

MAKING SENSE OF NATO'S WAR ON YUGOSLAVIA

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ALTHOUGH EVERYBODY has had to work out where they stand on NATO's seventy-eight-day air war against Yugoslavia, they have had to do so in a context of scarce and selective information. In the English-speaking world there have been few books on the Kosovo background or on contemporary Serbian politics.¹ But no less important has been the absence of reliable information about the NATO side of the war. The diplomacy leading up to the war was, of course, shrouded in secrecy. The formal decision to launch the air war was, for example, taken by NATO's North Atlantic Council but we do not even know the decision rules which NATO now applies for taking military action outside the area of the NATO states.² The same secrecy applies to much of the conduct of the war and not least to its diplomatic side. Therefore in the case of this extremely important event for the future not only of the Balkans and of Europe but of the whole world, a wise policy would be one which recognizes that our initial judgements on the NATO air campaign should be subject to revision in the light of further research and of information released now that the war is over.

What is beyond doubt is that the launching of the NATO air war was the result of American diplomacy and in particular of the policy of the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, supported by the National Security Council and President Clinton. Albright led a diplomatic campaign from the beginning of March 1998 on the issue of Kosovo, a campaign that culminated in the NATO action which began on 24th March 1999. The Clinton administration's Balkan experts seem to have been unenthusiastic about the Albright approach and so was the Pentagon. The Russian government, of course, but also most of the

European allies of the United States were, for most of this year-long campaign, in disagreement with the Albright approach. But in late January 1999 the British and French governments swung over to a policy of support for the Albright effort and this change of line in London and Paris was decisive in opening the way to the NATO attack on Yugoslavia. Neither the German nor the Italian governments, both of which had been prominent opponents of the Albright approach, felt able to stand out against the NATO action without the support of France. They therefore went along with the decision to launch the attack.

Thus to understand the background to the war we have to understand the character of the American State Department's aims. There are broadly speaking two approaches to this question. One approach begins with the proposition that the Clinton administration was reacting to events in the Western Balkans. This approach further suggests that the central pre-occupation of the US government in its reactive policy was the plight of the Kosovar Albanians. The war was launched as a humanitarian effort on their behalf.

This reading of the war does not, of course, exclude the possibility that wider political considerations played their part in US State Department thinking, but it suggests that these wider political benefits were perceived as spin-offs from the local humanitarian cause: the spin-offs could include new international moral authority for the US as a champion of human rights, the unification of NATO around a new approach to the use of force outside the NATO area on humanitarian military missions and, of course, domestic political benefits for President Clinton himself. On this reading, the hostility of the Russian government and the reluctance of West European governments could be read as a refusal to take human rights seriously, perhaps because of their continued attachment to traditional power politics based on state interest, narrowly conceived.

Some critics argue that US policy was governed by political objectives in the Balkans, but that these political objectives were traditional ones: to turn the Balkans into a strategic bridgehead for the US, providing it with military bases there, perhaps as staging posts en route to the Black and Caspian Seas or perhaps to shore up control over the Western shores of the Black Sea as part of US oil route security strategy; or in some interpretations, the US was interested in the valuable mineral resources of Kosovo itself. Yet these arguments seem weak. The US has ample staging posts to the Caspian through Turkey and it was already drawing Romania and Bulgaria into its security sphere. The Kosovar mineral deposits are surely not an adequate explanation, particularly since some of them are already Greek owned.

A more convincing alternative explanation of US policy in terms of local Balkan political objectives would be that Serbia under Milosevic and the Serbian Socialist Party was a local threat to US interests, particularly in Bosnia but perhaps more generally as an example of the possibility of resisting US-style free market capitalism. Yet despite the failure of the NATO's efforts at polit-

ical integration in Bosnia, the Serbian government was not acting to disrupt that operation. There was no sign that Milosevic's influence was growing in other parts of the region, the Serbian economy was in a very bad state and the main regional threat to stability came from state collapse in Albania and growing Albanian nationalism in both Kosovo and Macedonia.

This absence of clearly discernible and strong US power politics objectives in the Western Balkans has played an important role in convincing some analysts that this NATO war really was about humanitarian issues in that region. There was no clear issue involving strategic resources (such as oil) or their transport routes. Nor was there a great strategic rivalry with a power like the Soviet Union of old. Of course, Russia had an involvement with Serbia and the NATO attack on Serbia was bound to enrage and humiliate the Russian state. But that inevitable effect was surely to be seen by NATO as a political cost of whatever goals the war had, rather than the very goal of the war. For once, therefore, so the argument runs, NATO really was taking human rights seriously in a particular locality, rather than imposing its strategic political interests upon a locality through aggressive war.

We will review the preparations for war and the war itself to explore this interpretation. We will then look at another way of understanding the NATO action, a way that has been largely absent from the public debates on the war and conclude with some thoughts on the possible consequences of the way the war ended.

I. PROBLEMS WITH THE MAINSTREAM VIEWS

1. The United Nations and Humanitarian Intervention

There is no serious dispute that from the standpoint of international law, the NATO attack on Yugoslavia was a legal violation of what have been cornerstones of the international order. The attack constituted a gross violation of Yugoslavia's sovereignty: it was an act of unprovoked aggression by a coalition of states against a sovereign state. It was thus a clear breach of the UN Charter and had no mandate whatever from the UN Security Council.

The decision to launch the war also involved gross and multiple violations of the new cornerstone agreement of 1997 between NATO and the Russian Federation, the so-called NATO–Russia Founding Act, designed to make NATO enlargement into Poland more acceptable to Russia by establishing certain restraints on NATO behaviour. Articles that were violated in that agreement include the following:

- 'NATO and Russia will observe in good faith their obligations under international law and international instruments, including the obligations of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.'³

- ‘NATO and Russia will co-operate to prevent any possibility of returning to a Europe of division and confrontation, or the isolation of any state.’
- ‘This Act does not affect and cannot be regarded as affecting the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for maintaining international peace and security.’
- Also the act commits both sides to ‘refraining from the threat or use of force against each other as well as against any other state, its sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence in any manner inconsistent with the United Nations Charter and with the Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations Between Participating States contained in the Helsinki Final Act.’

The US government and NATO said that the attack was nevertheless necessary because of a humanitarian disaster which was looming in Kosovo. In such circumstances, likened to the Rwandan genocide or to Nazi genocide during the second world war, NATO argued that the legal norms of the international order must be set aside. The implication of this is first that horrors of a quite exceptional kind had taken place or were about to take place in Kosovo; and second that neither the Russian nor the Chinese governments would have been prepared to respond adequately to these horrors by approving a UNSC resolution for intervention to stop them.

This NATO argument is not, of course, sustainable in a reactive sense: however awful the war between the KLA and the Serbian security forces in Kosovo had been during 1998 and early 1999, in international comparative terms it was a small-scale war. Deaths on both sides amounted to some 2,000 of which about half were Serbian. Deaths in nearby Turkey from the conflict involving the Kurds were about 30,000. Refugee figures were similarly far smaller in the case of Kosovo. Furthermore, the scale of the conflict had been reduced over the winter of 1998–99.⁴

But the basic justification for NATO’s preparedness to violate international legal norms needs to be couched in pre-emptive terms, namely that if NATO had not acted, the Serbian government was preparing for a genocidal ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. Yet no evidence has been provided by NATO to demonstrate that the Serbian government had such a policy before the war started. It was therefore of great political importance for the US administration to be able to demonstrate during the war that Serbian government actions in Kosovo were genocidal and thus justified NATO’s flouting of the UN.

And in weighing up the arguments, we should bear in mind that the United States government was already committed before the war to freeing NATO military operations from UN control and legality. It was a requirement of the Senate resolution ratifying NATO enlargement that NATO should not be constrained by UN authority and the US and Britain had already been openly flouting UN Security Council authority in their military actions against Iraq in 1998. Thus, if the humanitarian threat in Kosovo did justify NATO’s undermining UN authority, it was certainly a happy coincidence that the US

government happened to be inclined to undermine that authority in any case for quite other reasons.

The official explanation for and justification of the NATO war is, then, a quite specifically non-political one. It says that NATO was seeking to respond to the plight of the Kosovar Albanians and to save them from the murderous policies of the Serbian state. The strength of this argument lies in an unstated assumption, namely that a war against the Serbian state must be the other side of the coin of a war on behalf of its local enemy, the Kosovar Albanian population. NATO's war was unquestionably against the Serbian state. Therefore, it would appear that it was unquestionably on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians.

But this humanitarian standpoint then throws up the first set of contradictions: that between the supposed goal – protecting the Kosovo Albanians – and the means – a bombing campaign of a particular type which left the Serbian security forces free on the ground to do what they wished with the Kosovar Albanians.

When we look more closely at the way the war was actually launched this contradiction becomes very acute, indeed bizarre. The bombing campaign was launched on 24th March. But President Clinton announced on the 19th March that the bombing campaign would be launched and nothing now could block it. The US administration thus gave the Serbian government five days in which they could do as they pleased in Kosovo. And when the bombing started, it was organized so that the Serbian authorities could continue to have a completely free hand in Kosovo for more than a week. The air war's first phase was directed largely at targets outside the Kosovo theatre itself for a full week. At the same time, President Clinton ruled out a land war at the start of the campaign and this rejection was reiterated even more forcefully by Madeleine Albright on the third day of the war.

At the time when the war was launched, the Clinton administration legitimated this method of waging the war by claiming that President Milosevic actually wanted a deal along the lines of Rambouillet and the bombing campaign would enable him to sell Rambouillet to the Serbian electorate against the hard-line nationalists in Serbia. In other words, there was no threat from Serbia of atrocities, ethnic cleansing or genocide in the American administration's mind, so an air war was appropriate.

This notion that Milosevic himself accepted Rambouillet was, in reality, utterly false – pure spin. During the first week of the war Madeleine Albright argued that NATO had had to launch the war swiftly because they saw Serbian forces massing to enter Kosovo before 24th March. Serbian forces *were* massing there and indeed were pouring into Kosovo, but for the simple reason that they knew NATO was about to attack. And an important series of articles in the *Washington Post* at this time on the background to the war reveals that there was absolutely nothing improvised about its start. Indeed, the *Post* cites Clinton administration sources for its claim that over a full fourteen months the Clinton administration had been campaigning internationally to build a wide coalition

for a war against Serbia on the Kosovo issue. These administration sources said the campaign was on the scale of the long US build-up to Desert Storm in 1990–1991. As an article by Barton Gellman published on the eve of the bombing campaign explains: ‘Some critics have seen a lack of resolve in the successive warnings Washington has issued since [February 1998]. But what critics see as vacillation is described by policy makers in Washington as orchestration of international backing for military force, much as they said they accomplished in Iraq.’⁵

This is a very remarkable revelation and if true it casts the origins of the NATO war in a dramatically different light from the usual explanations which suggest the war came from a long and fruitless series of searches for negotiated solutions: a point to which we shall return. But the relevant point for the present discussion is the fact that the military-political planning of the air war was not in the slightest improvised. It was planned with meticulous care for over a year by thoroughly competent experts in the NSC. The *Washington Post* cited some of these experts as saying they spent a whole year in almost daily running of the tactics to be used in the war and the different variants of Serb and other responses to the different possible tactics. And these unnamed experts said that they foresaw very large floods of refugees being likely as the result of the air war tactics employed. Such experts could also obviously foresee that the air war would provoke intense warfare between Serbian security forces and suspected KLA activists in Kosovo. And all such wars produce atrocities, rapes, looting and burning: even highly trained soldiers can engage in wanton atrocities in war conditions. The tortures and other atrocities committed by NATO troops engaged in ‘peacekeeping’ in Somalia testify to that. All such developments could have been foreseen very easily by US war planners. And they could be foreseen regardless of the political orientation of the government in Belgrade. We also know that although Albright claimed that she expected the war to be over quickly the Pentagon foresaw and advised that it would be a long air war: the Serbian government would not surrender quickly.

In these circumstances, there is only one serious explanation for the tactics employed by the Clinton administration: these tactics did not put humanitarian considerations for the welfare of the Kosovar Albanians first. Such humanitarian considerations were put to one side and were put to one side with full deliberation and foresight.

So the question becomes: why this kind of air war? Why the disregard of the welfare of the Kosovar Albanians? Were there special reasons for this kind of air war? Is it conceivable that the planners could also foresee that TV pictures of the refugees and accounts of their harrowing ordeals as a result of the war could become a central means of sustaining public support for the continuation of the war? Only future documentary evidence will tell us if this was indeed the case.

2. *The Political Programme of the War and the Kosovo National Question*

One of the most remarkable aspects of the NATO war was that it was waged supposedly on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians against Serbia but *not on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians' political demands against Serbia*. On the contrary, NATO's stated political programme for Kosovo remained throughout more or less the same as the stated political programme for Kosovo of Slobodan Milosevic, for Kosovo to remain within Serbia but with very extensive internal autonomy. Neither of the two main rival leaderships amongst the Kosovar Albanian community – that of Ibrahim Rugova and that of the KLA – have supported that aim. Both have consistently demanded full independence for Kosovo. And the sufferings of the war have not resolved this core issue of the Kosovo national question. It has simply been postponed, to be the subject of future contestation, perhaps between NATO and elements within the Kosovar Albanian community.

This extraordinary mismatch between NATO's war enemy and allies on one side and NATO's war aims on the other, may be one explanation why the Clinton administration was so keen to keep war legitimization out of the political realm and within the purely humanitarian/moral realm. But it is surely the case that before we can come to an informed judgement about the war we need to make a prior analysis of the political conflict within Serbia, a conflict evidently to do with the national question.

The US administration's largely successful avoidance of a public debate centring on its programmatic stance on the Kosovo national question was allied to an at least implicit suggestion that there has not been a serious national problem in Serbia at all: instead there has been a Milosevic problem. Milosevic, in other words, has been the source of the conflict between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs.

While the other national conflicts that have engulfed the former Yugoslavia in the last decade have had their origins in the crisis of the Yugoslav state, the Kosovo problem has been different: it has its origin in the very inclusion of Kosovo in Yugoslavia and it was a problem when post-war Yugoslavia was not in crisis. Kosovo was a problem of Yugoslavia itself, or, put more historically, a problem left by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. Kosovo was the birthplace of nineteenth-century Albanian nationalism, yet for political and military reasons it ended up in Serbian hands just before World War I.⁶

The inter-war Serbian monarchy sought to Serbianize Kosovo. Under German-Italian wartime occupation anti-Serbian Albanian forces took their revenge on the Serbian population and Kosovo itself was integrated into an Italian-controlled Albania. Kosovo Albanians formed an SS division to fight against the Communist-led partisans on behalf of the German Reich.

The new post-war Communist Yugoslavia lacked significant support in the Kosovar Albanian community and had to crush anti-Yugoslav resistance there when the new Yugoslavia was being created in 1945. Tito had a solution for Kosovo in a Balkan federation that would include Albania and Bulgaria. But

this solution was aborted by the Tito–Stalin split. Kosovo remained, therefore, an autonomous province of Serbia. Despite the fact that it achieved substantial economic development within this framework, important segments of Kosovar Albanian society never accepted post-war Yugoslavia and always wanted out. During the 1950s and 1960s such separatist currents were harshly repressed.

After the fall of the strongly anti-separatist Rankovic in 1966, Kosovo Albanians were granted increasingly far-reaching political autonomy and political power within Yugoslavia. The 1974 constitution gave Kosovo far more extensive power within the Yugoslav federation than was enjoyed by other national minorities in Europe. The Albanian-led Kosovo Communist Party had, for example, veto rights within the Yugoslav federal executive. But still this extensive cultural and political autonomy and power did not bring an end to Kosovo Albanian separatism. By the start of the 1980s, Albanian separatist currents included not only anti-Communist trends on the right but also leftist trends among students and young intellectuals looking to Enver Hoxha's Albania as an egalitarian and national model. And there was significant and effective pressure from the Kosovar Albanians on the Serbian minority to leave Kosovo.

These problems came to a head in 1981, when widespread riots and disturbances took place in Kosovo. The main demands of this protest movement were for Kosovo to achieve full Republican status within Yugoslavia. But the real significance of this demand lay not in the addition of new powers for Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation: the 1974 Constitution gave Kosovo all the effective policy autonomy enjoyed by full republics. The demand for republican status was seen both by the leaders of the protest movement and by the Yugoslav security forces as a demand for the right of Kosovo to secede from the federation. The Yugoslav authorities intervened to crush such separatist tendencies.

In the course of the riots in 1981, Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo were beaten, their homes and businesses burned, and their shops looted.⁷ Also a mysterious fire was started at one of Serbia's most cherished religious shrines, the Pec Patriarchate in Kosovo, a complex of medieval churches and the historical seat of the patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁸ Thousands of Serbs fled Kosovo following the violence. Pressure from Albanian nationalists on the Serbian minority in Kosovo continued during the 1980s. Some authors have tried to claim that the Serbian minority and Serb nationalists exaggerated or even fabricated claims of pressure and that the Serb emigration from Kosovo was largely an economic migration.⁹ But Miranda Vickers and other authors have shown that this was not in fact the case. There was substantial pressure on the Serbian minority to leave. Vickers has concluded: 'many Serbs and Montenegrins who decided to leave Kosovo [in the 1980s] had experienced intimidation, pressure, violence, and other severe abuses of their human rights because of their ethnicity.'¹⁰

The Kosovo Serbs appealed to the Serbian Communist Party to protect them against harassment. The deputy leader of the Serbian League of

Communists, Milosevic, eventually pledged to ensure that the Serbian minority would be protected – a view subsequently presented in the West as a turn on Milosevic's part towards Serbian chauvinism. But in Serbia Milosevic's stance was viewed as that of a Communist finally ready to defend the national and civil rights of the Serbian minority in Kosovo.

In the late 1980s, this long-standing problem of Kosovar Albanian hostility to continued incorporation within Slav Yugoslavia became intertwined with the crisis of the Yugoslav state itself. This generalized crisis was marked by a number of overlapping features: a deep socio-economic crisis and a deep social conflict over whether Yugoslavia should go capitalist; strong separatist tendencies in Slovenia, later replicated in Croatia; and an attempt on the part of the Milosevic-led Serbian League of Communists to strengthen Serbia's political weight within the federation by abolishing the 1974 autonomy of Voivodina and Kosovo and to use this increased weight to hold the Yugoslav federation together in an alliance with the Yugoslav armed forces.

Under Milosevic's policy, Kosovo was to be allowed only the pre-1974 autonomy. Though this was, in legal terms, still extensive, the downgrading of Kosovo autonomy was viewed by the Kosovo Albanians as a denial of their national aspirations and led to a political confrontation between the Serbian government and all the main political forces in Kosovo. The Serbian government purged the provincial administration, installing Serbian officials, and also purged part of the management of the state industries to place them in Serbian hands. During the 1990s Kosovo was in a permanent state of emergency involving repression of militant separatist political activity. Repression was particularly severe in the smaller towns and in the countryside, especially after the KLA began its guerrilla campaign in 1996. There were, by the start of 1998, many cases reported of beatings by Serbian police, brutalities against prisoners and even the use of torture against KLA suspects.¹¹

Although Kosovar Albanians retained their language rights in education and other areas, they were also required to pass exams in Serbo-Croatian. The University of Pristina was closed for a while and although independent Albanian newspapers were allowed, there were restrictions on the media. Kosovo Albanians retained their voting rights, but in the context of the denial of full 1974 autonomy for the province and the repression of various separatist groups, the Albanians responded through a boycott of Serbian state institutions and the organization of a parallel set of Albanian civil society and governance structures under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, a leadership overwhelmingly backed by the Kosovo population and demanding independence for Kosovo.¹²

The Kosovo problem was then, a long-term structural one centred on the question of independence and separation. The obvious solution to the problem lay in enabling the Kosovar Albanian community to merge with the Albanians of Albania and of Macedonia within a single political framework, the optimal one being a wider Balkan federation as the Yugoslav Communists had proposed

in the 1940s. At the same time, the rights of the Serbian minority could have been guaranteed. Alternatively, some other mutually agreed solution involving a confederal relationship between Kosovo and Yugoslavia in the context of other changes in Yugoslavia itself could have been, in principle, possible.

But such co-operative solutions were not available in the late 1980s and the 1990s because of the crisis in, and break-up of, the Yugoslav state, and because of the political orientations of the Western powers towards Yugoslavia.

3. The US's Reactive, Mediating Posture and the Reality of its War Drive from the Start of 1998

Although the Clinton administration has systematically presented Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbian Socialist Party as genocidal ethnic cleansers and so on, they have been well aware of the fact that the Serbian Socialist Party could support an agreement involving radical internal autonomy for Kosovo. It is true that although a very large minority of Serbia's population had, by early 1990, swung over towards extreme ethnic nationalist politics such as those espoused by Seselj's Radical Party, this was not at all the position of Milosevic. Here indeed, was the convincing element in the mendacious NATO spin at the start of the war, that Milosevic actually wanted the bombing campaign to gain agreement to Rambouillet. The West European states knew very well that a negotiated settlement based on autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia was possible as far as the Serbian government was concerned.

Such a negotiated settlement had also been a possibility as far as Rugova was concerned. Although Ibrahim Rugova had always demanded independence for Kosovo, he was prepared to enter negotiations with the Serbian government in the spring of 1998 and in the late summer of 1998 he indicated that he was prepared to set aside his demand for independence for the sake of an end to the conflict. Rugova had been re-elected by the Kosovar Albanians as their leader by a huge majority in March 1998. On both sides, therefore, there was the basis at least in principle for a deal.

This potentiality was reinforced by the stance of the Russian government and that of most of the West European governments: they wanted a cease-fire between the KLA and the Serbian security forces, followed by a negotiated internal settlement.

During the NATO war itself, NATO leaders frequently said that they had tried everything short of war to get a negotiated settlement but all their efforts had been thwarted because of Milosevic. Yet the record of events suggests a different story. It was the US Secretary of State whose actions and words over fourteen months undermined the possibility of a negotiated settlement and led through Rambouillet into a NATO war which, according to the *Washington Post*, the Clinton administration had been working for since February 1998.

We cannot here survey all the evidence but some key turning points need to be borne in mind by anyone wishing to make an objective assessment of the causes of the NATO war.

A. The start of the campaign

At Christmas 1997, President Clinton warned that unless the Serbian government moved to solve the Kosovo crisis, the US would be prepared to intervene militarily. In January and February 1998, the KLA launched a major military effort within Kosovo against Serbian officials and also Serbian civilians. As Gary Dempsey explains: 'Pursuing a textbook strategy, the KLA carried out attacks on police and civilians aimed at provoking a government crackdown that would radicalize the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo...'¹³ In February 1998, the KLA targeted Serb houses in the villages of Kloina, Decani and Djakovica and a Serb refugee camp in Babaloc.¹⁴

There then followed a very curious incident. Madeleine Albright's Special Envoy in the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, flew into Pristina on 23rd February and held a press conference, in which, according to Robert Thomas, 'he praised Milosevic in lavish terms and described the UCK as a terrorist organization'.¹⁵ The BBC correspondent in Yugoslavia quoted Gelbard as follows: "I know a terrorist when I see one and these men are terrorists," he said... At the time, the KLA was believed to number just several hundred armed men. Mr Gelbard's words were interpreted in the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade, as a green light for a security forces operation against the KLA and the special police conducted two raids in the Benitsar region in March.' Robert Thomas confirms this, saying that Milosevic interpreted 'Gelbard's gesture as a "green light" for a security crackdown in Kosovo'.¹⁶

A few days later, on 28th February 1998, the KLA killed four policemen in the Banitsar region and injured two more. On 5th March, Serbian security forces then launched a major counter-insurgency drive in Banitsar against the Jashari clan which was leading the KLA in that region and many members of the clan were killed. This news was reported on 6th March. The very next day, on 7th March 1998, in response to the Serbian security force operation in the Benitsar region of Kosovo, Madeleine Albright declared, 'We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia.'¹⁷ Two days later she reserved the right for the US to take unilateral action against the Serbian government, saying, 'We know what we need to know to believe we are seeing ethnic cleansing all over again.'¹⁸ This remained the US line right the way through from that first Serbian counter-insurgency drive against the KLA in Benitsar. Albright demanded war against Serbia. But the signal for the Serbian government to launch its counter-insurgency in Benistar also, intriguingly, came from Albright's own State Department.

B. Albright's strong support for the KLA and the undermining of Ibrahim Rugova

In the Spring of 1998 Richard Holbrooke arranged for negotiations to open between Ibrahim Rugova and the Serbian government. But within a month the US government was undermining Rugova's position by placing demands

upon Serbia that indicated one unambiguous conclusion: the US government was seeking to strengthen the position of the KLA in the civil war in Kosovo.

The KLA was, of course, completely opposed to any negotiations with the Serbian government. By entering negotiations with that government Ibrahim Rugova was therefore taking a great political risk. He presumably took that risk on the assumption that the US government, which, in the form of Holbrooke, supported the negotiations, would help to strengthen his position. And that meant the Clinton administration distancing itself from the KLA. Yet the Clinton administration did the exact opposite.

US effective support for the KLA became blatant by June 1998, by which time NATO military planning for an attack on Yugoslavia was completed. In that month, White House spokesperson Mike McCurry asserted that Serbia ‘must immediately withdraw security units involved in civilian repression, without linkage to ... the stopping of terrorist activity.’¹⁹ In parallel, Pentagon spokesperson Kenneth Bacon said: ‘We don’t think that there should be any linkage between an immediate withdrawal of forces by the Yugoslavs on the one hand, and stopping terrorist activities, on the other. There ought to be complete withdrawal of military forces so that negotiations can begin.’ In other words, Washington was insisting that before any cease-fire or negotiations on a Kosovo peace settlement the Serbian authorities must withdraw all their forces from Kosovo, handing over the territory to the KLA’s military forces despite the fact that the urban Albanian population of Kosovo was far more pro-Rugova than the KLA. Furthermore, while the Serbian forces were supposed to be withdrawing, KLA activity could continue, and indeed increase.

A similar pattern of Holbrooke moving in one direction, and the leadership of the administration moving in the opposite direction, occurred in October 1998. On 13th October Richard Holbrooke negotiated a cease-fire agreement with Yugoslav President Milosevic. The cease-fire would be monitored in Kosovo by OSCE observers. Milosevic agreed on the basis that the US administration would ensure that the KLA observed the cease-fire.

But the Clinton administration sabotaged the whole operation. The OSCE monitors did not enter Kosovo for a whole month after the agreement. During that time, the KLA did not respect the cease-fire, continued its operations and extended its reach in Kosovo. During the delay, the Clinton administration took control of the OSCE, placing William Walker, a key organizer of the Contra operation in Nicaragua and the blood-bath in El Salvador, in charge of the OSCE monitoring force. Some 2,000 trained monitors waiting in Bosnia to be sent into Kosovo were not drafted in and the US eventually put in ex-military personnel as monitors, people subsequently accused of acting as intelligence gatherers and operatives for NATO, very much along the lines of the US’s perversion of UNSCOM’s teams in Iraq – reporting on every item that could be relevant to a future NATO-KLA joint offensive.²⁰

At the same time the European-Russian-UN line continued to seek an internal solution and to blame the KLA for the failure to achieve it. Thus, for

example, at their General Affairs Council on 8th December 1998, Britain's Robin Cook and the other foreign ministers of the EU assessed the situation in Kosovo. The report of the meeting in the *Agence Europe Bulletin* of the following day stated: 'At the close of its debate on the situation in the Western Balkans, the General Affairs Council mainly expressed concern for the recent "intensification of military action" in Kosovo, noting that "increased activity by the KLA has prompted an increased presence of Serbian security forces in the region".' Thus, the EU saw the KLA as the driving force undermining the possibility of a cease-fire and a compromise solution. They were simply on a different line from Albright, and they continued to be right through January.²¹

C. Turning the Rambouillet negotiations into an ultimatum, while overthrowing the Rugova leadership

The idea of bringing the two sides together into face to face negotiations under international auspices came from the French government. The Clinton administration had been against such an idea, favouring a straight move towards bombing. But on this occasion, the differences were overcome in favour of the French getting their way on the *form* while the US would get its way on the *substance*. This was a turning point. The French and British switched over to the US position at a meeting of the contact group in London on 29th January 1999, exactly a week before the opening on 6th February of the Rambouillet 'negotiations'.²² From that moment on the NATO attack on Yugoslavia was a virtual certainty. We can see why when we appreciate that the Rambouillet 'negotiations' were not negotiations at all: they were an ultimatum to the Serbian government which was drafted in such a way as to ensure that it would be rejected.

The Serbian government wanted face-to-face negotiations at Rambouillet with the Kosovo representatives. This the Americans absolutely refused, presumably with British and French support (since they were formally supposed to be in charge of the process). It is also fairly clear that there were some on the Kosovo side who were interested in discussing with the Serbian authorities. Why else would the Clinton administration have decided to overthrow the elected Rugova government of Kosovo and replace it with a KLA-led government, there and then at Rambouillet?

The Serbian side was then required to agree to the 'Agreement' without changing it, or face a NATO attack on Yugoslavia. If the Serbian government had signed the 'Agreement' the signature would have had no status in international law, since treaties signed under threat of aggression have no force in international law. But the Serbian authorities, probably wisely, did not have any confidence in their ability to rely upon international law, so they refused to sign.

Most people assume that the Serbian government refused to sign because the 'Agreement' would lead to the independence of Kosovo. The 'Agreement' did involve a *de facto* NATO Protectorate. (Not by the way a democratic entity;

the Chief of the Implementation Force could dictate on any aspect of policy he considered relevant to NATO – i.e., US – concerns.) Yet after the first round of Rambouillet it appeared that the Serbian government might accept the text with which it was presented.

Matters changed dramatically, however, at the start of the second phase of the Rambouillet process. The Serbian government representatives were confronted then with a new text, introduced by the US government: Annex B. The origins of this initiative and the mechanisms by which it occurred remain obscure. We do not know if the French government was in favour of the inclusion of the new annex. We do not know if the US arranged that the annex was the precondition for the KLA to approve the deal as a whole. But this text, which remained secret until the war was well under way, contained an exact repetition of the key sticking point of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia which triggered the first world war: the demand that NATO forces could move freely across the whole territory of Yugoslavia and could do so with impunity.²³ This was a direct threat to the Serbian and Yugoslavian state. It is worth quoting these aspects of the Rambouillet text in some detail, bearing in mind the evidence from the *Washington Post* quoted earlier to the effect that the Clinton administration had indeed been campaigning for a war against Serbia by NATO for a full year.

- *NATO forces could move at will across the whole of Yugoslavia.* Thus, ‘NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, manoeuvre, billet, and utilization of any areas or facilities as required for support, training, and operations.’
- *NATO would have the right to deploy in Kosovo whatever types of forces it wished:* ‘NATO will establish and deploy a force (hereinafter KFOR) which may be composed of ground, air, and maritime units from NATO and non-NATO nations, operating under the authority and subject to the direction and the political control of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) through the NATO chain of command. The Parties agree to facilitate the deployment and operations of this force.’ Thus, if the US wished to use Kosovo as a base for the invasion and occupation of the rest of Yugoslavia, it could do so.
- *NATO could also alter the infrastructure of Yugoslavia at will:* ‘NATO may ... have need to make improvements or modifications to certain infrastructures in the FRY, such as roads, bridges, tunnels, buildings, and utility systems.’ It could thus move around investigating all Yugoslav infrastructures with a view to destroying them later if it wished.

- *All Yugoslav public facilities including the mass media should be at NATO's disposal free of charge.* Thus the Yugoslav authorities 'shall provide, free of cost, such public facilities as NATO shall require.' The Yugoslav authorities 'shall, upon simple request, grant all telecommunications services, including broadcast services, needed for the Operation, as determined by NATO. This shall include the right to utilize such means and services as required to assure full ability to communicate ... free of cost. NATO is granted the use of airports, roads, rails, and ports without payment of fees, duties, dues, tolls, or charges occasioned by mere use.' The Yugoslav authorities must not merely tolerate this: they must facilitate it. 'The authorities in the FRY shall facilitate, on a priority basis and with all appropriate means, all movement of personnel, vehicles, vessels, aircraft, equipment, or supplies, through or in the airspace, ports, airports, or roads used. No charges may be assessed against NATO for air navigation, landing, or take-off of aircraft, whether government-owned or chartered. Similarly, no duties, dues, tolls or charges may be assessed against NATO ships, whether government-owned or chartered, for the mere entry and exit of ports.' The ultimatum also demonstrated that NATO was determined to intervene within the Serbian media. It demanded 'Free media, effectively accessible to registered political parties and candidates, and available to voters throughout Kosovo.' And it said that 'The IM [Implementation Mission] shall have its own broadcast frequencies for radio and television programming in Kosovo. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia shall provide all necessary facilities...'

- *The US through NATO and the IMF/World Bank would dictate, not negotiate, the socio-economic programme in Kosovo* – which must be on free market principles – with the Yugoslav and Kosovo governments completely under the diktat of US policies. Thus, 'The economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles.' And, 'There shall be no impediments to the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital to and from Kosovo.' And again, 'Federal and other authorities shall within their respective powers and responsibilities ensure the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital to Kosovo, including from international sources.' There must also be complete compliance with the IMF and World Bank. Thus, 'International assistance, with the exception of humanitarian aid, will be subject to full compliance with ... conditionalities defined in advance by the donors and the absorptive capacity of Kosovo.' The Yugoslav government must also agree to Western multinational companies being given the contracts for programmes in Serbia chosen by the international financial institutions. Thus, 'If expressly required by an international donor or lender, international contracts for reconstruction projects shall be concluded by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.'

Rambouillet was thus an ultimatum for a war against Serbia and the terms of the ultimatum demonstrated that if the Serbian government accepted Rambouillet they would be vulnerable to a crushing attack in the future from NATO forces on Yugoslav soil.

It would be wrong to imagine that all the agencies within the Clinton administration and the American state supported the Albright policy of preparing the Western Balkans and the whole of Europe for an air war against Yugoslavia. There is a good deal of evidence that the administration's two leading Balkan specialists, Richard Holbrooke and Christopher Hill, were against Albright's approach. But it is equally true that Albright ran the diplomacy leading to war and Holbrooke and Hill, with their divergent styles, actually assisted the implementation of the policy through their effectively diversionary approaches at certain key moments.

And the evidence suggests both that a negotiated settlement of the national question could have been achieved and that the Clinton administration actively sought to undermine the conditions which made such a settlement possible. The administration undermined Rugova and gave active encouragement to the KLA campaign. Then it said that Rugova was too weak to strike a deal, then they engineered his replacement by a KLA-led interim government. Then they dictated an ultimatum to Serbia which was crafted to ensure rejection. And all the while the political programme of the US government on the cardinal political issue – the Kosovo national question – was most *opposed* to the programme of the KLA for a Greater Albania, and closest to that of Serbia. This war drive, whatever it was about, was absolutely not about safeguarding the welfare of the Albanians living in Kosovo in March 1999.

The more we examine the origins of this war the more we find ourselves in the midst of a very murky affair. At a gathering of intellectuals at the Marc-Bloc Foundation in Paris on 29th May 1999, Claude Lanzmann, the producer of *Shoah*, the documentary account of the Holocaust, spoke. He said that the NATO attack on Yugoslavia was a new Dreyfus Affair.²⁴ It was. But in this case the question is: what were the anti-Dreyfusards of Europe in 1999 up to? Why did they want this appalling war?

II. A THEORY OF A GEOPOLITICAL NATO WAR DIRECTED AT THE NATO ZONE ITSELF

An alternative take on the origins of the NATO war against Yugoslavia starts from the fact that the war did not derive from big power *reactions* to local events in the Balkans at all. Instead, this theory starts from the premise that the Clinton administration was seeking a war against Yugoslavia as a means for achieving political goals outside the Balkans altogether. The conflict between the Serbian state and the Kosovar Albanians was to be exploited as a means to achieve US strategic goals outside the Balkans on the international plane.

As we saw at the start of this essay there was one weakness in the argument that NATO had strategic political goals outside the Balkans for whose achievement a victory over Serbia would be valuable. The weakness was that nobody could identify any such credible NATO geopolitical goals. But this weakness only applies on one condition, namely that we treat NATO as basically a unitary actor, with common goals and interests. This is a deeply held assumption in public discourse within NATO-land. NATO is a 'we', the West, united in common values, etc. For decades during the Cold War we got used to the West acting as one in European politics. But we need to ask whether that unity carried over into the post-Soviet Europe of the 1990s. And if it did not, then a new set of questions, unexamined at the start of this essay, needs to be addressed. For example, did the Clinton administration have any conceivable political objectives in *Western Europe, within the NATO area itself*, whose achievement could be assisted through a successful war against Serbia? If so what were these objectives? What interests would Britain and France have had in doing their political somersault in late January 1999 to join the US in pulling the whole of NATO behind the air war? And why was an *air* war and, it seems, only an air war, so useful for the Clinton administration in this political context?

A glance at the history of European-American relations during the 1990s should demonstrate that on one European political question there was no agreement between the US and the French and German governments. That question has been an absolutely fundamental one. What should be the new political order in Europe after the Soviet Bloc and Soviet collapse? It is not usually addressed directly. Instead it is discussed intensively in languages of security or of military concepts and technicalities with headings and jargon such as a 'reform of NATO', a 'Two Pillar NATO or a Two Pillar Alliance', a 'European Security and Defence Identity', 'NATO out of area or out of business', 'separable but not separate' European military forces and the organization of 'Combined Joint Task Forces'. But behind this jargon has lain a fundamental political debate about the future power structure – in other words political structure of the European space. And it has not only been a debate.

This basic European political question arose because of the double-sided and paradoxical results of the Soviet collapse. On one side it made the United States overwhelmingly the most powerful power in resource terms, especially military resources. But simultaneously it destroyed the political structure through which US power resources could be converted into stable hegemony over Western Europe. That political structure had been Western Europe's security dependence on the US-Soviet relationship. The US-Soviet confrontation meant that the fate of Western Europe depended on decisions taken in Washington. This in turn ensured that the West European states, including the French, accepted US leadership on all fundamental European, and indeed world, questions. But without the US-Soviet confrontation this political structure collapsed. The institutions that expressed the structure – above all NATO – did not collapse. But NATO became an institution without a purpose. It was

organized for defence against a military opponent which had disappeared. As such it was doomed to die, and with it could die the US's influence over the West European states' international orientation. The West European states would still, of course, respect America's overwhelming power resources. And there were also shared interests in managing world politics and economic affairs for mutual advantage. But the West European states could now hope to start doing their own thing, especially in the new field opening up east of the European Union.

During the 1990s, both the Bush administration and the Clinton administration have been working extremely energetically to build a new political structure ensuring the return of the United States to hegemonic leadership in Europe. We will not review all the steps in that campaign here.²⁵ But we will very briefly outline the central issue, the main elements in the US programme for restored hegemony, and the ways in which the tussle between the US and West European states was fought out.

1. The Central Political Issue

The central political issue can be briefly stated as follows: which Western power or coalition of Western powers could lead the other states of Europe in resolving important European political problems? Would it be France plus Germany through an increasingly integrated EU with its own defence and security authority and instruments as well as its economic statecraft? Or would it be the United States? These were the only two choices as far as the Western powers were concerned. Britain, for example, could not add its own positive variant: it could only act as a spoiler of the other two possible variants (and in practice acted as a spoiler mainly of the Franco–German variant but also, for a while in Bosnia, of the American variant).

This central political issue passed through several phases in the 1990s. At first the Franco–German variant seemed very strong, with the Maastricht Treaty involving EMU plus the Common Foreign and Security Policy. And Germany showed it had enough political weight to win recognition for Croatia, a major political issue of the day. Then the Franco–German variant weakened as the EU was unable to resolve the Bosnian conflict. The US programme strengthened as the US pushed ahead with the transformation of NATO into an entirely new organization, fitted, at least on paper, for ensuring US leadership and successfully insisting that there should be no separate European military policy authority or military command system outside NATO and US leadership. This phase included the US success in ending the Bosnia war and handling the Dayton agreement. Yet in the second half of the 1990s the revived US leadership of Europe was still not secure. The Franco–German EMU project forged ahead to the Euro's launch. This was likely to lead to a further deepening of the EU as a political bloc, perhaps even to a federal state with full, democratic will-formation and full political identity. And even within NATO, US leadership was not assured. The tussle with the French over the meaning of a

so-called 'European Security and Defence Identity within NATO' was not yet resolved. The question of Russia's role in European affairs was not yet settled. Thus, though the West European states were going along with US leadership today, they still held in reserve instruments and potentialities for striking out autonomously. This was the situation in 1998 and early 1999 when the US was waging its diplomatic offensive for the NATO Kosovo war.

2. *The US Programme for its Revived European Leadership*

The key to the entire US programme was to transform the roles of NATO, to subordinate the West European states and multilateral institutions to NATO in the field of high politics and security, and to make NATO sovereign *vis-à-vis* the UN.

The transformation of NATO involved what Zbigniew Brzezinski calls the double enlargement: geographical enlargement into Poland and enlargement of NATO's military tasks from strategic defence to offensive strikes outside the NATO area. Both these changes are highly political.²⁶ NATO enlargement into Poland was simultaneously the exclusion of Russia from an institutionalized inclusion in Europe's high politics, since Russia was not to be allowed into NATO. But NATO's enlargement into Poland involved another crucial political element. On US insistence, NATO had to maintain the right to establish the bases of NATO powers (i.e., the US) and to position nuclear weapons in Poland. By insisting on this (while also insisting it had no current plans for actually doing either of these things) the US ensured that at any time it could create a state of emergency between Russia and Western and Central Europe simply by moving such weapons into Poland or by establishing a big US base there or by moving US forces up to the Polish border. This has the effect of giving the US control over the Russian-German and Russian-EU political relationship. A Russian-EU entente could jeopardize US leadership in Europe. Without a Russian-EU entente the West European powers could hardly risk a head to head stand-off with the United States. Such realities may sound brutal, but that is the way reality is with the kinds of states that lead the international system at the moment.

The second transformation of NATO involved giving it new missions to strike 'out of area' and providing it with the military forces for so doing. Only this change would ensure that NATO became once again a living military organization. The problem here, from the angle of the US government's political goal of establishing its European hegemony, was the following – to give NATO the kinds of strike missions that would require a central, leading military role *for American military assets*. Only if the West Europeans were dependent upon US military assets as they had been dependent on the US strategic arsenal during the Cold War would US military-political leadership of NATO be secure. The West Europeans would feel the need for military services that only the US could supply. Thus, the bigger and wider the 'out of area' mission statement the more assured was US military and therefore political dominance over NATO.

The third element in the US programme was to ensure that the European states and the EU, the WEU and the OSCE were all subordinated in the military policy and military command field to a US-led NATO. NATO had to have a monopoly of decision over the use of force in Europe, and the whole of Europe had to understand this.

The fourth element in the programme was to throw off the UN Security Council constraints on NATO decisions and actions. This was in one sense a logical corollary to the other elements in the programme but a vital one. If the US had untrammelled leadership within NATO but NATO was under UNSC authority, the French could challenge US leadership via the UNSC. If Russia was pushed out of institutionalized inclusion in European affairs but re-emerged at the centre of NATO's activities by exercising a veto over them in the UNSC, there would be no US-European hegemony.

3. The terrain on which the battle for US hegemony was fought out

To understand both the last decade of Yugoslav history and the battles over the new political structure of Europe, we have to understand the fact that the latter were in large part fought out within the former. Yugoslavia has been an absolutely central arena in which contending Western actors have sought to demonstrate to Europe and the world their capacity to lead Europe politically. And these contending actors have approached Yugoslav issues from this geopolitical angle. In particular, US behaviour in the Yugoslav theatre has been governed by its European strategic goal of blocking the emergence of Franco-German EU leadership and then of consolidating US leadership of European high politics.

In 1991 Hans Dietrich Genscher sought to demonstrate that Germany, not US military power, could settle a big difficult issue: the conflict between Yugoslavia and secessionist Croatia. Genscher triumphed on this in December 1991. As Lawrence Eagleberger, US Deputy Secretary of State for European affairs put it, Germany got ahead of the US on that issue.

But the Bush administration struck back by pushing the Bosnian government into a drive for an independent unitary Bosnia that the US administration knew, like all other informed observers, would lead to an atrocious war. At a meeting in Lisbon in March 1992 under the auspices of the EU the Bosnian Muslim government reached agreement with the Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb leaders to establish a confederal Bosnia based upon three ethnically based cantons. But as the *New York Times* later explained, the United States government persuaded Izetbegovic a week later to repudiate the agreement he had made 'and choose instead a sovereign Bosnia and Hercegovina under his presidency, saying that this was justified by the referendum on 1st March on independence. The problem with that referendum was that although the Bosnian Muslims and Croats overwhelmingly endorsed it, the Bosnian Serbs boycotted it, warning that was a prelude to civil war.'²⁷

The resulting war was one that the EU tried to stop, but could not, because

the Clinton administration did not wish the EU to be able to stop it and thus show its independent European leadership capacity. Paul Gebhard, Director for Policy Planning in the Pentagon, explains the position at this time. The West Europeans were trying to develop 'a European Security and Defence Identity in the WEU outside NATO. US criticism of European institutions, however, can only be credible if European policies are unsuccessful.'²⁸ As Gebhard explains, the key European goal in this effort was a Bosnian peace deal through the UN/EC Vance–Owen plan for Bosnia of 1993. He goes on: 'The EC claimed the lead in setting Western policy at the start of the Yugoslav crisis ... The Europeans may have thought that Vance's participation as the US representative was sufficient to commit the US to whatever policy developed. By having a former Secretary of State on the team, they may have expected to bring the US into the negotiations without having to work with officials in Washington. This approach reflects a desire in European capitals for "Europe" to set the political agenda without official US participation on issues of European security.'

Gebhard goes on to describe the trip of Vance and Owen to Washington in February 1993 to try to persuade the US of their plan. 'Vance and Owen argued that the deal ... was the best that could be crafted ... Without its participation, the Clinton administration was not committed politically to the plan ...' This is an understatement on Gebhard's part: the Clinton administration was committed politically *against* the plan because it was an independent EU plan. And by quietly undermining the plan it successfully undermined West European attempts at independent European leadership. As Gebhard explains, 'Because of the situation in Bosnia, the EC was unable to set the agenda for European security without the full participation of the United States ... The political influence and military power of the US remain essential to security arrangements in Europe.' In short, US rhetoric was for a NATO military drive in defence of human rights against Serbia; but US policy on Bosnia was governed by the goal of demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the EU by sabotaging EU peace efforts. When that was done, the US Bosnian goal changed: to demonstrating with the US-led NATO offensive of 1995 that US leadership through NATO, and only that, could tackle Yugoslavia and thus lead Europe.

This framework for understanding the relationship between Yugoslav events and the intra-Western contest for European leadership then provides us with a new way of understanding the US campaign for the Kosovo war. It requires us to turn on its head the cognitive map used by the proponents of American humanitarian war. Thus, for example, instead of thinking that the US was ready to overthrow the authority of the UN Security Council for the sake of the Kosovar Albanians, we assume exactly the opposite: the US was wanting to overthrow that UN authority over NATO and used the Kosovo crisis as an instrument for doing so. Instead of imagining that the US was ready to shut Russia out of European politics for the sake of the Kosovar Albanians, we assume that the Clinton administration used the NATO attack on Yugoslavia

precisely as an instrument for consolidating Russia's exclusion. And most crucially for understanding the absolute centrality of high-tech US air power as the central instrument of the seventy-eight-day air war, it was not a case of this US air power being an instrument used on behalf of the Kosovo Albanians; quite the reverse. The Kosovo Albanians' welfare interests were to be instrumentalized in order to demonstrate the efficacy of this unique US military asset to Europe and the world.

And last but not least, instead of assuming that the US firmly subordinated the West European states to its military and political leadership in order create a new dawn in the Western Balkans, it used a number of ingenious devices – especially the dilettantish vanity of messieurs Chirac and Jospin – to drag the West European states into a Balkan war that would consolidate US hegemony over them, turning the EU increasingly into a Euro–Atlantic sub-system.

III. THE ROLE OF FRANCE AND BRITAIN IN THE LAUNCH OF THE WAR AND THE ROLE OF GERMANY IN BRINGING IT TO AN END

The campaign for the Kosovo war was US-led from start to finish. But it would be very wrong to imagine that the US did it all on its own. Crucial to US goals was the fact that the war had to be a NATO war. That required one thing above everything else: French involvement. The Blair government, in this field, did not count: an Anglo–American operation opposed by a Franco–German led EU was a non-starter. But with France and Britain on board, Germany could not speak alone for Europe against an attack on Yugoslavia. The response from the American media would have been very straightforward, 'Germany opposes a war against genocide and ethnic cleansing. Given German history, nothing is more understandable.' Tony Blair's great contribution to the NATO war was to keep Hitler in high profile and thus keep Bonn in its place – for a while at least. But the French somersault in January 1999 needs explaining.

During the early 1990s, under President Mitterand, France had maintained its traditional Cold War posture of claiming European political leadership, if only Germany would break from the US and follow France. But this was an uncomfortable posture with a united Germany at the very centre (not to say the leadership) of European and transatlantic affairs. So President Chirac began to shift, first by waving French nuclear power through his Pacific nuclear tests. This was a mistake. So Chirac became interested in French reintegration into NATO as Europe's number one NATO power carving out a big new role for itself within the alliance (using the concept of the European security and defence identity). By 1997 this was beginning to reposition France between Germany and the United States, instead of being at one pole with Germany in the middle. Now France rather than Germany had the options. It could go with Germany (and Russia) on some issues, such as Iraq, against the Anglo-Americans. But it

had a new range of options as well, to go with the British and the Americans in putting Germany 'in its place' (i.e. firmly under France). The US campaign for the Kosovo war offered France this option. Albright went further, and offered France the prestige craved by so many European leaders: a conference at Rambouillet, France, at the very heart of Europe's high politics.

But another background factor was the shift in the British government's posture on European defence. British governments throughout the 1990s had been resolutely hostile to the EU having any military role: all such matters had to be firmly under NATO. But once that principle had been won by the Americans, why not give the EU a military role as a subordinate arm of NATO? This thought gave the Blair government the basis for its turn. In the Autumn of 1998 it started supporting the idea of the EU having a military role, thus scrapping the notion that NATO's subordinate European instrument should be the WEU. The new Blair line enabled Britain to sound positive about a big EU 'field', the Common Foreign and Security field, and thus to claim a 'leadership' role for Britain in the EU.

This Blair turn, combined with the French turn towards a leading role in NATO laid the basis for the St Malo declaration of Blair and Chirac in December 1998, offering joint Anglo-French leadership in the military field for the EU. The first act of the new partnership was their gracious acceptance of the generous Albright offer that France and Britain might like joint chairmanship of Rambouillet. That did it. France and Britain were locked in to the Clinton administration's drive for war. The final touch was Annex B in the Rambouillet second round.

What is poorly understood is how the German government then brought the war to an end. Much of the intra-NATO politics during the war remains completely hidden from NATO electorates. But enough is known to make some rough outline of the main events along the following lines.

From very early on in the war the German government began its diplomacy to end it. As holders of the EU Presidency, Bonn produced a cease-fire and peace plan differing from the American terms. It hoped to line up the EU member states behind the plan. The Blair government leaked the plan to the media, saying it was just a discussion document. The aim was to get the German government to disown its own plan. Schroder refused to disown it. The question was whether Chirac would back Schroder. He refused, saying France had a different plan of its own (though it never surfaced). The German government then turned to Moscow and began intensive efforts to craft a German-Russian position for an end to the war which did not contradict the NATO position but did not endorse it either, and which brought the UN back into the picture. This time Bonn and Moscow used the G8 framework. And in the first week of May this tactic worked. The US officials at the G8 did not feel able to denounce the plan. But the tactic worked only for a day. Then the US air force hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade with five missiles. That sank German-Russian diplomacy for three more weeks of bombing. But when

Schroder flew to Peking he learned the full details of the American bombing of the embassy from the Chinese, and he decided to use those details.

Meanwhile, the German government was developing a new axis of its diplomacy: Bonn–Belgrade, via a secret Swedish intermediary. The Russian government was also involved. Thoroughly briefed by German state officials, this intermediary then thoroughly briefed Yugoslav President Milosevic on what was really going on within NATO. Through this channel a deal was struck secretly between Bonn and Serbia. The problem then was to make the deal stick and prevent another sabotage by Washington. First Schroder issued his threat. He demanded a public enquiry into the bombing of the Chinese embassy. This was a way of saying that he was ready to polarize NATO on that issue unless Washington backed the German peace deal. At the same time, Schroder assembled the heads of government of the European Union in Cologne for the EU Council meeting and simultaneously sent the Finnish president and Chernomyrdin off to Belgrade with the deal already agreed with Milosevic. When the two emissaries touched down again in Cologne they went straight to the EU Council and it proclaimed the triumph of peace. Only a plane crash could have stopped this tactic from working. The question then, was what Washington would do about this *fait accompli*. It carried on bombing for a while, then called it a day.

The terms for ending the war involved major concessions to the Yugoslav government: the repudiation of Annex B, the de-recognition of the KLA as the future governing force in Kosovo, the involvement of Russian forces in Kosovo, the return of the United Nations to centre stage. If these concessions had been offered in Rambouillet, there would have been no war. But the US government also gained its most vital minimum goal for being able to claim victory: a *de facto* NATO protectorate in Kosovo.

CONCLUSION

The end of the war leaves all the central issues at stake at the start unresolved and indeed exacerbated. The Kosovo national question is unresolved. Albania remains a shattered state and society. Macedonia is a state under enormous strain. Montenegro's future status is now a bitterly contested issue. Tensions between Greece and Turkey are running higher than ever. New domestic cleavages are opening in Bulgaria and Romania, both of whose economies are in parlous states, made much worse by the war. And in the midst of the region, Serbia is in a deep economic, social and political crisis, which the Americans and British are attempting to sharpen in an effort to engineer the overthrow and destruction of its main elected political parties. Beyond the region, the Russian state is now plunged into a new and deep antagonism towards the West as all the worst fears of opponents of NATO enlargement have been proved right. And the struggle between the United States and Russia for ascendancy

in Ukraine is in full-swing. Europe is again dividing deeply. The division is economic, social, political and cultural. The field in which that division is likely to be most intense is in the Balkans.

At present the NATO powers are the military overlords in the Balkans. They are running a series of more and less formal protectorates in the region. These protectorates have a colonial character in that they are an attempt to use military-political domination over local populations with the aim of constructing client local political leaderships who are prepared to do NATO's bidding. Financial and other economic inducements and threats, media manipulation, direct administrative and political manipulation and the ultimate sanction of armed force will be applied to achieve NATO's goals. Such instruments will not in fact bring lasting peace and stability in the Balkans. Such a lasting peace will require a new political settlement which overcomes the fragmentation of the region into statelets which are, in the main, non-viable as independent entities.

But the system of NATO protectorates does transform political relationships within the NATO zone itself. The priorities of, and resources for, EU policy towards Eastern Europe have been radically shifted into the Balkans. The fate of the EU is now directly tied to the future situation in the Balkans. But the management of the Balkan area will be under US command since the US controls the NATO command structure. Unless the EU states were to transform themselves into a qualitatively different kind of unified political force, the result of the Kosovo war is, in this field, to place the Eastern policy of the EU more firmly than ever under US leadership. By achieving a NATO protectorate in Kosovo the US has achieved this geopolitical prize. And since Russia's relations with the West will now be focused more strongly than before on developments in the Balkans, Washington will be able to manage EU-Russian relations more strongly than ever.

The consequences of these results for Europe are potentially extremely serious. After this war, Europe is dangerously destabilized. There is an urgent need for discussions on a new European security project that will reunite the continent for economic, social and political development, a project that will replace Europe under NATO hegemony with an alternative, norm-based collective security structure. Such a project would also require a search for a new, inclusive political settlement in the Western Balkans, one that overcomes the region's political fragmentation in new confederal arrangements which offer lasting solutions to the national problems of the Albanians and the Serbs as well as the other peoples of the region. The starting point for rebuilding trust across the continent should be a determination in Western Europe to expose the truth about this dirty war, this European Dreyfus Affair, in order to assure people throughout Europe that such geopolitical power plays will never be allowed to happen again.

NOTES

1. But on Serbian politics see: Robert Thomas, *Serbia Under Milosevic* (Hurst, 1999) pp. 405–406. On Kosovo see Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (Columbia University Press, 1998). By far the best general account of the Yugoslav crisis and disintegration is Susan Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy* (Brookings, 1995). Also important is Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1995).
2. At a press conference on 8th October 1998, Madeleine Albright indicated that NATO had adopted new procedures for such decisions, rather than the previous NATO procedure of the so-called non-voting ‘consensus’ but she did not indicate what these new procedures were. This is a significant omission for citizens of NATO countries wishing to know the way in which their NATO member state may be drawn into any future NATO war.
3. Fergus Carr, ‘NATO and the Russian Federation in the new Europe’, in Czech Atlantic Commission (Prague): NATO Summit, 1997, and ‘Further Enhancement of European Security’ (Cesky Krumlov, 22nd–26th October 1997). Subsequent quotations from the Act are drawn from this source.
4. The Clinton Administration attempted to claim that a mass execution of non-combatant civilians had taken place in Racak in January 1999. But there is very strong evidence from Western journalists on the scene and from subsequent forensic investigations to suggest that the Racak corpses were those of KLA fighters and the event was stage managed by William Walker to bounce the European states into war. For reports indicating a staged outrage see ‘Les Morts de Racak: ont-ils vraiment massacré froidement?’, *Le Monde*, 21st January 1999, p. 2, and ‘Kosovo: zones d’ombre sur un massacre’, *Le Figaro*, 20th January 1999, p. 3. A detailed analysis of the incident is to be found in the important article by Diana Johnstone, ‘The Racak Incident’, published in German in K. Bitterman and T. Deichmann (eds.): *Wie Dr J. Fischer Lernte, die Bombe zu Lieben. Die Grünen, die SPD, Die NATO und der Krieg auf dem Balkan* (Tiamat, Berlin, June 1999).
5. Barton Gellman, ‘Allies See No Credible Alternative’, *Washington Post*, 23rd March 1999, p. A12.
6. Serbia gained control of Kosovo in the 1912 Balkan war and this control was recognized in the 1913 Treaty of London.
7. Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (Columbia University Press, 1998), p197.
8. Ibid.
9. This view is put forward in Branka Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Verso, 1992).
10. Vickers, op cit., p. 220.
11. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have provided extensive documentation of such allegations
12. Thus, the Albanian leaders refused to end the boycott of Pristina University until the Serbian authorities allowed degrees to contain the title, ‘Republic of Kosovo’, a demand which the Serbian authorities would not accept.
13. Gary T. Dempsey, ‘Washington’s Kosovo Policy: Consequences and Contradictions’, *Policy Analysis*, No. 321, 8th October 1998.
14. Ibid.
15. Robert Thomas, *Serbia Under Milosevic* (Hurst, 1999) pp. 405–406. Thomas’s

- book, the best English account of contemporary Serbian politics, is resolutely hostile to Milosevic.
16. Ibid., p. 406. See also James Pettifer, 'We have been here before', *The World Today*, April 1998.
 17. Steven Erlanger, 'Albright Warns Serbs on Kosovo Violence', *New York Times*, 8th March, 1998, p. A6.
 18. Anne Swardson, 'West, Russia Agree on Sanctions for Belgrade', *Washington Post*, 10th March, 1998, p. A13.
 19. Gary T. Dempsey, 'Washington's Kosovo Policy: Consequences and Contradictions', *Policy Analysis*, no. 321, 8th October 1998.
 20. On Walker's background and his role in the OSCE mission, see the important article by Diana Johnstone, 'The Racak Incident', op. cit.
 21. Once the war was under way, various West European leaders like Robin Cook tried to explain their complete reversal of their 1998 policy on the Kosovo problem by claiming that the behaviour of the Serbian security forces during the winter of 1998 forced them to reconsider their whole approach and opt for a war against a sovereign state without even UN authority. But the evidence of Cook's own statements and of those of the EU General Affairs Council of EU foreign ministers indicates that this is simply a falsehood.
 22. Daniel Vernet, 'Sursaut Européen au Kosovo', *Le Monde*, 5th February, 1999, p. 1.
 23. Claude Lanzmann, 'La Nouvelle affaire Dreyfus', *Le Figaro*, 31st May 1999.
 24. But see for further analysis Peter Gowan, 'The Twisted Road to Kosovo', *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, 62/1999 and Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble* (Verso, 1999).
 25. Brzezinski, working through Clinton national security adviser Anthony Lake, was the intellectual architect of this Clinton administration strategy of 'double enlargement'. Brzezinski formulates the goal as being 'to perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia' and engage in 'maneuver and manipulation in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy' (Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (Basic Books, New York, 1997). Madeleine Albright is a long-standing member of the Brzezinski school of geopolitics. On the strategic debate within the Clinton administration see Gilbert Achcar, 'Raspoutine joue aux échecs, ou comment le monde bascula dans une Nouvelle Guerre Froide' (to be published in English by Verso, London, Autumn 1999).
 26. *The New York Times*, 17th June 1993.
 27. Paul R. S. Gebhard, *The United States and European Security*, Adelphi Paper 286 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, February 1994). Subsequent quotations of Gebhard are taken from this same source.
 28. An important US goal in this area has been to ensure its effective leverage over EU policy on the future direction of the Euro. On these goals see Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 'Remarks on the Euro-Atlantic Partnership', Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 10th February 1999 (USIA, Euro-Atlantic Partnership, 2/10/99). See also the important speech by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, 'Remarks to the German Society for Foreign Policy', 4th February 1999 (USIA, Euro-Atlantic Partnership, 2/4/99). For general background analysis of these issues, see Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble* (Verso, 1999).