AFGHANISTAN IN CONTEXT: NATO OUT-OF-AREA DEBATES IN THE 1990S

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Abstract:

NATO's first out-of-area operations in Bosnia and Kosovo offer instructive lessons for those seeking to understand its strengths and weaknesses in post-9/11 operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. NATO was first drawn in to Bosnia largely as a result of its developing institutional links with the UN. Once it was involved, its members soon discovered a vital interest in preserving the institution's credibility by not withdrawing or admitting defeat. Operations in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans soon followed. Despite its long-term presence in the region, NATO has remained restricted in terms of what it can contribute to multifunctional peace support operations.

Keywords: NATO, Out-of-Area, Bosnia, Kosovo.

Resumen:

Las primeras operaciones de la OTAN en territorios fuera del área del Tratado Atlántico en Bosnia y Kosovo ofrecen lecciones instructivas para todos aquellos que intenten entender los puntos fuertes y débiles de las operaciones post-11/S en Afganistán y otros lugares. La OTAN se vio involucrada en Bosnia como resultado esencialmente de sus crecientes lazos institucionales con la ONU. Una vez en el terreno, sus miembros pronto descubrieron que preservar la credibilidad de la organización negándose a proceder con la retirada de sus operaciones y rechazando la admisión de derrota, se había convertido en un interés vital. Pronto siguieron las operaciones en Kosovo y otros lugares de los Balcanes. A pesar de su presencia a largo plazo en la región, la OTAN se ha mantenido limitada en cuanto al margen de maniobra para contribuir en operaciones de apoyo a la paz de carácter multifuncional.

Palabras clave: OTAN, Operaciones Fuera de Zona, Bosnia, Kosovo.

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1. Introduction

In December 2004 a report issued by the Western European Union's Parliamentary Assembly asserted that:

"In the Balkans NATO underwent its most profound transformation, from a primarily political and military alliance for the collective defence of its members against external armed attack to a Euro-Atlantic crisis-management instrument, initially in Europe and then on other continents as is the case today in Afghanistan and also to provide training in Iraq. The wars in former Yugoslavia blurred the distinction between the "NATO sphere of influence" and "out of area" and allowed the Alliance to embark upon its transformation into a political and military organisation with a wide geographical role."[1]

These bold claims are not wholly supported by evidence arising from NATO's actual record in the Balkans. It is certainly true that the operations in Bosnia and Kosovo provided – in the words of another WEU report – 'a laboratory and catalyst for the design, testing and development of concepts and mechanisms for the command and control and use of forces in a multinational framework'.[2] Indeed it is in the areas of collective military planning, force generation and command and control that NATO has made its most effective contribution to coordinating the efforts of its member states in the Balkans and in Afghanistan.

One should not overestimate the extent to which Balkan operations have effected a more general transformation of NATO's culture, structures and processes however. In terms of decision-making for example, NATO members did adapt during the course of their 1999 bombing campaign against Serbia so that their decision-making processes were able to respond appropriately to military requests on the one hand and maintain essential political cohesion and unity on the other. These adaptations were crisis-specific however and notwithstanding optimistic assertions by certain analysts,[3] they did not lead to the evolution of new norms to replace the traditional all-inclusive consensus based approach which remains the basis of NATO decision-making today.[4]

Of equal significance has been the evident failure of NATO to develop new policy, doctrine and modalities for multifunctional peace operations. In operational terms, as Mats Berdal and David Ucko have argued, it has remained essentially configured to conducting high-end military operations rather than peace support tasks.[5] Underlying this has been a persistent reluctance on the part of most member states to countenance new roles and missions for their national armed forces. Experience in Bosnia and Kosovo suggests that member states have often been averse to seeing their armed forces used outside a fairly narrow range of traditional military tasks. This has been reflected in failures to plan effectively for contingencies other than war-fighting. In this context Dana Allin has rightly criticised the 'extraordinary' situation during the bombing of Serbia in 1999 when 'hardly

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[1] "The Deployment of European Forces in the Balkans", *Assembly of Western European Union* (WEU), Paris (2004), para. 12.

[2] "European Forces in Afghanistan: Learning Lessons", *Assembly of Western European Union* (WEU) Paris (2006), paras. 75-76.

[3] Daalder, Ivo and Goldgeier, James: "Global NATO", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 5 (2006), pp. 111-112.

[4] In this context see the call for reform of consensus decision-making in Hamilton, Daniel (2009): *Alliance Reborn: An Atlantic Compact for the 21st Century*, Washington DC, Washington NATO Project, pp. 43-45.

[5] Berdal, Mats and Ucko, David: "NATO at 60", *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2009), pp. 55-76.

anyone on the NATO side' developed plans for post-war operations in Kosovo.[6] In summer 2004 almost nine years after the deployment of NATO-led peacekeeping forces to Bosnia, one of NATO's senior officials stated frankly that 'given the relatively small number of current operations, it is still possible to continue muddling through on the basis of ad hoc contributions and improvised solutions, much as the Alliance has been doing since launching its first peace-support mission [...] in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995'.[7]

The discussions which follow attempt to substantiate the critique laid about here by exploring the nature and significance of NATO's two principal Balkan interventions during the 1990s – in Bosnia and Kosovo respectively. The article begins with a brief discussion of the course of the NATO 'out-of-area' debates prior to the initial decisions by member states to deploy NATO assets in support of UN operations in Bosnia. Analysis of NATO's developing role in Bosnia and Kosovo follows, with a focus on the major stakes which the institution and its member states established and developed there. The discussions in these substantive sections also identify issues which had a particular resonance not only in the Balkans but subsequently for NATO's post-9/11 operations in Afghanistan.

2. NATO´s pre-Bosnia Debates

During the Cold War, 'out-of-area' in the NATO context was a term which referred to regions of the world not explicitly covered by the security guarantee contained in Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty (NAT). The treaty's area of coverage was precisely defined in Article 6. It included the territory of its signatories in Western Europe and North America and the seas and airspace above and around them north of the Tropic of Cancer. The treaty did provide a legal basis for considering out-of-area issues. Article 4 permitted members to 'consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened'. Entrenched multilateral consultative norms were not developed around this article however, despite periodic American efforts to interest allies in security issues outside the defined treaty area. Article 4 remained a relatively marginal legal and political instrument.

This is not to say that out-of-area issues were not considered at all within NATO forums, especially with regard to the Middle East. As Sten Rynning has shown, there were discussions and proposals put forward from NATO's earliest years to create some sort of association between it and various friendly – or strategically important – states in that region.[8] None of these efforts came to fruition however, as a result of lack of consensus amongst NATO members together with lack of interest and sometimes outright hostility from states and governments in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, towards the end of the Cold War NATO's collective planning resources were employed to help coordinate military operations in the Persian Gulf, although these were not conducted within a formal NATO command framework. The first such operation was the deployment of multinational naval task forces by the US and West European states

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[6] Allin, Dana H. (2002): *NATO's Balkan Interventions*, Adelphi Papers, no. 347 (2002), London, Oxford University Press/International Institute for Strategic Studies, p. 86.

[7] Kobieracki, Adam: "NATO's evolving operations", *NATO Review*, no. 2 (2004), at http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue2/english/art3_pr.html.

[8] Rynning, Sten: "NATO and the Broader Middle East, 1949-2007: The History and Lessons of Controversial Encounters", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 30, no. 6 (2007), pp. 905-927.

from 1987 to protect oil tankers from possible attack during the latter stages of the Iran-Iraq War. The second and better known operation was the US-led response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Taking advantage of the modalities developed by the naval co-operation in the Gulf since 1987, the US reportedly pushed at the beginning of this crisis for a joint military deployment explicitly under NATO auspices. This was rejected by European allies however, on the grounds that NATO had no legitimacy or mandate to conduct such an operation.[9] Nevertheless and following the 1987 precedent, member states did agree that NATO owned or operated a number of military assets and resources that would be invaluable in support of the international coalition operations conducted formally under the authority of the UN Security Council.[10]

These two Gulf operations, which coincided with the unravelling of the Cold War order in Europe, were important. They suggested that, as Rynning has put it, NATO member states' supposed 'ban' on out-of-area operations during the Cold War years had been 'a practice' rather than 'a principle' and so could be – and was – amended in response to a changing security context.[11] Douglas Stuart has also identified evidence of institutional adaptation:

"The record of NATO out-of-area cooperation during the Cold War is one of gradual learning and adaptation. After four decades of often intense disagreement, NATO governments came to accept the proposition that the alliance needed to monitor, discuss and in some cases respond to issues beyond the established treaty boundaries. On the other hand, all parties understood that out-of-area disputes could not be allowed to jeopardize the central mission of the alliance."[12]

By the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait it was clear that the 'central mission' of NATO was effectively being superseded by the ending of the Cold War. This had doubtless helped facilitate the member states' decision to utilise NATO's collective resources in support of operations in the Persian Gulf.

The pressing crisis there had prompted action before members had time to conduct a thorough internal debate on the ways and extent to which NATO could and should be used to support such operations in the new security context. The aftermath of the initial military deployments to the Gulf did witness an attempt to start such a debate. This was pushed to a significant extent by then Secretary-General Manfred Wörner. In November 1990, Wörner suggested that the Gulf operations should be seen as a precedent:

"Could we not develop an internal Alliance understanding whereby, in a spirit of solidarity, the degree of engagement in dealing with a given [out-of-area] problem might vary from Ally to Ally, but the assets of the Alliance would be available for coordination and support? This would operate where there is a clear need for common alliance interests to be defended."[13]

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[9] Chernoff, Fred (1995): *After Bipolarity: The Vanishing Threat, Theories of Cooperation, and the Future of the Atlantic Alliance*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, p. 181.

[10] These are detailed in Howe, Admiral J.: "NATO and the Gulf Crisis", *Survival*, vol. 32, no. 3 (1991), p. 249.

[11] Rynning, Sten (2005): *NATO Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, p. 46.

[12] Stuart, D.: "The United States and NATO Out-Of-Area Disputes: Does the Cold War Provide Precedents, or Merely Prologue?", in Schmidt, Gustav (ed.) (2001): *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, p. 134.

[13] "Speech by the Secretary-General at the 36th Session of the North Atlantic Assembly", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *NATO Press Service*, Brussels (1990).

Wörner was effectively suggesting that member states agree to institutionalise what had been developing hitherto in an ad hoc manner with regard to defence of common interests, even if territory and national sovereignty were not directly threatened.

There was, however, little sign of consensus amongst NATO members on the desirability of going down this route. The Secretary-General publicly admitted to substantial internal opposition, saying in a February 1991 interview that 'the discussions we had…show that member nations want to deal with out of area questions in a way that does not involve NATO as such. It will be handled more on a case by case basis I believe'.[14] The 'Gulf formula', whereby members would consider using collective NATO assets for out-of-area operations but only on a 'case by case basis' and without prior presumption of agreement, therefore remained in place. Its parameters were confirmed in several important NATO statements issued during 1991 and 1992.

The first was the new Strategic Concept adopted at the Rome summit in November 1991. Here members signalled that they agreed in principle to consider making greater use of the consultative provisions set out in Article 4 of the NATO:

"Any armed attack on the territory of the Allies, from whatever direction, would be covered by Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty. However, Alliance security must also take account of the global context. Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature [...] Arrangements exist within the Alliance for consultation among the Allies under Article 4 [...] and, where appropriate, coordination of their efforts including their responses to such risks."[15]

By itself this meant little however and it was not dissimilar from statements put out periodically during the Cold War. More significant were two potentially 'operationalising' agreements reached by NATO members during 1992. The first was outlined in the ministerial communiqué issued at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at Oslo in June. This stated that 'we are prepared to support, on a case-by-case basis in accordance with our own procedures, peacekeeping activities under the responsibility of the C[onference on] S[ecurity and] C[o-operation in] E[urope] including by making available Alliance resources and expertise'.[16]

The reference to 'making available Alliance resources and expertise' echoed Manfred Wörner's original proposal of November 1990. On the other hand, inclusion of the phrase 'on a case-by-case basis' represented public reaffirmation of reluctance to consider a general presumption of availability of NATO assets for potential Article 4 operations. In addition, the Oslo offer did not extend to the UN. Sceptics could note that NATO members were well aware that the CSCE had never organised a peacekeeping operation and that there seemed little prospect of its doing so. Nevertheless, they were finding themselves under increasing political pressure to offer to contribute in some way. The catalyst was spreading conflict in the Balkans caused by the ongoing disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia since mid-1991.

[14] "Interview with Time Magazine", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *NATO Press Service*, Brussels (1991).

[15] "The Alliance's New Strategic Concept" *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO) (1991), at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm.

[16] "Press Communiqué", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *NATO Press Service, M-NAC-1(92)51,* Brussels (1992).

3. The Bosnia Crisis

Pressure for NATO involvement in the Balkans was coming mainly from the UN Secretariat at this time. This might have seemed an unlikely source given the almost complete lack of contact between NATO and the UN during the Cold War. However the new UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had made clear that he wanted to see regional security institutions assume more of the burden for conflict management. Boutros-Ghali had also been commissioned at the beginning of 1992 by the UN Security Council to produce a report setting out recommendations for improvements to the UN's peacekeeping and peacemaking machinery. This was eventually published as An Agenda for Peace. As part of the drafting process he made contact with senior officials in regional institutions, asking them directly what these might be able to contribute to operations organised in co-operation with the UN. Contact with Manfred Wörner was part of this process.

In the summer of 1992, Boutros-Ghali opportunistically used this newly-established channel of communication to request NATO support for UN humanitarian relief operations in Bosnia where conflict had recently broken out.[17] This was despite the fact that the UN had not been included in the Oslo offer. Politically however it would have been difficult for NATO members to ignore or refuse Boutros-Ghali's request, as he doubtless calculated.

After a confused initial response involving the simultaneous dispatching of two naval task forces under NATO and the WEU respectively, subsequent requests for help from UN headquarters were met in a more united and cohesive way, with decision-making taking place largely in the NAC. The most significant operational decisions made during 1992 involved the deployment of West European military personnel (with the largest contingents coming from France and the UK) to help with escorting and protecting UN aid convoys on the ground in Bosnia. To facilitate command and control for them, the NAC decided to dispatch the multinational headquarters staffs previously assigned to NATO's Northern Army Group in Germany.

Still effectively driving the process, the UN Secretary-General took steps to ensure that the commitment of NATO assets in Bosnia would not turn out to be short-term or a one-off. In mid-December 1992 Manfred Wörner received a letter from Boutros-Ghali requesting 'eventual NATO support of future UN resolutions in former Yugoslavia' [emphasis added].[18] This contact was made just before an end-of-year ministerial meeting of the NAC, which duly agreed on 'the preparedness of our Alliance to support, on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with our own procedures, peacekeeping operations under the authority of the UN Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for international peace and security'.[19]

As with the previous Gulf crises, NATO's involvement in Bosnia had not come about as a consequence of unpressurised deliberative reflection. Once again member states had felt the need to respond to pressing external factors. Partly these came from the rapidly worsening security and humanitarian situation in Bosnia, which was already on its way to

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[17] Drew, Nelson S. (1995): *NATO from Berlin to Bosnia: Trans-Atlantic Security in Transition*, Washington DC, National Defense University, p. 9.

[18] Vos, Henk (1993): *Co-operation in Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement*, Brussels, North Atlantic Assembly (NATO), Sub-Committee on Defence and Security Co-operation between Europe and North America, p. 11. See also Leurdijk, Dick: "Before and after Dayton: the UN and NATO in the former Yugoslavia", *Third World Quarterly*, vol.18, no. 3 (1997), p. 459.

[19] "Press Communiqué", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), NATO Press Service, *M-NAC-2(92)106,* Brussels (1992).

becoming the scene of the worst conflict in Europe since the Second World War. Coupled with this was the pressure being shrewdly exerted by the UN Secretary-General. Member states did not systematically discuss the legal, doctrinal and political bases of their new out-of-area operations.

This is a significant point given NATO's lack of peacekeeping experience prior to 1992. Member governments were sometimes unrealistic in their expectations about what NATO could be expected to contribute and achieve. In May 1992 for example just before the Oslo NAC meeting, US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney asserted that 'NATO's expertise in running complex multinational operations would make it easy to adopt a peacekeeping role'.[20] This statement conveniently ignored the fact that up until then NATO had no experience in actually 'running complex multinational operations', although it had some in supporting them in the Persian Gulf. Nor had member states evidently spent much time reflecting on the new operational commitments they were potentially taking on. One month after the Oslo meeting at which they first offered to consider supporting CSCE peacekeeping, Manfred Wörner admitted that the NAC had 'not started to discuss the question of NATO as a peacemaker',[21] without giving an indication of what either he or member states understood that term to actually mean.

In view of this it is hardly surprising that NATO-UN operations during the Bosnian conflict from 1992-95 were increasingly characterised by stresses and strains. Operational factors added further to these. The most basic was the difficulty confronting the UN-led forces on the ground in attempting to conduct humanitarian relief operations in a seriously deteriorating security environment. This was compounded by the fact that their mandates from the Security Council and operational rules imposed by the Secretariat required them to operate on the basis of traditional UN peacekeeping principles – chiefly impartiality and consent – in a situation where there was clearly no peace to keep. The principles therefore were arguably moot at best and an active hindrance to operational effectiveness at worst. Furthermore, Security Council members began to add to the UN forces' mandate missions – most particularly protecting designated 'safe areas' – for which the requisite troop numbers and rules of engagement were never provided.

In the specific NATO-UN context the most intractable and enduring problems concerned the possible use of air power. Partly the differences were conceptual: in terms of what air power could and should be used for. A NAC meeting in August 1993 authorised NATO planners to devise options and force packages for possible air strikes against Bosnian Serb military positions and bases. UN requests however, had been for close air support; i.e. the use of air power specifically to protect UN personnel on the ground. This was to become the source of much friction and argument between NATO and the UN Secretariat.[22]

A major source of contention in this respect was the so-called 'dual-key' arrangement for authorising the use of air power, which Boutros-Ghali insisted on. The UN side reportedly used its authority under the dual-key to block air strikes on several occasions, to the chagrin of the US which threatened to terminate the whole arrangement at least once.[23] US Admiral Leighton Smith the NATO holder of the key from 1994 publicly lambasted it on his

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[20] Quoted in "NATO paves the way for a future peacekeeping role", *The Independent*, 28 May 1992.

[21] See the interview with Wörner in: *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 July 1992, p. 32.

[22] Rose, General M. (1998): *Fighting For Peace*, London, Harvill Press.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

retirement in 1996. 'I hated the dual key', he was quoted as saying, 'I thought it was the worst thing we could possibly have become involved in'.[24]

Underlying these operational disputes was the more basic issue of NATO's status as an autonomous international security institution. This was a theme in particular in the public statements of Willy Claes who became Secretary-General of NATO in 1994. Claes, a less diplomatic character than his predecessor, stated in January 1995 that by working with the UN in Bosnia, NATO had 'made itself ridiculous as a military organisation'. He added that 'if we cannot set the rules of our military operations, they will have to find other idiots to support peacekeeping'.[25] The following month Claes asserted that 'NATO is more than a sub-contractor of the UN', adding that 'it will keep its full independence of decision and action. There may even be circumstances which oblige NATO to act on its own initiative in the absence of a UN mandate'.[26] Such public statements reflected – and perhaps also reinforced – emerging realities on the ground. Operational planning for Bosnia was increasingly being carried out by NATO staffs with little or no coordination or consultation with the UN.[27]

These developments also reinforced perceptions that NATO and its member states had not evolved any deep understanding of, or empathy with, the norms and modalities of peace operations. British General Sir Michael Rose, who commanded UN operations in Bosnia during 1994, wrote in his memoir of the conflict that he never entirely trusted NATO as a partner for the UN on the grounds that the former – spurred on by the US – seemed constantly to be looking for excuses to bomb Bosnian Serb forces.[28]

Even as relations with the UN cooled however, NATO and its members were finding it increasingly difficult to contemplate leaving Bosnia. Aside from humanitarian considerations, this reflected increasing perceptions that NATO's credibility was on the line. Writing at the time, Lawrence Freedman identified the potency of this issue:

"It is far easier to send troops in than to extricate them at a later date [...] By then, the credibility of the intervener and probably the sponsoring institution – the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union, United Nations or NATO – will have been invoked. Reputation, or saving face, becomes an extra interest. As we have seen in Bosnia, the agonizing over a decision to admit failure and withdraw can be extremely intense."[29]

The NAC's decision to mount large-scale air strikes against Bosnian Serb military positions and bases in August and September 1995 should be seen in this context. Reinforcing NATO's credibility loomed large in the public justification for it. Statements declared that a key objective was to 'convince all parties of the determination of the Alliance to implement its decisions' and added that 'no-one can now doubt our resolve to see this matter through'.[30]

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[24] Quoted in "UN held back NATO help for Muslims'', *The Times*, 31 July 1996.
[25] Quoted in "Each state for itself", *Financial Times*, 6 January 1995.
[26] "Speech by the Secretary-General at the Munich Security Conference", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *NATO Press Service,* Brussels (1995).
[27] Leurdijk, *op. cit.*, p. 463.
[28] Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
[29] Freedman, Lawrence: "Bosnia: does peace support make any sense?", *NATO Review*, vol. 43, no. 6 (1995), p. 20.
[30] "Press Release", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *(95)73* and *(95)79, NATO Press Service*, Brussels (1995).

Similar concerns were apparent following the negotiation of the Dayton peace agreement, when attention turned to deploying a multinational force to supervise the implementation of its military provisions. They were evident in the US in particular, as the Clinton administration sought (successfully) to convince Congress of the wisdom of deploying 30,000 US troops as part of a NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR). Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned of 'the end of NATO' if the US was not prepared to help implement the agreement by deploying troops on the ground. Defense Secretary William Perry told a congressional committee that the successful implementation of an agreement would 'demonstrate the credibility of NATO'. Finally the President himself in a television broadcast, said that 'if we're not there, NATO will not be there; the peace will collapse [...] and erode our partnership with our European allies'.[31]

The early operations of IFOR and its successor Stabilisation Force (SFOR) suggested a restricted understanding of peace missions on the part of NATO and its member states. In the first instance, there was no serious suggestion amongst NATO members that the UN should have a continuing operational role, despite its experience in organising peacekeeping and stabilisation operations stretching back to the 1940s. NATO members saw IFOR and SFOR as replacing UN-led forces and not merely giving the latter a new mandate and additional military resources. From the beginning of 1996 the UN's role in Bosnia was essentially restricted to the Security Council providing a mandate for international operations there. This function was not unimportant: especially for Germany which was still coming to terms with deploying military forces outside its own territory and for which a UN mandate was essential. Yet there was no enthusiasm among NATO members for allowing the UN a continuing operational role. This reluctance was not wholly unwelcome on the UN side either. Boutros-Ghali had begun to criticise what he argued was an over-focus on Bosnia to the detriment of equally pressing crises elsewhere, especially in Africa.[32]

The narrowly military aspects of the Dayton agreements – such as the cantonment of heavy weapons from the former warring parties – were accomplished relatively quickly and without major incident. However, complaints were soon heard that other elements of the post-war effort in Bosnia were being neglected and that insufficient support for them was forthcoming from the NATO forces. Pursuing indicted war criminals and providing or supporting effective policing were two challenges most often mentioned in this context.[33]

Concerns over NATO's credibility ensured that its members did not feel able to simply dismiss these criticisms. In April 1996 the NAC issued a statement which said that:

"Creating a secure environment and promoting freedom of movement are IFOR's main contributions to the work of other organizations who are primarily concerned with the civil aspects of the Peace Agreement [...] IFOR is now providing increased support for civil tasks within its existing mandate, so long as this does not detract from its primary military mission [...] IFOR will continue to assist [...] efforts in such areas as the conduct of elections, the return of refugees and displaced persons, the maintenance of law and order and the

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[31] Christopher, Warren: "Bosnia: now for the hard part", *Independent on Sunday*, 8 October 1995; Perry, William: "Clinton team starts Congress troops plea", *Financial Times*, 18 October 1995; Clinton, William Jefferson, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, vol. 31, no. 48 (1995), p. 2062.
[32] This criticism recurs in his memoirs. See Boutros-Ghali, Boutros (1999): *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga*, London, I. B. Tauris.
[33] See *inter alia*, Neville-Jones, Pauline: "Dayton, IFOR and Alliance Relations in Bosnia", *Survival*, vol. 38, no. 4 (1996/97), pp. 54-59; *Beyond IFOR and SFOR: After the Combatant Comes the Legislator* (1998), Brussels, North Atlantic Assembly (NATO), para. 51; Allin, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

investigation of war crimes, tasks which are essential to the long-term consolidation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina."[34]

Thereafter the civil-military interface does appear to have gradually improved, though in a rather ad hoc manner which one analyst aptly described as combining 'luck and learning'.[35] By the second half of 1998, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was noting good working relations and effective co-operation between SFOR and the UN, most especially with regard to police reform.[36]

Notwithstanding reticence over their military forces' involvement in 'civil tasks', NATO members increasingly came to appreciate that they had good reason to be basically co-operative: not least because their ability to draw-down their military commitment would to a large extent depend upon progress in civil stabilisation and reconstruction. From the beginning of the IFOR deployment, the question of how long NATO-led forces would be deployed in Bosnia had been a controversial one, most especially in the US. In dealing with it NATO members developed the 'end state' concept. On the one hand they rejected – with increasing confidence following the transition from IFOR to SFOR at the end of 1996 – political pressure to declare a specific end date for operations. This carried too great a risk of destabilising the fragile security situation. On the other hand for domestic political and financial reasons, few member governments felt that they could publicly commit to an open-ended engagement. Thus the idea of the end state was born.

The basic notion was set out in 1998 by Gregory Schulte, the head of the Bosnia Task Force on NATO's International Staff:

"The North Atlantic Council, in consultation with non-NATO contributing countries, will review SFOR's force levels and tasks at regular intervals beginning later this year, with the aim of achieving progressive reductions in the size, role and profile of the force against the background of developments in the political and security situation. Progress in the implementation of the civil elements of the Peace Agreement [...] will also be important considerations. The desired end-state for this transition strategy is a secure environment adequate for the consolidation of the peace without the further need for a NATO-led military force in Bosnia."[37]

This approach enabled NATO members to make substantial draw-downs in IFOR and SFOR numbers after 1995 without ending the ongoing operation altogether. Numbers fell from 64,000 when IFOR was first deployed in January 1996 to 7,000 when NATO handed over to the EU at the end of 2004.

In summing up the impact of Bosnia on NATO's evolution three observations can be made. First, the Bosnian catalyst was not sufficient to induce a serious effort to develop new doctrine and capabilities to undertake multifunctional peace operations. NATO's operational focus remained rather limited, with grudging support for activities beyond traditional military tasks. Second, NATO developed institutional links with the UN. This was a wholly new development since the Cold War. However it too was limited. During the course of Bosnian operations, NATO and its members increasingly came to view co-operation with the UN as

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[34] "Press Release", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *NATO Press Service, (96)60,* Brussels (1996).
[35] Allin, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-46.
[36] "Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *United Nations* (UN), *Security Council, S/1998/862, UN Department of Public Information,* New York (1998).
[37] Schulte, Gregory: "SFOR continued", *NATO Review*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1998), p. 29.

irksome and restricting. This was bound up with the member states' view that they should retain NATO's autonomy as an international security actor. Finally, the sense that NATO's credibility was on the line in Bosnia increasingly became the key factor in effectively compelling its member states to commit to a long-term presence there.

4. The Kosovo Crisis

The last two considerations noted above were also apparent in NATO's initial response to the crisis over Kosovo which came to a head in 1998-99. The issue of NATO's credibility was fundamental from the start. This was not simply based on halting an impending humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. Member states were keenly aware of the risk of a knock-on effect on the fragile peace in Bosnia if Serb military and paramilitary activities in Kosovo were allowed to continue unimpeded. This concern was reflected in official statements. At a May 1998 NAC meeting for example, an agreed Statement on Kosovo asserted that 'the violence and the associated instability risk jeopardising the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and endangering security and stability in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'.[38] Humanitarian concerns were mentioned only in passing in NATO statements at this time. Following Operation Allied Force (NATO's air campaign from March-June 1999), a British parliamentary committee suggested that the humanitarian imperatives usually cited as the primary reason for the NATO intervention were at least partly a cover to provide legitimacy for operations actually designed to underpin NATO's credibility.[39]

Upholding NATO's credibility was undoubtedly a key concern – indeed it was sometimes explicitly stated as a core objective – behind the launch of Operation Allied Force. One week after it began, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook stated publicly that 'the whole credibility of NATO is at stake – not just loss of face after earlier commitments, but confidence in our own security. It is in the national British interest to maintain NATO's credibility'. Shortly thereafter Senator John McCain in the US said that 'credibility is our most precious asset. We have purchased our credibility with American blood'.[40] Perhaps the clearest indication of the extent to which NATO's credibility became a de facto war aim was contained in the Pentagon's After-Action Report on the campaign. This identified 'ensuring NATO's credibility' as being one of the 'primary interests' of the US and its allies in conducting it.[41]

The belief that strong action was required in order to underpin NATO's institutional credibility was thus instrumental in drawing its members into a second Balkan engagement. The relative strength of such concerns, together with the impact of cooling NATO-UN relations since the early 1990s, were evident in the fact that NATO's members were prepared to go to war with Serbia without obtaining – or even seriously trying to obtain – an authorising resolution from the Security Council. When it became clear that the Russian government would veto any attempt to obtain UN authorisation, there is scant evidence of significant angst

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[38] "Press Release: Statement on Kosovo", *North Atlantic Treaty Union* (NATO), *Ministerial Meeting, M-NAC-1(98)61*, Luxembourg (28 May 1998), at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1998/p98-061e.htm.
[39] "Kosovo Volume I: Report and Proceedings of the Committee", *UK House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs,* London (2000), p. xxviii.
[40] Cook, P. Riddell: "Former peacenik Cook warms to heat of battle", *The Times*, 30 March 1999. McCain, A. Sullivan: "America's hawks go into hiding", *Sunday Times*, 4 April 1999.
[41] "Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report" *US Department of Defense* (DoD), Washington DC (2000), p. 1.

over the matter in the internal NATO debates which preceded the launching of the bombing campaign. This lack of a significant internal debate stood in marked contrast to the division and rancour which preceded the US-led military action in Iraq four years later.

Overall, the UN was a marginal actor during the campaign but an increasingly significant factor in the diplomacy which eventually brought it to an end. The demands made by NATO members of the Milosevic government to bring the bombing to an end did not envisage any role for the UN politically or operationally. The fact that the UN was eventually accorded significant roles in post-conflict Kosovo can be put down largely to the influence of the Russian government. Once it became clear that Milosevic would not concede quickly, Russian involvement came to be seen as important and indeed essential in hammering out a final diplomatic settlement. An important part of the Russians' 'price' was basing the post-conflict peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts firmly on a UN mandate and also entrusting a UN mission on the ground (UNMIK) with supervisory responsibility. As a veto-wielding permanent member of the Security Council, this was self-evidently in Russia's interests.[42]

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 passed in June 1999 laid the foundations for the international presence in post-conflict Kosovo. It effectively stipulated that the legal status of Kosovo as a province of Serbia could not be changed other than through a process agreed and supervised by the UN.[43] This gave Russia a veto over any future efforts to move Kosovo in the direction of sovereign statehood.

Operation Allied Force was the most intense and demanding military operation which member states had yet undertaken within a NATO planning and command framework. As such it put the institution's established structures and processes under unprecedented pressure. Later on, their performance during the Kosovo operation came under critical scrutiny and alleged deficiencies were often stated to be a major reason why the George W. Bush administration avoided using NATO during its initial operations in Afghanistan in 2001. It is therefore useful to critically examine NATO's actual operational performance during the Kosovo bombing campaign.

During the Cold War, the integrated military command and planning structures were frequently lauded as constituting one of NATO's core strengths. Typical in this respect were remarks made by Manfred Wörner in November 1990. He declared that 'one of NATO's unique historical achievements has been the integrated defence structure [...] Nations that merge their defence signal their wish to act together in a common unity of purpose'.[44] Granting the political importance of the integrated structures however, should not disguise the fact that in operational terms their actual utility remained untested during the Cold War.

Some military officers were undoubtedly frustrated at the degree of political interference, as they saw it, during the Kosovo campaign. The then Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, German General Klaus Naumann, went so far as to give public expression to his concerns during the course of operations:

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[42] On the contrast between the initial NATO demands and the agreed basis of the settlement see Latawski, Paul C., and Smith, Martin A. (2003): *The Kosovo crisis and the evolution of post-Cold War European security*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 100-103.

[43] "Resolution 1244", *United Nations* (UN), *Security Council, S/RES/1244 (1999),* New York (10 June 1999), at http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement.

[44] Wörner, *op. cit*. (1990).

"We need to find a way to reconcile the conditions of coalition war with the principle of the use of surprise and the overwhelming use of force. We did not apply either in Operation Allied Force and this cost time and effort and potentially additional casualties. The net result is that the campaign has been undoubtedly prolonged."[45]

US Air Force Lieutenant General Michael Short as chief of NATO's Southern Europe Air Command had run the campaign. In the autumn of 1999 he was quoted assessing it thus:

"As an airman I would have done this differently. It would not be an incremental air campaign or slow build-up but we would go downtown from the first night so that on the first morning the influential citizens of Belgrade gathered around Milosevic would have awakened to significant destruction and a clear signal that we were taking the gloves off."[46]

The implication behind the public comments of commanders such as Generals Naumann and Short is that member states' political leaders had prevented Operation Allied Force from being run in a militarily optimal fashion – firstly by requiring the bombing campaign to commence with only limited strikes and secondly by shaping and constraining target selection throughout. To what extent were these criticisms justified?

During the earliest phase of the operation in late March 1999, there does seem to have been tight political control. Decisions – even over individual targets – required the approval of all the then 19 NATO members in the NAC. However, it appears to have been quickly realised that a more responsive and streamlined system was required. Less than ten days into the operation, The Times in London reported that NATO political leaders had decided to 'cast aside some of the bureaucratic shackles that have limited NATO's flexibility'. Specifically they had reportedly decided that the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) would 'now be subject to political control by the leaders of America, Britain, France, Germany and Italy and will no longer have to consult all 19 Nato ambassadors about every decision'.[47]

Thereafter, political oversight on a day-to-day basis was exercised by these major powers acting through what came to be known as the 'Quints' group.[48] The significance of the concession made by the 14 NATO governments not represented in the Quints should not be underestimated. Despite being relegated to a back-seat role, they were nevertheless still expected to maintain NATO-wide political consensus and solidarity behind the objectives of the campaign. A relatively limited degree of involvement in the day-to-day supervision of operations may have suited some NATO member governments politically. This was especially so in the case of Greece and two out of the three then new members (the Czech Republic and Hungary), where public and political opinion was less solidly behind the objectives of the campaign than in other NATO states.[49] There was also a de facto trade-off involving participation in the Quints and the level of a member state's contribution to military operations. The Quints between them provided over 80% of the almost 1,000 aircraft which

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[45] Quoted in "Nato faults have prolonged war, says top general", *The Times*, 5 May 1999.
[46] Quoted in "Lessons of Kosovo, Volume I", *op. cit.,* para. 94.
[47] "Alliance general cleared to bomb at will", *The Times*, 3 April 1999.
[48] See Judah, Tim (2000): *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, New Haven, Yale University Press, p. 269; "NATO Policy and NATO Strategy in Light of the Kosovo Conflict", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), *North Atlantic Assembly* Brussels, Belgium (1999), at http://www.nato-pa.int/archivedpub/comrep/1999/as252dsc-e.asp.
[49] Kostakos, G.: 'The Southern Flank: Italy, Greece and Turkey', and Talas, P. and Valki, L.: "The New Entrants: Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic", in Schnabel, Albrecht and Thakur, Ramesh (eds.) (2000): *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, pp. 166-180 and pp. 201-212.

were involved in the campaign's latter stages. The US, UK and France reportedly functioned as an elite within this elite, based on their operational contributions.[50]

Another mechanism for simplifying decision-making within NATO was the formal delegation of authority by the NAC in advance to then Secretary-General Javier Solana. Sir John Goulden, the UK's then Permanent Representative on the NAC, was subsequently asked whether NATO's decision-making machinery had proved sufficiently responsive to the pace of events. His reply was:

"Yes [...] mainly because of what I described as the delegation to Solana. Having agreed a plan we did not then constantly update it in the Council. We gave it to the military and Solana helped with the interpretation of the plan. He was completely up to date with the military. When they needed fine tuning or a political issue needed clarification, they would come to us and get it done on the day because the Council functioned daily [...] The consultation was very intense [...] By 29 March we had authorised all the powers that the military needed for the campaign, within six days of starting."[51]

The evidence discussed here suggests a process, which got under way from the first days of the bombing campaign, to streamline NATO decision-making. Partly this was done via the formation of the Quints group and partly via delegation of authority to the Secretary-General, who was granted an important degree of flexibility in determining whether and how to intensify the air operations. Overall, NATO political and military decision-making worked to an essential extent informally during Operation Allied Force. As members of the British parliamentary defence committee later concluded:

"We formed the distinct impression that the idealised wiring diagrams and flow charts reflecting NATO's command and control arrangements, and its associated staff procedures, had rapidly been thrown aside under the pressures of a real operation, and that this was an operation in which the element of political discretion was far higher than had ever been envisaged within the mindset of the Cold War in which NATO had grown up."[52]

Allegations made following 9/11 that NATO was unsuitable for high-end military operations because of the inherent limitations of fighting 'war by committee' are not fully substantiated by this analysis. It is undoubtedly true that the process was frustratingly slow and uncertain for some senior commanders. On the other hand it was ultimately good enough to enable NATO to prevail against Slobodan Milosevic in what became a protracted war of attrition. Crucially it allowed NATO members to preserve their political and diplomatic unity behind the aims of the campaign. This core unity has been rightly described as simultaneously representing NATO's weakest point and its greatest strength.[53] The basis of Milosevic's strategy had been to ride out the bombing for far longer than NATO members had initially envisaged, in the expectation that their united front against him would begin to fracture. When it did not do so, Milosevic realised that he had no real alternative but to concede defeat.

There were, to be fair, factors in play during the Kosovo campaign which made NATO's life less difficult than it might otherwise have been. In the first instance NATO and

[50] Rudolf, P.: "Germany and the Kosovo Conflict", in Martin, Pierre and Brawley, Mark R. (eds.) (2000): *Alliance Politics, Kosovo, and NATO's War: Allied Force or Forced Allies?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, p. 138.

[51] "Lessons of Kosovo: Volume II, Minutes of Evidence" London, House of Commons Select Committee on Defence (2000), para. 871.

[52] "Lessons of Kosovo: Volume I", *op. cit.*, para. 203.

[53] *Ibid.*, para. 281.

its member states ultimately avoided having to fight a ground war in Kosovo, although by June 1999 they had more-or-less agreed to threaten to launch one if the air campaign failed to compel Milosevic to settle. The difficulty that member states had in reaching agreement to even begin planning for a possible ground offensive suggests that intra-NATO decision-making could have been subjected to significantly greater strains had it ultimately proved necessary to actually wage one.

It is also reasonable to ask whether the basic intra-alliance consensus would have held had the parallel diplomatic process involving the Russians (and the EU in the shape of Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari) not emerged. In this context it is worth recalling that although it was not until early June 1999 that a diplomatic breakthrough was finally secured, the process began to emerge from the second week of April. Had there not been at least some diplomatic activity in progress from a relatively early stage in NATO's bombing campaign, it is possible that its core cohesion could have been under greater threat.

Kosovo emphasised capabilities imbalances between the US and its European allies. These were particularly apparent in terms of weapons delivered during the campaign. According to William Arkin, the US Air Force delivered three quarters of the total number of weapons expended by the NATO allies. This share rose even further – to 83% – when the contributions of the Navy and Marine Corps were included[54]. It has been argued that it was American perceptions of European capability deficiencies that acted as the chief deterrent to the Bush administration involving NATO in the first phase of operations in Afghanistan[55]. The problem with this approach was that bypassing NATO, especially in the immediate aftermath of the unprecedented invocation of Article 5 in September/October 2001, was hardly likely to encourage allies to develop or commit more significant capabilities in future. This may not have appeared to matter too much during the rapid overthrow of the Taliban in the autumn of 2001. It became significantly more important however once the US realised that a long-term military commitment in Afghanistan would be required in order to try to prevent it becoming a haven for Islamic extremists in the future.

The concept of national caveats (or 'red cards') was something that before the Kosovo crisis had been familiar only to cognoscenti. Consequently when they began to attract media coverage from 1999, it may have appeared as if something new and debilitating had suddenly been introduced. In fact the extent of NATO 'military integration' had never been as profound or significant as many had assumed. At no point in its history has NATO been granted a formal supranational dimension by its member states. Members who have assigned forces to actual or potential NATO missions have been careful about the degree of authority that they have been prepared to delegate. In military parlance, they have not usually been willing to delegate operational command. Rather, allied commanders have been granted more restrictive operational control.[56]

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[54] Arkin, W.: "Operation Allied Force: "The Most Precise Application of Air Power in History", in Bacevich, A. and Cohen, E. (eds.) (2001): *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Grand Strategy in a Global Age*, New York, Columbia University Press, p. 21.

[55] Medcalf, Jennifer (2008): *Going Global or Going Nowhere?*, Oxford, Peter Lang.

[56] The difference between them was succinctly summarised by the UK parliamentary defence committee in 2000: "Operational Command gives a commander authority to do virtually what he likes with the forces under his command, whereas Operational Control only gives him authority to use those forces for the missions or tasks for which they have been specifically assigned by contributing nations. The effect of this is that if commanders with Operational Control wish to use their forces for tasks different to those for which they were assigned, they have to seek national approval." "Lessons of Kosovo: Volume I", *op. cit.*, fn. 461.

Although national caveats had been used in Bosnia, Operation Allied Force was the first occasion on which the media and interested publics really became aware of their existence. Because they were not a new concept to NATO members and commanders however, their use was generally dealt with in a more matter-of-fact way than contemporary press coverage sometimes suggested. This is not to say that they did not sometimes become contentious. Tensions were especially likely to arise when individuals or governments sought to score political points. This was evident, for example, in a post-operation wrangle between the US and France. In October 1999, General Short was quoted in the press as singling out the French for criticism on the grounds that they had allegedly played a major role in restricting NATO targeting strategy during the latter stages of Operation Allied Force by vetoing particular targets in Serbia.[57] French officials soon replied, again through the press, with counter-accusations that the US had conducted parts of the operation outside NATO command structures.[58] Long standing Franco-US animosities over NATO made these disputes appear more serious than they probably were. Besides the French, other Quints group members had exercised vetoes over particular targets without attracting US criticism, at least in public. It is known for example that the UK had on occasion shown the red card in this respect.[59]

Political (and personality) clashes are also apparent in probably the most famous of all the publicly-known red card incidents which occurred during the Kosovo campaign. It came at the end of Operation Allied Force as the deployment of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) was about to commence. British Lieutenant General Sir Michael Jackson was ordered by SACEUR, US General Wesley Clark, to deploy UK troops to confront Russian soldiers who were on their way to the airport in Kosovo's capital Pristina, ahead of NATO forces.[60] The political backdrop to this incident was failure to agree on a role for Russian peacekeeping forces in Kosovo prior to the deployment of KFOR. Jackson demurred from obeying Clark's order and referred the matter to the British government, which in turn consulted the US government. The Clinton administration overruled SACEUR. Jackson's basis for refusing to carry out the order was that General Clark was exceeding his authority in attempting to task NATO-assigned forces with a mission that no member government had agreed to. The US, in common with other NATO members, had not delegated operational command to any NATO officer, including SACEUR.[61]

For a time it appeared as if this incident had the potential to develop into a major controversy. There were some in the US who tried to ensure that it did. In the autumn of 1999 Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was quoted as saying that 'we can't have second-guessing at every level of command in a military organisation if it is to be effective', and threatening to hold Senate hearings on the matter.[62] Subsequently however, the controversy petered out. Jackson himself made light of the matter. He later wrote of 'a little sideplay by the Russian contingent which had us all amused. Especially the chain of command', adding that Pristina airport 'formed no part of our initial plans…..the whole thing frankly was very much hyped up by the press'.[63]

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[57] "Kosovo air chief says French put pilots in danger", *Daily Telegraph*, 22 October 1999; "USA claims France hindered raids", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 27 October 1999, p. 3.

[58] 'US command structure in "Allied Force' slammed", *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 17 November 1999, p. 8.

[59] "Lessons of Kosovo: Volume II", *op. cit.*, para. 90.

[60] Fox, Robert: "Gen. Strangelove and the wimps", *Spectator*, 16 October 1999, pp. 14-15. For Clark's own account of the incident see Clark, General W. (2001): *Waging Modern War,* Oxford, Public Affairs, ch. 15.

[61] Gallis, Paul E. (ed.) (1999): *Kosovo: Lessons Learned from Operation Allied Force*, Washington DC, Congressional Research Service, p. 11.

[62] Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[63] Jackson, Lieutenant General M.: "KFOR: The Inside Story", *RUSI Journal*, vol. 145, no. 1 (2000), p. 16.

National caveats in the Balkans appear to have become a decreasing source of concern since the late 1990s. In Kosovo the need for KFOR to respond flexibly to an ever-present risk of inter-ethnic unrest seems to have persuaded troop-contributing states to adopt a pragmatic approach in reducing their impact. By 2005 a NATO Parliamentary Assembly report could claim that 'the issue of national caveats [...] mostly appear[ed] to have been resolved' there.[64]

5. Conclusions

A principal aspect of NATO's post-Cold War evolution has seen it taking on roles in what, during the Cold War years, were referred to as out-of-area operations. The origins of this evolutionary process were evident even before the Cold War ended – in the Gulf operations of 1987-88 and 1990-91 respectively. The key operations in this context were those undertaken in the Balkans during the 1990s however. They were the first to be conducted explicitly under NATO auspices.

The scale of the use of NATO operational assets in the Balkans was significant and its political profile was correspondingly high. These factors resulted in the growth of perceptions that the institution's credibility was at stake in a way which had not been the case in the earlier Gulf operations. This was a key reason why member states effectively felt compelled to adapt and modify their internal decision-making processes in order to try to ensure that NATO was able to achieve core objectives. Such efforts were especially evident during the course of Operation Allied Force in 1999 – the most intense military operation in which NATO was involved up to that time.

Having said this, it is noteworthy that the Balkan operations had a limited effect in promoting lasting normative or procedural change within NATO. Then Secretary-General Manfred Wörner had called for this as far back as November 1990. Very quickly however, he realised that the evolution of a new normative basis for out-of-area operations – an 'internal Alliance understanding' – would not be developed. Instead, member states would reserve the right to use NATO assets and resources on a case-by-case basis. This was explicitly written into key ministerial communiqués during 1992, when members formally offered to support peacekeeping operations conducted under the auspices of the CSCE (now the OSCE) and the UN.

Within these parameters there is a marked degree of continuity stretching back to the late Cold War years. Member states have shown themselves willing to utilise collective assets and resources through NATO to contribute to military operations where they have important or essential interests at stake. In the final analysis however, they have preserved their sovereign prerogatives over the employment of military power. Hence they have not permitted new intra-NATO norms or procedures to develop which might conceivably challenge or erode these.

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[64] "NATO's Ongoing Role in Balkan Security", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), *NATO Parliamentary Assembly*, Brussels (2005), para. 20. See also "NATO Operations: Current Priorities and Lessons Learned", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), *NATO Parliamentary Assembly,* Brussels (2008), paras. 78-97 and Allin, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.