

**AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND MILITARY VENTURES ABROAD:
ATTENTION, EVALUATION, INVOLVEMENT, POLITICS,
AND THE WARS OF THE BUSHES**

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ABSTRACT

In general, the American public pays very little attention to international affairs, a condition that does not seem to have been changed by the events of September 11, 2001. It seems to apply a fairly reasonable, commonsensical standard of benefit and cost when evaluating foreign affairs, and 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 and does not value foreign lives highly. Although the President does not necessarily need public support in advance to pull off a military venture, there is little or no long term political gain from successful ones. When the value of the stakes does not seem to be worth additional American lives, the public has shown a willingness to abandon an overextended or untenable position with little concern about saving face. However, if they are not being killed, American troops can remain in peace-keeping or nation-building ventures virtually indefinitely--for the most part, nobody will even remember that they are there.

In general, it seems that there is a substantial potential for the occupation of Iraq to become a deep political problem for Bush. Under favorable scenarios, public attention will switch to domestic issues, particularly to the troubled economy. Under quagmire ones, people are increasingly likely to see the war as a mistake, and starting and continuing wars that people come to consider mistaken does not enhance a president's re-electability. If Iraq does become a quagmire, the Bush administration could probably withdraw at a bearable electoral cost. The messy aftermath of the war against Iraq suggests that all or most of that self-infatuated talk about a brave new superpowered American "empire" and about triumphal "unilateralism" will fade.

American foreign policy is being reshaped in wake of the Cold War. And, as in the past, public opinion will play an important role in this process: as Ole Holsti has suggested, "we may moving into a period in which the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy takes on added rather than diminished significance" (1992, 461; see also Wittkopf 1990, 237). Indeed, it has already shown itself to be a notable impelling factor in some of the key policy decisions of the period. I would like to explore four issues: attention, evaluation, involvement, and politics, and then apply the observations derived from this exploration to current concerns about American policy in its occupation of Iraq, comparing that situation with the one that followed the Gulf War of 1991.¹

Attention

In general, the public pays very little attention to international affairs, something that can be shown in part by considering the results generated by the frequently asked poll question, "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?"

The question poses something of a contest: the hapless respondents are essentially asked to select the most notable irritant from the huge array of calamities arrayed daily in the news. Although they are allowed to give more than one response, the question does not encourage this, and at times, of course, the competition for the top spot can be quite severe. It is probably worth noting in addition that this question overstates concerns about political and international issues. A filter question asking the respondents whether they have given any attention to the country's problems would likely reduce the numbers of cited problems greatly--probably by half (Sterngold et al. 1994). Moreover, the responses would be quite a bit different if the question were broader, like the one asked by Samuel Stouffer in a classic study (1955, ch. 3): "What kinds of things do you worry about most?" The "big, overwhelming response," Stouffer found, "was in terms of personal and family problems." Indeed, 80 percent "answered *solely* in these terms." Then, to a follow-up question, "Are there other problems you worry or are concerned about, especially political or world problems?" 52 percent responded they had nothing to add.²

At any rate, it appears that the American public's natural tendency toward international issues is to pay them little heed: they principally focus on domestic matters when asked to designate the country's most important problem. Their attention can be diverted by major threats or by explicit, specific, and dramatic dangers to American lives overseas, but once these concerns fade, people return their attention to domestic issues with considerable alacrity--rather like "the snapping back of a strained elastic," as Gabriel Almond once put it (1960, 76). To those preoccupied by foreign affairs, this proclivity may resemble an attention deficit disorder.

This can be seen by scanning Figure 1 which displays an array of poll data covering nearly 70 years that are derived from responses to the question about the country's most important problem. It shows the percentage of the respondents in each poll who selected an international or foreign policy issue.

In the 1930s, domestic problems dominated even as a major war approached with such portentous and dangerous events as the Munich crisis of 1938. Only when war actually began in Europe in

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all data come from materials on deposit at the Roper Center for Public Opinion, Storrs, CT, and from Niemi et al. 1989.

² Results like these frequently elicit disapproving tongue-clicking. It is not clear, however, why one should expect people to spend a lot of time worrying about national or international problems, particularly when democratic capitalism not only leaves them free to choose other ways to get their kicks but in its seemingly infinite quest for variety is constantly developing seductive distractions. Some people are, of course, intensely interested in government and world affairs, but it verges on the arrogant to suggest that others are somehow inadequate or derelict unless they share the same curious passion (see Mueller 1999, ch. 6).

September 1939 and when war against Japan approached in the Pacific--from late 1939 through November 1941--did foreign affairs come to dominate the public's professed concerns.

War presumably became the chief preoccupation after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. There are no exact data, but when the most important problem question was twice asked during the war, it was prefaced by the words, "Aside from winning the war..." (see Smith 1985; Niemi et al. 1989, 39-46). Obviously and quite reasonably, the pollsters expected the war to be mentioned overwhelmingly if they had posed the question in its original form.

Most interestingly, attention to international concerns dropped to almost nothing at the end of the war in 1945. It rose again only two years later as the Truman Doctrine was announced in March 1947 and especially after the Communists alarmingly took over Czechoslovakia in February 1948. There was some decline in interest thereafter, but attention escalated again during the Korean War which lasted from June 1950 to the summer of 1953.

Over the next decade, foreign affairs generally commanded quite a bit of attention, especially during Cold War crises over U-2 overflights in May 1960, Berlin in the last half of 1961, and Cuban missiles in late 1962.

Then, in mid-1963, what might be called the classic Cold War came to an end with the Soviet-American detente surrounding the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (Mueller 1989, 156-62). And, as had happened at the end of the hot war in Europe and Asia in 1945, attention to foreign affairs dropped substantially.³

President Lyndon Johnson seems to have been able to center attention on foreign affairs again in the late summer and fall of 1964, a process that probably helped him in his reelection campaign against the Republican's Barry Goldwater who Johnson wanted to brand as an irresponsible war hawk. By 1966, Vietnam had come to dominate the public's attention, and it far outstripped all other foreign concerns. At the same time, of course, there were many domestic worries, particularly over the issues of civil rights and domestic disorder.

Attention to international issues declined by the 1970s as U.S. casualty rates in Vietnam were reduced and as troops began to be withdrawn. Then, the Vietnam War essentially came to an end as far as the American public was concerned with the January 1973 agreement to halt direct American participation in the fighting and, in particular, with the consequent release of American prisoners of war. Even though the United States was still committed to the area, and even though the war continued for more than two years, attention to Vietnam remained low and did not revive even when America's long time allies, the South Vietnamese, fell to Communist forces in the spring of 1975.

Between Vietnam and 2001, few events were able to focus the public's attention on foreign affairs. Indeed, at no time between the Tet offensive in the Vietnam War in early 1968 and the terrorist attacks of 2001 did foreign policy issues outweighed domestic ones in the public's concerns. Only three international issues notably intruded upon the American public's perceptions during that period, and none ever outdistanced the totality of domestic concerns.

One was a rise in attention after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, a concern apparently embellished by the Iran hostage crisis that had begun in November 1979. Even this rise is more fleeting and less impressive than might be expected, however: there is a brief spike of heightened interest in January 1980, but then a speedy and very substantial decline during the rest of that year.

Another was the remarkably heightened anxiety over thermonuclear war that materialized in the

³ For an analysis of American expectations of war during the classic Cold War period, see Mueller 1979.

early and mid-1980s and then withered with the rise of the disarmingly agreeable Mikhail Gorbachev in the USSR (see also Oreskes 1990). Although now substantially forgotten, as late as 1986 and 1987 over a fifth of the American public designated the danger of war as its country's greatest problem.⁴

The final attention-arresting international concern of the period was the Gulf crisis of 1990-91. Led by George Bush, the public was notably concerned about Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Interest in world affairs faded some in the fall, but was regenerated by Bush's drive toward war and escalated further when fighting actually took place in early 1991. It then dropped precipitously as soon as the war was over.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ended--even shattered--this long period of substantial inattention to foreign issues. For the first time since early 1968 foreign issues dominated domestic ones in the public's concern--though, actually, it could be argued, of course, that international terrorism is basically more nearly a domestic issue than a foreign one since the concern is about what the terrorist can do within the United States, not what they can do abroad. This concern remained high with the ensuing terrorist-related war on Afghanistan, and in 2002 and 2003 there was an additional focus on the war with Iraq. Since that war, however, attention to foreign affairs has slumped considerably, though not yet to the usual lows of the 1990s.

Over the last 70 years, then, the few events that have notably caused the public to divert its attention from domestic matters have been these:

1. World War II
2. certain Cold War crises before 1963
3. the Korea War
4. the Vietnam War
5. fleetingly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 presumably embellished by the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-81
6. the apparently heightened prospect in the mid-1980s of nuclear war
7. the Gulf crisis and war
8. the terrorist attacks of 2001 within the United States and the ensuing war in Afghanistan
9. the war against Iraq

Also of interest is the fact that, once these problems were resolved--particularly World War II, the classic Cold War, Vietnam, and the Gulf War--the public turned back to domestic matters with a virtuosity that is really quite remarkable. As will be discussed in the last section, something like this may be happening today in the wake of the Iraq War.

The most central conclusion from this survey of a lengthy poll trend remains that Americans show little interest in foreign and international matters unless they espy what appears to be a clear and present threat. It could be argued that the future of ordinary Americans is likely very importantly to be affected by international developments like globalization and the direction that Russia and China take. But issues like that are unlikely to register on a survey, crowded out as they are by such parochial domestic concerns as education, crime, drugs, and the condition of the economy. A 1998 poll, for example, asked people to list not one, but two or three problems facing the country and no international issue even made it into double figures--indeed, only 7 percent of all the problems mentioned were

⁴ For data, see Mueller 1994, 211-12. Of course, it could be argued that, objectively speaking, thermonuclear war was, and still is, the most important problem facing the country since that calamity could be devastatingly destructive. Clearly, however, the poll respondents are not unreasonably building an estimate of probability into their responses. For example, it appears that no one has ever suggested that the explosion of the sun might be the country's most important problem, even though that event would be even more consequential than thermonuclear war.

international. Then, when the respondents were specifically asked to designate two or three foreign policy problems, fully 21 percent were unable to come up with even one (Rielly 1999, 7-11). In fact, in some polls during and after the 1990s a few percent held the country's most important problem to be that it was spending too much time worrying about foreign concerns or was spending too much on foreign aid--responses that were dutifully included in the "foreign policy" category for the purposes of Figure 1 (see also Rielly 1999, 11).

However, as Figures 2 and 3 suggest, people do voice concern about some international issues, at least when they are specifically asked about them. Nuclear weapons remain a potentially potent attention-arresting concern--even as the weapons themselves dwindle in number and relevance from Cold War days--and so does terrorism.

In the runup to the Gulf War, George Bush was looking for issues which would support his case. His pollster, Robert Teeter urged that Iraq's nuclear potential could be a real "hot button" issue with the public.⁵ So alerted, the administration responded and was soon arguing that, contrary to earlier reports that the Iraqis were 5 to 10 years away from a nuclear bomb, they might be able to build one within a year (US News 1992, 179; Albright and Hibbs 1991). Although the effort does not appear to have decisively shifted opinion in Bush's favor, the nuclear argument may have been an important consideration for a number of waverers on the war (see Mueller 1994, 118). Similarly, although it may not be clear what a country like North Korea or Iran or Iraq would actually do with a nuclear weapon or two--confronted as they are by countries that have thousands of them--alarm over such a possibility has often risen to notable levels (see, for example, Will 1994; compare Fallows 1994/95, Mearsheimer and Walt 2003). In the 1990s, 80 percent or more of the public chose preventing the spread of nuclear weapons as a very important foreign policy goal and this rose to 90 in 2002 (see Figure 2). The "possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers" was selected by 72 percent as a "critical threat" to the United States, a figure that rose to 75 in 1998 and soared to 85 in 2002. In seeking to build support for war against Iraq during the last year, George W. Bush was clearly wise to stress its potential for developing nuclear weapons.

As Figure 3 indicates, international terrorism was almost as popular a "critical threat" as nuclear proliferation in a 1994 poll, and it topped it in 1998--both, of course, well before the September 11, 2001, attacks which sent it above 90 percent. In general, terrorist violence causes more disruption through the panic and overreaction it often provokes than through its direct effects. Over the course of the entire twentieth century fewer than 20 terrorist attacks managed to kill as many as 100 people, and none caused more than 400 deaths. The September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States in which some 3000 perished were accordingly quite literally off the charts. Until then, far fewer Americans were killed in any grouping of years by all forms of international terrorism than were killed by lightning (Figure 4).⁶ However, even including that disaster in the count, the number of people worldwide who die as a result of international terrorism is tiny compared to the numbers who die in most civil wars--or for that matter from automobile accidents, even in Israel. Indeed, it is likely that far fewer people were killed by all forms of terrorism during the course of the entire twentieth century than were hacked to death by the Rwandan *génocidaires* over a few weeks in 1994. Obviously, that could change if international terrorists are able to assemble sufficient weaponry or devise new tactics to kill masses of people and if they come to do so

⁵ For examples of the kinds of poll results Teeter was presumably pointing to, see Tables 122, 131, 133, and 134 in Mueller 1994.

⁶ The figure uses the latest State Department data. Apparently half the 3000 people killed in the bombings of September 11 were not Americans or else the count has been delayed.

routinely. But extreme events very often remain exactly that—aberrations rather than harbingers.⁷ However, terrorism was generating fear and concern far out of proportion to its objective importance long before September 11--which most people seem to think materially changed the situation. Thus, when Michael Moore had the audacity to note in an interview on CBS's 60 Minutes that "the chances of any of us dying in a terrorist incident is very, very, very small," his interviewer, Bob Simon, put him into his place by authoritatively informing him that "no one sees the world like that" (16 February 2003). Simon's assertion is almost as true as Moore's.⁸

Evaluation

In general, the American public seems to apply a fairly reasonable, commonsensical standard of benefit and cost when evaluating foreign affairs (see also Key 1966; Page and Shapiro 1992; Nincic 1992; Jentleson 1992; Holsti 1996, ch. 2; Jentleson and Britton 1998). An assessment of probable and potential American casualties is particularly important in its evaluation (see also Wittkopf 1990, 229; Larson 1996; Klarevas 1999).

After Pearl Harbor, the public had no difficulty accepting the necessity, and the costs, of confronting the threats presented by Germany and Japan even as it did in 2001 when terrorists killed even more people than had been slain at Pearl Harbor. During the Cold War, the public came to accept international Communism as a similar source of threat and was willing to enter the wars in Korea and Vietnam as part of a seen necessity to confront Communist challenges there--though as these wars progressed, there was a continuing reevaluation, and misgivings mounted about their wisdom. This decline of support appears primarily to have been a function (a logarithmic one) of cumulating American casualties, not of television coverage or anti-war protest, because the decline of enthusiasm followed the same pattern in both wars even though neither public protest nor television coverage were common in the Korean case (see Mueller 1973, chs. 3-6).⁹

Policy in the Gulf War of 1991 seems to have been subjected to a similar calculus. A fair number of Americans bought George Bush's notion that it was worth at least a few hundred American lives (far lower, however, than were suffered in Korea or Vietnam) to use war to turn back Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. But it is clear from poll data that, led by Democrats who had opposed the war in the first place, support for the effort would have eroded quickly (and in a logarithmic pattern) if significant casualties had been suffered (Table 1). Similar patterns (at lower casualty levels) are evident when the public was asked about his son's proposed war against Iraq (Table 2) and about peacekeeping in Bosnia

⁷ For speculation on this issue, see Mueller 2002, 2003a.

⁸ Some of this is because in all the endless yammering about terrorism since September 11, almost nothing is put forward about comparative probabilities. However, one recent analysis concludes that an American's chance of being killed in one non-stop airline flight is about one in 13 million, while to reach that same level of risk when driving on America's safest roads, rural interstate highways, one would have to travel a mere 11.2 miles. It further concludes that there would have to be one 9/11-type set of airline crashes a month to make flying as dangerous as driving America's safest roads (Michael Sivak and Michael J. Flannagan in American Scientist, Jan-Feb 2003, as reported in Wilson Quarterly, Spring 2003, p. 102). On this issue, see also Gorman 2003.

⁹ This conclusion is principally derived from trend data on the percentage holding the wars to have been a mistake. Opinion data concerning policy options does not permit a precise trend assessment about whether the public came to support withdrawal or escalation during the course of the wars because the polling agencies constantly changed the wording of the relevant questions in important ways (for an extensive display and analysis of such data, see Mueller 1973, ch. 4). For an analysis that seems to be insensitive to this issue, see Schwarz 1994; for a correction, see Larson 1996.

(Table 3).

Although concern about American lives often seems nuanced when the public assesses foreign affairs, there are times when it becomes so obsessive that policy may suffer in consequence. For example, it could be maintained that the Vietnam War was essentially supported until the prisoners of war held by Hanoi were returned. Although it may not make a great deal of sense to continue a war costing thousands of lives to gain the return of a few hundred prisoners, it would be difficult to exaggerate the political potency of this issue. In a May 1971 poll, 68 percent agreed that U.S. troops should be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of the year. However, when asked if they would still favor withdrawal "even if it threatened [not *cost*] the lives or safety of United States POWs held by North Vietnam," support for withdrawal dropped to 11 percent (see Table 4).¹⁰ The emotional attachment to prisoners of war was also central to the lengthy and acrimonious peace talks in Korea, and outrage at the fate of American POWs on Bataan probably intensified hatred for the Japanese during World War II almost as much as the attack on Pearl Harbor.

This process is also illustrated by some evidence from the Somalia episode of October 1993. After the debacle there, a Somalia group captured one American soldier. The public's determination to remain until the prisoner was recovered (and then to withdraw) is clear from Table 5.¹¹ And there was, of course, the remarkable preoccupation by politicians and press with Americans held hostage by Iran during the crisis of 1979-1981 to the virtual exclusion of issues and events likely to be of far greater importance historically. After that, the fate of a few hostages in Lebanon often seems to have held the Reagan administration hostage throughout the 1980s, an obsession that helped to generate the Iran-Contra scandal. And, until the Americans taken by Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait were released in December 1990, freeing them formed a major concern in the crisis for Americans--considerably more than freeing Kuwait (Table 6).

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. It may not be surprising to discover that there was little sympathy with the Japanese civilian population during World War II--many, after all, saw Japanese civilization as one huge war machine targeted against the United States.¹² But the Gulf War was radically different in this respect: for example, 60 percent of the American public held the Iraqi people to be *innocent of any* blame for their leader's policies (Mueller 1994, 316). This lack of animosity toward the Iraqi people did not translate into a great deal of sympathy among the American public for civilian casualties caused by air attacks, however. 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 support for bombing (see Table 7).

¹⁰ The force of this attitude was clearly felt by diplomats and politicians: negotiator Henry Kissinger recalls that "unilateral withdrawal...would not do the trick; it would leave our prisoners in Hanoi's hands," and "Vietnamization pursued to the end would not return our prisoners" (1979, 1011, 1039). For domestic political reasons, the option of ending the war without the return of the prisoners was apparently not even a hypothetical consideration.

¹¹ Policy makers seem well aware of this problem. Much of the reticence about bombing in Bosnia stemmed from fear that West European peace-keepers might be caught in the crossfire or taken hostage, and, accordingly, extensive bombing was begun in 1995 only after they had been quietly removed from vulnerable areas. The same thing happened with bombing campaigns against Iraq in 1998 and against Serbia in 1999.

¹² Asked what should be done with the Japanese after the war, 10 to 15 percent volunteered the solution of extermination. And 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" (Mueller 1973, 172-73).

Moreover, images of the "highway of death" and reports that 100,000 Iraqis had died in the war¹³ scarcely dampened enthusiasm at the various "victory" and "welcome home" parades and celebrations. Nor was much sympathy or even interest shown for the Iraqi civilian deaths that resulted from the severe sanctions imposed during the 1990s (see Mueller and Mueller 1999, 2000).

Involvement

After the Cold War, some people became worried that the American public had turned isolationist since it was able notably to contain its enthusiasm for sending American troops to police such trouble spots as Bosnia and Haiti. But it seems more likely that there has been little essential change of standards. 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

Figure 5 displays the results for a set of questions designed to tap isolationism. Focusing on consistently-worded questions, the ending of the Cold War in 1989 did not have much impact. There was some rise in isolationism after Vietnam in the mid-1970s, and something of a decline since then (abrupt drops in isolationism registered at the end of the Gulf War in 1991 and after the terrorist attacks of 2001 were soon reversed). For the most part, however, any overall changes have been modest.

With respect to foreign interventions, the public seems to apply, as usual, a fairly reasonable cost-benefit calculus. A substantial loss of American lives may have been tolerable if the enemy was threatening international Communism, terrorists dedicated to killing Americans, or the country that bombed Pearl Harbor, but risking lives to police small, distant, unthreatening, and apparently perennially-troubled countries has proved difficult to manage.

For example, 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. 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 1999). After that, support for the venture, already substantially reduced, it seems, to its hard core supporters, dropped even further, and criticism became rampant.¹⁴

In essence, when Americans asked themselves how many American lives peace in Somalia was worth, the answer came out rather close to zero as Table 8 forcefully suggests (see also Dole 1995, 41). The general reluctance to become involved in the actual fighting in Bosnia (despite years of the supposed "CNN effect") suggests that Americans reached a similar conclusion for that trouble spot--as have, it seems, Britons, Germans, Canadians, and others in their own terms.¹⁵ It seems clear that policing efforts

¹³ This figure is almost certainly much too high, probably by a factor of more than 10: see Heidenrich 1993, Mueller 1995.

¹⁴ The popularly-accepted notion that the debacle was importantly caused by the UN (Dole 1995, 37) is not only wrong, but grotesque: see Gordon and Friedman 1993. Despite the criticism of the UN that this episode inspired, especially from Republicans, there has been no notable decline in public support for the UN (see Murray, Klarevas, and Hartley 1997, and the data in Figure 2).

¹⁵ 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

will be tolerable only as long as the costs in lives for the policing forces remain extremely low.

It is true that during the Cold War 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 (see Table 9 and Mueller 1973, 44, 48-49, 58, 100-1). Similarly, as Figure 2 suggests, "protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression" (much less fighting to do so) has usually achieved comparatively low ratings among foreign policy goals both during and after the Cold War. Thus an unwillingness to send Americans to die for purposes that are essentially humanitarian is hardly new.¹⁶

Politics

In 1984, a year after the American invasion of 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). 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.¹⁷

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 massacred and mutilated early in the genocide (Gourevitch 114, 149-50). For the remarkable conclusion, based on a single poll question, that Americans might be willing, on average, to sacrifice 6,861 U.S. military deaths in order to stabilize a democratic government in Congo, see Feaver and Gelpi 1999. For a similar take, see Kull and Destler 1999, 106-8, critiqued by Larson 1999, 625.

¹⁶ Actually, this is not such an unusual position for humanitarian ventures. If Red Cross or other workers are killed while 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 of their service personnel.

¹⁷ Contrary to Weinberger's suggestion, the United States did have a clear strategy for victory in Vietnam: attrition. The basic idea was to carry the war to the enemy until it reached its "breaking point" at which juncture it might "fade away" (as in Greece, Malaya, and the Philippines) or (perhaps under pressure from the Soviets or Chinese) cut a deal (as in Korea and Indochina). In this, as Secretary of State Dean Rusk observed in 1971, American strategists "underestimated the resistance and determination of the North Vietnamese." But experience suggests that this misestimation, however unfortunate, was quite reasonable. As it happens, the willingness of the Vietnamese Communists to accept punishment was virtually unprecedented in the history of modern warfare. If the battle death rate as a percentage of prewar population is calculated for each of the hundreds of countries that have participated in international and colonial wars since 1816, it is apparent that Vietnam was an extreme case. Even discounting heavily for exaggerations in the "body count," the Communist side was willing to accept battle loss rates that were about twice as high as those accepted by the fanatical, often suicidal, Japanese in World War II. Furthermore, the few combatants who have taken losses as high as the Vietnamese Communists were mainly those like the Germans and Soviets in World War II who were fighting to the death for their national existence--not simply for expansion, like North Vietnam. This extraordinary Communist tenacity could not have been confidently anticipated: they accepted losses far higher than those sustained in their earlier war against the French. It may well be that, as one American general put it, "they

Like Vietnam, several other military interventions pretty clearly passed the fifth of these tests--that they be supported by Congress and public opinion--when they were initiated. Others, however, fail that test quite noticeably because 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 and Iraq Wars. 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. Thus the President does not necessarily need public support in advance to pull off a military venture.

However, there is little or no long term political gain from successful international ventures. It is true that 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. The public does not seem to be very interested in rewarding--or even remembering--foreign policy success. 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 to have been at least as unrewarding. Nobody gave Eisenhower much credit for a successful venture into Lebanon in 1958, to Johnson for success in the Dominican Republic in 1965, to Carter for husbanding an important Middle East treaty in 1979, to Reagan for a successful invasion of Grenada in 1983, or to Clinton for resolving, at no cost in American lives, the Bosnia problem in 1995. 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.¹⁸ 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 the presidency a few months later, Gore scarcely thought it important or memorable enough to bring up, and Clinton's "much-discussed legacy" seems to have centered on rather

were in fact the best enemy we have faced in our history" (the opposite characterization could be made of the enemy in the Gulf War). The decisions to question, therefore, are more nearly those of the Vietnamese Communists who continued to send thousands upon thousands of young men to the south to be ground up by the American war machine to achieve a goal that was far from central to their survival as a nation and that could have been pursued in far less costly ways. In the end, of course, attrition succeeded in Vietnam; but it was the Americans, not the Communists, who reached their breaking point. On these issues, see Mueller 1980; 1989, 174-76).

¹⁸ Of course, the truly big electoral loser of World War II was Britain's Winston Churchill, voted out of office even as he was attending a peace conference at the end of the war. Nor did Woodrow Wilson or his party derive long term benefit from victory in World War I. There may be some partial exceptions to this pattern, however. Eisenhower benefited 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 it was pointedly brought up again by Republicans in the 1968 election, a full 15 years after the event (Mueller 1973, 234). A good case for an exception seems to be the War of 1812 which seems to have benefited the Republicans who had instituted it (see Mueller 1994, 108-11), and something similar may have happened after 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 facts that the economy was improving impressively (see Norpoth 1987a, 1987b) and that the opposition Labour Party was in massive disarray at the same time.

different matters.¹⁹

At the same time, there is little or no long term political loss from international failures when the perceived stakes are low--unless the failure becomes massively expensive. This means the U.S. can abruptly pull out of many failed missions without having to worry too much about loss of face or effective political back-biting.

While Americans place a high, even sometimes exaggerated, value on the lives of other Americans, their reaction when Americans are killed varies considerably. In some cases it leads to demands for revenge, in others for cutting losses and withdrawing. Which emotion prevails seems to depend on an evaluation of the stakes involved

When Americans were killed at Pearl Harbor, the outraged calls for revenge against the Japanese was overwhelming--as they were against terrorists after September 11. But Japan and the terrorists were also seen as palpable threats to the United States itself. Similarly, although American decision makers apparently thought differently at the time, it seems clear from poll results like those in Table 6 that if Iraq had attacked American troops in the Saudi desert where they were placed after its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the Pearl Harbor syndrome would have been activated: Saddam Hussein would likely have been seen as an aggressor whose appetite knew no bounds and must be confronted immediately (see also Mueller 1994, 123). Table 6 also suggests that if Saddam had killed some of his American hostages, this would have formed a major reason to go to war (far more than cutting off oil supplies).

When the value of the stakes does not seem to be worth additional American lives, however, the public has shown a willingness to abandon an overextended or untenable position. Thus the public came to accept, even substantially to support, the decision to withdraw its policing troops from Lebanon in 1983 after a terrorist bomb killed 241 U.S. marines in the chaotic civil war there. Public opinion data on the episode are sparse, but they tend to suggest that the Lebanon venture was never very popular with the public (Larson 1996, 48; Burk 1999, 65). Shortly after the Marines were killed, 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--this even though Reagan's earlier overblown sales pitch had 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). Meanwhile, the percentage advocating removal of the troops remained high and then grew considerably during the next weeks (Table 10 and Figure 6). Similarly, the deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers in Somalia in 1993 helped lead to demands for withdrawal (after the lone American POW was recovered), not for calls to revenge the humiliation. Unlike the problems with Japan in 1941 or with Afghanistan in 2001, 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 its losses and leave.

These episodes thus demonstrate that when military intervention at least in low-valued ventures leads to unacceptable deaths, troops can be readily removed with little concern about saving face. As Table 11 suggests, after the fact Americans said that, although they considered Reagan's expedition to Lebanon to have been a failure, many, with reasonable nuance, felt it still to have been "a good idea at the time." The lessons of Korea and Vietnam suggest that there can be electoral consequences if casualties are allowed to rise very substantially. But, at least 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. As the

¹⁹ Conceivably, a successful venture will help if it comes close enough to the next election. There may have been such an effect in the March 2000 presidential election in Russia where the popular invasion of Chechnya seems to have boosted Vladimir Putin's election prospects even higher than they might otherwise have been.

experiences with Lebanon and Somalia suggest, by the time the next election rolls around, people will have substantially forgotten the whole thing. Thus, the situation does not have to become a quagmire. Most remarkably in this regard, the utter collapse of the American position in Vietnam 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; see also Mueller 1984).

Presidential advisor Dick 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. The phenomenon also suggests that low-valued ventures should be sold not with cosmic internationalist hype, but rather realistically as international social work that can be shrugged off if it begins to go awry.

However, if they are not being killed, American troops can remain in peace-keeping or nation-building ventures virtually indefinitely. Although there is a strong political demand that casualties in most military ventures--particularly those deemed of little importance--be low, there seems to be little problem about keeping occupying forces in place as long as they are not being killed--for the most part, nobody will even remember that they are there. Thus, 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. After the 1993 Somalia fiasco, for example, the Americans stayed on for several months and, since none were being killed, little attention was paid or concern voiced. Similarly, although there was little public or political support for sending U.S. troops to Haiti in 1994, there was almost no protest about keeping them there since none was 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). Although Clinton suggested that policing troops sent to Bosnia in 1995 might be withdrawn after one year, there was little public concern (or notice) when their stay was extended. 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 some remain after being placed there by the Bush administration in 1992) or in Kansas.

But of course, if American troops start being killed, particularly in low-valued ventures, there will be public and political demands to get them out whatever "time-certain" for withdrawal had previously been arranged. Thus, despite calls for knowing in advance what the endgame will be, the only "exit strategy" required is a tactical arrangement to yank the troops abruptly and painlessly from the scene should things go awry.

The wars of the Bushes

I would like to conclude by seeking to apply some of these observations about attention, evaluation, involvement, and politics to the current political situation (or dilemma) for George W. Bush in the wake of his essentially successful war against Iraq, comparing his situation to the one his father experienced after the Gulf War of 1991. These observations will obviously be tentative and speculative because the situation is only beginning to evolve and because there are considerable uncertainties about what will happen. In general, however, it seems that there is a substantial potential for the occupation of Iraq to become a deep political problem for Bush.

The fat lady sang in Bush's father's war: once Iraq was expelled, the Kuwaiti regime could come back from exile and take over, and American troops could go home to parade victoriously in American cities. No such pleasant fate greeted their descendants in 2003 who had to remain to build a viable national government out of the rubble that remained after Saddam, the sanctions, and the war had taken

their toll. Moreover, although many Iraqis are glad to see Saddam's tyranny toppled, the invaders have often found the population resentful and humiliated, rather than gleeful or grateful. Most importantly, bringing order to the situation has been vastly complicated by the fact that some people--including apparently some foreign terrorists drawn opportunistically to the area--have been dedicated to sabotaging the victors' peace and to killing the policing forces (Fattah 2003, Rubin 2003). And as a prominent hawkish columnist frankly observed, "Two quick wars have made U.S. soldiers the main guarantors of national integrity in Iraq and Afghanistan for years to come" (Hoagland 2003).

Success

Several scenarios are possible. Let us begin with the one most favorable to Bush: the situation in Iraq gradually improves as a new government and effective new Iraqi police and military forces are set up and, crucially, as attacks on American troops cease or at least subside to a scarcely noticeable level. History suggests that Bush may not benefit greatly in this case because, as with his previously successful war in Afghanistan (or as with his father's in Kuwait or with Clinton's successes in Bosnia in 1995 or in Kosovo in 1999 or with other earlier instances discussed in the first section of this paper), public attention will switch to domestic issues, particularly to the troubled economy. As Figures 1 and 7 show, this happened to his father, and as Figures 8 and 9 suggest, this may already be happening to Bush the younger. Obviously, if the economy also improves notably, this shift of focus will not be a great problem for Bush, though, as Figure 8 indicates, his handling of the economy has not generally been his strongest suit. In addition, insofar as people remain concerned about the economy, the financial costs of the Iraqi occupation, even assuming attacks on American forces subside, will continue to be considerable--and far higher than most people were led to believe by the administration before the war--and will be factored into the consideration.

At present, the situation in Iraq is essentially a humanitarian one--freeing the people of Iraq from a contemptible tyranny--and Americans are less willing to expend lives and treasure on such ventures than on ones that seem to have dealt with direct threats to the United States. Finding so-called weapons of mass destruction²⁰ or (especially) really credible links of the former Iraqi regime to terrorists seeking to do damage to the United States would raise the value of the war and occupation out of the purely humanitarian sphere, but Americans will still likely turn their attention to domestic issues. After all, the Gulf War of 1991 was undeniably effective at turning back an act of aggression, something the public considered to be of great national importance (Mueller 1994, 42). Moreover, Bush's father was given exceedingly high marks for the success--as a comparison of Figures 7 and 8 indicates, the approval ratings he achieved during and especially at the end of his war were far higher than those attained by his son in the sequel of 2003. Yet, people tend to focus on the economy, and the Democratic candidate won in 1992.

Finding and dispatching Saddam Hussein could also help, but that, like the killing of Saddam's two sons, is unlikely to have great, long-lasting resonance since, in the end, it would mostly just add dramatic terminal punctuation to an accomplished story--the forceful eradication of the regime.

Quagmire

Another scenario is quagmire--escalating financial and, particularly, human costs to Americans in a venture that increasingly comes to seem to have been of questionable value. Judging from the data in Tables 12 and 13 and Figure 10, something like that may already be underway. As can be seen in Table 12 and Figure 10, considerably more people supported the notion that the war had been worth it at

²⁰ For discussions questioning whether biological and particularly chemical weapons are actually capable of mass destruction, see Easterbrook 2002, Mueller and Mueller 1999, 2000.

the end of the 1991 Gulf War than at the end of the 2003 venture in Iraq. The 1991 euphoria diminished greatly over the next three months, probably because of the fact that Saddam remained in control in Iraq and because of the messy postwar aftermath in Iraq as uprisings in the north and south were brutally put down by Saddam's army (on this issue, see also Mueller 1994, 85-89), but it declined only a bit more over the next several months. The drop in 2003, from a considerably lower high at the war's end, has been at least as fast. Most importantly, there were no American lives lost after the Gulf War and the financial costs of the war proved to be very low because there was no occupation and because various other countries picked up most of the tab for the war itself. These circumstances do not hold at all for the war against Iraq and a notably increasing public uneasiness about continuing postwar American casualties has already been registered as can be seen in Table 13. In a quagmire scenario, the declines in Tables 12 and 13 seem likely to continue.

At least so far, the public may be willing to accept the notion that the job begun in Iraq needs to be finished--that may be what the numbers in Table 14 are suggesting. A parallel with Vietnam may be appropriate. An increasing number of people came to see the war as a mistake (see Mueller 1973, 52-58). However, there was a sort of continuing support for the U.S. effort there, as the discussion in connection with Table 4 suggests, in fear of a Communist takeover and, in particular, because North Vietnam still continued to hold American prisoners of war. Although a similar sort of grudging acceptance may continue for Iraq, a really impelling issue, like the one about POWs, does not hold in this case. In addition, Democrats--who still have not really sounded off that much on the war and its aftermath--will have an incentive to exploit the issue, particularly if an increasing number of people come to view the venture as a mistake. Many Democrats in Congress, seeing war as inevitable and anticipating that it would turn out to be as easy and as triumphal as the one in 1991, scurried to be on the right side of this issue this time and timorously voted for Bush's war effort, but they can always say, Gulf of Tonkin-like, that they had been the victims of administration duplicity--and, in fact, they are already beginning to do so. At any rate, the key operable electoral issue is likely to be whether the war is held to have been a mistake, not whether the job needs to be completed. As Truman and Johnson found out, starting and then maintaining wars that people increasingly come to consider mistaken does not enhance a president's re-electability.

If the Iraqi situation continues to deteriorate and if the economy fails to revive handily, there will probably be an effort by the Republicans to stress the terrorism issue since this has consistently been Bush's strongest suit (Clives 2003). The data in Figure 9 suggest, however, that this is unlikely to be successful--terrorism now draws less than 10 percent in the most important problem sweepstakes. An actual major attack of international terrorism on American soil would reverse this, of course. But it is not clear this would benefit Bush because Americans expect him to prevent terrorist attacks and might conclude from another terrorist event that he is failing at this key job.

Withdrawal

As the discussion above suggests, if Iraq does become a quagmire, the Bush administration could probably withdraw from Iraq at a bearable electoral cost. The fiascos in Lebanon under Reagan or in Somalia under Clinton failed to have notable consequences in their later re-election campaigns, and even the experience with debacle in Vietnam--a far more important venture--was largely irrelevant in the ensuing presidential election. A possible public conclusion might be:

The war was a good idea at the time, and it did get rid of a bad regime (at a very low cost to us), something the Iraqis couldn't do for themselves. Now let them dig themselves out of the situation. God knows they've got enough oil to pay for it. That's better than sending Americans over there to be shooting gallery targets, and, anyway, we have much more important domestic problems to deal with.

It would be useful, nonetheless, to find some sort of face saving device. Shunned by the Bush administration in its plunge toward war, the international community has not been eager to join in on the monumental reconstruction effort. The inability of the conquerors to find any evidence of those banned and greatly feared weapons of mass destruction, much less links to international terrorism, only enhances this reluctance as does the fact that there are people in Iraq (unlike Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, for example, or for that matter postwar Germany and Japan) who are devoted to killing peacekeepers whatever their nationality (Fattah 2003). Conceivably, however, the international community might be willing to assist with an extraction, particularly if the Americans display a certain amount of uncharacteristic humility and agree to foot the bill.

There would, of course, be a downside to the process. American prestige would suffer, and the Iraqis would be left in a desperate condition and might devolve into chaos or even into destructive civil war. Moreover, Osama bin Laden's theory that the Americans can be defeated, or at least productively inconvenienced, by inflicting small, but continuously draining, casualties on them would have achieved encouraging confirmation: thus, a venture that was designed and sold in part as a blow against international terrorists would end up emboldening and energizing them. But, as with earlier fiascos and debacles, these consequences are likely to be less significant electorally. The Democrats would not find much political gain in suggesting that American troops should be sent over to be killed to police the situation, though they would doubtless attempt to lambaste Bush for incompetence--as the Republicans did for Clinton after Somalia.

Repetition

The messy aftermath of the war against Iraq suggests that all or most of that self-infatuated talk about a brave new superpowered American "empire," about triumphal "unilateralism," and about swaggering hegemonism will fade. Already the administration is making nice with axis-of-evil pillar North Korea and showing a willingness to give in to its extortionist demands, even while tiptoeing delicately around an opportunity in Liberia to do some unalloyed good through the judicious, timely, and inexpensive assertion of military force.²¹

As in 1991, the superpowered, imperial, unilateralist, and now nearly friendless hegemon has shown itself capable of overpowering a pathetic, criminalized, military force that lacks leadership, morale, training, discipline, comparable weaponry, intelligence, strategy, tactics, and defenses (Mueller 1995, Wilson 2003, Zucchini 2003). But the economic and human costs of policing and rebuilding its shattered and ungrateful new dependency in the Middle East suggests the invader will be wary of repeating the experience. True hegemonism, one might think, should be made of sterner stuff.

²¹ On this issue more generally, see Mueller forthcoming.

Table 1

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 2

Suppose President George W. Bush decides to order U.S. troops into a ground attack against Iraqi forces. Would you favor or oppose that decision? (If support) The number of possible casualties in a ground war with Iraq had been estimated at between 100 American soldiers, if the Iraqi military offers little resistance, to as many as 5,000 American soldiers if the Iraqi Republican Guard fight an effective urban defense. With this in mind, would you still support sending ground troops to fight in Iraq if it meant that up to 100 American soldiers would be killed in battle, or not? (If yes) Would you still support sending ground troops if up to 500 American soldiers were killed in battle or not? (If yes) Up to 1,000? (If yes) Up to 5,000? (If yes) Would you say you would support sending ground troops to fight in Iraq no matter what is cost in American casualties, or not? (Los Angeles Times, December 12-15, 2002)

35%	Oppose war
7	Don't know if favor or oppose
58	Favor war
49%	Still favor if any killed
46%	Still favor if 100 killed
43%	Still favor if 500 killed
37%	Still favor if 1000 killed
32%	Still favor if 5000 killed
24%	Still favor if more than 5000 but not unlimited
17%	Still favor not matter the cost in American casualties
6%	Don't know about casualties

Table 3

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 Oct 19-22	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 4

May 1971

A proposal has been made in Congress to require the U.S. government to bring home all U.S. troops from Vietnam by the end of the year. Would you like to have your congressman vote for or against this proposal?
 68 Favor 20 Oppose 12 No opinion

Would you favor withdrawal of all United States troops by the end of 1971 even if it meant a Communist takeover of South Vietnam?
 29 Favor 59 Oppose 16 No opinion

Would you favor withdrawal of all United States troops by the end of 1971 even if it threatened [not cost] the lives or safety of United States POWs held by North Vietnam?
 11 Favor 75 Oppose 14 No opinion

Source: Mueller 1973, 97-98.

Table 5

Which of these three policies do you most favor for US policy in Somalia? (1993 Oct 6)

- 11% withdraw all US troops immediately
- 67 withdraw all US troops but only after all US servicemen are returned
- 19 or stay in Somalia until political stability is restored?
- 3 Not sure

Table 6

Now that the U.S. (United States) forces have been sent to Saudi Arabia and other areas of the Middle East, do you think they should engage in combat if Iraq... (Gallup)

A ...invades Saudi Arabia?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10	67	23	10
1990 Oct 18-19 *	68	19	13

B ...refuses to leave Kuwait and restore its former government?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10	42	40	18
1990 Oct 18-19 *	45	37	18
1990 Nov 15-16 *	46	40	14

C ...continues to hold U.S. civilians hostage?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10 **	61	30	9
1990 Oct 18-19 *	57	32	11
1990 Nov 15-16 *	55	34	11

** holds American civilians hostage?

D ...kills American civilians in Kuwait and Iraq?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10	79	14	7

E ...begins to control or cut off oil?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10	58	31	11

F ...attacks U.S. forces?

	Engage in combat	Do not engage in combat	Don't know
1990 Aug 9-10	94	4	2
1990 Oct 18-19 *	93	3	4
1990 Nov 15-16 *	91	6	3

* response items rotated

Table 7

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
1991 Feb 13	Bombing of shelter in Baghdad			
1991 Feb 14	13	67	18	2

Table 8

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 9

Here is a list of arguments that have been given for our military effort in Vietnam. I'm going to ask you to read over this card carefully. Then I'm going to ask you to tell me which two or three of these you yourself feel are the very strongest arguments? (Institute for International Social Research, February 1968)

- 49% If we do not continue, the Communists will take over Vietnam and then move on to other parts of the world
- 48 We must support our fighting men
- 33 If we quit now, it would weaken the will of other countries to defend their freedom
- 33 If we give up now, the whole expenditure of American lives and money will have been in vain
- 24 The United States should never accept defeat
- 23 If we do not continue, we will lose prestige and the confidence of our friends and allies abroad
- 19 We are committed to South Vietnam
- 14 If we pull out and the Communists take over, they will kill many of the Vietnamese who have opposed them
- 8 If we persevere, we are sure to gain our objectives

Table 10

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
1993 Oct 23	241 Marines are killed in bomb attack			
1993 Oct 23	21	21	48	10
1993 Oct 24	Reagan gives press conference			
1993 Oct 25	31	26	39	5
1993 Oct 26	16	33	45	6
1993 Oct 27	Reagan gives speech on Lebanon, Grenada			
1993 Oct 28	17	41	37	5
1993 Nov 3-7	13	41	39	7
1993 Dec 8-13	9	38	48	5
1994 Jan 3	5	30	59	6
1994 Jan 4	8	29	57	6
1994 Jan 12-17	7	31	58	4
1994 Feb	U.S. troops are redeployed to ships off shore			
1994 Mar 30	Reagan formally withdraws from peacekeeping			

Table 11

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 12

All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting, or not? (Washington Post)

		Worth fighting	Not worth fighting	No opinion
Gulf War:				
1991 Mar 4*	<u>end of war</u>	86	13	1
1991 Jun 2**		70	26	3
1991 Jul 28**		67	30	3
1992 Feb 2**		66	32	2
Iraq War:				
2003 Apr 30	<u>end of war</u>	70	27	4
2003 Jun 22		64	33	3
2003 Jul 10		57	40	3

* "this war"

** "the Persian Gulf war";

Table 13

Again thinking about the goals versus the costs of the war, so far in your opinion has there been an acceptable or unacceptable number of U.S. military casualties in Iraq? (Washington Post)

	Acceptable	Unacceptable	No opinion
2003 Mar 27	58	34	9
2003 Apr 3	62	32	5
2003 Apr 9	<u>fall of Baghdad</u>	28	6
2003 Jun 22	51	44	5
2003 Jul 10	44	52	3

Table 14

Do you think (the United States should keep its military forces in Iraq until civil order is restored there, even if that means continued U.S. military casualties); or do you think (the United States should withdraw its military forces from Iraq in order to avoid further U.S. military casualties, even if that means civil order is not restored there)? (Washington Post)

	Keep forces	Withdraw forces	No opinion
2003 Jul 10	72	26	2

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