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Commentary & Reply

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Commentary & Reply

From *Parameters*, Summer 2000, pp. 120-30.

RUSSIA'S PREDICTABILITY

To The Editor:

Dr. Richard Weitz's article "Managing an Unpredictable Moscow" (*Parameters*, Winter 1999-2000) contains three fundamental errors. It errs in its assumptions, it errs in its methodology, and it errs in the validity of its policy recommendations.

The first incorrect assumption is that the Yeltsin era is ending. The Yeltsin era or legacy is a Russia ruled by a super-presidential system lacking checks and balances to restrain executive power. This allowed Yeltsin to rule by decree, initiate two brutal wars in Chechnya, and consolidate the profits of so-called economic reforms into the hands of a hypercorrupt group of oligarchs and "liberal" reformers. Instead of creating the foundation of a liberal democratic society, it negated progress toward limited government, rule of law, protection of individual rights, and transparency in business dealings. The Yeltsin era will continue into the indefinite future because it will benefit whichever clique holds the presidency.

The second incorrect assumption is that Vladimir Putin is only a transitional figure. Here I am not talking specifically about Putin himself as the new President, but about Putin as a representation of the type of persons who are now ascendant in the Russian government. The past three prime ministers of Russia have all been drawn from its security services--the successors of the KGB. Recent events indicate that the Russian military has reached a level of influence in policymaking circles possibly unprecedented in Russian or Soviet history. The ascent of this *Chekist*/military influence in the Russian government, by persons whose formative years were spent in the most loyal and highly propagandized bodies of the Soviet Union, is not transitional because those persons have integrated themselves into the ruling structures of the Russian Federation.

The 1999 parliamentary election demonstrated that Putin was very popular even among many "reformers." While some view this coalition as a victory for "centrist" forces, in reality the so-called reformers have surrendered liberal democratic principles for a small share of power in the super-presidential system. Their need for Putin to continue with past "reforms" is essentially a need to make sure they can keep what has been stolen to date. Putin and his like are far from transitory figures because there is no politician or coalition in Russia today with the power to unseat him in an election, deter him in the Duma, or even challenge him in the court of public opinion via access to a free and independent media.

I also disagree with Dr. Weitz's use of a typical bureaucratic methodology, presenting left, right, and center options for the future and supporting the most neutral one, for three reasons. First, he has minimized the negatives of the centrists. Dr. Weitz stated that future centrist governments will be similar to Yeltsin's, with "a commitment to Western-style liberal democracy, limited economic reforms, and the devolution of substantial authority to regional officials." He contrasts this with a possible communist government which he believes would "restrict press freedoms and other liberties traditionally associated with Western liberal democracies." But under Yeltsin, Western-style liberal democracy did not flourish, and elections have been manipulated to provide a democratic veneer for an increasingly authoritarian state. Not only is the KGB being resurrected, but many of the freedoms that Weitz believes the communists would restrict have already been restricted by the "centrists."

The second error was to mitigate the foreign policy actions of the centrists and not see that they are almost identical to the possible foreign policy actions he fears from a future nationalist government. By exploiting ethnic tensions in the

Caucasus and Moldova, using state energy and pipeline firms to put political pressure on the Baltics and Central Asia, and trying to weaken US security abroad by proliferating weapons of mass destruction, Russia has already acted with the aggressive nationalism Weitz warns about. Even though Dr. Weitz acknowledges Russia's past intrigues in Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan, he believes that a nationalist government would be even more aggressive. But past actions indicate that the centrist government would have been more aggressive too, had it only had the means. A lack of resources, not a sense of good intentions toward the Near Abroad or the West, has been its main restraint. The centrists are already nationalists.

The third mistake is the failure to note the growing convergence in Russian politics regarding foreign policy. Centrists, communists, and nationalists alike believe that Russia should be a Great Power. The near universal support for the war in Chechnya is just the tip of this sentiment. The other consensus is in the development of a Eurasian national identity which is determined and enunciated by its opposition to the West. Weitz sees these factors as a problem only if Russia is ruled by nationalists. He does not see these twin factors as part of a general foreign policy consensus. These two trends have broad support among an electorate extremely disenchanted with Western values after suffering a most egregious economic downturn under the twin rubrics of "democracy" and "capitalism." What this means is that Russia, whoever leads it, will likely pursue a foreign policy of neo-imperialism in the Near Abroad and opposition to Western influence in areas of Russian interest like the Balkans, the Middle East, and China.

In conclusion, most of the negatives that Dr. Weitz fears from future communist or nationalist governments are already present in the current centrist regime. Therefore, his shaping strategies are already overtaken by events. We cannot shape the direction that the Russians themselves have chosen to move in. We cannot bend Russia to the way we wish it to be. The past decade of American attempts to do this should already be a warning to us that this is not possible. What we should do is concentrate on recognizing what type of Russia exists today. A clear view of the situation will prevent us from sending good money after bad and confusing long-term neo-imperial behavior for a transitory phase which we hope will end when a different government takes office. Such a recognition is the true key to managing our relations with Moscow and avoiding policies that do more harm than good.

Lieutenant Colonel Philip Wasielewski, USMCR
Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University

The Author Replies:

I wish to thank Lieutenant Colonel Wasielewski for his thoughtful commentary on my article. Since the art of political forecasting is fraught with uncertainty and subjectivity, we all benefit from hearing as many insightful voices as possible.

I believe that many of our differences reflect diverging time perspectives. Colonel Wasielewski's critique focuses on the likely policies of "whichever clique holds the presidency." He rightly insists that we must recognize "what type of Russia exists today." Most of his expectations for Russia over the next few years seem reasonable. In my own article, I was trying to speculate on how Russia might evolve over the next two decades rather than just after the next election. The longer out one looks, the greater the possibility that Russia might modify its present political and economic system, and that the baneful influence of what Colonel Wasielewski refers to as "this *Chekist*/military influence in the Russian government" will wane.

I agree with Colonel Wasielewski that "we cannot bend Russia to the way we wish it to be." But we might be able to nudge it along in the right direction. Many factors will shape Russia's evolution during the next few decades, and US policies can have some influence on Russia's foreign and (admittedly less so) domestic behavior.

Incidentally, I would like to call the interested reader's attention to two reports that appeared on Russian-American relations after I wrote my article. They were issued this January concurrently by the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP) in Moscow. The two influential institutions established study groups to examine how to improve US-Russian relations over the next few years. They are available on the Carnegie web page (www.ceip.org).

Dr. Richard Weitz

FORCE PROJECTION AND FORCE PROTECTION

To the Editor:

In "Operation Allied Force: Yet Another Wake-Up Call for the Army?" (*Parameters*, Winter 1999-2000), author Jeffrey Record appears to be arguing for a fight in the future that will not be a joint fight. The example he uses in Kosovo is a classic example of trying to go it alone with air power. The results are clear in two areas: (1) The Serbs achieved their strategic objective of driving the Albanian population from Kosovo and destroying the infrastructure. (2) A ground occupation continues to siphon off funds needed for the operational readiness of the Army (e.g., two of ten active divisions are not combat ready; we suffer from an increase in Operations Tempo [OPTEMPO] of more than 300 percent; and we see unprecedented deployment of Reserve and National Guard forces to meet world requirements).

What is clear from the lessons of the recent past is that the armies of the world are procuring heavy forces. Our failure to maintain the lethal punch contained in our heavy force, forsaking it for mobility, will be paid for in higher casualties by our soldiers in the field. The fact is that even with superior technology, the actual fighting is done close in on the ground (see *Into the Storm: A Study of Command*, by Tom Clancy with General Fred Franks, Jr.). The more lethal and survivable we can make the force, the better. The Army is not the Marines, and we should be thinking in terms of sustaining the fight once engaged.

Strategic lift is the real issue in force projection. Although less glamorous than futuristic weapons, it is much more essential to the total effectiveness of a force projected from the United States. I hope the new technologies coming on line will be added to, not substituted for, what works on the battlefield.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Gibbs, AR, USAR
Louisville, Kentucky

The Author Replies:

I am well aware of the limits of air power, which were displayed in NATO's war against Serbia to the great misfortune of the Albanian Kosovars. I am also aware that the Army wanted to have nothing to do with that war, in part because too many in the Army's leadership have come to equate force protection with mission accomplishment. Happily, the Army's new Chief of Staff understands the Army's growing disutility in the post-Cold War era absent fundamental structural and doctrinal reform.

Jeffrey Record

THE LEGAL BASIS FOR HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

To the Editor:

Kudos to *Parameters* for the provocative article by Robert Tomes ("Operation Allied Force and the Legal Basis for Humanitarian Interventions," Spring 2000). This is a surprisingly neglected issue. NATO and NATO nation officials still have not provided a consistent and coherent explanation of the jus ad bellum, and neither the 1999 Alliance Strategic Concept nor the 2000 Pentagon After Action Report to Congress fills that gap. The highly publicized and contentious Allied Force operation may not prove, as some believe, an exception to the core function of collective defense, and the geographic reach of future operations may even extend to the territory of the former Soviet Union, with Russia having of course condemned the air campaign over Kosovo as inconsistent with the UN Charter. A sustainable international legal argument needs to be clarified and strengthened. It is not a question of an external *droit de regard* over NATO action, but of establishing a point of reference accepted by other governments, the public, and Congress. And it is not axiomatically a stark choice between a more effective UN Security Council and "military imperium," as argued in the same issue (Ambassador James E. Goodby and Kenneth Weisbrode, "Back to Basics: US

Foreign Policy for the Coming Decade").

To date the justifications given have been either weak or contradictory. For example, then Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Klaus Naumann testified before the US Senate Armed Services Committee on 3 November 1999 that there was no "clearly defined common interest" or "clear and present danger," and that NATO had acted simply to uphold human rights. The After Action Report, however, cites two further principles: maintaining regional stability against the threat of a spill-over of the conflict, and upholding NATO's credibility while maintaining a cooperative relationship with Russia. Likewise, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson stated on 15 November that "our strategic interest in preventing the conflict from spreading coincided with our humanitarian interest in stopping ethnic cleansing." Legally, Allied Force has been characterized as a humanitarian "exception" to the need for a UN Security Council mandate, as an exercise of an autonomous right to defend "values" and of a "moral duty," but at the same time as in "support" of Resolution 1199 of 23 September 1999, which described the situation in Kosovo as "a threat to peace and stability in the region" and in the "spirit" of the UN Charter. What is the "threat"--spillover into other regions of the Balkans, when crimes against humanity are linked to raw geopolitics, or is ethnic cleansing ipso facto an actionable affront to humanity? All or some of the above? And if maintaining NATO consensus and demonstrating the credibility of its threats were so important, why did the White House publicly signal in late 1999 that it would secure victory with or without the alliance?

In reality, it seems closer to the truth that, as then NATO Secretary General Javier Solana stated on 22 June 1999, "To some extent, we just have to go ahead where there are threats, and we'll work out the theory later." Also in reality, Allied Force may well be simply a case of sound policy, of doing the right thing, regardless of bad law.

However, unless the concept of humanitarian intervention can attract wider regional, if not international, support as *ius cogens* then the problem of a precedent being abused does indeed arise, as the author cites regarding Hitler's *Liebensraum* policy--and the same could be said of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" or Tiananmen Square to defend "socialism" from subversion. Without a right of intervention recognized at least among like-minded nations, we risk reverting to the 19th century, in which war in the name of "interests" other than defense of territory or of political independence could be launched according to the warring state's own definition of its interests, a theory which for obvious reasons has been "generally discredited" (Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, Seventh Revised Edition, Routledge, 1998, p. 312). And in the absence of an accepted principle, even if not endorsed internationally, NATO will confront politically sensitive issues about attempts to minimize civilian casualties and property destruction and keep NATO-Russia relations on track. The potential for divisiveness is demonstrated by the fact that NATO was never able to agree on the relatively simple if subjective notion of "areas of interest" even during the Cold War. And surely if judicial opinion is divided on the question on whether a state can intervene to defend its own nationals, then intervention on behalf of non-nationals is at best no less suspect.

It is true that the NATO Strategic Concept offers a permissive framework for "crisis management" of the Euro-Atlantic area and is "in conformity" with the UN Charter, with a principal, agreed purpose of the Charter being to promote human rights. But more should be attempted for the sake of legitimacy and public support. A first step would be to revisit the otherwise sterile 1999 "Charter for European Security" adopted by the 54-state Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Charter notes that internal developments can pose a "threat" to "our security," and noninterference in internal affairs is not a defense if OSCE human rights and other commitments are violated, although regrettably Russia did resort to that illegitimate defense regarding outside criticism of the civil war in Chechnya after having earlier in the 1990s championed defense of human rights. But there is no OSCE enforcement mechanism, and the general decisionmaking rule is one of consensus. The United States and like-minded nations should work to adapt this, which would prove a linchpin test of whether Russia does indeed seek to join the Western mainstream and would not risk, as Washington has traditionally instinctively feared, undermining NATO. Another direction could be to make more use of the precedent of the 1950 UN General Assembly "Uniting for Peace" resolution that urged enforcement action regarding Korea because of an obstacle in the Security Council.

A passive or dismissive attitude or ad hoc approach to justifying humanitarian intervention risks paralysis and moral abdication. The Alliance must approach codifying the right or even duty of humanitarian intervention with the same energy and persistence it exhibited with Allied Force. At the dawn of a new century, it is surely worth reflecting on Henry Kissinger's dictum, as recorded in his classic *A World Restored* (Houghton Mifflin, 1957, p. 1): "Whenever

peace--conceived as the avoidance of war--has been the primary objective . . . the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless member of the international community." And, of course, if the allies do not correct the deficiencies witnessed during and after Allied Force with progress accurately reported to Congress, and if the Pentagon does not adapt its primary focus on winning two major theater wars, then diplomacy cannot be effectively matched with force through law.

John Borawski
Director of the Political Committee
NATO Parliamentary Assembly 1987-1999

To the Editor:

Robert Tomes has attempted to put lipstick on a hog by claiming an obscure *jus cogens* argument *may* exist to lend NATO's attack on Yugoslavia last year legitimacy under international law. In fact, most of the article seems to establish that NATO's military campaign was illegitimate under existing international norms, laws, and treaties. Mr. Tomes notes, correctly, that "from a formal legal standpoint, NATO's action were illegitimate." Intervention by sovereign states to overthrow the immoral actions of other sovereign states has a long history, and can be justified on the basis that they are a shock to the conscience of humanity. The long-term efforts by the Royal Navy in the 19th century to interdict the trans-Atlantic slave trade is one example. But let us not fool ourselves, these types of interventions are based on only one law--the law of superior force. Mr. Tomes notes that "if human rights violations are a legitimate reason for claiming a threat to peace in one region, then they must be in others. Of course, this begs the question as to why NATO or the United States fails to act in all similar cases, *a question that is answered by looking at other motives for intervention not addressed in this article.*" It is convenient to ignore similar cases for interventions in places like Chechnya, Tibet, and numerous locales in Africa because the cost for such intervention is far too high. This may be reality, but it is not international law.

The far graver threat we face as Americans is not that international law is too weak to form a basis for intervention to prevent human rights outrages, but that our own rule of law in arriving at those affirmative decisions has been undermined by the NATO action. Our rule of law is grounded in our Constitution, which stipulates that only Congress can declare war. President Clinton and many of his predecessors have routinely, openly, and in some cases, outrageously, violated this constitutional imperative. At the time NATO attacked Yugoslavia, the Congress would not and did not declare war as required by the Constitution. In addition, the agreement by which the United States participated in the war, the NATO Charter, itself does not contain any provision for launching an attack against another state absent an attack on a NATO member. In other words, NATO's attack was illegal under its own treaty, and the US participation was illegal under the Constitution. I have asked the State Department to furnish me with its legal reasoning for the basis of the NATO actions. I am still waiting.

I support the idea that military force can be used to intervene and stop human rights outrages. However, this should be done within the framework of our rule of law. Our Constitution exists because it is the social contract by which we have agreed to share the risks that form a threat to our liberty. We are a member of NATO because it is a social contract with other nations to share the risks that form a threat to our collective liberty. Intervene by all means, but do it legally by making the case to the American people. Americans have a long history of acting in just causes, they will do the right thing, but they must agree that it is the right thing to do. That process requires political leadership and should not be ignored for the sake of convenience.

Mike McGlothlin
Long Beach, California

The Author Replies:

John Borawski's commentary raises important issues, makes a strong and cogent argument, and adds important insight into the policy aspects of NATO's intervention in Kosovo. Among his other points, he asks why is the legal aspect of intervention such a neglected issue and why has there been so little official communication of the *jus ad bellum* aspects of Allied Force. I purpose four general answers.

Like intervention decisions, reasons for remaining silent on legal ramifications have little to do with international law arguments. Mike McGlothlin reinforces this point from my article in his commentary. The following paragraphs also address his comments, although he seems to have misunderstood my objective (for which the blame is mine).

The first answer to Mr. Borawski's comments is straightforward: the outcome of the intervention is not yet clear. Several factors are noteworthy here, many of which may address why the State Department has not answered Mr. McGlothlin's requests for documentation. Official--public--reviews of the legality of Allied Force under international law are inappropriate while NATO forces are still engaged in consolidating the peace. This relegates the debate to pundits, scholars, and zealots, whose views are often predetermined. As Edward Luttwak and others have argued, it may be that the intervention really staved off an ethnopolitical conflict that will draw regional actors into a larger and more bloody conflict. Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army dissatisfied with peace-making have stepped up attacks on Serb forces, leaders of which seek to draw American forces into conflict to spoil American will for continued US involvement. Only if NATO succeeds in the long run will allies and others be more willing to advocate a new legal norm for humanitarian intervention. But issue attention spans are short, and periods lacking highly publicized genocide do not promote the focus required to reform black letter law. (So, the best hope for reform lies in building a customary law argument, requiring additional interventions outside the UN system.) As McGlothlin points out, *jus cogens* is an obscure international law tool--but in the context of my article few tools exist.

A second reason is the ongoing war crimes trials. The discovery process-- really the reading into the record of crimes, activities of the charged, and the plight of victims--is as much for world opinion as it is for judicial opinion. The war crimes trials, compared to the acts of violence that sparked them, are not in the headlines or the focus of the evening news. Subsequently, a much smaller, technical audience is tuning in. Only when the war crimes of Kosovo, or of other events drawing humanitarian intervention, are widely reported and followed (as was the Nuremberg Trials) will public support for an international legal norm backed by action spring forth. Also, the decision coming out of the war crimes trials cannot be prejudiced by a public discussion of the legality of intervention, which would revolve around justifications for intervention and thus the crimes being tried. As for deeper American values and preserving the morality underscoring our Constitution, our best hope for the spread of the ethos of democratic responsibility is the profusion of normative institutions.

A third reason is that national security decisionmaking is rarely upheld for legal analysis, which is another way of saying public scrutiny of national morality. The only recent and truly successful international movement concerning the morality of national security decisionmaking was the Ottawa Convention to Ban Landmines. It succeeded (although not completely) through a massive mobilization of world support. Mobilization worked partly because many countries considered their use of landmines in the near future to be unlikely, because hair-splitting legal and policy arrangements were made to prevent the total ban of any future landmine use, and because the country most likely to use landmines refused to a total ban (the United States). Many view NATO's intervention as a further manifestation of American and Western European attempts at world dominance (moral justification of a larger immoral objective). Subsequently, the level of mobilization required to amend existing agreements and laws is unlikely in the realm of intervention. Moreover, the morality of some countries' forces has been questioned due to abuses of power. In part this is a failing of the UN, which has leadership and commitment problems stemming from consensus-based decisionmaking.

Finally, while I agree with Mr. Borawski that a "sustainable international legal argument needs to be clarified and strengthened," as the lack of any movement in this direction indicates, such arguments are likely to surface only when interventions are being debated. For these arguments to become "a point of reference accepted by other governments, the public, and Congress," they must exist in an atmosphere conducive to focusing on legal arguments rather than on the passions and politics surrounding deployment decisions. As Borawski points out by quoting Javier Solana, decisionmakers focus on the costs and benefits of intervention rather than on legal theorizing: they focus on pragmatic politics and "work out the theory later." The same is true concerning Mr. McGlothlin's plea for a strict interpretation of the founders' Constitution. Additionally, in an era where much tension exists between globalizing forces (including the spread of legal norms) and sovereignty, many states are reluctant to start down a path that weakens the formal international legal regime my article discussed.

Despite all of this, one thing is evident: the best and most appropriate place for a discussion of intervention to flourish

is in the pages of military and defense publications like *Parameters*. The military and civilian decisionmakers who give substance to the process of informing statesmen on interventions must be the most informed on this issue--theirs are the voices that speak with the least political bias. They, more than many realize, are likely to agree with John Quincy Adams's 1821 admonition that America not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. At the same time, they take seriously Lincoln's 1860 sentiment to have faith that right makes might. Shaping regional security, as outlined in the National Security Strategy, cannot be accomplished without acting to prevent threats to peace and security from escalating.

I conclude by turning to the idea of a social contract, which Mr. McGlothlin refers to in his commentary. This is exactly the concept we should apply to intervention (although Mr. McGlothlin treats the concept too narrowly). A social contract is not merely a pact between rulers and the ruled: it is a pact to *establish* rules. This applies to institutionalizing constitutional principles as much as it does to shaping a global civil society in which democratic ideals take root and blossom.

Robert Tomes

THE ROLE OF AIR POWER IN ALLIED FORCE

To the Editor:

Dr. Earl Tilford's article "Operation Allied Force and the Role of Air Power" (*Parameters*, Winter 1999-2000), is an important contribution to the ongoing debate among scholars and policymakers on air power and the lessons of Kosovo. He rightly challenges the official view of the Clinton Administration that Operation Allied Force was an overwhelming success, and he makes a strong case that "air power alone could not succeed, and it did not succeed in accomplishing the objectives specified by President Clinton on 24 March 1999." Dr. Tilford demonstrates convincingly the *illogic* of US strategy and how the Serbs exploited the strategy's incoherence and ineptness, taking advantage of the strategic, operational, and tactical mistakes of the allies. He shows why hitting enemy targets and causing destruction will not necessarily lead to achieving one's political objectives.

However, in order to advance the debate on the relevance of air power in future operations, the question should have been posed in a different way--instead of asking whether air power alone can do the job, the question should be *under what circumstances and for what purposes is air power an effective tool of military coercion*. Almost always, decisionmakers use more than one instrument of pressure (both military and non-military); they rely on diplomacy, economic sanctions, military threats or use of force, and it is very difficult to determine the relative effect of each of these on the opponent's decision to comply. (Take Japan in World War II for example: What made her surrender? Was it strategic air attacks, was it the blockade, or was it the Soviet attacks in Manchuria?) As Richard Overy writes about the bombing of Germany and Japan, "There has always been something fundamentally implausible about the contention of bombing's critics that dropping almost 2.5 million tons of bombs on tautly-stretched industrial systems and war-weary urban populations would not seriously weaken them. The air offensive was one of the decisive elements in Allied victory." (Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1995], p. 133.) Again, this is not to argue that air power by itself won the war, but to try to assess its contribution in the context of the other coercive instruments used.

The debate on the role of air power for the outcome of Operation Allied Force can be advanced through carefully discussing the role of the other instruments of pressure that influenced Mr. Milosevic's decision calculus. And such discussion is missing from Dr. Tilford's article. In order to evaluate what air power did and did not accomplish, he could have discussed the role of the alternative instruments of pressure brought to bear on the Serbs such as:

- . The sustained diplomatic efforts of the international community and particularly the Chernomyrdin/Ahtisaari mission. The military agreement signed at Kumanovo air base on 9 June 1999 shows that NATO did make some significant concessions, such as: agreeing to put the peacekeeping force under UN and not NATO auspices; restricting the deployment of KFOR peacekeepers to Kosovo without access to the whole of Yugoslavia (as demanded at Rambouillet); and, probably the key compromise, discarding the provisions for a referendum to determine the future

status of the province and thus allowing Yugoslavia to retain legal sovereignty over Kosovo. By showing Milosevic that he is politically isolated and can expect no help even from Russia, the EU/Russian mission seems to have had a bigger influence on Milosevic and his decision to agree to NATO's terms than is currently admitted, but we need more evidence on that.

. KLA actions on the ground and especially its resurgence in the latter weeks of the air campaign. Evidence shows that the Serbs suffered the most substantial military casualties in the last two weeks of the air campaign, coinciding with the KLA resurgence.

. The buildup of NATO ground combat power in the region, the increased discussion and planning for the use of ground forces, and their influence on Milosevic. For example, what was the impact of events such as the approval of the KFOR-Plus plan and the visible preparations for the deployment of additional forces, the 31 May decision of the US government to allow General Wesley Clark to strengthen and widen the road from Durres to Kukes, the role of Task Force Hawk in Albania, and the NATO peace implementation forces in Macedonia?

. Additional forms of non-military coercion, such as enforcing the economic sanctions against Yugoslavia, tightening travel restrictions, freezing the financial holdings of the Milosevic regime, and the Serbian leader's indictment by the International War Crimes Tribunal. Dr. Tilford could have strengthened his argument by presenting data in support of any of the above points. Since reliable evidence (especially on the Serbian side) is hard to find, we may have to admit that, at this point, we simply do not know enough in order to decide what exactly made Milosevic decide to give in.

To my mind, Dr. Tilford somewhat underestimates the accomplishments of air power in Kosovo. After all, the air strikes did cause Milosevic to fear internal unrest (e.g., popular discontent, dissatisfaction within the military, growing friction between the Montenegrin leaders and Belgrade) and ultimately give in. Fostering internal dissent by striking strategic targets was a major contribution of the air campaign. A more important shortcoming of the article, however, is the underestimation of the severity of the dilemma facing US decisionmakers in conflicts like this one where truly vital US interests are not at stake but, at the same time, there are strong humanitarian and political pressures on the US to intervene and "do something." Dr. Tilford may be right in his attempts to debunk the belief that precision air strikes can deliver bloodless, low-cost victories and to show that, as it was in Kosovo, these are victories without triumph. However, he underestimates the seductiveness of this "promise" of air power for policymakers and that "air-alone" strategies are bound to be tried (even though logic and experience tells us that they hardly ever work) exactly because, politically, this may be the only feasible strategy. Having in mind the strong domestic and international constraints on the use of US force and the countervailing pressures to "do something" and right the wrongs, decisionmakers often won't be able to do what is rational and proper in terms of sound military strategy.

Dessie Zagorcheva
Doctoral student, Department of Political Science
Columbia University, New York

The Author Replies:

I am grateful to Ms. Zagorcheva for her commentary on my article, "Operation Allied Force and the Role of Air Power." The article was narrowly focused, as the title indicates. Indeed, my article reflects the mindset of too many people throughout the military services who mistake the operational for the strategic, and in many cases do not seem to know the difference.

Other than the controversy over the supposed decisiveness of strategic bombing in World War II, I concede every point made by Ms. Zagorcheva. Even her references to Richard Overy's excellent work, *Why the Allies Won*, is good because while facts are facts and there is a definitive truth for historians to pursue, we may be wise if we never let ourselves become convinced that we have sole possession of that truth. That's a point air power evangelicals--along with Earl Tilford--need to keep in mind.

I wrote the article in July 1999, in the almost immediate aftermath of the end of the bombing, just as air power

enthusiasts and true believers were bellowing, "For the first time in history air power has defeated a land army." They were, of course, making a claim about air power already staked out at the end of the Persian Gulf War. If one really wanted to make a case for the pivotal role of air power in halting an enemy ground offensive, one would hold up Operation Linebacker I, the air power response to North Vietnam's Nguyen Hue Offensive in the spring of 1972. Air power has possessed some unique and awesome capabilities for over a quarter of a century, and no institution can employ those capabilities as well as the United States Air Force. As a military force, it is "simply the best."

As for Operation Just Cause, air power effected an outcome that was unique in that, working in combination with a number of other political, diplomatic, and military elements of power, it achieved the goal of compelling Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw the Serbian army and police from Kosovo. The wonder is that it did it so precisely, by hitting those targets that resulted in Milosevic changing his behavior and acceding to NATO's demands. Belgrade was not devastated and the Serbian people, for the most part, escaped undue harm. The use of air power in Operation Allied Force was truly a remarkable display of bombing as an instrument of compellence. I did not make that point in my article because I had not thought it through sufficiently to do so--a trap of writing in the immediate aftermath of any significant event.

Ms. Zagorcheva is also right about the seductiveness implicit in the promise of air power. The notion that victory can be purchased cheaply and quickly through bombing has been around for almost as long as the airplane, certainly since the last days of World War I. But today that argument is even more appealing because of the tremendous capabilities inherent in precision guided weapons. But as Ms. Zagorcheva points out, war is extremely complex, far more so than air power advocates, who approach war as quintessentially a targeting problem, seem to know or understand. Because air power enthusiasts speak with the authority of their convictions--they really do *believe in air power*--their offer is most seductive. They offer the political leadership a seemly clear choice between the commitment of ground forces with all the potential for bloodshed and sacrifice that entails on the one hand, or, on the other, quick victory at minimal cost through precision strike. Even if the political leadership does understand military power and has some cognizant, conscious comprehension of the art of war, the choice is too stark and the answer too apparent. A further danger is that our capability to use violence so precisely makes it too easy to turn to the military option. Since ultimately war is a human undertaking, one encompassing the full range of passions that issue from hatred and revenge, when we use violence we run the risk of unleashing the dogs of war.

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