

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FIELD GRADE
AND GENERAL OFFICER LESSON LEARNING

A Thesis

by

RYAN THOMAS LEACH

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Chair of Committee,	Brian Linn
Committee Members,	Lorien Foote
	Adam Seipp
	Jasen Castillo
Head of Department,	David Vaught

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Army that emerged from the Cold War was largely an untested one, a condition which would quickly be altered by deployments throughout the 1990s. First in Panama, then in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and elsewhere, the mettle of American soldiers, quality of the army's doctrine, and aptitude of its leaders would be tested in the crucible of combat. The results were not always flattering and often challenged officers' perceptions of the army, foreign policy, and the nature of future combat.

This thesis studies the lesson learning of field-grade and general officers in the U.S. Army during American's Small Wars of the 1990s. The purpose of this work is to identify and explain points of consensus and disagreement with and between the army's official histories, generals' memoirs, and professional publications of field grade officers. It is composed of three case studies in which the lessons of army officers are compared and contrasted. The first case study is an examination of the army's involvement in the invasion of Panama. The second case study explores U.S. involvement in Somalia. The final case study investigates the army's experience in Kosovo. It concludes that lessons learned by army officers were affected by their perspective which was a function of their generational affiliation and professional rank. Additionally, it concludes that U.S. Army's experience during the 1990s serves as a useful analog for understanding the challenges facing today's army. It recommends that senior army and civilian leaders should recognize that each generation has relative strengths and weaknesses to be harnessed and mitigated, and that that dissent and

alternative viewpoints should be valued and encouraged – even in hierarchical organizations such as the army.

DEDICATION

To Ashley, Jordyn, and Elijah. Without your sacrifices this never would have been possible. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor Brian Linn of the Department of History, Professor Lorien Foote of the Department of History, Professor Adam Seipp of the Department of History, and Associate Professor Jasen Castillio of the Bush School of Government and Public Service.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II WINNING THE WAR AND IGNORING THE PEACE: ARMY OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. INVASION OF PANAMA	11
Operation Just Cause – The Plan	14
The General Officer Perspective	19
The Field-Grade Officer Perspective	27
Conclusion	35
CHAPTER III DEALING WITH DEFEAT: THE US ARMY IN SOMALIA	38
Paved With Good Intentions – The Road to U.S. Intervention in Somalia	39
The General Officer Perspective	45
The Field-Grade Officer Perspective	54
Conclusion	65
CHAPTER IV A CONTESTED VICTORY: ARMY OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE KOSOVO CAMPAIGN	68
A History of Violence	70
The General Officer Perspective	78
The Field-Grade Officer Perspective	90
Conclusion	98
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS: THE NEXT GENERATION	101
REFERENCES	107

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1989. It was the dawn of a new era. The Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, capitalism and democracy seemed to be secured, and the United States had few, if any, significant strategic adversaries. Pax Americana seemed poised to reign across the globe and many Americans clamored to collect their hard-earned “peace dividend.”¹ The strength, resiliency, and growth of Western democracies, fueled by capitalism, seemed to vindicate their superiority over communism and socialism in nearly all regards, including military power. Some observers went so far as to say it was the end of history.² Yet even before the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union dramatically collapsed, some were already celebrating. Army Chief of Staff, General Carl E. Vuono assessed the army’s condition in 1987:

I think we start with the quality soldiers we have—and thanks to your committee [the Senate Committee on Armed Services] and Congress, we have the best soldiers we have had in a number of years. I will not recount all the statistics on that. I think they are all well-known.

I think we have a sound how-to-fight doctrine for the Army, built on preparing the Army to carry out its role in joint operations. I think we have training programs in place that are solid.

I think our modernization effort, both organizationally and systemwise [sic], has been a sound avenue for us. Finally, I think the real strength

¹ George H.W. Bush, “Remarks at the Richard Nixon Library Dinner” (speech, Yorba Linda, CA, March 11, 1992), U.S. Government Publishing Office, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PPP-1992-book1/pdf/PPP-1992-book1-doc-pg428.pdf>.

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 2006 ed. (New York: Free Press, 1994), 211.

that we have in our Army has been the development of our leaders over the past several years, both noncommissioned officers and officers.³

Unknown to Vuono, his confidence in the resurgent army would be thoroughly tried in the coming decade. First in Panama, then in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and elsewhere, the mettle of American soldiers, quality of the army's doctrine, and aptitude of its leaders would be tested in the crucible of combat. The results were not always flattering and prompted some officers to challenge Vuono's assessment. Through their own experiences and their study of the army's performance during the 1990s many officers developed conflicting and competing narratives. They argued that the progress Vuono and others lauded was illusory and the army's doctrine and leadership seemed unable to cope with the rapidly evolving environment in which the army found itself operating. The result was a decade of heated debate between officers over the future of the army.

As the debate progressed and rhetorical battle were lines drawn, officers filtered into one of two camps – they either believed that the army was adapting to respond to new conditions, or that it was not (or at least not sufficiently and quickly enough). How these officers viewed the army's evolution was more than just a vote of confidence or skepticism in reforms, it was also an indication of their attitudes towards the broader institution and its leadership. While support of these positions ebbed and flowed

³ "Statement of General Carl E. Vuono, Nominee to be Chief of Staff, Army," 10 June 1987 in Douglas D. Brisson, ed., *A Trained and Ready Army: Collected Works of the Thirty-First Chief of Staff, United States Army* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1994), 3.

throughout the decade based on the outcome of each conflict and officers' interpretations of them, a discernable pattern emerged.

To field-grade officers of the 1990's, the military interventions were foundational experiences. These officers relied on their experiences and studies of these conflicts to inform their notions of modern conflict and combat and in so doing, rejected the popular view that future conflicts would resemble the Gulf War. While they believed the army was largely successful in accomplishing its mission, their analysis tended to be critical.

Conversely, senior officers, shaped by their involvement in the Vietnam War and subsequent rebuilding of the army, were less effected by the army's campaigns during the 1990s. To them, the post-Cold War interventions were confirmatory rather than foundational and their analysis was more likely to focus on what went right during operations than what went wrong. Their views of the army's performance supported their overarching conclusion that the army was effectively evolving and was well-prepared to face the post-Cold War World.

This divergence in perspective touches on several lines of historical inquiry. The U.S. Army, in particular, places great emphasis on the value of learning lessons from history so that future officers will make the correct decisions and avoid their predecessors' mistakes.⁴ But who is empowered with learning the lessons? Is the U.S.

⁴ For examples of the importance that the army places on lesson learning see US Department of the Army, *Establishing a Lessons Learned Program*, Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Handbook 11-33 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CALL 2011); Kenneth E. Hamburger, *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History); Dennis J. Vetock, "Lessons Learned: A History of US Army Lesson Learning" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army Military History Institute, 1988).

Army's institutional memory of events and their interpretation only found in the official historians and generals' memoirs? Is the disjunction between generals' and field grade officers' conclusions about the lessons of combat typical of post-operational analysis? How does a hierarchical, authoritarian military organization like the U.S. Army institutionalize dissent, encourage critical thinking, and avoid group-think?

The purpose of this research is to identify points of consensus and disagreement with and between the official histories produced by the U.S. Army, generals' memoirs, and field grade officers' works. This research is part of the broader inquiry of how military organizations evolve and adapt over time. It also sheds light on the internal dynamics of the officer corps, on how institutions assimilate 'lessons' from recent conflicts, and how the U.S. Army gathers, analyzes, and internalizes new information and experiences. Connected to the broader lines of inquiry outlined above, this thesis endeavors to answer the following research questions: How did the U.S. experience in Panama, Somalia, and Kosovo effect army officers' perception of the army's ability to accomplish its missions? How did these experiences alter their views on foreign policy? How did these conflicts effect the perception of army organization, training, doctrine, and leadership during the 1990s? Lastly, how and why did these officers' lessons learned differ from the official army lessons learned?

The answers to these questions are important to our understanding of U.S. military history as well as to our understating of contemporary military issues. The 1990s army faced many challenges that are closely related to challenges faced by today's army – such as budget cuts and drawdowns in the face of increased responsibilities

abroad. This period encompassed in this study contained not only these three major military operations, but military drawdowns, budgetary constraints, force restructuring, an ongoing debate about the impact of the “Revolution in Military Affairs,” and a heated debate over the nature and scope of future land combat. Thus the army of the past helps us understand the army of today and make inferences about the future.

To answer these questions this thesis examined three major sources. The first was the U.S. Army’s ‘in-house’ or official studies of the campaigns. The second group of sources were the memoirs, biographies, and professional writings of general officers. The third were papers written by mid-level officers at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. CGSC, as a formal post-secondary educational institution was founded to “train junior officers in professional military subjects, particularly small-unit tactics.”⁵ As the study and practice of war advanced, the curriculum of the school expanded to teach “competence in handling large formations, mastery of problem-solving and decision-making skills, and confidence in those skills.”⁶ During the Cold War, the College encouraged exceptional officers to extend their studies either by writing research papers or applying for a master’s degree and writing a thesis. In the early 1980s the army’s new doctrine, AirLand Battle, introduced the concept of operational art. Operational art placed far more emphasis on adaptable, innovative, and

⁵ Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918* (Westport, CT: 1978), 3.

⁶ Peter J. Schifferle, *America’s School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 63.

critically-thinking commanders and staffs which necessitated the development of an additional course. In 1982 the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) was established to “raise the bar of the general understanding of warfare in the officer corps of the U.S. Army” by “[developing] a shared experience of theory, history, doctrine, political science, and practical experience...”⁷ As part of their curriculum, SAMS students were required to conduct extensive research as well as publish white papers, articles, and monographs.⁸ Together with the CGSC research papers and masters’ theses, these papers provide a unique and valuable source for studying the mid-level officer perspective. The addition of these mid-level officer sources to the official histories and the generals’ accounts allow us to reach an understanding of the officer corps’ perspectives that we would otherwise be unable to attain.

There are many histories of the post-Cold War armed forces but precious few that examine America’s “small wars” of the 1990s. However, each campaign has an official history published by the army and a corresponding Department of the Army Historical Summary (DAHSUM). The official histories and the DAHSUMs share limitations. They tend to be conservative consensus operational histories that rarely arrive at surprising or controversial conclusions and their scopes tend to be limited.⁹

⁷ Kevin Benson, “School of Advanced Military Studies Commemorative History: 1984-2009” (Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 54.

⁸ Harry Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 1994 ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: The Alumni Association of the United States Army War College, 1984), 463.

⁹ For an example of the limited scope of the official histories see Richard Stewart, *War in the Persian Gulf: Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm August 1990-March 1991* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2010). His analysis finds that U.S. units simply moved faster, were

Most important to this study, these documents often do not study the lessons learned from the conflicts. Those that do, tend to focus on ways to improve lethality and combat power. Overall, they illustrate an army that slowly, steadily, and deftly adapted to and overcame the new obstacles it faced in the closing decade of the 20th Century. In addition to the official histories, there are extensive journalistic and historical literature on these military operations, the post-Cold War national security debate, and the role of the U.S. Army. As one would expect, the viewpoints in these documents vary considerably. Some heap praise on the resurgent army while others mercilessly critique every mishap. While valuable, these sources suffered from the same flaw as most journalistic accounts. By virtue of their temporal proximity to the events these works provide an almost real-time account, but often lack the depth and sources of more complete histories. Outside of the official histories and journalistic accounts, these “small wars” largely failed to attract the academic rigor associated with other U.S. military ventures, primarily due to the Persian Gulf War’s proximity and scope. Finally, there are numerous memoirs by key participants, including many general officers. But as historian Andrew Bacevich points out, the modern American military memoir has been reduced to little more than a trope.¹⁰ Lastly, there is a limitation shared across virtually all of the secondary sources of this era - almost none study or reflect the perspective of mid-level officers.

more lethal, and that individual soldiers were better trained and equipped than their Iraqi counterparts.

¹⁰ Andrew Bacevich, “A Modern Major General,” review of *American Soldier*, by Tommy Franks and Malcolm McConnell, *New Left Review* 29, (September-October 2004): 125-126.

The field officer perspective provides an essential, but often overlooked perspective on the state of the U.S. Army during this tumultuous decade. Field-grade officers are the vital link between junior officers, soldiers, and general officers. The typical junior officer or soldier often lacks the experience and perspective required to place their personal experiences in the greater context of the army at large. At the other end of the spectrum is the senior officer, with a wealth of experience and perspective, but minimal contact with the soldiers actually fighting the battles. The field-grade officer, having served for eight to fourteen years, has developed his or her professional skills, experienced multiple operations (training and otherwise), has been exposed to the strategic and operational components to the army, yet retains their connection to soldiers and actual warfighting. Field-grade officers then, bridge the gap between the tip of the spear and headquarters. They possess a unique blend of experience, professional education, and closeness to combatants, which makes their perceptions exceptionally valuable to scholars studying the military or conflicts in which they were involved. For these reasons, their perspective on the U.S. Army's evolution in the decade prior to the Global War on Terror (GWOT) is unique and important. Recognizing this gap in the historiography, this work adds the voices and perspectives of field grade officers to our understanding of the turbulent 1990s.

This thesis offers three central arguments. First, that despite the outward appearance of service consensus, the decade of the 1990s was characterized by a wide, varied, and passionate internal debate amongst officers at all levels about the future of ground combat operations. Second, general officers viewed their experiences in the late

1980s and early 1990s positively and as affirmations of doctrine and the American way of war. Third, the conflicts of the 1990s profoundly impacted the perceptions and attitudes of many field-grade officers, and created a schism between their views, the general officers' views, and the army's official positions.

This study is comprised of three case studies of US Army interventions: Panama 1989-1990, Somalia 1992-1995, and Kosovo 1998-1999.¹¹ Each chapter is divided into four sections. The first section summarizes each conflict and provides relevant background information. The second section of each chapter discusses the official lessons learned as published by the U.S. Army. The third section examines the lessons learned from the conflict by general officers. The fourth and final section of each chapter examines lessons learned by field-grade officers in each of the conflicts.

Although nearly two decades removed from the writing of this thesis, the events of the 1990s are still relevant today. Then, as now, the army finds itself in an era of dwindling budgets, reduction in forces, transformation, and debate over the nature of future conflict. After more than a decade at war across the greater Middle East the army is seemingly at a crossroads. Despite the challenges it faces, there seems to be little respite in store for the army as signaled by President Trump's inaugural address: "We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the

¹¹ This thesis omits the Persian Gulf War for two reasons. Firstly, the scale of U.S. involvement and its impact on officer perception is large enough to merit its own study. Secondly, the U.S. combat experience in Iraq and Kuwait was an aberration for the decade. Taken together, these two considerations illustrate how the Persian Gulf War's status as a significant outlier could adversely affect this thesis and its conclusions.

Earth.”¹² We would do well then to learn from those who have gone before in similar circumstances.

¹² David Sherfinski, “Donald Trump: We will ‘eradicate’ ‘radical Islamic Terrorism’ ‘from the face of the Earth,’” *The Washington Times*, January 20 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jan/20/donald-trump-we-will-eradicate-radical-islamic-ter/>.

CHAPTER II

WINNING THE WAR AND IGNORING THE PEACE: ARMY OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. INVASION OF PANAMA

The fall of the Berlin Wall and rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989 caught military analysts and political prognosticators flat-footed. There was little doubt in the minds of American leaders that the U.S. would ultimately prevail in the Cold War, but no one had predicted such a rapid and widespread collapse. Although the Soviet threat had dissipated, American policymakers now faced a large number of disparate regional adversaries. One such area of concern for the United States was Central and South America. Under the auspices of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the U.S. had taken an active and often times interventionist role in the region. In the closing decades of the 20th century this role included unsavory and sometimes contradictory actions, such as funding anti-narcotics operations in one country while simultaneously providing aid and material support to narcotic-friendly leaders in another.¹³ The United States Army had often been employed as a tool of foreign policy in Latin America, but was it an appropriate one in the post-Cold War era? It was designed to defeat massed Soviet armored-columns attacking through Central and Western Europe. How would such an army contend with a vastly different adversary in a vastly different environment? Could ~~a Cold War army operate effectively~~ in a post-Cold War World? Was the army truly

¹³ For an overview of U.S. and Latin American relations throughout history see, Gregory B. Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015); Michael Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The Forced Alliance*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Michael E. Donoghue, *Borderlands on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

prepared to “carry out its role in joint operations” as U.S. Army Chief of Staff Carl Vuono contended?¹⁴

These and many other questions confronted U.S. Army officers as they prepared for, executed, and later interpreted the legacy and impact of the U.S. invasion of Panama. As we will examine, the legacy of *Operation Just Cause* is as interesting as it is contentious. Many officers viewed the operation as nearly perfect, noting that U.S. forces were able to quickly overwhelm its opponents and achieve its objectives at a relatively low cost. Other officers argued that the U.S. intervention in Panama foreshadowed some of the problems the army faced in the post-Cold War world.

Prelude to Conflict

The completion of the Panama Canal in 1914 made Panama critically important to the economic and military power of the United States. To Panamanians, the canal was a mixed blessing. On one hand it brought development and access to a worldwide trade network while on the other it incited external (mostly American) influence and imposition into Panamanian affairs. For a time, the shared interests in the Panama Canal was enough to ease any strain to Panamanian-U.S. relations. But in the 1980s these interests began to diverge when the *de facto* leader of Panama, Manuel Noriega, was implicated in election tampering and several murders in 1984. Although the United States had been aware of Noriega’s illegal activities from his time as a CIA informant

¹⁴ “Statement of General Carl E. Vuono, Nominee to be Chief of Staff, Army,” 10 June 1987 in Douglas D. Brisson, ed., *A Trained and Ready Army: Collected Works of the Thirty-First Chief of Staff, United States Army* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1994), 3.

dating back to the 1960s, the public nature of his actions in 1984 and increasingly anti-American rhetoric eroded the political will to continue supporting him and precipitated the slide toward a U.S.-Panamanian conflict.

The political crisis came to a head during the Panamanian election of 1989. Despite Noriega's and his supporters' involvement in widespread election fraud, the opposition leader appeared to win in a landslide. Noriega dismissed the election results as illegitimate due to illegal American influence. The U.S. imposed economic sanctions and conducted two high-profile military training exercises – *Operation Sand Fleas* and *Operation Purple Storm* – that were equal parts provocation and preparation for what many senior U.S. military leaders believed was an inevitable military confrontation in Panama.¹⁵ Noriega, unwilling or unable to back down from U.S. pressure authorized (or at least condoned) the harassment of U.S. personnel across Panama. Tensions boiled over and turned deadly on 16 December 1989 when U.S. marine 1LT Robert Paz was killed and two hostages taken by Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) at a roadblock in Panama City.¹⁶ With nearly 35,000 American citizens within the Panama Canal Zone in danger and U.S. interests threatened, President George H.W. Bush's patience ran out.

¹⁵ Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama*, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 49-51.

¹⁶ Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988 – January 1990*, (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office, 1995), 73.

Operation Just Cause – The Plan

The objectives in Panama were ambitious and numerous: kill or capture Noriega, protect U.S. military assets and personnel, neutralize the PDF, rescue American hostages, free political prisoners, and protect the Panama Canal. Merely achieving these objectives would be a laudable goal, but political necessity required the military not only to achieve them, but achieve them rapidly and decisively. Luckily for American military planners, the gradual degradation of U.S.-Panamanian relations allowed them to begin planning the invasion of Panama in 1987, a full two years before hostilities commenced.¹⁷ The large lead-time provided the military an ample opportunity to plan the invasion in great detail. The military's plan, eventually named *Operation Just Cause*, required nearly 30,000 U.S. military personnel (of which approximately 23,000 were army soldiers) to assault 27 targets in the opening hour of the conflict.

As the largest contributor of forces in the conflict, many of the most critical missions were assigned to the army. Army units from the 82nd Airborne Division, 7th Infantry Division, 7th Special Forces Group (SFG), 75th Ranger Regiment, and other smaller units were ordered to secure U.S. military facilities and protect U.S. dependents within Panama, capture or kill key PDF leadership including Noriega, rescue Kurt Muse (an American imprisoned by Noriega for aiding his political rivals), seize the *Torrijos* and *Tocumen* airports, assault Fort Amador, neutralize the garrison at *Rio Hato*, and assault the PDF headquarters facility known as *La Comandancia* – all within the first

¹⁷ Donnelly, Roth, and Baker, *Operation Just Cause*, 15-18.

few hours of the operation.¹⁸ After the primary objectives were secured the units would transition to securing their secondary objectives, “mop-up” any remaining resistance, and continue pursuit of Panamanian leadership if required. Following cessation of hostilities the majority of army units would depart Panama. The limited units that remained in Panama would then conduct *Operation Promote Liberty*, a “nation-building exercise designed to bolster the newly elected leadership in Panama.”¹⁹ *Just Cause* was designed to defeat and demoralize the PDF before it could mount an effective resistance, allowing U.S. forces to win quickly and avoid prolonged entanglement. Due to operational security concerns during the planning process other U.S. governmental agencies with substantial roles in post-conflict operations (the Department of State and the Department of Justice for example) were not integrated into the planning or execution of the operation. With a detailed, if limited plan in place, United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) awaited the order to execute the invasion of Panama.

Operation Just Cause

On 17 December 1989 President Bush issued the order to invade Panama. Forty-eight hours after the order was issued, in the early morning hours of 20 December, American forces forced their way into Panama and the fight to oust Noriega had commenced. Broadly speaking, the opening phase of *Just Cause* was executed

¹⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁹ Department of the Army, “Historical Summary: FYs 1990 & 1991,” (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1991) 17-18.

according to plan. Special forces units led the initial assault and seized several critical objectives as well as rescuing Kurt Muse. Parachute infantry, supported by ten M551 Sheridan tanks, seized their respective objectives while units stationed in Panama quickly secured American civilians and guarded key infrastructure. The PDF, having been systematically desensitized to U.S. troop movements during dozens of U.S. exercises in the preceding months, largely ignored reports of a U.S. invasion until it was too late. When the PDF was able to resist, they were quickly surrounded by U.S. military forces and forced to capitulate. One such example was the PDF and paramilitary units defending *La Comandancia*. After a brief but spirited defense they were quickly surrounded and subjected to a withering bombardment that destroyed much of the compound and forced their surrender. Due to American military planners' concerns over civilian casualties and collateral damage to infrastructure, the use of artillery and air power was constrained. The constraints placed on US forces required tactical units to rely on armored vehicles during their assaults on several objectives, most notably in cities where precision firepower was required. The PDF's lack of anti-armor weapons allowed U.S. commanders to distribute armored vehicles such as Sheridans in small teams to support operations throughout Panama. Armored vehicles were also used extensively after hostilities ceased to protect convoys, react to civil disturbances, and generally project American power.²⁰

²⁰ Cole, *Operation Just Cause*.

Less than ten hours after the invasion of Panama commenced and before President Bush could address the nation, major hostilities had already ceased. When President Bush was finally able to speak to the American people he outlined the objectives and causes of the American intervention:

My fellow citizens, last night I ordered U.S. military forces to Panama. No President takes such action lightly. This morning I want to tell you what I did and why I did it.

For nearly 2 years, the United States, nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have worked together to resolve the crisis in Panama. The goals of the United States have been to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama, to combat drug trafficking, and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal treaty. Many attempts have been made to resolve this crisis through diplomacy and negotiations. All were rejected by the dictator of Panama, General Manuel Noriega, an indicted drug trafficker.²¹

Although some PDF and paramilitary units held out until 25 December 1989, by the end of the day almost all armed resistance had been eliminated. As military resistance dwindled, U.S. forces located Noriega who had requested sanctuary at the Vatican's embassy. On 3 January 1990 after several days of negotiations between American and Vatican officials, Noriega was surrendered into American custody and immediately extradited to the United States. However, as combat ended, SOUTHCOM forces encountered looting, mass protests, arson, and general lawlessness.²² Although U.S. military units and Panamanian civil security forces were eventually able to impose law

²¹ George H.W. Bush, Address to the Nation on Panama, 20 December 1989, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3422> (accessed 28 September 2016).

²² R. Cody Phillips, *Operation Just Cause: The Incursion into Panama*, (Washington, D.C.; Army Center of Military History, 2004), 39.

and order, the period directly following combat operations caught SOUTHCOM unprepared and tarnished what was otherwise considered by many historians and military officers to be an outstanding military operation.

On the face of it, *Operation Just Cause* seemed to be a resounding success. All major military objectives were achieved at the relatively little cost of 23 U.S. servicemen killed and 322 wounded.²³ On the other hand, PDF casualties were higher than expected with 297 killed, 123 wounded, and 468 detained. Panamanian civilians also paid a hefty price for the U.S. invasion suffering an estimated 314 killed and unknown number of wounded either during the operation or in the subsequent violence. In addition to the personnel lost, American actions caused considerable damage to some urban areas requiring American restitution or reconstruction. The Panamanian costs, in terms of lives lost, property damaged and destroyed, and instability complicated the legacy of *Just Cause* and as we will see, influenced many authors' interpretations of *Just Cause*.

Army Lesson Learning in Panama

As the largest combat mission for U.S. forces since Vietnam, *Just Cause* had the potential to teach the army many lessons about many different topics. What were those lessons and who learned them? Were there official lessons learned? Did they agree or differ with the lessons learned by general and field grade officers that participated in the conflict or studied it after? In simpler terms, what was the legacy of *Just Cause*? The following chapter explores the lessons learned by general and field grade army officers

²³ Cole, *Operation Just Cause*, 65.

that either participated in the conflict, studied it as part of their Professional Military Education (PME), wrote about Panama in their memoirs, or spoke about it in their subsequent careers.

The General Officer Perspective

As leaders within the army, the general officer perspective is an important one. Their attitudes and opinions shape the future of the army in many ways including training and equipping future forces. In order to understand the legacy of *Just Cause* we must first start with understanding how the general officers viewed the U.S. invasion of Panama. One of the difficulties in studying general officers' perceptions about *Just Cause* is a comparative absence of source material from the most active participants. Another problem is that much of the generals' analysis of Panama was colored by Desert Storm and Vietnam.

Those officers that did consider *Just Cause* interpreted the army's experience in two ways. The first was as the last victory of the Cold War U.S. Army. The second interpretation posited that Panama was the first victory of the post-Cold War U.S. Army. The two competing views – Panama as vindication of the old or as foreshadowing something new – shaped general officers' views of Panama. The divergence in perspective was articulated by Army Chief of Staff Gordon R. Sullivan: “For some, success in Panama and the Persian Gulf tended to reinforce the Cold War model of the Army. But a more critical consideration of the events of 1989 and 1990-1991 provided

the catalyst for us to face change in two fundamental directions: new missions and new technologies.”²⁴

Stability Operations, Nation Building, and MOOTW

One focus of general officer analysis was the relevance of Panama to the army’s role in post-combat operations, or Military Operations Other than War [MOOTW].²⁵ In the early 1990s MOOTWs were part of growing debate over the future of the army. Most officers looked upon MOOTW as a mission that had to be dealt with but they didn’t have to like it. But a smaller group believed MOOTWs were an essential part of the army’s future mission that the army should and must embrace to remain relevant to U.S. national security. The general officers’ perceptions of Panama illuminate some of this debate.

General Carl W. Stiner, Commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps and Joint Task Force South (JTF South) claimed he was ordered by General Max Thurman to focus on combat operations and leave post-conflict operations to SOUTHCOM. In a book co-written with Tom Clancy nearly a decade after the invasion of Panama, he questioned Thurman’s priorities:

The combat part is the easier of the two [missions] because when you are shooting at someone, you are in control of the variables. But, when you enter the nation-building phase you are not. The new government is in control, and you have to respond to their needs and priorities. For that

²⁴ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, *Hope is Not a Method: What Business Leaders Can Learn From America’s Army*, (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 7.

²⁵ Authors varied in their use of terminology to describe the non-combat operations of the army. Most authors used the era-appropriate term MOOTW, but others used terms such as nation-building, stability operations, post-conflict operations, and Civil-Military Operations (CMO). For purposes of this work these terms are used interchangeably.

reason, the transition must be seamless, so there is no loss in momentum. And the planning for it must be integrated from the beginning.²⁶

Although he understood the importance and difficulty concerning stability operations, his assessment of *Just Cause* and its legacy did not address stability operations and instead focused on the army's performance in combat. He largely ignored the army's performance in an area it didn't excel in and chose to focus on one in which it did.

Stiner's uncritical attitude is typified by his comment: "I can't say we really learned any lessons. In my opinion, you only learn a lesson as a result of a big mistake, or when you've failed to anticipate an event somewhere along the line – training readiness, plan development, or the like – that could effect the mission."²⁷

Major General William M. Matz, Assistant Division Commander for Support of the 7th Infantry Division, recalled that in a post-operation review of the Mission Essential Task List (METL) "we had accomplished in JUST CAUSE about five or six of our key METL [tasks]. Two or three things like, I believe, river crossing, etc., obviously we didn't. But we reviewed our METL and thought that our METL was good and did not need to be changed." But in a revealing comment, he noted that although the division had been actively engaged in civil-military operations for several months after the operation "we did not feel that that should become an actual part of the division's primary METL. But certainly we would concentrate on that in the future in our

²⁶ Carl Stiner and Tom Clancy, *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), 385.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 392.

operations and in our exercises.”²⁸ Matz’s lesson from Panama was that post-conflict operations were tasks a unit must be trained to conduct but they were not mission essential. Matz’s division commander, LTG Carmen Cavezza, Commanding General of the 7th Infantry Division during *Just Cause*, drew similar conclusions after the operation. In Panama, “The simple part is the military part: isolating, moving in, and securing. But the getting out the pregnant women, and the lady with the dog, and the people who don’t want to go, and all those kind of things, just botch up the operation big-time.”²⁹ What had surprised and frustrated him was:

the aid problems. I kept looking for help in the civil affairs area, for more people to come in to relieve the combat troops, and they weren’t forthcoming. We were getting some pressure from the Panamanian government. They were concerned about the security of the refugees. They were concerned about losing control in those little villages we put together, and I wanted to turn that over to the right kind of people and let them start working the social problems and get my troops out of there so they could do the other things that they needed to do. That seemed to take a while.³⁰

Yet despite this experience, he was dubious about the practicality of better preparing for MOOTW and post-occupation stability duties: “For training purposes. I am not sure I could ever train adequately. I think the best thing I could do is to make sure my leaders

²⁸ Robert K. Wright, Larry Yates, and Joe Huddleston, “Oral History Interview of Major General William M. Matz,” 30 April 1992, <http://www.history.army.mil/documents/panama/JCIT/JCIT98Z.htm> (accessed 28 September 2016).

²⁹ Robert K. Wright, Larry Yates, and Joe Huddleston, “Oral History Interview of Lieutenant General Carmen Cavezza,” 30 April 1992, <http://www.history.army.mil/documents/panama/JCIT/JCIT97Z.htm>, (accessed 28 September 2016).

³⁰ Ibid.

understand the possibility of having to do that, and incorporate it in our training, but not make it a METL task because it would consume all our training time”³¹ Cavezza labeled stability operations training as “essential,” yet he stopped short of adding it to his METL because it would interfere with tactical training. He remained convinced of the primacy of tactical training even when his Panamanian experience showed that the combat phase was likely to be followed by a much longer period of reconstruction. In his view, post-combat operations were someone else’s task, not the U.S. Army’s.

Stiner, Matz, and Cavezza all learned lessons about post-conflict operations following their involvement and study of *Just Cause*. Broadly speaking, these officers understood that stability operations were important to the army but varied in the emphasis they placed on them. Stiner, writing considerably after the fact, ultimately concluded that post-conflict operations were the most critical to the long-term accomplishment of the army’s missions. On the other hand, Matz and Cavezza viewed MOOTW as a secondary priority and focused their training for combat operations, despite their conclusion that such operations were essential. All of these officers learned lessons from Panama, but very few of these lessons seemed to impact the units involved in the operation or the army at large. Merely a decade later in Iraq the army would make the same mistakes – inadequately planning and training for post-conflict operations while preparing to combat an overmatched adversary. From the perspective of the U.S. Army’s post 9/11 operations, William “Buck” Kernan, a colonel in Panama, concluded:

³¹ Ibid.

Where we should have learned our lesson was those nineteen months of planning for JUST CAUSE. That went like clockwork. The one thing we didn't plan for was the aftermath; the nation building aspect. What are you going to do for stability operations; for post-kinetic operations? That was an afterthought. Now, you would have thought that we would have done a better job this time around because of lessons learned with regime change even though it was this small. There were an awful lot of lessons learned we could have taken to Iraq and we didn't do it.

An awful lot could've been planned; an awful lot could've been done ahead of time to be postured to do this much more efficiently and effectively. Which just begs the question, "Why didn't we do a better job going into Iraq recognizing we were going to take down the government?"³²

Proof of Progress

The generals that led the army into Panama were all Vietnam veterans. Most were mid-level officers in Vietnam, and all had witnessed firsthand an ill-disciplined army without clear strategic objectives. While they drew many lessons from their experience in Vietnam, one of the most important was that political and strategic goals should be linked. This was especially true to General Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during *Just Cause*:

The lessons I absorbed from Panama confirmed all my convictions over the preceding twenty years, since the days of doubt over Vietnam. Have a clear political objective and stick to it. Use all the force necessary, and do not apologize for going in big if that is what it takes.³³

Whenever the military had a clear set of objectives, I pointed out – as in Panama, the Philippine coup, and Desert Storm – the result had been a success. When the nation's policy was murky or nonexistent – the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, creating a Marine "presence" in Lebanon – the result has

³² Douglas V. Johnson, *An Oral History of General William F. "Buck" Kernan, USA, Retired*, ed. James R. Greenburg (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army Military History Institute, 2015), 80-81.

³³ Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, 2003 ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 434.

been a disaster . . . We have learned the proper lessons from history.³⁴

Powell also concluded that the slow, methodical buildup of forces over time used in Vietnam was not conducive to victory: “Decisive force ends wars quickly and in the long run saves lives. Whatever threats we faced in the future, I intended to make these rules the bedrock of my military counsel.”³⁵ There are several problems with Powell’s conclusions. The first is that his “lessons” from Panama weren’t really from Panama. He used the army’s experience in *Just Cause* as a data point to confirm his preexisting views on the use of force and the linkage between strategic and political objectives. Secondly, there seems to be a gap between Powell’s vision of decisive force that ends wars quickly and decisive outcomes that achieve lasting political objectives. In both Panama and Iraq, American armed forces defeated the enemy’s organized military units but failed to control rioting, violence, and a breakdown in law and order.

General Powell was not the only officer who interpreted Panama as redemption for Vietnam. In 1983 the army had a small chance to show its improvements when it invaded Grenada. While the operation was a success, the demons of Vietnam had not been fully exorcised. Byzantine chains of command, technical limitations (especially regarding communication equipment), and lack of joint training prior to *Urgent Fury* all plagued *Just Cause*.³⁶ Senior military and civilian leaders recognized the military’s

³⁴ Ibid., 559.

³⁵ Ibid., 434.

³⁶ Richard W. Stewart, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Invasion of Grenada, October 1983*, (Washington, D.C.; Army Center of Military History, 2008), 30.

shortcomings and made strides to correct the deficiencies in the intervening time. The most critical development came in 1986 when the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act was passed. Goldwater-Nichols fundamentally changed the way in which the president received advice on military matters and streamlined the chain of command in joint operations. As the first large scale use of force since both *Urgent Fury* and Goldwater-Nichols, *Just Cause* was a real-world test of the new command structure and increased emphasis on joint operations.³⁷

Several general officers viewed *Just Cause* as a vindication of the military's reforms (specifically Goldwater-Nichols) and the resources spent conducting joint training. The most prominent was Army Chief of Staff Carl E. Vuono, who told a Congressional committee in 1990 that the JCS had made "significant strides in planning and executing joint operations." Despite the army's improved performance, Vuono warned:

We must be cautious, however, in drawing proper lessons from this operation. Some have already proclaimed it as the prototype for contingencies of the future. As important as it is, JUST CAUSE represents but one type of contingency in which the United States may find itself. It is a single point along the operational continuum that runs from peacetime competition to a major war.³⁸

Vuono was not alone in his assessment of *Just Cause*. General Gordon B. Sullivan, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans during Panama, initially

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "On the fiscal year 1991 Department of the Army Budget," 21 February 1990 in Douglas D. Brisson, ed., *A Trained and Ready Army: The Collected Works of the Thirty-First Chief of Staff, United States Army*, (Washington D.C: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1994), 223.

doubted the operation and recalled: “I told them [Carl Stiner and Gary Luck] that I thought my view was that it was just so complicated I just couldn’t comprehend that they could pull it off.”³⁹ Following the conflict Sullivan admitted:

Well that shows how much I knew. . . . It was really very well executed. The whole thing was well executed. There were some things we learned that we didn’t like and we changed. Some of them were training deficiencies or whatever, but generally it was flawless. I think what we saw was 21st Century warfare for the first time. Simultaneous applications of complementary capabilities and we literally shut a country down.⁴⁰

These three general officers concluded the army had learned the correct lessons from *Urgent Fury* and the Vietnam War and the *Just Cause* validated its progress. They saw what they wanted to see in Panama; a rapid and overwhelming force decisively achieving limited goals. Conversely, they either ignored or failed to recognize things outside of their comfort zone such as post conflict rioting and the near complete lack of inter-agency cooperation.

The Field-Grade Officer Perspective

The field grade officers who wrote on the Panama invasion were more ambivalent in their assessments of the army and its performance in Panama. Some field grade officers concluded the operation was a great success and vindicated the army’s progress and preparation. Major James Cashwell’s 1995 master’s thesis examined armored battalions’ preparedness for operations other than war by analyzing the efficacy

³⁹ John R. Dabrowski, ed., *An Oral History of General Gordon R. Sullivan*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2008), 176.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 176-178.

of armored units and tanks in several operations, including *Just Cause*. He assessed that the “performance of the tank in OOTW [in Panama], operating as part of the combined arms team, was extremely successful.”⁴¹ Based on his assessment of the army’s performance, Cashwell assessed that the army’s “Battle Focused” approach to training provided a “solid platform from which to launch into both war and OOTW.”⁴² Cashwell’s conclusions seemed to support Matz and Cavezza’s pre-conflict training focus and plans.

Other officers were far less impressed with the army’s training, planning, and execution of stability operations. Major Melissa Applegate’s 1994 paper recognized the difficulties that faced commanders preparing for the invasion. She contended that with limited training time and resources available commanders were required to make sacrifices in their training and could only accomplish essential training – which rarely included MOOTW tasks. But while Matz and Cavezza thought MOOTW required little specialized training or planning, Applegate didn’t. She contended that many of the problems encountered in Panama were due to poor planning by the senior leaders. Applegate argued that General Frederick J. Woerner (SOUTHCOM commander from 1987 to 1989):

understood the need for the military to plan post-conflict support to Panama, but the planning done under his command was overcome by events as the crisis deepened. Despite JTF-South's detailed planning for OPLAN 90-2, plans to support operations in a post-conflict environment-

⁴¹ James E. Cashwell, “Armored Battalion Preparedness for Operation Other Than War” (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1995), 26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, iii.

-the longest phase that would ultimately have the greatest impact on U.S. ability to realize the strategic objective of promoting stability--were insufficient. When it came time to implement [the invasion], the U.S. failed to resource the effort adequately and ultimately paid the price. U.S. efforts at rebuilding a police force illustrate this inconsistency in commitment.⁴³

Applegate noted that after Woerner was replaced by Max Thurman before the invasion, post-conflict planning gave way to increased emphasis on combat operations. She concluded a lesson of the Panama operation:

[it is the] actions that fall outside the realm of the military invasion itself that have the most lasting impact on the country, and on U.S. interests as a whole. . . because the U.S. military was the most visible representative of U.S. intentions and was responsible to carry out the lion's share of post-conflict support to Panama, U.S. successes or failures reflect on the military itself, in this case, negatively.⁴⁴

Major Christopher Baggott's 1990 SAMS monograph echoed Applegate's criticism of operational planners' near exclusive focus on the combat phase of the operation with little to no planning effort devoted to the post-conflict plan:

What these two [*Urgent Fury* and *Just Cause*] campaigns did not demonstrate was either an expertise in planning or conducting post-conflict operations to advance the peace in a manner most favorable to U.S. long-term regional interests. This planning shortfall may be a result of an uncertainty in fixing responsibility. Is it the statesman or the soldier who plans the peace? Or, is there a dual obligation for this mission? . . . It is the responsibility of the CINC in conjunction with the appropriate governmental agencies to mold the military campaign triumph into a lasting regional strategic victory.⁴⁵

⁴³ Melissa A. Applegate, "Military Power in Operation Other Than War" (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), 134-135.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁵ Christopher L. Baggott, "Achieving the Operational End-State: The Linkage of Military Operation with Regional Stability" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1990), 36.

Baggot raised a significant question – whose responsibility was it to plan for and conduct post-conflict operations? Cavezza concluded it was someone else’s responsibility, Baggot disagreed, contending that it was the responsibility of *both* military and civilian leaders. His analysis reinforced Applegate’s criticism that the generals were too fixated on operational planning and that they ignored both the political objectives of the mission and the consequences of their actions on the local and regional political, social, and economic conditions. While Powell claimed Panama was a success due to the linkage of political and military goals, Baggot believed there was a profound disconnect between military and political goals.

Applegate and Baggot identified what they believed was a flaw in the army’s planning process. But why had army planners failed to address such a seemingly simple problem? Major Louis Morales 2007 study of *Just Cause* concluded the planning obstacles were the result of failures in service and joint doctrine.⁴⁶ Major Charles Robinson also determined that “The doctrine in use before, during, and after the Panama crisis did not provide the ability to effectively implement foreign policy through unified interagency operations.”⁴⁷ To Robinson, the primary problem was that:

at each phase of the crisis, the natural tendencies of the superorganizations were allowed to overwhelm the ability to function in a unified and responsive fashion, focused on a clear objective. Even when the policy debates over feasibility and suitability are set aside, the implementation was so poor one can conclude that the failure to depose

⁴⁶ Louis W. Morales, “Post-Conflict Stability Operations and the 1989 United States Invasion of Panama” (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2007), 22.

⁴⁷ Charles Robinson, “Panama: Military Victory, Interagency Failure: A Case Study of Policy Implementation” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1993), 38.

Noriega without an invasion was a result of flawed execution. The post-conflict problems are also a result of poor implementation from a national perspective.⁴⁸

Morales and Robinson both believed that although *some* progress had been made in joint and interagency operations since Vietnam and *Urgent Fury*, doctrine still failed to provide the guidance required to successfully conduct joint and interagency contingencies.

Although a relatively small number of field officers analyzed *Just Cause*, their conclusions were similar. They argued that army training and doctrine did not place enough emphasis on MOOTW, a fact which was evident in the army's execution of these tasks in Panama. In their view, post-conflict operations were almost, if not more important, than the combat phases of *Just Cause* and that by bumbling this part of the operation the army put U.S. regional interests at risk. Although the post-conflict plan was largely ineffective in Panama, the political, economic, and social factors did not precipitate a descent into total lawlessness or anarchy as in Iraq more than a decade later. However, the potential for such an eventuality was present, and without a clear plan to 'win the peace,' the U.S. army left itself susceptible to further conflict.

Special Interests

As a large-scale military operation, *Just Cause* included nearly every type of army unit, ranging from elite light infantry to assault helicopters and tanks. Many officers interpreted *Just Cause* through the lens of their specific branch or military

⁴⁸ Ibid.

occupational specialty or focused on one type of weapon. This was particularly true of officers who were concerned that the end of the Cold War would see a rapid decline in the importance of armor and aviation.

In Panama the army deployed the M-551A1 Sheridan, a tank that originally entered service in the late 1960s. The Sheridan was a light tank, weighing in at just over 15 tons, which allowed it to be air-dropped in support of airborne operations. The somewhat unique capability of the Sheridan endeared it to several officers. Major Burdett Thompson concluded that the Sheridan's unique strategic capability made it critical to the army's forced entry ability. Her conclusion put her at odds with the army's plan to phase out the Sheridan in 1996 without providing a replacement.⁴⁹ She advocated retaining and improving the army's light armor vehicles.⁵⁰ Major Michael J. Kazmierski's contended:

There are two key points to be learned from this operation. First, the firepower and mobility of the mechanized forces contributed significantly to the overall success of the operation. A mechanized infantry battalion, a light armored vehicle company of Marines and a company of M-551A1 Sheridan armored reconnaissance vehicles greatly assisted in delivering the impact of overwhelming U.S. combat power. The sight and sound of a tracked vehicle is unmistakable to a light infantry soldier, armed only with a rifle, and can provide the impact needed to encourage the surrender of these lightly armed enemy troops, avoiding the need for costly fighting.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Burdett K. Thompson, "Where's the Light Armor? Enhancing the Firepower of Early Entry Forces" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1996), 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁵¹ Michael J. Kazmierski, "United States Army Power Projection in the 21st Century; the Conventional Airborne Forces Must Be Modernized to Meet the Army's Strategic Force Requirements and the Nation's

Kazmierski concluded that Panama demonstrated the eternal truth that mechanized forces alone could provide the “firepower, mobility, and survivability needed to support the difficult house-to-house fighting.”⁵² Major Marshall Hagen concurred with Kazmierski’s view that armored vehicles gave commanders an edge in Panama due to their “immediate mobility, shock action and firepower at the decisive point in the operation” and because “light armor was important in a show of force role because it discouraged sniping, looting, and general civil unrest.”⁵³ Major Scott Hume concluded that Panamanian operations proved the 75th Ranger Regiment required a combat system to provide “overwhelming firepower against enemy weapons; a rapid maneuver capability to the ground force commander; a sensor package that can leverage information to enhance leadership through faster and more accurate decision making capabilities than the enemy; and protection for the crew. One type of system that can provide these elements of combat power to the ground force is an armored vehicle.”⁵⁴

Those who argued that *Just Cause* proved the continuing relevance of armor failed to consider two important points. One was that the PDF did not have the capability to fight an armored force effectively. This allowed the American forces to

Future Threats” (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1990), 63.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Marshall A. Hagen, “Employment of Light Infantry in Contingency Operations: What Do We Do Without Light Armor?” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997), 19.

⁵⁴ Scott F. Hume, “Armored Rangers: Does the U.S. Army Ranger Regiment Need Armored Vehicles to Enhance Its Force Entry Capability?” (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1999), 75-76.

operate without fear of losing armored vehicles and act in a manner they would not be able to in a less permissive environment. A second was that officers did not include the logistical requirements of operating armored forces in their analysis. In Panama the U.S. had the benefit of being close to strategic bases and even had permanent military infrastructure in Panama. In a more remote or austere location the logistical burden of armored forces could be very challenging.

Another Cold War weapons system that appeared to demonstrate its continued importance was the helicopter. Major Bradley Mason made this point emphatically:

The successful aviation operations during "Just Cause" were due in large part to preparation and readiness. The specialized training programs highlighted in the previous paragraph [that focused on the transition from combat to post-conflict operations] and the emphasis by commanders on rules of engagement and conducting realistic rehearsals paid off. The assault helicopter units employed in Panama had trained to conduct LIC operations for both peace and war. They operated on "the fine line" for almost two years before engaging in actual hostilities, and their experiences could provide a meaningful foundation for assault helicopter LIC doctrine.⁵⁵

Although Mason praised the training, preparation, and execution of the invasion, he concluded that current doctrine was "inadequate to provide a salient training focus and must evolve to meet the challenges, dangers, and uncertainties, of operating in low intensity conflict."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bradley J. Mason, "Assault Helicopter Contingency Operations: The Fine Line Between Peace and War" (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 36.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, iv.

Major John Hansen was particularly interested in the firepower of attack helicopters – a characteristic that was limited by collateral damage concerns in Panama:

Sometimes the tolerance curve is very shallow and collateral damage becomes an overriding concern. During the raid into Tinajitas, Panama, Operation JUST CAUSE, preparatory fires into the landing zone were ruled out because of the populated neighborhoods surrounding Tinajitas. Normally the first stage in an air assault is the preparation of the target with fires from attack helicopters, artillery or fixed wing aircraft to suppress enemy defenses. [General James Johnson said] "We put our soldiers at risk in order to minimize casualties and damage to the Panamanian people and their country."⁵⁷

Despite the limitations on the use of force, he argued that “Forces require protection as the threat of open aggression against OOTW operations increases. The simple presence of an attack helicopter is documented as to being enough to provide protection to ground forces.”⁵⁸ Hansen concluded that the mobility, agility, firepower, and the psychological effect on combatants combined to give attack helicopters “a unique role in operations other than war.”⁵⁹

Conclusion

Operation *Just Cause* is and was widely regarded as a successful military operation. On this point, there is little to argue. U.S. forces were able to achieve all major military objectives quickly, and cheaply (in both terms of lives and resources) – and this is precisely the narrative that nearly all general officers offer in their analysis of

⁵⁷ John T. Hansen, “The Role of the Attack Helicopter in Operations Other Than War” (MA thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1995), 87.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

the conflict. Some generals (such as Stiner and Vuono) even went so far as to suggest that there were no true lessons learned, but merely validation of principles and imperatives learned elsewhere. Yet there is debate concerning the classification of *Just Cause* as a decisive American victory. The U.S. invasion of Panama killed civilians, destroyed infrastructure, and toppled a government (which it had supported for decades) with virtually no plan to restore stability and normalcy following the conflict – putting American interests in the region in peril. These facts led some mid-level officers to conclude that army’s training, doctrine, and execution of post-conflict operations was inadequate (or in some cases nonexistent). While these officers also saw Panama as a victory, they viewed the invasion as a real-world test that challenged the army in unexpected ways.

The divergence in perspective between these groups illustrates a few things. First, senior leaders looked to Panama to vindicate their efforts spent improving the army since the Vietnam War. The army that invaded Panama in 1989 was a vastly different one than departed Vietnam 15 years before – it was even a different army than had invaded Grenada merely six years before. These officers needed Panama to be a success so they could consider their careers and their views of the army and its role in combat as successful. Secondly, the different perspectives indicate differing attitudes towards lesson learning. Stiner, Vuono, and other general officers often conflated lesson learning with mistakes while field-grade officers could be critical of an operation even if it went well.

We can also learn from the areas in which these officers' perspectives converged. The vast majority of officers interpreted *Just Cause* narrowly and focused their analysis on tactics, organizations, equipment, and other detailed aspects of the operation. While some officers – such as Applegate and Baggot – attempted to draw larger conclusions about the army and its role in war, their efforts failed to gain traction with military and civilian leaders. The result was an army that learned superficial lessons from *Just Cause*, many of which it had learned elsewhere and merely reinforced in Panama. By sticking to their relative comfort zones, the officers that experienced and interpreted *Just Cause* missed an opportunity for growth. Instead of analyzing the army's relative strengths and weaknesses and adapting, the army maintained the status quo after Panama. In this case, this was not a general problem or a field officer problem, it was an officer problem.

CHAPTER III

DEALING WITH DEFEAT: THE US ARMY IN SOMALIA

The early 1990s was, on the surface, a time for the US Army to celebrate. The rapid and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 left the US as the sole remaining superpower and without an obvious adversary with which to contend. In addition to the geo-political developments, army operations in the first years of the decade seemed to indicate that the army rediscovered the formula for success. First, in Panama, *Operation Just Cause* could be viewed as an overwhelming military victory that achieved its limited objectives in spectacular fashion – and perhaps most importantly did not entangle the US in a protracted struggle. The Persian Gulf War, less than a year after *Just Cause*, was cause for even greater celebration. To many officers and military analysts, the decisive U.S. victory in the Persian Gulf War was a vindication of the American way of war. The ease with which US and Coalition forces swept their Iraqi opponents from the battlefield was astonishing, especially given the perceived strength and expertise of the Iraqi Army.

The short-lived era of triumphalism ended abruptly in October 1993 when eighteen Americans were killed and a further seventy-three were wounded in the Battle of Mogadishu against Somali warlords and militiamen. Although labeled as a tactical victory, the battle was a strategic loss that eroded the American people's will to continue and eventually led to U.S. withdrawal in March 1994. The stinging defeat in Somali caused many questions to emerge over the U.S. Army's ability to fight and win in a post-

Cold World against post-Cold War adversaries. By extension, it caused many officers to question the direction of the army and the future of military conflict in the waning years of the 21st Century.

Paved with Good Intentions – The Road to U.S. Intervention in Somalia

The political, social, and economic factors which spurred American and United Nations intervention did not coalesce overnight. Instead, these issues can be traced back to the disastrous Ogaden War of 1977-1978 in which Somali forces attempted to seize Ethiopian lands that were part of “Greater Somalia.” Instead of expanding his power, the President of Somalia – Mohamed Siad Barre – damaged the Somali Army and undermined his domestic credibility and political power.⁶⁰

The failed war had two lasting impacts. The first was that seeds of dissent were sewn amongst the Somali tribes. In the immediate aftermath of the war members of the Majeerateen Clan attempted an unsuccessful coup d'état which the Barre government defeated. The government's crackdown enflamed other tribal conflicts and contributed to the small but steadily growing anti-government resistance, which eventually fomented into open rebellion in the 1980s. The second legacy of the Ogaden War was the movement of Somalia into the American sphere of influence in the Cold War. In the initial phases of the war both the Ethiopian and Somali governments were Socialist and firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviets were caught in an awkward

⁶⁰ Robert Baumann, Lawrence Yates, Versalle F. Washington, *My Clan Against the World: US and Coalition Forces in Somalia, 1992-1994* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2004); Walter Clarke, “Background Information for Operation Restore Hope” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Department of National Security and Strategy, U.S. Army War College, 1992), 3-4.

situation supplying both sides of the conflict with military support. Eventually Soviet leaders withdrew their support of the Somalis, pushing them towards the Americans. The U.S., seeking to undermine Soviet interests and advance their own, supplied and supported the Somalis in exchange for military access on the strategic Horn of Africa. From that time forward, American interests in the region were linked with Somalia.⁶¹

Barre's problems continued throughout the 1980s as tribal tensions boiled over and manifested in a low-grade insurgency. The Somali National Army's attempts to crush the tribal rebellions were unsuccessful and spurred further rebellion. In early 1990 Barre's position was extremely precarious. The United Somali Congress controlled most of Somalia, leaving Mogadishu as the last vestige of Barre's power. After a prolonged fight in the city Barre was deposed and exiled. Instead of bringing peace and stability, the Somali Congress quickly disintegrated into several groups each vying for control of the government and limited natural resources – including food.⁶²

The war, the austere Somali environment, drought, and rampant corruption combined to create widespread famine. By 1992 an estimated 300,000 Somalis died of malnutrition, 3 million refugees had fled the country, and a further 10% of the population was at risk of malnutrition.⁶³ Facing a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, the United Nations passed a series of resolutions to implement a ceasefire

⁶¹ Baumann, *My Clan Against the World*, 12-14.

⁶² Clarke, "Background Information," 32.

⁶³ Baumann, *My Clan Against the World*, 23-24.

and render humanitarian aid. The first UN peacekeepers arrived as part of the United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM I) in July 1992 to “monitor the ceasefire in Mogadishu and escort deliveries of humanitarian supplies to distribution centres.”⁶⁴ Almost immediately the UN operation proved to be ineffective. Somali factions largely ignored the ceasefire when it suited them and routinely seized, destroyed, or otherwise harassed humanitarian assistance when it did not directly support their own interests. In late 1992 it was clear to American and UN officials a larger peacekeeping force would be required and in November 1992 the U.S. proposal to lead a multi-national security force to render humanitarian aid was accepted.

The new UN operation, known as the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to the UN and *Operation Restore Hope* to the U.S., was launched in December of 1992. At peak strength, UNITAF numbered roughly 38,000 troops representing 23 different countries.⁶⁵ The increased UN presence had a chilling effect on the Somali factions and reduced the violence to a level that facilitated the distribution of humanitarian aid. As the humanitarian crisis faded, U.S. leaders desired to reduce the number of American forces in Somalia which prompted the UN to establish UNOSOM II. The new UN mission expanded the scope of previous missions and UNOSOM II was “to take appropriate action, including enforcement measures, to establish throughout Somalia a secure environment for humanitarian assistance.” To that end, UNOSOM II was to

⁶⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, “United Nations Operation in Somalia I” 2003, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unosomi.htm>.

⁶⁵ Richard W. Stewart, *The United States Army in Somalia 1992-1994* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 2002), 10.

complete, through disarmament and reconciliation, the task begun by the Unified Task Force for the restoration of peace, stability, law and order.⁶⁶

Identifying the change in forces and missions, the previously pacified Somali warlords ceased their cooperation and openly engaged UN forces throughout Mogadishu. On 5 June 1993, Somali militiamen attacked Pakistani forces assigned to UNOSOM II, killing twenty-four and wounding an additional forty-four. The attack on 5 June triggered an escalation of violence in Mogadishu. U.S. and UN forces conducted offensive raids, striking at warlords' positions throughout Mogadishu, who in turn, counterattacked throughout the city. Hoping to deescalate the situation, allied leaders focused their efforts on one of the strongest warlords, Mohammed Farrah Aidid. To aid in their efforts to remove Aidid, the U.S. deployed a Joint Operations Task Force (JSOTF) named Task Force Ranger (TF Ranger) comprised of Rangers Regiment soldiers and elements of Delta Force.⁶⁷

Beginning in late August, TF Ranger conducted a series of raids against Aidid and his top lieutenants. Initially TF Ranger enjoyed success and captured several key leaders of Aidid's organization and severely limited his ability to move in and around Mogadishu. Instead of weakening the resistance and reducing violence, the American actions triggered stauncher Somali resistance. Although under constant pressure, Aidid and others were emboldened by their successes against U.S. and UN targets. On 25

⁶⁶ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, "United Nations Operation in Somalia II" 2003, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unosomi.htm>.

⁶⁷ Baumann, *My Clan Against the World*, 107-108.

September 1993 Aidid's militia destroyed an American helicopter with Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG), killing three American soldiers. Days later, on the afternoon of 3 October 1993, TF Ranger launched the raid which would eventually be immortalized by the book and film *Black Hawk Down*. The ensuing engagement, known as the Battle of Mogadishu, was the fiercest fighting of the campaign and lasted through the evening of 3 October into the morning of 4 October. Somali militia shot down two American helicopters, destroyed numerous vehicles, and pinned down a company of TF Ranger for an extended period. When the battle ceased, sixteen American Soldiers were dead, fifty-seven wounded, and one captured.⁶⁸ Although the battle was insignificant in terms of the overall military strength of TF Ranger, the strategic consequences were immense. In the matter of an afternoon, American policy changed as the U.S. mission in Somalia lost both political and public support. In the closing months of 1993 and beginning months of 1994, American forces set conditions for their withdrawal which was completed on 25 March 1994.

The American mission in Somalia, born of noble ideals and impulses, died an inglorious death at the hands of Somali warlords less than a year after it had begun. The events of 3 and 4 October shocked the U.S. military and by extension, the U.S. Army which to this point, was still enjoying the prestige of its success in Panama and Desert Storm. The strategic defeat caused many professional military officers to examine the

⁶⁸ Stewart, *The United States Army in Somalia*, 23.

army's performance, questions its trajectory, and contemplate the army's role in post-Cold War national security.

The initial step in that examination was a series of formal and informal inquiries and reports. One of the most influential of these reports was from Colonel Kenneth Allard. Among the many lessons learned compiled by Allard, were four overarching lessons. The first, Allard claimed, was that nation building was “a mission for which our forces should not be primarily responsible” and that civilian agencies of the government [were] better able to specialize in such long-term humanitarian efforts.”⁶⁹ The second lesson was that “any action in a peace operation that effectively takes sides between factions engaged in internal civil strife” would be viewed as hostile, in which “there should be no mistaking the fact that the troops given this mission have been committed to combat.”⁷⁰ Thirdly, Allard believed that “the three chains of command running during UNOSOM II underline[d] the importance of a lesson that should be adapted from Murphy's Laws of Combat: If it takes more than 10 seconds to explain the command arrangements, they probably won't work.”⁷¹ Lastly, he concluded that Somalia was “a clear warning for the future: Beware of the temptation to do too much. Giving in to that temptation is an occupational hazard in an institution built around can-do attitudes and the expectation of success. All the more reason, then, to ensure that the analysis of any

⁶⁹ Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned* (Honolulu; University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 79-80.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

peace operation includes the selection of those indicators that can best measure mission accomplishment.”⁷² For all intents and purposes, Allard’s work served as the official lessons learned by the army. While many of his views were shared by his contemporaries, other officers had different interpretations of the army’s actions in Somalia. What follows is an examination of their interpretations of the lessons learned in Somalia and the legacy of the U.S. intervention in Somalia on future military operations.

The General Officer Perspective

The U.S. Army experience in Somalia was a polarizing one for general officers. As leaders, they were ultimately responsible for the army and its ability to successfully complete its assigned missions. Failure, then, was a rebuke of their expertise, leadership, and the overall direction of the army. Unsurprisingly, this did not sit well with some general officers and many of them struggled to come to terms with the army’s experience and the conflict’s impact on future operations.

Intervention, Humanitarian Aid, and MOOTWs

At the heart of the generals’ analysis of the U.S. involvement in Somalia was a question with profound impacts: when was a military intervention appropriate? This question encompassed ongoing debates within the 1990’s army such as the importance of Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW), the army’s role in nation building, and stability operations. How these generals answered this question exposed a rift

⁷² Ibid., 83.

between some of even the most senior military leaders. General Colin Powell, and other adherents to the Powell doctrine, seemed to be preoccupied with avoiding a repeat of the Vietnam war at all costs. Other officers, such as Gordon R. Sullivan, George A. Joulwan, and William F. Kernan believed the army would and should be used abroad early and often to manipulate regional social, political, and economic conditions to avoid costly wars and prolonged entanglement.

Powell, serving his last days as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff made his dissatisfaction with the U.S. presence in Somalia clear. He later claimed that even before the Battle of Mogadishu he had “been urging [Defense Secretary] Aspin for weeks to demand a policy review to find a way out [of Somalia].”⁷³ Powell’s outlook on intervention was manifested in the “doctrine” attributed to him. An outgrowth of the Vietnam War, the Powell Doctrine argued that American forces should only be committed after certain conditions were met: “A risk to national security; . . . positive international support; clearly defined political objectives; full consideration of risk to US troops and their length of stay; a well-defined exit strategy; and clear approval from the American people.”⁷⁴ Powell argued that American entry into Somalia violated these principles in two important ways. The first was the U.S. and UN plans did not have a clear exit strategy:

⁷³ Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, 2003 ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 586. Considering the likelihood of Powell wanting to distance himself from the failed effort in Somalia and his later (false) assertions concerning weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Powell’s commentary here is unreliable.

⁷⁴ Ricardo Sanchez and Donald T. Phillips, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier’s Story* (New York: Harper, 2008), 105.

The UN approved a resolution shifting the mission from feeding the hungry to “nation building,” the phrase I first heard when we went into Vietnam. From what I have observed of history, the will to build a nation comes from within its people, not from outside. . . . Nation building might have an inspirational ring, but it struck me as a way to get bogged down in Somalia, not get out.⁷⁵

Secondly, the action in Somalia violated Powell’s principle that military interventions must have popular support. In his view, the Somalia mission “understandably confused Americans. Why, since we had gone into Somalia to feed its starving people, were our troops being shot at? This was the quicksand that the UN “nation-building” mission had sucked us into.”⁷⁶ As we saw earlier in Panama, Powell’s interpretation of Somalia was heavily influenced by his experience and understanding of the Vietnam War. His pre-existing viewpoints on war and the use of force colored his analysis of Somalia and led him to the conclusion that Somalia was a mistake and served to prove the lessons he had learned elsewhere.

In contrast to Powell, General Gordon Sullivan, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army from 1991-1995, declared “I was and am a conflict prevention and a post conflict reconstruction guy. Peacetime engagement, being involved with our allies, being involved in winning the peace, are important concepts.”⁷⁷ In such situations he advocated a whole-government approach: “we have to play our role and the rest of the

⁷⁵ Powell, *My American Journey*, 580.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 586.

⁷⁷ John R. Dabrowski, ed., *An Oral History of General Gordon R. Sullivan* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2008), 264.

Federal Government has to play its role, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Energy. Peacetime engagement, shaping--I happened to be a proponent of shaping.”⁷⁸

Rather than viewing the intervention in Somalia as merely a small tactical failure soon to be forgotten, Sullivan was concerned with the secondary and tertiary effects of America failure and worried “that we have left Somalia and we left a petri dish open. There have been bugs crawling in that petri dish since we left and they are not good bugs. There was no post-conflict reconstruction. I understand that some people view that as nation building, which to some, has become a very derogative term.”⁷⁹ Despite the tactical setbacks and the loss of life, Sullivan ultimately concluded that reestablishing the “sinews of civil society” was critical to success in low intensity conflicts and the army’s true failure was not following through and eliminating the root causes of instability in the region.⁸⁰

Whether military interventions were in the best interest of the United States or not, the 1990s was an active decade, and seemed to some, to be an indicator of future military action. General George Joulwan, Commander of U.S. Southern Command and later European Command, believed that MOOTWs and other stability operations “are

⁷⁸ Ibid., 263-264.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 264.

⁸⁰ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, *Hope is Not a Method: What Business Leaders Can Learn From America’s Army* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 52-53.

not going to go away. The military and the Army need to understand.”⁸¹ Although clear to him, Joulwan believed other officers didn’t share his conclusion which “said something about our military that so much of our leadership was against doing these missions [MOOTWs]. They really didn’t want to do them.” Joulwan alleged that the failures in Somalia could be traced backed to the inability or unwillingness of army leaders to embrace and adapt to stability operations, causing them to be “caught short in Somalia.”⁸² Joulwan concluded:

I wish we had gone through that transformation back then [in the early 1990s]. But it was very difficult because many felt that we shouldn’t do those types of things. So what happened was the National Command Authority would finally say to the military, “Do something.” And we didn’t really know how to do it. In many cases we got not only people killed, but also we did not do it in a professional way.⁸³

General William Kernan, Commander in Chief of U.S. Joint Forces Command,

believed the failed operation inspired a reappraisal of army strategic assumptions.

Based on our Somalia experience, we started looking at big questions about big things. We started looking at things like energy; the inability to provide energy and power and our reliance on it. We started asking questions like, “What are the second and third order effects on a population, on an economy and on an expectation of a populace based on the ability – or inability – of a government to provide services; run hospitals; to have lights in homes; refrigeration; and those kinds of questions. The inability of a government to provide and sustain those kinds of services can cause a great deal of disillusionment on the part of the people with and loss of confidence in their government. All of that plays on other people’s ability to question the effectiveness of the government. We were always looking for those “chinks in the armor;”

⁸¹ Ben Hodges, *An Oral History of General George A. Joulwan, USA Retired* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2000), 333.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

for the seams and gaps in national resilience.⁸⁴

Like Sullivan, Kernan advocated for a whole-government approach to stability operations which seemed to look very similar to counterinsurgency and nation building in the latter stages of American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. These striking similarities force us to consider how many of these lessons were actually learned in Somalia, rather than General Kernan re-examining his view of Somalia through a post-2007 Iraqi-occupation tinted lens.

Through much of the 1990s, army leadership struggled to come to grips over the army's role in nation building, low-intensity conflicts, and MOOTWs in general. Powell sought to limit the army's exposure to protracted conflicts against enemies that couldn't be decisively or quickly defeated. To Powell, Somalia was proof that the army had no business building nations. Yet other generals examined the same evidence and reached different conclusions. Sullivan saw Somalia as a failure but not one that ruled out further interventions. Joulwan and Kernan believed that Somalia-like operations would play an important role in the army's future and ultimately concluded that the army needed to learn and adapt from its experiences in Africa. Despite all of the lessons learned by these and other officers, precious little seemed to make a lasting change in the wider army. Regardless of these officers' emphasis on reestablishing the "sinews of civil society," nation building, and the effectiveness of host nation governments during post-conflict operations, the army would blunder through the same problems a decade

⁸⁴ Douglas V. Johnson, *An Oral History of General William F. "Buck" Kernan, USA, Retired*, ed. James R. Greenburg (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2015), 103-104.

later in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Why Did We Lose and What Can We Do About it?

General Dennis Reimer, Commanding General of Forces Command (FORSCOM) from April 1993 to June of 1995, was intimately aware and concerned with the army's performance in Somalia. Shortly after the Battle of Mogadishu Reimer visited Somalia to determine the cause of defeat, which he primarily attributed to ineffective command and control relationships between U.S. and UN forces.⁸⁵ Reimer also identified tactical deficiencies:

The special operating force had gotten somewhat complacent in terms of what they were trying to do, and this had led to some casualties that we should never have taken. My review of the situation just reinforced that when you start taking shortcuts and violate the principals of war you get in big trouble. I also felt that our elite forces should not be used for operations such as this that become rather routine over time -- we train them hard and we need to make sure they keep that razor edge that the training provides.⁸⁶

Reimer argued these problems were compounded by decisions made at the very highest levels of civilian leadership, most notably “the command had asked for additional equipment, to include tanks [and AC1-30 gunships], and had been turned down at the Sec Def (Sec Aspin) level.”⁸⁷ Reimer's accusation was controversial – and false. His account ignored the role senior military leaders played in denying the requests for additional forces. General Joseph P. Hoar testified before Congress that “The AC-130s

⁸⁵ *An Oral History of General Dennis J. Reimer, USA Retired*, interviewed by Lewis Sorley (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2000), 186.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

were dropped [from Task Force Ranger] in view of the number of capabilities available to the task force. That was my recommendation up the line. . . . There was a three-way discussion among [U.S. Special Operations Command Commander General Wayne A.] Downing, Powell and me about the deployment of little birds, troop carriers, etc. I felt and Downing agreed (he certainly told me he did) that we didn't need AC-130s or an extra platoon.”⁸⁸ As a result of Hoar's testimony, Reimer's claims must be interpreted in one of two ways. Either Reimer lacked the information required to arrive at an accurate conclusion (unlikely given his position and timing of his comments) or he was deflecting blame onto civilian leadership to protect military leaders.

Somalia affected Reimer's outlook on future conflict in two notable ways. The first was that he believed Somalia was an indicator of trends in future conflicts: away from conventional conflict towards irregular or asymmetrical warfare. He concluded that from now on “we were going to face different types of missions and, in fact, we were already starting to face different types of missions on a more regular basis.” He also held that Americans now had a “zero causality mentality” that adversely affected the army's ability to accomplish its missions. But to what extent did the nation's mentality affect the army? Was it a small obstacle to be overcome or unassailable? Reimer's answer to this question varied on the situation. In Somalia, he did not attribute the mission's failure primarily to casualty aversion, but recognized it as one of many

⁸⁸ Carl Levin and John Warner, “Review of the Circumstances Surrounding the Ranger Raid on October 3-4, 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia” 1995, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/mogadishu.pdf, 28.

considerations. In other places, like Haiti, he believed military's fear of casualties prevented the army from even beginning its mission.⁸⁹

Like Reimer, General Gordon Sullivan attributed the failure in Somalia primarily to the lack of unity of command.⁹⁰ He also placed blame on the disjointed efforts of the military, governmental agencies, and non-governmental agencies which he believed must be "closely linked" and that "must be in the game 24 hours a day, 7 days a week" to ensure success in peacekeeping operations.⁹¹ Achieving unity of command and unity of effort within the military is a difficult task in and of itself, adding interagency partners to an operation adds another degree of difficulty – and in Sullivan's view was an area that required additional attention following Somalia: "training with nongovernmental organizations, private volunteer organizations, primarily down at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC, Fort Polk, Louisiana) and we did a lot of that after Somalia in 1993. . ."⁹²

General Joulwan's analysis of Somalia identified what he believed was a key component to the army's failure:

If you [army leaders] don't anticipate, if you don't try to give this clear advice [to political leaders] in today's environment, you then are forced to be reactive instead of proactive and you put the mission and the troops at risk. Our troops may have the best equipment and the best technology, but if they are not well trained, if they are not focused, and if they don't

⁸⁹ Ibid., 204

⁹⁰ Dabrowski, *Oral History*, 293-296.

⁹¹ Ibid., 293.

⁹² Ibid., 217.

understand the mission, we may very well fail. If it's a knee-jerk sort of reaction, then I think you are not looking out for their welfare and you may end up as we did in Somalia – with a disaster.⁹³

Joulwan argued an important point, that senior military leaders were not providing their subordinates with sufficient time to plan, prepare, and execute their orders.

Reimer, Sullivan, Joulwan, and others identified mistakes at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war that called into question the direction of the army and effectiveness of the army's early 1990s transformation. Perhaps most worryingly, the problems these officers' identified were not novel problems, but comparatively well-known problems that surfaced in Grenada and Panama in the previous decade. Despite the lessons seemingly learned by the general officers in Somalia, the army did not appear to act upon them, and committed many of the same mistakes in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan a decade later.

The Field-Grade Officer Perspective

While general officers were relatively restrained in their critiques of U.S. involvement in Somalia for a variety of reasons (such as personal relationships with decision makers, political concerns, and prospect for their future advancement), field grade officers did not operate under the same restraints. Although members of the same profession their relative lack of rank and prestige granted them a degree of anonymity which was useful in critiquing the army's performance. Despite witnessing or studying the same events, these authors reached different conclusions about the legacy of Somalia.

⁹³ Hodges, *Oral History*, 333.

Mission Creep, Ambiguous Missions, and Failure

One of the primary lessons that field officers learned from Somalia was the danger of mission creep. Major Daniel Schuster defined mission creep as the process by which “over time the initial reason for military involvement in a particular operation undergoes expansive permutations as additional opportunities for a positive military influence in a diplomatic issue are perceived.”⁹⁴ Major Melissa Applegate described it as “an ‘evolving end state,’ which broadened the scope of the operation to include many missions and tasks that were never initially conceived as part of the operation.”⁹⁵ With either definition in mind, the potential danger of mission creep seemed obvious. Yet others argued that it “was not clear . . . whether mission creep was a phenomenon inherent in a dynamic situation, and thus something that commanders and their staffs needed to anticipate and adjust to, or whether it was an insidious process.”⁹⁶ Schuster believed that the “danger of mission creep lies in relating tasks to purpose. New tasks that creep into the military mission may be contrary to the initial purpose.”⁹⁷ Schuster raised a profound point – that ever-expanding military missions have the potential to evolve in scope and size contrary to the will of leaders. In Somalia, Applegate observed a runaway military mission:

⁹⁴ Daniel Schuster, “Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, and the Operational Art” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994), 9.

⁹⁵ Melissa A. Applegate, “Military Power in Operations Other Than War” (master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), 102.

⁹⁶ Baumann, *My Clan Against the World*, 91.

⁹⁷ Schuster, “Peacekeeping,” 9.

The frictions inherent in tactical actions, however, soon broached a strategic crisis. The U.S. efforts to arrest Aidid resulted in six successive highly publicized failures which became increasingly indiscriminate in inflicting civilian casualties. If the tactical watchwords for peace enforcement are decisive and discriminate, at some point continuance of these raids became counterproductive to the strategic aim. Each failure to arrest Aidid bolstered his prestige and undermined that of the U.S. deployed forces. Each failure also marked a growing operational separation between the tactics employed and the strategic aim.⁹⁸ Major Todd Wood's 1997 SAMS monograph which studied Intelligence

Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) concluded "Mission analysis is difficult without a clear mission, commander's intent, and end state. With changing missions that cover such a broad context, it becomes almost impossible to conduct effective IPB whether using doctrine or TTPs [Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures]."⁹⁹ Wood argued that the domino-like relationship between mission creep, staff functions, and tactical unit failure was evident before soldiers arrived in Somalia:

The mission creep they [the 10th Mountain Division] experienced directly correlates with the IPB and mission planning prior to deployment. The insufficient IPB was due to two factors, the lack of strategic IPB, which provides basic planning information, and a compressed planning sequence. The unit was originally allotted 10 days to plan for the mission but that time was reduced to 4 days.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

⁹⁹ Todd Wood, "Can IPB Eliminate Mission Creep?" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997), 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 23-24. For more on the army's struggle to adapt conventional IPB to MOOTWs and other stability operations see Bruce Guggenberger, "Intelligence Requirements for Operations Other Than War," (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2000); William Mangan, "Army IPB in Support of Nation Building Operations," (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2005); Steven Rotkoff, "Intelligence Training for Stability and Support Operations – Can the Military Intelligence Officers Advance Course Do Better?" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999); Lauri Snider, "Assessment of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Doctrine for Humanitarian Assistance Operations," (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1996).

He contended that the reduced planning process adversely effected commanders' awareness of the battlefield, which in turn adversely effected their units' ability to accomplish their missions. He described a cascading series of problems in Somalia:

The problem with IPB began with the description of the battlefield. The AO (area of operation) and AI (area of interest) were not properly addressed. No historical data was available on the patterns of the warring faction, and their equipment was not known. This caused the commander to have an unclear picture of the enemy situation. . . . The IPB failed to identify humanitarian relief and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) already operating in the country. This resulted in confusion as to what the NGOs capabilities were and where they had been operating. The lack of information about the warring clans, terrain, and NGOs combined to give the deploying commander a hazy picture of the AO. This in turn affected both the selection of forces deployed, and the order in which they arrived.¹⁰¹

Writing in 1995, Major Michael Beech reached similar conclusions when he studied operational and strategic level decision making in Somalia. Just as Wood and Schuster had found at the tactical level in their studies, Beech found that "that contradictory and uncoordinated national strategy and political policy resulted in poor operational planning and execution. There were also significant factors at the operational level which contributed to the failed U.S. intervention. Military operations were not connected to the rapidly shifting political aims."¹⁰² Beech railed against inadequate guidance from senior leadership:

UN resolutions are not an acceptable replacement for clear policy aims and a sufficient operational plan. Without such a clear policy there can be no concrete operational objectives or measurable end states. The US experience in Somalia shows that a lack of clear policy focus produces a

¹⁰¹ Wood, "Mission Creep," 24.

¹⁰² Michael Beech, "Mission Creep: A Case Study in U.S. Involvement in Somalia" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1995), ii.

lack of operational focus increasing the risk of mission creep.¹⁰³

Beech also argued that senior commanders abrogated “the responsibility of establishing clear and achievable objectives even in environment of strategic ambiguity.”¹⁰⁴ Beech concluded:

Operational level commanders must define clear end states that when executed achieve the intended political objectives. They must also consider the possibility of tactical failures and the subsequent results on national policy. If the national policy is so fragile that it cannot survive a tactical disaster then either the military means or the policy are severely flawed and requires re-examination.¹⁰⁵

As a result of the army’s rapidly evolving missions in Somalia, units were required to evolve in order to be successful, something many units found to be difficult to accomplish. Major Mark Duffield’s 1999 SAMS monograph studied the adaption models of the army and the Somali Habr Gidr Clan. Duffield sought to answer a vexing question – how did a seemingly “anarchic mob” function as a “complex and adaptive system” and evolve faster than the U.S. Army?¹⁰⁶ He concluded that “the U.S., reliant on rational analysis and apparently oblivious to other possible adaptation models, underestimated the Habr Gidr who adapted through both deliberate rational analysis and. . . . complex adaptive system theory.”¹⁰⁷ The Somalis were seemingly able to out-

¹⁰³ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Duffield, “Into the Beehive – The Somali Habr Gidr Clan as an Adaptive Enemy” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999), i.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 42.

learn and out-adapt the army. The implications of the army's inability to learn and change were ominous, since Duffield believed that the service's future missions would include more "peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance."¹⁰⁸

The Problems with Peacekeeping

As Duffield indicated, another field grade officer critique of Somalia was that that the army's ability to accomplish peacekeeping missions was inadequate. These officers learned that the complex interplay between army doctrine, military training, leadership, and foreign policy resulted in an army that had difficulty conducting peacekeeping operations. In turn, these officers offered a variety of solutions and recommendations to combat the army's ineffectiveness ranging from avoidance to paradigm shifts and everything in between.

Major Robert Botters' SAMS monograph examined "the scope and complexity of peace operations" and the effect of those operations on tactical units within the army. Specifically, this officer was interested in determining if units' involvement in MOOTWs degraded their ability to fight conventional war. Somewhat surprisingly, he viewed the army's experience in Somalia as a positive example of a unit organized and trained for war rapidly transitioning "between both peace operations and combat operations in the same environment."¹⁰⁹ He concluded: "The U.S. Army should avoid non-traditional organizations for peace operations and remain focused on preparing units

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Botters, "The Proliferation of Peace Operations and U.S. Army Tactical Proficiency: Will the Army Remain a Combat Ready Force?" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1995), 40.

for combat operations.”¹¹⁰ Botters’ message was clear, prepare for war and adapt to peace operations. His findings were heavily influenced by the focus of his limited study. He was only interested in the tactical proficiency of the units involved in the Battle of Mogadishu and ignored the strategic outcome of the conflict. His limited examination of the conflict illustrates two things: 1) some officers believed (either consciously or not) that outcomes were not directly correlated with performance and 2) tactical outcomes were worthy of consideration even after strategic failures.

In his 1997 Command and General Staff College thesis, Major Robert Young examined how participation in MOOTWs had affected officers’ opinions on the adequacy of their units’ training and preparation and their “propensity toward using lethal force in the future.” He found that of the officers surveyed, 65% percent desired the army to conduct less MOOTWs in the future, 19% assessed that their units were not appropriate for the missions they were assigned, and 90% reported no change in their future propensity to use lethal force in the future.”¹¹¹ Young’s survey, although narrow in scope and of limited utility in predicting the attitudes of army officers on a broader scale, identified several areas of concern for field officers. He found that the “warrior ethos may be jeopardized or compromised by OOTW. Over one-third of the officers in this study thought that being part of a peacekeeping force was not the kind of job his

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹¹¹ Robert Young, “The Impact of Operation Other Than War on the Midgrade (O3/O4) Army Officer” (master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1997), iii.

soldier should be doing.”¹¹² In addition to being counter to the army’s culture, Young observed that “most participants believe their unit was less combat ready after the OOTW deployment.”¹¹³ Young concluded that the army’s lack of clear prioritization of combat and MOOTWs compounded its units’ readiness. This officer’s work highlighted an instance of organizational and cultural dissonance within the army: officers recognized the increased likelihood that the army would conduct MOOTWs yet resisted the changes that would enable their completion.

Major Michael Clidas’ 1995 SAMS monograph examined the role of impartiality in peacekeeping operations. He theorized that impartiality was a “‘hub of power’ for the peace support force” that when compromised, often led to “protracted conflict and eventual failure.”¹¹⁴ In Somalia Clidas saw “a combination of flawed policy, coupled with a shortsighted application of force” that was “directly attributable to the PSF’s [Peacekeeping Force] loss of impartiality.”¹¹⁵

Applegate’s 1994 master’s thesis argued “during protracted intervention, the U.S. reaches a strategic point of diminishing returns where the costs begin to surpass the strategic gains to be made. . . . [and] failure to recognize this point can significantly

¹¹² Ibid., 113

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 29-30.

affect goal attainment, and protracted intervention can negatively affect readiness.”¹¹⁶

Her interpretation of Somalia supported that point:

The specific strategic objectives which were stated at the onset of the intervention were attained and the mission turned back over to the United Nations (UNOSOM- II) organization to realize the long-term objective of reconstituting the government and infrastructure--in other words, of promoting stability and encouraging democratic development. However, it only took one Somalia clan faction to begin to chafe at the amount of control imposed to lead to highly publicized dissent. This dissent led to opposition and then to violence, requiring an increased presence of U.S. and coalition forces and, in turn, increased imposition of control. . . . The failure to recognize the point of strategic diminishing returns led to confusion within the administration, the national military command, the diplomatic community and finally, among commanders on the ground.¹¹⁷ Major Roger Sangvic’s 1998 case study of what he termed the “catastrophic

failure” of the Battle of Mogadishu found poor decision-making on several levels of command, ranging from tactical commanders to army generals to the Secretary of Defense.¹¹⁸ His main criticism, however, was at the tactical level. Prior to the Battle of Mogadishu, TF Ranger had conducted several successful raids and met negligible resistance, leading to a sense of superiority. Sangvic argued that the “combination of underestimating the enemy’s capabilities and their own [TF Ranger’s] vulnerabilities as a result of overconfidence led to planning that could only deal with the best case scenario.”¹¹⁹ Sangvic concluded:

¹¹⁶ Applegate, “Military Power,” iii.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

¹¹⁸ Roger Sangvic, “Battle of Mogadishu: Anatomy of a Failure” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1998), ii.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

TFR's [Task Force Ranger's] failure to adapt was caused by a planning failure. A key part of the planning process is the wargaming process where friendly and enemy actions and reactions are analyzed to determine potential branch and sequels to an operation. TFR commander and planners failed to modify their tactics, techniques, and procedures to prevent helicopters from being shot down. Once the first helicopter was shot down, commanders failed to take appropriate immediate actions to prevent other helicopters from being hit with an RPG.¹²⁰ Somalia forced the army into unfamiliar missions in unfamiliar environments.

Unsurprisingly, the army's doctrine and training did not have a solution for every problem encountered by American forces. Major Michael Winstead's analysis of the 10th Mountain Division's difficulties in Somalia led him to call for "a common understanding and definition of the term force in U.S. Army Doctrine."¹²¹ He concluded that force protection was a vital concept and that the army's strategic leaders owed the tactical commanders a "comprehensive method to plan and execute his responsibilities in this realm."¹²²

According to Major Timothy Karcher, the army needed more than just updated doctrine to retain its edge. In his 2002 SAMS monograph, Karcher argued that that U.S. suffered from "Victory Disease" as a result of "a string of quick, decisive victories in the Caribbean and the Middle East, ending with the U.S.-led coalition's overwhelming

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Michael Winstead, "Force Protection as a Battlefield Operating System" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994).

¹²² Ibid., 41-42.

victory over Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War.”¹²³ As result of these successes the army became overconfident, complacent, and predictable, thus increasing its “likelihood of failure” in future conflicts.¹²⁴ To Karcher, Somalia illustrated how these conditions coalesced into a recipe for disaster:

In the case of TF Ranger in Mogadishu, the arrogant belief in the superiority of US forces combined with a complacent underestimation of the Somali opponent. Along with these symptoms came the use of an established pattern by the members of TF Ranger, allowing the Somalis to seize the initiative. In seizing the initiative, the Somalis were able to inflict significant casualties upon the US force, ultimately causing the US administration to abandon the mission in Somalia and withdraw US forces in “defeat.”¹²⁵

Karcher’s solution to the “Victory Disease” was to “vaccinate” army officers during their professional military education. Although officers were already exposed to military history during their education, it was often focused on the successful portions of American military history and used to “broaden an officer’s understanding of the roots of current doctrine and tactics” and *not* focused on failed campaigns.¹²⁶ By shifting the education system’s focus to include failed campaigns and defeats Karcher thought officers would be aware of the symptoms and root causes of victory disease and could avoid the potentially dangerous situation from developing.

¹²³ Timothy M. Karcher, “Understand the ‘Victory Disease,’ From the Little Bighorn, to Mogadishu, to the Future” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2002), 1.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

Conclusion

While Panama offered some challenges to the army, the conflict ended before the military could truly be tested. Somalia on the other hand, was replete with challenges for the army and its leaders – and lessons for those that were willing to critically examine the conflict. Many officers of many ranks did choose to examine the conflict, but with varying levels of criticality. Some officers, such as General Powell who viewed Somalia as an analog for Vietnam, used Somalia merely as data point to confirm his pre-existing idea. Other officers, even general officers, were more critical in their assessments of the army's performance and overall trajectory.

Generally, senior army officers viewed Somalia as a tactical success but an operational and strategic failure. They attributed the failures principally to byzantine chains of command. As a result, U.S. forces violated principles of war, specifically by not establishing unity of command and the associated unity of effort. In the generals' telling, these failings were largely the product of decisions forced upon them by UN resolutions, unclear U.S. policy, and untimely or unclear political decisions from Washington.

The midgrade officers, despite sharing some of the same critiques as senior military leaders, were far more critical in their assessments of the army and its performance. Many of these officers learned the dangers of mission creep from their experience and study of Somalia. They argued that the ever-expanding mission and elusive end state prevented tactical units from fully preparing, understanding, or conducting their assigned missions. While they recognized that these were partially the

result of poor policy decisions in Washington and elsewhere, these officers did not let generals off the hook. Instead, some field grade officers charged their operational leaders for failing to provide an achievable end state, thus creating the conditions that led to failure.

Some of these officers, Duffield and Karcher in particular, exposed troubling institutional and systemic failures. Their arguments concerning the army's ability to identify the opposition and its capabilities, correctly assess a situation, and adapt to changing conditions contradicted the "thinking and learning institution where physical change is led by intellectual thought" that Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Commander William W. Hartzog described.¹²⁷

The divergence in perspective between these groups sheds light on the role of professional experience and standpoint on lesson learning. As in Panama before, Somalia seems to indicate a correlation between the length of an officers' service and his or her willingness and ability to be critical of the army and its performance. Regardless of the criticality of the officers involved or studying Somalia, many of the lessons learned in Somalia seemingly failed to impact the army at-large. Many of the issues identified by these officers, such as arrogance, the inability to assess the tactical and strategic situation as well as the general lack of intellectual agility persisted in the army

¹²⁷ Training and Doctrine Command, *Force XXI Operations: A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1994).

as it entered Iraq and Afghanistan nearly a decade later – raising questions about the army’s willingness and ability to learn and adapt.

CHAPTER IV

A CONTESTED VICTORY: ARMY OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE KOSOVO CAMPAIGN

When the Berlin Wall fell, and Soviet Russia collapsed shortly thereafter, the United States found itself as the sole remaining superpower. While an enviable position, it was also an unfamiliar one. Military leaders were presented with a situation they were not accustomed to; they didn't have a clear enemy to fight, or perhaps more accurately they didn't have an enemy to prepare to fight. Some in the army advocated staying the course, keeping the army large and relatively unchanged from its Cold War form, ready to fight and win large conventional battles. In the early 1990s this conservative view dominated the army. Officers with this perspective viewed operations such as *Urgent Fury* in Grenada, *Just Cause* in Panama, and *Restore Hope* in Somalia as aberrations, minor detours which shouldn't alter the overall trajectory of the army. The spectacular triumph of the U.S. led coalition during the Gulf War cemented the conservative position in the minds of many army leaders. However, the conservative position became increasingly untenable as the U.S. combat experiences in the late 20th century failed to mesh with the leadership's vision of what war *should* be. If the Gulf War was the apogee of American conventional military power, the U.S. intervention in Somalia was its perigee. Yet Somalia was not the only conflict in the 1990's to challenge army officers' perception of warfare and the army's evolution. Despite the army's relatively minor involvement in Kosovo, military authors interpretations and conclusions were challenged. Many of these officers concluded that the Kosovo campaign was further

indication that U.S. Army needed to evolve in order remain relevant. This chapter explores those authors' critiques of the army and its performance in Kosovo as well as their suggestions to improve its performance.¹²⁸

On the evening of March 24, 1999 President Bill Clinton addressed the nation and ordered the United States military to begin operations against President Slobodan Milošević and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY):

My fellow Americans, today our Armed Forces joined our NATO allies in airstrikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo. We have acted with resolve for several reasons.

We act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive. We act to prevent a wider war, to diffuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results. And we act to stand united with our allies for peace. By acting now, we are upholding our values, protecting our interests, and advancing the cause of peace.¹²⁹

The United States, in conjunction with its NATO allies, launched an aerial campaign to halt the ethnic cleansing of Albanians and deter further aggressive action by Milošević. In doing so, NATO would be actively supporting the beleaguered Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an army in name only that was described by many as a terrorist organization. With lofty humanitarian goals in mind, a coalition of American, Canadian, Spanish, German, British, French, Italian, Belgian, Danish, Dutch, and Turkish air forces began an aerial campaign, hoping to avoid a war by intervening in one. The plan was

¹²⁸ For an overview of the U.S. Army in the 1990s, see John S. Brown, *Kevlar Legions: The Transformation of the U.S. Army, 1989-2005* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2011).

¹²⁹ Bill Clinton, Statement on Kosovo, 24 March 1999, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3932> (accessed 21 April 2016).

straightforward, quick airstrikes to compel Milosevic to accept NATO's conditions and prevent Serbian forces from ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. However simple the plan, actually achieving the desired end state proved difficult.

A History of Violence

In order to understand the Kosovo campaign, one must at least have a cursory understanding of its people. Kosovo occupies a special place in the hearts and minds of Serbians as a foundational element of their national and ethnic identity. The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and subsequent 500 years of Ottoman occupation of Serbian land looms large in Serbian historical memory and provided an impetus for revenge in the Serbian mind. More often than not, that desire for revenge manifested in actions against Muslims throughout Yugoslavia.¹³⁰

Serbian historical memory both contributed to, and was co-opted by, a wave of ultra-nationalist leaders in the late 20th century seeking to right the wrongs of the past, almost always violently. As president, Milošević whipped up nationalist frenzy that drove Serbians to seek revenge from Muslims in Yugoslavia. First in Bosnia, and then in Kosovo, Serbian forces systematically targeted Muslims for harassment, intimidation, and even murder. These actions set off a series of events that would eventually draw the ire of NATO in the mid 1990's. The particularly chilling Srebrenica massacre which resulted in the deaths of over 8,000 Muslim Bosniaks inside a NATO designated safe zone necessitated a response. The ensuing NATO military operation, *Deliberate Force*,

¹³⁰ Stephen Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed Up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009), 100.

was a fifteen-day bombing campaign consisting of 3,515 sorties (2,318 of which were flown by American aviators).¹³¹ International political pressure, combined with the judicious application of air power, forced Milošević to cease offensive operations and negotiate. A mere twenty days after NATO bombings commenced, Serbian forces acquiesced to NATO demands and withdrew from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although *Operation Deliberate Force* caused Milošević to abandon his goals in Bosnia, his predilection for ethnic cleansing and expansion of Serbian power had not abated.

As Yugoslavia disintegrated, ethnic Albanians took note and Muslim Kosovars, the vast majority of which were ethnic Albanians, long discontented with their second class status in Kosovo, began to actively seek their independence in the mid-1990s. One Albanian Kosovar was very clear about the lessons learned from his neighbors' struggles: "we have learned from the wars in Croatia and Bosnia that the outside world cannot solve our problems for us. We must fight for our own freedom."¹³² Lacking a conventional military to fight the Serbs, Albanians instead turned to a shadowy and relatively unknown group known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Beginning in 1996 the KLA began a self-described "guerilla war to liberate Kosovo."¹³³ The opening phases of the KLA's war of "liberation" was aimed at Serbian policemen and refugees. Although the KLA's attacks were mostly symbolic, Milošević wasted no time in

¹³¹ Robert Gregory Jr., *Clean Bombs and Dirty Wars: Air Power in Kosovo and Libya* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 46-47.

¹³² Stacy Sullivan, *Be Not Afraid, for You Have Sons in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 92-94.

¹³³ Phillips, *Liberating Kosovo*, 68.

responding and used the attacks as pretext for a massively disproportionate military response. By the summer of 1998 some 200,000 Kosovars were displaced from their homes by Serbian military actions.¹³⁴

The U.S. and its NATO allies recognized the inherent dangers of instability in the Balkans and immediately made several diplomatic overtures to Milošević and Albanian separatists in the hope to avert yet another bloody civil war in the Balkans.¹³⁵ At first diplomacy, backed up by threats of renewed bombing campaigns, seemed to have the desired effect – Serbian forces were restrained, redeployed, and many Kosovars returned to their homes. However, the KLA used the pause to consolidate their power and prepare for future attacks against Serbian targets, thus continuing the cycle of violence. President Clinton initiated another round of diplomatic talks which ultimately ended in the Rambouillet Agreement, which was not signed by the Serbians. The Clinton administration responded to Rabouillet’s failure with renewed threats of military force. Milošević retorted by launching *Operation Horseshoe* to “empty” Kosovo of its Albanians. The U.S. and NATO, having had their bluff called by Milošević, were forced to act. One the evening of 24 March 1999 President Clinton addressed the American people and informed them of his decision to use military force to protect the Albanian

¹³⁴ Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion*, 101.

¹³⁵ R. Cody Phillips, *Operation Joint Guardian: The U.S. Army in Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2007), 13-14.

people, uphold American values, protect American interests, and advance the cause of peace.¹³⁶

Where the Rubber Meets the Road – Combat in Kosovo

Spurred to action, NATO and U.S. planners devised *Operation Allied Force*, a three-phase military intervention which relied nearly exclusively on air power. The objective of phase one of the operation was to destroy or disable Serbian air defenses. Phase two aimed to degrade Serbian military and paramilitary units to the point they were unable to continue ethnic cleaning. Phase three of the operation expanded the scope of the bombing to include additional targets in Serbia and non-military infrastructure. *Allied Force* was in many ways, simply an updated and expanded *Deliberate Force*. NATO planned to rely exclusively on air power to deliver victory, and to that end gathered a powerful force with an initial strength of 344 aircraft, 214 of which were American.¹³⁷

The war began with a salvo of cruise missiles and fixed-wing bomber sorties targeting more than 40 targets.¹³⁸ Despite heavy attacks, Serbian air defenses remained intact. In response the Serbs scrambled four MiG-29s and fired numerous surface to air missiles at NATO aircraft. Although no NATO aircraft were shot down, allied air forces were forced to alter their tactics to counter the Serbian threat for the remainder of the

¹³⁶ Bill Clinton, Statement on Kosovo, March 24, 1999, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3932> (accessed 21 April 2016).

¹³⁷ Gregory, *Clean Bombs*, 54.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

conflict. The second and third nights of the campaign followed the same course as the first; NATO cruise missiles and bombs fell on Serbian targets throughout Kosovo while Serbian air defense systems and air force jets attempted, unsuccessfully, to interdict them. Despite the attacks and damage done to Serbian military units, the atrocities in Kosovo continued.

Supreme Allied Commander General Wesley K. Clark attributed *Allied Force's* failure to achieve its goals to a lack of NATO intelligence and target acquisition capability, a problem exacerbated by a lack of ground forces.¹³⁹ Whatever the cause for NATO's shortcomings, public pressure intensified as the potential for a short and painless campaign seemed to evaporate. To alleviate public pressure and provide a tangible result, NATO leaders systematically targeted FRY armored forces, especially tanks deployed in Kosovo. This practice, known as tank-plinking, was possible due to the widespread use of Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and precision guided munitions. Generals at various echelons of command focused their own personal efforts on directing the destruction of individual tanks on the battlefield from their headquarters hundreds or thousands of miles away. In one revealing incident the pilot ordered to find and kill a lone Serbian tank was the son of NATO's Joint Air Force Commander who protested when Clark and his father tried to direct his operation.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately for NATO and the beleaguered Kosovars, allied efforts to destroy tanks had little bearing on

¹³⁹ Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), 427.

¹⁴⁰ Christopher E. Haave and Phil M. Haun, *A-10s Over Kosovo: The Victory of Airpower over a Fielded Army as Told by the Airmen Who Fought in Operation Allied Force* (Maxwell: Air University Press, 2003), 300.

the progress of the war or on Serbian's ability to continue ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. It also contributed to doubts in Washington about Clark's leadership of the campaign. Vice Chief of Staff for the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Ralston, an air force officer himself, later complained that the aerial destruction of tanks "became the measure of merit that had nothing to do with reality . . . The tank, which was an irrelevant item in the context of ethnic cleansing, became the symbol for Serb ground forces."¹⁴¹

NATO planners initiated phase two of *Allied Force* on the night of 27 March. Although targeting lists changed slightly, phase two was nearly identical to phase one of the operation. NATO and American aircraft continued to bomb Serbian targets with long-range precision munitions and continued to have limited effects on the broader Serbian military. By late March Clark had concluded that "There's nothing air power can do by itself to deter paramilitary forces from committing acts of brutality."¹⁴² As March turned to April, the campaign plodded along with little real change until Serbian air defenses managed to shoot down an American F-117A Nighthawk and in a separate incident, capture three American soldiers along the Macedonian border. With these military setbacks, increasing public pressure, and intensifying ethnic cleaning operations by Serbians in Kosovo, NATO leadership was forced to alter their strategy and considered the use of ground forces.

¹⁴¹ Gregory, *Clean Bombs*, 63.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 65

Allied Force entered its third phase on the night of 1 April. After disappointing progress, Allied planners were given far more leeway in choosing targets during phase three. In addition to the additional targets, *Allied Force* strength swelled to over 1000 aircraft, allowing General Clark to launch nearly 600 sorties per night.¹⁴³ Despite the destruction caused by the bombing campaign, now reaching beyond Kosovo into Serbia proper, Serbian ground forces remained largely undeterred, eventually pushing General Clark to request an American ground task force to support the *Allied Force*. The U.S. Army responded by deploying Task Force (TF) Hawk, a 5,500 soldier “impromptu assortment of tank-killing Apache attack helicopters, Abrams tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, artillery, engineers, air defense, and logistics support.”¹⁴⁴ Although powerful, TF Hawk also required extensive logistical support and required nearly 24 days and hundreds of air force heavy-lift missions to reach its forward staging area in Albania.¹⁴⁵ When TF Hawk was ready, phase three of *Allied Force* was nearly half complete and American military leaders at the Pentagon deemed its use too risky due to vulnerability of the Apache helicopters to shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

The Pentagon’s decision left the KLA as the sole ground force operating in Kosovo. Luckily for allied forces, the KLA launched a series of small offensive operations and increased its integration with NATO. Serbian units were forced to react to this new threat, and exposed themselves to withering aerial bombardment from NATO

¹⁴³ Ibid., 73.

¹⁴⁴ Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Kevlar Legions*), 169-170.

aircraft. Finally, NATO forces were able to directly influence events in Kosovo and turn the tide of battle. Seventy-eight days after it began, the Kosovo campaign came to a close. Although hailed as a victory for the United States and NATO, *Allied Force* exposed several areas of concern for the U.S. Army.

Lessons Learned, Lessons Remembered, and Lessons Forgotten – the Legacy of Kosovo

So what were the lessons that the U.S. Army learned in Kosovo? How were these lessons learned and by whom? Were the same lessons learned by all those who studied the conflicts? Was there an army-wide agreement about the lessons learned in Kosovo? The following offers an overview of the lessons learned by American generals and field grade officers. From even this cursory examination its quite clear that there was no true consensus reached from the U.S. Army's experience in Kosovo. Senior American leaders often drew very different conclusions from the conflict than mid-grade officers who either carried out their orders or studied the campaign as part of their professional education.

Kosovo forced professional army officers to confront several uncomfortable truths about the U.S. Army of the late 1990s. Even the staunchest of supporters would be hard pressed to describe the U.S. Army's performance in Kosovo as anything more than adequate. Not only was the army largely excluded from the original campaign plan to defeat Milošević, it also proved itself unable to swiftly and effectively respond to calls for support. Task Force Hawk was a particularly embarrassing episode. It arrived in theatre far too late, with far too little capability, and with far too many restrictions on its use to significantly impact the campaign's outcome. While the army did eventually

contribute to the effort, it did so mostly through counter-battery radar operations and targeting, both valuable contributions but decidedly underwhelming.

The General Officer Perspective

By studying the memoirs, autobiographies, speeches, and other collected works of Kosovo's general officers we can piece together the lessons they learned from the army's involvement in Kosovo. These officers examined a wide variety of issues facing the army in the closing years of the 20th century including structural challenges, adaptation for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), the utility of tactical and strategic air power, and the future of warfare in the modern era. Many of the lessons these senior officers learned in Kosovo confirmed their existing views.

Structural Problems

Many senior officers interpreted the Kosovo campaign as proof of their previously held conclusion that the army's force structure was antiquated which adversely effected its ability to adapt to a rapidly evolving operational environment. As an institution, the army was in the midst of a transformation and had experimented with Division XXI, Force XXI, Army After Next (AAN), and Strike Force in an attempt to modernize the army's force structure and respond to changes in the post-Cold War security environment.¹⁴⁶ To these officers, Kosovo represented proof that the army's efforts were steps in the right direction and that the future of warfare required a more agile and adaptable force.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 3-7; William M. Donnelly, *Transforming an Army at War: Designing the Modular Force, 1991-2005* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2007), 5-19.

Two successive Army Chiefs of Staff believed their service had to become more modular and more mobile. Modularity, or the ability to customize units to the specific requirements of a mission, was of particular interest to Army Chief of Staff Dennis Reimer's AAN and Strike Force initiatives.¹⁴⁷ To Reimer and others, the need for flexibility resulted from the expanding requirements to render humanitarian aid, reduce instability, support governance, and other Military Operations MOOTWs. Reimer concluded that the most expedient way to achieve the required flexibility was to make existing units more versatile and expandable, or in army parlance – more modular. Task Force Hawk confirmed Reimer's preexisting convictions:

[Kosovo] was in my mind at least, a validation of the Strike Force concept. Because now we were considering a heavier ground force option, and if we go in with a ground force option the logical headquarters -- it would have to be beefed up, of course -- was V Corps. So I felt the need for the Strike Force concept really was demonstrated here.¹⁴⁸

General Reimer's successor as Army Chief of Staff, Eric K. Shinseki, came to much the same conclusion:

Since Task Force Hawk deployed to support the Kosovo operation in 1999, it has become increasingly apparent that the unique demands of contemporary operations will often require specially designed task forces drawn from numerous units rather than the orderly deployment of a single

¹⁴⁷ "The Army is People" October 1998 in James J. Carafano, *Soldiers Are Our Credentials: The Collected Works and Selected Papers of the Thirty-Third Chief of Staff United States Army Dennis J. Reimer General, United States Army Chief of Staff June 1995-June 1999* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000).

¹⁴⁸ Lewis Sorley, *An Oral History of General Dennis J. Reimer, USA Retired* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2000), 378.

unit. Joint and combined headquarters and the like are going to be even more diverse in the specialties they draw on.¹⁴⁹

To both Reimer and Shinseki, Kosovo was a real-world test of the modular organization tested in the Division XXI, Force XXI, Army After Next, and Strike Force experiments. Although the army (and TF Hawk) wasn't a modular force, both generals claimed it showed modularity's potential and thus provided proof of concept.

In addition to modularity, senior officers maintained Kosovo demonstrated the army needed to be more strategically and tactically mobile. Reimer claimed that TF Hawk's slow deployment demonstrated an over-reliance on other services' airlift and the army's need to develop "new operational concepts" to enhance its own mobility.¹⁵⁰ Reimer's immediate solution to the army's mobility problems was pragmatic if not overly imaginative: expand transportation capacity and pre-position strategic equipment.¹⁵¹ In doing so, Reimer ignored a primary cause of immobility, that commanders' aversion to risk and casualties led them to demand much heavier forces for an operation than were actually required, increasing both force size and logistical footprint. Instead of addressing the cultural problems which caused – or at least exacerbated – the army's mobility problems, Reimer merely sought to mitigate the effects.

¹⁴⁹ Eric K. Shinseki, "The Army Family" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2003), 21.

¹⁵⁰ Sorley, *Oral History of General Dennis J. Reimer*, 383.

¹⁵¹ Brown, *Kevlar Legions*, 171.

In similar manner, Shinseki postulated that Kosovo demonstrated the army's heavy forces were too heavy to deploy in support of rapidly evolving contingencies and its light forces lacked sufficient lethality and survivability.¹⁵² Shinseki's immediate solution was to create a medium-weight interim force, the Stryker Brigade Combat Team, that he claimed would combine the mobility of light forces with the lethality and survivability of heavier forces.¹⁵³ Although Shinseki's solution never fully materialized, it was an effort to address what he perceived as a root cause of the army's lack of mobility.

Reimer and Shinseki learned the same lessons from *Allied Force*, most notably that the army was on the correct track. In their view, Kosovo confirmed the previous decade's experiments with modularity and flexibility, some of which focused on the command structure and physical make-up of the U.S. Army. The generals' observations and conclusions from Kosovo were in-line with the army's late 1990s organizational initiatives. The generals, well-versed and invested in these transformative efforts, identified many of the same problems in Kosovo as they did in the pre-Kosovo army.

Army Generals and Air Power

As with structural problems, U.S. Army officers studied the use of air power thoroughly before Kosovo. General Clark's faith in air power as an instrument of coercive diplomacy was articulated over the course of several meetings with American

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Donnelly, *Transforming an Army*, 11-13.

and foreign civilian leaders including the British Foreign Minister Robin Cook and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger. Before the campaign, Clark believed that even the threat of aerial bombardment would cause Milošević to abandon his operations in Kosovo.¹⁵⁴ He reiterated his belief that air power alone could achieve NATO's objectives in a contentious exchange with Air Force General Joe Ralston.¹⁵⁵ Clark based his assessments of U.S. capability and Serbian will on the lessons he had drawn from *Deliberate Force* in which a NATO aerial campaign was able to quickly and relatively painlessly impose NATO political objectives.

Clark's support of air strikes prior to the Kosovo war stand in stark contrast to his comments after the cessation of hostilities:

We should be careful, though, about extolling the air operation in Kosovo as a pattern for future success, for it also manifested [*sic*] the limits of air power, even high technology air power, as an independent military instrument. In this manner the air campaign provided clear warnings about the direction of some U.S. military thinking.¹⁵⁶

One interpretation of Clark's revised viewpoint is that it was an evolution in his views on the usefulness of air power alone as a coercive agent in foreign policy. A second interpretation is that Clark's change was due to disenchantment with Pentagon leadership over targeting and strategy. A third, and more cynical view, is that Clark reinterpreted events to make it appear as if he had been right from the start, bolstering

¹⁵⁴ Clark, *Modern War* , 112.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

¹⁵⁶ Clark, *Modern War* , 432.

his image as a military visionary and anti-establishment figure in order to bolster future political aspirations.

Clark's doubts about air power, however delayed, were in contrast to media coverage of Kosovo which proclaimed "air power alone can win some kind of victory" and "[the air campaign is] a refutation of the common wisdom that air power alone cannot make a despot back down."¹⁵⁷ The U.S. Army had long contended that "boots on the ground" were required to win wars. Kosovo seemed to many analysts to be a refutation of the army, its arguments, and its place in national security. The air force's triumph, combined with TF Hawk's problems underscored what some military observers and analysts had been contending since the end of the Cold War nearly a decade earlier, that the U.S. Army was trained and structured to fight a war that was never coming.

Kosovo exposed more than just the vulnerability of air-only military campaigns. It also caused at least one senior military leader to question coercive diplomacy and proportional responses. While Kosovo was not the genesis of such ideas, it reinforced the view that American military power may not be the most efficient or effective means of achieving American political intent. Reimer expressed his misgivings about using armed force to achieve humanitarian goals:

as things emerged most of the Joint Chiefs did not feel that use of military force in Kosovo was in our vital national interest and probably would not have recommended the use of force in Kosovo. There was a split in that area, because I think some of us did feel that force might be necessary,

¹⁵⁷ Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion*, 105.

but most of us, fair to say, felt like Kosovo was not in the national interest.¹⁵⁸

He was also critical of NATO's unwillingness to use overwhelming force from the beginning of *Allied Force* and later recalled: "I still believe, and have believed for a long time, that when you make the decision to use military force, you go in with overwhelming force and put all your options on the table, don't take them off. In the end it is over quicker and with less casualties."¹⁵⁹

Reimer's recollections are as interesting as they are problematic. His comments are in line with standard understandings of military theory and have a logical consistency, yet they do not match the NATO's plan or goals in Kosovo. In many ways, *Allied Force* could be seen as the opposite of an effort to use overwhelming military force and instead placed severe limitations on the type and size of military response being considered. Only when defeat seemed plausible were allied leaders finally able to amend their plans and bring overwhelming force to bear.

Adaptation for Occupation

Military campaigns do not simply end after hostilities and there are often many lessons to be learned after the fighting. But in order for lessons to be learned someone must want to learn them, something which at least one senior officer accused the army as an organization of not wanting to do. General Ricardo Sanchez served as the assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division during the Kosovo campaign. Although

¹⁵⁸ Sorley, *Oral History of General Dennis J. Reimer*, 370.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 371.

his position was largely a supporting one, Sanchez was an integral part of planning and resourcing the operation. His position afforded him a unique perspective on the planning of *Allied Force*. As part of the army's lesson learning initiatives General Sanchez was required to submit an After Action Review (AAR) to senior leaders at the Pentagon following the conflict. Sanchez recommended the following in his AAR:

1. For the first twelve to eighteen months after combat operations, or until a civilian organization has its capacity deployed, the U.S. military must have both the responsibility and authority for the mission. It is the only organization that has the strategic and operational planning capacity, the command, control, and communications, and the logistics capacity necessary for success in such an environment.
2. A grand strategy must be in place before hostilities commence. Operations in Kosovo were being conducted in a strategic and operational vacuum due to a lack of a clearly defined vision for the province. Due to a lack of consensus over Kosovo's future, the governmental, nongovernmental, national, and international organizations constantly struggled with competing objectives.
3. The headquarters staff must have the manpower, processes, and expertise to tackle the daily complex strategic, operational, and tactical challenges of the mission.
4. Units deployed on such missions need national-level support and assistance on a "push" basis in order to succeed.¹⁶⁰

With the hindsight provided by a decade of attempted nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is tempting to exaggerate the significance of General Sanchez's conclusions and upon further consideration, many of them do not hold up to scrutiny.

While Sanchez rightly points out that a lack of governance is a bad thing, his solution – military governance – was problematic. Nation building requires a different

¹⁶⁰ Ricardo Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story* (New York: Harper, 2008), 132.

skillset than combat. To truly embrace a nation building role the army would have to significantly modify its force structure and training at the cost of preparing for combat operations. Sanchez's conclusion that the U.S. needed "a grand strategy" before initiating hostilities is myopic and indicates Sanchez's view of war as an engineering problem. No plan, however grand and well thought out can account for every eventuality in a conflict and predicating American military action on completing such an impossible task is imprudent. Sanchez's calls for additional national-level support were also misguided. U.S. and NATO shortcomings in Kosovo – a limited regional war that consumed far more resources than anticipated – were less the result of a lack of resources than *how* those resources were utilized. Indicative of such misappropriated resources was TF Hawk, which spent much of the campaign in neighboring Albania watching the war. If additional national-level resources were committed to Kosovo it is not incomprehensible to imagine them being unused.

Whether or not Sanchez's arguments were well-founded or misguided, his observations and recommendations largely fell on deaf ears: "I filed my Kosovo After Action Report according to procedure. But it went into a Pentagon file cabinet and died there."¹⁶¹ Sanchez's inability to persuade leaders in the army and civilian government as a senior leader illuminates army's limitations as a learning institution. If a general couldn't facilitate organizational change, what chance did lower level officers have?

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Sanchez was not the only general that contemplated post-combat operations after the army's involvement in Kosovo. In his 2010 autobiography General Hugh Shelton noted as had occurred in Haiti and Bosnia, and then in Kosovo "the greatest demand for troops followed the actual war fighting, when the requirements turned to providing a safe and secure environment so that the new government, assisted by our government, turned to the "nation building" phase."¹⁶² Although Shelton's conclusions are interesting, we must remember that his autobiography was published in 2010 when he had good reason to distance himself from the decisions which led to the invasion of Iraq and its under-manned and under-planned occupation.

As of the writing of this work, the United States and its NATO allies still have an armed presence in Kosovo. The post-combat operations following the seventy-eight days of *Allied Force* have lasted for 16 years. It could be argued that Kosovo's most important lessons for future military operations came after cessation of hostilities. Both Sanchez and Shelton recognized the difficulties and importance of winning (or at the very least not losing) the final phase of the operation. Both men *personally* learned from their experiences in post-combat operations in Kosovo, but the army as an institution seemingly did not.

Trouble in High Places

General Clark's relationship with his fellow generals during the Kosovo campaign was strained at best, and contentious at its worst. Before *Allied Force* began,

¹⁶² Hugh Shelton, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), 410.

Shelton concluded Clark's campaign plan was so poor that he and other senior leaders had to rewrite it.¹⁶³ Later, during the execution of the campaign, Shelton discovered that Clark "didn't know the planning cycle on air operations even though the entire mission is on big air operation" something he termed "nothing short of terrifying."¹⁶⁴ Perhaps most disturbing to Shelton was his belief that Clark's ego compromised his ability to lead and that he was a "loose cannon and absolutely in it for whatever was best for Wes."¹⁶⁵ Shelton also took issue with Clark's public persona and interaction with the media:

One thing that did *not* get any better was Wes's unfortunate inability to deal effectively with the press. To put it bluntly, for a smart guy he said some pretty dumb things. . . I called Wes as requested: "The Secretary has asked me to deliver the following message, and I quote: *get your fucking face off the TV. No more briefings, period. That's it.*"¹⁶⁶

Shelton's scathing critique of Clark labeled him as professionally and personally deficient – a damning condemnation from one senior leader to another.

For his part, Clark claimed the he, Shelton, and Reimer fundamentally disagreed on the war's strategy from the beginning. He maintained that from the beginning he had advocated for a wider and more decisive military action targeting not only FRY military forces, but Milošević's support structure:

The way I looked at it, the point of the campaign was either to break Milošević's will (or the will of his supporters) or, ultimately deny him the

¹⁶³ Ibid., 382.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 382-383.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 372.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 383.

capability to continue the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. On the strategic level, we continued to push for approval to attack the strategic communications targets, including TV stations, key bridges, and electric power stations – high profile elements of Milošević’s system for command, control, and sustainment of the Armed Forces in Yugoslavia. That was one center of gravity. But the Serb ground forces were another center of gravity, and they were the priority.¹⁶⁷

Clark’s vision for the Kosovo campaign, as well as the means by which he desired to achieve it, were fundamentally different than leaders in Washington, a fact which put him into direct conflict with senior military and civilian leadership and sowed the seeds of his eventual demise.

Given the quarrelsome relationship between Clark and others it is unsurprising that Clark’s conclusions from Kosovo were different than that of any other senior officer. Clark viewed Kosovo as a defining moment in U.S., NATO history, and military history representing a new breed of conflict that he assessed would be the “new normal.” He contended that small, limited wars like Kosovo, waged in support of regional stability and humanitarian assistance were far more likely than large scale conflicts like Korea and Iraq.¹⁶⁸ In contrast others, particularly Reimer, viewed Kosovo as a one-shot deal that was unlikely to be repeated and perhaps was not in the nation’s strategic interests.

The general officers that reflected on Kosovo, despite being a small group linked by professional education, training exercises, and careers’ worth of deployments, drew a

¹⁶⁷ Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 242.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 418.

variety of conclusions from their experience in Kosovo. The “official” lessons learned from Kosovo confirmed pre-operational priorities such as the need to be more modular and mobile. Kosovo also reinforced army’s officers’ critique of air power and the use of military force to achieve humanitarian aims. It illustrated to generals the importance of post-combat operations – while also highlighting the institution’s uneasiness with these missions. Lastly, Kosovo also exposed a group of senior leaders that despite decades of shared experiences, still could be deeply divided over matters of professional competency and character.

The Field-Grade Officer Perspective

General officers were not the only officers that studied Kosovo to draw conclusions about the army’s performance and future. Another group of officers – field-grade officers – observed and studied the same conflict as the generals yet learned different lessons, even when they were discussing the same or similar topics. As a result of their age, experience, and position, these officers’ perspective differed from their superiors, a fact which influenced their conclusions and positions.

Casualty Aversion

Where general officers tended to interpret Kosovo as confirming the need for organizational restructuring, mid-grade officers tended to interpret it as revealing cultural problems. Many *also* saw structural faults and largely agreed with points made by Shinseki and Reimer but in their minds, structural problems were not root causes of

the army's difficulties in Kosovo.¹⁶⁹ One cultural problem these officers critiqued was the army's aversion to casualties. In the 1990s and early 2000s it was commonly accepted among army officers that military operations were being adversely affected by the unwillingness of the American people, political leaders, and military leaders to tolerate any loss of U.S. troops.¹⁷⁰ In his 2000 SAMS monograph Major Jonathon Moelter argued that American involvement in Kosovo and America's other small wars indicated five trends of international concern:

(1) Aversion to casualties challenges US international leadership and credibility; (2) The US's presumed sense of invulnerability may result in preemptive attacks by the US; (3) A presumed strategy of zero casualties may directly shape US foreign relations; (4) Potential enemies can see US casualty aversion as an exploitable weakness; and (5) Past acts of apparent US casualty aversion continue to influence America's war on terrorism.¹⁷¹

He concluded that it was in the United States' best interests to reverse this perception and that although unnecessary casualties should be avoided, the potential loss of troops should not "interfere with achieving U.S. national or military objectives."¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ For examples see Adam L. Rocke, "Is the Stryker Brigade Combat Team a Viable Concept?" (MA thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 14; Jeffrey S. Settle, "Shock Effect or Ships Passing in the Night: The Role of Armored Forces in Fourth Generation Warfare" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2003), 42.

¹⁷⁰ Morris T. Goins, "Does the Perception of Casualties Affect Military Operations in the 1990s?" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2000).

¹⁷¹ Jonathon R. Moelter, "Effects of Foreign Perceptions of US Casualty Aversion on US International Relations" (MA thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2002), iii.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 80-81

Major Perry Rearick's 2001 Master's Thesis examined the relationship between force protection between mission accomplishment. He claimed that U.S. military leadership viewed casualties as unacceptable, a fact which had a detrimental effect on its ability to accomplish its mission Kosovo and more generally in all future military operations. Rearick identified four ways in which casualty aversion impacted mission accomplishment: (1) protecting the force was a stated mission (2) force protection hinder American forces' ability to build rapport with locals (3) differences in force protection measures between allied countries eroded mutual confidence and (4) force protection measures were developed in parallel with a unit's mission rather than as an aspect of accomplishing the unit's primary mission. Instead of placing force protection in the context of combat power, he argued it rivaled the importance of mission accomplishment, ultimately endangering "the Army's relevance to the nation."¹⁷³

Major Robert Ault's 2003 SAMS monograph concluded that the army's professional education program and its training practices produced officers who were risk averse. He worried that unless there was a "shift in cultural mindset through a refined education process rather than implementing changes to training and scenarios" the "next generation of officers may be brought up in a culture where obedience is equated to loyalty and fighting the plan is more important than fighting the enemy."¹⁷⁴ To Ault, the army stood on a dangerous precipice, moving towards a technocratic culture

¹⁷³ Perry Rearick, "Force Protection and Mission Accomplishment in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (MA thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2001), 72.

¹⁷⁴ Robert T. Ault, "Encouraging Risk and Embracing Uncertainty, The Need to Change the U.S. Army Culture" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2003).

and away from a warrior culture which to his mind, was a radical and dangerous departure.¹⁷⁵

Moelter, Ault, and Rearick's field-grade perspective provided a counterpoint to the perspective of their senior officers. Reimer and Shinseki concluded that the army's problems were the results of command structure and equipment and by fixing those problems, the army's performance could be addressed. The field grade officers viewed the problem less as structural than cultural, singling out what they say as both a civilian and military unwillingness to risk lives. In retrospect, the example of TF Hawk's deployment appears to support the field grade officers. Although late, TF Hawk did eventually arrive on the battlefield and was prepared to engage in combat operations. The decision not to employ TF Hawk was not based on command relationships or equipment problems, but on the generals' estimation of the risk to reward ratio of the operation. To the generals, the vulnerability of the Apache helicopters, predictable flight paths, and lack of readily identifiable targets made the employment of TF Hawk too risky.¹⁷⁶ The generals considered the relationship between tactical risk and reward when considering the employment of TF Hawk. To Ault, Moelter, Rearick and others, this showed that accomplishing the mission was less important than preserving American lives. These authors criticized the behavioral and cognitive norms of army officers and

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Sorley, "An Oral History of General Dennis J. Reimer," 381.

army culture which by extension was also a critique of the stewards of their profession – the general officers.

A Crisis of Leadership

Generals and field-grade officers were not always in opposition to one another regarding the lessons learned in Kosovo. One topic that united some senior and mid-level officers were their critiques of senior military leadership. Major Michael Johnson's 2000 SAMS monograph examined the application of Clausewitzian dialectics in the Kosovo campaign. Johnson faulted senior military leadership and claimed that senior leaders failed to develop the appropriate contingency plans to support a failure of their assumptions.¹⁷⁷ This officer also contended that military and civil leaders rejected the principle of annihilation because "they misunderstood the nature of war."¹⁷⁸ He argued that that General Clark and others were unable or unwilling to objectively analyze the crisis in Kosovo, leading to the perpetuation of what he termed "Kosovo myths."¹⁷⁹ In Johnson's view, Clark's (and other senior officers') inability to reach an objective conclusion contributed to the failure of future strategies and policies by not accurately and honestly providing feedback of their experiences, or as he terms it, did "not follow Clausewitz's lead as a critical historian."¹⁸⁰ Johnson's critiques struck at the

¹⁷⁷ Michael W. Johnson, "Clausewitz on Kosovo" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2000).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

generals' strategic, if not professional competence and called in question their ability to translate theory into practice.

Major Kelly Synder's 2001 Command and General Staff College master's thesis concluded the army's experience in America's small wars and the Kosovo campaign taught the army the importance of small-scale contingencies and Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW) but senior leaders were reluctant to make real and lasting change in army doctrine or strategy.¹⁸¹ She maintained that general officers failed to adapt to changing conditions despite observing them *and* themselves concluding that MOOTW would play an increasing role in the army's mission. Synder suggested army culture was still clinging to a Cold War view of conflict despite mounting evidence of its obsolescence, calling into question the army's ability to learn and adapt.

Other officers critiqued senior leadership for being unable to establish a common picture of the Kosovo campaign and create a united front. In his examination of the structural influences on the conflicts between presidents and military commanders, Major Michael Baim highlighted the impact of policy differences between presidents and senior military commanders charged with carrying out their orders. Baim contended that policy differences often end with the military commander being removed from

¹⁸¹ Kelly J. Synder. "Military Operations Other Than War Analysis Additional Skill Identifier" (MA thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2001), 1.

command, as occurred to General Clark following the Kosovo campaign.¹⁸² In his view, such a division presented “the adversary with exploitable opportunities.”¹⁸³

To field officers such as Baim, Gregory, and Synder the senior American leadership was partially to blame for the U.S. Army’s mediocre performance in Kosovo. They saw both cultural and systemic problems that defied quick or easy fixes and would require considerable effort, time, and introspection.

Air Power

Air power is alluring to the American people, policy makers, and military leaders alike. President and generals have sought to wage surgical air war many times with varying degrees of success; *Operation Eagle Claw* in Iran, *Operation El Dorado Canyon* in Libya, *Operation Desert Storm* in Iraq, and *Operations Deny Flight* and later *Operation Deliberate Force* in the Balkans. Despite their ardent desire to move beyond the need for ground forces, reality has prevented American leaders from doing so. *Operation Allied Force* was very much in the same vein, an attempt by the U.S. to exert its will while avoiding damage. As the many aerial campaigns before had taught military leaders, the Kosovo campaign proved to be a cautionary tale of the limits of air power.

¹⁸² Michael J. Baim, “A Test of U.S. Civil-Military Relations: Structural Influences of Military Reform on the Conflict between Presidents and Senior Military Commanders during time of War” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 40.

Several field-grade authors contemplated the limitations of air power in Kosovo. In her 1999 SAMS monograph Major Jody Blanchfield's concluded that Kosovo's environment hampered NATO air forces' ability to effectively engage ground forces:

Airpower may not always be an effective means of targeting different threats. Large-scale conventional ground forces may be very vulnerable to air attack as they were in Iraq's open desert during Desert Storm. However, Allied Force illustrates how difficult it can be to effectively target them in an urban environment.¹⁸⁴

She deduced that Kosovo demonstrated a determined enemy in an austere environment was unlikely to be defeated by air power alone. Environmental challenges were not the only obstacles that faced allied efforts in Kosovo. Blanchfield maintained that the Kosovo campaign plan was flawed and that any expectation of victory from an "air-only" campaign was a risky proposition. She contended that even an aerial campaign of immense force that incorporated economic and diplomatic power did not guarantee victory.¹⁸⁵ Even if air power could deliver victory, the type of victory it could achieve was also problematic and did not address the root causes which caused the conflict.¹⁸⁶

Other authors also believed air power had serious flaws and limitations. Major Robert Gregory argued that American leaders forgot a century's worth of hard-won combined arms operations knowledge by relying solely on air power in Kosovo. In his view the campaign's objectives were threatened by NATO's failure to integrate air

¹⁸⁴ Jody L. Blanchfield, "Bombs Away: A Strategic Analysis of Airpower in Limited Conflict" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1999), 40.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

power with a ground maneuver force at the beginning of the campaign.¹⁸⁷ He was concerned that allied leaders had concluded air power alone had delivered victory in Kosovo and that they would use it as a template for future air campaigns.¹⁸⁸ Gregory rejected their overly air-centric conclusions, and instead argued that the last hour addition of TF Hawk and its counter battery radars were critical to finally tipping the balance of power in the NATO's favor.¹⁸⁹

Army leaders were presented with an interesting problem after Kosovo: how would they ensure that the army was still viewed as a relevant force required for the nation's security after a war that was seemingly won by air power alone? Most of the field grade officers argued that the narrative suggesting air-only campaigns were the future of warfare were false narratives. These authors concluded that air power would only be successful when combined with a viable ground maneuver force. In their minds, Kosovo supported their case and the belated arrival of TF Hawk played a critical role in the final stages of the conflict and pushed the Serbian military to the breaking point.

Conclusion

Most military and civilian analysts concluded that in Kosovo the U.S. Army had been misused in *Allied Force*. Where they differed was in their assessment of the causes of the army's difficulties and their analysis of the applicability of Kosovo's challenges to future conflict. In this way, Kosovo seemingly offered contradictory lessons. Kosovo

¹⁸⁷ Gregory, "Turning Point," 205.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸⁹ Gregory, "Turning Point," 3.

both confirmed the senior leadership's desire to reform force structure *and* provided more critical authors a disturbing view of the army's problems. General and field grade officers observed the same events, but drew very different conclusions about their relevance and causes. But why? Why would professional officers, products of similar societal conditions and military education system differ so greatly in their observations and conclusions? As in Somalia and Panama before, we find that perspective and prior experience fundamentally altered authors' observations and conclusions.

The army's transformation in the 1990s, begun by Sullivan and continued by Reimer and Shinseki, focused on making the army more mobile and modular. By virtue of their positions, senior officers were personally and professionally invested in the army's analysis and transformative efforts, facts which influenced their observations and conclusions. Shinseki's observations that American formations in Kosovo were either too unwieldy to rapidly deploy in support of contingency operations or lacked the ability to stay and fight for extended periods were extensions of the army's pre-Kosovo analysis. His conclusions mirrored the goal of the army's transformation – the army must be more mobile and modular to remain relevant.

Field-grade officers shared the generals' critiques of the army's force structure but disagreed on its place as the root cause of the problems. These officers viewed the army's culture as the cause of its poor performance. They believed that the army's insistence on casualty avoidance put its ability to accomplish assigned missions at risk. By virtue of their rank the mid-level officers were closer to the troops and were personally responsible for implementing the generals' orders. It is not surprising then,

that these authors drew more “people-based” conclusions than their superiors, focusing on things like individual training and small-unit culture.

To outside observers, Kosovo appeared to vindicate the U.S. and NATO’s reliance on air power to deliver victory even in an austere environment against a determined foe. But a deeper examination of the conflict, its participants, and the authors that studied it yield a more nuanced perspective on Kosovo and the lessons learned there. Different lessons were learned by different participants and students of the conflict. The divergence between the lessons learned can, broadly speaking, be attributed to differences in perspectives of the participants and authors. The perspective of the general and field-grade officer was critical to their understanding and contextualization of Kosovo. Both perspectives yielded valuable lessons about the U.S. Army and its role in national security.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS: THE NEXT GENERATION

As historian Brian Linn argues, “a military institution’s concept of war is a composite of its interpretation of the past, its perception of present threats, and its prediction of future hostilities.”¹⁹⁰ At its core, this work is an examination of the army’s concept of war in the 1990s. Contrary to the appearance of service consensus offered by the army’s official histories, this thesis argues that there was a rigorous internal debate between mid-level and senior officers over the army’s perceptions of war in the last decade of the 20th century. Senior officers interpreted the army’s experiences as affirmation of their notions of war, which validated their careers and the overall trajectory of the army. Field-grade officers challenged these interpretations. They believed that the army’s experiences in this era exposed flaws in the army’s doctrine, training, and institutions.

This divergence in perspective forces us to ask many questions about lesson learning and institutional memory within a hierarchical organization. One of the primary questions to consider is why these officers, which were products of similar civil and military cultures, viewed the same events but came to different – and sometimes contradictory – conclusions. Further, we must consider what the debates between these officers can teach us about the debates within the contemporary army.

J. P. Clark posits that “the [existing] scholarship of military adaptation offers three broad causes for change: external direction that overcomes military conservatism,

¹⁹⁰ Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army’s Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 233.

internal direction emanating from a visionary leader, or an institutional reaction to an external shock.”¹⁹¹ But are these explanations sufficient to explain the dynamics at work in the 1990s army? The army did experience outside pressure to change, primarily through the budget cuts and reductions in size, but neither had a transformative effect. Likewise, some army leaders attempted to enact changes in force structure and composition by moving to a more modular army, but their efforts were stymied by budgetary restrictions. Lastly, although external shocks occurred, especially in Somalia, the reactions from senior leaders and the army’s institutions were muted. The officers that advocated broader change were seemingly drowned out by the status quo. Although elements from each of the causes for change outlined by Clark were present in the 1990s, none seem to fully account for the internal dialog covered by this study. How then can we account for the conflicting viewpoints and conclusions of these officers?

In his study of the contemporary U.S. Army Clark posits that there is a fourth force for change: “a series of generational shifts . . . arising from trends far deeper than any single event [that] caused the change in thinking that created the new military professionalism.”¹⁹² Clark’s theory seems well-suited to describe the army of the 1990s which was comprised of two distinct generations of army officers. The first were those officers that served in the Vietnam War, which by the 1990s were senior officers. As historian Andrew Bacevich contends, their experiences in Vietnam were “the pivot

¹⁹¹ J. P. Clark, “Organizational Change and Adaption in the US Army,” *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 25.

¹⁹² J. P. Clark, *Preparing for War: The Emergence of the Modern US Army, 1815–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 269–77.

around which all else” turned and shaped their post-Vietnam experiences.¹⁹³ The second generation of officers were from the post-Vietnam army and were serving in mid-level positions during this time. Without Vietnam as a defining experience in their professional lives they were more apt to challenge conventional wisdom and draw unique conclusions about their and the army’s experiences. When observed through the lens of Clark’s generational divide, there is a clear distinction between the conclusions and arguments of the two generations – and a plausible explanation for the diverging perspectives identified by this thesis.

Armed with a clearer understanding of what happened and a plausible explanation of why, we can now grapple with the broader implications of this study. I contend that the army’s experience during the 1990s serves as a useful analog for understanding the challenges facing today’s army. The army of the 1990s was a recovering one. The end of the Cold War and subsequent “peace dividend,” combined with successful campaigns in Panama and Iraq convinced American leadership that the army could and should be reduced in size. The result was a dramatic reduction of the force. In 1985 the army had over 780,000 active-duty soldiers; a decade later there were a little over 508,000.¹⁹⁴ Paradoxically, the dramatic reduction in strength occurred while the army assumed new roles and missions – primarily of the MOOTW variety – across the globe. The expansion of the army’s mission was not a new phenomenon. Brian

¹⁹³ Andrew Bacevich, “A Modern Major General,” review of *American Soldier*, by Tommy Franks and Malcolm McConnell, *New Left Review* 29, (September-October 2004): 126.

¹⁹⁴ John S. Brown, *Kevlar Legions: The Transformation of the U.S. Army, 1989-2005* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2011).75.

Linn argues that “after every conflict, the US Army not only recovers most of its prewar responsibilities but also inherits some new ones. . . . During the 10-year recovery period of the Gulf War, the US Army was deployed in a series of frantic and often ambiguous missions in the Balkans, Somalia, Haiti, and numerous other places as Defense Secretary Les Aspin Jr. boasted he could simultaneously restructure the nation’s armed forces and do more with less.”¹⁹⁵

Today’s army faces much the same situation as it did nearly twenty years ago. However, instead of recovering from a resounding victory in the Middle East, it is recuperating after more than a decade of constant use, or as some would argue, misuse. Despite the prolonged period of exertion, the army’s ability to advance U.S. national interests abroad is hotly debated. However, one fact is clear, today’s army has resumed its pre-Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) responsibilities while assuming new ones. The army continues to fight in the Middle East, North Africa, and to a lesser extent Central Asia. The GWOT is seems, has been rebranded but not retired. These struggles continue to play out as a resurgent Russia, defiant China, and volatile North Korea seek to expand their influence and exploit what they likely perceive as a distracted and vulnerable U.S. These problems are complicated by the simultaneous reductions in army force size from its peak of 566,045 soldiers in 2010 to 464,736 in December

¹⁹⁵ Brian McAllister Linn, “The US Army’s Postwar Recoveries,” *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 15.

2016.¹⁹⁶ One could be forgiven if they thought Les Aspin’s boast that “he could simultaneously restructure the nation’s armed forces and do more with less” was made in 2016 rather than 1993.¹⁹⁷

If we use this study, Clark’s generational divide, and Linn’s analysis of postwar recoveries, it seems likely that the army’s immediate future will include a vigorous debate amongst its officers over the meaning of army’s experience during the GWOT. Just as divisions emerged between Vietnam-era and post-Vietnam officers in the 1980s and 1990s, a division is likely to appear between GWOT and post-GWOT professionals in the 2020s and beyond. The question then becomes, a matter of what to do about – or with – the expected divergence of perspectives. First, we must recognize that each generation, which is a product of its unique culture and experiences, “will bring its own attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses” to the profession of arms.¹⁹⁸ Secondly, we must acknowledge the value of dissent and alternative viewpoints. Although some view the army as a strict hierarchical organization that is resistant to critique, the existence of CGSC and SAMS attest to the fact that the army believes it is better to encourage its best and brightest to, to some degree, question the authority of the broader institution and its senior leaders. Recognizing both the inevitability, and the value of free-thinking and (reasonable) dissent, this thesis is a clear recommendation to encourage officers to

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, “DoD Personnel, Workforce Reports & Publications,” Defense Manpower Data Center, https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp.

¹⁹⁷ Linn, “Postwar Recoveries,” 15.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

continue to engage in meaningful debate and for the army to sincerely engage with its officers.

Although only two decades removed from the writing of this thesis, many of the army's experiences during the 1990s seemed to have already faded from historical memory – if indeed they were incorporated in the first place. As America's small wars were largely overshadowed by the Persian Gulf War, so too has the 1990s been overshadowed by the 2000s and the Global War on Terror. Despite the intervening time and events, there are similarities between the two decades that merit consideration. Then, as now, officers vigorously debated a wide variety of important topics such as the effectiveness of the army's training, doctrine, and leadership. As such, the history of America's small wars and the officer corps' perceptions of them offers to teach both soldiers and scholars many lessons.

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