

## The Post-Cold War American Interventions into Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo

Dwight D. Murphey  
*Wichita State University*

During the 1990s, the United States, in cooperation with its allies, intervened in several parts of the world, including Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Those four interventions in particular raise several questions about the policy of intervention. This article reviews the interventions and seeks to address the questions in light of them.

**Key Words:** United States foreign policy, foreign interventions, Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, media accounts of foreign crises, humanitarian crises, political crises, conceptual basis for foreign intervention.

Early in the twentieth century, the United States intervened in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua without appreciable effect on the problems that existed in those countries. More recently, since the end of the Cold War, the United States (together with those with whom it cooperates closely) has intervened in many parts of the world. In this article, we will review the 1990s interventions into Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Following that review, it will be valuable to see how each intervention can be evaluated in light of certain questions they raise in common:

1. Whether the decision to intervene was in major part a response to sensational media accounts, leading to a selectivity that may have had little basis in principle.
2. Whether the problems that the intervention sought to address were in fact soluble.
3. Whether the intervention was undertaken with a clear vision of an outcome that was both achievable and desirable (or, as is often said, whether there was a foreseeable "end-game").
4. Whether there was conceptual clarity about the ends and the means to attain them.
5. Whether Americans had any profound understanding of the situation into which they were intervening.
6. Whether the intervention created animosities toward the United States that may make the world a more dangerous place for the United States and its allies.

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### Review of the Interventions

#### Haiti

The Duvalier dictatorship was overthrown in 1986 and was followed by what Haitians call "dechoukaj" (uprooting), about which we are told that "mobs from Cite Soliel [Port-au-Prince's largest slum] and other miserably poor parts of the city roamed the streets, hunting down their tormentors, hacking them to death with machetes or burning them alive."<sup>1</sup>

In his recent book *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions*, Lester Brune says that the overthrow of the Duvalier dynasty "did not change Haiti's authoritarian structure."<sup>2</sup> Conflict among four competing factions in the Haitian army, plus the terrorist "Tontons Macoutes" who had been the brutal secret police under the Duvaliers and continued to support the Duvalier faction, resulted in three coups between 1987 and 1990. Brune says that by mid-1990 "Haiti was near political anarchy."<sup>3</sup>

The December 1990 presidential voting resulted in the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a young Roman Catholic priest who was a devotee of "liberation theology" and had supported the "dechoukaj." Aristide called for "a nationalist, socialist government."<sup>4</sup>

Aristide held office only seven months before he was overthrown in 1991 by an army junta headed by Lt. General Raoul Cedras. While Aristide was in office, his administration received United States and World Bank aid, but the organization Human Rights Watch reported that Aristide stood by with an "apparently ambivalent attitude" while mobs carried out 25 lynchings, including four "neck-lacings" (the grotesque burning of a person to death by lighting a gasoline-filled tire that had been placed around the victim's neck).<sup>5</sup>

After Aristide's overthrow, the United States continued to recognize him as Haiti's president (a reversion to the Tobar Doctrine, the previously abandoned policy that had earlier denied recognition to a regime brought into being by a coup d'etat), and an embargo was

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<sup>1</sup> Report by Paul Quinn-Judge, *The Boston Sunday Globe*, July 24, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Lester H. Brune, *The United States and Post-Cold War Interventions* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1998), p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, October 15, 1994, p. 10A.

<sup>5</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, October 15, 1994, p. 10A.

placed against Haiti. The long-continuing tide of refugees setting sail for the United States increased enormously, causing the Bush administration to stop them in transit and return them to Haiti. During the 1992 American presidential campaign, William Clinton promised to re-install Aristide as president, but for almost two years after taking office Clinton relied on economic sanctions and negotiations to accomplish this. A Clinton threat in 1994 to send in 20,000 troops forced Cedras into negotiations with a team consisting of former-U.S. President Jimmy Carter, retired American General Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn. Although the resulting agreement left the junta in place, Clinton immediately occupied the country with 23,000 troops in "Operation Restore Democracy" and returned Aristide to office.<sup>6</sup> All international sanctions were then lifted, and within five years the United States gave \$2.2 billion in aid. (The total cost to the United States of the entire operation is said to have been \$20 billion.)<sup>7</sup> The American troops were replaced by a United Nations "peacekeeping" force.

In a manner reminiscent of the problems that continued after the 1915-1934 American occupation, Haiti remains in serious difficulty despite this intervention and assistance:

- \$65 million of U.S. aid spent under Aristide to develop a qualified police force failed to do so.<sup>8</sup> Abuses continued on all sides, with a series of political assassinations. In March 1995 a former legislator was shot and killed; and later that month an assassin in Port-au-Prince machine-gunned the woman who had been chief-of-staff under the army junta. Shortly before her death, she criticized the United States for intervening throughout the world without understanding "the realities of the countries involved."<sup>9</sup> In early April, U.S. intelligence reported that "hit lists" were circulating in Haiti that included 27 "political opponents of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide [who] may be targeted for assassination." A Western diplomat is quoted as saying that "these lists are a part of Haitian life."<sup>10</sup> The violence caused a three-week delay in scheduled

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<sup>6</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, September 21, 1994, and December 18, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> *Middle American News*, August 2000, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 58, 59.

<sup>9</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, March 29, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, April 7, 1995, p. 4A.

elections. Later that year, before the presidential election to choose Aristide's successor, "dozens of homes of suspected Aristide opponents have been burned or looted," an opposition radio station was attacked, and groups of vigilantes set up roadblocks. For his part, Aristide criticized the U.N. force for not disarming the various opposing paramilitary groups.<sup>11</sup>

- Rene Preval was elected in December 1995 and was sworn in as the new president the following February. This was the first time in Haitian history that an elected president handed power to another elected president. The Preval administration immediately reestablished diplomatic relations with Communist Cuba (which had been suspended for thirty years).<sup>12</sup> Later that year, the Los Angeles Times/Washington Post Service reported that "Haiti remains a violence-prone, corrupt nation." The Clinton administration sent bodyguards to protect Preval as he sought to purge his guard force of suspected political assassins.<sup>13</sup> After the 1997 parliamentary elections were declared fraudulent, Preval dissolved parliament.<sup>14</sup> A 17-month stalemate set in, preventing a budget or a functioning government. In January 1999, Preval began to rule by decree.<sup>15</sup>

- Parliamentary elections were held on May 21, 2000, after which the electoral council, controlled by supporters of the Aristide-Preval "Lavalas" party, declared that party's candidates winners of 16 of the 17 Senate seats that had been up for election.<sup>16</sup> The Organization of American States "declared the elections fraudulent,"<sup>17</sup> and this caused the international community to freeze millions of dollars of aid, leaving intact only the aid for humanitarian purposes. Lavalas supporters demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy, a demonstration that included spitting on the American flag. New presidential elections will be held in December 2000, with Aristide himself again a candidate and expected to win.

- In the meantime, unemployment is at 70 percent, 65 percent

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<sup>11</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, November 19, 1995, p. 10A.

<sup>12</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, February 8, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, September 14, 1996, p. 8A.

<sup>14</sup> *Insight*, report by Catherine Edwards, July 17, 2000, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, January 13, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> *Middle American News*, August 2000, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Insight*, report by Catherine Edwards, July 17, 2000, p. 24.

of adults can't read or write, an estimated seven tons of cocaine are shipped through Haiti every month from Colombia to the United States, the drug trade makes even wider the age-old division between rich and poor, there are continued assassinations and on-going violence; and "Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere," where "most people survive on less than a dollar a day."<sup>18</sup>

### Somalia

To understand the labyrinthine complexity of Somali life, it is valuable to review Somalia's history since two former British and Italian colonies united to form an independent state in 1960. The new nation operated as a republic at first, but the political life of the new country became increasingly fragmented among a number of clan-based political parties, which Catherine Besteman writes "drew support from a patronage system well maintained by massive injections of foreign aid."<sup>19</sup>

In 1969 the republic was overthrown by General Mohammed Siyad Barre, who, with the support of the army and backed by the Soviet Union, set up a Leninist-style Communist state based on "scientific socialism."<sup>20</sup> Consolidating state power and seeking a nationalist unity based on social equality, Barre worked to abolish "tribalism" and clan distinctions.<sup>21</sup> This remaking of society was enforced by the public execution of prominent personalities when they spoke out against it.

Barre sought an enlarged Somalia that would regain land that had once been Somali. For that purpose, he invaded the Ogaadeen in 1977 to recapture it from Ethiopia. This forced the Soviet Union and Cuba to choose between what had been two Marxist client states, and Somalia lost the war when that backing was given to Ethiopia. This led Barre to cut all connection with the Soviet Union, and with the loss of that support his regime began to lose momentum. During the 1980s, an estimated \$2.5 billion in Western aid flooded the

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<sup>18</sup> *The Washington Times National Weekly Edition*, August 14-20, 2000, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 14; Anna Simons, *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, p. 12.

country, but this began to dry up when eventually it became clear that Barre was continuing to govern by terror. Several resistance movements came into being based on clan identity.<sup>22</sup>

A rebellion against Barre began in 1988 and led to brutal retaliation highlighted by the massacre of "hundreds, possibly thousands" of worshippers by government troops on July 14, 1989.<sup>23</sup> By early 1991, chaos prevailed, producing widespread starvation. Barre was finally forced to flee on January 27, 1991, after which there was no functioning government. Two subclans vied for control of the large coastal city of Mogadishu, and fighting between them broke out in November, leading to approximately 30,000 killed by March 1992. As many as 13 clans and subclans fought each other for control of Somalia, and Barre's own forces, still active, won some victories.<sup>24</sup> Six days of all-out war in 1992, however, led to Barre's fleeing to Kenya. The depredations especially by Barre's forces added to the "growing mass starvation," which began to receive the world's attention as images of the starving appeared on television.<sup>25</sup> It is estimated that by March 1992 "at least 300,000 people had died of hunger and hunger-related disease... Some 500,000 people were in camps in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. More than 3,000 – mostly women, children, and old men – were dying daily from starvation."<sup>26</sup> Besteman tells how "unarmed Jubba villagers starved, died, and fled by the hundreds of thousands as warring factions repeatedly swept across the [Jubba] valley, claiming food stores, material goods, and land as their right." She says, too, that "as in Bosnia, widespread rape emerged as a powerfully violent and brutally denigrating form of violence against thousands of Jubba valley villagers."<sup>27</sup>

The United States began airlifting almost 45,000 metric tons of food to Somalia in August 1992, but decided to intervene militarily when the transports were fired upon from the ground and a variously

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<sup>22</sup> Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, pp. 17, 200.

<sup>23</sup> Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Mohammed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), pp. 9, 11; Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> John Drysdale in *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention*, Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, ed.s (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p.124.

<sup>26</sup> Sahnoun, *Somalia*, pp. 15, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, pp. 224, 18.

estimated 10 to 80 percent of the food was stolen.<sup>28</sup> A U.S.-led "substantial multinational military intervention," called "the Unified Task Force" (UNITAF), began "Operation Restore Hope" in December 1992.<sup>29</sup> U.S. President Bush announced that this was "a 'strictly humanitarian' mission, limited in both scope and duration," and the initial desire was to maintain neutrality among the competing factions.<sup>30</sup>

What at first was purely a relief project was enlarged into an effort to reconstruct Somalia, however, when Madeline Albright, U.N. Ambassador under the new Clinton administration, called for "the restoration of an entire country."<sup>31</sup> The result was the replacement of UNITAF in May 1993 by the "UN Operation in Somalia" (UNOSOM II), charged by UN Security Council Resolution 814 with the task that commentators speak of as "nation building." UNOSOM then sponsored a number of national and local "reconciliation initiatives," none of which was successful. An attempt to disarm the militias proved disastrous when one of the warlords, Mohamed Farah Aideed, ambushed a UN force, killing 24 Pakistani soldiers and mutilating and publicly displaying the bodies.<sup>32</sup> An attempt to capture Aideed led to the debacle of October 3, 1993, in which U.S. Rangers raided the Olympic Hotel in Mogadishu, taking 24 captives, but were pinned down for four hours in a fire-fight during which 18 Americans and one Malaysian were killed and a large number of others wounded, as well as two helicopters shot down. The injured body of U.S. Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant was dragged through the streets. The Somalis themselves suffered "an estimated 312 deaths and 814 wounded."<sup>33</sup>

President Clinton immediately ordered the withdrawal of all U.S. forces by March 1994. The upshot, Ken Menkhaus tells us, was that "a frustrated UN Security Council, under pressure from the United States, opted to terminate UNOSOM by March 1995, leaving Somalia

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<sup>28</sup> Walter Clarke in *Learning from Somalia*, p. 8; Sahnoun, *Somalia*, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> Preface to Clarke and Herbst, ed.s., *Learning from Somalia*, p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> Ken Menkhaus in *Learning from Somalia*, p. 42; Walter Clarke in *Learning from Somalia*, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, p. 201.

<sup>32</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 32.

still divided by dozens of clan and factional conflicts and without a national government."<sup>34</sup>

Brunc gives the effort credit when he says it "may have temporarily saved many lives," but he adds that "fighting among Somalian warring factions continued to cause food shortages and deaths long after they left." Aideed himself was mortally wounded in the fighting in July 1996, and "new contenders competed for power... throughout 1996 and 1997." Aideed's son Hussein joined Ali Mahdi, the leader of the other leading subclan in Mogadishu, in a "Declaration of Principles" in December 1997 for an intended reconciliation.<sup>35</sup> Since then, little world attention has been given to Somalia.

### Bosnia

To understand Bosnia and American intervention into the war there, it is necessary to know the context relating to Yugoslavia in general, of which Bosnia was a part.

The Balkans have a long history of ethnic conflict. Sharp divisions have existed at least as far back as the end of the Roman Empire. Three major civilizations – Western, Orthodox and Islamic – come together there. Conquests, sometimes centuries-long occupations, and reconquests go back many hundreds of years.

What would soon become known as Yugoslavia was fashioned out of parts of the by-then-defunct Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires by the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920 as the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. There were six states, based on ethnicity: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Over some opposition, a Serb (Alexander) was made king. When in 1928 the leader of the Croatian assembly was assassinated, King Alexander suspended the Constitution and gave the country a new name, Yugoslavia, over which he ruled with dictatorial powers until his own assassination in 1934. A Regency came to power which provoked a revolution in 1941 by signing a pact with Nazi Germany. The Regency was overthrown and replaced by King Peter II, but the Nazis responded by invading, occupying the country for the four years until 1945.

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<sup>34</sup> Ken Menkhaus in *Learning from Somalia*, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Brunc, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 33, 34.



During those war years, two large guerrilla forces – Chetniks and Partisans – fought not only the Nazis, but each other.<sup>36</sup> Brune tells how, under cover of the war, "what followed were brutal acts of 'ethnic cleansing' inflicted on Slavs, Jews, and Gypsies by Hungarians in Vojvodina, by Bulgarians in eastern Serbia and Macedonia, and by Italians and Albanians along the Dalmatian coast including Kosovo." He adds that "the most brutal outrages were committed by Croatia's neo-Nazi Ustashe, led by Ante Pavelic, who... kill[ed] or deport[ed] non-Croatians especially Serbs and Jews. The number of Ustashe victims is controversial with estimates ranging from 350,000 to 750,000 deaths, plus 300,000 deportees."<sup>37</sup>

After the war, Josip Broz ("Tito"), Communist leader of the Partisans, won the elections held in November 1945, and established the "Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia." Tito ruled for 34 years, maintaining an outward appearance of national unity in keeping with the Marxian idea that the common interests of the proletariat, not nationality, were paramount. After he broke with Stalin in 1948, it appeared to the world that he had accomplished a unique and independent form of Communism, based on worker ownership of industry and much more humane than the Soviet regime. Brune says, however, that "in reality, there was no genuine electoral democracy and Yugoslavia's economy was foundering" because of its dependence on Western aid and loans.<sup>38</sup> The six ethnically-oriented republics, to whom power had devolved through the 1976 constitution, had not really gotten along all that well, and their mutual animus became apparent after Tito's death in 1980. The economic failures led the federation into a crisis in 1987.

Nationalism had remained alive in Serbia, the largest of the republics, after World War II. Most Serbian literature expressed anguish over suffering and victimization. Sabrina Ramet says that by the 1980s the mood "was increasingly self-absorbed, self-righteous, and self-pitying."<sup>39</sup> We must, however, be careful; that sort of

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<sup>36</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 65, 66, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 69, 70.

<sup>39</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), p. 153. History shows that the mood of victimization she describes is a very dangerous one for potential opponents;

commentary is clearly not empathetic, and the Serbs have a very different perspective, based on a good many objective facts in their history. For example, some very real wounds were opened in 1986 with the trial of Andrija Artukovic on charges of mass murder committed against Serbs. Artukovic had been the Minister of Interior, Justice and Religious Affairs in fascist Croatia during World War II.<sup>40</sup> Also in 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts provided the intellectual rationale for angry nationalism with a memorandum that became a centerpiece for Serbian thinking during the years that followed. It articulated the outlook held by Dobrica Cosic, whom Serbs see as their contemporary spiritual father. The memorandum spelled out how the existence of Serbs had been threatened during the war, and complained of discrimination by Slovenes and Croatians. It focused particularly on Kosovo, the historic heartland of Serb identity, where it saw a complete anti-Serbian genocide as underway. As a remedy, the memo advocated a Greater Serbia that would bring all Serbs into one state.<sup>41</sup>

It was here that Slobodan Milosovic, visiting Kosovo in 1987 as head of the Communist Party, became the champion of the Serbs there – and, much more broadly, the "protector of all Serbs." With this, he rose to the top in Yugoslavia, a position that gave him control over the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA).

As the various republics slid into conflict, Slovenia gained its independence in a brief, non-violent war. A powerful independence movement headed by Franjo Tudjman, an historian and former JNA general, gained power in Croatia, whose national aspirations had been suppressed by Tito in 1971. Croats saw themselves as Western and the Serbs as backward and Byzantine; they also saw Bosnia-Herzegovina as a part of Croatia, with the Muslims there being simply Croatians who in the long course of Ottoman occupation had allowed themselves to become Islamicized.<sup>42</sup> In the growing conflict,

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it lay at the heart of Nazism as an angry movement, and here we see it again with Serbia. The same mood has been assiduously developed among blacks in the United States during the half century since the beginning of the Civil Rights movement.

<sup>40</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (No city given: TV Books, Inc., 1996), p. 31; Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, pp. 83, 86.

Milosevic dispatched troops to assist the Serbs living in the Krajina region of Croatia, and to other places where there were Serbs. At first, the JNA was victorious, "ethnically cleansing" regions of all but Serbs; but Croatia gained, at least, international sympathy, which proved very important.<sup>43</sup> Ramet reports that "in Croatia, Serbs damaged or destroyed more than 500 monuments and historical buildings and more than 370 museums, libraries and archives," and adds that "both Serbian and Croatian forces targeted mosques in Bosnia-Herzegovina."<sup>44</sup> War raged between 1991 and 1995, beginning with the conflict between Croatia and Serbia and then becoming a three-way fight among Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims.

By 1995, however, the tide had turned in favor of Croatia, which drove out much of its Serb population. Silber and Little say that "Croatia emerged, in 1995, with the backing of the United States, as the great power in the region." They add: "In an offensive tacitly encouraged by Washington and quietly ignored by the rest of the world, it swept away the self-styled Republika Srpska Krajina," leaving only about 100,000 of the original 600,000 Serbs there.<sup>45</sup> The European Union had in 1992 recognized both Slovenia and Croatia as independent nations.

During all of this, Milosevic had championed the Serbs within Bosnia (who had been 31.4 percent of the population, as compared to 43.7 percent Muslim Slavs, with the rest mostly Croats). Six Serbian enclaves were identified and supported militarily. Radovan Karadzic in Bosnia sought to establish a separate Bosnian Srpska [Serb] Republic. An election that was boycotted by the Serbs voted overwhelmingly in February 1992 for Bosnian-Herzegovinan independence. Shortly thereafter, Karadzic began shelling Sarajevo, and the war within Bosnia was underway.<sup>46</sup>

The United States under President Bush had been leaving it to the European community to solve the Yugoslavian conflict. It had supported the establishment of no-fly zones and a NATO naval blockade, and first became involved militarily itself when U.S. ships joined in the blockade in late 1992. The United States began to air-

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<sup>43</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 88.

<sup>44</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 263.

<sup>45</sup> Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 367.

<sup>46</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 76-78.

drop supplies to the Bosnian Muslims in early 1993, and supported the setting up of safe-havens for Muslim civilians. It worked out the Washington Framework Agreement in February 1994 that brought the Muslims and Croats into alliance, causing the power-balance to shift against the Serbs.<sup>47</sup> In July 1995, however, there was no outside intervention to stop a Serbian massacre of some 8,000 Muslim men at Srebrenica, which was one of the six "safe areas."<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, concentrated NATO air strikes in September 1995 led to a cease-fire, which in turn led to the Dayton Peace Accords that were signed in December. Twenty thousand U.S. troops were deployed immediately among the 60,000 "peacekeepers" of the NATO Bosnian Mission in 1995, and this was reduced to 6,000 by May 2000.<sup>49</sup> The Bosnian Serb siege of Sarajevo was withdrawn in March 1996, and approximately 70,000 Bosnian Serbs fled Ilidza, a suburb of Sarajevo, even digging up their dead to take them with them.<sup>50</sup>

All along, the "world community" had deplored "ethnic cleansing," favoring a multiethnic vision, but the realities "on the ground" governed the Dayton Accords, which confirmed the ethnic separations that warfare had effected. In Bosnia specifically, however, a complicated arrangement of mutual governance was arrived at involving the different ethnicities. This may well depend for its continuance, however, upon the indefinite presence of external military forces.<sup>51</sup> The Bosnian Muslims remain surrounded by their enemies.

President Clinton at first announced that American troops would remain as part of the peacekeeping force for only one year. In 1996, NATO's presence (with its American contingent) was extended, and then in late 1997 was continued indefinitely.<sup>52</sup> After almost five years, no end is foreseen for the intervention.

### Kosovo

Nothing better illustrates a people's investiture of physical space

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<sup>47</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 87, 94, 98, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 356.

<sup>49</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, May 2, 2000, p. 5A.

<sup>50</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 282.

<sup>51</sup> Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 113, 120.

with meaning than the Serbian sentiment toward Kosovo, which the Serbs see as sacred ground despite many years of an ethnic Albanian majority there. Kosovo, a "province" which was not given the status of a "republic" with the accompanying right of secession by the Yugoslavian constitution of 1976, lies in the southern part of Yugoslavia. Sixty-seven percent of its people were Albanian Muslims in 1961, but a high birth rate among these, combined with the emigration of a good many Serbs who complained about ethnic Albanian hostility, made the 1991 population 90 percent Muslim and just 10 percent Serb.<sup>53</sup> Despite this shift, Serbian nationalism, as reflected in the 1986 memorandum by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, gave the retention of Kosovo a preeminent place. Kosovo has been a virtual "holy land" to the Serbs, having been the locale where the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbs in 1389, imposing what proved to be almost five hundred years of Ottoman rule. Serbian resentment and self-assertiveness still burned brightly after all of those centuries, especially after the rise of nationalist feeling in the nineteenth century.

In 1968 after much dissension, demonstrations against "Serbian oppressors" and in favor of Albania broke out throughout Kosovo. These were suppressed by a combination of concessions and shows of force.<sup>54</sup> Anti-Serbian rioting was again militarily suppressed in 1981, a year after Tito's death, and tensions remained at a boil. In 1986, 200 well-known Serbian intellectuals protested what they saw as ethnic Albanian genocide against Serbs in Kosovo "through actions ranging from physical attacks to rape." They considered a capitulation to this a form of "national treason."<sup>55</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had come into being and, in the words of Allan C. Brownfeld, was "waging a classic guerrilla insurgency to win Kosovo's independence from Serbia... Its goal is a Kosovo from which Serbs have been ethnically cleansed."<sup>56</sup> Robert Gelbard, an American diplomat, spoke of the KLA as a "terrorist group." Indeed, as early as 1987, in

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<sup>53</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), p. 260.

<sup>54</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 305.

<sup>55</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 5, 306, 307.

<sup>56</sup> Allan C. Brownfeld in *St. Croix Review*, April 2000, p. 21.

his speech in Kosovo, Milosevic had claimed that the exodus of the Serbian population was due to Albanian terrorism.<sup>57</sup> In Noel Malcolm's book *Kosovo: A Short History*, which is essentially favorable to the ethnic Albanians, Malcolm ascribes the final crisis to a "disproportionate" response by Serbian authorities to continuing attacks, including some assassinations, by the KLA in 1996 and 1997. By mid-1998, the KLA, Malcolm says, "had abducted and killed a number of Serb civilians, and was claiming that it controlled a large area of 'liberated territory.'" In response, Serbian troops destroyed more than 300 Albanian villages, forcing the inhabitants out and in effect doing a reverse ethnic cleansing.<sup>58</sup> These facts, in juxtaposition, are especially valuable because they show that it was a more complex, interactive conflict than simply the "vicious Serb aggression" that Americans, who saw the images of fleeing Albanians on television, came to believe it was.

A peace conference was convened at Rambouillet, France, on February 6, 1999, where, as Ramet tells us, the Western proposal to settle the war was unacceptable to both sides. "It offended the Albanians by offering only autonomy, rather than independence, and alienated the Serbs by proposing to introduce 30,000 NATO ground troops in Kosovo" which Serbia considered an historic part of its sovereign territory.<sup>59</sup> Eventually, the Albanians accepted the offer, believing they had no choice if the West were to continue to stay involved. Serbia rejected it, however, and U.S. President Clinton launched the U.S. air assault against Serbia on March 24, 1999, carrying out 12,575 "strike sorties" between March 24 and the end of the air war on June 3. During the air attacks, Serbia continued its ground campaign, killing a reported 4,500 Albanians and causing 855,000 to flee as refugees. On June 3, Milosevic, seeing much of the Serbian infrastructure in ruins, capitulated, and a "peacekeeping" force of 39,000 NATO troops, including 5,600 Americans, was placed inside Kosovo.<sup>60</sup>

The aftermath has been less than satisfactory from the point of

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<sup>57</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 72.

<sup>58</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1999), pp. 4, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 317.

<sup>60</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 318, 319.

view of those who wanted simply to stop the fighting and reestablish Kosovo as a multiethnic autonomous province within Serbia. [We should note, however, that even though this was the rationale expressed by NATO, consistent with the overall ideology of "multi-ethnicity," the United States had greatly demonized Milosevic and the Serbs, and had come to see the ethnic Albanians sympathetically. With that as the context, it is difficult to imagine that an ultimate ascendancy by the Albanians would be particularly distasteful to the Americans.] Christopher Layne of the University of Southern California's Center for International Studies says that since the peacekeepers entered Kosovo "the KLA remains potent militarily, having blatantly refused to comply with its pledge to disarm." Layne refers to the continuing "brutal expulsion of Kosovo's Serb population."<sup>61</sup> Kosovo is accordingly becoming, even under the eyes of NATO and the United States, an Albanian state. On May 2, 2000, the New York Times News Service reported that "the top U.S. commander in Kosovo [predicts] that NATO peacekeepers will have to remain in the Balkans for 'at least a generation.'"<sup>62</sup>

### The Interventions in Light of the Questions They Raise in Common

With the review of the interventions as background, we can now examine how the questions that were mentioned at the beginning of this article are answered:

*1. Whether the intervention resulted primarily from  
sensationalist media accounts, leading to a selectivity  
among possible interventions that had little basis in principle.*

The worldwide mass media have a pervasive impact on the response to specific issues. David Callahan says that "graphic media images of international suffering are now transmitted faster and more widely than ever before, and these images often fuel public demands for action."<sup>63</sup> Such images spurred demand for the U.S. intervention into Somalia in 1992; Walter Clarke relates how "the humanitarian

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<sup>61</sup> Layne is quoted by Brownfeld in *The St. Croix Review*, April 2000, p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, May 2, 2000, p. 5A.

<sup>63</sup> David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflict* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Books, 1997), pp. 45, 91.

disaster in Somalia was on all the television screens in the United States by August 1992.<sup>64</sup> American General Colin Powell wrote in his memoirs that the mission was decided upon after Somalia "wrenched our hearts." Brune suggests that "perhaps like the American public, Bush, Powell, and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney simply judged Somalia by the television pictures reaching their homes. These instant photographs depicted the horrendous suffering of starving women and children but never captured the savage reality of the young gangs."<sup>65</sup>

The media again provided the provocation for action in Bosnia and Kosovo. Graphic atrocity reports about war crimes committed mainly by Serbs "outraged world opinion and inspired a U.S. congressional debate" in August 1992, Brune says.<sup>66</sup> In Kosovo, according to Malcolm, after Serb forces took men away from their families, "the U.S. government [reported] that it had satellite images of many newly dug mass graves."<sup>67</sup> These reports received extensive media attention at the time and were the principal provocation for the U.S. air war against Serbia, overriding Serbian protestations that the reports were false and were concocted by the Kosovo Liberation Army precisely to cause NATO intervention. It is a serious embarrassment that the atrocity reports did not prove true when investigated after the war. In an article entitled "Where are the bodies... Few 'mass graves' found thus far in Kosovo," the *WorldNetDaily* in late 1999 told of an independent intelligence report by a U.S.-based firm (the "Stratfor Report"). The report said that the International Criminal Tribunal to try war crimes cases had found no bodies in the Treпча mines despite earlier reports that the corpses of 700 murdered ethnic Albanians were hidden there. "Official estimates indicated that some 10,000 ethnic Albanians were killed in a Serb rampage of ethnic cleansing. Yet four months into an international investigation bodies numbering only in the hundreds have been exhumed," with the FBI [which participated in the search] having found "fewer than 200."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Clarke and Herbst, *Learning from Somalia*, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 92.

<sup>67</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, twelfth page of the unpaginated Preface.

<sup>68</sup> Article by Jon E. Dougherty dated October 20, 1999, in *WorldNetDaily.com*, December 1, 1999.



Interventions brought about by media attention are in principle no more worthy of intervention than countless other situations that are ignored. Robert Rotberg wrote in 1997 that "we live in a world where civil wars in far-off places are the norm – where thirty wars erupt annually, where there are twenty complex humanitarian crises every year, where 50 million persons are now displaced..., and where millions of people were killed during 1991-1995 in one corner of Africa alone"<sup>69</sup> [emphasis added]. The media-guided selectivity produces criticisms such as that voiced by U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali that the United States and its allies concerned themselves with Yugoslavia while turning a blind eye toward humanitarian needs in African nations such as Liberia, Somalia, and Rwanda.<sup>70</sup>

2. *Whether the problems that the intervention sought to address are in fact soluble.*

No amount of outside assistance and intervention seems to improve the situation in Haiti. After the 1915-1934 American occupation, Haiti passed into several decades of dictatorship under "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier. We have seen how corruption, violence and political chaos reign after the U.S. occupation in the 1990s.

In Somalia the situation is one where, even in the absence of the more recent troubles, there are large portions of the country "where bandits attack villages, shooting and looting before disappearing into the bush, where deaths from malaria, tuberculosis, fevers, and accidents claim far more lives than does old age."<sup>71</sup> Even before the intraclan warfare on the 1990s, Mogadishu was a "hardship post" for any Westerner sent there: "Streets were unsigned and driving was a free-for-all. Municipal electricity was erratic and unpredictable, telephone service ineffectual, and local news unavailable."<sup>72</sup> The picture Anna Simons paints of the larger culture isn't encouraging: "The universal belief among expatriates [was] that Somalis lacked the ability to maintain anything – roads, equipment, offices, projects, or,

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<sup>69</sup> Rotberg in Clarke and Herbst, *Learning from Somalia*, p. 233.

<sup>70</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 93.

<sup>71</sup> Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 11.

essentially, themselves."<sup>73</sup> Corruption, a lack of civic motivation and of any coherent national feeling, pastoralist ideology, an eagerness to rely on the help of outsiders, and a low level of competence all combine to deny a solid basis for a successful culture.

There is no lack of civilization in the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia and Kosovo, so the situation is not so obviously irremediable. The insolubility comes, rather, from centuries-long enmities. What foundation is there for a spirit of peace within the heart of a person whose parents and siblings have been shot, raped or hacked to pieces? There is little wonder that the prediction is made that a peacekeeping force will have to remain indefinitely.

### 3. *Whether the intervention was undertaken with an achievable desirable outcome in mind.*

In May 2000, William B. Jones, the U.S. ambassador to Haiti from 1977 to 1980, wrote that "once again, Haiti has made the complete circle from chaos and violence to chaos and violence. Although well-meaning and idealistic, U.S. policies have failed to bring democracy, stability and economic growth to Haiti."<sup>74</sup>

No clear case of an "end-game" occurred in Somalia, where a bloodied United States withdrew, "to be replaced," according to Clarke and Herbst, "by far less well trained and well armed soldiers from a multitude of countries."<sup>75</sup> Anna Simons tell how "the humanitarian assistance organizations paid pirates' ransoms to hired guns, bribed well-fed people in order to be able to deliver food to the starving, and otherwise created new inequities based on who [sic] they employed, elevated, and had to secure protection from."<sup>76</sup>

As to Bosnia, David Pryce-Jones says that "Bosnia is now a protectorate. A Bosnian government goes through the motions of administration, but U.N. personnel alone guarantee law and order. The world community, in other words, has introduced an updated version of the typical 19th-century colonial regime."<sup>77</sup> Fareed Zakaria, the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, predicts that "the

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<sup>73</sup> Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 15.

<sup>74</sup> Op-ed column in the *Wichita Eagle*, May 12, 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Clarke and Herbst, *Learning from Somalia*, p. 243.

<sup>76</sup> Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, p. 205.

<sup>77</sup> David Pryce-Jones, "Kosovo, from Scratch," in *National Review*, July 12, 1999, p. 21.

moment the occupation ends, the problems that led to the intervention will resume. Absent an occupying force, Bosnia would split into three separate, ethnically uniform states.<sup>78</sup>

There would not seem to be a coherent goal for Kosovo. The Clinton administration said that it wanted a multiethnic Kosovo that would be autonomous within Yugoslavia. But the destruction of Serbia's infrastructure and the driving out of the Serbian army set the stage for the "ethnic cleansing," in which ethnic Albanians have driven the Serb population out of Kosovo, that has followed the NATO occupation. Don Feder reports that "triumphant Albanians ethnically cleansed 230,000 Serbs and gypsies from Kosovo."<sup>79</sup>

The lack of an end-game becomes especially apparent when there is difficulty disengaging, as in Bosnia and Kosovo – or where disengagement means "cutting and running," as in Somalia and Haiti, without having produced an appreciable effect.

#### 4. *Whether there is conceptual clarity about the ends and the means to attain them.*

This deserves to be considered as a separate point because interventions are often mired in conceptual muddles.

There has been an impression that "humanitarian interventions" are both distinct from and much safer than "political interventions." This may be so where there is no local conflict; but where there is, the helping of those in distress is inescapably an intervention on the side of those who have been losing and against those who have been winning. In the context of Somalia, and speaking directly to the idea of the two types of intervention, Clarke and Herbst say that "although analytically attractive, the distinction between the different types of intervention, at the heart of so much of the current debate, is not particularly helpful. Indeed, at a practical level, it is hard to see how anyone could believe that landing 30,000 troops in a country was anything but a gross interference in major aspects of a country's politics."<sup>80</sup>

There is also a disconnect between the U.S. desire to intervene in crises and its unwillingness to suffer casualties. In Somalia when

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<sup>78</sup> Writing in *National Review*, September 27, 1999, p. 24.

<sup>79</sup> Don Feder column, *Middle American News*, July 2000, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> Clarke and Herbst, *Learning from Somalia*, p. 242.

the warlord Aideed adopted a tactic of "killing Americans," the American public came alive to the dangers and President Clinton immediately announced plans for U.S. withdrawal.<sup>81</sup>

Another confusion comes from the inability to decide between two ideological absolutes: the devotion to "multiethnicity" and the affirmation of distinct ethnic identities. The "international community" wants "ethnic pluralism" in such places as Kosovo and Bosnia, but at the same time the interventions run up against the separatism that distinct peoples prefer (and passionately seek) in fact.

There is conceptual confusion, too, in the prosecution of "war crimes" in a world in which "man's inhumanity to man" is as ubiquitous as it is. When there are apparently inexcusable brutalities committed on all sides in an endless string of wars, it is valid to ask just what justifies bringing a few perpetrators before a court either for prison or execution.

5. *Whether Americans have had any profound understanding of the situations into which they have intervened.*

Commentators often speak of Americans' poverty of understanding about foreign peoples and situations. About Bosnia, Samuel Huntington says that "American idealism, moralism, humanitarian instincts, naivete, and ignorance concerning the Balkans thus led them to be pro-Bosnian and anti-Serb."<sup>82</sup> Robert H. Jackson writes that it was far more convenient to those seeking intervention to see the Yugoslav situation as a struggle among warlords than to see it as a popularly-based struggle for ethnic self-determination.<sup>83</sup>

About Somalia, Walter Clarke writes that "inability or unwillingness to discern the essential political dynamics of the country and to effect remedial measures to foster civil society – out of expedience, disinterest, or naive 'neutrality' – lies at the root of the world's failure in Somalia."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Brune, *Post-Cold War Interventions*, p. 33.

<sup>82</sup> Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, p. 290.

<sup>83</sup> Jackson in Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, *Beyond Westphalia? State Sovereignty and International Intervention* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 73.

<sup>84</sup> Clarke in Clarke and Herbst, *Learning from Somalia*, p. 4.

6. *Whether intervention has made the world a more dangerous place for the United States in light of the animosities incurred.*

There is the risk that to the extent other peoples value their cultural identity and national sovereignty, they may well resent anyone who has a transcendent vision to impose on them. Christopher Layne writes that "this unilateral dominance – what political scientists call hegemony – is self-defeating... When one state becomes too powerful, other states become fearful and unite to 'balance' against it."<sup>85</sup>

Such resentment shows up in many places. John Drysdale says that the Somalis who inflicted heavy casualties on American Rangers on October 3, 1993, saw it as "an unprecedented triumph over a perceived tyranny."<sup>86</sup> Anna Simons reports that many Somalis were suspicious of the motives behind the intervention: "Obviously Somalia had to have something the United States and the rest of the world wanted."<sup>87</sup>

Dana Munro says that during the long early-twentieth century American occupation of Haiti, "there had always been resentment of the presence of foreign troops and the authority exercised by foreign officials." He tells how each class in Haitian life had its own reasons for this resentment.<sup>88</sup> Those who in the 1990s opposed the American intervention on behalf of Aristide formed a National Anti-Occupation Coalition in 1994, and blamed the assassination of Aristide opponents on President Clinton.<sup>89</sup> On the other side, we have seen how Rene Preval's government, elected from Aristide's party to succeed him, wasted no time in establishing diplomatic relations with Castro's Communist government in Cuba right after Preval was installed.<sup>90</sup> Then in July 2000, *Insight* magazine reported that "in mid-June, supporters of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide trampled and spat on an American flag in front of the U.S.

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<sup>85</sup> Christopher Layne article, "America's Role," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1999, p. B01.

<sup>86</sup> John Drysdale in *Learning from Somalia*, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*, pp. 207, 208.

<sup>88</sup> Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1974), p. 309.

<sup>89</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, March 29, 1995, report "Former Haitian official assassinated."

<sup>90</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, February 8, 1996.

embassy in Port-au-Prince."<sup>91</sup>

### Conclusion

The recent American interventions into Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo would seem to illustrate the reasons for humility and caution. They raise serious questions about ends-and-means, conceptual clarity, depth of understanding, the process of decision, and what may well be an unnecessary incurring of the rage for vengeance. As many of the conflict-situations tell us, reciprocal bloodlust is almost impossible to stop once it is started. Just what forms that bloodlust may take in an age when terrorism will be armed with chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass killing remains to be seen. For those who make themselves parties to disputes, they can never tell when the final chapter will be written.

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<sup>91</sup> *Insight*, July 17, 2000, p. 24.