

The potential for a u.n. peacekeeping force in kos



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ovol. Introduction

The bombing of Kosovo by NATO forces may finally come to an end. While the excuses for bombing the troubled region have been challenged, for the most part the world concurs that the atrocities going on in that nation warranted international action. In any event, the bombing did start and it continues, despite the accidental hits on pedestrian villages and buildings which were not targets in the first place. They have been explained away as unavoidable during such a mission. Casualties must be expected.

While the mission continues, talks of peace are in the air and even Milosevic seems hopeful. Yet, he remains stubborn, unwilling to comply with mandates which would essentially halt the bombing efforts. Still, a conclusion seems to be near. If in fact a treaty can be implemented, a peacekeeping force is inevitable. Yet, the force, or at least the use of the term "force" could be met with opposition.

Another important issue which crops up is the composition of the force. It is generally agreed that the United Nations would play a major role in peacekeeping. Yet, there are a variety of political components at play, and there has been tensions due to NATO's military mission, as well as Russia and China's ambivalent role in all of this. How all of these factors play out will essentially affect the peacekeeping efforts by the U. N.

In examining the potential for the U. N.'s presence in the region, the political implications as well as the reasons for the war in the first place, are all important. First, an in depth look at the conflict in Kosovo is necessary in order to analyze the effects and necessity of a potential U. N.-led force.

II. The Crisis in Kosovo

Every war has to have a reason. For the Kosovo conflict, one reason NATO gives for initiating the conflict is to prevent another holocaust (Cotler 8). Nazi Germany is fresh in the minds of many, and survivors of the death camps are still with us today. No one wants to make a mistake and wait as the so-called “ethnic cleansing” is in full swing. Yet, the bombings seemed to have brought even more atrocities, something not unexpected. It was justifiable as had nothing been done, ethnic cleansing would continue. At least the world is doing something about the problem. Though the war itself will bring casualties on all sides, and plans of expensive rebuilding of eastern Europe in the future, it is seen as beneficial overall.

While many agree with the action, and support for the mission is gained daily, the reason for the war is rather weak if one were to analyze the mission. The international community had chosen not to intervene in places like Cambodia, Iraq, Bosnia, and Rwanda in the past (Cotler 8). Another reason that the war does not make sense is because the ethnic cleansing had been going on for quite some time. NATO’s near-decade-long silence over human rights violations in Kosovo (8) is too much of a significant point to overlook. Why now?

Some suggest that the bombing was political. Although NATO is made up of an international community, the true power is that of the United States, with Britain as a close second. The critics of the action contend that Milosevic is made out to be a “Hitler” by NATO which is a way to justifying the bombing (Cotler 8). Some even go so far as to suggest that Clinton is creating a phony

war (Alexander A19). Alexander suggests that it is a phony war because its strategy has been determined by opinion polls, and targeting decisions made by the 19-nation committee which frequently changes objectives anyway (A19). Further, he notes the fact that the threat of ground troops was never an option, which adds to the claim that it is not a true war (A19).

Other criticisms embrace the Wag the Dog hypothesis, the pop culture created idea that a president can divert attention from a scandal by starting a war. The actual events of the Kosovo crisis do with uncanny precision correlate with the movie events as the war was started in the midst of Clinton's impeachment trial which had in fact soon been forgotten. Maybe the theory is not that far fetched.

Alexander also claims that stated objectives are not reasonable; they are the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, the ability of the Kosovars to return home along with the implementation of a peacekeeping force and autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia (Alexander A19). Despite criticisms on the war and reasons for the war, the point is that it was started and is presently in progress. Nothing can change that expect a change in the momentum in the form of a peace agreement, or a retreat on the part of either party. Before exploring possible remedies, a look at the war itself will be helpful to the analysis.

March 24, 1999 was the first day of the action when NATO air strikes had begun (" Day by day" PG). On that day, more than 40 Serb targets were struck and Yugoslavia claims that 11 civilians were killed and 60 were wounded in air strikes (PG). The first several days of the air war held reports

of further Serb atrocities while Milosevic continued to affirm his stance (PG). Russia demanded a halt to the air strikes and an American stealth fighter went down (PG). It is important to remember that at the time the mission had begun no one was certain of the extent that Yugoslavia was prepared. They did believe that they would have a greater fight than what actually materialized. There were many demonstrations around the world opposing the action. Russian Prime Minister met with Milosevic in Belgrade on March 30 (PG). The mass exodus from Kosovo began during this first week of attacks.

On March 31st it was learned that three soldiers were missing (" Day by day" PG). The very next day, April Fool's Day, they were paraded on television. They were the first captives of the war but that didn't last long. Much later on, Jesse Jackson negotiated their release which would essentially lead to peace talks. Although he acted alone, without U. S. support, it was thought that perhaps the bombing could be stopped due to the release of prisoners. But NATO did not take the carrot. The bombing did not stop.

Throughout the conflict, refugees continued to pour out of Kosovo which created a dilemma for the world as they had to go somewhere. On April 3rd, Macedonia said it would no longer accept refugees unless other European nations begin admitting some(" Day by day" PG). Immediately, Germany agreed to accept some refugees if other European nations would follow (PG). At around the same time, the White House announced that additional monies would be used to help the refugees (PG). The very next day, NATO announced plans to create an airlift campaign to bring in refugee supplies and to temporarily settle 20, 000 refugees in the United States; they also <https://assignbuster.com/the-potential-for-a-un-peacekeeping-force-in-kos/>

planned to settle 40, 000 in Germany, 20, 000 in Turkey and lesser amounts in Norway, Denmark, Romania, Sweden, Austria, Greece, Canada and Portugal (PG). The international community did step in quickly to help. The mass exodus and resettlement would be televised as the Kosovars were received with sympathy and kindness.

However, the bombing continued and accidents do happen. After some successful bombings of facilities deemed to be a threat, innocent people were killed. Such incidents became more numerous. On April 13th, for example, NATO admitted that a bomb accidentally hit a passenger train, killing at least 10 civilians (" Day by day" PG). Of course, some damage is expected but such a move has been criticized. The bridge on which the train traveled was clearly targeted. It was thought that NATO should have known that trains, perhaps with innocent commuters, used that bridge. Another accident occurred soon after, killing 64 refugees (PG). Again, there was much criticism as it was thought that NATO should have been able to distinguish a group of refugees from a military faction. It was around this time in mid-April that the U. N. estimated about 100, 000 new refugees were headed for Macedonia (PG). Germany announced a plan to allow a one-day NATO cease-fire if in fact Milosevic would begin to withdraw troops (PG). He didn't.

On April 23, Russian envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin met with Milosevic, announcing a breakthrough agreement for " international presence" in Kosovo (" Day by day" PG). But peace would not be restored. Further, while President Clinton met with the Russian envoy to discuss the Russian diplomatic effort to try to end the bombing, the U. S. rejected the appeal by Yugoslavia to stop the bombing because they had released the three captive

men (PG). However, on May 3rd Clinton announced a willingness for to pause in the bombing if in fact troops were pulled back (PG). Thus, although the U. S. did not agree to stop bombing as the troops were let go, it does seem that there was a change in attitude on both sides just about that time. Up until the release of the three U. S. troops, the initiative was a U. S.-led war, backed by Britain and of course, the other countries in the NATO alliance but much world criticism had been lodged in the process. Yet, Jesse Jackson was able to negotiate the release of prisoners and Russia continued negotiating for a peaceful solution. President Clinton continued the strong arm policy but did seem suddenly more flexible. Part of the reason for the harsh rhetoric was of course because forces were already committed and in fact, negotiations had failed in the past. Yet, the beginning of May proved to be a turning point and talk had begun about the possibility of a peacekeeping force in the foreseeable future.

On May 5, there was optimism in the air in support of the Russian-led diplomatic solution . Reports of such a diplomatic initiative suggested an “ international body” to run Kosovo when Yugoslav troops would pull out (“ Day by day” PG). On May 7, the United States and Russia seemed to have made some headway in negotiating a peace plan and even President Clinton felt that a true peace process had begun (PG). The United Nations, at this time, stepped into the peace talks and elements of the plan seemed to include a strong peacekeeping role in Kosovo with NATO and Russian troops (PG). Things were looking well until an incident which could be internationally significant occurred. It was purportedly another accident. But the ramifications were serious and the U. S. is not out of the woods yet.

Again, the Wag the Dog theory, while pertaining primarily to diversion from a sex scandal, is relevant. At least that is how it is perceived. However, some White House watchers contend that perhaps Clinton had wanted to cover up something significantly more serious than an a sexual liaison. Chinagate has been given little attention but it has been alleged that Chinese money had helped to fund the Clinton campaign. Further, it had been recently learned that the Chinese government stole a significant amount of U. S. military secrets. With that in mind, the “ accident” that happened on May 8th was extraordinary. If it were an accident, it gave the conflict quite an ironic twist.

What happened exactly was that on May 8, 1999 a missile attack hit the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three and wounding a dozen others (“ Day by day” PG). Needless to say, the Chinese government was not happy. What was also significant was that the reason given for the accident seemed so ludicrous that some contend that the excuse was intentionally lame. The reason for the error was explained as their erroneously using a four year old map and the embassy had been built after that time. However, it had been reported that a map of four years old reveals an empty lot where the embassy was built, suggesting that such an incident could never have happened. Why would they drop a bomb on an empty lot? Wouldn't they have noticed the discrepancy between the map and the reality of the situation?

While NATO immediately apologized and initially offered no details, there were many protests in China, which overshadowed the peace talks (“ Day by day” PG). On May 9th, China announced that it would suspend scheduled talks with the U. S., which were unrelated to the present war (PG). On May

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10th, Yugoslavia announced a partial withdrawal of troops from Kosovo but U. S. officials described their attempt as unimpressive (PG). In the mean time, problems persisted with bad feelings between China and the U. S. Soon, China demanded that there be an immediate halt to the bombing campaign before the United Nations considers any peace plan (PG).

Protests against the U. S. by the Chinese began to slow down (“ Day by day” PG). In fact, on May 14th, as part of a planned visit to China, NBC’s Matt Lauer was finally allowed to broadcast from the Great Wall. His trip had been delayed due to the crisis. This, and other events, suggest that the tension is less than it had been initially. During that week, Defense Secretary William Cohen reiterated that NATO will accept nothing less than a total troop and police withdrawal from Kosovo (PG). The war continues but peace may have a chance.

III. The Role of the United Nations

The United Nations took a back seat in terms of the Kosovo crisis but had recently, finally become involved. The head of the United Nations had actually proposed a plan as early as mid-April (McWethy, Gibson and Sawyer PG). The U. N. proposed that if the Serbs would pull out, a peacekeeping force could in fact be led by the U. N. as opposed to NATO (PG). Many ask why didn’t the United Nations become involved sooner and question the U. N.’s role in the new world order anyway.

Some contend that the United Nations as an entity, has been hurt by its exclusion from the Kosovo crisis thus far (Pisik A13). However, they can in fact, play a significant role now. Diplomats say that once the military phase

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is over, the United Nations, whose charter includes primary responsibility for international peace and security upon members of the Security Council, will be essential in negotiating a settlement and policing the Kosovo area (A13).

John Bolton, formerly part of the Reagan administration, notes that the U. S. does want the face-saving cover the U. N. can provide (Pisik A13). On May 6, G-8 foreign ministers who met in Bonn agreed that the Security Council should establish an interim administration for Kosovo in order to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all the Kosovars (A13). Ministers from the Group of Seven rich countries who attended were from the U. S., Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada; Russia was expected to be present at the Petersberg guest house just outside Bonn (" G8 close" PG). They agreed that deployment in Kosovo of any international civil and security forces should be something that had to be endorsed and adopted by the United Nations (Pisik A13). The ministers said a U. N. Security Council resolution must be prepared (A13). There does seem to be a significant role for the U. N. now. Perhaps it is, as Bolton suggested, political in nature. Yet, many ask why the U. N. has taken a back seat thus far.

One reason why the U. N. has been left out of the process to this point is that the permanent members of the Security Council have been divided by NATO's bombing campaign (Pisik A13). In fact the division is so significant that both Russia and China have refused to declare their support even for humanitarian efforts (A13). Russia and China's role had already been touched on. Despite the fact that they have expressed staunch opposition to the NATO exercise, they have been major players in the political game surrounding the activity.

Slovenian Ambassador Danilo Turk called the fact that even humanitarian issues are affected by the division disturbing (Pisik A13). And again, Russia and China's role is each very different from one another. Russia, while opposed, has been integral to the peace process. China, on the other hand, in light of the accident in the Chinese embassy, protests against the U. S. and the recently stolen military secrets, has taken on quite another role and in fact international relations are severely strained.

As far as the U. N.'s role in all of this, James Morrow, of Stanford University, said that although the United Nations has had none so far, its role could be vital if in fact a deal is made (Pisik A13). He noted that the U. S. is now seeking the right forum for international approval and coordination and added " Once you get to a point where you want to bring in the Russians and the Chinese, then the U. N. - a consensual organization - makes sense" (A13). John Hirsch, a U. S. diplomat, sees the current impasse as predictable and said that Washington's respect for and use of the organization has historically cycled up and down (A13). It seems as if the U. N. is used politically and it may very well be used here in that manner. Of course, it can be used practically in order to get more nations involved in keeping peace in the troubled European region. But it also has been noted that it was the first time an agreement had been reached that suggested that any Kosovo peacekeeping force should operate under a U. N. mandate (" G8 close" PG). As far as how quickly it would be able to take control of the territory is another matter (PG). It could take quite some time.

The U. N.'s role in past conflicts has been significant. During the 1970s Washington used the United Nations to support sanctions against white-ruled

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South Africa as well as to settle others conflicts such as those that existed in Namibia (Pisik A13). The 1980s, on the other hand was a time of disengagement (A13). There was however a spike for the 1991 Gulf war, as well as another estranged period during the Somalian, Rwandan and Bosnian peacekeeping venture (A13).

In terms of the peacekeeping force itself, a foreign ministry spokesman said that the peacekeeping force should have significant powers and noted that the force would not be weak, but rather robust (" G8 close" PG). At the same time, First Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Averdeyev was quoted as saying that the international presence should at first be civilian and might only in the future have a security component (PG). The plan put forth however highlights NATO's preference for a U. N. solution and for a broad international peacekeeping force (" Hope" PG). NATO troops will probably be there as well (PG). It has been asked, how large should the U. N. presence be and how heavily armed would they be (PG)? Another question which looms large is what would the mix of NATO, Russian and other troops be (PG)? No one knows for sure at this point. All of that is negotiable (PG).

One thing that is thought to be the case is that the NATO component of the force must include American troops, and it further must have its own independent command and defensible bases (" Hope" PG). It is further believed that it must be potent enough to thwart another Serb attack, at least until NATO reinforcements can be utilized (PG).

In any event, Slobodan Milosevic was given a message and further, had been never as isolated as he is today (" Hope" PG). Even his Russian friends are

prepared to desert him unless he allows the United Nations to take over in Kosovo and deploy troops so that refugees can go home (PG). That is the message which came out of the meeting in Bonn.

The Kosovo peace plan is essentially a potential breakthrough as it reflects Russia's fading alliance with Milosevic (" Hope" PG). While many are pleased with the successful peace talks, Kosovo continues to be bombed. Further, many wonder what Milosevic thinks and what he might do. After all, the ball will be in his court soon. In fact, it always was. He could have, at any time, stopped the bombing by complying with NATO requirements. While he has not adequately complied thus far, one wonders how a peace keeping force might be received. An interview with Milosevic himself was conducted on May first. Some of his answers may help to shed light on just how a U. N. force might work in the region.

When asked about a U. S. trusteeship or protectorate, Milosevic said he didn't understand why a U. N. protectorate would be necessary (Arnaud A8). He clearly noted that he is not saying that he is against a U. N. mission (A8). He explained that even before the war, they accepted 2, 000 verifiers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (A8). He also noted that the International Red Cross and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, had huge missions in Kosovo in the past (A8). By citing examples of how open the country was, he suggested that they were cordial to the international community (A8). Yet, he notes that while they accepted foreign reporters and governments with open arms, others abused that privilege as for example, KLA terrorists were being supported (A8).

Milosevic continued and says that the U. N. can have a large mission in Kosovo if it wants but they will not accept an occupation force, whether it is a NATO or a U. N. operation (Arnaud A8). When asked if he would accept a U. N. peacekeeping force, he replied “ Yes, but no army” (A8). He further noted that self-defense weapons would be acceptable, but no offensive weapons would be tolerated (Arnaud A8; Cobban 11). He added that they would not accept anything that looks like an occupation (Arnaud A8). When the term U. N. “ peacekeeping force” was brought up later in the interview, he said that he did not like the term “ force” and said “ We would welcome a U. N. mission, not what “ force” implies. There is no job for forces. What would such forces do? Just ruin our roads with their tracked vehicles. We would welcome anyone, any mission, that accepts to be our guests. Their mission would be to observe that all is peaceful and not to act as an occupation force” (A8).

The interviewer cleverly noted that much of the problem is semantics, to which he had no reply but he did say that they would like to see representatives of neutral countries rather than those who had committed aggressive acts against them (Arnaud A8). In determining which forces would be acceptable Milosevic explained that there are European countries that are not members of NATO, such as Ireland, and troops from that country, for example, would be acceptable (A8). Contingents from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus have also been mentioned and would be acceptable to Milosevic (A8). Clearly, there is a difference of what is acceptable to Milosevic and what will be demanded by the rest of the world. Despite such differences, the future is hopeful as at least, people are talking.

IV. Conclusion

The implementation of a U. N. peacekeeping force is an idea that has always been on the table, waiting for the right moment. Even China and Russia seem to be coming around. If all can agree, and Milosevic will cooperate, the bombing can in fact come to an end and a U. N.-led mission can go forth. That of course remains to be seen. There are a number of factors and if Milosevic is not cooperative, the international political consequences can be devastating. Both China and Russia want the bombing to stop and there is no telling which way they will go in the future if in fact an agreement is not reached soon. Further, with internal turmoil in Russia, and Yeltsin's impeachment trial in progress, the future of Russia's role is a mystery, but it is thought that its position will probably remain unchanged (Holland PG). The world is watchfully waiting with a degree of optimism, as bombs continue to fall down on Kosovo villages and refugees continue to make homes in strange lands.

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Note PG refers to pagination of electronic sources