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# Dodge, Duck, Elude, and Eschew: Fluctuations in American Public Opinion Regarding Intervention in Darfur, Libya, and Syria

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# Dodge, Duck, Elude, and Eschew: Fluctuations in American Public Opinion Regarding Intervention in Darfur, Libya, and Syria

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the world has suffered through several humanitarian crises. Few have captured the attention and imagination of Americans quite like the crises in Darfur, Libya, and Syria have. As each situation has developed – and the violence in each place has come to light – Americans have spent long hours debating the merits of intervention in each place. Americans seemed to support an intervention in Darfur, had mixed feelings about an intervention in Libya, and opposed intervention in Syria. This thesis asks why the American public has had different reactions to each crisis. It analyzes the public opinion polls that dealt with each conflict, and searches for trends. Finally, this thesis asks whether the reasons behind the discrepancies in American public opinion are local or global, humanitarian or political. In regards to these three conflicts, Americans seem most likely to support intervention when there are international organizations or coalitions that support the intervention, and when the logistics and specific costs and procedures of the intervention are released before the actual intervention begins.

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## "God created war so that Americans would learn geography"[1]

The world seems to be in a constant state of war. Since 1950, there have been more than forty major wars, with major wars being defined as those conflicts with over 1,000 deaths annually ("Modern warfare," 2013). The United States has been a belligerent, or provided massive support for one or more of the belligerents, in over ten of these major conflicts. The United States has also performed over ten military operations since 2010: a 2012 report stated that the United States was planning to deploy American troops to "as many as 35 African countries" in 2013 ("U.S. Army Teams Heading to 35 African Countries," 2012). A 2010 Department of Defense document (see Appendix A) reports a U.S. military presence in almost 150 countries, and the total number of active duty military personnel worldwide at 1,430,985 people (2010). Clearly, the United States is both widely and deeply involved in the matters of global and local security, and intensely involved in international security and politics.

When the United States does intervene – as it did in Haiti – it is subjected to intense criticism and reminded of its previous expansionist or imperialist aspirations. As difficult as that makes decisions about war and peace, things seem to be getting even more complicated. Vietnam syndrome[2] – coupled with long and difficult wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – has made the United States government more wary of intervention. However, the United States is now in the 21st

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[1] Mark Twain (Kurtzman, n.d.).

[2] Vietnam syndrome is the combination of negative public opinion in regards to war and a hesitant and limited U.S. foreign policy. The syndrome has led to the belief that the United States should never go to war "without a clear-cut objective, overwhelming military force, an endgame strategy and, most important, the support of Congress and the American people." (Kalb, 2013).

century, and has already been faced with severe humanitarian crises. The three humanitarian crises that most seemed to capture American attention were the genocide in Darfur and the civil wars in Libya and Syria. The United States intervened only in Libya, the conflict with exceptionally low casualties in comparison with Syria and Darfur, conflicts which have been remarkably brutal. The American people had very different opinions regarding these conflicts, but consistently seemed to disparage their government for taking a position in seeming opposition to the people's wishes. The people supported intervention in Darfur and criticized their government for doing nothing. They were ambivalent about intervention in Libya, and disparaged their government for seemingly acting only to secure Libya's oil reserves, despite the importance of those reserves to the economic health of Japan and of the European Union, and therefore, of the world at large, for a blip in the oil supply chain could lead to a downward jolt in an already weak economy. They opposed intervention in Syria, and disparaged their government for a paper tiger's indecision. This thesis analyzes the American public's opinions in regards to each conflict to determine when and why Americans support or oppose war – to see if the reasons are economic, political, local, global, humanitarian, nationalistic, emotional, or historical. This thesis will ask when Americans are willing to answer "a plea from another world[3]."

This thesis uses public opinion polls to analyze American public opinion in relation to the interventions – or hypothetical interventions – by the United States military in Darfur, Libya, and Syria. This thesis looks at the fluctuations in American public opinion and tries to search for trends and patterns in the polls. For example, certain polls ask respondents if they believe that the United States should or should not act on the basis of economic, strategic, humanitarian, or

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[3]  See Ernst Jünger in <u>Storm of Steel</u> (2004, p. 234).

political reasons. According to the fluctuations in support or opposition for each of these reasons, therefore, the polls can analyze the respondents' motivations.

These motivations may be economic, especially in regards to the resources that the United States can gain or will expend via intervention. They may be humanitarian, concerned with the number of casualties caused by each conflict or by the nature of the violence, especially as it was genocidal in Darfur and has been chemical in Syria. They may be strategic and concerned with the resources possessed by the nation embroiled in conflict, or their importance to the United States. They may be geographic, especially since Americans may be especially wary of intervention in the Middle East. They may be political concerns, as the people may be fearful that an intervention will produce more people angry at the United States, or, worse, that it will facilitate the rise of a government diametrically opposed to the United States and its interests. They may also be domestic concerns, with people fearing American casualties in the conflict, or anger that the government is spending more time worrying about the citizens of small and dusty countries halfway across the world.

This thesis also looks at existing theories of public opinion, and whether these arguments apply to the cases of Darfur, Libya, and Syria. For this, it is integral to review the theories on public opinion, particularly as they relate to intervention, in order to understand the importance that should be given to each variable or to determine whether the theory accurately matches the polls. The theories are also integral to the ultimate analysis of whether the public opinion trends in Darfur, Libya, and Syria follow the rules by which American public opinion is formed – or if Americans felt differently about one or more of these conflicts than the theories on opinion would suggest. The conclusions formed through the analysis of the public opinion polls can

therefore support a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which the American mind is made up when it comes to war.

It is vital to understand each of the conflicts before being able to apply the theories to them. Therefore, this thesis first defines the scope of the study and the terms being used, and secondly studies the existing models of public opinion for similarities between those cases and the conflicts in Darfur, Libya, and Syria. Next, this thesis discusses the histories of each of these conflicts and the public opinion polls corresponding to each conflict. Finally, patterns and trends found in the polls may shed light on the conditions in which American support or oppose intervention.

## Meanings and Models: Approaches to Public Opinion

### *Meanings: Definitions and Deductions*

In discussing intervention, it is important to define the sometimes vague or contradictory terms used. For example, the term "intervention" is  especially important to define, since intervention can refer to at least eight very different missions, including: *conventional war* used to defeat an enemy; *strategic deterrence* to maintain a beneficial situation; *tactical deterrence* meant to eliminate a challenge to a beneficial situation; *special operations/low intensity conflict* used in counterterrorism or other operations; *peace making* used to impose or enforce a peaceful solution to conflict; *peace keeping* used to protect a peaceful solution; *imposed humanitarian operations* to provide relief to citizens regardless of political affiliation; and, finally, *consensual humanitarian operations* in which the country to receive aid has approved the assistance and deployment of foreign troops (Livingston, 1997). In light of these definitions, the term intervention will include *special operations/low intensity conflict*, *peace making*, or *imposed humanitarian conflict*. Consequently, this definition allows for the fact that not all interventions

require putting boots on the ground – in Libya, for example, the intervention took place from the seas and from the skies, but falls within this definition of intervention. While economic intervention is also important, it will not be included in this definition of intervention because of the nature of the conflicts studied. The genocide in Darfur, for example, was enacted by the citizens as well as by the government of a very poor nation – ergo, the freezing of the country's assets, for example, would have had a small impact. This is also the case during the civil wars in Syria and Libya – economic intervention, such as sanctions or a freeze of assets – would have little impact, since these types of economic sanctions often take time to take affect, and primarily affect the people. Also, in Syria especially, foreign aid from countries invested in the outcome, such as Saudi Arabia on the side of the rebels and Iran on the side of the government, would nullify the effects of economic sanctions implemented by the United States since these two countries have mobilized massive amounts of nonlethal and presumably lethal aid, since a revolution needs bread as much as – if not more than – it needs bombs to succeed. Therefore, for this thesis, economic sanctions such as fines or penalties, curtailments on trade, or the freezing of assets, will not be included in the definition of intervention.

The United States government is defined as the federal government, and shall be seen as a separate entity than public opinion, because this thesis focuses on how the conditions of a conflict affect the people's opinions of said conflicts, rather than policy outcomes according to public opinion. As a result, this thesis explores the factors – be they international, political, or local – that affect American public opinion to try and order the public's system of priorities, to see if Americans are more likely to support intervention in the case of extreme humanitarian violations or when there is a clear strategic benefit from intervention, etc.

While it seems obvious that public opinion informs foreign policy, and numerous scholars have established the link between opinion and policy outcomes[4], it is still relevant to look at public opinion as it is formed. This is especially true when the conflicts are of a complicated nature, meaning that the United States may not have clear and immediate interests in the conflict, or the American people seem unconvinced of the existence or relevance of those interests.

In this way, the cases of Darfur, Libya, and Syria will be especially illuminating. In Libya, for example, the United States government had a strong national interest to protect: Libya is a large supplier of oil for Japan and the European Union, whose economic health is a major interest of the United States – as well as of the world – since economic problems in the already difficult European and Japanese markets could cause a relapse in the recovery and potentially send millions more people worldwide to unemployment. The average American, on the other hand, was not nearly as concerned with protecting the oil, and there seemed to be much debate on whether the United States government was only intervening to protect the oil, and not the people. In Syria and Darfur, humanitarian concerns motivated the support for intervention, while governments have much less concern for the welfare of citizens in other states when their safety

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[4] See *Effects of Public Policy on Opinion*, *The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda,* and *Public Opinion and Public Policy, 1980-1993* (Page & Shapiro, 1983; Burstein, 2003; Monroe, 1998).

would come at such a high cost[5] to the intervening country. Consequently, there was no intervention in either country.

As also discussed above, public opinion can be – and certainly often is – biased and uninformed. Therefore this thesis does not borrow the idea of the rational individual from economics, nor Bentham's cool appraiser of utility[6]. Instead, this thesis will assume that as much as each person is free to navigate their own opinion in whichever direction they so choose, "enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm" (Madison, 1787). Walter Lippmann, for example, argues that public opinion is often formed by the uninformed (2007). He writes that public opinion scholars assume that voters are well informed and independent in their thinking, but that this ideal is "unattainable…bad only in the sense that it is bad for a fat man to try to be a ballet dancer" (Lippmann, 2007, p. 384).

### Models: Influence and Information

Public opinion theorists have developed models of the formation of public opinion in order to map exactly how opinion is formed or transmitted. One such model places the responsibility of dispersion of opinion on the influential few, rather than on individuals. On the other hand, Watts and Dodds argue that the influentials are not as influential as has been supposed, as it is "generally the case that most social change is driven not by influentials but by

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[5] Cost is defined here as being measured in American lives that could be lost in intervention. This is due to the fact that, as of September 2013, the United States had already provided a whopping $1.4 billion in aid to the people of Syria (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013).

[6] Jeremy Bentham famously discussed utility as a measure of value of the pain or pleasure that is a consequence of an action.

easily influenced individuals influencing other easily influenced individuals" (2007, p. 442). The influentials discussed in the Watts and Dodds article are, however, not exactly what one would expect either. These influentials are our respected friends, family members, or colleagues, people who we see as bright and informed (Watts & Dodds, 2007, p. 442). They are not CEOs or world leaders (Keller & Berry, 2003, p. 1). This raises important implications for this thesis, as it argues that once the tide of public opinion begins to turn, many people will follow – not for any specific reason, but just for the sake of following, for the sake of agreeing with their friends, colleagues, and families. Accordingly, it is important to note that public opinion is not without peer pressure.

Still other scholars emphasize the importance of international institutions. Grieco et al., for instance, argue that Americans value the opinions of international organizations in intervention as a sort of "second opinion" – but only where those Americans value the organization making the statement (2011, p. 564). This argument will be explored in this thesis, as international organizations have been heavily involved in discussing and debating the conflicts in Darfur, Libya, and Syria, and since public opinion polls regarding the conflicts often include mentions of international organizations or international coalitions of states willing to participate in the intervention. Consequently, it will be interesting to look at the role of multilateralism and of coalitions in the development of American public opinion in regards to these three cases. The question of international and multilateral support or approval will be one of the most important factors in the analysis of the polls, as it appears very often in the questions that are asked. This may be because Americans believe that the United States government will be able to disperse some of the costs of the intervention among the members of the coalition; because the support of a large coalition would give moral or strategic credibility to a proposed intervention by the

United States; or because if the intervention begins to go poorly – possibly with mounting numbers of American casualties – then the other members of the coalition may be able to supply resources or additional troops to augment the American effort.

The nature of the conflict is also very important. Americans may see an intervention to protect civilians from a genocidal government in a far different light than an intervention to end a civil war between two groups – especially when the two groups have little support from the United States government, or, as seems to be the case in Syria, where the United States is wary of supporting a group that may later turn out to aid and abet terrorist organizations. The nature of the conflict can also reference the scale of the conflict: it can be all-encompassing and brutal, like Syria and Darfur, or more limited with far fewer casualties, as in Libya. Despite the massive casualties in Syria, Americans did not support intervention, as they did in Darfur – this may indicate the importance of the nature of the conflict itself.

In response to the type of conflict comes the type of mission, or type of intervention. Bruce Jentleson, for example, discussed three types of missions: internal political change, foreign policy restraint, and humanitarian intervention (1998; 1992). According to Jentleson, a mission of internal political change involves force used to engineer change "within another country whether in support of an existing government considered an ally or seeking to overthrow a government considered an adversary" while a mission of foreign policy restraint involves "force used to coerce an adversary engaged in aggressive actions against the United States or its interests" (1992, p. 50). This scholar added humanitarian intervention to the types of missions, and defined it as "the provision of emergency relief through military or other means" (Jentleson & Britton, 1998). Jentleson also argues in his papers that the mission itself is more important

than many other factors, including the numbers of casualties (Eichenberg, 2005, p. 143). Consequently, the nature of the mission itself will be a major factor.

The casualties, however, will also be extremely important, but can be complex to measure, as the numbers of casualties can refer to various types of casualties: non-American actual casualties, non-American perceived casualties, and expected American casualties. Non-American actual casualties refer to the numbers of casualties that arise in conflict, such as the numbers of dead, missing, or injured resulting in the genocide in Darfur. Non-American perceived casualties refer to the numbers of casualties that Americans think have occurred – if the story is being widely discussed and debated in the public sphere, people may think that the casualties are higher since the conflict is garnering so much attention. Expected American casualties refer to the numbers of American casualties expected if an intervention was to occur – for example, if the United States were to put boots on the ground as part of an intervention, this number could be very high. As perceived or actual casualties increase, public support for an intervention may increase as people may begin to feel a moral obligation to do something about the conflict. High numbers of expected American casualties may cause a decrease in public support for an intervention – but only when the mission is not viewed as being vital to American interests or important in protecting the lives of civilians, meaning that the mission is more important than the casualties.

The mission is also a necessary response to another great motivator: that of strategic interests. When the United States has very important interests at stake, Americans may be more likely to support an intervention – in this case, the most relevant strategic interest might be national security, a term that is extremely salient in American life and politics. Then again,

Americans may be cynical about the reasons that their government provides in justifying war, and may oppose the intervention on the grounds that it seems expansionist or imperialist.

I expect also that the state of the American economy can cause support to vary, with support decreasing if the economy is doing poorly. This expectation arises not from the literature on public opinion, but from the debates on the Iraq War and the recent economic recession. Politicians and citizens alike often cited the massive economic cost of the war, and in light of the recent economic recession, whose devastating effects are still being felt, it seems likely that issues of economics might be quite relevant in the polls.

Speaking of the salience of current issues, the media portrayals of the interventions or of the conflicts is remarkably interesting, and important in informing American public opinion. Sidahmed, Soderlund, and Briggs argue that the media influences public opinion through two methods: agenda-setting (referring to the amount of time the media dedicates to the story, thereby determining how relevant Americans will believe the story is); and framing, referring to the ways in which the media can determine how Americans will approach an issue, and what the relevant arguments will be (2010, pp. 45–46). Sidahmed et al. also blame "parachute journalists" for the poor media coverage of Darfur – "parachute journalists" being those journalists who are charged with reporting on a conflict or situation of which they have little or no understanding (2010, p. 49). In terms of the conflict in Darfur, the consequences of parachute journalism can be that journalists are therefore "content to go with 'accepted' wisdom on Sudan – wisdom characterized in large by bias, pivotal factual inaccuracies, misperceptions and often blatant disinformation" (Buckoke, 1992; Hoile, 2002). The amount of coverage also informs Americans as to the importance of the conflict or of how different, unexpected, difficult, or unusual the conflict is. The media – from celebrities holding signs to breaking news text messages from

CNN – frames the way that Americans will think about the conflict and how pressing they believe that the conflict is. Unfortunately, any study of the media's relevance would have to include, for example, a study of film, television, celebrities, and popular literature to search for direct or indirect references to the conflicts, or to conflict in general. For example, I would have to see whether there were any films or television series that aired while the conflicts in Darfur, Libya, and Syria were at their most salient in the American public sphere and which either supported or opposed intervention in those conflicts – or were even just about conflict in general. Another example of this would be analyzing the impact of celebrity actions or opinions, or whether celebrities discussed the conflicts in interviews or held concerts to raise funds to donate to victims of the conflicts – Ryan Gosling, for example, wore a t-shirt emblazoned with the word "Darfur" on it to the MTV Movie Awards. Such a study would be a fascinating, albeit very involved analysis of the role of popular culture and the role of influentials – and would be an interesting avenue for further research.

Similarly, the role of domestic partisanship on opinion will also be excluded from the study. While Adam Berinsky, for example, argues that public opinion regarding international affairs can only be understood in conjunction with a study of public opinion regarding domestic affairs, this thesis focuses on the American public's opinions and on the circumstances of the individual conflicts, rather than partisan responses to each conflict (2009).

Understanding public opinion is clearly complex, and in many cases the results seem specific to one case, one conflict, and one moment in history. However, this thesis will use the literature on public opinion to try and pinpoint the variables that affect American public opinion. This thesis attempts to look at multiple variables as they vary together and individually. These variables include: the reasons for the mission, be they humanitarian or political; the number of

casualties and the importance accorded to those casualties; the logistics of the mission itself (what type of warfare or strategies it would include); support or opposition to the intervention by international organizations or coalitions; strategic interests; the nature of the conflict as a genocide or civil war; the state of the American economy; the prevalence of the conflicts or the people's knowledge or awareness of these conflicts; etc.

## Questions and Conundrums: Polling and Politics

### *Polling*

I will analyze public opinion polls in order to try and isolate the most important factor or factors in determining American public opinion, and to search for trends in public opinion within and across the conflicts. I will look at the polls provided by the Roper Center and will begin by essentially analyzing the overall trends of the data, and looking for places where the American public began to change their answers to some of the particular questions included in the polls – meaning that the percentages of respondents who supported or opposed intervention began to change. Alternatively, I will look at the different questions asks – specifically, if they mention international coalitions or organizations, economic costs, casualties, etc. – to see how these variables affect opinion.

In regards to the polls, I analyzed data for one specific question across time, so that the way in which the question was asked would not skew the results. For example, many of the polling institutions include questions that are phrased in exactly the same way every time the poll is administered. This is because of the ample research on bias and priming[7] – that the way in

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[7] For example, a study by Bargh, Chen, and Burrows, provided participants with words to unscramble. Those words were primed: in this case, they were all stereotypically elderly words.

which a question is asked can influence the response given to the question. By choosing some of these repeated questions, I could try to control for the bias or potential for priming created by the question by ascertaining that whatever bias there is would be the same bias across time – which would stay constant as long as the way in which the question was asked stayed constant. Polls generally also provided numerous variations of every question that they ask, and I included these when available in order to better control for variation caused by bias and priming. For example, a question in a poll may have reminded the respondent of the number of casualties and then asked whether or not the United States should intervene. For this type of question, support for intervention could be higher than if the question had not reminded Americans of how many deaths the conflict had already caused. Therefore, the bias in this question is towards support, as people are usually angered and sickened by the number of casualties – especially in terms of the genocide in Darfur, which, among the three case studies of conflict included in this thesis, had the highest numbers of casualties. If the next question simply asked the respondent whether or not the United States should intervene, then the difference may be a quantifiable representation of the importance of the casualties caused by the conflict.

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Afterwards, researchers recorded the amount of time that it took participants to walk back toward the elevator. Participants who had been primed with the elderly words ("worried, Florida, old, lonely, grey, selfishly, careful, sentimental, wise, stubborn, courteous, bingo, withdraw, forgetful, retired, wrinkle, rigid, traditional, bitter, obedient, conservative, knits, dependent, ancient, helpless, gullible, cautious, alone") walked much more slowly than did members of the control group (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996).

One of the most important, and troublesome, components of my research was choosing the social, economic, or political factors, both domestic and international, that I believe were the more important factors in increasing or decreasing support for intervention. Correlation obviously does not imply causality, and so I had to be extremely discerning when I chose which events or other developments to specify as a cause for the change in opinion, even when those causes were listed specifically in the question. As such, I used the variables that seemed the most relevant in the public opinion and international relations scholarship in order to decide what to include or exclude.

I used American public opinion polls to discern which domestic and international social, economic, and political factors shaped American public opinion regarding intervention by the United States in Darfur, Libya, and Syria. I analyzed the results of polls provided by the Roper Center in order to measure public opinion as defined by each question over time. By including the factor of time and comparing questions across time, rather than to each other, I hope to limit the effects of bias and priming.

It is also extremely important to understand the nature of the conflicts in Darfur, Libya, and Syria before being able to analyze the American reaction to these conflicts. These three cases were chosen for the differing nature of the conflict and geographic position (see Table 1, below).

**Table 1: Case Studies**

|                     | **Darfur**  | **Libya**  | **Syria**   |
|---------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Region              | East Africa | MENA       | Middle East |
| Conflict            | Genocide    | Civil War  | Civil War   |
| Strategic Interests | No          | Limited    | Undecided   |
| Death Toll          | 300,000     | 30,000     | 140,000     |

Darfur was chosen for its humanitarian conflict in which the United States had no interests, and which occurred outside of the Middle East but in a similarly complicated geographical area.

Libya was chosen for its geopolitical civil war in which the United States did have some interests and for being outside of the Middle East but within MENA (Middle East North Africa). Finally, Syria was chosen for its domestic civil war in which the United States is unwilling to support or oppose either side and for its position in the Middle East. In this way, this thesis could study whether support for war seemed to be far lower in the Middle East or MENA regions because of recent American involvement there, and if the nature of the conflict as humanitarian, geopolitical, or domestic, would have much of an effect. The following section will provide more information on the individual conflicts.

*Politics: Darfur*

**Figure 1: Map of Sudan**



**(U.S. Department of State, 2009)**

The genocide began in 2003 when the Sudanese government joined forces with the Janjaweed – Arab Sudanese militias highly trained in combat – to massacre the black Sudanese (Totten, 2011a, p. 1). There had long been tensions between the majority Arab Sudanese and the minority black Sudanese tribes in Sudan, as the two vied for political and economic power ("Genocide in Darfur," n.d.). The Janjaweed and the government of Sudan, made up of Arab Sudanese, responded to a rebellion in Darfur by the black Sudanese by joining together to

eliminate the black Sudanese. They began using such varied methods of murder as aerial bombings, "automatic weapons fire, stabbings, burning people alive, and chasing [victims] into forbidding deserts without water and food" (Cheadle & Prendergast, 2007, p. 5; Totten, 2011a, p. 1). The people who made up the Janjaweed were often highly trained mercenaries who had fought in other wars, many of whom were very well paid by the government of Sudan – which added an economic incentive for people to join, on top of the threats of physical violence if they refused to join.

The world, meanwhile, argued about whether the Janjaweed and the government of Sudan were committing "genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and/or ethnic cleansing" as these terms all carried various legal repercussions in the United Nations and in international legal and political norms (Totten, 2011b, p. ix). In 2004, the United States formally acknowledged the conflict as genocide[8]. In the meantime, however, there were calls for the

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[8] The genocide in Darfur was the first genocide that was officially acknowledged by the United States government during the actual conflict, and was referred to as such in official statements. In the other major cases of genocides in history, the United States – as well as the international community – was extremely wary of labeling a conflict as genocide. This is because, according to international law as written by the United Nations and other international conventions on war and human rights, an acknowledgement by a government of a conflict as genocide would compel both the individual country that had made the acknowledgment as well as the international community to intervene in some capacity in the conflict. Therefore, other than the genocide in Darfur, the United States has officially recognized genocides years after they occurred. For example, President Carter only acknowledged the Cambodian genocide in 1978; President

United States to send troops to the country in order to try to control – let alone halt – the slaughter that would claim an estimated 300,000 lives (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013). The response to the genocide in the United States involved unprecedentedly massive mobilizations and the "formation of a citizen-based Save Darfur movement" that placed intense pressure on the United States government to "stop the killings" (Hamilton, 2011, p. xvii). This mobilization involved the creation of numerous organizations that raised awareness and funds for humanitarian aid, and led to the formation of United to End Genocide, which claims to be the largest activist organization in American ("Who We Are," n.d.).

This thesis includes polls taken between 2004 and 2008, as those were the years after which the United States had admitted the genocide and when the Justice and Equality Movement, a rebel group made up of ethnic minorities from Darfur, were able to invade the capital city of Khartoum and threaten the Arab Sudanese government. By 2009, Martin Agwai, the UNAMID[9] force director, claimed that the war was over (Totten, 2011a).

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Reagan acknowledged the Armenian genocide in 1981; and President Clinton acknowledged the Rwandan genocide in 1998 (1978; 1981; 1998).

[9] UNAMID refers to the African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur.

*Politics: Libya*

**Figure 2: Map of Libya**



**(U.S. Department of State, 2006a)**

The revolution against Muammar Gaddafi began in February of 2011 as a series of protests encouraged by the Arab Spring. The rebels began to take control of cities and other territories, but faced fierce fights against loyalist forces, made up both of members of the military and of citizens loyal to the government, and requested support from the international community. While there was not as broad and sustained a network of activists calling for intervention in Libya as there had been for Darfur, there were online petitions calling for a no-fly zone, such as through Avaaz, an online forum for petitions, which registered 800,000 signatures in support of a no-fly zone (Hilary, 2011). In March of 2011, the United Nations authorized air strikes and a no-fly zone over the country – an intervention by this thesis' definitions. NATO assumed command of the operation, with the United States "leading from behind" (Lizza, 2011). At this point, the death toll was estimated to be at between 1,000 and 2,000 people (Milne, 2011).

As a result, the United States contributed firepower – Americans watched tomahawk missiles blasting airport runways to pieces on the nightly news – but kept reminding the world

that it was not the most important player at the table – instead, it let France and the United Kingdom holds the reins during the operation. By July of the same year, just a few months after the intervention, Libya had an internationally recognized government in the National Transitional Council (BBC, 2011). On October 20, 2011, Gaddafi was captured and killed (BBC, 2011). By the end of the war, the death toll was estimated to be at 30,000 people (Milne, 2011).

The polls included in the analysis of the Libyan conflict were taken between the fall of 2011 and 2012. It is interesting to note that the Roper Center's polls on Libya were almost exclusively from after the United States' intervention with NATO – indicative of the fact that Libya was not on the minds of Americans until the United States actually decided to intervene. The polls stopped asking questions about the intervention after the embassy attack at Benghazi on September 11, 2012.

*Politics: Syria*

**Figure 3: Map of Syria**



**(U.S. Department of State, 2006b)**

The crisis in Syria also began during Arab Spring protests. Syrian security forces cracked down on protestors in March of 2011, killing dozens of people (Thompson & Wilkinson, n.d.). By April of 2011, the regime attempted to make some concessions to the protestors, promising

that it would open up the country's political culture, but "the regime's offerings [were] too little too late" (Thompson & Wilkinson, n.d.). The crisis at this point had escalated so far and so quickly in part because of the sectarian and ethnic divisions in Syria and a very tumultuous balance of power: Al-Assad and the highest members of both the government and the military are Alawites, belonging to the Shi'a branch of Islam, while the vast majority of the population of Syria is Sunni. Therefore, the government and military complex, so to speak, feared that being deposed would lead to their own massacre.

In April of 2013, evidence was unveiled that demonstrated that chemical weapons had been used in Syria against civilians. The government used sarin, a dangerous nerve agent that in high doses causes convulsions, paralysis, loss of consciousness, and respiratory failure possibly leading to death (Center for Disease Control, 2006). The Al-Asad regime used chemical weapons again on August 21, 2013. This time, the regime murdered 1,429 people, including 426 children (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2013). As of February of 2014, the war has claimed over 140,000 lives (Reuters, 2014). While there was outrage over the regime's use of chemical weapons, and horror at the growing number of deaths due to the conflict, there has been very little support for intervention, and even the topic seems to be disappearing from the news and other media. The polls used therefore reflect the earlier period of increased support, as they were taken between 2011 and 2013.

## Polls and Patterns: Searching for Opinion

### *Data on Darfur*

One of the more common questions in the polls regarding Darfur asks respondents whether, in light of an international coalition of soldiers in Darfur, Americans would support the deployment of American troops (see Table 2, below). The only constant in the polls were the

mentions of international peacekeeping forces and the American contribution thereof: therefore,

that is the only variable that is measured in regards to Darfur, or else comparison would be

impossible.

**Table 2: International Coalitions and American Troops**

| PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll: Opportunities for Bipartisan Consensus and the Crisis in Darfur | December 21-26, 2004 |
|---|---|
| Should Step In | 60% |
| Should Not Step In | 33% |
| No Answer | 7% |
| Total | 100% |
| If other members of the UN are willing to contribute troops to a military operation to stop the genocide in Darfur, do you think the US should or should not be willing to contribute some troops as well? | |

| PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll: Americans on Addressing World Poverty, the Crisis in Darfur and US Trade | June 22-26, 2005 |
|---|---|
| Should Be Willing | 54% |
| Should Not Be Willing | 39% |
| No Answer | 7% |
| Total | 100% |
| If other members of the UN are willing to contribute troops to a military operation in Darfur, do you think the US should or should not be willing to contribute some troops as well? | |

| CNN/ORC Poll # 2007-010: Immigration/Iran/2008 Presidential Election | October 12-14, 2007 |
|---|---|
| Favor | 63% |
| Oppose | 31% |
| Don't Know/Undecided | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Do you favor or oppose the presence of U.S. ground troops, along with troops from other countries, in an international peacekeeping force in Darfur? | |

**Source: PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll: Opportunities for Bipartisan Consensus and the Crisis in Darfur; PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll: Americans on Addressing World Poverty, the Crisis in Darfur and US Trade; CNN/ORC Poll # 2007-010: Immigration/Iran/2008 Presidential Election**

The results are that, across several years, the majority – 60% in 2004, 54% in 2005, and 63% in

2007 – of respondents supported the deployment of American troops to Darfur when

accompanied by foreign troops (Knowledge Networks, 2004, 2005; Opinion Research Corporation, 2007).

### *Lessons from Libya*

The one poll that was conducted before the intervention discussed a hypothetical no-fly zone in Libya (see Table 3, below). The poll asked this question in various forms, and interestingly enough, when the poll included more information on the logistics of the intervention – for example, by specifying that a no-fly zone would involve "bombing attacks on anti-aircraft positions, and then…continuous air patrols" – support increased (ABC News & Washington Post, 2011).

**Table 3: Role of Logistics in Determining Support**

| ABC News/Washington Post Poll: March Monthly -- Economy/Federal Budget Deficit/State Budget Deficit | March 10-13, 2011 |
|---|---|
| Support | 50% |
| Oppose | 44% |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 6% |
| Refused | 0% |
| Total | 100% |
| In Libya, there's fighting between anti-government protesters and forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi (MOA-mar ka-DAFI)… Would you support or oppose using U.S. military aircraft to create a no-fly zone in Libya in order to keep Gaddafi's air force from attacking rebel-held areas? | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Support | 55% |
| Oppose | 40% |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 5% |
| Refused | 0% |
| Total | 100% |
| In Libya, there's fighting between anti-government protesters and forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi (MOA-mar ka-DAFI)… You may have heard about the idea that U.S. military aircraft could participate in creating a no-fly zone over Libya in order to keep Gaddafi's air force from attacking rebel-held areas. Is this something you would support or oppose? | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Support | 73% |
| Oppose | 23% |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 3% |
| Refused | 0% |
| Total | 100% |
| In Libya, there's fighting between anti-government protesters and forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi (MOA-mar ka-DAFI)… Creating a no-fly zone first requires bombing attacks on anti-aircraft positions, and then requires continuous air patrols. Given those requirements, would you support or oppose using U.S. military aircraft to create a no-fly zone in Libya? | |

**Source: ABC News/Washington Post Poll: March Monthly--Economy/Federal Budget Deficit/State Budget Deficit**

According to the poll, therefore, the option that provided the least information – that only asked respondents if they supported or opposed the creation of a no-fly zone – had the least support, with only 50% of respondents supporting information when it was phrased in that manner (ABC News & Washington Post, 2011). As the questions began to include more information, the

percentage of respondents who supported intervention jumped from 50%, to 55%, and, finally, to 73% of respondents (ABC News & Washington Post, 2011). As the poll included more information regarding the actual circumstances of this hypothetical intervention, support for the hypothetical intervention itself increased.
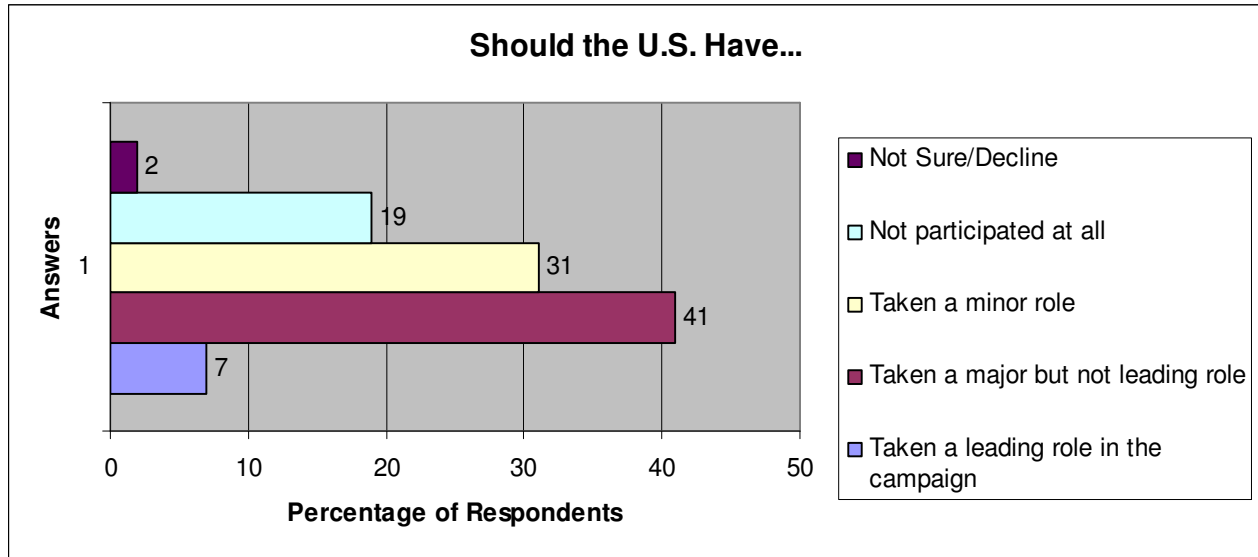
Of the many polls that I analyzed, one in particular actually broke down the respondents' answers in order to shed light on some of the motivations or reasons behind their opinions. This 2012 poll asked:

> As you may know, last year the United States participated in a NATO military campaign against forces loyal to Qadaffi in Libya which was led by Britain and France, not the U.S. Do you think the United States should have: taken the leading role in this campaign; taken a major but not leading role; taken a minor role; not participated at all; not sure/decline (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

I must acknowledge that this poll was actually done after the intervention. However, the poll will still be very useful – since the poll was taken after the United States' successful involvement in an intervention that deposed a dictator, but was also before the heinous attacks in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. Therefore, the poll was taken during a time of reflection on a successful intervention, without the negative effects of the Benghazi attacks to color the intervention itself.

Figure 4 (see below) lists the percentages of respondents who selected each option. The vast majority of respondents (41%) answered that the U.S. should have "taken a major but not leading role" which, incidentally, is what the U.S. did in fact do during the NATO-led intervention in Libya (Knowledge Networks, 2012). The second most popular response, with 31% of respondents, was that the "U.S. should have taken a minor role" (Knowledge Networks, 2012). More respondents believed that the United States should not have participated at all (19%) than that the United States should have "taken a leading role in the campaign" (7%) (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

**Figure 4:  The United States' Options**



**Should the U.S. Have...**

Legend:
- Not Sure/Decline
- Not participated at all
- Taken a minor role
- Taken a major but not leading role
- Taken a leading role in the campaign

Values: 2, 19, 31, 41, 7

X-axis: Percentage of Respondents (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50)
Y-axis: Answers

**Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA]**

The poll then asked respondents why they answered the way that they did (see Figure 5, below).

**Figure 5: The United States Should Have Taken A Major Role**



**Should Have Taken A Major Role**

Legend:
- Did/will do a good job
- Other should have taken a role mentions
- Should take up the leadership/more capable than others

Values: 0.34, 1.02, 2.04

X-axis: Percentage of Respondents (0.00, 0.50, 1.00, 1.50, 2.00, 2.50)
Y-axis: Reasons Why
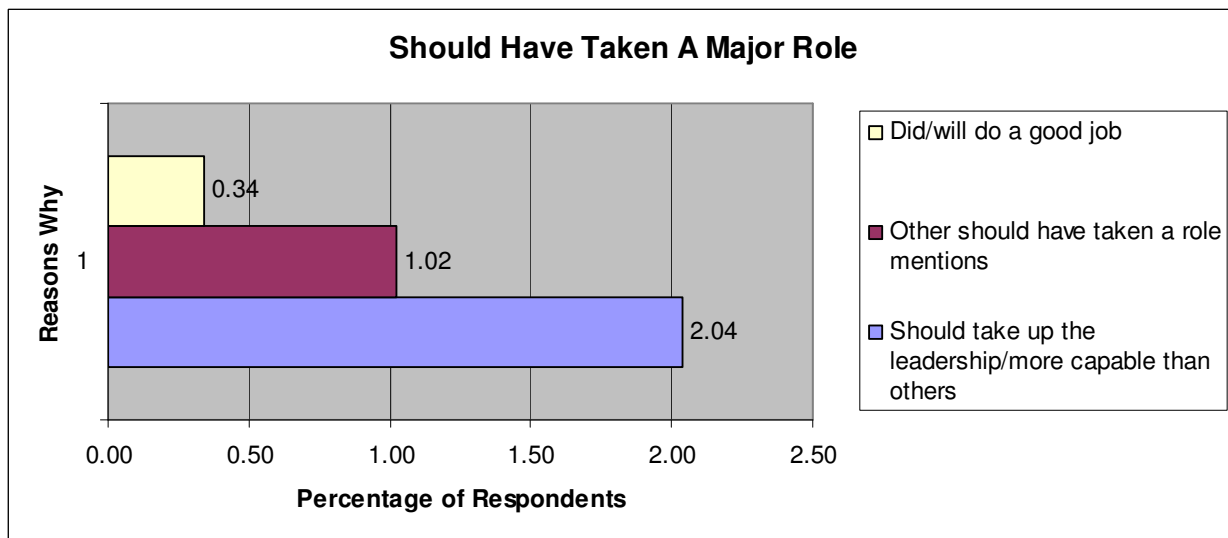
**Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA]**

Figure 5 (see below) breaks down the reasons that respondents said that the United States "should have taken a major role," (Knowledge Networks, 2012). Respondents who believed that the United States should have taken a leading role did so primarily because they believe that the

United States "should take up the leadership" and is "more capable than others" (Knowledge

Networks, 2012).

Figure 6 (see below) also listed the reasons why the respondents chose what they did, but

in this case, it analyzed why respondents answered that the United States should not have taken a

role, or an active role (Knowledge Networks, 2012). Some of the reasons included economics,

strategic planning, country and government image, and internal policy (Knowledge Networks,
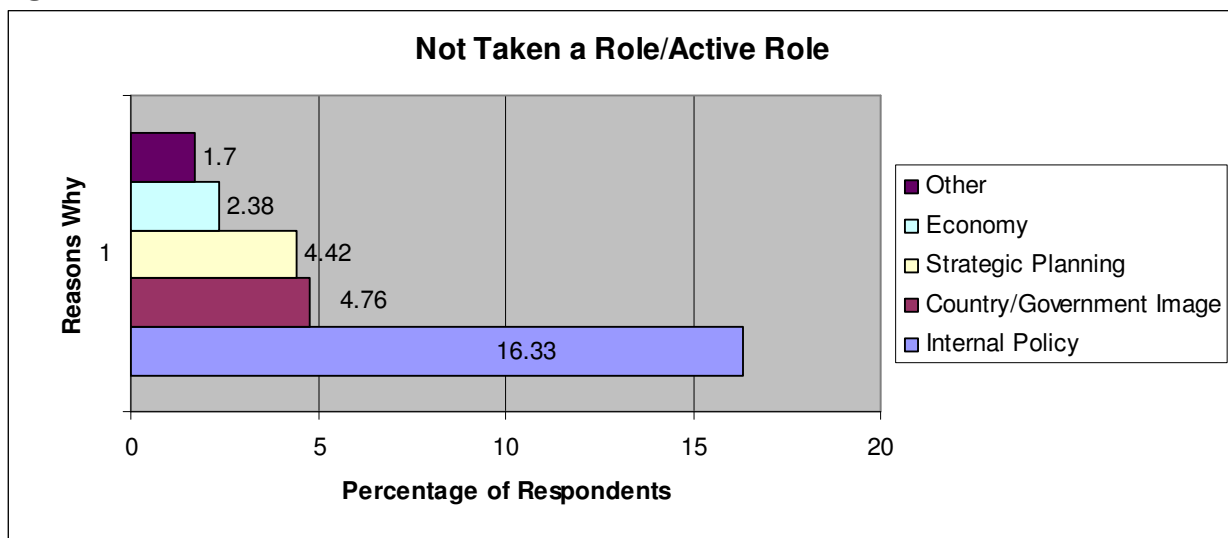
2012).

**Figure 6: The United States Should Not Have Taken A Role, Nor An Active Role**



**Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA]**

According to Figure 6, the vast majority of respondents who believed that the United States

should not have taken a role, or an active role, did so because of "internal policy"[10] reasons, as

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[10] While the poll did not readily define these terms, it listed another section with the

subcategories included in each category, which enabled respondents to understand the terms used

to label the larger categories, such as "internal policy" or "strategic planning" (Knowledge

Networks, 2012). See Table 4 for these definitions.

16.33% of respondents cited this reason (Knowledge Networks, 2012). The runners up included, respectively, country and government image with 4.76%, strategic planning with 4.42%, and then the economy with 2.38% of respondents (Knowledge Networks, 2012). The poll then also defined each of these categories and listed subcategories, so that respondents could understand the definitions used. Table 4 (see below) lists the reasons included within each subcategory.

**Table 4: Reasons Why The United States Should Not Have Taken A Role, Nor An Active Role**

| NOT TAKEN A ROLE/ACTIVE ROLE |
| --- |
| *Internal Policy* |
| Don't always need to lead/Let others take responsibility |
| Lesser interference in other countries/It's not our business |
| We need to concentrate on more pressing/existing issues |
| Other internal policy mentions |
| *Country/Government Image* |
| US does not have a good image/is resented by other countries |
| Other countries are well equipped/have enough resources |
| Other countries are closer to the issue/Depend on them for resources |
| Other country/government image mentions |
| *Strategic Planning* |
| It should be a joint operation/We can work together |
| Troops are already spread thin/Too many soldiers getting killed |
| Other strategic planning mentions |
| Only support military action if our country is attacked |
| *Economy* |
| We end up with a financial burden |
| We are in a poor financial condition/in debt |
| We end up supplying everything |
| We end up wasting our resources on wars |
| Other economy mentions |
| *Other Not Taken a Role/Active Role* |
| It has no impact on/does not benefit us |
| Not in favor of war |
| Other not taken a role/active role mentions |
| No congressional approval taken |

**Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA]**

For example, the category of "internal policy" includes such reasons as: "don't always need to lead/let others take responsibility"; "lesser interference in other countries/it's not our business"; and "we need to concentrate on more pressing/existing issues" (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

Figure 7 (see below) breaks down the percentage of respondents who selected each of the possible subcategories under the headings listed above in Table 4. This poll specifies the importance of each reason in the formation of public opinion. According to this poll, at least, the most important reason was that the United States "[doesn't] always need to lead" and should "let others take responsibility" with 9.86% of respondents citing this reason (Knowledge Networks, 2012). Other important reasons included "lesser interference in other countries/it's not our business" with 3.74%, "we need to concentrate on more pressing/existing issues" with 3.4%, "it should be a joint issue/we can work together" with 2.04%, "troops are already spread thin/too many soldiers getting killed" with 2.04%, and, finally, "U.S. does not have a good image/is resented by other countries" with 1.7% (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

In regards to this poll, strategic planning included reasons that reference allies and resources, such as with the reasons that "it should be a joint operation/we can work together"; troops are already spread thin/too many soldiers getting killed"; and "only support military action if our country is attacked" (Knowledge Networks, 2012). Reasons that were not especially important (as defined by the fact only 0.34% of respondents selected these) included those of resources – in this case, Americans did not seem to be especially concerned with the economics of intervention, both in terms of the resources that the United States would expend in intervention, and would gain from intervention (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

**Figure 7: Reasons Why the United States Should Not Have Taken A Role, Nor An Active Role**
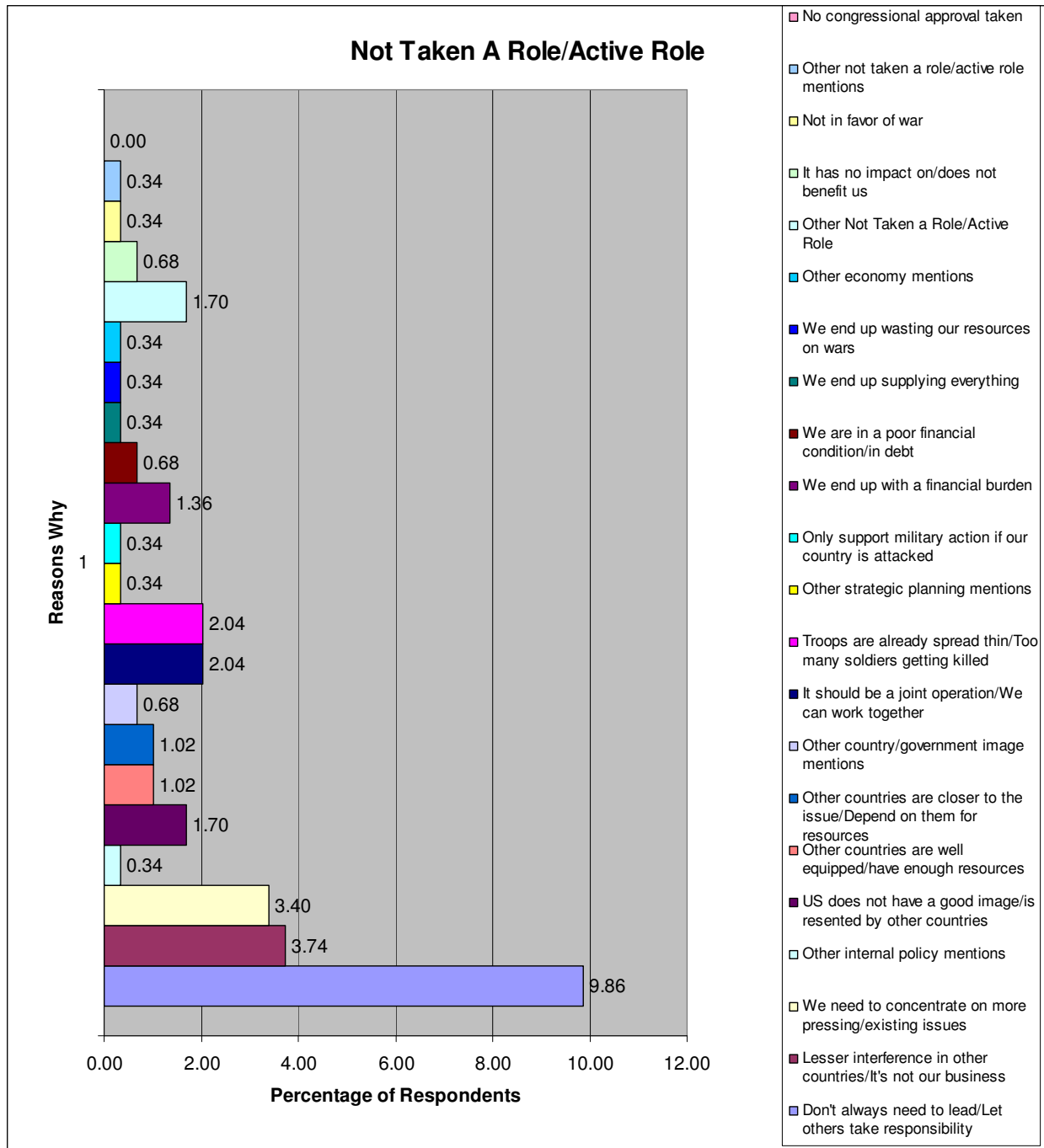
*Statistics on Syria*

One theme that was common in many of the polls that I studied was that of responsibility. In fact, three separate polls all asked the same question about the United States' global responsibilities (see Table 5, below). This particular question raises important questions about what Americans think is their country's responsibilities, and what Americans think they owe to the rest of the world.

**Table 5: American Responsibility to Help the People of Syria Measured across Time**

| CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Birth Control | February 10-13, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Has Responsibility | 27% |
| Doesn't have responsibility | 71% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 2% |
| Total | 100% |
| Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility? | |

| Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey | March 7-11, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Has Responsibility | 25% |
| Doesn't have responsibility | 65% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 10% |
| Total | 100% |
| Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility? | |

| Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey | December 5-9, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Has Responsibility | 29% |
| Doesn't have responsibility | 61% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 10% |
| Total | 100% |
| Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility? | |

**Source: CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Birth Control; Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey; Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey**

According to the polls listed above, the vast majority of Americans polled in 2012 (71% in February 2012, 65% in March 2012, and 61% in December 2012) believed that the United States

did not have a responsibility to get involved in the crisis in Syria (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012a; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012). By the end of the year, more respondents decided that the United States had a responsibility to do something – from 27% in February 2012, to 25% in March 2012, and to 29% in December 2012 (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012a; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012) . This responsibility, however, may fall far short of intervention – it may refer to simply supplying the rebel fighters with non-lethal aid, as the United States has done[11].

Another poll then asked whether other countries also had a responsibility in Syria (see Table 6, below). This poll seemed to be trying to quantify the question of when Americans would accept help from the rest of the world during a crisis. This poll demonstrated that Americans seem to be divided on whether other countries have a responsibility in Syria, with 55% of respondents thinking that other countries have a responsibility and 42% finding no responsibility (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012a).

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[11] According to the White House Office of the Press Secretary, as of September 2013, the United States is contributing "food, clean water, shelter, medical care, and relief supplies to over 4.2 million people inside Syria, as well as to the more than two million refugees across the region" (2013). The Office of the Press Secretary notably added to the bulletin the fact that "the United States remains the single-largest contributor of humanitarian aid for the Syrian people" (2013). As previously mentioned, the United States has provided nearly $1.4 billion in aid (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013).

**Table 6: Responsibility of the International Community**

| CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Birth Control | February 10-13, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Has Responsibility | 55% |
| Don't have Responsibility | 42% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 3% |
| Total | 100% |
| Do you think countries other than the United States have a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups, or don't countries other than the United States have this responsibility? | |

**Source: CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Birth Control, February 2012**

Since responsibility can be defined in an extremely wide range of options, the polls subsequently asked what sorts of actions the United States should take in regards to Syria (see Table 7, below).

**Table 7: What should the United States and other countries do in regards to Syria?**

| Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey | March 7-11, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Favor | 29% |
| Oppose | 62% |
| Don't Know/Refused/Undecided | 9% |
| Total | 100% |
| Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and its allies sending arms and military supplies to antigovernment groups in Syria? | |
| | |
| CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Gun Control/Syria | August 7-8, 2012 |
| Favor | 49% |
| Oppose | 47% |
| Don't Know/Refused/Undecided | 4% |
| Total | 100% |
| Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and other countries sending weapons and other military supplies to the opposition forces who are fighting to remove the Syrian government from power? | |

| CNN/ORC Poll: Politics/Gun Control/Newtown Shooting | December 17-18 2012 |
|---|---|
| Favor | 45% |
| Oppose | 51% |
| Don't Know/Refused/Undecided | 4% |
| Total | 100% |
| Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and other countries sending weapons and other military supplies to the opposition forces who are fighting to remove the Syrian government from power? | |

**Source: CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Gun Control/Syria; CNN/ORC Poll: Politics/Gun Control/Newtown Shooting; Pew Research Center Poll: Political Survey**

One common course of action referenced by the polls was that of sending weapons or other military supplies to the rebel fighters, rather than non-lethal aid (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012b, 2012c; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012). In March, the majority of respondents (62%) opposed the United States and its allies sending "arms and military supplies to antigovernment groups in Syria" (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012). By August, however, respondents were much more evenly divided regarding sending "weapons and other military supplies to the opposition forces" with 49% of respondents favoring sending arms and other aid and 47% opposing (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012c). By December the majority once again opposed sending arms and other military supplies, with 51% of respondents opposing and 45% of respondents supporting this type of intervention.  (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012b, 2012c). It is also interesting to note that support was far lower when the poll mentioned arming "antigovernment groups" as opposed to "opposition forces" (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012b, 2012c; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012).

In order to further understand which actions Americans supported or opposed, one poll in particular provided respondents with a list of possible actions that they could select (see Table 8, below). These options included imposing economic or diplomatic sanctions on Syria, enforcing a no-fly zone, sending arms to anti-government groups, bombing air defense, or sending troops into Syria (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

**Table 8: Actions That the United States Should Take**

| The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA] | May 25-June 8, 2012 |
|---|---|
| **Would you support or oppose the United States and its allies doing each of the following actions with respect to Syria?** | |
| | |
| Support | 63% |
| Oppose | 32% |
| Not Sure/Decline | 6% |
| Total | 100%[12] |
| Increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Syria | |
| | |
| Support | 58% |
| Oppose | 36% |
| Not Sure/Decline | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria | |
| | |
| Support | 27% |
| Oppose | 67% |
| Not Sure/Decline | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Sending arms and supplies to anti-government groups in Syria | |
| | |
| Support | 22% |
| Oppose | 72% |
| Not Sure/Decline | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Bomb Syrian air defense | |
| | |
| Support | 14% |
| Oppose | 81% |
| Not Sure/Decline | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Sending troops into Syria | |

**Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll: Global Views 2012 [USMISC2012-CCGA], June 2012**

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[12] Because of rounding, the other numbers listed in the responses to that poll seem to be incorrect as they do not add up to 100, but are indeed correct. This is also true for the responses to "Sending troops to Syria".

According to this poll, respondents supported actions that would require less of an investment by the United States government, along with a smaller involvement in the conflict (Knowledge Networks, 2012). This is apparent in the fact that the majority of respondents supported sanctions and no-fly zones (63% and 58% of respondents support these options respectively) while the majority opposed those courses of action that could draw a target on America's back or that required a higher level of involvement (67% opposed sending arms, 72% opposed bombing the Syrian air defense, and a whopping 81% of respondents opposed sending troops to Syria (Knowledge Networks, 2012).

Other polls also asked respondents for their opinions regarding the logistics of a hypothetical intervention (see Table 9, below). Specifically, they asked about the use of bombing raids or deploying troops on the ground to create "safe zones" – a tactic eerily reminiscent of a different humanitarian intervention[13] (Opinion Research Corporation, 2012b, 2012c). The idea of the safe zones, may, however, serve to delineate the boundaries of the mission – creating safe

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[13] "Safe zones" were infamously used during the United Nations intervention in the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations declared the city of Srebrenica to fall within a "safe zone" – but when soldiers with the Bosnian Serb Army advanced toward the city, the United Nations was unable to protect the refugees in the city, even as a United Nations officer sent a desperate message for help: "Urgent urgent urgent. B.S.A. is entering the town of Srebrenica. Will someone stop this immediately and save these people. Thousands of them are gathering around the hospital. Please help." (Engelberg & Weiner, 1995). Nobody came, and more than 7,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in "part mass slaughter, part blood sport" (Engelberg & Weiner, 1995).

zones and protecting those zones would require fewer troops than attempting to secure larger

swaths of the country.

**Table 9: Logistics of a Hypothetical Intervention**

| CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Gun Control/Syria | August 7-8, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Favor | 43% |
| Oppose | 51% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 6% |
| Total | 100% |
| Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and other countries using military airplanes and missiles to try to establish zones inside Syria where the opposition forces would be safe from attacks by the Syrian government? | |

| CNN/ORC Poll: Politics/Gun Control/Newtown Shooting | December 17-18, 2012 |
|---|---|
| Favor | 43% |
| Oppose | 52% |
| Don't Know/Undecided/Refused | 5% |
| Total | 100% |
| Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and other countries using military airplanes and missiles to try to establish zones inside Syria where the opposition forces would be safe from attacks by the Syrian government? | |

**Source: CNN/ORC Poll: 2012 Presidential Election/Gun Control/Syria; CNN/ORC Poll: Politics/Gun Control/Newtown Shooting**

This poll reinforces the trend of opposition to more involved interventions – such as those which

would involve boots on the ground – with 51% and 52% of respondents opposing the creation of

safe zones by military means in August and December of 2012, respectively. In this case as well,

respondents were more likely to support the use of airplanes and missiles in intervention than the

deployment of troops, but the majority still opposed involvement (Opinion Research

Corporation, 2012b, 2012c).

## Patterns and Paradigms

While the polls discussed previously do cover various countries over several years, there

seem to be a few lessons that can be taken away from the study of these three cases regarding the

scenarios in which American support for intervention increases and when support for

intervention decreases; and on variables that surprisingly do not significantly affect support for intervention.

American support for intervention seems to increase when: *there are international organizations or international coalitions of troops that will support or contribute to the American effort*; *the logistics of the mission – and in particular the specific parameters in regards to troop deployments and air or naval capacities – are released to the public in advance in order to appease the public's fears of long, bloody, or complicated wars for dubious reasons; intervention involved limited warfare like the establishment of no-fly zones or limited bombing raids.*

The fact that international organizations or international coalitions of troops were so important in these polls may be indicative of the anxieties surrounding the stereotypically American idea of the United States as the global police, who mediates disputes that no other country will go near: but Officer America is facing budget cuts and an economic recession that may make Americans more likely to place the responsibility on the backs of other countries or organizations, such as the United Kingdom, with whom the United States has often tried to ally itself ("Hague," 2013). In this sense, then, Grieco et al.'s work on the value which Americans place on international support seem to be validated by the polls used in this study (2011, p. 564).

Eichenberg and Jentleson also discussed the importance of the people's ability to understand the logistics of the mission, as clarity in regards to the strategy of the intervention – as well as the reasons for it – can allow the people to develop informed opinions on it (2005, p. 143; 1992, p. 50). This view seems to be validated by the polls, particularly as demonstrated by the polls regarding the intervention in Libya. As the questions in the polls were more able to delineate the United States military's next steps, the more people could support the intervention.

This specificity may allow Americans to support an intervention in light of the previously discussed Vietnam Syndrome, and of fears of protracted wars for unclear reasons. It is important to note that the particular reasons for the missions do not seem to be as important as providing the American public with the specifics of the mission. Consequently, a logically argued and well-planned and delineated intervention may be more successful than a hastily-planned but morally mandated intervention.

In keeping with this theme of the fear of unsupportable wars, Americans also seemed more likely to support intervention when these interventions were limited in nature. Americans were therefore more likely to support sanctions and humanitarian aid in Syria, and the establishment of no-fly zones in Libya through limited bombing raids. In regards to these limited interventions, opposition increased as the types of intervention became more involved – and was at its highest when the intervention would include boots on the ground. On the other hand, Americans supported sending troops to Darfur as part of an international coalition of troops or as an auxiliary force attached to an international organization. This may be because of the moral imperative produced by the fact of the genocide, which would, in effect, challenge the previously mentioned arguments by Jentleson that the mission may be more important than the casualties (Eichenberg, 2005, p. 143).

From a discussion of the reasons why or conditions when Americans do support war, the reasons why or conditions when Americans oppose war can also be extrapolated. The patterns of support and opposition demonstrate that American support for intervention decreased when the American public thought that: *the reasons behind the mission and the logistics of it were unclear*; *the United States would not have help*; *when other countries have a stronger responsibility to the people involved in the conflict than the United States does; other countries*

*have a larger stake or more to gain from the resolution of the conflict than the United States does*; *too many soldiers would be killed or injured*; *American troops would be deployed into the conflict and placed in harm's way*. Several of these reasons underscore the importance of the mission and of the logistics thereof. The discussions of responsibility and of other countries having a more significant stake in the conflict may emphasize the fear of fighting wars for unclear reasons: in this case, Americans oppose war because they do not think that that particular conflict is "their fight," literally. Along these lines, Americans also thought more about the dangers of the United States going it alone when they opposed intervention. It is very interesting to note that it is in opposition to war that moral arguments entered the polls: specifically, Americans expressed concern over the troops who would be deployed when they opposed American intervention in the conflict.

Variables that did not significantly change support included: *economic reasons* and *whether or not there was congressional support for war*. While these seemed to be very good and important reasons to support or oppose war, they did not seem to be as relevant in these three cases. This may mean that the American public supports war on logistical grounds and opposes war on moral grounds – either way, the mathematics of the intervention were not as relevant. Finally, congressional support for action was also insignificant, perhaps because the American public may place more stock in international organizations and in the President than they do in the Congress.

## Dodge, Duck, Elude, and Eschew: Fluctuations in American Public Opinion

This thesis has studied variables present in the public opinion polls on hypothetical or actual interventions in Darfur, Libya, and Syria. In studying these polls, I hoped to be able to select the variables which play a part in determining American support or opposition to war.

Unfortunately, there were limits to my method. I had to find polls that asked the same question over time, and so this eliminated polls in which questions were asked only once, perhaps because of social, political, or economic reasons that then changed. My analysis was also limited to those factors that can be quantified and that the authors of the polls deemed relevant to the conflicts. While my analysis of the literature on public opinion included several variables, not all of these variables were mentioned in the polls (the role of the parachute journalists, for example, was not explored by the polls): therefore, I include in this analysis only the variables that were included in the questions asked by the polls. I also could not account for support increasing or decreasing because of social, political, cultural, or economic events that occurred just before the poll was administered. Instead, I had to take the fluctuations in support more at face value, since I was unable to study current events in tandem with an analysis of the polls. A fascinating avenue of further study would be to analyze the polls in regards to political and economic events, or perhaps with cultural events – like Ryan Gosling's appearance on television wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with "Darfur" in stark lettering.

Keeping these limitations in mind, I found that support increased when: *there are international organizations or international coalitions of troops that will support or contribute to the American effort*; *the logistics of the mission – and in particular the specific parameters in regards to troop deployments and air or naval capacities – are released to the public in advance in order to appease the public's fears of long, bloody, or complicated wars for dubious reasons; intervention involved limited warfare like the establishment of no-fly zones or limited bombing raids.* Opposition increased when: *the reasons behind the mission and the logistics of it were unclear*; *the United States would not have help*; *when other countries have a stronger responsibility to the people involved in the conflict than the United States does; other countries*

*have a larger stake or more to gain from the resolution of the conflict than the United States does*; *too many soldiers would be killed or injured*; *American troops would be deployed into the conflict and placed in harm's way.*

I can therefore now discuss the implications of these findings for politics, as I had previously mentioned the role of this thesis in potentially informing decision-makers. To increase support for an intervention, politicians should perhaps focus not on moral mandates or even on the conflict itself. Rather, they should develop a highly specific plan of action, including troop or materiel deployments and even a timeline, in order to assuage American fears of protracted wars. For example, politicians could increase opposition for an intervention – for example, in a case where Americans desire war for moral or retaliatory reasons but the administration opposes it for some reason or other – by emphasizing the toll that war takes on the United States' armed forces and on troops' families and loved ones. According to these findings, therefore, trying to build opposition with logos or support with pathos would not be as effective. It is in this sense that American public opinion dodges, ducks, eludes, and eschews: there are countless variables that affect opinion, including the simple fact that people can lie or feel pressured into choosing one way or another, regardless of their own feelings. Public opinion can be swayed by any number of factors, and can symbolize a people's desperate support of global justice, or a people's abandonment of responsibility to humanity.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix A**

Department of Defense
ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS BY REGIONAL AREA AND BY
COUNTRY (309A)
September 30, 2010

| Regional Area/Country | Total | Army | Navy | Marine Corps | Air Force |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **United States and Territories** | | | | | |
| Continental United States (CONUS) | 939,623 | 455,914 | 108,151 | 117,487 | 258,071 |
| Alaska | 19,727 | 12046 | 76 | 19 | 7,586 |
| Hawaii | 38,755 | 22186 | 5,402 | 6,532 | 4,635 |
| Guam | 3,013 | 42 | 904 | 64 | 2,003 |
| Northern Mariana Islands | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Puerto Rico | 224 | 118 | 58 | 25 | 23 |
| Wake Island | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Transients | 49,390 | 7255 | 9,611 | 27,723 | 4,801 |
| Afloat | 82,962 | 0 | 82,962 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total - United States and Territories** | 1,133,699 | 497,561 | 207,164 | 151,851 | 277,123 |
| | | | | | |
| **Europe** | | | | | |
| Albania | 8 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 |
| Austria | 22 | 4 | 0 | 14 | 4 |
| Belgium | 1,252 | 669 | 102 | 34 | 447 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 8 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 |
| Bulgaria | 15 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 4 |
| Croatia | 13 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Cyprus | 16 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 9 |
| Czech  Republic | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Denmark | 12 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Estonia | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Finland | 16 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 4 |
| France | 64 | 22 | 5 | 15 | 22 |
| Germany | 53,951 | 38,437 | 221 | 417 | 14,876 |
| Greece | 338 | 8 | 275 | 12 | 43 |
| Greenland | 133 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 133 |
| Hungary | 54 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 49 |
| Ireland | 8 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Italy | 9,646 | 3,329 | 2,133 | 53 | 4,131 |
| Latvia | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Lithuania | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Luxembourg | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Macedonia, the Former Yugoslav | 16 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 4 |
| Malta | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 442 | 215 | 15 | 14 | 198 |
| Norway | 71 | 25 | 0 | 9 | 37 |
| Poland | 34 | 13 | 1 | 11 | 9 |
| Portugal | 703 | 24 | 22 | 8 | 649 |
| Romania | 16 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Slovakia | 10 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 3 |
| Slovenia | 7 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| Spain | 1,240 | 94 | 641 | 135 | 370 |
| Sweden | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 |
| Switzerland | 21 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 5 |
| Turkey | 1,530 | 57 | 5 | 13 | 1,455 |
| United Kingdom | 9,229 | 383 | 285 | 85 | 8,476 |
| Afloat | 362 | 0 | 362 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total - Europe** | 79,288 | 43,324 | 4,069 | 945 | 30,950 |
| | | | | | |
| **Former Soviet Union** | | | | | |
| Armenia | 9 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Azerbaijan | 8 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Georgia | 24 | 4 | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Kazakhstan | 15 | 6 | 0 | 8 | 1 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 11 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Moldova | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Russia | 47 | 14 | 0 | 25 | 8 |
| Tajikistan | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Turkmenistan | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Ukraine | 11 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Uzbekistan | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| **Total - Former Soviet Union** | 145 | 38 | 0 | 94 | 13 |
| | | | | | |
| **East Asia and Pacific** | | | | | |
| Australia | 130 | 29 | 16 | 28 | 57 |
| Burma | 12 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 1 |
| Cambodia | 11 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| China (Includes Hong Kong) | 56 | 9 | 0 | 38 | 9 |
| Indonesia (Includes Timor) | 26 | 7 | 2 | 13 | 4 |
| Japan | 34,385 | 2,684 | 3,497 | 15,678 | 12,526 |
| Korea, Democratic People's Republic Of | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Korea, Republic of (figures not available) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Laos | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Malaysia | 13 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marshall Islands | 16 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mongolia | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| New Zealand | 7 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Philippines | 207 | 11 | 4 | 182 | 10 |
| Singapore | 132 | 8 | 77 | 35 | 12 |
| Thailand | 110 | 43 | 6 | 38 | 23 |
| Vietnam | 16 | 6 | 0 | 9 | 1 |
| Afloat | 8,819 | 0 | 6,671 | 2,148 | 0 |
| **Total - East Asia and Pacific** | 43,953 | 2,833 | 10,274 | 18,197 | 12,649 |
| | | | | | |
| **North Africa, Near East, and South Asia** | | | | | |
| Afghanistan (see Deployment below) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Algeria | 10 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 2 |
| Bahrain | 1,349 | 28 | 1,126 | 169 | 26 |
| Bangladesh | 8 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Diego Garcia | 238 | 0 | 204 | 0 | 34 |
| Egypt | 275 | 217 | 4 | 23 | 31 |
| India | 26 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 10 |
| Iraq (see Deployment below) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| Israel | 35 | 6 | 0 | 16 | 13 |
| Jordan | 30 | 12 | 0 | 7 | 11 |
| Kuwait (see Deployment below) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lebanon | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Morocco | 12 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 4 |
| Nepal | 9 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Oman | 30 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 21 |
| Pakistan | 133 | 6 | 2 | 118 | 7 |
| Qatar | 555 | 304 | 0 | 51 | 200 |
| Saudi Arabia | 239 | 118 | 17 | 28 | 76 |
| Sri Lanka | 10 | 2 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Syria | 9 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Tunisia | 12 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 1 |
| United Arab Emirates | 94 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 88 |
| Yemen | 15 | 7 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Afloat | 4,717 | 0 | 408 | 4,309 | 0 |
| **Total - North Africa, Near East, South Asia** | 7,811 | 736 | 1,763 | 4,788 | 524 |
| | | | | | |
| **Sub-Saharan Africa** | | | | | |
| Angola | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Botswana | 9 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Burundi | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Cameroon | 9 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chad | 10 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Congo (Brazzaville) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Congo (Kinshasa) | 9 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Cote D'Ivoire | 8 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Djibouti | 1,379 | 58 | 802 | 169 | 350 |
| Eritrea | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ethiopia | 9 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Gabon | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ghana | 11 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Guinea | 8 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Kenya | 35 | 19 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| Liberia | 36 | 5 | 0 | 30 | 1 |
| Mali | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Mauritania | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Mozambique | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Niger | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Nigeria | 22 | 2 | 0 | 16 | 4 |
| Rwanda | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Senegal | 9 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Sierra Leone | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 34 |
| Somalia | 19 | 0 | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| South Africa | 39 | 5 | 0 | 31 | 3 |
| St. Helena (Includes Ascension Island) | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Sudan | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Tanzania, United Republic Of | 12 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Togo | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Uganda | 9 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Zambia | 7 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Zimbabwe | 9 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| **Total - Sub-Saharan Africa** | 1,709 | 132 | 824 | 326 | 367 |
| | | | | | |
| **Western Hemisphere** | | | | | |
| Antigua | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Argentina | 23 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 9 |
| Bahamas, The | 44 | 1 | 38 | 5 | 0 |
| Barbados | 9 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Belize | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Bermuda | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Bolivia | 14 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Brazil | 39 | 8 | 3 | 22 | 6 |
| Canada | 127 | 6 | 18 | 10 | 93 |
| Chile | 31 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 11 |
| Colombia | 62 | 33 | 2 | 16 | 11 |
| Costa Rica | 8 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cuba (Guantanamo) | 913 | 326 | 444 | 143 | 0 |
| Dominican Republic | 13 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 2 |
| Ecuador | 20 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| El Salvador | 24 | 6 | 1 | 14 | 0 |
| Guatemala | 12 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Guyana | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Haiti | 15 | 6 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Honduras | 403 | 217 | 0 | 11 | 175 |
| Jamaica | 9 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 0 |
| Mexico | 28 | 8 | 1 | 15 | 4 |
| Nicaragua | 17 | 9 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Panama | 19 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 0 |
| Paraguay | 11 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| Peru | 42 | 9 | 11 | 16 | 6 |
| Suriname | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 8 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Uruguay | 17 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 5 |
| Venezuela | 17 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 4 |
| Afloat | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total - Western Hemisphere** | 1,943 | 692 | 541 | 371 | 339 |
| | | | | | |
| **Undistributed** | | | | | |
| Ashore | 156,208 | 20,729 | 97,439 | 25,809 | 12,231 |
| Afloat | 6,229 | 0 | 6,229 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total - Undistributed** | 162,437 | 20,729 | 103,668 | 25,809 | 12,231 |
| | | | | | |
| **Total - Foreign Countries** | 297,286 | 68,484 | 121,139 | 50,590 | 57,073 |
| Ashore | 277,151 | 68,484 | 107,461 | 44,133 | 57,073 |
| Afloat | 20,135 | 0 | 13,678 | 6,457 | 0 |
| | | | | | |
| NATO Countries | 78,580 | 43,287 | 3,706 | 818 | 30,769 |
| Forward Deployment Pacific Theater | 47,390 | 2,894 | 11,386 | 18,407 | 14,703 |
| | | | | | |
| **Total - Worldwide** | 1,430,985 | 566,045 | 328,303 | | |
| Ashore | 1,327,888 | 566,045 | 231,663 | 195,984 | 334,196 |
| Afloat | 103,097 | 0 | 96,640 | 6,457 | 0 |
| | | | | | |
| **DEPLOYMENTS (not complete - rounded strengths)** | | | | | |
| **Operation New Dawn (OND)** | | | | | |
| **(Active Component portion of strength included in above)** | | | | | |
| Total (in/around Iraq as of September 30, 2010) - | | | | | |
| Includes deployed Reserve/National | 96,200 | 57,200 | 18,800 | 4,000 | 16,200 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guard | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| **Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)** | | | | | |
| **(Active Component portion of strength included in above)** | | | | | |
| Total (in/around Afghanistan as of September 30, 2010) - | 105,900 | 65,800 | 6,500 | 22,500 | 11,100 |
| Includes deployed Reserve/National Guard | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| **Deployed from locations for OIF/OEF (other than U.S.)** | | | | | |
| **(Active component of strength included in country)** | | | | | |
| Germany | 10,510 | 9,240 | 0 | 0 | 1,270 |
| Italy | 2,520 | 2,140 | 160 | 0 | 220 |
| Japan | 3,530 | 170 | 500 | 1,560 | 1,300 |
| United Kingdom | 530 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 530 |