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**Military Resistance to Humanitarian  
War in Kosovo and Beyond**  
*An Ideological Explanation*

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## Foreword

Maj Kenneth R. Rizer's *Military Resistance to Humanitarian War in Kosovo and Beyond: An Ideological Explanation* is a thought-provoking examination of the existence and implications of an institutional mindset within the US military. Major Rizer compares the "military mind" with liberal and conservative views and shows that officers tend to fall on the conservative side of the philosophical and political spectrums. The author demonstrates that an ideological gap exists between the US military and its civilian leadership. He notes that issues in civil-military relations arise as a result of the gap, as in the Pentagon's resistance to the Clinton administration's "humanitarian war" in Kosovo.

*Military Resistance to Humanitarian War in Kosovo and Beyond* is based on research Major Rizer conducted while an Air Force Olmsted Scholar at Stockholm University, Sweden. Air University Press is pleased to present his essay as a Fairchild Paper.



SHIRLEY BROOKS LASEIER  
Director  
Air University Press

## About the Author



**Maj Kenneth R. Rizer**

Maj Kenneth R. Rizer, a 13-year Air Force veteran from Minneapolis, Minnesota, has been selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in International Affairs from the United States Air Force Academy. Following undergraduate pilot training, he flew the RF-4C Phantom II reconnaissance aircraft in Korea, Germany, Texas, and California, becoming an instructor pilot and Desert Storm combat veteran. After transitioning to the F-16 Fighting Falcon, he served as an instructor pilot and flight commander at Misawa Air Base, Japan. Major Rizer served two years as an Air Force Olmsted Scholar at Stockholm University, Sweden, and is presently studying Security Affairs at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He has a wife, Cheri, and four children.

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## Preface

While much has been written about the so-called Clinton doctrine of using military force to promote human rights in the world, the military's inherent resistance to such nontraditional missions has garnered little attention. My paper, which was originally written in 1999 to fulfill the requirements for completion of the Security and International Relations course at Stockholm University, attempts to fill that void.

*Humanitarian intervention* is a new phenomenon, requiring a certain degree of introspection within the national security realm. Whether or not one agrees with the idea of intervening militarily for human rights, a deeper understanding of both sides' views on the issue can only improve policy formulation and implementation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jen Riser". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the main text block.

## **Abstract**

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) success in the Balkan conflict overshadowed Pentagon resistance to military intervention in Kosovo. Using the new institutionalism, content analysis of actors' statements, and recent civil-military relations studies, this paper explains why the Pentagon opposed war in Kosovo, and why it will likely oppose future such "humanitarian wars."

This paper shows that the US military holds an institutionalized philosophy of conservative realism. This philosophy stems from the nature of the profession, and is transmitted to succeeding generations through the military's unique cultural, historical, and educational traditions. Within this philosophical paradigm, the Pentagon views war as a legitimate political tool used only as a last resort, and then only for promoting or defending the nation's survival or vital interests.

The Pentagon resisted military intervention in Kosovo because intervention on behalf of human rights was incompatible with this institutionalized, conservative philosophy. Indeed, the Clinton administration's justification for military intervention stemmed directly from the liberal, Wilsonian tradition of basing foreign policy on universal principles rather than interests. Such a rationale was, and remains, antithetical to the military's interest-based, conservative view of war.

The paper concludes that this military philosophy is unlikely to change in the short term, that it will continue to strain relations with liberal administrations, and that it ultimately helps prevent cavalier uses of American military power.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*As air strikes became inevitable, many on the Joint Staff expressed disbelief that we were actually going to go through with it, because nobody believed that this was a great course of action.*

—Joint Staff  
*Air Force Times*

On 23 March 1999, following a diplomatic failure to gain Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's acceptance of the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government on Kosovo, the North Atlantic Council authorized air strikes directed toward "disrupting the violent attacks being committed by the Serb Army and Special Police Forces and weakening their ability to cause further humanitarian catastrophe."<sup>1</sup> After a 78-day air campaign known as Operation Allied Force, Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic finally agreed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) demands and the bombing stopped.

The fighting was over, but debate over its significance was just beginning. Two aspects of the conflict made it unique, and it was these two points that fueled discussion over its meaning. The first was the expressed purpose of fighting not for a national interest, at least in the classical sense, but for human rights. While US foreign policy has always had a strong moral element, this was the first time the United States fought a sustained campaign for a purpose defined as less than a vital national interest. Second, the Balkan conflict was "arguably the first time in history that a conflict has been won using airpower alone."<sup>2</sup> These two factors, fighting for human rights and use of airpower alone, figure prominently in current debates about future force employment. The crux of such debates is whether Kosovo was an aberration or a model for the future.

To answer these questions, one should consider the US military's perspective. Contrary to postconflict reports, the deci-

sion to fight for less than vital national interests deeply divided the US Department of Defense. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) have understandably avoided revealing their dissension over the prudence of intervening militarily in Kosovo, some clues exist. Gen Dennis Reimer, the Army chief of staff, stated that he had “concerns about whether airpower would do it by itself. Others felt that air *might* do it.”<sup>3</sup> Gen Charles Krulak, the Marine Corps commandant, questioned the efficacy of bombing in his testimony before Congress, asking rhetorically, “Will the strikes achieve an end?”<sup>4</sup> *The Economist* reported that the “Pentagon top brass hates the idea of getting embroiled in Kosovo peacemaking, which it regards as social work.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, *Air Force Times* reported that the joint chiefs made clear their opposition to an air campaign in Kosovo, but the administration of President William J. “Bill” Clinton overruled them. “We went forward as the Joint Chiefs and said, ‘This isn’t going to work.’ But, civilian leaders including National Security Advisor Sandy Berger weren’t impressed. It was like ‘Well, OK, thanks, but if you were going to do something like this, how would you do it?’”<sup>6</sup>

Why were the joint chiefs against intervening militarily in Kosovo? Is it possible to explain their resistance? What does such resistance mean for future force employment? This paper attempts to answer those questions.

## Objective

The paper explains the joint chiefs’ resistance to intervening militarily in Kosovo based on the US military’s worldview. It shows that the military has highly institutionalized values and beliefs, meaning that they depend on common culture, norms, and traditions. As a result of this culture, the officer corps has become increasingly conservative, creating an ideological “gap” between military and civilian leaders. This conservatism colors the military’s view of international relations, producing a *classical realist* philosophy that supports military action only to advance survival or vital interests.

This paper shows that contrary to the military view, the Clinton administration’s justification for military intervention

stemmed from the liberal, Wilsonian tradition of formulating foreign policy based on universal principles rather than interests. Because such a rationale was antithetical to the military's interest-based, conservative worldview, the joint chiefs resisted the decision to intervene militarily in Kosovo.

### **Significance**

While the study's immediate intent is explaining a neglected aspect of the decision to intervene militarily in Kosovo, the paper's conclusions have broader significance. Given that US military resistance to "humanitarian war" is deeply embedded and thus unlikely to change soon, future US policy toward fighting for less than vital national interests will inevitably be effected. One could argue that civilian control of the military makes such dissent irrelevant, but that argument ignores the fact that the military's view of suitable missions and roles affects defense budgets, training, and the conduct of combat itself. The way the military perceives itself thus has a significant impact on future military capability.

Another, perhaps more important, effect of military resistance to humanitarian war is its potential impact upon civil-military relations. If the military's view of suitable missions differs significantly from the civilian leadership's view, a risk exists that the gap between the groups could become a fault line. Such a rift occurred in 1964, when US military and civilian leaders differed so much over military policy in Vietnam that the joint chiefs' advisory role virtually ceased to function.<sup>7</sup> The estrangement had disastrous consequences and serves as a warning for the future. From this standpoint, understanding and managing the ideological gap between civilian and military leaders is a prerequisite for effective US civil-military relations.

### **Methodology**

This paper provides a content analysis of both the US military's institutional perspective toward military intervention and the Clinton administration's specific rationale for intervening mili-

tarily in Kosovo. *Content analysis* means a focus on determining motives, values, beliefs, and attitudes from statements.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the paper examines what certain actors said and then deduces the underlying meaning, or content, behind the words. This paper focuses not on individuals, but rather on the military as an institution. Given that military members share certain “sociological background factors,” they are to some extent products of the military environment. This is not to say that military personnel are automatons. It merely places the analysis at the institutional rather than the individual level in acknowledgment of the general sociological effect the military has on individuals.

The difficulty in finding sources revealing specific JCS objections to military intervention in Kosovo drove this study to the institutional rather than individual level of analysis. The joint chiefs’ silence is due, presumably, to their professionalism in not revealing politically sensitive criticism of a sitting president’s foreign policy. While much has come out regarding military objections to the actual conduct of the war (a subject that lies more firmly in the military’s realm than policy planning), the chiefs’ role in the decision to fight for Kosovo is still somewhat of a mystery. One can expect more information on this topic after the Clinton administration’s term ends and the chiefs retire. One unnamed military source alluded to this possibility while denying the author’s requests for information on the chiefs’ views about military intervention in Kosovo: “Your paper will be long filed away and dusty before that information becomes available.”

## Structure

This paper is composed of six chapters. Following this chapter’s introduction and definitions, chapter 2 examines and describes the institutional character of the US military using sociology’s *new institutionalism*. It validates the institutional level of analysis in large organizations and details how institutional values, beliefs, and philosophies propagate and persist within the military.

Building on chapter 2's conclusion that institutional belief systems can exist in the US military, chapter 3 identifies and tests the presence of such a philosophy. It begins by presenting Samuel P. Huntington's claim that the US military possesses an institutional philosophy that he calls conservative realism. For clarification, the chapter then contrasts this philosophy with its counterpart, liberalism. Finally, using recent civil-military relations studies, it tests Huntington's claim regarding an institutionalized military philosophy.

Chapter 4 further develops the conservative and liberal philosophies identified in chapter 3 by applying them to international relations. The chapter compares and contrasts the conservative and liberal views of the world, especially regarding the use of military force. It explains why conservatives view war as a political instrument for furthering national interests, whereas liberals see war as a preventable aberration resorted to in the name of universal values. Finally, it uses a recent study to prove the US military indeed holds the conservative, national interest-based worldview.

Chapter 5 outlines the Clinton administration's justification for war in Kosovo. Content analysis of various actors' statements shows that the justifications clearly echo liberalism's philosophy, worldview, and conception of military intervention.

Chapter 6 summarizes this paper's findings. It concludes that the Pentagon resisted intervening militarily in Kosovo because the operation was undertaken for liberal values the military opposes. It then shows the greater implications of an institutionalized military aversion to humanitarian war, offering some points to ponder concerning such military actions in the future.

## **Definitions**

This paper's usage of certain words requires explanation. References to *the military* or *the Pentagon* are to the officer corps within the armed services and not the enlisted force or the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The author excludes the enlisted force because the study's focus is on policy makers in the military rather than the entire force. Conversely, the paper

excludes Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen because he is not a “product” of the US military and thus is not subject to the same sociological factors that affect career military officers.

The concept of *national interest* inevitably crops up in any discussion of warfare. This paper defines the term according to Donald Nuechterlein’s National Interest Matrix which is discussed in chapter 4. For now it is enough to note that Nuechterlein defines four levels of interest based on intensity. A *survival interest* exists when the physical existence of the country is in jeopardy because of attack or threat of attack. A *vital interest* exists when serious harm to the nation would occur unless strong measures, including the use of force, are employed to protect the interest. *Major interests* are situations where a country’s political, economic, or social well being may be adversely affected but where armed force is deemed unnecessary. Finally, *peripheral interests* are situations in which some national interest is involved, but the nation as a whole is not particularly affected by a given outcome.<sup>10</sup>

In referring to threats, this paper adopts the A-list, B-list, and C-list construction of former Defense Secretary William Perry and Assistant Secretary of International Security Policy Ashton Carter. These lists roughly parallel the first three levels of interest described above. A-list threats are those that threaten US survival. B-list threats are imminent threats to US interests, but not to the survival or way of life of Americans. C-list threats are important contingencies that indirectly affect US security, but they do not directly threaten US interests.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, conservatism and liberalism refer to different schools of thought and philosophical traditions within the field of international relations, and not necessarily to their everyday usage in American politics. *Conservatism*, often referred to as *realism*, is an international relations theory emphasizing the self-interested competition of sovereign states. *Liberalism*, sometimes called *Wilsonianism* or *internationalism*, emphasizes the rule of law and respect of individual rights. Chapters 3 and 4 explain these concepts in greater detail.

## Areas for Further Research

Although this study relies on some quantitative research, it is predominately qualitative in nature. Hence, while it argues that institutional philosophy was the primary source of Pentagon resistance to military intervention in Kosovo, this argument does not rule out other causal factors. Four alternative explanations for Pentagon resistance to military intervention in Kosovo were considered but rejected for lack of sources. The first alternative arose from application of Graham Allison's Organizational Behavior Model, in which organizational interests are paramount. Using this paradigm, the Pentagon might have resisted military intervention in Kosovo because intervention threatened such military interests as retention, budgets, and service branch prestige. While this explanation may have validity, no currently available information supports it.

A second possible explanation is interservice rivalry. While one can imagine that certain branches of the military might have had different views toward operations in Kosovo based on parochial service interests, the currently available evidence fails to adequately defend this explanation.

A third explanation could be that the interplay of the joint chiefs' individual personalities, philosophies, and interests determined the military's resistance. Although examining individuals from such a rational actor perspective is a valid analytical tool, the currently available sources do not support such an investigation.

Finally, one could explain the military's resistance to intervention in Kosovo by demonstrating that the proposed conduct of the conflict ran counter to military doctrine. Indeed, the author initially intended to make that argument in conjunction with the philosophical one. While the conduct of operations arguably failed, at least initially, to fulfill a number of doctrinal requirements, few currently available sources linked the planned conduct of Kosovo warfare to the chiefs' initial resistance. As this study focuses on the *decision* to fight in Kosovo vice the *conduct* of the fighting, using the latter to explain the former, especially in the absence of solid evidence, pushed the bounds of inference too far. When more sources become available, it may emerge that some or all of the JCS

were against military intervention because the initial objectives, rules of engagement, force structures, and planned application of force ran counter to joint or individual service doctrine.

#### Notes

1. Dr. Javier Solana, press statement, 23 March 1999, 3, on-line, Internet, 10 November 1999, available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-040e.htm>.
2. Nick Cook, "Kosovo: War of Extremes," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8, on-line, Internet, 8 September 1999, available from <http://defence.janes.com/defset.html>.
3. Quoted in "Verbatim Special: The Balkan War," *Air Force Magazine*, July 1999, 43.
4. Johanna McGeary, "Standoff in Kosovo," *Time*, 29 March 1999, 27.
5. "The Late March on Kosovo," *The Economist* 350, no. 812 (27 March–2 April): 53–54.
6. Sean D. Naylor, "NATO Approach to Kosovo Strike: A Losing Battle?" *Air Force Times*, 12 April 1999, 14.
7. H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 84.
8. Evert Vedung, *Political Reasoning*, trans. David McCune (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1982), 24.
9. *Ibid.*, 23.
10. Described in Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 29.
11. Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 11.

## Chapter 2

### **The Institutional Military**

*The visitor strolling the halls of the Pentagon will see scores of paintings and photographs depicting scenes and events of past actions, some mundane and some heroic. Each represents a decision; the decisions now provide powerful tokens of identity and rules for future action.*

—Graham Allison  
*Essence of Decision:  
Exploring the Cuban Missile Crisis*

Although the legal, medical, and clerical professions deal with important issues of life and death, only military members are expected, as a requirement of the mission to provide national security, both to put their lives at risk and take the lives of others. Within a democratic society that values individual life, the responsibility for applying and managing violence on behalf of the state differentiates the military from other institutions and society in general. It creates a military culture that strongly influences all members of the organization. This institutionalization molds and constrains military leaders to certain predictable patterns of behavior. According to Graham Allison's Organizational Behavior Model, if one understands these institutional effects, one can predict the institution's policies and viewpoints since they are results of regular patterns of behavior.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The New Institutionalism and the Military**

According to sociology's *new institutionalism*, institutions constrain individuals so that their interests emerge within normative and historical contexts.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that individuals lose their identities, but rather that institutions mold individual views by defining what is acceptable within the confines of historical experience and institutional expectations. As Robert Keohane says, "Institutions do not merely reflect the preferences and power of the units constituting them; the institutions them-

selves shape those preferences and that power.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, an institutional output such as a policy recommendation on military intervention in Kosovo is much more than the sum of the individual views of the JCS.

How does the military as an institution shape the chiefs’ views? It happens from absorption through socialization, education, on-the-job training, or acquiescence to convention.<sup>4</sup> Within the officer corps, the functional imperative of defending the nation’s security creates “complex vocational institutions which mold the officer corps into an autonomous social unit.”<sup>5</sup> In the Air Force, for example, these institutions include the Air Force Academy, Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air University, among others.

In attending such institutions and acting according to their espoused principles, officers internalize the institutional values, ideas, and language which each of the services consciously promotes. In the Air Force, for example, critical study of leadership, war theory, and military history constantly reinforce the Air Force core values of “integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.” Such study performs the role of *transmission*, a sociological process by which cultural understanding propagates.<sup>6</sup> By repeated exposure, ideas and theories become institutionalized. This acceptance influences everything from the way individuals lead their lives to how they view such decisions as, “Should the United States fight in Kosovo?”

Within the military, historical case studies are often used to transmit relevant lessons learned to succeeding generations of officers. This method increases continuity between the past and present so that certain views or acts become objectified into doctrine. Such doctrine, whether formal or not, colors the way military leaders conceptualize and draw inferences from situations involving the use of force.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, institutionalized doctrine and values create “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.”<sup>8</sup>

## Organizational Behavior Model

Graham Allison, in his 1999 update to the classic *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, uses the concept of institutionalism in formation of his Organizational Behavior Model. Allison maintains that acts and choices of large organizations are outputs according to regular patterns of behavior.<sup>9</sup> He applies Herbert Simon's idea of *bounded rationality*, in which actors' positions in organizations often determine their views. To explain, predict, and understand these views, one must understand the organization's goals and conceptualization of a situation.<sup>10</sup> For Allison, a key to explaining organizational output is analyzing the organization's perceptions, preferences, goals, and culture.<sup>11</sup>

### Summary

An institutionalized military culture affects individual military members. Institutionalization molds and constrains military leaders to certain predictable patterns of behavior. This molding of ideas occurs through transmission to succeeding generations of officers by, among other things, attendance and study at the services' educational institutions. The process presumably underlies the military's institutional view of man, the world, and war.

### Notes

1. Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman Press, 1999), 5.
2. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 10.
5. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 16.
6. Lynne G. Zucker, "The Role of Institutionalism in Cultural Persistence," in Powell and DiMaggio, 87.
7. Powell and DiMaggio, 20.
8. Ibid., 8.

## Chapter 3

### **Military Versus Liberal Philosophy**

*As Clausewitz said, "All war presupposes human weakness, and against that it is directed." No one is more aware than the professional soldier that the normal man is no hero. The military profession organizes men so as to overcome their inherent fears and failings. The uncertainty and chance involved in the conduct of war and the difficulty of anticipating the actions of an opponent make the military man skeptical of the range of human foresight and control.*

—Samuel P. Huntington  
*The Soldier and the State:  
The Theory and Politics of  
Civil-Military Relations*

The previous chapter discussed the possibility of institutionalized values and beliefs in the US military; this chapter confirms their existence. It begins by presenting Samuel P. Huntington's theory of an institutionalized military philosophy that he defines as *conservative realism*. It then compares and contrasts this philosophy with its antithesis, *liberalism*. Finally, the chapter tests the validity of Huntington's claim against the results of several studies of civil-military relations.

### **The Military Mind**

In his classic study of civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington argues that military officers are fundamentally different ideologically than their civilian counterparts. The "military mind" as he calls it, is an institutional result of the military's existence. The very need for the military assumes conflicting interests between individuals, and acknowledges violence as a means to promote or protect those interests. To the military professional, conflict is inevitable because people are selfish and egocentric and driven by needs for power, wealth, and security. This pessimistic view does not rule out elements of goodness, strength, and reason, but rather em-

phasizes, as Thomas Hobbes did, the inherent evil, weakness, and irrationality of man. For this reason, the “leviathan” of the state is created with the military as its source of external security. The main responsibility of the military within such a conception is to enhance the security of the state against competing nation-states.<sup>1</sup>

In relation to national military policy, Huntington maintains that the military mind views war as inevitable because of competing state interests. As just noted and at a more fundamental level, he claims the military professional sees war’s source in the nature of humanity itself. “To abolish war we must remove its cause, which lies in the imperfection of human nature.”<sup>2</sup> Given the belief that the causes of war lie in human nature, the military mind is skeptical of institutional devices for preventing war. Treaties, international law, and the United Nations, for example, are of little help in promoting peace; what matters are the power relationships between states.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to restriction of commitments and the avoidance of war, Huntington argues that although military professionals are not necessarily interested in political goals, they are deeply concerned about the relationship between political goals and military means. The soldier thinks “grand political designs and sweeping political goals are to be avoided, not because they are undesirable but because they are impractical. The military security of the state must come first. Moral aims and ideological ends should not be pursued at the expense of that security.”<sup>4</sup>

In their advice to policy makers, Huntington’s military professionals oppose reckless, aggressive, or belligerent action. As students of history, officers recognize the impossibility of predicting war’s outcome due to its uncertain nature. Given this uncertainty, the military professional believes that war should be a reaction to actual threats to the security of the state, and generally should not be used except as a final recourse.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, Huntington defines the military’s philosophy as one of conservative realism:

The military ethic emphasizes the permanence, irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature. . . . It recognizes the continuing likelihood of

wars among nation states. . . . It emphasizes the importance of power in international relations and warns of the dangers to state security. . . . It urges the limitation of state action to the direct interests of the state, the restriction of extensive commitments, and the undesirability of bellicose or adventurous policies.<sup>6</sup>

## **Liberalism**

Huntington goes on to contrast this military philosophy with liberalism. Contrary to the cynical Hobbesian view that people are self-interested, liberalism begins with the Lockian presumption that people are basically good. As a result, peace is the natural state rather than war. Since the sources of conflict are external to the individual, liberals believe that people must be free from political, social, and economic restraints upon their individual liberty. Because human behavior is a result of environmental more than innate factors, liberals believe behavior is pliable and can be improved through societal institutions. Thus, they trust to such institutional devices as international law, international courts, and international organizations rather than power-based relationships. While sometimes pacifistic, liberals may support a war fought to further liberal ideals. To them, war as an instrument of national policy is immoral while war on behalf of universally true principles of justice and freedom is not.<sup>7</sup>

If Huntington is correct, the military as an institution has a very different philosophy than that of liberalism. The following section tests Huntington's hypothesis of a conservative, realistic military philosophy.

## **Conservative Officer Corps**

Huntington claimed in the 1957 first edition of *The Soldier and the State* that military officers were, ideologically, conservative realists. More recently, *Wall Street Journal* defense reporter Thomas E. Ricks, in a widely read 1997 *Atlantic Monthly* article and subsequent book, wrote that there was a widening and dangerous gap between the post-cold-war US military and civilian society.<sup>8</sup> Are these claims valid today and can they be proven?

Fortunately, a couple of recently published studies test Ricks and Huntington's hypotheses. The most widely reported was conducted by Ole Holsti's Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP), which surveyed military and civilian leaders every four years between 1976 and 1996 on such issues as ideology, party affiliation, values, and foreign and domestic policy preferences. Holsti recently updated his findings through new data collected in 1998–99. Both of Holsti's studies confirm that Huntington and Ricks were correct about the conservative realism of military leaders compared with their civilian counterparts (see the appendix for study group breakdown).

### The Studies

Holsti's 1998–99 study showed that 67 percent of US military leaders considered themselves "somewhat" or "very conservative," compared with only 32 percent of nonveteran civilian leaders (table 1). Conversely, although only 4 percent of the military leaders considered themselves "somewhat" or "very liberal," 38 percent of nonveteran civilian leaders did.

**Table 1**

	<b>Ideological Identification of US Military and Civilian Leaders</b>						
	<b>1976</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Conservative Military/Civilian</b>	61/30	72/38	76/35	76/35	72/34	73/36	<b>67/32</b>
<b>Moderate Military/Civilian</b>	23/27	24/27	17/28	20/27	24/28	25/28	<b>28/28</b>
<b>Liberal Military/Civilian</b>	16/42	4/34	8/36	4/37	4/37	3/36	<b>4/38</b>

*Source:* Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the US Military and Civilian Society?: Some Further Evidence, 1998–99" (paper prepared for Triangle Institute for Security Studies' "Project on the Gap between the Military and Civilian Society," Wheaton, Illinois, 27–29 October 1999), table 9.

Some long-term ideological trends are also noticeable. While military leaders predominantly have identified themselves as conservative since the FPLP study began in 1976, civilian leaders have exhibited about equal percentages in identifying them-

selves as liberal and conservative. Both military and civilian leaders tend to be approximately 25 percent moderates, although military leaders were slightly below that figure during the 1980s, when they also posted their highest percentages as conservatives.

Ricks's ideological gap between military and civilian leaders has widened slightly since 1976. Military leaders now show 6 percent more conservatives and 12 percent fewer liberals, while nonveteran civilian leaders have about the same percentage of conservatives while becoming 6 percent less liberal. While the increasing conservatism of the military is striking, equally dramatic is the virtual disappearance of liberalism within the armed forces.

### Republican Officer Corps

The gap between military and civilian society is even more pronounced when one looks at party affiliation (table 2). In the same 1999 study cited above, 64 percent of military leaders listed themselves as Republicans, compared with only 30 percent of nonveteran civilian leaders. While only 8 percent of

**Table 2**

**Party Identification of US Military  
and Civilian Leaders**

	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	1999
<b>Republicans</b> <b>Military/Civilian</b>	33/25	46/28	53/30	59/29	61/30	67/34	<b>64/30</b>
<b>Independents</b> <b>Military/Civilian</b>	46/31	40/30	29/27	27/27	26/24	22/22	<b>17/20</b>
<b>Democrats</b> <b>Military/Civilian</b>	12/42	10/39	12/40	9/41	6/42	7/41	<b>8/43</b>

*Source:* Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the US Military and Civilian Society?: Some Further Evidence, 1998–99" (paper prepared for Triangle Institute for Security Studies' "Project on the Gap between the Military and Civilian Society," Wheaton, Illinois, 27–29 October 1999), table 8.

military leaders identified themselves as Democrats, fully 43 percent of the civilian leaders did.

The long-term trend of party affiliation within the military is particularly striking. Between 1976 and 1996, the percentage of military leaders associated with the Republican Party rose steadily from 33 to 67 percent, with a slight dip to 64 percent in 1999. Most of this increase came at the expense of military leaders describing themselves as Independents. In 1976 the top choice of military leaders (46 percent of respondents) was to identify themselves as Independents. Since then the percentage of military Independents has decreased every study year, adding up to only 22 percent in 1999. Civilian party affiliation was much more stable over this time, with the identification as Republicans, Democrats, and Independents being approximately 30, 40, and 25 percent, respectively.

## **Summary**

In sum, Huntington was partly right. Military officers are clearly more conservative than their civilian counterparts. This fact has sparked a great deal of recent debate on the importance of the military reflecting the larger society's values. While some, like Huntington, argue that a conservative military within a liberal society is necessary and good, others express concern that the gap isolates a military which should be representative of the democratic society it defends. Although this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, the implications are fundamental to the thesis that conservative philosophy was behind Pentagon resistance to humanitarian war in Kosovo.

What Huntington did not foresee was the increased partisanship of today's military. Increased identification with one political party has sparked debate over the proper role of the military in policy formulation. While purists believe the military should be apolitical, others acknowledge an important role for the military in advocating its positions within the political environment. Again, the debate is beyond the paper's scope. However, a predominantly conservative and Republican military viewpoint, without doubt, affects the institution's position regarding the use of force.

**Notes**

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 62–63.
2. Quoted in Huntington, 65.
3. Huntington, 65–66.
4. *Ibid.*, 68–69.
5. *Ibid.*, 69.
6. *Ibid.*, 79.
7. *Ibid.*, 90–91.
8. Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the US Military and Civilian Society?: Some Further Evidence, 1998–1999” (paper prepared for Triangle Institute for Security Studies’ “Project on the Gap between the Military and Civilian Society,” Wheaton, Illinois, 27–29 October 1999), 1.

## Chapter 4

### **Conservative Versus Liberal View of Force**

*I regard the Wilson-Bryan attitude of trusting to fantastic peace treaties, to impossible promises, to all kinds of scraps of paper without any backing in efficient force, as abhorrent. . . . A milk-and-water righteousness unbacked by force to the full is as wicked as and even more mischievous than force divorced from righteousness.*

—President Theodore Roosevelt

*This age is an age . . . which rejects the standards of national selfishness that once governed the counsels of nations and demands that they shall give way to a new order of things in which the only questions will be: Is it right? Is it just? Is it in the interest of mankind?*

—President Woodrow Wilson

Having shown that the military is predominantly conservative and Republican, this study extends the ideological discussion to the military's view of force in international relations. This chapter traces the roots of conservatism and liberalism, and explains how adherents of these philosophies view using force as an instrument of foreign policy. After comparing the two philosophies, this chapter tests the hypotheses that an institutionalized military view of force exists and that it is consistent with the conservative model of international relations.

### **The Conservative Worldview**

The conservative sees the world in terms of power relationships between sovereign states acting in accordance with their national interests. The philosophy originated after the Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the unity provided by the Catholic Church was rejected and collapsed. The states of Europe needed some new principle to justify their conduct.

They found it in the concepts of *raison d'état* and the balance of power. Each depended on the other. *Raison d'état* asserted that the well being of the state justified whatever means were employed to further it; the national interest supplanted the medieval notion of a universal morality. The balance of power replaced the nostalgia for universal monarchy with the consolation that each state, in pursuing its own selfish interests, would somehow contribute to the safety and progress of all the others.<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal Richelieu (Armand-Jean du Plessis, Duke de Richelieu), who was the first minister of France during most of the Thirty Years War, became the “father of the modern state system” through his relentless application of *raison d'état* for the benefit of France.<sup>2</sup> Despite being a cardinal in Catholic France, Richelieu put French geopolitical interests ahead of religious ones in opposing the Hapsburg attempt to reestablish Catholicism in Europe. By subsidizing both the Protestant king of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, and the Muslim Ottoman Empire’s efforts against the Holy Roman Emperor, Richelieu demonstrated that his only criterion in making alliances was that they served French interests.<sup>3</sup> Under such a philosophy, war was considered moral so long as it furthered the nation’s interests. Following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, this Machiavellian approach of using the national interest as the guiding light of foreign policy became the norm in Europe.

While *raison d'état* provided a rationale for individual state behavior, it failed in supplying answers to the challenge of world order.<sup>4</sup> Lacking an overarching world authority to protect them, weaker states saw stronger ones as threats to their existence. This resembled the Hobbesian “state of nature,” in which life was an unchecked strife between self-interested individuals. To escape the anarchy of this paradigm, individuals worked together to create the “leviathan” of the state. Like these individuals, the European states preferred a measure of security to total anarchy, but rather than depending on an international leviathan, they turned to the balance of power.

The balance of power thus became the companion to *raison d'état*, forming the second pillar of the conservative (classical realist) approach to international relations. According to author Chris Brown, different ways exist to define the balance of power, but all theories have a single or root idea: “This root

idea is the notion that only force can counteract the effect of force, and that in an anarchical world, stability, predictability, and regularity can only occur when the forces that states are able to exert to get their way in the world are in some kind of equilibrium.”<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically, the effect of a successful balance of power is that most nations and, consequently, the international system itself are more secure. In the same way that self-interested individuals interacting economically create a free market (according to Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations*), self-interested states interacting politically create an international system based on the balance of power. In both cases, the result of self-interest is benign as all reap the benefits, respectively, of a free market and a more secure international system.

### **The Realist View of War**

This is not to say that war becomes unnecessary or is irrational under a balance of power system. Rather, conservatives see war as a necessary and natural complement to the balance of power. Seen as a political instrument, war can both preserve the balance and bring about change.<sup>6</sup> Within this paradigm, sovereign states may have interests that the international political system cannot satisfy. Lacking an overarching world authority, these states may resort to the “self-help” of war to achieve their interests.

Although it seems intuitive that having many nations resolved to use war to further their interests is chaotic, disorderly, and dangerous, within a balance of power system, the opposite is true. War actually becomes a moderating influence. As Kenneth Waltz says, “The constant possibility that force will be used limits manipulations, moderates demands, and serves as an incentive for the settlement of disputes.”<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Waltz argues, the threat of war in the international system fulfills the same role as does the threat of strikes domestically. In labor disputes, the threat of strikes encourages labor and management to face difficult issues, try to understand each other’s problems, and work hard to find so-

lutions. The possibility that conflicts among nations may lead to long and costly wars has similarly sobering effects.<sup>8</sup>

While conservatives consider war legitimate and inevitable, they believe it should be undertaken only in the name of survival or vital national interests. Given the experience of the past century, in which World War II alone caused more than 55 million casualties, war is viewed as a costly and tragic occurrence that often proves difficult to control or predict.<sup>9</sup> Given war’s destructive capability and uncertain nature, the conservative views it as a last resort used only for the most important reasons. Donald Nuechterlein illustrates this view in his National Interest Matrix, which is the basis for figure 1.

**Intensity of Conflict**

Basic Interest at Stake	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of Homeland	X			
Economic Well-being		X		
Favorable World Order			X	
Promotion of Values				X

**Figure 1. Conservative National Interest Matrix**

*Source:* Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 29.

Placement of the Xs in this matrix shows the classical realist view of force. “Intensity of Interest” refers to how important a given interest is in a declining scale between “Survival” and “Peripheral” interests (see definitions section, in chapter 1). “Basic Interest at Stake” refers to categories of substantive interest, arranged in roughly descending order. The thick vertical line represents the demarcation between what a state should and should not support with armed force.<sup>10</sup> For the conservative, when expressed in terms of threats, this line represents the difference between those threats that can directly harm the United States or its way of life (A-list and

B-list threats) versus those that can only indirectly affect US security (C-list threats).

The conception that the nation should only fight for its survival or vital national interests is consistent with Huntington's summary of conservative realism in *The Soldier and the State*. He writes that the military man "urges the limitation of state action to the direct interests of the state, the restriction of extensive commitments, and the undesirability of bellicose or adventurous policies."<sup>11</sup> While war is the "continuation of politics by other means," moral aims and ideological ends should not be pursued at the expense of the military security of the state.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, the conservative philosophy of force stems from a "realistic" worldview in which sovereign nations act in their own best interests according to the principle of *raison d'état*, or its more modern form, Otto von Bismarck's *realpolitik*. The result of these efforts is a balance of power system that contributes, at least theoretically, to stability. Within such a system, war is a valid means of achieving and protecting national interests. Given war's destructive and costly nature, it should be invoked only as a last resort in support of national survival or vital interests.

### **The Liberal Worldview**

The liberal worldview gained prominence as a result of the tragedy of World War I. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, European leaders sought to refurbish the old balance of power system while American negotiators tried to break from what they saw as a failed model of international relations. In his famous Fourteen Points, President Woodrow Wilson told the Europeans that the international system should no longer be based on the balance of power but on ethnic self-determination, collective security, and open agreements.<sup>13</sup> Whereas President Theodore Roosevelt, a classical realist, believed that America should assume an international role because of its self-interest, Wilson's justification was more messianic: America had an obligation, not to the balance of power, but to spread its principles throughout the world.<sup>14</sup> For Wilson, these principles

were that peace depended on the spread of democracy, states should be judged by the same ethical standards as individuals, and national interest should be replaced by adherence to international law.<sup>15</sup>

This shift in focus from a predominantly national interest-based foreign policy to one based on universal principles is the defining difference between the conservative and liberal worldviews. Within the field of international relations, Wilson's thinking is summarized as *liberal internationalism*, or the adaptation of broadly liberal political principles to the management of the international system.<sup>16</sup> Its absorption into the foreign policy of virtually every US administration since is due in large part to faith in America's exceptionalism, a belief that the United States is morally superior to the rest of the world. This belief is the basis for a crusading ideology in which "America's special mission transcends day-to-day diplomacy and obliges it to serve as a beacon of liberty for the rest of mankind."<sup>17</sup> Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger writes, "It is above all to the drumbeat of Wilsonian idealism that American foreign policy has marched since his watershed presidency, and continues to march to this day."<sup>18</sup>

How does liberal internationalism contrast with conservative realism? Since liberals discount the Hobbesian view of self-interested man, they reject the conservative, Darwinian view that individuals and, by extension, states are locked in inevitable competition and conflict. To the liberal, peace, not war, is the natural condition since states have much more in common than not, which naturally promotes cooperation rather than conflict. As a result, the liberal internationalist is more supportive of international institutions that "pool" the efforts of states than the conservative realist, who is skeptical about the efficacy of such organizations.

### **The Internationalist View of War**

Whereas conservatives argue that war is inevitable, Wilson argued that a league encompassing all nations could effectively resolve crises without war.<sup>19</sup> If conflicts between nations arose, Wilson believed that binding international arbitration

was the key to peace. Assuming all nations had an equal interest in peace and would therefore unite to punish those who disturbed it, Wilson proposed a plan of collective security in which each country guaranteed the security of all others, thus eliminating the need for military alliances or a balance of power system. Law would replace war as the underlying principle of the system.<sup>20</sup>

Within this context, if collective security fails in deterring war, peace-loving nations of the world will unite to combat the aggressor. The cause they fight for, however, is not national interest but a stable international order. As Wilson said in requesting a declaration of war, “We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal domination of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the liberal fights for *values* in contrast to the conservative who fights for *interests*. To liberals, war as an instrument of national policy is immoral while war on behalf of universally true principles of justice and freedom is not.<sup>22</sup>

### **Does the Military Have the Conservative Worldview?**

Having defined the contrasting conservative and liberal views of the world, the question for this study becomes: Does the military in fact have the conservative worldview?

#### **The Holsti Study**

Ole Holsti’s previously referenced 1998–99 study of US civil-military relations asked a number of questions regarding foreign policy and the use of the military. Comparing the responses of military and nonveteran civilian leaders reveals clear divergence on either side of this study’s reported cleft between conservatives and liberals. The data does not demonstrate that the civilian leaders were liberal in their foreign policy views, but the differences between the groups does

show that the military leaders were significantly more conservative in international outlook.

Table 3 shows the percentages of military and nonveteran civilian leaders who responded that a given foreign policy goal was “very important.” As the table shows, military leaders viewed human rights, humanitarian concerns, and international cooperation as significantly less important than did their civilian counterparts. Only 13 percent of the military leaders thought “promoting and defending human rights in

**Table 3**  
**Respondents Listing Foreign Policy Goals as Very Important**

	Military Leaders	Nonveteran Civilian Leaders
Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	13	34
Helping to improve the standard of living in less developed countries	8	36
Combating world hunger	15	47
Strengthening the United Nations	19	29
Fostering international cooperation to solve common problems, such as food, inflation, and energy	42	60
Maintain superior military power worldwide	74	47

*Source:* Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the US Military and Civilian Society?: Some Further Evidence, 1998–99” (paper prepared for Triangle Institute for Security Studies’ “Project on the Gap between the Military and Civilian Society,” Wheaton, Illinois, 27–29 October 1999), table 10.

other countries” was “very important,” compared with 34 percent of the civilians. In regards to the humanitarian concerns of improving “the standard of living in less developed countries” and “combating world hunger,” only 8 and 15 percent, respectively, of the military leaders listed these as “very important” compared with approximately 36 and 47 percent of their civilian counterparts. Regarding international cooperation, approximately 10 and 20 percent fewer military leaders supported “strengthening the United Nations” and “fostering international cooperation to solve common problems,” respectively, than the nonveteran civil-

ians. Finally, nearly 75 percent of military leaders thought that “maintaining superior military power worldwide” was “very important” as compared with less than 50 percent of nonveteran civilians.

In summary, the military leaders were much less willing to regard the traditional internationalist foreign policy goals of promotion of human rights, humanitarian assistance, and international cooperation as “very important” than their civilian counterparts were. Conversely, military leaders were more willing than the civilians to support the classical realist foreign policy goal of maintaining superior military power worldwide, although some of this disparity may be due to the military’s institutional interest in maintaining a large force.

In another series of questions, Holsti asked the groups their positions on “certain propositions that are sometimes described as lessons that the United States should have learned from past experiences abroad.” Table 4 lists the percentages who either “agreed strongly” or “agreed somewhat” to certain propositions. To the statement, “The United States should give economic aid to poorer countries even if it means higher prices at home,” only 33 percent of the military leaders agreed compared with 52 percent of the nonveteran civilian leaders, showing once again that the military is much less willing to support the liberal idea of international humanitarian assistance than the civilians.

**Table 4**

**Respondents Agreeing with Given US Foreign Policy Propositions**

	Military Leaders	Nonveteran Civilian Leaders
The United States should give economic aid to poorer countries even if it means higher prices at home.	33	52
There is nothing wrong with using the Central Intelligence Agency to try to undermine hostile governments.	65	44
The United States should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power.	79	57

*Source:* Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the US Military and Civilian Society?: Some Further Evidence, 1998–99” (paper prepared for Triangle Institute for Security Studies’ “Project on the Gap between the Military and Civilian Society,” Wheaton, Illinois, 27–29 October 1999), table 11.

Responses for two other statements reflect the conservative realism of the military. In the first, 65 percent of military leaders agreed with using the Central Intelligence Agency to undermine hostile governments versus 44 percent of the civilian leaders. The military response is consistent with the classical realist tenet of putting national interest above moral concerns. Willingness to undermine a sovereign state through covert means runs directly contrary to the internationalist idea of using international institutions, international law, and world public opinion to control hostile threats. The survey response is a clear example of the military favoring national interests over universal values.

The second example of the military's conservative realism is the response to the statement: "The United States should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power." Seventy-seven percent of military leaders supported that statement versus 52 percent of nonveteran civilians. This comparison shows that the military leaders are more willing to use force to combat state aggression, a reflection of the realist idea that challenges to the world order must be met with force, unilaterally if necessary.

### **The Weinberger Doctrine**

Further evidence of the military's conservative worldview is its widespread acceptance of the so-called Weinberger Doctrine.<sup>23</sup> In a 1984 speech, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger described six major tests to be applied when considering the use of US combat forces abroad, each of which reflects the conservative view of war. Based primarily on the historical lessons of Vietnam and the 1983 bombing of US Marines in Beirut (and later affirmed through application in the Persian Gulf War), these principles have become highly institutionalized in the US military.

The first test is straight from Huntington's description of conservative realism:<sup>24</sup> "The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies."<sup>25</sup> Closely linked to this test and acknowledging the terrible cost of war, the sixth test states, "The commitment of

US forces to combat should be a last resort.”<sup>26</sup> This test directly reflects the conservative military belief that “war should not be resorted to except as a final recourse.”<sup>27</sup>

The second test echoes the conservative view that war is hard to control or predict,<sup>28</sup> so that if US troops are put into combat, “It must be with the clear intention of winning . . . or we should not commit them at all.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, given war’s high stakes and uncertain nature, it should not be resorted to without a full commitment.

The third test addresses the conservative desire to match military means to political goals.<sup>30</sup> “We should have clearly defined political and military objectives. And we should know precisely how our forces can accomplish those clearly defined objectives.”<sup>31</sup>

The fourth test reinforces the third by requiring that the forces committed be constantly reassessed and adjusted to adapt to the changing environment or changing objectives.<sup>32</sup> This idea both contributes to the “winning” of test two and the matching of means to ends of test three.

The fifth test stems from what Huntington called the “undesirability of bellicose or adventurous policies.”<sup>33</sup> It requires, “There be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.”<sup>34</sup> Having to gain such approval serves as a brake against open-ended or questionable military commitments.

Clearly, the military’s acceptance of the Weinberger Doctrine is consistent with the conservative worldview. More specifically, it embodies most of the conservative principles regarding the use of military force abroad.

## Summary

This chapter compared conservative and liberal philosophies about military intervention, and showed through survey data and the military’s acceptance of the Weinberger Doctrine that the Pentagon’s worldview is one of conservative realism. As demonstrated by survey data and consistent with that national interest-based view, the military was much less supportive of foreign policy goals related to human rights, humani-

tarian concerns, and international cooperation than were the civilians. Equally consistent with conservative realism, military leaders were much more supportive of strengthening the military, undermining hostile governments, and projecting US power. Military acceptance of the Weinberger Doctrine's principles reinforces the notion of an institutionalized Pentagon view toward military intervention.

#### Notes

1. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 58.
2. *Ibid.*, 58–59.
3. *Ibid.*, 62.
4. *Ibid.*, 66–67.
5. Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 105.
6. *Ibid.*, 103–4.
7. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 113–14.
8. *Ibid.*, 114.
9. Jimmy Carter, *Living Faith* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 100.
10. Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), 28–30.
11. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 69.
12. *Ibid.*, 68.
13. Kissinger, 19.
14. *Ibid.*, 30.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Brown, 23.
17. Kissinger, 46.
18. *Ibid.*, 30.
19. *Ibid.*, 52.
20. Brown, 24.
21. Kissinger, 48.
22. Huntington, 90–91.
23. John T. Correll, "The Use of Force," *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 12 (December 1999): 38.
24. Huntington, 79.
25. Quoted in Correll, 38.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Huntington, 69.
28. *Ibid.*, 63.

29. Ibid., 38.
30. Huntington, 68.
31. Quoted in Correll, 38.
32. Ibid.
33. Huntington, 79.
34. Quoted in Correll, 38.

## Chapter 5

### **The Clinton Administration Case for Intervening in Kosovo**

*The American people want their country's foreign policy rooted in idealpolitik as well as realpolitik. The United States is uniquely and self-consciously founded on a set of ideas, and ideals, applicable to people everywhere.*

—Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott

This chapter focuses on the nonmilitary side of the decision to intervene militarily in Kosovo. It outlines the Clinton administration's policy on intervention for human rights, and demonstrates how the lesson of Bosnia influenced the decision to intervene in Kosovo. Finally, it describes the administration's application of the legal concept of *humanitarian intervention*. Throughout the chapter, the case is made that the administration's policy toward human rights, both in theory and practice, clearly reflected the liberal worldview.

#### **Why Intervene?**

One can argue that the Clinton administration's decision to intervene militarily in Kosovo was inevitable due to "brinkmanship diplomacy" in the Rambouillet process (named after the city near Paris, France, where much of the failed negotiations took place). Under such an argument, failure to carry out Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and others' repeated threats of military force would have threatened the credibility and prestige of the United States. While this argument may have some validity, it is pure conjecture at this point. Granting the benefit of the doubt, this study assumes that the administration knew the possibility existed that its threats might not have the desired effect upon the Milosevic regime and that NATO, led by the United States, might be forced to act. Given this assumption, the Clinton administra-

tion must have concluded that the situation in Kosovo was worth the use of military force.

### **US National Security Strategy**

A good place to begin this analysis is with the Clinton administration's 1998 *National Security Strategy Report*, a congressionally mandated document outlining the nation's grand strategy, interests, and regional approaches to issues. In the chapter, "Advancing U.S. National Interests," the report says, "We seek a world in which democratic values and respect for human rights and the rule of law are increasingly accepted. This will be achieved through . . . promoting an international community that is willing and able to prevent or respond effectively to humanitarian problems."<sup>1</sup> It further states, "In some circumstances our nation may act because our values demand it. Examples include responding to . . . violations of human rights."<sup>2</sup>

While the emphasis of these selections is clearly on such liberal ideas as human rights, international law, and international community, these statements must be taken in the context of the entire document, which blends concepts from both the conservative and liberal views of the world. However, these statements do show a predisposition to act in reaction to violations of human rights. The intentionally vague qualifiers "in some circumstances" and "may act" demonstrate that the administration recognized the need for discrimination between cases.

### **Never Againism**

The Clinton administration's predisposition for intervening on behalf of human rights was strongly influenced by its involvement in Bosnia. President Clinton, Secretary Albright, and other national leaders of the Contact Group strongly believed they had waited too long to intervene in Bosnia, allowing thousands of needless deaths through "ethnic cleansing," a belief reaffirmed for the president by his reading of Richard Holbrooke's book, *To End a War*.<sup>3</sup> President Clinton drew from this experience when explaining America's Kosovo policy.

More than a month before the first NATO attacks in Kosovo and Serbia, he said, “Bosnia taught us [that] violence we fail to oppose leads to even greater violence we will have to oppose later at greater costs.”<sup>4</sup> Secretary Albright echoed the theme in March when she said, “We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbia authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with in Bosnia.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, in justifying the military intervention in Kosovo, Clinton repeated the theme: “In the Balkans, inaction in the face of brutality simply invites more brutality.”<sup>6</sup>

This concept of *never againism*, which weighed so heavily on the consciences of President Clinton and Secretary Albright, has classic liberal roots—concern for individual human life and preservation of human rights. Both the president and secretary of state accepted the liberal idea that the United States, as the world’s only superpower, had a moral obligation to take action when such principles were threatened. Guilt over late action in Bosnia (and no action in Rwanda, where one million people were savagely killed)<sup>7</sup> surely was reflected in National Security Advisor Anthony Lake’s 1996 comment, “When millions of human lives are at risk, the world’s most powerful nation cannot simply sit on the sidelines. The American people will not allow it—and that is to their credit.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Humanitarian Intervention**

While the notion of never againism influenced President Clinton to take early action in Kosovo to protect the lives and human rights of ethnic Albanians, the actual justification for military force came from the concept of *humanitarian intervention*, which is highly controversial in the realm of international law.<sup>9</sup> The putative doctrine of humanitarian intervention has two parts:

The use of force on behalf of universal values instead of the narrower national interests for which sovereign states have traditionally fought; and, in defense of these values, military intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states rather than mere opposition to cross-border aggression, as in the Gulf War of 1991.<sup>10</sup>

According to this idea, states can lose their legal right to internal noninterference (a basic right of sovereignty) in the

case of gross violations of human rights.<sup>11</sup> As John Shattuck, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, expressed it, “When early warning measures fail, active intervention becomes necessary, especially when large numbers of civilians are threatened by violations of international humanitarian law.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, according to Dr. Javier Solana, secretary general of NATO, NATO’s military action was directed toward

disrupting the violent attacks being committed by the Serb Army and Special Police Forces and weakening their ability to cause further humanitarian catastrophe. . . . Our objective is to prevent more human suffering and more repression and violence against the civilian population of Kosovo. . . . We must halt the violence and bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe now unfolding in Kosovo. . . . We must stop an authoritarian regime from repressing its people in Europe at the end of the twentieth century. We have a moral duty to do so.<sup>13</sup>

President Clinton added that Operation Allied Force was designed “to deter an even bloodier offensive against innocent civilians.”<sup>14</sup>

The application of humanitarian intervention in Kosovo has its roots in classical liberalism. When President Wilson spoke of fighting for “the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments,”<sup>15</sup> he could have been speaking on behalf of Kosovo’s ethnic Albanians. When Samuel Huntington wrote that “the liberal will normally support a war waged to further liberal ideals [because] war on behalf of universally true principles of justice and freedom” is moral,<sup>16</sup> he sounds remarkably like Dr. Solana defending war in Kosovo or Assistant Secretary of State Shattuck defining humanitarian intervention.

The similarity between the rhetoric of the Clinton and Wilson administrations is no coincidence. Both shared a liberal belief in America’s moral obligation to crusade for such universal values as democracy, human rights, and self-determination. In Kosovo, Clinton carried on the Wilson tradition as adapted by President James E. “Jimmy” Carter Jr., namely, that the civilized forces of the world have an obligation to enforce human rights.<sup>17</sup> What made Clinton’s contribution to

the liberal tradition unique was his willingness to intervene militarily on behalf of these liberal values. This so-called “Carterism with bullets” is a messianic, crusading, and hawkish view of the world that is entirely liberal.<sup>18</sup>

## Summary

The Clinton administration’s decision to intervene in Kosovo was based on its policy of intervention for human rights and was influenced by experience in Bosnia. The administration’s application of humanitarian intervention was an inheritance and extension of the liberal worldview. While promotion of human rights is nothing new in American foreign policy, pursuing a value-based policy with military force, or Carterism with bullets, is a new concept consistent with the liberal tradition.

## Notes

1. National Security Council, *National Security Strategy Report*, October 1998, 5; on-line, Internet, 10 November 1999, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/nschome.html#doc>.

2. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

3. Michael Elliot, “Mission Uncertain,” *Newsweek*, 5 April 1999, 19; Douglas Waller, “Packing Heat,” *Time* 153, no. 8 (1 March 1999), 33; Marc Weller, “The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo,” *International Affairs* 75, no. 2 (2 April 1999), 212.

4. “A Toe in the Kosovo Waters,” *The Economist* 350, no. 8107 (20–26 February): 58.

5. *Ibid.*, 58.

6. Elliot, 13.

7. Gerry Gendlin, “Dangers of the ‘Clinton Doctrine,’” *National Security Studies Quarterly* IV, issue 2 (Spring 1998): 58.

8. *Ibid.*, 53.

9. Michael Mandelbaum, “A Perfect Failure,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 5 (September–October 1999), 5; Weller, 217.

10. Mandelbaum, 5.

11. *Ibid.*, 6.

12. John Shattuck, “Promoting the Rule of Law in the Post-Cold War World,” *National Security Studies Quarterly* IV, issue 2 (Spring 1998): 81.

13. Dr. Javier Solana, press statement, 23 March 1999, 2; on-line, Internet, 10 November 1999, available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-040e.htm>.

14. Elliot, 18.

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15. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 48.

16. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 91.

17. Paul Starobin, "The Liberal Hawk Soars," *National Journal*, 14 May 1999, 3; on-line, Internet, 23 September 1999, available from <http://www.nationaljournal.com/njstories/0514nj1.htm>.

18. *Ibid.*, 3.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

*A democratic definition of the national interest does not accept the distinction between a morality-based and an interest-based foreign policy. Moral values are simply intangible interests. Leaders and experts may point out the costs of indulging these values. But if an informed public disagrees, experts cannot deny the legitimacy of public opinion. Polls show that the American people are neither isolationist nor eager to serve as the world's police. But finding a middle course is proving difficult and complex.*

—Joseph S. Nye Jr.

The US military holds an institutionalized philosophy of conservative realism. This philosophy stems from the nature of the military profession itself, and is transmitted to succeeding generations of officers through the military's unique cultural, historical, and educational traditions. The philosophy affects everything from how officers live their lives to how they view the world. Within this paradigm, the military views war as a legitimate political tool undertaken only as a last resort, and then only for promoting or defending the nation's survival or vital interests.

The Pentagon resisted the decision to intervene militarily in Kosovo, at least in part, because fighting for human rights was incompatible with the military's conservative philosophy. Indeed, the Clinton administration's justification for military intervention stemmed from the liberal, Wilsonian tradition of basing foreign policy on universal principles rather than interests. Such a rationale was antithetical to the military's interest-based, conservative realism.

### Significance for the Future

The US military's institutionalized conservatism and resistance to humanitarian war pose three issues for the future. First, because the military's conservative philosophy is institutional-

ized, it is deeply entrenched. Given the profession's unique culture, in which tradition and hard-learned lessons resonate, it is unlikely that the experience in Kosovo or the effects of a single administration can significantly alter the underlying military belief that the mission is to "fight and win the nation's wars" and that these wars must be based on the nation's survival or vital interests. While marginal, short-term changes in force posture or philosophy may occur due to the efforts of a given administration, bureaucratic resistance to such change will be strong.

Second, civil-military relations will inevitably be better when administrations share the military's conservative philosophy. Liberal administrations will find little Pentagon support for humanitarian war and related military operations. Although respect for civilian control of the military is perhaps the most deeply entrenched value in the US armed forces, military resistance to liberal applications of force could strain the civil-military relationship to the point where the military's advisory role diminishes. Such diminishment occurred in the early years of the Vietnam War with disastrous consequences. To avoid such occurrences in the future, military and civilian leaders must recognize and bridge the philosophical gap separating them through mutual respect and earnest engagement.

Finally, a conservative military resistant to cavalier uses of military force serves the nation's interests. To prevent America from searching, in John Quincy Adams's words, for "monsters to destroy," a conservative military, armed with the institutional memory of past wars won and lost, serves as an advisory brake to ill-conceived policies. Its advice, whether accepted or not, encourages a president to weigh carefully the risks to American servicemen and women against the nation's policy objectives. Armed with such advice, the president can better attempt to fulfill Leo Tolstoy's dictum: "And it is as much the duty of anyone who governs to avoid war as it is the duty of a captain of a ship to avoid shipwreck."<sup>1</sup>

**Notes**

1. Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is within You: Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as a New Theory of Life*, trans. Constance Garnett (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 153.

## Appendix

### 1998–99 Survey of American Military Officers and Civilian Leaders

<b>Military Leaders</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Army War College	72	9.9
Naval War College	334	46.2
National Defense University	156	21.6
Capstone	68	9.4
Command and Staff College	<u>93</u>	<u>12.9</u>
Total	723	100.0

<b>Civilian Leaders</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Who's Who in America	575	58.1
Media	44	4.4
Politics	46	4.7
Clergy	65	6.6
State Department	37	3.7
Foreign Policy Experts	57	5.8
Who's Who in American Women	80	8.1
Labor Leaders	31	3.1
Duke Seniors	<u>54</u>	<u>5.5</u>
Total	989	100.0

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