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To Intervene or Not to Intervene: The Decision Making Process of the United States in Humanitarian Interventions

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Abstract

The emergence of the United States as the world’s sole hegemon at the end of the Cold War is a much-studied phenomenon, as is the rise of the “humanitarian intervention” after the fall of the Soviet Union. History shows the emergence of the United States as a leader in humanitarian interventions; however, research is lacking in determining what factors the United States uses in the decision process of if and when to intervene in various humanitarian crises. My paper seeks to fill that void, using case study analysis of the paired comparisons of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and Somalia and Rwanda, as well as critical analysis of various presidential speeches and State Department correspondence to ask whether 1) the fear of precedence, 2) state sovereignty, and 3) political self interests play a role in the decision process, and the respective weight each factor carries. My findings were that precedence, state sovereignty, and political self interest do in fact weigh heavily in the decision process; furthermore, my findings suggest that political self interests represent a proverbial “trump card” in the decision process, with the most importance placed on this one factor. With these findings, I conclude that the term “humanitarian” intervention is misleading in US foreign policy, as there seems to be no weight placed on the morality of an intervention but rather how intervention can help the United States.
Introduction

Humanitarian interventions are increasingly seen as a phenomenon of international relations. With the introduction of the responsibility to protect by the UN World Summit in 2005, having a clear definition of humanitarian intervention, as well as the rules by which one nation should intervene upon another, is becoming increasingly important. Given the emergence of the United States as the sole world hegemon after the fall of the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) at the end of the Cold War, understanding why the United States chooses to intervene in some crises but not others is particularly important to the study of US foreign policy and international relations.

According to the Danish Institute of International Affairs, humanitarian intervention is defined as “the coercive action by States involving the use of armed force in another state without the consent of its Government, with or without authorization from the UN Security Council, for the purpose of preventing or putting to a halt gross and massive violations of human rights or international humanitarian law” (Corell, 2001: 2). However, there exists an inherent dilemma when trying to establish a universally accepted definition of humanitarian intervention. The problem lies in the juxtaposition of intervening on moral grounds versus intervening for a state’s self interest. Should countries—and their respective militaries—intervene on the principle of what is right? Or are there other factors to take into consideration? The relatively new and highly controversial principle of responsibility to protect, affirmed by the UN at the World Summit in 2005, has added to the problem, providing nation-states with a deontic doctrine

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1 The Danish Institute of International Affairs is an independent research organization dedicated to the study of international affairs. It is just one section of the larger Danish Centre for International Studies and Human Rights, established in 2002.
with which to apply to humanitarian crises across the globe (2005 World Summit Outcome, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, October 24, 2005).

As the question of humanitarian intervention remains a salient subject, especially for the United States, it is important to consider why the United States has intervened in some cases but refrained from doing so in others. Several hypotheses can be deduced from the vacillating role of the United States in conducting humanitarian interventions. There could be a fear of setting precedence that intervention represents a slippery slope; that by intervening once, future and perhaps more violent interventions will take place. Or there could be the fear of establishing a new precedence and, thus, maintaining the status quo represents a safer option. There could be the role of state sovereignty, in which intervention in a country in which the government has not asked for help undermines that government’s sovereignty. Or it could be due to political self interests of the United States and principle decision makers. Of course, these motivations are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, probably are inherently intertwined. Whichever the case, the decision to intervene is not a simply black and white decision process, but rather is informed by various intertwined factors determining if to intervene, when, and how much. It is important to look both at cases in which the United States did intervene as well as cases where they did not, for the comparison is what can help shed light on what motivations the United States can cite in deciding whether to intervene in humanitarian crises.

Also important to consider is the changing nature of humanitarian interventions. During the Cold War, countries across the world adopted a stance of non-interventionism, based in part on a strict interpretation of the Westphalian idea of sovereignty. It was also a function of the bipolar nature of the Cold War in which intervention by one side might be countered by actions of the other. However, with the end of the Cold War came a new series of principles marked by
interventionism, especially in the 1990s. John Vincent, in his book *Human Rights and International Relations* (1986), argued that “allowing human rights to serve as the justification for intervention would open the floodgates to countless wars” (quoted in Welsh, 2007: 87). However, after the Cold War, this did not happen. True, countries were more likely to intervene, but, as Jennifer Welsh argues, “Far from witnessing rampant interventionism, the period since the end of the Cold War has, in spite of the prominence of human rights talk, been marked more by non-intervention” (Welsh, 2007: 87). Yet intervention has not been rendered useless by any means. In fact, in the period between 1990 and 2000, the number of humanitarian operations—headed by both the United States and the United Nations—increased dramatically, as the United States believed it its duty as a hegemon to protect against any threats to international order.

The UN Security Council is responsible for deciding whether to intervene on the grounds of gross humanitarian violations.² Because the United States is both a permanent veto empowered member of the UN Security Council and is recognized as the world’s sole hegemon, studying the decision process of the United States should provide insights into decisions to intervene. The United States and its military are the entities that give the United Nations clout and credibility. The Security Council cannot accomplish much without the political and military support of the US, due to the role the US maintains as a hegemon. Given this, the specific criteria that the UN Security Council outlines in the *UN Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines* handbook is fully applicable to the decision process of the United States on whether to intervene in perceived human rights violations. These criteria are

1) Whether a situation exists the continuation of which is likely to endanger or constitute a threat to international peace and security;

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² It is important to note that this is only significant for those cases in which UN authorization is sought. As will be discussed, the US has shown that authorization by the UN is not necessary and there is nothing to stop a state from intervening without UN approval.
2) Whether regional or sub-regional organizations and arrangements exist and are ready and able to assist in resolving the situation;
3) Whether a cease-fire exists and whether the parties have committed themselves to a peace process intended to reach a political settlement;
4) Whether a clear political goal exists and whether it can be reflected in the mandate;
5) Whether a precise mandate for a UN operation can formulated; and
6) Whether the safety and security of [UN] personnel can be reasonably ensured. (United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines, 2008)

Case study selection will be in part based off the UN criteria, as they can be reasonably deduced to be the same criteria the United States uses to determine their role in intervention. It will also be helpful to use contextual analysis on speeches given by past presidents as well as various White House officials to differentiate between the motives—especially moral motives—for intervening in humanitarian crises. Although polling might give quantitative data as to whether there exists a salient exigency in a particular humanitarian intervention, at least on the part of the public, polling also represents a problem for analysis. Oftentimes, items that are on the polling agenda must also be on the national agenda. However, humanitarian crises and the option to intervene are not usually on the national agenda. Instead, humanitarian crises arise during presidential terms and are responded to as the situation arises. Polling also represents an issue because it only reflects what the public thinks, not necessarily what the decision makers think.

In choosing cases for the study, one must use a strict interpretation of Roberts’ definition of humanitarian intervention: “coercive action by one or more states involving the use of armed force in another state without the consent of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants” (Weiss, 2007: 5). A critique of humanitarian intervention would argue that interventions have taken place long before the end of the Cold War and, in fact, World War I and World War II may represent two of the largest
interventions the United States has been involved in. However, using Roberts’ definition specifically indicates that humanitarian interventions do not directly involve the national strategic interests of the state. Although interests may be implicitly understood, since 1986, the National Security Strategy (NSS) issued by each president explicitly lays out the strategic interests of the United States. Although the details of these national strategic interests may change between presidential terms, there are three basic principles consistent between presidential terms. These interests are:

1) Protecting the territory and citizens of the United States,
2) Protecting the economic interests of the United States,
3) And promoting American values overseas.

It can be assumed that these are not significantly different than interests before the requirement for the NSS. Since the decision to go to war during the two world wars represented national strategic interests, they are necessarily excluded from my working definition of humanitarian intervention. Furthermore, strategic interests in relation to World War I and World War II were clearly delineated in the declarations of war.

**Literature Review**

**HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY AND THE DECISION TO INTERVENE**

According to hegemonic stability theory, the presence of one “single, strongly dominant actor in international politics leads to collectively desirable outcomes for all states in the international system” (Snidal, 1985: 579). If the United States is a hegemon, then we would expect to see the United States leading the international community in efforts to reduce threats to international peace as well as increased interventionist stances on perceived human rights abuses. This role, as the definition of hegemonic stability theory suggests, would place the United States
as the most powerful country in the international arena and as the sole policing force in maintaining international peace.

However, contrary to what would be expected, there are drastically fewer cases where the United States has chosen to intervene under humanitarian pretenses. This begs the question of why we do not see as many humanitarian intervention cases as we would expect from the United States. The United States’ decision process must necessarily exclude certain cases of humanitarian violations for various reasons. Weiss argues that there are numerous motivations that could be cited for intervening, and I suggest that these motivations can help explain why we do not see as many cases of humanitarian interventions led by the United States as would be expected (Weiss, 2007).

The United States does not explicitly state what specific criteria are used when determining whether to intervene in a humanitarian crisis. However, given the role of the US in the United Nations Security Council, it can be assumed that the Security Council’s criteria are similar to the decision process that the US uses as well. The UN handbook states

1) Whether a situation exists the continuation of which is likely to endanger or constitute a threat to international peace and security;
2) Whether regional or sub-regional organizations and arrangements exist and are ready and able to assist in resolving the situation;
3) Whether a cease-fire exists and whether the parties have committed themselves to a peace process intended to reach a political settlement;
4) Whether a clear political goal exists and whether it can be reflected in the mandate;
5) Whether a precise mandate for a UN operation can formulated; and
These criteria can help the UN— and the US— determine when to go into a country experiencing a humanitarian crisis.

DEFINING HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: GENERAL CONSENSUS AND INHERENT PROBLEMS

A primary problem is how one defines humanitarian intervention, and what one considers to be humanitarian intervention. Thomas G. Weiss, in his book Humanitarian Intervention: War and Conflict in the Modern World (2007), uses Adam Roberts’ definition of humanitarian intervention: “coercive action by one or more states involving the use of armed force in another state without the consent of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants” (5, emphasis his). According to Anthony Ellis, humanitarian intervention is “when a state, or a group, or an individual, interferes coercively in the affairs of a foreign state in order to prevent the violation of the rights of citizens of that state” (Humanitarian Intervention: Moral and Philosophical Issues, ed. Aleksandar Jokic, 2003: 17).

Hans Corell, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs for the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, gives another definition of humanitarian intervention. He quotes the Danish Institute of International Affairs, saying that humanitarian intervention is the “coercive action by States involving the use of armed force in another state without the consent of its Government, with or without authorization from the UN Security Council, for the purpose of preventing or putting to a halt gross and massive violations of human rights or international humanitarian law” (“To Intervene or Not: The dilemma that will not go away”, 2001: 2). Corell argues more for the legal responsibility of nations to intervene. To Corell, the question is not whether a country should intervene, but how.

TYPES OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

There are two overarching types of humanitarian interventions. The first consists of interventions that are solicited by the governing body of the state. However, most critics,
including Thomas Weiss (2007) and Anthony Ellis (2003), argue that these are not humanitarian interventions but rather aid to a struggling nation-state. The second type of intervention is intervention without the consent of the government being intervened upon. According to Thomas Weiss, these are the only legitimate types of humanitarian interventions. He argues that because the state being intervened upon is oftentimes the perpetrator of human rights violations, the criteria of having government consent is pointless (Weiss, 2007: 6).

Other literature suggests that there are four types humanitarian intervention: 1) assisting aid delivery, 2) protecting aid operations, 3) saving the victims of violence, and 4) defeating the perpetrators of violence (Seybolt, 2008: 39). However, Seybolt makes the argument that these four types of humanitarian interventions are not mutually exclusive. Seybolt writes, “They can be (and often have been) pursued simultaneously, but they can also work at cross purposes” (2007: 39). Each of these types of interventions must be approached slightly differently in terms of strategy and slight variations can exist. However, he argues that any issues that can arise by pursuing multiple types of humanitarian interventions simultaneously can be overcome if decision makers are clear about the objectives of their interventions prior to intervening. There is also the issue that the difficulty of intervention as well as the amount of commitment a nation-state must make towards the intervention, increases as policy makers move from the first type to the fourth type. Since humanitarian intervention involves military action against the offender, the amount of strategy necessarily gets more complicated and more involved as the type of intervention changes. Seybolt notes that the five strategies of humanitarian [military] intervention are avoidance, deterrence, defense, compellance, and offence, each of which involves an incremental increase in difficulty (2008: 39).

**MITIGATING FACTORS**
Obviously when nations in general and the United States specifically are determining whether to intervene in a humanitarian crisis, other factors have to be considered. One of these factors is path dependency, in which previous cases of humanitarian intervention influence the decision process in another case. The suggestion that there exists some sort of relation between cases that affects the decision process must be taken into account when doing the case study and, as such, paired comparisons of cases that are similar in time frame or region are included in the case study. The perception of the relative success of a previous intervention can have the potential to positively influence the decision of whether to intervene in a different scenario; conversely, the perception of a failed intervention can negatively influence the decision to intervene, halting any talk of intervention.

Another mitigating factor that can influence the decision process of policy-makers in the United States is logistics.\(^3\) Logistics determine not whether or not a nation-state will intervene, but if they conceivably can. Much as the rescue mission involved in the Iran Hostage Crisis was almost thwarted due to logistical issues with the helicopters, military strategists and decision makers must account for logistics in the planning of these humanitarian interventions (Smith, 1985: 26).

**WHAT HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IS NOT**

In order to understand what humanitarian intervention is, we must also define what it is not. Roberts’ definition of humanitarian intervention—and in fact the working definition of this paper—necessitates that humanitarian intervention is the use of military action in another state “without the consent of its Government” (Weiss, 2007: 5). However, one could argue that the definition should include cases where the state solicited or agreed to help from other states in

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\(^3\) Logistical concerns are those that make a military mission possible. These include if the military can safely get into the country, if there are available resources to sustain the mission, and if the mission itself does not present much danger to the troops involved.
handling a humanitarian crisis. But as Weiss argues, the inclusion of consent in this definition is highly controversial. Weiss argues “because ‘the existence of de facto control is generally the most important criterion in dealing with a regime as representing the state,’ consent was controversial and of little practical meaning…” (2007: 6). Weiss continues, arguing that in many cases of humanitarian intervention, consent was often irrelevant or ambiguous. Essentially, consent by the government is not included in Roberts’ definition of humanitarian intervention because it so often is the case that gross humanitarian violations are initiated and perpetuated by the state itself. Weiss argues, “The absence of consent is clearest when there is explicit opposition from a recognized government…” (2007: 6). Requiring consent by the state would inherently limit the ability of international powers (the United States, the United Nations) to intervene in humanitarian crises.

Critics of Roberts’ definition would also argue that the definition is too narrow. Yet the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty has endorsed this supposedly narrow definition; they have established that a humanitarian crises necessitates “the threat or actual occurrence of large-scale loss of life (especially genocide) and massive forced migration” (Weiss, 2007: 6). This, of course, excludes relief for environmental disasters and revolutions of democratically elected governments.

The use of Roberts’ definition of humanitarian intervention also excludes national strategic interests. Each incoming president, at the start of their term, enumerates their plans for protecting the National Security Strategies of the nation. Despite the fact that specific details of the National Security Strategies may change, there exist some consistencies among them all. The common themes in the national security strategies that each president has agreed upon are

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4 The International Commission on Intervention and Sovereignty was a commission consisting of members of the UN General Assembly, founded by Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun in 2001, to popularize humanitarian intervention under the pretense of responsibility to protect.
protecting the territory and citizens of the United States, protecting the economic interests of the United States, and promoting American values overseas. Although critics would argue that interventions have taken place long before the end of the Cold War and, in fact, World War I and World War II may represent two of the largest interventions the United States has been involved in, the definition of humanitarian intervention that this paper ascribes to does not include either of the world wars and argues any war fought under the pretenses of national strategic interests are not humanitarian interventions.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

In order to understand the various theories the drive humanitarian intervention, a study of international relations theory must be discussed. Several different international relations theories influence how political scientists understand the power play involved in international affairs. Understanding each of these perspectives—realist, liberal, and neo-liberal—are essential to understanding how policy makers and decision makers use the decision process to determine whether a state will intervene in a humanitarian crisis.

Despite the fact that this paper seeks to understand the decision process used by the United States in particular, a significant amount of international relations theory is necessary to understand how the US—or any state—acts in the international arena. The necessity of this discussion is evident if you take regimes into account. Under regime theory, formal and informal international institutions affect the behavior of individual states. Each regime consists of a set of norms or acceptable behaviors. This is why a significant amount of discussion involves the UN and its relation to the international arena, rather than just the US. The issue of sovereignty is not just a US-endorsed theory; rather, it is legitimized by the UN in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Humanitarian intervention suggests that sovereignty may be
superseded by the need to protect individuals from the state. This is an international issue and, thus, a large focus of this paper involves discussion of international relations theory.

A realist perspective rests on differences of power across the international arena and the pursuit of state security. The major actor involved is the nation-state, and international organizations such as the United Nations are seen as directed by nation-states rather than independent organizations. Realists perceive no other important actors other than the state, and international systems are referred to insofar as they represent a system of states only. The state is a unitary and rational actor, therefore actions within a state are confined to the state. For realists, the type of governance and treatment of citizens is not of the concern of the international system. Realists also order issues facing the state hierarchically, with issues of national or international security at the top of the list. According to Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, “states use the power they have to serve their interests or achieve their objectives…the struggle for (or use of) power among states is at the core of international relations” (2012: 41).

More specifically, a realist perspective would argue that humanitarian interventions, regardless of which definition one chooses to use, are a type of “low politics”—if there is no direct threat to the security of a nation-state or to the international arena as a whole, a realist would argue that there is no need for humanitarian intervention (Viotti and Kaupi, 2012: 40). Furthermore, since humanitarian intervention represents a social issue for nation-states, it is regarded as lower on the hierarchical totem pole than military strategy and national strategic interests. For a realist, there really is no such thing as humanitarian intervention or a moral obligation to intervene in the affairs of other states. The only reason a realist would give for an intervention would be if the state being intervened upon represented a direct threat to the state doing the intervening.
In contrast to realism, liberalism is primarily concerned with international collaboration and how that can be accomplished. A liberal perspective believes that the primary actor is not just nation-states, but international and nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, and groups and individuals as well, and that each of these actors can be analyzed as independent actors rather than one actor as a whole. This pluralism of actors, therefore, acts as a pacifying and globalizing effect on state behavior. Liberals believe that factors and individuals at the micro level affect state behavior and international relations. The key assumption liberals make—and the biggest difference between liberals and realists in regards to this paper—is that there are a lot more items on the international agenda than just national security. Economic, social, and environmental issues are salient issues for liberals, and can sometimes be considered more important than military-related matters.

A liberal perspective on humanitarian interventions suggests that liberals would put high priority on interventions. After the failure of the League of Nations as an integrated group of peacekeeping states, realists and liberals came to an agreement with the right of the UN Security Council to maintain peace between sovereign states. However, the UN is rife with liberal policy, in which the emphasis on the importance and legitimacy of international organizations is high. One of these organizations, the UN Human Rights Council, represents a key factor in liberal theory on humanitarian interventions. This group acts as a watchdog group for the UN, reporting on gross human rights violations across the world. This suggests that the liberal perspective on human rights and interventions is highly salient.

Neo-liberalism, or neo-liberal institutionalism, developed by Robert Keohane and his colleagues, suggests that “variations in the institutionalization of world politics exert significant impacts on the behavior of governments” (Viotti and Kauppi, 2007: 147). Neo-liberalism
incorporates some realist beliefs, such as the fact that nation-states are important and rationally-thinking actors in the decision process. However, neo-liberalism seeks to understand why rationally-acting nation-states who seek to maximize their own gains through self-interests would “pursue multilateral, cooperative behavior” (Viotti and Kauppi, 2007: 148).

**SOVEREIGNTY**

Within humanitarian intervention theory, there exist two often contrasting concepts. One concept—sovereignty—stands as a historical precedent, often cited as the predominant reason to not intervene. Sovereignty, as established in the Treaty of Westphalia, grants each state the right to self-determination and self-jurisdiction without interference from the international community. The other concept—the responsibility to protect—advocates for intervention on moral grounds and as a moral commitment, arguing that we have a responsibility to protect those humans whose rights are being violated by the very states that have presumably pledged to protect them.

The signing of the Treaty of Westphalia is generally considered as establishing the idea of state sovereignty. The objective was to create individual political entities whose jurisdiction lay within their borders, so as to maintain international peace and security. A strict interpretation of the Treaty of Westphalia notes that sovereignty is defined by a state’s capacity to make authoritative decisions (Evans and Sahnoun, 2002: 101-102). Sovereignty as a concept has acted as a check against interventions, humanitarian or otherwise, despite the fact that it has often been ignored throughout history. In fact, prior to the 1990s, when interventions under the pretenses of protecting human rights skyrocketed, sovereignty was often cited as the predominant reason for maintaining a strict non-interventionist stance. Welsh describes John Vincent’s take on non-interventionism during the Cold War, writing that the superpowers of the “Third World” actually sought to promote non-intervention, though for a variety of different reasons (2011: 1193). This
principle of non-intervention, Welsh argues, sought to protect weak states from intervention by strong states. The general consensus remained that non-interventionism was key to protecting the sovereignty of all states throughout the international arena. The concept of non-intervention was solidified by the United Nations, Article 2, Section 1 and Section 7. As Evans and Sahnoun describe, the UN enshrined the “sovereign equality of states” by solidifying the fact that sovereign states had the right, through international law, to have “exclusive and total jurisdiction” within their territory (2002: 102). The UN article also noted that other states have the duty to not intervene in the jurisdiction of other sovereign states.

Humanitarian intervention shifts the international understanding of sovereignty. It opens the door for countries to intervene in the internal affairs of one another in the case of gross violations of human rights: “…working against this standard has been the increasing impact in recent decades of human rights norms, bringing a shift from a culture of sovereign impunity to one of national and international accountability” (Evans and Sahnoun, 2002: 102). The international community, in short, can override the principle of sovereignty. And, in fact, the threat of intervention itself, as Evans and Sahnoun seem to suggest, acts as a measure of accountability in and of itself. The fact that states may intervene when another state is violating “human security” can itself act as a deterrent away from these violations (Evans and Sahnoun, 202: 102).

**THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

At the 2005 World Summit, the United Nations established the principle of responsibility to protect:

Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement,
through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability. (United Nations General Assembly, 2006 World Summit Outcome)

The responsibility to protect (R2P) was established to provide an ethical argument behind the idea of humanitarian intervention. The concept of humanitarian intervention caused a lot of tensions throughout the international arena. States balked at the idea of intervention for the fear that it was a threat to state sovereignty. Responsibility to protect was in response to that fear, in order to establish an accountability clause to the UN articles laying out state sovereignty.

One of the big tensions surrounding the idea of humanitarian intervention is the idea of morality. Instead of considering the rational decision process that leads to humanitarian interventions, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations Hans Corell notes that nations have an ethical obligation to intervene. There exists a moral responsibility to protecting those peoples whose rights are being violated by the state: “…the argument has been made that the very concept ‘humanitarian intervention’ is not appropriate. Rather, what we are faced with is a ‘responsibility’ for the international community to act…” (Corell, 2001: 4). This responsibility, referred to as the responsibility to protect, was affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005. It hoped to emphasize “the responsibilities of states to protect their populations, and called upon the international community to fill the gap when states failed to exercise those responsibilities” (Welsh, 2011: 1198). What responsibility to protect offered was a way to bypass issues of sovereignty and the non-interventionist stance that sovereignty implied.

The use of R2P also circumvented some of the inherent dilemmas involved in the term ‘humanitarian intervention’. Whereas humanitarian intervention implies military action—
something of a distasteful subject for most human rights activists (Evans and Sahnoun, 2002: 101)—responsibility to protect implies a moral standard which emphasizes the universal rights of humans. The term ‘responsibility to protect’ has certain advantages that the term ‘humanitarian intervention’ does not according to Evans and Sahnoun:

First, it implies evaluating the issues from the point of view of those needing support, rather than those who may be considering intervention. The searchlight is back where it should always be: on the duty to protect communities from mass killing, women from systematic rape, and children from starvation. Second, this formulation implies that the primary responsibility rests with the state concerned. Only if that state is unable or unwilling to fulfill its responsibility to protect, or it itself the perpetrator, should the international community take the responsibility to act in its place. Third, the ‘responsibility to protect’ is an umbrella concept, embracing not just the ‘responsibility to react’ but the ‘responsibility to prevent’ and the ‘responsibility to rebuild’ as well. (2002: 101)

In essence, the idea of responsibility to protect was introduced and approved by the UN to make the very idea of intervention less of a strategic move by states, but an exigency that presents a moral obligation to the international arena. Evans and Sahnoun continue this idea, arguing that the traditional Westphalian interpretation of sovereignty was rooted in the idea of control, and that the responsibility to protect helped to shift that paradigm away from control and towards a moral responsibility (2002: 101).

**HYPOTHESIS**

Despite the abundance of literature on international relations theory and the types of humanitarian interventions, there exists very little research on how the United States determines whether to intervene in a humanitarian crisis or not. Yes, the US must consider both path dependency and logistical issues in the decision process; but the actual decision process must be influenced by greater factors. Some elucidation into the issue has been given by Thomas Weiss,
but little explanation is offered beyond the superficial. Weiss suggests that the motives for intervention may vary, and could be anything from ethical to national interests or something a bit more “disingenuous—self interested pursuit of gain disguised as ‘humanitarian’” (2007: 6). However, no literature considers the role of the US as the world hegemon in the decision process.

Through my research and the use of case study, I seek to fill that void. By asking why the US has chosen to intervene in some instances but not others—even when the UN had chosen to intervene—, I hope to shed light on the decision process that the US uses to legitimize intervention or the lack of intervention. Several hypotheses can be deduced from the inconsistent role the US has played in the international arena in regards to humanitarian interventions.

1. My first hypothesis is that of precedence. There could be a fear of setting precedence that intervention represents a slippery slope; that by intervening once, future and perhaps more violent interventions will take place. Or that the establishment of a new precedence seems unwarranted and unsafe and therefore the status quo is maintained by the US.

2. My second hypothesis suggests that the role of sovereignty in the international arena acts as too great of a deterrent. Perhaps intervention in a country in which the government has not asked for help undermines that government’s sovereignty and could be perceived as an act of war.

3. My third hypothesis, which relies heavily on a realist perspective, suggests that political self interests of the United States are the determining factor in humanitarian interventions. I suggest that the US will not intervene in a country, regardless of the
presence of gross human rights violations, if the intervention does not present any sort of gain for the country.

I fully recognize that these three hypotheses are not mutually exclusive and in fact are more than likely to be inherently intertwined in the decision making process. However, I do believe that there is one factor in the decision process that is key in determining the course of action, and I believe that this one factor is greater in importance in each particular case than any other factor. In order for my research design to work, I make the assumption that each of these hypotheses is exclusive.

**Research Design**

In order to determine the various motives for choosing whether to intervene in a humanitarian crisis and how much of an intervention is needed, one must look back at previous interventions. One must determine the political climate of the time, analyze various speeches by positions of authority within the United States and the international arena, and study what exactly happened in each of a variety of cases. Case studies represent the best methodology for my research question, as they will elucidate the decision process and the motives behind the decision of whether to intervene. John Gerring, in his book *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* defines case study as “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is…to shed light on a larger class of cases” (2007: 20). As Gerring describes, I seek to use case studies to shed light on why the United States decides whether or not to intervene in certain humanitarian crises.

Case study selection relies on a variety of techniques. In order to mimic a true experiment as best as possible using a case study method, I have to ensure that as many variables as possible can be held constant in each of my case studies as well as across case studies. In
order to accomplish this, my cases all take place within the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union. Case study selection will be based on cases that took place both in a Republican administration and a Democratic administration, so that commonalities across administrations can be assessed. This also provides me with context to view the changes in response from one administration to another. In this research design, I am making the assumption that there would be differences between administrations. However, I recognize that this assumption might not be entirely true, given the fact that there is a difference between political rhetoric and the eventual actions undertaken by the United States. The Republican administration I use is that of President George H.W. Bush, and the Democratic administration I use is that of President Bill Clinton. These cases will control for post-Cold War and pre-September 11th sentiments, where the decision to intervene could be considered more optional.

Gerring also describes various techniques for case study selection. One technique is the diverse case. This method suggests that the primary objective of the case study is to achieve a maximum amount of variants across relevant cases (Gerring 2007: 97). By capturing as much variation as possible within my cases, I can ensure that these cases represent the full spectrum of humanitarian interventions which will further legitimize my findings. Despite the fact that the diverse case technique lacks a widely recognized name, it is still recognized as a viable technique for case study selection. Within the diverse case study selection of my research, I am including cases that are deemed “influential cases” by Gerring: cases that can “verify the assumptions behind a general model of causal relations” (2007: 108). Selecting cases that verify assumptions suggests that the cases I select are representative of a larger whole, that these cases are prime examples of path dependency within a paired comparison. I am doing a paired comparison of
my cases to elucidate instances of path dependency, where it could be argued that the decision process of whether to intervene was greatly influenced by prior experiences.

The cases I am choosing for my case study are Bosnia during the First War of Yugoslav Succession (1991-1995), Kosovo during the Second War of Yugoslav Succession (1997-1999), Somalia (1992), and Rwanda (1994). I will do paired comparisons of Bosnia-Kosovo and Somalia-Rwanda, as there is perhaps a clear path dependency of the outcome of one case influencing the decision process of the other case; I hypothesize that the relative success of the Bosnia intervention influenced public opinion to be pro-intervention in the case of Kosovo, and relative failure of the Somalia intervention influenced public opinion to be anti-intervention in Rwanda.

I will be splitting the case of Bosnia because it takes place during a transition in presidential administration. In choosing Bosnia, I can assess the changing responses in the transition from President H.W. Bush and President Clinton in 1993. Bosnia became a humanitarian crisis during the Bush administration, and the decided lack of response by President Bush in 1992 was later overturned by President Clinton in 1995. My expectation is that I will be able to identify the reason why there was a change in response and, from that, discover the causes behind US humanitarian interventions.

Case Studies

**BOSNIA DURING THE FIRST WAR OF YUGOSLAV SECESSION, 1991-1995**

**BACKGROUND**

Tensions in the Balkans have dated back as far as the sixth and seventh centuries AD. However, it was not until the latter half of the 20th century that ethnic differences among the peoples of Yugoslavia resulted in massive violence. As Andrew Wachtel and Christopher
Bennet note, the people of Yugoslavia “stopped thinking of themselves as Yugoslavs (if they ever had done so) and saw themselves instead as Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Macedonians, and so forth” (2009: 18). The rising nationalist loyalties throughout Yugoslavia eventually led to the rise to power of a number of politicians who, rather than appealing to Yugoslavs as a people, instead rallied around ethnically homogenous populations, thereby increasing the perceived differences between groups. A major factor in the descent of Yugoslavia into war was the election and leadership of Slobodan Milosevic in 1987, who eventually fueled a rise of Serbian nationalism and “bred fear among Yugoslavia’s non-Serbs” (Wachtel and Bennet, 2009: 29).

Following the declared independence of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence in 1992; the United States as well as the European Community (EC) recognized Bosnia as an independent state. However, Bosnian Serbs were against this declaration and fighting broke out between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Muslims.

**Analysis**

Bush Administration

**H1: Precedence**

As the Cold War came to a close, the United States was still hesitant to get involved in international crises that did not directly involve our personal interests. The norm of nonintervention as established by the Treaty of Westphalia pervaded. The Bush administration was hesitant to challenge that norm; intervention in the crisis in Yugoslavia (prior to the US recognizing Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia as independent states) would have changed the status quo and set a new precedence of intervention. George H.W. Bush was not willing to alter the status quo and, as such, wanted the EC to handle the crisis rather than getting the US involved, since the crisis was viewed as a regional one. Furthermore, in holding off on recognizing
secessionist states from Yugoslavia—namely Bosnia—the United States was able to use the norm of nonintervention to claim that the crisis was a civil war and did not require international support.

Furthermore, it was perceived that intervening in Bosnia would place the United States in jeopardy of violating the Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Since the Reagan era, the United States had been downsizing their military and in 1989 the agreement, signed by most of the European nations, the United States, and the USSR, officially called for the gradual removal of troops as well as military equipment from European soil. This treaty called for each signee to “reduce its battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters…” (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe). According to COL (RET) Pflaster, the director of the monitoring group for Headquarters, US Army Europe at the time, if the US were to send troops to Bosnia, they might be in violation of the treaty.\(^5\) This treaty established another precedent of non-intervention: if intervention meant sending more troops to Europe, then intervention should not be undertaken. The Bush administration did not want to be in violation of the treaty and, thus, refused to intervene in the crisis. This also explains why the US urged the EC to handle the situation, rather than getting involved itself.

At the time that the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina was escalating, the United States was already involved in OPERATION DESERT STORM. This previous involvement acted as a deterrent for the Bush administration to get involved in another war, especially one in which the US had little interest in getting involved in; as Secretary of State James Baker noted, “We don’t have a dog in this fight” (Silber and Little, 1997: 201). Since the US had no interests in getting involved, the initial response to the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina was one that kept the issue at

\(^5\) This was revealed to me by Dr. Michael D. Kanner, based on his recollections of conversations when serving with COL (RET) Pflaster.
arm’s length. The Bush administration was attempting to resolve OPERATION DESERT STORM at the onset of the Yugoslav crisis in 1992 and, because this second crisis was something that was seen as a regional problem—and thus was within the confines of a single, sovereign country—the US hoped that the UN and the EC would be able to resolve the conflict peacefully while maintaining the integrity of the Yugoslav borders. By the time Secretary of State Baker met with leaders of Yugoslavia, it appeared to be too late to truly resolve anything. As former Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman noted in his memoir, “If a mistake was made, it was that the secretary of state hadn’t come six months earlier, before the action-reaction spiral of nationalist threats had spun out of control. Unfortunately, that was a time that coincided with the massive American preparations for the Gulf War. Even a great power has difficulty in dealing with more than one crisis at a time” (1996: 137).

As tensions continued to mount and the dissolution of Yugoslavia became more self-evident, the US urged the EC to handle the situation rather than the US getting involved themselves. The US held tight to the notion that the crisis represented a regional one and, if Yugoslavia was unable to solve the crisis without international help, then it should be the duty of the EC to step in and help. As such, Washington urged participation from European nations without participating themselves:

The US representatives were instructed to convey Washington’s conviction that a breakup was in the interest neither of the Yugoslav people nor of Europe’s security and to urge the Europeans to avoid actions that could encourage secession. Washington didn’t commit itself on the form of government Yugoslavs might choose—the tight federation advocated by the Serbs or the loose confederation favored by the Slovenes and Croats—but stated neutrally that it was
up to the citizens of Yugoslavia to decide. The United States asked the Europeans in their public statements to express support for unity and democracy in Yugoslavia… (Zimmerman, 1996: 65)

H2: Role of state sovereignty

The Bush administration’s initial response to the mounting tensions in Yugoslavia amounted to no more than verbal support for the maintenance of Yugoslavia as a state through peaceful and cooperative dialogue, while transitioning from a post-communist society to democracy and an open-market. Bush’s foreign policy of unity and democracy was staunchly against the dissolution of Yugoslavia. As Secretary Baker noted in his remarks to various ministers in Yugoslavia, “In all these meetings, I stressed the importance of respecting human and minority rights, of continuing the process of democratization, and of continuing a dialogue to create a new basis for unity” (“US Concerns About the Future of Yugoslavia”, June 21, 1991, emphasis added). President Bush, in the Spring of 1991, communicated with Prime Minister Markovic outlining US policy on the matter, reaffirming the position that “The US government wanted to see the resolution of the nationality disputes within the context of a single state” (Zimmerman, 1996: 122, emphasis added). As Department of State spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler said in a statement titled “US Policy Toward Yugoslavia”,

The United States will not encourage or reward secession; it will respect any framework, federal, confederal, or other, on which the people of Yugoslavia peacefully and democratically decide. We firmly believe that Yugoslavia’s external or internal borders should not be changed unless by peaceful consensual means. (5/24/1991)

This statement was later reflected in Ambassador Zimmerman’s statements to federal Yugoslav officials, “…we had no intention of meddling in Yugoslavia’s internal affairs” (Zimmerman, 1996: 15).
However, the United States under the Bush presidency would not support Yugoslavia beyond verbal recognition; the Bush administration ignored requests for economic and military support by members of the nations within Yugoslavia (Zimmerman, 1996). The fact that the US was more than hesitant to get involved in another regional crisis suggests a role, at least partly, of state sovereignty. Bush and his advisors wanted to maintain the borders of Yugoslavia but would not get involved due to the fact that the crisis was a regional one and, as such, should be dealt with by the powers that be within that state, i.e. the presidency of Yugoslavia and its various constituents. Furthermore, countering debates within Congress made for inconsistent policy towards the escalating crisis in Yugoslavia. This was largely fueled by the ethnic backgrounds of US Representatives Joe Dioguardi (Democrat of New York) who was an Albanian American, and Tom Lantos (Democrat of California), who was a Hungarian-American. These two “peppered” Congress with resolutions condemning the increasing human rights abuses perpetrated by Serbians; however, because the Bush administration opposed these resolutions, attempts at ending the crisis in Yugoslavia were futile at best (Zimmerman 1996: 127).

The United States was unconcerned with Yugoslavia’s affairs, although the Bush administration acknowledged their interests in maintaining the integrity of Yugoslavia’s borders. In a 1992 news conference given on the subject of containing the crisis in Bosnia, President Bush himself argued that the only way to prevent the continued loss of innocent lives and to end the bloodshed was if the “international community is to place civilian monitors” in the Balkans to “provide an international presence and inhibit human rights abuses and violence” (“Containing the Crisis in Bosnia and the Former Yugoslavia”, 1992). The only mention of the role of the United States itself in curtailing the increasing violence is to “propose” to the international
community that they do something ("Containing the Crisis in Bosnia and the Former Yugoslavia", 1992).

H3: Political self interests

During the Cold War, the US had a number of geopolitical interests in the region, even granting Yugoslavia “most favored nation” status. Seen as a buffer between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the West and the Warsaw Pact in the East, Yugoslavia was supported by the US in hopes that it would become a model of states breaking out of the “Soviet orbit” (Zimmerman, 1996: 6). As Zimmerman notes, “Successive US governments [beginning in the 1940s] believed that Yugoslavia could become a model for independence as well as for an Eastern European political system that, though regrettably communist, could be more open politically and more decentralized economically than the Soviet satellites” (Zimmerman, 1996: 7). In fact, the US had even chosen to “downplay” the human rights abuses being perpetrated by Milosevic’s regime prior to 1989 because of our security interests in the region (Zimmerman, 1996: 7).

However, as Zimmerman argues, the favored status that Yugoslavia had enjoyed prior to the end of the Cold War dissipated post-1989 and Yugoslavia’s importance was replaced by the burgeoning democracies of Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The rising nationalist sentiment in Yugoslavia contrasted with the democratizing processes taking place in these other Soviet satellites presented a further incentive to the US to intervene—at least monetarily—in these countries rather than Yugoslavia.

Intervention in Yugoslavia—prior to the all-out violence that broke out in 1992—would have been costly, both in terms of money and lives. According to Ambassador Zimmerman, the US Treasury under the Bush administration was a significant obstacle for pro-interventionists. The Treasury believed that investing in the maintenance of Yugoslavia’s borders represented a
bad investment, or as Zimmerman put it, “Politicians would rather back a winner than a loser and, despite Markovic’s heroic efforts [at economic reform], Yugoslavia looked like a loser” (1996: 51). Furthermore, US intervention at that time would have necessarily meant the lives of American troops being lost which was a cost that the US was not willing to endure. As Stokes et al. note, “Political leaders…have to calculate costs. Not only do they know…that significant military intervention would be bloody but they realize that their citizens are not willing to sustain heavy casualties for Bosnia” (1996: 143). The US, the sole hegemonic power in the international arena, was clearly not ready nor willing to give up American lives for a problem occurring outside their realm of political interest. The phrase “for Bosnia” that Stokes et al. uses only serves to solidify this fact; the implications suggest that Bosnia has nothing to offer to the United States and, thus, there is little interest in any sort of intervention.

Another incentive that kept the Bush administration from intervening in the crisis in Bosnia was the upcoming elections in 1992. President Bush had made a name for himself as a foreign policy president, seemingly disregarding the domestic sphere in favor of international politics. This became a major point of contention during the election year, as the Bush administration was being attacked by the Democrats for his strong foreign policy stance. Thus, in an effort to bolster his own domestic credibility while simultaneously avoiding yet another war for the US, Bush chose to avoid intervention in the Bosnia crisis. Instead, as a means of placating those people calling for intervention, Bush began tentatively preparing for an intervention of some sort in Somalia, which would ultimately culminate in the approval of UNITAF in late 1992. President Bush, along with General Powell, hoped that a humanitarian mission to Somalia would draw attention away from Bosnia and decrease the pressure to intervene there.
The Bush administration also felt a strong need to assert US hegemony over Europe after the fall of the USSR. As Gibbs argues, the United States, during the Cold War, had gained an innumerable amount of political and economic advantages from its hegemonic status, “and it now sought to retain these advantages” in post-Cold War Europe (2009: 139). Therefore, the Bush administration actively undermined EU and UN efforts at solving the crisis in Bosnia prior to the outbreak of all-out war. By undermining the Lisbon agreement in early 1992, the United States effectively weakened Europe’s role in handling the crisis, embarrassed both the EU and the UN, and asserted US hegemony in the region.\(^6\) However, after the Lisbon agreement was rejected by Bosnian Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, full-scale war broke out in the region.

**Clinton Administration**

**H1: Precedence**

After assuming office, despite the fact that President-elect Clinton had said that a failure to act in Bosnia would mean “to give up American leadership”, little was done to change the precedent established by the outgoing Bush administration in terms of intervention (President Clinton, quoted in Gibbs, 2009: 141). The Clinton administration did not act swiftly in the case of Bosnia other than providing political support to the Bosnian Muslims, a stance inherited from the previous administration.

**H2: Role of state sovereignty**

Bosnia was recognized as a sovereign state under the Bush administration in mid-1992. This move allowed the United States to assert US dominance over the region by pushing Europe to recognize Bosnia as an independent country. Since Bosnia was declared a sovereign nation, the decision to intervene would have involved discussions of sovereignty. Eventually, the

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\(^6\) The Lisbon agreement, also known as the Cutileiro Plan, was an effort made by the European Community to broker a peace agreement between the fighting ethnicities by giving each faction a separate region within Bosnia. The plan would also decentralize power, creating a confederal state comprised of Bosnian Serbs, Muslims, and Croats (Gibbs, 2009).
decision to recognize Bosnia as an independent nation characterized the violence within the region as an interstate war rather than a civil war marking a reason for intervention. However, calls for a “lift and strike” mission were still met with resistance. It was believed that by lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and arming the Bosniaks, the violence between Bosniaks and Serbs would escalate uncontrollably.\(^7\) As Michael Ignatieff argued, “If Americans allow the arming of the Bosnian Muslims, they will soon find themselves complicit in ethnic cleansing, for that is what the Muslims are certain to do” (quoted by Gibbs, 2009: 162).

H3: Political self-interests

After Bill Clinton won the presidential elections in 1992, he made it clear that his administration would support a more active role in Bosnia. However, due to a phenomenon of rhetorical gridlock, even the Clinton administration was unable to handle the situation effectively until 1995.\(^8\) Gibbs writes, “The president’s indecision reflected…a drifting administration divided between a series of hawkish, pro-interventionist civilian figures and a skeptical military” (2009: 149). As former Zimmerman has noted, the “vacillations” of the Clinton administration “deferred decisive Western action to the summer of 1995”, three years after the violence broke out in Bosnia (1996: XII).

Upon entering into office, the Clinton administration was immediately plagued by a split cabinet on the issue of the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia. Arguing for intervention were President Clinton himself, Vice President Al Gore and US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, using a “lift and strike” approach in which the US would send arms to the Bosniak government—thereby lifting the arms embargo placed on Bosnia—while providing air support

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\(^7\) Bosniaks are Bosnian Muslims.
\(^8\) Rhetorical gridlock here refers to contrasting debates about what needed to be done about Bosnia; two equally important sides in the debate were arguing for two vastly different approaches, namely, intervention versus non-intervention.
and the threat of air strikes (Klemenčič, 2009). On the other end of the spectrum were Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Leslie Aspin Jr., and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who were staunchly against armed intervention at all in Bosnia for fear that intervention could leave the United States in a Vietnam-like quagmire.

President Clinton was at odds with the Pentagon and his Joint Chiefs of Staff. The military opposed intervention, arguing that bombing Serbian strongholds in Bosnia would not necessarily prove to be successful. Because of Clinton’s legitimacy problems with the military prior to taking office, he could not discredit himself further in the eyes of the Pentagon by making a move against the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Furthermore, Clinton’s plea to place US troops in Bosnia was met with resistance from outside sources, including European allies and Russia (Klemenčič, 2009). President Clinton also held General Powell in high esteem, and since General Powell was against armed intervention, no intervention would take place until after Powell’s departure in September 1993. Gibbs quotes White House advisor Sydney Blumenthal: “Until his departure…Powell dominated Clinton’s foreign policy councils… At no other previous time in his career did Powell have as much influence as he had in 1993” (2009: 149).

The desire to undergo a “lift and strike” mission was widely rejected outside of the State Department and, thus, no moves towards intervention were undertaken until after the Srebrenica massacre in which more than 8,000 Bosniaks were murdered by Bosnian Serbs. At this point, international calls for an armed intervention in Bosnia were renewed, and the United States took the opportunity to not only intervene, but to cut out the role of the UN and the EC, thereby asserting US hegemony in the region.
The overarching desire to maintain US hegemony in Europe and to re-impose the authority of NATO as a worldwide security alliance became the ultimate goal of the United States in the intervention in Bosnia. Through OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE, the US would be able to accomplish both goals; this mission, approved in August 1995, allowed the creation of a Croat/Bosnian ground force that would be aided by the use of NATO airstrikes. Although OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE was technically a multinational intervention, “it was conceived and conducted largely by the United States” (Gibbs, 2009: 166). This allowed the US to reassert the relevance of NATO and advance the United State’s role as the sole superpower. Gibbs quotes the International Herald-Tribune’s conclusion that “the United States is today again Europe’s leader; there is no other” (2009: 167).

**KOSOVO, 1997-1999**

**BACKGROUND**

The beginning of the crisis in Kosovo can again be pinpointed to the election of Slobodan Milosevic in the late 1980s. Milosevic’s promotion of Serbian nationalism weighed heaviest in ethnically-Albanian Kosovo and, under his regime, countless laws were passed to bolster Kosovar Serbs while simultaneously discriminating against the majority Kosovar Albanian population. By 1989, Milosevic had begun to systematically abolish Kosovo’s autonomy using historical pretenses (Paul, Clark, & Grill, 2010: 282). Serbians have historically felt a strong sense of nationhood in regards to Kosovo, culminating in the Battle of Kosovo, in which Serbians fought against the invading Turks in 1389. This fact was used as reason for Serbia’s claim to Kosovo. As Ambassador Zimmerman noted in his memoir, “Kosovo is to Serbs what Jerusalem and the West Bank are to Israelis—a sacred ancestral homeland now inhabited largely
by Muslims” (1996: 13). This widely held sentiment was used as justification for Milosevic’s oppressive policies toward Kosovar Albanians.

In response to Milosevic’s repression of Kosovar Albanians, Albanian dissidents formed a parallel society in 1998, led by Ibrahim Rugova. Despite Rugova’s call to avoid violence, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began an armed insurgency against Kosovar Serbs. Following the Jashari Massacre in March of 1998, where members of the KLA were killed during a shootout with Serbian police, peace talks between the leadership in Kosovo and the leadership in Serbia were canceled, and the road to war was set.

**ANALYSIS**

**II: Precedence**

As the fighting between Serbians and Albanians in Kosovo increased, it was believed that the counterinsurgency efforts by Serbia were only to quell the violence against Kosovar Serbs perpetrated by Kosovar Albanians. Western powers understood it was Serbia’s right to suppress the insurgency, but it was unclear whether Milosevic would use this counterinsurgency to rid Kosovo of the Albanian population and reestablish a historic precedent of Serbia’s claim to Kosovo. Despite the fact that NATO allies were split in their decisions with how to handle the violence—the United States and the United Kingdom considering armed intervention; France, Germany, and Italy rejecting force; and Russia’s firm decision to do nothing—it was Milosevic’s reputation for violence that prompted the United States to take action.

Serbia’s response to the attacks by the KLA on civilian Serbians reminded the West of Milosevic’s reign of human rights abuses throughout his administration. As UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook noted, “It looked just like the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia” (*The Fall of Milosevic* [FILM]). It was this precedent of human rights abuses that had already been established by the Milosevic regime that ushered in US intervention. James Gow writes that
there “was a sense of trying to prevent history’s repeating itself and taking responsible action where their predecessors had been judged to have failed” (2009: 307). President Clinton was determined not to have another international policy blunder; where the Bush administration, Europe, and NATO failed to act in Bosnia, the United States would act quickly and decisively in Kosovo to prevent the same ethnic bloodbath that had occurred. And as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reminded the Contact Group in London: “Gentlemen, remember that history is watching us and our predecessors sat in this room and watched Bosnia burn” (The Fall of Milosevic [FILM]). Clearly, the decision to intervene in the Kosovo crisis was strongly influenced by the previous decision to intervene in Bosnia, and the relative failure to act decisively in the Bosnia crisis spurred the Clinton administration to refrain from making the same mistake twice. As such, decisive US intervention was sought to put a [hopefully] quick end to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo.

Once the decision to intervene had been made in March of 1999, the US and NATO moved ahead without the approval of the UN or the EU. The EU had been undergoing a series of financial scandals and Franco-German tensions in the early part of 1999, which served to weaken the credibility of the organization in the international arena. This allowed the US to move ahead with the Kosovo intervention without any opposition from EU member states. Furthermore, in order to [theoretically] lawfully bypass UN approval for the intervention, the US claimed the “humanitarian emergency in Kosovo was ‘overwhelming in character and required an emergency response’ and that such considerations must outweigh any legalistic concerns about UN approval” (Alan Henrikson in “The Constraint of Legitimacy: The Legal and Institutional Framework of Euro-Atlantic Security”, quoted in Gibbs, 2009: 196). This claim set a new precedent for humanitarian intervention; whenever the United States—as the world
hegemon—believed a situation was a humanitarian emergency, they could—and should—intervene, regardless of UN approval. This new norm served to reaffirm US world hegemony over organizations such as the UN and weakened the UN’s role in international policy; it also served to establish a new norm of humanitarian intervention and introduce the concept of R2P.

**H2: Role of state sovereignty**

At the initial onset of the violence in Kosovo, it was widely believed that, since the removal of Kosovo’s autonomy from Serbia in 1989, Kosovo was a territory of Serbia and, thus, the issue was an internal affair. A referendum was later passed confirming that the issue in Kosovo was an internal affair and prohibiting any interference from international actors (Gow, 2009: 305). Since Serbia itself was a sovereign state and, under the Westphalian system a sovereign state had jurisdiction within its borders and was safe from outside interventions, Milosevic believed that it was Serbia’s sovereign right to not only end the violence perpetrated by the KLA in Kosovo, but to maintain the integrity of Serbia’s borders by resisting Kosovo’s calls of independence. The United States and the rest of the Western powers were forced to acknowledge and abide by the Westphalian norm of non-intervention and support Serbia in its fight against Albanian separatism, thereby deeming the crisis a civil war within the borders of a single sovereign state.

In order for an intervention to take place during the crisis in Kosovo, the US had to bypass issues of sovereignty and non-intervention. In the discussions about what to do with the mounting violence of both Albanians against Serbs and vice versa, the US hoped to somehow initiate a military intervention. When refugees began to flee Serbia and Kosovo in droves and

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9 The Treaty of Westphalia established the concept of state sovereignty, in order to protect small states from intervention on larger states. Under a strict interpretation of the Treaty of Westphalia, states had jurisdiction within their borders and were free from international intervention. This norm of non-intervention was later enshrined by the UN in Article 2, Section 1 and Section 7; these articles noted the “sovereign equality of states” that had “exclusive and total jurisdiction” within their territory and that other states had the right to not intervene in this jurisdiction.
inhabit other countries, the US used this as evidence that the violence had moved beyond the borders of a single sovereign nation and thus required immediate NATO intervention.

Furthermore, OPERATION ALLIED FORCE only gained support from NATO-member nations after speeches by numerous politicians called attention to the fact that the violence in the Former Yugoslav Republic represented a direct threat to the safety and security of the world. After OPERATION ALLIED FORCE had begun, President Clinton claimed that “NATO had taken action ‘to prevent a wider war, to defuse a powder-keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded before in this century with catastrophic results’” (Kritsiotis 2000: 342). Naming the issue as an international threat, rather than a humanitarian crisis within one single state, helped to bypass the constraints of sovereignty in favor of intervention in Kosovo. Sovereign states maintain the right to defend themselves against threat to their own sovereignty. Painting the issue in Kosovo as a threat to the democratic peace in Europe allowed for justification for military action.

H3: Political self interests

The ultimate decision process to intervene in Kosovo was underlined by a desire to reestablish US dominance on the European continent. During the 1990s, increasing tensions between Europe and the US had been dominating international policy. Europe had felt that, after the end of the Cold War and during the Bosnia crisis, the US had “been overly domineering” (Gibbs, 2009: 172). This spurred a desire for Europe to seek to establish its own foreign and military policy, independent of US input, thereby distancing themselves from both NATO and the US. This culminated in the St. Malo declaration, which announced the EU’s intention of procuring its own military that would act autonomously from NATO.10

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10 On December 4, 1998, the French and British governments met at St. Malo, France, in order to outline their desire to create a autonomous military for the European Union, “in order to respond to international crises”. This declaration was made in an effort to assert Europe’s role in both European affairs as well as in the international arena. The declaration makes it clear that the EU military would act independently of NATO forces (Franco-British Summit Joint Declaration on European Defense, 1998).
The US, in response to the St. Malo declaration, sought to reaffirm itself in Europe by strengthening NATO. The response was the New Strategic Concept, which placed NATO in a more powerful position. The Concept made NATO less of a Cold War, regional security entity, and turned it into a worldwide policing agency. The goal of the New Strategic Concept was to ensure NATO’s legitimacy in Europe and to remind Europe of the role of the United States as the sole world hegemon. As David N. Gibbs writes, “A strengthened NATO represented an institutional alternative to the unreliable European Union, thus undercutting European efforts aimed at foreign policy and financial independence” (2009: 173).

The war in Kosovo thus presented itself as a means to popularize the Concept while simultaneously reinvigorating NATO. Gibbs argues, “A key factor influencing official thinking was the realization that a NATO war in Kosovo could strengthen the Atlantic alliance and thus contribute to one of the central US policy objectives of this period” (2009: 184). The timing of the crisis in Kosovo, as well as US motivations to get involved, coincided with the desire to strengthen NATO and reaffirm US hegemony in Europe.

Another factor influencing US motivations in Kosovo was US economic interests in Europe. According to General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO, US trade with Europe equaled over $250 billion annually; rising tensions between the US and Europe threatened those economic interests, and it was the goal of the US to ease those tensions (Clark, 1999; Gibbs, 2009). It was hoped that a stronger NATO, as well as the war in Kosovo, would help to ease those tensions. In a speech given in March 1999 to the Legislative Convention of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, President Clinton himself acknowledged Kosovo’s role in bringing together the US and Europe as partners in trade and world leadership. He said,
…we need a Europe that is safe, secure, free, united, a good partner with us for trading…and someone who will share the burdens of taking care of the problems of the world…And if we’re going to have a strong economic relationship that includes our ability to sell around the world, Europe has got to be a key…Now, that’s what this Kosovo thing is all about. (Clinton, 1999)

US hegemony in Europe was dependent on trade relations, and it was believed that a stronger NATO would strengthen the loosening ties between the US and Europe. Gibbs quotes General Clark in saying, “As a result of those [economic] interests, we have continued to maintain a strong military presence in Europe” (2009: 174). Thus, the New Strategic Concept was an effort by the US to maintain those multilateral trade systems. This also helped to solidify the relationship between military alliances and trade partners: where military alliances are made and strengthened, trade follows.

There was also Secretary of State Albright’s desire to make sure Milosevic was gone before she left office. Albright, it seemed, had made it her personal goal to ensure the removal of Milosevic from his seat of power. In fact, according to Assistant Secretary of State James Rubin, “Madeleine Albright banged the table at one meeting and said that getting rid of Milosevic was her number one aim; he had to go before she did” (The Fall of Milosevic [FILM]). In this case, personal interest became national interest. The desire to remove Milosevic served as motivation enough for the US to overlook the fact that the KLA was a terrorist group and, despite the policy that the US would not work with terrorists, the US not only worked with the KLA, but also helped to train the guerilla forces and supply them as well. According to Gibbs, the State Department even recognized the fact that the KLA was a terrorist organization, but shifted its policy in favor of the KLA in 1999 (2009). Since it was in the interest of the US to
support the overthrow of Milosevic, it was also in the interests of the US to intervene on behalf of the KLA and the Kosovar Albanians. This also led to the speculation that the US sabotaged the negotiations at Rambouillet, both to ensure the overthrow of Milosevic as well as to start a NATO-led attack that would serve to draw NATO-allies together and ease US-European tensions. The inclusion of the Military Annex in the Rambouillet agreement forced the Serbians to refuse to sign; the Annex called for NATO forces to occupy and have unrestricted access to all of the FRY—not just Serbia and Kosovo—thereby representing a serious infringement of sovereignty to Serbians. The inclusion of this Annex thus forced Serbia to refuse to sign the agreement and catapulted NATO into Operation Allied Force, which is exactly what the United States had wanted.

On the other side of the argument, the US military was unsure that the airstrikes that were being advocated by Secretary of State Albright and President Clinton would be sufficient in ending the violence in Kosovo. Defense Secretary William Cohen and National Security Advisor Samuel Berger, along with other senior military officials, worried that if the airstrikes failed to be as effective as NATO and the US Air Force hoped, then the US would then be obligated to put US troops on the ground in Serbia and Kosovo, thereby risking the lives of American and potentially getting the US involved in another “Vietnam” (Gibbs, 2009: 184). This deadlock led to a delayed US response, as another phenomenon of rhetorical gridlock held back any decisive action. Furthermore, Bosnia was still fresh in the minds of the US military, and the amount of US involvement at the height of the Bosnia crisis left the military fatigued. As Gibbs notes, another reason why the US was slow to respond in Kosovo was “simply fatigue from the intense level of US involvement in earlier conflicts in the former Yugoslavia…” (2009: 182). There was hesitation—at least on the part of the military—to get involved in yet another
crisis in the same region, especially since the Dayton Accords had only just been negotiated four years earlier.

**Somalia, 1992**

**Background**

The Somali humanitarian crisis can be traced back to the deeply-rooted clan-based differences across Somalia. Though all Somalis consider themselves to be of one ethnicity, their primary loyalty lies with their clans, which has historically caused deep clan-based cleavages across the country. In July, 1960, Somalia gained its independence from European colonialism, but the problem of uniting clans became more and more of an issue; the infrastructures left over from the British and Italian colonists in the south of Somalia were better developed than the north, leading to further inter-clan marginalization (Nalbandov, 2009: 108). After the democratically elected president, former Prime Minister Abdirasdiid Shermaarke, was assassinated under more inter-clan tensions, the Somali military took over and Major General Siyaad Barre came to power.

In an effort to consolidate power, Barre attempted to turn the attention of the warring clans away from one another and towards war with neighboring Ethiopia over the disputed Ogadeen region. However, Barre’s war against Ethiopia was eventually lost, discrediting Barre in the eyes of the other Somali clans. As Nalbandov writes, “…in the eyes of common Somalis, it was not the country that had lost, but Barre’s [loyalty to the clans of his family] had, which was blamed by majority of other clans for poor performance in Ogadeen” (2009: 109). The loss led to the rise of several clan-based opposition groups to Barre, who temporarily forgot their inter-clan disputes in a concerted effort to get rid of Barre’s regime. In 1991, after years of demonstrations and political unrest, Barre was forced to flee the capital of Mogadishu.
Barre’s removal from power left a power-vacuum in the capital, as leaders from varying clans went back to war with one another over the creation of a provisional government and power-sharing leadership. The strongest fighting occurred within one single clan, where the general Mahammad Faarah Aideed (of the Habar Gidir sub-clan) declared his opposition to President Ali Mahdi Mahammad (of the Abgal sub-clan) and formed his own provisional government in the capital, effectively splitting the capital in two as the factions of Aideed and Mahdi went to war. By the end of March 1992, hundreds of thousands of Somalis had been killed or had fled the country. The war between Aideed and Mahdi, coupled with drought and famine in the country, led to a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

ANALYSIS

Under the Bush administration, the United States’ role in Somalia was characterized by three waves of action: 1) nonintervention, 2) partial intervention, and 3) intervention.

H1: Precedence

The hesitancy in 1991 that characterized the United States’ response to the Somalia crisis was deeply embedded in a lack of precedence about what should be done. The Bush administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, along with other high ranking White House officials, were still using the Powell Doctrine in determining whether to involve US troops in overseas combat missions.\(^{11}\) This doctrine, noted as a “practical guide”, was introduced by General Colin Powell after US involvement in Vietnam and Lebanon (Powell, 1995: 293). The Powell Doctrine used six tests in determining whether the US should commit American troops to combat. These questions served to establish whether US interests were at stake and, if they

\(^{11}\) The Powell Doctrine was a series of six tests used to determine whether US troops should be committed to combat. These tests were: 1) “commit only if our or allies’ vital interests are at stake”; 2) “if we commit, do so with all the resources necessary to win”; 3) “Go in only with clear political and military objectives”; 4) “Be ready to change the commitment if the objectives change, since wars rarely stand still”; 5) “Only take commitments that gain the support of the American people and the Congress”; 6) “Commit US forces only as a last resort” (Powell, 1995: 293).
were, the doctrine ensured that the US would go through all means “necessary to win” (Powell, 1995: 293). Since Somalia failed the initial test of whether US interests were at stake, the crisis in Somalia was initially low on the priority list for the Bush administration. The Powell Doctrine also served to enforce a norm of non-intervention if US interests were not at stake; thus, the lack of precedence halted US involvement in Somalia in 1991.

However, after President Bush lost the 1992 presidential election to Bill Clinton, Bush offered up US troops to lead a humanitarian mission in Somalia. In UN Security Council Resolution 794, the United States “…recognized that the Somalia situation constituted ‘a threat to international peace’ and authorized the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) to use ‘all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations’” (Patman, 2010: 21). Resolution 794 marked a turning point in US precedence. It was the first time that the US justified sending its troops “to a foreign country not to safeguard US strategic interests, but to perform a humanitarian mission” (Patman, 2010: 21). This resolution, coupled with UNSC Resolution 688 from April 1991 that recognized repression of a member government’s people as constituting a threat to international peace, established a new norm for humanitarian intervention.

H2: State Sovereignty

After the end of the Cold War, and as globalization rapidly took off, the United States was left as the world’s sole hegemon and nations were no longer viewed as totally sovereign. This notion stemmed from the idea that globalization makes borders more porous and accessible which changes the nature of sovereignty. Globalization, coupled with Bush’s New World Order, suggested a new way to handle international crises. The New World Order called for the maintenance of international peace through mutual cooperation of the US and the UN. The
major tenets of Bush’s New World Order called to “…preserve security, defend freedom, promote democracy, and enforce the rule of law” (Patman, 2010: 8).

Bush’s New World Order gave the US and the UN international policing responsibilities and reason to intervene if a threat to international security and democracy was perceived. The New World Order removed the issue of state sovereignty from discussions of whether to intervene in another nation’s internal affairs.

After the decision to intervene had been made, the Bush administration made it clear that they would not seek disarmament or nation-building within the failed state, but rather secure humanitarian relief. This decision was based on the idea that since the intervention was for humanitarian purposes (rather than a strategic intervention), the Bush administration should adhere to the norm of non-intervention, and pledge respect to Somalia’s “sovereignty and independence” (George Bush, quoted in Patman, 2010: 43). By recognizing the sovereignty of Somalia, the Bush administration made it clear that US forces would not partake in disarmament which could, “by definition, affect the position of key competitors for political power” during the Somali civil war (Patman, 2010: 43).

H3: Political self-interest

Prior to the end of the Cold War, Somalia represented an important geostrategic post for the United States. Once allied with the USSR, Somalia signed an agreement in August 1980 with the United States granting access to Somali air and naval facilities at Berbera in exchange for American economic and military aid. This aid allowed General Barre to maintain power during the war with Ethiopia over the Ogadeen region. This agreement also served to displace the USSR presence in Somalia, a primary goal of the United States during the Cold war. However, the end of the Cold War meant that the Horn of Africa was no longer relevant as the race to establish superpower dominance in the region had ended. Thus, Somalia lost its
geostrategic post in the eyes of the Bush administration. Patman notes, “The country was transformed in the space of a few years from an important Cold War player to the status of a geostrategic discard” (2010: 1). In the new era, under the New World Order, weak or failing states were greatly underestimated in terms of importance to the US and were thus left to manage themselves while the US dealt with other, more pressing issues—like the disintegration of the USSR and the escalating violence in Bosnia.

Shortly after the end of the Cold War, the Bush administration withdrew all military and economic support of Somalia, citing vast human rights violations by Siad Barre. This withdrawal compounded the civil strife within Somalia, leading to Barre’s overthrow and the collapse of the Somali state. Yet the US remained complacent about the bloodbath in Somalia, hoping that a resolution would be met between Aideed and Mahdi, brokered by Africa rather than the United States. The US refused to get involved in the situation, even though the US was aware of the worsening conditions in Somalia; they withdrew all US citizens from the country prior to the fall of General Barre, knowing that violence would break out in Mogadishu.

Another reason why the United States refused to get involved in the Somalia situation during 1991 and early 1992 was the fact that the cost of peacekeeping after the end of the Cold War had skyrocketed, leaving the US, as the world’s sole superpower, to pay for the majority of these missions. The UN—and subsequently the US—had already committed to several other peacekeeping missions around the world, costing the United States approximately $70 million per year (Patman, 2010: 24). The United States was simply not willing to incur further peacekeeping costs for a country as low on the strategic radar as Somalia. Furthermore, avoiding extraneous costs in peacekeeping would keep Congress and the American people at bay; as Patman notes, “…the administration was concerned not to incur the displeasure of Congress by
spending even more in the area of peacekeeping” (2010: 24). The United States was already involved in several other crises around the world, including the Persian Gulf conflict, Bosnia, and the dissolution of the USSR. Committing to a large peacekeeping mission in Somalia would necessarily distract attention and money from these other preoccupations. As such, the United States made every effort possible to block efforts to put Somalia on the UN Security Council agenda and actively resisted Secretary General Boutros-Ghali’s efforts to have the UN be more proactive in Somalia.

Calling upon the Powell Doctrine, the argument to avoid intervention relied heavily upon the lack of threat to national interests that the Somalia crisis posed. This realist point of view was held by General Powell and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were against any humanitarian intervention anywhere in the world, including Somalia, Bosnia, and Liberia. Citing a fear of mission creep, it was believed that getting involved in Somalia would “embroil the US in historically entrenched conflicts that were not relevant to US vital interests” (Patman, 2010: 25). Furthermore, sending troops to Somalia was viewed as logistically difficult from a security standpoint. The Joint Chiefs and senior White House staff believed that US forces would not be able to protect themselves or aid in the distribution of humanitarian aid due to ambiguity about who the enemy really was (Patman, 2010).

As the crisis in Somalia escalated, the Bush administration continued to hesitate to get involved. A major obstacle to the Bush administration and to maintaining Bush’s New World Order was the fact that Somalia coincided with an election year. The upcoming election would help explain the “apparent reluctance of the White House to raise the profile of Somalia…” (Patman, 2010: 16). On the one hand, Democrats were criticizing President Bush for being a foreign policy president, while candidate Bill Clinton was advocating for more attention spent on
the economy. This criticism by Democrats to avoid yet another foreign policy endeavor put pressure on the Bush administration to avoid intervention in Somalia. On the other hand, refusal to intervene in Somalia would severely discredit Bush’s New World Order, diminishing the plan into nothing more than political rhetoric and tarnishing the United States’ reputation in the UN. Furthermore, failure to intervene would challenge Bush’s efficacy as president as well as his ability to lead the world superpower in matters of international security.

Post-election, however, a drastic change was observed in Bush’s policy toward Somalia. After losing the election to Clinton, the lame-duck administration was able to free itself from pre-election pressure and pursue an armed intervention in Somalia. Patman writes, “Freed of domestic electoral considerations, Bush was free to concentrate on his strength (foreign policy), and, in particular, on an issue with which he had been fully engaged since September (namely, the Somali crisis)” (2010: 38). Bush made the quiet recognition in July of 1992 that the issue in Somalia was not simply a famine and food crisis; reports coming out of Somalia noted the mass killings inside Mogadishu as well as looting of humanitarian relief by various insurgents. However, the decision to send US troops to Somalia in an armed intervention was not fully decided upon until after the election and after consulting with President-elect Clinton’s transition team about an increased US role in Somalia. The loss of the election had significant effects at changing US foreign policy towards Somalia and eventually allowed for the US-led mission UNITAF (UNITED TASK FORCE).

It is also important to consider the fact that the decision for full, armed intervention took place during President Bush’s lame duck presidency. Bush feared saddling the incoming Clinton administration with a new humanitarian intervention, and General Powell feared that the new administration would seek to escalate a mission in Bosnia, considered to be “far more dangerous
a place—in Powell’s judgment, one that could become a quagmire for American troops” (Patman, 2010: 39). The Bush administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff thus viewed Somalia as the lesser of two evils and, if the call was for some sort of humanitarian effort by the US military, it was believed that Somalia was a safer option. Patman writes, “The option of a limited but large-scale US-led humanitarian intervention in Somalia corresponded to Bush’s desire to make an immediate difference in Somalia without tying the hands of his successor” (2010: 39). It is important to note that although the Bush administration, along with the UN, approved armed intervention in Somalia, the intervention itself was deemed a limited engagement. Resolution 794 authorized UNITAF to use “all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations” (UN Security Council Resolution 794, December 3, 1992). This resolution is important because it clearly states that the primary goal—in fact the only goal—of the US-led UNITAF forces was to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, not, as President Bush said “to dictate political outcomes” (George H.W. Bush, quoted in Lyons & Samatar, 1995: 34). For fear of mission creep, General Powell, President Bush, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff attempted to ensure that the commitment of US troops to Somalia was given a clear and limited goal.

The Bush administration pointed to the images of starving Somali children in the media as reason for the turnaround in foreign policy towards Somalia. This CNN effect slowly altered Bush’s policy, from non-intervention to partial intervention (from July 1992 to September 1992) and, finally, to full armed intervention.12 Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Herman Cohen, along with other White House officials, had worked endlessly to bring the Somali crisis to the

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12 The CNN effect is the idea that the worldwide media has the ability “to affect the conduct of US diplomacy and foreign policy” (Livingston, 1997: 1). According to Livingston, advances in technology have allowed the media to broadcast live “from anywhere on Earth” and, as a result, “the vacuum left by the end of the Cold War has been filled by a foreign policy of media-specified crisis management” (1997: 1).
attention of the media in the hopes that the images would sway public opinion and, thus, put pressure on the Bush administration that something had to be done. Writes Patman, “Clearly, these members of the Bush administration were hoping to mobilize US public opinion in order to put pressure on those of their colleagues within the government who were resisting a more engaged policy approach toward Somalia” (2010: 27-28).13

**Rwanda, 1994**

**Background**

The violence in Rwanda stemmed from long-standing ethnic tensions between the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis. After the First World War, Belgian colonial rule favored the minority Tutsis, breeding resentment amongst the Hutus. Once independence was gained in 1959 after the Hutu Revolution, violence broke out between the Hutus and Tutsis, causing thousands of Tutsis to flee to neighboring countries. Opposition groups were gradually formed, and several insurgencies against the Hutus in Rwanda were attempted; the Rwandan Hutus put down each rebellion, and responded in turn with more violence towards ethnic Tutsis, causing more refugees to flee (Chalk et al, 2010).

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)—a Tutsi-led rebellion army—invaded Rwanda from their base in Uganda. The RPF, led by Paul Kagame, demanded the right of return for Tutsi refugees in neighboring countries as well as political representation in the Rwandan government. This first phase of insurgency was put down by French and Zairian troops, but the RPF mounted another insurgency, this time resorting to guerilla tactics. The RPF was fairly

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13 UNITAF was eventually escalated into the US-UN peacekeeping mission UNISOM II through Resolution 814. This resolution effectively changed the mission from one of securing safe passage for humanitarian relief to “provide humanitarian and other assistance to the people of Somalia in rehabilitating their political institutions and economy and promoting political settlement and national reconciliation” (UN Security Council Resolution 814, March 26, 1993). UNISOM II set out to do what UNITAF had specifically avoided—nation-building in the failed state. However, the decision to escalate the mission, under the authority of President Bill Clinton, is not the focus of this paper since the initial decision to intervene had been made under President Bush and, as such, has been omitted in the analysis.
successful in this endeavor, and was able to make territorial gains into Rwanda. In 1992, the Rwandan government, under President Juvénal Habyarimana, and the RPF asked the United Nations to monitor a cease-fire and peace negotiations at Arusha, Tanzania. The Arusha Accords promised to create a coalition government where both Hutus and Tutsis had representation.

In April of 1994, President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, killing him and the president of Burundi. The attack was believed to be by radical Hutus who were against negotiations with Tutsis during the Arusha peace process. Since the peace negotiations were not universally supported, it was believed that radical Hutus had shot President Habyarmana’s plane as an excuse to escalate violence towards Tutsis. After the president’s death, a new wave of violence against Tutsis and moderate Hutus broke out, much of it carried about by the Hutu Interahamwe (the extremist Hutu youth militia), leading to genocide. The RPF eventually was able to overtake Kigali, and announced a cease-fire by mid-June and the establishment of a new government by mid-July. In this time period, an estimated 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis were killed (Paul, Clark, & Grill, 2010: 140).

**Analysis**

**H1: Precedence**

In 1992, the US led the UN-sanctioned United Task Force in Somalia, successfully providing humanitarian relief to Somali civilians suffering from famine. However, when the US led the 1993 mission to apprehend the Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aideed in Mogadishu, eighteen American service members were killed and the remains of their bodies were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu for the world to see. This event caused the United States to reverse its then-current policy from a position of assertive multilateralism to one of selective engagement, in which the US would only get involved in situations that represented a direct
threat to their strategic interests (Chalk et al., 2010:26). Prior to the Mogadishu tragedy, President Clinton had drafted presidential review decision PRD-13, which would allow for greater US military involvement under UN command. This decision would have given the US further hegemonic control in UN-sanctioned missions around the world and solidify the US’s role as the sole world power. However, this measure was widely unpopular in the Pentagon, which had no desire to participate in more peacekeeping operations. It was also heavily criticized by Republican members of Congress.

After Somalia, President Clinton issued presidential decision directive PDD-25. This set “restrictive criteria for US involvement in multilateral peacekeeping operations” (Chalk et al., 2010: 26). PDD-25 stated that the US would not get involved in UN peacekeeping operations unless “UN involvement represents the best means to advance US interests” (Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-25, May 3, 1994). Furthermore, the directive issued strict criteria for which the US would decide if and when to intervene; among these criteria were “the nature of US interests, the size of the proposed US force, the risk to US personnel, the proposed duration of the mission and rules of engagement and the nature and mandate of the operation” (Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-25, May 3, 1994). PDD-25 also reasserted US hegemony over the international arena; the directive stated that any peace-enforcement operation “that is likely to involve combat” should be under the command of the United States not the UN (Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-25, May 3, 1994).

The Clinton administration was also wary to recognize or acknowledge the fact that the reports coming out of Rwanda were of genocide. Had the US acknowledged that what was occurring in Rwanda was in fact genocide, the Clinton administration would have been obligated to intervene under the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of
Genocide. Not acknowledging the genocide took pressure off the Clinton administration to intervene, thereby maintaining the norm of non-intervention established by the Somalia tragedy.

Part of the reason why the Clinton administration was able to avoid intervention was because there was little pressure on them to intervene by Americans, despite a few lobbyist groups pleading for US intervention. The media itself was not accurately reporting the genocide taking place in Rwanda and when there were reports pertaining to Rwanda, the killings were referred to as a tribal conflict rather than genocide. *The New York Times* reported the violence as “bloody clashes between tribal factions in the Rwandan capital of Kigali” (Lewis, 1994).

Despite a report from UNAMIR Force Commander Brigadier General Roméo Dallaire about an “extermination” plot to kill Tutsis and the “collection of arms, stocking of arms, and the distribution of arms to civilian elements” in Rwanda, information being reported back to Americans and to the US government suggested that the crisis was simply a political upheaval (PBS Frontline Interview, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” with David P. Rawson). This is evident in President Clinton’s letter to congressional leaders in which he describes the aftermath of President Habyarimana’s death as “general fighting” between “government forces and forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front” and as “some members of the Rwandan military…killing opposition leaders and civilians” (Letter to congressional leaders on the Evacuation of United States citizens from Rwanda and Burundi, April 12, 1994, emphasis added). Clinton’s refusal to acknowledge the violence as ethnically driven—rather than politically driven—again allows the US government to avoid even considering the violence as genocide. Furthermore, there is no

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14 The Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN in 1948 and put into force in 1951, defined genocide as “…acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”. Article I of the Convention confirms that genocide is a “crime under international law” which all the signatories of the Convention “undertake to prevent and punish”. The Convention thus held all signatories responsible for not only recognizing genocide, but in punishing those responsible for genocide as well, and in providing “effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide…” (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, UN General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) December 9, 1948).
mention of the escalation of the violence outside of Kigali. Clinton’s letter suggested that the violence was a solitary and contained crisis, implying that US involvement is neither appropriate nor needed. Despite calls from within the government to acknowledge the genocide, the State Department only went so far as to recognize “acts of genocide” in Rwanda, not full-fledged genocide (Chalk et al., 2010: 35). This verbal nuance again helped the US government maintain the norm of non-intervention.

American media outlets began increased reporting on the situation in Rwanda in March of 1994. However, what was being reported was only the growing numbers of refugees and the unsanitary and dangerous conditions they were living in, not the genocide taking place in Rwanda. This increase in news coverage eventually led the UN Security Council to approve UNAMIR II on May 17 whose directive was to “support and provide safe conditions for displaced persons and other groups in Rwanda and would help with the provision of assistance by humanitarian organizations” (Department of Public Information, United Nations). However, UNAMIR II had no directive for curtailing the genocide. Instead, and in response to the American public, UNAMIR only supported Rwandan refugees, completely disregarding the genocide. As Chalk et al. note, the “media’s emphasis on the humanitarian crisis enabled the Clinton administration to distance itself from the genocide and policy options for intervention” (2010: 35). They continue, “If there was a ‘CNN effect’, it came in response to this second story… The Clinton administration was quite ready to employ Pentagon resources in a ‘feeding and watering’ operation, as it was commonly referred to at the Pentagon.\(^{15}\) What it was not willing to do, and would not allow television pictures to force it to do, was to stop the slaughter

\[^{15}\] A “feeding and watering” operation referred to the United States’ willingness only to provide enough protection to ensure the safe passage of humanitarian aid. This is an important distinction in missions, as it clearly lays out the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking. The US would not participate in any peacemaking or nation building.
early on” (Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, quoted in Chalk et al., 2010: 35). The lack of
effective media reporting on the genocide meant the US government could avoid humanitarian
intervention and, instead, play a minor role in supporting Rwandan refugees through UNAMIR II.

**H2: State Sovereignty**

The United States was able to maintain the norm of selective engagement established by
the disaster at Somalia because the rhetoric inside the US and within the government understood
the violence to be merely a civil war. Therefore, the concept of sovereignty superseded
intervention in the crisis within the borders of Rwanda. As Chalk et al. noted, “The description
of the violence as a component of an ongoing civil war or ancient tribal conflict sublimated the
extraordinary horror of the mass murder of civilians” (2010: 34). It was believed that the
violence was also on a small scale, taking place only within the capital of Kigali, rather than
across the whole country. Alan J. Kuperman writes, “Nearly two weeks into [the genocide],
reports suggested that only 20,000 Rwandans had been killed by both sides in a civil war that the
Tutsi were winning, that was confined mainly to the capital, and in which violence was waning”
(2001: 31). When the violence broke out initially, it was suspected by even the most careful
observers that it was simply a renewal of the civil war that had broken out in the early 90s, and
that it was fueled by political differences rather than deeply-rooted ethnic hatred. Kuperman
explains, “…when violence exploded in the capital…experts perceived it through the prism of
their expectations as the renewal of civil war” (2001: 32).

This assumption of a renewed civil war was again fed by the inaccurate information
reported by the media. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called the crisis “tribal fighting” and *The
Washington Post* wrote off the genocide as a land that “historically has been convulsed by
*periodic spasms of ethnic* bloodletting between its majority Hutu tribe and the minority Tutsis”
(emphasis added, Jelinek, 1994; Richburg, 1994). With the aversion to claiming it was genocide, and by naming the conflict a tribal conflict and a civil war, a CNN effect to induce intervention was avoided.

**H3: Political self-interests**

The presence or absence of political interests in Rwanda weighed heavily on whether the United States would get involved. Unlike in Bosnia and Kosovo, the United States had no incentives to intervene on behalf of Rwandan civilians. That fact, coupled with the new norm of selective engagement laid out by PDD-25, established the Clinton administration’s mostly hands-off approach to the genocide in Rwanda. PDD-25 noted that the US would only intervene in matters where they could either advance their political interests or else their interests were in jeopardy and Rwanda evidently lacked any sort of interest for the US. As Chalk *et al.* write, Rwanda lacked exploitable resources and was “peripheral to the geostrategic interests of the United States” (2010: 25). Because the US lacked any political interests in the region, even negotiations during the Arusha Peace Accords were deferred to countries with more interests in the region, such as the French. Chalk *et al.* quote a senior US government official in saying, “We did not have massive strategic interests there. We had to be very deferential towards those who had a much larger interest, including the French, and we maintained that position in Arusha. We did not intend to assert ourselves as leading the process” (2010: 24).

After the dissolution of the peace process and the violence escalated, the US still maintained a hands-off approach. The US was uninterested in risking the lives of American soldiers to go into a country that would not provide any sort of strategic gain for the US government. In fact, one Congressional official responsible for Africa was quoted as saying: “The United States has no friends. The United States has interests, and in the United States there’s no interest in Rwanda. And we are not interested in sending young American marines to
bring them back in coffins. We have no incentive” (quoted by Monique Mujawamariya, a human rights activist, in PBS Frontline Interview, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” with David P. Rawson). The fear of body bags is evident in the fact that President Clinton was unwilling to get US troops involved in Rwanda while the genocide was occurring, but once a cease-fire had been established, he sent 4,000 American troops to Rwanda to aid in post-genocide humanitarian relief (Chalk et al. 2010: 38).

Intervention in Rwanda would have also been a costly operation, not just in American lives, but economically as well. There had been Congressional calls for jamming the hate radio station RTLM in Rwanda which was responsible for disseminating the genocidal message outside of Kigali and throughout the countryside. This same tactic was used successfully in Haiti to curtail the spread of violence-inducing messages, and it was believed by some in Congress that the tactic would work for Rwanda as well. However, these protests to jam RTLM were met with criticism that the endeavor would be too costly; the aircraft used to jam radios, a Commando Solo C-130 aircraft, cost about $8,500 per flight hour and required relatively secure air space to operate due to its relative vulnerability. Since the US could not guarantee secure airspace and since the operation of the aircraft was so economically costly—and because the US was unwilling to spend a seemingly unnecessary amount on a strategically insignificant situation—the strategy was rejected. It was also believed that jamming RTLM would “affect [US] diplomatic relations with Rwanda” (Chalk et al, 2010: 33).

Discussion

The case study analyses have shed light on a number of issues pertaining to the decision process that the United States uses in determining if and when to intervene in humanitarian crises. All four cases—selected from both the Bush administration and the Clinton
administration—were influenced by the fear of setting a new precedence, the role of state sovereignty, and political self interests. It is clear that these three hypotheses contribute significantly to determining when the United States intervenes. And it is also clear that these three factors are all inherently intertwined, each contributing to the other in complicated and often unclear ways. However, in each of these cases, there is one particular factor that seems to be the most important in determining whether the United States would intervene in various humanitarian crises. This factor, which I call the trump card, seems to be the decisive factor in all four of the cases.

Hypothesis one asked whether the fear of setting a precedence was the ultimate decision factor when determining whether to intervene in the four case studies analyzed. It is clear from the analysis that precedence seems to be a major reason why the United States does not intervene, but it does not fully explain why they do. In Bosnia, the Bush administration’s lack of interventionist policies to curtail the escalating violence depended on the fact that there was little historical precedence for intervention. The Bush administration hoped that the crisis would remain a regional one, and that the US could cite the norm of non-intervention as established by Westphalian concepts of sovereignty to stay out of the upheaval. On the other hand, the Clinton administration’s actions in handling the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo were, at least in part, informed by the precedent established in Bosnia, both during the Bush administration and during the early part of the Clinton administration. Actions in Kosovo depended on how inaction in Bosnia (under President Bush) was perceived a failure. In Somalia, it was ultimately the precedence of the Powell Doctrine that stunted a potential peacemaking operation. The humanitarian intervention that the Bush administration had approved during its lame duck presidency was confined by Bush’s desire not to escalate UNITAF into an offensive mission.
Upholding the Powell Doctrine’s strict mission directives while still intervening in the humanitarian crisis helped to establish a precedent of intervention that President Clinton would eventually call upon in Somalia. Furthermore, the later failure of UNISOM II under the Clinton administration—and Clinton’s response to the failure (pulling out all American troops and calling an end to the humanitarian mission)—established a new precedent, solidified in PDD-25, marking the administration’s staunch platform of non-intervention in the case of Rwanda.

Hypothesis two questioned whether the role of state sovereignty as established by the Treaty of Westphalia acted as a major factor in the decision making process of the United States. Infringements upon state sovereignty are historically viewed as acts of war, whereas the fear of setting a new precedent does not carry those implicit repercussions. As such, state sovereignty was studied not as a specific type of precedence but as a major deterrent to international interventions. Although less obvious perhaps than the role of precedence, state sovereignty was often cited as a reason for non-intervention. The Bush administration’s refusal to acknowledge Bosnia as an independent country before 1992 is significant evidence to the sovereignty hypothesis. By not acknowledging Bosnia as independent, the US could refuse intervention on the grounds that the crisis was an internal civil war, rather than a threat to international security interests. Noting that a sovereign nation had the right to their internal affairs, and since the crisis in Bosnia very much seemed to be an internal crisis, the Bush administration could refuse armed intervention. In Kosovo, sovereignty was a major factor preventing the Clinton administration from intervening. In order to sidestep the issue of sovereignty, the US had to paint the issue as a threat to international security. Thus, the US used the refugee crisis spilling out of Kosovo into neighboring countries as evidence that the threat was pushing past the borders of a single sovereign nation and threatening the security of the region and therefore required NATO
intervention. Somalia as a case provides less of an answer to the second hypothesis as the previous two cases. Sovereignty was rarely cited as a reason to avoid intervention. However, once the decision to intervene had been made by President Bush, a reason for the limited mission of UNITAF (protecting the distribution of humanitarian aid rather than an offensive mission to depose the war lords and establish peace) was the sovereignty of the nation. Bush did not want to impede upon the sovereignty of Somalia since the intervention was purely a humanitarian mission. And in Rwanda, intervention was avoided because the rhetoric surrounding the humanitarian crisis painted the situation as a civil war confined by the borders of the country. Therefore, as was the case initially in Bosnia and Kosovo, the United States would not get involved under the pretenses of Westphalian sovereignty.

Hypothesis three asked if the political self-interests of the United States and the president affected the decision process, and based upon my analysis, it appears that the presence or absence of the threat to political interests is the key factor in both the decision to intervene and the decision not the intervene. Despite some vacillating between intervention and non-intervention, the presence of political interests in the area seemed to be the proverbial trump card for intervention. In the case of Bosnia, the Bush administration’s hesitancy to get involved was informed heavily by the fact that intervention would have been too costly in terms of money and lives, and Bush did not want to get involved in foreign affairs due to his struggling image as a foreign policy president. Furthermore, both the Bush administration and the Clinton administration would only intervene in Bosnia as far as it would help to establish US hegemony in Europe and NATO’s dominance worldwide. In Kosovo, US interest in reaffirming its role as world hegemon as well as the desire to reestablish NATO as a worldwide security force through the New Strategic Concept acted as motivation to intervene in the humanitarian crisis. Despite
calls by the Pentagon to avoid intervention for fear of incurring high economic costs and American casualties, interests in Kosovo—and Europe as a whole—trumped all other concerns. In Somalia, the lack of geostrategic interests in the nation prevented humanitarian action for at least the first phase of the crisis; even after the Bush administration had approved UNITAF, the mission’s limited directive was proof that the US had little interest in the region and, as such, it would not undertake a mission that would potentially cost American lives. And a clear lack of any interest in Rwanda prevented the United States from intervening during the genocide, further supporting my third hypothesis.

**The Trump Card: Political Self Interests**

It is clear in the case study analyses that the United States will not intervene in a case unless their interests are at stake, proving the realist perspective. The United States’ hesitancy in the situations in Somalia and Rwanda, not to mention the Bush administration’s lack of action in Bosnia—and conversely the quick action by the Clinton administration in Kosovo—were based on the impact the humanitarian crises and subsequent intervention would have on US interests. Specifically, the Bush administration’s hesitancy in Somalia and the Clinton administration’s lack of action in Rwanda were intimately tied to the fact that both of these African countries had very little to offer to the United States in terms of resources. This fact is best highlighted by the quote from Monique Mujawamariya in which she states that the United States has no friends, only interests; and if the United States is going to get involved in a humanitarian crisis in another country, there had better be some incentive.16 This sentiment seems to hold true throughout the cases in the 1990s, regardless of presidential administration. It appears that US political interests

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16 This is a restatement of a quote by Henry John Temple Viscount Lord Palmerston, Foreign Secretary and former Prime Minister under Queen Victoria, of Great Britain: “We have no permanent allies, we have no permanent enemies, we only have permanent interests.”
in regions are oftentimes the deciding factor in the ultimate determination of if and when to intervene.

Admittedly, there are other factors involved in this decision process. One may argue that the responsibility to protect weighs heavily on administrations and that there exist some moral argument that necessitates intervention. But as I have shown, moral arguments are rarely made and, if they are, they are usually ignored. Furthermore, it is very difficult to determine the morality behind a humanitarian intervention. An idealist perspective would argue that all humanitarian interventions are for moral reasons, and that the responsibility to protect should be—and in fact is—the determining factor in the decision process. But this is not the case. In the four cases I studied, not once was the decision to intervene based on moral grounds. Had morality been the issue, then there would have been an intervention at the start of the Bosnian crisis, at the start of the Somalian crisis, the United States would have stopped the genocide in Rwanda, and Kosovo might never have happened to begin with. The United States’ lack of immediate action in various humanitarian crises—even when presidential administrations knew what was happening—is proof that morality and the responsibility to protect are minor factors in the ultimate decision process.

Furthermore, it is near impossible to determine the morality behind a humanitarian intervention due to duality in rhetoric; regardless of attempts at couching an intervention under moral terms, what is often the case—and what was seen in the decision process behind Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, and Rwanda—is intervention (or lack thereof) for disingenuous motives. There is often a disconnect between what is said and what is done and, to use a fitting cliché, actions speak louder than words. Thus, despite rhetoric claiming that these interventions were
for moral reasons, the inaction and action of both the Bush administration and the Clinton administration throughout the 1990s speaks otherwise.

**PATH DEPENDENCY**

My paired comparisons have also revealed a significant amount of path dependency between humanitarian crises in similar regions or during similar time periods. The paired comparison between Bosnia and Kosovo revealed that the inaction from one administration prompted the action of the other; specifically, the fact that the Bush administration neglected to react to the crisis in Bosnia effectively caused the Clinton administration to not only react to Bosnia after assuming office, but also to react quickly to the crisis in Kosovo. It was made very clear that, in the shadow of the failure of the Bush administration to act in Bosnia, the Clinton administration could not fail to act in Kosovo. Furthermore, since Bosnia was widely viewed as a successful humanitarian mission in the eyes of both the Clinton administration and the American people, there was wide support for an intervention in Kosovo.

The same phenomenon of path dependency caused the opposite response in the comparison between Somalia and Rwanda. The initial decision to intervene was made under the Bush administration, but the decision to escalate the mission from UNITAF to UNISOM II was made under Clinton; this decision was widely viewed as a disaster after eighteen American service members were killed in the Battle of Mogadishu. This established a precedent for the Clinton administration, reaffirming the idea that the United States would not intervene in a humanitarian crisis unless its interests were at stake. The failure of UNISOM II in Somalia directly affected the failure to act in Rwanda.

**CONCLUSION**
Unfortunately, what my analyses have revealed in each of these cases during the 1990s is the fact that a true humanitarian intervention does not seem to exist. Despite the rhetoric placing an intervention in the realm of the responsibility to protect and morality, none of my cases on humanitarian intervention show any calls upon morality. This leads me to conclude that truly humanitarian interventions led by the United States—for purely humanitarian reasons—simply do not exist. The United States will not get involved in a case for only humanitarian reasons. The United States will not get involved despite worldwide calls for action. Rwanda—where no interests were at stake, where the US could not gain anything from intervention, where an intervention would necessarily be only for moral reasons—is proof that the United States, and presidents themselves, are constrained by national interests more so than any other factor.

What I suggest by these results is that the responsibility to protect and the UN’s endorsement of this concept do not weigh in the United States’ decision making process and, as such, couching humanitarian interventions as moral, and as the “right thing to do”, makes little difference in United States foreign policy. I suggest that future research on the United States foreign policy should look past the responsibility to protect and focus instead on how moves in the international arena by the United States affect US interests. Naturally, questions have been elucidated through my research. What is the threshold used to determine if a threat to interests exists in humanitarian crises? Should we continue to call interventions “humanitarian interventions”? Or should we begin calling them something else? Or does the term “humanitarian intervention” make US intervention more acceptable for nongovernmental organizations, watchdog groups, and human rights activists? And what is it about the time period between the end of the Cold War and September 11th that prompted such dramatic changes in US foreign policy towards humanitarian crises? Furthermore, given more time, I
would like to study the decision to escalate missions, such as the escalation of UNITAF to UNISOM II in Somalia under President Clinton. Although decisions to escalate missions were not included in this paper as it was not the focus of my study, the decision to escalate a mission has important implications in US foreign policy and could further elucidate why the US intervenes in various crises.
References


*The Fall of Milosevic*, Dir. Dai Richards, Brook Lapping for the BBC. 2003.


