

**THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL**  
**OF THE UNITED STATES**

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**The Kosovo Crisis:  
The End of the Post-Cold War Era**

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**Occasional Paper**

**Dr. Alexei G. Arbatov**

**With an Additional Commentary by  
David C. Acheson**

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# **The Kosovo Crisis: The End of the Post-Cold War Era**

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With Additional Commentary by  
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**MARCH 2000**

**OCCASIONAL PAPER**

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THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES

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## Foreword

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NATO's military operations against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 represented a watershed in the post-World War II history of Europe. Even from the vantage point of U.S. policy, the decision to lead a NATO operation against a European state on account of a dispute concerning its own national territory was a remarkable one, notwithstanding the steady development of the crisis triggered by Serbia's behavior that may have made the actual outbreak of war seem more like an incremental step to implement the threats previously made. But for many other countries, the U.S. and NATO decision was no less fateful, while often appearing in a rather different perspective. This paper by the distinguished scholar and leading political figure Alexei Arbatov (of the YABLOKO party), deputy chairman of the defense committee of the Russian State Duma, is a lucid and thorough analysis of how the crisis and NATO's action affected opinion in Russia and Russian views of the prospects for U.S.-Russia relations.

Dr. Arbatov's analysis is not a comfortable or comforting one for Americans. Nor is it one that many U.S. or NATO leaders and specialists will accept, still less agree with, in its entirety. But in spite, or perhaps precisely because, of its disquieting conclusions and the fact that it is at times less than totally persuasive to Western readers, the analysis is important and needs to be understood and pondered in the United States and elsewhere. The Atlantic Council is accordingly pleased to be able to publish Dr. Arbatov's paper, which we hope will attract the discussion and reflection it deserves.

Dr. Arbatov's association with the Atlantic Council has been an ongoing one. Twice during 1999, and again in January 2000, in the immediate aftermath of the Duma elections, he addressed meetings at the Council and presented some of the analysis that appears here. No one was more instrumental in ensuring that the Council continue to focus on Russia and the U.S.-Russian relationship than my predecessor David Acheson. It is therefore especially welcome that Mr. Acheson was willing to write the comments on Dr. Arbatov's paper from a U.S. point of view, which are also included in this publication. Mr. Acheson notes a number of the points on which Western critics of Dr. Arbatov's analysis would focus, but also raises important questions for the future about how the international community should deal with acute situations of the kind that Serbia created in Kosovo. These are difficult questions around which there is as yet no consensus either in the United States or in the international community. The Atlantic Council hopes that with this publication, and with other programs that will address these issues, we can help promote the political and public debate that will equip us to deal better with future problems of this kind.

The views expressed by the authors of the papers published here are their personal views and do not represent positions of the Atlantic Council.

March 2000

**Christopher J. Makins**

President  
The Atlantic Council

## Executive Summary

Just a couple of years ago very few people in the United States, Russia or Western Europe, beside experts on the Balkans, would have recognized the name Kosovo and still fewer would have known anything about this obscure Serbian province. Since early 1999 all the world's attention has been concentrated on the events in this hot spot. Moreover, further evolution of the conflict in and around Kosovo will largely define relations between Russia and the West, the state of European security and many world affairs at the opening of the twenty-first century.

Despite the end of NATO's air campaign against Yugoslavia, the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and the deployment of NATO and Russian peacekeepers there under the UN mandate, the tragic Balkan saga is still far from over. However, regardless of further developments in the region, the crisis has already produced some crucial lessons and insights into the state of international politics ten years after the end of the Cold War. These are as follows:

- \* Russia and the West, and above all the United States, were caught unprepared by this crisis, despite numerous warnings of its coming for many years before the eruption of violence in February 1998.

- \* The Russian and Western publics, parliaments and mass media perceive the nature of this conflict, its origins and the methods of dealing with it in starkly different, sometimes opposite ways, in spite of the preceding decade of mutual openness, massive contacts and the free exchange of views on a broad range of political and security issues.

- \* Russia and the West have demonstrated huge miscalculations of each other's motives, actions and reactions, leading to mutual recriminations and suspicions, reminiscent of the worst Cold War years.

- \* International organizations, which had been authorized and expected to deal with such conflicts – the United Nations (UN) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – have shown severe limits in their abilities to handle them.

- \* International law, the UN Charter, multilateral fora and legal agreements, which were expected to cement the basis of the post-Cold War security structure in Europe and other regions, proved to be of little significance and easy to ignore or evade in practical policy not only to “rogue” states, but even for the most civilized nations of Europe and North America.

- \* All of a sudden, the unprecedented security cooperation and partnership of the last decade, as well as the agreements of several previous decades, have proven to be all too fragile, raising the possibility of a return to mistrust, rivalry and confrontation, which supposedly had been left forever in the past.

- \* The concealed divergence of Russian and Western security perceptions, perspectives and priorities, which had existed since the mid-1990s, but was pushed under the carpet by political leaders at ceremonial summits, burst out and left Moscow and NATO facing each other almost through gun sights.

- \* The consequences of the Kosovo crisis of 1999 will have a long-term negative effect on U.S.-Russian relations and the further evolution of European security, as well as on the roles of the UN and the OSCE in resolving problems on the European continent, including the Balkans and post-Soviet space.

- \* Before the end of 1999 the experience of Kosovo precipitated a new phase of tensions between Russia and the West, this time around the “Russian Kosovo” in Chechnya. Perceptions of the Kosovo conflict deeply affected Moscow's conduct in Chechnya and Western reactions to it.

The new Russian Duma elected in December 1999 may open the way to progress in U.S.-Russian relations in particular to START II ratification. For the future the Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council (PJC) should be strengthened with a tacit understanding that NATO will not undertake any new out-of-area action except with the authorization of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Russia and the West should also cooperate in building stable and economically sound relations across the post-Soviet space with greater cooperation between the United States and Russia on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the new security problems of the twenty-first century.



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# THE KOSOVO CRISIS: THE END OF THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

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## 1. Western Perceptions and Considerations on the Kosovo Crisis

For Western public opinion, foremost American, the Kosovo crisis was a clear-cut case of savage suppression of an Albanian ethnic minority, which constituted an absolute majority of about 90 percent in Kosovo, by the authoritarian and nationalistic Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Even before the spread of violence in Kosovo after February 1998, this regime was held responsible for the bloody and devastating wars in the former Yugoslavia since 1991. Serbia conducted these wars against Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia in an attempt to keep by force its Balkan Empire, created by Joseph Tito after the Second World War. Hence, it was a clear case of a regional imperialist aspiring to subjugate national liberation movements in its colonies. Milosevic's Serbia (remaining in a Union only with Montenegro) was a semi-Communist heir of the former Communist Tito regime, demonstrating a strong anti-Western and fundamentalist Christian Orthodox and pan-Slavic ideological propensity, while being opposed by pro-Western Catholic or Muslim nations.

Last but not least, Serbian suppression of secessionists was conducted in the most cruel way, including massive ethnic cleansing and the mass murder of civilians. All this was especially shocking in Europe at the end of the twentieth century and implied a challenge to Europe's civilized and prosperous life, with its integrating economies, emerging super-state structures and disappearing borders. Against this background, exposés by the mass media of devastated cities, mutilated corpses and millions of refugees deeply affected Western public opinion and political parties, which were putting a growing pressure on governments to act to stop this anachronism from the Dark Ages on the postindustrial enlightened and liberal European continent.

Another important factor was the search for a new *raison-d'être* for the Atlantic Alliance. It was created to wage the Cold War with the once omnipotent "Evil Empire" – the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe – to contain their superior offensive military power and to check Communist expansion on the continent. This task, set in the late 1940s by U.S. and West European leaders, "present at the creation," was apparently successfully and unequivocally fulfilled after the end of the Cold War with the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and disbanding of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and Russia embarking on the implementation of market economic reforms, building democracy and aspiring to become a Western "strategic partner" and eventually even ally. Hence, NATO, which was left as the most powerful military alliance in the world and the most efficient political coalition in world history was facing a choice of historic dimensions: to be dismantled for lack of further missions or to find a new mission in the post-Cold War environment.

As was to be expected, institutional preferences as well as many collateral political and military motives and interests, developed during fifty years of NATO history, were pointed vehemently to the latter, not the former choice. Expanding NATO to include aspiring Central and Eastern European nations, former Warsaw Pact allies and Soviet Republics, and negotiating with Moscow to alleviate its concerns while developing with it the "Partnership for Peace" program, was one new task to keep NATO busy for some time. But with a friendly and militarily inferior (even if still unpredictable) Russia and in the absence of any other common enemy, expansion, as a transformation of the form of NATO, could not forever serve as a substitute for finding a new goal and mission.

Finally, by the mid-1990s that mission was agreed to be defined as performing peace-keeping and, if need be, peace-enforcing operations in the unstable post-Communist world. That world was prone to ethnic, social and religious conflicts and territorial disputes, leading to widespread violence and infecting the rest of Europe with their dire consequences: massive refugees, illegal migration, transborder crime, drugs and arms traffic, epidemics, pollution, etc. By 1999 NATO had for several years been energetically reorganizing its structures, redrawing operational plans, reforming and retraining its armed forces for these new missions. Allegedly this was to be implemented on the basis of the UN Charter and UN Security Council (UNSC) mandates, in cooperation with Russia and neutral states and in close contact with OSCE. Thus, the principal argument given to Moscow to remove its objections to NATO expansion was that the alliance was being profoundly transformed for the above new missions and that Russia had nothing to fear from it, but rather could greatly benefit from security cooperation with the alliance, which was extending and coming closer to Russia's borders.

Not responding to the Kosovo crisis, which seemed to be a textbook test for such new NATO missions, would have totally discredited NATO, its new proclaimed functions and its very *raison d'être* in the post-Cold War era, at exactly the time of the eagerly anticipated 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The preceding war in Bosnia, which was stopped by the Dayton peace agreement of 1995, after the Serbs were coerced by a limited number of NATO air-strikes, created a model for dealing with such situations. That model also included a Russian vote for the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the NATO peacekeeping operation (SFOR), in which a Russian battalion ("Rusbat") was participating as a part of the U.S. brigade.

All this set a stage for U.S. policy, together with its NATO allies, with respect to Kosovo: first threatening military action against Yugoslavia, then trying to reach a peaceful agreement (first in September 1998 and then at Rambouillet in February-March 1999) and then starting a bombing campaign on March 24, 1999. The latter continued for more than 70 days and ended with Belgrade's capitulation and another UN Security Council resolution. Moscow was actively mediating between NATO and Yugoslavia to achieve peace and elaborate this resolution, which authorized, beside other things, a peacekeeping operation to be implemented once again by NATO and Russia.

## **2. Russian Perceptions of the Conflict and NATO Policy**

Russian historic sympathy towards Serbs, as Slavic Christian orthodox brothers, is the commonly accepted, but groundless, international myth. In the nineteenth century, the Tsarist Russian Empire fought several wars in the Balkans and in 1914 entered the First World War with the single *realpolitik* purpose to achieve geopolitical and geostrategic gains to the detriment of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, a centuries long enemy and principal threat and rival in the soft Russian southern underbelly, the huge Black-Caspian Seas basin. Freeing Christian Slavic brothers from Turkish slavery was nothing more than an ideological justification for Moscow's geopolitical expansion.

In May 1941 Serbs started an uprising against German occupation, which was savagely suppressed by Hitler. Still, the need to re-deploy substantial forces for this purpose and to end the uprising postponed by a few weeks the German attack on the Soviet Union. It may be speculated that this delay eventually saved Moscow from being taken over by the Germans in the summer or early fall of 1941. An early rainy fall and then an early and unusually cold winter stopped the German armies twenty miles from Red Square. This, and the following Russian counteroffensive in December 1941, were the first decisive turning points in the war on the eastern front, which in November 1942 was made irreversible by the Soviet victory in Stalingrad.

But very few Russians know these facts of history and are grateful to the Serbs, although some vague feeling of fraternity subconsciously exists in people's minds. However, this did not prevent a deep split between Stalin and Tito in the late 1940s, when Soviet propaganda went as far as calling the Yugoslav leader a "fascist butcher." Khrushchev's reconciliation with Tito was not celebrated by Russians as a great event, as the vast majority just did not care about intra-Communist quarrels. The sarcastic folk verse of the 1950s went as follows: "Dear comrade Tito, you are now our friend and brother. As Nikita Khrushchev said, you are not guilty at all."

During all the decades of the Cold War, Yugoslavia was quite a challenge to the Communist ideology and the Soviet-led "socialist camp." Being basically a part of the "socialist system" economically and politically, Yugoslavia was neutral in its foreign policy (actually it was a founder nation of the world non-aligned movement), which was in conflict with Communist ideology, and thus was always a big irritant to the foreign policy of the USSR and Warsaw Pact.

To make things worse, Yugoslavia's economic and political regimes were much more liberal and open to Western influence than any other Communist state could afford or was permitted to be. Strategically, Yugoslavia served as a buffer, separating the superior military power of the Warsaw Pact from the southern flank of NATO and denying the USSR naval and air basing opportunities in the Mediterranean to circumvent the Black Sea straits—a historic cork in the bottle for free Russian access to the European underbelly, the Middle East and North Africa.

Two other factors, much more important than the non-substantive "Slavic solidarity," made the ordeal of Yugoslavia and the destiny of the Serbs important for the Russian political elite and public at large. One was the fact that the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia were taking place more or less simultaneously, but following two radically different models with all their enormous implications. Another factor was the policy and role of the West in the process of disintegration, which became a crucial factor in the dissolution of the two Empires and in the domestic politics of Russia.

Whatever the domestic reasons for it were, the Soviet Union was disbanded peacefully, by the initiative of the metropolis (the Russian Federation), and on the basis of consensus of the other three largest Soviet republics: Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Yugoslavia disintegrated violently, against the stubborn resistance of the hegemonic nation, Serbia, and through bloody wars during most of the 1990s, that eventually led to the Kosovo crisis and may lead to the collapse of Serbia itself.

Since the disintegration of the USSR remains so central to Russian domestic and foreign policies (primarily because of the uneasy relations of Moscow with other post-Soviet states), the drama in Yugoslavia provides a tangible input into Russian political calamities. On the one hand, the horrors of failed imperial wars and a sequence of defeats of Belgrade would imply that efforts to preserve the empire by force after the late 1980s would have been fatal for Russia and extremely dangerous for the rest of the world, had the Yugoslavian scenario been applied to the Soviet nuclear superpower. But there is an opposite side to this coin. Disbanding the Soviet Union was the first point of the impeachment process against President Yeltsin attempted by the Communist opposition in May 1999. After a decade of turmoil within Russia and along its perimeter, matched against the crashing failure of economic reforms (which culminated in the default of August 1998), and aggravated by the demise of Russia as a great power by the end of the 1990s, the act of doing away with the Soviet Union in December 1991 is perceived by the vast majority of the Russian political elite, at best, as a fatal mistake, and at worst as treason committed by "Yeltsin and his cronies."

Against this background, direct Western intervention in support of Croats, Bosnians and Kosovars against Serbian attempts to save their sub-regional empire, and later to at least preserve its inner core (since Kosovo is a historic part and parcel of Serbia), is interpreted by many Russians as a clue to what happened with the Soviet Union. In particular, they point out that the disbanding of the Soviet Union in 1991 was followed by an intimate affiliation of the West with Yeltsin's regime and policy, its deep involvement in the elaboration and funding of the economic reforms, as well as indirect Western resistance to Moscow's attempts to restore any part of its influence across the unstable post-Soviet space.

Allegedly all that was a "grand design" by the United States and its allies to do away with the Soviet Union (like Yugoslavia) once and forever, to establish a unipolar world and deny Russia any influence on events even in close proximity to its borders, which was demonstrated so unequivocally during the Balkan crisis. In this light, making Russia impotent and isolated and crushing Serbia – the only bastion of resistance to NATO dominance in Europe (except Russia and Belarus) – are seen as parts of the same strategy.

The Dayton peace agreement of 1995, which is perceived as a great success in the West, looks differently in Russia. The Western attitude towards the war in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991-1992, where Serbs were really the instigators and culprits, was automatically transferred to the perceptions of the war in Bosnia. Not so in Russia, where the difference was noticed. In spite of the continuing subservient policy of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs under Andrei Kozyrev on Yugoslavia, Russia's public opinion, political elite at large, strategic community and mass media started to change their stance on the Balkan crisis and challenged Moscow's official line, which was still going in the wake of the U.S. course. In Bosnia, unlike Slovenia and Croatia, there was no direct military intervention of Serbia to oppress freedom-loving national minorities. Bosnia was a tragic and bloody civil war among the three main ethnic groups: Serbs, Croats and Muslim Bosnians, all of whom received direct support from the outside. Hasty recognition of Bosnian independence before resolving its huge ethnic and territorial controversies triggered that war.

From the Russian angle, the Dayton peace first of all showed that military force, not persistent negotiations, was the decisive instrument for resolving such problems. Second, Moscow was given a clear demonstration that its interests would be taken into account only as long as they were in line with the position of the United States and NATO, but otherwise would be ignored, as were Russia's numerous protests against bombing Serbs. This was the greatest cold shower to dispel the euphoria of the post-Cold War mood in Russia and it induced a growing nostalgia for the past, when the Soviet Union could not be treated so lightly, at least in the vicinity of its sphere of influence, including the Balkans. Third, the West disclosed an outright use of double standards in its post-Cold War policy. When Serbian forces went on the offensive, they were bombed by NATO, but when Croats or Bosnians violated the truce, nothing was done militarily to stop them.

Fourth, the authority of the supreme international organizations, the United Nations and the OSCE, was put in doubt by NATO military intervention, which was not directly authorized by the UN Security Council, but based on some dubious interpretation of its previous resolutions. The West demonstrated that it was willing to follow the rules of international law and the UN Charter only as long as the positions of Russia (and China) in the UN Security Council acquiesced to using these organizations and rules to reach Western goals. Otherwise the West was ready to go ahead, disregarding the legitimate international rules and structures. So much for the long-awaited rule of law in post-Cold War international relations.

There is an argument that whatever the deficiencies of the Dayton peace and the way it was imposed, it stopped massive violence and destruction. In this connection it is conveniently forgotten that in 1993 there was a peace agreement on Bosnia proposed by the UN emissaries David Owen and Cyrus Vance, as well as a Russian proposal to introduce a massive UN peacekeeping force with large participation of Russian forces.

Both were rejected at that time by the United States. Neither NATO nor Western public opinion was ready for a large-scale military operation in the Balkans. But was the Dayton peace agreement so much better that it justified two more years of the bloody war in Bosnia? If the primary goal were to end the war at whatever price, the peace in Bosnia could have been reached much earlier. Two more years of war deserved a much better treaty, based on a genuine compromise among the warring sides (not subjugation of one of them by a superior force), as well as on real cooperation between Russia and the West. Instead, Dayton papered over the deep unresolved hostilities in Bosnia and the growing rift between Russia and the United States. Besides, it set a model for the next, still more destructive crisis in Kosovo.

Russia's own experience with ethnic conflicts and its involvement in those across the post-Soviet space (as well as the sufferings of ethnic Russians in calamities of this nature in many post-Soviet republics) made Russia all the more sensitive to the events in Yugoslavia. Since the late 1980s, Russians have learned by their own tough experience about the complexity of such problems, the irrelevance of black-and-white judgments, the wrongness of one-sided and simplistic designations of villains and martyrs, and the counterproductiveness and unexpected horrible results of the use of crude superior force in support of one or the other side. That experience came from bloody ethnic clashes in Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Ingush tragedy in Northern Ossetia, the wars in Nagorno Karabakh and Transdnister, the tribal-religious massacres in Tajikistan, and worst of all, the painful, tragic and devastating war in Chechnya in 1994-1996.

Abuse of the ethnic rights of Albanians in Kosovo is perceived in Russia quite differently from the way it is seen in the West. Objectivity requires one to admit that the idea of the immanent values of human rights in general, and ethnic minority rights in particular, is new, vague and still weakly rooted in the Russian public consciousness and political mentality. Russia is a young democracy with only one decade of history. Neither 70 years of Communist rule, nor the previous one thousand years of Tsarist Russian history allowed for any democratic values in politics and ideology, while harshly suppressing even minor dissent in those areas. Young democracies tend to be quite inconsistent on human and ethnic rights. (Suffice it to recall the young American democracy, based on eternal Jeffersonian principles, but for almost one century of its maturing oblivious to the human and ethnic rights of black slaves.)

After doing away with Communism in the early 1990s Russians were eager to accept "wholesale" all Western democratic principles and values, brought to them by pro-Western Russian intelligentsia and Western mass-media, which all of a sudden acquired unlimited access to that traditionally closed and permanently brain-washed society. However, disappointment came quite soon, first of all as a result of devastating economic reforms, unprecedented crime and corruption, the disintegration of social security and the disorganization of all state functions.

The idea of ethnic rights has gained a perverted sense in impoverished Russian cities, and even in relatively prosperous Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where ethnic newcomers from the Caucasus and Central Asia are most conspicuous in crime and corruption activities and unabashedly enjoy the luxuries of the "new life" (casinos and high fashion clothing, expensive restaurants and cars, suburban mansions and the best foreign resorts, etc.), which are unthinkable for the great majority of Russians. Cases of abuse of non-Russian ethnic minorities do exist in Russia, including Moscow, but they occur at a routine level, in a biased treatment by the police and the registration system for "the guests of the city." However, many ethnic "Southerners" occupy key positions in the federal and local government, finance, trade and the most lucrative business (like oil and gas), and some spheres are totally monopolized by them (like food bazaars in Moscow by Azerbaijanis).

Furthermore, this takes place against the background of discrimination against ethnic Russians in many former Soviet republics: all the way from "civilized" European Latvia to underdeveloped Asian Uzbekistan or

Turkmenistan, where Russians are banned from government, business and are routinely oppressed in everyday life. This is true not only for other post-Soviet countries, but for many autonomous ethnic republics within the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus and Volga-Ural regions.

Last, but not least, Western indifference towards abuse of the human and ethnic rights of Russians in post-Soviet states has destroyed the credibility of Western allegiance towards those values elsewhere. For instance, the most outrageous discrimination against Russians in Latvia, where they must pass difficult exams to get citizenship or otherwise are given “non-citizen” passports with severe limitations of their social and political status, are meeting only mild resistance and criticism in the West.

Russians are aware of the same selective attitude of the West towards ethnic rights in the Balkans. During the war in Bosnia, ethnic cleansing by Serbs against Bosnians and Croats was broadly covered by mass media and served as the principal justification for the NATO air raids against Serbian forces in 1995. However, when Croatian and Bosnian forces undertook a counteroffensive, while Yugoslavia under U.S. pressure stopped its aid to Serbian troops, about 300,000 Serbs were expelled from the Krajina in Croatia. This was the largest ethnic cleansing during the whole Bosnian war. Many thousands of refugees perished in the process under Croatian fire and attacks of marauders. And nothing was done by the West, not even any obvious political pressure on Tudjman’s regime in Croatia, to say nothing of any military action to save the peaceful Serbian population.

Such precedents made Russians very skeptical about the real nature of Western concern for the ethnic rights of Albanians in Kosovo. Russians are generally inclined to think that such concern is nothing more than just a convenient pretext, provided for public consumption, to justify intervention, undertaken for very different genuine reasons. Western selectivity with respect to the ethnic rights of Russians in Latvia and Serbs in Croatia is so obvious that any argument to the contrary would be taken at best as naivete or at worst as deception.

Not many Russians (just like Westerners) know in detail the history of the conflict in Kosovo. But their hard experience of the recent past in the former Soviet Union and analogies with Yugoslavia would make them suspect that the picture is not as simple and clear “black-and-white” as the Western official line and media would claim. And they are intuitively right in their suspicions.

### **3. A Bit of History of the Kosovo Problem**

Historically, Kosovo was the cradle of the Serbian nation and creed. All the most sacred Serbian Christian Orthodox monasteries are in Kosovo in the area called Metokhia. Hence the full name of this Serbian province: Kosovo and Metokhia. At the Kosovo field near Pristina, the Serbs were defeated by the Turks in the late fourteenth century, after which Serbia was subjugated by Turkey for five hundred years. After adopting Islam, Albanians were encouraged to move to Kosovo to fortify Turkish domination over Serbs and most of them stayed there after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War. During the Second World War, Germany’s closest ally Italy created Greater Albania and included Kosovo into its new borders. At the instigation of Hitler and Mussolini, Albanians in Kosovo savagely oppressed Serbs: in 1941-1942, about 10,000 Serbs were killed there and 100,000 left as refugees (according to U.S. data) and the same number of Albanians moved into Kosovo. After the end of the Second World War, there were approximately equal numbers of Serbs and Albanians in this province, which was naturally returned to Serbia by the general post-war territorial settlement in Europe, one element of which was the creation of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (later renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

During the 1950s and 1960s the authoritarian Yugoslavian President Tito (who was Croat by nationality) encouraged Albanians to relocate to Kosovo and step by step broadened its autonomy within Serbia. His motives were to limit Serbian domination of the whole Yugoslavia. Besides, he contemplated eventually pulling Albania into Yugoslavia and for this purpose uniting Kosovo with Albania. Although Kosovo was the poorest province of Serbia, it was much more prosperous than isolated and underdeveloped Albania across the border. Tito's policy of pandering to Kosovo Albanians was his way of undermining the Maoist regime of Enver Hoxha in Tirana. In the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 Kosovo received rights and powers equal to all other republics of Yugoslavia (Croatia, Slovenia, etc.), except the right to secede from the Federation.

Broad autonomy for Kosovo opened the door to a massive inflow of Albanians from impoverished neighboring Albania and from other regions, which together with high birth rates made ethnic Albanians a 90 percent or so majority in the province. This ethnic pressure and local Albanian self-rule was making life difficult for the Serbs and induced them to leave Kosovo in large numbers (much like what has been happening since 1991 with Russians in the North Caucasus and some other republics of the Russian Federation). Simultaneously, this was provoking the indignation and resistance of Serbs in Kosovo and other Serbian regions. Slobodan Milosevic decided to capitalize on the growing nationalistic feelings of Serbs to consolidate his public appeal while he was President of the Serbian Republic and then President of Yugoslavia. In 1989, constitutional amendments removed broad autonomy from Kosovo and shifted authority to Belgrade and to the Serbian administration, courts and police in Kosovo.

This step was the turning point in the developments in the province that eventually led to massive violence and international military involvement. No doubt this was the fundamental and fatal mistake of the Milosevic regime. By the late 1980s Yugoslavia started to fall apart with growing secessionism in Slovenia and Croatia. Belgrade decided to fortify its position in the Serbian provinces by constitutional amendments to prevent their following this example, but instead triggered a classic self-fulfilling prophecy. Albanian resistance started with protests from the intelligentsia, then student demonstrations, suppressed by Serbian police, which provoked acts of terrorism and armed underground activities.

For all the magnitude of the mistakes of the Milosevic regime, it is worthwhile to make one reservation. Although Kosovo Albanians were deprived of local self-government, they retained all civil rights and freedoms. State schools and the press used the Serbian language, but there was no limitation on private schools and mass media in the Albanian language. Before Albanian extremists started broad armed resistance, there was nothing comparable in Kosovo to, say, the discrimination against ethnic Russians in Latvia: "non-citizen" passports, limitations on the occupation of official posts, participation in elections, commercial activities, ownership of private property, getting pensions, etc. Still the West, which took so closely to heart the deprivations of Kosovars, has been showing an amazing tolerance towards the abuse of the civil and ethnic rights of Russians in Latvia. Hence, by European standards, the difficulties of Albanians in Kosovo could be a legitimate reason for political resistance, but in no way for armed revolt. Otherwise, Russians in Latvia should be considered entitled to military resistance as well, which apparently the West would not wish to encourage.

Another facet of the Kosovo problem was Albania's domestic calamities, which directly triggered violent events in Kosovo. In Albania there are two main ethnic subgroups. The Teske live in the south (30 percent of the whole population), a large part of them in cities, mostly sharing socialist ideology, one-third Catholic and two-thirds Orthodox Christians. In the north are the Gege (70 percent of the population), who are less developed Muslim nationalists, mostly in rural areas. After the fall of the government of Sali Berisha in 1997, the new government was formed by the southerners, while the northerners started actively using the "Kosovo card" (oppression of brother Albanians in Serbia) in their struggle to regain power in Tirana. Apart from the

symbolic political effect of bolstering the radical northerners, the “reunion” with Kosovars would provide the Gege with an overwhelming majority in Albania (its population is 3 million and 1.5 million in Kosovo).

Northern Albanians and Kosovars hoped that after the Dayton 1995 peace on Bosnia there would be a second Dayton international conference, which would resolve the Kosovo problem. When this did not happen, in March 1996 the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was created, into which newly arrived militant students from Albania implanted Maoist ideology on top of Muslim radicalism. In October 1997, the KLA conducted the first large demonstration in Kosovo’s capital, Pristina, against the moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova, who was elected in Kosovo in 1992, and whom Belgrade stubbornly refused to recognize. Since late 1997, Kosovo has been split between moderates under Rugova and radicals led by KLA chief Hashim Thaci.

In late 1997, there were talks between Yugoslavia and Albania on the Kosovo issue at the level of foreign ministers, after which Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic met with Albanian Premier Fatos Nano. In May 1998 Milosevic met with Rugova. These events were interpreted by the KLA as signs of the forthcoming settlement between Belgrade, Tirana and Kosovo moderates behind the back of Albanian northerners and Kosovo militants.

A broad armed uprising started in Kosovo in May (after several successful local attacks since March) and by July the KLA gained control over 40 percent of the territory of this province, killing hundreds of Serbian policemen, peaceful Serbs and loyal Albanians in the process. In response Serbian regular armed forces and internal troops moved into Kosovo and by late August suppressed the uprising, driving the KLA out. This was done harshly, with large collateral fatalities among Albanian civilians and the destruction of many villages. According to Kosovo Albanian data, about 1,500 people were killed (including armed guerillas) and 400-500,000 refugees fled to Albania and Macedonia.

At first, the United States did not support the KLA, officially declaring it on a number of occasions a “terrorist organization” keen on creating Greater Albania by uniting all Albanians living in the Balkans and cutting pieces of territory from many countries of this region. But, in September 1998, the KLA almost succeeded in a coup against the government of Nano in Tirana, blaming it for not supporting the struggle of Kosovars. Then the West started to exert pressure on Belgrade to stop military actions in Kosovo and let the refugees come back to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in refugee camps. Western mass media opened a massive campaign against Milosevic and Serbian oppression, atrocities and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, as well as about the sufferings of the refugees in the camps of Albania and Macedonia. Finally, NATO threatened to bomb Yugoslavia and started actual preparations for military action.

Several weeks of hectic diplomatic activities followed between Moscow and Washington, in the OSCE, within the Contact Group (the United States, France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Russia), as well as bilaterally between Moscow and Belgrade, Washington and Belgrade and Washington and Pristina. At that time, war was averted, the Serbian army returned to its casernes and refugees started to return home. It was agreed that 2,000 OSCE observers would come to Kosovo to supervise the Serbian withdrawal and the protection of Albanian ethnic rights. However, the KLA also came back, with the sole aim of revenge and the provocation of another war to induce NATO to intervene militarily and help the KLA gain full control over Kosovo. In winter 1998-1999, military hostilities resumed on a broad scale, the Serbian army returned, the OSCE observers left and Albanian refugees went away for the second time.

In January 1999, the conference was convened in Rambouillet, France. NATO, Russia and Yugoslavia agreed to four basic principles: the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, its sovereignty over Kosovo (with the granting of broad autonomy to the province), the withdrawal of the major part of the Serbian army, and return



of refugees under international protection and humanitarian relief. However, the Executive Protocol was never signed. It envisioned the massive introduction of NATO troops into Kosovo, a no-flight zone over the part of Serbian territory bordering Kosovo, the demilitarization of the KLA and the formation of the Kosovo Protection Corps, and an eventual referendum on the status of the province (with predictable consequences). Since Moscow and Belgrade did not sign this document, the Western side signed it unilaterally with the representatives of the KLA. Later the KLA revoked its signature, since the provision for the referendum, as the most provocative, had been removed. The talks stalled, while the pressure for some action mounted in the West.

On March 24 the first NATO air and missile strike was launched against Serbian troops and other targets in Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia. One more Balkan war started, and the post-Cold War phase of U.S.-Russian relations ended.

#### **4. War and Politics**

Whatever the humanitarian justifications of this military action, from the angle of international law it was a fact of outright aggression against a sovereign state (although for the obvious reasons the UN Security Council did not describe it as such). The NATO air war was a rude violation of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, in which the sides undertook an obligation never to use force against any third state, except by authorization of the UNSC in accordance with the UN Charter and international law.

This first large-scale devastating use of force in Europe since 1945 shook the very foundation of the post-Cold War European international order. NATO strategy was an imposing embodiment of the principle “the end justifies the means” and of double standards in foreign policy. Without justifying brutal Serbian methods of dealing with Kosovars, it is worthwhile to remember that ethnic conflicts in general are extremely difficult to resolve cleanly and quickly. Except for the former Czechoslovakia, which divorced peacefully in the 1990s, other countries encountered great problems in addressing such issues, which sometimes led to broad-scale bloody violence: Russia, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkey, a NATO member which incidentally was deeply concerned about NATO military actions, fearing obvious analogies with the Kurdish issue in the European public mind. In Latvia, a candidate to join NATO and the European Union, violence has up to now been avoided only because the ethnic Russian minority has been more patient towards much worse violations of its human rights than those which had provoked an armed revolt in Kosovo.

Even states with much stronger democratic traditions, deeply integrated into the civilized Western world, fail for many decades to resolve ethnic conflicts smoothly: the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel and others. The United States itself about a hundred years ago plunged into the most devastating and bloody war to preserve its territorial integrity, losing in the process almost a million Americans.

However at the end of the twentieth century only Yugoslavia was singled out as a culprit to be punished by the most powerful military alliance in the world for failing to fix its ethnic problem peacefully and wisely. It is impossible to get rid of the impression that it was not the tragedy of Kosovo Albanians per se which provoked such a strong reaction, but the will of the United States and its allies to do away with the regime of Milosevic, which was motivated by other factors in European and intra-NATO politics. The Kosovo crisis was just a good pretext, especially after a massive and prolonged mass media campaign to portray Milosevic as a “new Hitler.”

Saving innocent Albanian people by killing many hundreds of other innocent people (Serbians), signed off as “deplorable collateral damage,” was a shocking example of moral aberration on the part of the civilized West, and most of all of enlightened Western Europe, which rejects capital punishment of even the most evil criminals condemned by courts. Official Western information on “massive executions of civilians” by Serbian troops in Kosovo and “mass graves” also turned out to be false, when after the war international teams of experts started the investigation in place. The victims found in such graves were far less numerous than had been asserted and many of them probably were KLA guerrillas. This, in particular, led to a scandal in the British Parliament and the Minister of Defense had to give explanations that actually acknowledged the fact of deliberate misinformation of the public by the government.

Serbian actions in Kosovo were harsh and sometimes very cruel, but NATO military intervention transferred the conflict into a qualitatively different dimension. Air strikes overshadowed the violence on the ground and much aggravated the sufferings of the peaceful population in Kosovo and the rest of Serbia. Yugoslav forces, unable to respond to superior NATO power, applied their vengeance to Kosovars: ethnic cleansing – the organized massive expulsion of the civilian population – started only after the initiation of air strikes, not before. The campaign of the Western mass media about ethnic cleansing in Kosovo before NATO action was a conscious lie to affect public opinion and justify the use of force. NATO action upgraded a local ethnic conflict (with a lower than average level of casualties by the 1990s post-Communist standards) up to an acute international political and potentially military confrontation, involving nuclear powers. For the first few days of the air war the crisis looked like the most explosive and dangerous since the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962.

NATO military action was a slap in the face for Russia, and more than ever before demonstrated Western arrogance and willingness to ignore Russian interests when they diverge from those of the West. It was a particularly painful humiliation for Moscow, since President Yeltsin had given many personal undertakings to prevent such action and had guaranteed Yugoslav security. In view of the vulnerable position of Yeltsin and Russian democrats, strongly attacked inside the country for the failure of economic reforms (which climaxed in the August 1998 default) and for infinite unilateral concessions to the West in foreign affairs, NATO’s action was also a clear manifestation of a total U.S. disregard for the positions of democrats and the prospects of democratic reforms in Russia. Routine short-term considerations took the upper hand over the fundamental long-term issues of European and world security, which are dependent on the success of democracy in Russia.

Predictably, the NATO strikes provoked an unprecedented outcry in Russia, an enormous wave of anti-American and anti-NATO moods, which by far exceeded anything like those seen even in the worst days of the Cold War, when such attitudes were deliberately (and mostly unsuccessfully) instigated by official Soviet propaganda. All the principal political parties, including democrats, mass media, public opinion and all branches of government, joined in this reaction of indignation and hostility towards NATO and sympathy towards the Serbs. Traditional feelings towards Serbs had nothing to do with this reaction: support for Yugoslavia was the Russians’ response to the U.S. and NATO’s arrogant and unjust, deeply biased and heavy-handed policy with respect to Belgrade and to impudent Western self-righteousness and egoistic neglect of the views and interests of other states, above all Russia.

Apart from anything else, Russian democrats were very much concerned about the lessons which the West was giving to Russia: the goals justify the means and national interests are higher than law or any considerations of fairness and justice. If those rules were followed by long-established Western democracies, a young and controversial Russian democracy could all the more indulge itself in such a philosophy. They were right. Only a few months later this lesson was implemented by the Kremlin in the new military action in Chechnya.

Besides, there is a wide consensus in Russia that the Balkans remain the only region outside the post-Soviet space where Moscow has retained serious economic, political and security interests. At least Russia has much greater reasons to hold this view than the United States. And this has nothing to do with the “Slavic orthodox fraternity,” which is a subject of speculation by nationalists in Russia and Yugoslavia, as well as an easy and empty explanation of Russian reaction in the West. The Balkans are directly adjacent to the Black-Caspian Seas zone of vital Russian interests. The Balkans are a possible route of Russian oil and gas pipelines (with terminals at the Russian Black Sea shore and shipping across the Black Sea) to circumvent the Turkish Black Sea straits, which are periodically closed to Russian oil tankers. Developments in the Balkans affect Russia’s relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and the volatile Transcaucasus and North Caucasus sub-regions. The Russian political and military presence in the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean is highly dependent on Russian positions in the Balkans. Also, Moscow highly values the Serbian stance against NATO expansion, fully shared by Russia and very few other European countries. If this is one of the reasons why the West does not like Milosevic, any military pressure on Yugoslavia would be as disagreeable to Russia as Russian military pressure on the countries that are applicants to NATO would be unacceptable to the West.

A common Western argument is that NATO was obliged to take a unilateral military action since Russia’s position made the UNSC and the OSCE unable to take decisive measures, while the toleration of further violence in Kosovo was no longer possible. However, it is precisely the essence of the function and procedure of the supreme international security organizations, notably the United Nations, to forge a consensus out of diverging views and elaborate joint actions to deal with external aggression or the massive violation of human and ethnic rights inside any country. A superior power must not claim the right to circumvent such organizations and procedures only because they prevent it from acting quickly to execute its will. In a civilized state one is not permitted to shoot a criminal, even if one disagrees with the verdict of a court of justice or its procedures seem too long and complicated.

As for the urgency of taking action on Kosovo, it is noteworthy that the West, as well as the UN and the OSCE, were sitting on their hands when the KLA was taking control over the province in May-July 1998, showing no haste to stop violence and numerous killings of Serbian police, civilians and loyal Albanians. Neither was any action taken after September 1998 to prevent the KLA from returning to Kosovo together with refugees, although it was absolutely clear that the secessionists would not agree to a peaceful solution short of full independence of Kosovo, and for that reason would provoke a new war.

In one stroke, NATO action crossed out all those cooperative and constructive elements that were created by the patient policies of Moscow and the West not only during the 1990s, but for a much longer time in the 1970s and 1980s. The START 2 Treaty ratification was once again frozen in the State Duma when chances for a positive vote were quite high. All contacts with NATO, including through the Partnership for Peace program, were stopped as well.

For the first time since the mid-1980s operational departments of the General Staff and Armed Forces, the Security Council and the Foreign Ministry crisis-management groups, closed sessions of the Duma were seriously discussing the option of military conflict with NATO. All of a sudden the apocalyptic scenarios of the Third World War, which seemingly had gone into history for good, came back from Tom Clancy suspense best-sellers to practical policy-making and military operational planning. After an unprecedented decade of disarmament, de-targeting, cooperation and transparency in defense and security matters between Russia and the United States, this was like a cold shower, reviving the worst instincts and stereotypes of the Cold War. However short this period was (the first few weeks of the bombing) this scar will probably stay forever in U.S.-Russian relations, which will never be the same as before March 24, 1999. Full responsibility for this lies with the Clinton Administration and its European allies.

NATO aggression against Yugoslavia has demonstrated a genuine transformation of this alliance. During the Cold War it was really a defensive coalition of states to defend their territories and deter the superior offensive military power of the Warsaw Pact. After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, the threat all of a sudden evaporated and NATO inadvertently became by far the most powerful military force in the world. NATO started a desperate search for a new sense of existence.

This was discovered in peace-enforcement and peace-keeping military missions, which would be welcomed and expedient if the alliance had trimmed its forces and structures radically and provided its services to the legitimate international security organizations: the UN and the OSCE. However, NATO was too powerful and sophisticated to accept this modest secondary position. Hence, it claimed a much greater mission in the post-Cold War world: to be at least on an equal footing as and possibly at much higher status and power than the United Nations and the OSCE. This implied the self-proclaimed right to act independently without UN or OSCE authorization, which was considered desirable, but not necessary to initiate military action by NATO. Moreover, the new alliance strategy allows for military action of an offensive nature and beyond the territories of NATO member states. Thus, the countries which do not belong to the alliance and are not aspiring to membership have every reason to fear possible NATO military aggression based on arbitrary NATO decisions, instead of the legitimate judgment of the UN and UNSC, as the highest international court of justice, to reach such verdicts and execute the punishment.

The argument that, since NATO is an alliance of democratic countries, others have nothing to fear from it, is amazing in its hypocrisy or foolishness. Democratic states have a historic record of waging unjust and devastating wars: like European powers in their colonies in Asia and Africa in the 1950s-1970s and the United States in Vietnam in 1964-1972. This argument is reminiscent of the ideological Soviet thesis that the Soviet Union by its very nature cannot be an aggressor, whomever it attacks. The present premises of NATO strategy also bring to mind the teachings of the Communist founding father Vladimir Lenin, who argued that the nature of just or unjust war and the role of states-parties to a war are not determined by who attacks whom, but rather by the class nature of the participating states and their class goals in a war.

History knows many examples of a victim turning into a predator and a defender into offender. As the Balkan war of 1999 has shown, whatever the official justifications for the military action, NATO transformed from a status quo to an expansionary alliance (in a sense of its territorial extension), from a defensive to an offensive military power, and from a law-abiding international actor keen on averting aggression into an aggressive encroacher on international law and the legitimate role of the United Nations and the OSCE. The unpleasant image of the Milosevic regime and the cruelty of the Serbian army in Kosovo do not change this reality, although they made it much easier to sell the employment of NATO force to Western public opinion and parliaments.

NATO has become the greatest problem of European security, since apparently it cannot exist without an enemy and the regular threat and use of force. If the enemy or the reason for war are absent, they have to be artificially created to justify NATO's continued existence. This is now, with one or another reservation, an overwhelming opinion of all Russian political parties and figures, including centrists and democrats, except for a marginal group of radical pro-Western politicians.

## **5. War and Diplomacy**

The military side of the 1999 war is a subject for a special study. Suffice it to say that NATO turned it into a major military show, where the most advanced and sophisticated weapons, command and control systems, operations and tactics were demonstrated. The campaign "Allied Force" continued for 78 days with the par-

ticipation of 14 out of 19 NATO member-states. Altogether, 1,260 aircraft and 30 combat ships were employed, including three aircraft carriers and six nuclear attack submarines with cruise missiles. The air forces conducted 35,000 sorties and about 15,000 bombs and missiles hit Yugoslavia. In preparation for a ground offensive, 27,000 troops were re-deployed to Albania and Macedonia. During the war the newest technology was extensively tested: stealth B-2 and F-117 airplanes, long-range sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, guided bombs, cluster and penetrating munitions, space reconnaissance, communication and navigation systems, new airborne warning and control systems, and electronic warfare and counter-radar systems, various kinds of drones, etc.

All this frightening panoply of military power (almost 20 percent of all NATO potential) was thrown against a small country with a population equivalent to greater New York City (11 million), with a GNP smaller than U.S. military R&D expenditures (\$17 billion) and an army of 100,000 armed with Soviet weapons of 1960s vintage. This country almost did not resist the massive air-campaign, symbolically firing back with anti-aircraft guns and obsolete SA-6 and SA-7 missile systems.

And still the results of the war are dubious at best. The initial goal of NATO was to destroy the Serbian army and its supply and infrastructure assets in Kosovo and across the rest of the country. However, when the Serbian troops were later leaving Kosovo, it turned out that only 13 tanks were destroyed, while 300 tanks and APCs were left intact. The Serbian army in Kosovo survived a terrible beating and was ready to meet the ground offensive and inflict heavy casualties on the enemy. Apparently Western figures on Yugoslav army losses in Kosovo and elsewhere were highly exaggerated.

Another aim was not reached either. As in the Gulf War of 1991, NATO's tactic was to provoke all enemy SAM radar to start operation against the first waves of aircraft, discover and destroy them with anti-radiation missiles and thus deprive Yugoslavia of any air defense capability. However, the Serbs did not switch on their radar, trying to preserve their air defense till the time of a NATO ground invasion when the aircraft would have to go down to low altitudes to provide air cover for the ground forces. Without destroying Serbian air defenses NATO did not dare to go to lower altitudes, and that is why NATO losses were amazingly small: two airplanes and 16 drones, not a single pilot killed in combat. But the Serbian army was not seriously crippled either.

Having failed to reach the first goals, the alliance apparently changed its strategy to the destruction of Yugoslavia's industrial assets, infrastructure, administrative and communications facilities. In this pogrom on a defenseless country from an altitude of 10,000 meters, NATO air power really was a great "success" (although the famous precision-guided weapons sometimes hit the wrong targets: embassies, like that of China, and even the wrong countries – including Macedonia and Albania). As a result of seven weeks of bombardment of Yugoslavia 100 percent of the oil refineries were destroyed, as were 70 percent of the defense industry, 60 percent of fuel storage facilities, 100 percent of electricity transformers, and 40 percent of TV and radio stations, including the Belgrade TV center, where 16 civilian employees were killed by missiles. Also 68 bridges were destroyed and 70 percent of the roads and 50 percent of the railroads were put out of action.

Altogether 1,500 people were killed, two thirds of them civilians, 2,500 lost their homes, and 2 million became jobless. Other items of collateral damage included 86 historic monuments, more than 300 schools, hospitals and other civilian sites. Another consequence is the ecological damage as a result of destruction of oil refineries and oil storages, chemical plants, which heavily polluted the Danube, one of the main European rivers which is bringing this pollution into the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. In late 1999 the Attorney General of the UN International Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia, Carla del Ponte, in addition to the investigation of Serbian atrocities in Kosovo, started an investigation into NATO crimes in the course of the bombing campaign and gross violations of the Geneva convention on the rights of civilians during combat.

In spite of the intensive bombing, the Serbian army continued operations against the KLA and drove them out of the province. Also after the air campaign started, Serbian internal troops implemented massive ethnic cleansing of Albanians. Altogether about 900,000 left Kosovo in the course of ethnic cleansing or to escape fighting on the ground and NATO air strikes, that on many occasions hit Albanians, refugee convoys and civilian transportation vehicles. In addition to Albanians, about 100,000 Serbs left Kosovo because of air raids. The humanitarian catastrophe, which allegedly was to be averted by NATO action, was greatly exacerbated.

The results of NATO's eleven weeks of air war were quite dubious. Milosevic's regime survived (not just during the war, but after Belgrade's defeat as well), which was contrary to the main U.S. strategic goal in the Balkans. Despite vast devastation of Yugoslav economy, its army survived as well and was ready to meet a NATO ground invasion. If that had happened it would have cost the West heavy losses and profound political consequences. The humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo grew much larger and added great sufferings of Serbian civilians to the tragedies of Albanian civilians. All in all, beside the impressive show of military technology, NATO strategy on Kosovo was not a success. And it would have been a historic failure were it not for the Russian diplomatic role and actions.

Russian reactions to NATO aggression were of three types. One, shared by nationalists and radical Communists, and emotionally supported by a large part (at least a third) of public opinion, was to provide Yugoslavia all kinds of military aid, including the famous S-300 air defense missiles (SA-10 and SA-12), to send volunteers, and if need be, deploy Russian regular troops, in particular if the ground invasion of Kosovo took place. Yugoslavia was entitled to any aid of such kind as a victim of aggression by the UN Charter. To enhance this right there was a strong drive in Russia to conclude a mutual security assistance treaty with Belgrade or to accept Yugoslavia into the Russian-Belarusian bilateral alliance, which included an obligation of mutual assistance in case of attack on either party. The State Duma by an overwhelming majority voted in favor of this acceptance in April 1999 (the Yugoslav Parliament, the Skupshina, had also supported it earlier). Although this vote was not binding at the executive branch, it demonstrated like many other Duma resolutions (as did huge and violent demonstrations near the U.S. embassy in Moscow) the depth of hatred towards the United States and NATO in broad strata of the society.

The principal argument that worked against this most militant stance was just the practical unfeasibility of such aid. Yugoslavia was surrounded by either NATO member states, or countries aspiring to NATO membership. Hence, either ground or air communications were closed to Russia. Sea routes implied crossing the Black Sea straits, controlled by Turkey, or Gibraltar, sealed by NATO navies. The shores of Yugoslavia, belonging to the Serbian-allied Republic of Montenegro, could be easily blockaded by NATO naval forces that were engaged in the air raids. Breaking through to Montenegro's shores would have meant a direct collision of the Russian fleet with much superior NATO naval and air forces. This would have resulted in either a Russian crushing defeat or a Third World War, with horrible consequences for all. This was what contained Russia's direct aid or intervention. But the extent of the fundamentally changed attitude towards NATO was reflected in serious discussion of such options, which went on and on during the first weeks of the war.

Another position, shared by an even larger part of public opinion, was to abstain from any involvement and provide Yugoslavia full moral and political support, hoping that the war would turn into NATO's European Vietnam, especially in the event of a ground invasion of Kosovo. Russian public opinion and the major part of the political elite wished for heavy casualties of NATO forces, the collapse of the alliance and the withdrawal of the U.S. presence from Europe altogether. In a sense this was a no less impressive manifestation of the change of Russian public attitudes towards the United States and the West in general, induced by a cumulative reaction to NATO's expansion in Europe and military actions in the Balkans in the mid to late 1990s.

However, due to NATO's enormous superiority in all dimensions of power, this position implied a war with terrible devastation of Yugoslavia before NATO would start to crumble. During the Vietnam War it took three years of large-scale fighting before U.S. public support for the involvement disintegrated. And even after this the war went on for five more years before Washington tacitly acknowledged defeat and withdrew, initiating a profound reappraisal of all U.S. foreign and defense policy and international involvement. Yugoslavia was not able to resist NATO for a long time without massive Russian massive aid and involvement, which would have led to a global confrontation between Russia and the West, with consequences far outreaching the initial stakes in the Balkan conflict.

It was highly doubtful that Yugoslavia could take such great pain as Vietnam and besides, Europe was not Asia to withstand the prolonged shock of such events. Most probably the escalation of bombing and a ground invasion to subjugate Yugoslavia would soon have induced Russia to intervene directly with all the immense consequences of the first option. Or, with Moscow sitting on its hands, it would have led to a mortal defeat and destruction of Yugoslavia, albeit with heavy casualties and political damage to NATO, while Russia would finally be denigrated and totally marginalized in European affairs. Both variants were too high a price to pay for giving NATO a lesson and undermining the alliance.

That is why a third option gained the support of the most realistic remaining part of the Russian political elite and was accepted as an official line by the president and the government. It consisted of taking the initiative in promoting a diplomatic settlement of the conflict between NATO and Yugoslavia. Such mediation would have to help NATO save face without rewarding it for an outrageous act of aggression. Also it had to rescue the regime of Milosevic from collapse and save Yugoslavia from further damage, while sustaining its juridical sovereignty over Kosovo and providing the Albanian majority there with security and maximum autonomy. And finally, this course had to enhance the role and influence of Moscow in the Balkans and in European affairs, limiting the role of NATO and making the Alliance reckon with the UN, the OSCE and Russia.

Clearly, such a strategy required a diplomatic genius on the level of Henry Kissinger, or a modern Metternich, or his Russian analogue of the nineteenth century, Alexander Gorchakov. Alas, nobody like that was found in Yeltsin's administration or government. Instead, someone least of all suited for such a mission was appointed – Victor Chernomyrdin, a former prime minister of Russia, under whom the economy disintegrated for six years, precipitating the August 1998 crash and default. This person was a favorite subject for folk jokes in Russia for his modest intellect and illiterate manner of speaking (before becoming a government official he was an oil-drilling engineer and rose to become the head of Gazprom). This envoy, when appointed to perform a diplomatic miracle in the Balkans, had quite a sober intuitive view of Moscow's general interest, but could not tell Bosnia from Croatia and had never heard of the UN Charter. His direct diplomatic contact was U.S. deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott – an expert diplomat, a master of international politics and one of the best specialists on the Soviet Union and Russia (an author of many books on the subject), who spoke Russian probably more fluently than Chernomyrdin. In such a diplomatic competition there were no doubts about who would be the winner.

The main reason for the appointment of Chernomyrdin was Yeltsin's distrust and jealousy towards the then prime minister and former foreign minister Yevgeni Primakov. He was suspected by the Kremlin of playing games with Communists in the Duma and becoming too popular in Russia as a possible successor to Yeltsin. While Primakov was a recognized authority on foreign affairs and took quite a tough stance on NATO's action against Yugoslavia, the appointment of Chernomyrdin—a person with no experience in diplomacy at all and a well known dependency on the West—was a deliberate slap in the face for Primakov and a clear signal that his time was running short. (A month and a half after the beginning of the war Primakov was dismissed

from his post.) This was a typical Kremlin intrigue, in which the interests of the state and crucial issues of world security were subordinated to Byzantine games for power and position in Moscow.

Besides, there were several other reasons why Chernomyrdin's mission was doomed to failure. One was a characteristic disorganization of Yeltsin's government, when different agencies acted without proper coordination, responsibility was diffused and implementation stumbled. On Yugoslavia, the Ministry of Defense, high officials of the general staff of the armed forces, the Foreign Ministry, the cabinet and Chernomyrdin all took varying positions and made conflicting statements on the issue.

Another factor was Russia's political and military weakness and deep financial dependency on the West, which severely limited its freedom of maneuver in promoting its independent plan for peace in the Balkans. And last, but certainly not least, was the fact that the war was a one-way street. Only one side was being bombed, while the other was never attacked and did not take any casualties while bombing. Diplomatic mediation between such unequal parties and in such an unfavorable situation would be a big challenge even for a great master of diplomacy—to say nothing of Chernomyrdin. The enormous inequality of positions of NATO and Yugoslavia could be to some extent redressed only by a forceful and consistent Russian diplomacy, which would put all the political weight of Russia on the scales to add to a helpless Yugoslavia and yield a not grossly unequal peace. Instead, Chernomyrdin did something quite different.

In fact his mission fulfilled two tasks, whether willingly or not. One was to provide a political smoke screen for the continuing NATO air campaign. The rising opposition in European parliaments and public opinion was placated by references to Russia's mediation and arguments not to weaken the Western negotiating position by opposing the war. Another job was to persuade Belgrade to accept something very close to the NATO position on the peaceful settlement.

The Russian envoy, because of his personal limitations and the decision-making mess in Moscow, failed to formulate a clear and just peace package, and was even less able to implement anything like that in practice. Instead, his mission came down to a role of postman between NATO and Belgrade, which naturally turned into imposing the Western peace proposals on Yugoslavia, since it was Yugoslavia which took the bombing and it was NATO that was delivering it. Instead of adding Russian political weight to Yugoslavia, Chernomyrdin added it to NATO, which eventually brought Belgrade to its knees.

At first, Moscow's position was: unconditional stopping of the air war; partial withdrawal of Yugoslav troops while leaving police and local administration in the province to form a coalition government, including moderate Albanians; deployment of the UN peacekeeping force in Kosovo ("blue helmets"), consisting of a large Russian contingent and those of neutral countries; return of all refugees to Kosovo and peaceful coexistence of Serbs, Albanians and other ethnic groups; full disarming of the KLA and preventing its gaining control over Kosovo; restoration of destroyed property in Yugoslavia; and compensation for human losses caused by NATO countries. It was stated that a NATO peacekeeping force would be just an occupation of part of Yugoslavia by an aggressor and a victory of an aggression.

But the air raids continued and Russia persuaded Yugoslavia to make a concession by agreeing to a linkage between the cessation of bombing and Belgrade's obligation to a complete withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and the introduction of the international peacekeeping force. It was also conceded that the UN-run peacekeeping contingent might include smaller NATO countries, which were not most active in the military campaign. U.S. and other major forces could stay in Albania and Macedonia, providing an outer perimeter and keeping the KLA at bay.



Still the war went on and Moscow pushed Belgrade towards another concession by accepting U.S. and other leading NATO countries' broad peacekeeping presence in Kosovo. But it was to be under the UN flag and UN command, while the Russian contingent was to be the largest (10,000) and control its own sector, in parallel to U.S., German, French, British and Italian sectors. The Russian sector was to be adjacent to the border with central Serbia. Russians would also protect several enclaves of Serbian population and historic monasteries. This was promised by Chernomyrdin to Milosevic, as well as that the peace-keeping operation would be authorized by the UNSC in accordance to Chapter VI of the UN Charter (i.e. an operation by agreement of all parties) and the UN resolution would recognize Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo.

On all points the Serbs were betrayed. A surprising march of a Russian military unit from Bosnia to Kosovo on June 12 and its deployment in the Pristina airport (named Slatina) was just a sensational gesture which did not change the principal guidelines of the final agreement. The UNSC resolution No. 1244 was based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter (an action enforced against the will of one of the parties). Kosovo was recognized as a subject of Yugoslav, not Serbian, sovereignty, which meant that secession of the only other allied Republic of Montenegro and the disbanding of Yugoslavia would imply the possibility of secession of Kosovo from Serbia. The peacekeeping operation was not a UN action, but a NATO mission by authorization of the UN. Moreover, Russia did not receive its own sector in Kosovo. Its much smaller contingent (3,600) was deployed in four out of five main sectors and in Slatina, which *de facto* put Russian troops under the NATO sector commanders. Besides, Russian contingents were separated from each other and, except for one unit, they were not near the border with the rest of Serbia, and they were located in areas populated by Albanians, not Serbs. Keeping control over Slatina airport meant nothing, since all air traffic, as well as ground communications in all sectors, was commanded by NATO.

During June-July about 50,000 NATO peacekeeping troops entered Kosovo. The arrival of a Russian contingent, beside the unit in Slatina, was delayed by almost two months because of obstacles to providing air corridors on the part of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Together with NATO and 500,000 refugees, a fully armed KLA entered Kosovo, as well as many thousand bandits and marauders. Mass pogroms, looting, hostage taking, expulsions from homes and killing of civilian Serbs went on in the province, which was abandoned by 200,000 Serbs, Gypsies and other ethnic minorities by the end of August. By late 1999, Kosovo virtually became a mono-ethnic province. (It is quite amazing how Western governments and press obviously did not care at all about the Serbian humanitarian catastrophe and Albanian atrocities against the civilian population.) Power was being taken by force by the KLA, which later was turned into a legal local police by the NATO commanders. Yugoslav sovereignty over Kosovo was equal to zero; a decision was even made to introduce a local currency. The territorial integrity of Yugoslavia was also a fiction, with open borders to Albania and Macedonia. Having inflicted damage estimated at \$100 billion by bombing Yugoslavia, NATO refused to help in its restoration as long as Milosevic stays in power.

This in retrospect is one more reflection of the genuine aims of NATO in Yugoslavia. It was, and continues to be, the overthrow of the Milosevic regime. Otherwise, having achieved all its goals in Kosovo with respect to the rights of Albanians, NATO should have helped in restoration and provided humanitarian relief to all Serbs who had suffered while NATO was reaching its goals with the help of bombs and Russian diplomacy. However, it is apparent that helping Kosovo Albanians was nothing more than a pretext, used to gain public support for a strategy geared to other aims.

This strategy is further implemented and, beside economic blockade and instigation of Serbian opposition to Milosevic, will probably include encouragement of the secession of Montenegro, then secession of Kosovo and the other Serbian provinces—Vojvodina and the Sandzak. After that Russian peacekeepers would be asked to leave, while the NATO contingent may expand to occupy new territories. Serbia would shrink to a small

area around Belgrade. All that if the Milosevic regime does not fall to give place to a pro-U.S. government, which would succumb to the will of NATO and get in line for membership in the alliance and Western aid and credits. In order to get rid of the hated regime of Milosevic the United States and its allies are ready to erase Serbia altogether from the map and to do away with the country and a people with a thousand-year-old culture and a great role in European history.

This would lead to a further split between Russia and the United States and estrangement of the Russian political elite and public opinion from the West. In the Balkans, still greater instability may follow with the proliferation of ethnic conflicts and their dire social, political and military consequences. Growing rivalry and juxtaposition between Moscow and the West in the post-Soviet space would bring more calamities and tensions in this unstable part of Europe and within the Russian Federation itself. There is no doubt that among all misunderstandings and controversies between Russia and the United States during the 1990s, the crisis over Kosovo marked a real threshold in the post-Cold War era of cooperation, starting a new, much more tense and confrontational phase in European and global international affairs.

## **Conclusion**

It was immediately clear that NATO's victory over Yugoslavia and Russia's humiliating role in this tragic episode would not go into history without some bad consequences. But nobody could expect that these consequences would come so quickly and so directly. Russia's new war in Chechnya during the fall of 1999 and its effects on relations between Russia and the West were closely related to events in Kosovo earlier in the year.

The war in Yugoslavia greatly affected the Russian leadership and public opinion. Its main lessons were that the goal justifies the means. The use of force is the most efficient problem solver, when applied decisively and massively. Negotiations are of dubious value and should be rather used as a cover for military action. Legality of state actions, observance of the laws and legal procedures, humanitarian suffering are of secondary significance in achieving the goal. Limiting one's casualties is worth massive devastation and collateral fatalities among civilian populations. Foreign public opinion and the positions of Western governments are to be discounted if Russian interests are at stake. A concentrated campaign in the mass media and tight control over information about the war is the key to success. All those lessons were applied with deadly effects in the "counter-terrorist operation" which was transformed into a large-scale war in Chechnya after September 1999. The syndrome of the first Chechen war is over, the taboo on the use of force in such cases is removed. If NATO self-proclaimed the right to attack a sovereign state to achieve its aims, Russia is all the more entitled to use force on its own territory. Nobody will be allowed to intervene in Russian domestic affairs, the West will be taught that Russia is not Yugoslavia. This is the common Russian spirit of today.

Besides, the profound change in Russian public mood in support of a massive use of force and tough opposition to the West was reflected both in the encouragement of the war in Chechnya (in stark contrast to the 1994-1996 war), as well as in an amazing rise of popularity of the designated successor to Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin. His reputation is that of a "strong man," decisively using force to suppress crime, terrorism and armed secessionism and to provide for "law and order." The results of the parliamentary elections in December 1999 were more than anything else the victory of the "war parties" and the defeat of "peace parties" (foremost YABLOKO). The same is predicted for the presidential elections in March 2000.

The West in its turn, is trapped in the Kosovo precedent. It cannot afford to sit on its hands, as it did during the Chechen war of 1994-1996, since the Chechen conflict is so similar to the Kosovo model. Refraining from any action only because Russia is a nuclear power and a much larger and stronger state would compromise the moral standards and humanitarian values by which the NATO intervention in Kosovo was justified.

Standing aside would tacitly imply that the war against Yugoslavia was based on double standards, was not necessary, or was motivated by quite different strategic reasons. This would cause tremendous political damage to NATO and to its leaders, who were responsible for the 1999 aggression against Yugoslavia.

Hence, both Russia and the West are trapped in the implications of the war over Kosovo and are drawn deeper and deeper into confrontation over the crisis in Chechnya and the rest of the North Caucasus. Hopefully a military clash remains unthinkable, but Western financial and political pressure is growing and provoking equally tough resistance and hostility in Russia. Since it is a clash of principles, not realistic interests, it is very hard to settle by pragmatic diplomacy. The seeds of total misunderstanding and hostility sown in Kosovo are growing into huge problems in U.S.-Russian relations, which are replacing the ideological rift of the Cold War and will deeply affect these relations as they enter the twenty-first century. However, the on-going change of both U.S. and Russian leadership in 2000 (in the course of presidential and parliamentary elections in both countries) may present a chance of revising and restoring U.S.-Russian cooperation on a new basis.

First of all, it must be recognized that under the cover of empty declarations and pompous summits, U.S.-Russian relations have deeply deteriorated during the last half of the 1990s. Many channels of negotiations are deadlocked, a number of treaties are suspended, and there is a lack of mutual understanding and trust on the resolution of acute world conflicts. In Russian public opinion there is a growing perception of threats, emanating from the United States and NATO, while in Western public opinion there is a spreading disenchantment with Russian domestic instability and foreign behavior.

U.S.-Russian security cooperation must be patiently and consistently rebuilt step by step, on a pragmatic basis and without excessive expectations, gradually expanding the zone of cooperation and providing for it a solid domestic public support.

There should be no U.S. public pressure on Moscow on the issue of Chechnya, at least at an official level. This would make anti-Western moods in Russia stronger and undercut anti-war opposition within Russia. All U.S. concerns and warnings should be conveyed privately, however strong they may be. Any public linkage of the Chechen issue with IMF credits and restructuring of Russian foreign debt would be counterproductive. Moscow's action in Chechnya may be stopped or revised only if Russian public opinion and the attitude of Parliament and the mass media towards the war change in favor of peaceful resolution. Open Western pressure is provoking just the opposite reaction.

In principle, Moscow should revise its operation in Chechnya, curtailing large-scale offensive actions, which lead to heavy casualties among federal forces and excessive damage to civilian population and property. Instead, a blockade should be established around the Chechen capital Grozny, mountain areas and the perimeter of the rebellious republic. Special operations and selective strikes may go on against guerrilla units and leaders within the blockaded zones. Finally, negotiations should be opened with Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov, presenting him with tough conditions of surrendering Grozny, disarming guerrilla forces and cooperating with federal troops and authorities. All this is necessary not because of Western pressure, but for Russia's own interests of cutting losses and reaching a peaceful settlement from a position of strength.

Furthermore it should be recognized that the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo is not working and the UNSC resolution No. 1244 is not being fulfilled in its most important provisions. The deployment of forces must be renegotiated, with the Russian contingent receiving its own large sector in the northern region of Kosovo adjacent to the rest of Serbia. Serbian refugees would then be able to return and settle there, Kosovo would not be turned into a monoethnic province and its eventual secession from Yugoslavia would not be feasible. The West should also stop its policy of undermining the Milosevic regime, leaving it to Serbs to make

up their minds, and international assistance for the restoration of destroyed Yugoslav assets must be provided without any conditions. Hence moral standards, which had justified the whole operation, would be at least partially revived.

After the 1999 elections, the new composition of the Russian Duma makes it easier for the government to get parliamentary support for its policy. If introduced by Vladimir Putin, START 2 would most probably be ratified by the Duma. Providing IMF credits could be one incentive for Moscow, the other being quickly reaching a compromise on START 3 and the ABM Treaty amendments.

Reviving the NATO-Russian Partnership for Peace would be encouraged by corrections of the peace-keeping operation in Kosovo and a START 2/START 3/ABM Treaty package agreement. Other steps should be a tacit understanding on no further NATO expansion during the next several years. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council could be made into a structure for agreements and elaboration of joint peacekeeping operations, on which Moscow by definition should have a veto, like any NATO member-state. At least tacitly, it must be recognized that NATO will not implement any new out-of-area military action except by authorization of the UNSC. Deep reductions and restructuring of conventional forces for joint peace-keeping operations could be a goal for the next round of negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE 2).

Across the post-Soviet space, Russia and the West should cooperate rather than compete in settling conflicts, fighting terrorism and militant religious fundamentalism, exploring natural resources, laying pipelines and building stability and social order.

All these might provide for much more efficient cooperation of the United States and Russia on the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, the resolution of world conflicts and addressing new security problems of the twenty-first century.

## About the Author

Alexei G. Arbatov was born in Moscow on January 17, 1951. He graduated from Moscow State Institute for International Relations in 1973 and was accepted as a postgraduate student at the Institute for World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Since that time, he has published extensively on security.

Dr. Arbatov has been a member of the State Duma (Russian Parliament) since 1994, elected from the federal list of the Russian democratic party YABLOKO, headed by Grigory Yavlinsky.

In 1995 and in 1999, he was reelected, and presently serves as deputy chair of the Duma Defense Committee and as a member of the YABLOKO Political Council. On the Defense Committee, he is responsible for the elaboration of the defense budget and processing of arms control treaties. He also remains on a part-time basis as the head of the Center for Political and Military Forecasts at IMEMO.

Arbatov is married and the father of one daughter.

## Commentary

Dr. Alexei Arbatov's paper, *The Kosovo Crisis: The End of the Post-Cold War Era*, sets forth a number of theses with which I find myself in considerable agreement, though the paper is written from a highly critical and unmistakably Russian perspective. At the same time, in my opinion, Dr. Arbatov fails to accept a central difficulty in peace enforcement or "humanitarian intervention", in Kofi Annan's phrase, and he posits some dubious propositions that are important to his case, i.e., his criticism of NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

My respect for Dr. Arbatov as an informed and thoughtful writer prompts me to state first certain of his points with which I agree:

In my opinion, the Dayton agreements, hastily cobbled together, papered over the unresolved difficulties in Bosnia. Two chief faults stand out: first, the paucity (too little and too late) of attention and resources devoted to the civilian pacification effort, mainly police to keep order and protect minorities at the "retail level", to prevent the burning of homes and ethnic abuses by civilians. Second is the absence of qualified, independent, apolitical judicial personnel to dispose of criminal violations in a fair, efficient, credible manner, essential to build confidence in the protection of minorities. But even these weaknesses did not prevent Russian forces from participating with NATO in Bosnia. It seems a hollow criticism, in light of that participation, to say that this joint effort contributed to the rift between Russia and the United States.

Dr. Arbatov is quite right in stating that the air attacks on Serbia proper prompted the vicious revenge taken by Serb forces upon the Albanian Kosovar civilian population. I believe NATO's choice of a low-risk air war was a serious mistake since it offered the Kosovars no protection and was in the nature of after-the-fact punishment rather than a preventive action. The justification for preventive action by NATO would have been far stronger than the justification for punishment and would have expanded the international acceptance for NATO intervention. But, of course, the apprehension about NATO casualties that could result from ground actions in Kosovo and from close air support prevented these actions from being prosecuted with a vigor, a case of the mission taking a back seat to the modern zero tolerance of politicians (or at least U.S. politicians) for casualties.

Dr. Arbatov's criticism of illegal NATO action against a sovereign nation over its internal domestic conduct is troubling and partially valid, but only partially. The historically autonomous status of Kosovo and the fact that massive flows of refugees would seriously affect neighboring states must distinguish the case from classic domestic scenarios. But the rhetorical justification for intervention stated by senior officials in Washington was so shrill and unqualified as to give alarm to governments that hold a traditional view of the concept of sovereignty. Particularly offensive was the aphorism put out to the press: "human rights trump sovereignty", surely guaranteed to ring alarm bells in Beijing and Moscow. The administration's extreme tone put the wrong clothes on NATO's concern with Kosovo.

I disagree with Dr. Arbatov particularly on two specifics. He cannot expect us to take seriously his suggestion that the Vance-Owen initiative might have led to a diplomatic solution that might have stopped the Serb insurgency. Cyrus Vance and David Owen had no cards to play. In that region "power grows out of the barrel of a gun", to adapt a saying of Mao. Vance and Owen had no leverage; they were mere supplicants. They had no clients prepared to wield sanctions. Nor can Dr. Arbatov expect us to believe that a Russian peace enforcement initiative alone, purportedly under UN auspices, would have been seen by the Croats and Bosnian Muslims as even-handed and effective protection against the Serb partisan forces.

This brings me to the key issue that underlies the whole debate about Kosovo, an issue that Dr. Arbatov does not attempt to wrestle with: how does the civilized world deal with mass slaughter that occurs entirely within, and with the support of, the domestic jurisdiction of a state? Are we to accept that it is beyond the reach of forcible prevention? Such an absolute claim for sovereignty has been made unacceptable by the Holocaust in World War II and by the events in Srebrenica and elsewhere in former Yugoslavia much more recently. Are we to say that any

coalition of the willing that has sufficient muscle to prevent mass murder may move to do so on its own authority? This would seem too broad. Must justification for regional intervention also rest upon action by an established regional organization? Must the mass murder also have international effects and ramifications to justify intervention? If so, Kosovo would seem to have satisfied both of those added conditions.

In *The Economist* for September 18-24, 1999, Kofi Annan presented a guest article arguing that the legitimacy of “humanitarian intervention” must rest upon a UN mandate and that interventions not so sanctified are illegal, as Kosovo was. But this is too pat, as Annan himself recognizes. Where does it leave urgent and outrageous cases of mass murder when intervention has been vetoed in the UN Security Council? Must we helplessly watch the gruesome spectacle unfold? Nor does Annan’s formulation distinguish between large and small, urgent and non-urgent, deadly and non-deadly abuses of human rights. Annan tries to bridge this difficulty by saying that the UNSC has a duty to act in cases of mass murder so that we can escape the dilemma of UNSC action or no action at all, but, alas, the right of veto is unconditional and the Council cannot be made to act.

Perhaps many of us would have no difficulty with a principle according paramount, as distinguished from exclusive, rights in the UN to mandate intervention, provided that regional authority may act in default of UN action. NATO should not presume to act unconditionally as a law unto itself. But in arguing for exclusive authority in “the true church”, the UNSC, Annan would virtually assure that humanitarian intervention would never occur except at the invitation of the offending state, an anomaly that actually occurred in the recent East Timor-Indonesia case.

International usage is searching, perhaps fumbling, for a way to respect sovereignty without immunizing egregious abuses of human rights, chiefly mass murder. Dr. Arbatov is right in his belief that this accommodation has not yet been settled, but I believe he is wrong if he believes that no accommodation needs to be found. And it is a cop-out to say, let diplomacy deal with mass murder. It was, after all, the Rambouillet deadline set in that diplomatic exercise that gave Milosevic his window to move his troops against the Kosovar civilian population.

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