

**PUBLIC OPINION AS A CONSTRAINT ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY:
ASSESSING THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF AMERICAN AND FOREIGN LIVES**

John Mueller
March 1, 2000

Department of Political Science
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY 14627-0146 USA
716-275-5236
716-271-1616 (fax)
bbbb@troi.cc.rochester.edu
www.rochester.edu/College/PSC/Mueller

Prepared for presentation at the
National Convention of the
International Studies Association
Los Angeles, California
March 14-18, 2000

ABSTRACT. Although Americans are extremely sensitive to American casualties, they seem to be remarkably insensitive to casualties suffered by foreigners including essentially uninvolved--that is, innocent--civilians.

Several conclusions emerge from an examination of all the cases in which American troops have been deployed on a non-advisory basis since 1941 in situations that were actually or potentially dangerous.

1. The public has not become newly isolationist after the Cold War; it about as accepting of involvement in foreign affairs as ever, but it does not have--and never has had--much stomach for losing American lives in ventures and arenas that are of little concern to it.
2. Peace-keeping need not become a "quagmire": if things go wrong, troops can be readily removed with little concern about saving face or about longer political consequences.
3. If they are not being killed, American troops can remain in peace-keeping ventures virtually indefinitely.
4. Low-valued ventures should be sold not with cosmic hype, but as international social work that can be shrugged off if it begins to go awry.
5. There is little or no long term political gain from successful military ventures.
6. The President does not necessarily need public support in advance to pull off a military venture.

Of all the enemies the United States has fought in its history, the enemy population most intensely hated was probably the Japanese in World War II. By contrast, there has been remarkably little animosity toward the Iraqi people. Nonetheless, this did not translate into much sympathy for civilian deaths during the Gulf War. And the public's remarkable indifference to the massive death toll essentially caused by its government's sanctions policy in the decade since the war suggests that any avowed concern for the lives of foreign civilians is at best an expression of unreflective smugness and at worst one of arrant hypocrisy.

In a 1988 poll, 86 percent of the American public said they held the "number of American lives that might be lost" to be a "very important" factor when considering whether to use American armed forces in hostilities. In the same survey, fully 79 percent said "the number of civilians that might be killed in the area of combat" should also be a "very important" consideration (Table 1).

This paper seeks to evaluate the reality of these results. It argues that the first adequately expresses how Americans have actually tended to react to policy decisions. The second, however, has proven in practice to be at best an expression of unreflective smugness and at worst one of arrant hypocrisy.

The perceived value of American lives

In a democracy, policy makers contemplating the deployment of troops into a situation that is, or might become, hostile, should sensibly evaluate three considerations insofar as they desire support for the action from the public. First, they must consider the value the public places in the venture, and they may try to use whatever persuasive skills they possess to enhance this value--that is, to sell the project to the public. Second, they must consider the likely costs of the venture, particularly in American battle deaths. And third, they must evaluate the potential for the political opposition to exploit the situation should battle deaths surpass those considered tolerable by the public.

Table 2 sets out a summary of such considerations for cases in which American troops have been deployed on a non-advisory basis since 1941 in situations that are actually or potentially dangerous.¹

World War II (1941)

By all accounts, the public readily embraced a declaration of war upon Japan in a rage after the attack on Pearl Harbor.² And it was fully willing to enter hostilities with Germany when Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States a few days later. Since both countries were seen to be aggressors with the potential ultimately to threaten the United States directly, the perceived stakes were very high indeed. The United States had suffered some 51,971 battle deaths in its single year of fighting in World War I, so it was quite reasonable, of course, to anticipate that the massive two-front, multi-year war the country embarked upon in 1941 would be very costly--though it seems that no one actually sought to evaluate whether the war against Japan, in particular, was worth the potential costs or whether the Japanese threat might be handled in a manner that was less costly than direct warfare.³

Therefore any opportunity for a political opposition--at least as long as the war seemed to be going satisfactorily and as long as victory seemed to be the likely outcome--was modest at best.⁴

¹ For complete consideration, one might want to include as well those cases in which decision makers decided for various reasons not to send troops in such situations--such as Eisenhower to Indochina in 1954 or Kennedy to Laos in 1961 or Reagan (due to Congressional opposition) to El Salvador in the 1980s or Clinton to North Korea in 1994. Portions of this paper develop and expand considerations put forth in Mueller 1996 and Mueller 1997. For an approach that in several ways parallels the one applied in the first half of paper, see Larson 1996. See also Jentleson 1992.

² As Gordon Prange observes: "The American people reeled with a mind-staggering mixture of surprise, awe, mystification, grief, humiliation, and, above, all cataclysmic fury" (1981, 582).

³ For an assessment of these issues, see Mueller 1995a, 103-10. Given the high perceived stakes of the war, it seems that the public might have tolerated just about any number of combat deaths to win it. At the end of the war, it was anticipated that there would be massive further losses in a final attack upon Japan (an attack that never came about, of course). The contemplation of these additional casualties does not seem to have sapped support for the war even after the losses that had already been sustained.

⁴ A comparison might be made with the election of 1864 (and, to a degree, with the Congressional election of 1862) during the Civil War when Lincoln's war leadership was substantially challenged only to be rescued by military successes in the fall. Of course, the North did not fear enemy occupation the way the United States did during World War II.

Nonetheless, there was some limited willingness to cut the war short that might have been exploited. This is perhaps suggested by the responses to the question, "If Hitler offered peace now to all countries on the basis of not going further but of leaving matters as they now are, would you favor or oppose such a peace?" In early 1944, when Hitler still held France, 20 percent endorsed the idea and later 15 percent did so (Cantril and Strunk 1951, 1077-78).

Korea (1950) and Vietnam (1965)

The two hot wars the United States waged during the Cold War enjoyed considerable initial public support largely because they appeared to be necessary, or at least acceptable, measures to counter military challenges put forward by the Communist world, challenges that could ultimately threaten the United States itself.⁵ At its beginning, it was reasonable to anticipate that the Korean war would cost at least thousands of U.S. lives, a figure that increased considerably when the Chinese entered the war at the end of 1950.⁶ Vietnam, it seemed at the start, would probably exact losses of something like the same magnitude as Korea.

As the costs of the wars escalated to those levels, however, their value declined. Increasingly, Korea seemed like a distant, frustrating mess and, once it became clear the Soviet Union would not directly intervene there, something of a distraction from the main area of global contest: Europe. The Cold War stakes in Vietnam also declined after U.S. troops were sent there to fight in large numbers. To the South, a coup in Indonesia in late 1965 firmly pulled that important country away from its pro-Communist tendencies; to the North, China became less directly threatening as it turned inward with its Cultural Revolution and as it increasingly focused its hostility toward the Soviet Union.⁷

Accordingly, opportunities for opposition arose and were eagerly seized upon. In Korea, the Republicans, although supportive at the outset, were quick to criticize the indecisive and costly war (Larson 1996, 23). Eventually the political fortunes of its chief author, Harry Truman, so slumped that he declined even to run again in 1952, an election that was handily won by a Republican candidate who seemed to suggest he could settle the painful war. Policy in Vietnam and the prosecution of the war there were pilloried not only by critics from the Republican right, but, even more notably (if possibly counterproductively) by the Democratic left.⁸

It is not clear that Truman considered this potential in the Korean case. In part this was because it was reasonable to anticipate, when the decision to enter the war was made, that the war there

⁵ For data, see Mueller 1973, ch. 3; Larson 1996. In 1972 reporter David Halberstam wondered how all those smart people in the White House could have become the "architects of a war which I and many others thought the worst tragedy to befall this country since the Civil War." After all, he pointed out, "They were intelligent men, rational men, and seemingly intelligent, rational men would have known the obvious, how unlikely was to work, and how dangerous it was to send combat troops, and that if we sent American units we would be following the French" (1972, 810-11). One reason, as it happens, is that almost all of the bright people in the White House agreed with the views Halberstam had expressed in 1965 about Vietnam: A "strategic country in a key area, it is perhaps one of only five or six nations in the world that is truly vital to U.S. interests." He, like they, opposed withdrawal because "those Vietnamese who committed themselves fully to the United States will suffer the most," because "the United States' prestige will be lowered throughout the world," and because "the pressure of Communism on the rest of Southeast Asia will intensify" and "throughout the world the enemies of the West will be encouraged to try insurgencies like the one in Vietnam" (Halberstam 1965, 315, 319; oddly, none of these passages are included in the 1988 reprint edition of the book). Or as reporter Neil Sheehan, another future critic of American policy in Vietnam, put it in 1964, "The fall of Southeast Asia to China or its denial to the West over the next decade because of the repercussions from an American defeat in Vietnam would amount to a strategic disaster of the first magnitude." Only the United States, he argued, could meet "the Chinese Communist challenge for hegemony in Asia."

⁶ Many Americans felt that they actually were in World War III: Larson 1996, 21.

⁷ On this issue, see Mueller 1989, 177-78.

⁸ On the counterproductive nature of the Vietnam antiwar protest movement, see Mueller 1973, 164-65; Mueller 1984; Garfinkle 1995. For a different perspective, see Small 1988.

would be over in a few months--the Chinese escalation did not seem to be in the cards. Thus, it probably seemed likely that it would not encroach upon the presidential elections of 1952. In deciding to enter the Vietnam War, however, Lyndon Johnson was presented not only with estimates of American casualties that proved to be quite accurate, but also with the tantalizing prospect that there was a 50/50 chance the war would essentially be won by the end of 1967 or early 1968--that is, comfortably before he would have to run for re-election (Mueller 1980; Mueller 1989, 175). However, he was also presented by his vice president, Hubert Humphrey, with warnings about the potential for a decline of public support should the war drag on (Humphrey 1976, 322-24)--warnings the politically alert Johnson probably scarcely needed.

Lebanon (1958), Dominican Republic (1965)

The forceful interventions into civil war conditions under Eisenhower in Lebanon in 1958 and under Johnson in the Dominican Republic in 1965 were justified under Cold War injunctions of stopping the advance of Communism, advances that were variously held to be under the patronage of Egypt's Nasser in the former case, Cuba's Castro in the latter.

Since Lebanon and the Dominican Republic were both small and peripheral players in the Cold War, it seems likely that tolerance for U.S. casualties in fighting there would have been quite low. Both ventures were substantially criticized at the time, particularly by liberal Democrats. Had U.S. troops encountered significant resistance, casualties could have quickly mounted to unacceptable levels, and this opposition would have been loosed.

Lebanon (1983)

In sending troops to help police the civil war situation in Lebanon, President Ronald Reagan declared that "in an age of nuclear challenge and economic interdependence, such conflicts are a threat to all the people of the world, not just to the Middle East itself" (1983, 1096). Peace in the area is of some importance to the United States, and there were minor connections to the Cold War perhaps. But it is unlikely that the public saw intervention there as being even as vital to national interest as had been the venture in 1958 or the one in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

Public opinion data on the episode are sparse, but they tend to suggest that the Lebanon venture was never very popular with the public, and there was plenty of political criticism (Larson 1996, 48; Burk 1999, 65). In the two or three days after 241 U.S. Marines were killed by a terrorist bomb there, the polls detected a sharp rise in the percentage calling for the sending in of more troops to avenge or deal with the tragedy, but this reaction dissipated within a few days. Meanwhile, the percentage advocating removal of the troops remained high and then grew considerably during the next weeks (Table 3).⁹

Despite his portentous sales pitch, Reagan decided a few months later to have the remainder of the troops "redeployed to the sea." Politically, this was a wise move on his part. Certainly, the public had no difficulty accepting the decision.

Grenada (1983)

Reagan's invasion of Grenada (two days after the Marines were killed in Lebanon) had more Cold War implications since he could plausibly argue that the tiny island was becoming a Communist satellite. Some alarms were raised that an air strip being built there by Cubans could be used as a base against the United States or against other U.S. interests in the area, especially the Panama Canal. Concern was also voiced about the safety of some 1000 American medical students on the island, and this was used as a justification for the attack.

The venture was a success in that it deposed a regime that might indeed have been rather

⁹ As Larson aptly points out, because the venture was already substantially unpopular, there was not much room for support to drop further (1992, 48n),

vicious--to its own people if not to international stability (see Valenta 1984)--and in that it was accomplished at a very small loss of American life. However, the venture was hugely (and predictably) controversial, and, had casualties been much higher, it seems exceedingly likely the Democrats would have made a great deal of political hay out of it (see Moynihan 1990).

And it was by no means clear that the American costs would necessarily be low: the potential for unacceptable casualties was certainly there. In the war's aftermath, William Safire characterized the operation as "the quick crushing of a lightly armed gang of thugs by a huge task force" (1984). But the Soviets and Cubans had armed the "thugs" with enough firepower to equip a 10,000-man army. Moreover there were over 700 Cubans on the island, some 150 to 200 of them seasoned soldiers (Valenta 1984, 14, 22), who were ordered by Castro not to surrender to American forces (Gonzalez and Ronfeldt 1986, 6). Had they launched a persistent guerrilla defense and generated a certain amount of popular support, they could have inflicted substantial casualties on the clumsy invaders who often displayed considerable incompetence.¹⁰

Panama (1989)

Justification for the U.S. invasion of Manuel Noreiga's Panama was pretty minimal. There was something about drugs (on which the administration was actively warring at the time), and invader George Bush clearly was piqued at some of the Panamanian dictator's insolent behavior toward the United States and toward Americans in the area. Concern about the famous Canal might have made some sense if proof could have been offered that Noreiga had ever threatened that piece of real estate (due to be turned over to Panama in a decade anyway).

The public clearly bought the invasion: Bush's approval ratings rallied upward for a month or so (Mueller 1994, 179) and there seems to have been support for his notion that Americans were in some danger there (Larson 1996, 41). But significant American casualties would surely have caused this support to decline (Larson 1996, 42-43)--fortunately for Bush, Noreiga quickly capitulated. And even more surely, U.S. casualties would have been used by outraged Democrats to attack Bush as an irresponsible and dangerous leader (again, see Moynihan 1990).

Gulf War (1991)

To the public, the stakes in countering Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait appear to have been considerable, but they were by no means as great as those in Vietnam or Korea. There was strong agreement among elites and (partly in consequence) the public that the invasion of Kuwait must be reversed. But there was also a deep split about whether war--as opposed to continued sanctions--should be used to dislodge Iraq (see Mueller 1994, chs. 2-3).

Bush, of course, was determined to give war a chance. Poll data suggest that the American public might have tolerated 1000-2000 American battle deaths to accomplish this task (Tables 4, 5; see also Larson 1996, 35-39). This is far lower, of course, than the costs borne in Korea or Vietnam. Beyond this level, not only would support likely have slackened very substantially, but the war-opposing Democrats would have been launched into massive protest against the war. They were fully poised to do so, and they would surely point out in the process that they had had a nonviolent plan to accomplish the objectives Bush was now so rashly and irresponsibly pursuing at high cost in American lives.¹¹

¹⁰ As Norman Schwarzkopf catalogues it, "an abysmal lack of accurate intelligence, major deficiencies in communications, flareups of interservice rivalry, interference by higher headquarters in battlefield decisions, our alienation of the press, and more" (1992, 258)

¹¹ A significant antiwar protest movement was rising before the war, but it was hampered by timing: the key decisions were made by Congress and the President during and shortly after the winter holiday break when college students--the core of a likely protest--are widely dispersed and distracted. By the time the antiwar movement had begun to be mobilized on a massive basis in mid-January 1991, Bush had started the war and it was clearly going extremely well (on this issue, see Mueller 1994, 58-60).

Bush and his commanders seem to have been fully aware of this potential. Bush kept his war desires secret until after the November 1990 elections. And in planning the war, casualty estimates were carefully made. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin, a Democrat who supported war, announced before the war that the military was anticipating some 500-1000 battle deaths (Schmitt 1991; Moore 1991). Moreover, Bush got his commanders explicitly to agree that U.S. casualties would be no higher than the equivalent of "three companies per Coalition brigade," or about 9,000--a number which would suggest a maximum of some 2000 battle deaths (Department of Defense 1992, 70; Cushman 1992).¹²

Gulf area (1991)

The value of containing, disarming, and inconveniencing Iraq and of seeking Saddam Hussein's overthrow in the wake of the Gulf War probably also ranks fairly high with the American public. The policy has been carried out for a decade by presidents of both parties and, despite the massive loss of life it appears to have caused in Iraq (to be discussed more fully below), it has generated remarkably little dissent from either party. Both administrations, however, have been careful to deploy troops and air attacks in a manner that guarantees that American casualties will be kept very low (an approach which also minimizes the chances that an American could be taken hostage by the Iraqis) even though this often means ordering that bombs be dropped from such great heights that they are far more likely to miss their intended targets.

Given the demonlike persona that Saddam Hussein presents with such consistency and alacrity, given the political potency of fears he might develop so-called weapons of mass destruction, and given the wider interests the United States has in the area, it is likely that there would be substantial support for an invasion of Iraq designed to take him and his regime out. It seems reasonable to suggest that the loss of even a hundred or more Americans in such a venture--the costs of the Gulf War itself--might be acceptable to the public. As in the Gulf War, however, losses much larger might well trigger a considerable political backlash against the attacking administration.

Generating the political support for such a war would likely be very difficult, however, because there seems to be considerable contentment with a policy that essentially keeps the annoying Saddam prisoner in his own country while harassing him occasionally with bombing (and devastating his civilian population with sanctions). Support for an invasion to dislodge Saddam would most likely soar if Saddam were to bomb, attack, or threaten to attack one of his neighbors--that is, to commit or threaten aggression once again. This is something he probably understands and appreciates quite well.

It is possible that Iraq may eventually be able to capture one or more American soldiers and hold them hostage. This could be dangerous for the regime since it could help generate the public support necessary to initiate an invasion. After the Somali firefight of 1993, the Somalis held one American soldier prisoner. Although there was a great demand to withdraw, several polls show that this demand was substantially contingent on recovering the prisoner first.¹³ Relatedly, although

¹² Although it is often maintained that in the Gulf, unlike Vietnam, the military commanders were left free to fight the war as they saw fit, this restriction on casualties is far more severe than anything in Vietnam. Moreover, as in Vietnam, there were substantial limitations on bombing. To avoid a situation that could lead to war prematurely, no reconnaissance aircraft were flown over Iraq or occupied Kuwait before the war. During the war, bombing was carried out to minimize civilian casualties (as in Vietnam), and targets like mosques and monuments to Saddam Hussein were to be avoided. Then, after the bombing of a shelter in Baghdad, "politically-motivated controls reduced the number of targets to the barest handful," as Eliot Cohen observes (1994, 121). Moreover, planes the Iraqis flew to sanctuary in Iran were not to be hit because the politicians were concerned such strikes might outrage the Iranians. And, because of Washington's fear that Scud missile attacks on Israel might bring that country into the war, tremendous resources were diverted to knocking out Iraq's missiles--a political restriction that makes little military sense because the Scuds were militarily insignificant as Schwarzkopf forcefully points out (1992, 417). On this issue, see Mueller 1995b, 81.

¹³ See Mueller 1996, Klarevas 1999. For a different take, see Kull and Destler 1999, 106-8, critiqued by Larson 1999, 625.

American decision makers apparently thought differently at the time, it seems clear from poll results that if Iraq had attacked American troops in Saudi Arabia where they were placed in 1990 as a deterrent after its invasion of Kuwait, something of a Pearl Harbor syndrome would likely have been activated: Hussein would have been seen as an aggressor whose appetite knew no bounds and must be confronted immediately. Moreover, if Hussein had killed some of the American civilian hostages he held for several months in 1990, this would have formed a major reason to go to war (for data and a discussion, see Mueller 1994, 123, 249). Thus, he would be well advised not to hold Americans hostage.

Somalia (1992)

The stakes in the 1992-1994 venture into a civil war situation in Somalia were purely humanitarian. There seems to have been considerable support for the effort when Bush put it into effect in late 1992 (cautiously waiting, however, until after the presidential election). But it seems clear that the 1993 Clinton policy of nation building, much criticized by Republicans as unwise "mission creep," was dampening support for the venture even before 18 Americans were killed in a firefight on the night of October 3-4, 1993 (Larson 1996; Strobel 1997, 166-83; Burk 1999, 66-67; Klarevas 2000).¹⁴ After that, support for the venture, already substantially reduced, it seems, to its hard core supporters, dropped even further, and criticism became rampant. Clinton judiciously retreated. To save a bit of face, however, he let the troops stay on for six months, but only after making sure that no more were killed in combat situations.

In its way and in its day, the international mission to Somalia in 1992-93 helped to bring a degree of order to a deadly situation that was causing a famine reportedly killing at its peak thousands of people per day. Never before perhaps has so much been done for so many at such little cost.¹⁵ Yet, American policy there has been labelled a "failure" in large part because a few Americans were killed in the process. In essence, when Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer came out rather close to zero (see Table 6; Dole 1995, 41).¹⁶

Haiti (1994)

In moving toward an invasion to set things right in Haiti in 1994, President Bill Clinton chose to echo Bush's earlier amazing hyperbole about the anti-democratic coup that had taken place there in 1991--that it posed "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States" (Washington Post, 16 September 1994, p. A31). The Haiti issue was probably of somewhat more national interest concern than Somalia not because it threatened to shake the security or economy of the United States, but because of a politically inconvenient flow of desperate refugees from Haiti to the United States, a flow that had been substantially caused by the economic sanctions Bush had slapped on Haiti at the time of the coup.

Beyond a bit of concern about this refugee issue, the American public never quite seemed to grasp the urgency of the Haiti problem, and the policy never seems to have generated much support (Strobel 1997, 184-89; Klarevas 1999). The Bush-Clinton hyperbole seems to have had no resonance,

¹⁴ The mission generally began well but then went awry when one helicopter crashed. See Atkinson 1994, DeLong and Tuckey 1994, Bowden 1999. The popularly-accepted notion that the debacle in Somalia was importantly caused by the UN (Dole 1995, 37) is not only wrong, but grotesque: see Gordon and Friedman 1993.

¹⁵ New York Times columnist William Safire has blandly observed of the venture that "the saving of hundreds of thousands of lives is no small thing" (1993). What, one might wonder, would he consider to be a large thing? According to American Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the lowest estimate of the number of lives saved is 110,000 (MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, 2 March 1995). The economic cost of the international mission has been put at \$2 billion.

¹⁶ On the other hand, this is not such an unusual position for humanitarian ventures. If Red Cross or other workers are killed when carrying out humanitarian missions, their organizations frequently threaten to withdraw no matter how much good they may be doing. Essentially what they are saying, then, is that the saving of lives is not worth the deaths of even a few rescuers.

and people, insofar as they paid any attention at all, probably dismissed it as nonsense and an insult to their intelligence. Had there been any notable loss of American life in the attempt to police Haiti the Republicans would surely have gone ballistic, and they would have found a receptive audience (Table 7).

Macedonia (1992), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (1999)

In part because they occurred in Europe, which had essentially been free of civil war for 40 years, the various violent conflicts entailed in the breakup of Yugoslavia garnered a great deal of press attention during the 1990s, much of it from journalists who were actively and passionately advocating intervention.¹⁷ But throughout, Americans paid very little attention to the issue--for the most part, attention rose only when decisions were being made to send in policing troops in 1995 and 1999 and when an American pilot, Scott O'Grady, was shot down in hostile territory in 1995 and made a dramatic escape (Sobel 1996, 162; Sobel 1998, 258-59; Larson forthcoming). Moreover, the public proved, despite continual media pleas to the contrary, entirely capable of containing its enthusiasm for sending troops to police the situation. So much for the vaunted "CNN effect."¹⁸

Objectively, it seems reasonable to suggest that because they occurred in Europe, an area of considerable economic and historical importance to the United States, these wars were at least of more concern to American interests than was Somalia. But to the public, the difference does not seem to have been very great.

In an attempt to generate support for dispatching policing troops at the end of 1995, Clinton argued that "If war reignites in Bosnia, it could spark a much wider conflagration. In 1914, a gunshot in Sarajevo launched the first of two world wars"--a historical parallel that is wildly overdrawn as numerous commentators have pointed out (for example, Mandelbaum 1996, 25). He also argued that the whole future of Europe was at stake: "Europe will not come together with a brutal conflict raging at its heart."¹⁹ And he argued that NATO and American world leadership was at stake: "We would also weaken NATO...and jeopardize U.S. leadership in Europe."

But poll data demonstrate that he was never able to increase the numbers of Americans who saw wisdom or value in sending U.S. policing troops to Bosnia even though it was expected that there would be few casualties (Sobel 1996; Sobel 1998; Larson forthcoming). And when it was suggested that American soldiers might die, support plummeted (Table 8). In fact, six months or a year after troops had been sent to Bosnia, support for the venture had still not risen (though there may have been some decline in strong disapproval), this despite the fact that the mission was completely successful in that the Bosnians had stopped killing each other (even if they hadn't come to love each other) and, most importantly, in that no Americans had been killed (Table 9). Needless to say, the Republicans, who generally opposed sending American troops, remain poised to exploit any measures which result in American deaths there.

Conclusions and observations

Several policy relevant conclusions and extrapolations emerge from this survey.

1. The public has not become newly isolationist after the Cold War. Trend data on various questions about internationalism and isolationism are given in Figure 1. There was some rise in isolationism after Vietnam in the mid-1970s, and perhaps it is now a bit higher than then. But, for the

¹⁷ Bennett 1995, 195-96, 236-37; Brock 1993-94. As Clinton put it in 1995, "the TV reporters are doing their damndest to get me to enter a war" (Morris 1999, 165).

¹⁸ On this issue, see Mueller 1994, 129-37; Mueller 1996; Mueller 1997, 84-85; Strobel 1997.

¹⁹ Another questionable argument. After spending a half year in 1994 in a sympathetic Slav country, Slovakia, a few hours' drive from Bosnia, it seems clear to me that for most Europeans, the war was largely a tragic sideshow. Rather than the "heart" of Europe, they may be more inclined to see it at its armpit. A character in a recent Serbian film, "Cabaret Balkan," dismisses the area as Europe's "asshole."

most part, any increases have been fairly modest (see also Kull 1995-96).

With respect to foreign interventions, the public seems to apply a fairly reasonable cost-benefit calculus. A substantial loss of American lives may have been tolerable if the enemy was international Communism or the country that had attacked Pearl Harbor, but risking lives for a goal as ungraspable and vaporous as policing a small, distant, unthreatening, and seemingly perennially-troubled place like Somalia or Bosnia has proved difficult to manage. It seems clear that policing efforts will be tolerable only as long as the costs in lives for the policing forces remain extremely low.²⁰

This reluctance to intervene, however, should not be seen as some sort of new isolationist impulse. Americans were willing, at least at the outset, to send troops to die in Korea and Vietnam, but that was because they subscribed to the containment notion holding Communism to be a genuine threat to the United States that needed to be stopped wherever it was advancing. Polls from the time make it clear they had little interest in losing American lives simply to help out the South Koreans or South Vietnamese (Mueller 1973, 44, 48-49, 58, 100-1). Thus it seems that the public is about as accepting of involvement in foreign affairs as ever, but it does not have--and never has had--much stomach for losing American lives in ventures and arenas that are of little concern to it.

It is unlikely that this perspective is unique to the United States. After Spanish troops had suffered some 17 deaths in the Bosnian war, their government indicated that this was enough for them, and they withdrew from further confrontation, something that greatly encouraged the Croat gangs they had been dealing with (Hedges 1997). Similarly, Belgium abruptly withdrew from Rwanda--and, to save face, urged others to do so as well--when ten of its policing troops were very deliberately massacred and mutilated early in the genocide (Des Forges 1999, 618-20; Gourevitch 114, 149-50). It seems clear that policing efforts will be politically tolerable only as long as the costs in lives for the policing forces remain extremely low--and perhaps not even then.

2. Peace-keeping need not become a "quagmire". If things go wrong in low-valued ventures, such as those rated 1 and 2, and possibly 3 in Table 2, troops can be readily removed with little concern about saving face or about longer political consequences. The public has shown a willingness to abandon an overextended or untenable position after excessive American lives have been lost without particularly blaming the administration that sent them in.

Although Reagan had declared the conflict in Lebanon to be "a threat to all the people of the world," the public had no difficulty rising above this overblown sales pitch and accepting Reagan's later decision to withdraw the Marines after 241 of them had been killed by a terrorist bomb. As Table 10 suggests, after the fact Americans said that they considered Reagan's expedition to Lebanon to have been a failure; however, many felt, with reasonable nuance, that it had been "a good idea at the time," and it seems to have had no negative electoral consequence for the president. Similarly, the deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers in Somalia in 1993 further stimulated a demand for withdrawal, not calls to revenge the humiliation. And by the time the 1996 election rolled around, the public had substantially forgotten about it. Thus, unlike the problems with Japan in 1941 or Iraq in 1990, the situations in Lebanon and Somalia did not present much of a wider threat to American interests, and the public was quite willing to support measures to cut losses and leave.

The lessons of Korea and Vietnam suggest that there can be electoral consequences if casualties are allowed to rise very substantially. But, if a venture is seen to be of little importance, a President can, precisely because of that, cut and run without fear of inordinate electoral costs.²¹ Thus, the

²⁰ For the remarkable conclusion, based on a single poll question, that Americans might be willing, on average, to sacrifice 6,861 American military deaths in order to stabilize a democratic government in Congo, see Feaver and Gelpi 1999.

²¹ To a degree, this might apply even to a much more highly valued venture for which support has declined like the one in Vietnam. It is most remarkable that the utter collapse of the American position in Vietnam in 1975 mainly inspired impotent handwringing at a distance and hasty evacuation on the scene. As noted earlier, the perceived foreign policy value of maintaining the American position in Vietnam had been declining for years, and,

situation does not have to become a quagmire.

3. If they are not being killed, American troops can remain in peace-keeping ventures virtually indefinitely. Although there is an overwhelming political demand that casualties be extremely low in peace-keeping ventures, there seems to be little problem about keeping occupying forces in place in ventures deemed of little importance as long as they are not being killed. After the Somalia fiasco, the Americans stayed on for several months and, since none were being killed, little attention was paid or concern voiced.²² Similarly, although there was little public or political support for sending U.S. troops to Haiti, there has been almost no protest about keeping them there since none have been killed--in fact, when the last of them were withdrawn in March 1996 the story was given eleven inches in a lower corner of page 14 of the New York Times (Mitchell 1996).

At the end of 1995, Clinton told a skeptical American public that the policing troops being sent to Bosnia would only be there for a year. Although many Americans have since come to see Clinton as a liar, this is not the instance of deception upon which they base that conclusion, and there was little protest, or even much notice, that the troops were still there as the nation entered a new millennium; in fact, support for maintaining troops in Bosnia had gone up a bit (Table 9). And Americans tolerated--indeed, hardly noticed--the stationing of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops in Europe, Japan, and South Korea for decades on end. If they are not being killed, it scarcely matters whether the troops are in Macedonia (where 500 remain nearly a decade after they were placed there by the Bush administration) or in Kansas.

Therefore it is not important to have an "exit strategy," a "closed-end commitment," or "a time-certain for withdrawal" except for selling an interventionist policy in the first place. On the other hand, if American troops start being killed in low-valued ventures, there will be demands to get them out whatever "time-certain" for withdrawal had previously been arranged. That is, despite calls for knowing in advance what the endgame will be (see Powell 1992/93, Sciolino 1993), the only "exit strategy" required is a tactical arrangement to yank the troops abruptly and painlessly from the scene if things go awry.

4. Low-valued ventures should be sold not with cosmic hype, but as international social work that can be shrugged off if it begins to go awry. Michael Mandelbaum has suggested that the Clinton administration seems to have been trying "to turn American foreign policy into a branch of social work" (1996, 18). As it happens, most of the knotty international problems that occupy the headlines are of remarkably little concern to the United States if one applies commonly-accepted standards of what constitutes the national interest--and the public seems to be applying exactly those standards. The problems are, in fact, mainly humanitarian in nature.

But, international social work is not necessarily therefore a non-starter. There is, after all, adequate support for domestic social work. If the town drunk seems to want to reform, most people from humanitarian concerns alone would be willing to have the society spend time and some of their tax or charity money--though certainly not any lives--to help him along. If, despite society's best efforts, the drunk again succumbs to the bottle, the venture will be seen as a waste, perhaps, but still as a worthy effort, a good try.

most importantly, America had gotten its prisoners of war back two years earlier. For this and other reasons, Americans accepted defeat with remarkable equanimity (see Mueller 1984). Amazingly, the debacle in Indochina in 1975 was actually used by the man who presided over it, Gerald Ford, as a point in his favor in his reelection campaign of 1976. When he came into office, he observed, "we were still deeply involved in the problems of Vietnam;" but now "we are at peace. Not a single young American is fighting or dying on any foreign soil" (Kraus 1979, 538-39). His challenger, Jimmy Carter, seems to have concluded that it was politically disadvantageous to point out the essential absurdity of Ford's ingenious argument.

²² Somewhat similarly, protests against U.S. policy in Vietnam died down after 1968 when tactics were changed to minimize American casualties. Protest was re-invigorated in 1970, however, by the invasion of Cambodia which, judging from Nixon's rhetoric of the time, seemed to promise a re-escalation of the conflict.

International social work might best be sold in the same manner. Presidential advisor Dick Morris says that "the best way to sell foreign involvement to Americans is not through appeals to nationalism or economic self-interest but to look instead at human right and values" (1999, 165). He may be right in part, but there should also be a limit to the commitment. Thus a sales pitch on Bosnia might have run as follows:

Look, the folks in Yugoslavia, under the influence of a bunch of murderous drunken thugs and bone-headed politicians, have gotten themselves into a mess they can't get out of and a lot of innocent people are being killed and brutalized in the process.²³ They seem now finally to be exhausted and are looking for a way out of their self-dug pit. It looks like we can help with some support and police work--something that will cost a manageable amount of money and, we anticipate, few, if any, lives. If, despite our best efforts, it turns out that the Yugoslavs still really do want to run around murdering each other, then we're out of there. It will have been a good try, but we are not miracle workers and there are a lot of other matters to attend to.

There are dangers to such a way of putting policy. Local fighters would know from such a perspective that if they manage to kill only a small number of the peace-keepers that the peace-keepers will withdraw. But they probably know that anyway. Moreover, the peace-keepers will be withdrawn if casualties mount; effectively, that is the policy whatever the rhetoric.²⁴

5. There is little or no long term political gain from successful military ventures. When American troops are sent abroad into dangerous situations, there is usually a "rally round the flag" effect: the commander-in-chief's approval ratings rise abruptly (Mueller 1973, 208-13). But it is important to note that this phenomenon tends to be fleeting. On international affairs, Americans (and probably others as well) suffer from a collective attention deficit disorder. People tend to be concerned primarily by domestic matters. Their attention can be diverted by major threats or by explicit, specific, and dramatic dangers to American lives, but once these issues fade, people turn to focus again on domestic concerns with considerable alacrity--rather like "the snapping back of a strained elastic," as Gabriel Almond once put it (1960, 76). And as part of that phenomenon they do not seem to be very interested in rewarding--or even remembering--foreign policy success.

Some of the ventures listed in Table 2 were held to be failures--Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon (1983), and Somalia. The first two, because they lingered painfully, hurt the electoral prospects of those who had instituted them. The latter two, because they were low-valued ventures and because the people in charge cut their losses and got out, did not, as noted above.²⁵

The rest have been held to be successes, but it would be difficult to argue that they brought electoral gain to their instigators. If George Bush found little lasting electoral advantage in a large dramatic victory like the Gulf War (or, earlier, for the successful Panama intervention), lesser accomplishments seem likely to have been at least as unrewarding. Nobody gave Eisenhower much credit for Lebanon (1958), Johnson for the Dominican Republic, Reagan for Grenada, or Clinton for Bosnia. Even Truman, who presided over the massive triumph in World War II, saw his approval plummet to impressive lows within months because of domestic concerns.²⁶

²³ For a development of this perspective, see Mueller 1999.

²⁴ In 1999, Clinton was pilloried for indicating that ground troops would not be sent into Kosovo unless the environment was "permissive." However reassuring this policy declaration may have been to marauding Serb forces, it also happened to reflect actual politically feasible policy. To indicate otherwise would have been at best an empty bluff (the NATO bluff about bombing had already been called) and at worst a lie. Clinton seems to get into trouble both when he lies and when he tells the truth. Time to move on, perhaps.

²⁵ Morris argues that "if foreign policy is misplayed, it can hurt an incumbent's image faster than can domestic errors" (1999, 164). The tarnishing of the image may be fast, but it need not be debilitating in the longer term.

²⁶ Nor did Woodrow Wilson or his party derive long term benefit from victory in World War I. There may be

At the time of the Kosovo bombings of 1999, press accounts argued that the presidential ambitions and political future of Clinton's vice president, Al Gore, hung in the balance and that the outcome would "make or unmake Clinton's much-discussed legacy" (Kettle 1999; Zelnick 1999; Page 1999; Balz and Neal 1999). From the standpoint of public opinion, the Kosovo venture seems to have been a success, but when he launched his campaign for presidency a few months later, Gore scarcely thought it important or memorable enough to bring up.

Conceivably, a successful venture will help if it comes close enough to the next election--Bush might have benefitted, perhaps, if he had been able to stage the Gulf War so that it wrapped up within a few days or weeks of the election. But none of the cases examined in Table 2 allow this possibility to be tested.²⁷

6. The President does not necessarily need public support in advance to pull off a military venture. In 1984, a year after Grenada, Reagan's Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, promulgated his now famous "six major tests" that should be passed before U.S. combat troops are sent abroad: (1) The engagement should be "deemed vital" to the national interest; (2) it should be done "wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning"; (3) there should be "clearly defined political and military objectives" and a precise knowledge of how they can be accomplished; (4) the relationship between objectives and forces must be "continually reassessed"; (5) Congress and public opinion must support the action; and (6) combat should be a last resort (Weinberger 1984).²⁸

When some of the military interventions on Table 2 were initiated they pretty clearly passed the fifth of these tests, that they be supported by Congress and public opinion. Among these are World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, and Somalia. Others fail that test quite noticeably since they were entered into by presidents when the public and Congress were clearly deeply divided. Among these were Lebanon 1983, a failure, and the successes of Lebanon 1958, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Gulf War. Yet, this division of initial support seems to have little long term relevance to the venture or support for it. In the case of the successful ventures, the opposition simply dissolved and went on to other issues; in the case of the failure, the instigator judiciously cut his losses and abandoned the mission, and there were no notable negative ramifications.

some partial exceptions to this pattern. Franklin Roosevelt obviously gained politically from World War II when he ran as war leader in 1944, but it doesn't follow that he would have gained from it after it was over any more than Truman did. Eisenhower benefitted from the Korean War, but that was not because he had instituted it. Rather, his achievement was in apparently bringing it to an end within six months of his inauguration in 1953, something that may well have been the most significant achievement turned in by any postwar president: it was still remembered as a great accomplishment seven years later when Eisenhower was leaving office, and in the 1968 election, a full 15 years after the event, the Republicans found it useful to remind voters of the achievement to entice them to vote for their candidate who had been Vice President under Eisenhower and who was promising to do something similar with the then-current, and most painful, war in Vietnam (Mueller 1973, 234). On the other hand, had Eisenhower not been able to resolve the Korean War, it might have become his war, rather like Vietnam became Nixon's. A good case for an exception seems to be the War of 1812. The Republicans had instituted the war and were hurt politically by its unpopularity. However, after it was over, they were able to gain by characterizing the war-opposing Federalists as traitors (see Mueller 1994, 108-11). Something similar might apply to the Civil War. The successful Falklands War of 1982 may have helped British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the elections of 1983, but the effect is confounded by the fact that the economy was improving impressively at the same time: see Norpoth 1987a, 1987b.

²⁷ It is possible that the failed military venture to rescue the hostages in Iran in the spring of 1980 hurt Jimmy Carter's prospects in the November elections, or that a success would have substantially improved them. The election, however, was wrapped up with other considerations as well, especially economic ones. A case of beneficial timing may be taking place in the current presidential election in Russia where the popular invasion of Chechnya seems to be boosting Putin's election prospects even higher than they might otherwise have been.

²⁸ Except for the impossible demand that it be known precisely how the objective is going to be accomplished, the 1965 Vietnam decisions would, with only minor quibbles, pass all of Weinberger's tests, whereas his Grenada caper would fail most of them.

The perceived value of foreign lives

Although Americans are extremely sensitive to American casualties, they seem to be remarkably insensitive to the deaths of foreigners including essentially uninvolved--that is, innocent--civilians. Morris argues that "it is only through a focus on the abuse of people--particularly children--that the American people are willing to rise above their essentially isolationist prejudices" (1999, 165-66), an observation, the record suggests, that is probably pretty close to being sanctimonious nonsense.

The Japanese and the Germans in World War II

Of all the enemies the United States has fought in its history, the enemy population most intensely hated was probably the Japanese in World War II. Many saw Japanese civilization as one huge war machine directed against the United States, and the fact that Japan had begun the war with a "sneak attack" enraged Americans while the brutalities visited upon American prisoners of war on Bataan and elsewhere by the Japanese intensified this contempt (Falk 1962). Asked what should be done with the Japanese after the war, 10 to 15 percent of Americans in various polls conducted during the war suggested extermination. After the war was over, 23 percent said they regretted that many more atomic bombs had not "quickly" been used on Japan before it "had a chance to surrender" (see Mueller 1973, 172-73; see also Dower 1986).

Perhaps because the Germans were European, perhaps because they had declared war before waging it, perhaps because they treated American POWs better, and perhaps because they had, in Hitler and the Nazis, a demonic leadership that was easier to focus on, attitudes toward the German people during the war were somewhat less hostile than toward the Japanese. After the German death camps were discovered in the aftermath of the war, however, the differences narrowed (Table 11)

The Koreans and the Vietnamese

Attitudes toward the enemy peoples in the Korean and Vietnam wars were probably not nearly as intensely negative as in World War II, but those peoples appear nonetheless to have been seen as cogs in a large and rather undifferentiated war machine. Consequently, the arguments of antiwar activists during Vietnam that the bombing was causing the deaths of "innocent civilians" in the North generally fell on deaf ears. The arguments would probably have been far more effective if the protesters had pointed out that the bombing was unnecessarily killing American airmen (Mueller 1984, 154).

As noted earlier, American sympathies with the plight of the South Korean and South Vietnamese people, who the wars were waged in part to defend, was also quite limited.

The Iraqis during the Gulf War

The Gulf War furnishes an illuminating extreme example, particularly in comparison with the Japanese case. As Table 12 suggests, there was remarkably little animosity toward the Iraqi people: responding to a question with extreme wording, 60 percent of the American public held the Iraqi people to be innocent of any blame for their leader's policies.

However, this did not translate into a great deal of sympathy among the American public for civilian casualties. During the Gulf War, one reporter observed that "You can be certain that if saturation bombing of the Iraqi capital becomes an American tactic, stomach-churning footage of bombed-out schools and hospitals will find their way on to American screens" (Taylor 1992, 11). But, as Table 13 indicates, the extensive pictures and publicity about the civilian casualties resulting from an attack on a Baghdad bomb shelter on February 13, 1991, had no impact on this attitude (see also Mueller 1994, 79). Moreover, the immunity the American public showed to the images of the "highway of death" and to reports at the end of the war that 100,000 Iraqis had died in the war²⁹

²⁹ This figure is almost certainly much too high, probably by a factor of more than 10: see Mueller 1995b.

scarcely dampened the enthusiasm of the various "victory" and "welcome home" parades and celebrations.

The Somalis

At least 300 Somalis died in the 1993 firefight that killed 18 Americans.³⁰ Much concern was voiced by Americans over the latter figure, none whatever over the former. And, as noted earlier, the notion that it was worth even a small number of American lives to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent Somalis was firmly rejected.

The Iraqis after the Gulf War

Numerous reports by agencies of the United Nations, the International Red Cross, and visiting journalists and medical workers have been devoted to the consequences to Iraqi civilians and civilian society of the sanctions that were put in place in 1990 and have been continued ever since (with some limited mellowing in the last few years). Iraq seems to have been peculiarly vulnerable to the sanctions because so much of its economy was dependent on the export of oil and because the effects of sanctions have been enhanced by the destruction during the Gulf War of much of Iraq's rather advanced infrastructure.³¹

The impact appears to have been devastating. A 1999 UN report stresses that "the gravity of the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people is indisputable and cannot be overstated": the country has experienced "a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty" (UN 1999, paras. 43, 49). No one knows with any sort of precision how many Iraqi civilians have died, but various agencies of the United Nations, which is in overall charge of the sanctions on Iraq, have estimated that the sanctions have contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people there. By 1998, the percentage of Iraqi children who die in their first year had reportedly risen to 12 percent from the 3.7 percent rate that prevailed before the Gulf War with an excess of some 40,000 children under the age of 5 dying each year. Excess deaths for those over the age of 5 have been estimated to be about 50,000 per year. These additional deaths are attributed to inadequate food and medical supplies (between 1990 and 1996 pharmaceuticals were allowed in at only 10 percent of 1989 levels) as well as breakdowns in sewage and sanitation systems and in the electrical power systems needed to run them--systems destroyed by bombing in the Gulf War that have often gone unrepaired due to sanctions-enhanced shortages of money, equipment, and spare parts.³² It was not until 1998--nearly eight years after sanctions

³⁰ At the time, Somali leaders put their losses at 312 killed (Atkinson 1994). In a recent book on the episode, journalist Mark Bowden gives the figure as "as many as 500" and then, 23 pages later, escalates it: "conservative counts numbered 500 dead" (1999, 310, 333).

³¹ On the outlier status of this case, see Drezner 1999, 109.

³² Barbara Crossette, "Iraq Sanctions Kill Children, U.N. Reports," New York Times, 1 December 1995, p. A9. Sarah Zaidi and Mary C. Smith Fawzi, "Health of Baghdad's children," Lancet 346/8995 (2 December 1995), p. 1485. Omar A. Obeid and Abdul-Hussein Al-Hadi, "Sanctions against Iraq," Lancet, 347/8995 (20 January 1996), pp. 198-99. Stahl 1996. Maggie O'Kane, "The Wake of War," Guardian (London), 18 May 1996, p. T34. Barbara Crossette, "Unicef Head Says Thousands of Children Are Dying in Iraq," New York Times, 29 October 1996, p. A8. Storer H. Rowley, "Iraq's Kids Pay Tragic Price Under 6 Years of UN Sanctions," Chicago Tribune, 24 November 1996, p. 8. Geoff Simons, The Scouring of Iraq: Sanctions, Law and Natural Justice (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), ch. 3. Richard Garfield, "The Impact of Economic Embargoes on the Health of Women and Children," JAMWA 52/4 (Fall 1997). Maggie O'Kane, "Another Day in Babylon," Guardian (London), 7 March 1998. Julian Borger, "Iraq elite rides high despite sanctions," Guardian Weekly, 8 March 1998, p. 4. "War on Sanctions," The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer (PBS television), 13 March 1998. Patrick Cockburn, "Poisoned Tigris Spreads Tide of Death in Iraq," Independent (London), 25 April 1998, p. 16. UNICEF Report, "Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Iraq," 30 April 1998: <http://www.intranet.unicef.org/PD/DocCenter.nsf>; summary: <http://leb.net/iac/UNICEF1998.html>. Tim Weiner, "Response to Baghdad: Military Muscle May Not Suffice," New York Times, 12 November 1998, A12. Stephen Kinzer, "Iraq's Sad Cultural Elite Pines for Good Old Days," New York Times, 23 December 1998, p. A10. Stephen Kinzer, "The Misery of Babylon In the Age Of Hussein," New York Times, 24 December 1998, p. A6. Denis J. Halliday, "Iraq and the UN's Weapon of Mass Destruction,"

began--that Iraq was allowed to buy material for rebuilding its agricultural sector, water supply facilities, oil fields, and once-impressive medical system.³³

Despite the fact that, as noted above, there is remarkably little hostility among the American public toward the Iraqi people, this massive destruction of innocents--quite possibly, in fact, as many as in the Rwandan genocide of 1994--has mostly inspired indifference. It is difficult to account for this monumental lack of concern, but several explanations are at least conceivable.

1. The public is unaware of the damage. In a letter published in the New York Times in 1998, a man who had traveled to Iraq and had seen "hospital wards filled with dying children, Baghdad streets flooded with raw sewage, and doctors fighting diseases without adequate medicine," expressed the view that "if the news media would only broadcast the intolerable suffering I have witnessed, I am convinced a genuine debate would begin" (11 November 1998, A30). In fact, however, the news media have covered the story, albeit limitedly--on May 12, 1996, for example, CBS News' extremely popular news magazine show, "60 Minutes," broadcast an extensive report on the human damage complete with agonizing pictures of dying children and acknowledgements of reports that half a million children had died by then as a result of the sanctions (Stahl 1996). But such media coverage has not stirred interest, and stories that do not incite much response from media audiences tend not to be followed up.³⁴ Similarly, prominent international figures like the Pope have repeatedly and passionately condemned the effects of sanctions, but this, too, has stirred little perceptible public protest--or even much notice.

2. The damage is Saddam Hussein's fault. One important goal of the sanctions is to remove Saddam Hussein from office--and therefore from life. In 1991, President George Bush authoritatively announced that the economic sanctions would be continued until "Saddam Hussein is out of there," and his deputy national security adviser declared that "Iraqis will pay the price while he remains in power" (they have, indeed). In 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated that sanctions would not be lifted even "if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction" (Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, 43, 263; also 98). And in 1998, the U.S. Congress passed a number of measures designed to help Iraqis overthrow Saddam, while the Clinton administration explicitly made forcing him from office a central goal. Unlike many dictators, such as Somoza, Marcos, or Batista, Saddam Hussein has no other place to go--he is reasonably safe only in office and in control in Iraq. Therefore, the rather mild-sounding notion that he should be removed from office--that he should "step aside" in Bush's words--is effectively a death sentence to him.³⁵

Not surprisingly, Saddam has been uncooperative about allowing the sanctions to have this effect, regardless of the cost to the Iraqi people. He has also sought to rebuild his military capabilities, including, it appears, his chemical and biological arsenals: these weapons must seem to offer the best deterrent against potential invaders who appear to be obsessed with such weapons. In particular, he has been wary of any threats to his "sovereignty" and of arms inspectors and other outsiders whose activities could be used to fix his whereabouts. Disclosures that the arms inspections have indeed been

Current History, February 1999, pp. 65-68. Herring 1999. Judith Miller, "U.N. Panel Seeks to Ease Suffering of Iraq's People," New York Times, 31 March 1999, p. A6. Ritter 1999, 147-50. Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, ch. 5. UN 1999. David Sharrock, "Iraq is falling apart. We are ruined." Guardian (London), 24 April 1999, p. 14. "Life and Death in Iraq," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 11 May 1999. Larry Kaplow, "Consequences of Kuwait: Sanctions Have Iraq Withering," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 13 June 1999, p. 2F. Drezner 1999, 1, 8n. Douglas Jehl, "U.N. Official Seeks an End To Sanctions Against Iraqis," New York Times, 20 September 1999, A6. Robert Corzine, "Aid chief attacks UN's policy on Iraq: Long-term development needed rather than handouts says co-ordinator who resigned," Financial Times (London), 17 February 2000, 16.

³³ Vernon Loeb, "Oil-for-Food Program Continues as Key Facet of U.S. Policy on Iraq," Washington Post, 14 November 1998, p. A16. Melby 1998, 121.

³⁴ On this phenomenon more generally, see Mueller 1994, 129-34, 334n9.

³⁵ On the essential intention of the sanctions to bring down Saddam Hussein, see Melby 1998, 118, 123; Drezner 1999, 1.

used to harbor spies are unlikely to enhance his enthusiasm for having them around.³⁶

In an important sense, therefore, the devastation is caused by Saddam's policies, not by the sanctioners--an argument the latter often make in defense of the policy.³⁷ If the Iraqi dictator would only do as they demand, they argue, the sanctions would be removed. In addition, the country's leadership sometimes seems more interested in maximizing the nation's suffering for propaganda purposes (especially with an eye toward getting the sanctions removed) than in relieving it.

In effect, however, the sanctioners are demanding that Saddam commit suicide or at least take measures which he feels will put his life at notable and further risk. Thus, while the impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi people--Saddam's hostages, in effect--may ultimately be his fault, they are also a predictable and inevitable consequence of the sanctions policy. If they had not been instituted it seems highly likely that the country would have moved back toward the relatively prosperity--including one of the finest medical systems in the area--it enjoyed before the Gulf War. The sanctioners are essentially instructing Saddam Hussein that if he doesn't commit suicide, they will kill thousands of Iraqi children. When he refuses to comply with this request, they kill thousands, and then thousands and thousands more.

Albright, then American ambassador to the UN, insisted on a letter to CBS' "60 Minutes" on 19 May 1996 that "The unfortunate truth is that the UN Security Council cares more about the people of Iraq than their own ruler does." This, it seems, is not saying much. And the truly "unfortunate truth" is that the people die regardless.

3. Saddam Hussein is a very bad person and the sanctions are preventing him from arming and, in particular, from developing weapons of mass destruction. The sanctions have also been designed to keep Iraq from developing weaponry--particularly weapons of mass destruction--with which it can once again threaten its neighbors. And it seems likely that without the sanctions Iraq would be somewhat better armed and further along in whatever efforts it is making to develop weapons of mass destruction, a specter that many find alarming.³⁸

The problem is that the chemical and biological weapons and the missiles Iran may be seeking to build are actually not terribly effective armaments. Moreover, in a thus-far futile effort to drive its leader from office (and therefore from life), and in a more successful effort to keep him from building up his military and WMD capabilities, economic sanctions have probably already taken the lives of more people in Iraq than have been killed by all weapons of mass destruction in all of history (Table 14). Moreover, a policy of containment and deterrence of the tyrant could probably accomplish the same ends with far less destruction of human welfare.³⁹

³⁶ Since chemical and biological weapons can be made and stored in very small places, it is logical that the inspectors should have the complete run of the country at all times. For example, a Soviet biological weapons facility was successfully hidden in an ordinary apartment block: Frontline, PBS, 13 October 1998. Not surprisingly, Saddam is most notably resentful when arms inspectors have demanded visits to his presidential sites and party headquarters purportedly to discover if he had perhaps been hiding germ or gas bombs there. Moreover, the security apparatus used to conceal weapons is the same as the one used to protect Saddam. On these issues, see Tim Weiner, "U.S. Spied on Iraq Under U.N. Cover, Officials Now Say," *New York Times*, 7 January 1999, p. A1; Tim Weiner, "U.S. Used U.N. Team to Place Spy Device in Iraq, Aides Say," *New York Times*, 8 January 1999, p. A1; Thomas W. Lippman and Barton Gellman, "U.N. Helped U.S. to Spy on Saddam," *Guardian Weekly*, 17 January 1999, p. 17; Peter J. Boyer, "Scott Ritter's Private War," *New Yorker*, 9 November 1998.

³⁷ See, for example, Milton Leitenberg, "Sanctions against Iraq," *Lancet* 347/8995 (20 January 1996), pp. 199-200; Madeleine K. Albright, letter to 60 Minutes (CBS television), 19 May 1996; Miller (note 32); Drezner 1998, 71.

³⁸ On the effectiveness of arguments that Iraq was developing nuclear and chemical weapons as a justification for the Gulf War, see Mueller 1994, 39, 42, 118, 142-43.

³⁹ On these issues, see Mueller and Mueller 1999; Mueller and Mueller forthcoming.

4. The sanctions will encourage the Iraqis to overthrow the regime. The sanctioners hope that their policy will encourage or help facilitate a coup, an assassination, an army revolt, a popular uprising, or a rebellion or invasion by armed dissidents. However, while such an undertaking is certainly possible, the prospects do not appear very bright, at least at present.

Saddam Hussein does not need the loyalty of major portions of the Iraqi population to remain in power. Rather it is essential for him to have the dedicated support of a relatively small band of followers and sycophants including the Special Republican Guard, the Special Security Organization, and the Martyrs of Saddam. To maintain their loyalty, he does not need to inspire love but to carry out two policies.

First, he needs to give them privileges they would lose if he were removed from office. The sanctions may make this task easier by creating artificial shortages and driving up prices for scarce commodities, demands that can be serviced only by smugglers and sanctions-busters. Insofar as Hussein can control this highly lucrative market, he can funnel the considerable benefits of such enterprises to his followers. Moreover, the system of food rationing, made necessary by the sanctions, has been used by the government to strengthen its control. As one Iraqi puts it, "I have to pledge loyalty to the party. Any sign of disobedience and my monthly card would be taken away." And key supporters are rewarded with extra rations.⁴⁰ For sanctions to be effective, it is axiomatic that they weaken, rather than strengthen, the ties of the leadership's core support group (Kirshner 1997; Drezner 1999).

Second, Saddam must instill in his supporters an awareness that if he dies, so in all probability will they. This task, crucial to his survival, does not appear to be difficult. Any forceful deposition of Saddam by Iraqis is likely to lead to a bloodbath as old scores are savagely settled. One Iraqi notes of a local official, "If there were a revolution, that guy would be chopped into a thousand pieces and thrown into the river."⁴¹ And regime supporters are fully aware of this; as one puts it, "I know the guy across the street hates me for being in the party" and a struggle with rebels would be "very very bloody."⁴²

Hussein might meet his demise by being violently deposed in a coup or by assassination. There reportedly have been several such efforts since the Gulf War.⁴³ To evade such efforts, Hussein warily travels in road convoys of at least six identical vehicles, flies only in military helicopters and selects his landing sites at the last minute, and holes up in various residences which are surrounded by 20-foot high fences.⁴⁴ Even his senior ministers do not know where he is at any particular time (Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, 256). And his retaliation against opponents is lethal, prompt, ruthless, and often sadistic. Two conspirators were executed by having dynamite jammed into their mouths and then detonated.⁴⁵ Deserting soldiers have had their ears amputated and have been branded with X's between the eyes. And thousands of people are believed to have been "disappeared."⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Richard Downes, "Saddam's men use sanctions to secure their grip," Independent (London), 12 December 1988, p. 17. See also Sharrock (note 32), UN 1999, para 27.

⁴¹ Downes (note 40).

⁴² He may be remembering the fate of one of Hussein's favorite poets who was caught in the 1991 uprisings. His captors dressed him in women's clothing, cut off his ears and tongue, demanded he try to recite some of his poetry, and then hacked him to death. O'Kane, "We Want Saddam Gone" (note 32).

⁴³ O'Kane, "Another Day" (note 32). James Risen and Barbara Crossette, "Even U.S. Sees Iraq Opposition As Faint Hope," New York Times, 19 November 1998, p. A1. Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, ch. 7.

⁴⁴ Maggie O'Kane, "Saddam Wields Terror--and Feigns Respect," Guardian (London), 25 November 1998. O'Kane, "Wake of War" (note 32).

⁴⁵ O'Kane, "Another Day" (note 32). One of Hussein's sons-in-law defected together with his brother. They were persuaded to come back in January 1996 by promises of pardon and then executed within 24 hours of their return: Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, ch. 8.

⁴⁶ O'Kane, "Wake of War" (note 32).

There have also been attempts by the military to depose Hussein: two in 1991, as well as a rising by a battalion of his Republican Guards in 1995.⁴⁷ Saddam's wariness of a repetition is suggested by the fact that the army is not allowed to bring heavy weapons anywhere near Baghdad due to fears that regular troops might turn and use it against his government.⁴⁸

A popular uprising is also possible, but that prospect appears rather slim. There were very substantial rebellions against Hussein and his government in 1991 in the wake of the Gulf War--in no less than 15 of the country's 18 provinces. These were poorly coordinated and became associated with elements supporting Iran, and they were put down with tremendous brutality and with massive and indiscriminate executions (Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, ch. 1). The memory of this experience provides a strong disincentive to a repetition. Moreover, many observers have noted that the years of sanctions in Iraq have tended to sap the energies of the population as the quest for survival becomes paramount.

There have also been proposals for organizing an invasion by rebels, something that carries with it unsettling echoes of the Bay of Pigs. Like the 1961 effort to depose Castro, it would involve seeking to coordinate and to arm fractious opponents--probably over several years--and to provide them a base from which to attack (Byman et al., 1999; Ritter 1999, 202-3). Of course, Saddam Hussein is not without defenses in all this, and the opposition, both within the country and outside it, is splintered and infiltrated by agents.⁴⁹

5. Americans are bad losers. The remarkable lack of concern may be due in part to the fact that if the Gulf War was--or came to be--about deposing Saddam Hussein, the United States could be said to have lost it. Indeed, a year after the war, fully 69 percent of the American public held the war not to have been a victory because Hussein was still in power (see Table 15 and compare Table 5; see also Mueller 1994, 78-79, 88-89). There may be some parallels with the U.S. reaction to its defeat in Vietnam. Policy makers, supported by a substantially uninterested public, punished the victorious Vietnamese Communists as much as possible for a decade and a half after the war even when those victors put a stop to genocide in neighboring Cambodia.⁵⁰

6. It is painful to acknowledge a mistake of policy. Inertia also probably plays a role. It is difficult to admit a mistake, particularly when that mistake has led to deaths--in this case, deaths in massive numbers. A shift of policy would also essentially be giving in to Saddam Hussein since it would involve acknowledging that, by holding his own people hostage, he has won the war of nerves. Thus the alternative of hanging tough can have a certain appeal despite the misery and destruction of human life that may result.

⁴⁷ O'Kane, "Another Day" (note 32). Risen and Crossette (note 43).

⁴⁸ O'Kane, "Saddam Wields Terror" (note 44). Relatedly, government officials are often wary of journeying south of Baghdad, particularly to such hostile cities as Karbala and Najaf. Maggie O'Kane and Ian Black, "Saddam deputy escapes assassination attempt," Guardian (London), 24 November 1998, p. 2.

⁴⁹ A cell of dissidents run by the Central Intelligence Agency was destroyed in September 1996 when it was betrayed by one of the Kurdish leaders, Massoud Barzani, as part of his power struggle with a rival in northern Iraq, an area that is being protected by the militaries of the sanctioning countries. Tim Weiner, "Opponents Find That Ousting Hussein Is Easier Said Than Done," New York Times, 16 November 1998, p. A10. Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, ch. 7.

⁵⁰ By and large, Americans chose to remain blissfully aloof from the genocide in Cambodia. From the Communist takeover in April 1975 until the end of 1977 the three evening news telecasts devoted a total of twenty-nine minutes to the cataclysm taking place there. In July 1975 the New York Times ringingly editorialized that the silence about the genocides in Cambodia "must be broken" and then ignored the issue in its editorial column for over three years. Some of the inattention may have stemmed from a deep desire in America not to know what was going on in Southeast Asia, because if the horrors there were fully appreciated, a logical proposal might have been to send American troops back to try to halt the holocaust: when such a proposal was made in 1978 by former peace candidate George McGovern, NBC television gave the story twenty seconds of coverage (Adams and Joblove 1982, 218-19, 224-25).

7. The deaths from sanctions are remote and statistical. Much of the inattention to Iraqi civilian deaths may also derive from the fact that, in contrast to deaths caused by terrorist bombs, broad economic sanctions--or more aptly economic warfare--generally kills quietly and statistically, and the severity of its effects are often unappreciated as a result. That is, deaths inflicted by sanctions are dispersed rather than concentrated, statistical rather than dramatic. If the death rate for young children rises from 3.7 to 12 percent, for example, the change is one of degree and, still, 88 percent do survive. The same phenomenon may help to explain why extremely infrequent multiple shootings in U.S. schools and workplaces lead to frenzied outcries for gun control or media censorship, while most people accept with little comment the murder of several dozen Americans per day in ones and twos.

Interestingly, if it were somehow possible to inflict the same sort of damage against the Iraqi population with abrupt armed force that the sanctions have caused more incrementally, it would probably be illegal for U.S. military officers to comply with an order to do so.

8. The deaths, after all, are only of foreigners. It is sometimes argued that the tragedies in Rwanda or Bosnia or Somalia in the 1990s were caused in part by a failure of policy by the major countries of the world. There may be something to this: in some cases deft and forceful moves by the major countries might have prevented or alleviated the murderous mayhem in those places. But, ultimately, the major countries would have been rescuing the Rwandans, Bosnians, and Somalis from themselves: at bottom the disasters were self-inflicted.

The situation in Iraq is different. The United States and its allies have not committed sins of omission or of incompetence in this case. In a (mostly failed) effort to accomplish ends they consider valid, they have consciously adopted policies that have necessarily resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of completely innocent civilians--indeed, disproportionately children under the age of 5, the most innocent of innocents.

The simple central question then becomes, "Is the policy worth such costs?" That is, one might wonder, with former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "whether suffering inflicted on vulnerable groups in a target country is a legitimate means of exerting pressure on political leaders whose behavior is unlikely to be affected by the plight of their subjects."⁵¹

The question is asked of policy makers all too rarely. But it has been posed at least once publicly. When asked on "60 Minutes" in 1996 whether she thought the deaths of perhaps half a million Iraqi children was "worth it," Albright, without taking issue with the death toll estimate, replied, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price--we think the price is worth it."⁵² The gains from sanctions, she argued, were that they had forced Saddam Hussein to "come cleaner on some of these weapons programs than we thought before, and he has recognized Kuwait" (Stahl 1996). By 1999, as it happens, both these costly achievements had been substantially reversed: Iraq had recanted its recognition of Kuwait and, in response to U.S. and British bombing at the end of 1998, it had forced arms inspectors from the country.

Of course, the sanction deaths are of foreign innocents, and that, perhaps, makes the destruction easier to accept and to ignore.

Many commentators have noted with alarm the "strikingly abysmal indifference" Germans displayed during World War II toward the murders by their government of millions of innocent Jews (Browning 1998, 201). This indifference may have been facilitated in part by the fact that the Jews who were being killed were overwhelmingly foreigners. Indeed, German executioners were often disoriented when they came upon German Jews or Jews in areas of Poland that had been incorporated into Germany because it was more difficult to dehumanize such people (Browning 1998, 153; Browning 2000, ch. 6).

⁵¹ Quoted, O'Kane, "Wake of War" (note 32).

⁵² Understandably, this statement has become famous in the Arab world: Cockburn and Cockburn 1999, 263.

The situation is not comparable to the one in Iraq in many ways, of course. But there is a distinctly unpleasant resonance in the remarkable indifference Americans and others in the West have shown toward the fact that the policies of their governments have inevitably led to the deaths of massive numbers of completely innocent people. In the end, it seems, scarcely anyone cares. Or even notices.

References

- Adams, William C., and Michael Joblove. 1982. The Unnewsworthy Holocaust: TV News and Terror in Cambodia. In Television Coverage of International Affairs, ed. William C. Adams, 217-225. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Almond, Gabriel A. 1960. The American People and Foreign Policy. New York: Praeger.
- Atkinson, Rick. 1994. The Raid That Went Awry. Washington Post, 30 and 31 January.
- Balz, Dan, and Terry M. Neal. 1999. Gore Benefits, but Will War Issue Stay Hot? Washington Post, 6 June, A21.
- Bennett, Christopher. 1995. Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences. New York: New York University Press.
- Bowden, Mark. 1999. Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Brock, Peter. 1993-94. Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press. Foreign Policy, Winter, 152-172.
- Browning, Christopher R. 1998. Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland. New York: HarperCollins.
- . 2000. Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Workers. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Burk, James. 1999. Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia: Assessing the Casualties Hypothesis. Political Science Quarterly 114(1, Spring):53-78.
- Byman, Daniel, Kenneth Pollack, and Rose Gideon. 1999. The Rollback Fantasy. Foreign Affairs 78(1, January/February):24-41.
- Cantril, Hadley, and Mildred Strunk. 1951. Public Opinion 1935-1946. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Clinton, Bill. 1995. Why Bosnia Matters to America: Our values, interests and security are all at stake. Newsweek, 13 November, 55.
- Clodfelter, Micheal. 1992. Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Cockburn, Andrew, and Patrick Cockburn. 1999. Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein. New York: HarperCollins.
- Cohen, Eliot. 1994. The Mystique of U.S. Air Power. Foreign Affairs 73(1, January/February):109-124.
- Cushman, John H. 1992. Pentagon Report on the Persian Gulf War: A Few Surprises and Some Silences. New York Times, 11 April, 1-4.
- DeLong, Kent, and Steven Tuckey. 1994. Mogadishu! Heroism and Tragedy. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Department of Defense, United States of America. 1992. Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, April.
- Des Forges, Alison. 1999. "Leave None to Tell the Story": Genocide in Rwanda. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Dole, Bob. 1995. Shaping America's Global Future. Foreign Policy, Spring, 29-43.
- Dower, John. 1986. War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War. New York: Pantheon.
- Drezner, Daniel W. 1998. Serious About Sanctions. National Interest, Fall, 66-74.
- . 1999. The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Falk, Stanley. 1962. Bataan: The March of Death. New York: Norton.
- Feaver, Peter D., and Christopher Gelpi. 1999. Casualty Aversion; How Many Deaths Are Acceptable? A Surprising Answer. Washington Post, 7 November, B3.
- Garfinkle, Adam. 1995. Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement. New York: St. Martin's.
- Gonzales, Edward, and David Ronfeldt. 1986. Castro, Cuba, and the World: Executive Summary. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, April. R-3420/1.
- Gordon, Michael R., and Thomas L. Friedman. 1993. Disastrous U.S. Raid in Somalia Nearly Succeeded, Review Finds: Valorous Delay May Have Far-Reaching Impact. New York Times, 25 October, A1.
- Gourevitch, Philip. 1998. We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- Halberstam, David. 1965. The Making of a Quagmire. New York: Random House.
- . 1972. The Best and the Brightest. New York: Penguin.
- . 1988. The Making of a Quagmire. Revised ed. New York: Knopf.
- Hedges, Chris. 1997 a. On Bosnia's Ethnic Fault Lines, It's Still Tense, but World Is Silent. New York Times, 28 February, A1.
- Herring, Eric. 1999. An Ethical Dimension to British Foreign Policy? Paper delivered at the annual conference of the Political Studies Associations. University of Nottingham, UK, 23-25 March.
- Humphrey, Hubert H. 1976. The Education of a Public Man: My Life and Politics. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

- Jentleson, Bruce W. 1992. The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force. International Studies Quarterly 36(1, March):49-74.
- Kettle, Martin. 1999. Kosovo holds the key to Gore's prospects. Guardian Weekly, 6 June, 6.
- Kirshner, Jonathan. 1997. The Microfoundations of Economic Sanctions. Security Studies 6(3, Spring):32-64.
- Klarevas, Louis J. 1999. American Public Opinion on Peace Operations: The Cases of Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti. diss. American University.
- Kraus, Sidney. 1979. The Great Debates: Carter vs. Ford, 1976. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kull, Steven. 1995-96. What the Public Knows that Washington Doesn't. Foreign Policy, Winter, 102-115.
- Kull, Steven, and I. M. Destler. 1999. Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Larson, Eric V. 1996. Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- . 1999. Review of Kull and Destler, Misreading the Public. Public Opinion Quarterly 63(4, Winter):624-27.
- . forthcoming. Putting Theory to Work: Diagnosing Public Opinion on the U.S. Intervention in Bosnia. In Being Useful: Policy Relevance and International Relations, ed. Miroslav Nincic and Joseph Lepgold. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Mandelbaum, Michael. 1996. Foreign Policy as Social Work. Foreign Affairs 75(1, January/February):16-32.
- Melby, Eric D. K. 1998. Iraq. In Economic Sanctions and American Diplomacy, ed. Richard N. Haass. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.
- Mitchell, Alison. 1996. Clinton Honors Troops That Served in Haiti. New York Times, 19 March, A14.
- Moore, Molly. 1991. Aspin: War Would Start With Air Strikes, Escalate to Ground Battles. Washington Post, 9 January, A15.
- Morris, Dick. 1999. The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the Twenty-First Century. Los Angeles: Renaissance Books.
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. 1990. On the Law of Nations. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mueller, John. 1973. War, Presidents and Public Opinion. New York: Wiley. (Reprinted 1985 by University Press of America, Lanham, MD).
- . 1980. The Search for the 'Breaking Point' in Vietnam: the Statistics of a Deadly Quarrel. International Studies Quarterly 24(4, December):497-519.
- . 1984. Reflections on the Vietnam Protest Movement and on the Curious Calm at the War's End. In Vietnam as History, ed. Peter Braestrup, 151-157. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- . 1989. Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1994. Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1995a. Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the Recent Transformation of World Politics. New York: HarperCollins.
- . 1995b. The Perfect Enemy: Assessing the Gulf War. Security Studies 5(1, Autumn):77-117.
- . 1996. Fifteen Propositions about American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in an Era Free of Compelling Threats. Paper given at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association. San Diego, CA, 19 April. (<http://www.rochester.edu/College/PSC/Mueller>).
- . 1997. The Common Sense. National Interest, Spring, 81-88.
- . 1999. The Rise, Decline, Shallowness, and Banality of Militant Nationalism in Europe: Hobbes, Thugs, "Ethnic Conflict," and the Future of Warfare. Paper given at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Washington, DC, 2 September. (<http://www.rochester.edu/College/PSC/Mueller>).
- Mueller, John, and Karl Mueller. 1999. Sanctions of Mass Destruction. Foreign Affairs 78(1, May/June):43-53.
- . forthcoming. The Methodology of Mass Destruction: Assessing Threats in the New World Order. Journal of Strategic Studies.
- Norpoth, Helmut. 1987a. The Falklands War and Government Popularity in Britain: Rally without Consequence or Surge without Decline? Electoral Studies 6(1):3-16.
- . 1987b. Guns and Butter and Government Popularity in Britain. American Political Science Review 81(3, September):949-959.
- Page, Susan. 1999. Kosovo can help or haunt Gore. USA Today, 14 April, 4A.
- Powell, Colin L. 1992. Why Generals Get Nervous. New York Times, 8 October, A35.
- Prange, Gordon W. with, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon. 1981. At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Reagan, Ronald. 1983. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Washington, DC: United States Government Publishing Office.

- Ritter, Scott. 1999. Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem--Once and for All. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Safire, William. 1984. Only the 'Fun' Wars. New York Times, 3 December, A23.
- . 1993. Depart With Honor. New York Times, 7 October, A29.
- Schmitt, Eric. 1991. U.S. Battle Plan: Massive Air Strikes. New York Times, 10 January, A17.
- Schwarzkopf, H. Norman. 1992. It Doesn't Take a Hero. New York: Bantam. Written with Peter Petre.
- Sciolino, Elaine. 1993. Christopher Explains Conditions For Use of U.S. Force in Bosnia. New York Times, 28 April, A1.
- Sheehan, Neil. 1964. Much Is At Stake in Southeast Asian Struggle. New York Times, 16 August, E4.
- Small, Melvin. 1988. Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Sobel, Richard. 1996. U.S. and Foreign Attitudes Toward Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia. In The World and Yugoslavia's Wars, ed. Richard H. Ullman, 145-81. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.
- . 1998. The Polls--Trends: United States Intervention in Bosnia. Public Opinion Quarterly 62(2, Summer):250-78.
- Stahl, Leslie. 1996. Punishing Saddam; Sanctions Against Iraq Not Hurting Leaders of the Country, Bu the Children are Suffering and Dying. 12 May. New York: 60 Minutes, CBS Television.
- Strobel, Warren P. 1997. Late-Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Taylor, Philip M. 1992. War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- United Nations. 1999. Report of the second panel established pursuant to the note by the president of the Security Council of 30 January 1999 (S/1999/100), concerning the current humanitarian situation in Iraq. New York: United Nations, 30 March. <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/panelrep.html>.
- Valenta, Jiri, and Virginia Valenta. 1984. Leninism in Grenada. Problems of Communism 33(4, July-August):1-23.
- Weinberger, Caspar A. 1984. Excerpts From Address Of Weinberger. New York Times, 29 November.
- Zelnick, Bob. 1999. Kosovo crisis carries grave risks for Gore. USA Today, 8 April, 13A.

Table 1

No one wants our nation to get into any conflicts in the future, but as in the past, our leaders might someday decide to use our armed forces in hostilities because our interests are jeopardized. I know that this is a tough question, but, if you had to make a decision about using the American military, how important would each of the following factors be to you? (Americans Talk Security) 1988 September 7-18

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Depends, don't now
The possibility of failure	56	24	15	4
The cost in dollars	45	31	21	4
The number of American lives that might be lost	86	9	2	2
The fact that we might break international laws or treaties with other nations	55	29	12	6
Whether or not our allies and other nations will support the action	56	30	9	5
Whether or not the American people will support the action	71	19	6	4
The length of the time that we would be involved in fighting	61	24	10	6
The number of civilians that might be killed in the area of combat	79	15	4	4
Whether or not another major power like the Soviet Union or the Peoples Republic of China might get involved	69	19	7	4
Whether or not the U.S. Congress will support the action	64	20	10	5

Registered voters; N=1005

Table 2

CASES IN WHICH AMERICAN TROOPS HAVE BEEN SENT ON A NON-ADVISORY BASIS
INTO A MILITARY ENVIRONMENT THAT IS ACTUALLY OR POTENTIALLY HOSTILE

	Year of initial decision	Value of stakes to the public		Anti-cipated battle deaths	Actual battle deaths	Potential of political opposition to exploit excessive deaths
World War II	1941	very high	10+	100,000s	292,131	modest
Korea	1950	high, but declining	8	1000s-10,000s	33,870	substantial
Lebanon	1958	fairly low	4	10s-100s	1	substantial
Dominican Republic	1965	fairly low	4	10s-100s	27	substantial
Vietnam	1965	high, but declining	8	10,000s	47,072	substantial
Lebanon	1983	low	3	near 0	266	high
Grenada	1983	low	3	low 100s	14	high
Panama	1989	low	3	10s	26	very high
Gulf War	1991	fairly high	6	low 1000s	148	very high
Gulf area	1991	fairly high	6	near 0	near 0	high
Macedonia	1992	very low	2	near 0	0	very high
Somalia	1992	minimal	1	near 0	29	very high
Haiti	1994	low	3	near 0	0	very high
Bosnia	1995	very low	2	near 0	near 0	very high
Kosovo	1999	very low	2	near 0	0	very high

Battle deaths through Gulf War: Clodfelter 1992.

Table 3

Would you say...

(ABC, ABC/Washington Post)

	the U.S. should send more troops to Lebanon	leave the number of troops about the same	or remove the troops that are there now	Don't know	
1993 Sep 22-26	7	48	40	5	1506
1993 Oct 23	241 Marines are killed in bomb attack				
1993 Oct 23	21	21	48	10	505
1993 Oct 25	31	26	39	5	612
1993 Oct 26	16	33	45	6	729
1993 Oct 27	Reagan gives speech on Lebanon, Grenada				
1993 Oct 28	17	41	37	5	517
1993 Nov 3-7	13	41	39	7	1505
1993 Dec 8-13	9	38	48	5	1506
1994 Jan 3	5	30	59	6	608
1994 Jan 4	8	29	57	6	508
1994 Jan 12-17	7	31	58	4	1524
1994 Feb	U.S. troops are redeployed to ships off shore				
1994 Mar 30	Reagan formally withdraws from peacekeeping				

Table 4

As you may know, the United Nations Security Council has authorized the use of force against Iraq if it doesn't withdraw from Kuwait by January 15th (1991).

If Iraq does not withdraw from Kuwait, should the United States go to war with Iraq to force it out of Kuwait at some point after January 15th, or not? (Washington Post)

	Go to war at some point after January 15 if Iraq doesn't withdraw from Kuwait	Do not go to war	Don't know	
1991 Jan 11-15 *	60	33	7	1007

* Asked of 1/3 of sample

As you may know, the United Nations Security Council has authorized the use of force against Iraq if it doesn't withdraw from Kuwait by January 15th (1991).

Would you favor or oppose going to war with Iraq at some point after the January 15th deadline if it meant 1,000 American troops would be killed in the fighting? (Washington Post)

	Favor war at some point after January 15 if it meant 1,000 American troops would be killed	Oppose war if 1,000 American troops would be killed	Don't know	
1991 Jan 11-15 *	52	43	5	1007

* Asked of 1/3 of sample

As you may know, the United Nations Security Council has authorized the use of force against Iraq if it doesn't withdraw from Kuwait by January 15th (1991).

Would you favor or oppose going to war with Iraq at some point after the January 15th deadline if it meant 10,000 American troops would be killed in the fighting? (Washington Post)

	Favor war at some point after January 15 if it meant 10,000 American troops would be killed	Oppose war if 10,000 American troops would be killed	Don't know	
1991 Jan 11-15 *	37	56	7	1007

* Asked of 1/3 of sample

Table 5

Assuming Iraq leaves Kuwait, would you consider the war with Iraq a success if 500 American troops died, or not? (IF YES) Would you consider it a success if 1,000 American troops died, or not? (IF YES) Would you consider the war with Iraq a success if 5,000 American troops died, or not? (IF YES) And would you consider the war with Iraq a success if 10,000 American troops died, or not? (IF YES) And would you consider the war with Iraq a success if 20,000 American troops died, or not? (ACCEPT 'CONSIDERS NO AMERICAN TROOPS DIED AS A SUCCESS' AS A VOLUNTEERED RESPONSE) (Los Angeles Times) 1991 Jan 17-18

Consider war with Iraq a success if Iraq leaves Kuwait and		
	no American troops die	80%
	500 American troops die	50%
	1,000 American troops die	37%
	5,000 American troops die	27%
	10,000 American troops die	20%
	20,000 American troops die	16%
Don't know		13%
Refused		7%

Table 6

Nothing the US could accomplish in Somalia is worth the death of even one more US soldier. (Time/CNN/Yankelovich) 1993 October 7

60 Agree
 35 Disagree
 5 Not sure

Table 7

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Nothing the US could accomplish in Haiti is worth the death of even one US soldier? (Time/CNN) 1994 July 13-14

50 Agree
 39 Disagree
 11 Not sure

N=600

Table 8

Suppose you knew that if the United States sent U.S. troops to Bosnia as part of an international peacekeeping force, that no/25/100/400 American soldiers would be killed. With this in mind, would you favor or oppose sending U.S. troops to Bosnia? (Gallup/CNN/U.S.A. Today)

1995 Sep 19-22 n=1229	Favor sending troops	Oppose sending troops	Don't know
No soldiers killed	67	29	4
25 soldiers killed	31	64	5
100 soldiers killed	29	65	6
400 soldiers killed	21	72	7

1995 Oct 19-22 n=1229	Favor sending troops	Oppose sending troops	Don't know
No soldiers killed	68	29	4
25 soldiers killed	31	64	4
100 soldiers killed	30	65	6
400 soldiers killed	21	72	7

Table 9

Do you approve or disapprove of the presence of US troops in Bosnia?

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know	
1995 Dec 6-7	36	57	7	1000
1995 Dec 15-18	41	54	6	1000
1996 Jan 5-7	36	58	6	1000
1996 Jan 10-11	41	50	9	1000
1996 May 28-29	42	51	7	1019
1996 Jun 12-13	44	45	11	1004
1997 Feb 5-6	40	54	6	1227
1997 Jun 26-29	39	53	8	1013
1997 Nov 12-16	50	42	8	1200
1997 Dec 18-21	49	43	8	1005
1998 Jan	43	50	7	1218
1998 Jan	53	43	5	1004
1999 Mar 24-28	57	34	9	1488

	Strongly approve	Approve not strongly	Disapprove not strongly	Disapprove strongly	Don't know
1995 Dec 15-18	24	17	11	43	6
1996 May 28-29	23	19	15	36	7

Table 10

Do you think the removal of the US Marines from Lebanon means that Ronald Reagan's policies were a success or failure? (NBC News) 1984 March 8-11

19 Success
 15 Neither (volunteered)
 54 Failure
 15 Not sure

Which of the following statements come closest to your opinion about sending US Marines to Lebanon? (CBS/New York Times) 1984 February 21-25

33 It was a big mistake to send them at all
 45 It was a good idea at the time but it didn't work
 15 We should have sent more of them to begin with
 7 Not sure

Table 11

If the people of Japan (Germany) are starving after the war (at the present time), do you think the United States should

	sell them only what food they can pay for	or send them food as a gift if they can't pay for it,	or not send them any food at all.	Undecided
--	---	---	-----------------------------------	-----------

JAPAN:

1943 Jan	34	30	31	5
1946 Mar	46	30	20	4

GERMANY:

1943 Jan	41	39	16	4
1946 Mar	49	35	13	3

Source: Opinion News, April 16, 1946

Table 12

Do you think the people of Iraq must share the blame for Saddam Hussein's policies in the Middle East or are they innocent of any blame for Hussein's policies? (Los Angeles Times)

	People of Iraq must share blame for Hussein's policies	People of Iraq are innocent of any blame for Hussein's policies	Don't know	
1991 Feb 15-17	32	60	8	1822

Table 13

Which of these three statements comes closer to your own view? (Washington Post, ABC/Washington Post)

	The United States should be making a greater effort to avoid bombing civilian areas in Iraq	The United States is making enough of an effort to avoid bombing civilian areas in Iraq	The United States is making too much of an effort to avoid bombing civilian areas in Iraq	Don't know	
1991 Feb 8-12	13	60	22	4	1011
1991 Feb 13	Bombing of shelter in Baghdad				
1991 Feb 14	13	67	18	2	722

Table 14

DEATHS CAUSED, THUS FAR, BY WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Nuclear weapons	high estimate	200,000	civilian
Chemical weapons in World War I	high estimate	78,390	military
Chemical weapons since World War I *	high estimate	20,000	mostly civilian
Biological weapons and accidents	high estimate	5,000	mostly civilian
Missiles	high estimate	5,000	civilian and military
In Iraq by economic sanctions	low estimate	400,000	civilian, disproportionately children under 5

* Excluding deaths in gas chambers.

Table 15

Saddam Hussein has withdrawn from Kuwait but remains in power in Iraq. Do you think this is a victory for the U.S. and allied forces, or not? (Gallup)

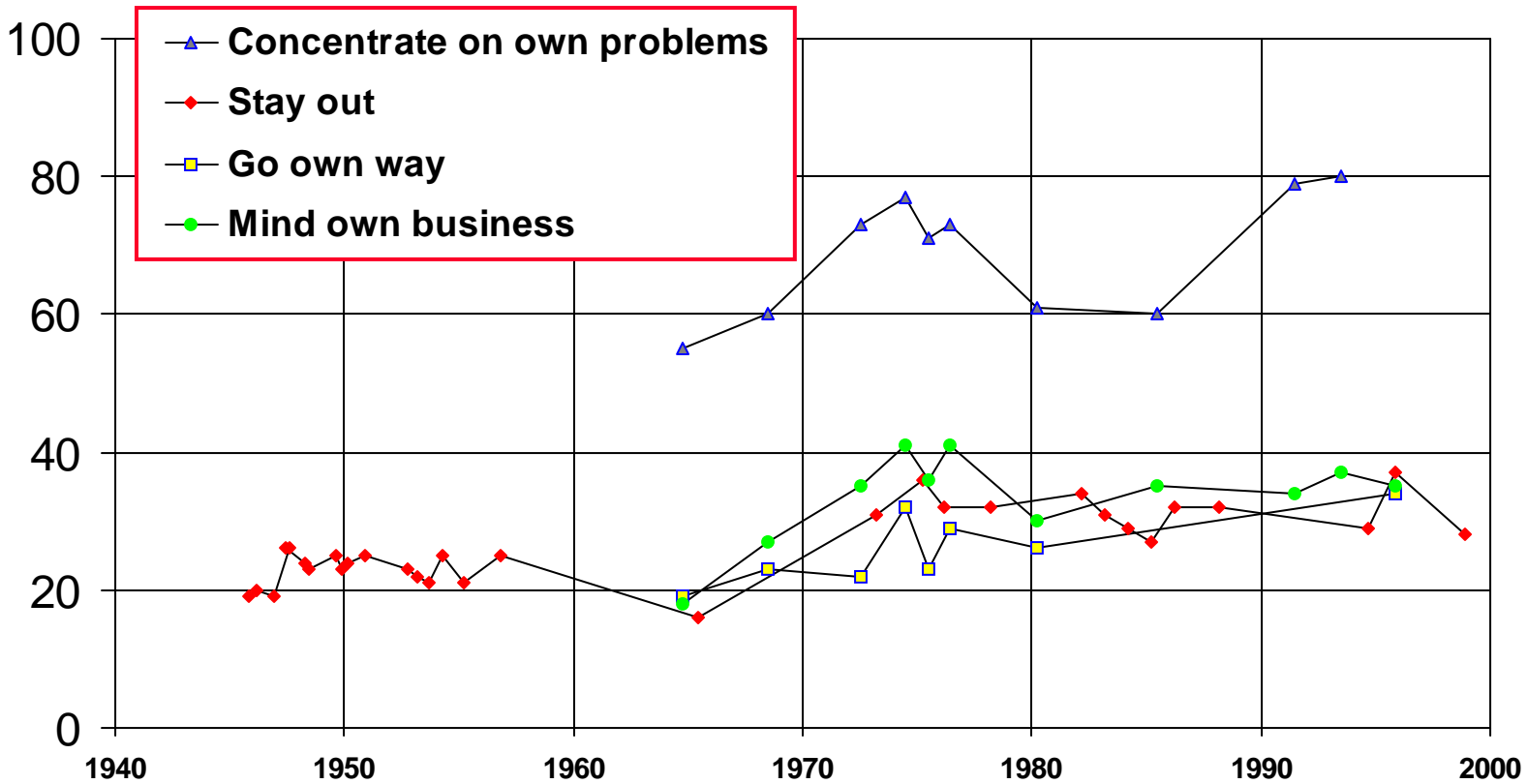
	Is a victory if Saddam remains in power	Not a victory	Don't know	
1991 Mar 1	55	38	7	
1991 Mar 14-15	50	43	7	763
1991 Apr 4-5	46	45	9	751
1991 Apr 18-22	36	55	9	761
1992 Jul 31-Aug 2 *	25	69	6	1002

* Last year, Saddam Hussein withdrew from Kuwait but he remains in power in Iraq. do you thin this was a victory for U.S. and allied forces in the Persian Gulf region, or not?

Source: Gallup Poll Monthly, August 1992, p. 34

Figure 1

ISOLATIONISM QUESTIONS



We shouldn't think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home.

Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stayed out of world affairs?

Since the United States is the most powerful nation in the world, we should go our own way in international matters, not worrying too much about whether other countries agree with us or not.

The United States should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along as best they can on their own.