

NATO and the Former Yugoslavia: Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance

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NATO and the Former Yugoslavia: Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance¹

by *Joyce P. Kaufman*

INTRODUCTION

On 9 June 1999, an agreement was signed that ended eleven weeks of NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and which was to bring peace to the region, at least for now. This is the latest in a series of agreements negotiated since October 1998 and, with NATO and UN support, one that might hold. However, ensuring that peace ultimately will require the deployment of approximately 55,000 troops, bringing to more than 80,000 the number of NATO troops in the Balkans.²

The decision to bomb Yugoslavia in March 1999 was made just as the alliance was preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary by admitting new members, and was concurrent with the release of the 1999 "Alliance's Strategic Concept." Building on the Strategic Concept agreed upon in Rome in 1991, the 1999 version reinforces the notion that, if it is to endure as a vital organization, NATO must be prepared to address and respond to a new range of threats and contribute to "peace and stability" in the region, as well as continue its primary mission of the defense of its members as outlined in Article 5 of the NATO Charter.³ Despite the outline of a strategic concept that was designed in 1991 to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War world, the outbreak of conflict in the former Yugoslavia -- first in Croatia, then Bosnia-Herzegovina and most recently Kosovo -- provided a clear and direct challenge to those alliance goals.

As of July 1999, in the wake of the peace agreement, NATO was celebrating the fact that in Kosovo the alliance acted decisively. In addition, despite disagreements about the wisdom of the bombings, once decisions were made the unanimous conclusion seems to be that alliance cohesion was maintained.⁴ However, as the events in the former Yugoslavia illustrate, as NATO celebrated its 50th anniversary this April and now looks toward its future, it also needs to reexamine its post-Cold War role. While the discussion of the future of the alliance after the Cold War has been part of ongoing NATO ministerial summits, the alliance seems to have made little progress in staking out a new role for itself in a changing security environment. If NATO is to survive and even thrive, it is incumbent upon the organization to review the lessons of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and to draw some conclusions about what they mean for the alliance's future.

I will argue here that in many ways the decision-making and divisions within the alliance surrounding what to do, first about Bosnia and then about the situation in Kosovo, are indicative of the problems that NATO has been facing since the end of the Cold War. Lack of a clear mission and of leadership have contributed to drift, rather than direction, in spite of articulation of a "Strategic Concept." Taking this point one step further, this article will argue that the conflicts in Bosnia and more recently in Kosovo point out NATO's inability to deal with conflicts of this type at a time when ethnic and religious conflicts are among those the alliance is most likely to confront into the twenty-first

century. It also asserts that the pattern observed in Kosovo and before that in Bosnia, characterized by the threat of force but with little activity that would make that threat credible, is part of a pattern that was established as early as 1992 when, for political reasons, the leaders of the NATO nations chose not to use force until later in that conflict as well. The lesson here is that politics drives the military/security aspects of the alliance.

A Brief History of the Origins of the Conflicts in Yugoslavia

It is important to put the situation in Kosovo, and NATO's hesitancy to address that conflict, into the context of the conflicts that have racked the country of Yugoslavia for almost a decade. When Josef Tito died in 1980, the end of the country of Yugoslavia became inevitable. The country had been artificially created in 1918 at the end of the First World War, and it joined a number of independent states, including Serbia and Montenegro, with parts of the old Habsburg and Ottoman empires. Under Tito's leadership at the end of World War II, Yugoslavia was excluded from the Soviet eastern bloc and it became an important element in the West's policy of containment of the Soviet Union. For the most part, careful political maneuvering by Tito ensured that Yugoslavia would survive amidst the uncertainty of the Cold War world. The country's openness to economic relations with the primary actors in the Cold War-world gave the country access to economic aid and capital goods and markets in a way that was not available to most of the countries of the Eastern bloc. Tito's death, however, also illustrated many of the weaknesses of the system that he had created.

The country of Yugoslavia was made up of six republics, each of which -- theoretically -- recognized nations as historical-territorial communities.⁵ Hence, members of each of those republics had rights as ethnic peoples defined by a common language, religion and political consciousness. What remained unclear was the relationship between the rights of the individual republics and the powers of the federal or central government of Yugoslavia. While Tito was in power, the central government had precedence over the individual republics; with his death, however, the loose federal system was not strong enough to curtail the growing power of the republics. A break-up of the country of Yugoslavia into independent nations made up of each of the republics was the inevitable result.

In addition, changes in the international system conspired against the country of Yugoslavia. During the 1980s Yugoslavia was accumulating foreign debt which was exacerbated by world-wide economic recession. By the mid-1980s, the country was in economic depression which only grew worse as the Cold War ended and Yugoslavia no longer had the critical political or strategic role to play that it had during the Cold War. Political uncertainty accompanied the economic instability, and the republics became more assertive in defining policies that would help them, often at the expense of what had been the country of Yugoslavia.

Many argue that the demise of Yugoslavia, and the outbreak of conflict that inevitably followed, can be attributed to the rise of nationalist leaders who played upon the ethnic divisions, especially in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶ Although the process

actually started earlier, (specifically, with the election of Slobodan Milosevic as President of Serbia in 1987), by 1991, the path was set not only for the creation of the independent republics that would replace Yugoslavia, but, more important, for armed violence and conflict. It was in that same year that NATO drafted and was adopting its strategic concept for the alliance in the post-Cold War period; yet, the alliance was unprepared for the conflicts in Yugoslavia that would follow.

War in Croatia, 1991-92: A Prelude to Further Conflict

In 1990, Croatia was still a member of the Yugoslav federation. Tensions were growing throughout that year, especially following the election of radical nationalist Franjo Tudjman to the presidency in April. In December, the constitution was changed so that Serb Croats were no longer recognized as Croatia's "constituent nation," but became instead the "national minority."⁷ What is noteworthy about this change is that what followed was the systematic discrimination of Serb Croats, contributing further to Milosevic's campaign of Serb nationalism and to his warning that unless measures were taken, Serbs could never feel safe again.

In May 1991, in violation of an existing agreement, two Croatian policemen entered the town of Borovo Selo, a Serb-held town in Croatia, and were arrested. Croatian authorities then sent 20 more policemen to free them, followed by 150 reinforcements. This led to a gun battle which left 17 dead. The incident can be seen as the start of the war in Croatia.⁸ One month later, on 25 June 1991, the parliament of Croatia declared the republic's independence and full sovereignty, and set in motion the procedures for ending its union with the Yugoslav federation.

Fighting followed for the next six months. From August through November 1991, the siege and shelling of the town of Vukovar by Serb forces, accompanied by the shelling of Dubrovnik in October 1991 both attracted significant publicity and attention and contributed to an international movement to support recognition of Croatia's independence.⁹ The publicity given to the Serb brutality, especially in the cases noted above, eclipsed the systematic brutality on the part of the Croats against the Serbs.

Under UN auspices, in November 1991, American Cyrus Vance and British Lord Peter Carrington negotiated a cease-fire that was finalized in January 1992. Following the agreement, 14,000 UN peacekeepers were deployed to Croatia. For the most part, they were able to contain the further outbreak of violence in Croatia, although there were a number of notable, and deadly, lapses primarily over the status of the Krajina until a new ceasefire was negotiated in March 1994. However, the growing conflict situation in the neighboring republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was far more complex than Croatia, and proved to be more difficult to resolve as well as directly threatening to NATO, which was unprepared for the conflict. At this time, it was the United Nations, rather than NATO, that was seen as responsible for keeping the peace in the region despite the fact that NATO's 1991 Strategic Concept Paper suggested that the alliance had to be prepared for the risks posed by "ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes" in the future.¹⁰

War in Bosnia: 1992-95

Up through the Tito years, Bosnia had been an area in which ethnic Serbs and Muslims generally co-existed in peace. In fact, intermarriage was not uncommon and children grew up playing together. The conflict that followed Tito's death can be seen as rooted in a decade of economic decline and in the failure to sustain a central or federal government. Rather than loyalty to the country of Yugoslavia, growing nationalist feelings led to ethnic loyalties instead. Fueled by nationalist leaders like Slobodan Milosevic, the movement toward Serbian nationalism directed those feelings against the Muslim members of the community and resulted in armed conflict as one group turned on another. According to authors Jasminka Udovicki and Ejub Stitkovac: "The Croatian war fed the ambitions of both Serbian and Croatian nationalist extremism, and it had the overwhelming effect of silencing non-nationalist forces that existed before the summer of 1991 in both states."¹¹ This, in turn, directly contributed to the outbreak of armed conflict in Bosnia.

By late 1991, Bosnia was marching toward war, a process that was accelerated in December 1991 when European Community (EC) countries, starting with Germany, recognized the republics of Croatia and Slovenia, and offered recognition to Bosnia and Macedonia. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, seeing the proverbial handwriting on the wall, was trying to avert impending disaster. He requested, and got, EC monitors in Bosnia; he also asked for, but did not get, UN peacekeepers there.¹² As Izetbegovic was trying desperately to hold his country together, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic was fueling nationalist sentiments among the Bosnian Serbs. In January 1992, Bosnian Serb representatives abandoned the parliament with the declaration that the Bosnian government no longer represented them, and they then declared their autonomy. By that time, the Bosnian Serbs had organized armed units in every Serbian village and town in Bosnia.¹³

Fighting actually began in the city of Mostar late in 1991. However, because of its location, which intersected Serbian and Croatian interests in southern Bosnia, and as the largest town in Hercegovina with a population which was 35 percent Muslim, 34 percent Croatian and 19 percent Serbian, it became one of the first battlegrounds of the war in Bosnia.¹⁴ In December, Mostar's municipal government requested that the city be demilitarized. In March 1992, violence erupted at a Serbian wedding party in the predominantly Muslim section of Sarajevo.¹⁵ Although this event proved to be an isolated incident, the relentless shelling of Sarajevo that would continue for months started just a few months later. Expulsion of Muslims from the self-proclaimed Serb capital of Banja Luka began as early as April 1992. According to former US Ambassador Warren Zimmerman, "The pattern of Serbian atrocities that continued throughout the war was set in those first few days."¹⁶ And, one could now argue, this pattern of atrocities and extreme human rights abuses and violations continued in Kosovo as well.

As the conflict in Bosnia continued to escalate, the NATO allies agreed that something had to be done, that the international community could not continue to stand idly by as the violence escalated. However, in 1992 for a host of political reasons, no NATO leader

was then ready to press for the use of force. In December 1991, the European leaders had signed the Maastricht Treaty that was envisioned to move Europe forward on the path to political and economic union. In fact, the treaty proposed that EC members would join together in a political and economic union, adopt a single common currency, share the same set of policies on social and domestic issues, and have a common foreign and defense policy. European priorities at that time were focused on ratification of the treaty and moving forward on the path toward union.¹⁷ While the situation in Bosnia was a concern, the Europeans were looking for alternative ways to address it; Europe was not ready to go to war to deal with it.

Hence, as early as 1992 attitudes toward Yugoslavia and what to do about the growing crisis deeply divided the NATO countries in Western Europe and the United States, as well as the European countries themselves, a situation clearly exacerbated by domestic political concerns. According to Maynard Glitman, ". . . the Yugoslav crisis arose as the Cold War came to an end and when Western Europeans, optimistically envisaging the emergence of a powerful European Union (EU), were eager to demonstrate their ability to take on a major political-security relationship in Southern Europe."¹⁸ Christopher Bennett, similarly, notes that: "International attitudes to the war in Yugoslavia were based not on an analysis and understanding of Yugoslav affairs but on domestic political considerations of each country's selective experience of conflict." He then goes on to explain how these attitudes were manifested in each country's policies toward Yugoslavia which, in turn, resulted in a division within the European Community regarding what course to pursue. "As fighting escalated, a rift emerged . . . between countries like Germany, which believed the way to end the war was to stand up to Serbia, and those like Britain, which preferred to stay out of the conflict and consider all sides equally guilty, irrespective of evidence to the contrary."¹⁹

On the other side of the Atlantic, as Glitman goes on to say, "The US leadership, anxious to demonstrate domestically that the US would not have to continue shouldering most of the burden of the post-Cold War era, was equally concerned that the Europeans should accept the task of stabilising Yugoslavia."²⁰ Clearly, the Bush administration, facing a presidential election, was concerned that the Europeans accept the task of stabilizing Yugoslavia rather than having it fall to the United States. One result of these conflicting domestic political concerns on both sides of the Atlantic was that no country wanted to or emerged to take a leadership role to deal with the growing crisis, either individually or within NATO. However, another result of the differing priorities on the two sides of the Atlantic was the emergence of rifts within the alliance that would not only make this situation difficult to deal with over time, but that would haunt the ways in which NATO responded to the subsequent conflict in Kosovo.

This also suggests that the pattern of division within and among members of the alliance regarding how to proceed in response to the situation in Bosnia was set relatively early in the conflict. This same pattern, governed by the need to respond to domestic political priorities and the subsequent inability to act, contributed initially to the escalation of the conflict in Kosovo and to NATO's inability to respond to that conflict as well.

By spring 1992, Serb forces in Bosnia had appropriated many of the same tactics used earlier in Croatia: shelling cities and civilians. Most notable was the relentless shelling of the city of Sarajevo, which became the focus for much of the media attention later in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the spring and summer of 1992, the press continuously published reports of the brutality of the conflict, including atrocities surrounding the policy of "ethnic cleansing" non-Serbs, especially Muslims. The public outcry that resulted pressured British Prime Minister John Major, who was then sitting as chair of the EC, to organize an international conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina in conjunction with the UN.

A joint EC-UN conference was held in London in August 1992. It created a War Crimes Commission to investigate the reports of ethnic cleansing and other atrocities. Major was also able to exact pledges from the Serb leaders to lift the sieges of the Bosnian towns and cities and to place their heavy weaponry under UN supervision. A number of other provisions were enacted, including the creation of a no-fly zone over Bosnia, although there were no provisions for enforcing this. However, within one month after the conference ended, the Bosnian Serb forces again were shelling Sarajevo and other population centers in direct violation of the commitments made in London. It remained clear that nothing would change without the credible threat of force. However, for political reasons, the United States and the European allies remained resistant to the use of force.[21](#)

The United Nations became the international organization that was taking on primary responsibility for Bosnia. UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) were deployed to Bosnia specifically to protect aid convoys and relief work undertaken by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). But their military mandate was limited to self-defense, despite the fact that the UN had issued a call to states acting nationally or in regional organizations to "take all measures necessary" to ensure the delivery of aid. Clearly, UNPROFOR was insufficient to the challenges it would confront in Bosnia. According to Pauline Neville-Jones, "The failure of UNPROFOR had partly to do with a widening mismatch between mission and capability, but also partly to do with serious underlying transatlantic disagreements about the direction of policy."[22](#)

By the end of 1992, as the siege of the city of Sarajevo by the Serb forces continued, pressure increased on UNPROFOR to open the Sarajevo airport for humanitarian aid flights as well as to meet its mandate of protecting UNHCR convoys with infantry battalions in various sectors of the republic under peacekeeping rules of engagement. Also added was a monitoring role of airfields (in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the republic of Yugoslavia) to implement the "no fly zone," and to observe violations of the arms embargo and economic sanctions.[23](#) To assist UNPROFOR in its enhanced mandate, NATO authorized air assets to be used to monitor violations, although without any authority to intervene. This was the first deployment of NATO forces in Bosnia, and the mission was limited in both scope and duration.

Meanwhile, Lord David Owen and Cyrus Vance continued to work toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict. The Vance-Owen Plan was issued in Geneva in January 1993.

The plan insisted that refugees be allowed to return to their homes throughout Bosnia, and it contained a provision that the cantons corresponding to Serb-held areas would not be connected on a map in such a way as to make it easy for them to seek to join Serbia as a single territorial block.²⁴ However, the reality was that the Serb areas were already joined, and the Serb military leaders would not relinquish those ties. In addition, as oversight for the return of the refugees was placed in control of the cantons, this provision, too, proved impossible to enforce.

On 22 May 1993, the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Spain, Russia and the United States met in Washington to discuss the situation. Any thought of air strikes was dropped at that time, and the idea of enforcing the Vance-Owen Plan was abandoned. In its place, the foreign ministers decided that Bosnia's remaining two million Muslims would be allowed to congregate in a number of "safe areas," where they would be guarded by UN troops who were only allowed to use force if they, and not their Muslim charges, came under attack. This plan was rejected by President Izetbegovic, who had not even been consulted. What followed was a series of subsequent plans, each based on some way to carve up Bosnia. Meanwhile, fighting continued throughout 1993.

In February 1994, there was a significant change in policy in response to the Sarajevo market massacre in which 68 civilians were killed by a single mortar shell. This event provoked great public outcry and finally provided the political incentive to take action. Pushed by the United States and France, NATO declared an "exclusion zone" for heavy weaponry around Sarajevo and warned the Serb commanders that if their forces were not withdrawn they would be subject to NATO air attacks. At the end of February 1994, in one of the first of the NATO-authorized actions, US jets under NATO command shot down four warplanes in breach of the UN-imposed no-fly zone. The Serb forces, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, complied and the heavy bombardment of Sarajevo ended.²⁵ But the fighting throughout Bosnia continued.

In December 1994, as the situation in Bosnia continued to deteriorate, former US President Jimmy Carter tried to broker a truce that would be of limited (four months) duration. If successful, the goal was to use this ceasefire as the first step toward formal peace talks, which were scheduled to begin early in 1995 under the auspices of a five-nation "contact group." This group, which consisted of the United States, France, Britain, Germany and Russia (and later Italy),²⁶ met into 1995 but were unable to mediate a ceasefire.

Through April and May 1995, the fighting intensified in many parts of Bosnia. In mid-May, Sarajevo received one of the heaviest artillery bombardments since the start of the war. At that time, a request by NATO commanders for permission to launch air strikes against Serb artillery positions was turned down by the UN. On 25 May, however, the UN finally granted permission to NATO to respond to those attacks with air strikes. "Two ammunition supply bunkers in the hills near Pale were destroyed by NATO jets on the 25th, and another six on the following day."²⁷

In response to the NATO actions, Serb General Mladic initiated a series of actions, which included firing a rocket into the "safe area" of Tuzla killing 71 people, and then taking as hostages more than 360 UN troops stationed throughout Bosnia.²⁸ Based on the situation to date, he initiated these actions undoubtedly in the belief that there would be no military response. His assumption, however, proved to be incorrect. Those latest acts of aggression prompted first British and French peacekeeping forces to alter their tactics from "peacekeeping" to the more aggressive acts of "peace-enforcement." These actions were then followed by the creation and introduction of the British-French Rapid Reaction Forces into Bosnia in July 1995. On 11 July, in response to the Serb attack on the UN "safe area" of Srebrenica, NATO planes were authorized to take limited action, and finally, at the end of August, they were authorized to engage in almost continuous bombing raids. After more than 3,000 sorties which eliminated Mladic's air defenses and destroyed large quantities of ammunition, Mladic withdrew most of his weaponry from Sarajevo.²⁹

As the military situation in Bosnia changed with aggressive NATO action, so did the climate for negotiations. After the years of fighting, a status quo seemed to emerge. At that point it seemed unlikely that any additional escalation in the conflict on any side would result in the gain of much ground. Hence, the time was ripe for a negotiated settlement.

Dayton, IFOR, and SFOR

Under US leadership, early in fall 1995 negotiations started in Dayton, Ohio that would finally bring the conflict in Bosnia to a halt. The negotiations themselves involved eight negotiating teams, three from the combatants and five representing members of the contact group. The agenda was defined and the sessions run by US negotiator Richard Holbrooke. Agreement was reached on 21 November 1995 with the Bosnian peace agreement signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. This brought an end to more than three years of fighting in Bosnia.

The lessons of the UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia suggested that, if the peace were to be maintained and the terms of the Dayton Agreement implemented, a more aggressive force needed to be deployed. As the negotiations were underway, President Clinton announced his decision to send US ground troops into Bosnia to become the backbone of the force charged with implementing the agreement. The NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) would be comprised of troops from the various NATO nations joined, for the first time, by Russian soldiers as well.

The Implementation Force, which was deployed effective 20 December 1995 within one week after the Dayton Agreement was signed, would consist of 20,000 American troops, with Britain, France and other countries sending another 43,000 between them. Germany, in a departure from established policy, agreed to send 4,000 troops for support work in Croatia, and Russia (in its role as a member of the Partnership for Peace Program), agreed to deploy 2,500 troops. The goal was for the IFOR troops to be in place in the

period immediately following the signing of the Dayton agreement to enforce its implementation, and then to withdraw, hopefully, by the end of 1996.

As scheduled, early in 1997 the IFOR troops in Bosnia were replaced by a smaller (about 30,000 troops) Stabilization Force (SFOR). The IFOR/SFOR mission included establishing military stability by separating the warring parties, mapping minefields, and destroying the heavy weapons that remained in the area, all of which were accomplished by the end of 1997. Under the watchful eye of the Western countries, elections were held as scheduled in November 1997 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the Republika Srpska (RS), the Serb part of the new federation, Biljana Plavsic seemed secure in her position as duly-elected President and the new Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, managed to create a cabinet which included 18 Muslims. In breaking from Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and cooperating with the West in defining and implementing the Dayton Agreement, Plavsic's administration offered the West an optimistic signal regarding the future of Bosnia. With Western funding and support, she began the difficult task of "cleaning up" the RS. In addition, Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian Serbs and an indicted war criminal, seemed to have retreated and the situation in Bosnia appeared to be returning to some semblance of normalcy. This optimistic situation was short-lived, however. Plavsic was defeated in elections held in September 1998, and was replaced by Nikola Poplasen, an ultra-nationalist Serb. However, his party took only 83 seats in the parliament, well under the majority needed to form a government. The Western countries threatened to withdraw economic aid unless a moderate was selected to lead the Bosnian government; the preference was for Milorad Dodik to remain as Prime Minister, using the promise of continued economic aid as the "carrot," but also the threat that any Bosnian leader who does not comply with the Dayton Agreement will be punished aggressively. Carlos Westendorp, the top civilian international official in Bosnia, was also given additional authority to remove Bosnian leaders from political posts if they obstructed the accord, a power he exercised shortly thereafter.

In December 1998, the "donor nations" met in Madrid and released a detailed plan for economic changes in Bosnia specifically to create jobs and ways to enhance financial competition without relying on foreign aid. Included is a two-year timetable for broad changes that, according to Westendorp, "should make the peace irreversible."³⁰ Milorad Dodik claimed that the atmosphere within Bosnia had become more cooperative, and he praised Westendorp's authority to "impose a solution when a mutual accord cannot be found."³¹ The main dissenting voice was that of Nikola Poplasen, who said that Westendorp was becoming too powerful. Westendorp removed him from power in March 1999.³²

Although there are plans to draw down the number of troops that remain stationed in Bosnia, at this point it appears to be clear that peace will not be sustained and the country of Bosnia rebuilt unless some NATO troops remain stationed in the area. In that regard, NATO forces have had to take on a peace-keeping mission, albeit without broader discussion about that role as it fits within NATO's mission in the post-Cold War world. Rather, NATO forces were deployed in response to the situation.

The Lessons of Bosnia, Implications for Kosovo

The lessons of Bosnia, if learned, can be an effective guide to understanding the situation in Kosovo and what NATO could have done to address the conflict before it escalated. Susan Woodward warns that: "Western governments failed in the case of Yugoslavia, but not only that: they also revealed little capacity for learning. Their actions over the period 1991-96 repeated over and over the same approach, same thinking, and same mistakes."³³ It might be all too easy to make the same pattern -- and same mistakes -- regarding Kosovo.

In the case of Bosnia, it is important to note that questions about what to do about the growing crisis deeply divided the NATO countries in Western Europe and the United States, as well as the European countries themselves. The situation was exacerbated as domestic political concerns in each case affected the policy options and decisions made. Inherent in the different perspectives was the question of alliance leadership as well. Before NATO could or would act, one country would have to move forward with a proposal for action. Traditionally, that country had been the United States which, for domestic political reasons, was unwilling to do so at that time. The political reality was such that the countries on both sides of the Atlantic were dealing with different political concerns which similarly affected their policies regarding the conflict in Bosnia, and the course of action to pursue. One result of these differing perspectives was that no country wanted to or emerged to take the leadership role, and so little was done to actively intervene in the growing crisis. However, another result of the difference in perspective on both sides of the Atlantic, was the emergence of rifts within the alliance that would make the situation increasingly difficult to deal with over time and which would emerge, and even grow, when NATO had to deal with the situation in Kosovo.

This notion of the impact of domestic politics and history is made by Michael Mandelbaum who seeks to explain NATO's reluctance to enter the conflict and the reasons for the deep divisions within the alliance that emerged because of Bosnia. Mandelbaum claims that: "NATO's members came to the conflicts in Yugoslavia with different sympathies which had their roots in history and domestic politics. . . . These different sympathies inevitably led to different interpretations of the conflict."³⁴ Those, then, resulted in very different assumptions and expectations about what could and should be done about the conflict, and by whom.

The result of these differences was that both NATO, as a primarily European military alliance, and the EC/EU, the organization working toward political and economic union in Europe, proved unwilling to interfere in any way to limit the growing conflict. Furthermore, this inability to act raised fundamental questions about the two organizations. For the EU, the crisis in Yugoslavia was the first major test of an organization seeking a means to create unified political and defense policies for the nations of Western Europe; for NATO, the conflict in Bosnia and how to deal with it was a challenge not only to alliance unity, but also regarding the role that the alliance should play in the post-Cold War world.

With the end of the conflict in Bosnia, NATO seemed like an alliance that could finally turn its attention to other matters, most important among them, what role(s) and mission(s) it should expect and be prepared for in the future. NATO's highest priority had been to enlarge the alliance to include new members from Central and Eastern Europe. From 1993 on, as the war in Bosnia was raging, NATO was moving forward with its enlargement plans. Three new members from the former Warsaw Pact entered the alliance in March 1999 in its first major step toward enlargement since the Cold War ended, yet, the question of what NATO should be into the twenty-first century remained unresolved. In the meantime, the conflict in Kosovo emerged to challenge NATO anew.

A Brief History of Kosovo Province: 1945 to the Present[35](#)

Kosovo is a region with a rich history for the Serbs that explains, in part, the Serb commitment to retaining it. To understand the Serb position today requires going back 600 years to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the fall of Kosovo to the Ottoman Empire. While many of the details surrounding the battle are unclear, it is known that the fighting was intense with heavy losses on both sides. Over time, a mythology grew up around this battle which became especially important for the Serbs later on.[36](#)

Until the last hundred years, many of the battles that were fought in Kosovo united Serbs and Albanians against a common enemy. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the dividing lines that would lead to the most recent conflict in the region were drawn. In November 1912, Serbian and Montenegrin forces invaded Kosovo. Simultaneous with that invasion, an independent Albania was declared, which helped foster a nationalist movement in Kosovo. From the Albanian perspective, the imposition of Serbian-Montenegrin rule was part of a history of colonial conquest; from the Serb perspective, however, this represented "the ultimate example of a war of liberation to release a captive population (the Serbs of Kosovo) from an alien imperial power (Turkey)."[37](#) But the result was that ". . . the policies imposed from above [against the Albanians in Kosovo] by the Serbian and Montenegrin governments from the first moment of their conquest in 1912 . . . created systematic hostility and hatred on a scale that the region had never seen before."[38](#)

But Noel Malcolm also reminds us that the Serbs perceive this series of events quite differently. "From the Serbian point of view, however, what happened in 1912 was to be understood according to a different pattern of ideas: it was the ultimate example of a war of liberation to release a captive population (the Serbs of Kosovo) from an alien imperial power (Turkey)."[39](#) And, in many ways, each of these interpretations can be seen as true. However, the Serb government sought to codify its version and make it the dominant and accepted one.

Kosovo lies in the southern part of Serbia, bordering both Macedonia and Montenegro.[40](#) Albania borders Kosovo on the west. It is an area that is relatively homogeneous ethnically; 90 percent of the population is ethnic Albanian and heavily Muslim, although some are Catholic or Orthodox. Despite attempts at various points to increase the number of Serbs in Kosovo, the percentage of the Serb population has remained at about 10

percent.⁴¹ By the late 1970s, Kosovo was also the poorest part of Yugoslavia due to both mismanagement and neglect. By 1981, the unemployment level in Kosovo was the highest in the country with a significant ethnic imbalance in place among those who were employed: "Serbs and Montenegrins, who formed 15 percent of the population, [were] holding 30 percent of these jobs," i.e., in the state-run enterprises.⁴²

Politically, Kosovo was also a conflict waiting to explode. Yet, despite the history, NATO was unprepared for the conflict when it did finally break out. In 1945, at the end of World War II, there were discussions among senior Communist leaders in Yugoslavia about which of the federal units Kosovo should be part of: Montenegro, Macedonia or Serbia. At that time, one of Tito's senior advisors noted that "The best solution would be if Kosovo were to be united with Albania, but because neither foreign nor domestic factors favour this, it must remain a compact province within the framework of Serbia."⁴³ In September 1945, the People's Assembly of Serbia passed a law establishing the "Autonomous Region of Kosovo-Metohija," and declared that it was a "constituent part of Serbia." In January 1946, the Communist-dominated assembly passed a new constitution which confirmed the federal arrangements including the existence of two autonomous units in Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina. One year later, Serbia issued its own constitution which gave "autonomous" Kosovo the right to direct its own economic and cultural developments, prepare its own budget, assure the protection of its citizens, etc. These autonomous powers were "secured by the constitution of the People's Republic of Serbia, in agreement with the constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia."⁴⁴

The Yugoslav constitution of 1963 changed the relationship of Kosovo to Serbia and Yugoslavia once again. This constitution stated that any of the republics could form autonomous provinces, and that the autonomous provinces of Serbia, including Kosovo, were created by the Serbian Assembly. In effect, what the constitution did was abrogate responsibility for the autonomous provinces at the federal level and place the responsibility with the republics. Hence, the status of Kosovo became a function of the internal arrangements of Serbia.

The next change came in 1966 when a movement toward decentralization throughout Yugoslavia altered the status of the autonomous provinces. In 1967, Tito made his first visit to Kosovo in 16 years and publicly criticized what he saw there including the obvious preferences given to the Serbs, and the discrimination against the Albanians. This was followed in 1968 by the redefinition of the autonomous provinces to become "socio-political communities," at which point they were given the right to "carry out all tasks of a republic apart from those tasks which were of concern to the republic of Serbia as a whole."⁴⁵ With that, Kosovo was granted the status of a legal entity at the federal level, with the potential to exercise any and all powers of a republic within Yugoslavia. The next logical step appeared to be the formal creation of the republic of Kosovo.

By the creation of the Yugoslav constitution of 1974, the one that would remain in place until the final break-up of the country, although technically remaining part of Serbia the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina were granted status roughly equal to the

republics, including having their own direct representation in the main federal Yugoslav bodies. The 1974 constitution also granted the autonomous provinces the right to issue their own constitutions.

According to Noel Malcolm, there were two fundamental reasons, one theoretical and one practical, why the autonomous provinces did not subsequently become republics. The theoretical objection was tied to the belief that nationalities are not equal to nations, and therefore cannot hold sovereign rights. But it was the practical political considerations that were the primary factors behind denying republican status to Kosovo. The fear was that a Kosovo Republic ultimately would secede from Yugoslavia and annex itself to Albania.⁴⁶ In addition, it was also clear that granting republic status would have caused political resentment in Serbia. Even if republic status had been granted, it is unclear whether Kosovo would have wanted to become part of Albania, which at that time was suffering from miserable economic conditions as well, and where religion was being formally and systematically suppressed. Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s the stage was set for what would become part of the underlying issues affecting Kosovo province today.

In March and April 1981, demonstrations broke out throughout Kosovo. The protestors demanded better conditions as well as the release of students at the University of Pristina who had been jailed for starting the demonstrations. Within the course of days, special security police were brought in from throughout Yugoslavia and a state of emergency was declared. A concerned Yugoslav government suppressed information about the demonstrations, and arrested hundreds in connection with the them. The exact number who died as a result of the clashes is uncertain; however, it is known that more than 2,000 were arrested. One of the most damaging effects of the events was that it started a new round of accusations and counter-accusations about both Albanian and Serb nationalism.

The issues of Serb and Albanian nationalism in Kosovo continued to flare up for years thereafter. By the mid-1980s, more and more sensationalist arguments were starting to appear on both sides of the issue. A "Memorandum" initially written in 1985 and published in its entirety in 1989 continued to fuel the issue. This memorandum stated that the 1974 constitution of Yugoslavia had carved Serbia into three parts, and then went on to state that "The relations between Serbia and the autonomous provinces cannot be reduced, either solely or mainly, to formal or juridical questions about the interpretation of constitutions. It is a matter above all of the Serbian people and their state." The conclusion drawn in the memorandum was that the "integrity of the Serbian people" must be maintained and the overriding concern of future policy. In retrospect, "this Memorandum has been set in retrospect as a virtual manifesto for the 'Greater Serbian' policies pursued by Belgrade in the 1990s."⁴⁷

The election of Slobodan Milosevic as President of Serbia in 1987 further fueled the Serbian nationalist furor. By 1988, the Serbian assembly was preparing amendments to the Serbian constitution that would severely restrict Kosovo's powers. The proposed amendments would give Serbia control over Kosovo's police, courts and civil defense as well as such matters as education, social and economic policy, and the choice of an

official language, in contradiction to what had been stated in the constitutions of 1946 and 1974. Under the existing constitution, amendments could be proposed by Serbia but had to be approved by the Kosovo assembly. More demonstrations followed as it became apparent that, if the amendments were approved, autonomy for Kosovo would end. Serb troops were sent into Kosovo, a state of emergency was declared and a major crackdown started. The provincial assembly of Kosovo met on 23 March 1989, surrounded by tanks and armored cars; members of the security police mingled with the delegates who passed the amendments, although without the two-thirds majority required for such changes. The vote was then affirmed by the Serbian assembly on 28 March. With that, Kosovo's autonomy was virtually eliminated.

It is not coincidence that in June 1989, 600 years after the Battle of Kosovo, Slobodan Milosevic made his defining speech on Serb nationalism in Kosovo at the "Field of Blackbirds," site of the defeat of the medieval Serbs by the Ottoman empire. In that speech Milosevic played upon the Serb myth of victimization, previously at the hands of the Ottomans and more recently by Tito's Yugoslavia. He adopted the slogan that "Serbs win wars, but lose the peace," a reference to the failure of the victorious Allied forces after both world wars to create a Serb state. And he also used the occasion to foster the belief that the Serbs were being forced once again to leave Kosovo, their historic homeland.[48](#)

One year later, in March 1990, the Serbian Assembly passed another series of measures designed to shore up the Serb position still further. New municipalities were created, investment was concentrated in Serb-held areas, houses were built for Serbs who returned to Kosovo, and Albanians were encouraged to seek work in other parts of Yugoslavia. Under laws passed in 1989, Albanians in Kosovo were forbidden to buy or sell property without obtaining special permission. A wave of other decrees were passed in June 1990 including the suppression of the Albanian-language newspaper, the closing of the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the dismissal of thousands of state employees. In July, the Serbian authorities dissolved both the Kosovo assembly and government, the last vestiges of Kosovo's autonomous status. Three weeks later, the Serbian assembly passed another law which made possible the subsequent expulsion of more than 80,000 Albanians from their jobs.

In response to these measures, on 7 September 1990 many of the Albanian delegates from the Kosovo assembly met in great secrecy and agreed on the proclamation of a constitutional law for a Republic of Kosovo. This document contained the provision for a new assembly and an elected president. All other laws, including those derived from Serbia and Yugoslavia, were declared valid only if they conformed to the priorities of the new constitution. In September 1991, the Albanians in Kosovo organized a referendum, also held in secret, to consider a decision to declare Kosovo a sovereign and independent republic. It was claimed that 87 percent of voters took part, and 99 percent of those who voted were in favor.[49](#) On 24 May 1992, Kosovo-wide elections were held to create a new republican assembly and government. Ultimately, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, a specialist in literary history and president of the Association of Writers of Kosovo as well as the

head of the political movement known as the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), was elected President of the underground Republic of Kosovo.

The basic policy pursued by Rugova and the LDK was three-fold: first, to prevent violence; second, to "internationalize" the problem, i.e., to make the issue known to the world and, subsequently, to engage the international community in a discussion of, and perhaps solution to, the situation; and third, to deny systematically the legitimacy of Serbian rule. The last was to be accomplished by the refusal to participate in Serb elections or other "official" acts such as the census, and to create the outlines of a state apparatus for a Kosovo republic. The second and third are especially contentious and tie directly into the situation that NATO and the leaders of the Western countries had to face, that is, whether the status of Kosovo is an internal question for Serbia or whether it is an international issue that can and should be addressed by powers beyond Serbia.

By 1995, with the conclusion of the war in neighboring Bosnia, the crisis in Kosovo was continuing and even growing. The Dayton Agreement did not alter the status of Kosovo directly. The only concession that it made to the situation in Kosovo was an agreement by the UN Security Council that the "outer wall" of sanctions against Serbia would remain in place until the human rights abuses in Kosovo were addressed. However, the Dayton Agreement, coupled with other internal decisions, served to undermine Rugova's position in Kosovo. By 1996, in contradiction to the policies of Rugova and the LDK, more violent forms of direct action were starting to take place including shootings and bomb attacks against Serb officials and institutions. By the summer of 1997, the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was starting to take credit for these actions.⁵⁰ These terrorist activities accelerated in February 1998, leading to the conflict in Kosovo which, once again, pitted the people of Kosovo against Serbia. But the conflict, and how to deal with it, put the leaders of Western Europe, the United States and Russia in a position of confrontation once again as well.

Outbreak of Conflict in Kosovo Province: 1998-99

The illusion of normalcy in the region was shattered late in February 1998 with the outbreak of armed conflict in Kosovo. This time the conflict was between the Serbs and the ethnic Albanians. Four policemen were killed in an ambush by members of the KLA which prompted the Serb government to respond by sending out police reinforcements and heavily armed paramilitary units to track down the assailants. Twenty civilians were shot by policemen who were moving through the area where the guerillas were believed to be operating. Approximately 30,000 ethnic Albanians marched to protest the killing. The KLA claimed that they were fighting to create an independent state of Kosovo. According to the rebel leaders, there were armed units throughout Kosovo ready to take up the cause.

Since 1989, when Kosovo was absorbed into Serbia, Albanian political leaders had engaged in a campaign of civil disobedience to win back Kosovo's autonomy. However, the attacks by the Kosovo Liberation Army, coupled with the undermining of Rugova's position following Dayton helped gain widespread support for more drastic measures.

Many feared, however, that these attacks permitted Belgrade to justify mounting repression in Kosovo. In fact, many Western diplomats at that time correctly feared that Serbian forces might again initiate the types of attacks that occurred during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

Throughout March 1998, fighting continued between ethnic Albanians and the Serb police and paramilitary forces. More than 80 Albanians died during the first ten days of fighting, including women, children and the elderly, and it appeared that a low-intensity conflict was inevitable. On 9 March, the six member Contact Group, which has oversight responsibility for the former Yugoslavia, met in London to address the situation in the former Yugoslavia, including the situation in Kosovo. At that time, US Secretary of State Albright indicated that she wanted to propose "strong measures" that "would signal the disapproval and condemnation of the international community for this [the Serb] crackdown" on the ethnic Albanians.⁵¹ The "strong measures" referred to were largely economic and punitive. However, this proposal met with resistance from other members of the Contact Group, especially Russia which consistently opposed sanctions against the Serbs. Further, other member nations, including Italy and France, were known to be hesitant about another confrontation with Serbia. Although the foreign ministers of the United States, France and Germany did agree on the need for "firm and clear measures" to stop the spread of violence in Kosovo, what those should be remained vague.

The Group, including Russia, did agree that an international force would remain in Macedonia as a deterrent. At that meeting, the Group also agreed to consider Albania's request for a NATO force to patrol the border with Serbia. At that point, many felt that it would be up to Milosevic to determine what to do next, that is, whether he would allow the violence to continue, thereby risking Western action, or authorize a halt to Serb aggression in Kosovo. This pattern of relegating control of the situation to Milosevic would be consistent throughout the conflict with Kosovo.⁵²

Despite the divisions among the members of the Contact Group, the meeting in March ended with agreement to impose "modest" diplomatic and economic sanctions on Yugoslavia for President Milosevic's "'unacceptable use of force' against the ethnic Albanian majority in the province of Kosovo,"⁵³ but that the sanctions would not go into effect for 10 days, after the situation in Kosovo had been reviewed. What is especially important to note here is that the direct use of force was not yet deemed an option. Despite ongoing concerns that Kosovo could become another Bosnia or even spread beyond the borders of Serbia, the first response of the members of the Contact Group was to resort to economic sanctions which, as was seen in the past, were largely ineffective.⁵⁴

Despite the sanctions, through March and into April the situation continued to deteriorate. Armed clashes were occurring daily, with the death toll at more than 150 people by the end of April, less than two months after the conflict started. In May, Milosevic agreed to enter into talks with ethnic Albanians in order to try to reach a political settlement of the crisis. Under intense international pressure, the Serb government agreed not to attack civilians and promised to allow foreign monitors, relief workers and journalists full access to the region; however, none of those promises were kept. In response to this

apparent good-faith action, the major powers agreed to ease sanctions on Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ The truce was short-lived, however. By early June, heavy fighting had once again broken out in Kosovo, leading to more deaths and sending hundreds fleeing. The ethnic Albanian leaders withdrew from talks with Milosevic and increased warfare seemed likely. After a meeting on 12 June, NATO ministers directed air contingents to conduct exercises over Albania and Macedonia. These exercises were designed as a show of force to warn Milosevic that NATO would take action if the conflict escalated.

The situation remained tenuous and unresolved going into the summer of 1998 with fighting continuing between Serb forces and Albanian rebels throughout the province. In August, Milosevic told envoys from the EU that the Serbian offensive against the Kosovo separatists was over. That, however, proved to be untrue as Serb forces continued to shell villages in Kosovo and as European Union envoys and other international monitors found evidence to the contrary. United Nations officials believed that as of early August, up to 200,000 people, or 10 percent of Kosovo's population, might be refugees trying to flee the fighting and brutality.

Reports of massacres of ethnic-Albanian civilians prompted NATO to threaten to get involved unless a ceasefire could be agreed to. NATO once again talked about the need to use force, and, as the alliance did in Bosnia, approved a set of contingency plans for intervention once the political decision was made to go forward. In August, the United States announced that NATO had approved plans to use military force against the Serbs. The announcement was intended, at least in part, to pressure Milosevic to end the offensive against the ethnic Albanians.⁵⁶ At this time, the United States, the European Union and NATO were all demanding a ceasefire in Kosovo; many of the Western governments were afraid that, if not checked, the conflict would spread to Albania and Macedonia.

Despite the threats, Serb suppression/repression continued into the fall. Throughout September, both NATO and the United Nations Security Council warned Milosevic to stop the Serb attacks. NATO also asked member states for forces necessary to carry out the threat of air strikes if Serbia did not comply. The United States said that this was the next in a series of steps leading to the use of force should that become necessary.

Early in October, as NATO was gearing up for air strikes against the Serbs, US negotiator Richard Holbrooke was dispatched to negotiate with Milosevic to persuade him to withdraw Serb forces or risk NATO attack. Holbrooke's apparent success in Dayton in resolving the Bosnia conflict made him the person most likely to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. With NATO attacks apparently imminent, Holbrooke and Milosevic reached an agreement. Under its terms Milosevic agreed to let unarmed foreign observers and NATO reconnaissance flights monitor the withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo, thereby saving Serbia from the air strikes already authorized. Milosevic also agreed to local elections in Kosovo as a step toward political stability. Under OSCE auspices, a Kosovo Verification Mission composed of monitors from 54 member nations would be responsible for assuring compliance with the terms of the agreement.

At that time, in an op-ed piece in the New York Times, John Mearsheimer predicted that "The deal arranged by Richard Holbrooke is likely to fail sooner rather than later." He went on to explain that "The deal is doomed . . . because neither the Albanians nor the Serbs are likely to stick to it."⁵⁷ Mearsheimer argued that full independence was the only acceptable outcome to the Albanians. The Serbs, however, would only be satisfied if Kosovo remained a province of Serbia and one with limited autonomy. The agreement, which technically gave the ethnic Albanians limited autonomy, did not satisfy either party. Further, putting OSCE monitors in place made it harder for NATO to strike, as well as giving the Serb forces approximately 2,000 civilian hostage-targets.

Initially, however, the situation appeared to be positive, or at least it was cast that way publicly. By late October, monitors indicated that Serbia was complying with the terms of the agreement and was withdrawing troops from Kosovo, albeit slowly. (Under the agreement, not only was Milosevic told the number of troops to withdraw from the region, but he was given a timetable for doing so.) Given Milosevic's compliance, NATO eased its initial demands regarding the number of paramilitary forces that would be permitted to remain in Kosovo. NATO also agreed to extend indefinitely its "activation order" that authorized the use of force and kept more than 400 war planes on alert. This meant that NATO could order an air strike at any time if Milosevic did not comply with the terms of the agreement.

As of the end of November, the peace deal apparently had been successful in achieving some of its objectives. Aid workers were able to deliver food and medicine, thereby averting a humanitarian catastrophe. Milosevic had withdrawn several thousand troops, and unarmed observers were in place. But by the end of December, it appeared that the peace agreement was disintegrating as Serb troops and Albanian rebels once again engaged in armed conflict. By early January 1999, it was apparent that the ceasefire, that had been imposed in October 1998 amid threats of NATO air strikes, was barely holding as Serb police again battled ethnic-Albanian rebels.

What is especially telling is the media coverage of the events in Kosovo when it was apparent that the October truce was failing. Headlines such as: "NATO Warning to Yugoslav: Another Hollow Threat?," in the New York Times,⁵⁸ and "NATO Readies Military Force Following Warning to Belgrade" in the Wall Street Journal,⁵⁹ chronicled the ongoing threats by NATO, but also the apparent inability or unwillingness of NATO to act on those threats. It is one of the basic principles of international relations that for a threat to be effective, it must be credible. That, in turn, means having both the capability and the will to act. NATO clearly had the capabilities; what it appeared to lack, once again, was the political will to use them.

Once again, the international community was asking not only whether Milosevic had been successful in achieving his own goals in Serbia at the expense of peace or, at least, an end to violence in the region, but also what options would be open legitimately to the Western nations to address the situation. And questions emerged again about how to implement a ceasefire and whether that meant engaging NATO forces in the Balkans, this time in Kosovo.

Throughout January 1999, the situation in Kosovo continued to deteriorate. In mid-January international monitors discovered the massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians in what seemed to be a prelude to renewed violence.⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter, William Walker, the US head of the International Verification Mission was ordered to leave the country by President Milosevic, although he later reversed that order under international pressure. Despite the ongoing Serb provocation, the Europeans hoped to resolve the conflict by negotiation drawing on a rough autonomy agreement worked out by the US Ambassador to Macedonia, Christopher Hill, who was also a US mediator for Kosovo.

US officials estimated that more than 200,000 people were forced from their homes since the offensive initially began in February 1998. As winter approached, many in the West feared a humanitarian catastrophe unless some action was taken. In many ways, the EU recognized the potential dangers and acted upon them quickly; by comparison with the United States, the EU provided vast amounts of trade and aid. The United Nations continued to try to get food and other supplies to the thousands driven from their homes in the fighting. These were important measures and needed to be taken. However, they did little to address the underlying causes of the conflict nor did they help to bring the conflict to an end.

However, the threat of NATO strikes was again a possibility at this point. At the end of January, NATO authorized Secretary General Javier Solana to order air strikes any time if Serbia did not agree to start talks on the situation in Kosovo within the week. According to Madeleine Albright, this decision was made because "Diplomacy backed by the threat of force is the only way to ensure that both sides halt the violence and come immediately to the peace table."⁶¹ At that point, NATO was also aware of the possible danger to the more than one thousand OSCE civilian observers in Kosovo and anticipated that it would take up to 10,000 NATO troops to get them to safety if they were threatened in any way. In anticipation of a successful negotiation, the alliance also began planning for the deployment of 30,000 to 40,000 troops to monitor the agreement.

With the threat of force looming, the two sides finally came to the table at the beginning of February, meeting at Rambouillet outside Paris. The model for these talks appeared to be Dayton, where under the direction of Holbrooke, all the parties involved remained sequestered for the weeks it took to reach an agreement that was then backed up by NATO forces. The current situation proved to be far more difficult, however. The talks started later than anticipated due, in part, to last-minute maneuvering on both sides, the Serbs and the ethnic-Albanians. Once the talks started on 7 February, they went more slowly than planned as first one side then the other refused to comply with the agreements reached. In addition, where Dayton was run by Holbrooke with the understanding that any agreement reached would be backed up by US and NATO forces, Rambouillet was run primarily by the Europeans and squabbles among the members of the Contact Group provided the backdrop. "The real negotiating, and the bickering, is among the six host countries, known as the Contact Group," wrote Jane Perlez in the New York Times on 18 February, ten days after the talks started.⁶² Also Russia, a member of the Contact Group, was against a NATO presence at the conference and was to be a

critical player at Rambouillet. The strong Russian presence at this point had important implications later on for NATO as well as for the resolution of the Kosovo crisis.

The talks continued haltingly through February and into March, each round concluding with the threat that if agreement were not reached, NATO would have no choice but to take military action. The first round ended when, surprisingly, the Kosovo Albanian delegation refused to accept the agreement reached; the second round ended in March with the Serb delegation refusing. What made the situation especially difficult were, first, the fact that since the negotiations started, the fighting in Kosovo was among the worst since the previous October when an earlier agreement had been reached, and second, the fact that more than 80,000 ethnic-Albanians fled their homes during the final three weeks of the talks.⁶³ Finally, NATO had previously stated that it would use force if an agreement were not reached and each time, the threat had come to naught. But Milosevic had backed down under the threatened use of force each time before, making the question of whether NATO would use force this time an open question. In retrospect, it appears that Milosevic was willing to gamble that NATO's threats again would prove to be hollow.

The failure of the talks in February and March made further action necessary if NATO was to appear to be credible. But the decision surrounding the next steps put further pressure on an already fractured alliance. The decision making here was two-fold: first, when and how to respond to the failure of the talks, and second, once a decision was made for air strikes, how long should NATO allow that to continue before taking additional measures, such as sending in ground troops. The European countries were divided, with the United Kingdom taking the lead in asserting the need for a forceful response, and Italy and Greece at the other extreme, resisting the use of force and advocating a peaceful diplomatic solution. The recently-elected government of Gerhard Schroeder in Germany, with its delicate coalition, also found itself in a difficult position which only grew worse once the use of ground forces was raised as a possibility. The United States' position was that the bombing was necessary to demonstrate NATO's opposition to aggression, to deter further attacks on civilians, and to damage Serbia's capacity to continue to wage war. As the bombing campaign continued, though, the United States remained steadfast in its commitment to an air campaign and in opposition to the deployment of ground troops, further illustrating the range of opinion among the members of the alliance.

What made the situation in Kosovo especially difficult politically is the fact that unlike Bosnia, Kosovo is a province of Serbia, which is a sovereign state. The prospect of NATO military strikes against the Serbs, which would be seen as being in support of the ethnic Albanians, would raise important sovereignty questions as well as non-Article 5 questions. Furthermore, for Russia, which already had a difficult relationship with NATO because of the enlargement issue, NATO strikes into Kosovo would clearly be perceived as threatening not only an ally (Serbia), but also potentially as an extension of NATO -- and US -- power projection in the region.⁶⁴

Yet fundamental human rights and humanitarian issues were at stake as well in the Kosovo situation. The ongoing reports of massacres of ethnic Albanians by the Serbs roiled the domestic publics of the various nations involved. However, the constant stream of refugees also put pressure on Macedonia, Albania and even Italy, and was potentially threatening to Germany which had accepted a large number of refugees earlier during the conflict in Bosnia. In many ways, though, the real issue facing NATO and the leaders of Europe and the United States at that time was what can and should they do to try to contain the situation in Kosovo? And, as the situation in Kosovo pointed out quite clearly, NATO was ill-equipped to answer that question.

NATO and Kosovo: March through July 1999

In March, as NATO was grappling with the situation in Kosovo and what actions to take, it was also preparing for a summit in celebration of its 50th anniversary as well as the admission of three new members. However, the celebration of NATO enlargement and the acceptance of the 1999 Strategic Concept Paper which were to define NATO as "a promoter of security, as well as a guarantor against aggression,"⁶⁵ was eclipsed by the events rapidly unfolding in Kosovo and by NATO's need to respond to those events quickly.

In retrospect, it is clear that the decision-making surrounding the bombing of Kosovo beginning on 24 March benefitted from lessons learned from the Bosnia situation. In Bosnia, NATO delayed taking action whereas with Kosovo, the allies were largely in agreement that something needed to be done and quickly. Although there were disagreements within the alliance as to what should be done, once decisions were made there was relative cohesion among NATO nations and, at least publicly, a sense that the alliance was committed to the success of the mission. However, this is not to suggest that the decision-making process was easy, nor that the NATO nations were prepared politically to take military action. As was the case in Bosnia, this was a political decision rather than a military one.

By the time the leaders of the NATO nations met in Washington on April 23 through 25 for the summit, the bombing campaign was well underway. At the conclusion of the summit, the alliance declared that its military campaign "would succeed." Nonetheless, President Clinton told Russian President Boris Yeltsin in a phone conversation that they should work together to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. At the same time, pressure was building within some of the NATO nations to think about deploying ground troops, although they avoided the issue at the summit. It should also be remembered that during this period the alliance was coming under criticism for targeting errors that killed civilians, including a column of refugees.

The Washington summit in April in many ways represented the introduction of the "new" NATO, enlarged to include former adversaries as a symbol that the Cold War had ended. The Strategic Concept paper adopted at that meeting reinforced the importance of the alliance not only to ensure "the defence of its members" but also as an organization that "contributes to peace and stability in this region."⁶⁶ It speaks of the alliance as the

embodiment of "the transatlantic link by which the security of North America is permanently tied to the security of Europe,"⁶⁷ and of the need for NATO to be prepared for a different type of security environment if it is to survive and remain a viable entity. Furthermore, the document acknowledges the need for the alliance to be prepared to take on different kinds of missions, including crisis response and peacekeeping, albeit on a case-by-case basis. In theory, then, it seemed that NATO had learned some lessons from Bosnia and, it appeared, was prepared to act if and/or when necessary. And Kosovo appeared to be the test of that new plan.

However, the situation was far more complex and difficult for the alliance to deal with than that which was outlined in the Strategic Concept paper. As the bombing continued into April and then May, the goal of bringing Milosevic to the negotiating table to resolve the situation in Kosovo was far from achieved. Rather, pressure was building among some of the allies to take more drastic measures, specifically, sending in ground troops. Once again, despite a newly-approved strategic concept that should have united NATO, deep rifts emerged within the alliance regarding what the next steps should be. On 6 May, the Group of 8 Industrialized Countries (G-8) agreed on a vague set of principles to end the conflict that included bringing Russia and NATO together in pursuit of a diplomatic solution. Two days later, on 8 May, the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was hit by NATO air strikes in what appeared to be a grave targeting error. This, too, set off a round of recriminations that also helped to mobilize support both against the continued air strikes and as well as in support of altering the military tactics being employed.

By the middle of May Britain was leading the charge to deploy ground troops in Kosovo. At a meeting of EU foreign ministers on 17 May, British Foreign Minister Robin Cook revived an earlier British proposal to send ground troops into Kosovo within the next few weeks on the supposition that Yugoslav forces would be weakened from the weeks of bombing. The plan, which was originally suggested by France and Britain earlier in April prior to the summit, was opposed by the United States. In fact, the differences among alliance members were said to be so sharp that the issue was left off the formal agenda for the summit meeting.⁶⁸

The division among the alliance members about the use of ground forces continued to grow due, in part, to domestic political pressures. This can be seen dramatically in the opposite stands taken by the British and the United States, the two pillars of the traditional "special relationship." According to press coverage coming from Britain, public sentiment in that country was in support of ground troops coupled with the belief that US hesitancy was impeding the war effort. In fact, a lead editorial in *The Financial Times* stated that "Mr. Clinton's prevarication about offering the U.S. troops that are vital to a successful outcome has left time on Mr. Milosevic's side."⁶⁹ By the end of May, Britain announced that it was sending 18,000 troops to Kosovo to form the core of a peacekeeping force there, tripling British presence in the region and increasing pressure on the United States. In contrast, the United States would not even entertain the possibility of ground troops.

Despite the pressure from Britain, the United States was not alone in its unwillingness to commit ground troops and its desire to continue to fight a ground war. Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder declared that his country would block the alliance from fighting a land war, and the Italian Parliament voted on 19 May to commit the government to seeking a halt in the bombing. In fact, the issue of deploying ground troops would continue to be divisive. Meanwhile, NATO increased its air campaign while simultaneously seeking a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Ironically, at this point, it was Russia that was taking the lead in the latter effort joined later in May by Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari representing the EU.

Throughout May, as the bombing continued, so did the attempts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Representatives of Russia, the United States and the EU met regularly to try to reach an acceptable solution, at least among themselves. The assumption was that if that group could agree, then the proposal would be put forward to Milosevic. During this period, it was Russian envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin who was in ongoing consultation with Milosevic. This process of consultation and negotiation continued throughout May and into June. Finally, on 9 June, an agreement was signed that would bring an end to the latest conflict. On 21 June, an agreement was signed between NATO and the KLA that requires the KLA to surrender their weapons.[70](#)

The June 1999 Agreement

A starting assumption going into the negotiations was that Kosovo had to remain part of Serbia. The agreement reaffirmed this position, and also required the withdrawal of Serb troops from Kosovo as well as the swift deployment of a Western-dominated force. The exact terms continued to be negotiated with the Serb side demanding additional concessions: rather than withdrawing forces in a week, NATO agreed to 11 days; in response to NATO's demand for a demilitarized zone of 25 kilometers around Kosovo, the number was reduced to 5 kilometers. But also raised as an issue was the role that Russia would play in the peacekeeping forces. This question, although technically outside the realm of the agreement with the Serb forces, had an impact on NATO that had not been anticipated when the peace was negotiated.

The lesson here is that the end of the conflict in Kosovo did not bring an end to the discussions/disagreements within NATO. In fact, as it turned out, implementing the peace proved to be almost as divisive a factor as any decision made to that point. The agreement divided Kosovo into five zones, each to be under the direct responsibility of one of five NATO nations: the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Russia was not to have its own zone in the belief that its long-standing alliance with the Serbs could undermine the peace-keeping effort. Russia, however, clearly felt differently. As a member of the Partnership for Peace, given its special relationship NATO fostered during the enlargement campaign, and given the role it played in negotiating the peace, Russia clearly wanted to be one of the major players in keeping the peace by having its own zone in Kosovo.

In a bold move, shortly after the agreement was reached and before the NATO troops had time to deploy, Russia sent in its own contingent of troops who stationed themselves at the Pristina Airport. By 15 June, as the KFOR troops were being deployed, the British forces found themselves confronting Russian forces, rather than Serbs. Russia's ties with NATO, which were already shaky due to Russia's strong opposition to the bombing campaign, grew even more tense during this period as it remained unclear who was really responsible for the latest Russian move. By 26 June, and following a Russian-US meeting in Helsinki, a Russian force was to remain in Kosovo but divided among the five areas under NATO-led control. KFOR was moving toward a total troop strength of 55,000, the majority to come from Britain with the entire force to be under British command.

Lessons Learned and Implications for NATO

As this article went to press, the task of rebuilding the region was just beginning. So, too, were the evaluations and second-guessing that follow any major operation. At hearings before the United States House of Representatives Intelligence Committee the Director of the CIA disclosed the string of errors that led to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.⁷¹ Secretary of Defense William Cohen complained publicly in July that NATO had no choice but to step into the situation in Kosovo because the United Nations had moved too slowly, a charge countered by the UN which claimed that it was NATO members who were at fault for not deploying their own forces in an area for which it is responsible.⁷² And NATO continues to struggle with what the operation in Kosovo means for its future.

The conflict in Kosovo province has proven to be an especially difficult challenge to the countries of the West. It followed the apparently successful conclusion of the war in Bosnia negotiated by the United States and maintained by NATO and Partnership for Peace troops engaged in a peacekeeping function. Yet, it once again pitted NATO and the West against Slobodan Milosevic, now President of Yugoslavia. As Kosovo technically is a province of Serbia, Western military options were limited. Issues of sovereignty meant that many Western countries were hesitant to interfere in an internal uprising. World opinion does not look kindly upon such acts, as Russia learned in Chechnya where it attempted to use military force to put down an internal independence movement in a "break-away" province. However, public opinion also feels strongly about the need to protect human rights, especially given the press depictions of Serb atrocities and repression of the Albanian majority in Kosovo.

The conflict was especially trying for NATO, which had repeatedly threatened the use of military force to deter Milosevic and to protect the Albanian majority, but which was hesitant to use that force for political reasons. The lessons of Bosnia are well-remembered: that NATO used force only relatively late in the conflict (starting in 1994), and only after a series of well-publicized events, such as the massacre in the Sarajevo market, increased public awareness of the situation. The use of NATO forces in the context of Kosovo caused the alliance once again to confront directly issues about its role and mission in post-Cold War Europe and even the world.

In reviewing the history of NATO involvement first in Bosnia and more recently in Kosovo, it is clear that lessons were learned from the first case that influenced the alliance's actions in the second. In the case of Kosovo, although a crisis had been brewing for a long time, which NATO chose not to address, when violence did erupt in February 1998 NATO nations became engaged fairly quickly through diplomatic means and then the alliance took military action within months after the diplomatic initiatives failed. This stands in marked contrast to the situation in Bosnia where it took years for NATO to become involved. In both cases, the military forces were ready but needed the political decisions for action to be taken. In many ways the situation with Kosovo was far more controversial, given the sovereignty issue, but humanitarian concerns were sufficient for the alliance to agree to move forward. In retrospect, it appears that NATO, as an institution, was not ready to act (or react) in the case of Bosnia because of the clearly different nature of the conflict, whereas in Kosovo the transition in perspective had been made, thereby making it easier for the alliance to act relatively quickly.

In the case of Bosnia, the alliance was leaderless, with no nation willing to come forward and take the lead for a host of domestic political reasons. In the case of Kosovo, there was leadership but, more important, a sense of cohesion and unity of purpose once the decisions were made. It should also be remembered that by the time of Kosovo there were new leaders in three of the major players within NATO -- the United States, Britain and Germany. This clearly changed the domestic political dynamics in each case, thus reinforcing the importance of domestic politics in NATO decision-making.

This is not to suggest that the decisions, once they were made, were made easily, however. In reality, the decision-making process surrounding Kosovo were as divisive and fraught with difficulty as the ones regarding Bosnia. However, the difference is that following the situation in Bosnia and in the wake of the summit outlining NATO's role in the post-Cold War period, Kosovo was essential to the ongoing credibility and viability of the alliance. If NATO had been unwilling or unable to act in Kosovo, given the lessons of Bosnia, in many ways the alliance would have been doomed to failure in the future. The mission in Kosovo required the alliance to work together despite domestic political pressures.⁷³

Bosnia was a catalyst and a crisis for an alliance ill-prepared for the new situations it would face. In Bosnia, NATO responded to the situation only when it had to. Kosovo offered the alliance the opportunity to show the world that it really had made the transition from a Cold War defensive alliance to one that could deal with a range of conflicts and crises as they arise.

In reviewing the situation in Kosovo shortly after the June peace agreement was made, an article in the Los Angeles Times assessed the situation as follows: "As its air campaign against Yugoslavia dragged on, NATO looked less like the military alliance that won the Cold War than like a dysfunctional family, its members smiling for the camera but kicking each other under the table." The article then goes into specifics: "The British were ready to force their way into Kosovo with a massive ground attack. The Greeks, just an artillery shell away from the Serbian province, wanted no part of any kind of war. The

American president was hearing conflicting messages from his own divided political advisors. The Germans would fight in the air but not on the ground." The conclusion drawn was that "No wonder Slobodan Milosevic . . . thought he could outlast the North Atlantic Treaty Organization . . . Surely, this unruly 19-nation coalition would splinter. Milosevic guessed wrong, but so did NATO."[74](#)

The assumption made in March at NATO headquarters was that Milosevic would have to give in to the military might and pressure of the alliance, and probably within a matter of weeks. This proved to be a fallacious assumption; rather than giving in, the air strikes only seemed to harden Milosevic's position. Further, the longer the bombing went on, the more alliance credibility was damaged by erroneous targeting of civilians as well as by the constant stream of news about the plight of the Albanian refugees. However, Milosevic also miscalculated the resolve of the NATO nations. Despite their differences and domestic political pressure, the alliance did not splinter but remained a cohesive unit. Nonetheless, the decision-making process was a difficult one and, once again, put NATO into the position of responding to an evolving situation rather than anticipating and/or initiating action.

Although tangential to the points raised here, one of the most interesting aspects of NATO's role in Kosovo has to do with that mission's impact on enlargement. The introduction of the three new members in March 1999 was seen as another concrete indicator that the Cold War is over and that all of Europe can unite with the United States in pursuit of peace and stability. Few would argue that none of the three newest members was prepared to be thrust immediately into a European conflict. The situation was especially acute for Hungary, which became one of the staging areas for the bombings. The expectations of the new members could be instructive for any of the other countries currently seeking membership in the alliance. The lesson of Kosovo is that with membership comes responsibility which any country must be prepared to accept. But the introduction of the new members was sobering for the existing alliance members as well. Thrust immediately into a conflict, NATO became aware quickly of any and all military shortcomings which, under other sets of circumstances, could have been addressed over time. Kosovo showed quite clearly that time is not always an option.

Conclusions

It is clear that the alliance learned some hard lessons from the situation in Bosnia that it used to help make decisions when faced with the conflict in Kosovo. However, what remains uncertain is how NATO will take those lessons and apply them in the future. Despite the lessons of Bosnia, despite the clear indications that crisis was imminent, in the case of Kosovo NATO still waited until armed conflict erupted before getting involved and, as was true with Bosnia, then reacted to the circumstances. Alliance leaders once again sought diplomatic and negotiated settlements before authorizing the use of force, holding out the threat of NATO military strikes should negotiations fail. But, as in the past, diplomatic initiatives continued long after it became apparent that they would come to naught, especially in the case of a leader like Slobodan Milosevic.

In reviewing the situation in Kosovo at the time, an article in the Wall Street Journal on 20 January 1999 stated: "Despite a threat of force last autumn, the alliance remains racked with doubts about whether military action against Yugoslavia would help or further ignite passions on both sides. With thousands of European and US troops committed to Bosnia, Western leaders are also fearful of getting drawn into another Balkan conflict." The article then concludes: ". . . NATO officials remain deeply worried that failure in Kosovo would damage NATO's reputation in the lead-up to an important April summit in Washington that is meant to celebrate an expanded and revitalized alliance."[75](#)

Some of the questions about the future of the alliance were addressed at the NATO ministerial in December 1998. But, as was noted in an editorial reflecting on this meeting in *The Economist*: ". . . NATO diplomats found that they could not agree on what the alliance was for, what weapons it would threaten to use and in what circumstances."[76](#) One of the issues that was then unresolved and contentious was the question of Kosovo and, specifically, what should be done and who should do it. Again, according to *The Economist*, the question of the Balkans remains outstanding as Kosovo conjures up many of the arguments -- and disagreements -- raised earlier about Bosnia. "While Americans have long-standing doubts about Europe's competence in handling the multiple crises of former Yugoslavia, the Europeans are now grumbling about the tactics of the United States in Kosovo. They say it handled the high-wire diplomacy almost unilaterally and left them alone with the risky job of preparing an intervention force to stand by, in nearby Macedonia, in case the cease-fire in Kosovo fails and international monitors there need rescuing. To this complaint, Americans will reply that Kosovo would never have reached the boiling point if, at earlier stages in the crisis, the Europeans had not been complacent."[77](#)

This statement points out once again the challenges facing the alliance and how the situation in the Balkans, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo, proved to be a crisis for the alliance. These situations raise important questions about the future of NATO and, especially, the role of the Balkans as a catalyst that point out the failures or weaknesses of the alliance in a world that is quite different from the one in which NATO was created. While unlikely to threaten the existence of the alliance, the situation in Kosovo does illustrate the need for NATO to think carefully about its future in a world without the single threat posed by the Soviet Union.

The situation in the former Yugoslavia presented NATO with perhaps its greatest crisis to date. On the one hand, the alliance is looking forward to celebrating a "revitalized alliance" that is poised to meet the post-Cold War world with an enlarged membership that includes some of its former enemies. On the other hand, it remains unable to deal with the types of conflict that the alliance is likely to face in the post-Cold War period.

As this article goes to press, outbreaks of violence continue in Kosovo (although now primarily they appear to be revenge acts directed against Serbs), and the threat of a conflict is brewing in Montenegro.[78](#) Whether the latter erupts or not, it seems clear that instability in Europe, and especially the Balkans, will remain a very real possibility. What

remains unclear, however, is whether NATO will take the lessons of first, Bosnia, and more recently Kosovo, and anticipate the instability and apply the words of the strategic concept so that they become a plan of action, or whether the alliance will continue to wait until the situation unfolds and then determine once again how to react to the latest situation given domestic and international political realities.

Endnotes

1. This article is a revision of a paper presented at the annual meetings of the International Studies Association, Washington, DC, February 1999. It is part of ongoing research that examines the relationship between the ongoing conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and NATO. The author thanks the reviewers of this piece for this journal for their input and suggestions regarding revision. The author also thanks: Ken Huffman, David Karns, Bill Krug, Charlie Skinner and Jim Townsend from the US Mission to NATO, and James Appaturai, Mihai Carp and Rick Kirby from the Political Affairs Division, NATO Headquarters, for their time and insights. The author is also grateful to colleagues on the Professional Interests Committee of Whittier College for their award to me of a Faculty Research Grant which made the travel to NATO Headquarters in June-July 1999 possible.
2. This number includes the approximately 30,000 troops currently serving in Bosnia as part of NATO's stabilization force (SFOR) plus the additional troops to be deployed as part of the Kosovo force (KFOR).
3. "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, DC on 23 and 24 April 1999, press release by NATO, 24 April 1999, Part I, Section 6.
4. The author heard this point made consistently in discussions she had with people in both the Political Affairs Division and US Mission to NATO, at NATO headquarters on 1 July 1999. In an interview with Doyle McManus of The Los Angeles Times, US National Security Advisor Samuel (Sandy) Berger also stressed this point when he said "The fact that the international community acted, that NATO as an alliance for the first time in 50 years engaged in sustained military action, that it was able to maintain its coherence despite the fact that you had in Germany a government that has not fought a war since World War II, with a foreign minister from the Green Party; in Italy and Greece, countries that have much closer relations to Serbia; the fact that the 19 democracies could remain united all of that, I think, was extremely important." The Los Angeles Times, 25 July 1999.
5. The six republics were: Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia. Serbia and Montenegro remain the last vestiges of Yugoslavia and continue to call themselves "Yugoslavia." They remain linked under the leadership of former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

6. See, for example, the essays in Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway, eds., *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). The essays in this volume underscore the theme that "the roots of ultranationalism that destroyed Yugoslavia" exist "not in some insidious historical pattern of ethnic hatreds and conflagration, but rather in the quite specific set of circumstances that crystallized following the death of Marshall Tito in 1980." (Preface, p. x)
7. Ejub Stitkovac, "Croatia: The First War," in *Burn This House*, pp. 153-73.
8. "Yugoslavia on the Brink," *Economist*, 11 May 1991, p. 45.
9. "Under Siege," *Economist*, 2 November 1991; "The Sense of a Senseless War," *Economist*, 23 November 1991, pp. 53-54.
10. "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," Agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome on 7-8 November 1991 in *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), p. 235.
11. Jasminka Udovicki and Ejub Stitkovac, "Bosnia and Hercegovina: The Second War," in *Burn This House*, p. 174.
12. According to Warren Zimmerman, the last US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, the rationale for denying the deployment of peacekeepers to Bosnia prior to the outbreak of the conflict was that, traditionally, peacekeeping forces are used after a conflict started and not as a deterrent force to be deployed prior to the outbreak of conflict. Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of A Catastrophe* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 172.
13. Udovicki and Stitkovac, "Bosnia and Hercegovina," p. 179.
14. "Serb-led Army Bombards Key Town," *Reuters*, 11 May 1992.
15. "Bosnia and Hercegovina: Next Please," *Economist*, 7 March 1992, p. 48.
16. Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 194.
17. Mathias Jopp, *The Strategic Implications of European Integration. Adelphi Papers 290*. (London: IISS, July 1994), pp. 6-17.
18. Maynard Glitman, "US Role in Bosnia: Rethinking a Flawed Approach," *Survival* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1996-1997), p. 68.
19. Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Courses and Consequences* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 178.
20. Glitman, "US Role," p. 68.

21. Warren Zimmerman notes that although Cyrus Vance remained opposed to the use of force, his negotiating partner, former British Foreign Secretary David Owen, saw the need for air strikes. Similarly, former US Secretary of State George Shultz argued that American interests required the use of force on behalf of the Bosnians. Nonetheless, the United States position against the use of force would not change for years. Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 217.
22. Pauline Neville-Jones, "Dayton, IFOR and Alliance Relations in Bosnia," *Survival* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1996-1997), p. 46.
23. Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 296.
24. Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 247-48.
25. Jopp, *Strategic Implications*, pp. 44-45.
26. Italy became the sixth member of the group in 1995 when it joined the existing five-member group. The rationale for Italy's inclusion was that since it was being used as a staging area for the NATO bombing of Bosnia, it should be included in the decision-making process.
27. Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 262.
28. "A Balkan Quagmire Beckons," *Economist*, 3 June 1995, p. 41.
29. Kurt Schork, "NATO Extends Deadline in Bosnia," *Reuters*, 18 September 1995.
30. Al Goodman, "Allies Toughen Policy to Reward and Punish Bosnian Leaders," *New York Times*, 17 December 1998.
31. *Ibid.*
32. NATO/SFOR, "Transcript: Joint Press Conference," Sarajevo, 5 March 1999, at www.nato.int/sfor/trans/1999.
33. Susan L. Woodward, "International Aspects of the Wars," in *Burn This House*, p. 240.
34. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1996), pp. 30-31.
35. Although there clearly is a long history to the region that pre-dates 1945, for purposes of this article I will focus primarily on the history since 1945, the point at which the politico-geographical borders of the province were created for the first time. For more

detail about the full history of the region, the reader is urged to see Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

36. The details of the battle and the mythology surrounding it are described in detail in Chapter 4, "The Battle and the Myth," in Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 58-80.

37. *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. It is that location that made the conflict in Kosovo especially threatening. Throughout the conflict there were fears that, if not contained, the conflict could spread to Macedonia and ultimately Greece, raising the specter of war either among NATO nations, or between NATO and some of the PFP countries.

41. The attempt to resettle Serbs into Kosovo can be seen as recently as 1995-96, when Serbian authorities announced that 20,000 of the Serbs from the Krajina region would be relocated to Kosovo. However, this forced resettlement was met with great resistance. According to one story told by Noel Malcolm, "when a busload of refugees discovered en route that they were being taken to Kosovo, they put a gun to the driver's head and forced him to turn back to Belgrade." Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 353.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 337.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-28.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-41.

48. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 92.

49. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 347.

50. "Recent Background to Current Crisis in Kosovo," *Jane's Sentinel* (March 1999), at www.janes.com/defence/features/kosovo/background.html.

51. Steven Erlanger, "Albright Warns Serbs on Kosovo Violence," *New York Times*, 8 March 1998.

52. I noted this observation in a conversation that I had with an analyst at NATO headquarters who noted that in Kosovo "we [NATO] actually gave up control of the situation to Milosevic."
53. Steven Erlanger, "U.S. and Allies Set Sanctions on Yugoslavia," *New York Times*, 10 March 1998.
54. In fact, then-German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel was quoted as saying "Everything must be done to insure that another awful conflagration does not explode in Europe. We need to act in time." Quoted in Steven Erlanger, "Albright Tours Europe to Whip Up Resolve," *New York Times*, 18 March 1998. Clearly, the American and European leaders were aware of the lessons of Bosnia when "inattention and disunity in the West allowed the civil war to take hold and spread." *Ibid.*
55. Giles Elgood, "Major Powers Easing Off Sanctions Against Yugoslavia," *Reuters*, 19 May 1998.
56. Jeremy Gaunt, "NATO says Ready for Kosovo Action, Russia Balks," *Reuters*, 7 August 1998; Janet McEvoy, "NATO Set to Endorse Kosovo Plans," *Reuters*, 11 August 1998.
57. John J. Mearsheimer, "A Peace Agreement That's Bound to Fail," *New York Times*, 19 October 1998.
58. Roger Cohen, "NATO Warning to Yugoslav: Another Hollow Threat," *New York Times*, 20 January 1999.
59. Carla Anne Robbins and Thomas E. Ricks, "NATO Readies Military Force Following Warning to Belgrade," *Wall Street Journal*, 21 January 1999.
60. Shaban Buza, "Kosovo Deaths 'Look Like Executions' OSCE," *Reuters*, 16 January 1999. An initial count of 42 bodies was raised later to 45.
61. Quoted in Norman Kempster, "NATO Chief Empowered to Order Airstrikes in Balkans," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 January 1999.
62. Jane Perlez, "Tangled in Talks," *New York Times*, 18 February 1999.
63. "Kosovo on the edge of the knife," *Economist*, 20 March 1999.
64. In fact, Russia suspended ties with NATO at the end of March 1999 to protest NATO's attack on Yugoslavia. On July 1999, Russia announced that it was prepared to restore at least some of the contacts with the alliance, focusing on the joint Kosovo peace operation. ("Russia Says It's Restoring Ties with NATO" *New York Times*, 20 July 1999.) However, those talks were later postponed "because of differences over Kosovo-related issues on the agenda. ("NATO and the Russians Postpone a Meeting," *New York*

Times, 21 July 1999). The talks were held on 23 July, when NATO delegates met with Russian diplomats who sit on the Permanent Joint Council. The Council then issued a statement expressing concern about the situation in Kosovo and further saying that "NATO and Russia are determined to do their utmost to insure equal security for all inhabitants of Kosovo," thereby suggesting that relations were once again resumed. ("NATO and Russia Pledging Cooperation," New York Times, 24 July 1999).

65. Javier Solana, "Growing the alliance," *Economist*, 13 March 1999.

66. "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," 1999, Part I, Section 6.

67. *Ibid.*, Section 7.

68. Eric Schmitt and Michael R. Gordon, "British Pressing Allies to Deploy Ground Troops," *New York Times*, 18 May 1999.

69. Quoted in Warren Hoge, "Blair Under Domestic Pressure on Ground Forces," *New York Times*, 18 May 1999.

70. On 21 September 1999, NATO and the KLA reached an agreement to convert the KLA into a civilian "protection corps," with its weapons subject to strict control. Reuters, 21 September 1999.

71. Eric Schmitt, "In a Fatal Error, C.I.A. Picked a Bombing Target Only Once: The Chinese Embassy," *New York Times*, 23 July 1999.

72. Judith Miller, "U.N. Says It's NATO That Lags in Kosovo," *New York Times*, 22 July 1999.

73. The domestic political pressure against the air campaign within some of the alliance partners, most notably Italy and Greece, was quite strong. In Greece, for example, 96 percent of the public was said to oppose the air war. Nonetheless, both countries fell in with their alliance partners in support of the effort once the decision was made. Tyler Marshall and Richard Bourdreax, "How an Uneasy Alliance Prevailed," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June 1999.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Neil King, Jr. and Carla Anne Robbins, "Milosevic Defies West on Kosovo Killings," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 January 1999.

76. "NATO's Mid-Life Crisis," *Economist*, 12 December 1998, p. 17.

77. *Ibid.*

78. The information in this article is current as of the end of July 1999. The author is aware of the fact that the situation is very dynamic and will not attempt to predict what might happen. Rather, I have drawn my conclusions on the situation as it evolved to date.