

PAST EXPERIENCE AND PRESIDENTIAL POLICY MAKING: VIETNAM AND AMERICAN STRATEGIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GULF CRISIS

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of U.S. power was evident after World War II. This was partly due to the relative decline of the three major powers: France, Britain and Germany. Having been ravaged by the first and second World Wars, these nations' economic capacities could not sustain their global obligations. American losses in the wars were in no way equivalent to those of the European powers, but, "with its economic dominance and sustained political will, the United States was catapulted into the world stage to fill the vacuum created by the demise of European powers."¹

Prior to World War II, American foreign policy was based on the doctrine of "isolationism," or "unilateralism," in which the United States adopted a foreign policy posture independent of the European alliance. This permitted the U.S. to intervene selectively without the burden of assuming responsibility for a global balance of power.² American unilateralism, often referred to as "non-alignment," was sustained because of the overriding commitment to maintain a global balance of power.³

Following the "British retreat" in 1947, when the British Government officially declared its inability to uphold its foreign policy obligations -- especially in regard to Greece, Palestine, Turkey and India -- the United States, in an attempt to fill the void and serve as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism, shifted its foreign policy strategy from unilateralism to containment.⁴ The doctrine of containment eventually became the centerpiece of the Truman foreign policy. In enunciating his foreign policy ideology, President Truman in March of 1947 called for a two-tier approach of supporting regimes opposed to Communism and extending military, technical, and economic aid to regimes friendly to the United States.⁵

The policy of containment survived a series of global challenges until its application in Vietnam by the Johnson Administration. The Vietnam War resulted in the breakdown of consensus in American foreign policy. Even "after the United States had largely withdrawn from Vietnam, Congressional fervor demanded new restraints be placed on the President, resulting in the passage of the 1973 War Powers Resolution."⁶ This era has been described as the period of helplessness, shame and retreat; the mood has been called the "Vietnam Syndrome."⁷

Subsequent U.S. Administrations' attempts to resurrect American pride from the disappointments and disillusionments failed. In November of 1979, during the

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1 Everett Carl Ladd, *The American Policy*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 637-638.

2 *Ibid.*, 638.

3 John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 3.

4 James Lee Ray, *Global Politics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 31.

5 James A. Nathan and James K. Oliver, *United States Foreign Policy and World Order* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1981), 56-74.

6 *Congressional Quarterly*, (April 6, 1991): 872.

7 Stephen Budiansky and Bruce B. Auster, "A Force Reborn," *U.S. News and World Report*, (March 18, 1991): 30.

Carter Administration, the American Embassy and staff were seized in Tehran, Iran. This challenge added to the sense of frustration over America's weakness. Even a rescue operation to release the hostages in April 1980 was futile. Jean Kirkpatrick, on the basis of this perception, accused the Carter Administration of cultivating in America an attitude of "defeatism, self doubt, self denigration and self-delusion--a tendency that reflected the spirit of Munich".⁸

Ronald Reagan's anti-communist and interventionist doctrines were heralded as a panacea for self confidence in America's will to control global events.⁹ The election of Ronald Reagan was construed to be a victory for those who rejected the idea of the "inevitability of America's decline and a watershed in its history that would mark the end of the period of retreat."¹⁰ Unfortunately, U.S. military ventures in Lebanon brought to light the lingering remnants of the memory of the Vietnam failure. In October 1983, the U.S. Marine barracks at the Beirut International Airport were attacked by terrorists; two hundred forty-one American troops were killed. The troops were sent to Lebanon on a peace-keeping mission in response to the Israeli invasion. In February 1984, as a result of mounting public pressure, President Ronald Reagan evacuated all remaining U.S. forces from Lebanon, but the American humiliation never abated.¹¹

One of the major foreign policy tests for the Bush Administration came in 1990 in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The event was followed by a series of extensive debates regarding appropriate U.S. responses to the invasion. Approaches to these responses would inevitably reflect the American experiences in Vietnam, supporting the idea that past experiences influence public policy.¹² Thus, the central premise of this paper is that the policy options and strategies adopted by the United States, in reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, were shaped by the Vietnam experiences. This paper, therefore purports to:

1. Give a background account of American involvement in Vietnam.
2. Identify the problems that undermined American foreign policy in Vietnam.
3. Compare and contrast U.S. foreign policy approaches as illustrated in its conduct during the Vietnam and Gulf Wars.
4. Identify problems and concerns raised by the Vietnam conflict that resurfaced in the Gulf crisis, and present strategies used by the Bush Administration while addressing these concerns in its management and execution of the Gulf War.
5. Provide the framework with which to understand and predict American foreign policy attitudes and responses to other global challenges by the Clinton Administration.

THE U.N. SYSTEM AS AN AGENT OF LEGITIMATION

In its approach to the Gulf crisis, the United States learned from its experience in Southeast Asia. Its involvement in the Vietnam conflict was resented by both China and the Soviet Union, who at the time branded it an imperialist move. It should be

⁸ Jean J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon*, (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute), 1983.

⁹ Robert E. Osgood, "The Revitalization of Containment," *Foreign Affairs*, 60, 3 (1982): 469.

¹⁰ Whittle Johnston, "Reagan Foreign Policy: An Assessment," *Perspectives on Political Science*, 19, 1 (Winter 1990): 39-42.; Donald E. Nuechterlein, "The Reagan Doctrine in Perspective," *Ibid.*, 19, 1 (Winter 1990): 43-49.

¹¹ Robert E. Hunter, "The Reagan Administration and the Middle East," *Current History*, (Jan. 1989): 57.

¹² Felix A. Nigro and Lloyd G. Nigro, *Modern Public Administration*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 159-160.

noted, that the international climate then was not conducive for the convergence of interests on any foreign policy issues because of the Cold War. The essence of international consensus on the Gulf problem was to give the impression at home that the world was on the American side, and that its actions were not unilaterally conceptualized, as was the case in Vietnam. The relations between the U.S. and the communist states, including the Soviet Union, regarding Vietnam, was plagued by the "Cold War Syndrome" because their positions on pressing international issues were priced on ideological considerations rather than the basic precepts of international law.¹³

The post Cold War relations between the United States and the Soviet Union thawed this old superpower rapprochement due to Gorbachev's "new thinking" doctrine. This concept was predicated on the assumption that the prevailing world situation of confrontation between states based on ideology was irrelevant to contemporary national and human welfare, and should be replaced by economic, scientific and technological exchanges for the long term survival of the Soviet Union as a political entity.¹⁴ Since the "new thinking" policy was instituted in the Soviet Union, its relations with the United States improved dramatically. This, in turn, narrowed their outlook on regional and international issues. The Bush Administration took advantage of this closeness to tackle the Gulf conflict, especially in the United Nations' forum where both nations held veto power on resolutions which originated from the Security Council.

The imperative of reaching an international agreement in the condemnation of Iraq over its invasion and occupation of Kuwait, and the punitive actions to be taken by the international community, aimed to give the impression that it was a concerted effort by the world body. Any sacrifice made by the United States, either unilaterally or otherwise, to uphold a universal principle under the aegis of the world body was a worthy endeavor.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on the second of August, 1990, President George Bush reacted by freezing Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets in the United States. He banned trade and other transactions with Iraq, including air and sea travel. The U.N. Security Council unanimously called for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. The Council met in response to Kuwait's urgent request (S/21423), as well as a similar request (S/21424) by U.N. Resolution 660 (1990), sponsored jointly by Canada, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁵

The significance of the above resolution was that the "big five" -- all the members of the Security Council -- condemned the invasion in very strong and uncompromising terms. August 6, 1990 witnessed a joint Soviet and American call for a halt to international arms exports to Iraq. On the same day, the U.N. Security Council voted to prohibit its members from importing or exporting either Iraqi or Kuwaiti goods. Resolution 661 (1991) which was adopted by a vote of thirteen in favor, zero against and two abstentions (Cuba and Yemen) provided that all states should cut off dealings with Kuwait and Iraq except on humanitarian grounds, which were

13 E. J. Dionne, "Drawing Lessons from History: The U.S. Enters the Gulf with Memories of Munich and Vietnam," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Aug. 13-19, 1990): 6.

14 W. Bruce Weired, "Soviet New Thinking and U.S. Foreign Policy," *World Affairs*, 150, 2 (Fall 1988): 59-65.; Daniel R. Kempton, "New Thinking and Soviet Policy Towards South Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 28, 4 (1990): 545-572.

15 "Comprehensive Mandatory Sanctions Imposed Against Iraq," *U.N. Chronicle*, (Dec. 1990): 5-22.

subject to the approval of the United Nations.¹⁶

On August 7, 1990, President Bush dispatched U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf to deter further Iraqi aggression and to protect American interests in the region.¹⁷ By August 8, U.S. officials had acknowledged the strength of American forces in Saudi Arabia to be about 50,000. The following day, the U.N. Security Council declared Iraq's annexation of Kuwait "null and void" and demanded that Iraq rescind its actions purporting to annex Kuwait. Resolution 662 (1990) called on states, international organizations, and specialized agencies not to recognize that annexation and to refrain from any actions that might be interpreted as an indirect recognition of the annexation.¹⁸

On August 16, the U.S. informed the Security Council via Communique (S/21537) that, at the request of Kuwait, it had joined in the interception of vessels seeking to trade with Iraq or Kuwait in violation of U.N. mandatory sanctions. Hence, on August 18, U.S. ships fired warning shots across the bows of two Iraqi tankers in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. The Security Council, on August 25, voted to authorize multi-national naval forces to enforce the anti-Iraq embargo. Resolution 665 (1990) called on those states which were cooperating with the Government of Kuwait in deploying maritime forces in the Gulf, to use such measures commensurate to the specific circumstances as might be necessary under the Council's authority to halt all shipping in order to inspect and verify their cargoes and destinations, and to ensure strict implementation of the sanctions imposed on Iraq.¹⁹

The United Nations voted on September 25 of that year to extend the anti-Iraq boycott to aircraft. The significance of Resolution 670 (1990) was that it convened under the auspices of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Under this resolution, states were authorized to deny landing and overflight rights to any aircraft destined for Iraq or Kuwait, unless it was inspected to determine that its mission was not in violation of the provisions of Resolution 661 or 670.²⁰

The U.N. Security Council voted 12-2 on November 29 to authorize the use of "all means necessary" to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait, in the case they failed to withdraw by January 15. It was the first time since the end of the Korean war in 1950 that the United Nations authorized the use of force against a member nation. By passing this use of force resolution, the world body, in effect, legitimized the use of force in resolving international disputes. As Chris Raymond wrote, this was "essentially an American operation legitimized by a United Nations Security Council decision."²¹ The ideological significance of the vote on U.N. Resolution 678, authorizing the use of force, was that the Soviet Union and the United States voted in favor, while China abstained. Even the abstention vote by China, short of an outright veto of the resolution, had the effect of acquiescence.²² Once again, solidarity between traditional enemies was established.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷ George Bush, "U.S. Increases Troop Commitment in Operator Desert Shield," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 1, 11 (Nov. 12, 1990), 258.

¹⁸ *U.N. Chronicle*. (Dec. 1990): 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ *U.N. Chronicle*. (Dec. 1990): 21.

²¹ Chris Raymond, "After 20 Years of Studying Conflicts Among Nations, A Political Scientist Offers His Thoughts on War," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (Feb. 3, 1991): A5-A6.

²² *U.N. Chronicle*. (Mar. 1991): 47.

DOMESTIC CONSENSUS AND THE POLITICS OF BODY COUNT

Since the Vietnam War, in which the U.S. reportedly lost 58,000 soldiers, American foreign policy makers have become sensitive to foreign policy decisions that require the presence of U.S. troops on the ground, and the ultimate risk to which they are exposed. In other words, American foreign policy has become responsive to domestic pressures and realities. Foreign policy in this case denotes the "actions and purposes of American government to territories beyond its national borders."²³ The response of American policy to internal forces is an important concept in international relations. Domestic climate consistently shapes foreign policy more strongly than objectives and external conditions, while various levels of public attitudes and emotions condition foreign policy as well.²⁴

As state characteristics become primary causes of foreign policy behavior, a society's economic institutions and social structures underlie the actions of its decisions. This means that policy makers' actions result from concern or responses to internal elements and dynamics.²⁵ Similarities between domestic and foreign policies are once again becoming blurred.

Foreign policy often develops out of domestic, political, and policy priorities. Consequences of domestic or foreign policy decisions have a spill-over effect on each other. A case in point is the American political objectives in the Middle East and the U.S. energy policy at home.²⁶ An illustration of domestic politics affecting U.S. foreign policy took place in October 1983. The United States had deployed its troops as a peace-keeping force in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The U.S. Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport were attacked by terrorists. Two hundred forty-one American troops were killed. Due to public reactions to the killings, President Ronald Reagan ordered the withdrawal of remaining U.S. troops in February 1984.²⁷

Reluctance to sacrifice America's children in foreign theaters of conflict has popularized the wars of proxy. The conflicts between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the Cold War period were characterized by the use of proxy which relied on support of a third party state against Soviet interests, in this case, to fight or destabilize Soviet client states or allies. This policy of surrogacy has been used by the U.S. as a bulwark against Soviet hegemonic influences and ambitions in the third world. Examples are not far fetched. In Afghanistan, the U.S. supported, financially and militarily, the Mujahedeen fighting the central government and puppet regime in Kabul, which was installed by the Soviet government after its invasion in 1979. The Reagan Administration significantly increased its financial and military aid to the Mujahedeen to about \$280 million.²⁸

Following the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, the Angolan National Government, ruled by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) under Augustino Neto, was supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union. After the death of Neto, Jose Eduardo Santos became his successor. The United States

23 Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structures of Foreign Policy," *Daedalus*, 65, 2 (Spring 1966): 503-529.

24 James N. Rosenau, *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969): 172.

25 H. Bliss and M. Glen Johnson, *Beyond The Water's Edge*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1975): 27-47.

26 Robert E. Hunter, "The Reagan Administration and Middle East," *Current History*, (Jan. 1989): 4, 57.

27 Carrol J. Doherty, "Covert Aid: Wars of Proxy Losing Favor as Cold War Tensions End," *Congressional Quarterly*, (Aug. 25, 1990): 2723.

28 *Ibid.*

continued its support of the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), headed by Jonas Savimbi. U.S. support for UNITA began in 1975 with the Reagan Administration, and was continued by President Bush who provided UNITA about \$60 million in covert aid.²⁹

Since 1982, the U.S. has opposed Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. It has supported resistance groups led by former Cambodian leader, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and former Prime Minister Sonn Sann. However, their alliance with the notorious Khmer Rouge, which has been implicated in the death of one million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979, generated congressional opposition in the United States. Thus, the Bush Administration announced its withdrawal of support for the coalition.³⁰ Throughout the Reagan era, the U.S. government also supported the Contra movement in Nicaragua, whose goal was to topple the Sandinista government, headed by President Daniel Ortega. The Sandinista regime came to power after the 1979 overthrow of dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle.³¹

The theory of proxy in foreign policy assumes that the United States, for fear of domestic opposition against human cost, will use its clients to fight its wars. Sensitivity to the possibility of high casualties undoubtedly featured in U.S. approaches to the Gulf crisis. The Bush Administration made sure that an overwhelming force was present on the ground, in the event that if it were to be used, its massive nature would bring the war to a quick end. This technique is thought to cost less in human toll, compared to slow and prolonged warfare. Hence, on August 7, 1990, President Bush dispatched U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia to serve as a deterrent to possible Iraqi incursion into Saudi territory.³²

By August 8, 1990, American officials admitted the strength of troops to be about 50,000, and on August 22, the President called up more than 40,000 reserves--an action President Lyndon Johnson could not take for fear of triggering Chinese and Soviet interventions in Indochina. The number of U.S. troops by October 16, 1990 had reached 200,000. By November 8, President Bush ordered the near doubling of U.S. forces, saying that the U.S. must have an "adequate offensive" option. Consequently, the Administration scrapped plans for troop rotation.³³

At this stage in the conflict, skepticism that a war in the Gulf could be averted grew. There was also growing concern about the troop make-up, and the relative impact in terms of death count and wounded relating to various ethnic groups in the U.S. Debate intensified, especially in the black community over "shared sacrifice"--the fact that "blacks who constitute 23% of the military and only 12% of the general population would die disproportionately in war."³⁴

The Bush Administration allayed fears concerning the high cost of American lives in a possible war by reiterating that it would not be another Vietnam; American troops would be given the best possible support, and would not be asked to fight

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Carrol J. Doherty, "Covert Aid: Wars of Proxy Losing Favor as the Cold War Ends," *Congressional Quarterly*, (Aug. 25, 1990): 2723.

³¹ Richard L. Millet, "Nicaragua: A Glimmer of Hope?" *Current History*, (Jan. 1990): 21-37; see also Howard J. Wiard, "United States Policy in Latin America," *Ibid.* (Jan. 1990): 1-31.

³² George Bush, "U.S. Increases Troop Commitment in Operation Desert Shield," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 1, 11 (Nov. 12, 1990): 258.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Juan Williams, "Black Troops, Black Leaders and the War in the Gulf," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Jan. 28-Feb. 3, 1991): 26.

with their hands tied behind their backs.³⁵ Furthermore, on August 9, 1990, President Bush officially notified Congress that the deployment of troops should not be construed to mean that hostilities were imminent, but that it was being used as a coercive strategy to force Iraq to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait in compliance with U.N. resolutions.

This rationalization, however, was interpreted to mean an instant attempt by the Administration to circumvent the requirements of the 1973 War Powers Resolution. The success of this strategy, in winning public and institutional support on the Gulf policy, was underscored by the statement made by the Majority Leader George Mitchell prior to the Senate votes on SJ Resolution 2 and HJ Resolution 77. He stated that if the Administration was indeed "trying to prevent war, divisions over policy could serve to undermine that threat, perhaps making an actual military confrontation more likely."³⁶

In the final assault against Iraqi troops on January 16, 1991, the air campaign took precedent over the ground war. The U.S. and its allied forces attacked and destroyed arms depots, roads, tanks, missile sites, airfields, and bridges. Dropping of leaflets, urging immediate Iraqi troop surrender and instructions and steps to follow, was intensified. Retired U.S. Army General Don Starry was quoted as saying, "We just have to hurt them to make the ground operation much easier."³⁷

Extended debates over the utility and effectiveness of air war reflected the concern and sensitivity to the casualty question. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) urged reliance on air strikes to bring Iraq to its knees.³⁸ Committee Chairman Les Aspin (D-Wis.) expressed doubt that the air war would be decisive, but predicted that it "would continue for about ten to fourteen days before the ground option could be seriously considered."³⁹ Even Norm Dicks (D-Wash.), a member of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, noted that "there was absolute unanimity behind this strategy of trying to do as much as we could by air before deciding to commit ground forces."⁴⁰

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

The doctrine of a "just war" states that under certain circumstances, a war can be good--not in the sense of being pleasant or intrinsically desirable, but in serving the welfare of a nation and the cause of peace.⁴¹ One of the reasons why public support for the Vietnam War eroded was the perception that it was morally dubious and indefensible, given its cost both financially and in human toll. The relationship between moral value choices and strategic considerations in U.S. foreign policy has been tested before. At the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, President John F. Kennedy was confronted by the foreign policy option of taking limited military action by bombing Soviet missiles and risking a nuclear retaliation, or

35 "Bush Announces War on Iraq, Assures We Will Not Fair," *Congressional Quarterly*. (Jan. 19, 1991): 197.

36 *Congressional Quarterly*. (Dec. 1, 1990): 4004.

37 Stephen Budianski, et al., "Preparing the Ground: U.S. Commanders are Counting on Mobility, Air Support and New Ways to Find the Enemy," *U.S. News and World Report*. Feb. 4, 1991): 32-41.

38 Pat Towell, "The Gulf War: The Initial Airstrike Results, Numerous Hits, Few Losses," *Congressional Quarterly*. (Jan. 19, 1991): 184.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

41 Thomas Magstadt and Peter M. Schotten, *Understanding Politics*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 473.

imposing a naval blockade against Cuba.

But at the urging of Robert Kennedy, then the Attorney General, and against the advice of Dean Acheson, the President chose the blockade option. Robert Kennedy had warned that a surprise attack by the mighty U.S. against Cuba, a small state, could not be undertaken if America were to maintain moral positions at home and around the world.⁴² One way the United States tried to uphold its moral image was to portray Iraqi actions as so barbarious, that they warranted or justified the intervention of a moral state, and that such intervention would have to be conducted in a humane manner.

On September 17, 1990, the Bush Administration, through Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, fired Air Force Chief of Staff Michael J. Dugan for saying in an interview that Baghdad would be flattened in the event of an air attack on Iraq. Such a statement recalled memories of genocide and reckless misuse of power, in the light of which America has tried not to portray itself. Cheney had charged Dugan with "poor judgement" for revealing classified information after the story was run by the *Los Angeles Times*. The consequence of this story was the Pentagon reinstating the wall between the media and the military.⁴³

President Bush compared Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler on November 1, 1990, noting that Hitler didn't respect much, but at least he did "respect the legitimacy of the embassies." It was a way of shaping both domestic and external public opinions to support his Gulf policy in order to stop what he called the "Saddam madness." It should be recalled that on August 23, 1990, Hussein paraded British hostages on Iraqi television. The British government called the act a "repulsive charade." Also, on August 24, 1990, Iraqi troops surrounded American and European embassies in Kuwait after their governments declined Iraqi requests to close them. This was followed by the raid on Canadian and European diplomatic compounds and the brief taking hostage of three French diplomats by the Iraqi forces on September 14, 1990.

Before the November Hitler-Hussein comparison, Bush had told Congressional leaders on October 30, 1990, that he was growing impatient with the barbarious treatment of western hostages in Iraq. Perhaps such a negative portrayal of Iraq persuaded her to bow to the pressure of a gradual release of all remaining hostages on November 18, provided there was no war. A *Newsweek* poll, to determine the attitudes of American public toward the comparison of Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, strikingly showed a near even split. Of the respondents, 53% agreed, while 41% disagreed.⁴⁴

The image of Iraq and its leadership was further damaged when, on November 21 and 22, President Bush and congressional leaders visited Saudi Arabia. Bush emphasized the dangers that Iraq's nuclear weapons development posed to the world. Concerns heightened and opinions shifted against Iraq when it was recounted that it used chemical weapons in its war with Iran in the 1980s.

Consistent reports from refugees of the civil war in Turkey, and physicians for human rights organizations, indicated that Iraq also used poison gas against Kurdish

42 Julius Emeke Okolo, "Morality and Realism in Nigerian Foreign Policy," *World Affairs*, 150, 2 (Fall 1988): 69-83.

43 Rick Atkinson, "Candor May Be the First Casualty: The Story Behind the Firing of Air Force General Dugan," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Oct. 1-7, 1990): 23.

44 Tom Morganthau, et al. "Should We Fight," *Newsweek*, (Nov. 26, 1990): 26.

civilians. It should be recalled that after the destruction of Iraq's nuclear reactor by Israel in 1980, Iraq warned that if provoked in similar acts by Israel again, it would wipe out half of Israel's population. A group of U.S. senators, headed by Robert Dole (R-Kansas), who traveled to Baghdad to verify the statement, were convinced that it was not an empty threat.⁴⁵

ROLE OF THE PRESS: NATIONAL SECURITY V. the 'RIGHT TO KNOW'

Since the firing of Air Force Chief of Staff Michael Dugan on September 17, 1990, relations between the press and the Pentagon became strained over the public's right to know and national security. The military instituted the "pool" system of conducting reporters in the war theater. The system was established in 1984 by the Pentagon in response to public and congressional complaints that journalists had been excluded from covering the U.S. invasion of Grenada. The pool system was presumably designed to make the press coverage possible, guarantee that certain information vital to American national interest was protected, and to protect the safety of the journalists.⁴⁶ But the earliest information on the Gulf War appeared distorted by the military information units bent on controlling the words and images that emerged from the battle fields.⁴⁷

The pool method allowed reporters to accompany military escorts to selected sites with their reports subject to military security review before transmission. This practice constitutes censorship. The Bush Administration, cognizant of how the power of images could adversely affect public opinion over the conduct of the war, took the steps as a precautionary measure.⁴⁸ Previous attempts to deny the public access to information have generated much controversy. On the bureaucratic level, the federal agencies, by virtue of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), have provided access to agency records. The FOIA was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 4, 1967.⁴⁹

The President believed that a democracy works best when the people have all the information that the security of the nation permits, and that no one should be able to pull the curtains of secrecy around decisions that can be released without harm to public interest.⁵⁰ In signing the FOIA legislation, President Johnson noted that "the United States is an open society in which the people's right to know is cherished and guarded."⁵¹ In another instance, President Nixon refused to make available to Watergate prosecutors certain tape recordings and documents implicated in the Watergate hearings.

Nixon had claimed the power of "executive privilege," an inferred power, as the basis to withhold information from Congress, the judiciary and other entities. But in *Nixon vs. the United States* (1974), the Supreme Court rejected Nixon's contention

45 Thomas L. McNaughter, "Ballistic Missiles and Chemical Weapons: The Legacy of the Iran-Iraq War," *International Security*, 15, 2 (1990): 5-34.

46 Joseph L. Galloway, "Who's Afraid of the Truth?" *U.S. News and World Report*, (Feb. 4, 1991): 49.

47 Howard Kurtz, "The Press Pool's Chilling Effect Covering the War," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Feb. 18-24, 1991): 12.

48 Patrick J. Sloyan, "The War the Administration Isn't Going to Let You See," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Jan. 21-27, 1991): 23.

49 L. G. Sherick, *How To Use the Freedom of Information Act*, (New York: Arco Publishing, 1978), 7.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*

that the separation of powers doctrine precludes judicial review of a President's claim to privilege, and ruled that "neither separation of powers nor the claim of confidentiality of high level communications could provide him immunity from judicial process under all circumstances."⁵²

Despite the arguments for the people's right to know, public opinion appeared to support giving the military more control over what is reported from the war front. In a survey conducted by Princeton Survey Research for the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, 79% of the respondents believed that censoring the news reports of the Gulf War was a good idea, while 16% disagreed.⁵³

One of the most heated debates over U.S. strategy in the Gulf War occurred when CNN Correspondent Peter Arnet reported that American planes bombed a baby food factory in Baghdad, in contradiction to the official claim that it was a military target. Senator Alan Simpson labeled Arnet a "sympathizer" of Saddam Hussein. The argument touched off a heated debate over the proper role of an independent press during conflict, even though reporters have, consciously or unconsciously, served as tools for all sides in conflict in many instances.⁵⁴ The U.S. bombing of a shelter, which the Iraqis claimed was housing civilians, touched off another debate.

Showing the scene of bodies of Iraqi mothers and children was designed to weaken public opinion at home against the war effort, and the release of such information could be interpreted as providing comfort for the enemy.⁵⁵ There is no doubt that Simpson's response to Arnet's reporting was related to the Vietnam experience, and by implication, a way to question Arnet's loyalty to his nation.

INSTITUTIONAL SOLIDARITY

It has been a generally held notion that consensus on foreign policy issues by competing institutions is difficult in American politics. This is complicated by the structure and operational relationships among the various branches of the U.S. government. The doctrines of "separation of powers" and "checks and balances," while constituting an obstacle to despotic rule, have encouraged formalism where each branch of government tries to shield its power, thereby making abrupt change difficult.⁵⁶ The strategic implication of such institutional arrangements is that no unified, cohesive and legitimate positions emerge on policy issues.⁵⁷

The breakdown of consensus in U.S. foreign policy symbolized the central legacy of the Vietnam War. During the Nixon Administration, the U.S. renewed the secret bombing of Cambodia against congressional opposition. Such symptoms of "imperial presidency" at work led to a congressional repeal of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution which authorized American involvement in Indochina.⁵⁸ Also, over President Nixon's veto, Congress passed the War Powers Act of 1973 which restrained presidential war-making powers. The War Powers Resolution was passed despite President Nixon's contention that a continued bombing policy was necessary to force

52 *New York Times*, (July 25, 1974).

53 Richard Morin, "The New War Cry: Stop the Press," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Feb. 11-17, 1991): 38.

54 Jim Hoagland, "Simpson's Scud Attack," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Feb. 18-24, 1991): 30.

55 Charles Paul Freund, "The Battle for Hearts and Minds, Including Ours," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (Feb. 25-March 3, 1991): 1991.

56 Charles Jones, *An Introduction To the Study of Public Policy*, (Monterey, California: Wadsworth, 1984).

57 Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, *Politics, Economics and Welfare*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), 336.

58 I. M. Dexter, "Congress as Boss?" *Foreign Policy*, 42, (Spring 1981): 167-180.

the Khmer Rouge to the negotiating table.⁵⁹

The Vietnam experience was never repeated during the Gulf War. On November 20, 1990, Representative Ron Dellums filed a suit on behalf of forty-five democratic congressmen to halt President Bush from initiating hostilities in the Gulf until Congress declared war. In *Dellums v. Bush* (1990), the plaintiff quoted James Madison who once said that "in no part of the constitution is more wisdom to be found than in the clause which confines the question of war or peace to the legislature and not to the executive department."⁶⁰

In response, the Bush Administration argued that "while the President has the right and power to deploy American forces, the courts are ill-equipped to address such a matter."⁶¹ In other words, the matter between the President and Congress belongs exclusively in the political arena, and pending participatory debate by the full Congress. On December 13, 1990, presiding Judge Harold Green ruled that it would be premature and presumptuous for the court to render a decision on the issue of whether a declaration of war was required -- at the time or in the near future -- when Congress itself had provided no indication whether it saw such a declaration either necessary on hand or imprudent on the other.⁶² On this legal note, the President won the first battle with his hands not restrained.

Prior to January 16, 1991, Congress had empowered President Bush to use force to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. The Joint Resolution (HJ Res. 77) stated that the President could use "all means necessary" to force Iraq out of Kuwait after January 15, 1991, which coincided with the U.N. deadline. On January 15 and 18, the Senate and House, respectively, passed votes of confidence in support of the President. The text of the resolution reads that "the Congress commends and supports the efforts and leadership of the President as Commander-in-Chief in the Persian Gulf hostilities; the Congress unequivocally supports the men and women of our Armed forces."⁶³ These votes of confidence had the effect of a joint declaration of war. It was not a surprise to learn on January 16, 1991 that President Bush had dragged the nation into war.

CONCLUSION

The failure of American foreign policy in Vietnam was partially due to threats posed by communist China and the Soviet Union. The Johnson Administration, for fear of drawing China and the Soviet Union into the conflict in the case of an all out war, adopted an incrementalist approach which led to a prolonged and protracted engagement that claimed high American casualty. The Bush Administration, cognizant of this fact, built up formidable American offensive capability in the Gulf before the final push to liberate Kuwait. This point was driven home when the President said that the U.S. soldiers would not have their hands tied behind their backs, as was the case in Vietnam. It also weakened Iraq's sources of assistance by courting the support of China and the Soviet Union in the Security Council. As a matter of plan, the U.S. relied extensively on air power to prosecute the war, in lieu

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, (April 24, 1973): 5.

⁶⁰ Quoted in *Congressional Quarterly*, (Jan. 5, 1991): 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Congressional Quarterly*, (Jan. 19, 1991): 177.

of massive plan offensive, to minimize American losses.

Support for the Vietnam War was further marred by the press and media enjoying free hand in the course of gathering and reporting news about the war in Vietnam. Opposition to the war mounted as scenes of destruction were transmitted live through the television. The levels of destruction caused by the war could not give it a human face. The war was perceived to be immoral and support for it rapidly crumbled. To correct this image, the Bush Administration restricted the free movement of the press by way of controlled "press pools," but claimed the right of censorship on the basis of safeguarding national security interests.

Furthermore, the United States shaped public opinion in favor of the war by depicting the atrocities committed by Iraq in Kuwait to the American people. The atrocities included rapes, plundering, taking of hostages and looting, and were compared to those committed by Hitler. The deionization of Iraqi conduct was reinforced by the depiction of the conflict to be judged on the basis of values, world peace and the rule of law, as part of the necessary principles in the new world order.

Furthermore, the Administration's urge for a moral image to the war was evident in the Simpson-Arnet affair, when the bombing of a baby food factory in Baghdad was flatly denied. The Administration further cultivated this perception by firing Air Force General Michael Dugan for suggesting that Baghdad would be leveled in the event that war broke out. The essence of these actions was to erase any doubt that the United States had benevolent intentions to liberate Kuwait, and not perpetrate genocide against the Iraqi people.

In the Vietnam experiment, consensus in American foreign policy was tattered by the conflict of American institutions. There was a lack of informed debate on policy choices between the President and Congress. Power was usurped by the executive branch to the extent that Congress was no longer a co-equal player, but a reactionary in determining the course of American foreign policy. A case in point is the secret bombing of Cambodia by President Nixon against congressional opposition, which set the stage for the passage of the War Powers Act of 1973.

Upon realizing the implications of the lack of institutional solidarity in foreign policy, the Bush Administration took a number of actions at the outset of the Gulf crisis in order to strengthen its ability to use force at a critical moment. First, Bush got the courts to rule in his favor in the famous *Dellums v. Bush* case (1990), and second, he got the congressional stamp of approval to use "all means necessary" to carry out American policy in Kuwait. All this support from various branches of government constituted a defacto declaration of war.

With the Gulf War marking the rebirth of a new era in U.S. foreign policy, new challenges lie ahead; this is in Bosnia. American positions on the war have been shaped by its experiences in the Vietnam War. President Bill Clinton has adopted a cautionary approach. In order to avoid the Vietnam quagmire in Bosnia, the President has resisted all suggestions to take a unilateral military action. He remains committed to the position that the United States will take military action only in concert with other European allies. This sentiment is also reflected in a public opinion poll that indicates that a majority of Americans are opposed to U.S. unilateral military involvement in Bosnia. American foreign policy in the near future will unlikely continue on this course.