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The Payoffs of Multilaterally Authorized Intervention: Averting Issue Linkage vs. Assuaging Congress

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Abstract

What motivates the USA, the world's most powerful country, to seek multilateral approval from the United Nations or NATO for its military interventions? Drawing on interviews with top-level US policymakers and combining process tracing with a structured-focused comparison of several cases, this article reveals that American leaders do not value multilateral approval primarily to avert negative issue linkage or 'soft balancing' in other policy domains. Instead, they are motivated by narrower concerns. Their main goal is to facilitate sustained military and financial burden sharing on the prospective intervention, in the expectation that this will *assuage congressional concerns about resource costs*, reducing the risk that Congress might withdraw its support once American troops are deployed. The article therefore demonstrates that: (a) US policymakers worry less about issue linkage than many IR theorists, as policymakers are confident that overall, US power inclines other countries to bandwagon with the United States; and (b) contrary to widespread belief, executive-branch concerns about congressional opposition do significantly influence US military intervention decision making.

Keywords

Multilateralism, United Nations, military intervention, soft balancing, burden sharing.

Introduction

Multilateral approval from the United Nations or NATO can enhance the perceived legitimacy of military intervention by signaling that the use of force is not narrowly self-serving but instead follows established international rules and procedures. In the broadest sense, this legitimation effect may explain why even powerful countries like the USA value multilateral approval for their interventions. As General Colin Powell, who served as US national security adviser, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and secretary of state in various administrations explains, ‘if you can get multilateral support for a planned intervention, then you should seek it, in order to have the greatest possible legitimacy for the action’.¹ Since the end of the Cold War, US leaders have in fact generally sought multilateral approval from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and/or NATO’s North Atlantic Council (NAC) for major interventions that could not easily be framed as self-defense missions – whether in the Balkans, the Middle East, Somalia, Haiti, or Libya. But why exactly do American leaders covet the legitimacy resulting from multilateral approval? Securing the approval of standing international organizations (IOs) such as the UN and NATO is likely to involve time-consuming negotiations; it typically constrains US freedom of action; and it often requires substantial side-payments and logrolling. Consequently, US policymakers can be expected to endeavour to secure UN or NATO approval only if they anticipate significant benefits.

One prominent hypothesis is that US policymakers seek IO approval and the resulting legitimacy primarily to reduce the risk of costly international resistance in the form of negative issue linkage, or ‘soft balancing’ against the USA in other policy domains.² This argument appeals to systemically oriented IR scholars, who have long argued that salient foreign policy decisions by the major powers elicit various forms of systemic feedback.³ However, the United States, as the world’s most powerful country, may be relatively immune to negative issue linkage and soft balancing.⁴ Notwithstanding the recent financial crisis and

much talk about the ‘rise of the rest’, the USA remains significantly ahead of its nearest competitors in terms of hard military and economic power. Total US military spending in 2014, at \$581 billion, was more than four times the \$129 billion of second place China. Similarly, nominal US GDP in 2013, at roughly \$17 trillion, was almost double that of second place China and about eight times that of countries such as India or Brazil.⁵ If those weaker countries were to reduce their cooperation with the USA across various issue areas, notably in finance and trade, as a consequence of US unilateral intervention, they might primarily harm themselves. American leaders may well be aware of that.

Consequently, a narrower set of concerns may drive US policymakers to seek multilateral approval through the United Nations or NATO. Specifically, policymakers may be motivated by concerns about burden sharing and domestic support from Congress. Although Congress has few means to stop a determined administration from intervening militarily abroad, congressional opposition can become more of a problem in the long run, when missions become protracted, as legislators need to approve the necessary appropriation bills. Policymakers may therefore seek UNSC or NAC approval to facilitate sustained military and financial burden sharing when they anticipate a potentially open-ended deployment, in the expectation that this will assuage congressional concerns about resource costs and reduce the risk that Congress might withdraw its support once American troops are deployed.

The evidence for this article is derived primarily from interviews conducted by the author with top-level US policymakers. Information gathered from interviews is sometimes problematic, as personal memories may be clouded by hindsight. Nevertheless, interviews with key policymakers are often the only way of reconstructing the motives and bureaucratic bargains that led to the adoption of particular decisions. In terms of methods, the article combines process tracing with a structured-focused comparison of several cases displaying meaningful variation on the dependent variable. The first part of the article lays out in detail the two hypotheses under examination, clarifies underlying assumptions, and derives

observable implications. The second part traces the process of US decision making in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf War and the 1999 Kosovo intervention. The third part briefly discusses two negative cases, where the USA made only limited or no efforts to secure multilateral approval. I find no evidence that policymakers are motivated by concerns about issue linkage when seeking UN or NATO approval—instead, they appear motivated primarily by concerns about burden sharing and domestic support. The conclusion discusses broader implications of the finding for theory and policy.

Averting negative issue linkage and ‘soft balancing’

Scholars associated with realist balance-of-threat theory claim that if the USA pursues unilateral military interventions that signal revisionist intentions, other powerful states such as Russia, China, India, or Brazil might retaliate through soft balancing across various issue areas. Specifically, those states might reduce their cooperation with the USA on issues such as finance and trade, nuclear proliferation, and counterterrorism, thus imposing tangible costs on US policy. As Robert Jervis writes, ‘assertive hegemony erodes the willingness of [other states, including] allies, to cooperate [with the USA] on a wide range of endeavours’.⁶ Liberal institutionalists, although reasoning from different premises, similarly predict that if the USA acquires a reputation for noncompliance with the norms, rules, and procedures embedded in the UN Charter regime, other states might reciprocate through costly retaliation and negative issue linkage by ‘form[ing] coalitions to balance American behaviour in other areas such as trade or the environment’.⁷

Assuming that US policymakers are aware of those risks, then fears of negative issue linkage or soft balancing across various policy domains might explain why the USA seeks multilateral approval from the UNSC and NATO’s NAC. Alexander Thompson and Erik Voeten have made this hypothesis explicit. Thompson argues that if the USA intervenes

without IO approval, in defiance of established international norms, ‘even weak states have means of imposing costs’.⁸ Those costs, he affirms, can involve ‘direct retaliation or countercoalitions’ as well as ‘long-term costs imposed... through negative issue linkage: the coercer finds its relations with other states suffering in other issue areas’. That leads him to hypothesize that ‘powerful coercers’ like the USA seek IO approval strategically, in order to signal benign intentions to potentially antagonistic third-party states and minimize international costs.⁹ Erik Voeten similarly assumes that if ‘the United States exercises force in the absence of SC authorization, other states [might] challenge it... for instance, by reducing cooperation elsewhere’.¹⁰ That, he argues, creates incentives for US policymakers to seek IO approval in order to uphold ‘cooperative efforts’ across an array of issues, including ‘on economic issues [and] common security threats’.¹¹

If concerns about negative issue linkage motivate the USA to seek IO approval, we should observe policymakers working hardest to secure such approval in cases where there is a significant risk that third-party states might otherwise interpret US intentions as revisionist (e.g., when an intervention appears aimed at control of foreign territory or natural resources, political regime change, or straightforward retaliation — all goals that are *prima facie* incompatible with the UN Charter norms that underpin the international status quo). Furthermore, for causal inference to be warranted, policymakers would have to declare in interviews, memoirs, and various statements that when they sought IO approval, they were in fact motivated by concerns about negative issue linkage.

Increasing and maintaining congressional support

Another possibility is that domestic politics motivates US efforts to secure UN or NATO approval for armed intervention. Some scholars hypothesize that American leaders seek IO approval in order to increase US public support by validating their own claims about foreign crises and reassuring the public about the likely consequences of military action.¹² One study

claims to have found concrete evidence that UNSC approval boosts US public support by magnifying the rally-‘round-the-flag effect.¹³ However, the coding of cases underlying that study is problematic, raising questions about the validity of the finding.¹⁴ A recent survey experiment indicates that although IO approval somewhat increases U.S. elite support for intervention, it does not consistently increase mass public support.¹⁵ There is strong evidence that once US troops are deployed in combat abroad, the public tends to rally around the flag and support the president, regardless of multilateral approval — at least as long as there is bipartisan *congressional backing*.¹⁶ Therefore, also taking into account that Congress ultimately holds budgetary power over military intervention, it may be worth focusing in more detail on congressional attitudes.

To-date, scholars theorizing the benefits of IO approval in terms of executive-legislative relations have largely viewed such approval as a means of increasing the president’s freedom of action in the run-up to the use of force, claiming that it ‘ties the president’s hands’ and thus minimizes the risk that Congress might veto an intervention.¹⁷ However, a significant body of research indicates that regardless of multilateral approval, it is very difficult for legislators on Capitol Hill to prevent a determined administration from intervening abroad. The 1973 War Powers Resolution, intended to constrain the executive branch, has been largely ineffectual. In the *short run*, legislators typically aim at ‘blame avoidance’: they prefer to neither vote for military intervention, since that would involve ceding control entirely to the executive branch (while sharing the blame in case of failure), nor vote against it and risk being blamed for undermining US coercive diplomacy.¹⁸

It would nevertheless be wrong to conclude that Congress is toothless when it comes to constraining US presidents on the use of force. Congressional opposition can become more of a problem in the *long run*, following the deployment of American troops, as combat and stabilization missions become protracted, resource costs rise, and success remains uncertain.¹⁹ Support in Congress for open-ended deployments is likely to become increasingly brittle,

making it difficult for policymakers to secure the necessary appropriations — especially when the mission is largely humanitarian and no clear threat to American security exists. Congressional opposition in turn can dramatically undermine US public support for ongoing interventions, as the American news media generally ‘index’ the slant of their coverage to reflect the range of opinion that exists within Congress.²⁰ As an extreme measure, Congress might adopt binding legislation requiring the withdrawal of all US troops, as it did for the Lebanon intervention in 1983, or cut off funding after a set deadline, as it did for Vietnam in 1973 and Somalia in 1993.²¹

In an important study, William Howell and Jon Pevehouse conclude that ‘early congressional discussions about impending military action send valuable signals’ to policymakers about the likelihood of domestic political support for potentially ‘protracted or costly’ interventions.²² Research on congressional opinion also finds strong bipartisan demand on Capitol Hill for burden sharing with foreign allies and partners and more generally for a cooperative approach to solving international problems.²³ Consequently, when policymakers expect a resource-intensive commitment and congressional support appears lukewarm to begin with, they may seek advance approval from the UNSC or NATO’s NAC in order to maximize the prospect of sustained burden sharing and reduce the likelihood of future congressional backlash.

Facilitating sustained burden sharing

There are two ways in which multilateral approval from the UNSC or NAC, obtained before the launch of offensive operations, can function as a catalyst for sustained military and financial burden sharing. First, the resolution of approval can explicitly mandate a follow-on multilateral peacekeeping force led by other international partners. Second, the burden-sharing commitment can be less formal, based on the legitimation effect of IO approval and the reputational implications of public pledges of support.

The strongest assurance of sustained burden sharing is obtained when the initial resolution authorizing military intervention, typically a UNSC mandate, also contains a formal commitment on the part of the multilateral body and its principal members to set up a follow-on UN peacekeeping force led by other countries. For instance, SCR 940, which authorized the 1994 US intervention in Haiti, explicitly mandated the establishment of a follow-on UN force as soon as basic security had been restored.²⁴ Once the UN force was deployed in the spring of 1995, most American troops were able to withdraw, and that, as a former US policymaker recalls, satisfied members of Congress who ‘were eager either to cut or restrict appropriations for Haiti’.²⁵ More recently, UN resolutions have become increasingly specific in this regard. SCR 1497, authorizing a US-led intervention in Liberia in 2003, committed the SC ‘to establish... a follow-on United Nations stabilization force’ under regional leadership (i.e., led by countries other than the USA) within a maximum of two months. Similarly SCR 2085, authorizing a French intervention in Mali in 2012, mandated the deployment of an African-led mission that would gradually take over most of the stabilization burden.²⁶ This mode of proceeding is particularly attractive for lower-stakes missions where reliance on less proficient troops from developing countries seems acceptable for keeping the peace.

Even in the absence of an authorizing resolution explicitly mandating a follow-on force, advance IO approval and the resulting legitimacy can facilitate sustained burden sharing by reducing domestic political obstacles for foreign partner states to cooperate with the USA in peacekeeping and stabilization.²⁷ In addition, a UNSC resolution authorizing the use of ‘all necessary means’ involves a public, and therefore potentially costly, commitment to support US policy on the part of all those SC members who have offered their affirmative vote. The same goes for approval from NATO’s NAC, which requires a consensus among all members of the alliance. Once member states are thus committed to supporting US policy, subsequent resistance by them to the establishment of UN or NATO stabilization missions

becomes unlikely. Non-US member states may also independently value institutions such as the UN and NATO for the security benefits they provide. Consequently, once a UN or NATO stabilization mission has been approved and the institution's reputation becomes linked to mission success, those member states may be willing to maintain significant troop contributions even in the face of mounting costs.

Research shows that approval of US-led interventions by NATO's NAC, in particular, substantially increases Washington's ability to extract significant burden-sharing contributions from its most militarily capable allies even after a mission becomes unpopular among their domestic audiences.²⁸ In the Balkans, for instance, where the USA intervened in 1995 and again in 1999 only after securing NATO's endorsement, Washington's international partners subsequently took on most of the stabilization burden.²⁹ By contrast, in Iraq, where the USA and Britain intervened in 2003 without IO approval, Washington and London struggled to persuade other countries to contribute stabilization troops. Once the USA agreed to partially offset the financial costs of those contributions, in the short run it was able to recruit about 16,000 troops from other partners besides Britain.³⁰ However, the improvised multinational coalition showed little staying power. By May 2007, when America 'surged' its own troops to over 150,000 to control the Iraqi civil war, the non-US/UK component had shrunk to only about 7,000 troops.³¹ This pointed lack of burden sharing contributed to growing congressional pressure to withdraw all American troops from Iraq.³²

Burden sharing and US domestic politics

Members of Congress, as quintessential political players, may have other reasons beyond concerns about the military and financial burden for opposing a particular intervention. They may be opposed for parochial and ideological reasons,³³ or because they are beholden to sectoral economic interests that have little to gain from an assertive foreign policy involving military intervention.³⁴ However, as the case studies below will demonstrate, whatever other

reasons members of Congress may have to oppose an intervention, *in public* they tend to emphasize ostensibly non-partisan issues such as the intervention's likely costs in terms of materiel and resources. By securing multilateral burden-sharing commitments, US policymakers can address those criticisms, making it more difficult for Congress to continue to publicly oppose an intervention and especially to justify funding cut-offs once US troops are deployed.

The political scientist Sarah Kreps argues that US policymakers contemplating military intervention are likely to choose multilateralism as a way to 'share... costly burdens' when there is little urgency and they anticipate a significant operational commitment.³⁵ There is some important overlap between Kreps's argument and the one developed in this article. Yet there are also significant differences. First, in her book, *Coalitions of Convenience*, Kreps focuses primarily on coalitions of the willing rather than IO approval. Nowhere does she argue that the expectation of coalition cohesion motivates efforts to secure IO approval ahead of intervention.³⁶ Furthermore, when identifying potential drivers of US multilateralism, Kreps views 'burden sharing' and 'domestic politics' as distinct, alternative hypotheses: she favors the former, disregarding the possibility that domestic politics may motivate policymakers' interest in burden sharing and ultimately in multilateralism.³⁷

Decision makers may of course value the policy benefits of international burden sharing regardless of concerns about domestic politics. But executive-branch officials, especially civilians who strongly advocate military intervention, are often inclined to value swift military action (e.g., for the sake of redressing a humanitarian crisis or signaling resolve) above international cooperation and burden sharing.³⁸ Furthermore, there is evidence that hawkish policymakers tend to underestimate or disregard the longer-term operational costs of intervention.³⁹ Congressional leaders, by contrast, are likely to consistently focus on those costs, given that they are the ones who need to finance military interventions and justify the resources allocated to their constituents. Congressional grumblings about resource costs

during the run-up to intervention, in turn, can be expected to play an important role in focusing policymakers' attention on the need for burden sharing.

If concerns about burden sharing and congressional opposition motivate US efforts to gain IO approval, we should observe policymakers working hardest to secure such approval for interventions anticipated to be resource-intensive and potentially open-ended, and more generally for (humanitarian) interventions in peripheral regions that are likely to enjoy only limited congressional support. For causal inference to be warranted, policymakers should further declare in interviews, memoirs, and various statements that when they worked hard to secure IO approval they were in fact motivated by a desire to satisfy congressional demands for burden sharing.

The 1991 Gulf War and 1999 Kosovo intervention as most-likely cases

The 1991 Persian Gulf War was a massive military operation involving half a million US troops. That makes it *prima facie* very plausible that a desire to reassure other states in order to avert negative issue linkage motivated US policymakers to seek UN approval. The Kosovo intervention, even more than the Gulf War, is a most-likely case for the issue-linkage hypothesis. The use of force over Kosovo was opposed by another great power, Russia, and US policymakers worried that broader relations with Moscow might suffer. Furthermore, the use of force in support of a secessionist movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army, was opposed by China and several regional powers, including India and South Africa.⁴⁰ Other post-Cold War interventions for which the USA also sought IO approval, such as Somalia 1992, Bosnia 1994-95, and Liberia 2003, enjoyed significant international support *a priori* as humanitarian rescue missions, making them less likely candidates for the issue-linkage hypothesis.⁴¹ The Gulf War and Kosovo intervention can also be seen as most-likely cases for the alternative hypothesis that concerns about Congress motivate US efforts to secure IO

approval. Both were resource-intensive operations involving the possibility of open-ended commitments. Furthermore, as shown below, Congress was very sceptical in both instances.

Most-likely cases are tailored to cast strong doubt on a theory and related hypotheses if the evidence does not fit. As Alexander George and Andrew Bennett write, ‘the best possible evidence for weakening a theory is when a case is most likely for that theory and for alternative theories, and all these theories make the same prediction... This might be called an easiest test case’.⁴² A theory’s failure in such easy cases calls into question its broader applicability. Consequently, if one of the two hypotheses examined fails to hold up in the Gulf War and Kosovo case studies below, while the other stands up well, we can conclude that the mechanism posited by the latter is more likely to explain American behaviour. For further hypothesis testing, it will then also briefly consider two negative cases, in which the USA made only limited or no efforts to secure IO approval.

The Gulf War

The principal US national security officials in 1990-91 were President George H.W. Bush; Brent Scowcroft, his national security adviser; Secretary of State James Baker; Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney; and General Colin Powell, the influential chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the Bush administration initially imposed multilateral economic sanctions on Iraq and built up US troops in the Gulf to deter Saddam Hussein from a further advance into Saudi Arabia. But in late October, the US president decided that he would launch a massive ground campaign before the end of the winter to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait, unless they left voluntarily.⁴³ Secretary of State Baker then spent the next three weeks visiting twelve capitals on three continents, offering sizable political and financial inducements, to garner international support for a use-of-force authorization from the UNSC.⁴⁴ President Bush himself also travelled

overseas and devoted significant time and energy to persuading other SC members to authorize military action.⁴⁵ Furthermore, to facilitate international consensus building, US policymakers decided to limit war aims to the restoration of the *status quo ante*.⁴⁶ What motivated US leaders to make such an all-out effort to secure UN approval?

Averting negative issue linkage

Scholars have argued that in the run-up to the Gulf War, ‘US decision makers turned to the UN as an intentional strategy to minimize international political fallout’, given that ‘relations with other influential states, such as the Soviet Union, were perceived to be at stake’.⁴⁷ Former decision makers, however, dispute this interpretation. Scowcroft, who played a key role in devising US policy together with the president, denies that the administration sought UN approval to reassure other states about American intentions and maintain cooperative relations across different issue areas.⁴⁸ With specific regard to the Soviet Union, Scowcroft clarifies that UN approval was not viewed as particularly valuable to maintain the cooperative spirit in relations between Washington and Moscow. Instead, he explains, ‘it was the other way round’ — he and the president viewed Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s a priori desire to cooperate on Iraq as helpful in terms of securing UN approval. ‘It was not easy, because Gorbachev was of two minds: he wanted to cooperate with the United States, and at the same time Iraq was a client state of the Soviet Union. But had the Soviets opposed us, it would have been much more difficult to build support’.⁴⁹

Former secretary of state Baker agrees with Scowcroft’s analysis. With the collapse of communism, Baker recalls, ‘America’s status as the preeminent superpower was magnified’, which resulted in an immediate tendency for most other states to bandwagon with the United States: ‘Everyone wanted to get closer to the United States’.⁵⁰ The Soviets in particular, he explains, ‘were anxious to be seen to be cooperating with rather than confronting the United States’.⁵¹ Senior Bush administration officials believed that as far as compliance with

international norms was concerned, a legitimate case could have been made under Article 51 of the UN Charter for undoing the Iraqi aggression without IO approval, and the expectation was that most other countries would have acquiesced in such a course of action.⁵² In short, the president's principal advisers did not expect that UN approval would be especially advantageous, let alone necessary, to reassure third-party states and notably the Soviet Union about American intentions and avert negative issue linkage.

Assuaging Congress

As the use of force appeared increasingly likely from September 1990 onward, congressional leaders began questioning whether American interests in the region warranted what they expected would be a resource-intensive and potentially drawn-out military operation. Members of Congress demanded assurances that the burden would be shared internationally. 'A lot of the members [of Congress] talk about the importance of burden sharing', House majority leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) told the press. 'Whether it's sending troops or writing checks or helping in all that needs to be done, I think that's a very important effort'.⁵³

Among the president's principal advisers, Secretary Baker and JCS Chairman Powell initially worried more than others about the operational burden and the related challenge of maintaining US domestic support in the eventuality of protracted combat.⁵⁴ The Secretary of State and JCS chairman had both been profoundly shaped by the Vietnam War and their related experience of 'what happened in efforts to fight a war when you don't have the support of your domestic population'.⁵⁵ In the case of Vietnam, Congress had eventually cut off all funding for US troops after a set deadline, forcing a humiliating withdrawal.⁵⁶ Baker and Powell therefore recommended that if force was to be used to liberate Kuwait, the burden ought to be shared with international partners, as demanded by Congress, and the operation should be completed swiftly, with no open-ended occupation. Advance UN approval, by legitimizing the war and providing a limited mandate (i.e., liberating Kuwait, but no regime

change) could facilitate burden sharing and would commit the administration to a short military operation.⁵⁷ Baker recalls that for those reasons, from early on he and Powell ‘were pretty much of one mind’ in believing that ‘the military option had to be linked with a diplomatic offensive to authorize the use of force’.⁵⁸

Scowcroft, Secretary of Defense Cheney, and the president were initially reluctant to request a UNSC mandate, because they worried that a failed attempt might become a political liability and that working through the UN would constrain the administration.⁵⁹ But on 8 November 1990, President Bush announced the deployment of another 200,000 American troops to the Gulf, which would double the US military presence there.⁶⁰ Thereupon, legislators on Capitol Hill dramatically increased their pressure on the president, accusing him of having prematurely decided to embark on a resource-intensive war and making it clear that congressional support should not be taken for granted.⁶¹ Scowcroft specifically recalls that ‘Congress demanded to know who else was going to put up money [and] volunteer troops’.⁶² At that point, Bush, influenced by a book he had read about Lyndon Johnson’s experience during the Vietnam War, reportedly told his senior advisers that ‘to go without support from Congress is too dangerous, we need to involve the Congress’ — and he decided to seek a congressional vote of support, to insure himself and his administration against possible domestic political backlash down the road.⁶³ Otherwise, he feared, ‘if it drags out, not only will I take the blame, but I will probably have impeachment proceedings filed against me’.⁶⁴

By mid-November, therefore, Baker’s and Powell’s argument that a SC mandate would be crucial to successfully address the domestic political challenge finally touched a chord with the president.⁶⁵ In previous weeks, congressional leaders such as House Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.) and Senate majority leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) had repeatedly linked their demand for burden sharing to the issue of UN approval — thus indicating that a SC mandate would help assuage Congress.⁶⁶ On 14 November, Bush and Scowcroft met privately with congressional leaders, and according to a contemporaneous newspaper report

based on insider accounts, ‘Mr. Bush, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Scowcroft essentially decided after this meeting... that they needed a Security Council resolution... to bring Congress along’.⁶⁷ Once the SC approved the use of ‘all necessary means’ to liberate Kuwait on 29 November 1990, Congress followed suit and also authorized the use of force against Iraq.⁶⁸

It bears emphasizing that the Bush administration did not seek UN approval because it worried that congressional opposition might otherwise have prevented it from using force. President Bush insists that ‘even had Congress not passed the [authorizing] resolutions, I would have acted and ordered our troops into combat’.⁶⁹ Robert Gates, then the deputy US national security adviser, is convinced that the president ‘was going to throw that son of a bitch out of Kuwait, regardless of whether the Congress or the public supported him’.⁷⁰ The president wanted to get Congress on the record as supporting the use of force and more generally assuage sceptics on Capitol Hill, in order to reduce the risk of a Vietnam-like scenario, where legislators forced a withdrawal of US troops *after* they had been deployed.⁷¹

Arguments that US policymakers in 1990-91 ‘were not primarily motivated by political concerns at home when they channelled policy through the UN’⁷² and were ‘not motivated by burden sharing or military resource aggregation’⁷³ contrast with the available evidence. It was certainly the case that foreign heads of government, such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, French President François Mitterrand, and the leaders of Turkey, Italy, and Japan insisted on UN approval.⁷⁴ However, they requested a UN mandate as a precondition for contributing troops and/or financial resources to the war effort – i.e., for the burden sharing that Congress demanded. As former JCS chairman Powell recalls: ‘We needed the UN support to create the kind of coalition we ended up with. If we didn’t have the UN support, we would not have had the Syrians, the Egyptians, and the rest of them there’.⁷⁵ Syria and Egypt ultimately contributed 15,000 and 20,000 troops, respectively, to Operation Desert Storm. In total, US partners contributed almost 300,000 troops, while also pledging \$53.5 billion in financial contributions.⁷⁶

The Kosovo Intervention

The principal US national security officials at the time of the Kosovo intervention were President William Clinton; Samuel Berger, his national security adviser; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; Secretary of Defense William Cohen; and JCS Chairman Henry ‘Hugh’ Shelton. In the spring of 1998, when the deteriorating security situation in Kosovo became a matter of growing international concern, Secretary Albright emerged as the administration’s chief advocate of military intervention. As one of her former aides recalls: ‘Albright believed very early on that the lessons of Bosnia were that [Yugoslav President Slobodan] Milosevic would respond only to the use of force’.⁷⁷

During the first half of 1998, most of Washington’s European allies — including France, Italy, and Germany — were reluctant to countenance military action.⁷⁸ Consequently, on 23 April 1998, Albright and Robert Gelbard, the State Department’s hawkish Balkans envoy, made the case for US unilateral air strikes to National Security Adviser Berger and his deputy, Donald Kerrick.⁷⁹ Albright’s and Gelbard’s specific proposal was that the USA give Milosevic an ultimatum of between three and five days to remove his security forces from Kosovo, and in case of noncompliance Washington should ‘use Tomahawk missiles and in the middle of the night destroy the [Yugoslav] ministry of defence and the ministry of interior’.⁸⁰ Berger, however, summarily rejected the idea of US unilateral air strikes.⁸¹ The president himself, Albright recalls, subsequently made it ‘very clear that... we had to work with the allies, that we weren’t going to do this unilaterally’.⁸²

By mid-July 1998, US diplomats concluded that because of Russia’s opposition to a UN mandate for armed intervention, ‘efforts to achieve a United Nations Security Council Resolution under Chapter VII would be counterproductive’.⁸³ From then onward, the administration focused its multilateral diplomatic efforts on the Atlantic alliance. Forging a consensus on the use of force at NATO required several months, limiting Washington’s

freedom of action while the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate. Why, then, did President Clinton decide to multilateralize US policy over Kosovo?

Averting negative issue linkage

The use of force over Kosovo was opposed by Russia, as well as by China, India, and South Africa. That makes it *prima facie* plausible that the USA sought IO approval to avert negative issue linkage or, as one scholar puts it, to uphold its ‘reputation as a relatively benign superpower and its leadership position in the post–Cold War world’.⁸⁴ There is no evidence, however, that US policymakers aimed to reassure non-NATO members and Russia in particular by involving the Atlantic alliance. ‘The Russians did not like the way in which the US and the West had established a kind of hegemony in the Balkans’, explains Stephen Sestanovich, then the secretary of state’s special adviser for the former Soviet Union.⁸⁵ Gregory Schulte, at the time a senior staffer on the National Security Council (NSC) responsible for US Balkans policy, goes so far as to speculate that ‘the Russians probably would have been happier if the US just did it unilaterally, because with the Warsaw Pact gone, the first threat to Russia was the expansion of NATO’.⁸⁶

Nor did US policymakers expect that securing NATO’s approval would reassure other states, such as China, India, or South Africa. But that was not a particular concern, remembers James Dobbins, then a senior administration official who attended most NSC meetings on Kosovo: ‘The only state outside NATO that was of serious concern was Russia. The assumption was that the Chinese would go along with whatever the Russians would go along with. As to the NAM [the Non-Aligned Movement, which includes India and South Africa], there wasn’t anything they could do to help Serbia or harm us’.⁸⁷ Morton Halperin, at the time the State Department’s head of policy planning, confirms that in the intramural debates on Kosovo, the possibility of costly opposition from third-party states beyond Russia ‘was not on the screen at all’.⁸⁸

Assuaging Congress

Senior US defense officials were convinced from the spring of 1998 onward that stabilizing Kosovo in the aftermath of air strikes would require a long-term effort. ‘Our assumption was that the only way you could have a deal which would be real was, effectively, an occupation,’ explains Walter Slocombe, then the undersecretary of defense for policy.⁸⁹ Yet congressional leaders opposed another large-scale US troop deployment to the Balkans, after the one in Bosnia, and they demanded assurances that most of the stabilization burden would be shouldered by the European allies.⁹⁰ Senior members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, including Ted Stevens (R-Ala.), Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), insisted that the USA should not contribute more than fifteen percent of troops for stabilizing Kosovo.⁹¹

Among the president’s top-level advisers, Secretary of Defense Cohen and JCS Chairman Shelton were particularly reluctant to deploy American forces without first assuaging Congress, which made it imperative in their eyes to secure commitments from the other NATO allies that they would lead on Kosovo’s stabilization. General Joseph Ralston, then the JCS vice chairman, recalls that he and chairman Shelton ‘didn’t want to get started in this and then suddenly have the Congress say, “well wait a minute, we’re not going to support that.” Because then you don’t have a way to succeed’.⁹² Cohen similarly remembers being concerned about the ‘great reluctance on the part of most members of Congress to commit American forces, even on a peacekeeping mission’, which made him ‘absolutely convinced that the United States could not afford to take any kind of unilateral action from a political point of view’.⁹³

Cohen and other senior defense officials insisted vis-à-vis their colleagues from the White House and State Department that the administration should obtain NATO’s approval before launching air strikes and involve the allies in all aspects of policy planning and

implementation. ‘If there was going to be a military solution, we wanted to make sure that the allies were on board’, recalls General David Weisman, then the deputy director for strategy and policy on the Joint Staff. ‘We needed the NATO endorsement, and NATO had to take the lead, so that everybody would be involved, not only with the operation, but also with the peace afterward — in fact, that was the most important part’.⁹⁴ Senior State Department officials with experience in the field of transatlantic relations agreed that by involving NATO, the United States could trigger the ‘pull’ of alliance solidarity and facilitate European leadership on postwar stabilization.⁹⁵

Kerrick, then one of Berger’s deputies on the NSC staff, further insists that a desire to satisfy congressional demands for burden sharing motivated the administration to proceed multilaterally through NATO: ‘Congress would say, “yeah we should do something about it,” but they were very reluctant to want to commit US military forces. So they would ask: “How long are they going to be there? What’s the mission going to be? And who’s going to pay for it?” It got to a point where it was clear that well, we need to do this multilaterally’.⁹⁶ On 30 January 1999, the NAC endorsed the use of airpower. But it took another several weeks, until 24 March, until the USA and thirteen other NATO members finally agreed to commence air strikes against Yugoslavia.⁹⁷ Waging war through a multi-national coalition proved to be challenging, and the USA contributed the lion’s share of the military hardware and technological capabilities to the air campaign.⁹⁸ Yet in the long run, the administration’s effort to proceed multilaterally paid off. Soon after Milosevic yielded to NATO’s demands, Washington’s European allies publicly confirmed their willingness to shoulder most of the postwar burden.⁹⁹ The US contribution to stabilization and reconstruction, as demanded by Congress, never exceeded fifteen percent of the total.¹⁰⁰

Negative Cases: Panama 1989 and Iraq 2003

Most-likely cases are particularly useful for disconfirming particular hypotheses. To gain more confidence in domestic politics as the principal driver of US efforts to secure IO approval, it is worth briefly discussing two negative cases. If concerns about domestic politics motivate US policymakers to work hard to secure IO approval in some cases, then the absence of such concerns should be evident in cases where the USA made only limited or no efforts to secure IO approval. I will examine in particular US decision making in the run-up to the 1989 Panama intervention and the 2003 Iraq War, since those cases also provide further valuable insights about the issue-linkage hypothesis.

In 1989, US national security leaders anticipated that a unilateral invasion of Panama aimed at forcibly removing local strongman Manuel Noriega from power would be ‘roundly condemned by people in the international community’.¹⁰¹ If a desire to reassure other states about American intentions and related concerns about issue linkage generally steer US intervention policy toward multilateralism, then in this case policymakers should have worked hard to secure IO approval. Instead, on 16 December 1989, the USA decided to move ahead with military intervention, and no effort was made to secure IO approval before 27,000 US troops invaded Panama.¹⁰² By then, the Cold War deadlock at the UNSC had been largely overcome. The Council had already established multilateral peace missions in Angola, Namibia, and Central America, and only months later it authorized a major military operation against Iraq.¹⁰³ Therefore, had US policymakers considered UN approval for the Panama intervention sufficiently desirable, they could arguably have obtained it by offering sizeable inducements to bring the Council on board, as they subsequently did for the 1991 Gulf War.

Space limitations preclude a detailed analysis of the Panama case. But the decision to intervene unilaterally in this case can be explained by reference to US domestic politics and the expectation of a limited operational commitment. President George H.W. Bush and his advisers expected that a US-friendly government would take office in Panama ‘within hours’

of the initial American landing; there was strong domestic support for military intervention on Capitol Hill (indeed, leading members of Congress had long been calling for Noriega's forcible removal); and the operation was deemed unlikely to result in an open-ended commitment or other significant burdens on the United States.¹⁰⁴

Similar factors explain the limited US effort to secure IO approval for the 2003 Iraq War. In the fall of 2002, President George W. Bush was persuaded by Colin Powell, then the secretary of state, and Tony Blair, the British prime minister, to involve the UNSC over Iraq.¹⁰⁵ American leaders understood that using force to change Iraq's political regime would be internationally controversial, as numerous allies had begun to express their concerns about a war for regime change in previous months.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, one might plausibly hypothesize that American leaders sought multilateral backing on Iraq in order to reassure other states about US intentions and avert potentially costly negative issue linkage.¹⁰⁷

However, Powell, who among senior US officials made the strongest case for seeking UN approval in 2002-03, insists that he was not worried about reduced international cooperation with the USA in other policy domains: 'I did not expand the problem out to cooperation on counterterrorism and Afghanistan and things like that — I didn't think through all of that'.¹⁰⁸ Stephen Hadley, who as deputy national security adviser at the time attended most senior-level policy meetings on Iraq, similarly does not 'remember anybody [in the administration] making the argument that we needed international sanction on Iraq to keep people cooperating with the US in other areas'.¹⁰⁹ Powell and others who recommended that the president seek UN approval were primarily concerned about the possibility that the USA might have to shoulder the burden of stabilizing Iraq on its own. 'When we break this we're going to own it', Powell told the president in August 2002, 'and you may not want to be the government of this country. So let's try to get the UN resolution'.¹¹⁰

After the UNSC adopted Resolution 1441 in November 2002, which threatened 'serious consequences' but did not explicitly authorize the use of force, the Bush

administration at first ‘didn’t feel as though an additional resolution would be necessary’.¹¹¹ Then, in January 2003, President Bush acceded to Blair’s request to seek a second UN resolution authorizing the use of force.¹¹² But the USA was never committed to obtaining a second resolution. As Jeremy Greenstock, then the UK’s ambassador to the SC, explains, ‘the prime minister persuaded the president that there should be at least American condonement of that attempt. We never got real American support in it’.¹¹³ Several studies indicate that ‘if it had been willing to delay the onset of war [the Bush administration] may well have gained a resolution licensing the use of force’.¹¹⁴ Yet on 16 March 2003, Bush told Blair that the UN track should be abandoned, refusing to extend the diplomatic effort as demanded by other SC partners, and three day later the USA commenced Operation Iraqi Freedom.¹¹⁵

Washington’s limited interest in securing in UN approval for the 2003 Iraq War can again be explained by reference to US domestic politics. Ever since Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ speech in January 2002, senior administration officials had relentlessly insisted that Iraq constituted a serious threat to American security. That prompted Congress to adopt a joint resolution providing the president with wide-ranging authority to use military force against Iraq already in October 2002, when the UN negotiations had just begun.¹¹⁶ Congress was thus effectively locked in. Furthermore, with the exception of Powell, senior US officials believed that toppling Saddam Hussein and stabilizing Iraq would be easy—a ‘cakewalk’, in the words of the neoconservative political commentator Kenneth Adelman.¹¹⁷ As a result, they did not view the burden-sharing benefits of IO approval as particularly appealing. A former senior US defense official recalls that civilian leaders at the Pentagon, in particular, ‘didn’t have an extended stabilization period in mind, so they didn’t make the argument, we need UN approval because that’s the only way to durably hold the allies’.¹¹⁸

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s earlier comment that ‘the mission should determine the coalition’, rather than the other way around, was an implicit criticism of the weight that previous administrations had placed on multilateral cooperation.¹¹⁹ Rumsfeld and

his hawkish collaborators believed that efforts to obtain UN approval for the Iraq War would needlessly constrain the USA. Summing up, in both the Panama and Iraq cases, strong US domestic support for intervention and the expectation of a limited commitment reduced incentives for American leaders to work hard to secure IO approval.

Conclusion

Alexis de Tocqueville remarked that ‘Americans, in their relations with foreigners, appear impatient at the least censure and insatiable for praise’.¹²⁰ This article has found that when US policymakers seek UN or NATO approval for military interventions, they are not so much concerned with averting broader international censure and issue linkage. Instead, they aim to facilitate sustained military and financial burden sharing for potentially open-ended commitments, in the expectation that this will assuage congressional concerns about resource costs and minimize the risk that Congress might withdraw its support once American troops are deployed. Strobe Talbott, a former deputy secretary of state, sums it up as follows: ‘Particularly when it comes to intervening in civil wars or failed states and there is no clear threat to US national security, it is much more sustainable if you have regional IOs and coalitions that are backed by global institutions to carry these things out, because you just can’t have US forces stay that long. It goes to our domestic politics’.¹²¹

These findings have several important implications. First, the foreign policy of materially preponderant states is more likely to be influenced by domestic rather than international systemic variables. This might seem obvious – if it weren’t that several major studies have recently sought to explain US demand for multilateralism in the field of military intervention by reference to systemic factors and related concerns about issue linkage.

Second, this article is part of a small but growing body of literature showing that executive-branch concerns about congressional opposition do indeed influence US military intervention decision making.¹²² This is relevant because previous research had concluded

that Congress is toothless when it comes to constraining the executive branch in matters of military intervention. Congress cannot prevent a determined administration from intervening abroad — but congressional opposition can become a problem in the long run, as military operations become protracted, since Congress needs to pass the necessary appropriation bills.

The finding that domestic politics can motivate American leaders to prefer multilateral mechanisms for military intervention contrasts with the evidence from other studies that US domestic politics often militates against multilateral commitments. As David Skidmore notes, the end of the Cold War has ‘empower[ed] parochial interests who often oppose multilateralist commitments abroad based upon narrow ideological or utilitarian considerations’.¹²³ Parochial domestic interests do often lead Congress to oppose multilateral commitments (especially binding treaty commitments) in the fields of human rights, environmental policy, and trade. However, while legislators remain ambivalent about multilateral institutions as such, they generally value multilateral burden sharing, as facilitated by IO approval, in the field of military intervention – especially for interventions in peripheral regions that are anticipated to be resource-intensive and potentially open-ended.

Finally, the finding that concerns about negative issue linkage do not influence US decision making in the field of military intervention also has broader implications for American foreign policy. The use of military force, because of its salience, would seem to be the policy domain where decision makers ought to be most sensitive to issue-linkage concerns. If such concerns are essentially a non-factor in this field, it is unlikely that they motivate US engagement with multilateral bodies more generally.

The evidence from this article suggests that US decision makers tend to be more confident in the bandwagging incentives that unipolarity generates for other states than many international relations theorists. Whether American policymakers are justified in this belief, and in the related assumption that negative issue linkage will remain negligible, is of course a different matter. For the time being, foreign leaders retain strong incentives to keep

cooperating with the USA on a plethora of issues, even following US military interventions carried out without IO approval. However, emerging powers like China, India, and Brazil may acquire greater leeway to retaliate against the USA through negative issue linkage in the future, as they further increase their capabilities. There is a danger that over two decades of unipolarity may have produced rather too much complacency among American policymakers. Assuming that US power continues to decline in relative terms and negative issue linkage becomes more likely, US policymakers may underestimate the probability of such issue linkage occurring, with the result that overall international cooperation might suffer.

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Notes

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- ¹ Author interview with Gen. Colin Powell (2 February 2011).
 - ² Erik Voeten, 'The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force', *International Organization* 59(3), 2005, pp. 527-57; Alexander Thompson, 'Coercion Through IOs: The Security Council and the Logic of Information Transmission', *International Organization* 60(1), 2006, pp. 1-34; Alexander Thompson, *Channels of Power: The UN Security Council and US Statecraft in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Joel Westra, *International Law and the Use of Armed Force: The UN Charter and the Major Powers* (London: Routledge, 2007).
 - ³ Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (London: Routledge, 2005), chap. 5; Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: Norton, 2005).
 - ⁴ See Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, 'Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back', *International Security* 30(1), 2005, pp. 109-39; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), chap. 3.
 - ⁵ On military spending, see *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2015), chap. 2. On GDP figures, see World Bank, *Gross Domestic Product 2013*, available at: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>.
 - ⁶ Jervis, *American Foreign Policy*, p. 105. See also Robert Pape, 'Soft Balancing against the United States', *International Security* 30(1), 2005, pp. 7-45.
 - ⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 17. See also Charles Kupchan, 'The False Promise of Unipolarity', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 24(2), 2011, pp. 165-73.

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- ⁸ Thompson, *Channels of Power*, p. 6.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 26.
- ¹⁰ Voeten, 'Political Origins', p. 543.
- ¹¹ Voeten, 'Political Origins', p. 541. See also Westra, *International Law*, pp. 43-7.
- ¹² Joseph Grieco et al., 'Let's Get a Second Opinion: International Institutions and American Public Support for War', *International Studies Quarterly*, 55(2), 2011, pp. 563-83; Songying Fang, 'The Informational Role of International Institutions and Domestic Politics', *American Journal of Political Science* 52(2), 2008, pp. 304-21; Terrence Chapman, *Securing Approval: Domestic Politics and Multilateral Authorization for War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- ¹³ Terrence Chapman and Dan Reiter, 'The United Nations Security Council and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6), 2004, pp. 886-909.
- ¹⁴ Chapman and Reiter ('UNSC and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect', p. 897, fn. 28) code the Iraqi no-fly zones (no explicit SC authorization), the 1992 UNPROFOR deployment in Bosnia (no US troop deployment), and the initial 2001 Afghanistan intervention (no explicit SC authorization) as UN-authorized American interventions. Meanwhile they leave out the 1992 Somalia intervention, the Bosnian no-fly zone, and the 2003 Liberia intervention, which were all explicitly UN authorized, US-led interventions. See also Chapman, *Securing Approval*, p. 112.
- ¹⁵ Joshua Busby, Craig Kafura, Jonathan Monten, and Jordan Tama, "Multilateralism and the Use of Force: Experimental Evidence on the Views of Foreign Policy Elites," unpublished manuscript.
- ¹⁶ Richard A. Brody, *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 56-73; Tim Groeling and Matthew A. Baum, 'Crossing the Water's Edge: Elite Rhetoric, Media Coverage, and the Rally-Around-the-Flag Phenomenon', *Journal of Politics* 70(4), 2008, pp. 1065-85. One recent study based on survey research finds that although IO approval somewhat increases U.S. elite support for military intervention, it does not meaningfully increase mass public support. See Joshua Busby, Craig Kafura, Jonathan Monten, and Jordan Tama, "Multilateralism and the Use of Force: Experimental Evidence on the Views of Foreign Policy Elites," unpublished manuscript.
- ¹⁷ See esp. Kenneth Schultz, 'Tying Hands and Washing Hands: The US Congress and Multilateral Humanitarian Intervention', in Daniel Drezner (ed.), *Locating the Proper Authorities* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003); but also Andrew Cortell and James Davis, 'How Do International Institutions Matter? The Domestic Impact of International Norms and Rules', *International Studies Quarterly* 40(4), 1996, pp. 451-87; and Atsushi Tago, 'Determinants of multilateralism in US use of force', *Journal of Peace Research* 42(5), 2005, pp. 585-604.
- ¹⁸ James Lindsay, 'Congress and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era', in *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era* (Queenstown, MD: Aspen Institute, 1995); Andrew Bennett, 'Who Rules the Roost? Congressional-Executive Relations on Foreign Policy', in Robert Lieber (ed.), *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001). See also Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power*, third revised ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013).
- ¹⁹ David P. Auerswald and Peter F. Cowhey, 'Ballotbox Diplomacy: The War Powers Resolution and the Use of Force', *International Studies Quarterly* 41(3), 1997, pp. 505-28; William Howell and Jon Pevehouse, *While Dangers Gather: Congressional Checks on Presidential War Powers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), chap. 2.
- ²⁰ John Zaller and Dennis Chiu, 'Government's Little Helper: US Press Coverage of Foreign Policy Crises, 1946-1999', in Brigitte Nacos, Robert Shapiro, and Pierangelo Isernia (eds.), *Decisionmaking in a Glass House* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Howell and Pevehouse, *While Dangers Gather*, pp. 153-91.
- ²¹ On Lebanon, see Fisher, *Presidential War Power*, pp. 140-41. On Vietnam and Somalia, see Richard Grimmett, 'Congressional Use of Funding Cutoffs Since 1970 Involving US Military Forces and Overseas Deployments', *CRS Report for Congress* (16 January 2007), pp. 2-3.
- ²² Howell and Pevehouse, *While Dangers Gather*, pp. 21, 26.
- ²³ Joshua Busby, Jonathan Monten, Jordan Tama, and William Inboden, 'Congress Is Already Post-Partisan', *Foreign Affairs* (online), 28 January 2013.
- ²⁴ SCR 940 (31 July 1994), §8.
- ²⁵ Strobe Talbott, *The Great Experiment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), p. 302.
- ²⁶ SCR 1497 (1 August 2003), § 2; SCR 2085 (20 December 2012), § 9-11.
- ²⁷ See e.g. Jennifer Welsh and Dominik Zaum, 'Legitimation and the UN Security Council', in Zaum (ed.), *Legitimizing International Organizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Thompson was

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- ambivalent in his 2006 article ('Coercion Through IOs') as to whether IO approval is sought to avert negative issue linkage or merely to generate international support and burden sharing for particular interventions. His subsequent book (*Channels of Power*), however, puts the emphasis squarely on averting issue linkage and clarifies that for his argument to hold up, 'other rationales, such as burden sharing must be ruled out as the primary motivators' (p. 51).
- ²⁸ Sarah Kreps, 'Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for NATO-led Operations in Afghanistan', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6 (3), 2010, pp. 191-215.
- ²⁹ Stefano Recchia, 'Beyond International Trusteeship: EU Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Occasional Paper No. 66* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2007); Stephen Cimbala and Peter Forster, *Multinational Military Intervention: NATO Policy, Strategy and Burden Sharing* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), chap. 4.
- ³⁰ Paul Richter, 'US Enlists More Countries in Iraq, at Taxpayers' Expense', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 2003; Joseph Christoff, 'Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq', *Testimony before the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight* (9 May 2007), pp. 5-8.
- ³¹ Christoff, 'Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq'. See also Christopher Blanchard and Catherine Marie Dale, 'Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Stabilization and Reconstruction', *CRS Report for Congress* (26 December 2007), pp. 11-18.
- ³² Jeff Zeleny and Carl Hulse, 'Senate Supports a Pullout Date in Iraq War Bill', *New York Times*, 28 March 2007.
- ³³ Timothy Hildebrandt et al., 'The Domestic Politics of Humanitarian Intervention: Public Opinion, Partisanship, and Ideology', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9 (3), 2013, pp. 243-66; Schultz, 'Tying Hands and Washing Hands.'
- ³⁴ Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Benjamin Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Kevin Nazirny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
- ³⁵ Sarah Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions After the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 28-36, at p. 35.
- ³⁶ In 'Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion' Kreps notes that in the Afghanistan case, NATO's post-hoc involvement from 2003 onward facilitated coalition cohesion. But the Afghanistan intervention is *sui generis*: although US policymakers did not seek multilateral support for the initial intervention in 2001, the outpouring of solidarity with the USA in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks made it possible to subsequently involve NATO in stabilization operations.
- ³⁷ Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience*, pp. 37-40.
- ³⁸ Stefano Recchia, "Soldiers, Civilians, and Multilateral Humanitarian Intervention," *Security Studies* 41 (1), 2015: 1-33.
- ³⁹ Charles Kupchan, 'Getting In: The Initial Stage of Military Intervention', in Ariel Levite, Bruce Jentleson, and Larry Berman (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 243-56; Aaron Rapport, *Waging War, Planning Peace: US Noncombat Operations and Major Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).
- ⁴⁰ Talbott, *Great Experiment*, pp. 313-22; Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur (eds.), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention* (Tokyo: UN University Press, 2000).
- ⁴¹ On international support for military intervention in Somalia, see Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 55-9. On Liberia, see Richard Stevenson and Christopher Marquis, 'Bush Team Faces Widespread Pressure to Act on Liberia', *New York Times*, 23 July 2003. On Bosnia, see James Steinberg, 'International Involvement in the Yugoslavia Conflict', in Lori Fisler Damrosch (ed.), *Enforcing Restraint: Collective Intervention in Internal Conflicts* (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 46-7.
- ⁴² Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 122.
- ⁴³ James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995), p. 303; Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), pp. 318-20.
- ⁴⁴ Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 305-25.
- ⁴⁵ George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Vintage, 1999), pp. 406-8; David M. Malone, *The International Struggle Over Iraq: Politics in the UN Security Council, 1980-2005* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 64-70.
- ⁴⁶ I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for encouraging me to highlight this.

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- ⁴⁷ Thompson, *Channels of Power*, pp. 51, 54. See also Voeten, 'Political Origins', p. 545-46; Westra, *International Law*, pp. 112-30.
- ⁴⁸ Author interview with Brent Scowcroft (22 March 2011). The question posed to Scowcroft was: 'Were you and the president concerned that if the USA went into Iraq without explicit UN authorization, that might have negatively affected relations with other countries beyond the question of Iraq – for instance, on other security issues, on global disarmament, on trade?' To which Scowcroft replied: 'No, I don't think so. It never got to that point'. A similar question was asked again toward the end of the interview: 'There is an argument that the USA seeks UN endorsement to reassure other states and avoid small balancing acts — attempts to undermine US foreign policy in other issue areas. Did that play a prominent role in 1990?' To which Scowcroft replied: 'Not in this case, no'.
- ⁴⁹ Scowcroft, author interview.
- ⁵⁰ Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 281.
- ⁵¹ James Baker, 'The Gulf War', *PBS Frontline Interview*, 1997. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/>.
- ⁵² Author interview with Thomas Pickering, US Permanent Representative to the UN, 1989-92 (14 January 2011). See also Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 278; Richard Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 90.
- ⁵³ Quoted in John Goshko and Dan Balz, 'Allies Needed in Gulf, Hill Warns', *Washington Post*, 6 September 1990. See also R. W. Apple, Jr., 'Criticism of US Gulf Policy Growing Louder in Congress', *New York Times*, 20 September 1990.
- ⁵⁴ Author interview with Bruce Riedel, Director for Gulf and South Asia Affairs, NSC staff, 1991-93 (15 December 2010). See also Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), pp. viii-x, 129-31; Richard Cheney, with Liz Cheney, *In My Time* (New York: Threshold, 2011), p. 186.
- ⁵⁵ Baker, 'The Gulf War.' See also Colin Powell, with Joseph Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 143.
- ⁵⁶ Grimmett, 'Congressional Use of Funding Cutoffs', p. 2.
- ⁵⁷ Riedel (author interview) remembers that during debates at the White House, 'Powell, as the representative of the military, [made it clear he] wants domestic political support; he doesn't want Vietnam; and he wants the potential exit ramp that the UN is going to provide'. See also Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 287-88.
- ⁵⁸ Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 302.
- ⁵⁹ Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 94; Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 304.
- ⁶⁰ Michael R. Gordon, 'Bush Sends New Units to Gulf to Provide "Offensive Option"', *New York Times*, 9 November 1990.
- ⁶¹ Michael Gordon, 'Nunn, Citing "Rush" to War, Assails Decision to Drop Troop Rotation Plan', *New York Times*, 12 November 1990.
- ⁶² In Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, p. 359.
- ⁶³ Scowcroft, author interview.
- ⁶⁴ In Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, p. 428.
- ⁶⁵ Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 313-14. See also Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, pp. 396-402.
- ⁶⁶ John M. Goshko, 'Baker Urged to Ask Hill Before Moving on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 18 October 1990. See also Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, pp. 389-402.
- ⁶⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, 'How US Won Support to Use Mideast Forces', *New York Times*, 2 December 1990.
- ⁶⁸ Adam Clymer, 'The Vote That Congress Can't Forget', *New York Times*, 15 January 1991.
- ⁶⁹ Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, p. 446.
- ⁷⁰ Quoted in 'The Gulf War — Part 1', *PBS Frontline interview*, 28 January 1997. Available at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script_a.html.
- ⁷¹ Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, p. 428.
- ⁷² Thompson, *Channels of Power*, p. 66.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-8.
- ⁷⁵ Powell, author interview.
- ⁷⁶ Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold, and Danny Unger (eds.), *Friends in Need: Burden Sharing in the Persian Gulf War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), chap. 1.

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- ⁷⁷ Author interview with James Rubin, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, 1997–2000 (9 April 2010). See also Ivo Daalder and Michael O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO’s War to Save Kosovo* (Wash., DC: Brookings Institution, 2000), p. 24; Alex J. Bellamy, *Kosovo and International Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 72-3.
- ⁷⁸ Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary* (New York: Miramax, 2003), pp. 381-83; Bellamy, *Kosovo and International Society*, pp. 86-7.
- ⁷⁹ Author interview with Donald Kerrick, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1997-99 (22 March 2010). See also Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 383.
- ⁸⁰ Author interview with Robert Gelbard, US Balkans Envoy, 1996-99 (22 March 2010).
- ⁸¹ Kerrick, author interview; Daalder and O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 30.
- ⁸² Madeleine Albright, ‘War in Europe’, *PBS Frontline Interview*, February 2000. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/albright.html>
- ⁸³ NSC/Principals Committee meeting, ‘Summary of Conclusions’, 15 July 1998 (declassified pursuant to MDR No. 2009-0983-M, requested by the author).
- ⁸⁴ Katharina Coleman, *International Organizations and Peace Enforcement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 237-38.
- ⁸⁵ Author interview with Stephen Sestanovich (4 March 2010).
- ⁸⁶ Author interview with Gregory Schulte, Balkans Policy Director, NSC staff, 1998-99 (9 March 2010).
- ⁸⁷ Author interview with James Dobbins, US Envoy for Kosovo, 1998-99 (10 July 2009).
- ⁸⁸ Author interview with Morton Halperin (10 March 2010).
- ⁸⁹ Author interview with Walter Slocombe (11 March 2010).
- ⁹⁰ Miles A. Pomper, ‘Lawmakers Press Clinton on Kosovo’, *CQ Weekly*, 26 September 1998. See also Ryan C. Hendrickson, *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), pp. 123-29.
- ⁹¹ Julie Kim, ‘Kosovo and the 106th Congress’, *CRS Report for Congress* (18 January 2001), p. 6.
- ⁹² Author interview with Joseph Ralston (17 March 2010). See also Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Conflict* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), pp. 137-38.
- ⁹³ William Cohen, ‘War in Europe’, *PBS Frontline Interview*, February 2000. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/cohen.html>
- ⁹⁴ Author interview with David Weismann (16 February 2011).
- ⁹⁵ Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1997–2000, and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, 2001–05, author interview (13 January 2011); Dobbins, author interview.
- ⁹⁶ Kerrick, author interview.
- ⁹⁷ Daalder and O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 101.
- ⁹⁸ Clark, *Waging Modern War*, pp. 193-267.
- ⁹⁹ Anne Swardson and Charles Trueheart, ‘Europeans Assume Lead in the Balkans: EU Sets Agenda to Stabilize, Rebuild’, *Washington Post*, 5 June 1999.
- ¹⁰⁰ Woehrel, ‘Future of the Balkans’, p. 11; Cimbala and Forster, *Multinational Intervention*, p. 134.
- ¹⁰¹ Powell, author interview. See also Woodward, *Commanders*, p. 170.
- ¹⁰² Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 189; Powell, *American Journey*, pp. 423-25.
- ¹⁰³ Bruce Russett, ‘The Gulf War as Empowering the United Nations’, in John O’Loughlin, Tom Mayer, and Edward Greenberg (eds.), *War and its Consequences: Lessons from the Persian Gulf Conflict* (New York: Harper Collins), pp. 192-93.
- ¹⁰⁴ Powell, *American Journey*, p. 424. On the expectation of a limited burden see also William Flavin, ‘Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success’, *Parameters*, 33 (3), 2003, pp. 108-09. On congressional support see Russell Crandall, *Gunboat Diplomacy: US Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), pp. 209-214.
- ¹⁰⁵ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown, 2010), pp. 238-239; Philip Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies At War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004), p. 107.
- ¹⁰⁶ Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies At War*, pp. 98-107.
- ¹⁰⁷ Thompson (*Channels of Power*, p. 161) argues that US leaders sought to involve the UNSC in 2002-03 because they worried about the broader ‘international political costs of intervening in Iraq’, and Westra (*International Law*, p.136) similarly argues that they wanted to ‘reduce the likelihood of resistance from other states’.

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- ¹⁰⁸ Powell, author interview.
- ¹⁰⁹ Hadley, author interview.
- ¹¹⁰ Powell, author interview. See also Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), pp. 149-51.
- ¹¹¹ Author interview with William B. Wood, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for IO Affairs, 1998-December 2002 (25 January 2011).
- ¹¹² Bush, *Decision Points*, 244; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 296-97.
- ¹¹³ Jeremy Greenstock, testimony before the UK Iraq Inquiry, May 26, 2010, p. 28. Available at: <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/>
- ¹¹⁴ Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order* (London: Palgrave, 2004), p. 148. See also Thompson, *Channels of Power*, p. 150; and for a detailed counterfactual analysis, Stefano Recchia, 'Chirac Said "Non"— Or Did He? Revisiting US-UN Diplomacy on the 2003 Iraq War', *Political Science Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- ¹¹⁵ Bush, *Decision Points*, 252; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, pp. 357-59.
- ¹¹⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, pp. 203-4.
- ¹¹⁷ Kenneth Adelman, 'Cakewalk in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 13 February 2002.
- ¹¹⁸ Author interview with Kori Schake, Director for Defense Strategy and Requirements on the NSC Staff, 2001-05 (21 January 2011). For a similar argument see also Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience*, pp. 130-33.
- ¹¹⁹ Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War*, p. 7.
- ¹²⁰ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, transl. and edited by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1835]), p. 585.
- ¹²¹ Author interview with Strobe Talbott, deputy US secretary of state, 1994-2001 (9 July 2009).
- ¹²² For other studies in this vein, see Auerswald and Cowhey, 'Ballotbox Diplomacy'; Howell and Pevehouse, *While Dangers Gather*; Douglas L. Kriner, *After the Rubicon: Congress, Presidents, and the Politics of Waging War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
- ¹²³ David Skidmore, *The Unilateralist Temptation in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 33.

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Table 1. Post-Cold War Interventions for Which USA Sought UN/NATO Approval

Intervention (Operation code-name)	Authorizing resolution	Policy objective
Northern Iraq 1991 (Provide Comfort)	UNSCR 688 (5 April 1991).	Protect Kurdish population, facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance.
Somalia 1992 (Restore Hope)	UNSCR 794 (4 December 1992).	Create secure environment for delivery of humanitarian aid.
Bosnia 1993 (Deny Flight)	UNSCR 816 (31 March 1993); NATO/NAC vote (8 April 1993).	Enforce no-fly zone over Bosnia.
Haiti 1994 (Uphold Democracy)	UNSCR 940 (31 July 1994).	Restore exiled Haitian president.
Bosnia 1995 (Deliberate Force)	NATO/NAC vote (25 July 1995).	Protect UN safe areas and facilitate end of Bosnian war.
Kosovo 1999 (Allied Force)	NATO/NAC vote (30 January 1999).	Stop ethnic violence, obtain Serb consent to NATO stabilization force.
Iraq 2003 (Iraqi Freedom)	none*	Disarm Iraq of suspected WMD, change political regime in Baghdad.
Liberia 2003 (Joint Task Force)	UNSCR 1497 (1 August 2003).	Create secure environment for delivery of humanitarian assistance.
Haiti 2004 (Secure Tomorrow)	UNSCR 1529 (29 February 2004).	Facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance, help restore stability.
Libya 2011 (Odyssey Dawn/Unified Protector)	UNSCR 1973 (17 March 2011). NATO/NAC vote (24 March 2011).	Impose a no-fly zone, protect civilians from government violence.

SOURCES: Barbara Salazar Torreon, 'Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2015', *CRS Report for Congress* (15 January 2015); *New York Times* archive; Online repository of UNSC resolutions (<http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions>); NATO website (<http://www.nato.int>).

* SCR 1441, adopted on 8 November 2002, did not explicitly authorize the use of force.