

SMART WAR AND RESPONSIBLE STATECRAFT

When is smart war wise statecraft? In light of *Operation Allied Force*, NATO's air campaign to force an end to the ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population of the Serb province of Kosovo, this question represented one of the more interesting facets of the broader controversy of humanitarian intervention in the 1990s. If we define humanitarian intervention as *military intervention in order to protect the human rights of a state's inhabitants that does not have the authority of its government*,¹ NATO's war in Kosovo stands as a particularly robust example. International intervention in Bosnia had enjoyed the consent of the newly independent Bosnian government as its sovereignty was assaulted by Croatian and Serbian secessionists. In the case of Kosovo, by contrast, NATO marked the fiftieth anniversary of its existence by the transformative act of going to war for the first time in its history, not in the kind defensive contingency for which it was created, but in a humanitarian cause. The Alliance was not only denied the acquiescence of the Yugoslav government but also acted in violation of the basic norms of the UN Charter and in the absence of Security Council mandate. The intervention really began with the Rambouillet conference, in which a select group of NATO states attempted to dictate political terms profoundly affecting Yugoslavia's internal affairs; that attempt and the threat of force that accompanied it, moreover, were influenced by the experience and cost of collective vacillation in Bosnia. Kosovo was therefore a watershed.² The features of the intervention reflect NATO's sense of proprietary interest in the former Yugoslavia as well as the continuing military transformation of the Alliance from a defensive coalition to an expeditionary instrument of coercion.

Additionally, Kosovo raised issues concerning the ethics and political prudence of humanitarian intervention, both in principle and in its NATO iteration of 1999. In strictly military terms the effectiveness of *Allied Force* was circumscribed by the priority given to casualty avoidance in a conflict where vital national interests were not

directly engaged. The technologies that facilitated a surgical application of force and helped to minimize civilian and military deaths also served to legitimate the intervention in spite of its violation of international norms. Yet they simultaneously undermined the sense of collective European responsibility for regional security through the employment of military capabilities possessed solely or preponderantly by the United States. A lower-tech alternative to *Allied Force*, using European ground troops, might have come closer to meeting the humanitarian rescue challenge and made the operation a catalyst for greater European unity. A crisis, after all, is an opportunity for creative innovation; once it has passed, governments revert to old habits. The opportunity to make Kosovo a project of collective European crisis-management was passed up, and the responsibility of the United States for peace in the Balkans was increased in proportion to American dominance in *Allied Force*.

The Kosovo campaign, lastly, represented another episode in post-Cold War NATO *Ostpolitik*, begun with Germany's reunification, extended in the application of CFE standards in the former Warsaw Pact and the offer of NATO membership to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and expressed in the form of political trusteeship for Bosnia after the Dayton Accords. Kosovo broadened and deepened this trusteeship. It also posed questions about the limits of American responsibility for peace-support and political trusteeship in the former Yugoslavia specifically and for European security generally. As the decade drew to an end and the struggle to succeed Bill Clinton in the White House got underway, the domestic sense of these limits inside the United States raised issues of enormous potential consequence to the Atlantic Community.

THE HIGH TIDE OF INTERVENTIONISM

The Alliance's involvement in the former Yugoslavia resonated with a broader international trend of the decade, favoring humanitarian intervention on behalf of populations suffering famine, domestic political anarchy, or violent repression. Haiti, Rwanda, and Somalia figured prominently alongside Bosnia and Kosovo as targets of a humanitarian impulse exercised not only by the nongovernmental organizations traditionally active in humanitarian relief but also by states whose governments attempted to integrate humanitarian concerns into their official foreign policy missions.³ At the same time, a new enthusiasm for multilateral peacekeeping as a means of conflict prevention and containment—often in combination with humanitarian missions and rechristened “peace support”—reflected the hope of many that ideas of collective security and supranational regulation of conflict would at last be given the fair test they deserved after the “false start” of the 1950s.⁴

There was some justification for this enthusiasm. True, the principle of self-determination was as controversial and demonstrably unpredictable in its consequences as ever, while the cause of arms-control had a poor decade in light of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). But the growth of free markets and borderless commerce in the 1990s was in many cases truly transformative, while

the notion that international organizations could underpin conditions favoring the spread of democracy was not without merit and notable successes. Indeed, precisely this was happening in one fashion or another all over Europe, the continent whose wars had inspired the ideas in the first place. The world was more democratic and free trading than ever before. Looking back on the century, it was not unreasonable to conclude that Woodrow Wilson had been more of a prophet than a statesman.⁵

The trouble with the humanitarian impulse was its very impulsiveness. Between 1988 and 1994 the United Nations took on almost double the total of its peacekeeping missions of the previous forty-three years, a hyperactivity with little regard for pragmatic selectivity that by mid-decade had produced as many disappointments as successes due to the number of missions and the variety of circumstances into which they were cast.⁶ The 1992–1993 Somalia intervention was disastrous. The mixed scorecard of interventionism elsewhere was in part the result of the UN's resources being stretched beyond capacity by a confusion of universalism with nondiscrimination—the imperative that intervention be demonstrably effective somewhere with a desire to make it decisive everywhere.⁷ It was additionally limited by the commitment member-states were prepared to make to the enforcement of international peace beyond resort to lofty rhetoric. Short-circuited by forty years of Cold War polarization, the development of an authentic sense of international community in the 1990s was hobbled not by a struggle of superpowers but by the demonstrated heresy of the community's members. "Assertive multilateralism" expressed the hopes that the Clinton administration cherished concerning the evolution of international affairs but in the application was logistically challenging and usually much less multilateral than Clinton had hoped. In Somalia parallel command-and-control structures under the United Nations led to operational confusion, which impressed upon Clinton the potentially high cost of failing to establish American leadership in multilateral efforts. Clinton was rightly criticized for his "tentative" attitude to intervention and his reluctance to back it with robust force, but he was also justly skeptical about the substantive commitment of other states to the humanitarian ethos. In 1994 his administration issued Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) dealing specifically with "multilateral peace operations," a document that indicated to some observers that an American willingness to engage in unilateral action might be the near-term response to the failure of emergency multilateralism.⁸

Growing American skepticism concerning the viability of multilateral operations was valid in light of the fact that comparatively wealthy powers fond of advocating multilateral intervention were often able, due to modest defense budgets, to offer only limited military resources to the collective effort. By the 1990s NATO had only partially accepted, through the *New Strategic Concept* and the Bosnian experience, the conversion to an expeditionary ethos. Moving from the global challenge confronting the United Nations to the regional European context, the most valid generalization of the time was that "the political will to deal decisively with the ethnic violence percolating within NATO's territory and on its periphery is not in great evidence."⁹ The Alliance's underachieving "middle powers" reflected the differential between principle and practice. The Canadian government, to cite a non-European

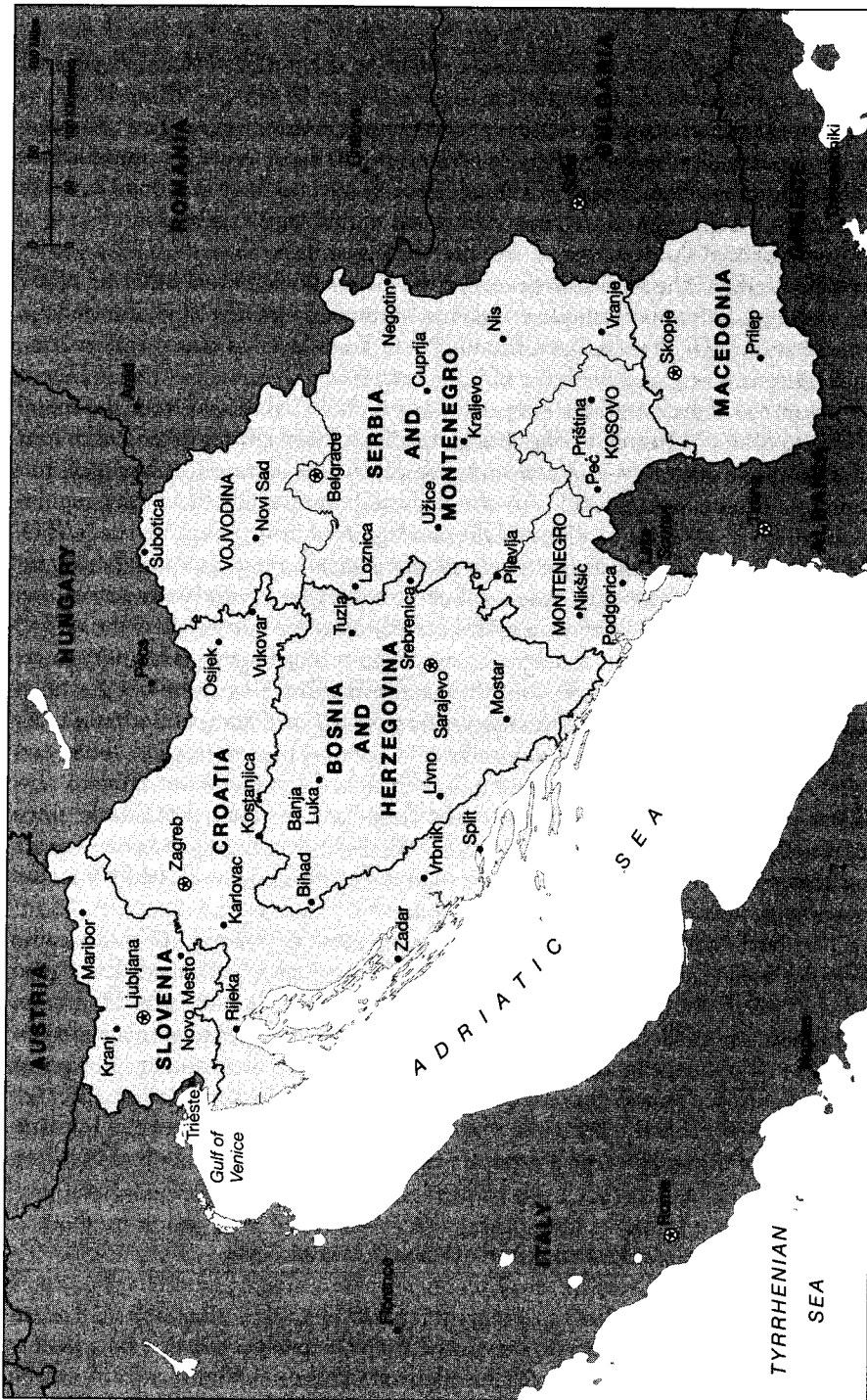
example, was rarely short on sanctimony regarding the duties of the international community, yet reduced its own service personnel from 87,000 in 1990 to 58,000 in 2000, even as it increased its overseas peace-support commitments. The combination of over-tasking with stingy defense budgets resulted in morale, equipment, and readiness problems that hampered Canada's ability to contribute in proportion to its national fiscal capacity and in harmony with its multilateral enthusiasms.¹⁰

An additional shortcoming of the interventionist impulse of the 1990s was its apolitical quality. The rush to rescue victims in reaction to their suffering alone built erroneously "on the metaphor of saving a drowning stranger" and distorted the context surrounding the stranger's dilemma.¹¹ In Yugoslavia, as elsewhere, international consensus on the desirability of intervention had no sooner emerged than it was subject to a debate on the appropriate "exit strategy," which divorced the moral imperative of rescue from the sober contemplation of the self-interested reasons for intervening . . . or not. In Yugoslavia the idea that intervention was based on humanitarian principles applicable anywhere glossed over the fact that both geopolitical proximity to Western Europe and the availability of institutions such as NATO, the EU, and the OSCE made the region a comparatively attractive candidate for intervention in terms of distance, access, military logistics, and available infrastructure. This oversell of the intervention as an inherently altruistic action—and the undersell of the economic, historic strategic reasons for absorbing fragments of the Yugoslav federation into Western Europe—involved a less-than-honest evasion of the wholesomely self-interested reasons for intervention on the one hand and a public admission of the likely open-ended commitment to occupy the territory indefinitely on the other. Intervention here was not a discrete act of assistance but rather a new chapter in the ongoing relationship between Yugoslavia and the rest of Europe since the federation's invention by the victors of 1919. History, culture, and power made the attempt to impose a democratic peace more realistic and less idealistic than the governments advocating it would acknowledge.¹²

The third stage of the wars of the Yugoslav succession, civil war in Kosovo, came late in the decade at a time when humanitarian intervention had already lost a good deal of its perceived legitimacy. The intervention was largely successful in terms of consolidating post-Cold War territorial and political change, but it succeeded on terms that did damage to the prestige of the humanitarian ideal and again exposed fissures in NATO. This might not have been so, had the Clinton administration not chosen to brush aside the principle of sovereignty in order to redeem the humanitarian ethos at minimal political exposure to itself and the governments of its Allies.

RIGHTEOUS MIGHT AND CASUAL WAR

The abridgement of any state's sovereignty constitutes a very serious action. The Alliance's Kosovo intervention can be viewed from the perspective of a long history of interventions by strong states into the affairs of weaker neighbors, and any charge against NATO for reckless endangerment of hallowed custom would be compelling



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least of all in the case of the Balkan region, where compromised sovereignty has historically been closer to the norm than to the exception. Still, the great virtue of the “organized hypocrisy” of sovereignty is that it has, after all, organized and served international peace well enough that it should not be tampered with blithely. Peace, Michael Howard reminds us, is “the order, however imperfect, that results from agreement between states.”¹³ And NATO was clearly guilty of a form of recklessness in Kosovo. The violation of Serbian sovereignty involved a sharp contrast between the imperatives invoked to legitimate it and the means brought to bear in pursuit of an acceptable outcome—what was promptly judged as a “disconnection between the high moral language of the cause and the essentially limited character of the war itself.”¹⁴

Critics of the war blamed the “human rights prism” for a Western inability to understand the nature of political conflict in the former Yugoslavia that would frustrate NATO and the European Union from playing a constructive role in regional peace.¹⁵ But it is difficult to believe that Western governments were genuinely deluded about the chances of durable peace in Kosovo after their experience in Bosnia, both before and after Dayton. The human rights imperative and RMA technologies worked together to facilitate not an optimal diplomatic or humanitarian outcome in Kosovo but rather an acceptable short-term political outcome for NATO’s member-states. Due to the precision of which contemporary weapons are capable, options were available to them that had never before accompanied a military conflict. They exploited these options and accorded secondary priority to the security of the civilian population of Kosovo. This was evident from the outset of military operations. When *Operation Allied Force* was launched on March 24, 1999, President Clinton insisted that “ending this tragedy is a moral imperative,” yet cautioned almost in the same breath that “I don’t intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war.”¹⁶ As an indirect result, the inauguration of NATO bombing was accompanied by an *intensification* of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. A report tabled by the OSCE catalogued in some 900 pages of detail a litany of rape, torture, and killing. The details were prefaced by the observation that “violations inflicted on the Kosovo Albanian population on a massive scale after March 20 were a continuation of actions by Serbian forces that were well-rehearsed, insofar as they were taking place in many locations before that date.”¹⁷ Whereas some 69,500 Kosovars were displaced from the province by March 23, the number ballooned to an estimated 862,979 by June 9. Because no NATO army invaded either Kosovo or the Serb Republic itself, Serb forces were able to accelerate the ethnic cleansing that had, since 1991, been integral to the goal of patching together a Greater Serbia from the fragments of federal Yugoslavia.

Determined from the outset to hold its losses to the absolute minimum, the Alliance restricted its aircraft to operations above 15,000 feet. The “moral arithmetic here became perverse,” noted one critique, “we were unwilling to risk many American casualties in air or ground combat but, given the rightness of our cause, we felt justified in a high-altitude bombing campaign that inevitably killed civilians.”¹⁸ Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General, spoke in terms of a “moral duty” to “stop

the violence and bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe now taking place in Kosovo." He stressed further that the Alliance had no quarrel with the Yugoslav people,¹⁹ who must have been surprised when NATO's first bombs and missiles slammed into targets in and around Belgrade rather than into Serb tanks, trucks, and troops in Kosovo. NATO's political leadership essentially contrived to punish Serbia's infrastructure — "degrading its war-making capacity" was the favored phrase of press briefings in the first phase of the war—for crimes its soldiers had committed, and continued to commit, in Kosovo. Tragic as the civilian casualties were, they represented only one half of the perverse equation. Seventy-two days of bombardment ultimately compelled Serb forces to withdraw from Kosovo. An enormous quantity of Serb military equipment was pulled out of Kosovo after the cease-fire,²⁰ spared by the absence of NATO troops in the ravaged province but also by the fact that, even at its height, NATO's air campaign was notable neither for its ferocity nor for its precision but rather for its circumspection. Apache helicopters from the U.S. Army were never committed against Serbian tanks,²¹ while the Hercules AC-130 gunships available were subject to such operational restrictions as gave them scant opportunity to fulfill the role of scourge from the sky expected of them. Columnist Charles Krauthammer, no friend of humanitarian intervention even in principle, nevertheless restricted himself to ridiculing NATO's mission on its own terms. While the achievement of its primary humanitarian objective was hampered by its less-than-robust military measures, he maintained, the secondary mission of preventing instability in neighboring states too was compromised by the accelerated rate at which Kosovar refugees were flooding into Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. In the early phase of the air campaign, additionally, two Serbian MIGs were shot down attempting to attack NATO peacekeeping forces in Bosnia; later there were reports of incidents involving Serb forces on the borders of Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro.²²

Among NATO governments, that of Tony Blair in Britain was most insistent on the need for an invasion of Kosovo. But Blair was out of phase with the other NATO states. From the outset, both the bombing campaign and the war of words crafted by Alliance spokesmen were designed to reflect the center of gravity of *existing* public opinion in the Alliance rather than to prepare the public for the possibility of greater sacrifice with frankness about a ground war. The tension between the declared goal of saving the Kosovars and the domestic political exposure inherent for NATO governments of committing ground troops was artfully triangulated with the air power-only approach. Neither France nor Italy was prepared to contribute as many troops as Britain, but both were willing to provide troops if a ground war were approved. At one point British Defense Secretary George Robertson speculated that sending in ground troops might appear as an act of war against Yugoslavia rather than the regime of Slobodan Milošević, while German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder opposed a ground war and went so far as to suggest that Germany would block authorization for an invasion.²³

But it was the political timidity of the Clinton administration that vetoed the ground option altogether, even in the face of the preference of Supreme Allied

Commander in Europe (SACEUR), General Wesley Clark, for a force of 175,000, using Albania as the principal invasion route. Having decided against the two extremes, washing its hands of the crisis or facing the risks of outright invasion, the administration opted for a "bomb and pray" reliance on air power alone to achieve its military ends. The dissonance between an ostensibly humanitarian mission and the less-than-heroic means used to achieve it made this policy controversial; equally, it threatened to be ineffective until the Alliance broadened its array of targets and intensified the bombing of them.²⁴

In a press conference given by General Klaus Naumann, Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, on May 9, 1999, a succession of reporters asked why the Alliance conceded no need to change its approach to the war despite the fact that the air campaign had not stopped ethnic cleansing inside Kosovo. Naumann's answer dealt adroitly with the dilemma of defending a policy with which he was clearly uncomfortable:

You are asking a moral question, I understand you fully and from a moral point of view I also hate to see this news, but on the other hand, you can only do what is achievable and what is acceptable by our nations in this Alliance. And for that reason I have to tell you once again that we have no reason at this point in time to change the strategy which is focused to some extent on the philosophy of our democracies that we should avoid casualties, we should avoid the loss of life.²⁵

Both Naumann and the reporters understood the deeper reason why *Allied Force* was being conducted in a way that nobody found very edifying. While considerable scholarly attention has been given to explaining why Western publics have become distrustful of their elected representatives, the mounting evidence that this sentiment is reciprocal has had little attention. The governments of the mature democracies have acquired a low regard for the character of their electorates and are inclined to undertake foreign policy initiatives, to the extent possible, on the political cheap. The war was being prosecuted with a mind to keeping casualties to zero, while minimizing Serb civilian casualties and attacking military and industrial infrastructure. War waged in this fashion enabled NATO governments to insure themselves against popular outrage when the outcome of the conflict was less than optimal.²⁶ During the dark days of the Cold War Michael Howard speculated as follows:

Even in the nuclear age, the obligation on the citizen to fight in defense of the community that embodies his values seems to me to be absolute, and the more fully he is a citizen, the more total that obligation becomes. The ugly skeleton of military obligation for the preservation of the state can become so thickly covered with the fat of economic prosperity and under-exercised through the skillful avoidance of international conflict that whole generations can grow to maturity, as they have in Western Europe today, without even knowing it is there."²⁷

The charge that *Allied Force* resulted in a victory worthy only of cowards is harsh in view of the very high level of professionalism to which Western militaries are

held. The professional military of the NATO states in the 1990s operated in a political environment in which enthusiasm for humanitarian intervention was often strong in proportion to the absence of direct sacrifice from the public—a public for whom any sense of the connection between the right to security and the duty to serve was lost and the ethos of the citizen-soldier dead. Such support could prove suddenly ephemeral when intervention involved casualties, cost, and inconvenience. In the case of *Allied Force*, NATO's political and military leadership was forced to give as much attention to the unpredictable shoals of contemporary democracy as it did to the difficult terrain of Kosovo and the tragedy unfolding there.

What did *Allied Force* mean for the Atlantic Alliance as Europe's premier security organization? Because air operations initially witnessed an acceleration of the atrocities visited upon the population of Kosovo, its reliance on air power was prominent among the reasons cited by critics who judged the operation a perfect failure. In addition, NATO's policy going back to Rambouillet was ridiculed as self-contradictory, in so far as the Contact Group did not support Kosovo's secession from Yugoslavia yet had militarily aided the side of the secessionists—more forcefully put, “had intervened in a civil war and defeated one side, but embraced the position of the party it had defeated on the issue over which the war had been fought.”²⁸ In response its advocates conceded the humanitarian shortcomings of *Allied Force* but rejected the notion that Wilsonian idealism, or the abuse thereof, had paved a path to hell with good intentions. The war had put NATO's very credibility on the line yet had reaffirmed American leadership of the Alliance militarily, politically, and morally. “Today may not be the Wilsonian moment in the sense that all the world is ready to adopt Western values and institutions,” claimed one review, “but it is a period in which unprecedented power can be used to promote human rights and democratic government in circumstances where the terrain is favorable.”²⁹ General Wesley Clark, as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe responsible for implementing militarily the political will of the NATO governments, later referred to the “brave talk” about “the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs” yet conceded that the operation achieved “a military success at remarkably little cost in Allied lives and resources,” despite the fact that its prosecution violated almost every basic principle of the conduct of war.³⁰ *Allied Force* turned out to be a testimony to American power that would radiate well beyond the Balkans.

Between these two views there is a more sober interpretation that, looking back from 1999 to 1989, *Allied Force* was the most ambitious manifestation of post-Cold War *Ostpolitik* involving the liquidation of East European communist systems and the incremental extension of Euro-Atlantic democracy eastward.³¹ Since the initial phase of Yugoslavia's disintegration, the Alliance had acted progressively as an anti-Serb coalition whose diplomacy and military power had supported the self-determination claims of Croats, Slovenians, Bosnians, and Albanian Kosovars *against* the Yugoslav rump-state headquartered in Belgrade. An analyst in Belgrade observed with some justice that the campaign in Kosovo “was like the final battle of the Cold War.”³² Admittedly this was not the intended outcome, but it was what the sum of NATO's actions represented. In Yugoslavia the Alliance had pushed aside the United Nations and

the accepted conventions of international relations, yet had done so ostensibly to redeem a more ambitious definition of “international community,” even as it consolidated the Atlantic community's Cold War victory.

THE HOLLOW SHELL OF BURDEN-SHARING

The claim that *Allied Force* reasserted American leadership merits closer examination, not because it is wrong but rather because the articulation of American leadership in the campaign limited its contribution to the cause of European self-reliance. Having decided to take on the humanitarian mission, the Clinton administration passed on the ground war option and with it the opportunity to involve America's European allies more intensely in a European security crisis. Rare indeed is the occasion when Britain is eager to commit troops to a continental conflict. In achieving the mission using advanced weaponry plus integrated command-control and communications capabilities possessed almost exclusively by the United States, the administration made *Allied Force* an American affair and undercut the ability of European allies—quite apart from the issue of their willingness—to contribute more to the overall military effort.

Almost alone, American air power broke the Yugoslav military and forced the Milošević government to yield to the Alliance's demands. This may have been its most fortunate aspect, skeptics of the RMA have pointed out, because NATO's new technologies did not permit its aircraft either to attack Serbian armored forces in poor weather or to distinguish military from civilian vehicles without the aid of a pilot's eye.³³ If one holds that the Clinton administration and most of the NATO allies chose an airpower-only campaign due to a fear of casualties, then *Allied Force* was a success, above all because the RMA was never subjected to a thorough test.³⁴ To the contrary, the campaign was a mixture of competing political impulses and military imperatives, the sum of which placed egregious limitations on the conduct of coherent operations. A principal criticism of *Allied Force* is that the manner in which it was launched “violated two of the most enduring maxims of military practice: the importance of achieving surprise and the importance of keeping the enemy unclear as to one's intentions.”³⁵ Each weakness was in its own way either a by-product of coalition warfare or of political micromanagement of a military campaign—or both. By ruling out altogether a ground campaign, let alone an invasion, the Clinton administration revealed so much of NATO's hand to Belgrade that Serb forces in Kosovo could adapt themselves to the certainty of a one-dimensional threat. The politics of coalition warfare meanwhile further intensified the political scripting of the campaign. French President Jacques Chirac opposed any attack on Belgrade's electrical power grid that would leave the Serb capital in the dark for any length of time. Ultimately, CBU-104 (V)2/B cluster munitions were used to deposit carbon-graphite on the grid and thus shut it down for only a few hours. The point here is that neither weather nor terrain, neither Serb guile nor NATO interoperability problems, made *Allied Force* initially a close-run

thing. Rather, it was the strategy chosen by the Alliance's political leadership that "risked frittering away the hard-earned reputation for effectiveness that U.S. air power had finally earned for itself in *Desert Storm* after more than three years of unqualified misuse over North Vietnam a generation earlier."³⁶ To a significant extent, the promise of RMA technologies encouraged NATO's political leaders to impose limitations on the campaign, but those very limitations meant that other aspects of the RMA and of NATO's concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) were not tested at all.

Among the less publicized problems of the war for Kosovo was the interoperability of NATO air forces. Of all the European allies, France's contribution of deployed aircraft and total sorties flown was the largest—more than 100 aircraft in a total of 2,414 sorties. France's possession of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) permitted its pilots to participate in the strike phase of operations involving restrictive rules of engagement, prevailing weather conditions, and challenging terrain. France also contributed a larger number of support aircraft than other European allies for combat air patrol (CAP), electronic warfare (EW), airborne warning and control (AWAC), intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance missions (ISR), and aerial refueling.³⁷ The United Kingdom provided the second largest allied force, the Royal Air Force accounting for 1,008 strike missions. Because the RAF was supplied with PGMs it was able to offer a strike capacity similar to that of France. The RAF also flew CAP, AWAC, and ISR missions. However, the combined Anglo-French punch was limited by the fact that it lacked all-weather munitions capable of dealing with the adverse conditions that lasted for the duration of the campaign.³⁸

Italy was the third largest allied contributor overall. Its aircraft accounted for 1,081 sorties, but Italy's contribution did not include any traditional support aircraft. One of the great merits of the Italian effort was the fact that, like the German *Luftwaffe*, Italy's Tornado electronic and combat reconnaissance aircraft (ECRs) were equipped with HARM anti-radiation missiles and advanced electronic countermeasures, permitting them to play a role in suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) missions. German and Italian Tornados jointly accounted for 37 percent of all HARM shots taken during *Allied Force*. Proportional to its size, a remarkable contribution was made by the Royal Netherlands Airforce, which chalked up 1,252 sorties in strike and CAP roles. Additionally, Dutch aircraft were equipped with forward-looking infrared (FLIR) and were therefore able to undertake strike missions at night. Yet because these aircraft did not carry PGMs, their night capabilities were reduced as the rules of engagement became more restrictive.³⁹

Yet the collective effort of the European NATO states represented a supplementary contribution to the prosecution of *Allied Force*. The United States supplied more than 700 of the total 1,055 aircraft deployed and flew more than 29,000 sorties. The USAF provided fighters, bombers, ISR aircraft, SpecOps/Rescue aircraft, and intra-theater airlifters. The EA-6 Prowler accounted for most of the SEAD missions, providing stand-off jamming for allied sorties. American aircraft also delivered far and away the largest number of PGMs and all-weather weapons, ranging from JDAM, JSOW, the Paveway II and III also used by the British and French

airforces, Maverick AGM-130, to air- and sea-launched cruise missiles. This array of capabilities was ultimately crucial to the success of the air war, given that the restrictive rules of engagement and adverse weather conditions made precision bombing indispensable. The United States provided almost all of the aerial intelligence employed and selected virtually every target.

Commenting on the discrepancy between U.S. and European contributions to the air campaign, one study noted that the "capabilities gap" was both quantitative and qualitative, characterized by *asymmetry* on the one hand and *interoperability* problems on the other. There were particular problems with rapid and secure communications given that many European fighters lacked Have-Quick-type frequency-hopping UHF and KY-58-like radios for encrypted communications. American command and control aircraft were often required to transmit target and aircraft position data "in the clear," running the risk of giving away tactical intelligence to Serb forces. Neither was the STU-3 secure phone system common to U.S. forces available to the allies. At worst, classified communications had to be passed by hard copy. The absence of a common identification friend or foe system (IFF); a variable ability to detect which Serb SAM installations were tracking coalition aircraft; and the small number of non-U.S. aircraft capable of laser target identification all complicated the work of AWACs operators.⁴⁰

Possibly a more telling fact of NATO dependence on U.S. capabilities, however, is that some 70 percent of the American aircraft deployed for *Allied Force* were in a support role. The United States supplied over 90 percent of aerial refueling and virtually all of the tactical jamming for SEAD missions. Its C-17s and C-130s also furnished the bulk of airlift requirements. The C-160 Transall used by the European allies was perfectly capable but was not available in sufficient numbers to support a mission as extensive as *Allied Force* became. It is tempting to speculate that the transatlantic gap in support capabilities visible in Kosovo could well turn out to be more critical than any difference in combat firepower, because their role in *Allied Force* "reflects the growing importance of these assets in the types of operations NATO could face in the future."⁴¹ Indeed, they are assets central to the CJTF concept developed in the mid-1990s.

Both during and immediately after *Allied Force* much was made of the capabilities gap and the absence of European self-reliance in coping with a European crisis. General Naumann confessed in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee that "as a European, I am ashamed we have to ask for American help to deal with something as small as Kosovo."⁴² The defense press observed that the Balkan operation had reinforced both the idea that all future wars will be coalition wars and that interoperability with U.S. forces will be the key to coalition success. Yet the more NATO relied on high-tech systems, it went on, the more the alliance would depend on the nations willing to buy them. In the face of these facts, retired RAF Air Vice Marshall R. A. Mason noted that "we fear that we will end up as spear carriers to the United States" and "burden-sharing will become no more than a hollow shell."⁴³ This perception of the Kosovo experience was reinforced from the other side of the Atlantic, in statements from the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense concerning the

“visible antiquity” of European systems, and from Congress that the Europeans “are slipping one or two generations behind the USA.”⁴⁴

Post-Kosovo reports by the two most militarily capable European allies, France and the UK, focused on the capabilities gap. Not surprisingly, the French report was more concerned with closing the gap as much in the pursuit of greater European autonomy from the United States as in the name of enhanced European military effectiveness itself. The British report acknowledged European reliance on the United States and noted five areas of deficiency: precision all-weather strike; strategic lift; intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance; suppression of enemy air defense/electronic warfare; and air-to-air refueling. The British report was also less concerned with European autonomy than with responsible burden-sharing. Consistent with the 1998 *Strategic Defence Review* and its value-for-money spirit, it highlighted the tension between preferences and limitations. Where it cited “the alarming deficit in European capabilities for suppressing and destroying even relatively unsophisticated air defenses,” it recommended that Europe should “accept that its scope for action independent of the United States is very limited” or undertake to improve its capabilities “sufficiently to act independently.”⁴⁵ Under *Command, Control and Coordination* it dealt directly with European dependency on U.S. capabilities, stating that American dominance in NATO could be viewed either as a vehicle for Washington to push the Alliance in directions for which there is less than full consensus or as self-imposed constraint on American military might, enabling European views to carry more weight than they would otherwise. The report stated “we favor the latter view.”⁴⁶ Where the French report turned to the non-RMA dimension of the need for greater European autonomy, it called for the Eurocorps to be transformed into a projectable rapid reaction force, whose headquarters could command a multi-national force.

For all their differences over Europe’s security relationship with the United States, in other words, the reports jointly catalogued a trans-Atlantic capabilities gap stretching from the most exotic war-making hardware to the most traditional skills. German defense and security analysts agreed but drew additional attention to the systemic problem of European defense spending. “The situation would be hilarious if it weren’t so tragic,” observed Holger Mey of the Institute for Strategic Analysis, “We come out of the Washington and Cologne NATO and [European Union] meetings with strong statements of how Europe has learned its lesson from Kosovo, but the defense budget shows that we haven’t learned a thing.”⁴⁷ Far from providing a catalyst for greater European self-reliance, the prosecution of *Allied Force* was testimony to the remarkable and continuing dependence of a club of the wealthiest nations of Europe on the military capacity of the United States. One of the more thoughtful promoters of European unity, former Swedish Prime Minister and UN Special Envoy to the Balkans, Carl Bildt, observed that the United States is “as much a solo player as ever.”⁴⁸

Bildt’s statement was in diplomatic terms something of an exaggeration. The campaign took place, after all, against the backdrop of the Anglo-French Summit at Saint-Malô the previous year. The Chirac and Blair governments assumed a

more prominent diplomatic role at Rambouillet than had been the case in Bosnia, their respective foreign ministers, Hubert Védrine and Robin Cook, working well together despite the fact that Védrine held Cook’s position to be too anti-Serb.⁴⁹ The reluctance of the Clinton administration to consider the use of American ground troops prior to a settlement gave a sense of urgency to the Anglo-French initiative.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Europeans together exerted a political influence on the conduct of *Allied Force* that was, on occasion, in excess of their military contribution—an influence occasionally resented by a U.S. military shouldering the lion’s share of the load. Along with the United States, lastly, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy were leading participants in the postwar occupation force for Kosovo (KFOR).⁵¹ The higher European diplomatic profile before, during, and after the campaign in Kosovo, however, did little to mitigate the fact that it would not have taken place at all without U.S. leadership and precision firepower.

That being the case, the Clinton administration’s reception of the European effort to narrow the capabilities gap was not always consistent with Washington’s recurrent concerns about burden-sharing. As the Clinton administration drew to a close, Defense Secretary William Cohen engaged in some frank exchanges with European allies about the Anglo-French initiative for a European defense force. Cohen’s remarks included the blunt warning that a European rapid reaction force could make NATO a “relic of the past.”⁵² In light of the Kosovo experience, it was an odd and somewhat contradictory statement. If its intention was to caution London that a new partnership with France could undermine the “special relationship,” it came from an administration that rejected Prime Minister Blair’s entreaties for ground war and opted to achieve its military goals with air power alone. It suggested that the United States wanted more defense spending from European governments but not the kind of European self-reliance that would inevitably involve a measure of independence. It was, in effect, a non-policy and at odds with a long-held American conviction that European integration and the Atlantic Alliance were entirely compatible. It is worth recalling that in mid-1950s the Eisenhower administration had considered the NATO solution to European security in some respects second-best to that of a European Defense Community. Eisenhower would have been near euphoric at the prospect of an integrated and effective European force.⁵³

A DECADE’S DIVIDEND

This leaves aside the issue as to whether it was prudent in the first place to intervene in a conflict within a sovereign state and in a fashion that essentially interrupted rather than resolved a domestic power struggle.⁵⁴ As for NATO’s present role in the former Yugoslavia such considerations are academic; the Alliance crossed a threshold in Kosovo that it is by no means obliged to cross elsewhere, but it cannot withdraw prematurely from the role of political trusteeship it has taken on in increasing increments since the failure of the UN and the EU in the secessionist crises of the early 1990s. By the end of the decade the anticipation of an American

presidential election served to enliven debate on the scorecard of the post-Cold War era. Humanitarian intervention in general and the Balkan experience in particular prompted critics of the Clinton administration to charge that it had "lurched prematurely toward the mirage of political globalization, conflating American leadership with multilateralism, committing the United States to humanitarian activism ambitious in aims but limited in action."⁵⁵ Even the skeptics, nonetheless, noted that the United States had taken on responsibilities in the Balkans that it could not responsibly abandon. They insisted with some justification that a Europe whose unity was worth anything really *ought* to be able to take over entirely while conceding that its governments would likely "scream bloody murder" if actually challenged to do so.⁵⁶

At the end of the 1990s, in other words, the asymmetry in military capacity and the attendant issue of a more just burden-sharing remained a central issue for the expanding Atlantic community. By most measures it had been an extraordinarily successful decade, beginning with German reunification and moving on to the first round of eastern enlargement. It had also involved the formal embrace of an entirely new strategic perspective and its application, however imperfect, to regional crisis-management. In the mid-1990s the Alliance sought to integrate Russia, to the extent that this was possible, rather than to ostracize it. But just as the observation that NATO exhibited a reluctance to lead humanitarian missions and preferred "to act as a subcontractor for the military tasks assigned to it by the UN Security Council" turned out to be premature and was refuted by *Allied Force*, so too did the intervention in Kosovo demonstrate that relations with Moscow were of secondary importance to the consolidation of NATO's position in the Balkans.⁵⁷ The Alliance sought neither to alienate nor to appease Moscow. Its members were highly critical of Russia's suppression of revolt in its southern province of Chechnya in 1994; when Russia attacked again in 1999 their response was more muted, but concern over Moscow's vocal objection to *Allied Force* was, with few exceptions, nonexistent.

In the United States a certain fatigue with the role of world leadership was unmistakable. On the political left, the globalization of the international economy came under assault as a plot to exploit Third World labor, export jobs, and subvert environmental protection. After eight years in power, support for the Clinton agenda was eroding in the Democratic camp. On the right, the thematic thrust of the Republican presidential aspirant George W. Bush began to emerge in late 1999. In foreign policy it fastened upon the "Wilsonian overreaching" of the Clinton administration, citing Haiti as an improper use of American military power and pondering the prospects of withdrawing U.S. forces from Kosovo. The best evidence that NATO was headed for troubled waters came in a December meeting of defense ministers in Brussels, where Secretary Cohen again impressed on European governments the need for increased defense spending. It also appeared in the vain attempt by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to get NATO Allies to take seriously the need to amend the 1972 ABM Treaty to permit the creation of a limited ballistic missile defense in response to the proliferation of missile technology

in the Third World. President Chirac rejected any questioning of the ABM that might upset "strategic equilibria" and trigger a new arms race.⁵⁸ In retrospect it might have been prudent to welcome, differences notwithstanding, the outgoing administration's attention to Atlantic affairs. In the camp of presidential candidate Bush, the Alliance hardly figured at all.

NOTES

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4. Charles W. Kegley, Jr., "International Peacemaking and Peacekeeping: The Morality of Multinational Measures," *Ethics & International Affairs* 10 (1996): 25–26.
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7. Kegley, "International Peacemaking and Peacekeeping," 44.
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9. Kegley, "International Peacemaking and Peacekeeping," 35.
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12. *Ibid.*, 130–131; Tony Smith, "Morality and the Use of Force in a Unipolar World: The Wilsonian Moment?" *Ethics & International Affairs* 14 (2000): 11–22.
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14. Michael Ignatieff, "The Virtual Commander," *New Yorker*, August 2, 1999, 36. From the same author, see *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), 6.
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19. NATO Press Release (1999) 041, 24 March 1999.
20. Philip Towle, Cambridge University, "NATO's Strategic Bombardment Campaign against Serbia in 1999," paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Committee on Atlantic Studies, American University of Paris, October 15–17, 1999, 3.
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23. *Financial Times*, March 30, 1999, 2.
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29. Smith, "Morality and the Use of Force in a Unipolar World," 22.
30. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 124, 423–426.
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