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THE MOGADISHU EFFECT: AMERICA'S FAILURE-DRIVEN FOREIGN POLICY

A Thesis

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty of the History Department

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Kearney

By

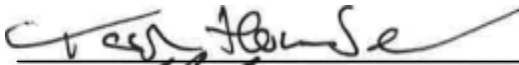
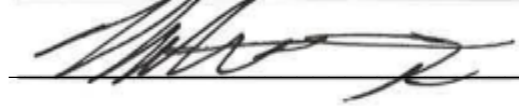
Philip Benjamin Dotson

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

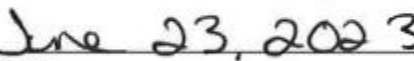
Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Kearney.

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ABSTRACT

The October 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, commonly referred to as “Black Hawk Down,” transformed American foreign policy in its wake. One of the largest special operations missions in recent history, the failures in Somalia left not only the United States government and military in shock, but also the American people. After the nation’s most elite fighting forces suffered a nearly 50 percent casualty rate at the hands of Somali warlords during what many Americans thought was a humanitarian operation, Congress and the American people erupted in anger. Although the United States has continued to be seen as an overbearing global peacekeeping force in the thirty years since Somalia, the Battle of Mogadishu served as the turning point for a generational foreign policy shift that significantly limited future global intervention because of the overt publicization of battle’s aftermath in the media, domestic and international reactions, and a fear of repeating the same mistakes elsewhere. The first major American loss of life after the Cold War, the battle and the reaction that followed, known as the “Mogadishu effect,” forced President Clinton to rethink the United States’ role internationally. Clinton and his administration struggled to convince the American people that involvement overseas, especially global peacekeeping, was vital to international order after becoming the world’s sole superpower. Congressional hearings, presidential correspondence, government documents, poll results, and numerous media releases across Clinton’s presidency mark the distinct shift in American foreign policy that took place after Mogadishu. Although he inherited involvement in the United Nations mission in Somalia from George H.W. Bush, the failures in Somalia transformed Clinton’s humanitarian

involvement in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda, tarnishing the remainder of his presidency and shifting expectations of significant American involvement in international peacekeeping after the Cold War.

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Far too many people played a role in the creation and production of this thesis to thank them all. There are a few, however, that deserve special recognition. I owe a debt of gratitude to my undergraduate thesis advisor, Dr. Thomas Mach of Cedarville University, for his belief in me and his ability to focus my early work on this topic. His mentorship lit a fire in me to pursue this topic far beyond my undergraduate studies and this thesis would never have come to fruition without his help. I'm also indebted to my graduate thesis advisor, Dr. Linda Van Ingen of the University of Nebraska at Kearney for her willingness to help me navigate this topic over the past year. The countless hours she spent reviewing my writing to reach this point has not only taught me immensely but has also probably bled Kearney dry of red ink. To my parents, Dr. Chris Dotson and Rebecca Dotson, I will never be able to repay your imprint on my life. From my mom's early devotion to my education that meant endless nights teaching, playing, and reading to me, to my dad's consistent push to better myself and continue my education, their impact has been immeasurable. To my wife, Molly, I will forever be grateful for her willingness to bear the bulk of the responsibilities around the house and put up with my long days at work and late nights completing my degree and researching and writing this thesis. You all mean the world to me and hopefully this thesis will validate your support and belief in my continued education.

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Introduction

The Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia, commonly referred to as “Black Hawk Down,” was one of the most controversial conflicts in the second half of the twentieth century. One of the largest special operations missions in recent history, the failures at the Battle of Mogadishu in October of 1993 shook the United States to its core. As Somalis dragged the bodies of dead Americans through the dusty streets, a tragedy displayed on the screens of televisions across the United States and printed on the front page of nearly every newspaper, both politicians and the public began to question why the nation’s military had fallen prey to such a disaster. Despite the nation’s familiarity with robust overseas military involvement, Mogadishu felt different. In the twenty years before Somalia, American forces were deployed across Europe, fought in Vietnam, toppled regimes in Grenada and Panama, suppressed the Iraqi incursion in Kuwait, and were involved in countless other international missions. In stark contrast, however, “the post-Somalia world watched the United States government avoid becoming involved in nearly every international incident that arose, including the United Nations classified genocide that occurred in Rwanda in early 1994.”¹ The aftermath of Mogadishu marked a shift from a humanitarian-focused and heavily interventionist foreign policy to one focused solely on national security.

Although the United States military continues to be engaged globally, the Battle of Mogadishu served as the turning point for a generational foreign policy shift that

¹ Philip Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Channels* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 179, <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/channels/vol1/iss1/3/>.

transformed humanitarian involvement in Rwanda, Haiti, and Bosnia and significantly affected future global intervention because of the overt publicization of battle's aftermath in the media, domestic and international reactions, and a fear of repeating the same mistakes elsewhere. The world quickly wondered why the United States shifted from overt military involvement under a façade of global peacekeeping to all but ignoring blatant genocide.² By 1994, just months after the Battle of Mogadishu, as humanitarian crises were in full swing in Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, the Clinton Administration had already released Presidential Decision Directive 25 to guide the nation's new foreign policy strategy of national-security focused intervention that ensured the United States would not become decisively engaged in another humanitarian crisis.

Because of this sudden shift, the American public and academics alike quickly began looking for causation between Somalia and President Clinton's new policy of non-intervention. Since the Battle of Mogadishu, especially in recent years, popular media films, like "Black Hawk Down," autobiographies, and other works that address the battle from a broad perspective have become immensely popular. Academics, both in and out of the military, have sought to analyze and dissect the battle to identify how policy decisions and military failures resulted in such a catastrophe. Further, academics have addressed Mogadishu, not from a military perspective, but from one that seeks to analyze the failure of humanitarian intervention. There are also a few scholars, however, that have worked to identify how both the Battle of Mogadishu's military catastrophe and the failures of

² Dotson, "The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy," 180.

humanitarian intervention have impacted the foreign policy decisions of the United States in the years that followed. While the historiography addressed below will cover all three sects of academic discourse, it is in this final group that the argument of this thesis will reside and establish new scholarship.

Several scholars address the issue regarding the impact on policy decisions after the catastrophe in Mogadishu. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, in their 1996 *Foreign Affairs* article, “Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention,” reexamine US involvement in Somalia and argue that the United States thought Somalia could be a quick operation rather than a nation-building experiment, refusing to commit time and resources to the event, which eventually resulted in its failure.³ They argue that because of top generals’ refusal to commit civil affairs assets, reinforcements, and fight for Somali stabilization in their effort to treat the operation like a humanitarian surgical strike, the mission ultimately failed. Further, the disaster in Somalia affected American involvement in Bosnia as leaders were expected to turn the other cheek for fear of “crossing the Mogadishu line,” marking a “retreat from [the] administration’s earlier rhetoric of assertive multilateralism.”⁴ Experienced columnists with a specialization in foreign affairs, Clarke and Herbst are certainly qualified to make their assessments based on the interviews and data they have collected. Additionally, although the work is placed firmly in the category of a causality-driven foreign affairs analysis of the battle, its periodization

³ Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, “Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (March/April 1996): 70-85.

⁴ Clarke and Herbst, “Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention,” 70-71.

limits it from serving as a comprehensive work. Because of its 1996 publication date, the article is constrained by not only the still-classified data of the events of Mogadishu and Bosnia, but also its inability to address future foreign-policy effects of Mogadishu in Rwanda, Darfur, and other locations. Consequently, while it is certainly influential to the historiography of the topic, its early publication prevents it from being a consummate work.

Another example of an early work, Mark Bowden, in his 1999 book, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, writes a careful blend of a popular rendition of the battle and an academic analysis of its failures.⁵ A lifetime reporter for newspapers like *The Atlantic* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Bowden was well known in the field of journalism, but his reporting on the Battle of Mogadishu and his eventual publication of *Black Hawk Down* is what ultimately put him in front of the American people. The largest compilation of information on the Battle of Mogadishu, the work was written after Bowden wrote a series of short articles about the fight in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* during the 1993 crisis. Published after the declassification of many of the specifics of the battle, the book contains numerous primary accounts and sources from the battle, even interviews with local Somali captains and warlords. Bowden is the foremost expert in the historiography of the Battle of Mogadishu itself outside of those who were physically involved in the event. While not revolutionary in terms of its critique of the battle or its academic argument, it has served a fundamental purpose of portraying the battle to the

⁵ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999).

American people in a broader audience and has enabled the work of many of the academic historians who have followed.

Several years later, following the continued declassification of government documents and the evolution of the Mogadishu era of foreign policy, more academic works continued to be published that analyzed the modern-era humanitarian and genocidal crises in Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and Somalia. Eric Heinze, in his 2007 *Political Science Quarterly* article, “The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared,” comparatively analyzed Rwanda and Darfur and the American response to both.⁶ Holding an endowed chair position at the University of Oklahoma, Heinze has spent his career assessing genocide and American intervention. In this article, he compares the use of the term “genocide” in both Rwanda and Darfur and then examines the external pressures placed on the American government to act in each and why it refused to become involved. Heinze ultimately argues that the lack of involvement in Darfur was the result of US involvement in the Middle East at the time. This argument, however, likely stems from how focused his work was on Rwanda and Darfur; by not examining the events in their greater global context, he misses the “Mogadishu effect” and how significant of an impact it had on the US decision to not become involved. As a result, although the work’s analysis between Rwanda and Darfur is vital in understanding those individual events, further work must be done to place them in the greater context of US foreign policy and decision making in the Mogadishu era.

⁶ Eric Heinze, “The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared,” *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 359-83. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20202884>.

Like Heinze's comparative analysis of Rwanda and Darfur, Yuri Fuchs, in his 2011 PhD dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, "Multilateral Intervention in Intrastate Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Bosnia, Somalia, and Darfur," conducted a similar study to understand the broader requirements for involvement in foreign countries for the United States.⁷ The work, while encompassing Somalia, refuses to acknowledge its effects or impacts on the others and instead analyzes Bosnia, Somalia, and Darfur as isolated incidents to understand the conditions for involvement across all three events. Consequently, the paper ultimately does not search for causality, but rather examines the actions taken in each event and identifies common threads in the foreign policy decisions. As a result, the dissertation, while comprehensive in the scope of its topic, does not identify the shift or transition to the Mogadishu-driven foreign policy as the causality for many of the decisions and actions it identifies.

In contrast, Colum Lynch, in his 2015 *Foreign Policy* articles, "Genocide Under Our Watch" and "Rwanda Revisited," examines the failure of the American government to act in Rwanda and ties it to failures in Bosnia and Somalia.⁸ The United Nations-based senior diplomatic reporter for *Foreign Policy*, Lynch has made a career out of foreign policy examination and journalism. Using White House documents, which were secured through Freedom of Information Act requests, he largely confirms previous accounts that portray the Clinton administration as reluctant to play the role of global police force,

⁷ Yuri Fuchs, "Multilateral Intervention in Intrastate Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Bosnia, Somalia, and Darfur" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

⁸ Colum Lynch, "Genocide Under Our Watch," *Foreign Policy*, April 16, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/16/genocide-under-our-watch-rwanda-susan-rice-richard-clarke/>.

stung by peacekeeping setbacks in Bosnia and Somalia and faced with a hostile Congress bent on cutting funding for new UN adventures. It was the White House that was the first to advocate a pullout of UN soldiers from Rwanda during the genocide, where they served as the final defense for the Tutsi. Across the article, the interviews conducted by Lynch consistently tie US inaction in Rwanda to the failures suffered in Mogadishu and argues that Presidential Decision Directive 25, issued by Clinton after Somalia, placed a “straitjacket” on the United States for involvement in Rwanda and gave a “green light” to genocide planners.⁹ Lynch is one of the few authors who have comprehensively addressed Somalia’s effect in Rwanda, but that is where his research stopped; there is no examination of Somalia and its long-lasting effects beyond Rwanda. Consequently, his work leaves room for further examination and the establishment of a much longer-lasting foreign policy arc from Mogadishu into the twenty-first century.

Finally, Paula Baker, Robert Griffith, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Natasha Zaretsky engage the factors that affected this shift in foreign policy in *Major Problems in American History Since 1945*, a collection of documents and essays that highlights the foreign policy turbulence during the Bush and Clinton administrations.¹⁰ As the United States began to transition away from the Cold War, which had long justified the lengthy record of American foreign interventions, these administrations were forced to seek the public’s approval for continued foreign involvement when many argued it was time to

⁹ Colum Lynch, “Rwanda Revisited,” *Foreign Policy*, April 05, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/05/rwanda-revisited-genocide-united-states-state-department/>.

¹⁰ Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001).

transition inward towards domestic repair. George H.W. Bush's "New World Order" was the first attempt at this. The "New World Order" placed the United States on the moral high ground, arguing that it was the United States' role as a prosperous, moral nation to ensure the same success across the rest of the globe.¹¹ This transition was important for Bush as the United States became heavily involved in the Gulf War, but even still, "the New World Order was long on rhetoric and short on substance."¹² Despite this, domestic American polls from Bush's presidency listed most reactions towards defending human rights in other countries as "very important," indicating at least some buy in towards this new set of policies.¹³

By 1995, however, President Clinton faced an entirely different set of circumstances. Following the staggering American losses and failures in Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, Clinton was forced to reconcile his defeats with the American public as he begged them to "buck up to and not back down" from internationalist intervention after the Cold War.¹⁴ He cited his refusal to commit troops inside this new version of internationalist intervention after Somalia's defeats as "measured [uses] of the world's strongest military" and maintained America's responsibility to "lead the world."¹⁵ Part of an elaborate plan to masquerade Clinton's fear of foreign involvement after

¹¹ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 478-480.

¹² Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 480-481.

¹³ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 481.

¹⁴ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 461.

¹⁵ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 460.

Mogadishu as measured uses of force, Clinton's talking points in the middle years of his presidency were masked in vague terms and attempted to highlight foreign policy successes achieved without the committal of ground combat forces. During the Cold War, "Americans accepted the globalist foreign policy, massive defense establishment, and intrusive internal practices that had previously been taboo except in times of war."¹⁶ Without the Cold War as the justification for involvement, however, the willingness of the American people to suffer military losses rapidly waned. This was the chief issue with 1990s foreign policy; "it stated that U.S. diplomacy should be clear and coherent but failed to identify a single overriding threat or objective that would make it so."¹⁷

The Battle of Mogadishu occurred at a unique point in American history. The transitional period between the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks that initiated the Global War on Terror left senior government officials and the American people without a common, uniting factor to bind together the United States' historic internationalism. The Cold War firmly established a bipolar world that pitted the United States against the Soviet Union. This enabled senior American officials to justify international involvement to the American people by explaining how it either contained communism or gave the United States an advantage against the Soviet Union. Humanitarian aid missions in Africa, involvement in Vietnam, and even invasions of countries in South America all could be justified under this structured idea of containment in the bipolar world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the world transitioned rapidly into a unipolar

¹⁶ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 474-475.

¹⁷ Baker et al., "The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities," 475.

world with the United States remaining as the sole global superpower. This left the American people wondering when the nation would transition to domestic affairs and repair the long neglected internal functions of the United States after decades of focused attacks against communism abroad. It was in this unique period that the Battle of Mogadishu fell. The American people would not have a common enemy again until 2001 as they worked to combat terrorism or work to stymie the growth of other rising superpowers later into the twenty-first century as the world once again transitioned to a multipolar world full of rising superpowers. Government leaders could no longer readily justify international involvement that provided no marked advantage to national security; the American people had grown weary of constant involvement overseas. Left without a clear purpose during the unipolar period, Clinton worked to unite the American people towards a common goal of continued global peacekeeping but struggled significantly, especially after the Battle of Mogadishu's failures.

Through this lens, Baker, Griffith, Lawrence, and Zaretsky all craft an argument that highlights the significance of the end of the Cold War to American foreign policy, especially in the wake of military defeats that no longer had appropriate justification to the American people. The losses in Mogadishu were arguably the largest military defeat of the period and subsequently, their argument offers relevant context towards understanding the impact of Mogadishu on the remainder of the Clinton era's foreign policy.

Outside of these major articles, dissertations, and books, there is still a vast amount that contribute to the same scholarship as these major movements mentioned

above. Many, like J.D. Lock's *Rangers in Combat: A Legacy of Valor* and Eric Haney's *Inside Delta Force*, examine detailed accounts of the Battle of Mogadishu, echoing Bowden's own comprehensive work. Other authors, like Rory Carroll, François Grünewald, Clyde Prestowitz, Jonathan Stevenson, and Brendan Stone, all delve into the different humanitarian events in Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, and Somalia.¹⁸ Many of these works, however, have faced the same historiographical issues that Heinze, Fuchs, and Lynch faced; their work fails to look at every case study together and identify the massive shift that the Battle of Mogadishu forced on US foreign policy. Even so, there are authors in academic research journals, news articles, and books that have revisited the question of Mogadishu and its effects in the past decade and have begun to identify causality there. None, however, have established sound, conclusive evidence for Mogadishu's multi-decade effects; there is an incredible academic gap in this portion of scholarship on Mogadishu.

Because the Battle of Mogadishu is just shy of thirty years old, primary sources are also abundant and primarily digitized, making many of them easily accessible. Due to the project's scope, much of what is needed to posit this thesis is either available through online databases or biographies of American senior leaders. The most significant

¹⁸ J.D. Lock, *Rangers in Combat: A Legacy of Valor* (Tucson: Wheatmark, 2007); Eric Haney, *Inside Delta Force* (New York: Bantam Dell), 2003; Rory Carroll, "US Chose to Ignore Rwandan Genocide," *The Guardian*, March 31, 2004, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/mar/31/usa.rwanda>; François Grünewald, "Aid in a City at War: The Case of Mogadishu, Somalia," *Disasters* 36, no. 1 (July 2012): 105-25; Clyde Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995); Brendan Stone "The U.S.-NATO Military Intervention in Kosovo," *Global Research*, December 29, 2005, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-u-s-nato-military-intervention-in-kosovo/1666>.

primary-source database used throughout this thesis is the Clinton Archive, a digitized collection of thousands of transcripts, reports, letters, and other government documents retained from President Bill Clinton's tenure in the Oval Office. Also available to visit in person in Arkansas, the archive's contents provide an eye-opening view into the world of Clinton-era foreign policy and the shocking political fallout that occurred after Somalia. In addition to the Clinton Archive, Congress's own record keeping service, through their diligent effort to maintain sessional transcripts, also aided the effort to study and understand the domestic political climate surrounding Somalia and how it impacted the Clinton administration's decision making. Many participants of the battle and key political figures have also since published a swath of autobiographies that provide insight into not only the events in Somalia, but also those that transpired after the battle.

The foundation for this research is present not only through this previous scholarship, but through my own as well. The research article I published in 2016, built on my undergraduate thesis, "The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy," begins this examination but, due to its limited length, fails to not only expound on previous foreign policy to highlight the transition but also lacks strength from its limited pool of primary sources that is the result of such a short research article.¹⁹ To build off this scholarship and establish a comprehensive, conclusive work, this thesis will not only examine the foreign policy decisions prior to the Battle of Mogadishu and go to great lengths to examine each individual case study inside Rwanda,

¹⁹ Dotson, "The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy," 179-200.

Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia, but will also display significant causality from expanded research into national and presidential archives that contain congressional hearings, presidential correspondence, and other government documents. When supplemented with my already-established research, this thesis will conclusively identify the Battle of Mogadishu as the turning point of a generational foreign policy shift that affected Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia, and future global intervention.

The title of this thesis, the “Mogadishu Effect,” comes from an early term coined to describe the lasting foreign policy effects of the Battle Mogadishu. The “Mogadishu Effect” came to represent American foreign policy’s shift away from constant intervention overseas for fear of significant public backlash in the wake of tragedy and failed policies. Benjamin Runkle, a specialist in foreign policy decisions during the Global War on Terror (GWOT), used the term to describe the United States’ foreign policy heading into the GWOT after national failures in Somalia.²⁰ News reporters, like Howard Fineman of NBC News, also used the term. During the Invasion of Fallujah in 2004, Fineman compared the “nightmarish, beastly images of humiliating death so far beyond the pale of the Western idea of war” coming out of George W. Bush’s invasion of Fallujah to the aftermath of Clinton’s Somalia debacle.²¹ Both resulted in significantly decreased popular support for international intervention. The “Mogadishu Effect,”

²⁰ Benjamin Runkle, “The ‘Mogadishu Effect’ and Risk Acceptance,” *The History Reader*, accessed June 23, 2023, [The "Mogadishu Effect" and Risk Acceptance - The History Reader : The History Reader](#).

²¹ Howard Fineman, “Bush should beware the Mogadishu effect,” *NBC News*, March 31, 2004, [Bush should beware the Mogadishu effect \(nbcnews.com\)](#).

however, is not the only name for this style of failure-driven foreign policy. It has also been referred to as the “Black Hawk Down Effect” and the “Somalia Syndrome.”

John Hirsch, an advisor to the UN mission in Somalia, used the term “Black Hawk Down Effect” in a *Foreign Policy* article to describe the fear of intervention after the Battle of Mogadishu.²² Hirsch pleaded that, while the “Black Hawk Down Effect” certainly forced lessons of nonintervention on the Clinton administration and those that followed, the positive lessons from Somalia must also not be forgotten. Primarily spending the article’s entire length addressing UN intervention in Somalia rather than its long-term effects, Hirsch thought that the international community had far more to learn from the crisis than just lessons of nonintervention like ensuring a holistic approach to humanitarian crises by attacking not only the immediate effects, but also their “political causes.” Others, like Dr. Robert Patman, referred to the effect as the “Somalia Syndrome.”²³ Dr. Patman’s article, however, focused on how the non-intervention that the “Somalia Syndrome” bred after Mogadishu resulted in a permissive global environment that enabled Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations to not only conduct the 9/11 attacks but continue terrorizing countries around the globe in the years that followed. While Patman’s article does legitimize the syndrome and its creation in a post-Cold War world, he explores the reactions and periodization that created it very minimally and focuses instead on the syndrome’s effects on global terrorism.

²² John Hirsch, “The Black Hawk Down Effect,” *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2011, [The Black Hawk Down Effect – Foreign Policy](#).

²³ Robert Patman, “The Roots of Strategic Failure: The Somalia Syndrome and Al Qaeda’s Path to 9/11,” *International Politics*, 52, no. 1: 89-109, [The roots of strategic failure: The Somalia Syndrome](#).

While all these authors refer to the same effect by different names, I ultimately selected “Mogadishu Effect” for two primary reasons. First, the “Mogadishu Effect” describes more accurately the actual causality of the effect. The term “Somalia Syndrome” would indicate that the entirety of the UN mission in Somalia and the United States’ role in the mission resulted in the failure-driven foreign policy that followed. Americans widely supported operations in Somalia prior to the Battle of Mogadishu, however, and it was not until after the October 3-4, 1993 debacle that support rapidly diminished. Consequently, the term “Mogadishu Effect” more precisely describes its causality. Secondly, while the term, “Black Hawk Down Effect,” still attributes the causality to the battle, its utilization of the “Hollywood name” for the battle lends itself to confusion. For clarity’s sake, the “Mogadishu Effect” lends itself to the most accurate name for the effect.

Although these authors examined certain portions of the “Mogadishu Effect,” none expounded on it in its totality. This thesis seeks to further flesh out the effect and its far-reaching consequences. Runkle compared the deaths from the American invasion of Fallujah to the deaths suffered by the American military in Mogadishu. Hirsch took the effect and skipped immediately into the GWOT, asking global leaders to remember the lessons from Mogadishu and Patman looked at the battle’s effects on modern terrorism. None of these authors, however, addressed the battle’s effects on humanitarian intervention in any of the crises that Clinton faced in the 1990s. While other authors, as previously discussed in this historiography section, have addressed these individual instances of involvement in detail, none have comprehensively addressed all these

instances, their intertwinement, the reactions after the battle that created the effect, and the stark differences between Grenada and Panama and Somalia that allowed these reactions to foster. This thesis, however, works to do that in detail.

The remainder of this chapter will describe two American involvements overseas prior to Somalia and the Battle of Mogadishu to provide context and serve as a foundational requirement for the introduction of the rest of the issues presented in the following chapters. While entire works could be and have been devoted to each individual American military intervention in the twentieth century, this introduction will focus solely on providing that foundational context for those interventions in Grenada, Panama, and Somalia. Although the reaction to the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia was immense, it becomes even clearer when examined next to the American interventions in Grenada and Panama and their significant points of comparison with Mogadishu. The loss of American life in Grenada and Panama was greater than that in Somalia and the United States even lost as many helicopters during the invasion of Panama as they did during “Black Hawk Down.” Consequently, the circumstances surrounding involvement in Grenada and Panama and the aftermath that followed each invasion are important to understand to place Somalia into a larger historical context.

Between World War II and the United States invasion of Grenada in October of 1983, the American military had already involved itself in dozens of countries and their instabilities without declarations of war.²⁴ The American invasion of Grenada in October

²⁴ US Library of Congress, CRS, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2004*, by Barbara Salazar Torreon and Sofia Plagakis, CRS Report R42738 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, March 8, 2022), 12-14.

of 1983 established its mark as the largest of these involvements since Vietnam. The invasion, codenamed Operation Urgent Fury, was wrought by the instability and extreme violence of a coup attempt just two weeks prior, led by Grenadian Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard. The difficulties in Grenada, however, start far earlier. Initially part of the United Kingdom, Grenada gained its independence in 1974 under the leadership of Sir Eric Gairy, the leader of the Grenada United Labor Party. Just two years later, amidst turmoil and social change in the country, Gairy won the general election whose results were subsequently thrown out and regarded as illegitimate by his competitors. Although he remained in power, his personal militia continued to fight with rival gangs and competitor militias until March of 1979 when the New Jewel Movement, headed by Maurice Bishop, overthrew the government while Gairy was out of the country. This transitional turmoil continued into October of 1983 when a separate faction, led by Deputy Prime Minister Coard, once again overthrew Bishop's People's Revolutionary Government. After significant infighting and mass protests, Bishop was imprisoned and eventually executed. Paul Scoon, the governor general, was also arrested, a nationwide curfew was placed into effect, and an already unstable government was fully seized by Coard and his violent militia, transforming it into the Revolutionary Military Council.²⁵

It is in this context that the United States made the decision to become involved. Because of Grenada's military-led violence and the increasing instability in the country, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), asked the United States on

²⁵ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 22.

October 21, in conjunction with other local countries, to step in and handle the rapidly deteriorating situation.²⁶ According to a Joint Chiefs of Staff report, written in 1997, that reviewed the incident in Grenada, Governor General Scoon also requested support from the OECS “to free his country from the Revolutionary Military Council” while under house arrest.²⁷ In his autobiography years later, however, Scoon said he did not sign such a letter asking for that support until the morning after the invasion had begun.²⁸ After being informed of these two requests by Secretary of State George Shultz, President Ronald Reagan called a meeting on the morning of October 22 with the National Security Planning Group and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).²⁹ By that night, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized a 7,600 person “multi-service force of [Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)], Rangers, Marines, and airborne troops” to invade Grenada in partnership with forces from the OECS on October 25 as part of Operation Urgent Fury.³⁰ A force package that was substantially larger than initial estimates, General John W. Vessey, Jr., the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), said the JCS recommended

²⁶ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 22-25.

²⁹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 22.

²⁸ Sir Paul Scoon, *Survival for Service: My Experiences as Governor General of Grenada* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003), 136, 145.

³¹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 23.

³⁰ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 26, 29.

this course of action because they wanted “to go in with enough force absolutely to get the job done...to minimize casualties, both on our side and on theirs. [They] wanted to intimidate the Cubans.”³¹

On October 25, the operation, commanded by Admiral Wesley McDonald, was executed. By October 29, just four days later, resistance on the island was quelled and a temporary new government, led by Governor General Scoon, was installed. Across the four days, US forces suffered nineteen deaths and had an additional 116 personnel wounded.³² The combined opposing force of Cuban and Grenadian soldiers sustained 60 deaths, 417 wounded, and an additional 638 captured personnel.³³ Although the operation was a significant US military success and enjoyed broad domestic support, it did not go without its share of political criticisms both at home and abroad.

In the days before the operation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the president with several requirements for the political and legal approval of the invasion. These included alerting Congress, informing the United Nations Security Council, asking for assistance from the United Kingdom since Grenada “technically remained a member of the British Commonwealth,” and requesting the creation of an interim Grenadian

³¹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 26.

³² Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 62.

³³ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 62.

government to “legitimize continued military occupation” in the country.³⁴ Additionally, the State Department also argued that OECS had the legal right to request aid from countries like the United States during situations like that in Grenada through Article 52 of the UN Charter and Article 22 of the Organization of American States Charter.³⁵ Despite this, on October 28 in a United Nations General Assembly meeting, General Assembly Resolution 38/7 was created by a vote of 108-9, deploring “the armed intervention in Grenada, which [constituted] a flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that state.”³⁶ It continued on to say that each country had an inalienable right to “determine its own political, economic, and social system...without outside intervention” and the resolution demanded the “immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops from Grenada.”³⁷ When the debate reached the floor of the UNSC, the United States vetoed the resolution condemning their actions in Grenada.³⁸ In response to questions about the resolution, President Reagan “dismissed the General Assembly condemnation of the Grenada invasion as no surprise,

³⁴ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), [25](#).

³⁵ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), [25](#).

³⁶ UN General Assembly, Resolution 38/7, The Situation in Grenada, A/RES/38/7 (November 3, 1983), [The situation in Grenada. \(un.org\)](#), 19.

³⁷ A/RES/38/7, 19-20.

³⁸ Mr. Sinclair of Guyana speaking, on October 27, 1983, to the UN Security Council, 2491st Meeting, *UN Security Council Official Records*, pt. 437, [NL830046.pdf \(un.org\)](#), 40.

saying the majority of the nations ‘have not agreed with us on just about everything that’s come before them where [the United States] is involved.’”³⁹

Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada offers especially interesting comparisons to the Battle of Mogadishu and its domestic response. Neither Grenada nor Somalia directly threatened American national security and neither demonstrated direct intent of harming American citizens. Both suffered similar death tolls of American soldiers and while there were certainly outcries against the invasion, the operation was regarded as a “successful rescue.”⁴⁰ Uniquely, while the international response to the invasion in Grenada was overwhelmingly negative and the domestic response relatively positive, the inverse was true in the humanitarian efforts in Somalia. These factors enable an examination that stretches beyond the direct considerations of the battle; the collapse of the Soviet Union occurring between the two events, the publicity of the events in Mogadishu, and the domestic political climate likely all had a part in the difference between both events and each of these factors will serve as key focal points for comparisons across this work. In reality, however, nothing changed in President Reagan’s foreign policy guidelines following Grenada despite the deaths of American soldiers and the incredibly negative international response. This is in stark contrast to the almost immediate changes that occurred in Clinton’s own foreign policy guidelines just weeks after the Battle of Mogadishu. While the contrasting reaction by each administration to negative feedback is apparent, the differences that made Mogadishu so unique and Clinton’s reaction stand out

³⁹ Francis Clines, “It Was a Rescue Mission, Reagan Says,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1983, [IT WAS A RESCUE MISSION, REAGAN SAYS - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/04/us/politics/it-was-a-rescue-mission-reagan-says.html).

⁴⁰ Clines, “It Was a Rescue Mission, Reagan Says.”

so significantly from his predecessors will be explored across the second chapter of this thesis.

The United States invasion of Panama in 1989, codenamed Operation Just Cause, also acts as another good point of comparison for understanding how significant the foreign policy shift was following Mogadishu.⁴¹ In 1989, the Panamanian government and its population were in turmoil. Following the national elections in May of that year, General Manuel Noriega, the military leader of the country, refused to accept that Guillermo Endara, the leader of the opposing political party, had won with over seventy percent of the votes.⁴² Attempting to suppress the results of the election by violence, Noriega and his supporters assaulted Endara and his party members.⁴³ These actions sent the domestic situation in Panama spiraling out of control. By October, General Noriega had defeated a coup attempt by Major Moisés Giroldi and other members of the Panamanian Defense Forces.⁴⁴ This was not the first coup attempt against Noriega,

⁴¹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), [1](#).

⁴² National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and National Republican Institute for International Affairs, *The May 7, 1989 Panamanian Elections*, (1989), 109-112, accessed January 28, 2023, [FinalReportPanama1989.pdf \(cartercenter.org\)](#).

⁴³ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and National Republican Institute for International Affairs, *The May 7, 1989 Panamanian Elections*, (1989), 58-59, accessed January 28, 2023, [FinalReportPanama1989.pdf \(cartercenter.org\)](#).

⁴⁴ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 14-16.

however; he had encountered and defeated his first coup attempt in March of 1988, just a year prior.⁴⁵

Noriega was also facing extreme pressures from the United States. Having previously served as a CIA informant for almost twenty years from 1967-1986, he not only had a rich history with the intelligence agency, making between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year for the duration of his tenure working with the CIA, but he had an incredibly symbiotic relationship with the United States.⁴⁶ In exchange for his assistance in managing the drug and arms trades in Panama, the United States would supply his defense forces with weapons, support him as the de-facto leader of Panama, and maintain him on their payroll.⁴⁷ By June of 1986, however, this relationship had begun to sour. Following the leak of large amounts of classified information, General Noriega was revealed to have been participating extensively in the trade of illicit materials, espionage, money laundering, and a large swath of other crimes.⁴⁸ White House officials reported that “the most significant drug-running in Panama was being directed by General Noriega” and that “for the last 15 years, he had been providing intelligence information simultaneously to Cuba and the United States,” while also “[selling] restricted American

⁴⁵ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 14.

⁴⁶ Frederick Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator* (New York: Putnam, 1990), 26-30, 162.

⁴⁷ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of US Foreign Relations Since 1897* (Portsmouth, NH: SR Books, 2001), 494.

⁴⁸ Seymour Hersh, “Panama Strongman Said to Trade in Drugs, Arms and Illicit Money,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1986, [PANAMA STRONGMAN SAID TO TRADE IN DRUGS, ARMS AND ILLICIT MONEY](#).

technology to Cuba and Eastern European countries.”⁴⁹ Despite early attempts by the United States to repair his “drug-stained reputation,”⁵⁰ all efforts to aid Noriega were called off following the break of the Iran-Contra affair, a political scandal where the senior administration officials had been exposed selling weapons to Iran to secretly fund the Contras rebel group in Nicaragua, in November of that year.⁵¹ Although the relationship with Noriega had been impactful to the United States and “its monitoring of insurgencies in Central America,” the American government could no longer blatantly interact with a globally renown criminal.⁵²

Although President Reagan tried to pressure General Noriega to resign in 1986 after the leak of the classified data, in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal, Noriega refused and chose to ignore American demands.⁵³ In an effort to further stress him, the United States Justice Department filed drug indictment charges against Noriega in February of 1988,⁵⁴ and by April, had prohibited any payments to accounts owned by

⁴⁹ Hersh, “Panama Strongman Said to Trade in Drugs, Arms and Illicit Money.”

⁵⁰ Oliver North, Email to John Poindexter, August 23, 1986, accessed January 28, 2023, [doc07.pdf \(gwu.edu\)](#).

⁵¹ “The Contras, Cocaine, and Covert Operations,” National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 2, The George Washington University National Security Archive, accessed January 28, 2023, [The Contras, Cocaine, and U.S. Covert Operations \(gwu.edu\)](#).

⁵² The George Washington University National Security Archive, “The Contras, Cocaine, and Covert Operations.”

⁵³ Robert Pear and Neil Lewis, “The Noriega Fiasco: What Went Wrong,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1988, [THE NORIEGA FIASCO: WHAT WENT WRONG](#).

⁵⁴ Phillip Shenon, “Noriega Indicted by U.S. For Links to Illegal Drugs,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1988, [NORIEGA INDICTED BY U.S. FOR LINKS TO ILLEGAL DRUGS](#).

or linked to the general.⁵⁵ Although these measures had little effect, the Reagan administration's policy measures against Noriega seemingly ceased prior to the American presidential elections that Fall in which Reagan's vice president, George H.W. Bush, was running.⁵⁶ Because of Bush's close ties to Noriega, any overt military action or further provocation of the situation in Panama would likely have damaged Bush's chances at a victory in the election. Therefore, things subsided until after Bush's election and the contested Panamanian elections in 1989. Following Noriega's dispute of the results and the violent beating of his political opponents, things in Panama "grew sharply worse."⁵⁷ On December 15, 1989, the Panamanian National Assembly declared a state of war against the United States and "Noriega named himself the Maximum Leader."⁵⁸ In the next two days, Panamanian soldiers shot three American military officers, violently beat another American officer and his wife, and threatened over 40,000 American citizens residing in Panama.⁵⁹ Because of the mounting pressure to act, President Bush reviewed

⁵⁵ James Gerstenzang, "U.S. Squeeze on Noriega Tightens: Reagan Blocks All Payments by Americans to Panama Regime," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1988, [U.S. Squeeze on Noriega Tightens : Reagan Blocks All Payments by Americans to Panama Regime](#).

⁵⁶ Robert Oakley et al., *Policing the New World Disorder: Peace Operations and Public Security* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998), 46.

⁵⁷ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 2.

⁵⁸ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 2.

⁵⁹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 2.

the situation on December 17, and by December 20, Operation Just Cause, the American invasion of Panama, was underway.⁶⁰

By the end of the day on December 20, just over 27,000 members of the American military were on ground in Panama and engaged in combat operations that lasted just over two weeks against the nearly 13,000 members of the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF).⁶¹ A mix of special operations and conventional forces were used against a variety of strike targets that rapidly crippled the Panamanian infrastructure, the PDF, and the country's unstable government. In the first days, airports were seized, prisons targeted, and other key pieces of infrastructure controlled by the American military in raids across the country with Noriega's capture occurring by January 3, 1990.⁶² The operations did not go without consequence, however; General Maxwell Thurman, the commanding general for the operation, published casualty figures on Operation Just Cause on Christmas Day of 1989: "23 U.S. killed and 322 wounded; 297 Panamanians killed, 123 wounded, and 468 detained."⁶³ In a particularly brutal fight at the PDF headquarters, called *La Comandancia*, the Panamanian defenders even "shot down two

⁶⁰ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 2-3.

⁶¹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 37-38, 51.

⁶² Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 38-42, 61-63.

⁶³ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 65.

U.S. special operations helicopters and forced one observation helicopter to ditch in the Panama Canal.”⁶⁴ Despite this significant loss of life and American aviation equipment, seventy-four percent of Americans polled still approved the invasion.⁶⁵ The reactions were far different abroad, however, as the invasion provoked volatile responses from much of the international community similar to those after the invasion of Grenada.

Just two days after the invasion, the UNSC submitted a draft resolution that condemned the American invasion of Panama, demanded the immediate withdrawal of US troops from the country, and held the United States in international contempt.⁶⁶ Once again, the resolution was vetoed by the United States. This time, however, the United States was joined by France and the United Kingdom in the permanent member veto, contrasting the aftermath of Grenada.⁶⁷ When the security council reprimand failed to gain traction, the General Assembly of the United Nations also submitted a resolution that labeled the invasion as a “flagrant violation of international law,” with a passing vote of 75-20 and 40 abstentions.⁶⁸ In an even more telling response, the Organization of American States voted “to censure the intervention by a vote of 20-1-5, with only the US

⁶⁴ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 40.

⁶⁵ Robert Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Latin America and the Caribbean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 96.

⁶⁶ UN Security Council, Resolution S/21048 (December 22, 1989), [S/21048 : UN Documents : Security Council Report](#).

⁶⁷ Mr. Penalosa of Colombia speaking, on December 23, 1989, to the UN Security Council, 2902nd Meeting, S/PV.2902, *UN Security Council Official Records*, 18-20, [Provisional verbatim record of the 2902nd meeting, held at Headquarters, New York, on Saturday, 23 December 1989 : \(un.org\)](#).

⁶⁸ *Yearbook of the United Nations* 43 (New York: United Nations, 1989), 175.

voting against the resolution.”⁶⁹ Despite the United States once again receiving significant foreign criticism for its interventionist foreign policy, domestic support persisted; the country continued to maintain a large overseas presence. Between the end of Operation Just Cause in January of 1990 and the Battle of Mogadishu in October of 1993, the American military was deployed in support of six additional peacekeeping or interventionist operations including Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia, Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait and Iraq, Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq, Operation Silver Anvil in Sierra Leone, Operation Provide Promise in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.⁷⁰ It is because of these continued interventions and those in Grenada and Panama that the drastic transition following the Battle of Mogadishu becomes so clear.

Somalia was a place of chaos in 1991. General Siad Barre, the de-facto leader of Somalia from 1969-1991, had been establishing increasingly socialist government measures and regulations since the late 1980s that led to significant infighting among the senior warlords in the country. The CIA World Factbook says that “resistance to Siad’s socialist leadership, which was causing a rapid deterioration of the country, prompted allied clan militias to overthrow SIAD in early 1991, resulting in state collapse,” officially sparking the Somali Civil War.⁷¹ Following the dethroning of Siad Barre, the

⁶⁹ *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa, CA: International Development Research Centre, 2001), 76.

⁷⁰ US Library of Congress, CRS, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2004*, by Barbara Salazar Torreon and Sofia Plagakis, CRS Report R42738 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, March 8, 2022), 12-14.

⁷¹ “Somalia,” The World Factbook, CIA, accessed February 28, 2023, [Somalia - The World Factbook \(cia.gov\)](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/00africa_00010.html).

remainder of the country's warlords began vying for power in a struggle that not only transformed Somalia into a war torn country, but also enabled yet another dictator, General Mohamed Farrah Aidid, to take control.⁷² A graduate of an infantry school in Rome and the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow, Aidid began his long career in the Somali government as a police officer, ultimately joining the Somali National Army (SNA) after Somalia gained independence from Great Britain.⁷³ Eventually, he rose to the ranks of Brigadier General in the SNA, where he served as a member of Barre's cabinet, as the ambassador to India, and as the national intelligence chief.⁷⁴ In 1990, Aidid was also elected as the chairman of the entire United Somali Congress (USC), no small feat for a system fractured into three separate factions: USC-Rome, USC-Mogadishu, and USC-Ethiopia.⁷⁵ Although this caused internal political struggles among several other key members of the USC, it was from his position here in the USC that he was able to unite the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) together with the USC to eventually overthrow Barre in 1991.⁷⁶

⁷² Mohamed Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 155-156.

⁷³ Abdul Ahmed III, "Brothers in Arms: Part I," *Wardheer News*, October 29, 2011, [Wayback Machine \(archive.org\)](#), 2-3; Mohamed Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 155-156.

⁷⁴ "Somali Faction Leader Aidid Dies," *CNN*, August 2, 1996, [CNN - Somali faction leader Aidid dies - Aug. 2, 1996 \(archive.org\)](#).

⁷⁵ "Profile: How to Turn a Warmonger into a Hero: General Aidid, Top Bad-Guy on America's Hit List," *The Independent*, July 17, 1993, [Profile: How to turn a warmonger into a hero: General Aideed, top bad-guy on America's hit list | The Independent | The Independent](#).

⁷⁶ Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, US Justice Department, *Somalia Assessment* (Washington, DC, 2003), 4.8-4.10, accessed January 28, 2023, [Somalia, Country Information \(justice.gov\)](#).

Aidid's success failed to last, however, as soon after the coup, "clashes for territory took place throughout Somalia during 1991 and 1992 between rival clan-based militias."⁷⁷ Somalia also experienced widespread famine during this period as an additional fallout of the infighting, making food a highly valuable commodity by 1992.⁷⁸ Warlords across Somalia, including Aidid, were using food deprivation to control the populace. According to the Center of Military History, "an estimated 300,000 Somalis died from starvation" as a result of these actions.⁷⁹ Because of this infighting and the extensive starvation in the country, the United Nations finally made the decision to intervene in the situation. In January of 1992, the United Nations Security Council passed UNSC Resolution 733, which officially created United Nations Operations in Somalia 1 (UNOSOM I) and simultaneously placed an arms embargo on Somalia while providing food supplements to the starving population.⁸⁰ By March, after reaffirming UNSC Resolution 733, the UNSC voted unanimously to preserve a ceasefire in Somalia, continue the humanitarian aid packages, and to "strongly [support] the Secretary-General's decision urgently to dispatch a technical team to Somalia" in UNSC Resolution

⁷⁷ Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, US Justice Department, *Somalia Assessment* (Washington, DC, 2003), 4.13, accessed January 28, 2023, [Somalia, Country Information \(justice.gov\)](#).

⁷⁸ Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Genocidal Politics and the Somali Famine," *Al Jazeera*, July 30, 2011, [Genocidal politics and the Somali famine | Humanitarian Crises | Al Jazeera](#).

⁷⁹ Richard Stewart, *The United States Army in Somalia, 1992-1994* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2002), 5-6.

⁸⁰ UN Security Council, Resolution 733 (January 23, 1992), [Security Council Resolution 733 - UNSCR](#).

746.⁸¹ Despite these resolutions, however, the situation in Somalia deteriorated; warlords continued to ravage the country, steal the UN-provided humanitarian aid packages, and threaten the lives of the UN aid workers. In response, the UNSC once again unanimously adopted another resolution in early December of 1992, UNSC Resolution 794, that authorized the creation of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) underneath the control of the United States to establish a “secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia...essential for the survival of the civilian population.”⁸²

UNITAF was comprised of nearly 37,000 personnel from across 28 countries in the UN enterprise.⁸³ Of that number, nearly 25,000 were American troops, primarily from the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), the 10th Mountain Division, and the special operations community. Consequently, United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) served as the overarching headquarters for the United Nations, with Joint Task Force (JTF) Somalia in charge. After just a few short months of combat and noncombat operations in Somalia, the United Nations and several Somali factions met for a Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia in March of 1993, resulting in the Addis Ababa Agreement that had begun in January; the agreement established a cease fire, ensured safe passage for humanitarian relief workers, and served as the first step

⁸¹ UN Security Council, Resolution 746 (March 17, 1992), [Security Council Resolution 746 - UNSCR](#)

⁸² UN Security Council, Resolution 794 (December 3, 1992), [Security Council Resolution 794 - UNSCR](#)

⁸³ “Somalia – UNOSOM II: Background,” Peacekeeping UN, accessed January 28, 2023, [UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA II](#).

towards national reconciliation.⁸⁴ In conjunction with the conference, the UNSC also voted to pass UNSC Resolution 814, transitioning UN efforts in Somalia from UNITAF to UNOSOM II and from solely combat and security operations to nation building.⁸⁵ Notably, however, General Aidid was not a signer of the Addis Ababa Agreement and after a few short weeks of cessations, hostilities erupted once again. By June of 1993, clashes between UNOSOM II and the SNA had increased so significantly that they “resulted in the deaths of 24 Pakistani troops and several hundred Somali casualties.”⁸⁶ Consequently, the UNSC published yet another resolution on Somalia, UNSC Resolution 837, that authorized UN forces “to take all necessary measures against all those responsible for the armed attacks” and initiated retaliatory attacks against the Somalis, sparking even more violence.⁸⁷

In response, the Clinton Administration dispatched Task Force Ranger (TFR) as part of Operation Restore Hope, an American sub-operation of the larger UNOSOM II, underneath the leadership of General William Garrison in August of 1993.⁸⁸ “Rangers, Delta Force operators, Para-Rescue operators, Combat Controllers, Navy SEALs, and

⁸⁴ United States Institute of Peace, *The General Agreement signed in Addis Ababa* (January 8, 1993), [The General Agreement: Somalia: Peace Agreements: Library and Links: U.S. Institute of Peace \(archive.org\)](#).

⁸⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 814 (March 26, 1993), [Security Council Resolution 814 - UNSCR](#).

⁸⁶ Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, US Justice Department, *Somalia Assessment* (Washington, DC, 2003), 4.19-4.20, accessed January 28, 2023, [Somalia, Country Information \(justice.gov\)](#).

⁸⁷ UN Security Council, Resolution 837 (June 6, 1993), [Security Council Resolution 837 - UNSCR](#).

⁸⁸ Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” 181.

Night Stalkers were all part of the [four-hundred and forty] man unit assigned to Mogadishu, Somalia in August, 1993.”⁸⁹ Not under the umbrella control of the United Nations, this specialized group of soldiers, airmen, and sailors were solely under the direction of General Garrison and the United States, designed for specialized strikes against valuable targets.⁹⁰ Within a month of TFR’s deployment to Mogadishu, “American ground troops were fighting with militias close to the main United Nations compound,”⁹¹ according to a September 13 *New York Times* article,⁹² and IEDs detonated by Aidid’s militia had resulted in four American deaths with several more injuries.⁹³ By September 25, fighting with the militias had also caused the death of three more Americans and the destruction of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter when Somalis managed to strike the helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG).⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” 181.

⁹⁰ “Somalia – UNOSOM II: Background,” Peacekeeping UN, accessed January 28, 2023, [UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA II](#).

⁹¹ “Militias and U.N. Troops Fight in Mogadishu,” *New York Times*, September 13, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/13/world/militias-and-un-troops-fight-in-mogadishu.html>.

⁹² Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” 181-182.

⁹³ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 114.

⁹⁴ “3 Killed as U.S. Chopper Is Shot Down in Somalia,” *New York Times*, September 25, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/25/world/3-killed-as-us-chopper-is-shot-down-in-somalia.html>.

In response to these attacks, his refusal to participate in peace talks, and his war crimes, the United States issued a \$25,000 reward for the capture of General Aidid.⁹⁵ Major Roger Sangvic, in his analysis of the events of Somalia for the United States Army, said, “in retrospect, the reward had the opposite effect to that which it was intended to have. SNA members considered the UN reward an insult because it was so small. The reward reinforced what Aidid told his clan members: the UN was interfering in Somalia’s internal struggle. Instead of weakening Aidid, the small reward further unified support for Aidid.”⁹⁶ The reward also had a negative effect in the United States; some, including a *Seattle Times* editor, felt that the United States had already wasted enough money in Somalia and that no one would even “live to spend the money” earned by capturing Aidid due to the continually deteriorating situation in Somalia.⁹⁷

Despite this violence in the latter half of 1993, John Hirsch, an advisor to the US Ambassador to Somalia Robert Oakley, when reminiscing about UN involvement in Somalia, said “In those [first] five months, it worked pretty well. People forget the early successes of Operation Restore Hope to feed the hungry and break the famine...Somalia had created an early hope for the UN that peacekeeping could be taken to a new level; they believed that ‘a matrix could be crafted [in Somalia] for future operations in other

⁹⁵ “4 U.S. Soldiers Killed in Somalia, Africa: Clinton pledges ‘appropriate action.’ Men die when vehicle hits land mine in area dominated by supporters of warlord Mohammed Farah Aidid,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1993, [4 U.S. Soldiers Killed in Somalia](#).

⁹⁶ Roger Sangvic, *The Battle of Mogadishu: Anatomy of a Failure* (Fort Leavenworth, 1998) 9.

⁹⁷ Charles Warren, “U.S. Troops in Somalia – Anyone Who Tries To Collect Reward For Capture Of Aidid Unlikely To Survive To Spend It,” *The Seattle Times*, October 8, 1993, [U.S. Troops In Somalia](#).

global hotspots.⁹⁸ Following the Battle of Mogadishu, however, the blueprint for saving the world's weakest links was shredded and 'American policy changed virtually overnight.'⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰

The Battle of Mogadishu, codenamed Operation Gothic Serpent, began as a raid by the elite Task Force Ranger, designed to capture two of General Aidid's top lieutenants on October 3, 1993, in response to the increasing concerns surrounding Aidid. The TFR headquarters received intelligence from the CIA that nearly twenty of Aidid's lieutenants, including two of his most senior leaders, were meeting near the Olympic Hotel in Mogadishu's Bakara Market that afternoon.¹⁰¹ A hotbed of SNA activity, the Bakara Market area had previously been off limits to UNOSOM II and TFR engagements due to the overwhelming number of SNA faction members in the area. The task force also had additional concerns with the raid and due to the limited time that they had to plan the mission, anticipated friction points could not be mitigated as significantly as during a deliberately planned mission. In the months before the raid, the Somali populace had grown extremely hostile towards the UNOSOM II forces, especially the Americans. As

⁹⁸ Paul Alexander, "Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later," *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

⁹⁹ Paul Alexander, "Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later," *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

¹⁰⁰ Philip Dotson, "The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy," *Channels* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 182, <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/channels/vol1/iss1/3/>.

¹⁰¹ Clifford Day, "Critical Analysis on the Defeat of Task Force Ranger" (master's thesis, Air Command and Staff College, 1997), 7, 16, [CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE DEFEAT OF TASK FORCE RANGER \(gwu.edu\)](http://www.gwu.edu/~critical-analysis-on-the-defeat-of-task-force-ranger).

clashes intensified between the Somali warfighters and the American military, the UNOSOM II mission slowly transitioned from “feeding to fighting.”¹⁰² While the initial goal of the UN mission in Somalia was to provide humanitarian aid to the populace during the crises, as peacekeepers became more consistently engaged, UN strikes became more frequent, and the rules of engagement more permissive.

As part of this transition, multiple raids took place across Mogadishu that resulted in significant collateral damage. The most significant of these raids took place on July 12 in what became known as the Abdi House Raid. In an effort to kill or capture many of Aidid’s top supporters, including Aidid’s interior minister, Abdi Hassan Awale, seventeen helicopters,¹⁰³ mixed between AH-1 Cobras and UH-60 Black Hawks, fired over 2,000 rounds of cannon fire and sixteen missiles on eighty to ninety Somalis inside Abdi’s house before sending in a strike force to survey the site in an event that the Human Rights Watch said “looked like mass murder.”¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ According to a report from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the collateral damage from the raid resulted in at least fifty-four dead Somalis and another 174 wounded,¹⁰⁶ most of which were civilians and leaders

¹⁰² Day, “Critical Analysis on the Defeat of Task Force Ranger,” 19.

¹⁰³ Mark Bowden, “A Wrong Turn in Somalia – An Ill-Conceived Copter Raid Turned Many Somalis Against U.S. Forces,” *The Seattle Times*, February 9, 1998, [A Wrong Turn In Somalia](#).

¹⁰⁴ Keith Richburg, “U.N. Helicopter Assault in Somalia Targeted Aideed’s Top Commanders,” *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1993, [U.N. HELICOPTER ASSAULT IN SOMALIA TARGETED AIDEED’S TOP COMMANDERS](#).

¹⁰⁵ “Somalia Faces the Future: Human Rights in a Fragmented Society,” Human Rights Watch, accessed January 19, 2023, [SOMALIA \(archive.org\)](#).

¹⁰⁶ Richburg, “U.N. Helicopter Assault in Somalia Targeted Aideed’s Top Commanders.”

of the more moderate political factions, not allied to Aidid.¹⁰⁷ These strikes not only angered the populace and reduced Somali political support for UN intervention, but the collateral damage from these strikes likely also prevented the task force from receiving the C-130 gunship requested as support during the Battle of Mogadishu just three months later.

Consequently, by October 3 during preparation for the raid in Bakara Market, the United States was facing an increasingly hostile population, did not have adequate air support, and because the rebel group's meeting was planned for the afternoon, would have to conduct the raid in the middle of the day rather than at night when most special operations missions are executed.¹⁰⁸ Despite these concerns and because of the significance of the raid towards the effort of dismantling Aidid and his pseudo-regime, General Garrison still authorized the raid. The plan was complex, but for the task force, the mission was routine; "they had done [it] dozens of times without difficulty, in practice and on the task force's six previous missions."¹⁰⁹ Operators from C Squadron, 1st SFOD-D, or Delta Force, would be dropped onto the rooftop of the meeting house by four AH-6 Little Bird helicopters and would enter the building, clear it from top to bottom, and secure Aidid's lieutenants.¹¹⁰ Simultaneously, rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger

¹⁰⁷ Bowden, "A Wrong Turn in Somalia – An Ill-Conceived Copter Raid Turned Many Somalis Against U.S. Forces."

¹⁰⁸ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 4.

¹¹⁰ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 4-5.

Regiment, under the command of Captain Michael Steele, would fast rope from UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters into security positions on the hotel's four corners, preventing movement in and out of the ranger's cordon.¹¹¹ By the time that the hotel had been cleared and the prisoners secured, a ground convoy under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Danny McKnight, would arrive at the hotel and transport the Army contingent and their prisoners back to their operating base just outside the city. In total, nineteen planes and helicopters, twelve vehicles, and 160 personnel were to leave the operating base for the mission.¹¹² The operation's planners estimated it would take an hour to complete the mission from start to finish.¹¹³

Nearly fifteen hours later, however, after "the bloodiest single combat episode involving U.S. casualties since Vietnam," the Battle of Mogadishu finally ended.¹¹⁴ Three Black Hawk helicopters were struck by Somali RPGs and two of them had crashed into the heart of Mogadishu, forcing the operation to transition from a raid to a rescue mission; the helicopters and their occupants had to be secured.¹¹⁵ The ground convoy had been nearly immediately cutoff from primary routes within ten minutes of the operation's

¹¹¹ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 4.

¹¹² Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 4-5.

¹¹³ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 8.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995) xiv.

¹¹⁵ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 77, 108, 138.

beginning by the rapid mobilization of the Somali militias, forcing the convoy to drive in circles under withering fire to identify alternate routes.¹¹⁶ As the afternoon operation transitioned into night, the American troops left fighting their way through the city streets also began to run out of water and lose visibility; they had opted to bring extra ammunition and other items instead of their water canteens and night vision devices since the raid was supposed to be a short, midday operation.¹¹⁷ Everything that could have gone wrong went disastrously wrong. By the end of the battle on the morning of October 4, the 160-man force had suffered eighteen dead, including two Delta Force members posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for “[giving] their lives saving the injured pilot”¹¹⁸ of *Super Six Four*, one of the downed Black Hawks, and seventy-three wounded.¹¹⁹ The Somali casualties were staggering; estimates listed 312 killed and 814 wounded in the aftermath of the battle.¹²⁰ Although political and military leaders might not have realized it at the time, the peacekeeping mission in Mogadishu that had just transformed into a bloodbath would alter American foreign policy and intervention requirements for decades.

¹¹⁶ Rick Atkinson, “Night of a Thousand Casualties,” *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1994, [NIGHT OF A THOUSAND CASUALTIES](#).

¹¹⁷ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 6.

¹¹⁸ Peter Collier, *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty* (New York: Artisan, October 1, 2003) xviii.

¹¹⁹ Todd South, “The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later: How the Fateful Fight Changed Combat Operations,” *Army Times*, October 2, 2018, [The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later](#).

¹²⁰ Atkinson, “Night of a Thousand Casualties.”

In Grenada, Panama, and Somalia alone, the US suffered a combined total of 698 casualties.¹²¹ In the nearly eight years between Somalia and the invasion of Afghanistan, despite constant appearances of intervention overseas, the US only suffered a combined total of forty-five casualties.¹²² This significant reduction in casualties was not because the American military was participating in fewer overseas operations, it was because following Mogadishu, the American military was participating in far different capacities with far less troops. Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada contain many similarities to the Battle of Mogadishu; helicopters were shot down, significant American casualties were incurred, both conventional and unconventional troops were used in combat, and mixed domestic and international policy reactions followed all three operations. The question then becomes, why was the impact of Mogadishu so different from previous interventions? There are a few key differences that will be explored across this thesis. First, the Battle of Mogadishu was the first major military disaster to occur after the collapse of the USSR and the American people had to redefine their geopolitical role without the Red Scare as its backdrop.¹²³ Second, the casualties caused at the Battle of Mogadishu were the result of massive military missteps

¹²¹ “Worldwide U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths – Selected Military Operations,” Defense Casualty Analysis System, accessed January 29, 2023, [Defense Casualty Analysis System \(osd.mil\)](https://www.osd.mil/DCAS/).

¹²² Defense Casualty Analysis System, “Worldwide U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths;” US Library of Congress, CRS, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, by Nese DeBruyne, CRS Report RL32492 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, March 8, 2022), 4.

¹²³ Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001), 461.

and not just as a byproduct of kinetic engagements like those in Grenada and Panama.¹²⁴ Third, the media portrayal of Mogadishu and the bodies of dead Americans being dragged through the streets dominated the national understanding of the event in significant contrast to earlier interventionist actions. Finally, while the interventions in Grenada and Panama maintained high levels of domestic support, the disaster in Mogadishu elicited a vastly negative domestic response by both the American public and the country's political figures.

Using these four key differences as its backdrop and building on the foundation laid by the many scholars that have also attempted to understand and interpret the Battle of Mogadishu, this thesis, broken down into four chapters, sheds new light on this difficult topic. Chapter 1, titled "Reactions to Mogadishu," will seek to firmly establish the drastically different reactions that occurred in the wake of Mogadishu. Broken into three separate sections, the chapter will address the reactions of the public, the military, and domestic political figures to understand the scope of the battle's inward and outward effects on the American people and the leadership of the United States. To do this, I will use research from domestic polls, internal military documents, correspondence between leaders found in the Clinton Digital Library, records of congressional proceedings, and memoirs and autobiographies from key military and political figures. By establishing the significant reactions that occurred domestically in this chapter after providing the larger context in the introduction, it enables the thesis to flow firmly into the second chapter that

¹²⁴ Roger Sangvic, *Battle of Mogadishu: Anatomy of a Failure* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army, 1998)

then seeks to explain why these reactions were so much more pronounced than reactions to other twentieth-century American interventions and losses of life.

Chapter 2, “What Made Mogadishu Different,” will explore the differences between Mogadishu other American interventions in the second half of the twentieth century by examining the Battle of Mogadishu through its geopolitical context, missteps in military planning and action, and the overt publicization of the battle by the media. Inside this comparative analysis, much of the data and research to argue this will come from military after-action reports, news reports and media reactions from other interventions like Panama and Grenada to compare with the reactions by the media, addressed in Chapter 1, and biographies of key political and military figures that can navigate the battle in its larger, geopolitical context. Understanding the battle in the context of the Cold War, its geolocation, the military participation, and media reactions will all aid in the development of the overarching argument of the thesis. It will not only expand on why the reactions covered in Chapter 1 were so significant across multiple populations but will also set the stage for Chapter 3 and understanding how American foreign policy was able to seemingly transform overnight.

While the first two chapters established the fallout of the Battle of Mogadishu, Chapter 3, “The Transformation of American Foreign Policy,” will transition the thesis towards Mogadishu’s impact on US foreign policy, now known as the “Mogadishu Effect.” Following the Battle of Mogadishu, American foreign policy transformed virtually overnight and had lasting consequences. Broken down into four sections, this chapter will examine this transformation through the transformation of the military and

the withdrawal of American involvement around the globe, changes in the legislature of the American government, personal transformations of senior leaders and their willingness to accept risk, and finally, the creation of new presidential decision directives that holistically outlined the future of American foreign policy and international involvement. The Clinton and Bush Digital Libraries, the Library of Congress, Congressional archives, military documents, and individual memoirs and autobiographies of senior leaders will all provide the primary source documentation necessary to argue these points. By looking at these changes, this chapter shows how the immense reactions to Mogadishu transformed foreign policy and ultimately serves as the crux of the thesis.

Chapter 4, “The ‘Mogadishu Effect’ in Action,” will demonstrate the transformation of American foreign policy through practical examples and application in places like Rwanda, Haiti, and Bosnia. Broken down into three primary sections, this chapter will devote ample time to each case study to clearly indicate the new foreign policy and the “Mogadishu Effect” in action. News articles, media interviews, American government documents, United Nations documents, and other memoirs and autobiographies will be used in this chapter to further demonstrate how significantly the “Mogadishu Effect” affected US decision making in Rwanda, Haiti, and Bosnia.

Finally, in doing this, I must mention the gravity of the topics addressed in this work. History, for me, has always been about ensuring the underrepresented are represented, telling the stories that should never be forgotten, and always reminding those around us that stories are never one-sided. It is in that spirit that I hope this work will continue to demonstrate the brave acts of the men and women involved in not only

United Nations Somalia (UNOSOM) and the special operations detachment that suffered over fifty-percent casualties there, but also those in Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda, and other sites where civilians, volunteers, and members of the armed forces answered the call of their own indecisive government to help those around the world. It is also in that spirit, however, that we must never forget the millions of lives lost to the genocides, famine, and raw violence that matter as significantly as those whose story has been retold thousands of times. It is my distinct wish the reader understands that, although the work is primarily written to demonstrate the transformation of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, millions of lives were impacted by every single decision analyzed across the next four chapters.

Chapter 1: Reactions to Mogadishu

The fallout from the Battle of Mogadishu in October of 1993 was nearly unprecedented. In the wake of the battle's bloody fighting and the domestic political fallout that ensued, American foreign policy changed virtually overnight. While these repercussions can certainly be blamed on the unstable foreign policy goals that followed the Cold War, a lack of vested national interest in Somalia, military missteps, and domestic political threats against the Clinton administration, there were also other influential factors. The aftermath of Mogadishu can also be largely attributed to the overt publicization of the battle and its nearly immediate coverage on television screens and newspapers across the country. The American public, its policymakers, and the nation's military were all affected by the 24-hour news cycle that followed the battle. Reactions to Mogadishu stand out uniquely when compared to other episodes of post-Vietnam American intervention like the invasions of Grenada and Panama in 1983 and 1989. Although this type of media pressure placed on the government and its policies, called the "CNN Effect," was not unique to Mogadishu, the rapid proliferation of news networks and their transmittal speeds that grew out of the second half of the twentieth century aided considerably in their effectiveness, resulting in a nearly unstoppable wave of sensational press, expended political capital, and a complete withdrawal from Somalia.¹

¹ Daniel McSweeney, "The CNN Effect and Somalia," E-International Relations, August 11, 2011, [The CNN Effect and Somalia \(e-ir.info\)](#), 2.

Journalism had changed significantly from the earlier years of American foreign policy by the time Task Force Ranger, a special operations task force designed to dismantle General Mohammed Aidid's forces in Mogadishu, was deployed to Somalia. During the Spanish-American War nearly one-hundred years prior in 1898, the American government attempted to censor the journalism occurring behind the front lines in Cuba to control the narrative portrayed to the American people and maintain domestic support for yet another overseas military operation.² While World War II largely experienced only reports and news stories supportive of the war and America's "Greatest Generation," also called "cherry propaganda," the Korean War a few years later, regressed back to stout sensationalism in an effort to control the predominant narrative. James Landers, a historian, and former journalist, said "the war in Korea formed a bridge between the military-media relationship of World War II, during which cooperation and a sense of shared purpose reigned, and that of the Vietnam War, during which distrust and hostility developed."³ While initial efforts by the media in the Korean War were supportive of American troops and their involvement in the conflict, as General MacArthur and his American and South Korean contingent were forced to retrograde south, negative opinions, criticisms of MacArthur's leadership, and staggering casualty reports began to flood the media. Consequently, "In the space of five months, journalists in Korea went

² Bonnie Miller, "Did Fake News Unite the Home Front Behind a War with Spain?," *Home Front Studies*, 1 (2021): 1-13.

³ "Korea: How the Korean War Changed the Way Military Conflicts are Reported," *University Times*, University of Pittsburgh, [University Times » Korea: How the Korean war changed the way military conflicts are reported \(pitt.edu\)](https://www.pitt.edu/~newscenter/2013/04/24/korea-how-the-korean-war-changed-the-way-military-conflicts-are-reported/).

from reporting with no censorship...to reporting with full field censorship. Military commanders justified the progressive restrictions on the basis of operational security, while journalists believed the military sought mainly to protect its public image.”⁴ Much like the Spanish-American War, the United States Army controlled the flow of information into and out of Korea and subsequently, could censor the majority of the country’s news reporting.

By the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, military control of the media was virtually impossible due to the permissive operational environment and significant advances in technology, especially satellite transmissions which allowed for “same day” broadcasting of events occurring half-way around the world.⁵ This lack of sensationalism during the first “television war” caused significant domestic backlash against the effort in Vietnam as camera crews and journalists were able to broadcast the deteriorating conditions, low morale, and intense fighting that the American soldiers in Vietnam faced.⁶ An article titled “Vietnam: The First Television War” on the National Archives website traces the growth of American television owners and its effects on policy making.⁷ Between 1950 and 1966, American television ownership grew from nine percent to ninety-three percent and the subsequent access to near-immediate information played a large part in the

⁴ “Korea: How the Korean War Changed the Way Military Conflicts are Reported.”

⁵ Jessie Kratz, “Vietnam: The First Television War,” Pieces of History, National Archives, January 25, 2018, [Vietnam: The First Television War – Pieces of History \(archives.gov\)](#).

⁶ Kratz, “Vietnam: The First Television War.”

⁷ Kratz, “Vietnam: The First Television War.”

withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and the eventual end to American involvement there.⁸

By Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield in the early 1990s, however, “journalists in the Persian Gulf were forced to depend on the military to reach otherwise inaccessible desert battlefields,” and the military “[had] reasserted a large measure of control over reports from the field,” according to Bob Dvorak, a combat journalist embedded with the military during Desert Storm.⁹ The concerns were real; even Madeline Albright, the US Ambassador to the UN addressed how influential the television and the media were in “[heightening] the pressure both for immediate engagement in areas of international crisis and immediate disengagement when events do not go according to plan.”¹⁰ Stemming from a concern about protecting operational security, preventing the display of the true horrors of war, and maintaining popular support for the war effort, the United States government tried everything within its power to balance these issues with the free press guaranteed by the Constitution.

This task was difficult, especially given the advancements in technology. By the time of the Battle of Mogadishu in October of 1993, however, the task was nearly impossible. Nearly every American owned a television set and at the time, cable news networks, like ABC, NBC, and CBS, had taken over as the primary means through which Americans received their news updates. In stark contrast to news consumption thirty

⁸ Kratz, “Vietnam: The First Television War.”

⁹ “Korea: How the Korean War Changed the Way Military Conflicts are Reported.”

¹⁰ McSweeney, “The CNN Effect and Somalia,” 3.

years later in 2023, where only ten percent of 18–34-year-olds and 18 percent of 35–44-year-olds receive their news through these cable networks, television companies maintained a firm grasp on news publication in 1993.¹¹ The frequency of Americans who watched cable news networks, combined with the ability of satellite transmissions to rapidly increase the speed in which broadcasts could be seen around the world, proliferated Americans’ access to the gruesome images and real time updates pouring out of Somalia and the Battle of Mogadishu. Although the world has transitioned to new modes of news reception in the thirty years since Mogadishu and many now readily receive their media updates via social media and other applications on their handheld devices, the effect has remained the same. During the 2022 and 2023 War in Ukraine, Ukrainian civilians and military members have used social media platforms to great effect in the absence of journalists on the frontlines.¹² Images and videos of combat on the frontlines of the war between Ukraine and Russia, posted on social media platforms, continue to drum up support around the world for Ukrainian independence and expose people, who would formerly have held no access, to the horrors of direct combat. Although many governments work to limit the press’s ability to report on some of the tragedies during these conflicts, the strength of technology during the conflict in Somalia and its continued evolution has made that nearly impossible.

¹¹ “Frequency of using cable news as a source of news among adults in the United States as of August 2022, by age group,” Statista, accessed June 24, 2023, [Cable news consumption frequency in the U.S. by age 2022 | Statista](#).

¹² Megan Specia, “‘Like a Weapon:’ Ukrainians Use Social Media to Stir Resistance,” March 25, 2022, [How Ukrainians Are Using Social Media to Stir Resistance - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

Because the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was underneath the banner of the United Nations, there were no American guidelines or regulations on press coverage and reporting.¹³ Contrasting the United States Department of Defense's own strict guidelines put in place around the Gulf War, their absence in Somalia offered a unique situation to a presidential administration attempting to maintain domestic popular support for humanitarian aid in an African country that posed a limited threat to national security. Between March of 1993 and March of 1994, the nearly six months on either side of the Battle of Mogadishu in October, over six-hundred reporters from sixty countries reported from inside Somalia on the United Nations effort in Mogadishu.¹⁴ Several of these reports, the footage, and pictures from the aftermath of the Battle of Mogadishu, were the byproduct of this unabridged access. This media placed significant domestic pressure on the Clinton administration with which Madeline Albright had been so concerned. In the hours, days, weeks, and months that followed the October 3-4 battle, images of slain American soldiers and videos of them being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu flooded every news outlet in America.¹⁵ For some, these graphic images would have been the first time they learned that the United States had soldiers in Somalia. For others, these reports solidified their concerns that American soldiers were dying in a

¹³ David Stockwell, "Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations to be a Principle of Military Operations Other Than War" (master's thesis, Army Command and Staff College, 1995), [Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations \(universityofleeds.github.io\)](https://www.universityofleeds.github.io).

¹⁴ David Stockwell, "Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations to be a Principle of Military Operations Other Than War."

¹⁵ Mark Huband, "The People Killed Them. Chopped Them Up. I Consider Myself Lucky," *The Guardian*, October 9, 1993, [The people killed them. Chopped them up. I consider myself lucky' | World news | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/1993/oct/09/the-people-killed-them-chopped-them-up-i-consider-myself-lucky).

country that posed no significant threat to the United States. For those in Congress and presidential leadership, however, these reports were the start of a tidal wave of negative domestic responses that ultimately drove President Clinton to withdraw troops from Somalia. He likewise withdrew troops from Haiti and eventually refused the call to action in Rwanda and Bosnia. News reports, domestic political reactions, international political reactions, and the reactions of the American military in the wake of Mogadishu all point conclusively towards the media's significant impact on this decision to alter America's foreign policy.

Immediately after the bloody battle concluded on October 4, reports began flooding in from dozens of media and news outlets around the country. Despite the wide range of geographical and ideological views amongst the newspapers, they all agreed on one thing: it was time to get the American military out of Somalia. On October 5, the *Chicago Tribune* demanded that Clinton "get himself a mandate now-or get the American troops out."¹⁶ It continued by stating that "with body bags starting to return from Mogadishu, the President [owed] it to all citizens to level with them about the objectives American forces are pursuing in Somalia and to identify what U.S. interests, if any, are at stake."¹⁷ A *Washington Post* article on the same day stated that the battle might have been "only the beginning of the bad news for [American forces in] Somalia," if the United

¹⁶ "American Blood Shed in Somalia," *Chicago Tribune*, October 4, 1993, [AMERICAN BLOOD SHED IN SOMALIA – Chicago Tribune](#).

¹⁷ "American Blood Shed in Somalia."

States continued its involvement there.¹⁸ Additionally, over the next several days, multiple *New York Times* articles demanded that the United States “spell it out to the UN on Somalia,”¹⁹ and review the nation’s policy there.²⁰

The *Los Angeles Times* also ran a series of articles on October 5 and 6 disparaging American involvement in Somalia. One stated that the casualty figures from the battle “marked a major escalation in the military confrontation in Somalia and seriously [threatened] Clinton’s policy there.”²¹ Another said that the temptation “to get every American the heck out immediately” was strong amidst the emotions surging in the wake of the battle.²² A third article described the attitude towards the defeat in Washington: “Outraged by images of dead Americans being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, many members of Congress revolted against President Clinton’s Somalia policy...as Democrats and Republicans alike demanded the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the

¹⁸ Barton Gellman, “U.N. Forces Lose Mobility in Somalia,” *The Washington Post*, October 5, 1993, [U.N. FORCES LOSE MOBILITY IN SOMALIA - The Washington Post](#).

¹⁹ “Spell It Out to the U.N. on Somalia,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993, [Opinion | Spell It Out to the U.N. on Somalia - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

²⁰ Erich Schmitt, “The Somalia Mission: Clinton Reviews Policy in Somalia as Unease Grows,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993, [THE SOMALIA MISSION: CLINTON REVIEWS POLICY IN SOMALIA AS UNEASE GROWS; Reinforcements For U.S. Troops Delayed 9 Hours - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

²¹ Art Pine, “U.S. Boost Somalia Troops After 12 Die,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1993, [U.S. Boosts Somalia Troops After 12 Die : Africa: Casualty figures more than double; six are held hostage. Deadly incident threatens Clinton policy. - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).

²² “That Mess in Somalia,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1993, [That Mess in Somalia - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).

African country.”²³ Further articles in California newspapers were also accompanied by gruesome pictures of naked and mauled American soldiers being hauled through the streets of Mogadishu.²⁴ Dorothy Morris, the mother of one of the soldiers deployed in support of the Somalia peacekeeping mission, compared the photos of dead soldiers sweeping across her TV to the Vietnam War era.²⁵ Having regretted not joining the anti-war protests then, Morris used the emotions evoked by the pictures to begin collecting thousands of signatures on a petition to the president to bring American troops home from Somalia immediately.²⁶ These photos and other videos from the aftermath of the battle became indiscriminately intertwined with Clinton-era foreign policy for years; the lack of press censorship in Somalia was finally resulting in the chaos that those like Albright had feared.

In addition to these news articles, Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant, the pilot of one of the downed helicopters and a captive taken by the Somalis following the battle, was beaten, bruised, and broadcasted on live television across multiple interviews while in captivity for days before his release could be secured. A photo of a bloodied Durant even made it on the October 18, 1993, front page of *Time* magazine, just two weeks after

²³ Art Pine and Michael Ross, “Angry Lawmakers Threaten to Push for Somalia Pullout,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1993, [Angry Lawmakers Threaten to Push for Somalia Pullout : Africa parties warn they may cut funds. Clinton confers with his top security advisers. - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).

²⁴ Simon Reeve, “U.S. Returning to a Nightmare Called Somalia,” *San Francisco Gate*, December 16, 2001, [NEWS ANALYSIS / U.S. returning to a nightmare called Somalia \(sfgate.com\)](#).

²⁵ Sara Fritz, “Deaths in Somalia Spark Flood of Opposition in U.S.,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1993, [Deaths in Somalia Spark Flood of Opposition in U.S. - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).

²⁶ Fritz, “Deaths in Somalia Spark Flood of Opposition in U.S.”

the battle, in an article titled “Somalia: Anatomy of a Disaster.”²⁷ The article’s opening paragraph expressed American sentiment at the time: “It seemed so simple at first. There were people in need. America would help. But the mission to Somalia, which began with visions of charity, now puts forth images of horror. While America’s attention was focused at home, the goals of the mission shifted dangerously, and now the effort threatens to become a violent standoff.”²⁸ Article after article demanded action by the federal government to withdraw American forces from Mogadishu. Grieving parents took to the newspapers to mourn their children, while others used the event to demand reform in American foreign policy.²⁹ Media across the nation was flooded with the images and stories of the battle for weeks, delivering a shocking blow to a nation whose constituents had become less engaged in international affairs since the recent end of the Cold War.

By the time Task Force Ranger, an American special-operations contingent designed to capture or kill General Mohammad Farrah Aidid, deployed to Somalia in August, domestic support was fading rapidly. In the eight months prior to the task force’s deployment, only 30 percent of the articles published by the *Los Angeles Times* were negative in their remarks on American involvement in Somalia.³⁰ In contrast, all thirty-

²⁷ George Church, “Somalia, Anatomy of a Disaster,” *TIME*, October 18, 1993, [Somalia: Anatomy of a Disaster - TIME](#).

²⁸ Church, “Somalia, Anatomy of a Disaster.”

²⁹ Charles Hall, “VA. Woman Says Dead Soldier is Her Son,” *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1993, [VA. WOMAN SAYS DEAD SOLDIER IS HER SON - The Washington Post](#).

³⁰ Theresa Bly, “Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 60, [Thesis Draft \(dtic.mil\)](#).

five news articles published by the *Los Angeles Times* between the task force's deployment and the withdrawal of American forces in April of 1994 possessed a negative connotation against American involvement in Somalia.³¹ By the time the Clinton administration had attempted to redefine its involvement in Somalia, it was too late; the public relations disaster that resulted from the Battle of Mogadishu had already done its damage. Americans no longer wanted to be the "world's policeman."³² The public wanted Clinton to focus on his domestic agenda despite concerns abroad; in an early November poll, only 13 percent of Americans believed that foreign policy should be Clinton's primary focus.³³ This minority feared that if the US pulled out of Somalia immediately, it risked "the humiliation of having one [under armed] warlord drive the United States from the field of battle."³⁴ If the US kept forces there, however, the administration would face the wrath of a majority of the American public and the policymakers in Congress.

The "CNN Effect" that resulted from the Battle of Mogadishu's news cycle was immense, especially in the court of public opinion. Theresa Bly, in her thesis on the "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy," compiled the results of seventy-six polls from the era to outline how significantly the negative press had impacted domestic

³¹ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making," 60-61, 91-100.

³² Doyle McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1993, [AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE: DIVIDED WE STAND.](#)

³³ McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand."

³⁴ Charles Maynes, "Mission Impossible: Is the Price in Somalia Too High?," *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1993, [Mission Impossible : Is The Price in Somalia Too High?.](#)

political ratings.³⁵ In December of 1992, 81 percent of Americans supported involvement in the UNOSOM mission set.³⁶ By October 6, 1993, just three days after the Battle of Mogadishu, that number had fallen to 21 percent.³⁷ In her analysis of these statistics, Bly correlated the decline of support for the mission to specific US shifts in Somalia from a humanitarian operation to one of security and policing. She tied the quick reaction force's (QRF) policing efforts, Task Force Ranger's attempt at capturing Aidid, and the failures at the Battle of Mogadishu to the sharpest declines in domestic support.³⁸ In conjunction with the operation's plummeting domestic support, in the days following the Battle of Mogadishu, sixteen separate polls listed over sixty percent of Americans as favoring an immediate withdrawal regardless of the humanitarian or political fallout in Somalia that it would subsequently cause.³⁹

The results of these polls and the analysis of these news articles are especially interesting when compared to those that followed the invasions of Grenada and Panama in the 1980s. Despite the invasion of Grenada in 1983, codenamed Operation Urgent Fury, and the invasion of Panama in 1989, codenamed Operation Just Cause, each

³⁵ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making."

³⁶ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making," 65.

³⁷ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making," 65.

³⁸ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making," 65.

³⁹ Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making," 131-138.

incurring more American casualties than the Battle of Mogadishu, both enjoyed broad domestic support. Although Urgent Fury initially forced a decline in domestic support for Reagan, after his televised defense of the invasion two days later, domestic support both for Reagan and the operation increased substantially with over 71 percent of Americans supporting the invasion.⁴⁰ Additionally, in the weeks following the invasion, polled Americans supported Reagan's handling of foreign policy more than at any other point since October of 1981.⁴¹ The invasion of Panama offered similar results in domestic polls. A *New York Times* poll taken in the days after the invasion had 73 percent of Americans supporting Bush's foreign policy decisions,⁴² and a *Los Angeles Times* poll listed 77 percent of Americans as favoring the invasion of Panama, despite the 23 deaths and over 300 American casualties suffered there.⁴³ Further, the invasion of Panama pushed Bush's ratings in the first year of presidency higher than any president since World War II.⁴⁴ Clinton, however, could count on only a fourth of Americans for support after Mogadishu.

⁴⁰ Barry Sussman, "Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1983, [Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows.](#)

⁴¹ Sussman, "Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows."

⁴² Michael Oreskes, "Approval of Bush, Bolstered by Panama, Soars in Poll," *The New York Times*, January 19, 1990, [Approval of Bush, Bolstered by Panama, Soars in Poll.](#)

⁴³ George Skelton, "The Times Poll: Americans Strongly Back Bush on Panama Invasion," *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1989, [THE TIMES POLL : Americans Strongly Back Bush on Panama Invasion - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\).](#)

⁴⁴ Oreskes, "Approval of Bush, Bolstered by Panama, Soars in Poll."

The data from Grenada and Panama clearly contrasts with the national cries for answers that followed Mogadishu, despite the United States suffering more casualties in those countries that, like Somalia, also offered little threat to national security. This contrast is not without causality, however, at least in Grenada; the American military banned media and reporters from the invasion during the first forty-eight hours.⁴⁵ This left many around the world guessing about the outcome of the operation and meant that many of the gruesome videos and photographs, like those taken in Mogadishu, were not captured and subsequently broadcasted by the media. In Panama, however, there was no such media ban to explain Bush's domestic support, raising more questions about media causality. Although the press that poured out of Panama and Grenada were mixed in the tone of their portrayals, with most favoring the invasions, the news after Somalia was holistically negative. Consequently, the Battle of Mogadishu significantly affected the American people's perception of United States involvement in Somalia.

The Battle of Mogadishu also elicited immense reactions from American policymakers. Concerned with backlash from the legislature, the Clinton administration knew it had to attempt to control the narrative in Congress if it had any hope of stabilizing the country's foreign policy goals. The day after the battle, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Secretary of Defense Les Aspin met with over 200 members of Congress in the Capitol to alleviate concerns and assuage congressional anger before rash

⁴⁵ "Grenada: The Reaction to the Action," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1983, [Grenada: The Reaction to the Action](#).

decisions grew quickly out of hand.⁴⁶ Even prior to this, however, the secretaries were asked by the office of the president to make specific calls to members of Congress, including Senator Robert Byrd, to alleviate concerns. Senator Byrd was a Democrat from West Virginia who had been adamantly opposed to American involvement in Somalia from the start. With the Battle of Mogadishu now freshly imprinted on American minds, however, the president worried that Senator Byrd would try and use the situation to propose an amendment that would completely “cut off funding for the Somalia operation and withdraw troops by Nov 15, 1993.”⁴⁷

Despite these attempts by the president’s secretaries, however, policymakers still took to the press to express their concerns immediately after the news of the battle broke; even President Clinton’s own Democratic party, led by Senator Byrd, revolted against his foreign policy. Byrd, who also served as the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, called for an “immediate end to ‘[the] fatal cops-and-robbers operations.’”⁴⁸ And, as the secretaries feared, Byrd threatened to introduce a bill that forced the White House to remove all American soldiers and interests from Somalia.⁴⁹ Senator Ernest Hollings, a

⁴⁶ Clifford Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress: Opposition to a U.S. Military Role in Somalia Deepens as the Death Toll Rises,” *The New York Times*, October 5, 1993, [[Press Clips](#)] [Wednesday, Oct \[October\] 6, 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 11.

⁴⁷ Alphonse Maldon, Email to Howard Paster, Lorraine Miller, Steve Ricchetti, and Timothy Keating, October 5, 1993, accessed February 15, 2023, [FOIA 2006-1021-F - Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 4.

⁴⁸ R.W. Apple, “Clinton Sending Reinforcements after Heavy Losses in Somalia,” *The New York Times*, October 4, 1993, [[Press Clips](#)] [Tues \[Tuesday\] Oct \[October\] 5 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 8.

⁴⁹ Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress.”

Democrat from South Carolina, said that Somalia was “Vietnam all over again” and demanded an immediate withdrawal from Somalia, stating that “there’s no education in a second kick of a mule.”⁵⁰ Another Democrat from Colorado, Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, said that the members of Congress revolted when the secretaries told members of Congress that “more time was needed to put a government in place” in Somalia.⁵¹ The Democrats were not the only ones sharply criticizing Clinton, however; the Republicans inside the legislature were equally as frustrated with the military failures in Mogadishu.

Republican senator John McCain, from Arizona, said that his office “received 400 calls...from constituents favoring immediate withdrawal” and that he adamantly supported withdrawal after securing the remaining American troops in Mogadishu.⁵² Senator Phil Gramm, a Republican from Texas, told the *New York Times* on October 5 that “the people who [were] dragging American bodies [didn’t] look very hungry to the people of Texas. Support for the President in the country and Congress is dying rather rapidly.”⁵³ Support across the legislature for an operation that started as a humanitarian effort to feed a starving populace quickly waned as the bodies of dead American soldiers were the only things that appeared to result from the nation’s aid package in Somalia.

Nearly two weeks later, on October 15, during a session of Congress, many legislators received their chance to directly express their concerns over the

⁵⁰ Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress.”

⁵¹ Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress.”

⁵² Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress.”

⁵³ Krauss, “White House Tries to Calm Congress.”

administration's actions. Congressmen and senators patiently waited for their chance to speak in the packed chamber. In his address on the floor, Republican Senator Bob Livingston of Louisiana was blunt in his distaste for the decision-making skills of the Clinton Administration. Remarking on Clinton's lack of consistency, Livingston demanded to know why "the administration [had] been pursuing an explicit policy of nation-building in Somalia" despite the president saying that "the U.S. military mission [was not then] nor was it ever one of 'nation-building.'"⁵⁴ He continued by saying that Clinton's denial of the situation was a "weak attempt to try and avoid responsibility for the dreadful effects of the nation-building policy," that "the administration [wanted] to deny its role in the havoc which ensued" after the battle, and he demanded that the country "pull every last United States soldier and marine out of that country."⁵⁵ Picking up where Livingston left off, Congressman Bob Dornan, a Republican from California, was next to speak. Dornan opened by stating that he hoped that the millions of Americans who monitored congressional proceedings understood the "disarray that [American] foreign policy [was] in," threatening that the administration's ineptitude was finally "getting personal."⁵⁶ Continuing his tirade, Dornan blamed the failures in Mogadishu on Clinton's removal of military members from his National Security Council, replacing

⁵⁴ Bob Livingston speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

⁵⁵ Bob Livingston speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

⁵⁶ Bob Dornan speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

them with “fuzzy academics who have never understood the military culture;” such people were against the invasions of Panama and Grenada and were “ho, ho, Ho Chi Minh supporters during the Vietnam War.”⁵⁷ “Clinton wrote in 1969 that he had come to loath the military,” Dornan said, “and from Somalia to Haiti, it looks like he still does.”⁵⁸ Republican Senator William Roth, from Delaware, then proceeded to take the floor. In a much shorter speech than the one given by Dornan, Roth suggested that the president owed the American people and Congress answers to fundamental questions about an operation before involving American troops. The operation’s national security impacts, its chance of success, and exit strategies for troops at the end of the operation were key components in determining future involvement overseas.⁵⁹ Roth believed international interventions, without answers to these questions, would take the nation “down the road to pain, terrific pain.”⁶⁰

Despite the robust attention the Battle of Mogadishu got during these earlier sessions of Congress and inside the media, the battle remained at the forefront of political discourse over the next several weeks. By November 4, the Senate had requested both the secretary of state and the secretary of defense’s presence at a hearing on the matter.

⁵⁷ Bob Dornan speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

⁵⁸ Bob Dornan speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

⁵⁹ William Roth speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

⁶⁰ William Roth speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 20.

Although the secretary of state attended the hearing, the secretary of defense failed to show.⁶¹ The secretary of defense's failure to attend was further exasperated by the Department of Defense's refusal to respond to requests for information from the Senate and the undersecretary of defense's refusal to answer questions posed directly by senators in the weeks prior.⁶² Left wondering, the senators began to target Secretary Christopher directly about the failures in Mogadishu. Senator Judd Gregg, a Republican from New Hampshire, asked Christopher specifically about the "fact pattern" that led to the death of the eighteen Americans and the wounding of seventy-eight more at Mogadishu.⁶³ Because the battle was a military operation, however, Secretary Christopher deflected responsibility for its outcome and instead suggested that the senator contact the already absent secretary of defense.⁶⁴

South Dakotan Larry Pressler, another Republican senator, also questioned Christopher during the hearing about the president's lack of knowledge on the Somalia situation. Pressler was referring to an interview of the president by the *Washington Post* during which Clinton said he had "been unaware of the change in the Somalia mission

⁶¹ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us), 97-98.

⁶² Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us), 97-98.

⁶³ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us), 113.

⁶⁴ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us), 113.

from Operation Restore Hope to UNOSOM-2.”⁶⁵ A major change, it marked the transition from solely humanitarian aid to one that involved heightened security measures to protect UN forces there. Senator Pressler also questioned the flow of information from meetings on Somalia to recommendations given to the president. Pressler insinuated that the suggestions posed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA regarding Somalia were not relayed to the president, creating yet another breakdown of information in the federal government’s management of Somalia.⁶⁶ North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms even told the secretary that in all of Arlington National Cemetery, very few “died for less reason than those Americans whose lives were destroyed at Mogadishu.”⁶⁷ Not only had the American loss of life there not been worth the mission’s national security benefits, but the senate was slowly beginning to identify the failures of senior officials in the administration to even manage the fundamentals of the operation. The breakdowns in communication that surrounded Somalia revealed the Clinton administration’s inability to effectively manage American foreign policy objectives in a manner consistent with clearly defined goals.

⁶⁵ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 83.

⁶⁶ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 82.

⁶⁷ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 41.

The media, the American people, and Congress had all determined that the humanitarian aid in Somalia had not been worth the American loss of life. Legislators and the media rapidly began to criticize the Clinton administration and their consistency in foreign policy. First, American involvement in Somalia was part of a humanitarian aid package that intentionally doubled as nation building. Then, months later, President Clinton had adamantly stated that the mission there was never about nation building. Roderick Von Lipsey, a White House fellow, in a memorandum written to President Clinton's chief of staff two weeks after the battle, listed his concerns with the ensuing media outbursts that "[insinuated] that the administration [lacked] viable foreign and security policies."⁶⁸ He continued by saying that "without clear articulation of [national interest and policy objectives], the POTUS' ability to secure NAFTA; conclude GATT; engage APEC, EC, Russian and East-Central European leaders; trim defense spending; and deploy US forces in the future [was] put at risk."⁶⁹ Clinton's lack of a unified foreign policy with clearly defined goals in each international engagement had finally bitten back. His foreign and domestic goals risked complete collapse if he failed to establish a clear and coherent foreign policy.

In the wake of Somalia, Republicans and Democrats both united in their disdain for the mishandling of foreign policy objectives there and the subsequent lives it cost. The reactions to the invasions of Grenada and Panama a decade earlier, however, differed

⁶⁸ Roderick VonLipsey, Email to Kori Schake, October 25, 1993, accessed February 15, 2023, [FOIA 2006-1021-F - Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 5.

⁶⁹ Roderick VonLipsey, Email to Kori Schake, October 25, 1993, accessed February 15, 2023, [FOIA 2006-1021-F - Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 5.

significantly inside of Congress. After Operation Urgent Fury, despite legislators' shock when learning of the invasion, both the House and the Senate were widely split down the political aisle in their support for Reagan's unannounced invasion of Grenada.⁷⁰

Democrats largely opposed the invasion. When they learned of the operation on the day of the invasion, the Democrats exploded with concern because President Reagan had not consulted Congress before sending several thousand troops to what looked like an act of war.⁷¹ Even inside the context of the Cold War and the expansive flexibility that had been given to the president to combat communism both at home and abroad, legislators still grew concerned with the unadvised decisions the executive branch had made to become involved in Grenada. Senator Daniel Moynihan, a Democrat from New York, called it an "act of war," demanding that the president "explain what legal grounds exist for the action he took."⁷² Congressman Michael Barnes, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, said that "in no case [was] Congress...adequately consulted."⁷³ Still others complained that the Reagan administration's constant use of the nation's military to solve problems was a "deeply disturbing characteristic of the White House's foreign policy."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ "U.S., Caribbean States Invade Grenada; Cuban Resistance Stronger Than Expected," Stanford University, October 28, 1983, accessed February 16, 2023, [Document24 \(stanford.edu\)](#).

⁷¹ John Barton, "Congress Gave Cautious Support to the Invasion of Grenada," *United Press International*, October 25, 1983, [Congress gave cautious support to the invasion of Grenada](#).

⁷² "U.S., Caribbean States Invade Grenada; Cuban Resistance Stronger Than Expected."

⁷³ "U.S., Caribbean States Invade Grenada; Cuban Resistance Stronger Than Expected."

⁷⁴ "U.S., Caribbean States Invade Grenada; Cuban Resistance Stronger Than Expected."

The Republicans, although cautious about Reagan's unannounced use of the military, largely supported his actions. Senator Steve Symms, from Idaho, appreciated Reagan's enforcement of the "long-neglected Monroe Doctrine" and Congressman Phil Gramm of Texas believed the invasion was a significant step towards ending the "open season" on Americans declared by terrorists and criminals around the world.⁷⁵ Other Republicans believed the move was vital towards protecting the lives of American citizens on the island and that had Reagan failed to act so quickly, another "Iranian hostage situation" had the potential to take place.⁷⁶ Despite the strong sentiment in support of the invasion by the Republicans, however, both parties united in the House of Representatives to apply the War Powers Resolution to limit the fighting in Grenada by a vote of 403-23, forcing Reagan to have American troops home by Christmas Eve of 1983 unless additional approval was granted by Congress.⁷⁷ Although most Republicans voted in support of the legislation, many still "supported the president's policies, but wanted to clarify the legal situation and assert the right of Congress to have a say in foreign-policy decisions."⁷⁸ In contrast to the Battle of Mogadishu, which experienced largely unanimous opposition against Clinton's foreign policy agenda, support for the invasion of

⁷⁵ "U.S., Caribbean States Invade Grenada; Cuban Resistance Stronger Than Expected."

⁷⁶ Barton, "Congress Gave Cautious Support to the Invasion of Grenada."

⁷⁷ Steven Roberts, "House Votes Bill Applying War Law to Grenada Move," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1983, HOUSE VOTES BILL APPLYING WAR LAW TO GRENADA MOVE.

⁷⁸ Roberts, "House Votes Bill Applying War Law to Grenada Move."

Grenada was bipartisan. Urgent Fury, however, was not the only conflict leading up to Somalia that held the support of the American people.

Much like the invasion of Grenada, Operation Just Cause in Panama also won bipartisan support. Congress was wholly united behind George H.W. Bush and his decision to invade Panama. Both Democrat and Republican legislators supported the invasion despite minor concerns from certain news outlets that the executive office had once again breached the Constitution's requirements of notification before war.⁷⁹ The House of Representatives even introduced a resolution two months after the invasion that both commended the president for his actions and urged him to "continue efforts to foster democratic ideals in Panama."⁸⁰ The invasions of both Grenada and Panama elicited partial political support for Reagan and Bush for their actions to defend American citizens, curb communism, and restore democracy internationally. In the aftermath of the Battle of Mogadishu, however, Clinton's decisions in Somalia had not a single supporter on either side of the aisle.

Not only did the Battle of Mogadishu elicit a vast response from the American public and American policymakers, it also had sweeping effects on the nation's military. In the days and weeks that followed, military policies would transform, leaders would resign, and the military complex was left holding the blame for the failures of the political administration to maintain a holistic and coherent foreign policy agenda. The

⁷⁹ Matthew Rothschild, "In Panama, An Illegal and Unwarranted Invasion," *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1989, IN PANAMA, AN ILLEGAL AND UNWARRANTED INVASION.

⁸⁰ US House of Representatives, 101st Congress, Resolution 262 (February 8, 1990), H.Con.Res.262 - 101st Congress.

military, however, was not without failures of its own; an entire critical analysis paper was written on the military failures at Mogadishu by an Army major out of Fort Leavenworth to better grasp these issues and understand how to prevent them in the future.⁸¹ There were both operational failures at the highest levels of the administration in the months before the battle and tactical failures on the ground during the battle itself that all impacted its outcome. When explored, they establish a dominant narrative that outlines failures at every level of the military complex that failed to ensure success during the operation.

There were two key tactical-level issues at the Battle of Mogadishu. The first was the delay in communication between observation assets, senior leadership, and the soldiers maneuvering on the ground. Throughout the duration of the battle, aviation assets were used to provide observation and directions to the ground convoy navigating its way through Mogadishu. One of these aviation assets, the primary observer plane during the fight, was the P-3 Orion spy plane.⁸² During the fight, the P-3 crew would give directions for the convoy to forward observers in an operations center who then passed that guidance to the drivers on the ground. The delay in this communication chain often resulted in the convoy passing their turn before even receiving the directions to turn. Howard Wasdin, one of the Navy SEALs at the battle, said, “The Orion spy plane could see what was happening but could [not] speak directly to McKnight (the ground forces

⁸¹ Roger Sangvic, *The Battle of Mogadishu: Anatomy of a Failure* (Fort Leavenworth, 1998).

⁸² Howard Wasdin and Stephen Templin, *Seal Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy Seal Sniper* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), 13.

commander). So it relayed information to the commander at the Joint Operations Center (JOC). Next, the JOC commander called the command helicopter. Finally, the command helicopter radioed McKnight. By the time McKnight received directions to turn, he'd already passed the road."⁸³ These directions were essential throughout the battle because of the makeshift barricades emplaced by the angry Somali populace that rendered maps essentially useless. Consequently, this breakdown of information meant that the ground convoy received significantly more enemy contact than they would have if direct lines of communication had been established with the commanders on the ground.

The second tactical issue during the battle was the choice by members of Task Force Ranger to replace their water sources and night vision devices with extra ammunition for the fight.⁸⁴ They decided to do this based on the raid's timeline; it was supposed to be a thirty-minute raid during the middle of the day, which essentially eliminated any requirement for sustainment or nighttime optics. This failure to adequately prepare for contingencies, however, made for a struggle when the battle turned into an overnight fiasco. Although ammunition was certainly important during a fight where they expected contact, it would have been much easier to resupply ammunition later if needed than to provide the soldiers with the night-vision devices required to effectively fight and gain an advantage at night during the middle of the battle. The American military has

⁸³ Howard Wasdin and Stephen Templin, *Seal Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy Seal Sniper* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 13.

⁸⁴ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 6.

been and is a force that prides itself on “owning the night.”⁸⁵ From the late 1980s to recent engagements in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, the American military has chosen to fight at night because of the marked advantage it has through its equipment, training, and prowess during night operations. Therefore, choosing to not bring the same optics that could provide such a significant advantage during contingencies was a significant oversight that the task force paid dearly for as the nighttime fighting dragged on against a far larger force in Mogadishu.

Although the tactical failures during the battle certainly had an impact on its outcome, the operational decisions made months prior had the greatest effect on its failures and were the ones most remembered by the public during its aftermath. In the months leading up to the battle, there had been a debate amongst senior military leaders on the ground about whether to authorize armored vehicles like M1 Abrams Tanks, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and additional aviation support like the AC-130 Gunship, a fixed-wing aircraft with significant armament capabilities. Concerned with its role during peacekeeping operations on the ground, the ability to maintain the AC-130 on site in Somalia, and the potential for collateral damage by using weapons of this caliber, especially after the fallout of the Abdi House Raid,⁸⁶ Secretary Aspin made the decision not to deploy additional support to those troops stationed in Mogadishu.⁸⁷ Although

⁸⁵ Dan Schoen and Jon Tishman, “We Don’t Own the Night Anymore,” *Modern War Institute at West Point*, January 22, 2021, [We Don’t Own the Night Anymore - Modern War Institute \(usma.edu\)](https://www.usma.edu/we-dont-own-the-night-anymore).

⁸⁶ Mark Bowden, “A Wrong Turn in Somalia – An Ill-Conceived Copter Raid Turned Many Somalis Against U.S. Forces,” *The Seattle Times*, February 9, 1998, [A Wrong Turn In Somalia](https://www.seattletimes.com/archive/1998/02/09/a-wrong-turn-in-somalia/).

⁸⁷ Barton Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor,” *The Washington Post*, May 13, 1994, [SOMALIA HEARING EXAMINES REJECTED REQUEST FOR ARMOR](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1994/05/13/local-news/somalia-hearing-examines-rejected-request-for-armor/1994-05-13/).

Aspin owned the decision, in statements made well after the battle, he said he had “deferred” the decision to senior military leaders and seemed unaware of its potential use for hunting down Aidid.⁸⁸ The two senior military commanders in Mogadishu, however, both had a different story to tell. Major General Thomas Montgomery, the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, a unit of conventional forces stationed in Somalia as a quick reaction force, adamantly believed that Aspin’s “deferral” had been a refusal. In prepared remarks to the Senate Armed Services Committee on May 12, 1994, he said the “clear intent behind my request was to improve my ability to protect the entire force and to be able to reach out and assist any element or base in trouble.”⁸⁹ Further, General Montgomery was firm in his belief that the additional armored and aviation support would have saved the lives of his men across the deployment, but especially those lost in support of Task Force Ranger during the Battle of Mogadishu.

Major General William Garrison, the commander of Task Force Ranger, also testified at the same committee hearing. In opposing remarks to those made by General Montgomery, he believed that the additional support would have only saved the life of one soldier during the battle and argued that the fire support from the helicopters he had already been allocated had been more than enough to augment his forces, nullifying the need for the AC-130 gunship.⁹⁰ While his contrasting understanding of the situation

⁸⁸ Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor.”

⁸⁹ Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor.”

⁹⁰ Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor.”

likely stemmed from his role in special operations, who “normally emphasize speed and agility over heavy equipment,” there would have still been merit to the equipment’s deployment into theatre to protect the conventional forces there against rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and other explosives. Although there was also a chance that the requested support would not have arrived in Mogadishu in time for the fight, the decision to deny the request was one that caused significant fallout in the military amidst accusations by the American public and the nation’s legislators.⁹¹ This failure in leadership certainly was not the first time that senior military officials received sharp criticism for their decisions during combat operations, but this one felt unique. Two separate generals were called to testify before a senate committee on theater-level support requests whose operational effects were not even clear. Every decision made by military leaders was examined under a microscope following the staggering casualty numbers produced by the October battle. These examinations were further exasperated by constituents and the families of the slain men who voiced their considerable disdain for the government’s lack of operationalized support for the American military in Somalia.⁹² While these concerns had very little tactical basis, combined with the media outbursts already discussed, they fueled a flame in the presidential administration and Congress that resulted in decisions to transform American involvement overseas and the nation’s support of future military operations.

⁹¹ Luke Hartig, “We Shouldn’t Forget the Lessons of Black Hawk Down: Part I,” Just Security, August 29, 2017, accessed February 21, 2023, [We Shouldn't Forget the Lessons of Black Hawk Down: Part I](#).

⁹² Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor.”

These sharp criticisms of senior military leaders resulted in multiple retirements and resignations across the defense enterprise. The concerns of policymakers and the American public over these several key military decisions placed immense pressure on the administration to act against those in charge. Sensing this tension, as the senior special operations commander in charge of the raid on October 3 and 4, General Garrison wrote a letter to President Clinton near the end of that month,⁹³ taking full responsibility for the outcome of the raid and asking the American public to remove President Clinton and Secretary Aspin from the “blame line.”⁹⁴ This letter, in conjunction with the entire fallout from the battle, effectively ended the career of a man who had served with distinction in the nation’s most dangerous units since 1966. Staff Sergeant Dan Schilling, an Air Force combat controller during the battle, said, “it wasn’t a shame that [Garrison’s] career was derailed after our deployment; it was a criminal act committed by political cowards.”⁹⁵

Despite General Garrison accepting responsibility for the failures in Mogadishu, Secretary of Defense Aspin also resigned in January of 1994,⁹⁶ leaving office with the fourth shortest tenure in the position in American history outside of acting secretaries of

⁹³ Michael Gordon, “General Is Said to Take Blame for Raid in Somalia,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1993, [General Is Said to Take Blame for Raid in Somalia](#).

⁹⁴ Edward Chang, “Military Brass Resigned Over ‘Black Hawk Down,’ But Not Afghanistan,” *The Federalist*, October 6, 2021, accessed February 21, 2023, [Military Brass Resigned Over ‘Black Hawk Down,’ But Not Afghanistan](#).

⁹⁵ Dan Schilling and Matt Eversmann, *The Battle of Mogadishu: Firsthand Accounts from the Men of Task Force Ranger* (New York: Random House, 2005), 187.

⁹⁶ Gellman, “Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor.”

defense.⁹⁷ Although his refusal to commit additional armored and aviation assets in Somalia was certainly the nail in the coffin, the breakdown in communication between senior officials in the administration also played a role in his resignation. It is the secretary of defense's unique responsibility to keep the president abreast of all military operations and actions and after the battle, Clinton remarked that he had not even known "the Rangers were still under standing orders to capture General Aidid and his lieutenants."⁹⁸ This confusion in foreign policy objectives, one of the things that the administration had been so heavily criticized for in the past, was a hallmark of the Clinton presidency. Whether the breakdown in guidance came from those selected to senior positions in the administration or a lack of clear guidance from Clinton himself, one thing was certain: Congress and the American people were no longer willing to tolerate it and demanded answers.

In contrast, the invasions in both Grenada and Panama were widely regarded as military successes. Neither invasion necessitated change inside the military complex, no one demanded the relief of senior defense department officials or military commanders, and almost no one criticized the tactics and operational planning during the operations. While Operation Just Cause in Panama was left unscathed by the media, politicians, and critics of the military, Operation Urgent Fury faced minor criticisms.⁹⁹ Some believed

⁹⁷ "Leslie Aspin: William Clinton Administration," Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, accessed February 21, 2023, [Leslie Aspin > Historical Office > Article View \(defense.gov\)](#).

⁹⁸ Gordon, "General Is Said to Take Blame for Raid in Somalia."

⁹⁹ Daniel Bolger, "Operation Urgent Fury and Its Critics," *Military Review: The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army* (July, 1986), [Operation Urgent Fury and Its Critics \(army.mil\)](#).

that the operation's command and control was misappropriated and that the military's force ratios and target selections during the invasion were misaligned.¹⁰⁰ There is much evidence when the invasion is examined with an understanding of military operations, however, that readily refute these claims. Aside from these small criticisms, both operations' military tactics were left out of the media and post-battle analyses; it was business as normal for the American military and despite incurring casualties, they still accomplished their objectives against superior forces in complicated terrain. When the aftermath of the Battle of Mogadishu is compared to previous bouts of American intervention, it becomes increasingly clear that Mogadishu was certainly unique.

The proliferation of the tragedy in Mogadishu by the American media in the wake of the battle elicited far greater reactions from the American people and the nation's legislators than anyone could have imagined. The issues evoked by these reactions, combined with the failure of the Clinton administration to answer basic questions like the ones Senator Roth posed during the October 15 congressional hearing, exasperated Congress to the point that it decided to handle the matter in Mogadishu itself. At a time when the military was already downsizing, Congress acknowledged the brutal reality that nation-building in Somalia posed a great risk to a shrinking force. In a congressional report looking back on the Battle of Mogadishu, the writer determined that the shocking loss of life there "led many to question even more intensely the extent of US national security interests in these matters, and the wisdom of burdening the US military with these activities, at a time when the military [was] experiencing sharp downsizing and

¹⁰⁰ Bolger, "Operation Urgent Fury and Its Critics."

funding reductions.”¹⁰¹ By November 9, 1993, the 103rd Congress introduced House Resolution 170, sponsored by Republican Congressman Benjamin Gilman, which directed the president to “remove US armed forces from Somalia by March 31, 1994.”¹⁰² Two years and four months after the first American troops had landed in Somalia in support of Operation Restore Hope and the United Nation’s Unified Task Force, the American military had completely withdrawn from Somalia.¹⁰³ Several other countries followed suit and by that Fall, the UNSC issued UNSC Resolution 954, which established the date for the complete withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia as March 31, 1995.¹⁰⁴ The great foreign policy experiment that was UNOSOM, something that was supposed to create a matrix for future intervention, had come to a tragic end.¹⁰⁵

The question then becomes, why were the reactions to Mogadishu so significant and those to Grenada and Panama so miniscule? The military suffered far more casualties in both Grenada and Panama respectively than it did in Mogadishu.¹⁰⁶ The raid on Aidid’s

¹⁰¹ US Library of Congress, House of Representatives Report 104-18, “National Security Revitalization Act,” February 6, 1995, H. Rept. 104-18 - NATIONAL SECURITY REVITALIZATION ACT.

¹⁰² US House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, Resolution 170 (November 9, 1993), H.Con.Res.170 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994).

¹⁰³ Lester Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1999), 33.

¹⁰⁴ UN Security Council, Resolution 954 (November 4, 1994), Security Council Resolution 954 - UNSCR.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Alexander, *Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later*, *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

¹⁰⁶ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 62; Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint*

lieutenants in Mogadishu cost the lives of eighteen Americans and wounded another seventy-three personnel.¹⁰⁷ The invasions of Grenada and Panama resulted in forty-two dead Americans and another 438 wounded. American forces in Panama also lost as many special operations helicopters as they did in Mogadishu and under similar circumstances.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the United States population knew the country had forces in Somalia supporting the United Nations but had no clue until well after the invasions of Grenada and Panama that the military were to become involved there. Despite all these similarities and points of comparison, Grenada and Panama were largely regarded as national successes while the Battle of Mogadishu sent the nation into a spiral that transformed American foreign policy for decades. The next chapter, “What Made Mogadishu Different,” will examine five key differences in the circumstances in and around the battle to better understand the differences that created this unique reaction.

Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 65.

¹⁰⁷ Todd South, “The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later: How the Fateful Fight Changed Combat Operations,” *Army Times*, October 2, 2018, [The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later](#).

¹⁰⁸ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 40.

Chapter 2: What Made Mogadishu Different

The Battle of Mogadishu, on October 3-4, 1993 transformed American foreign policy virtually overnight in a political reaction to overseas failures that occurred in support of United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM), the United Nations humanitarian aid mission in Somalia. The Clinton administration's foreign policy transitioned from widespread global intervention and policing efforts, humanitarian aid packages, and other methods of international involvement to a policy that encouraged intervention only in cases of national security; all other efforts would be given lip service and money from the national coffers but would not be addressed with the same urgency nor personnel requirements that had been offered to previous cases of intervention. In the weeks that followed the early October battle, President Clinton announced the permanent withdrawal of American forces from Somalia, senior military officers were crucified by legislators, and the secretary of defense, Les Aspin, resigned.¹ Clinton's approval ratings plummeted and Americans no longer wanted anything to do with overseas operations that involved US troops, even if that meant the total collapse of an entire country and the subsequent starvation of its people.² Further, Republicans and Democrats united across the political aisle in their disdain for the Clinton administration's foreign policy to ensure

¹ US House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, Resolution 170 (November 9, 1993), [H.Con.Res.170 - 103rd Congress \(1993-1994\)](#); Michael Gordon, "General Is Said to Take Blame for Raid in Somalia," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1993, [General Is Said to Take Blame for Raid in Somalia](#); Barton Gellman, "Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor," *The Washington Post*, May 13, 1994, [SOMALIA HEARING EXAMINES REJECTED REQUEST FOR ARMOR](#).

² Theresa Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 60-61, 91-100, [Thesis Draft \(dtic.mil\)](#).

that a disaster like the Battle of Mogadishu, also known as “Black Hawk Down,” would never happen again. The domestic reactions to the battle, the “Mogadishu effect,” toppled decades-long foreign policy guidelines rooted deep in Cold War politics. Turmoil over the death of eighteen American soldiers, the wounds of another seventy-three, and the destruction of two special operations UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters reshaped national politics.³ The American people regarded Operation Restore Hope, the codename for American operations inside UNOSOM, as a total failure and believed that Clinton and other senior leaders had wasted the lives of the eighteen young men dead in the dusty streets of Mogadishu.⁴

The track record of American intervention in the second half of the twentieth century was long and bloody, but for the first time, the effects of overseas involvement finally ignited a domestic reaction significant enough to completely transform foreign policy. Previous operations shared an impressive number of similarities with the Battle of Mogadishu, however, but failed to deliver the same reaction. The United States lost far more servicemembers during Operation Urgent Fury,⁵ the invasion of Grenada in 1983,

³ Todd South, “The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later: How the Fateful Fight Changed Combat Operations,” *Army Times*, October 2, 2018, [The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later](#).

⁴ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 41.

⁵ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 62.

and Operation Just Cause,⁶ the invasion of Panama in 1989, than were lost during the Battle of Mogadishu. Additionally, during Operation Just Cause, Panamanian combatants also shot down two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and grounded a third, the exact same number of helicopters damaged in Mogadishu.⁷ Despite this, domestic political and popular reactions to the invasions of Grenada and Panama were far more favorable to the Reagan and Bush administrations than to Clinton's in the wake of the tragedy in Somalia. So why then was Mogadishu so different from the rest of twentieth-century intervention for the American legislators and citizens who so significantly opposed Clinton's foreign policy?

Five key factors, ranging from global and geographical concerns to operational failures, created the unique reaction to "Black Hawk Down" and established the environment in which the "Mogadishu effect" was allowed to develop and transform American foreign policy. First, the Battle of Mogadishu was the first significant loss of life that the United States had suffered since the end of the Cold War.⁸ Previously, presidential administrations had been able to justify past conflicts and their repercussions under the guise of abating Russian aggression around the world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, Americans struggled to find the reasons their military was dying

⁶ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 65.

⁷ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 40.

⁸ "Worldwide U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths – Selected Military Operations," Defense Casualty Analysis System, accessed January 29, 2023, [Defense Casualty Analysis System \(osd.mil\)](https://www.osd.mil/DCAS/).

abroad.⁹ The Cold War had dominated almost every single aspect of American life for nearly fifty years. Domestic and foreign policies were both affected by competition with the USSR. The Red Scare, the American nickname for concerns of Soviet domination, had become a driving factor of national politics. Foreign and domestic policies transformed to prevent the fall of capitalism and ensure the success of the United States in the superpower race against the Soviet Union. Domestic programs and surveillance were created under the guise of national security, civil rights movements called for indirect rights and inclusive democracy, and efforts to promote masculinity across the nation were widespread to combat communism at home. Abroad, American foreign policy was driven by containment throughout much of the Cold War. Initially penned in 1946 by George Kennan, a State Department official, the policy of containment grew out of his letter on Russian policy, now titled the “Long Telegram.”¹⁰ By the time the letter had been presented to President Harry Truman months later, it had begun to solidify itself as national doctrine; it created the guidelines for the prevention of communist expansion by military, political, and economic means.¹¹

Containment policy drew the United States into conflicts against the Soviet Union in Korea and Vietnam, by proxy in Panama and Grenada, by negotiation in Cuba, and

⁹ Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001).

¹⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 201-224.

¹¹ Ken Hechler, *Working with Truman: A Personal Memoir of the White House Years* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 44.

pressured still other international hotbeds for communist expansion. For decades, American presidents justified international intervention under the guise of containment and the destruction of the Red Scare. Invasions into minor, obscure countries that posed little direct threat to national security were justified by arguing their value in the fight for containment against the USSR and the subsequent denial of terrain and resources eventually owned or supervised by the United States. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War in late 1991, however, the global stage had transformed and American policies, built on a foundation of international conflict, were collapsing.¹²

Norman Ornstein, in a 1992 *Foreign Affairs* article, said that “the end of the Cold War [had] thrown our existing assumptions and most of our traditional political divisions into turmoil.”¹³ He further asked, “what does a superpower do in a world no longer dominated by superpower conflict?”¹⁴ The United States could no longer fight obscure wars or support international intervention in outlying countries; it had to identify a new enemy. A 1992 Harvard University article argued that the “fall of communism [had] given way to the rise of nationalist totalitarianism,” and believed that nuclear proliferation in places like Iraq, China, and North Korea were of immense concern.¹⁵ Despite the ever-present concern about nuclear weapons, however, Americans no longer

¹² Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001), 446-447.

¹³ Norman Ornstein, “Foreign Policy and the 1992 Election,” *Foreign Policy* 71, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 1.

¹⁴ Ornstein, “Foreign Policy and the 1992 Election.”

¹⁵ Allen Soong, “Foreign Policy by Poll,” *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 1993, [Foreign Policy by Poll | Opinion | The Harvard Crimson](#).

worried about the international stage when the national security implications could not be clearly traced back to their personal lives as was so commonplace during the Cold War. In a Clinton Administration investigation on “America’s Place in the World” conducted shortly after Mogadishu in November of 1993, not a single majority of leading Americans from across ten separate career fields placed international intervention for humanitarian aid or global policing efforts in their top five foreign policy priorities for the country moving forward.¹⁶ Further, the support of the broader public for overseas involvement was also diminishing. During the Cold War, “Americans accepted the globalist foreign policy, massive defense establishment, and intrusive internal practices that had previously been taboo except in times of war.”¹⁷ Without the Cold War as the justification for involvement, however, the willingness of the American people to suffer military losses rapidly waned. This was the chief issue with 1990s foreign policy; “it stated that U.S. diplomacy should be clear and coherent but failed to identify a single overriding threat or objective that would make it so.”¹⁸

Consequently, on the morning of October 4, 1993, when the American people learned that an elite special operations unit in East Africa had lost over fifty percent of its formation in support of humanitarian aid operations, the United States erupted in an outcry against the Clinton administration. In polls taken during the next twelve months,

¹⁶ Robert Erburu et al., *America’s Place in the World: An Investigation of the Attitudes of American Opinion Leaders and the American Public about International Affairs* (New York: Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press, 1993), 20.

¹⁷ Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” 474-475.

¹⁸ Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” 475.

comparing popular advocacy of international involvement during and after the end of the Cold War, domestic support for an active foreign policy had fallen nearly fifteen percent.¹⁹ Support for every single dimension of international involvement had sunk to some degree; the steepest declines were in support of improving international “living standards,” “protecting weaker nations against aggression,” and “promoting human rights abroad.”²⁰ Notably, these were all categories in which the UNOSOM mission in Somalia fit. Americans were not dying abroad protecting democracy, restoring capitalist freedom, or deterring Soviet aggression. Instead, they were being massacred by the same people they were sent to help in a nation that held little security implications against the United States because of unclear foreign policy goals in the wake of the Cold War. Weary of international involvement after nearly a century of continuous conflict at the helm of the global scene, weary Americans decided it was time for the United States to transition inwards and focus on domestic policies.²¹ This trend continued throughout Clinton’s first term and by the time of his reelection campaign in 1996, polled voters’ top four priorities for the president and Congress were all domestic issues.²² The American reaction to the Battle of Mogadishu was firmly in the grasp of the effects of the Cold War’s aftermath. It

¹⁹ Alvin Richman, “Trends: American Support for International Involvement: General and Specific Components of Post-Cold War Changes,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 307-308.

²⁰ Richman, “Trends: American Support for International Involvement,” 307-308.

²¹ Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” 476-477.

²² Keating Holland, “Clinton Rides High on Issues Public Cares About Most,” *CNN*, February 3, 1996, [AllPolitics - Clinton Rides High](#).

was this key fact, among others, that made it so different from the invasions of Grenada and Panama.

Ronald Reagan, in his address on the decision to initiate Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, justified the invasion by arguing its necessity to protect American medical students on the island and to prevent communist expansion.²³ He had taken advantage of the Cold War's hold on the United States; in a gripping address, he described Grenada as a "Soviet-Cuban colony being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy."²⁴ Further, he justified the action by describing its necessity in line with American foreign policy: "There was a time when our national security was based on a standing army here within our own borders...the world has changed. Today our national security can be threatened in far-away places. It's up to all of us to be aware of the strategic importance of such places and to be able to identify them."²⁵ To Reagan, Grenada, a country of only 110,000 people, was one of these key places, and the nation agreed.²⁶ After his emotional speech on the invasion of Grenada, over seventy percent of Americans supported the invasion. The military venture thrust Reagan into the lead of his political opponents in pre-heat polls for the 1984 election.²⁷ Although some Americans

²³ "Transcript of Address by President on Lebanon and Grenada," *New York Times*, October 28, 1983, [TRANSCRIPT OF ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT ON LEBANON AND GRENADA](#).

²⁴ "Transcript of Address by President on Lebanon and Grenada."

²⁵ "Transcript of Address by President on Lebanon and Grenada."

²⁶ "Transcript of Address by President on Lebanon and Grenada."

²⁷ Barry Sussman, "Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1983, [Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows](#).

were concerned that Reagan was “bringing the country closer to war,” only twenty-two percent opposed the military intervention in Grenada.

Just over six years later, President Bush continued the same textbook foreign-policy speech to justify Operation Just Cause in Panama on December 20, 1989. The United States had to protect its citizens in Panama and needed to bring democracy to the small, Central American country. In fact, he mentioned the American restoration of democracy eleven times in the six-minute speech.²⁸ The national imperative that supported overseas intervention through the containment of communism continued. Even more so than after Reagan’s justification of action in Grenada, the American public were wholly bought into the invasion of Panama. In the Gallup polls that followed and in those taken after the end of the Gulf War months later, Bush held record-high presidential approval ratings, initially setting the record at eighty percent in January of 1990 and then breaking it in February of 1991 with an eighty-nine percent approval rating.²⁹ Just over two years later, only months after the end of the Cold War, however, Bush’s ratings had fallen to nearly forty percent due to a combination of domestic factors and a lack of international success.³⁰ Bush’s attempt at redefining international involvement after the Cold War, called the “New World Order,” established the United States as a moral beacon

²⁸ “December 20, 1989: Address to the Nation on Panama,” George H.W. Bush Presidency, UVA Miller Center, accessed March 15, 2023, [December 20, 1989: Address to the Nation on Panama](#).

²⁹ RJ Reinhart, “George H.W. Bush Retrospective,” *Gallup*, December 1, 2018, [George H.W. Bush Retrospective](#).

³⁰ Reinhart, “George H.W. Bush Retrospective.”

to the rest of the world, but “was long on rhetoric and short on substance.”³¹ It lacked a clearly defined goal or an enemy with which to pit the United States against, something that had made Cold War-era foreign policy so well-supported in the past. As time continued and Bush made the initial decision to support UNOSOM in Somalia, a mission that Bill Clinton inherited when he took office in January of 1993, this lack of clarity in American foreign policy ensured that any military disaster that were to take place would further muddy future American foreign policy decisions. Consequently, in contrast to the resounding support that Bush and Reagan had enjoyed in the wake of military invasions and American losses of life, after Mogadishu, Clinton was berated by both legislators and the American people as poll numbers sunk to near-record lows and support of his foreign policy decisions deteriorated rapidly. Without the national unity against the Soviet Union that was so rampant for most of the twentieth century, the loss of American life in Somalia appeared unjustified and unacceptable to the American people. The aftermath of the Cold War, and the lack of strong foreign policy goals that followed, had fully claimed Clinton as its first victim in the wake of the Battle of Mogadishu; Clinton struggled to transition the nation towards his administration’s goals after Somalia.

Mogadishu’s historiographical periodization in the wake of the Cold War, however, was not the only thing that made public reaction so different from that of Grenada and Panama. The second factor that separated it from past conflicts and losses of American life overseas was its distal location to the United States; the invasions of

³¹ Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001), 478-481.

Grenada and Panama were much closer to home. Conflicts in Central America and the Caribbean Sea provided a much more tangible validation for intervention than a humanitarian aid mission halfway around the world, especially one that offered little threat to national security.³² In mid-1993, American legislators had begun to grow weary of the country's involvement in Somalia but had not amassed the political capital required to pressure the president into complete withdrawal from Mogadishu. By October 15, just two weeks after the battle, however, legislators had all the ammunition they needed to strike down Clinton's involvement in Somalia. Legislators and the American public quickly decided that Mogadishu did not merit the risk nor the loss of lives that they had deemed worth the cost in Grenada and Panama. There were other telling signs of comparison between the three events and legislative reactions to them that made Mogadishu different than Grenada and Panama, signs that directly related to their geographical proximities to the United States.

The most interesting of these signs is the difference in language used by legislators when describing each operation. The American attempt in Somalia to depose the warlords and install a democratic government was oddly similar to the missions in both Grenada and Panama, but with two key differences: their proximity and their direct involvement of American citizens. In Grenada, several-hundred American medical students remained on the island during the coup and there was a large contingent of American citizens living in Panama at the time of invasion. Somalia, however, had few, if

³² Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](http://www.presidentiallibraries.us), 41.

any, Americans living in the country during the 1993 humanitarian crisis. Further, Congressmen repeatedly referred to Grenada and Panama as neighbors of the United States, all while validating the national security concerns located there, in the sessions of Congress that followed each invasion. Several remarked that the operation in Grenada was an operation “at the request of our eastern Caribbean neighbors.”³³ In fact, during a single day of congressional sessions, the word “neighbor” was used in relation to operations in Grenada six times.³⁴ During that October 25, 1983, session of Congress, Congressman Ed Markey told his fellow legislators that the United States must not “turn our backs” on the nation’s southern “neighbors.” He argued that Grenada was a necessary battle against communism as the American military “threw out the Cubans and the Soviets in [the country’s] own hemisphere and said, ‘enough is enough.’”³⁵ In Congress’s first session following the invasion of Panama, Operation Just Cause was treated with the same voracity. Legislators once again remarked on the importance of advancing “freedom and democracy” in Panama, “noble causes” worthy of the nation’s attention.³⁶ Much like discussions on Grenada, congressmen also remarked on the proximity of Panama to the United States, consistently utilizing the term “neighbor” or “our hemisphere” to describe

³³ Ike Skelton speaking, on October 25, 1983, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 129, Part 21, [GPO-CRECB-1983-pt21-3.pdf \(congress.gov\)](#), 29183.

³⁴ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 129, Part 21, [GPO-CRECB-1983-pt21-3.pdf \(congress.gov\)](#).

³⁵ Ed Markey speaking, on October 25, 1983, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 129, Part 21, [GPO-CRECB-1983-pt21-3.pdf \(congress.gov\)](#), 29186.

³⁶ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 136, Part 1, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 10.

its location.³⁷ Even those opposed to the invasion drew on proximity in their arguments. Congressman Joseph Kennedy II from Massachusetts, for example, used proximity to demand change in American foreign policy; he asked the house to “abandon this failed policy of easy resort to military intervention in our hemisphere.”³⁸ Regardless of their support for the operations in Grenada and Panama, however, one thing was certain: Congress was keenly aware of their geographical proximity to the United States and the importance of maintaining stability and image in the United States’ own hemisphere.

In contrast, Congressmen opposed action in Somalia for its geographic distance. In the session of Congress that followed Mogadishu, as legislators took their turns berating the Clinton administration for their foreign policy failures, Republican Congressman Porter Goss demanded that Clinton take responsibility for his “ill-advised decision to take sides in Somalia’s internal disputes.”³⁹ Senator Robert Byrd said that “it was time for Americans to leave the Horn of Africa to the Somalis and other friendly African nations.”⁴⁰ Congressman David Durenberger argued that “there is a basic reality in Africa that [Congress] must realize and accept: every country needs a stable leader. In Somalia, that may be General [Aidid] or it may be someone else, but that is an issue for

³⁷ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 136, Part 1, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 54.

³⁸ Joseph Kennedy II speaking, on January 23, 1990, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 136, Part 1, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 54.

³⁹ Porter Goss speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24821.

⁴⁰ Reid Miller, “U.S. Death Toll Rises in Assault on Aidid Aides,” *The Washington Times*, October 5, 1993, [\[Press Clips\] Tues \[Tuesday\] Oct \[October\] 5 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 88.

the Somalis to decide, not the United Nations, and certainly not the United States.”⁴¹

Further, press releases from newspapers and media outlets from across the country also asked what “conceivable national interest” the United States had in the African country.⁴²

To Goss and others, the humanitarian aid mission that was preventing hundreds of thousands of Somalis from dying of starvation and civil war was one that was better left alone; the freedom and democracy of the war-torn African country was not our concern. Rarely did legislators, newspapers, or the American public remark on concerns for freedom and democracy in Somalia. Buzzwords that had carried support for operations in the Western hemisphere, like turning “Panama back into a democracy,” did not apply to Somalia.⁴³ The situation in Somalia was far worse than it had ever been in Grenada or Panama. Somali faction leaders were turning the country into a warzone in a national power struggle and innocent civilians were starving because of the war-induced famine, but Congress repeatedly remembered Grenada and Panama as worthy of invasion while simultaneously condemning US action in Somalia during congressional hearings on UNOSOM. While there were certainly multiple factors in every intervention that prescribed the American response to each, the language used when describing the proximity of the three countries indicate a large bias to those regionally aligned with the

⁴¹ David Durenberger speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24785.

⁴² “The Body Count in Somalia,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 5, 1993, [[Press Clips](#)] [Tues \[Tuesday\] Oct \[October\] 5 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 126.

⁴³ “Porter Goss speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24821.

United States and indicate concern for involvement in the far-flung, war-torn East African country of Somalia.

Although historical context and geographical location both played parts in the contrasting reaction to Mogadishu when compared with earlier interventions, the third key difference between them was the variation in military force quality for each operation. The majority of forces involved in the Battle of Mogadishu were part of the United States' most elite units while the invasions of Panama and Grenada consisted of a mix of both special operations and conventional forces.⁴⁴ After failed attempts in Somalia to capture General Aidid and eliminate the disruptions to the United Nations' humanitarian aid efforts, the United States deployed Task Force Ranger (TFR), a joint special operations task force, on August 22, 1993.⁴⁵ Comprised primarily of Army Rangers from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment out of Fort Benning, Georgia, the 440-person task force also had substantial supporting assets.⁴⁶ Members of 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta, commonly known as Delta Force, pilots and Black Hawk helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), Navy SEALs, Air Force para-rescuers and joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs), and other specialized units all were part of this elite strategic asset for the United States in

⁴⁴ “Somalia – UNOSOM II: Background,” Peacekeeping UN, accessed January 28, 2023, [UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA II](#).

⁴⁵ Richard Stewart, *The United States Army in Somalia: 1992-1994* (U.S. Army Center of Military History), [The United States Army in Somalia, 1992-1994 | U.S. Army Center of Military History](#), 17-18.

⁴⁶ Dillon Heyliger, “U.S. Involvement in Mogadishu Before the Battle of Mogadishu,” *U.S. Army*, October 3, 2018, [U.S. involvement in Mogadishu before the Battle of Mogadishu | Article | The United States Army](#).

Somalia. Joint special operations task forces like this one had become the “force of choice for operations involving heavy cultural and language support with foreign militaries, organizations, and populations, and precise targeting attacks requiring minimal collateral damage” for the United States military.⁴⁷ Operating independently of any conventional forces stationed in Somalia, like the 10th Mountain Division soldiers who were there to serve as a quick reaction force (QRF), they had the ability to move quickly and precisely to strike targets. There was no more qualified group of individuals that America could have placed in Mogadishu to target Aidid’s organization and aid in the restoration of order for the Somali populace.

In contrast, Grenada’s and Panama’s Operations Urgent Fury and Just Cause consisted of a mix of special operations and conventional forces operating in relative tandem with each other. In preparation for the invasion of Grenada, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) decided on executing a joint operation with forces from multiple branches of the military and a combination of both special and conventional troops.⁴⁸ Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 120, the name for the entire operation’s collection of troops, consisted of four smaller, individual task forces and a group of special forces soldiers. Members of 160th SOAR, the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit, Air Force fighter pilots, and two brigades of the 82nd Airborne Division were supplemented by strike forces of special forces soldiers inserted ahead of the invasion to secure key locations and personnel as part of the

⁴⁷ Heyliger, “U.S. Involvement in Mogadishu Before the Battle of Mogadishu.”

⁴⁸ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 30.

operation.⁴⁹ Although Admiral McDonald, the overall commander of the operation in Grenada, and his staff had initially proposed “blending Marines and Rangers in heterogenous units for the initial landings,” the “JCS rejected carrying jointness to that extreme.”⁵⁰ Despite this, unlike Somalia, conventional and unconventional forces were operating in tandem with each other throughout the duration of the operation, a mix of highly trained, precisely calibrated soldiers and standard paratroopers and marines with conventional training. The invasion of Panama was no different; another joint task force, a mix of conventional and unconventional troops, executed the operation. The overarching task force consisted of five smaller task forces, like Grenada, and was supplemented by naval special operations forces.⁵¹ Army Rangers, the 7th Infantry Division, a brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division, the 193rd Infantry Brigade, military police officers, AH-64 Apache helicopters, OH-58 Kiowa helicopters, a joint marine battalion, Air Force planes, and Naval Special Warfare personnel comprised the task force. Although most of the objectives during the invasion were isolated to branch-organic units, there were a few key instances, in contrast to Urgent Fury, where joint objectives were taken by a mix of special operations and conventional forces working together.

⁴⁹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 30-31.

⁵⁰ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada 12 October – 2 November 1983*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 30-31.

⁵¹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, by Ronald Cole (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 22-23.

The operations in Grenada and Panama together cost over fifty-two American lives and wounded nearly five-hundred more, each invasion consuming more lives than the 18 troops lost in the Battle of Mogadishu. The reaction to the deaths in Mogadishu was far greater, however, because of the qualifications of the troops there. Task Force Ranger in Somalia was comprised of the nation's finest forces and were there for minor strike operations in conjunction with an overarching humanitarian aid mission; significant casualties were not expected. Inversely, the invasions of Grenada and Panama were expected to be bloody messes. Especially when combined with a mix of conventional and unconventional troops, the invasions would not leave American forces unscathed. Somalia was different. When forces in Mogadishu, men who were supposed to be America's premier fighting force, suffered more than a fifty-percent casualty rate, concern spread rampant throughout the US.⁵² Legislators and the American public were shocked that such highly-trained troops had suffered significant casualties. Their qualifications were repeatedly mentioned in congressional hearings; one congressman remarked that the forces "[were] outstanding, exceptionally well trained; the best trained men in the world."⁵³ Days later, other congressmen continued to address the qualifications of the troops who were killed: "[the Somalis got] Special forces Guys. We have lost Delta Force guys. We have lost Rangers. We have lost sergeants in their middle

⁵² "Pentagon Releases Somalia Casualty List," *UPI Archives*, October 6, 1993, [Pentagon releases Somalia casualty list - UPI Archives](#).

⁵³ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 24, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24407.

thirties...a [US] Army Ranger company was decimated in south Mogadishu.”⁵⁴ In fact, the task force’s status as “Rangers” was mentioned forty-five times in one day of congressional hearings, including remarks that the “Army Rangers were simply hung out to dry” during the fallout of the battle.⁵⁵ In contrast, during the congressional sessions that followed the invasions of Grenada and Panama, despite both invasions having more special operations forces present than in Somalia, their status as “Rangers” or special operations forces was only mentioned three times after Grenada and zero times after Panama.⁵⁶ The homogeneity of the forces in Mogadishu’s status had redefined the way that American legislators viewed the deaths that followed. If the best forces the United States had to offer were massacred by relatively untrained militias in a third-world country, how was America supposed to defend itself against near-peer threats like the former Soviet Union?

Fourth, although the type of troops involved in Somalia played a large part in the differing reaction to the Battle of Mogadishu, their deaths were also a shock because of the type of mission in Somalia, when compared to the invasions of Grenada and Panama, and the military blunders leading up to Mogadishu that Americans argued resulted in the military deaths. Many of the losses incurred in Panama and Grenada were to be expected; invasions are costly operations, and both were planned and executed doctrinally at all

⁵⁴ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 24, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24459, 24690.

⁵⁵ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 24, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 23885.

⁵⁶ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 24, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

levels. In contrast, the losses in Mogadishu were believed to be the result of the massive operational and tactical missteps by leaders at every level of the nation's department of defense.⁵⁷ How was it that over fifty percent of an elite, special operations unit died while supporting humanitarian operations in Somalia? This question, and others, went unanswered for many in the wake of Mogadishu. Instead, legislators and their constituents chose to focus on garnering answers as to why senior officials had denied the additional air support and armored vehicles that had been requested weeks before the Battle of Mogadishu, equipment they firmly believed would have saved the lives of those slain in the streets of Mogadishu. Americans, especially the parents of those killed in Somalia, were not willing to allow those who made these fateful decisions to go unpunished.⁵⁸

Even despite the loss of life during each conflict, the invasions of Grenada and Panama were considered successes, or so most people believed. Fighting for freedom, democracy, and the defense of the American citizens living in those countries, the United States could justify the consequences of the invasions through these ideals. The reasons behind the deaths were clear cut for Americans, it was a military operation; the military was sent to each country to depose the sitting government and restore peace on the island through direct combat. Operations like those have significant risk and consequently, when Americans learned of the invasions, the published casualty figures appeared to be

⁵⁷ Michael Gordon and Thomas Friedman, "Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success So Near, a Loss So Deep," *New York Times*, October 25, 1993, [Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success So Near, a Loss So Deep](#).

⁵⁸ Charles Hall, "VA. Woman Says Dead Soldier is Her Son," *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1993, [VA. WOMAN SAYS DEAD SOLDIER IS HER SON - The Washington Post](#).

acceptable. When the news broke after the Battle of Mogadishu, however, Americans were confused; why were soldiers in such significant numbers dying in support of humanitarian operations?⁵⁹ Many thought they were still under the initial guidance of UNOSOM I, the United Nations mission designed solely for humanitarian operations.⁶⁰ In actuality, the American task force there was under independent orders, separate from UNOSOM I and even separate from UNOSOM II, a more aggressive mission designed to protect aid workers and rid the country of General Aidid. Upon discovering this military independence through investigations and congressional hearings, legislators and the public were maddened that American forces were being used to police a third-world country's internal problems in a scenario that provided zero political, national security, or material benefit.⁶¹

Legislators and the public were most distraught, however, about the tactical, operational, and strategic failures from American leaders in Mogadishu to the secretary of the defense in Washington, failures that had gotten eighteen Americans killed and nearly eighty more wounded.⁶² This issue further compounded the grief and pain the country felt for its lost troops. Not only did the nation feel that its troops died in a completely

⁵⁹ "American Blood Shed in Somalia," *Chicago Tribune*, October 4, 1993, [AMERICAN BLOOD SHED IN SOMALIA – Chicago Tribune](#).

⁶⁰ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 83.

⁶¹ Doyle McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1993, [AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE: DIVIDED WE STAND](#).

⁶² Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 113.

unnecessary operation, but that their deaths had been preventable if senior defense officials and the president had provided the men on the ground the requested equipment they needed to complete the operation assigned them.⁶³ Some believed that armored personnel carriers would have provided the additional security required to keep the men in the convoy alive as they became trapped in the corridors of Mogadishu created by the Somali militias.⁶⁴ Instead, they rode around in unarmored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) that were riddled with bullets and the blood of dead Rangers by the operation's end. Some believed that the AC-130 Gunship would have provided the additional firepower needed to deter counterattacks from the militia and allow the men to evacuate the city or even mitigate the disaster in the first place.⁶⁵ Instead, Task Force Ranger personnel spent over eighteen hours bogged down in close-quarters engagements with small arms and strafing runs from MH-6 "Little Bird" helicopters overhead that could only provide limited support. America was convinced that the Pentagon and Secretary of Defense Les Aspin had let the nation's troops die because of their denial of additional assets to the men on the ground.

The senior generals on the ground, however, held different views on the value of the additional assets during the fight. Although the commander of the 10th Mountain Division quick reaction force personnel in Somalia, Major General Thomas Montgomery,

⁶³ Barton Gellman, "Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor," *The Washington Post*, May 13, 1994, [SOMALIA HEARING EXAMINES REJECTED REQUEST FOR ARMOR](#).

⁶⁴ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 24, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 23920.

⁶⁵ Gellman, "Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor."

firmly believed that the additional armored assets would have saved the lives of the personnel traveling in Mogadishu, Major General William Garrison, the Task Force Ranger commander, was convinced that the additional assets would have provided very little impact to the losses incurred during the fight. He also questioned the likelihood of their arrival in time for the battle, even if they had been approved.⁶⁶ As a career special operations soldier, Garrison also understood the uniqueness, speed, and agility of the special operations mission that this type of equipment would have inhibited. Despite the general's more senior and opposing viewpoints, however, the country still held the Pentagon in contempt for their failure to commit additional assets to Somalia.⁶⁷

The United States was also concerned because legislators viewed the refusal to commit the supporting equipment as incriminating evidence of a larger, administrative-wide shift to preclude the input of senior military leaders and replace it with that of career politicians who had never stepped foot into combat. The fight to control the narrative in the aftermath of Mogadishu was in full swing and many partisan politicians used the decision to deny additional equipment to and personnel to justify the larger transition the government was taking at the time. Clinton had slowly been replacing military members on the National Security Council (NSC) and other key committees with life-long civilians with contrasting viewpoints. Clinton's new NSC used economic issues and concerns as the foundation for its national security decisions and its new composition indicated this

⁶⁶ Gellman, "Somalia Hearing Examines Rejected Request for Armor."

⁶⁷ Luke Hartig, "We Shouldn't Forget the Lessons of Black Hawk Down: Part I," Just Security, August 29, 2017, accessed February 21, 2023, [We Shouldn't Forget the Lessons of Black Hawk Down: Part I](#).

fact. Clinton's NSC, with the Secretary of Treasury, the UN representative, the Assistant for Economic Policy, and the Chief of Staff as the additions, was far different than George H.W. Bush's, led by General Brent Scowcroft, just years prior.⁶⁸ This tension between military and civilian leadership was addressed heavily during the hearings on Somalia, especially by Congressman Bob Dornan, and became one of the mainstays of that year's Congress.⁶⁹

It was a combination of these factors, the deaths in Mogadishu and the operational failures that convinced the American people that the government could have prevented the losses with the committal of additional equipment, that helped make the reaction to Mogadishu so different from that of Grenada and Panama. Additionally, the difference in mission set played a factor; losses from the invasion of two separate countries were understood far better than the fifty-percent casualty rate during one day of a humanitarian operation. Americans also believed that the deaths from the humanitarian operation in Somalia were the result of the civilian takeover of national security decisions inside Clinton's administration. Further, once legislators realized that Clinton had not even been informed of the transition between UNOSOM I and UNOSOM II, a significant shift in foreign policy action in Somalia that created the scenario in which Task Force Ranger could operate independently in their hunt for Aidid, they had lost all confidence in both

⁶⁸ "History of the National Security Council: 1947-1997," Office of the Historian, United States Department of State, IRP, accessed March 15, 2023, [History of the National Security Council 1947-1997 \(fas.org\)](https://fas.org).

⁶⁹ Bob Dornan speaking, on October 15, 1993, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 139, Part 17, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](https://www.congress.gov), 20.

Clinton and his administration to maintain a foreign policy course that would protect the lives of the nation's citizens deployed in support of his grandiose overseas campaigns to police the globe.

Finally, the overt publicization that stemmed from the lack of media control during United Nations operations in Somalia, combined with the other situational factors that surrounded Mogadishu like the operational military failures, served as the ultimate spark that created the reaction that transformed American policy.⁷⁰ The media's influence on the aftermath of Mogadishu was immense and a testament to the power carried by the "CNN Effect." In the days that followed the battle, officials in the Clinton administration knew they had to limit the fallout of Mogadishu. They understood that "how the battle of Mogadishu [was] remembered...[would] greatly influence their room for maneuver in foreign policy."⁷¹ Despite these concerns and their attempt to manage American memory, however, the reaction to Mogadishu was too significant to prevent its effects on Clinton's plans for both foreign and domestic policy.

The media reaction to Mogadishu was both immediate and incredulous; the proliferation in the news of pictures of dead Americans being dragged through Mogadishu stunned, shocked, and horrified the American people. While the reaction to Mogadishu likely played the largest role in the battle's transformation of America's foreign policy, the causality for its difference when compared to the media reactions to

⁷⁰ David Stockwell, "Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations to be a Principle of Military Operations Other Than War" (master's thesis, Army Command and Staff College, 1995), [Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations \(universityofleeds.github.io\)](https://github.com/stockwell/press-coverage-in-somalia).

⁷¹ Gordon and Friedman, "Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success So Near, a Loss So Deep."

Grenada and Panama is also the simplest to identify. In Grenada, the United States banned press reporters from the action for the first forty-eight hours of the invasion.⁷²

This decision, born out of failures from Vietnam to control the media and their impact on domestic support for the war, also became the standard for the United States during later involvement in the Gulf War. In Panama, there was no such ban. Support for the invasion remained high, however, because of American support for ending the human rights violations and “rescuing” the several-thousand American citizens stuck in Panama.

Although Grenada and Panama command two separate reasons for the prevention of media outrage, they were both effective in their own regard. Reagan managed to keep the media from flashing pictures of dead Americans in Grenada across the news before he had a chance to justify the invasion in a presidential address to the country, and Bush enjoyed the highest approval ratings of any president since World War II after the invasion of Panama.⁷³

In contrast, Somalia had neither popular support for the mission nor the ability to control the hundreds of media reporters located in Mogadishu. Because the overarching mission in Somalia was under the flag of the United Nations, press reporters could not be banned and had free reign to report on nearly anything in Somalia. Consequently, as soon as the Battle of Mogadishu concluded on October 4, news stories broke around the world,

⁷² “Grenada: The Reaction to the Action,” *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1983, Grenada: The Reaction to the Action.

⁷³ Barry Sussman, “Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows,” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1983, Grenada Move Earns Reagan Broad Political Gains, Poll Shows; Michael Oreskes, “Approval of Bush, Bolstered by Panama, Soars in Poll,” *The New York Times*, January 19, 1990, Approval of Bush, Bolstered by Panama, Soars in Poll.

accompanied by dozens of gruesome images. In a scenario where Clinton was already fighting to maintain popular support for the mission, it became nearly impossible to mitigate the irreversible damage the proliferation of the media caused. Stories that broke following the invasions of Grenada and Panama largely favored the military action and lauded the president's decisions to commit troops. After Somalia, however, nearly every single story that addressed the Battle of Mogadishu, including all thirty-five *Los Angeles Times* articles, negatively connoted American involvement there.⁷⁴ This media reaction was far different from anything the Clinton administration could have expected and ultimately served as the foundational ignition for the remainder of the United States to mount its offensive against American involvement as a global police force in Somalia.

The shocking loss of life in the Battle of Mogadishu forced Clinton and his administration to rethink American foreign policy and redefine it for the next several decades. It would have been nearly impossible to predict the fallout the battle wrought when remembering previous international involvements. Yet the context and events surrounding American involvement in Somalia made it distinctly different from the invasions of Grenada and Panama and other United States military actions overseas for several reasons. First, occurring right after the end of the Cold War, the Battle of Mogadishu challenged American foreign policy priorities without the Soviet Union and the "Red Scare" as their backdrop. Presidents were unable to continue to justify involvement overseas as containment against communism, and the American people were

⁷⁴ Theresa Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 60-61, 91-100, [Thesis Draft \(dtic.mil\)](#).

no longer willing to incur significant losses in blind support of an ideological war. It was inside this historical periodization that “Black Hawk Down” challenged the United States to redefine its goals for future involvement. Second, Americans were less likely to support involvement in a distal African country that posed little threat to national security. Interventions just south of the United States in Grenada and Panama were far more justifiable to Congress and the American people because of their geographic proximity. In repeated remarks during the sessions of Congress that surrounded each intervention, countries like Grenada and Panama were called “neighbors” while Somalia was consistently labeled as a “far-flung African country.” It was clear that the United States was growing weary of international policing efforts outside the western hemisphere.

Third, Somalia’s Task Force Ranger personnel package was exclusively more elite than the forces deployed in support of Operations Urgent Fury and Just Cause. Top tier special operations forces from the Army, Air Force, and Navy were all deployed to Somalia while only small portions of the total force package in Grenada and Panama were composed of Navy SEALs and Army Rangers. Expectations of a homogenous elite force on a humanitarian mission were high. Consequently, when forces in Somalia suffered significant casualties, reactions were far more significant than those to the casualties of either earlier invasion. Fourth, the type of mission set assigned to forces in Somalia and the operational failures that occurred during their deployment also established key differences between the Battle of Mogadishu and Grenada and Panama. Forces conducting full-scale invasions of entire countries, like those in Grenada and Panama, can incur significant casualties. When troops deployed to Somalia in support of

a United Nations humanitarian mission lost over fifty percent of their fighting force, however, the entirety of the American population became outraged and demanded answers from both their representatives and the Clinton Administration. These issues, especially when coupled with the denial by senior defense officials of additional equipment and aviation assets that generals like Thomas Montgomery believed could have saved American lives, caused Congress to conduct hearing after hearing into the Battle of Mogadishu and demand answers from nearly everyone involved.

Finally, all these differences were ultimately compounded by the uncontrolled flood of news reports that poured out of Mogadishu in the days and weeks after the failed raid, highlighting every single failure that killed eighteen Americans in a routine targeting operation. The proliferation of the media, ensuring every difference between previous interventions and Somalia were highlighted, served as the death knell for Clinton's early form of foreign policy and forced him to transition his administration's focus inward to domestic issues to appease an enraged populace. Caught between George H.W. Bush's New World Order and George W. Bush's expansion of national security assets overseas in the wake of the Cold War, Clinton spent the remainder of his presidency remediating his early failures in Mogadishu. Six months after the disastrous raid, all American forces had withdrawn from Somalia and the United States prepared to take a limited role in subsequent crises like Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, as millions of innocent civilians were massacred in the names of ethnic unity and political power. American foreign policy shifted and set a new standard of intervention criteria for the United States that stood for the next three decades. The next chapter, "The Transformation of American Foreign

Policy,” clearly outlines this shift from evocative reactions to transforming decisions and establishes the stage for the final chapter to examine their impact in case studies across the globe in the years that followed Task Force Ranger in Somalia.

Chapter 3: The Transformation of American Foreign Policy

The weeks that followed the October 3, 1993, Battle of Mogadishu transformed the United States. A simple “snatch and grab” operation by America’s most elite special operations units that was supposed to take only an hour transitioned into a 15-hour fight that resulted in 18 dead Americans and nearly another 80 wounded.¹ With the images of slain Americans on every television screen and newspaper in the country, Congress erupted in anger and bewilderment at the lack of clear policies and guidelines on foreign involvement from the Clinton administration. Senior military leaders, including the secretary of defense, resigned amidst significant domestic pressure, and Americans demanded their troops redeploy from an overseas commitment with minimal national security implications. United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM), initially designed as a humanitarian operation in Somalia to combat the famine that was killing hundreds of thousands of Somalis, had transitioned into an American manhunt, codenamed Operation Gothic Serpent, for General Mohamed Farrah Aidid, a leading warlord in Somalia vying for control of the country amidst the internal power struggle. The task force in charge of the operation, Task Force Ranger, and its leadership had operated for months with limited oversight by senior officials in the Clinton administration; many officials, including the president, had admittedly not even been informed of the transition of the mission in Somalia from a humanitarian and peacekeeping operation to the manhunt that led to the October 3 battle. Consequently,

¹ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 8.

when the news of the battle broke in the days that followed, legislators and the American public were shocked that an elite special operations unit had suffered nearly fifty-percent casualties in support of what they thought was a humanitarian mission to a starving country.

Initially began by George H.W. Bush near the end of his presidency in 1992, Bill Clinton inherited UNOSOM and the American mission in Somalia when he took office months later. Despite this, many in both Congress and the public held Clinton personally responsible for its failure through his lack of oversight once it fell under his control. Public support for his presidency, the operation in Somalia,² and international involvement dwindled to near-record lows in the weeks that followed the Battle of Mogadishu.³ Clinton's hopes of broad domestic policy advancements, conjoined with a robust foreign policy agenda, were obliterated in his first year in office. The American population no longer wished to serve as the world's policeman and demanded focus on intricate domestic issues which required the significant support of the same legislature he had just alienated with his failures in Mogadishu.⁴ Although Clinton had inherited UNOSOM, it was a mission whose ending defined the remainder of his presidency and significantly affected American foreign policy decisions for decades. Called the

² Theresa Bly, "Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 65, [Thesis Draft \(dtic.mil\)](#).

³ Doyle McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1993, [AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE: DIVIDED WE STAND](#).

⁴ McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand."

“Mogadishu Effect” or the “Black Hawk Down Effect,” the battle’s aftermath initiated a reaction that transformed the United States.

The fallout from the Battle of Mogadishu was immense across a spectrum of institutions and personalities in the United States government. This chapter, however, will focus on the four most key areas affected by the fallout. First, Congress erupted in anger and presented numerous policies that sought to limit American international involvement and the president’s ability to emplace forces overseas without prior approval from the legislature. Second, the congressional and public anger that followed Mogadishu led to the creation of multiple presidential decision directives by Clinton, chiefly Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), which rewrote the requirements for international intervention in peace operations by American forces and has been one of the foundational documents for American foreign policy since its inception.⁵ Third, the United States military, restricted by an angry Congress and domestic population, scapegoated and removed senior leaders for the failures in Somalia while simultaneously withdrawing from posts around the world. Finally, the battle was also a defining moment in many senior politicians’ careers. It transformed multiple leaders, including Clinton, for decades; even years later, Clinton and others would remark in interviews on the power of the “Mogadishu Effect” and its grasp on their decision-making processes throughout the remainder of their time in politics.

⁵ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#).

Through these four categories, this chapter will holistically outline how the Battle of Mogadishu affected American foreign policy and establish the foundation for the case studies on American involvement after Mogadishu in the final chapter. Post-Somali involvement in Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, and other locations around the globe decreased. Within weeks of Mogadishu, American forces had withdrawn from Haiti and six months after “Black Hawk Down,” all US forces were out of Somalia. Amidst cries of genocide around the globe, Clinton refused to commit further ground troops for fear of another Mogadishu. The distinct differences between Somalia and previous bouts of American intervention, coupled with the heightened US reaction that followed, had erupted in a nearly perfect crises that forced Clinton to abandon his early hopes of remaining at the forefront of international policing efforts and maintaining the world order. He instead transitioned inward to repair domestic policies while ignoring crisis after crisis around the globe.

Although there were several aspects of American politics that affected Clinton’s transformation of foreign policy amidst the post-Somalia change, none were as significant as the Congress’s impact on the administration. Shocked by Clinton’s apparent disregard for the lives of American troops, his lack of oversight on foreign policy matters, and his refusal to garner the approval of the legislature for combat operations, Congress rapidly rebelled in the weeks after “Black Hawk Down.” Less than two weeks after the battle, congressmen and senators were loudly expressing their disdain for the Clinton administration’s handling of foreign policy and just over a month later, on November 9, 1993, Congress had introduced House Resolution 170, which mandated the removal of all

American forces from Somalia by March 31, 1994.⁶ Despite nearly two years of humanitarian work in Somalia, Congress was no longer willing to risk American lives to save the lives of others around the world. The Republican-controlled 103rd Congress was beginning to demonstrate its significant power in the curbing of Clinton's ambitious foreign policy agenda. Democratic Senator Paul Simon of Illinois, during prepared remarks on the senate floor in the same month, even mentioned to Secretary of State Warren Christopher that the administration had been "pushed into [a March 31 withdrawal] by Congress."⁷ Further, Susan Rice, then a director for international organizations and peacekeeping on the National Security Council (NSC), in a memorandum over a year later in preparation for the 104th Congress, mentioned how significantly the 103rd Congress had controlled policy decisions in the months after Somalia.⁸ Facing "sustained, often bipartisan criticism for its management of crises," Rice said, "the GOP, sensing the administration's increasing vulnerability, worked to transform support for the UN into a partisan issue, despite President [George H.W. Bush's] record of strong support for the UN."⁹ Further, "members of both parties joined forces to protest soaring peacekeeping costs," ultimately forcing the administration to

⁶ US House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, Resolution 170 (November 9, 1993), [H.Con.Res.170 - 103rd Congress \(1993-1994\)](#).

⁷ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Foreign Policy, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 2011-0516-S, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 84.

⁸ Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, Antony Blinken, William Danvers, and Christina Funches, December 13, 1994, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Rwanda · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 464.

⁹ Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, et al., 464-465.

fight “numerous amendments to restrict participation of US forces in UN missions, for the remainder of the Congress.”¹⁰ As part of this fight over the next year, the Clinton administration defeated the Nickles Amendment, designed to combat UN command and control of American forces, the majority of the Dole Peace Powers Act, an attempt to force the president to consult Congress prior to the committal of armed forces into “hostilities or situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated,”¹¹ and another slew of amendments by multiple legislators designed to completely restrict payments for future UN peacekeeping assignments.¹² Despite these limited successes by the Clinton administration to stave off angst towards an aggressive foreign policy, however, Congress still maintained a grasp on the administration and its international involvement.

Serving as one of the largest byproducts of this grasp on the administration, Presidential Decision Directive 25 was ultimately the tool with which Clinton and his administration attempted to rectify their mistakes in Somalia. Although the review of American involvement in peacekeeping operations that sparked the initial creation of PDD-25 was commissioned by the president in March of 1993, amidst the mission in Somalia, the directive did not release until May of 1994, well after the Battle of Mogadishu, and the battle’s impact on the final release of the directive is evident. At a time when the United States was both transitioning out of the Cold War era and

¹⁰ Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, et al., 464-465.

¹¹ United States Senate, 104th Congress, Peace Powers Act of 1995 (January 4, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [S.5 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\): Peace Powers Act of 1995](#).

¹² Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, et al., 465.

attempting to rectify its losses in Africa, Clinton’s administration had much to remedy inside of the directive, focusing on three primary areas. PDD-25 first addresses the importance of preserving the United States’ ability to fight near-peer threats unilaterally without support from external organizations in the wake of the Cold War. At the beginning of the directive, Clinton writes, “Participation in UN peace operations can never substitute for the necessity of fighting and winning our own wars, nor can we allow it to reduce our capability to meet that imperative.”¹³ Concerned that the United States would transition its military to a force that could only serve in peacekeeping roles and would lose the training, organization, and mindset necessary to fight “serious threats to the security of the United States” in the “post-Cold War era,” Clinton argued that although multilateral operations and partnerships with the UN and NATO are important, the nation must still be prepared to fight a unilateral war.¹⁴

The directive’s second concern focused on specific criteria for involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; Clinton was adamant that the United States would not support “involvement in situations where such involvement is not viable or when it would interfere with US interests.”¹⁵ Annexes 1 and 2 of the directive dictated specific factors for key leaders to weigh when deciding on involvement in peacekeeping

¹³ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 1.

¹⁴ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 1.

¹⁵ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 2.

operations abroad.¹⁶ The advancement of US national interests served as the chief factor in the consideration of overseas involvement; national security, including financial, economic, political, or military interests, had to be threatened before action was requested. Further, the risk to American personnel deployed in support of the operation had to be proportional to the impact inaction would have on national or international security. Any humanitarian operation would also require clearly defined political or military objectives and withdrawal criteria for American forces to be involved. Although the directive allows for financial or logistical support of operations under less stringent criteria, the committal of American troops rested primarily on objectives and an exit strategy, unlike Somalia, that allowed for the protection of forces overseas. Additionally, troops would only be committed to a conflict if the command-and-control arrangements for US forces were acceptable to the president. US forces were to remain under direct US control for all combat operations and in all peacekeeping operations during which a significant threat presented itself to forces on the ground. Domestic popular and congressional support were also required for involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Written so recently after the backlash from Mogadishu, the administration was adamant that Congress would not only be constantly updated on ongoing operations but would also support the operation in its entirety. Only once these criteria were weighed and the operation deemed significantly worthy of involvement would the United States deploy its people and assets overseas in support of global

¹⁶ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 17-18.

policing. By using PDD-25 criteria to weigh involvement, “multilateral peace operations” were “placed in proper perspective among the instruments of US foreign policy” to avoid a repeat mistake of Mogadishu.¹⁷

PDD-25’s third area of focus was reducing the budget impacts of peacekeeping operations and downsizing the funding expenditures of overseas involvement. A key concern for the United States was making United Nations operations “more efficient and effective” to reduce costs and ensure that the United States’ “financial assessment is more equitable” and covers only a “share” of the global peacekeeping burden.¹⁸ In 1994, the United States covered nearly 32 percent of the financial costs of UN peacekeeping operations. Now they sought to reduce it, through the measures introduced in PDD-25, to 25 percent by 1996.¹⁹ These measures were a vital part of Clinton’s effort to continue American involvement in United Nations operations and ensure the country did not fully retreat from global intervention after the Cold War. These measures also came at a time of financial crisis for the American government. The United States was nearly \$1 billion dollars in debt to the United Nations for their piece of global peacekeeping funding in the Summer of 1994 and struggled to allocate further funding for operations in Somalia,

¹⁷ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 2.

¹⁸ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 2,3.

¹⁹ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 11.

Yugoslavia, and Kuwait.²⁰ After publication of PDD-25, however, the Clinton administration used the new foreign policy guidelines to convince Congress to appropriate funds to pay off the UN debt.²¹ Additionally, under the guidelines of the new directive, which also demanded shared responsibility for peacekeeping operations between the Department of State and the Department of Defense, Clinton requested Defense Department financing for the three unfunded operations in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East as part of its “proposed ‘shared responsibility’ for peacekeeping.”²² The funding would not be committed to the UN, however, until the UN had demonstrated its ability to combat “waste and fraud of funds inside its organization” through the plan laid out in detail across the directive.²³ Further, Clinton insisted that the United Nations conduct “rigorous reviews of peace operations with a view to terminating those that are not successful or have insufficient prospect of meeting their objectives” as another method of continually decreasing the financial burden of the United States in global operations.²⁴ At a time when the United States debt-to-GDP ratio was rapidly increasing, going from 41 percent in 1985 to 64 percent in 1995, Congress was not only concerned

²⁰ Paul Lewis, “US to Pay Off its UN Debt for Peacekeeping Operations,” *The New York Times*, August 26, 1994, [U.S. to Pay Off Its U.N. Debt For Peacekeeping Operations: The US debt to the UN was the result of years of unpaid dues that the United Nations relied on from its core members to fund peacekeeping operations around the globe.](#)

²¹ Lewis, “US to Pay Off its UN Debt for Peacekeeping Operations.”

²² Lewis, “US to Pay Off its UN Debt for Peacekeeping Operations.”

²³ Lewis, “US to Pay Off its UN Debt for Peacekeeping Operations.”

²⁴ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 11.

about the loss of American lives in overseas involvements but also the financial impact of continued global policing.²⁵

Presidential Decision Directive 25 transformed how the United States viewed peacekeeping and global policing. Although it was impacted by the anger and political turmoil that came from the Battle of Mogadishu and failures in Somalia, it sought to solve problems in several key areas of American foreign policy and regain congressional support for future operations. Susan Rice believed that the directive had served successfully to this effect, remarking that “the intensity of opposition in Congress subsided somewhat” following the release of PDD-25, enabling increased funding opportunities for UN support and ensuring the US did not remove itself wholly from the global stage.²⁶ The directive was not published without its share of opposition, however, most of which centered on the “shared responsibility” of peacekeeping operations between the Departments of Defense and State.²⁷ Both Congress and the Departments of Defense and State were concerned that the directive forced both departments “into areas where it claims no expertise,” despite the “shared responsibility” clause opening up additional lines of funding for global operations through its inclusion of the Department of Defense.²⁸ In response, the directive was ultimately published with wording that

²⁵ Kimberly Amadeo, “US National Debt by Year,” *The Balance*, January 18, 2023, accessed April 5, 2023, [US National Debt by Year](#).

²⁶ Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, et al., 465.

²⁷ Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, et al., 465.

²⁸ Memorandum for Anthony Lake, The White House, November 4, 1993, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified Documents concerning PDD-25](#), 2.

enabled presidential discretion in matters of oversight and responsibility between the two departments. Following its publication, the stage was set for the transitioning of American requirements and obligations to global world order.

Despite this promising development, over a year later, by the time the 104th Congress convened, legislators and the administration still questioned the American foreign policy agenda. In the wake of the Cold War and recent failures overseas, both sides of the aisle struggled to redefine and reestablish American dominance on the world stage without risking American lives or national interests. Consequently, Congress published the National Security Revitalization Act (NSRA) in February of 1995. Distraught by the “bitter experience of the United States in the failed United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia,” Congress worried that similar operations posed a risk to “entangle the United States in costly and ultimately futile efforts with little or no connection to the national interests of the United States.”²⁹ Further, the act stated, “in a world in which serious threats remain to vital US national security interests, the United States [could not] afford to squander its resources on peacekeeping operations unconnected to its national interests.”³⁰ The act meant to ensure that “future US involvement in United Nations peacekeeping operations [advanced] US national security interests and [did] not detract from those interests.”³¹

²⁹ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, National Security Revitalization Act (February 6, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [H. Rept. 104-18 - NATIONAL SECURITY REVITALIZATION ACT.](#)

³⁰ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, National Security Revitalization Act (February 6, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [H. Rept. 104-18 - NATIONAL SECURITY REVITALIZATION ACT.](#)

³¹ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, National Security Revitalization Act (February 6, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [H. Rept. 104-18 - NATIONAL SECURITY REVITALIZATION ACT.](#)

Although the 104th Congress built the NSRA on the foundation laid by Clinton’s presidential directive, the Republican-majority congress also posed a significant challenge to the administration’s efforts to remain involved in international peacekeeping. In the months leading up to the congress, Susan Rice fretted that many of the Republican senators and representatives would “oppose sustained support for the UN” and continue to sponsor “highly restrictive, anti-peacekeeping legislation” that could force the administration to “moderate crippling amendments, accept them, or veto the bills to which they are attached,” further damaging the administration’s political capital after Mogadishu.³² These concerns came to fruition during the 104th Congress as the Republican-led legislature introduced numerous anti-peacekeeping bills and acts, in addition to the NSRA, that forced Clinton to use his veto powers. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996, sponsored by a bipartisan team of Congressmen Ronald Dellums and Floyd Spence, further sought to restrict the American defense enterprise and repair the budget deficit by reducing armament and personnel costs across the Department of Defense.³³ The Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1996 and 1997, sponsored by Republican Benjamin Gilman, sought to dismantle numerous foreign affairs agencies and consolidate them into fewer departments

³² Susan Rice, Email to George Andricos, Antony Blinken, William Danvers, and Christina Funches, December 13, 1994, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Rwanda · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/declassified-documents-concerning-rwanda), 466-467.

³³ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996 (December 13, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [H.R.1530 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996](https://www.congress.gov/bills/104/1530).

underneath the Department of State while simultaneously establishing limits to voluntary expenditure dedicated to the United Nations Development Program and other peacekeeping efforts.³⁴ Republican Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, along with a bipartisan group of 18 other senators, also sponsored the Bosnia and Herzegovina Self-Defense Act of 1995, an attempt to terminate the American arms embargo of the country and begin flooding weapons and funding back into the region, enabling local Bosnians to defend themselves against their Serbian aggressors.³⁵ All three acts attempted to create further restrictions on American peacekeeping overseas in a variety of ways and all three acts were vetoed by Clinton, subsequently failing the attempt to override in the legislature. In addition to these vetoed acts, however, there was still further legislation passed throughout the 104th session that continued to narrow and redefine American foreign policy overseas.

Despite these vetoes, however, the 104th Congress still attempted to pass further legislation to narrow and redefine foreign policy overseas in the wake of Mogadishu. A 1995 congressional report on multilateral peacekeeping operations entitled, “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,” emphasized the transition taking place in the thought processes surrounding foreign involvement for the United States.³⁶

³⁴ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1996 and 1997 (March 8, 1996), accessed April 5, 2023, [H.R.1561 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\): Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1996 and 1997](#).

³⁵ United States Senate, 104th Congress, Bosnia and Herzegovina Self-Defense Act of 1995 (July 26, 1995), accessed April 5, 2023, [S.21 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\): Bosnia and Herzegovina Self-Defense Act of 1995](#).

³⁶ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#).

The report's thesis was twofold. First, opportunities for American intervention in peacekeeping operations overseas must be both carefully selected and limited in their scope. The report emphasized the value the American military offered in those mission sets while still arguing that its involvement should be limited. In Somalia, it argued, American interests justified turning the operation "over to multilateral peacekeeping efforts once the immediate humanitarian crisis was stemmed" because "no outside force [could] long impose on any society what is, in the end, its own responsibility – creating a stable and legitimate domestic order."³⁷ Although American troops "prevented the death of hundreds of thousands of Somalis and then turned over the mission to UN peacekeepers," the report continued, "such efforts by the US and the international community must be limited in duration and designed to give the peoples of a nation the opportunity to put their own house in order."³⁸ Congress firmly believed that "the responsibility for the fate of a nation rests finally with its own people."³⁹ Second, the report also posited that when force is required, the American military must use it "with an unwavering commitment to [the nation's] objectives" for fear that an immediate withdrawal after casualties, like that in Somalia, could not only risk mission collapse, but

³⁷ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 6.

³⁸ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 57.

³⁹ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 57.

have lasting impacts on American global accreditation and national foreign policy goals.⁴⁰ Further, early withdrawals posed significant risk to American troops stationed overseas as rogue actors could quickly learn that attacking American troops would cause the United States to withdraw from crises around the globe.

In contrast to some of the earlier legislative acts and reports, however, the congressional report advocated for selective and limited involvement in international peacekeeping operations while simultaneously demanding that the United States not retrograde from the world stage. Following World War I, the report said, the victors “squandered their triumph in this age-old struggle when they turned inward, bringing on a global depression and allowing fascism to rise, and reigniting global war.”⁴¹ After World War II, however, the nation “did not walk away from the challenge of the moment. Instead it chose to reach out, to rebuild international security structures, and to lead.”⁴² Consequently, in the wake of Mogadishu and amidst the redefining of foreign policy objectives, the report demanded that the United States should follow the example of World War II leaders and “secure the peace won in the Cold War against those who would still deny people their human rights, terrorists who threaten innocents, and pariah states

⁴⁰ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/NSC-1995-Congressional-Report), 6.

⁴¹ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/NSC-1995-Congressional-Report), 9.

⁴² William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/NSC-1995-Congressional-Report), 9.

who choose repression and extremism over openness and moderation.”⁴³ A balanced approach, similar to that taken by President Clinton in PDD-25, the report sought to redefine American foreign policy by moderating the nation’s global presence, through selective involvement, while still maintaining an active role on the world stage.

The legislation that poured out of the 104th Congress certainly indicated a drastic shift in the direction of American foreign policy objectives in the second half of the 1990s following Mogadishu. Led by Clinton’s PDD-25 and the NSRA, the Republican-majority Congress fought unceasingly to reduce American expenditure and the nation’s footprint overseas. The Battle of Mogadishu’s impacts on Congress were made clear in the months following as the entire nation shifted its focus inward, despite attempts from the Clinton administration to maintain its global presence. The Battle of Mogadishu not only impacted the national framework for foreign-policy decision making, but also created political transformations inside senior leaders across the national enterprise that redefined how those leaders, like Bill Clinton and others, made decisions on international involvement.

The effects that the Battle of Mogadishu had on the United States were not limited to government-wide transformations, but also impacted individuals and their willingness to accept risk and continue on the policy path of interventionism. A fear of another Somalia-sized failure proved too great for many to not transform their policies in the wake of the tragedy. A Clinton-era policy paper, written by Ted Widmer, a White House

⁴³ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement: 1995*, by Robert Boorstin (Washington, DC: National Security Council, February, 1995), [NSC - 1995 Congressional Report · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](#), 9.

aide, exemplifies these changes in detail.⁴⁴ Debating the merits between isolationism and interventionism, Widmer explores some of the commonly held beliefs among Congress at the time. One Republican representative argued that isolationism was ultimately putting “America first,” and another congressman believed that the United States should “break decisively with internationalism by abandoning the quest for worldwide security, prosperity and democracy as the best guarantors of American well-being.”⁴⁵ Continuing, he argued that “in a world likely to remain highly unstable, America’s future is best assured by restoring and consolidating its own military and economic strength.”⁴⁶ Political commentator Patrick Buchanan attempted to explain this stark contrast for support of internationalism in the Clinton administration when compared to the American people. It is “working-class kids who bleed and die in Mogadishu and along the DMZ when the shooting starts,” he said, “but the best and the brightest tend to escape the worst consequences of the policies they promote from military service to unemployment,” and this “may explain why national surveys show repeatedly that the best educated and wealthiest Americans are the staunchest internationalists on both security and economic

⁴⁴ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>.

⁴⁵ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 11-12.

⁴⁶ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 11-12.

issues.”⁴⁷ Political scientist Benjamin Schwartz argued that before the end of the Cold War, “the American public supported the maintenance of U.S. forces in Europe and the Far East based on its understanding that those forces were needed to counter the Soviet threat.”⁴⁸ After the Cold War, however, there was no such threat and the American public began to question why the United States was spending money and accepting risks like it was still at “war.” Other congressional Republicans, like Paul Kennedy, worried that the United States would overreach their strategic assets and would send the nation into a rapid decline like several other ancient and modern states in global history.⁴⁹ The answer to this new national question about an overextension of resources seemed to be threefold: the United States must defend its economic strength and growth, it should avoid unnecessary risks like that in Mogadishu, and it should assertively defend its own territory, not the territory of third-world countries in political and cultural disarray.⁵⁰ Policy changes and the beliefs of congressmen across the country were rapidly transitioning towards supporting policies of isolationism rather than maintaining the interventionist approach it had acted upon for decades.

⁴⁷ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 11.

⁴⁸ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 13.

⁴⁹ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 14.

⁵⁰ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 14-15.

The tragedy in Mogadishu drove others, like Congressman Bob Dornan of California, into political action. Dornan announced in 1995 that he was running for president in the upcoming 1996 election. In an interview with Fox News, Dornan said that “when 19 of our very best trained Delta Force special ops and Rangers and mountain soldiers were killed in Mogadishu,” he knew he was committed to running in the 1996 presidential election.⁵¹ Dornan was convinced that Clinton’s appointments of Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to office and the failures to weigh risk with assets available and potential national security implications “[squandered] the lives of young Americans.”⁵² A firebrand, Dornan was already known for his aggressive attitude on the floor of the House, but following the losses in Mogadishu in October of 1993, his outward hatred of Clinton grew. In a presidential debate in Iowa, Dornan called Clinton a “criminal” and “pathological liar,”⁵³ and was later rebuked during a session of Congress for claiming the president “gave aid and comfort to the enemy during the Vietnam War;” the first time in 21 years that a representative had his floor privileges temporarily removed.⁵⁴ Although Dornan had been known for his controversial takes prior to Mogadishu, it was not until

⁵¹ Office of Communications and Don Baer, “Fox Morning News - Bob Dornan 4/12/95,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/34545>, 5.

⁵² Office of Communications and Don Baer, “Fox Morning News - Bob Dornan 4/12/95,” Clinton Digital Library, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/34545>, 5.

⁵³ Charles Mahtesian, “What was Thad McCotter Thinking?,” *Politico*, May 31, 2012, accessed April 5, 2023, [What was Thad McCotter thinking?](#).

⁵⁴ Charles Mahtesian, “What was Thad McCotter Thinking?,” *Politico*, May 31, 2012, accessed April 5, 2023, [What was Thad McCotter thinking?](#); Gebe Martinez, “Dornan Rebuked After Diatribe Against Clinton,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1995, accessed April 5, 2023, [Dornan Rebuked After Diatribe Against Clinton](#).

after the battle that his political escapades increased in an effort to capitalize on his “faith, family, and freedom” campaign slogan leading into the 1996 election.

The failures in Mogadishu also affected Bill Clinton’s decision making. Although Congress and the American people certainly pressured him into many decisions, including the creation of PDD-25, the battle also changed his personal understanding of foreign involvement. In the years that followed Somalia, the United States had to make difficult decisions about intervention in multiple international crises around the globe, including in Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia. Despite Clinton’s adamancy that the United States remain at the forefront of global peacekeeping, his political transformation after Somalia was evident in the decision-making processes involved in each scenario. When deciding not to intervene in Rwanda for example, his staff prepared answers for his interviews, including one in September 1994 with the Washington Post, knowing he was “spooked by Somalia,” and the “costs of an enhanced peacekeeping mission.”⁵⁵ In past interviews, the lack of answers to the limiting effects of PDD-25 on peacekeeping also concerned the staff significantly enough that they left the response to that question up to Clinton; the administration had tried their best to justify a lack of involvement overseas after Somalia but had failed.⁵⁶ In the years since, Clinton has repeatedly referred to his failure to intervene in Rwanda because of concerns leaving Somalia as his “greatest

⁵⁵ “FOIA 2006-0238-F - Nancy Soderberg and Rwanda,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/14477>, 1-3.

⁵⁶ “FOIA 2006-0238-F - Nancy Soderberg and Rwanda,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/14477>, 1-3.

regret.”⁵⁷ Rwanda, however, was not the only intervention in which Clinton demonstrated his transformation.

Clinton continued to show the grasp that Mogadishu still had on him nearly six years later during the Kosovo crisis. In a discussion on intervention in Kosovo with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1999, Clinton still vividly remembered the failures of Mogadishu. Debating the merits of UN versus NATO involvement in Kosovo, Clinton recollected the “awful memory of Somalia” when the United Nations maintained the command-and-control structure.⁵⁸ Ruminating on the “lingering bad taste” of Somalia, Clinton told Blair that Somalia was “the lowest point of [his] presidency. It was a...nightmare” and Clinton “felt personally responsible for that kid’s body being dragged through the streets.”⁵⁹ Further, Clinton viewed measured intervention in Kosovo as “a practical measure [for] keeping people alive.”⁶⁰ Clinton firmly alleged that the United Nations had failed the United States miserably in Somalia and that the restrictive measures emplaced on force protection and rules of engagement there by the UN had ultimately been responsible for the American tragedy in Mogadishu. Clinton was only

⁵⁷ Dana Hughes, “Rwanda, and What Bill Clinton Left Out When He Criticized Obama on Syria,” *ABC News*, June 13, 2013, accessed April 5, 2023, [Rwanda, and What Bill Clinton Left Out When He Criticized Obama on Syria](#).

⁵⁸ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, William Clinton and Tony Blair, The White House, April 10, 1999, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair](#), 309.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, William Clinton and Tony Blair, The White House, April 10, 1999, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair](#), 309.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, William Clinton and Tony Blair, The White House, April 10, 1999, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair](#), 309.

interested in involvement in Kosovo if NATO were to be involved there, not the United Nations; to him, NATO meant “keeping our people alive.”⁶¹ Part of Clinton’s political transformation was a deep disappointment in the United Nations and the organization’s consistent failures to solve global peacekeeping problems in a safe and time-effective manner.

The Battle of Mogadishu and American failures in Somalia continued to be a touchy subject for Clinton in the years that followed. Over a decade after “Black Hawk Down,” in September 2006, Clinton conducted an interview with FOX News Sunday’s Chris Wallace as part of Clinton’s annual Global Initiative forum that stemmed from his charity work post presidency.⁶² Quickly transitioning from discussions on his organization’s work to failures as a former president, the interview rapidly grew heated as Wallace pressed Clinton on failures in Somalia and his subsequent foreign policy decisions. What started as a casual interview turned into a nearly fifteen-minute diatribe by Clinton defending his actions in Somalia. Nearly 13 years after Mogadishu, the wound was still fresh for Clinton. Although only one example highlighting the continued effect that Somalia had on Clinton, the FOX interview is indicative of the years that followed Mogadishu. Clinton’s administration, Congress, and the American people were both angry at the failures in Somalia and afraid of reproducing them elsewhere.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, William Clinton and Tony Blair, The White House, April 10, 1999, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair](#), 310.

⁶² William Clinton, interview by Chris Wallace, “FOX News Sunday,” *FOX News*, September 26, 2006, accessed April 5, 2023, [Transcript: William Jefferson Clinton on 'FOX News Sunday'](#).

Further, the failures in Mogadishu drove the American people into action following Somalia, transforming the political landscape across the United States. In the 1994 election cycle, the American people took to the polls to express their dissatisfaction with the foreign policy failures the previous year. In federal congressional elections, the Republican party gained 12 seats in the senate and 54 seats in the house.⁶³ Republicans took control of ten more governorships from the Democrats in the gubernatorial elections.⁶⁴ Further, the Republican party “made striking advances in state legislatures, taking control of at least 15 chambers that had been in democratic hands.”⁶⁵ These electoral shifts marked the largest federal party shift in Congress since the 1948 election cycle and the largest state party shift since 1966.⁶⁶ This sweeping victory, called the “Republican Revolution,” came with the Republican party’s introduction of the “Contract with America,” a policy paper promising the American people drastic reforms in fiscal responsibility, corruption, crime, congressional terms, and other key areas of domestic

⁶³ “Election Statistics: 1920 to Present,” History, Art & Archives, United States House of Representatives, accessed April 5, 2023, [Election Statistics: 1920 to Present](#); “Election and Voting Information,” Federal Election Commission, United States of America, accessed April 5, 2023, [Election and voting information](#).

⁶⁴ “1994 Gubernatorial General Election Results,” US Election Atlas, [1994 Gubernatorial General Election Results](#).

⁶⁵ Sam Verhovek, “The 1994 Election: State Legislatures; Republican Tide Brings New Look to Legislatures,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1994, accessed April 5, 2023, [THE 1994 ELECTION: STATE LEGISLATURES](#).

⁶⁶ “Election Statistics: 1920 to Present,” History, Art & Archives, United States House of Representatives, accessed April 5, 2023, [Election Statistics: 1920 to Present](#); “Election and Voting Information,” Federal Election Commission, United States of America, accessed April 5, 2023, [Election and voting information](#); “State Legislative Elections,” *Ballotpedia*, accessed April 5, 2023, [State legislative elections, 2022](#).

policy.⁶⁷ When coupled with the foreign policy failures of the Clinton administration in Somalia and America's transition towards domestic repair following the Cold War, the "Contract with America" transformed the national legislative landscape and introduced Newt Gingrich of Georgia as the speaker of the house and Bob Dole as the senate majority leader. These drastic changes gave the Republican party nearly complete control over government entities in raw voting power and, when coupled with Clinton's own political transformation and the development of PDD-25, set the stage for a new, stricter version of American foreign policy that defined overseas involvement for the United States following the Cold War.

Combined with the national identity crisis that followed the end of the Cold War, the American military and its posture overseas changed drastically after Somalia. The Battle of Mogadishu forced the Clinton administration to "rethink and possibly scrap plans to use American troops for United Nations peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, Haiti, and other trouble spots; plans that were central to its whole conception of foreign policy."⁶⁸ The release of PDD-25 drastically changed American intervention and the use of forces overseas. Wary of the changes coming to American foreign policy, a senior state department official at the time remarked that "hopefully some sort of concept of

⁶⁷ "Republican House Representatives, 'Republican Contract with America,' 1994," Bill of Rights Institute, accessed April 5, 2023, [Republican House Representatives](#); Andrea Stone, "Republican Revolution Fades," *USA Today*, January 19, 2003, accessed April 5, 2023, [USATODAY.com - Republican Revolution fades](#).

⁶⁸ Paul Alexander, *Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later*, *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

collaborative action with the United Nations will emerge, but it is not going to be what it was.”⁶⁹ The United States shied away from critical areas of intervention for fear of another Mogadishu moment. Just one week after the Battle of Mogadishu, the USS Harlan County withdrew from its humanitarian mission in Port-au-Prince, Haiti after an “orchestrated riot by fewer than two hundred lightly armed demonstrators in which there were no American injuries.”⁷⁰ The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) also withdrew forces soon after Mogadishu in response to increased violence across Rwanda; “the UN Security Council voted to reduce the number of peacekeepers in UNAMIR from 2,100 to 270, making their principal task negotiating a ceasefire between the belligerents,” rather than ending the fighting through enforced security measures.⁷¹ The United States was concerned that if its forces remained in Rwanda, the increased violence would result in a disaster like “Black Hawk Down.”⁷² Clinton was also criticized in the aftermath of his presidency and 9/11 for failing to pursue Osama Bin Laden in the late 1990s. In the same FOX News Sunday interview where Clinton adamantly defended his policies after Somalia, Chris Wallace also pressed him on his lack of interest in capturing

⁶⁹ Paul Alexander, Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later, *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

⁷⁰ Philip Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Channels* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 179, <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/channels/vol1/iss1/3/>; Roberto Fabricio, Key Moment For U.S. In Haiti Was In 1993, *Sun Sentinel*, September 18, 1994, accessed March 23, 2016, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1994-09-18/news/9409170327_1_haitian-dock-mood

⁷¹ Eric Heinze, “The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared,” *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 3 (Fall, 2007): 364.

⁷² Colum Lynch, “Genocide under Our Watch,” *Foreign Policy* (April 16, 2015), accessed January 21, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/16/genocide-under-our-watch-rwanda-susan-rice-richard-clarke/>.

Bin Laden.⁷³ In a Pentagon study of why America failed to pursue Bin Laden in the late 1990s, Professor Richard Schultz posited that “the Mogadishu disaster [had] spooked the Clinton administration” to the point of inaction against the looming threat.⁷⁴ After Mogadishu, in contrast to the nation’s previous foreign policy guidelines, the American military withdrew from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

The Department of Defense also conducted a significant drawdown in the wake of the Cold War and American intervention in Somalia. Part of Congress’s goal to cut the military’s budget, the department “strove to reduce the total active force levels by 25 percent between FY 1987 and 1997.”⁷⁵ Between 1990 and 1995, the Department of Defense laid off over 100,000 troops and more than 45,000 civilians every year.⁷⁶ Additionally, in part due to the withdrawal of American forces from humanitarian missions abroad after Mogadishu, the percentage of troops deployed abroad dropped to as low as 14 percent in 1994, down from nearly 25 percent in 1989.⁷⁷ Americans were growing weary of international involvement. Polls at the time “routinely [showed] large

⁷³ William Clinton, interview by Chris Wallace, “FOX News Sunday,” *FOX News*, September 26, 2006, accessed April 5, 2023, [Transcript: William Jefferson Clinton on 'FOX News Sunday'](#).

⁷⁴ Benjamin Runkle, “The Lost Lessons of 'Black Hawk Down',” *War on the Rocks*, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2013/10/the-lost-lessons-of-black-hawk-down/>.

⁷⁵ Maria C. Lytell, et al., “Force Drawdowns and Demographic Diversity: Investigating the Impact of Force Reductions on the Demographic Diversity of the US Military,” in *Force Drawdowns and Demographic Diversity* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015), [Active-Duty Drawdown in the 1990s from Force Drawdowns and Demographic Diversity](#), 13.

⁷⁶ Katherine McIntire Peters, “The Drawdown Drags On,” *Government Executive*, March 1, 1996, accessed April 5, 2023, [The Drawdown Drags On](#).

⁷⁷ Tim Kane, “Global US Troop Deployment, 1950-2003,” *The Heritage Foundation*, October 27, 2004, accessed April 5, 2023, [Global U.S. Troop Deployment, 1950-2003](#).

majorities opposed to intervention in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, and elsewhere. The American public,” a Clinton policy writer said, “[appeared] to be more intent on revitalizing the social and economic framework at home,” rather than allocating resources abroad.⁷⁸ Despite this unwillingness from the American people to maintain a large presence abroad, the Department of Defense still had to maintain a force trained and equipped enough to secure the nation and fight its wars. The drawdown, however, made this task increasingly difficult. The policy writer believed that after the end of the Cold War, the willingness of independent actors overseas would increase their resolve to test US commitment to intervention abroad, not decrease it in response to the American “victory” and subsequent drawdown. Yet the Clinton administration’s military no longer had the “assets of the scope required” to forge a “New World Order” like George H.W. Bush had hoped for in his foreign policy plan.⁷⁹ If Mogadishu predated the Persian Gulf War, the undertaking in Kuwait would have been executed by a reduced force, requiring “66% of all US Army divisions” and “50% of [America’s] aircraft carriers.”⁸⁰ This would in part be the result of a drawdown in forces stationed in Europe, which comprised most of the forces that fought in the Gulf War; US troops in Europe had decreased from

⁷⁸ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 13.

⁷⁹ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

⁸⁰ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, “Clinton Doctrine,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

300,000 to 100,000 in less than a decade.⁸¹ Further, if the United States had to fight a second war on a different front simultaneously with a conflict like the Gulf War, the military's entire reserve would have been called to active duty and the selective service draft would have been reinitiated.⁸² Despite these dire counterfactual considerations, the Department of Defense still claimed at the time that it had the capability to fight and win a multi-front conflict.⁸³ The Clinton administration was concerned, however, that the Cold War's end had increased the gap between these "means and ends" to a point that was untenable for the United States.⁸⁴ American citizens' resolve to continue fronting the funding required to maintain a Cold War-sized military waned after the end of the Cold War and the failures in Mogadishu further exasperated the United States' war weariness.

The American transition after the Cold War was significant. After decades of continuous war and global policing, the end of the twentieth-century race to be the world's sole superpower was over and the United States had won. The US had poured its financial assets, citizens, and infrastructure into the competition against the Soviet Union, and had allowed its domestic pursuits to falter underneath the weight of maintaining a

⁸¹ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, "Clinton Doctrine," William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

⁸² National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, "Clinton Doctrine," William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

⁸³ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, "Clinton Doctrine," William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

⁸⁴ National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, "Clinton Doctrine," William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>, 12.

large overseas presence. The extensive Civil Rights Movement nevertheless drove the United States towards change, demanding a transition into a new era that focused on equality, quality of life, and the maintenance of domestic concerns. In the months that followed the end of the Cold War, President George H.W. Bush sought to globalize US achievements. He wanted to retain the nation's status overseas and marshal the country towards his "New World Order" policies, asking Americans to place the United States at the moral, economic, and military forefront of the world so that the entire world might improve under the nation's mentorship. It was in this post-Cold War transition that Clinton assumed the presidency. In some ways an attempt to maintain his predecessor's involvement internationally, Clinton tried to maintain popular support for humanitarian missions and interventions overseas. The Battle of Mogadishu occurred at this critical point, however, caught in the competing grasps of a domestic-oriented populus and a foreign policy-oriented administration. The failures in Somalia demolished any hope Clinton had for remaining involved internationally.

The failures in Mogadishu dashed Clinton's plans for involvement in Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, and other places around the world. The loss of life in the Somali humanitarian aid mission highlighted the concerns that were already growing across America. Congress pressured Clinton to withdraw troops from Somalia and release Presidential Decision Directive 25 to provide firm, clear guidance to the nation on intervention criteria overseas. The directive placed vast restrictions on foreign involvement by demanding clear national security threats, mission objectives, and withdrawal criteria of any request by the United Nations for foreign aid and involvement.

Initially appeased by the directive, the 104th Congress then took to the floor to create bills that further sought to repress Clinton's will for involvement and downsize the military by over 25 percent. The "Republican Revolution," the largest party turnover since the 1940s, drove legislation through the bureaucracy as part of their "Contract with America" and the nation's interest in domestic-heavy policies. Although the military drawdown was successful, the Clinton administration vetoed bill after bill throughout the duration of the congressional session in order to retain some American presence overseas. In the months after Mogadishu, the United States reached a critical point in redefining its national strategy and goals after the Cold War, and Congress and the Clinton administration were on opposite sides of the battle lines.

The political and personal impact of the Battle of Mogadishu on many national leaders blurred the lines of each side's clearly defined objectives for the United States. Clinton, despite advocating for an aggressive foreign policy, also suffered from a fear of failure in the wake of Mogadishu. Repeatedly he made remarks or expressed in action his unwillingness to put troops in harm's way for humanitarian missions or objectives that did not threaten national security. Mogadishu also drove congressmen towards hopes of the presidency. Others, like Senators Richard Shelby of Alabama and Ben Campbell of Colorado changed party affiliation after what they viewed as a Democrat-driven tragedy in Somalia.⁸⁵ Through the actions of these leaders and others, the United States had transformed its foreign policy objectives into a narrowly focused ideology that limited the

⁸⁵ "Election and Voting Information," Federal Election Commission, United States of America, accessed April 5, 2023, [Election and voting information](#).

nation's global involvement just four years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Clinton-era policy documents, like PDD-25 and the NSRA, set national precedents for involvements that defined American policies on intervention. Even today, the American military remains at 75 percent of the personnel that it had before the Clinton-era drawdowns.⁸⁶ The Battle of Mogadishu's key positioning as the first significant loss of life after the Cold War gave it the unique power to redefine how American leaders thought about foreign involvement and changed the tolerance that their constituents had for the tangible losses that intervention required. Consequently, the United States stood idly by, strangled by the fear of repeated failure, as millions of people were slaughtered in genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia and still others lost their lives in Jean-Bertrand Aristide's power struggle for Haiti. In the wake of Mogadishu, American foreign policy transformed into a nearly unrecognizable instance of what it was just years prior. The next chapter, "The 'Mogadishu Effect' in Action," details the effects of this foreign policy transformation across the remainder of Clinton's presidency through case studies on Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, examining both the causality and the consequences of Clinton's refusal to become involved in the wake of Mogadishu.

⁸⁶ Katherine McIntire Peters, "The Drawdown Drags On," Government Executive, March 1, 1996, accessed April 5, 2023, [The Drawdown Drags On](#).

Chapter 4: The Mogadishu Effect in Action: Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda

The October 1993 Battle of Mogadishu transformed American foreign policy in its wake, redefining American intervention criteria and crippling the Clinton administration's goals for future international involvement. After Task Force Ranger (TFR), an elite military task force comprised of multiple special operations units, suffered nearly 50 percent casualties in a raid supporting United Nations Operations in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), the American public and their legislators revolted against Clinton and his administration, forcing the president to transition the nation's priorities overseas.¹ The immense reaction by Congress, the media, and the public that enabled this transformation of American foreign policy became known as the "Mogadishu effect" or the "Black Hawk Down effect."² Despite a plethora of instances of American intervention overseas across the twentieth century on nearly every continent, after Mogadishu, the United States stood idly by as millions of innocent lives were slaughtered in Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia amidst political and ethnic violence. Clinton and his administration actively prepared for role in the Haitian crisis and had plans for involvement overseas in Bosnia and Rwanda as part of the United Nations and NATO missions in both countries.³ The Battle of Mogadishu, however, changed everything.

¹ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 8.

² Benjamin Runkle, "The 'Mogadishu Effect' and Risk Acceptance," accessed June 8, 2023, [The "Mogadishu Effect" and Risk Acceptance - The History Reader : The History Reader](#); John Hirsch, "The Black Hawk Down Effect," August 12, 2011, [The Black Hawk Down Effect – Foreign Policy](#).

³ Paul Alexander, "Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts US Policy 20 Years Later," *Stars and Stripes*, October 03, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/fallout-from-somalia-still-haunts-us-policy-20-years-later-1.244957>.

American involvement in Somalia, and subsequently “Black Hawk Down,” served as the litmus test for Clinton’s foreign policy plans following the end of the Cold War. As the Cold War ended in 1991, George H.W. Bush attempted to ensure that the United States remained internationally focused despite cries for the administration to transition inwards towards domestic priorities after nearly fifty years of tense competition internationally with the Soviet Union. It appeared as if Bush had managed to convince the American people to remain involved internationally in the early years after the Cold War, after heavy conflict in the Middle East as part of the Gulf War and decisions to become involved in humanitarian crises like Somalia resulted in skyrocketing presidential approval ratings.⁴ The world watched to see how the United States would posture itself overseas as the recent victor of the Cold War and the remaining global superpower. Unfettered, the nation could continue to serve as a global police force, ensuring moral and economic order around the world as part of Bush’s “New World Order.”⁵

The United States prioritized American involvement internationally, specifically in United Nations crisis zones like Somalia, as Bill Clinton assumed the presidency in 1993. The American people, however, had not been wholly convinced of the nation’s requirements in humanitarian crises overseas and Clinton’s first year served as the proving ground for America’s new direction post-Cold War. Congress and their constituents pressured Clinton to rebuild domestically and reduce foreign requirements

⁴ RJ Reinhart, “George H.W. Bush Retrospective,” *Gallup*, December 1, 2018, [George H.W. Bush Retrospective](#).

⁵ Paula Baker et al., “The 1990s and the Search for Post-Cold War Priorities,” *Major Problems in American History Since 1945* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2001), 478-481.

throughout most of 1993.⁶ Despite this, Clinton continued to advocate for involvement internationally and reassured the American people of the importance of the American military's role in Somalia as they prevented the further starvation of the Somali people during the politically driven famines there. Clinton lost ground rapidly after the significant loss of life in October during the Battle of Mogadishu, however, and just a few short months later, the United States had completely withdrawn from Somalia.⁷ The litmus test for international involvement in the wake of the Cold War had ended and the American people determined that they no longer held any interest in committing the nation's military to dangerous situations that provided few national security benefits. Despite the best efforts of the Clinton administration to maintain some sense of international presence, the United States collectively shrunk inward and wanted no part in global policing, even to prevent genocides.

The "Mogadishu Effect" transformed American foreign policy. As Raoul Cedras and Jean-Bertrand Aristide fought over the presidency in Haiti in an army-led coup, the United States withdrew its troops from the country for fear of another Mogadishu after a non-violent riot in the Haitian capital.⁸ In Africa, as nearly 1,000,000 Rwandans were massacred in the largest UN-defined genocide since WWII as part of an ethnic cleansing

⁶ Doyle McManus, "America's World Role: Divided We Stand," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1993, [AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE: DIVIDED WE STAND](#).

⁷ Lester Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions: Bush and Clinton in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1999), 33.

⁸ Roberto Fabricio, "Key Moment For U.S. In Haiti Was In 1993," *Sun Sentinel*, September 18, 1994, accessed March 23, 2016, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1994-09-18/news/9409170327_1_haitian-dock-mood.

effort by the Hutu people, Clinton stood idly by, committing no American assets to the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and refused to even address the conflict as a “genocide” for fear of being forced into action.⁹ In Bosnia, as the Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina dissolved alongside the USSR, nearly 100,000 Bosnian and Croatian civilians were slaughtered by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army and the United States refused to put its ground forces into significant combat and instead provided solely aviation and logistical support to the UN effort to end the conflict.¹⁰ Time and time again after Mogadishu, Clinton and the United States demonstrated the Mogadishu effect’s grasp on American foreign policy as they used the redefined intervention criteria in Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) to argue for inaction overseas.¹¹ A nation that once served as a peacekeeping force in nearly every corner of the globe dared not risk the chance of another Mogadishu and instead chose to act as bystanders to tragedy after tragedy. American foreign policy after the Cold War had been defined and it was not what Bush nor Clinton had hoped. Somalia and the Battle of Mogadishu failed as the proving grounds for aspirations of future intervention, driving the nation towards inaction. Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia all demonstrated the crippling power of the Mogadishu effect and its three-decade imprint on American foreign policy.

⁹ Rory Carroll, “US Chose to Ignore Rwandan Genocide,” *Guardian*, March 31, 2004, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/mar/31/usa.rwanda>.

¹⁰ “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995,” Country Case Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 29, 2023, [Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992–1995](#).

¹¹ Presidential Decision Directive 25, National Security Council, May 3, 1994, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [PDD-25 - U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations](#), 11.

The Mogadishu effect disrupted American involvement in Haiti just seven days after “Black Hawk Down.” As the world transitioned out of the Cold War era, Haiti also reached a historic political milestone. In December of 1990, Haiti held its first-ever democratic presidential election as “Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president with an overwhelming majority.”¹² After decades of authoritarian rule by the nation’s wealthy, Aristide represented change, equality, and transformation to a country whose poor and rural communities had suffered for far too long.¹³ Aristide’s platform was one on which he had stood for years prior as a Salesian Catholic minister. His drive for equality among Haitians had been a focal point of his many sermons. “The rich of my country, a tiny percentage,” Aristide said, “sit at a vast table overflowing with good food, while the rest of my countrymen are crowded under that table, hunched in the dirt and starving. One day the people under the table will rise up in righteousness. It is [my] mission to help them stand up and live as human beings.”¹⁴ Aristide wanted change, and using his spiritual platform, worked to incite revolution against the ruling family across the country.¹⁵ The religious hierarchy of his church did not receive his sponsorship of

¹² Rachael Bunyan, “25 Years After ‘Operation Uphold Democracy,’ Experts Say the Oft-Forgotten US Military Intervention Still Shapes Life in Haiti,” *TIME*, September 20, 2019, [How Operation Uphold Democracy Still Affects Life in Haiti | Time](#).

¹³ Howard French, “Haitians Overwhelmingly Elect Populist Priest to the Presidency,” *The New York Times*, December 18, 1990, [Haitians Overwhelmingly Elect Populist Priest to the Presidency](#).

¹⁴ Johann Hari, “How Our Governments Snuffed Out a Democracy and Kidnapped a President: A Modern Parable,” *HuffPost*, September 17, 2010, [How Our Governments Snuffed Out a Democracy And Kidnapped a President: A Modern Parable](#).

¹⁵ “Aristide No Stranger to Struggle,” *CNN*, February 16, 2004, [CNN.com - Aristide no stranger to struggle](#).

violence through his political sermons well, however, and both the Salesian Order, his native Catholic organization, and the Catholic mission office in New Rochelle, New York, condemned his actions.¹⁶ Both organizations broke ties with Aristide in 1988. The head of the New York catholic mission office said that “he was advocating violence and that’s where [the mission office] had to draw the line.”¹⁷ Despite his issues with religious organizations, however, Aristide continued to advocate for the poor and rural communities of Haiti. At the time, one percent of the Haitian population owned 50 percent of the wealth and 75 percent of the land.¹⁸ Aristide ran in the 1990 election on a platform designed to remedy this unequal quality of life across the country.

As part of his platform, Aristide sought to triple the minimum wage, increase the number of schools and their availability to the populace, transition the national military to a civilian-run organization, rectify human rights violations, and ban emigration of all elite Haitians until their financial accounts had been scrutinized for criminal activity.¹⁹ The Haitian elite did not favor these changes. By the 1990 election, Aristide had already survived three assassination attempts.²⁰ Just eight months after winning the country’s first

¹⁶ “Aristide No Stranger to Struggle.”

¹⁷ “Aristide No Stranger to Struggle.”

¹⁸ Hari, “How Our Governments Snuffed Out a Democracy and Kidnapped a President: A Modern Parable.”

¹⁹ Hari, “How Our Governments Snuffed Out a Democracy and Kidnapped a President: A Modern Parable;” Edward Collins and Timothy Cole, “Regime Legitimation in Instances of Coup-Caused Governments-in-Exile: The Cases of Presidents Makarios and Aristide,” *Journal of International Law & Practice*, no. 2 (1996), 219.

²⁰ “Aristide No Stranger to Struggle.”

democratic elections with 64 percent of the vote, Aristide was ousted. General Raoul Cedras, the Haitian commander-in-chief, led a coup that forced Aristide into exile and allowed Cedras to take charge of the country for the Haitian elite.²¹ Haiti's progress towards democratic freedom came to a screeching halt. The inequality across the country remained as Cedras recaptured the country to stop Aristide's sweeping changes.

Politically charged violence also erupted across the country as Cedras consolidated power in the months that followed the coup. Nearly 5,000 supporters of Aristide were killed over the three years that followed, including one mass shooting where the victims were "tortured and made to lay in open sewers before being shot," in April 1994.²² Referring to Cedras' rule since 1991 as a "reign of terror," Bill Clinton said that the "campaign of murder, rape, and mutilation" enabled "horrific atrocities" to take place across Haiti. Despite these concerns for the Haitian people under Cedras' rule, however, President Clinton, the United Nations, the Caribbean community, and the Organization of American States all stood idly by for nearly three years, "[pursuing] every diplomatic avenue possible" before becoming willing to commit land forces to end the atrocities. When that time came, it was just seven days after the end of the Battle of Mogadishu. On October 11, 1993, the United States dispatched the *USS Harlan County* to Port-au-Prince, Haiti with nearly 200 US and Canadian engineers and military police on board to aid in national stability following the transfer of power between Aristide and

²¹ French, "Haitians Overwhelmingly Elect Populist Priest to the Presidency."

²² Bunyan, "25 Years After 'Operation Uphold Democracy,' Experts Say the Oft-Forgotten US Military Intervention Still Shapes Life in Haiti;" Kathie Klarreich and Tim Padgett, "Lost in the Fog," *TIME*, May 2, 2004, [Lost in the Fog - TIME](#).

Cedras as stipulated in a “Governors Island Accord” signed by both parties.²³ Coming so soon after Mogadishu, when the ship faced a non-violent protest by a Haitian mob in the harbor at Port-au-Prince, it immediately left and returned back to the United States. “With the street battle in Mogadishu only a week past,” the State Department said, “the administration proved unwilling to risk casualties.”²⁴ After the setback, spurred by fears of repeating Mogadishu, the United States did not attempt to intervene militarily again for another 11 months as the atrocities and crimes against humanity raged on in Haiti.²⁵

By July of 1994, Clinton received increasing pressure from the Congressional Black Caucus to intervene in Haiti due to the humanitarian crimes, the destruction of the nation’s democratic processes, and Haiti’s proximity to the United States.²⁶ Although wary to intervene in another humanitarian combat operation less than a year after Mogadishu, Clinton still worked to secure a “United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) authorizing the removal of the Haitian military regime.”²⁷ UNSCR 940, “the first resolution authorizing the use of force to restore democracy for a member nation,” enabled the return of Aristide and established a six-month mandate for the United Nations

²³ “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995,” Office of the Historian, US State Department, accessed April 29, 2023, [Milestones: 1993–2000 - Office of the Historian \(state.gov\)](#).

²⁴ “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995.”

²⁵ “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995.”

²⁶ “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995;” William Clinton, “The President’s Radio Address,” The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, [The President's Radio Address](#).

²⁷ Bunyan, “25 Years After ‘Operation Uphold Democracy,’ Experts Say the Oft-Forgotten US Military Intervention Still Shapes Life in Haiti;” “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995.”

Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) to maintain order after the American-led invasion.²⁸ The general American public were not as supportive of an invasion as the Congressional Black Caucus, however, and nearly 60 percent of Americans opposed sending forces there with only 29 percent of Americans supporting an invasion at all.²⁹ Clinton himself was also wary of an invasion and the risk to American forces in the wake of Mogadishu and, despite accommodating requests for an invasion, he worked to prevent it at all costs. In his speech announcing his intentions for an invasion of Haiti to the American people, he remarked that “it is the responsibility of any American President to pursue every possible alternative to the use of force in order to avoid bloodshed and the loss of American lives.”³⁰ In an effort to avoid another Mogadishu, Clinton dispatched President Jimmy Carter, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn to Haiti to “minimize the loss of life” that would result from such an invasion.³¹ While elements from Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the 82nd Airborne Division prepared to deploy in support of Operation Uphold Democracy on September 16, the diplomatic envoy showed Cedras what he believed to be a live video feed of over 3,000 paratroopers and their equipment loading planes in preparation to

²⁸ “Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995;” UN Security Council, Resolution 940 (July 31, 1994), [Security Council Resolution 940](#).

²⁹ James Gerstenzang, “UN Authorizes Haiti Invasion: Caribbean: Security Council Resolution, approved 12-0, permits a US-led military action to restore democracy. But no attack is expected for at least a month,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1994, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-08-01-mn-22402-story.html>.

³⁰ “The President’s Radio Address.”

³¹ “The President’s Radio Address.”

invade Haiti.³² After viewing the footage and negotiating with the envoy, Cedras agreed to return power to Aristide and leave the country.³³ Two hours into their flight towards Haiti for the invasion, 61 planes and thousands of paratroopers turned back to their headquarters; a crisis was averted.³⁴ This marked the second time during the Haitian humanitarian crisis that Clinton managed to avoid inserting American troops into a politically charged combat environment. For over three years, as the United States attempted to do nothing more than execute diplomatic and economic sanctions against Haiti, Cedras had terrorized his countrymen. After a non-violent protest, Clinton withdrew support forces almost immediately and even a year later, managed to resolve the conflict diplomatically and avoid another combat scenario like Mogadishu. Just three days after Carter's defusal of the situation, once the danger had passed, Clinton planned to send over 15,000 American troops as peacekeepers to manage the transition to Aristide, once again under the banner of the United Nations.³⁵

Despite Clinton's cautious attempt at intervention, it did not go without criticism. In a senate hearing just a month after the failed docking of the *USS Harlan County* in Port-au-Prince, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina expressed his significant discontent on intervention in Haiti. There was "absolutely no justification for risking

³² "Invasion of Haiti is Barely Averted," *Associated Press*, September 19, 1994, [INVASION OF HAITI IS BARELY AVERTED](#).

³³ "Invasion of Haiti is Barely Averted."

³⁴ "Invasion of Haiti is Barely Averted;" "2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment 'White Falcons,'" Global Security, [2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment](#).

³⁵ Ronald Coleman speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 18, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24776.

even one American life [in Haiti],” Helms said, “and I challenge anybody to demonstrate that restoring Aristide to power in Haiti is worth one American life.”³⁶ Only one month after the Battle of Mogadishu, the senate hearing committee members were politically charged with concern over any involvement in Haiti. Yet, after fear-led withdrawals in both Somalia and Port-au-Prince, some raised questions about the impact on US reputation. The senator asked, “are we so insecure in our own decision-making process that...we’re scared off by a few two-bit third world gangsters?”³⁷ Although few, if any, at the hearing supported intervention in Haiti, those opposed were also concerned about the impact on American reputation overseas if the United States continued to withdraw from humanitarian scenarios following losses of life against unorganized militaries. In an October 1993 *TIME* interview with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Dan Goodgame asked if the Battle of Mogadishu made it more difficult to use US forces in Haiti.³⁸ Christopher responded that the Battle of Mogadishu certainly “shows the relative impatience of the American people for the involvement of American troops in situations where our vital national interests are not so directly engaged.”³⁹ Limiting US engagement, however, had its own risks. The Mogadishu effect after Black Hawk Down, Christopher believed, would affect the United States in Haiti; inaction there would

³⁶ Jesse Helms speaking, on November 4, 1993, to the US Senate, The Reuter Transcript Report, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/), 41-42.

³⁷ Jesse Helms speaking, on November 4, 1993, to the US Senate, The Reuter Transcript Report, [Department of State · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/), 41-42.

³⁸ “Defending His Boss,” *TIME*, October 18, 1993, [\[Press Clips\] Tuesday, Oct \[October\] 12, 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/), 16.

³⁹ “Defending His Boss.”

“[create] refugee flows” in the wake of the crisis.⁴⁰ Disengagement put the US global reputation at risk and raised new worries about geopolitical chaos and an increasing number of refugees.

Addressing the potential for such chaos also raised eyebrows. In a session of Congress on September 19, while many senators expressed their thanks and gratitude for Carter’s diplomatic success, other senators expressed their concern for the discussions of involving American troops as peacekeeping forces in Haiti after Aristide regained control. Senator Daniel Moynihan of New York was concerned that operations in Haiti would “drag on and on” like they did in Somalia and that the United States would eventually realize that forces there were not “accomplishing very much.”⁴¹ The mission, he feared, would only “[place American] troops in increasingly dangerous situations.”⁴² Senator William Roth, an outspoken critic of international intervention during the crisis in Somalia, told the senate that “[the United States] should have learned in Somalia that the best intentions still lead to tragic consequences.”⁴³ Addressing the deployment of American troops to Haiti as peacekeeping forces underneath the United Nations, he said “to say that [the United States is] going to restore democracy is just utter nonsense.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ “Defending His Boss.”

⁴¹ Daniel Moynihan speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24687.

⁴² Daniel Moynihan speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24687.

⁴³ William Roth speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24709.

⁴⁴ William Roth speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24709.

Another senator, Bob Livingston, asked: “is ‘nation-building,’ the concept that failed so badly in Somalia, going to be employed in Haiti?”⁴⁵ Congressman Dave McCurdy stated, “we cannot have another Somalia. We cannot allow thugs and tin-pot dictators to believe they can intimidate the United States by killing a few of our soldiers...I opposed an invasion of Haiti, and I am just as concerned about the dangers of a long-term occupation.”⁴⁶ Other congressmen implored their peers to “remember what happened in Somalia” and Clinton’s “nation building disaster” there while still others demanded that the United States “make certain that [it was] not facing a potential Somalia.”⁴⁷ Throughout just one day of congressional sessions, Somalia was mentioned a total of 61 times as legislators debated the merit of involvement in Haiti. Eleven months later, the Battle of Mogadishu still haunted the Capitol and significantly impacted legislative perceptions of peacekeeping in Haiti.

The first crisis after Somalia, the Haitian humanitarian crisis was one of many instances of military inaction by the United States after Black Hawk Down. Spooked by the loss of life and widespread reaction to failures in Mogadishu, Clinton and the American people spent nearly three years in stasis as Haitian civilians fell victim to Cedras’ military rule. Halfway around the world in Europe, however, another instance of

⁴⁵ Bob Livingston speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24758.

⁴⁶ Dave McCurdy speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24762.

⁴⁷ Congressmen speaking, on September 19, 1994, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 140, Part 180, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#), 24763, 24765, 24766.

political and ethnic violence took place. As the United States recovered from Somalia and argued over action in Haiti, Serbians slaughtered Bosnians in ethnic conflict after the collapse of the Soviet Union, once again creating a situation that exposed the limits of US engagement in a Post-Cold War era.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 transformed the geopolitical landscape in Europe. Once part of the Soviet Union, smaller states began to gain their independence, redefining political and ethnic boundaries in the region. In early 1992, one of these states, Yugoslavia, dissolved, splintering its former republics, including Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁸ At the time of the split, Bosnia and Herzegovina had a population of 4 million people, broken into four ethnic groups: “Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim, 44 percent), Serb (31 percent), and Croat (17 percent), as well as Yugoslav (8 percent).”⁴⁹ Prior to the split, Serbians comprised the largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia by nearly 20 percent.⁵⁰ Consequently, Serbians hoped that during the separation, they could establish Republika Srpska, “a majority Bosnian Serb area within Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an independent Serb Republic” to maintain separation from the soon-to-be Bosniak majority-led government.⁵¹ After the separation from Yugoslavia, which made the Serbs a minority population of Bosnia, and the failure to create Republika Srpska

⁴⁸ “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995.”

⁴⁹ “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995.”

⁵⁰ Joseph Cataliotti, “The Ethnic Groups of Yugoslavia,” *Ethnic Groups in Europe*, Study, accessed April 29, 2023, [Yugoslavia Ethnic Groups](#).

⁵¹ Kendra Bengtson, “Genocide Denial in Bosnia,” *World Without Genocide*, accessed April 29, 2023, [Genocide Denial in Bosnia Contributes to Political Crisis](#).

diplomatically, many of the Bosnian Serbs grew concerned that they would lose control of the country to the Bosniak majority.⁵² This idea of an independent, Bosniak-led nation distressed the Serbian population significantly enough that they “launched a military campaign to secure coveted territory and ‘cleanse’ Bosnia of its Muslim civilian population,” regaining control of the government.⁵³ Over the next three years, the Bosnian Serb militias, backed by Serbia, and the former Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) waged war on civilian population centers across the country.⁵⁴ Within a year, the combined Serb and JNA army established control of three quarters of the country and created their “Republika Srpska” on the east side of Bosnia. Targeting both Bosniak and Croatian civilians, the JNA and Serb militias killed more than 100,000 people, including 80,000 Bosniaks, in a horrific ethnic cleansing that lasted the duration of the civil war.⁵⁵ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum said that the Serb forces committed “systematic and widespread abuses, including ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and other gross violations of human rights” during their assaults on key population centers across the country.⁵⁶ In Srebrenica, a small town of 36,000 people, Serbs executed more than 8,000 Bosniak males in the “largest massacre in Europe since the Holocaust”

⁵² “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995.”

⁵³ “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995.”

⁵⁴ Bengtson, “Genocide Denial in Bosnia.”

⁵⁵ “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995.”

⁵⁶ Bengtson, “Genocide Denial in Bosnia.”

and raped the women in streets “littered with corpses.”⁵⁷ More than 25 years later, mass graves are still being found in Srebrenica, a town that has since dwindled to only 10,000 residents.⁵⁸

Across the country, incident after incident of human rights violations occurred for more than three years as the United States and the UN watched. Despite deployments of UN forces to the country to provide safety for the fleeing Bosniak refugees, they failed to provide even the most basic forms of protection.⁵⁹ Upon deployment to Bosnia, UN peacekeepers tried to establish “safe zones” in key population centers and airfields around the country to protect the refugees from the Serbian aggressors. The UN peacekeepers were not authorized, however, to use force in the defense of the safe zones until months after their arrival. When the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) finally passed UNSC Resolution 836, authorizing the use of force to protect safe zones established in Srebrenica, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Goražde, Žepa, and Bihać, the result was ineffective.⁶⁰ The “under-equipped” Dutch peacekeepers stationed in Srebrenica surrendered after retreating out of the town against the onslaught of Serbs approaching the city and watched as more than “5,000 Muslims sheltering at their base were handed over” to the Serbians and subsequently massacred.⁶¹ The United Nations ground-force

⁵⁷ “Srebrenica,” City Population, accessed April 29, 2023, [Srebrenica \(Municipality, Bosnia and Herzegovina\)](#); “Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995;” “Bosnia’s Srebrenica Massacre 25 Years On – In Pictures,” BBC, accessed April 29, 2023, [Bosnia's Srebrenica massacre 25 years on.](#)

⁵⁸ “Srebrenica;” “Bosnia’s Srebrenica Massacre 25 Years On – In Pictures.”

⁵⁹ “Bosnia’s Srebrenica Massacre 25 Years On – In Pictures.”

⁶⁰ UN Security Council, Resolution 836 (June 4, 1993), [Resolution 836 \(1993\) / \(un.org\).](#)

⁶¹ “Bosnia’s Srebrenica Massacre 25 Years On – In Pictures.”

combat response to the civil war was all but non-existent and refrained from combat operations to control the crisis, instead focusing on providing limited refuge to the displaced Bosniaks.

Rather than preventing the slaughter of Bosniak civilians across the country, both the United States and the UN focused only on establishing “safe areas” and the dampening of the Serbian will to fight through naval and aerial strikes, no-fly zones, refugee camps and transportation, and economic sanctions.⁶² For most of the war, the United Nations and NATO executed limited air strikes in support of the Bosnians and many European countries served as the primary contributors of ground troops supporting the “safe zones.”⁶³ They refused to become decisively engaged in the conflict between the competing ethnic groups, especially after Serbian forces took 400 UN peacekeepers hostage in the Spring of 1995.⁶⁴ After Srebrenica, however, things changed. Soon after, members of the UN, including the United States, met in London to rectify the failures that caused the massacre of almost 8,000 Bosnians.⁶⁵ The delegates, including US Secretary of State Christopher Warren, agreed that NATO would cohesively defend

⁶² UN Security Council, Resolution 836 (June 4, 1993), [Resolution 836 \(1993\) / \(un.org\)](#); UN Security Council, Resolution 757 (May 30, 1992), [Security Council Resolution 757 - UNSCR](#); UN Security Council, Resolution 781 (September 14, 1992), [Security Council Resolution 781 - UNSCR](#); UN Security Council, Resolution 713 (September 25, 1991), [Security Council Resolution 713 - UNSCR](#).

⁶³ Ivo Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended,” The Brookings Institution, December 1, 1998, [Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended](#).

⁶⁴ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁶⁵ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

Gorazde, Bihac, Sarajevo, and Tuzla as their last stand.⁶⁶ Any attack or threat made towards those cities “would be met with a ‘substantial and decisive’ air campaign” designed to wipe out the Serbian attack.⁶⁷ By that Fall, the Serbian aggressors still maneuvered towards Sarajevo with over 70 percent of the country under their control and initiated an artillery bombardment on Sarajevo.⁶⁸ The United States and its NATO allies executed the planned bombing campaign against the Serbians in response to the shelling of Sarajevo that, when coupled with the Croatian counteroffensive that retook nearly 20 percent of the country, forced the Serbians into diplomatic peace talks.⁶⁹ The aerial attacks, codenamed Operation Deliberate Force, lasted 21 days from August 30 to September 25, and struck 338 separate Serbian targets.⁷⁰ By December, during the Dayton Peace Accords, the “US-mediated 1995 Dayton agreement brought about an end to the war” and “divided Bosnia into a rotating three-party presidential system with two governing entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁷¹ More than three and a half years and over 100,000 deaths later, including the largest massacre in Europe since the Holocaust, the Bosnian War had ended.

⁶⁶ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁶⁷ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁶⁸ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁶⁹ “Genocide Denial, Rising Tensions, and Political Crisis in Bosnia,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 29, 2023, [Genocide Denial, Rising Tensions, and Political Crisis in Bosnia — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum \(ushmm.org\)](https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-denial-rising-tensions-and-political-crisis-in-bosnia).

⁷⁰ Robert Owen, *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2000).

⁷¹ “Genocide Denial, Rising Tensions, and Political Crisis in Bosnia.”

For more than three years, the United States refused to commit ground forces to Bosnia to stop the Serbian perpetrated atrocities, instead committing only humanitarian aid packages and aerial support.⁷² Comfortable with letting American partners in the United Nations manage the defense on the ground, including the hundreds of European peacekeepers who had been captured by the Serbians in 1995, the United States did not insert ground forces into Bosnia until after the Dayton Peace Accords.⁷³ “Some American peacekeepers took part in the UN contingent after the Dayton peace agreement was signed,” a *Stars and Stripes* article said, “but they were in Tuzla, away from the hotter spots.”⁷⁴ Deployed there as a token gesture to feign support for intervention in the conflict, American troops deployed far away from much of the ground fighting that others in the UN contingent saw.⁷⁵ The commander of UN forces in Bosnia, British Lieutenant General Michael Rose, also argued that these forces and those deployed throughout the war experienced significantly stricter rules of engagement (ROE) after Somalia. “Peacekeepers under fire from or taken prisoner by Serb forces over the last two years [post-Somalia],” he said, “were expected to turn the other cheek for fear of ‘crossing the Mogadishu line.’”⁷⁶

⁷² Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁷³ Daalder, “Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended.”

⁷⁴ “Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later.”

⁷⁵ Philip Dotson, “The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Channels* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2016): <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/channels/vol1/iss1/3/>.

⁷⁶ Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, “Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (March/April 1996): 70-85, [Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention | Foreign Affairs](#).

American failures in Somalia affected policymakers' decisions during the conflict in Bosnia. Although the United States refused to dispatch ground forces to Bosnia until after the Dayton Peace Accords, even then, Congressional members consistently referred to failures in Somalia to support their disdain for units in the Balkans. During the December 1995 debates, Senator John McCain of Arizona acknowledged the transitioning world the United States found itself in while debating the merits of international intervention in a post-Cold War and post-Somalia society. President Clinton told members of Congress that "NATO [would] fall" if the United States failed to deploy forces into Bosnia to support the peace accords.⁷⁷ McCain argued, however, that the world built NATO to serve as a "mutual defense pact" against the USSR and since the USSR had fallen, the United States "must look at the role of NATO in the world we live in today, not the world we lived in in 1945."⁷⁸ Further, the United States "must do this thinking ahead, not by moving crisis to crisis, not by going to Somalia and saying we are going to try to capture a warlord, and then when we lose 18 rangers we walk away...and now we have Bosnia, a civil war in a non-NATO country, and we are told NATO is going to fall if we are not there in a non-NATO country, in a civil war."⁷⁹ NATO's role after the

⁷⁷ John McCain speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁷⁸ John McCain speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁷⁹ John McCain speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

Cold War and failures in Somalia did not “pass the commonsense test” for McCain.⁸⁰ Choosing to spend the finite resources of the United States in humanitarian operations like Somalia and Bosnia that only bred failure also threatened American national security, McCain argued. If the nation expended its resources in support of these operations, then what would the United States do when it was “needed in a crisis that does threaten US security?”⁸¹

Other members of Congress also did not support the deployment of troops to Bosnia. In May of 1995, Congressmen Bob Dornan and John Doolittle of California introduced HR 1530, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996, which outside of managing financial expenditure, also sought to establish strict guidelines for deployment of American troops under UN or NATO commanded operations.⁸² The resolution also pointed to UNOSOM II, the failed UN mission in Somalia, as a testament to the “high premium on the ability to rapidly employ effective military force in response to unplanned circumstances” placed on the American military by peacekeeping operations.⁸³ Although the resolution passed in both the House and the Senate, however,

⁸⁰ John McCain speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸¹ John McCain speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸² US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, Resolution 1530 (May 2, 1995), [Actions - H.R.1530 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\)](#).

⁸³ Bob Dornan speaking, on November 20, 1995, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol 141, No. 186, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

Congress was unable to override President Clinton's veto on the act.⁸⁴ Dornan, an outspoken critic of Clinton's interventionist policies in Somalia, repeatedly expressed his disdain for action in Bosnia on the floor of Congress. Dornan asked what the president would "tell the families of those killed in Somalia" if forces were once again lost during operations in Bosnia after claiming to learn a lesson about intervention in the wake of Mogadishu.⁸⁵ He further asked how the United States could prevent another soldier from having to become Randy Shugart or Gary Gordon, two posthumous recipients of the Medal of Honor from the Battle of Mogadishu, in a conflict, much like Somalia, where the United States had "no vital national security interests, no specific military objectives, and no clear exit strategy."⁸⁶ Congressman Joe Scarborough of Florida also compared Bosnia to Somalia. Adamant about a policy of non-intervention, Scarborough said, "the fact of the matter is, we went to Somalia, we spent \$3 billion, it cost us over 20 American lives, and today warlords continue to fight each other. We did not make a difference in Somalia, and Somalia is nothing compared with what we go to when we start talking about sending troops to Bosnia. It makes absolutely no sense."⁸⁷ Other congressmen asked if the UN and NATO implementation force (IFOR) in Bosnia would do "better than

⁸⁴ Bob Dornan speaking, on November 20, 1995, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol 141, No. 186, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸⁵ Bob Dornan speaking, on November 20, 1995, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol 141, No. 186, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸⁶ Bob Dornan speaking, on November 20, 1995, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol 141, No. 186, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸⁷ Joe Scarborough speaking, on November 29, 1995, to the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No. 189, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

[the United States] did in fulfilling our promise to capture [Aidid] in Somalia” while loathing the administration’s decision to place American troops in harms way instead of permitting the people Bosnia to “defend their country, and their lives” on their own.⁸⁸ In November, as the United States prepared for the Dayton Peace Accords, Congressman Joel Hefley of Colorado introduced House Resolution 2606 that, like Dornan and Doolittle’s own resolution, sought to prohibit the use of Department of Defense funds for the deployment of troops to Bosnia under any circumstance.⁸⁹ Although it passed the House 243-171, the Senate voted down the bill 22-77, despite support for the bill from prominent senators like John McCain.⁹⁰ As December grew closer, neither the House nor the Senate managed to prevent the deployment of American troops to Bosnia.

Eventually, over 60,000 American troops would cycle through Bosnia as part of the NATO supported IFOR, of which the United States provided more than one third of the forces.⁹¹ Their deployment was too late, however, for the men and women killed in Srebrenica and other combat hot spots around Bosnia. Even if the US had agreed to support earlier with troops, policymakers worried that Clinton would lose public support like he did in Somalia if he failed to “define [the American] mission clearly, early and

⁸⁸ Senators speaking, on December 12, 1995, to the US Senate, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 141, No. 197, [Congressional Record | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#).

⁸⁹ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, Resolution 2606 (November 9, 1995), [Actions - H.R.2606 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\)](#).

⁹⁰ US House of Representatives, 104th Congress, Resolution 2606 (November 9, 1995), [Actions - H.R.2606 - 104th Congress \(1995-1996\)](#).

⁹¹ Slobodan Lekic, “20 years ago, US troops began peacekeeping mission in Bosnia,” *Stars and Stripes*, January 21, 1996, [20 years ago, US troops began peacekeeping mission in Bosnia | Stars and Stripes](#).

often.”⁹² A 1993 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) national intelligence estimate paper on “Prospects for Bosnia” also addressed the UN’s rules of engagement and command structure as prohibiting factors in Bosnia because of their past failures directing international troops in Somalia.⁹³

In 1996, after one year in operation, the IFOR transitioned to a stabilization force (SFOR) that remained in place until 2004, where the mission was handed off to a much smaller contingent of European forces.⁹⁴ The United States suffered zero combat casualties across the eight years of deployments to Bosnia.⁹⁵ After watching nearly 100,000 people die, including multiple massacres of civilians in the Serbian’s ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Bosnians, between 1992-1995, the United States finally intervened with ground forces once the conflict was over. Bosnia’s lack of direct national security implications on the United States failed to meet the criteria implemented inside Presidential Decision Directive-25, the byproduct of Somalia that redefined American foreign policy. Prior to the Battle of Mogadishu, Madeline Albright, Clinton’s Ambassador to the UN at the time, worked tirelessly to convince other members of his

⁹² Anthony Lake, “America’s Interests and America’s Role,” John Hopkins University, April 7, 1994, [Lake - Bosnia - Johns Hopkins - 4/7/94 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/record/1425), 7.

⁹³ William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, Director of Central Intelligence National Intelligence Estimate, “Prospects for Bosnia,” May, 1993, [1993-05-01, NIE Report re Prospects for Bosnia · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/record/1425).

⁹⁴ Congressional Research Service, “Bosnia Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR): Activities of the 104th Congress,” January 6, 1997, [Bosnia Implementation Force \(IFOR\) and Stabilization Force \(SFOR\)](https://www.congress.gov/104/crs/104-010101); Lekic, “20 years ago, US troops began peacekeeping mission in Bosnia.”

⁹⁵ Lekic, “20 years ago, US troops began peacekeeping mission in Bosnia.”

cabinet to support a more direct PDD that advocated action abroad in specific instances.⁹⁶ Albright feared that, the draft PDD “[legitimized] ethnic cleansing,” and “[signaled] to the central and east Europeans and to Russia that [the United States] will do nothing about it.”⁹⁷ Suggesting NATO action, supported by the United States, Albright voted in favor of a more internationally forward PDD prior to the October 1993 battle. The Battle of Mogadishu, however, “forced the administration to rethink and possibly scrap plans to use American troops for United Nations peacekeeping operations in Bosnia.”⁹⁸ Although “Bosnia was already almost dead in terms of United States participation in peacekeeping,” a senior State Department official remarked, “Mogadishu put the last nail in the coffin.”⁹⁹ Failures in Somalia affected American policies dictating intervention in both Haiti and Bosnia. Michael Kramer, reporting for *TIME*, said, “with so many Americans disgusted with Clinton’s handling of Somalia, it’s hard to see how the president could command the public and congressional support necessary for a Bosnian adventure.”¹⁰⁰ The transformation of American foreign policy wrought by failures in Somalia completely derailed American intervention in the Balkan ethnic cleansing. It also

⁹⁶ William J. Clinton Digital Library and Museum, CIA Historical Records Division, “Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia,” February 5, 1993, [1993-02-05, Minutes of the Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia, February 5, 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/1993-02-05/Minutes-of-the-Principals-Committee-Meeting-on-Bosnia-February-5-1993).

⁹⁷ William J. Clinton Digital Library and Museum, CIA Historical Records Division, “Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia,” February 5, 1993, [1993-02-05, Minutes of the Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia, February 5, 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/1993-02-05/Minutes-of-the-Principals-Committee-Meeting-on-Bosnia-February-5-1993), 1.

⁹⁸ Michael Gordon and Thomas Friedman, “Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success so Near, a Loss so Deep,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1993.

⁹⁹ Gordon and Friedman, “Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success so Near, a Loss so Deep.”

¹⁰⁰ Michael Kramer, “It’s All Foreign to Clinton,” *TIME*, October 18, 1993, [\[Press Clips\] Tuesday, Oct \[October\] 12, 1993 · Clinton Digital Library \(presidentiallibraries.us\)](https://www.presidentiallibraries.us/1993-10-18/Press-Clips-Tuesday-October-12-1993), 22.

affected Clinton's decision making on the genocide in Rwanda, however, as hundreds of thousands of civilians were murdered in yet another ethnic cleansing at nearly the same time.

In 1990, the small central-African country of Rwanda fell into political turmoil. While the rest of the world focused on bringing the Cold War to the end, the two ethnic majorities in Rwanda fought for control of their national government. The Hutu, comprising 85 percent of the national population, and the Tutsi, comprising nearly all the remaining 15 percent, entered a civil war that permanently transformed the ethnic landscape of Rwanda.¹⁰¹ Tension between the Hutus and the Tutsis was not a byproduct of the late 1900s, however; it had existed for centuries. A part of German East Africa from 1897 to 1918, Rwanda fell under Belgian control after World War I as part of a League of Nations mandate.¹⁰² Despite being a significant minority of the population, both the Germans and the Belgians favored the Tutsi as rulers of Rwanda and maintained their roles in the monarchal government.¹⁰³ For over 60 years, the Tutsi minority ruled and oppressed the Hutu people. In 1959, having grown tired of the oppression, the Hutus rioted around the country, overthrew the national government, and expelled "as many as 330,000 Tutsis" into surrounding countries, including Uganda.¹⁰⁴ Soon after, the Tutsi

¹⁰¹ "Rwandan Genocide," History, accessed April 29, 2023, [Rwandan Genocide - Facts, Response & Trials \(history.com\)](#).

¹⁰² "Rwandan Genocide."

¹⁰³ "Rwandan Genocide."

¹⁰⁴ "Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter," *BBC*, April 4, 2019, [Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter - BBC News](#); "Rwandan Genocide."

leadership fled the country and by 1962, Belgium granted Rwanda, under its newly appointed Hutu republic, independence.¹⁰⁵ In 1973, Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu and the Rwandan army's chief of staff, seized power through a military coup and ruled the country for two decades.¹⁰⁶ Throughout his reign, he became increasingly discriminatory against the Tutsi people in continued retribution.¹⁰⁷ By 1990, ethnic violence grew so rampant that the "children of [the] Tutsi exiles" from the 1959 revolution formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), based out of Uganda, and invaded Rwanda to seize back power from the Hutu.¹⁰⁸

The Rwandan Civil War, starting with the RPF's invasion of Rwanda in 1990, further strained ethnic lines. Habyarimana directed the arrest and killing of Tutsis across the country for fear that they were cooperating with the RPF.¹⁰⁹ By 1992, the two sides established a ceasefire to enter negotiations, ultimately producing an agreement to create a transition government in 1993.¹¹⁰ Angered by the possibility that the Tutsi would be reincluded in the government, radical Hutus systematically killed small groups of Tutsis across Rwanda, including a cluster of nearly 300 people.¹¹¹ These killings nullified the

¹⁰⁵ "Rwandan Genocide."

¹⁰⁶ "Rwanda," The World Factbook, CIA, accessed April 29, 2023, [Rwanda - The World Factbook \(cia.gov\)](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/00ad_0000.html).

¹⁰⁷ "Rwanda," The World Factbook, CIA.

¹⁰⁸ "Rwanda," The World Factbook, CIA.

¹⁰⁹ "Rwandan Genocide."

¹¹⁰ "Rwandan Genocide."

¹¹¹ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 173-174.

ceasefire and the RPF reinitiated combat operations against the Hutu government, blaming the ethnic cleansing for the resumption of hostilities. Violent acts of aggression hallmarked the year that followed. After a missile struck a plane carrying both Habyarimana and the Burundi president on April 6, 1994, killing everyone aboard, however, the bloodshed quickly became unmanageable.¹¹² Nearly 30 years later, no one knows who holds ultimate responsibility for the killing; at the time, many blamed both the radical Hutu, trying to drive their moderate Hutu members to action against the Tutsi, and the RPF, for the death of Habyarimana in the plane crash.¹¹³ Regardless of who detonated the launcher firing the missile, the Hutu retribution against the RPF and Tutsi people was both immediate and fierce. “Within an hour of the plane crash, the Presidential Guard, together with members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Hutu militia groups known as the Interahamwe (‘Those Who Attack Together’) and Impuzamugambi (‘Those Who Have the Same Goal’), set up roadblocks and barricades and began slaughtering Tutsis and moderate Hutus with impunity.”¹¹⁴ These militia groups killed moderate Hutu Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and 10 Belgian UN peacekeepers trying to protect him at his residence during the first 24 hours of the conflict amidst the ethnic cleansing.¹¹⁵ Within 48 hours, an “interim government of

¹¹² Raymond Bonner, “Unsolved Rwanda Mystery: The President’s Plane Crash,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1994, [Unsolved Rwanda Mystery: The President's Plane Crash](#).

¹¹³ “Rwanda Genocide: Habyarimana Plane Shooting Probe Dropped,” *BBC*, December 26, 2018, [Rwanda genocide: Habyarimana plane shooting probe dropped](#).

¹¹⁴ “Rwandan Genocide.”

¹¹⁵ “Belgian Charged in Rwanda Deaths of 10 Peacekeepers,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1995, [Belgian Charged in Rwanda Deaths of 10 Peacekeepers](#); Julien Ponthus, “Rwandan Convicted of Killing

extremist Hutu Power leaders from the military high command” emplaced after the death of the prime minister and Belgian peacekeepers withdrew from the country while the United Nations changed its peacekeepers’ rules of engagement (ROEs) to engaging only in self-defense.¹¹⁶ The extremist interim government distributed “hit lists” of key government officials that refused to cooperate in the Tutsi genocide to militia members who subsequently hunted down the officials, murdered them, and replaced them with people who willingly cooperated.¹¹⁷ With these individuals removed from power, the genocide grew rapidly in scope. The Hutu militia groups established checkpoints across the country that inspected every Rwandan citizen’s government issued document that identified them as either Hutu or Tutsi.¹¹⁸ They allowed the Hutu to move unobstructed and slaughtered the Tutsis without impunity. In the 100 days that followed the death of Habyarimana and the Burundi president, Hutu militias murdered nearly “800,000 of their fellow citizens, including approximately three-quarters of the Tutsi population,” and raped thousands of Tutsi women and girls.¹¹⁹ For reference, commonly accepted estimates of Jewish deaths during the Holocaust place Jewish losses at 60-65 percent of

Belgian Peacekeepers,” Reuters. Accessed June 8, 2023. [Rwandan convicted of killing Belgian peacekeepers | Reuters](#).

¹¹⁶ “Rwandan Genocide.”

¹¹⁷ “Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter,” *BBC*, April 4, 2019, [Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter - BBC News](#).

¹¹⁸ “Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter.”

¹¹⁹ “Rwanda,” *The World Factbook*, CIA; “Rwanda genocide: ‘I am a mother – I killed some children’s parents,’” *BBC*, June 15, 2020, [Rwanda genocide: ‘I am a mother - I killed some children's parents’](#).

the global Jewish population across the span of several years.¹²⁰ The Tutsis lost 75 percent of their ethnic group in just 100 days.

Despite the scope of the ethnic cleansing committed by the Hutus in Rwanda, the international community refused to intervene. After the death of the Belgian peacekeepers, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) not only changed the peacekeepers' ROEs to self-defense only, the "UN Security Council voted to reduce the number of peacekeepers in UNAMIR from 2,100 to 270, making their principal task negotiating a ceasefire between the belligerents."¹²¹ The United States, even with no troops serving as part of the UNAMIR peacekeeping force, acted as the primary advocate for the withdrawal of UN troops from Rwanda. The Chief of Staff to the UN Secretary General at the time, Iqbal Riza, told an interviewer that when forces on the ground asked to conduct raids to seize weapons from aggressors, the UN staff said, "Not Somalia again;" the "UN had taken the blame and wasn't going to risk another bloody African adventure."¹²²

The United States also refused to act. According to Tony Marley, a State Department Military Advisor at the time, the State Department concerned itself more about the effect of inaction in the face of genocide on upcoming elections than they did

¹²⁰ Myron Taylor, "Distribution of Jews in the World," Vatican Diplomatic Files, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Identifier i467, Marist College at Poughkeepsie, New York, [Distribution of Jews in the World \(marist.edu\)](http://marist.edu); "Estimated Number of Jews Killed in the Final Solution," Jewish Virtual Library, [Estimated Number of Jews Killed in the Final Solution \(jewishvirtuallibrary.org\)](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org).

¹²¹ Eric Heinze, "The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 3 (Fall, 2007): 364.

¹²² Steve Bradshaw, Ben Loeterman, and Mike Robinson, "The Triumph of Evil," PBS, aired January 26, 1999, [Transcript | The Triumph Of Evil | FRONTLINE | PBS](http://www.pbs.org).

trying to solve the problem.¹²³ On the same day the killings started, the United States had aerial surveillance reporting on actions in Rwanda.¹²⁴ The Human Rights Watch also reached out to the State Department within 12 days of the genocide “pleading that [the United States] oppose a quick UNAMIR pull-out from Rwanda,” because “if they pull out, the Rwandans [would] quickly become victims of genocide.”¹²⁵ Additionally, daily national intelligence briefings from the CIA and other entities in the administration repeatedly used the word genocide when describing events occurring in Rwanda, including phrases like “genocide and partition” and a “final solution to eliminate all Tutsis.”¹²⁶ The administration, despite being made clearly aware of the developing situation in Rwanda, refused to publicly use the word genocide due to the requirements that accompanied it. In a memorandum on policy in Rwanda, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense wrote, “be careful. Legal at State was worried about this yesterday – Genocide finding could commit [the United States] to actually ‘do something.’”¹²⁷ The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by the UN

¹²³ Steve Bradshaw, Ben Loeterman, and Mike Robinson, “The Triumph of Evil,” PBS, aired January 26, 1999, [Transcript | The Triumph Of Evil | FRONTLINE | PBS](#).

¹²⁴ George Washington University National Security Archives, National Photographic Interpretation Center, Imagery Analysis Brief Priority Exploitation Group, “Runway Blocked: Kigali, Rwanda,” April 7, 1994, [2014-0278-M \(gwu.edu\)](#).

¹²⁵ George Washington University National Security Archives, Eric Schwartz, Memorandum to Susan Rice and Donald Steinberg, “Pull-Out of UNAMIR,” April 19, 1994, [2014-0278-M \(gwu.edu\)](#).

¹²⁶ “US Chose to Ignore Rwandan Genocide.”

¹²⁷ George Washington University National Security Archives, US Department of State, “Discussion Paper: Rwanda,” [rw050194.pdf \(gwu.edu\)](#).

mandated that the United States act upon identifying genocide in Rwanda.¹²⁸

Consequently, many “senior officials privately used the word genocide within sixteen days of the start of the killings, but chose not to do so publicly because the president had already decided not to intervene.”¹²⁹ The administration also instructed other officials to avoid the word “genocide” out of concern that it “could inflame public calls for action.”¹³⁰

Regardless, the United States still did not intervene, largely due to the national response after Somalia. In a memorandum detailing UNSC meetings, David Hannay, the UK’s representative to the council, stated that the US was “concerned that a wrong turn now in Rwanda would put an end to any possibility of US support for expanded peacekeeping elsewhere in Africa, particularly after the Somalia experience.”¹³¹ Richard Clarke, a National Security Council member, stated at the time that “Rwanda may be the case the NSC is looking for to prove that the US can say ‘no’ to a new peacekeeping operation.”¹³² His wish eventually came to fruition. In a meeting of senior administration officials debating involvement in Rwanda against the newly minted PDD-25, many

¹²⁸ United Nations, “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” December 9, 1948, [volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf \(un.org\)](#).

¹²⁹ “US Chose to Ignore Rwandan Genocide.”

¹³⁰ Douglas Jehl, “Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings ‘Genocide,’” *The New York Times*, June 10, 1994, [Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings 'Genocide' - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

¹³¹ George Washington University National Security Archives, “My TELNO 1364 and Your TELNO 557: Rwanda,” April 16, 1994, [DOCUMENT 17.pdf \(gwu.edu\)](#).

¹³² George Washington University National Security Archives, US Department of State, Memorandum from the Secretary of State to US United Nations Envoy, “Evening Notes 9/28,” [2011-0265-M \(gwu.edu\)](#).

believed that involvement in Rwanda would be “almost a repeat of the Somalia experience and is therefore unlikely to generate much support.”¹³³ Further, the mission in Rwanda, regardless of the tragic deaths wrought by the genocide, failed to meet intervention criteria as outlined in the PDD and therefore prevented the United States from becoming involved. John Shattuck, an Assistant Secretary of State at the time, said that the decision directive “was effectively a straitjacket for US decision-making, vis-a-vis various kinds of peacekeeping operations. In a sense, PDD-25 was the US equivalent of the withdrawal of Belgian forces after the killing of the peacekeepers, in the sense that it gave a ‘green light’ to the genocide planners.”¹³⁴ Starting less than six months after the Battle of Mogadishu, involvement in Rwanda worried American leaders. “When Rwanda’s genocide began days after the last US troops left Somalia,” a *Stars and Stripes* article says, “the US and UN, stung by the recent failures and unwilling to undertake such a massive operation again so soon, hesitated to intervene in tribe-on-tribe slaughter.”¹³⁵ Eric Schwartz, a human rights specialist to the NSC, remarked that having “just removed remaining forces from Somalia, it’s possible that our experience in Somalia narrowed our collective capacity to contemplate robust action in Rwanda.”¹³⁶ Ultimately, the United States never became involved militarily in Rwanda and only provided logistical and

¹³³ George Washington University National Security Archives, Marc Grossman, Memorandum to William Itoh, “Discussion paper for the Deputies Committee on Peacekeeping Options in Rwanda,” May 16, 1994, [2014-0278-M \(gwu.edu\)](https://www.gwu.edu/~nsaia/2014-0278-M).

¹³⁴ Colum Lynch, “Rwanda Revisited,” *Foreign Policy* (April 05, 2015), accessed January 21, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/16/genocide-under-our-watch-rwanda-susan-rice-richard-clarke/>.

¹³⁵ “Fallout from Somalia Still Haunts Us Policy 20 Years Later.”

¹³⁶ “Genocide under Our Watch.”

humanitarian aid packages as the entirety of its relief efforts. Token force packages were deployed to surrounding countries and maintained a presence at the border only to evacuate citizens. Somalia firmly grasped the Clinton administration and UN policymakers as they adhered to policies of inaction in the face of Rwandan genocide. By July of 1994, despite the Hutu-perpetrated killings of Tutsi around Rwanda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front managed to seize control of most of the country. These actions effectively ended the genocidal killings until just two years later, when the RPF led an invasion that started the First Congo War and ended in the deaths of nearly 200,000 Hutu.¹³⁷ Turmoil in Africa was certainly far from over, but one thing remained constant: America's unwillingness to become involved in another instance of international peacekeeping following Somalia.

Somalia transformed how the United States viewed involvement in international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations as part of its broader foreign policy goals after the Cold War. Just days after the Battle of Mogadishu, American troops rushed out of the Haitian harbor at Port-au-Prince after an unarmed riot for fear of another international incident. The United States also refused to intervene with ground troops in Bosnia after the collapse of the USSR as thousands of civilians died in ethnic killings, including Srebrenica, where Serbians massacred over 8,000 Bosnians. The Clinton administration offered only air support, logistical aid, and other means of action until the end of the civil war, when it finally deployed ground troops to Bosnia away from the hotspots at which

¹³⁷ Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

other UN peacekeepers had been stationed. Simultaneously to both Haiti and Bosnia, the Hutus in Rwanda slaughtered 800,000 Tutsis across 100 days in one of the largest and quickest ethnic cleansings in history. Once again, however, the United States not only refused to deploy its military to quell the situation, but it also offered only its token financial, economic, and humanitarian aid packages to the bleeding nation. Moreover, it actively advocated for the United Nations to withdraw its forces from the Rwandan civil war.

Clinton spent his entire presidency watching as nation after nation around the globe suffered ethnic conflict because of the nation's failures in Somalia. In a PBS interview years later with Walter Clarke, part of America's envoy to Rwanda, Clarke said that "the ghosts of Somalia continue to haunt US policy. Our lack of response in Rwanda was a fear of getting involved in something like a Somalia all over again."¹³⁸ America's enemies had also learned from American failures in Somalia. Osama Bin Laden remarked that his followers "realized that the American soldier was just a paper tiger. He was unable to endure the strikes that were dealt to his army and so he fled."¹³⁹ Bin Laden and others watched as a fighting force that won conflicts around the globe in the twentieth century, as recent as the invasions of Grenada and Panama, retreated from a humanitarian aid mission after its premier units suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the citizens from a third world country. In recent years, Clinton has called Rwanda his "greatest

¹³⁸ William Cran, "Ambush in Mogadishu," PBS, aired November 1, 2001, [Tapes & Transcripts | Ambush in Mogadishu | FRONTLINE | PBS.](#)

¹³⁹ William Cran, "Ambush in Mogadishu," PBS, aired November 1, 2001, [Tapes & Transcripts | Ambush in Mogadishu | FRONTLINE | PBS.](#)

regret,” stating that he feels a “lifetime responsibility” for the Rwandan deaths.¹⁴⁰ In March 1998, he even visited Rwanda and issued a speech that eventually became known as the “Clinton apology,” as he acknowledged “America’s failure to respond to the Rwandan genocide.”¹⁴¹ Ultimately, Clinton, pressured by the American people and congressional members, failed to act in the face of human tragedy in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Whether his refusal to act stemmed directly from the fears of repeating Somalia again or each instance of nonintervention failing to meet the standards outlined in PDD-25 for involvement, American troops never deployed during the height of any of the conflicts’ death tolls. Under Clinton’s direction, American foreign policy transformed around him. The standards for intervention set in PDD-25 and the document’s requirement for active national security concerns to be present in any scenario in which American troops deployed changed how the nation thought about international involvement in the wake of Somalia. The world watched as the nation that had just “won” its Cold War refused to place American citizens in danger to make it a better place. What good was being the world’s sole “superpower” if the United States could not effect change in peoples’ lives? Clinton and his administration wrestled with that question for the remainder of his presidency as they fought against a domestically focused nation.

¹⁴⁰ Dana Hughes, “Bill Clinton Regrets Rwanda Now (Not So Much In 1994),” *ABC News*, February 28, 2014, [Bill Clinton Regrets Rwanda Now \(Not So Much In 1994\) - ABC News \(go.com\)](#); Dana Hughes, “20 Years After Rwanda Genocide, Regret and Remembrance,” *ABC News*, April 7, 2014, [20 Years After Rwanda Genocide, Regret and Remembrance - ABC News \(go.com\)](#); Dana Hughes, “Rwanda, and What Bill Clinton Left Out When He Criticized Obama on Syria,” *ABC News*, June 13, 2013, [Rwanda, and What Bill Clinton Left Out When He Criticized Obama on Syria - ABC News \(go.com\)](#).

¹⁴¹ William J. Clinton, “The ‘Clinton Apology,’” History, filmed March 25, 1998, video of speech, 1:48, [Listen to The "Clinton Apology" | HISTORY Channel](#).

Clinton sought to determine how the United States could maintain George H.W. Bush's "New World Order" while still using the nation's role as a superpower to improve the lives of his constituents at home. In the delicate balancing act between international and domestic aid, Clinton's foreign policies suffered collateral damage across the remainder of the 1990s. Hundreds of thousands of people died in ethnic conflict across the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa while Americans fought for quality of life increases at home. Ending a century-old policy of global policing, Clinton ushered in a new foreign policy system that has remained in place for three decades. The proving grounds for PDD-25 – Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda – played the role of an unfortunate bystander with dire consequences in the American decision to transition away from international involvement, a turning point marked by the Battle of Mogadishu.

Conclusion

The October 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, commonly referred to as “Black Hawk Down,” transformed American foreign policy in its wake. One of the largest special operations missions in recent history, the failures in Somalia left not only the United States government and military in shock, but also the American people. After the nation’s most elite fighting forces suffered a nearly 50 percent casualty rate at the hands of Somali warlords during what many Americans thought was a humanitarian operation, Congress and the American people erupted in anger. Although the United States has continued to be seen as a global police force in the thirty years since Somalia, the Battle of Mogadishu served as the turning point for a generational foreign policy shift that significantly limited future global intervention because of the overt publicization of the battle’s aftermath in the media, domestic and international reactions, and a fear of repeating the same mistakes elsewhere. The first major American loss of life after the Cold War, the battle and the reaction that followed, known as the “Mogadishu effect,” forced President Clinton to rethink the United States’ role internationally.

Americans watched in shock as reports of dead troops and images of naked Americans being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu flooded the media the morning after the battle. In the weeks that followed, national media overwhelmingly expressed disdain towards the results coming from Somalia and nearly exclusively blamed the president for his failure to maintain a current understanding of the situation on the ground. The United States’ role in Somalia had continuously shifted since the beginning of the mission. The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) initially

started out as solely a humanitarian effort to aid the starving populous in a war-torn country. When Somali warlords, like Mohammad Farrah Aidid, began to seize control of the UN-distributed food and raid UN caravans to maintain control over the populace, however, the mission shifted. The UN created the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), spearheaded by the United States military under the code name Operation Restore Hope, to protect humanitarian personnel and ensure starving Somalis received the UN aid, not the warlords running the country. By May 1993, UNITAF and Operation Restore Hope ended, and American military personnel deployed to Somalia reduced drastically. By August, however, Aidid had increased attacks on peacekeeping personnel, killing several members of the UN task force. As part of a broader shift to UNOSOM II, the United States then deployed Task Force Ranger, a special operations task force, to Somalia under Operation Gothic Serpent to find and capture or eliminate Aidid. The Battle of Mogadishu occurred during the task force's efforts to find Aidid and his senior lieutenants. These constant changes to both the American and United Nations mission wrought repeated questions by both the media and Congress in the wake of Mogadishu. Clinton, expressing no foreknowledge of the mission's transition from humanitarian to headhunting, betrayed a lack of confidence and control of international affairs to those around the country. Consequently, the American people were not only angry about the drastic loss of life in Somalia, but that their national leaders had seemingly no idea about the state of their deployed forces.

Many called foreign policy goals into question and began to wonder why the United States became involved in an operation that offered no additional national security

protection while incurring such significant risk on deployed servicemembers. In response to growing concerns about the use of American troops abroad after the Cold War and failures in Somalia, Clinton created Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) to establish strict guidelines for future involvement overseas. Congress attempted to limit Clinton's hopes for foreign involvement by passing legislation like the National Security Revitalization Act (NSRA). Within six months of Black Hawk Down, the United States completely withdrew from Somalia. Further, over the next several years, the Clinton administration stood idly by as genocides and ethnic slaughter occurred in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda for fear of "crossing the Mogadishu line."¹ Clinton and members in Congress worried that any overt involvement of ground troops in these ethnic conflicts would result in the same drastic losses of life that came from Somalia. Instead, the United States withdrew forces from a Haitian harbor after a non-violent riot in Port-au-Prince, offered only token support in Bosnia, deploying troops after the completion of much of the fighting, and advocated the withdrawal of all UN peacekeeping forces from Rwanda after the death of ten Belgian peacekeepers. Despite invading both Grenada and Panama less than a decade prior in the name of democracy, the United States no longer wanted any part in Clinton's global peacekeeping plan. The end of the Cold War punctuated by the death of 18 American servicemembers in Somalia had transformed American foreign policy.²

¹ Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (March/April 1996): 70-85, [Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention | Foreign Affairs](#).

² Todd South, "The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later: How the Fateful Fight Changed Combat Operations," *Army Times*, October 2, 2018, [The Battle of Mogadishu 25 years later](#).

Clinton and his administration struggled to convince the American people that involvement overseas, especially global peacekeeping, was vital to international order after becoming the world's sole superpower. Connecting international order to national security was even harder. Congressional hearings, presidential correspondence, government documents, poll results, and numerous media releases across Clinton's presidency reveal this struggle. Although he inherited involvement in the United Nations mission in Somalia from George H.W. Bush, the failures in Somalia transformed Clinton's humanitarian involvement in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda, tarnishing the remainder of his presidency and shifting expectations of significant American involvement in international peacekeeping after the Cold War.

While this thesis goes to great lengths to describe the events surrounding the Battle of Mogadishu, including the transformation of American foreign policy in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda, the Mogadishu Effect continued far beyond these hostilities. Mogadishu's effects can be traced not only through the Clinton era, but to the present day in 2023. Just four years after Rwanda in 1998, Clinton once again faced decisions on international involvement in Kosovo as Yugoslav forces invaded Kosovo, killing thousands of Albanians and displacing hundreds of thousands more.³ During conversations with British Prime Minister Tony Blair on involvement in Kosovo, Clinton still expressed concern over repeating Somalia.⁴ The Hague would later charge multiple

³ UN Security Council, Resolution 1199 (September 23, 1998), [Security Council Resolution 1199 - UNSCR](#).

⁴ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, William Clinton and Tony Blair, The White House, April 10, 1999, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, [Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair](#), 309.

Yugoslav leaders, including Yugoslavia's president, with numerous war crimes, including the Račak massacre in which 45 Albanians were slaughtered.⁵ Yet, the United States and most of NATO had only intervened via planned air strikes, much like those used to end the Bosnian War. Mogadishu's effect did not end when Clinton left office. George W. Bush continued to deal with the legacy requirements enplaced by PDD-25 as standards for international intervention. Despite reeling from the effects of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Bush still followed the protocols enplaced in past national security requirements for international intervention. In 2003, the Darfur Genocide began in Western Sudan. Between 2003 and 2005, the Sudanese government killed more than 200,000 Darfuri through violence and starvation in yet another ethnic cleansing in response to the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement rebel groups' fight against government oppression.⁶ Although the Bush Administration, including former US Secretary of State Colin Powell, quickly addressed the events unfolding in Sudan as a genocide, the United Nations did not share the same opinion.⁷ Some have speculated that the drastic change between Bush's reaction to genocide in Sudan and Clinton's refusal to address Rwanda as a genocide in public is linked to Bush's hope that condemning the actions of the Sudanese government internationally would be enough to justify American

⁵ "Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic goes on trial for war crimes," History, accessed May 11, 2023, [Slobodan Milosevic Goes on Trial for War Crimes \(history.com\)](https://www.history.com/news/slobodan-milosevic-trial-war-crimes); Tim Juda, *Kosovo War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 193.

⁶ "Timeline: Darfur crisis," *Al Jazeera*, February 23, 2010, [Timeline: Darfur crisis | News | Al Jazeera](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/2/23/timeline-darfur-crisis).

⁷ Eric Heinze, "The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared," *Political Science Quarterly* 122 (Fall, 2007): p. 361.

noninvolvement in the crisis.⁸ Despite Bush’s adamancy about addressing the events in Darfur as genocide, he refused to intervene militarily. When the United Nations created the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2007 under UNSC Resolution 1769, years after the slaughter began, the United States did not contribute troops or police forces to the mission, despite it serving as one of the largest UN peacekeeping operations in recent history.⁹ The Darfur Genocide in Sudan marked the fourth time in just over a decade that the United States refused to actively intervene with ground forces to prevent ethnic conflict and genocide.

In the years since Darfur, presidential administrations continued to make difficult decisions regarding involvement in international peacekeeping operations. While the United States remains a top contributor of logistical and economic support to United Nations missions abroad, American troops deploy far less frequently in support of UN operations than they did prior to Mogadishu.¹⁰ Out of the 12 active peacekeeping operations in 2023 led by the Department of Peace Operations at the United Nations, the United States contributed zero military personnel.¹¹ Although American special

⁸ Heinze, “The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared,” p. 361.

⁹ UN Security Council, Resolution 1769 (July 31, 2007), [Security Council Resolution 1769 - UNSCR](#); “UNAMID Facts and Figures,” UNAMID, UN Missions, accessed May 11, 2023, [UNAMID Facts and Figures | UNAMID \(unmissions.org\)](#); “About UNAMID,” UNAMID, UN Missions, accessed May 11, 2023, [About UNAMID | UNAMID \(unmissions.org\)](#).

¹⁰ “The United States in UN Peacekeeping: Strengthening UN Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention Efforts,” Press Releases, US Department of State, September 23, 2010, [The United States in UN Peacekeeping: Strengthening UN Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention Efforts](#).

¹¹ “Where We Operate,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed May 11, 2023, [Where we operate | United Nations Peacekeeping](#).

operations forces and supporting conventional units remain deployed around the globe, the United States has not continued to actively contribute military personnel to United Nations missions. The United States contributes forces to Kosovo Force (KFOR), under the direction of NATO, where they work concurrently with, but separately from, the United Nations mission there on the ground.¹² In the decades since the failures in Somalia, the United States maintains its avoidance of nearly all military involvement with the UN out of growing concerns for the safety of American military personnel.

While the United States' current foreign policy decisions still indicate a lack of willingness to become involved internationally with military forces in many instances, there are also multiple, more recent deployments that could serve as grounds for future research. Each of these deployments should be compared with not only PDD-25's policies for intervention, but requirements drafted by the current administration at the time of each involvement to determine the lasting effects of Mogadishu and America's failure driven foreign policy. In 2014, under the Obama administration, for example, American special operations forces and CIA personnel began deployments to Syria in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, seeking to bolster the Syrian Democratic Forces' fight against their government. Largely a battleground for a fight against ISIL and ISIS, many have advocated for American involvement there out of a growing concern for the national security implications that come from an enlarged Islamic State organization.¹³

¹² UN Security Council, Resolution 1244 (June 10, 1999), [Security Council Resolution 1244 - UNSCR](#).

¹³ Charles Lister, "We're abandoning Syria and our D-ISIS policy," MEI, May 5, 2023, [We're abandoning Syria and our D-ISIS policy | Middle East Institute \(mei.edu\)](#); Onur Ant, "Why Efforts to End Syria War Have Gained New Impetus," *The Washington Post*, May 5, 2023, [Why Efforts to End Syria War Have Gained New Impetus - The Washington Post](#).

Consequently, Syria offers unique perspectives to the study of American intervention overseas. The United States has also maintained its developing pattern of utilizing surgical airstrikes as a replacement for the deployment of conventional troops in support of foreign intervention elsewhere.¹⁴ From 2015-2019, American fighter jets flew targeted missions against ISIL in Libya, aiding the Libyan government's fight against regional terrorists.¹⁵ Special forces have also remained deployed across the African continent external to UN sponsored missions, although not without consequences to American foreign policy. During the Trump administration, in an October 2017 ambush on an American special forces contingent traveling with their Nigerien partner forces, more than 100 enemy fighters bore down on the convoy, killing four American soldiers and wounding another two.¹⁶ In a situation eerily similar, albeit smaller, than the Battle of Mogadishu nearly 25 years before, rebel soldiers slaughtered elite troops executing a routine operation. In the months that followed, the American people and Congress once again questioned how the military complex had let their men die.¹⁷

¹⁴ "The Human toll of America's Air Wars," *The New York Times*, December 19, 2021, [The Human Toll of America's Air Wars - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/19/us/military/air-wars-libya.html).

¹⁵ Kate Brannen and Nancy Youssef, "U.S. Kills Leader of ISIS in Libya," *Daily Beast*, April 13, 2017, [U.S. Kills Leader of ISIS in Libya \(thedailybeast.com\)](https://www.thedailybeast.com/us-kills-leader-of-isis-in-libya).

¹⁶ Lolita Baldor, "Pentagon report finds multiple failures leading to Niger attack," *PBS*, May 10, 2018, [Pentagon report finds multiple failures leading to Niger attack](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/2018/05/pentagon-report-finds-multiple-failures-leading-to-niger-attack/).

¹⁷ Haley Britzky, "They were painted as rogue Green Berets. This is the truth the Pentagon doesn't want you to hear," *Task and Purpose*, November 19, 2021, [What really happened to the Army Special Forces team ambushed in Niger](https://www.taskandpurpose.com/story/2021/11/19/isis-ambush-niger-2017/6411110002).

There are exceptions, however, to this continued trend of nonintervention after Somalia. The Global War on Terror (GWOT), spurred by the attacks on September 11, 2001, under the George W. Bush administration, still impacts the United States military in 2023. Less than one month later, American special operations forces deployed to Afghanistan and the United States military remained there until its withdrawal in 2021. In March 2003, the United States also invaded Iraq as part of the GWOT and continues to deploy forces there in support of counterterrorist operations. Bush's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, released in February 2003, outlined national goals as part of the war and defined the military's robust involvement there as vital to national security, marking it as an exception from the Mogadishu effect and its subsequent policies.¹⁸ These cases of intervention, in addition to the plethora of others since Clinton's failures to act in Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda, offer a rich environment for expanding on the continued impacts of the Mogadishu effect. Examining the intricacies of each individual case of intervention or nonintervention and comparing it to the criteria both outlined in current doctrine and in PDD-25 is the next logical step in expanding research on the Battle of Mogadishu's foreign policy impacts into the twenty-first century.

Although the United States continues to make tough decisions regarding intervention in recent years, it has also restructured the way its forces protect national interests and build partnerships overseas. In 2017, General Mark Milley, then chief of staff of the army under the Trump administration, introduced plans to create security

¹⁸ George W. Bush, "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, February 14, 2003, [President Bush Releases National Strategy for Combating Terrorism](#).

force assistance brigades (SFABs) that could deploy around the world and partner with foreign militaries to both build relationships and improve allied militaries in prevention of large-scale combat operations.¹⁹ In the six years since their creation, these regionally aligned brigades have deployed to dozens of countries in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America. The deployments serve as a deterrent to global competitors in vital hotspots and work to ensure that nations around the world see the United States as an asset. By providing instruction on crucial topics and assisting in the fielding of new equipment and technology, these SFABs alleviate pressure for larger rotational deployments and free up special forces teams to focus on more combat-oriented missions.²⁰ In the event of combat with a near-peer threat, these SFAB teams also prepare to embed themselves with partner forces and serve as liaisons between larger allied units and American commands.²¹ Despite their apparent benefits, however, these international deployments of small security force teams provide more risk to the American foreign policy enterprise in the chance that they incur casualties or fall into diplomatic disfavor. Yet they also offer a large variety of options for rapport building overseas that remained relatively empty until their implementation. A cost-effective way to mitigate the use of special operations forces and conventional units, the SFABs have

¹⁹ Gary Sheftick, “First security force assistance brigade training for deployment,” US Army, October 16, 2017, [First security force assistance brigade training for deployment](#).

²⁰ Sheftick, “First security force assistance brigade training for deployment.”

²¹ Sheftick, “First security force assistance brigade training for deployment.”

proven to be impactful in their infancy, but long-term impacts to foreign policy have yet to be fleshed out or identified.

The American military has also increased rotational deployments to Europe, Korea, the Middle East, and other locations with larger, conventional brigades. In recent years, especially after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the United States continues to deploy more armored, wheeled, and airborne formations around the globe in a show of deterrence by force. Once deployed, these formations participate in multinational exercises designed to test logistical and communications systems between allied militaries and demonstrate the raw power of partnered forces. The American government favors this system of rotational deployments due to their cost-effectiveness and the stress they place on national logistics chains.²² Many favor permanently stationed units abroad, however, because of their higher manning, regional knowledge, the demonstration of a more permanent commitment to American allies. Families of deployed soldiers on rotation especially prefer permanently stationed units to reduce the strain that comes with frequent rotations abroad.²³ Both the conventional deployments of tens of thousands of troops and vehicles every year and the consistent rotational deployments of SFAB and special operations teams around the globe indicate a stark shift in American foreign policy as the United States navigates its national security interests in a post-Cold War world marked by the Battle of Mogadishu.

²² John Deni, “We Should Permanently Post More US Troops Abroad,” *Newsweek*, August 28, 2017, [We Should Permanently Post More U.S. Troops Abroad.](#)

²³ Deni, “We Should Permanently Post More US Troops Abroad.”

While the Mogadishu effect can clearly be traced throughout the Clinton presidency, its broader effects and end date are harder to identify. The Niger ambush on American special forces in 2017, the botched American withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, and other failures during the War on Terror all impacted and continue to influence United States foreign policy. At what point the failures from Mogadishu fade away and these more recent failures come into light to impact national decision making on global involvement is unclear. What is clear, however, is the consistent, continuous relationship between foreign policy failures and decisions on future intervention. The political and public backlash incurred by international failures, especially those that result in losses of life, continue to impact American policy decisions. Although the “CNN effect” can be traced back decades, the proliferation of the media and the immediate access to information in recent years proves itself as a consistent, driving factor in political decision making. As the United States works to pull itself out of its failure-driven foreign policy, increasing the deployments of political and military assets around the globe, only time will tell the lasting effects of both Somalia and the nation’s recent failures. Recent events continue to indicate a trend of non-intervention despite increased rotational deployments. In April of 2023, amidst reinvigorated infighting in Sudan, the United States under the Biden administration evacuated its embassy personnel in Sudan while denying any plans of intervention in the conflict or in developing plans to retrieve the remaining 16,000 American citizens registered in the country for fear of becoming

bogged down in conflict.²⁴ During Biden’s 2021 evacuation of Afghanistan, images of the American embassy in Vietnam flashed across the screen of televisions right beside images of the American embassy in Afghanistan showing both evacuations after years of failed conflict in each country.²⁵ Between 2022 and 2023, in the first year of the Russian offensive in Ukraine, the United States spent hundreds of millions of dollars and provided vast amounts of equipment in support of the Ukrainian defense while providing no direct combat units for fear of igniting a world war with Russia.²⁶ These three instances of conflict avoidance combined with the preemptive posturing by American forces overseas all indicate plans for reliance on deterrence by force, built partnerships, and a will to avoid the internal affairs of independent countries.

The Battle of Mogadishu transformed American foreign policy in October 1993. In the years since, the battle became the famous subject of multiple media projects including books and the movie, “Black Hawk Down.” While most of these works focused on the overt heroism of the American troops trapped on the ground and their daring escape out of the city, very few addressed the aftermath of the battle. The United States went on to withdraw from Somalia and avoid conflict in Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, and other locations around the globe as hundreds of thousands of people died. Although some might advocate for persistence of avoiding conflict in other nation’s internal affairs

²⁴ “Biden says US embassy evacuation in Sudan has been completed,” *New York Post*, April 23, 2003, [US embassy staff evacuated from war-torn Sudan](#).

²⁵ “‘This is not Saigon’: US rejects comparisons between its Afghanistan and Vietnam exits,” *Dawn*, August 15, 2021, [‘This is not Saigon’: US rejects comparisons between its Afghanistan and Vietnam exits](#).

²⁶ Phillips Payson O’Brien, “The Future of American Warfare Is Unfolding in Ukraine,” *The Atlantic*, November 25, 2022, [The Future of American Warfare Is Unfolding in Ukraine](#).

as a good preventative measure for preserving the lives of American troops, the decision is still not without consequence. A nation that served as the global peacekeeping force across the twentieth century during the Cold War found itself avoiding intervention time and time again as ethnic conflict raged around the world. The end of the Cold War, the persistent effects of the Battle of Mogadishu's failures, and the Clinton administration's subsequent drive to reinvent its foreign policy redefined American presence overseas. Whether that reinvention will be a lasting fixture of American foreign policy and if the United States will continue to let its failures drive its decisions internationally, however, has yet to be seen.

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