sunni Arab states therefore sought to aid Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the war while appeasing revolutionary Iran, but they also attempted to improve their defensive posture by building a deeper security relationship with the United States and forming the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981. This dynamic could be seen as a strategic benefit to the United States, since it strengthened U.S. security relationships in the region and eventually allowed the United States to build substantial bases in the region. However, the insecurity of U.S. allies in the region was also a short-term cost of the revolution.

The United States entered the Iran-Iraq War directly in 1987, during the so-called Tanker War. The United States was officially neutral at the beginning of the conflict but began to provide more support to Iraq as the war continued.[53] Iraqi aircraft attacked the oil terminal at Kharg Island in early 1984 and began attacking ships going to or from Iranian ports. In response, the Iranian navy imposed a blockade of Iraq.[54] On May 17, 1987, the U.S. ship Stark was struck by an Iraqi F-1 Mirage plane, killing 37 sailors and wounding 21 (the Iraqi government claimed this was an accident and offered to compensate the United States).[55] Beginning in July 1987, U.S. Naval forces began to provide protection to Kuwait-owned tankers under Operation Earnest Will, which continued until September 1988. The Naval deployment, which also effectively shielded Iraq from Iranian attacks, cost about $20 million per month to maintain.[56]

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[50] Brzezinski, 1983, p. 356.

[51] Vance, 1983, p. 314.

[52] Efraim Karsh, "Introduction," in Efraim Karsh, ed., *The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989.

[53] Gause, 2010, p. 70.

[54] "Gulf Still Tense Despite Longest Lull in Tanker War," Reuters, March 8, 1988.

[55] "U.S. Seeks $32 Million for Stark Victims," *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1988.

[56] Robin Wright, "Getting the U.S. Out of the Gulf," *New York Times*, July 7, 1988.

In addition to the strategic costs, the Iran-Iraq War lasted eight years and generated approximately 200,000 battle deaths on each side, with an additional approximately 400,000 wounded on either side.[57] The war had particularly devastating and brutal human costs: Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranian troop formations, and Iran recruited child soldiers and used them to clear minefields. The war "left the region poorer by hundreds of billions of dollars in lost oil production, physical destruction and wasted human and economic capital."[58]

The foreign policy orientation of the revolutionary regime also posed a significant strategic threat to U.S. interests in the region. This antagonistic orientation was strengthened following the events of the U.S. embassy hostage crisis. From its beginning, the Iranian regime's declared foreign policy goal was the export of its revolution, which meant that Iran provided support to similar-minded Shi'ia insurgencies in the region through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC's) Quds Force.[59] Notably, the Iranian Revolution served as a model for Shi'ia insurgent groups in the Lebanese Civil War, where Hezbollah was founded and rose to prominence with the support of the IRGC. Iran served as a political model for Hezbollah but also provided substantial assistance in the form of weapons and training. Hezbollah and its predecessors posed a significant threat to U.S. strategic interests in the region from the early 1980s. Iran's proxy groups in Lebanon carried out at least 24 international terrorist attacks in just one nine-month period in 1985, according to the CIA. By 1985, the CIA had identified Iranian-sponsored terrorist groups as the greatest threat faced by U.S. personnel and facilities in the Middle East region.[60] The Islamic Jihad Organization, a precursor to Hezbollah, carried out a bombing of U.S. Marines and French Army barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23, 1983, killing 241 Americans and 58 French, and bombed the U.S. embassy annex in Beirut on September 20, 1984, killing 24. There is substantial evidence that Iran provided direct support to Islamic Jihad that allowed the group to carry out the barracks bombing.[61] At the time, the barracks bombing was the deadliest terrorist attack in history that targeted Americans, and it led to the withdrawal of the Marines from Lebanon in 1984.[62] Iran's support for Shi'ia insurgents also posed a threat to Sunni U.S. allies in the region, including Saudi Arabia. The allies' leadership worried that the revolution would foment instability within their own states and were frustrated that the Carter administration did not push back more forcefully against Iran's attempts to expand its regional influence.[63]

The rise of an oppositional regime in Iran also imposed strategic costs on the United States by posing a threat to unimpeded trade through the Strait of Hormuz. Located between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, the Strait is the main access route for the transportation of oil from the region and therefore is a potential choke point for global oil markets.

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[57] Gause, 2010, p. 45.

[58] Gause, 2010, p. 46.

[59] John L. Esposito and James Piscatori, *The Iranian Revolution Ten Years Later: What Has Been Its Global Impact?* Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, August 1989, p. 3.

[60] Matthew Levitt, "The Origins of Hezbollah," *The Atlantic*, October 23, 2013.

[61] David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran*, New York: Penguin Press, 2012, pp. 134–142.

[62] Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*, revised ed., Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015.

[63] Trofimov, 2007, p. 60.

Iranian officials have periodically threatened to cut off access to the Strait of Hormuz.[64] In 1971, the Middle East produced about 30 percent of the global oil supply; a disruption to trade therefore had the potential to cause widespread disruption to the market.[65]

The host nation also suffered significant costs because of the outcome of the revolution. Khomeini's revolutionary government consolidated its authority in the 1980s through the use of widespread violence and oppression. In June 1981, after the militant group Mojahedin-e Khalq's (MEK's) attempt to consolidate the opposition and overthrow the government, the government responded with a wave of executions designed to destroy the guerrilla organizations. From June to November 1981, more than 2,600 political prisoners were executed. In 1988, the government embarked on another set of mass executions of political prisoners affiliated with the MEK and other opposition groups, killing an estimated 2,000 political prisoners over the course of a few months.[66]

The consequences of the revolution for Iranian's human rights continue to this day. Prisoners, particularly political prisoners, are routinely subject to torture.[67] Political expression is suppressed. Although women played a key role in the revolution, the revolutionary government instituted laws in the early 1980s that circumscribed the public roles that women could play and that eliminated many of their civil rights.[68] Of course, the Shah's regime (most notably, the secret police) also used violent repression, including torture and the execution of political prisoners, as a tool of social control. Had the Shah's government remained in power, it might have continued to do so in order to end the protests and break the nationwide strikes. But the government violence that began in 1981 was on a larger scale: Abrahamian has written that the MEK's attempt to overthrow the government in 1981 "set off waves of repression unprecedented in Iranian history."[69] Iran also suffered severe economic consequences in the aftermath of the revolution, caused by the U.S. and later international sanctions imposed on the regime and lost economic productivity during the Iran-Iraq War.

Key Actors and Interests

In this section, we identify key actors in the Iranian Revolution, including Iranian figures and U.S. officials who generated the U.S. policy response to the revolution. We identify the interests of each actor and briefly describe the actions of each through January 1979, when the Shah left and Khomeini returned.

The Shah: Mohammed Reza Pahlavi had ruled Iran since September 1941 and was interested in remaining in power. U.S. officials believed that the Shah behaved indecisively throughout the crisis: A 1980 CIA assessment noted that "many believed that had the Shah

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[64] Harold H. Saunders, "The Iran-Iraq War: Implications for US Policy," in Thomas Naff, ed., *Gulf Security and the Iran-Iraq War*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1985, p. 65.

[65] Marolda and Schneller, 1998, p. 13.

[66] Amnesty International, *Iran: Violation of Human Rights 1987–1990*, London, 1990, p. 11.

[67] Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999.

[68] Valentine M. Moghadam, "Revolution, Religion, and Gender Politics: Iran and Afghanistan Compared," *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 10, No. 4, Winter 1999.

[69] Abrahamian, 1999, p. 129.

exerted more forceful leadership the outcome might have been different."[70] Early in the crisis, he allowed the military to fire on protestors but directed that they hold their fire after the Jaleh Square massacre in September 1978. He also made concessions to the opposition throughout the crisis, including by appointing successive governments, while insisting on retaining key elements of his authority, including control over the military budget. During a meeting with Ambassador Sullivan in December 1978, the Shah outlined what he considered to be his three options: (1) leaving the country and appointing a regency council to rule in his place, (2) attempting to form a civilian opposition government, or (3) encouraging the Iranian military to follow an "iron fist" policy to violently repress the protests and strikes. U.S. officials believed that by recounting these options, the Shah was essentially asking them to take responsibility for a military crackdown if he decided to implement that option, which U.S. officials refused to do.[71] Although he repeatedly considered the military option, he never turned to it beyond appointing a nominally military government in late 1978 with little authority to act on its own. Instead, in December 1978 and January 1979, the Shah attempted to negotiate with members of the opposition; eventually, Bakhtiar agreed to serve as prime minister if the Shah agreed to leave the country. The Shah was diagnosed with lymphatic cancer in 1973, and although he received treatment from French doctors, he kept his illness secret. U.S. officials reportedly did not learn of his illness until October 1979, and he entered the United States soon after to receive emergency medical care.[72] Some observers retroactively ascribed what they saw as "the Shah's uncharacteristic indecision" to his illness and treatment.[73]

Carter administration: The Carter administration preferred that the Shah, a key U.S. ally, remain in power but worried about the implications of a military crackdown for human rights, as well as regional stability. Carter came into office with a human rights–oriented foreign policy, which informed the administration's decision to ultimately support a transition to a moderate opposition government and eventual democratic elections over a military crackdown. The Carter administration was also deeply concerned that instability in Iran and the existence of the Tudeh communist party and Marxist insurgent groups in the opposition created an opening for the Soviet Union to expand its influence in Iran. This possibility informed U.S. officials' preference for a government that included Khomeini and elements of the radical religious forces over a government that included the Tudeh party or other leftist groups.[74] In part because of sharp divisions within the senior ranks of the administration, the Carter administration did not convey specific preferences to the Shah about how he should respond during much of the crisis but assured him that the administration would support him regardless. However, once the administration lost confidence in the Shah in December 1978 or January 1979, the United States gave its support to the Bakhtiar government, encouraging senior Iranian military officials to likewise support the Bakhtiar government even as they prepared contingency plans in case his government fell.

Brzezinski faction: One faction within the senior ranks of the U.S. administration, including Brzezinski, Brown, and others, pushed the administration to support a military

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[70]   "The Shah's Illness and the Fall of Iran," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 24, Summer 1980, p. 61.

[71]   Vance, 1981, p. 331.

[72]   Lawrence K. Altman, "The Shah's Health: A Political Gamble," *New York Times*, May 17, 1981.

[73]   "The Shah's Illness and the Fall of Iran," 1980.

[74]   Sullivan, 1981, p. 182.

coup. Brzezinski later wrote, "With a large army at his command, I felt that [the Shah] could . . . use the military not only to establish order but to initiate a comprehensive cleanup of exiting corruption."[75]

Vance faction: Another group of U.S. officials, including Vance and Sullivan, believed that a military coup would lead to widespread bloodshed and would endanger the U.S. relationship with a successor government and supported a transition to a moderate opposition government. They believed that Khomeini could be a moderate figure who acted as a spiritual guide to the government without retaining governing authority and that the military and religious factions could reach an accommodation that would help stabilize the opposition government. Vance reflected that "[w]hile I did not rule out eventual support for a military government whose purpose would be to restore order and end the bloodshed, I did not believe the United States should make such a fundamental decision for Iran, which is precisely what the shah was attempting to get us to do."[76]

The opposition: The opposition was united around the demand that the Shah must abdicate and leave Iran but had little else in common. An October 1978 CIA assessment found that the "opposition is fragmented into many groups" and that any group or coalition that came into power would therefore "lack the power to impose its will . . . and it would be a constant target for other ambitious elements, including the military."[77]

Khomeini and the radical clerical opposition: In retrospect, it is clear that Khomeini wanted to return to Iran to head a radical, religiously oriented government. However, prior to his return to Iran in January 1979, Khomeini's intentions were less clear. Khomeini was a senior Shi'ia cleric who spent more than 15 years living in exile in Iraq and later in Paris after he denounced the Shah and was arrested in 1963, sparking protests throughout the country. Khomeini continued to deliver speeches denouncing the Shah that were smuggled into Iran on cassette tapes, increasing his popularity in Iran. Khomeini repeatedly denounced the Shah and called for revolution, so it was clear that he would not support more-incremental reform, but what kind of government he would support as a successor to the Shah was less clear. In the late 1960s, Khomeini gave a series of lectures in Najaf, Iraq, published under the title *Vilayat-e Faqih,* a term that refers to government by Islamic jurists.[78] The lectures laid out his theory of politics, arguing that governance should be entrusted only to the Shi'ia clergy: "Since the rule of Islam is the rule of law, only the jurists, and no one else, should be in charge of the government," he argued at that time.[79] However, beginning in the 1970s, Khomeini took pains not to commit himself to any specific policies and worked to affiliate himself with a variety of opposition groups, with the exception of Marxist organizations, while also not identifying himself too closely with any particular group. According to Abrahamian, Khomeini "carefully avoided making public pronouncements, especially written ones, on issues that would alienate segments of the opposition—issues such as land reform, clerical power, and sexual equality. Instead, he hammered the regime on topics that outraged all sectors of the opposition," helping

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[75]   Brzezinski, 1983, p. 366.

[76]   Vance, 1983, p. 331.

[77]   Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, "Meeting with Dr. Brzezinski, 27 October 1978," memorandum to Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment, October 30, 1978.

[78]   Bakhash, 1984, p. 38.

[79]   Quoted in Abrahamian, 1982, p. 477.

him win over a diverse array of social groups, especially the middle class and business owners, who formed a critical base of his support.[80] Khomeini also made misleading statements during his exile, telling reporters that a future government would be democratic, that women would have the same rights as men, and that he had no desire to rule Iran but would merely serve as a kind of spiritual adviser to the government.[81] During his exile in Iraq and later in France, Khomeini built a substantial, well-resourced network of supporters in Iran. Khomeini's move from Iraq to France in October 1978 gave him access to the media—he gave more than 120 interviews in the course of his four months in Paris—helping him gain more support both within Iran and abroad.[82] After his return to Iran in February 1979, when he was greeted by crowds of millions of supporters, Khomeini's faction of radical clerics was one of many competing for authority. However, from 1979 through about 1983, the clerics consolidated their authority by attacking and banning opponents and gaining the majority of the seats in the Assembly of Experts as it was producing a new constitution. According to Nikki Keddie, the Islamist politics of Khomeini and his followers rose in popularity during the 1970s in large part because of "the failures of nationalism and communism as foci of opposition. Iranian Islamism incorporated some ideas, practices, and class support from prior Marxist and nationalist movements and initially combined the popular classes, intellectuals and students, and the bazaar bourgeoise."[83] Additionally, while the Shah's regime focused on suppressing the secular and leftist organizations in the 1960s and early 1970s, it allowed the business guilds and clergy to continue their activities largely without interference, which caused the mosques and bourgeoise organizations to become the basis of widespread opposition in the late 1970s.[84] In November 1979, the constitution was adopted, and Khomeini became Supreme Leader of the revolutionary Islamic government.

Pro-democracy opposition groups: The National Front was one of the most prominent political opposition parties in Iran; during the revolution, it advocated for abolishing the monarchy and establishing a democratic government in Iran. The group was founded by Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1949, who served as the democratically elected prime minister of Iran from 1951 until he was overthrown in a CIA- and MI6-backed coup in 1953. Most of the National Front's leadership was arrested in 1953, but they were released from prison soon after. The National Front began as an umbrella group for a variety of groups with nationalist, pro-democratic, secular, and Islamic leanings, but several groups splintered off to form other organizations in the 1960s. Bakhtiar, who had served as a deputy minister in Mossadegh's government, was a member of the National Front but was expelled when he agreed to form a government under the Shah in January 1979. The Liberation Movement of Iran spun off from the National Front in 1961 and tended to attract support from young professionals and technocrats who sought a way to synthesize Western political theory and Islam. It was cofounded by Mehdi Bazargan, who also served as a deputy minister under Mossadegh. The Liberation Movement maintained closer ties with Khomeini, and Bazargan was appointed by him as

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[80]   Abrahamian, 1982, p. 532.

[81]   Abrahamian, 1982, pp. 532–534.

[82]   Bakhash, 1984, pp. 40–44.

[83]   Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, updated ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 319.

[84]   Ervand Abrahamian, "Iran in Revolution: The Opposition Forces," *MERIP Reports*, No. 75/76, March/April 1979, p. 8.

prime minister in February 1979. Bazargan resigned in November 1979 in protest of the U.S. embassy takeover.

Tudeh Party: The Tudeh Party was a communist party that sought to establish a communist government in Iran. Founded in 1941, Tudeh played an important role during Mossadegh's time as prime minister but was decimated by the regime's crackdown after 1953, when mass arrests severely degraded the party's underground organization.[85] Tudeh increased its activities and recruiting again in the early 1970s.[86] The Tudeh Party was relatively small in terms of numbers but was well-organized and constituted an active faction among the array of opposition groups during the revolution.[87] Tudeh received support from communist parties in the Soviet Union, East Germany, and elsewhere in Europe.[88] U.S. officials were particularly fearful that the revolution would give Tudeh and Marxist groups and leftist groups an opportunity to gain more power and preferred an opposition government that included Khomeini and the religious right to Tudeh.

Guerrilla organizations: Several guerrilla organizations of different sizes arose after the regime put down the 1963 demonstrations, most notably including the MEK and the Fedayeen-e Khalq.[89] Some of these groups were Islamist in orientation whereas others were Marxist, but they all wanted to overthrow the Shah and have a role in the new government. The regime's willingness to use massive force to put down the demonstrations and the erosion of the Tudeh and National Front parties by Iranian intelligence services afterward convinced some young members of the opposition that violence was inevitable, and they began to form secret discussion groups.[90] An incident in 1971, when armed militants attacked a rural gendarmerie post, "sparked off eight years of intense guerrilla activity and inspired many other radicals, Islamic as well as Marxist, to take up arms against the Pahlavi regime."[91] During the revolution, these guerrilla groups were relatively small in size but were "more important than their small numbers and pre-1978 success would indicate."[92] They were strengthened when the Shah amnestied political prisoners in 1978 in response to the protests, releasing more than 100 members of guerrilla organizations.[93]

Military leadership: By late 1978, the senior leadership of the military was the largest institution that remained loyal to the Shah.[94] The Shah built the military along neo-patrimonial lines in the senior ranks in an otherwise modern military organization, creating a command structure whereby all senior officers' loyalty ran directly to the Shah. This structure served as a coup-proofing mechanism. The Shah also reportedly sought to maximize competition and

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[85] Abrahamian, 1982, p. 451.

[86] Ward, 2009, p. 212.

[87] Huyser, 1986, p. 291.

[88] Abrahamian, 1982, p. 454.

[89] Ward, 2009, p. 212.

[90] Ervan Abrahamian, "The Guerrilla Movement in Iran, 1963–1977," *MERIP Reports*, No. 86, March/April 1980.

[91] Abrahamian, 1980, p. 3.

[92] Keddie, 2006, p. 219.

[93] Abrahamian, 1980.

[94] Ward, 2009, p. 213.

resentment among senior officers for this reason.[95] Some military leaders considered a coup at several moments during the revolution, including in January 1979, to force the Shah to remain in the country. According to Arjomand, in fall 1978, "The hard-liners among the military wanted the Shah to allow them to clamp down on all opposition activities, and General Oveisi [the commander of the army] began to feel out the foreign powers concerning their reaction to a military takeover." However, in mid-October—and on every other occasion when military leadership sounded them out about a potential military coup—U.S. and British officials responded that they favored a transition to an opposition government and did not look favorably on a military coup.[96] On November 5, the Shah replaced the serving prime minister, Jafar Sharif-Emami, with General Gholam-Reza Azhari, the chief of staff of the armed forces, but because most ministries in the military government were still headed by civilians, the change was seen as largely cosmetic. Gary Sick later reflected that, because Azhari was not one of the generals who was pressuring the Shah to crack down on protestors, the appointment was likely an effort by the Shah to preempt the emergence of a serious military rival for leadership rather than to appoint a strong-willed government that was empowered to take decisive action to end the protests.[97] In February 1979, after fighting broke out at Doshan Tappeh air force base in Tehran and revolutionaries seized control of important government installations around the capital, the military leadership declared the military neutral and ordered the military back to the barracks, leading to the fall of the Bakhtiar government, effectively marking the end of the Shah's regime. The new provisional government undertook purges of the military, executing many of the senior generals, and established its own system of control and oversight. The new regime also created new security institutions (including the IRGC, which was established in May 1979) to maintain internal security and guard against external threats.[98]

Military lower ranks: In contrast with the military leadership, the non-officer ranks of the military were more likely to sympathize with the protestors. In general, professional elements of the military were more loyal to the Shah, while the conscript force, consisting largely of peasants and the urban poor, were sympathetic with the demonstrators.[99] More than half of the military of about 450,000 was made up of conscripts, raising concerns about the institution's loyalty to the Shah.[100] The opposition campaign also built a strategy to create divisions within the military to prevent a violent crackdown, with demonstrators handing out flowers to soldiers and promising them a warm reception if they defected.[101] The rate of defections accelerated toward the end of 1978 and was estimated to be about 100 per day by January 1979, raising concerns about cohesion.

Table B.4 summarizes the key actors and their interests and actions in the Iranian Revolution.

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[95] Ward, 2009, p. 124–125.

[96] Arjomand, 1988, p. 120.

[97] Sick, 1985, p. 79.

[98] Michael Eisenstadt, "Iran's Islamic Revolution: Lessons for the Arab Spring of 2011?" Institute for National Strategic Studies, April 2011.

[99] Eisenstadt, 2011.

[100] Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994, pp. 130–131.

[101] Eisenstadt, 2011.

Table B.4
Iran: Actors and Interests in Real-World Case

Actors	Interests	Actions
The Shah	• Remain in power, end strikes and protests • Reluctant to engage in violent crackdown	• Charted a middle path by making concessions to the opposition while retaining most of his authority • Asked U.S. officials for guidance • Left the country, effectively abdicating, in January 1979
Carter administration	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region • Prevent rise of oppositional government • Respect human rights as much as possible	• Expressed support for the Shah throughout but did not give decisive instructions
Brzezinski faction	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region	• Supported military crackdown and coup
Vance faction	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region • Peaceful transition to moderate opposition government	• Supported negotiations between military and conservative religious opposition to facilitate a transition • Supported direct outreach to Khomeini
Khomeini and radical Islamists	• Overthrow the Shah and head a revolutionary government	• Participated in revolution • Sent propaganda from Paris and retained networks of supporters in Iran • Returned in 1979 to massive crowds
Pro-democracy opposition groups	• Head revolutionary government or form a coalition	• Participated in revolution • National Front formed government under Bakhtiar that fell when Khomeini returned
Tudeh Party	• Head revolutionary government or form a coalition	• Participated in revolution
Guerrilla organizations	• Overthrow the Shah and head a revolutionary government	• Participated in revolution • Tried to overthrow revolutionary regime in 1981
Military leadership	• Loyal to the Shah • Low cohesion	• Divided over whether a crackdown was necessary, but never implemented a crackdown • Declared neutrality in January 1979
Military lower ranks	• Low morale • Majority of troops are conscripts	• Experienced high defection rates

Key Factors

In this section, we identify and assess some of the key factors that affected the revolution, drawing on our analysis of the key actors' interests and behavior.

The Military's Ability to Restore Order

The military was unable to restore order by ending the strikes and protests during the revolution, even though it was the largest and most effective institution that retained its loyalty to the Shah by late 1978. The senior ranks of the military were deliberately designed by the Shah to discourage cohesion so that each general's primary loyalty was to the Shah only. According to Huyser, rather than holding joint meetings of the chiefs of the military services, the Shah met with them separately in his role as commander in chief to ensure their absolute loyalty to him and to prevent collaboration among the military leadership. This lack of cohesion prevented

the senior military leadership from creating an effective strategy to counter the revolutionary opposition: Even after Huyser encouraged the leadership to develop a unified contingency plan to take over if the civilian government fell, they were unable to do so. Furthermore, throughout the revolution, the military was discouraged by the Shah, and later by U.S. officials, from executing a coup or cracking down on protestors. Even the military government that was appointed by the Shah was made up mostly of civilian ministers and was therefore essentially a military government in name only.

"Winners" of the Revolution

In the real-world scenario, Khomeini and his supporters took power from what originated as a multiparty revolution and postrevolutionary state. Between 1979 and 1983, the regime consolidated rule under radical clerics through the enforcement of ideological and behavioral control and through the elimination of the opposition by both political and violent means. Khomeini's followers came to dominate key institutions, including the judiciary (which codified Sharia law) and the armed forces, by sidelining the military and creating their own security forces, such as the IRGC.[102] The consolidation of authority under Khomeini was facilitated by his overwhelming public popularity and the other opposition groups' misjudgment (or overly optimistic assessment) of his intentions. According to Keddie, "Most non-clerics in the opposition underestimated both the probability of clerical rule and the ability of the clergy to rule . . . . Opposition groups that might have united against the drive toward a clerical monopoly with its strict version of Islam did not do so."[103] Additionally, Iraq's invasion of Iran and the 1979 hostage crisis, both of which generated nationalist sentiment and were used by Khomeini's party to discredit moderate members of the opposition who were positively disposed toward the west, accelerated the process of consolidation.[104] The paranoia that followed the failed rescue attempt of the American hostages and suspicions that the Iranian military might somehow be involved also facilitated the regime's purge of the officer corps.[105]

The focus of the Shah's regime on suppressing the secular and leftist organizations in the 1960s and early 1970s while declining to interfere in the activities of the clergy and the mosques meant that the clerical opposition was therefore comparatively well-organized when the revolution began.[106] The Tudeh Party and National Front had been decimated by the government's reaction to the 1963 uprising and subsequent factionalization of both parties; thus, although they played a role in the revolution, they were not well-equipped to seize power once the Shah had departed. The MEK and other guerrilla organizations were better equipped to do so because of their battle experience over the past decade and the augmentation of their ranks when the Shah freed political prisoners. The MEK was estimated to have about 5,000 members in the early 1980s. Khomeini's overwhelming popularity in Iran, as evidenced by the crowd of millions who greeted him on his arrival, and the superior organization and capacity of the clerical opposition, also facilitated the regime's consolidation of authority.

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[102] Keddie, 2006.

[103] Keddie, 2006, p. 241.

[104] Keddie, 2006, p. 240.

[105] Khomeini said at the time that "[t]he military have the Shah in their blood"; Bakhash, 1984, p. 119.

[106] Abrahamian, 1979.

Counterfactual Scenario

In early December 1978, President Carter calls a meeting of the NSC principals to discuss the ongoing crisis in Iran. Carter expresses concern about the quality of intelligence that he has received about the crisis: Despite reassurance from the intelligence agencies that Iran is "not in a revolutionary state," the protests have only grown, and strikes threaten Iran's oil production. After receiving advice from the NSC, Carter decides to dispatch General Huyser on a secret mission to Tehran. Huyser's mission will be to assess the willingness and readiness of the Iranian military leadership to execute a coup. At the same time, to express U.S. support for the Shah and deter potential Soviet interference, the 82nd Airborne is placed on alert status, and two aircraft strike groups prepare to deploy to the Indian Ocean. After several days of meetings, Huyser reports that although the lower ranks of the military appear demoralized and the rate of defections is increasing, key members of the senior military leadership are in favor of a coup. In a second meeting with the NSC principals one week later, Carter decides that U.S. policy will be to support a military coup in Iran to forestall a revolution that would likely yield an opposition government with an anti-American orientation. Carter, backed by Brzezinski, Brown, and others, argues that U.S. strategic interests in Iran are too important, in spite of the risks associated with a coup.

Early one morning in mid-December, the senior Iranian military leadership drive to the Shah's Sadabad Palace in Tehran. They explain that they are forming a military government and that the Shah will remain in a leadership capacity but that much of his authority will be turned over to the ministers of the military government, with General Oveisi, commander of the army, serving as prime minister. At the same time, military leadership implements the contingency plans developed with Huyser. Senior military leaders move into each of the government ministries. An hour later, the Shah appears on television to announce the formation of a military government and the imposition of martial law. He encourages civilians to go back to work and to avoid protesting and warns that the military stands ready to take action against protestors if necessary. Over the next several days, hundreds of members of the opposition are arrested.

The United States deploys the 3rd brigade of the 82nd Airborne to the oil refinery at Abadan, near Iran's southwest shore and close to the Iraq border. At the same time, a battalion-sized Marine amphibious unit lands on Kharg Island, Iran's primary oil terminal, which located off the southwest coast of Iran and northwest of the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. troops guard these oil installations and ensure that merchant ships are able to enter and leave the port of Kharg Island. Both had been placed on standby, and their deployment is timed to coincide with the coup so that they land within hours after the new government is announced. The next day, another Marine unit enters Tehran to supervise the evacuation of U.S. citizens. U.S. civilians are directed to assemble at the embassy, and the Marine unit flies all U.S. citizen embassy staff and others by helicopter to the airport, where they are flown out of the country. Finally, the Seventh Fleet Carrier Task Force is moved to the Indian Ocean, and several USAF F-111 Aardvark fighter-bombers are deployed to the Cairo West airbase in Egypt as a sign of U.S. support for the coup and as a deterrent signal to the Soviet Union.

The streets are quiet for a few months following the coup. Although few Iranians return to work, and strikes are therefore still in effect in practice, there are no protests. Reports surface that some political prisoners are tortured while in custody or have disappeared. The economy continues to be in peril as oil production does not resume. Then, a few months after the coup, small protests begin again around Tehran and other major cities. Because the pro-

tests are peaceful, the military warns protestors but does not fire on them. Over the following week, fueled by a fiery speech by Khomeini that denounces the military government and that is smuggled into the country on cassette tapes and distributed widely, the protests grow rapidly. On the seventh day, a massive protest in Tehran turns violent as protestors attack police installations and other government infrastructure. The military fires on protestors, killing several hundred. Over the next several days, however, the riots continue. By the end of the week, thousands of protestors have been killed by the military. The following day, a military unit conducting crowd control in Tehran refuses to fire at protestors. Over the subsequent week, army mutinies spread throughout the country as many rank-and-file members of the military defect to the side of the protestors. Some simply refuse to fire on protestors, while a few units attack those that continue to fire on protestors, leading to skirmishing in the streets of major cities among different army units and armed members of the opposition who have seized weapons from occupied government installations.

Senior military leadership is paralyzed by indecision because of a lack of agreement over how to proceed. No one wants to take responsibility for deciding the military government's next steps, and the Shah refuses to weigh in. The generals realize that the Shah is seriously ill, rendering more confusion because they have little fealty to Oveisi, and no military leader is able to command the loyalty of the others in the Shah's absence. As the riots and violence continue, Oveisi and other senior military leaders, hoping to at least escape the country with their lives, order the military to return to their barracks and then flee the country along with the Shah. Khomeini returns to Iran within a month of their departure, facilitated by the planning of a network of his supporters in Iran.

U.S. forces continue to occupy the southern oil fields and Kharg Island, preventing the Khomeini regime from gaining access to a significant source of income. Then, several months after the constitutional referendum, a group of Iranian students takes over the U.S. embassy compound in Tehran. Although most U.S. citizens have been evacuated from Tehran, a small staff remains to coordinate U.S. policy toward the new regime. When the regime refuses to release the hostages, U.S. and Iranian officials enter into secret negotiations. The United States agrees to withdraw from the oil fields in exchange for the release of the hostages. The next day, the U.S. embassy staff are driven to the airport and flown back to the United States, and the 82nd Airborne and Marine amphibious unit withdraw.

From here, history proceeds much as it did in the real-world scenario, albeit on a delayed timeline. Khomeini is even more popular than he was before the coup because of anti-Western and anti-military sentiment, and this popularity helps his followers eliminate competing opposition groups and consolidate their authority over the government. A new constitution is drafted, and Iran votes overwhelmingly to establish an Islamic republic via referendum.

Key Actors: Counterfactual

In the counterfactual scenario, we make several assumptions about the decisions of key actors following the military coup and U.S. intervention. In this section, we provide supporting evidence for these assumptions, using information about their views and actions from the real-world events.

The Shah: In the counterfactual, the Shah's interests become subordinated to the interests of Iranian military leadership because of the nature of the coup. The counterfactual assumes that the military retains the Shah as a figurehead because their primary loyalty is to him and because military leaders had difficulty coordinating with one another and coming

to an agreement on policy (because of coup-proofing measures taken by the Shah during his reign). However, retaining the Shah would only inflame anti-Shah sentiment and predispose the opposition and the Iranian public to oppose the new military government.

Carter administration: We assume for the sake of the counterfactual that Carter sides with the Brzezinski faction with his decision to encourage a coup. Vance, Sullivan, and other State Department officials articulate their concerns to the president but ultimately are overruled.

The opposition: The opposition is divided along several issues, including how the country should be governed after the revolution, but is united primarily by its opposition to the Shah. Thus, the opposition as a whole opposes the coup because the intervention stokes anti-Shah and anti-Western sentiment even further than in the real-world scenario.

Khomeini and the radical clerical opposition: In retrospect, Khomeini and his followers in the real-world case were able to defeat other opposition factions through violence or political means to consolidate their authority in the years following the revolution. However, this outcome was not preordained; similarly, it is not the inevitable outcome of the counterfactual scenario. However, the anti-Shah and anti-Western sentiment generated by the coup would make Khomeini even more popular within Iran, making this the likely outcome. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, many members of the opposition and U.S. officials misjudged Khomeini's intentions after returning to the country: Some U.S. officials believed that Khomeini would return as a Gandhi-like figure who would serve as a kind of adviser to a more moderate government. According to Gary Sick, this view was informed by wishful thinking as much as by careful analysis: The evidence available at the time, including Khomeini's writings and the text of his speeches, demonstrated that he was not interested in establishing a democratic government that respected human rights.[107] Nevertheless, nothing that happens in the counterfactual changes U.S. officials' views of Khomeini and the role he would play after his return. The military government effectively prevents Khomeini's return because he has reason to fear that he would be arrested or even executed if he returns under the military government, but, just as in the real-world case, public demand for his return is overwhelming once the Shah's government falls, and U.S. officials do little to prevent his return. This demand facilitates Khomeini's return and the subsequent subordination of other opposition groups.

Pro-democracy opposition groups: The interests of pro-democracy opposition groups do not change substantially in the counterfactual. These groups continue to oppose the Shah and the military government and misjudge Khomeini's intentions, facilitating his return.

Tudeh Party: Much like the pro-democracy groups, the interests of the Tudeh Party do not change substantially. Although the group plays a role in the revolution, it does not have a large following because of its decimation after the 1963 protests and therefore does not play a substantial role in the government once the Shah has left. Khomeini's increased popularity following the coup also weakens the party's support.

Guerrilla organizations: As in the real-world scenario, the guerrilla organizations also play an outsize role in the revolution, facilitating the departure of the military government by engaging the military in Tehran. However, much like in the real-world case, Khomeini's government is able to use its popularity to crack down on the guerrilla organizations, executing many of their members who are taken as political prisoners.

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[107] Sick, 1985, p. 85.

Military leadership: An important assumption of the counterfactual scenario is that military leadership would be impeded by an inability to cooperate among themselves in order to develop and execute policy options in response to the changing environment on the ground because of a lack of cohesion and a coup-proofing hierarchy that made senior military leaders' first loyalty to the Shah. It is impossible to state with any certainty the degree of cohesion among the senior military leadership at the end of the Shah's regime. Among U.S. officials, Sullivan and Huyser were in the best positions to assess this, and although they met at least once a day while Huyser was in Tehran, their views of whether the military leadership would be able to effectively execute a coup diverged dramatically. Sullivan believed that military leadership was not sufficiently unified and therefore was unprepared to execute a coup. Huyser thought this was not the case, later writing,

> I cannot avoid the conclusion that Ambassador Sullivan, and many other creditable writers who disagreed with my assessment of Iran's military capability, evaluated them against a set of purely Western standards . . . . The capability was there with strong leadership, and that is one of the main reasons I pressed hard to have that leadership emanate from Mr. Bakhtiar. I believe until this day that had he given the order to act, the military would have reacted in a professional manner.[108]

Huyser attributed the differences in their assessments to the fact that he had a better knowledge of military organization and operations and closer relationships with Iran's military leadership. However, even Huyser's optimistic assessment of military leadership cohesion assumed a strong leader able to give clear orders. In the counterfactual, although the Shah is retained as the nominal head of the government, General Oveisi is in charge of making decisions and issuing orders. Other military leaders are less likely to follow his leadership for the reasons articulated earlier, especially when the situation on the ground becomes critical as thousands of protestors are killed and mutinies spread. Furthermore, the coup only accelerates the Shah's inability to make clear policy decisions, and he is unable to provide clear recommendations for the military leadership. This scenario is supported by the assessments of other U.S. officials in late 1978. Vance, for example, later reflected that, in November 1978, "[w]ithout his unifying presence as a focus for its loyalty, the army might rapidly splinter into warring factions."[109] Likewise, even Brzezinski, who was the most ardent supporter of the coup option, admitted his fear that "the military high command, composed of individuals handpicked by the Shah for their personal loyalty to him, might disintegrate on his departure."[110] Furthermore, Brzezinski reflected later that although a military coup in the early stages of the crisis would likely have been effective in preventing the revolution, he had greater doubts about whether the military would have succeeded later in the crisis, when the costs of a crackdown would be higher and the military was increasingly demoralized.[111]

Military lower ranks: Sullivan and Huyser's assessments of the lower ranks of the military's morale and cohesion also diverged quite significantly. The counterfactual assumes that morale and cohesion among the lower ranks would be decisively degraded if they were asked

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[108] Huyser, 1986, p. 65.

[109] Vance, 1981, p. 329.

[110] Brzezinski, 1983, p. 379.

[111] Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 394–395.

to shoot a large number of unarmed protestors. Huyser reported that although there were significant numbers of defections in January 1979, he estimated the rate to be approximately 100 per day out of a total force of about 450,000. He later wrote that the defections "did not represent a significant drain on Iran's military strength."[112] He argued that the fact that they had not been reluctant to shoot at protestors when ordered to do so was in fact a good sign of discipline and cohesion.[113] Likewise, Gary Sick reflected that although desertions were growing within the armed forces,

> soldiers continued to obey orders—including firing on demonstrators—and displayed remarkable discipline well beyond the point when they might have been expected to become demoralized. Even in mid-December 1978, Mehdi Bazargan and other revolutionaries within Iran were deeply concerned that the army would perpetrate a massacre.[114]

However, Sullivan and many other officials worried about the morale of the lower ranks of the military in the midst of widespread defection. Sullivan wrote that, by late 1978,

> I felt that the military had convincingly lost its will. Many of the dissidents in the streets who might face the armed forces in an emergency were the sons, brothers, and other close relatives of the men behind the rifles and machine guns. . . . I felt that the armed forces would, in a crunch, collapse because they would be unable to face the sort of opposition they would meet in the streets . . . . I concluded, therefore, that in a confrontation between the armed forces and the revolution, the armed forces would collapse.[115]

Furthermore, after a reorganization in 1963, the military's primary mission was directed toward external security, and soldiers were therefore not trained, organized, or equipped to deal with crowd control.[116] Taken together, these assessments suggest that the lower ranks of the military would likely remain disciplined over the short-term but would not be willing to fire on protestors for more than a few days. Continued protests and high numbers of civilian casualties would cause defection rates to accelerate as morale declined.

Table B.5 summarizes the assumptions and supporting evidence for these key actors in the counterfactual scenario.

Key Factors: Counterfactual

In this section, we identify and assess the key factors that would affect the outcome of a U.S. military intervention in this case, drawing on our analysis of how the key actors' interests and behavior changes in the counterfactual scenario. This section provides supporting evidence for the assumptions made in the counterfactual about the outcome of the intervention following the military coup.

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[112] Huyser, 1986, p. 83.

[113] Huyser, 1986, p. 242.

[114] Sick, 1985, p. 84.

[115] Sullivan, 1981, pp. 239–240.

[116] Eisenstadt, 2011.

Table B.5
Iran: Assumptions and Supporting Evidence for Key Actors in the Counterfactual

Actors	Interests	Actions	Supporting Evidence
The Shah	• N/A (figurehead role)	• Retained as a figurehead	• Necessary to unite military leadership
Carter administration	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region • Prevent rise of oppositional government	• Encourage military coup • Opt for intervention	• Counterfactual assumes Carter administration supports the military coup
Brzezinski faction	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region	• Support military coup and crackdown	• Same as real-world case
Vance faction	• Retain key U.S. ally in the region	• Offer resignation	• Opposed coup in real-world case
Khomeini and radical Islamists	• Overthrow the Shah and head a revolutionary government	• Participate in revolution • Delay return until military government falls • Consolidate authority over other opposition factions	• Increased anti-American sentiment after failed intervention • Personal popularity • Intentions misjudged by U.S. officials and opposition
Pro-democracy opposition groups	• Overthrow the Shah and head or participate in a revolutionary government	• Participate in revolution	• Similar to real-world case
Tudeh Party	• Overthrow the Shah and head or participate in a revolutionary government	• Participate in revolution	• Similar to real-world case
Guerrilla organizations	• Overthrow the Shah and head or participate in a revolutionary government	• Participate in revolution	• Similar to real-world case

The Military's Ability to Restore Order

In the counterfactual, the military's ability to restore order by ending the protests and strikes is determined by the level of fragmentation among senior leadership, cohesion and morale among the lower ranks, and the level of violence against protestors following a military crackdown. As explored in the scenario, the military is unable to permanently end the protests and the strikes in part because of the inability of senior military leadership to agree on a unified response to the resumption of large-scale protests. The military leaders had an antagonistic relationship among themselves prior to the revolution because of the Shah's efforts to maximize competition among senior officers to assure their loyalty to him. The fragmented command structure impeded senior officer's efforts to devise and execute contingency plans in the real-world scenario. In the counterfactual, senior officers are unwilling to act without the approval of the Shah or to take the lead on suggesting a course of action for fear of taking responsibility should it fail. Factionalization and infighting among the senior leader military leadership prevents them from devising and executing contingency plans once the protests begin again.

Additionally, the success of the military government depends in part on the ability of the lower ranks of the military to carry out orders to fire on protestors and use other violent measures to disperse the crowds of protestors. In the counterfactual, although the military manages

to carry out these orders for a few days, this course of action proves unsustainable as morale declines, defections increase, and military units that defect clash with loyal units.

The success of the military government also depends on the level of casualties and violence that follow the coup and the announcement of martial law. In the counterfactual, although protests subside for a few weeks, several thousand protestors are killed when large-scale demonstrations begin again. U.S. officials differed in their expectations of the degree to which a military crackdown on protests would lead to a large number of casualties. Huyser believed that a military coup would not necessarily lead to widespread violence, arguing that protestors in the past had retreated quickly when the military used force against them.[117] However, most other U.S. officials believed that a military coup would generate a good deal of violence against civilians. Sullivan wrote in a late-December cable that the Iranian military leadership were "prepared for a massive crackdown which will involve a lot of blood being spilled."[118] Brzezinski later recounted that Vance, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Vice President Walter Mondale warned Carter that "a military solution, especially one undertaken without the Shah, would certainly precipitate a massive bloodbath."[119] The military was not trained in crowd-control techniques because the Shah had prioritized building an externally focused military in the 1960s and 1970s, and the military had fired on protestors at several points in 1978, leading to hundreds of civilian deaths. Additionally, the military coup in the counterfactual is led by General Oveisi, a hard-liner who favored a military crackdown in the real-world scenario. Thus, in the counterfactual scenario, a military crackdown on widespread protests leads to several thousand civilian casualties.

Taken together, the real-world scenario provides evidence to support our proposed counterfactual outcome, in which a military coup leads to a violent crackdown on protestors that would generate widespread casualties. This outcome further degrades military morale and leads to soldiers refusing to follow orders and, in certain cases, mutinying. The senior leadership is unable to agree on the policy direction for the military government as protests and violence continue, leading to the fall of the military government.

"Winners" of the Revolution

The outcome of which faction of the opposition would control the new government after senior military leaders fled the country was not preordained. In the real-world scenario, Khomeini and his supporters were able to neutralize other factions of the opposition and consolidate their authority through political means and the use of violence. The radical clerics who supported Khomeini had an advantage over other opposition groups, such as the National Front and Tudeh Party, which had been decimated after the 1963 uprising, and over guerrilla organizations, which were better organized and equipped but did not have the same levels of popular support. The process of consolidation was further accelerated by the domestic dynamics of the hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq War.

In the counterfactual scenario, the outcome is similar. Khomeini's popularity is further strengthened by the military coup and by the anti-American sentiment generated by U.S. support for the coup. This anti-American sentiment plays a similar role to the hostage crisis and

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[117] Huyser, 1986, p. 289.

[118] Quoted in Milani, 1994, p. 125.

[119] Brzezinski, 1983, p. 371.

the Iran-Iraq War in the real-world case by facilitating Khomeini's rise and accelerating the consolidation of the Islamic Republic's authority over other opposition factions.

U.S. Military Assets in the Region and Intervention Duration

The lack of permanent and pre-positioned U.S. military assets in the region constrained the options that U.S. policymakers faced once they recognized the seriousness of the crisis. In the counterfactual, the United States quickly moves a carrier strike group and some aircraft into the region and deploys units that are specifically designed to deploy rapidly with little warning, but it would take longer to deploy a larger number of regular forces: Such a deployment would pose far-more-complex logistical challenges, especially if those troops remained in the country for any length of time. Although it is by no means clear that a larger U.S. troop presence would have made the intervention more successful, since it would face the same barriers (including the popularity of the revolution and the lack of cohesion and morale in the Iranian military), the lack of military assets in the region limited the options available to policymakers when the crisis erupted.

How long might the 82nd Airborne and Marine amphibious unit in the south be expected to stay after the fall of the military government? This decision would be affected by U.S. public opinion, the Carter administration's preferences, and the dynamics of the postmilitary government environment. U.S. public support for the counterfactual intervention is not strong. In the immediate post-Vietnam environment, the U.S. public is deeply wary about sending the U.S. military abroad and is distrustful of the government's intentions: A 1978 Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll found that, in various hypothetical crisis scenarios, "a third or less of the public favored using U.S. troops."[120] Nor is the public supportive of sending U.S. troops abroad to provide support to an autocratic government that is violating the rights of its citizens, even though U.S. strategic interests in the region are at stake. President Carter is also unwilling to keep U.S. troops deployed abroad indefinitely, especially when they appear to be serving little function: Although they are (in theory) able to keep Iranian oil refineries and ports open, they have difficulty convincing Iranian workers to go back to work and finding foreign workers who are willing to work in such an unstable environment. For these reasons, when the Iranian government refuses to release the embassy hostages in the counterfactual scenario, U.S. officials are willing to avoid a protracted standoff during which U.S. civilians are at risk in exchange for withdrawing.

The key factors of this case study are summarized in Table B.6.

Costs of Intervention: Counterfactual

In this section, we compare the costs of the counterfactual intervention with the costs of the real-world scenario, in which the United States did not intervene. We consider three categories of variables: (1) the costs of intervention with regard to the trajectory of the crisis, (2) the costs in terms of the host nation's postconflict trajectory, and (3) the economic, domestic political, reputational, and strategic costs of intervention for the United States.

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[120] John E. Reilly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1979*, Chicago, Ill.: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1979, p. 26.

Table B.6
Iran: Key Factors

Factors	Real-World Case	Counterfactual
Military's ability to restore order	• Low cohesion among senior officers • Low morale among conscripts • Shah's orders and U.S. advice	• Low cohesion among senior officers • Low morale among conscripts • Violence against civilian protestors
"Winners" of the revolution	• Comparative capacity of opposition factions • Misjudgment of Khomeini's intentions • Khomeini's popularity	• Comparative capacity of opposition factions • Misjudgment of Khomeini's intentions • Khomeini's popularity • Reaction to U.S. support for the military government
Duration of U.S. intervention	• N/A	• U.S. public opinion • Carter administration's preferences • Local context

Crisis

A U.S. military intervention during the Iranian Revolution as outlined in the counterfactual extends the crisis and generates more violence. Although there is a temporary period of months immediately after the coup when the streets are quiet and there is some stability, the size and scale of protests again intensifies. The brutality of the military crackdown generates thousands of civilian deaths. Once the military government falls and the Shah departs, however, the crisis is similar to real-world events: Khomeini returns after a few weeks and appoints a government of radical clerics, and the next few years see more violence and repression as the new government consolidates its authority over the other factions of the opposition. The anti-American and anti-Shah sentiment heightened by the military coup would accelerate this process slightly but otherwise would not substantially change the outcome of the crisis.

Host-Nation Trajectory

The host-nation trajectory following the counterfactual intervention is similar to Iran's real-world trajectory following the revolution. The violence of the military crackdown and increased anti-western sentiment following the U.S. intervention empowers hard-liners in the new revolutionary government. In the real-world case, Khomeini's government took hard-line positions on domestic issues, such as women's rights and the imposition of Sharia law, early on. The new regime also took hard-line foreign policy positions from the beginning, including by refusing the return of the U.S. hostages seized in November 1979, calling on Iraqis to overthrow their government in 1979, going on the offensive against Iraq in 1982 during the Iran-Iraq War, and providing support for Shi'ia militia groups in Lebanon in the early 1980s. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine substantive differences in the domestic and foreign policies of an even more hard-line government than were implemented by the real-world revolutionary regime that emerged in 1979.

The revolutionary government following the counterfactual intervention causes the same oppression and human rights violations against the Iranian people as did the real-world government. Iran suffers similar economic issues because of economic sanctions, although the sanctions are not imposed after the hostage crisis but later in the 1980s in response to Iran's support for terrorist groups and the Lebanon barracks bombing. Additionally, the anti-western sentiment accelerated by U.S. support for the failed intervention facilitates the consolidation of

authority in the new clerical regime, helps more-radical leaders get elected to high offices, and provides the regime with a message that unifies the Iranian public in the face of international sanctions.

Costs for the United States

The economic costs for the United States in the counterfactual are slightly higher than in the real-world case. The United States pays the costs associated with deploying and providing logistical support to the 82nd Airborne and the Marine amphibious unit stationed in southern Iran for several months. Otherwise, the costs of the intervention are similar to the real-world case, since the United States maintained a two-carrier presence in the region during the hostage crisis in the actual case. The United States still becomes involved in the Iran-Iraq War and pays the costs of providing protection to merchant ships during the war (see below). The U.S. economy still suffers from the disruptions to the oil market when Iranian production levels decline, both during the military government and afterward.

The counterfactual scenario has lower domestic political costs than does the real-world case. Although the Carter administration is criticized for appearing weak when the military government falls and U.S. forces withdraw several months later, this event does not get the same kind of protracted media attention as the actual hostage crisis did over its course. Although the Carter administration therefore suffers some criticism for the conduct of the intervention, the Iranian Revolution has more-diffuse effects on the 1980 presidential elections. The failure of the counterfactual intervention also amplifies the post-Vietnam sentiment among the American public that the use of U.S. force abroad should be limited and strengthens isolationist factions within the American public. However, because the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam has already had such a large effect on the public's perceptions of U.S. foreign policy and the use of force abroad, the failure in Iran is not likely to change public perceptions significantly.

The failure of the counterfactual intervention does, however, have significant negative reputational and strategic costs for the United States. Observers attribute the rise of the fundamentalist, anti-American regime in Iran to the U.S. intervention: The intervention would therefore be seen not only as a failure in achieving the objective of sustaining the military government, but as actively causing harm by contributing to Khomeini's rise. Another unsuccessful intervention following so closely on the heels of the withdrawal from Vietnam leads to negative perceptions of U.S. military strength. Pundits worry about what this failure could mean for the global balance of power in a context in which the Soviet Union intervenes in Afghanistan soon after the fall of the Iranian military government. The United States suffers additional reputational costs for providing support to a regime that openly kills its own citizens during the crackdown on protestors. Support for the failed military coup also has a significant negative effect on U.S. reputation in terms of popular opinion in Iran and in the Middle East region more broadly. Rising anti-Western sentiment in the region generates public support for opposition movements in other countries in the region, leading to increased domestic instability in moderate Arab regimes that are allied with the United States, including the Arab Gulf states.

The failed intervention also has significant strategic costs for the United States. In the counterfactual scenario, regional allies (including Saudi Arabia and the other Arab countries of the Gulf) are unsettled by the apparent U.S. inability to defend a critical ally. U.S. intervention in Iran generates increased domestic instability in allies such as Saudi Arabia, with incidents like the siege of Mecca occurring with increasing frequency across the region and protests in

front of the U.S. embassy occurring in several Muslim-majority countries. Allies in the region worry about the potential for revolution to spread across borders and to inspire like-minded opposition movements in their own countries, but they are also concerned that the United States might not live up to its promises to defend its allies in the region. They also fear the hegemonic ambitions of the new theocratic Iranian state. By laying claim to leadership of the Muslim world, Khomeini and his regime pose a direct threat to the Saudi monarchy's claims to this leadership role as the custodians of the most important Muslim holy sites.[121] Some of these countries begin to seek support from the Soviet Union, creating a spiral dynamic whereby the United States and Soviet Union are both compelled to provide more weapons and other forms of support to these countries, further destabilizing the region. The instability increases the risk that the United States and Soviet Union could get drawn into a regional conflict. These costs come on top of the large strategic costs that the United States suffered in the real-world case, including the loss of a key regional ally and the creation of an opponent that harms U.S. strategic interests in the region by destabilizing regional allies, supporting terrorist groups in places such as Lebanon, threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, and so forth.

As in the real-world case, radical Iranian students take U.S. embassy personnel hostage in November 1979; rather than freeing the U.S. personnel, Khomeini uses the ensuing crisis to shore up domestic support by playing on anti-American sentiment and increasing feelings of nationalism among the population. In the real-world case, the U.S. embassy compound was overrun on several occasions during the revolution, but the new regime's security forces intervened to free the U.S. staff prior to November 1979. Given the lack of adequate security at the embassy compound and the anti-American orientation of the new regime, it is plausible that a similar hostage crisis would have occurred following the counterfactual intervention. Because the failed intervention averts a prolonged hostage crisis, the relationship between the United States and Iran is not as immediately antagonistic in the counterfactual. U.S. officials hope to build a diplomatic relationship with the new regime to encourage it toward democracy and moderate policy positions.[122] U.S. officials also have a more favorable view of the Khomeini government initially, but this effect quickly wears off. Taking advantage of the anti-American sentiment that pervades the opposition after the failed intervention, Khomeini delivers a series of fiery speeches denouncing Western influence in Iran. These sorts of statements and speeches, as well as the regime's support for terrorist organizations in the region (such as Hezbollah), quickly sour the relationship. The failed intervention therefore does not substantially alter the contours of the U.S.-Iran relationship following the revolution when compared with the real-world scenario.[123]

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[121] Trofimov, 2007, p. 57.

[122] In the real-world scenario, the Khomeini-appointed opposition government was divided on the question of what the new government's relationship with the United States should look like. Prime Minister Bazargan "believed he had the Revolutionary Council's mandate to pursue normalization of relations with the United States" and even met with Brzezinski in Algiers on November 1, 1979. However, Bazargan opposed the taking of U.S. embassy hostages and resigned two days into the hostage crisis, on November 6, 1979; Bakhash, 1984, p. 70. This division suggests that the U.S.-Iran relationship in the counterfactual might have gotten off to a better start in the absence of a protracted hostage crisis.

[123] Reflecting on discussions within the administration about whether to support a military coup, Gary Sick later wrote, "Even if the military succeeded in restoring control, the United States would have mortgaged any future relationship with Iran by associating itself with what almost certainly would have been extensive bloodletting and a direct confrontation with Islam. The risks of such a policy within Iran and the region were incalculable." Sick, 1985, p. 171.

Finally, a war between Iraq and Iran also has costs for U.S. strategic interests in the region. Much like the real-world case (although on a delayed timeline), Saddam Hussein fears that the revolutionary government will foment instability within Iraq's majority Shi'ia population and senses an opportune moment to strike when Iran's military and government are in disarray. The ensuing war has further destabilizing effects for U.S. regional allies, much like the Iran-Iraq War in the real-world scenario.

Conclusion

In this case study, we assessed how the Iranian Revolution might have turned out had the United States intervened. We outlined a counterfactual in which U.S. officials encourage a military coup and intervene to support the new military government. Because of low military cohesion and morale and the overwhelming popularity of the opposition, the intervention is unsuccessful, and the military government is replaced by the Khomeini-led clerical opposition. As compared to the real-world scenario, the intervention would not have had a long-lasting effect on the outcome of the revolution but would have led to many more civilian deaths and would have increased anti-American sentiment in Iran and the region. The United States would suffer larger reputational and strategic costs, but the economic and domestic political costs would be similar to the real-world scenario, in which there was no U.S. military intervention.

This case is unusual for several reasons. First, the overwhelming popularity of the revolution against the Shah made the Iranian Revolution one of few revolutions in history to mobilize an entire society, virtually shutting down the entire country for months. The sheer size of the crowds protesting and the number of workers striking meant that, by late 1978, there was likely little that outside parties or the Shah could do to appease them short of regime change. Iran's population numbered more than 37 million in 1979, living in a territory of more than 1.5 million square kilometers, making it one of the largest countries in the region. Taken together, Iran's sheer size and the overwhelming popularity of the revolution made it highly unlikely that a small-scale or limited-duration intervention could halt the revolution's momentum and prevent regime change by late 1978. For these reasons, this counterfactual case study suggests that the United States might have a limited ability to prevent or affect the course of regime change in cases in which there is a great deal of popular support, especially in host countries with large populations and geographic size.

Additionally, Iran was a critical regional ally of the United States in the Middle East and occupied the central role in several U.S. administrations' strategic approach to the region. As the country closest to achieving regional hegemony at the time of the revolution, it was also a fulcrum in the region's balance of power dynamics. These dynamics made the threat of regime change in Iran a particularly high-stakes problem.

This case also demonstrates that regional power projection capabilities can limit or facilitate the size of a potential U.S. military intervention. The United States had no permanent assets in the Middle East region in the late 1970s, preferring to provide key allies with weapons so that they could defend themselves and stabilize the region. Although this strategy led to substantial cost savings (and was necessary because U.S. allies refused to host permanent bases, fearing domestic backlash), it also limited the options available to policymakers when a crisis erupted.

This case also points to the necessity of good intelligence to inform intervention decisions. U.S. intelligence agencies failed to read the warning signs of an impending crisis in

Iran and failed to alert policymakers. Better intelligence was necessary to help policymakers assess the factors on the ground that could have made intervention a possibility—such as the morale and cohesion of the military, the relative popularity of the opposition, and the Shah's state of mind—and then to help them assess whether an intervention would have been likely to succeed. The U.S. intelligence failures regarding the Iranian Revolution limited the options available to policymakers. Instead, President Carter was unable to get a good read on whether the Iranian military would be able to successfully implement a coup, and uncertainty about the on-the-ground dynamics therefore significantly inhibited the administration's decision-making. Better intelligence collection within an allied state also would have trade-offs, potentially affecting the U.S. relationship with the Shah's regime, but would have informed White House policymakers that the Iranian Revolution had reached a crisis stage sooner and would have helped them get a better read on the cohesion of the Iranian military at all levels and the popularity of the revolution, which were factors that they were getting conflicting reports on from Ambassador Sullivan and General Huyser.

The counterfactual also points to the need for U.S. policymakers to take the human rights implications of intervention into account in addition to strategic considerations. In the counterfactual, the optics of intervening to support an autocratic regime that violates the rights of its citizens and kills protestors has significant reputational costs, which lead to strategic costs when the intervention generates anti-American sentiment that further destabilizes the region.

The counterfactual also indicates that there are limits to the effects that U.S. military intervention can produce, particularly where only limited U.S. military and intelligence assets in the region are available. Nevertheless, U.S. policymakers could be prone to overestimating the potential effects of U.S. intervention, leading to greater costs if the intervention fails. Even with the benefit of hindsight, there was probably little that the United States could have done in 1978 or 1979 "that could have significantly changed the course of events," given limited U.S. assets in the region and the popularity of the revolution.[124] This case suggests that U.S. policymakers might sometimes overestimate the extent to which the United States has the ability to change the outcome of a major crisis.

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[124] Keddie, 2006, p. 236.

Korea, 1950

Introduction

The Korean War erupted when North Korea invaded South Korea early in the morning of Sunday, June 25, 1950. The attack by the Korean People's Army (KPA) came as a complete surprise to the South. The United States presented a resolution at the UN Security Council and condemned North Korea for its attack. When North Korea did not withdraw to the 38th parallel despite the UN's request, the United States intervened in the conflict as part of a multinational coalition under the banner of the UN. Neither North Korea nor the Soviet Union, which backed Pyongyang's bid to reunify the peninsula, had expected this outcome. The United States contributed the lion's share of soldiers and air and sea forces to the UN forces.[1] Before these forces arrived en masse, the battle-hardened KPA, with many veterans of the Chinese Civil War, achieved notable early successes. Republic of Korea (ROK) forces, along with a handful of U.S. forces that were rushed to Korea at the time of the attack, were initially pushed down the peninsula to the southwest corner, known as the Busan Perimeter. However, following a daring September amphibious landing behind North Korean lines at the port city of Incheon, UN forces recaptured Seoul and began to roll back the invading KPA forces. By November 1950, UN forces had reversed the North's successes and penetrated deep into North Korea, approaching the border with China. By January 1951, the People's Republic of China (PRC) had dispatched hundreds of thousands of "Chinese People's Volunteers" (CPV) to back crumbling KPA forces. The Chinese intervention reversed the tide of the war once again, but battle lines soon stabilized not far from the 38th parallel, the original line demarcating the border between North and South Korea.

After one year of fighting, in June 1951, the involved parties realized that changing the front line further would be costly.[2] Consequently, lengthy negotiations for an armistice began, and the participants agreed by the end of July 1951 on an agenda for armistice talks. By March 1952, they agreed on all the items on the agenda other than an item that dealt with the repatriation of prisoners of war (POWs). This issue delayed the negotiations for 15 months. The UN Command had suggested voluntary POW repatriation, but Chinese and North Korean forces wanted all of their POWs returned. This posed a problem because some prisoners had been conscripted into the CPV or KPA and did not wish to return to their countries of origin. The negotiations stalled until March 30, 1953, three weeks after Joseph Stalin's death. After Stalin died, the Soviets and the Chinese compromised on the principle of voluntary repatriation of POWs, and the negotiations resumed on April 26.[3] The major-power participants finally reached an agreement and signed the armistice on July 27, 1953.[4]

The two Koreas did not have much influence over the decisions made at the negotiating table, even though the war was fought on their land. In particular, North Korea was ready to

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[1] At the same time, the United States sent the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait, without realizing the negative effect it would have on Chinese thinking. Robert Jervis, "The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 1980, p. 582.

[2] William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, paperback ed., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 358.

[3] Elizabeth A. Stanley, "Ending the Korean War: The Role of Domestic Coalition Shifts in Overcoming Obstacles to Peace," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Summer 2009, p. 63.

[4] Stanley, 2009, p. 63.

end the war around January 1952. South Korea's leaders preferred to fight until they had unified the peninsula, but without support from the United States and its allies, they could not do this on their own. As a result, the war ended with an armistice that South Korea decided not to sign.[5]

Why did the United States choose to intervene in the Korean War? What were the implications of this intervention? And what might have happened had the United States chosen not to intervene? These are the key questions that we consider in this case study. First, we provide a detailed assessment of the historical case, covering the U.S. interests involved at that time and considering the U.S. rationale for intervention. Then, we discuss the costs and benefits for the United States that resulted from the intervention, including economic, domestic, reputational, and strategic costs and benefits. We then analyze other key actors' interests before and during the Korean War, including those of the Soviet Union, the newly established PRC, and the two Koreas.

Following this analysis of the historical reality, we assess a counterfactual scenario in which the United States chooses not to intervene in the Korean War. After sketching out this scenario, we analyze the key factors that would likely have led to a different outcome of the war and how this change would have affected the interests of the key actors. In particular, we analyze U.S. costs and benefits that would likely have resulted from the nonintervention decision. We conclude with a discussion of policy implications for future intervention decisions.

U.S. Participation in the Korean War

U.S. Strategic Interests

The overriding U.S. global strategic interest prior to the Korean War was containing the Soviet Union, including its military might (primarily in Europe) and its communist ideology worldwide. However, avoiding any direct military conflict with the Soviets that could potentially escalate to general war was also a priority.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, U.S. decisionmakers believed that the Soviet Union was involved in the war alongside North Korea, if not orchestrating it, and felt that this expansionist move must stop. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson said,

> The very fact of this aggression . . . constitute[s] undeniable proof that the forces of international communism possess not only the willingness, but also the intention, of attacking and invading any free nation within their reach at any time that they think they can get away with it. The real significance of the North Korean aggression lies in this evidence that, even at the resultant risk of starting a third world war, communism is willing to resort to armed aggression, whenever it believes it can win.[6]

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[5]   Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Paths to Peace: Domestic Coalition Shifts, War Termination and the Korean War*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009, Ch. 3; Stueck, 1997; Kathryn Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996, Document 102, pp. 75–76; Shen Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution During the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 14–15, Winter 2003–Spring 2004, p. 19; William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 191–193.

[6]   U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Supplemental Appropriations for 1951: Hearings Before the Committee on Appropriations*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950, p. 272; cited in Jervis, 1980, p. 579.

As a result of this diagnosis of this aggression by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the United States felt it had to demonstrate resolve, even in the more peripheral area of Korea, so that the Soviet estimation of U.S. resolve in core strategic areas, including Western Europe, was not undermined.

Why Did the United States Intervene?

There were three key factors preceding North Korea's invasion of the South that are crucial for explaining why the United States viewed the Korean War in the manner described above and why it chose to intervene: (1) the Soviet Union's increasing military capabilities and influence, (2) the communist victory in the long-running Chinese Civil War, and (3) the "Red Scare" in the United States.

In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb, which ended the U.S. nuclear monopoly. This occurred several years earlier than the United States anticipated.[7] Adding to U.S. concerns, the Soviet Union had recently demanded that Turkey allow joint control of the Dardanelles, which connect the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and U.S. policymakers believed that the Soviet Union was indirectly involved in the Greek Civil War by aiding the communist-led National Liberation Front.[8] As a response, the United States adopted the Truman Doctrine, clarifying U.S. intent to contain communism.[9] President Harry S. Truman further ordered the NSC to conduct an analysis comparing Soviet and U.S. military capabilities. This report later became known as "NSC-68," which recommended heavy military increases to contain the Soviet Union.[10] However, the U.S. government thought that the European theater needed the most-urgent increase in conventional capability.[11]

Adding to U.S. concerns, China's Communist Party (under the leadership of Mao Zedong) took power in 1949, with Chinese nationalists led by Chiang Kai-Shek retreating to Taiwan. In 1950, Mao and Stalin signed the Mutual Defense Treaty.[12] In the United States, the Republican Party criticized the Truman administration for losing China by not providing enough assistance to Chiang's nationalists.[13] The domestic political rationale for taking a stronger position against the communist regime even appeared in U.S. diplomatic cables at the time.[14] In the United States, Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin started his infamous

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[7]   Samuel F. Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Fall 1979, p. 117.

[8]   Dennis Merrill, "The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1, March 2006, p. 31.

[9]   Scott D. Parrish and Mikhail M. Narinsky, *New Evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947: Two Reports*, Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 9, March 1994, p. 11.

[10]   John Lewis Gaddis and Paul Nitze, "NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat Reconsidered," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Spring 1980.

[11]   Jervis, 1980, p. 577; Stueck, 1997, p. 356.

[12]   Shen Zhihua, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s*, trans. Neil Silver, New York: Routledge, 2012.

[13]   William Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy Toward China and Korea, 1947–1950*, paperback ed., Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, p. 65.

[14]   Jervis, 1980, p. 583.

hunt for communists within the U.S. government, known as McCarthyism. As a result, the Truman administration was under severe pressure not to appear soft on communism.[15]

Deterring the Soviet Union and containing communist expansion were the two most pressing international concerns of the Truman administration in the wake of North Korea's invasion. Combined with U.S. domestic factors, the Truman administration was strongly motivated to intervene and save South Korea.

Although these factors motivated the U.S. intervention, the U.S. decision to intervene still appears to have conflicted with the "defensive perimeter" that Secretary of State Dean Acheson described at the National Press Club on January 12, 1950, just five months before North Korea's invasion. As stated, the U.S. defensive perimeter only included Japan, the Ryukyus (Okinawa), and the Philippines and did not include what is currently the ROK and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Beyond these three areas, he said, "it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack."[16] If areas outside the perimeter were to be attacked, "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon . . . the United Nations which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression."[17] Given the apparent contradiction between Acheson's remarks and the later U.S. intervention decision, it is important to understand the U.S. foreign policy surrounding the defensive perimeter speech, how it was perceived by U.S. adversaries, and how it did or did not differ from the decision to intervene in South Korea.

Soviet policy at the time was highly concerned about the possibility of direct conflict with the United States, and the concern that a war in Korea might lead to such a conflict persisted, notwithstanding Acheson's speech. Through declassified documents from the Soviet Union's archives, we can confirm that North Korea's invasion was approved by Stalin on the condition that the Soviet Union would not directly engage in the conflict other than aiding with military equipment.[18] For example, Stalin allowed the KPA to use Soviet ships but did not allow any Soviet personnel on board because "it may give the adversary a pretext for interference by the USA."[19] Stalin would face the Western challenge elsewhere, and China would supply reinforcements to North Korea as necessary.[20] However, Soviet pilots did eventually provide air cover to parts of North Korea and directly engaged with U.S. pilots. Although this fact was known by the United States, Washington never raised it with Moscow to avoid an escalation that might lead to direct conflict between the superpowers.

Declassified documents further reveal that despite widely held South Korean beliefs to the contrary, Acheson's National Press Club speech did not substantially affect North Korean, Soviet, or Chinese incentives to participate in the Korean War. Stalin still feared the possibility

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[15] Stueck, 2017, p. 256. Also see U.S. Department of State, "NSC-68, 1950," webpage, undated a.

[16] Dean Acheson, "Speech on the Far East," speech delivered at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., January 12, 1950a.

[17] Acheson, 1950a.

[18] This section draws on the unpublished manuscript *The Korean Conflict, 1950–1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century* by Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova.

[19] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov," June 21, 1950c.

[20] International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevic), "Report on Kim Il Sung's Visit to the USSR, March 30–April 25, 1950," Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, April 25, 1950.

that the United States would intervene after Acheson's speech.[21] Furthermore, the announcement of the defense perimeter did not deviate from U.S. foreign policy at that time. After the Guomindang were defeated, the United States already had determined that it would not intervene in the Chinese mainland or in future conflicts on nearby islands, including Formosa. General Douglas MacArthur had also placed South Korea outside the U.S. defense perimeter in March 1949 to justify moving U.S. troops from South Korea to Japan. Also, Acheson's speech was a "defensive political gambit" that Secretary of Defense Johnson forced him to write in order to silence Republican criticism of the Truman administration's policy toward China.[22] The Truman administration hoped to establish a relationship with the PRC.

Furthermore, the defense perimeter was not the only component of Acheson's speech. The speech was asking for Congress's approval of economic aid that could be provided to South Korea for its economic stability, which could lead to democratic institutions that are resilient to communism and allow for growth in the future. Acheson was confident that the United States had a "greater opportunity to be effective" in Korea than in other places in Asia.[23] With the speech, the United States intended to discourage Syngman Rhee from engaging in military conflict while economically aiding South Korea. By putting South Korea outside of the defense perimeter, the United States hoped to encourage its future ally to be restrained, signaling that the United States would not guarantee its security.[24] Declassified Soviet documents show that Stalin believed it was going to be the South which would provoke the North and that he did "everything to avoid provoking Washington and Seoul."[25] This is evident in Stalin's actions, such as his refusal to sign the Soviet-North Korea Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in January 1949, an event which embarrassed Kim Il Sung. Furthermore, although Stalin agreed to provide some economic aid, he said, "The 38th parallel must be peaceful. It is very important."[26]

Notwithstanding these prior signals on Korea (in the Acheson speech and elsewhere), the Truman administration did not have to debate intensively to reach the decision to aid South Korea and intervene in the Korean War, for the reasons discussed above. The incentives for the United States to intervene were strong. The Acheson speech that set the defense perimeter was also not the main cause of the Soviet endorsement of the North's invasion of the South. The Soviets remained cautious about provoking the United States despite the speech. That said, had the United States placed South Korea inside the defense perimeter in the Acheson speech and in other similar statements of U.S. policy, it is quite possible that the DPRK invasion could have been deterred. Ultimately, despite seemingly incoherent U.S. policy, the United States had ample reasons to intervene by the time North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950: the fall of Nationalist China, the end of the U.S. nuclear monopoly, the Red Scare in domestic politics, and the strategic imperative to deter the Soviet Union and the expansion of communism.

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[21] Perhaps this is why Stalin did not provide troops to North Korea.

[22] Ronald McGlothlen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia*, New York: Norton, 1993.

[23] Dean Acheson, "Crisis in Asia—An Examination of U.S. Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 551, January 23, 1950.

[24] Lloyd C. Gardner, "Introduction," in Lloyd C. Gardner, ed., *The Korean War*, New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972, p. 17; J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea*, Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p. 31; John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War*, New York: Norton, 1965, pp. 17–19.

[25] Evgueni Bajanov, "Assessing the Politics of the Korean War, 1949-51," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996.

[26] Bajanov, 1995/1996, p. 54.

U.S. Contributions in the Korean War

In this section, we describe the U.S. contributions to the real-world intervention into the Korean War in 1950. The United States started to get involved in the war the day after its outbreak. Regardless of the prewar U.S. statements, the United States viewed the KPA crossing the 38th parallel as "the opening of a global advance by the Communist bloc, and even perhaps the start of World War III."[27] There appears to have been only limited internal policy debate in the Truman administration regarding the decision to intervene. Truman, the State Department, and the Department of the Army had a conference at Blair House the day after learning of the North Korean attack and reached a consensus. Truman recalled that there was "unspoken acceptance" and that "whatever had to be done to meet this aggression had to be done."[28] Admiral Forrest Sherman also said, "If the Soviet[s] want war, they will have it."[29] U.S. forces in Korea expanded throughout the second half of 1950. Truman provided air and naval support to Korea following a UN Security Council resolution on July 27, 1950. On September 15, units of the U.S. Army X Corps landed at Incheon. Within a week, more than 6,000 vehicles, 25,000 tons of equipment and supplies, and 53,000 persons had arrived at Incheon.[30] By the end of October 1950, when General MacArthur was marching toward the Yalu River, he had six Army divisions, two regimental combat teams, and one Marine division. He commanded a total of 214,000 U.S. personnel in Korea and Japan.[31] By June 1951, the U.S. Army had expanded from 590,000 personnel at the start of the war to more than 1,530,000 and remained at roughly this strength through the signing of the armistice in 1953.[32]

The Costs and Benefits of the U.S. Intervention

The most-acute costs paid by the United States in the Korean War came on the battlefield. The number of total deaths of American military personnel who served in the Korean War was 36,574, which included 33,739 battle deaths. The number of wounded soldiers was 103,284.[33] The casualties suffered by the other 15 members of the UN Command was approximately 17,000.[34]

The total military cost of war in Korea between 1950 and 1953 was roughly $30 billion, or about $341 billion in 2011 dollars. That sum was equivalent to 4.2 percent of U.S. GDP in the peak year of 1952. Also in 1952, U.S. defense spending comprised 13.2 percent of GDP.[35]

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[27] Shen, 2012, p. 135.

[28] Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs By Harry S. Truman: 1945 Year of Decisions*, reissue ed., New York: William S. Konecky Associates, 1999, p. 332; cited in Dennis D. Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur and the Korean War: June 1950–July 1951*, paperback ed., New York: Enigma Books, 2011, p. 9.

[29] Wainstock, 2011, p. 9.

[30] Terrence J. Gough, *US Army Mobilization and Logistics in the Korean War: A Research Approach*, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1987, p. 7.

[31] Gough, 1987, p. 7.

[32] Gough, 1987, pp. 12, 17.

[33] Nese F. DeBruyne, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RL32492, updated September 24, 2019.

[34] U.S. Department of State, *A Historical Summary of Untied States-Korean Relations: With a Chronology of Important Developments 1834–1962*, Washington, D.C., 1962.

[35] Stephen Daggett, *Costs of Major U.S. Wars*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RS22926, June 29, 2010.

The U.S. government still pays compensation benefits to Korean War veterans and families, which costs about $2.8 billion per year.[36]

Because the United States made the swift decision to intervene under the banner of the UN Forces, reputational costs were limited. However, there were some strategic costs in terms of U.S. relations with North Korea and China. U.S. heavy aerial bombing of North Korea changed that country's military strategy and ideology in the 1950s in ways that persist today. The U.S. Air Force "dropped 386,037 tons of bombs and 32,357 tons of napalm and fired 313,600 rockets and 166,853,100 rounds of machine-gun ammunition during the war."[37] The destruction done by aerial bombing was proportionately greater than that done to Japan in World War II.[38] Even by U.S. assessments, the bombing campaign was unnecessary. Air Force General Curtis LeMay said, "Over a period of three years or so, we killed off—what— 20 percent of the population."[39] Near the end of the war, when U.S. pilots ran out of targets, the bombing included nonurban targets, such as hydroelectric and irrigation dams, which destroyed agricultural lands and crops.[40] As a result, Kim Il Sung became paranoid about U.S. destructive capabilities, and the leadership still uses this experience as a propaganda tool in North Korea, where every child learns of the bombing campaign as a holocaust.[41] Although the bombing campaign strategically made sense at that time because of the enemy's numerical superiority and U.S. technological superiority, the action also helped foreclose the possibility of rapprochement with North Korea, feeding that country's paranoia and antagonism toward the United States, which became a strategic cost after the war.

Furthermore, by intervening in the Korean War and crossing the 38th parallel, the United States found itself engaging directly with the PRC military. Scholars agree that the Korean War is the critical formative event in shaping U.S. relations with the PRC.[42] The Korean War created mutual enmity between the two countries that lasted for two decades. Although the PRC was a communist country closely aligned with the Soviet Union after signing an alliance treaty in early 1950, the Truman administration had adopted a strategy of not endorsing or becoming involved in Taiwan affairs to leave open the possibility of trade and relations with mainland China, with the hope of driving a wedge between the Soviet Union and the PRC.[43] However, after the Korean War, such a possibility was foreclosed for decades because the United States treated the two countries as a Sino-Soviet bloc that needed to be contained.

Although there were few (if any) reputational costs for the U.S. intervention in the Korean War, there were several reputational benefits. The United States was seen as the defender of democracy and demonstrated its resolve to its partners in East Asia and Europe. Further, the

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[36] Baker, Mike, "AP: Costs of US Wars Linger for over 100 Years," *Associated Press*, March 19, 2013.

[37] James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War*, New York: W. Morrow, 1988, p. 254; cited in B. C. Koh, "The War's Impact on the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of American–East Asian Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1993, p. 58.

[38] Zachary Keck, "How American Air Power Destroyed North Korea," *National Interest*, August 12, 2017.

[39] Blaine Harden, "The U.S. War Crime North Korea Won't Forget," *Washington Post*, March 24, 2015.

[40] Harden, 2015.

[41] Liam Stack, "Korean War, a 'Forgotten' Conflict that Shaped the Modern World," *New York Times*, January 1, 2018.

[42] Allan R. Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-51: They Came from the North*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2010, p. 17.

[43] James I. Matray, "Beijing and the Paper Tiger: The Impact of the Korean War on Sino-American Relations," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2011; Jervis, 1980, p. 576.

U.S. decision not to use nuclear weapons (though it was considered), despite its conventional forces being hard-pressed, laid the foundation for the "nuclear taboo" that emerged because the Korean War was the first test case for nuclear powers to not use the weapon in a war when their opponent did not have nuclear weapons.

The strategic benefits the United States gained through the intervention included a stronger alliance network in East Asia, as well as in Western Europe. After Korea, the Truman administration was better able to justify its requested defense budget increases to Congress. The war also deepened the U.S. relationship with Japan. The United States returned sovereignty to Japan and legalized the U.S. forces in Japan on April 29, 1952.[44] Japan's economy immensely benefited from the Korean War, mainly though the UN forces' "direct procurement" program, which increased exports and reduced imports.[45] With a stronger Japanese economy and military, the country clearly became the most important strategic partner for the United States in East Asia.

Furthermore, the Korean War "was a turning point in the history of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)] alliance," because the war led to a "massive increase" in U.S. conventional military capabilities.[46] Moreover, because of heightened concerns about potential communist aggression after Korea, "the German question was revived and acquired an urgency that had been lacking before."[47] The Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO, and the United States continued to build a stronger alliance network in Europe. These changes might have happened even without the U.S. intervention in the Korean War, but the process of convincing the U.S. public of the need for defense budget increases in particular was much smoother after the North Korean invasion and the U.S. response.

Host-Nation Trajectory

In terms of host-nation costs and benefits, North Korea calculated its losses at $1.7 billion, and South Korea calculated its losses at $2 billion, which is roughly equivalent to South Korea's entire GDP for 1949. North Korea lost about 8,700 industrial plants, and South Korea lost twice as many. South and North Korea lost about 60,000 homes each.[48] The most long-lasting cost, of course, was that Korea is still divided into two countries, even long after the end of the Cold War.

However, after the war ended in 1953, the United States signed a defense treaty with the ROK and trained and provided arms to the South Korean military forces.[49] The United States continued to support South Korea not only through the military aid but also through economic aid. From 1953 to 1961, U.S. aid financed almost 70 percent of total imports and 75 percent of total fixed capital formation.[50]

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[44] Shen, 2012, p. 121.

[45] Saburo Okita, "Japan's Economy and the Korean War," *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 14, July 25, 1951, p. 141.

[46] Walter Lafeber, "NATO and the Korean War: A Context," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Fall 1989, p. 461.

[47] Lafeber, 1989, p. 461.

[48] Koh, 1993.

[49] Michael J. Nojeim, "US Foreign Policy and the Korean War," *Asian Security*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2006, p. 137.

[50] Stephan Haggard, Byung-kook Kim, and Chung-in Moon, "The Transition to Export-Led Growth in South Korea: 1954–1966," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 4, November 1991, p. 852.

Key Actors and Interests

To help build our theoretical model of this case, we identify in this section the key actors in the Korean War (direct participants and major stakeholders), their interests in the conflict, and the key actions each took throughout the war and its aftermath.

The Soviet Union's Interests

Before the Korean War broke out, the Soviet Union had several strategic interests and concerns in the region. The Soviet Union was greatly concerned about guaranteeing its political and economic interests in the Far East, including maintaining a buffer zone in case of Japanese rearmament. It was also interested in the United States focusing more on the region to draw attention away from Europe. After the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) agreed to support North Korea's invasion of South Korea, its priority became not escalating the conflict into one that might drag the Soviet Union into a major war with the United States. The Soviet Union believed that the two countries were bound by the post–World War II agreement that both the United States and Soviet Union would not participate in combat activities on the other side of the 38th parallel, which also gave the Soviets a clear justification for not directly supporting the North Korean advance. Indeed, the Soviet Union was focused on limiting the visibility of its presence during the Korean War, including in the supply of weapons and fighter pilots, providing the United States with a plausible deniability that any violation of prior agreements had occurred. These interests before and after the war led to a series of shifting Soviet policies toward the DPRK and attitude toward the war over time, which are laid out below.[51]

Policy of Restraint

Before the decision to endorse the North Korean invasion, Stalin's greatest regional security fear was Japan's rearmament. He believed that Japan could again threaten the Soviet Far East, potentially using the Korean Peninsula as the pathway to continental Asia.[52] The prospect of a North Korean advance on the peninsula was therefore not entirely unwelcome, though it raised several potential complications and concerns.

Kim Il Sung visited Moscow in March 1949 as the first official delegation of the DPRK. This was the first occasion in which Kim Il Sung asked for permission to invade South Korean territory. At the time, he asked for permission to seize the Ongjin Peninsula.[53] Despite the peninsula's location south of the 38th parallel, South Korea did not have land access to the Ongjin Peninsula, and the territory was used to stage provocations against North Korean forces. Kim suggested that if the operation to seize the Ongjin Peninsula went well, he would be able to "organize a number of uprisings in South Korea," and then he could continue his offensive against the South.[54] Stalin did not approve the plan at that time for two reasons. First, he feared that the United States would intervene, because the invasion could be inter-

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[51]   Kathryn Weathersby, *"Should We Fear This?" Stalin and the Danger of War with America*, Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 39, July 2002, pp. 23–26.

[52]   Katheryn Weathersby, *Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives*, Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 8, November 1993, p. 12.

[53]   Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from [Grigorii Ivanovich] Tunkin, [Chargé d'Affaires of the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang] to the Kremlin," September 3, 1949b.

[54]   Shen, 2012, p. 112.

preted as violating the 1945 agreement with the USSR that divided the peninsula at the 38th parallel. Second, U.S. troops were still stationed on the peninsula, and Stalin believed that the South Korean military was superior to that of the North. Stalin might have been more likely to approve the invasion at that time if U.S. troops had been withdrawn or if the North Korean army were stronger.[55] On September 24, 1949, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Politburo sent Ambassador Terenty Shtykov to inform Kim Il Sung and North Korean Foreign Minister Park Hon-young that the Soviet Union would not authorize a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula: "Since North Korea does not have the necessary superiority of military forces in comparison with South Korea . . . a military attack on the South is now completely unprepared and therefore . . . is not allowed."[56] In October 1949, Stalin reprimanded Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Shtykov for allowing the North to attack the South's positions along the 38th parallel in limited clashes.[57] Stalin emphasized that such provocation is "very dangerous for our interests and can induce the adversary to launch a big war."[58]

Policy of Support

Stalin's decision changed in January 1950, when he determined that the time was ripe for the North's offensive against the South.[59] When Kim Il Sung asked once again for Stalin's permission to attack the South, Stalin said he is "ready to help him in this matter" and invited Kim to visit Moscow for discussion.[60] What changed between October 1949 and January 1950?[61]

According to a report prepared by the Central Committee's International Department that summarizes the conversations among Stalin, Kim, and North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Hon-yong in April 1950, three changes occurred internationally: the Chinese Communist Party's victory in the Chinese Civil War, evidence of U.S. reluctance to get involved in Asian conflicts, and the detonation of the Soviet nuclear bomb.[62] According to the report,

> the Chinese Communist Party's victory over the Guomindang has improved the environment for actions in Korea. China is no longer busy with internal fighting and can devote its attention and energy to the assistance of Korea. If necessary, China has at its disposal troops which can be utilized in Korea without any harm to the other needs of China.[63]

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[55] Conversation between Stalin and the governmental delegation of the DPRK headed by the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK Kim Il Sung, March 7, 1949.

[56] Shen, 2012, p. 113.

[57] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov," October 30, 1949d.

[58] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, 1949d.

[59] Among the available declassified documents, Stalin's January 30, 1950, cable to Ambassador Shtykov is the first indication of Stalin's change of mind. See Shen, 2012, p. 116. Also see Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov," Washington, D.C.: History and Public Policy Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, January 30, 1950a.

[60] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, 1950a.

[61] Shen, 2012, p. 106.

[62] If Stalin changed his mind in January 1950 and gave the green light to Kim Il Sung, April 1950 is when he gave final approval for the war. Shen, 2012, p. 117.

[63] International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), 1950.

Not only was Chinese capability now available in contingency, but the Chinese victory also helped psychologically. The summary stated, "It has proved the strength of Asian revolutionaries, and shown the weakness of Asian reactionaries and mentors in the West, in America. Americans left China and did not dare to challenge the new Chinese authorities militarily."[64] Although Stalin had initially refused Mao's request to replace the 1945 treaty with Nationalist China with the newly established PRC, Stalin proposed signing a new Sino-Soviet treaty on January 6, 1950. The newly formed defense pact between China and the USSR, Stalin likely reasoned, was an additional help.[65] The Soviet report said that because of the alliance between the two countries, "Americans will be even more hesitant to challenge the Communists in Asia. According to information coming from the United States, it is really so. The prevailing mood is not to interfere." The reference to "information coming from Washington" was likely a reference to NSC-48, adopted in December 1949, which drew the U.S. defense perimeter to the west of Japan and the Philippines. Stalin likely obtained a copy through British spy Donald McLean, although this claim is speculative.[66] Finally, the report states that the U.S. reluctance to intervene "is reinforced by the fact that the USSR now has the atomic bomb and that our positions are solidified in Pyongyang."[67] Ironically, as shown through declassified documents, the same reasons that the United States felt it had to intervene—the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, the end of the nuclear monopoly, and increasing Soviet influence in the region—were the very reasons that Stalin interpreted as signs that U.S. intervention was unlikely.

Nonetheless, after weighing these arguments for the invasion, Stalin was still very cautious. He noted, "First of all, will Americans interfere or not? Second, the liberation can be started only if the Chinese leadership endorses it."[68] Kim responded by saying he did not think the United States would interfere. He also reassured Stalin that Mao would endorse Kim's plan. After his own revolution, Mao promised to assist North Korea with troops if necessary.[69]

Stalin advised Kim to target the Ongjin Peninsula so that it would be unclear who initiated the attack. Stalin calculated that

> [a]fter [the North] attack and the South counterattacks it would give you a chance to enlarge the front. The war should be quick and speedy. Southerners and Americans should not have time to come to their senses. They won't have time to put up a strong resistance and to mobilize international support.[70]

Kim also believed that the war would end in three days.[71]

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[64] International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), 1950.

[65] "Stalin's Conversations: Talks with Mao Zedong, December 1949–January 1950, and with Zhou Enlai, August–September 1952," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996.

[66] Weathersby, 2002, p. 11.

[67] Weathersby, 2002, p. 9.

[68] Weathersby, 2002, p. 9.

[69] Weathersby, 2002, p. 10.

[70] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov," April 17, 1949a.

[71] International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), 1950.

Policy of Abandonment

As the course of the war turned from good to bad (from the communist perspective), Soviet policy shifted as well. Although the Soviet Union assisted North Korea via tight coordination in planning and preparation when the situation was good, it made sure to limit its involvement when the situation worsened.[72] Three days after the U.S. Congress authorized a full-scale intervention in Korea, Stalin sent an anxious cable to Ambassador Shtykov in Pyongyang on July 1, 1950:

> You do not report anything about what kind of plans the Korean command has. Does it intend to push on? Or has it decided to stop the advance? In our opinion, the attack must continue and the sooner South Korea is liberated the less chance there is for intervention. . . .

> Does the [North] Korean government plan to make an open statement of protest against the attacks and the military intervention? In our opinion, this should be done.[73]

Even before active U.S. bombing of North Korean forces began, all Soviet advisers attached to the North Korean army's front units were withdrawn because of the fear that they might be taken as prisoners. Stalin told Khrushchev, "We don't want there to be evidence for accusing us of taking part in this business. It's Kim Il-sung's affair."[74] When Stalin was persuaded by a desperate Kim to provide military advisers nonetheless, Stalin ordered the frontline advisers to be disguised as *Pravda* reporters.[75] During this time, Stalin also started to contemplate how to use his new Chinese ally.[76]

After asking Mao to send troops to North Korea as soon as possible, Stalin wrote to Kim and shared his letter to Mao:

> I was proceeding from the following considerations of an international character.

> 1 The USA, as the Korean events showed, is not ready now for a big war;

> 2 Japan, whose militaristic potential has not yet been restored, is not capable of rendering military assistance to the Americans;

> 3 The USA will be compelled to yield on the Korean question to China, behind which stands its ally, the USSR, and [the United States] will have to agree to such terms of the settlement of the Korean question that would be favorable to [North] Korea and that would not give the enemies a possibility of transforming Korea into their springboard;

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[72] Shen, 2012, p. 133.

[73] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "1 July 1950, Ciphered Telegram, Fyn-Si (Stalin) to Soviet Ambassador in Pyongyan (Shtykov)," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996, p. 40.

[74] Nikita Khruschev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, ed. and trans. Strobe Talbott, Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1970, p. 370; cited in Shen, 2012, p. 136.

[75] Vladimir Petrov, "Soviet Role in the Korean War Confirmed: Secret Documents Declassified," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, September 1994, p. 53.

[76] Shen, 2012, p. 137.

4 For the same reasons, the USA will not only have to abandon Taiwan, but also to reject the idea of a separate peace with the Japanese reactionaries, as well as to abandon their plans for revitalizing Japanese imperialism and converting Japan into their springboard in the Far East.[77]

Stalin's assessment of the international situation and the justification for Mao to send troops to Korea was, of course, only partly accurate. After the signing of the armistice treaty, not only did the United States not abandon Taiwan, but it also expedited the revitalization of Japan's military capabilities and made Japan its foundation in the Far East by establishing critical military bases.[78] However, he was correct in the sense that Japan was not in a position to militarily assist the United States during the war, and the United States actively negotiated with the Chinese to conclude the war, contrary to South Korea's desire.

Overall, although the Soviet Union had an interest in supporting its North Korean proxy and limiting U.S. influence in East Asia, its overriding concern was to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States. The Soviet Union authorized the invasion only because Stalin was nearly certain that the United States would not participate. When the United States did intervene, Stalin made sure that the Soviet Union was not directly involved and relinquished this responsibility to the Chinese. Stalin even recommended that the North Koreans withdraw to China and the Soviet Union when Mao was not certain of the wisdom of Chinese involvement without Soviet airpower assistance.[79] Even when China decided to intervene in October 1950, Stalin kept postponing air assistance, affecting the decisionmaking and timing of Chinese direct involvement.

China's Interests

Similar to the Soviet Union, the PRC before the outbreak of the war wanted to create a buffer zone from future Japanese and U.S. attacks. However, two more-important goals were to take back Taiwan in the near future and for China to demonstrate its value as a member of the alliance with the Soviet Union because of the security and economic aid the Soviet Union could provide for its reconstruction.[80] When the war started, China was also focused on discouraging Japan and the United States from intervening in the war. When the United States intervened in the war and crossed the 38th parallel, China was concerned by the seemingly unlimited U.S. campaign and felt compelled to defend its border with North Korea because the loss of the North Korean buffer would be highly threatening.

In 1950, China had two main strategic interests in the region. First, China was determined to take back Taiwan as soon as possible. This is evident by the fact that Soviet experts were training "fast-track" pilots to graduate from a Chinese air force school and that China was constantly demanding provisions of Soviet naval and air arms.[81] Second, China wanted to

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[77] Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Document Research Office, ed., *Zhou Enlai Chronology, 1949–1976*, Beijing, 1997, Vol. 1, p. 51; cited in Shen, 2012, pp. 159–160.

[78] Jennifer M. Miller, "The Struggle to Rearm Japan: Negotiating the Cold War State in US-Japanese Relations," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 2011.

[79] Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Ciphered Telegram from Feng Xi (Stalin) to Kim Il Sung (via Shtykov)," Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, October 13, 1950d.

[80] Stueck, 1997, p. 358.

[81] Shen, 2012, p. 131.

avoid military conflict on its northeastern border, since most of its military forces were in the South of China, near Taiwan. There were fewer than 200,000 troops in the Northeast, compared with more than twice that number (16 armies) on the southeast coast.[82]

Before China agreed to intervene on behalf of North Korea, it was concerned with potential Japanese and U.S. intervention. According to telegrams between Stalin and Mao in mid-October 1949, Mao told Stalin that the Chinese did not approve of Kim's effort to militarily unify the peninsula.[83] Kim had to reassure Mao by using his experience in the guerrilla fight with the Japanese during the colonial period to argue that North Korea would certainly achieve victory.[84] In addition, Mao felt strongly pressured to intervene on behalf of North Korea by Stalin.[85] This was the main reason Mao had to commit to supporting North Korea before the war began, although once the United States crossed the 38th parallel, direct Chinese security concerns came to the fore.[86]

China's involvement in the war was very different from the involvement of the Soviet Union. Whereas the Soviet Union approved the attack, provided military equipment, and helped with planning and preparation, all mostly at the crisis initiation stage, the CPV jumped in to rescue North Korea four months into the war, when UN forces were threatening to fully overrun the peninsula.[87] China's priority was developing its new nation, but when it saw North Korea on the brink of collapse and its own border under threat, it mobilized troops and public opinion under the slogan "Resist America and Assist Korea, Defend our Homes and Protect our Nation."[88] China established the Northeast Border Defense Army, consisting of four armies.[89] However, the decision for this intervention was only made after the United States crossed the 38th parallel.[90] During his early meetings with the Soviet Union in July 1950, Zhou Enlai told the Soviet Ambassador that sending Chinese troops to North Korea would only occur if U.S. forces crossed the 38th parallel. Although the United States was already involved in the conflict at that time, North Korea still appeared to have the advantage.[91]

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[82]   Shen, 2012, p. 131. The approximate strength of one army was 21,000–30,000 during the Korean War. Therefore, the southeast coast would have had a maximum of 480,000 troops. Billy C. Mossman, *Ebb and Flow: November 1950–July 1951*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1990, Ch. 3.

[83]   Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Draft Reply to Mao Zedong's Telegram from Stalin via Molotov," trans. Gary Goldberg, Washington, D.C.: History and Public Policy Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 26, 1949c.

[84]   Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, 1949c.

[85]   Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, "Telegram from Stalin to Roshchin, with Message for Mao Zedong," May 16, 1950b.

[86]   Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War*, New York: Macmillan, 1960, p. 172; cited in Thomas J. Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Summer 1992, p. 135.

[87]   Shen, 2012, p. 132.

[88]   Shen, 2012, p. 134.

[89]   Chen Jian, "China's Changing Aims During the Korean War, 1950–1951," *Journal of American–East Asian Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1992, p. 20.

[90]   Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *China Quarterly*, No. 121, March 1990, p. 103.

[91]   Shen, 2012, p. 140.

When the United States crossed the 38th parallel, Mao and Peng Dehuai, the newly appointed commander and political commissar of the CPV, convinced the party members after a debate that lasted almost a week and made the decision to send the troops on October 15.[92] When Mao was still convincing the party members, he sent Stalin a cautious telegram that could be read as if Mao is hesitating to contribute, encouraging Stalin to decide to evacuate Soviet personnel from North Korea.[93] This highlights how the Soviet Union almost gave up on North Korea, when Stalin thought that Chinese help might not be coming.

However, China ultimately decided to intervene in the conflict after the United States crossed the 38th parallel and landed in Chongjin. Even after the decision, however, the degree to which the Soviet Union would provide air assistance was critical to China. China was very disappointed with the fact that the Soviet Union kept delaying and was only promising minimum assistance in the rear area of Chinese forces (i.e., in China, not North Korea).[94] Stalin's refusal to coordinate the Soviet Union Air Force and CPV after the Chinese decided to commit became a source of resentment for Mao against the Soviet Union.[95]

The CPV crossed the Yalu River on October 19 and fought the first battle on October 25 for the "War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Assist Korea."[96] On November 25, China attacked elements of the U.S. Eighth Army.[97] On December 16, President Truman announced a state of national emergency because of the intensity of Chinese intervention.[98] By January 1951, the CPV was fully engaged in the Korean War. Because of its involvement, the entire Korean conflict changed, and the front lines settled around the 38th parallel again one year after fighting had begun.

In sum, although China was prepared for the possibility of intervention, it was not willing to actually take this action until the United States crossed the 38th parallel. The party did not have consensus on Chinese participation, and the PRC had limited resources so soon after the end of the civil war. However, after feeling that the border between the PRC and North Korea was under threat, China fully participated in the war, changing its outcome.

North and South Korean Interests

Both North and South Korea sought to reunify the peninsula—by force if necessary—under their respective regimes. The communist-backed nationalist government of Kim maintained a policy of *kukdo wanjong*, or "completion of national territory," while the anticommunist nationalist government of Rhee adopted the slogan *pukjin tongil*, or "advance north and

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[92]   Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, Ch. 6; Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "Stalin, Mao, Kim, and China's Decision to Enter the Korean War, September 16–October 15, 1950: New Evidence from the Russian Archives," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996.

[93]   Shen, 2012.

[94]   Shen, 2012, p. 174.

[95]   Shen, 2012.

[96]   Shen, 2012, p. 174.

[97]   Gough, 1987, p. 9.

[98]   Gough, 1987, p. 9.

unify."[99] Both Moscow and Washington initially sought to restrain their respective partners as skirmishes broke out along the 38th parallel in 1948 and 1949.[100]

North Korea's ability to secure the support of its primary patron, the Soviet Union, in 1950 transformed these skirmishes along the 38th parallel into a global conflict following the intervention of the United States and the UN and, later, the newly established PRC. North Korea was founded—with Soviet backing—by anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter Kim. Kim was first and foremost an anticolonial revolutionary nationalist who saw socialism as the surest and fastest method to throw off the colonial yoke and develop a modern, independent nation-state on the Korean Peninsula.[101]

North Korea's main goal before the decision to invade South Korea was to unify the peninsula and liberate the South Korean people.[102] Kim, after a lunch at the Foreign Ministry for his ambassador to China, Li Juyeon, told two Soviet ambassadors the following:

> Lately I cannot sleep at night, thinking about how to resolve the question of the unification of the whole country. If the matter of the liberation of the people of the southern part of Korea and the unification of the country is drawn out, then I can lose the trust of the people of Korea.[103]

Indeed, Kim was obsessed with a desire to unify the Korean Peninsula under his control.[104] When asked by Stalin about possible U.S. intervention, Kim reassured Stalin that one would not occur for four reasons:

1. North Korea would gain a military victory within three days.
2. In South Korea, 200,000 Communist Party members would rise in revolt.
3. South Korean partisans would help the KPA in its fight.
4. The United States would have no time to prepare.[105]

With this confidence, North Korea decided to invade South Korea with the authorization of the Soviet Union and the backing of the PRC.

Rhee, the South Korean leader at that time, also had the ambition of unifying the peninsula, using military means if necessary. Before the war, though, Rhee's goals were more limited, focused on discouraging the United States from withdrawing troops from the peninsula. He was unsuccessful in this regard, however: The United States withdrew nearly all of its once-large post-1945 troop presence by 1949.

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[99]   Yong-Pyo Hong, "North Korea in the 1950s: The Post Korean War Policies and Their Implications," *Korean Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 44, No. 5, 2004, p. 216.

[100] Karunakar Gupta, "How Did the Korean War Begin?" *China Quarterly*, No. 52, October–December 1972, p. 701.

[101] James F. Person, "Chinese-North Korean Relations: Drawing the Right Historical Lessons," 38 North, September 26, 2017.

[102] Stueck, 1997, p. 357.

[103] Shen, 2012, p. 115.

[104] William Stueck, "The Korean War as History: David Rees' Korea: The Limited War in Retrospect," College Park, Md.: Cold War International History Conference, September 25–26, 1998.

[105] Shen, 2012, p. 122.

Tensions between the North and South had been growing since their division after their liberation from Japan in 1945. Skirmishes on the border were frequent, and when Soviet troops withdrew from North Korea, Rhee increased the level of provocation.[106] Rhee's overemphasis on military matters led the United States to take preventive measures by controlling funds so that U.S. contributions went toward economic development rather than to the military.[107] Rhee's belligerent northward unification policy also caused diplomatic and political problems between the South Korean and U.S. governments.[108] Rhee also felt that, because of Nationalist China's failure to win the Chinese Civil War, South Korea was being made to suffer unnecessarily by a lack of more-aggressive U.S. support. He continuously emphasized that he and Chiang Kai-shek were different and that he was able to defeat the communists. Rhee's aggressive military policies, therefore, were not only aimed at unifying the peninsula but also were an expression of fear that the United States would abandon South Korea as it did Nationalist China.[109]

Military Balance in 1950 on the Korean Peninsula

By the time the North was prepared to attack the South in June 1950, the North Korean army was superior to the South Korean army. This superiority is mainly due to the substantial foreign assistance North Korea received from both the Soviet Union and China, the former providing weapons and the latter providing personnel. North Korea also had the advantage of not dealing with a domestic insurgency similar to the one that South Korea was experiencing.[110] After Kim received the green light from Stalin for an attack in January 1950, Kim proposed adding three more infantry divisions to the already existing seven infantry divisions in the army to prepare for the war. Also, Kim asked to use a loan allocated for 1951 in 1950 to purchase equipment for the new divisions. Both were approved by Moscow swiftly.[111] The KPA had three divisions of veteran infantry from China that were formed by Korean soldiers released from the People's Liberation Army and a former cadre of the Red Army during World War II.[112]

North Korean ground forces were composed of two types of units: the Border Constabulary (Bo An Dae) and the North Korea People's Army (NKPA or In Min Gun). The total number of ground forces was about 135,000 soldiers. This estimation included 77,838 men in seven assault infantry divisions, 6,000 in the tank brigade, 3,000 in an independent infantry regiment, 2,000 in a motorcycle regiment, 23,000 in three reserve divisions, 18,600 in the Border Constabulary, and 5,000 in Army and I and II Corps Headquarters.[113]

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[106] Shen, 2012, p. 108.

[107] Myunglim Park, "The 'American Boundary', Provocation, and the Outbreak of the Korean War," *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1998, p. 39.

[108] Park, 1998, p. 40.

[109] Park, 1998, p. 42.

[110] Millet, 2010, p. 29.

[111] Shen, 2012, p. 116.

[112] Millet, 2010, p. 29.

[113] Roy E. Appleman, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1986.

In June 1950, the ROK Armed Forces consisted of 94,808 Army, 6,145 Coast Guard, 1,865 Air Force, and 48,273 National Police.[114] When the war broke out, the roughly 98,000 soldiers were composed of approximately 65,000 combat troops and 33,000 headquarters and service troops.[115] Although North Korea had an additional 18,600 trained troops in its Border Constabulary and 23,000 partially trained troops in three reserve divisions, the sizable National Police forces were not trained or armed for military use.[116] Not only did the North Korean forces have substantially more soldiers, then, they were also better trained and better prepared for battle.

In terms of military equipment, the gap between the North and South was even more pronounced. In June 1950, the North Korean Army had 150 Russian-built T-34 tanks.[117] In addition, North Korea had 180 Russian-supplied aircraft, including 70 attack bombers comprising a small tactical air force. It also had three types of artillery, including the 122 mm howitzer, the 76 mm self-propelled gun, and the 76 mm division gun with a maximum range of more than 14,000 yards. The ROK Armed Forces had no tanks, no medium artillery, no 4.2 in. mortars, no recoilless rifles, and an air force with no fighter aircraft or bombers.[118] Also, the ROK Army had a supply of artillery and mortar ammunition that would last only a few days of combat. Because South Korea was a low priority for DoD prior to June 1950, South Korea had only received light weapons from the United States.[119] The clear superiority of North Korean forces was not recognized by U.S. military authorities prior to the invasion, and Brig. Gen. William L. Roberts, Chief of the Korean Military Advisory Group, thought that if the South were attacked by the North, the ROK Army would prevail.[120]

Key Factors Affecting the Outcome

Four key factors contributed to the eventual outcome of the U.S. intervention in Korea:

1. the determination and effectiveness of the United States in intervening in the conflict on a large scale
2. the signing of a Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and the PRC in February 1950 and the CPV intervention[121]
3. no use of nuclear weapons and U.S. unwillingness to escalate the war against China more broadly once Chinese involvement became clear

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[114] Appleman, 1986, p. 13.

[115] Appleman, 1986, pp. 13–14.

[116] Appleman, 1986, p. 18.

[117] Appleman, 1986, p. 10.

[118] Appleman, 1986, p. 16.

[119] Ronald McGlothlen, "Acheson, Economics, and the American Commitment in Korea, 1947-1950," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1, February 1989, p. 49.

[120] Appleman, 1986, p. 18.

[121] Some scholars suggest that the successful Chinese revolution and the signing of the treaty between China and the Soviet Union gave the Soviet Union the confidence to support North Korea. According to Shen Zhihua, however, those events had the opposite effect on the Soviet calculation. Although the Soviet Union's security is enhanced by having the adequate buffer zone in East Asia, Soviet strategic interests might have been adversely affected because the new China could be a potential threat to the Soviet Union in the future. See Shen, 2012, pp. 117 and 124.

4. Stalin's death and the signing of the armistice (without including South Korea or achieving South Korean aims of reunification).

In this section, we outline the effects of these key factors throughout the war, starting with the implementation and success of U.S. intervention, including General MacArthur's counteroffensive strategies. The United States made several decisions that helped UN forces recapture Seoul and drive out North Korea from the South through its determination and effectiveness in intervening in the conflict on a large scale. From a military standpoint, the early decisions made to repel the North Korean advance were effective, but the later decision to proceed into North Korea also changed the calculations of several key actors, with mixed effects for U.S. goals. To begin with, the successful amphibious attacks provided momentum to the United States, giving confidence to Truman and MacArthur to advance North. However, the military success by the United States was also crucial in pushing China to decide to undertake its own intervention into the war.

On September 15, 1950, UN forces conducted an amphibious landing at Incheon, surrounding the KPA from the rear and forcing them out of South Korea. One of the reasons MacArthur chose Incheon was because of its strategic location as a port near Seoul, near the airport in Gimpo, and with good connections to railways. After the Incheon landing, as predicted by MacArthur, UN forces recaptured Seoul on September 26, 1950. This result provided the U.S. leadership with the hope of defeating North Korea and unifying the peninsula under a pro-U.S. government.[122] More importantly, after this amphibious attack, the U.S. and UN forces gained the momentum to march North above the 38th parallel. Not only did the trajectory of the war in the United States change, but also the Soviet and PRC decisionmaking rapidly changed at that time.[123] According to William Stueck, had the Incheon landing not occurred, the Soviet Union could have encouraged North Korea to take a more defensive approach, including negotiations. Ten days after the Incheon landing, on September 25, General Nie Rongzhen, the acting Chief of the General Staff, told Indian Ambassador K. M. Pannikar that "China cannot stand idly by if the Americans cross the 38th parallel" and that China has to make "whatever sacrifice is necessary to stop an aggressive American advance."[124] Zhou Enlai reiterated this message in a speech given on September 30 by saying, "The Chinese people certainly cannot tolerate foreign aggression, and also cannot sit idly by while the imperialists wantonly aggress against their neighbor."[125] China's diplomatic efforts through the Soviet Union at the UN and India were ignored by MacArthur and the Pentagon.[126] As Acheson later noted, "no possible shred of evidence could have existed in the minds of the Chinese Communists about the non-threatening intentions of the forces of the United Nations."[127] On

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[122] Yufan and Zhihai, 1990, p. 102.

[123] Shen, 2012, p. 142.

[124] Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War*, New York: Times Books, 1982, p. 281; cited in Shen, 2012, p. 145.

[125] Shen, 2012, p. 145.

[126] Stueck, 1997, p. 348. See also P. K. Rose, "Two Strategic Intelligence Mistakes in Korea, 1950: Perceptions and Reality," Langley, Va.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Winter 2001; and Yufan and Zhihai, 1990, p. 102.

[127] Quoted in Spanier, 1965, p. 97; cited in Jervis, 1980, p. 583.

the U.S. side, however, discounting the possibility that the Chinese were intervening in self-defense meant seeing any Chinese intervention as an act of aggression.[128]

On September 29, Truman authorized MacArthur to advance into North Korea. The next day, Zhou sent out a public message that warned that China would not overlook its neighbor being invaded by the imperialists.[129] After the Incheon landing, the North Koreans became desperate and were anticipating the fall of Seoul. As a result, Foreign Minister Pak Hon-yong demanded direct military assistance from the Soviet Union or from China, if the request to the Soviet Union failed.[130] North Korea pleaded that

> when the enemy troops cross over the 38th parallel we will badly need direct military assistance from the Soviet Union. If for any reason this is impossible, please help us by forming international volunteer forces in China and other people's democracies to assist in our struggle.[131]

In response, Stalin said, "[W]e consider formation of volunteer units to be a more acceptable form of assistance [than Soviet military assistance]. We must first consult with our Chinese comrades on this issue."[132]

Similarly, on October 13, right before Stalin authorized air assistance to the marching Chinese troops to North Korea, he believed that another amphibious assault was coming because of U.S. movement in the vicinity of Chongjin. Stalin began to believe that the U.S. military was going to carry out another amphibious assault, this time on the Pyongyang-Wonsan line above the 38th parallel. Because the rear of the KPA was defenseless, the United States was able to advance to the Korean-Chinese and Korean-Soviet borders without resistance. This made Stalin change his decision.[133] Stalin sent a letter to Kim asking Kim to withdraw North Korean forces to China or to the Soviet Union, since China was not quite ready to intervene. Ambassador Shtykov met with Kim and Pak the same night to draw up a withdrawal plan.[134] Furthermore, on the same day, Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinsky asked the United States to give up on its "get tough" policy and return to its wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union. He also said the Soviet Union was willing to meet the United States "halfway."[135]

This decision again took a turn when Mao decided to send troops despite Stalin's lack of commitment on airpower cover. Stalin then ordered Kim not to evacuate the North as originally instructed.[136] Without these counteroffensive movements, particularly the U.S. push to the Chinese and Soviet borders, the Soviet and Chinese strategies might have shifted toward

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[128] Jervis, 1980, p. 583.

[129] Yufan and Zhihai, 1990, p. 102.

[130] Shen, 2012, p. 146.

[131] "Ciphered Telegram, DPRK Leader Kim Il Sung and South Korean Communist Leader Pak Hon-Yong to Stalin (via Shtykov), 29 September 1950," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6–7, Winter 1995/1996, p. 112.

[132] Petrov, 1994, pp. 60–61; cited in Shen, 2012, p. 147.

[133] Shen, 2012, p. 170.

[134] Shen, 2012, p. 170.

[135] I.F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952, p. 137; cited in Shen, 2012, p. 170.

[136] Shen, 2012, p. 172.

defense. With the continuous success of the U.S. offensive, the Chinese became more involved in the war and the U.S. and UN forces' momentum was too great to stop.[137]

Although the first key factor, the U.S. decisive military decisions, led to direct involvement of PRC troops, the signing of the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty of course had substantial influence on the Chinese likelihood of involvement in the war. After the Chinese Communist Party achieved victory in the civil war, its relationship with the USSR developed immediately. In the initial meeting before signing the alliance, Stalin asked the Chinese delegation to put China at the center of the East Asian revolutionary movement while the Soviet Union focused on the West. Military cooperation soon started between the two countries as well. Furthermore, in July and August 1949, the 164th and 166th Divisions of the PLA's Fourth Field Army, which were composed of mostly Korean nationals, were returned to North Korea. This decision was influenced by two things: (1) the close relationship between North Korea and the Soviet Union and (2) a conversation between Stalin and Liu Shaoqui, who was representing the Chinese Communist Party in Moscow in May 1949.[138] The main topic of conversation between Stalin and Liu was China's future support for revolutionary movement in East Asia.[139]

Once Chinese forces intervened into the Korean War, the question of how far the United States was willing to go to win the war became central. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had believed that the use of atomic bombs would have a decisive effect on stopping the Chinese advance into Korea.[140] The casualties and reputational costs would have been enormous, but the United States could have reversed the outcome of the war after the Chinese intervened. A U.S. Army study indicated the perceived positive outcomes of tactical nuclear use:

> Air-burst nuclear weapons could have taken a terrible toll on the CPV troops at points when these troops had been openly massed in large numbers during their offensives of November through January. One 40-kiloton air-burst at Taechon in late November, it was estimated, could have destroyed some 15,000-20,000 troops; a combination of six 40-kiloton bursts in the Pyongyang-Chorwon-Kumhwa triangle in late December nearly 100,000 troops; six 30-kiloton bursts north of the Imjin River in late December some 30,000-40,000; and two 40-kiloton bursts opposite the Wonju salient in early January some 6,000-9,000.[141]

Furthermore, the United States had nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union,[142] the only country which had nuclear capability other than the United States throughout the Korean War.[143] The PRC did not have nuclear weapons at that time. If the United States calculated that the use of nuclear weapons and winning the war were more beneficial than the costs of

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[137] Stueck, 1997, p. 357.

[138] Chen Jian, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance and China's Entry into the Korean War*, Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 1, June 1992.

[139] Chen, 1992.

[140] Bruce Cumings, "Why Did Truman Really Fire MacArthur? ... The Obscure History of Nuclear Weapons and the Korean War Provides the Answer," History News Network, January 10, 2005.

[141] Mark A. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States During the Korean War*, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1989, p. 50.

[142] The United States had about 450 bombs and the Soviet Union only had 25 bombs at that time. See Cumings, 2005.

[143] Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Winter 1988/1989, p. 52.

using nuclear weapons for the second time in five years, the United States could have done so. However, decisionmakers in the Truman administration thought the use of nuclear weapons was not a desirable option.[144] They thought this despite the fact that South Korean leadership wanted the United States to use its full capability to help South Korea unify the peninsula and that MacArthur believed he would be able to turn around the war with nuclear weapons, even after Chinese involvement. The outcome of the war would indeed likely have changed with the use of nuclear weapons, but the subsequent reputational costs for the United States in the 1950s would have been too great. If the United States had decided to use nuclear weapons in Korea, there was also no guarantee that the Soviet Union would have not used their very limited and nascent nuclear capability.[145]

The views of Stalin were also crucial to determining the course of the war. After the war had bogged down, Stalin had an interest in prolonging the war to exhaust the West and increase Chinese dependence on the Soviet Union.[146] On the other side, the Truman administration wanted to swiftly end the war so that it could focus on rearming and preparing NATO for Soviet attack contingencies. These conflicting interests led to protracted negotiations. After Stalin's death, however, the armistice negotiations quickly moved forward. This was partly due to changes in Soviet domestic politics: After the death of Stalin but before Nikita Khrushchev had emerged as the next leader, Soviet leadership did not want to deal with further domestic uncertainties by continuing the war.[147] On March 30, 1953, the PRC agreed to exchange sick and wounded prisoners and allow POWs who did not wish to be repatriated to be sent to a neutral commission. The Chinese had also achieved their goal at that point, which was securing a buffer south of its border.[148] In total, the war lasted about three years, but it included two years of armistice negotiations (during which fighting continued) because of key actors' interests in prolonging the war, including the Soviet Union, China, and South Korea.

Table B.7 summarizes the key actors, their interests, and the key actions they undertook that were critical to the outcome of the war from the preceding analysis.

Counterfactual Scenario

What if the United States had made a different decision, instead choosing not to intervene in the Korean War? That is the counterfactual that we will explore here. The counterfactual scenario begins to diverge from the real-world case in June 1950. Our analysis aims to consider the situations in the region and the world through the mid-1950s.

The Korean Peninsula would likely look very different in the early and mid-1950s if the United States had not intervened after the North Korean invasion of South Korea. The KPA would almost certainly have prevailed over the South Korean forces, and the peninsula would have been united under a pro-communist nationalist regime. However, the unified Korean state would not necessarily have looked like North Korea after 1953.

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[144] Cumings, 2005.

[145] Dingman, 1988/1989, p. 54.

[146] Stueck, 1997, p. 358.

[147] Barry M. Blechman and Robert Powell, "What in the Name of God Is Strategic Superiority?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 4, Winter 1982/1983, p. 593.

[148] Blechman and Powell, 1982/1983, p. 593.

Table B.7
Korea: Actors and Interests in Real-World Case

Actors	Interests	Actions
Truman administration	• Containing the Soviet Union and the spread of communism • Avoiding war with the Soviet Union • Increasing U.S. influence in East Asia	• Decided to intervene shortly after the outbreak of the war • Did not attribute responsibility for the North Korean decision to the Soviet Union after the invasion
U.S. Department of State	• Spreading economic stability and democracy in the world • Not directly accusing the Soviet Union	• Asked Congress to aid Greece, Turkey, and South Korea economically so that they could achieve economic stability and democracy in the future
DoD	• Moving remaining troops out of South Korea to Japan (MacArthur before the outbreak of the war) • Defending Western Europe from the Soviet Union	• Advised the White House to withdraw troops from South Korea completely (before the outbreak of the war)

Soviet Union (Stalin)	• Maintaining a buffer zone in Asia in case of Japanese rearmament
	• Advancing communist allies' interests
	• Not inviting U.S. intervention that might drag the Soviet Union into a major war
	• Hiding the Soviet presence during the Korean War
	• Securing warm-water ports: Having access to the Pacific through the ports of Busan and Incheon, because the USSR lost assets in Manchuria after the alliance treaty with the PRC in January 1950
	• During the war:
	  • Prolonging the war, negotiating in a way that did not make the communists look weak
	  • Tying down U.S. forces in South Korea so that the United States cannot engage in Europe militarily
	  • Gathering intelligence on U.S. military technology and organization
	  • Increasing the dependence of China on the Soviet Union through the USSR's military and economic assistance
		• Supported the North in its efforts to unify the peninsula
		• Formed defense treaty with China after China agreed to support North Korea
		• Made sure Kim and Mao understood that the Soviet Union would only provide equipment aid and would never provide Soviet troops
		• Disguised Soviet military equipment and weapons, and the Soviet trainers of the CPV wore Chinese uniforms
		• Did not agree on one issue of armistice talks (POW repatriation) and prolonged the negotiations for two years (POWs were also sources of information)

PRC (Mao)	• Being perceived as a valuable member of the bilateral alliance with the Soviet Union so that China receives security and economic aid • Creating a buffer zone from future Japanese and U.S. attacks • Preventing Japanese and U.S. intervention in the war • Taking Taiwan back in the future	• Agreed to assist North Korea in the Korean War by sending Chinese troops and sent "volunteers" to the North even though the negotiation for receiving the Soviet air cover failed • Assisted North Korea in its efforts to unify the Korean Peninsula under the North's rule
North Korea (Kim)	• Unifying the Korean Peninsula	• Attacked the South after the Soviet Union's approval
South Korea (Rhee)	• Continuing to receive U.S. military and economic aid • Unifying the Korean Peninsula	• Resisted the U.S. decision to withdraw troops in 1949 • Disagreed with the United States on signing the armistice. Rhee wanted to unify the peninsula when the UN forces had the advantage
U.S. Congress	• Ending war and humanitarian fallout • Limiting budgetary costs from the war	• Generally pushed for early termination of the U.S. ground intervention
Eisenhower administration	• Ending war and signing the armistice agreement as soon as possible	• Encouraged South Korea, the Soviet Union, and China to sign the armistice and end the war as soon as possible

In this scenario, the United States decides not to intervene to save South Korea after the North Korean invasion. Without timely help from the United States and international forces, South Korea is largely conquered in a matter of weeks. North Koreans advance 10 km a day on average at first, though they are slowed as they meet greater resistance further South.[149] Given the imbalance in size and capabilities between the North and South Korean forces, it would likely not have been long before the entire peninsula was captured. South Korea surrenders to North Korea, allowing North Korea to unify the peninsula.

Key Actors: Counterfactual

There are several key actors whose decisions under the counterfactual scenario are important to its outcome. In this section, we assess how the interests and actions of the key actors described above would change under our counterfactual scenario—that is, a situation in which no U.S. intervention occurred.

The United States: A key question that would shape the outcome of the counterfactual is whether U.S. credibility in East Asia and Western Europe among its other allies and partners would have remained strong after abandoning South Korea. Absent other steps, the answer is likely to be no: After the fall of South Korea, the United States would have developed a strong interest in taking steps to not further damage its remaining credibility in the world. Communist expansion had proven successful twice within two years in 1949 and 1950 in East Asia, and the United States could not let that happen again. After the Korean War started and ended within weeks and the outbreak was a surprise for the United States because of its miscalculation of North Korea's military readiness and the Soviet's willingness to back the aggression, the United States focuses on not losing its third democratic partner in the region: Japan. In the actual Korean War case, Japan benefited from U.S. participation in the Korean War. The United States offered massive procurement after the outbreak of the Korean War, and Japan's economy recovered rapidly throughout the war. Without the intervention in the Korean War, Japan's economy might not have experienced the same speedy recovery. However, in the counterfactual scenario, after losing China and Korea to communism, the United States could not lose its greatest strategic asset in the Western Pacific. The Truman administration and MacArthur's priority in East Asia would become rapidly mobilizing to prevent any aggression against Japan. Therefore, MacArthur proposes to Truman an immediate signing of the Treaty of Mutual Defense and forms an alliance with Japan in 1950. As a result, the United States prepares for the signing after returning sovereignty to Japan in 1950. The United States also provides troops and logistical support for Japanese forces' training and rearmament.

In Europe, meanwhile, partly to amend its damaged credibility among NATO members, the United States focuses on boosting defense forces in West Germany, West Berlin, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, where the Soviet Union showed interest in intervening before the Korean War. However, the speed of NATO rearmament and capacity-building might have been slower than the actual case because of likely more-gradual defense budget increases in the United States. The Truman administration and the Bureau of the Budget were committed to having a "sound economy" and a powerful U.S. Air Force, which were the foundation of national security. Also, after the first postwar recession in summer 1949, military expenditures were considered an

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[149] By road, it is about 450 km from the 38th parallel to Busan. We are grateful to our colleague Bruce Bennett for pointing these factors out.

economic burden rather than a stimulus.[150] As a result, despite the Soviet military expansion (including its nuclear weapons program and NSC-68's recommendation, which came out in April 1950), the budget increase for defense spending is harder to justify in front of Congress. Although concerns regarding communist expansion would likely have increased following the loss of Korea, the Truman administration would likely not have been able to increase the defense budget to the same extent of the pronounced spike that occurred in the actual case.

The Soviet Union: Without even directly intervening in the war, the Soviet Union is able to secure the second dramatic communist success in East Asia. This outcome gives great confidence to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union realizes that the United States is constrained in its ability to intervene in local wars, increasing Soviet willingness to take more-aggressive risks elsewhere, including in Europe. As was the case before the Korean War, the Soviets still do not want to go to war directly with the United States. However, Soviet willingness to engage in pressure and intimidation increases. Stalin plans to encroach on Europe bit by bit and put pressure on countries such as Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Germany. After a secure East Asian buffer zone is created by the Chinese and the Koreans, Stalin is better able to turn his focus westward.

China: If the United States had not intervened in the Korean War, China would not have intervened either. Relieved of the need to worry about its northeastern border, China would have been able to devote more resources to planning to take Taiwan. However, the United States, stung by the loss of Korea, would also have had stronger incentives to protect Taiwan from invasion. Although the United States and the PRC avoid the antagonism of fighting one another directly in the Korean War, tensions over Taiwan might be heightened, leading to no substantial improvement in ties or U.S. efforts to split the Sino-Soviet bloc by the mid-1950s. For its part, China would have concentrated on securing economic and security aid from the Soviet Union, although the latter's incentive to provide such aid might have been more limited, given the diminished capitalist threat in East Asia.

North Korea: Although Kim benefited from Soviet backing in the actual case, as an anticolonial revolutionary nationalist, there were limits to his acceptance of Moscow's suzerainty. North Korea was utterly dependent on the Soviet Union for arms during the Korean War.[151] Yet just three years after the historical Korean War armistice, Kim took steps to minimize the influence of the Soviet Union on the trajectory of cultural, political, and economic developments in North Korea. He did this by purging those with close ties to Moscow, including several dozen ethnic Koreans who arrived from the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1950 to assume positions in the North Korean bureaucracy.[152] Kim perceived these individuals as conduits of Soviet influence in the Korean Workers' Party who would continue to represent Moscow's interests if not removed. This process might have come even sooner had Kim unified the peninsula in 1950, without having become so dependent on Soviet arms for the duration of the three-year conflict. The nature of the regime was affected in part because Kim was trying to carry out his vision for a strong and independent North Korea after determining that he was too reliant on Moscow and Beijing during the Korean War. Kim's postwar economic

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[150] Wells, 1979, p. 123.

[151] See N. Fedorenko and B. Ponomarev, "Information on the Situation in the DPRK," trans. Gary Goldberg, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 1955.

[152] See James F. Person, *"We Need Help from Outside": The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956*, Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper No. 52, August 2006.

policies—which were focused primarily on heavy industry—were aimed at reducing North Korea's dependency relationship with the Soviet Union and China. When domestic opponents of Kim's policies—which did little to improve living conditions—began making unfavorable comparisons with contemporary Soviet economic practices, Kim took steps to eliminate all perceived conduits of Soviet influence in the country. These efforts made the country more nationalistic and insular.

North Korea would have been less dependent on Beijing and Moscow in the counterfactual. North Korea would not have been dependent on Soviet arms for a three-year period but only for the duration of the shorter, successful campaign. Without as much destruction in the North from the U.S. counteroffensive and bombing campaign, Pyongyang would also not have been forced to rely on Soviet postwar assistance with reconstruction to the same degree. Moreover, Chinese influence would also have been diminished. Although the CPV in the real-world case remained in Korea for nearly five years after the armistice and gained political influence and material leverage through their occupation, North Korea in the counterfactual scenario would have been less dependent on the Chinese had Beijing never been forced to commit troops. Kim would ultimately have had greater freedom to pursue different policies domestically, particularly because the improvement of living conditions would not have been so urgent had northern Korea not been devastated by U.S. bombing campaigns. Moreover, Kim would have had greater freedom to pursue different policies toward the West if, at some point, he wanted to diversify his relations with nations beyond the socialist camp.

Table B.8 summarizes the key actors in the counterfactual case, including how their interests and actions shifted.

Key Factors: Counterfactual

In this section, we analyze how the following three key factors that affected the outcome in the real-world intervention would change in the counterfactual scenario:

Table B.8
Korea: Actors and Interests in the Counterfactual

Actors	Interests	Actions
United States	• Maintain U.S. credibility in East Asia and Western Europe • Defend Western Europe from the Soviet Union	• Rapidly form mutual defense treaty with Japan • Focus on defending Western Europe from further aggression by the Soviet Union
Soviet Union	• Focus pressure in Europe, including Germany, Turkey, and Yugoslavia • Avoid a direct conflict with the United States	• Use enhanced intimidation tactics in Western Europe
PRC	• Secure the border • Recover Taiwan • Develop domestically	• Secure military and economic aid from the Soviet Union to increase economic and military capability • Focus on accumulating capability to attack Taiwan in the future
North Korea	• Protect Korea's sovereignty from regional and international great powers	• Maintain good relations with Soviet and Chinese allies but reach out to the United States if there is overintervention from the Soviet Union and China

- **U.S. support:** In the actual case, the United States decided to immediately intervene. In the counterfactual scenario, we define the case by assuming that the United States decides not to intervene. In the actual case, U.S. support mitigated North Korea's military superiority. However, in the counterfactual, North Korea's military superiority vis-à-vis South Korean forces led to the capture of the southern peninsula and the unification of Korea under communism. Thus, the change in U.S. support stipulated in the counterfactual had a dramatic effect on the outcome on the Korean Peninsula, although the overall effects on East Asian or European stability are less clear.
- **U.S. credibility and deterrence:** Without the intervention decision, the credibility of U.S. deterrence is damaged. Even with public statements that Korea was outside the U.S. defensive perimeter, South Korea was still a close partner and, until recently, host to a substantial U.S. troop presence. To compensate, the United States focuses on providing greater, clearer support to Japan and NATO allies in Western Europe. This shift would have led to a more rapid alliance formation with Japan in the counterfactual and a clear U.S. strategic imperative to strengthen NATO.
- **U.S. domestic politics:** In the actual case, the Truman administration's congressional support for both the intervention decision and the requested defense budget increases was quickly forthcoming. In the counterfactual scenario, the domestic political difficulty of achieving greater defense budgets is increased for the administration. Although increases would likely have been forthcoming, they would likely have been less dramatic and less immediate.

Changes to Key Relationships

Assessing how U.S. nonintervention in the Korean War would have affected East Asia going forward requires an investigation into how the relationships among the key actors would have been affected.

Soviet Union–PRC alliance: In the real-world scenario, the first test of the new Sino-Soviet alliance, which was established four months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, came when Stalin tossed the responsibility of militarily assisting North Korea to Mao.[153] Stalin demonstrated the limits of his commitment to his Asian ally, especially when the Soviet Union did not agree to provide sufficient air assistance for the Chinese troops entering Korea. Before the Chinese participation in the war, Stalin regarded the new Chinese regime as equivalent to that in Yugoslavia.[154] In the postwar period, the PRC became more confident vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Without the war exposing these tensions, it is possible that Soviet-PRC relations would remain more cordial for longer, delaying the increase in tensions that occurred in this historical case. However, the two allies could also have had greater reason to compete for leadership of the international communist movement and to compete particularly for influence in the newly unified Korea. Although this competition would likely have been to the benefit of Korea, it might have had negative effects on Soviet-PRC relations.

PRC-DPRK relations: Had the United States not intervened, many of the tensions that occurred during the war between Beijing and Pyongyang would have been avoided. For one, this would likely have precluded the intervention of the CPV. Although the North Koreans were grateful for Chinese aid, the relationship between CPV commanders and the North

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[153] Shen, 2012, pp. 148–49.

[154] Stueck, 1997, p. 363.

Korean leadership quickly soured.[155] Just as Kim was uncomfortable with a foreign military apparatus assuming control of field operations, direct conflicts over military tactics and the use of railways and other resources increased tensions.[156] Contemporary Soviet reports from after the war describe tensions between the Korean leadership and the Chinese troops who remained in the country until they were withdrawn in 1958. Yet it would be wrong to assume that Kim would have been any more comfortable with the PRC than he was with the Soviet Union. Kim's experiences with the Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s made him distrustful of the new leaders of the PRC.[157] The antagonism between Kim and Peng Dei-hui that developed during and after the Korean War solidified Kim's mistrust against China. Had the United States not intervened in the Korean War, North Korea would not have had the chance to confirm its mistrust against the Chinese until later, perhaps during the Great Leap Forward. Therefore, without the interventions, North Korea might have had more-amicable communist solidarity with its Chinese neighbor.

U.S.-Japan alliance: In the counterfactual world, the alliance between the United States and Japan would still have formed, likely with a more rapid process. Japan was the essential strategic asset in the Western Pacific for the United States, and the United States would have had a strong incentive after the collapse of Korea to provide more military aid and faster rearmament of the Japanese military. Furthermore, after U.S. inaction in both China and South Korea, Japan would have demanded stronger reassurance from the United States. This would likely have made the strategic partnership between the two countries stronger, earlier.

U.S.-PRC relations: In the counterfactual world, the United States and the PRC would not have had to face prolonged hostilities during the war or during the lengthy armistice negotiations. According to Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, Stalin was concerned that Mao would establish relations with the United States, a possibility that was eliminated by military confrontation between the two countries.[158] However, we can expect the outcome of stronger U.S.-Taiwan relations after the North Korean invasion because of the enhanced U.S. incentive to discourage China from invading Taiwan. This stronger U.S. tie with Taiwan would have placed clear limits on any potential rapprochement with the PRC.

U.S.-Soviet relations: Using the declassified documents cited and contextualized above, we can understand the extent to which Stalin was reserved and cautious about becoming directly involved in a war with the United States. Although Stalin believed that the United States would not intervene in Korea, which was one of the main reasons he authorized North Korea's attack, that does not mean that Stalin believed that the United States would not intervene elsewhere—for example, in Berlin or Japan. If the United States did not intervene in Korea, the characteristics and timing of the Cold War might have been different. Without being aware of the Soviet Union's reserved and hesitant support for Kim's invasion, the United States likely would have been convinced that the Cold War had been started and that the Korean War was proof of the Soviet Union's expansionist intention.

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[155] See Fedorenko and Ponomarev, 1955.

[156] See Shen, 2003–2004.

[157] See Hongkoo Han, "Colonial Origins of Juche: The Minsaengdan Incident of the 1930s and the Birth of the North Korea–China Relationship," in Jae-Jung Suh, ed., *Origins of North Korea's Juche: Colonialism, War, and Development*, Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2013.

[158] Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993, Ch. 2.

Further, Stalin's lack of interest in direct engagement with the United States in military conflict does not mean that Stalin did not have an interest in gradually encroaching on various parts of Europe. By the time the Korean War started, Stalin showed aggressive interests in Turkey, Iran, Yugoslavia, and Germany to secure a Soviet periphery in Europe.[159] If the United Stated had not intervened in the Korean War, Stalin would likely have perceived fewer risks to more-aggressive movement in Europe, which could have heightened tensions with a United States determined to demonstrate its credibility to its allies anew.

The U.S.-Soviet arms race would likely have continued in the counterfactual scenario. In the real-world case, the Soviet Union detonated its first hydrogen bomb in November 1955 and launched the world's first intercontinental ballistic missile in May 1957. Further, the United States was more prepared for the arms race because of the increased defense budgets allocated since the start of the Korean War. Without more-gradual increased spending in arms, it might have been more difficult for the United States to counter the Soviet Union's emerging nuclear and missile capabilities in the 1950s.

U.S.–(North) Korea relations: Although a decision not to intervene would have meant an immediate loss of U.S. influence on the Korean Peninsula, we cannot preclude the possibility of a relationship with a Korea unified under the DPRK. Because of the Korean Peninsula's geographic proximity to large and powerful countries, Koreans frequently describe their country as a shrimp among whales. "When the whales fight," the expression goes, "the shrimp's back is broken." The sentiment expressed in this saying is that Korea has often been the victim of its larger neighbors, who at times have fought over Korea. As an antidote to their unfortunate geographical location, Koreans have historically reached out to distant countries to serve as counterbalances to neighbors. In 1882, Korea reached out to the United States to counter the growing influence of Japan and formed a Corean-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce.[160] If the unified Korean state under the DPRK felt it was too much influenced by either the Soviet Union or China, it could have reached out to the United States to counterbalance, carving out a position similar to Yugoslavia in the early 1950s. The direct confrontation between the two states during the war and the U.S. disproportionate aerial bombing foreclosed this possibility in the real-world case.[161] Furthermore, the hostilities between South and North Korea and the U.S.-ROK defense treaty were also the preconditions for the hostile track taken in U.S.-DPRK relations during the Cold War. Without these factors present, the two states might have established more-positive relations.

Costs and Benefits of Nonintervention in the Counterfactual Scenario

In this section, we review how the costs and benefits of intervention would change under the counterfactual scenario. We consider three categories of variables: changes to the conflict itself, changes to the host nation's postconflict trajectory, and costs and benefits for the United States.

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[159] Geoffrey Roberts, "Moscow's Cold War on the Periphery: Soviet Policy in Greece, Iran, and Turkey, 1943–8," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 2011; Parrish and Narinsky, 1994, p. 6.

[160] Michael J. Seth, *A Concise History of Modern Korea: From the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, paperback ed., New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010, p. 15.

[161] Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, New York: Modern Library, 2010, Ch. 6.

Changes in the Course of the Conflict

It is clear that the conflict would have been short-lived without the U.S. intervention, resulting in a North Korean victory and no Chinese intervention. North Korea's KPA would have decisively won the war without any direct intervention by the Chinese or the Soviet Union. The United States would not have incurred massive casualties, except possibly for the 500-man U.S. Korean Military Advisory Group stationed in Korea at the outbreak of the war.[162] South Korea would likely still have seen substantial devastation because it would not have surrendered for at least several weeks until North Korea reached the Busan perimeter. However, the magnitude of damage would not be comparable to the actual damage that occurred in the historical war.

Host-Nation Trajectory

Once the conflict ended in the counterfactual scenario, Korea's trajectory in the immediate postwar years would have substantially differed from the real-world case. The country would have been unified under Kim's leadership and would have formed close relations with other communist states (mainly, the Soviet Union and China).

Economic conditions in Korea following this much shorter war would likely have improved more quickly, at least initially, than they did in the real-world case. In the actual case, there were three million Korean casualties, and 43 percent of the population of the Korean Peninsula was personally affected by the war.[163] In the North, Kim said, "our people's economy has been totally destroyed by the war."[164] North Korea's 8,700 industrial plants were destroyed, as well as about 906,500 acres of farmland, 600,000 homes, 5,000 schools, and 1,000 hospitals and clinics.[165] North Korea's national income in 1953 was 69.4 percent of what it was in 1949, according to one estimate.[166] North Korea could only generate 17.7 percent of its 1949 output of coal.[167] In South Korea, a similar number of schools and homes were destroyed, and over 17,000 industrial plants and business facilities were devastated. South Korea's gross national product declined by 14 percent between 1949 and 1952, and the total value of property damage estimation was equivalent to South Korea's gross national product in 1949.[168]

If there were no United States intervention, however, much more minor destruction would likely have occurred, concentrated in the southern part of the peninsula, and there would have been almost no destruction in the northern part of the peninsula. Furthermore, North Korea was the industrial center during the colonial period and had more factories built by the Japanese. Without the U.S. aerial bombing campaign, most of the industrial facilities would have survived. With much-more-limited physical damage to the country, the initial economic recovery might have been faster. The longer-term trajectory of the country is more difficult to assess and lies outside the scope of this effort, although it seems unlikely that the unified Korea

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[162] Gupta, 1972, p. 701.

[163] Koh, 1993, pp. 57–58.

[164] Koh, 1993, p. 58.

[165] Koh, 1993, p. 58.

[166] Koh, 1993, p. 58.

[167] Joseph Sang-Hoon Chung, *The North Korean Economy: Structure and Development*, Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1973, pp. 78–79, 86; cited in Koh, 1993, p. 58.

[168] Koh, 1993, p. 58.

would have followed the remarkable economic boom that occurred in South Korea throughout the Cold War if the unified country remained committed to communist economic policies.

Costs and Benefits for the United States

The cost of the counterfactual intervention for the United States in economic terms would have been smaller than the cost of the real-world intervention. In the actual intervention, the United States spent $30 billion ($341 billion in 2011 dollars) on the war effort. Without the intervention, this spending would not have taken place, although there would likely have been increased defense budgets over 1950 levels to provide greater security for allies in Japan and Western Europe.

The counterfactual intervention would likely have had significant domestic political implications. The Truman administration would have been attacked by the Republicans for losing both China and Korea to communism. The U.S. administration would also likely have had a more difficult time increasing the defense budget to the levels seen during the Korean War. The rapid bipartisan budget increase that occurred in the real-world scenario could be considered a strategic benefit that came out of the intervention in the Korean War. According to Stephen Ambrose,

> By June 1950, a series of desperate needs had come together. Truman had to have a crisis to sell the NSC 68 program; Chiang could not hold on in Formosa nor Rhee in South Korea without an American commitment; the U.S. Air Force and Navy needed a justification to retain their bases in Japan; the Democrats had to prove to the McCarthyites that they could stand up to the communists in Asia as well as in Europe. The needs were met on 25 June 1950.[169]

Furthermore, Samuel Huntington argued, "without the war, the [military spending] increase probably would have been about the size of that of 1948–1949, that is, 20 percent instead of 200 percent."[170] This more gradual increase in defense budgets could have led to strategic costs, including possible effects on deterrence in Europe vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In East Asia, because the United States now had to rely more heavily on Japan, these smaller budgets could have given the latter more leverage in the relationship. However, the strategic benefits from the counterfactual scenario would be less antagonistic relations, at least initially, with China and North Korea without having to directly fight in the war. The United States might have been able to reach an earlier détente with China or North Korea and use these relations to contain the Soviets in East Asia, although it is also possible that tensions over Taiwan could have nonetheless undermined U.S.-PRC relations.

Although there are no reputational benefits in the counterfactual case, there likely would have been major reputational costs in the counterfactual case. The United States would have lost credibility in East Asia and Western Europe among allies and partners over its abandonment of South Korea.

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[169] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938, Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1971, p. 195; cited in Jervis, 1980, p. 589.

[170] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, p. 201.

Conclusion

In this case study, we assessed what a nonintervention in the Korean War might have looked like, analyzing how the counterfactual nonintervention might have altered the outcome and changed the costs and benefits for the United States. We argue that the available evidence suggests that South Korea would have fallen relatively quickly without U.S. intervention and would have been unified under the communist regime led by Kim. That does not mean, however, that East Asia as a whole would have fallen to communism. The United States would have formed a strong alliance with Japan earlier, and Stalin still would have been cautious about provoking a direct conflict with the United States over its clearly expressed key strategic interests.

The Korean conflict started and evolved through a series of miscalculations. Stalin authorized the attack mainly because the he felt the risks of U.S. intervention were low, as demonstrated when the United States did not intervene in the Chinese Civil War. Kim was confident that North Korea would be able to easily conquer South Korea because of his belief that the United States would not intervene and his confidence in the lack of popularity of the Rhee regime.[171] The United States also misperceived the Soviet's involvement and thought the conflict was part of a larger campaign that Stalin was leading. Furthermore, the United States did not take Chinese signals and defense rationale seriously. When the United States gained the momentum and, despite Chinese warnings, marched north close to the Korea-China border, it ensured the full intervention of Chinese forces.

The key factors that affected the outcome in our counterfactual scenario were the lack of U.S. military support for South Korea, U.S. domestic politics, U.S. credibility and deterrence capability against the Soviet Union, and U.S. management of alliances in East Asia and Europe. Without the intervention decision, DPRK military superiority would have allowed Kim to unify the country within weeks. U.S. domestic politics would have been affected by the nonintervention decision because the United States would have lost both China and South Korea within two years. As a consequence, the United States would have focused on managing its credibility and deterrence capability against the Soviet Union in its remaining allies and partners in East Asia and Europe. This focus means the United States would have formed a mutual defense treaty with Japan more rapidly. Also, the United States would have focused on NATO cohesion and expanded capabilities to contain the Soviet Union in Europe. However, without active war participation, an increase in military spending that was necessary for the defense and alliance management would have been harder to justify, resulting in more-gradual military expansion compared with the historical record.

The United States suffered substantial economic costs and human casualties in the actual case. However, it increased its defense budget, beginning at the start of the Korean War and continuing throughout the Cold War, with bipartisan support, in part because of its active participation in the war. With this increased defense budget, the United States was able to underwrite a posture to defend South Korea, which soon became one of its strongest anticommunist allies, and was able to expand its commitment to NATO during the Korean War. Without intervention in the Korean War, the United States still would have focused on increasing NATO cohesion and capabilities, but the degree and speed likely would have been more gradual because of budget constraints.

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[171] Stueck, 1997, p. 353.

With the Korean War intervention, the United States demonstrated its resolve to defend its allies to both partners and potential adversaries. The United States gained stronger alliance networks in East Asia, as well as in Western Europe. Without intervention, the United States would have lost credibility in East Asia and Western Europe and would have had to take additional steps to try to regain it. However, the United States in the real-world case also suffered strategic costs. The United States antagonized North Korea through heavy bombing that changed North Korean perception of the United States and its military strategy. The intervention decision and U.S. counteroffensive strategies also led to Chinese intervention and the PRC's direct military confrontation with the United States. This experience gave great confidence to the newly formed communist regime in China and worsened relations between the two states. If the United States had not intervened, there would have been less-antagonistic relations with China and North Korea, which could have led to greater possibilities for earlier détente (unless undermined by continuing tensions over Taiwan).

In the counterfactual case, we would have observed changes in relations among numerous key actors in the region, some with further-reaching strategic implications. After the historical Korean War, North Korea had to rely on China and the Soviet Union for postwar security and reconstruction. Throughout the process, the North Koreans felt both countries were overly interventionist. If North Korea did not have to rely on its communist patrons as much in the postwar era, and if it had not established such virulent anti-Americanism during the war, North Korea might have adopted a more flexible internal and foreign policy. Furthermore, the security environment for North Korea in East Asia in the real-world case worsened when the United States formed alliances with South Korea in 1954 and when North Korea started to have problems with its communist patrons in the late 1950s. In the counterfactual scenario (without the South Korean variable), the DPRK might have reached out to the United States several years after 1950 to form relations, leading to new opportunities for strategic triangulation for both states. For the United States, a military disaster in Korea need not necessarily have become a strategic disaster over the longer term.

Libya, 2012

Introduction

Following uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, demonstrations broke out in the Libyan city of Benghazi in February 2011, and "revolutionary councils" emerged across the country. Protests soon turned violent after heavy suppression from security forces, including air strikes against civilians and the use of mercenary troops, as rebel groups took control of parts of eastern provinces.[1] Concern grew that large-scale civilian massacres were imminent as government forces approached rebel-held towns, especially in Benghazi, with a population of roughly 750,000. Although Libya and the United States had taken steps toward a normalization of their relations in the previous decade, Muammar Qaddafi's long history of brutality and support for terrorism left him few friends in the region or beyond and contributed toward an unusually broad willingness to see his departure. Despite Qaddafi's near-universal unpopularity, the decision to intervene on behalf of the rebels was a difficult one for the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama. The president was instinctively skeptical of military interventions, having campaigned on an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, having recently announced the end of the combat mission in Iraq, and seeking to dial back U.S. involvement in the Middle East (the "pivot" to Asia would be announced in late 2011). The administration was also engaged in extended debates with Congress over executive war powers: Republicans argued that U.S. strikes without congressional approval were unconstitutional,[2] and polls showed that 77 percent of Americans opposed bombing Libyan air defense sites.[3] Senior intelligence officials had also publicly assessed that Qaddafi was "in it for the long haul," making it clear that negotiated solutions to the uprising were unlikely.[4]

U.S. Participation in the NATO Intervention
U.S. Strategic Interests

Generally, the Obama administration saw the Arab uprisings as a "moment of opportunity" and window for democratic change in the region. Additionally, Qaddafi had long been a patron of terrorism and was so despised that even the Arab League supported the no-fly zone against him. Further, Qaddafi's language (calling opponents "rats" and "cockroaches") and his speech in which he threatened to "cleanse Libya inch by inch, house by house, home by home, alleyway by alleyway, person by person, until the country is cleansed of dirt and scum," heightened fears that a massacre of rebels and civilians was imminent.[5] The Obama administration also included strong advocates for such concepts as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and atrocity prevention, such as Samantha Power, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the NSC. This combination of strategic opportunity, human rights violations, and atrocity prevention, as well as the willingness

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[1]   Christopher S. Chivvis and Jeffrey Martini, *Libya After Qaddafi: Lessons and Implications for the Future*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-577-SRF, 2014; Karl P. Mueller, ed., *Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-676-AF, 2015, pp. 11–12.

[2]   Felicia Sonmez, "Rand Paul Opposes U.S. Military Involvement in Libya," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2011.

[3]   Pew Research Center, "Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya," March 14, 2011.

[4]   "Gadhafi Likely to Survive Revolt, U.S. Intelligence Chief Says," CNN, March 11, 2011.

[5]   Known as the "zenga zenga" speech, Arabic for "alleyway by alleyway." Michael Peel, "The Colonel's Last Stand," *Financial Times*, May 11, 2012.

and even enthusiasm of regional and European allies (particularly France and the UK) made the action feasible and plausible. But the domestic climate in the United States, particularly after indecisive campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and the budget deficit, meant that Obama had to make the case for humanitarian intervention while recognizing that the United States did not have core national interests at stake, which contributed to the eventual U.S. decision to take part in an intervention that it would initially lead (Operation Odyssey Dawn) before transitioning it to its allies under NATO leadership (Operation Unified Protector).[6]

Why Did the Intervention Occur Early?

The intervention occurred very early in the conflict after a swiftly formed coalition and high-level diplomatic consultations, with the first strikes occurring just over a month after the initial protests.[7] The urgency of the intervention was primarily driven by a concern that a civilian massacre was imminent as government forces approached Benghazi.

U.S. Contributions

The United States provided broad support to the coalition, including naval forces; cruise missiles; tanker refueling; air strikes; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); targeting; battle management; signals intelligence; equipment; and missile defense, among other contributions.[8] During the operations, the United States provided about 75 percent to 80 percent of aerial refueling and 70 percent to 75 percent of ISR, as well as strategic lift, targeting, and search and rescue capabilities.[9] One participant reflected, "In the Libya War, a US admiral commanded the NATO Alliance, another US admiral commanded the air campaign, and the US secretary of state was the main driver of the diplomatic effort to hold the coalition together."[10] Still, the United States was said to have "led from behind," with another commentator referring to the intervention as "the very first NATO operation in which the United States declined to be at the forefront."[11] U.S. allies required significant support, however, resulting

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[6]   Charles A. Kupchan, "Libya's Strains on NATO," interview with Bernard Gwertzman, Council on Foreign Relations, April 4, 2011.

[7]   The first protests occurred on February 15, and the first strikes took place on March 19.

[8]   John Barry, "America's Secret Libya War: U.S. Spent $1 Billion on Covert Ops Helping NATO," *Daily Beast*, August 30, 2011. Overall, the United States assigned the following aircraft to Operation Unified Protector and Operation Odyssey Dawn: six AV-8B Harrier, 12 F-16C Fighting Falcon, ten F-15E Strike Eagle, six F-16CJ Fighting Falcon, six A-10 Thunderbolt II, five EA-18G Growler, four EA-6B Prowler, two AC-130 Spectre, one EP-3E ARIES II, one P-3C Orion, three RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles, eight to ten MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicles, one EC-130H Compass Call, one EC-130J Commando Solo, two RC-135 Rivet Joint, ten F-15E Strike Eagle, 15 KC-135 Stratotanker, four KC-10 Extender, one E-8C JSTARS, two E-3B/C Sentry, three B-2 Spirit, and two B-1B Lancer (Mueller, 2015, p. 405). For a detailed overview of the complex command arrangements throughout the course of Operation Odyssey Dawn and Operation Unified Protector, see Mueller, 2015, pp. 77–99.

[9]   Amy McCullough, "The Libya Mission," *Air Force Magazine*, August 1, 2011. See also Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, "NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 2, March/April 2012, p. 6.

[10]   Derek Chollet, *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World*, New York: Public Affairs, 2016, p. 115.

[11]   David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2012, p. 351.

in the United States returning to a more engaged posture and contributing munitions and "unique capabilities," such as Predator drones.[12]

Key Actors and Interests

In this section, we identify the key actors in the Libyan intervention and its aftermath (both among local parties to the conflict and in the international community), identify their interests in the conflict and how they might have shifted over time, and briefly describe key actions for each throughout the war.

Muammar Qaddafi: Qaddafi ruled Libya for over 40 years after first taking power in a military-led coup in 1969. He adopted a deeply antagonistic posture toward the West for much of his career, aligning himself closely with a variety of extremist and revolutionary causes. Capricious, eccentric, and brutal, he was a generous patron of terrorist groups and moved ruthlessly against any challenges to his highly personalized rule. In the early 2000s, however, he began a surprising reinvention in which he pursued rapprochement with the West, renounced his nuclear program, and worked with the West as a counterterrorism partner, targeting his jihadist domestic opponents, many of whom had fought in Afghanistan and Iraq.[13]

National Transitional Council (NTC): The NTC emerged as one of the most prominent opposition groups during the revolution, gaining French recognition as a "political interlocutor" in March and Italian recognition in April.[14] British recognition followed a month later, with Prime Minister David Cameron stating in May 2011 that the NTC was "the legitimate political interlocutor in Libya and Britain's primary partner there."[15] The United States did not recognize the NTC as the official government of Libya until July 2011.[16] The U.S. recognition came alongside that of the Libya Contact Group, a coordinating body made up of more than 30 governments and international organizations.[17] The UN seated the NTC delegate as the representative from Libya in September 2011, as did the International Monetary Fund.[18] And in October, the Council of the EU expressed "full support to the Libyan authorities represented by the NTC, as the legitimate interim governing authority in Libya and the sole representative of the Libyan state and people."[19] Despite its relatively swift consolidation

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[12] Sanger, 2012, p. 352.

[13] Peter Finn, "The Rise and Fall of Libyan Leader Moammar Gaddafi," *Washington Post*, August 25, 2011.

[14] Embassy of France in London, "Situation in Libya and the Mediterranean – Extraordinary European Council – Press Conference Given by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic," Brussels, March 11, 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, "Focus-Libya: Frattini, the NTC Is Italy's Only Interlocutor," press release, Rome, April 4, 2011.

[15] David Cameron and Mustafa Abdul Jalil, "Statement Between the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Libyan NTC," London: Cabinet Office, May 12, 2011.

[16] Andrew Quinn, "Seeking to Free Funds, U.S. Recognizes Libya Rebels," Reuters, July 15, 2011; Josh Rogin, "U.S. Recognition of the Libyan Rebel Government Leaves Many Questions Unanswered," *Foreign Policy*, July 15, 2011.

[17] Ian Black, "Libyan Rebels Win International Recognition as Country's Leaders," *The Guardian*, July 15, 2011.

[18] John Campbell, "The AU and South Africa Recognize Libyan NTC—Finally," *Africa in Transition*, blog, Council on Foreign Relations, September 21, 2011; International Monetary Fund, "Press Release: IMF Recognizes Libya's National Transitional Council, Says Ready to Support Its Efforts to Revive the Country's Economy," Washington, D.C., September 10, 2011.

[19] Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on Libya: 3117th Foreign Affairs Council Meeting," Luxembourg, October 10, 2011.

of key international recognition, however, the group's claim to the mantle of the revolution was not uncontested. Variously criticized as being elitist, foreign, regionally imbalanced, and Islamist influenced,[20] the council included key figures who had defected from the old regime, expatriates, and civil society and religious figures, and the council struggled to establish legitimacy and transparency.[21] Many members also remained anonymous, given the risks of their exposure in Qaddafi-controlled territory, adding to the council's legitimacy questions.

EU: Despite the recent establishment of key foreign policy institutions and mechanisms—such as the External European Action Service, the Lisbon treaty, and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy—the EU struggled to find a coherent voice and role in the crisis. EU High Representative Catherine Ashton initially opposed the no-fly zone because of German and Italian objections in particular. Italy eventually moved to favor intervention, but the German abstention from UN Security Council Resolution 1929 kept the EU largely out of the crisis.[22]

NATO: Although the initial military campaign was relatively successful, unanimity among NATO member states was very much lacking before and during the intervention. Not only was the alliance already extended significantly in Afghanistan, but the political leadership in various capitals perceived the situation in Libya very differently: Germany and Turkey, in particular, had significant reservations about the mission. During the early stages of the crisis, alliance involvement was not even assumed to be necessary by some states, including France.[23] The NATO mission also snowballed as the plans for intervention evolved. Initially tasked with supporting humanitarian aid and evacuations, the mandate soon grew to include the enforcement of an embargo and no-fly zone before growing still further to include targeting command-and-control installations and ground troops and, effectively, regime change.[24]

France: French President Nicolas Sarkozy was an early and vocal advocate for robust intervention in the crisis. Although the extent to which he was animated by domestic considerations is unclear, long-standing French interests and engagement in North Africa and the Sahel meant that, despite the lack of a direct colonial history, the fate of Libya was of keen interest to French regional and national security.[25]

UK: On March 21, British Prime Minister David Cameron declared military action in Libya to be "necessary, legal, and right" in order to avoid a "bloody massacre . . . in the nick of time," while stating that Qaddafi's fate and the future of Libya should be decided by the

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[20] Susanne Tarkowski Tempelhof and Manal Omar, *Stakeholders of Libya's February 17 Revolution*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, January 2012, p. 4.

[21] Paul Salem and Amanda Kadlec, "Libya's Troubled Transition," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 14, 2012; Omar Ashour, "Libya's Muslim Brotherhood Faces the Future," *Foreign Policy*, March 9, 2012.

[22] Ruth Hanau Santini and Arturo Varvelli, "The Libyan Crisis Seen from European Capitals," Brookings Institution, June 1, 2011.

[23] See Christopher S. Chivvis, *Toppling Qaddafi: Libya and the Limits of Liberal Intervention*, Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 36.

[24] Jeffrey H. Michaels, "Able but Not Willing: A Critical Assessment of NATO's Libya Intervention," in Kjell Engelbrekt, Marcus Mohlin, and Charlotte Wagnsson, eds., *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons Learned from the Campaign*, New York: Routledge, 2014.

[25] On Sarkozy's motivations for supporting a military intervention in Libya, see also Jolyon Howorth, "'Opération Harmattan' in Libya: A Paradigm Shift in French, European and Transatlantic Security Arrangements?" *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2014, p. 409; Frederic Wehrey, *The Burning Shores: Inside the Battle for the New Libya*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018, p. 42; and Chivvis, 2014, p. 34.

Libyan people with international support. He framed British action as limited in scope, tightly bound to the UN mandate, and oriented around the protection of civilian life. He underscored the urgency of the action and importance of U.S. and French involvement, stating that inaction risked an unstable terror-exporting pariah state on Europe's border.[26] However, a parliamentary enquiry would later claim that the UK's action was based on "erroneous assumptions" and was "dragged along by French enthusiasm."[27]

UN: Despite the diversity of views represented among member states and the rapid evolution of the U.S. position, the UN Security Council passed the relatively forceful (if somewhat ambiguous) Resolution 1973, which authorized a no-fly zone and "all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Libya while disallowing any "foreign occupation force." The text cited attacks on civilians that "may amount to crimes against humanity" and the urgent need to facilitate access for humanitarian aid. The resolution demanded a cease-fire and envisaged a political solution to the crisis, while acknowledging the "legitimate demands" of the Libyan people.[28]

Russia: Historically, Russian ties with Libya were relatively close, facilitated in part by Qaddafi's hostile posture toward the West during much of his rule. Although Russia abstained from the vote on UN Security Council Resolution 1973, allowing a no-fly zone to proceed, Moscow was apparently caught off guard by NATO's expansive interpretation of the resolution's mandate. State-owned media later called the attack "aggression . . . against a sovereign country," and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for the "situation's return to the political level." Some later analysis suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin felt "personally duped" by the manner in which NATO countries justified and undertook the intervention, which was not explicitly authorized by the UN Security Council resolution.

United States: Congressional Republicans criticized the Obama administration both for sluggish timidity and for executive overreach: that is, for moving too slowly in the intervention and for failing to adequately consult Congress.[29] Similarly contradictory complaints were made by Republican presidential candidates in March 2011.[30] Others suggested that the administration's policy was passive and overly deferential to the Arab League and UN or raised concerns about the costs of the operation and entrance into a third war after Iraq and Afghanistan. Some similar complaints were echoed by Democratic representatives as well.[31] Opinion within the administration was also far from unanimous. The cabinet was split between advocates of the R2P doctrine, such as then NSC Special Assistant Samantha Power and UN Representative Susan Rice, and skeptics opposed to U.S. intervention, such as Secretary of Defense

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[26] Hélène Mulholland, "Libya: Military Action Necessary, Legal and Right, Says David Cameron," *The Guardian*, March 21, 2011.

[27] House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, "Libyan Intervention Based on Erroneous Assumptions; David Cameron Ultimately Responsible," September 14, 2016; "MPs Attack Cameron over Libya 'Collapse,'" BBC News, September 14, 2016.

[28] "Libya UN Resolution 1973: Text Analysed," BBC News, March 18, 2011. See also: United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1973 (2011), S/RES/1973, March 17, 2011b.

[29] Helene Cooper, "Defending Strikes, Obama Says He 'Refused to Wait,'" *New York Times*, March 29, 2011.

[30] Paul West, "GOP Hopefuls Criticize Obama," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 2011.

[31] Naftali Bendavid, "Republicans Show Divisions over the U.S. Intervention," *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2011. See also Christi Parsons, "Obama Rejects Libya-Iraq Tie: President Insists Action Not on Par with '03 Invasion," *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2011.

Robert Gates and Vice President Joe Biden.[32] It was reportedly only after a last-minute shift in Hillary Clinton's position on the matter that Obama moved to support military intervention, which he later stated had been a "51/49" decision.[33] Although Obama was deeply skeptical of a broader mission in general, he was also reportedly frustrated when advised that a no-fly zone was insufficient and unlikely to prevent massacres against civilians by itself. He instead requested an expanded set of more-robust options, ultimately settling on a plan that authorized strikes against Libyan ground forces as well, with the expectation that heavy U.S. involvement would be soon attenuated and replaced by other NATO forces.

Determinants of Outcome

Several key factors were necessary prerequisites for the eventual success of the initial NATO military intervention in Libya to remove Qaddafi. They were not, as history would show, sufficient for the success of the subsequent political transition.

Unity and coordination between the United States and European allies: Given various domestic and international political considerations, the operations would not have been possible unilaterally and required a high degree of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic coordination and cooperation among allies and in international organizations, such as NATO and the UN. Although countries such as Germany and Turkey did not initially support the intervention, Berlin refrained from blocking the mission and Ankara eventually sent naval forces in support of the NATO effort. Further, French and British leadership were instrumental in encouraging the initially reticent Obama administration to join an allied operation that would certainly not have been considered solely as a U.S. intervention.

International and regional legitimacy: Given the sensitivities surrounding the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (and the internationalization of those conflicts) and in the context of the broader global war on terror, Western intervention in a Muslim country was a deeply controversial prospect. Although Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa expressed regret at the widening scope of the allied bombing in the early days of the campaign, the intervention would have been unlikely to have occurred at all in the absence of the Arab League's earlier support for the no-fly zone.[34] At the UN, the intervention was the subject of extensive discussion and engagement, culminating in the ratification of UN Security Council Resolution 1973. Although countries such as Russia would later claim that Operation Odyssey Dawn and Operation Unified Protector were not within the scope of what was authorized by the resolution, it is highly unlikely that the United States would have proceeded in the absence of a UN mandate.

Military capabilities: The campaign would not have been possible without the sufficiency, readiness, capabilities, interoperability, and deployability of allied forces. Although the air campaign eventually revealed some limitations to allied interoperability and sustainment and ISR assets, it demonstrated impressive readiness and power projection capabilities on the part of U.S. forces in particular.

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[32] Michael E. O'Hanlon, "U.S. Options for a Libya Intervention," Brookings Institution, March 6, 2011.

[33] Helene Cooper and Steven Lee Myers, "Shift by Clinton Helped Persuade President to Take a Harder Line," *New York Times*, March 19, 2011; Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Clinton, 'Smart Power' and a Dictator's Fall," *New York Times*, February 28, 2016.

[34] Edward Cody, "Arab Group Decries West's Broad Air Campaign in Libya," *Washington Post*, March 21, 2011.

Relative unity of Libyan opposition: Although the composition, nature, and coherence of rebel leadership was the subject of significant debate and ambiguity, the campaign relied on the rebel NTC as a diplomatic interlocutor and on rebel forces as ground troops, without which the intervention would have been practically and diplomatically impossible. Although the degree to which rebel forces contributed to targeting requests is unclear, local troops would have necessarily coordinated closely with U.S. forces to avoid friendly fire and civilian casualties.

Table B.9 summarizes the key actors, their interests, and the key actions they undertook in the real-world scenario.

Costs and Benefits of Intervention

Economic, reputational, and strategic costs: In September 2011, the Pentagon put its total spending for the Libya intervention at $1.1 billion. A month later, Biden stated that the United States had spent $2 billion "total," which presumably included military and nonmilitary costs for both Operation Odyssey Dawn and Operation Unified Protector.[35] Instability and fighting also contributed to a rise in oil prices; to the extent that the intervention prolonged this spike, it might have cost the U.S. economy hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars.[36]

The broad coalition supporting the intervention and Qaddafi's extraordinarily poor reputation in the region meant that there were few, if any, reputational costs for the United States in the Arab world.[37] Strategically, however, there might have been a cost to wider nonproliferation efforts, as there is evidence that the DPRK in particular learned the lesson that disarmament and renunciation of nuclear weapons programs can leave countries vulnerable to regime change attempts. In the aftermath of the attack, a DPRK state news agency quoted an official from the country's foreign ministry, who suggested that the Libyans had been foolish to abandon their nuclear program in negotiations with Western countries, and the lessons of the Libyan case were the subject of much public discussion surrounding preparations for the proposed Donald Trump–Kim Jong-un summit in 2018.[38]

The intervention undermined the stability of neighboring countries: A U.S. intelligence officer said that "lives that were saved in Benghazi turned into lives lost in Timbuktu," with jihadist groups in neighboring countries benefiting from the instability in Libya and from weapons proliferation throughout the region.[39] There were other regional implications as well. Gulf Cooperation Council states supported the anti-Qaddafi coalition while suppressing unrest in Bahrain and resisting calls for wider reforms, likely reckoning that cooperation in Libya could buy them some reprieve from U.S. pressure.[40]

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[35] Kevin Baron, "For the U.S., War Against Qaddafi Cost Relatively Little: $1.1 Billion," *The Atlantic*, October 21, 2011.

[36] Stefan Karlsson, "The Total Cost of the Libya Intervention," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 15, 2011.

[37] Shibley Telhami, "Libya Action in U.S. National Interest," Brookings Institution, March 28, 2011.

[38] Mark McDonald, "North Korea Sees Nuclear Error by Libya," *New York Times*, March 25, 2011.

[39] Quoted in Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Successes and Failures of the U.S. and NATO Intervention in Libya," testimony presented before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on May 1, 2014, Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Defense of Democracies, May 12, 2014, p. 4.

[40] Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012, p. 165.

Table B.9
Libya: Actors and Interests in Real-World Case

Actors	Interests	Actions
Qaddafi	• Maintain power and reassert control	• Moved to crush rebellion
NTC and opposition	• Overthrow Qaddafi regime	• Demonstrations and armed revolt • Enlistment of international support and recognition
Obama administration	• Avoid entanglement and another war • Avoid destabilization of region • Atrocity prevention • Facilitate greater European ownership of neighborhood security	• Operation Odyssey Dawn (United States) and support to Operation Unified Protector (NATO) • "Led from behind" • Limited engagement, particularly postconflict
France	• Atrocity prevention • Reassert global role and credibility[a] • Regain trust of Arab world[b] • Win second presidential mandate in 2012	• First public support for overthrow of Qaddafi • First recognition of NTC • Participation in patrols and strikes
NATO	• Initially did not assess uprising to be a direct threat or interest[c] • Alliance cohesion • Collective security	• Air surveillance mission in Mediterranean • Enforcement of arms embargo • Assumption of no-fly zone mission • Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1973[d] • Operation Unified Protector[e]
EU	• Member-state unity, regional stability • Develop and deploy effective foreign policy apparatus • Contain migration flows	• Suspended negotiations with Qaddafi regime, visa ban, sanctions, humanitarian aid, citizen evacuations, asset freeze[f]
UK	• Prevent civilian massacre • Remove Qaddafi regime[g]	• Coleadership of international coalition • Early recognition of NTC
UN	• Atrocity prevention	• UN Security Council Resolution 1970 • UN Security Council Resolution 1973
Russia	• Assert role as major international actor • Protect notion of sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs • Avoid emergence of norms of human rights–based interventions • Secure influence in Libyan political transition	• Abstention on UN Security Council vote (Resolution 1973), later anger at NATO's interpretation of mandate • Overt engagement with rebel factions in subsequent civil war
Arab League	• Represent collective interests of Arab member states • Maintain solidarity and principle of noninterference	• Initial support for no-fly zone, later complaint that regime change exceeded mandate

[a] Angelique Chrisafis, "Sarkozy Hopes Libya Can Boost France's Reputation – as well as His Own," *The Guardian*, September 1, 2011.

[b] "Who Is in Charge Here? Europe's Confusion About How to Run Military Action in Libya, and How to End It," *The Economist*, March 25, 2011.

[c] NATO, "Statement by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Libya," March 27, 2011a.

[d] NATO, 2011a.

[e] NATO, "Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR Final Mission Stats," fact sheet, November 2, 2011b.

[f] Erik Brattberg, "Opportunities Lost, Opportunities Seized: The Libya Crisis as Europe's Perfect Storm," Brussels, Belgium: European Policy Center, June 2011.

[g] "MPs Attack Cameron over Libya 'Collapse,'" 2016.

Arguably, the United States also might have lost some political capital with Russia as a result of the campaign, which might have undermined the chances of future UN acquiescence to R2P-based missions. A Royal United Services Institute report in 2012 argued that the "political fallout of operating at the very edge of what the resolution authorized" had frustrated Russia and China, and that Putin "reportedly [felt] personally duped and angry" at NATO's somewhat expansive interpretation of the resolution.[41] This sense of unfair play might have complicated not just the Syrian negotiations, which were soon to follow, but also wider relations between Russia and the West, as Putin stated in 2014.[42] Although U.S. and NATO actions were clearly frustrating to Russia, Putin's claims of personal offense and disillusionment should be treated with some skepticism. Ultimately, however multilateral the effort and however large the coalition involved, the campaign is also generally counted among several failed U.S. interventions, potentially contributing to a loss in U.S. prestige and reputation.

Economic, reputational, and strategic benefits: The intervention did not precipitate any immediate or clear economic benefits. Persistent instability, political stalemate, and pervasive oil smuggling combined to stunt Libya's postwar economic development. Further, the country maintained a self-imposed prohibition on foreign investment in the oil sector for several years after the overthrow of Qaddafi that continued until the beginning of 2017.[43]

Polling of Libyans after the intervention suggested that the United States enjoyed unusually high favorability ratings, which rose nearly 25 percentage points from before the revolution.[44] Some polling suggested that U.S. favorability might have risen to nearly 70 percent among Libyans.[45] Generally low levels of collateral damage and highly discriminate targeting also contributed to the popularity of the intervention. Finally, although the United States had been pursuing normalization with Libya under the Bush administration, the intervention was arguably a positive strategic opportunity to remove a longtime sponsor of terror while building interoperability with NATO allies and partners and attempting to create the conditions for more-effective governance in the country.

Ultimately, however, the outcome of the intervention was mixed at best. As of 2019, Libyan politics remained fractured, violent, and chaotic. The economy has been similarly battered, and oil production in August 2018 was less than two-thirds that of prewar levels.[46] Although violence has not reached levels seen in Yemen and Syria, such examples are extreme and misleading: Overall deaths in Libya might seem small compared with those in Syria, but

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[41] Michael Clarke, "The Making of Britain's Libya Strategy," in Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen, eds., *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign*, London: Royal United Services Institute, March 2012.

[42] Jonathan Marcus, "Why China and Russia Rebuffed the West on Syria," BBC News, October 5, 2011; Paul Lewis, "Putin Insists Russia Wants to Repair US Relations – but Ill Will for Obama Is Clear," *The Guardian*, April 17, 2014.

[43] Patrick Wintour, "Libya Calls for West to Invest in Oil Industry to Help 'Unify' the Country," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2017.

[44] Max Fisher, "Libyans Now Like America Slightly More than Do Canadians," *The Atlantic*, August 13, 2012.

[45] Lindsay J. Benstead and Mieczyslaw Boduszynski, "Public Opinion and the Demise of U.S. Public Diplomacy in Libya," *University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy Blog*, December 14, 2017.

[46] Salma El Wardany, Saleh Sarrar, and Hatem Mohareb, "Libyan Forces Quash Gunmen After Attack on State Oil Company," *Bloomberg*, September 10, 2018.

Libya's smaller population makes them proportionally more comparable.[47] Despite these negative indicators, the trajectory of the conflict in the absence of U.S. intervention might well have been similarly destructive. Further, Libya's fate has arguably been as much a failure of sustained Western engagement than of the initial campaign itself. The fact that most Libyan factions and figures were adamantly opposed to a peacekeeping force also highlights the difficulty of sustaining success even after relatively effective military operations.

Counterfactual Scenario

The United States intervened militarily in Libya in 2011 by first leading, then supporting a civilian protection mission combining a no-fly zone with strikes against the Libyan regime's ground troops and command-and-control centers. This intervention gives rise to several possible counterfactuals. Instead of intervening, the United States could have completely avoided military involvement. Alternatively, the United States could have intervened but with a smaller or heavier footprint than it did. Each of these options suggest different intervention scenarios depending on how they affect the other interveners' decisions.

Following the rule of minimal rewrite, we identify as the most plausible counterfactuals those options that were presented to Obama when he made the decision to intervene but that he did not choose. Selecting counterfactuals using this method requires a single rewrite in the history of the U.S. intervention in Libya (changing Obama's decision) rather than two (changing the menu of options in addition to Obama's decision).

The various options considered by the president were laid out during a March 15 NSC meeting devoted to Libya. On the meeting's agenda was deciding a response to the resolution introduced at the UN by France, the UK, and Lebanon to establish a no-fly zone over Libya. Multiple accounts of this meeting—including from participants—provide a similar picture of its unfolding.[48] Obama initially was presented with only two options: (1) doing nothing or (2) supporting the French, British, and Arab League call for a no-fly zone in Libya.[49]

Participants at the meetings were divided. The main opponents to an intervention were Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Vice-President Joe Biden, National Security Adviser Tom E. Donilon, Deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough, White House Chief of Staff William M. Daley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen, and Deputy National Adviser for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan. Gates later recalled, "I opposed the United States attacking a third Muslim country within a decade to bring about regime change, no matter how odious the regime."[50] The group also shared such concerns as a reluctance to divert resources that were much needed in Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya, as well

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[47]   For an overview of estimates of conflict-related deaths in Libya since the revolution, see Hana Salama, "Counting Casualties: Operationalizing SDG Indicator 16.1.2 in Libya," Geneva, Switzerland: Small Arms Survey, February 2018.

[48]   This section draws on descriptions of the March 15 meeting and preferences of various members of the Obama administration in Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, pp. 511–519; Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices*, New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 370–371; Chollet, 2016, pp. 96–100; Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House*, New York: Random House, 2018, pp. 112–115; Sanger, 2012, pp. 338–345; Wehrey, 2018, pp. 42–43; Chivvis, 2014, pp. 58–59; Mikael Blomdahl, "Bureaucratic Roles and Positions: Explaining the United States Libya Decision," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 27, No. 1; and Becker and Shane, 2016.

[49]   A variation on the no-fly zone option was briefly considered that consisted of a cyberattack on Libya's air defense that would have removed the need for strikes (Sanger, 2012, pp. 343–344).

[50]   Gates, 2014, p. 511.

as doubts over the outcome of the intervention: The United States might make things worse rather than better or find itself bogged down in another protracted nation-building effort.

Supporters of an intervention included Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the NSC Samantha Power, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes. They presented the president with two main arguments: (1) the moral need to prevent a massacre in Benghazi, which was portrayed as another Rwanda in the making, and (2) the need for the United States to provide the leadership and action its European and Arab allies were calling for.

At one point during the meeting, Obama asked whether a no-fly zone would prevent a massacre in Benghazi. Mullen made clear that it would probably not achieve that result. The president expressed his unhappiness with the options that were presented to him and adjourned the meeting, asking for a different set of options. When the meeting resumed a few hours later, Obama was presented with a new option that combined a no-fly zone with strikes against Qaddafi's ground forces. Obama decided in favor of that option but specified that the United States would only be heavily involved at the beginning of the operation to eliminate Libya's air defenses before transitioning its leadership to NATO, with U.S. allies bearing the main burden of the intervention.[51] Rice rewrote the UN resolution with the French, British, and Lebanese representatives; two days later, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 authorizing member states "to take all necessary measures . . . to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi."[52]

The three options that were presented to Obama can be described as (1) no intervention, (2) light intervention (no-fly zone), and (3) medium intervention (no-fly zone plus strikes).[53] Some options were never put on the table: in particular, a "heavy" intervention that might have consisted of an intervention led by the United States from beginning to end, combined with a postconflict reconstruction effort. The mention of U.S. ground troops in Libya appeared to be clearly off-limits during the NSC meeting.[54] Obama had made it clear that he did not see Libya as a vital interest and agreed with his Secretary of Defense and most of his advisers that they should not get involved in a third large-scale war while trying to extricate the United States

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[51] As Wehrey summarizes it,

> America would use its unmatched capabilities in airpower and precision strike—what the military called a "comparative advantage"—on the front end of an intervention and then hand off responsibility to its European partners. The intervention would be collective, not unilateral, and Washington would exempt itself from any ownership of what came next (Wehrey, 2018, p. 43).

[52] United Nations Security Council, 2011b, para. 4.

[53] This third option includes strikes on Qaddafi's ground troops. A "simple" no-fly zone also was expected to include strikes but only against Libyan air defenses.

[54] Sanger, 2012, p. 340. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 also qualifies the use of "all necessary measures" by member states by adding "while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory" (UN Security Council, 2011b, para. 4).

from Iraq and Afghanistan.[55] The administration also anticipated that Congressional Republicans would not support a vote on war authorization.[56]

The two additional options of (1) providing only logistical and intelligence support to other nations conducting a no-fly zone or (2) keeping open the option of a later intervention in case it became clear that European and Arab allies could not enforce their no-fly zone without U.S. assistance were not examined at the meeting, likely because they seem to have been generally disliked by the Obama administration. Rice's words to French Ambassador to the UN Gérard Araud on March 15, 2011, warning him that "[y]ou are not going to drag us into your [expletive] war"[57] suggest that the U.S. position at that time was to not intervene at all and certainly not to support an intervention led by others. Another indication that these options were off the table is the fact that Hillary Clinton used the second option as an argument in favor of intervention, warning Obama that "the French and British would go ahead with air strikes on their own, potentially requiring the United States to step in later if things went badly."[58] A later intervention on the part of the United States to support a failing European operation was thus considered a highly undesirable course of action.

This analysis leaves two plausible counterfactuals: (1) Obama decides to stay entirely out of the Libya intervention and (2) the United States pursues a no-fly zone along with its European and Arab allies, similar to the ones conducted over Iraq or Bosnia. The former appears to be considerably more plausible than the latter, for several reasons. First, Gates writes in his memoirs that "in a private side conversation with me after the meeting, the president said the Libyan military operation had been a 51-49 call for him,"[59] suggesting that he only saw two options: a forceful intervention ("51") and a nonintervention ("49").[60] Prior to March 15, 2011, Obama's preference for a nonintervention had been made clear on several occasions: On two occasions, Rice stated that the United States opposed a no-fly zone; the United States refused to take a position on that matter at the March 14 meeting of the Group of Eight (G8); and France and the UK were growing increasingly nervous that the United States, like Germany, would not support the UN resolution for a no-fly zone that they were pushing for.[61] One account illustrates how U.S. allies had come to expect that the United States would refrain from action in Libya: After being told by Rice that the United States would, after all, not only back a no-fly zone resolution but also add strikes against Qaddafi's ground troops, "Mr. Araud said the turnabout had so shocked him and his British counterpart that they at first suspected

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[55]   Chollet, for instance, recalls that Obama "sympathized with the arguments of Defense Secretary Gates, who warned that getting involved would be a diversion from more important commitments and not worth the costs and trade-offs" (Chollet, 2016, p. 99).

[56]   Rhodes, 2018, p. 119; Zaki Laïdi, *Limited Achievements: Obama's Foreign Policy*, trans. Carolyn Avery, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 119.

[57]   Susan Rice quoted from memory by former French Ambassador to the UN Gérard Araud in Becker and Shane, 2016.

[58]   Becker and Shane, 2016.

[59]   Gates, 2014, p. 519.

[60]   The "49" is unlikely to represent the "no-fly zone only" option, since Gates recalls that "[t]he president said it was a close call, but we couldn't stand idly by in the face of a potential humanitarian disaster—*he came down on the side of intervention*" (Gates, 2014, p. 518, our emphasis), suggesting that the alternative was nonintervention. Additionally, the "no-fly zone only" option was clearly rejected by Obama as soon as he was told by Mullen that this option would not protect civilians in Benghazi from Qaddafi's repression.

[61]   Laïdi, 2012, p. 120.

a trick."[62] Absent the looming prospect of a large-scale massacre in Benghazi, the United States likely would not have reconsidered its decision to not intervene. Therefore, nonintervention appears to be the most likely counterfactual and is examined in detail below.

The Context

Our counterfactual diverges from the real-world scenario on March 15, 2011. During the NSC meeting on Libya, Obama is presented with the two options of remaining outside of any potential Libya intervention or supporting the European and Arab League call for a no-fly zone. Obama maintains the U.S. position of not seeking military involvement in Libya, a country that presents limited strategic interest for the United States and where the risks of entanglement are perceived to be high. The president dispatches Rice to reiterate the message to the French and British representatives to the UN that the United States will not support a UN resolution calling for a no-fly zone.

In the absence of U.S. support, would France and the UK form a "coalition of the willing" and establish a no-fly zone anyway?[63] Cameron had proposed a no-fly zone as early as February 27, 2011, and Sarkozy, who had initially favored a nonmilitary course of action, became the most vocal proponent for this option in the second week of March, likely motivated by a mix of humanitarian and domestic political considerations.[64] The Obama administration clearly considered a UK-France intervention to be a possibility, since it was the basis of Hillary Clinton's argument in favor of a U.S. intervention (which would ensure that military force would be used on U.S. terms).

Yet the UK and France's eagerness to secure U.S. participation in an intervention suggests that they knew how difficult the intervention would be without it. The British appear to have been skeptical about the possibility of moving ahead with a no-fly zone without a UN mandate: According to one account,

> William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, rejected suggestions that the new [UN Security Council] resolution [calling for a no-fly zone] had "zero chance" of success. But he acknowledged that the no-fly zone could not be put in place by the UK and France without wider support.[65]

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[62] Becker and Shane, 2016. This suspected trick was likely an expectation on the part of the United States that Russia, China, or both would veto what became UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy," *New Yorker*, April 25, 2011).

[63] Accounts from U.S. officials regarding this question are not particularly helpful, since they appear to validate their author's view on the desirability (or not) of a military intervention. Gates argues that "[f]or all the talk . . . the allies were not yet prepared to act" (Gates, 2014, p. 516); Secretary of State Clinton notes in her memoirs that [o]ur NATO allies were prepared to take the lead in any military action. The Arab League would support it, and some would even actively participate in combat operations against an Arab neighbor" (Clinton, 2014, p. 370). Other accounts offer mixed evidence. Senior Director for Strategic Planning on the NSC staff Derek Chollet believes that Europeans would have intervened regardless of whether the United States had intervened, recalling that "[i]n fact, our European allies had made it clear that they would move with or without us" (Chollet, 2016, p. 98). Yet he is less categorical a few pages later, noting that "[i]f the US had opted out, the allies might well have acted anyway" (Chollet, 2016, p. 103).

[64] See Jason W. Davidson, "France, Britain and the Intervention in Libya: An Integrated Analysis," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2013; Ben Smith, "Sarkozy's War," Politico, March 22, 2011; and "Sarkozy's Libyan Surprise," *The Economist*, March 14, 2011.

[65] Nigel Morris and David Usborne, "Cameron Frustrated with Obama's Refusal to Act over No-Fly Zone," *The Independent*, March 17, 2011.

Citing an interview with Tom Donilon, author James Mann notes that "British and French officials privately made clear that they not only wanted but expected America to join with them. The message was simple but direct: We need you on this."[66] In a radio interview on February 28, French Prime Minister François Fillon stated that a no-fly zone "could only be in the framework of a joint operation with great powers. No one in Europe today has the means to enact such an operation alone."[67] Historically, France and the UK had never been involved in a no-fly zone without the United States.[68] Neither country had a vital strategic interest in Libya. They also did not have the military capabilities necessary to carry out that mission successfully on their own, a fact that the real-world scenario made amply clear but that would certainly have been known to French and UK leadership in March 2011.[69] Overall, the most plausible option for France and the UK was therefore to follow the course of action set by the United States and refrain from intervening militarily in Libya without U.S. support.[70]

The Intervention

In our counterfactual, there is no military intervention in Libya. The United States and its allies still call for Qaddafi to step down from power, claiming he lost all legitimacy because of the mistreatment of his population.[71] Chollet notes that although regime change was not the objective of a potential military intervention, "the United States, Europeans, and Arab League had all signed on to regime change as the broader political goal that they would seek to achieve through other means—pressure, isolation, and diplomacy."[72] Thus, the public and unofficial

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[66]   James Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*, New York: Viking, 2012, p. 290. See also Chivvis, 2014, p. 200: "the fact remains that the United States was the 'indispensable nation' for these kinds of military operations."

[67]   French Prime Minister François Fillon quoted in Davidson, 2013, p. 317.

[68]   At that point, no-fly zones had been used four times: in Iraq, with Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch; in Bosnia, with Operation Deny Flight; and in Kosovo, where NATO enforced a no-fly zone outside of a UN mandate. The United States and the UK took part in all four; France took part in all but Northern Watch. On the history of no-fly zones, see, for instance, Jeremiah Gertler, Christopher M. Blanchard, Catherine Dale, and Jennifer K. Elsea, *No-Fly Zones: Strategic, Operational, and Legal Considerations for Congress*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, R41701, May 3, 2013; Nathalie Guibert, "Libye: la creation d'une zone d'exclusion aérienne en discussion [Libya: creation of a no-fly zone under discussion]," *Le Monde*, March 1, 2011; "Nato Reduces Kosovo No-Fly Zone," BBC News, December 27, 2001; Karl P. Mueller, *Denying Flight: Strategic Options for Employing No-Fly Zones*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-423-AF, 2013, pp. 2–5; and Stephen Wrage and Scott Cooper, "The History of No-Fly Zones Doesn't Bode Well for Syria," Defense One, October 26, 2015.

[69]   On the allies' military shortcomings during the operation and the extent of the support that the United States had to provide for the mission to be successful, see Gates, 2014, p. 522; Daalder and Stavridis, 2012, p. 6; and Chivvis, 2014, p. 190. Howorth concludes that "the USA deployed crucial and indispensable military assets without which the mission could not have been taken to a successful conclusion" (Howorth, 2014, p. 405).

France and the UK's limited capabilities had also been exposed during previous no-fly zones. One French journalist notes, for instance, that France and the UK could not have maintained the sustained pace of sorties required by the Kosovo no-fly zone enforcement mission without U.S. refueling support (Guibert, 2011).

[70]   We assume that the decision on the European side was between intervening or not, but that, if a decision was decided, it would be on a scale similar to the one they chose in the real world. In other words, we do not examine options for which Europeans would have chosen a lighter intervention, since this would have only made sense if the Europeans had acted in support to another, larger actor—likely the United States.

[71]   This is merely a reiteration of the argument expressed by the United States, France, the UK, and the Arab League prior to March 15, 2011.

[72]   Chollet, 2016, p. 104.

initiatives to convince Qaddafi to step down that took place in February and early March continue. However, because such efforts were unsuccessful prior to March 15, they are likely to be equally unsuccessful—if not more so—after that date, since Qaddafi no longer operates under the threat of a military intervention against his regime and historically has proven highly resistant to Western pressure and isolation.

A key consideration in this counterfactual is whether the U.S. decision not to intervene holds over time or whether an intervention is merely delayed. For instance, if there had been a massacre in Benghazi at the hands of Qaddafi's troops (as was widely expected at the time),[73] would this prompt the United States to intervene to punish Qaddafi and deliver on its (and other leaders') promise to get rid of the Libyan leader? Whether there would have been large-scale killings of combatants and civilians in Benghazi will remain unknown.[74] Similarly unverifiable is political scientist Alan Kuperman's argument that only moderate repression would have followed Qaddafi's troops' entry into Benghazi: an outcome that, while still morally repugnant, would not warrant the application of the R2P principle.

In either case, however, the Libyan rebellion ends up defeated and Qaddafi's troops' activity remains confined to urban centers to maintain order. Under these circumstances, a no-fly zone with or without strikes makes little sense, and the United States and Europeans likely instead use diplomatic, economic, and other types of levers to remove Qaddafi from power. In other words, the United States in our counterfactual maintains its nonintervention policy regardless of what happens in Benghazi in mid-March 2011.

Key Actors: Counterfactual

In this section, we outline the likely implications for the key actors described above under our counterfactual scenario.

Muammar Qaddafi: The Libyan leader remains in power. Previous statements from Western leaders suggest they will continue to pursue a diplomatic track to get him to step aside. Yet the fact that the European threat of an armed intervention was an empty one and that the United States chose not to intervene only reinforces Qaddafi's conviction that his improved relationship with the United States, mostly built on cooperation against Al-Qaeda, has protected him so far and will likely continue to do so, making it unnecessary for him to make concessions. In June 2011, the International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Qaddafi, his son Saif, and his chief of military intelligence, Abdullah Senussi,[75] a development that solidifies

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[73] For instance, Chollet's account suggests the U.S. administration, France, the UK, the Arab League, and even Russia were convinced this massacre was going to happen (Chollet, 2016, pp. 96–97). For the United States, this argument is mentioned in most accounts of the NSC March 15 meeting. On how it factored into the French and British decision to push for intervention in Libya, see Davidson, 2013, pp. 215 and 321.

[74] Alan Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Summer 2013.

[75] This is a real-world development that still holds in the counterfactual ("ICC Issues Gaddafi Arrest Warrant," Al Jazeera, June 27, 2011). Although Libya is not a party to the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court, the fact that the UN Security Council referred the Libyan situation to the court through Resolution 1970 in February 26, 2011, automatically provides it with jurisdiction in this case (International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, The Hague: Netherlands, July 17, 1998, Article 13). Wehrey notes, "It was the first time the Security Council had voted unanimously on such a referral" (Wehrey, 2018, p. 40).

the return of the Libyan leader to international pariah status and complicates attempts by the United States and Europeans to negotiate his departure from power.[76]

Libyan opposition and NTC: Without a U.S. or European intervention, the Libyan rebellion is defeated by the Libyan regime. Three main factors suggest that this would have been the rebellion's most plausible outcome under our counterfactual. First, news accounts published shortly before the intervention made it clear that Benghazi represented the last large pocket of resistance against Qaddafi's forces, following a series of rebel defeats in Ras Lanuf, Zawiyah, Brega, and Ajdabiya in early March.[77] Second, rebel accounts subsequent to the intervention highlight that they would not have survived in the absence of an intervention.[78] Third, preintervention estimates of the strength of the regime's forces in comparison with the rebellion's made it clear that the latter was outnumbered and outpowered and could not succeed on its own. This point was emphasized by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper in his testimony before the U.S. Senate on March 10, 2011.[79] A failure of the rebellion, however, does not mean that rebel activity disappears in Libya. Instead, it morphs into a low-intensity conflict consisting mainly of guerrilla-type attacks against Libyan government troops, infrastructure, and official buildings, and the conflict is mainly confined to the Benghazi area, where protests started in February 2011,[80] and the Misrata area, which had shown particularly strong resistance during its siege by Qaddafi's troops from February to May 2011. The ability of this remaining rebel activity to channel funds and arms from supportive states—Qatar, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—also likely has a considerable impact on its ability to survive and, possibly, expand.

Obama administration: Obama's decision not to intervene comes under criticism from members of Congress (particularly Republicans) who favored a no-fly zone or a more-forceful action—such as Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman[81]—and his foreign policy is described in some media as indecisive or setting the United States on the path of strategic retreat. The primacy given to U.S. strategic interests over humanitarian principles (such as R2P) disappoints parts of the Democratic electorate who voted for Obama in 2008 but does not affect the 2012 election campaign, particularly because the majority of the U.S. public believed that the United States should stay out of Libya anyway.[82] The non-Libya interven-

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[76] Howard LaFranchi, "Libya's Qaddafi Charged with War Crimes: A Help or Hindrance to NATO?" *Christian Science Monitor*, June 27, 2011. See also Max Fisher, "Will ICC Arrest Warrants for Qaddafi Make Any Difference?" *The Atlantic*, June 27, 2011.

[77] Wehrey, 2018, p. 36; Chris McGreal, "Libya Rebels Face Last Stand as Gaddafi Forces Zero in on Benghazi," *The Guardian*, March 15, 2011; Edward Cody, "France Pleads for Military Intervention as Gaddafi Forces Attack Libyan Rebels," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2011; Chivvis, 2014, p. 53.

[78] See, for instance, Chivvis, 2014, p. 189.

[79] Although Clapper's statement was downplayed by the White House and led Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to call for Clapper's resignation. See Greg Miller, "Intelligence Director's Testimony About Gaddafi Causes Controversy," *Washington Post*, March 10, 2011.

[80] This alternative scenario is mentioned specifically by Frederic Wehrey in Craig Whitlock, "Overpowered Rebels May Be Forced Back to Benghazi," *Washington Post*, March 16, 2011; and by Chivvis, 2014, p. 189.

[81] Mann, 2012, p. 289.

[82] A Pew Research Center poll conducted from March 10 to 13, 2011, shows that, for 63 percent of respondents, the United States does not "have the responsibility to do something about fighting in Libya." Only 27 percent of respondents thought it was a U.S. responsibility: a lower result than in similar polls about previous humanitarian disasters, including "ethnic genocide in Darfur" (December 2006, 51 percent), "ethnic fighting in Kosovo" (March 1999, 46 percent) and "fighting between Serbs and Bosnians" (June 1995, 30 percent); Pew Research Center, 2011.

tion marginally affects the 2016 election campaign, however, by removing the assassination in Benghazi of four Americans, including U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens, as a Republican Party line of attack against Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. This event does not happen in our counterfactual because the United States cuts diplomatic ties with the Qaddafi regime.

France: Sarkozy invested a lot of political capital in an intervention in Libya, for which he had been the most forceful advocate. The failure to convince the United States to participate, as well as the decision to forgo an intervention with the United Kingdom, comes at a cost for the French president, who faces intense criticism at home for what is perceived as much talk and no action at best and confirmation that France's foreign policy is largely directed from Washington at worst.[83] This domestic cost is amplified by the fact that France is one of the few countries where supporters of an intervention outnumbered opponents.[84] The Libya issue, however, has little to no impact on the 2012 presidential elections, which Sarkozy loses in any case to his main opponent, socialist candidate François Hollande.[85] Further, in response to U.S. inaction in Libya, France continues developing its bilateral defense relationship and capabilities so as to be less dependent on the United States in the future.

UK: One author notes that before the U.S. decision not to intervene, "Cameron was under fire at home for the deep cuts outlined in his 2010 Strategic Defence Review."[86] The nonintervention of the UK in Libya only accentuates these criticisms because it is seen as evidence of the erosion of the UK's military power and its ability to influence world events. The UK decides to continue developing its bilateral defense relationship with France to be less dependent on the United States for future interventions and maintains defense spending at a higher level than in the real-world scenario. Yet overall, public opinion was divided on a Libya intervention in the first place,[87] so forgoing it has limited domestic political costs for Cameron and does not affect his ability to win the 2015 general elections with a comfortable majority.[88]

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[83] In early February 2011, an open letter written by French diplomats and published in the newspaper *Le Monde* accused Sarkozy of following the United States blindly and of not giving France a real foreign policy (Marly [pseudonym], "On ne s'improvise pas diplomate [You can't improvise as a diplomat]," *Le Monde*, February 22, 2011).

[84] A Financial Times/Harris poll conducted from March to April 2011 shows 40 percent of French respondents supporting military action in Libya, with 31 percent opposing (and 30 percent choosing "neither"); a Reuters/Ipsos MORI poll conducted in April 2011 shows 63 percent of French respondents supporting military action in Libya, with 37 percent opposing (cited in Ben Clements, "Public Opinion and Military Intervention: Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya," *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 84, No. 1, January–March 2013, p. 122, table 1).

[85] With Qaddafi still in place, Sarkozy is also at risk of hearing more allegations, on the part of the Libyan leader, that he funded the French president's campaign (an illegal act under French law). In the real-world scenario, Qaddafi first made these allegations on March 16, 2011, in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, and they eventually resulted in the indictment of Sarkozy in March 2018 (see, for instance, "Quand Kadhafi assurait avoir financé la campagne de Sarkozy [When Qaddafi claimed to have funded Sarkozy's campaign]," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 28, 2014; "Financement libyen de la campagne de 2007: Sarkozy est mis en examen [Libyan financing of the 2007 campaign: Sarkozy is under investigation]," *Le Monde*, March 21, 2018). In our counterfactual, Qaddafi attempts to use these allegations as leverage against Sarkozy to try to negotiate a relaxation of the international sanctions against his regime.

[86] Chivvis, 2014, p. 37.

[87] A Financial Times/Harris poll conducted from March to April 2011 shows 37 percent of British respondents supporting military action in Libya, with 36 percent opposing (and 27 percent choosing "neither"); a Reuters/Ipsos MORI poll conducted in April 2011 shows 50 percent of British respondents supporting military action in Libya, with 49 percent opposing (cited in Clements, 2013, p. 122, table 1).

[88] The regret of not having been able to intervene in Libya might make British decisionmakers more prone to intervening in Syria, resulting in a larger majority supporting air strikes in Syria in the House of Commons vote in December 2015.

NATO: In the real-world scenario, the outcome for NATO is mixed. On the positive side, the immediate mission's outcome—the protection of civilians, removal of Qaddafi from power, and military victory of the rebellion, all without a single NATO casualty—was hailed as a success, and the fact that the United States was able to "lead from behind" was seen as showing that allies could contribute significant military capabilities and leadership when needed.[89] However, the operation underlined some divisions within the alliance,[90] and the allies' constant need for U.S. support during the mission made it clear that their capabilities presented serious shortcomings, especially with respect to ISR limitations and munitions.[91] In our counterfactual, France and the UK anticipate such shortcomings, and this is one of the reasons they decide not to intervene without U.S. support in Libya. With that decision, and no U.S. participation or a UN mandate to enforce a no-fly zone, NATO does not play any role in the Libya crisis, and France and the UK prioritize a bilateral framework for future interventions in order to lessen their dependence on U.S. support for the application of their military power.

EU: As a result of the U.S. refusal to support the Libya intervention, the notion of independent European defense capabilities benefits from renewed interest, at least on the part of those European countries that were willing to contribute to military action in Libya.[92] Yet Germany's opposition to an intervention acts as a reminder that the EU option was never viable in Libya for reasons independent of the U.S. decision.[93] Additionally, France and the UK's realizations that their military capabilities did not allow them to intervene in Libya on their own also suggests to them that they need to address these shortcomings before an EU military response can be seriously considered.[94]

Coming at a time when the EU is still struggling with a financial crisis, Europe's failure to conduct on its own the intervention that it called for is seized by politicians who claim that Europe is subservient to the United States and losing its global relevance. However, although Qaddafi's repression likely pushes some Libyans out of the country, as does the economic hardship resulting from the return of Libya to the status of pariah state, Europe overall experiences a lesser refugee crisis—a crisis that was used in the real-world scenario by those same politicians to gain electoral support. Our counterfactual's overall impact on European politics is therefore marginal.

UN: In our counterfactual, the UN passes resolutions calling for the protection of civilians in Libya, but without authorizing the use of force for that purpose. This response is perceived as a drawback for proponents of the R2P principle but can hardly be blamed on the UN, since no veto was used to block an eventual UN mandate to intervene. The R2P principle itself, however, is in better shape in our counterfactual than in the real-world scenario, since it is not tainted—at least in the eyes of Russia and China—by the association with regime

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[89]   Daalder and Stavridis, 2012; Chivvis, 2014, pp. 190–191.

[90]   Mann, 2012, p. 294; Chivvis notes, "Only half the allies participated, and even fewer flew strike missions" (Chivvis, 2014, p. 192).

[91]   See, for instance, Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Seeing Limits to 'New' Kind of War in Libya," *New York Times*, October 21, 2011; and Howorth, 2014, pp. 411–412.

[92]   The EU countries that contributed to Operation Unified Protector are France, the UK, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, and Bulgaria (Howorth, 2014, p. 408).

[93]   Howorth, 2014, pp. 406–407.

[94]   Mueller, 2015, pp. 194–196.

change in Libya.[95] The UN remains a key actor in the Libya situation through its monitoring of the arms embargo and of the sanctions established in Resolution 1970.[96]

Russia: In the real-world scenario, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's decision to abstain from—rather than veto—the vote of Resolution 1973 was much criticized by then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and Moscow soon claimed this decision was based on a false understanding that "all necessary means" did not mean regime change.[97] In our counterfactual, Russia does not experience "buyer's remorse" after abstaining and sees with satisfaction the refusal by the United States to prompt regime change by force.[98] This outcome could encourage Moscow to continue on a path of improved relations with the United States.[99]

Arab League: The Arab League criticizes the failure of the UN Security Council to pass a resolution for a no-fly zone over Libya. Those members of the Arab League that are most invested in the Libya crisis—Qatar and the UAE—continue to call for Qaddafi to leave power.[100] The UAE and Qatar start providing proxy support to some of the groups still active in the Benghazi and Misrata areas, despite the arms embargo (discussed further in the next section).

Table B.10 summarizes the key actors in the counterfactual, including their interests and actions.

Determinants of Outcome: Counterfactual

In this section, we examine the implications of our counterfactual scenario on the four key factors that affected the outcome in the real-world scenario.

Unity and coordination between the United States and European allies: In our counterfactual, the United States does not support the call from its European and Arab allies and partners to implement a no-fly zone over Libya. As a result, coordination is limited to non-

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[95] One author notes that "Russia (explicitly) and China (implicitly) seized upon the manner in which NATO implemented its UN mandate in Libya to discredit R2P in Council debates over action on Syria" (Justin Morris, "Libya and Syria: R2P and the Spectre of the Swinging Pendulum," *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 5, September 2013, p. 1280).

[96] UN Security Council Resolution 1970 refers the Libyan situation to the International Criminal Court and imposes an arms embargo, a travel ban, and an asset freeze that applies to a list of Libyan officials, including Qaddafi. See UN Security Council, Resolution 1970 (2011), S/RES/1970, February 26, 2011a, para. 4–21.

[97] Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 248–249; Isabel Gorst and Neil Buckley, "Medvedev and Putin Clash over Libya," *Financial Times*, March 21, 2011; Samuel Charap, "Russia, Syria, and the Doctrine of Intervention," *Survival*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 2013, p. 38.

Hillary Clinton notes in her memoirs,

> In later discussions, especially about Syria, [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey] Lavrov claimed he had been misled about our intentions. That struck me as disingenuous since Lavrov, as a former Ambassador to the UN, knew as well as anyone what "all necessary measures" meant (Clinton 2014, p. 372).

[98] Charap, 2013, p. 37.

[99] Former National Security Adviser Tom Donilon noted in a 2017 interview that

> there was a substantial change when he [Putin] came back. He became very critical of his successor, particularly on things like Libya, and decided to take Russia in a different direction. And indeed, in a direction where not only were they going to have it to carve out a distinct foreign policy, but it was going to actively confront the West and the United States across a range of dimensions (Susan B. Glasser, "Tom Donilon: The Full Transcript," *Politico Magazine*, July 10, 2017).

[100] These countries were the only members of the Arab League that participated in the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Libya.

Table B.10
Libya: Actors and Interests in the Counterfactual

Actors	Interests	Actions
Qaddafi	• Maintain power and reassert control	• Crushes rebellion
NTC and Libyan opposition	• Overthrow Qaddafi regime	• Fails to garner international military support • The NTC remains a "government in exile" recognized by France and a few others • Low-level rebel activity continues around Benghazi and Misrata
Obama administration	• Avoid entanglement and another war • Avoid destabilization of region • Atrocity prevention • Facilitate greater European ownership of neighborhood security	• Choice of diplomatic and sanctions track over military action
France	• Prevention of attacks on civilians • Reassert global role and credibility • Regain trust of Arab world	• Mitigates domestic backlash after much talk and no action • Builds up its military capabilities in partnership with the UK
NATO	• Initially did not assess uprising to be a direct threat or interest • Alliance cohesion • Collective security	• No role in the resolution of the Libya crisis
EU	• Member-state unity, regional stability • Develop and deploy effective foreign policy apparatus • Contain migration flows	• Sanctions and asset freeze against Qaddafi regime
UK	• Prevent civilian massacre • Remove Qaddafi regime	• Mitigates domestic backlash after much talk and no action • Builds up its military capabilities in partnership with France
UN	• Atrocity prevention	• UN Security Council Resolution 1970
Russia	• Protect notion of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs • Avoid emergence of norms of human rights–based interventions	• Continue toward improved relations with the United States
Arab League	• Divergent views, but concern for avoiding atrocities and maintaining influence in Libya	• UAE and Qatar provide support to proxy groups

military initiatives, such as diplomatic efforts to compel Qaddafi to leave power and encourage a regime transition that would include some power-sharing with the Libyan opposition.

International and regional legitimacy: The widespread condemnation of Qaddafi and his regime, which resulted in the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and a call for a no-fly zone and which came from a wide range of countries (including key members of the Arab League), is sustained in our counterfactual. This unity bolsters the effectiveness of sanctions against Libya and might open new avenues for a peaceful power transition in Libya, although (as indicated above) Qaddafi at that point is likely to believe he has the upper hand and to be as reluctant to leave power—if not more so—as he was in February and March 2011.

Military capabilities: The French and British realization that they do not have the military capabilities required to sustain a no-fly zone on their own results (among other factors) in

their decision to not engage militarily in Libya. This realization, however, prompts renewed efforts by both countries to bolster their defense relationship, with the recognition that they cannot simply rely on the United States to support them in future operations. Budgetary constraints and domestic priorities, however, prevent either country from significantly improving its capabilities.

Relative unity of Libyan opposition: In both the real-world scenario and the counterfactual, this unity is fragile, with the various opposition groups involved in the low-level conflict that persists in the Benghazi and Misrata areas likely receiving support from different state backers. With Qaddafi still in power, however, it is possible that unity is maintained longer than in the real-world scenario because these groups still confront a common enemy (the Qaddafi regime) rather than the groups fighting among each other to fill a power vacuum.

Costs of Intervention: Counterfactual

In this section, we review the costs and benefits of a counterfactual scenario in which the United States does not intervene in Libya. In particular, we examine how the counterfactual scenario alters the costs of conflict, the host-nation's (i.e., Libya's) trajectory, and the costs and benefits of a nonintervention for the United States.

Conflict

In our nonintervention counterfactual, there are no conflict costs for the United States. DoD, which ended up absorbing the $1.1 billion cost of the real-world intervention despite Defense Secretary Gates's efforts to have the Overseas Contingency Operations appropriation cover it,[101] is spared this expense, relieving some budgetary pressure on the Pentagon.[102] There are, however, conflict costs for Libya. First, there is the human cost of the regime's repression in Benghazi that was allowed to follow its course. This comes in addition to the previous casualties caused by the regime on its population (rebels and civilians). Second, there is the cost for Libya of the guerrilla war that takes hold of the Benghazi and Misrata areas. This war comes with human costs, financial costs (because the regime needs to bolster its security apparatus and increase infrastructure protection), and economic costs (because the economic output of the oil-rich Benghazi region goes down because of a deteriorating security environment).

The nonintervention in Libya has implications for other conflicts. Would the contestation of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria have taken a different direction if Qaddafi had remained in place and NATO had not intervened? Anthony Shadid noted in October 2011 that

> [t]he death of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi reverberated across Syria on Friday, reviving protests that had begun to stall and focusing attention on a newly organized, unarmed opposition group seeking to challenge the Assad family's four decades of rule. . . . the Syrian National Council, announced in Istanbul this month, has begun trying to emulate the success of Libya's opposition leadership, closing ranks in the most concerted attempt yet to

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[101] Gates, 2014, p. 520.

[102] Gates recalls that, at that time, "Congress was funding us under a yearlong continuing resolution at about $20 billion less than the president's proposed budget" (Gates, 2014, p. 519).

forge an alternative to President Bashar al-Assad and courting international support that proved so crucial in Libya.[103]

In our counterfactual, there is no Libyan success to emulate for opposition groups in Syria, and a nonintervention in Libya, which had always been considered an easier intervention case than Syria,[104] would not have further raised the hope of the Syrian opposition groups that they would receive foreign aid. During the March 2011 U.S. decisionmaking process, proponents of an intervention made a similar argument—that is, "if Qaddafi were allowed to slaughter his people, it would encourage counterrevolutionary repression elsewhere, bringing an abrupt end to the Arab Spring."[105] Yet the rise of an armed opposition in Syria cannot be reduced solely to the Libya factor. In the case of Syria, the economic and demographic motives that prompted other opposition movements to rise during the Arab Spring were compounded by the fact that Assad had been leading a minority regime,[106] with the Alawites representing only 10–15 percent of the Syrian population.[107] This demographic weight, in addition to the successful examples of regime change in Tunisia and Egypt, are other important explanatory factors and suggest that the Syrian Civil War would have taken place regardless of what happened in Libya.[108]

Our counterfactual, however, changes some of the means through which the Syrian Civil War was fought, at least initially. Although the Libyan military registered a few defections in February–March 2011, most of Libya's arsenal remains under close guard and does not leak to nonstate actors across the region. This has some important consequences for the war in Syria, which was fueled in part by the presence of these weapons.[109] In 2014, a report from the UN Panel of Experts on Libya noted, "Most Syrian armed opposition groups face a shortage of materiel, particularly ammunition, which has resulted in strong demand in the Syrian Arab Republic."[110] In our counterfactual, Libya is not a supply source; although it was not the only source for the Syrian opposition, this difference might reduce the level of fighting, put

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[103] Anthony Shadid, "Death of Qaddafi Revives Opposition, and Hope, in Syria," *New York Times*, October 21, 2011.

[104] See, for instance, Donette Murray, "Military Action but Not as We Know It: Libya, Syria and the Making of an Obama Doctrine," *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2013, pp. 152–153.

[105] Chivvis, 2014, pp. 40–41. This point is also made in Wehrey, 2018, p. 41, and Jackson Diehl, "Libya's Domino Effect," *Washington Post*, March 14, 2011.

[106] The literature on the origins of the Arab Spring is vast. See, for instance, Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz, "Democratization Theory and the 'Arab Spring,'" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 2013; George Joffé, "The Arab Spring in North Africa: Origins and Prospects," *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 2011; and Filipe R. Campante and Davin Chor, "Why Was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Spring 2012. In February 2011, The Economist put together a "Shoe-Thrower's Index," with various indicators purporting to predict where unrest would happen next in the Arab world,

> ascribing a weighting of 35% for the share of the population that is under 25; 15% for the number of years the government has been in power; 15% for both corruption and lack of democracy as measured by existing indices; 10% for GDP per person; 5% for an index of censorship and 5% for the absolute number of people younger than 25 ("The Shoe-Thrower's Index," *The Economist*, February 9, 2011).

[107] Sam Dagher, "Syria's Alawites: The People Behind Assad," *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2015.

[108] We are thankful to Jeff Martini for suggesting this point.

[109] See, for instance, UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Concerning Libya*, New York, S/2014/106, February 19, 2014, para. 164–199.

[110] UN Security Council, 2014, para. 168.

the opposition at a disadvantage, or force these groups to find less-accessible alternative supply sources.

Another conflict that is affected by our counterfactual is the one that began in January 2012 in Mali when a Tuareg armed group, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, took up arms against the Malian government. Political and economic conditions in Libya affect Mali in several ways. Ever since the catastrophic droughts that plagued Northern Mali in the 1970s, Libya has been a destination for Malian Tuaregs and Arabs who found work in Libya either in the oil industry or as soldiers in Qaddafi's Islamic Legion. In that sense, Libya worked as a pressure valve when the economic situation in northern Mali became unbearable.[111] It was also a training ground for Malians who learned combat in Qaddafi's wars in Chad and Lebanon and put this experience to use back home: For instance, one of the leaders of the 1990 and 2012 rebellions was Iyad Ag Ghaly, a Libyan army veteran.[112]

After the collapse of the Qaddafi regime, thousands of Malian and Nigerien Arabs and Tuaregs—including some who had been recruited by Qaddafi in early 2011 to combat the rising rebellion[113]—returned to their countries of origin, with little hope of finding their place in weak local economies that relied largely on the remittances these same individuals previously sent from Libya.[114] Some of these individuals also brought back with them weapons taken from Qaddafi's arsenals.[115] Returnees and weapons together provided a catalyst that triggered the war in Mali, which resulted in the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (allied with radical Islamist groups) taking over the northern half of the country, a coup in Bamako, and a French military intervention supported by several other countries, including the United States.[116]

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[111] Libya also played an important diplomatic and economic role in the Sahel, where it was competing with Algeria for dominant regional power status. Libya was involved as a mediator in several of the crises that took place between Tuareg and Arab groups and the Malian central government. Additionally, Libya invested massively in the region, particularly in large infrastructure projects, including Mali's government office complex (see Jeffrey Gettleman, "Libyan Oil Buys Allies for Qaddafi," *New York Times*, March 15, 2011; and Chris Arsenault, "Mali's Land Deal with the Devil," *Foreign Affairs*, May 12, 2015).

[112] On the relation between Malian Tuaregs and Libya, see, for instance, Baz Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara: The 'Teshumara' Nationalist Movement and the Revolutions in Tuareg Society," *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 49, Supp. 12, 2004; Kalifa Keita, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg Insurgency in Mali," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1998, pp. 110–111; and Yehudit Ronen, "Libya, the Tuareg and Mali on the Eve of the 'Arab Spring' and in Its Aftermath: An Anatomy of Changed Relations," *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2013.

[113] Baz Lecocq and Georg Klute, "Tuareg Separatism in Mali," *International Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 3, September 2013, pp. 429–430.

[114] See Stephanie Pezard and Michael Shurkin, *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali: Past Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-892-OSD, 2015, p. 59. On returnees from Libya and their effect on the Sahel region, see Asmita Naik, *Returnees from Libya: The Bittersweet Experience of Coming Home Summary Report*, Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, May 2012; and UN Security Council, *Report of the Assessment Mission on the Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Sahel Region, 7 to 23 December 2011*, New York, S/2012/42, January 18, 2012.

[115] Lecocq and Klute, 2013, p. 430. On the proliferation of weapons from Libyan arsenals in the Sahel (and beyond), see, for instance, Vincent Hugeux and Boris Thiolay, "Le legs mortel de Kadhafi [Qaddafi's deadly legacy]," *L'Express*, October 19, 2011.

[116] For a more detailed account of the impact of the Libyan crisis on the war in Mali, see Roland Marchal, *The Coup in Mali: The Result of a Long-Term Crisis or Spillover from the Libyan Civil War?* Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Peacebuilding

In our counterfactual, the Libyan regime maintains control of its arsenals, and Malian Tuaregs and Arabs present in Libya remain in the country. Some are affected by the contraction of the Libyan economy as a result of international sanctions against the regime but not to the point where a large number of them decide to return to Mali.[117] Mali's experience of recurring Tuareg and Arab rebellions (in 1963–1964, 1990–1996, and 2006–2009), similar rebellions in nearby Niger, and the fact that little had been done since 2009 to address the former rebels' grievances, however, suggest that Mali's stability is short-lived. In our counterfactual scenario, therefore, a war in Mali happens anyway; however, in the absence of the Libyan collapse as a catalyst, it is delayed by several years. Without weapon flows from Libya, it is also possible that this delayed Malian insurgency does not progress to the point where rebels appear to threaten Bamako; in which case, France's intervention would likely remain in the diplomatic realm, as it did during prior insurgencies in Mali.

Finally, Tunisia was strongly affected by the Libyan crisis and the instability that followed the fall of Qaddafi. According to a 2017 World Bank report, the Libyan crisis could be accountable for almost a quarter of the drop in Tunisia's growth between 2011 and 2015, caused by reduced investment and tourism in Tunisia as a result of the Libyan crisis, the decrease is remittances from Tunisians working in Libya, increased security spending on the part of the Tunisian government, and reduced spending of Libyans in Tunisia.[118] In a 2018 interview, Tunisian Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui directly blamed challenges to Tunisia's security as a consequence of the 2011 international intervention in Libya and the instability that ensued.[119] The perpetrators of the terrorist attack at the National Bardo Museum in Tunis, which killed 21 European tourists in March 2015, had reportedly received training and weapons in Libya.[120] In our counterfactual, Tunisia experiences fewer of these effects because Libya remains relatively stable, aside from the areas where an insurgency persists.

Host-Nation Trajectory

Libya, even with Qaddafi still in power, remains plagued by instability. Although the rebellion has been crushed as a large-scale, organized movement behind the relative authority of the NTC, insurgent activity continues around Benghazi and Misrata, where Libyan troops are subject to routine attacks, as are (occasionally) some governmental offices in Tripoli. The failure of the NTC to rally international support around the rebels' cause in 2011, however, has discouraged potential leading figures—all of them now living outside of Libya following widespread repression—from stepping forward to propose a different political future for Libya.

Even confined to the Benghazi and Misrata areas, the low-level rebellion against Qaddafi is divided, with various groups vying for leadership. It is not possible to know whether the military leaders of the early rebellion—Abdul Fatah Younis, Fawzi Bu Katif, Khalifa Haftar—

Resource Centre, May 2012; and Scott Shaw, "Fallout in the Sahel: The Geographic Spread of Conflict from Libya to Mali," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2013.

[117] This outcome is based on the fact that sanctions against Libya in the early and mid-1980s did not prompt the return of Malian migrants in Libya to their country of origin.

[118] World Bank, *Republic of Tunisia: Impact of the Libya Crisis on the Tunisian Economy*, Washington, D.C., Report No. ACS16340, February 2017, p. 2.

[119] Robbie Gramer and Humza Jilani, "Libya an Obstacle on Tunisia's Path to Stability," *Foreign Policy*, August 6, 2018.

[120] Faith Karimi, Tim Lister, and Greg Botelho, "2 Tunisia Museum Attack Suspects Got Weapons Training in Libya, Official Says," CNN, March 20, 2015; see also Gramer and Jilani, 2018.

would have survived the repression in Benghazi and (for those who survived) what their subsequent political and trajectory might be. A main line of division between more-secular and more-Islamist groups—as the NTC and February 17 Brigades were divided in March 2011—and further divisions within each group along ideological or leadership lines are likely.[121] However, as noted above, the necessity to confront a common enemy might make these divisions less prominent than they were in the real-world scenario, in which the Qaddafi threat was gone and opposition groups competed against each other to determine the political future of Libya.

Rebel activity is supported by some of those outside powers that were most insistent on the imposition of a no-fly zone, despite the arms embargo established by UN Security Council Resolution 1970. The UAE in particular provides discreet support to the more secular groups,[122] while Qatar and Turkey do the same with the more Islamic-minded groups.[123] This eastern rebellion also operates with support from the Muslim Brotherhood in neighboring Egypt, but that support ends in 2013 following the removal from power of Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi.[124] Overall, this proxy support has the potential of reigniting a larger-scale rebellion in Libya, possibly putting the country back on the real-world scenario's track (as of February–March 2011), with heavy repression from the regime, large civilian casualties, and large numbers of refugees.

Rebel activity around Benghazi disrupts Libya's oil production, which plummets, compounding Libya's financial difficulties caused by the sanctions regime imposed by the international community that results, within a few months, in the freezing of $160 billion in Libyan assets.[125] These economic shocks to Libya might further destabilize the country, possibly bringing more popular support to the simmering rebellion in Benghazi and Misrata.

Finally, a key question is whether, in our counterfactual, Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) operate on Libyan territory to the same extent that they did in the real-world scenario. The answer depends largely on the extent to which Qaddafi maintains some degree of control over the country. In a scenario in which only the Benghazi and Misrata areas experience turmoil and the Libyan state does not collapse—even with reduced oil output and sanctions—Qaddafi's forces would likely be able to limit Al-Qaeda and ISIS's ability to use Libya as a base and training ground.

Costs and Benefits for the United States

Economic costs and benefits: In our counterfactual, one economic benefit is that the United States does not spend the $1.1 billion that the intervention cost in the real-world scenario. The United States also does not develop the aid programs to Libya that, in the real-world scenario, followed the fall of Qaddafi. The U.S. Agency for International Development, for instance,

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[121] This assessment is based on Wehrey's description of the Libyan rebellion's key actors and factions in Benghazi from February to March 2011 (Wehrey, 2018, pp. 29–33).

[122] This outcome is based on the UAE's support to Haftar's Libyan National Army in the real-world scenario. See, for instance, UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011)*, S/2017/466, June 1, 2017, para. 132. See also Wehrey, 2018, p. 52.

[123] This outcome is based on Qatar's support to Rafallah al-Sehati (which later split into subgroups, one of which was Al-Qaeda–aligned Ansar al-Shariah) in the real-world scenario. See, for instance, David D. Kirkpatrick, "Qatar's Support of Extremists Alienates Allies Near and Far," *New York Times*, September 8, 2014; and Wehrey, 2018, p. 52.

[124] We are thankful to Jeff Martin for suggesting this point.

[125] This figure is drawn from the real-world scenario. See Steven Lee Myers and Dan Bilefsky, "U.N. Releases $1.5 Billion in Frozen Qaddafi Assets to Aid Rebuilding of Libya," *New York Times*, August 25, 2011.

had $44 million obligated for Libya in 2014, up from $27 million in 2011.[126] We assume that the gains and losses incurred by the regime sanctions against Libya are negligible for the United States because of the limited amount of bilateral trade that existed between the two countries prior to the 2011 crisis.[127] The consequences of the February–March 2011 crisis on oil production in Libya, however, are lasting and have a severe impact on global oil markets. Foreign oil companies started leaving Libya in February 2011, and by the end of the month, the crisis had already resulted in a surge in oil prices to $110—their highest level in two and a half years.[128] By the first week of March, oil and gas production in Libya had fallen by 60–90 percent.[129] With Qaddafi remaining in power, these foreign companies are unlikely to return.[130] In a best-case scenario for Libya's oil production, nationalizations by Qaddafi restore some of the precrisis output; in a worst-case scenario, the United States and its allies decide on an oil embargo against Libya—similar to the one imposed in the 1980s—to coerce Qaddafi into leaving power, resulting in an even larger disruption of the Libyan production and global markets.[131] Additionally, the United States in our counterfactual is spared the costs of its counterterrorism campaign in Libya, which has consisted since 2015 of air strikes against Al-Qaeda and ISIS targets.

Another important cost that the United States avoids in our counterfactual relates to the U.S. embassy and consulates in Libya. As mentioned above, the United States in our counterfactual severs diplomatic relations with Libya. It does not reopen its embassy in Tripoli (closed in February 2011) or its consulates: particularly not the consulate in Benghazi, which is in one of the most unstable areas in Libya. In addition to avoiding the human cost of losing four U.S. nationals, including Ambassador Stephens, the United States saves on the operational costs of these representations and, more importantly, on the estimated $7 million that the investigation and hearings on the Benghazi attack cost.[132]

Strategic costs and benefits: The gruesome ending of Qaddafi often is mentioned as having provided other dictators around the world with the "lesson" that they should not get rid of their nuclear weapons if they do not want to be overthrown by an outside intervention.[133] Former Deputy Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken noted, "I heard directly from

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[126] U.S. Agency for International Development, "Foreign Aid Explorer," online database, accessed November 12, 2018.

[127] In 2010, Libya reported that the United States accounted for 2.51 percent of its exports and 5.26 percent of its imports. The United States reported that same year that 0.05 percent of its exports went to Libya, while Libya represented 0.11 percent of total U.S. imports that year (World Bank, "World Integrated Trade Solution: Country Analysis," online database, accessed November 12, 2018).

[128] Javier Blas, "Libya's Impact on Oil," *Financial Times*, February 23, 2011.

[129] U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Libyan Supply Disruption May Have Both Direct and Indirect Effects," March 7, 2011.

[130] Blas, 2011.

[131] Blas, 2011. On the effect of the U.S. oil embargo on Libya's oil revenue in the 1980s, see Richard Nephew, *Libya: Sanctions Removal Done Right? A Review of the Libyan Sanctions Experience, 1980–2006*, New York: Center on Global Energy Policy, Columbia University, March 2018.

[132] Jeremy Herb, "A Tale of Two Investigations: Benghazi vs. Mueller," CNN, June 29, 2018.

[133] Sanger, 2012, pp. 364–365. See also Tad Daley, "Nuclear Lesson from Libya: Don't Be like Qaddafi. Be like Kim," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 2011.

the Chinese that the Libyan model did not inspire confidence in Pyongyang,"[134] and the Libya precedent was mentioned as an obstacle to U.S.-North Korea talks on disarmament between Trump and Kim Jong-un in June 2018.[135] This lesson for authoritarian leaders (which could be summarized as "disarmament exposes, rather than protects") represents a strategic cost for the United States that does not exist in our counterfactual. In the absence of an intervention in Libya, the United States might be more successful at convincing authoritarian leaders that they have something to gain from improving their relationship with the United States through engaging in some level of disarmament or even voluntary denuclearization.

One strategic cost of our counterfactual, however, is the termination of Libyan cooperation with the United States and Europe on radical Islamist groups' activity, which could lead to some missed opportunities for security services in these countries.

Reputational costs and benefits: As a result of nonintervention, the United States suffers reputational costs commensurate with the level of the Qaddafi regime's repression in Benghazi. If the repression ended up being the bloodbath that many feared, the U.S. failure to prevent it—particularly after U.S. allies were so strongly pushing for it—would have resulted in high reputational costs for the United States. There might have been echoes of the U.S. lack of intervention in Rwanda, and Obama likely would have been perceived as bearing a large responsibility for letting the massacre happen. If the repression in Benghazi was limited, the United States would suffer similarly limited—if any—reputational costs.

The absence of an intervention might also lead to some questioning of U.S. reputation as an ally. France and the UK likely would blame their nonintervention on the lack of U.S. leadership, contrasting their diplomatic efforts and willingness to use military force with the U.S. obstructionist role. They might, however, refrain from pushing this narrative too far because it underlines their dependence on the United States for the exercise of their military power.[136] Privately, however, U.S. allies are more doubtful that the United States will support their interventionist policies than they are in the real-world scenario.

Domestic costs and benefits: Overall, the domestic costs and benefits for the United States of a nonintervention are limited.[137]

Conclusion

In this case study, we compared the NATO intervention that took place from March to October 2011 with the counterfactual scenario of a nonintervention. Table B.11 summarizes the key factors at play in the intervention and the impact they had on our counterfactual.

Although the costs of the intervention itself were limited—a financial cost, for the United States, much lower than what it paid for the no-fly zones over Iraq or Kosovo and relatively low

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[134] Anthony J. Blinken quoted in Peter Baker, "Libya as a Model for Disarmament? North Korea May See It Very Differently, *New York Times*, April 29, 2018.

[135] Uri Friedman, "The Word That Derailed the Trump-Kim Summit," *The Atlantic*, May 24, 2018.

[136] Both points are mentioned in an interview with author James Mann in which Ben Rhodes argues that nonintervention in the case of Libya comes with severe reputational costs:

> If we are for democracy, if we are against mass atrocities and we are for collective action on behalf of global security issues, and then we don't step up to the plate in Libya, it would have sent a signal that the U.S. isn't really a leader (Mann, 2012, p. 293).

[137] As discussed earlier in the "Key Actors: Counterfactual" section on the Obama administration.

Table B.11
Libya: Key Factors

Factors	Real-World Case	Counterfactual
Unity and coordination between the United States and European allies	• Eventual agreement between the United States and France, the UK, and key allies, including eventual agreement for NATO mission • Unity eventually facilitated Operation Unified Protector	• Lack of agreement regarding military operation, but unity and coordination remain important to pursue a diplomatic track and maintain sanctions against Libya
International and regional legitimacy	• Support for no-fly zone • Subsequent denunciation of broader strikes	• International and regional legitimacy remain important to pursue a diplomatic track and maintain sanctions against Libya
Military capabilities	• U.S. forces conducted bulk of strikes and missions, making overall scope and prosecution of operation possible	• France and the UK call off military action in absence of U.S. participation and leadership • Failure to intervene prompts France and the UK to bolster their defense relations and slow the pace of their defense budget cuts
Relative unity of Libyan opposition	• N/A	• This unity shatters as the rebellion turns to low-level, persistent conflict and different groups receive material support from different states

reputational and domestic costs[138]—it is the aftermath of the intervention that has generated dramatic human and economic costs for Libya, as well as a steep strategic cost for the United States. The political and military chaos that followed the fall of Qaddafi eventually turned into a full-fledged civil war in 2014. At the time of this writing—seven years after the end of NATO's operations over Libya—Libya's government is contested, close to 400,000 Libyans are considered "persons of concern" by the UN,[139] and, in the UN Development Programme's (UNDP's) Human Development Index, Libya fell from the 64th rank in 2011 to 108th in 2018.[140]

Even if it achieves a modicum of stability, it remains to be seen whether Libya will eventually emerge as a capable counterterrorism partner or whether its protracted crisis of governance will exacerbate regional fragility and further drive radicalization. Although his rule was erratic, brutal, and historically disruptive, Qaddafi had developed a working relationship with the United States and the UK and had pursued a relatively effective normalization in exchange for denuclearization and cooperation, underlining the strategic costs that accompanied his downfall. Overall, U.S. strategic interests are somewhat better served in our counterfactual because the maintenance of the Qaddafi rule over Libya prevents the breakdown of the country into fiefdoms controlled by various entities, including some with sympathies for Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

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[138] Gertler et al., 2013, p. 12, Table 1.

[139] The exact figure was 375,840 as of 2017. "Persons of concern" include refugees, IDPs, returnees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons; UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "Population Statistics," online database, accessed August 2018.

[140] UNDP, *Human Development Report 2011*, New York, 2011, p. 126; UNDP, *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*, New York, 2018, p. 23.

In the absence of NATO intervention, it is also likely that the cost to the Libyan population, in terms of casualties, displacement, armed predation, and economic disruption, would have been less severe. Political repression and economic sanctions remain, however, as does sporadic violence, although it is limited in intensity and largely confined to the Benghazi area. Absent the large-scale, sustained instability that followed the overthrow of Qaddafi, Libya might become a destination for some Syrian refugees. This scenario, however, assumes that the repression in Benghazi was not the large-scale massacre that many predicted and that ended up being a key factor that lead to the NATO intervention in the real-world case. It also assumes that proxy support for the remnants of the rebellion does not allow it to gain in intensity and spread again: In which case the counterfactual would return, with small changes, to the situation that led in March 2011 to the deliberations in Washington and in European and Arab capitals on whether they should support the anti-Qaddafi opposition.

Finally, the region around Libya is also better off in our counterfactual, although marginally so. The securing of Libyan arsenals prevents flows of small arms and light weapons from spreading through the region, fueling conflicts in Syria, Mali, and elsewhere. Yet cutting that supply is unlikely to stop the war in Syria because combatants receive equipment from various state backers. Similarly, in Mali, the war that pitted Arabs and Tuaregs living in the north against the government in Bamako is delayed but not avoided. Tunisia experiences a better outcome because the spillover from Libya's instability is somewhat reduced in our counterfactual.

Overall, our counterfactual offers a less-than-ideal outcome in which a dictator is still in power and civil war remains a possibility. Yet it appears to be a better outcome than what happened to Libya in the real-world scenario. A different intervention that would have included planning for a comprehensive postconflict stabilization and reconstruction effort might have fared better, improving the odds of a stable Libya ruled by an elected and representative government: In 2016, Obama described the lack of planning for postconflict Libya as the "worst mistake" of his presidency.[141] Yet this option of a different intervention was not seriously considered at the time because of U.S. war weariness and nation-building fatigue, as well as other limiting factors on the ground, such as the NTC's refusal of a foreign military presence in postintervention Libya.[142] This reality left a choice between a bad option—a nonintervention that would leave Qaddafi in power—and the even worse option of an intervention that removed Qaddafi from power but created a terrorist and criminal sanctuary and contributed to destabilizing the region.

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[141] See, for instance, Dominic Tierney, "The Legacy of Obama's 'Worst Mistake,'" *The Atlantic*, April 15, 2016.

[142] Derek Chollet, Ben Fishman, and Alan J. Kuperman, "Who Lost Libya? Obama's Intervention in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 3, May/June 2015, pp. 156–157; Chivvis, 2014, pp. 183–185.

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