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**THESIS**

**LUCK IS NOT A STRATEGY: INEFFICIENT  
COERCION IN OPERATION ALLIED FORCE**

by

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December 2015

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**LUCK IS NOT A STRATEGY: INEFFICIENT COERCION IN OPERATION  
ALLIED FORCE**

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## ABSTRACT

Operation Allied Force, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 over ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, has been used as evidence for many arguments including the value of independent airpower and the use of limited force to achieve coercion. This thesis examines the bases of airpower doctrine and coercion theory, and examines Allied Force as a case of coercion.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), dominated by the United States, entered Allied Force without a coherent or complete strategy. Over the course of the air campaign, strategy eventually evolved to achieve the alliance's goals, but this was only possible because of the incredible mismatch between the superlatively capable NATO air forces and the largely obsolete Yugoslav defenses.

Allied Force conclusively proved that airpower alone *can* be used to coerce a target state to concede to diplomatic demands, but it also showed that the United States' military and political leadership had little idea *how* to execute coercion. To improve the outcomes of future military interventions, it is essential that the United States' military and political leadership devotes far more resources to strategic planning and analysis instead of hoping that operationally proficient military personnel will unknowingly arrive at an effective strategy.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPS	Global Positioning System
JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
IFOR	Implementation Force
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
MUP	Ministry of the Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SAM	Surface-to-air missile
SANU	Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences
SEAD	Suppression of enemy air defenses
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
YUL	Yugoslav United Left

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched Operation Allied Force, an air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. By early June, Yugoslav forces began an orderly withdrawal from Kosovo, allowing the unopposed entry of international peacekeepers. Achieving its goals without a single NATO combat death, Allied Force was trumpeted as an “overwhelming success.”<sup>1</sup> This thesis examines the strategy of Allied Force, and how the strategic choices were translated into operational efforts; it seeks to determine what the best course of action should have been and how to achieve it in the future.

### A. IMPORTANCE

Since the end of World War II, all wars have been limited to some degree. Some have featured a limited commitment by one combatant but not the other, limiting the size of the war but not the intensity. More usefully, some wars have featured either explicit or tacit agreements to limit the scope of the war, the intensity of the fighting, or the means used. In the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union managed to fight for almost fifty years without overt violence between the two superpowers. Direct hostility was so limited that the Cold War does not generally qualify as a war, but it unquestionably featured *coercion*.

Coercion is the process of persuading an adversary using threats; expertly done, it can gain the political objectives over which wars are fought with little or no actual fighting. While coercion has always been a valuable strategic tool, it has gained importance in the post-Cold War era as professional militaries are becoming more advanced but generally shrinking in size. With a small professional military, even successful military interventions can be costly, and Pyrrhic victories can exhaust nations, so strategists are more than ever wise to seek to achieve victories with less fighting.

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<sup>1</sup> “Message from Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Henry H. Shelton,” in the U.S. Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, (Washington, DC: January 31, 2000), page 1 of 4, <http://www.DOD.mil/pubs/kaar02072000.pdf>.

The only military force used during Operation Allied Force was airpower, and on that basis many insist that it was a successful case of strategic bombing. To substantiate this claim would, however, require a useful definition of the concept, but the U.S. Air Force defines *strategic attack* vaguely enough to encompass any target imaginable.<sup>2</sup> Although strategic results were achieved through airpower, established airpower doctrine is overwhelmingly focused on providing operational capabilities independently of armies or navies, and does not provide a coherent path from these capabilities to strategic results. Because airpower doctrine is limited to explaining the operational effects, this thesis will use the model of coercion to analyze the strategy of Allied Force.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis is a case study analyzing Operation Allied Force as an instance of coercion. The focus will be the strategic level, although several operational efforts will be analyzed because they reflected strategic decision-making; this thesis does not attempt to optimize performance of any operational functions. The ultimate focus of the analysis and recommendations is not to establish a new theoretical model, but to add case evidence to a field that has been largely theoretical to this point.

## **C. SOURCES**

There are a considerable number of primary and secondary sources available in English on Operation Allied Force, but most authors have notable biases. The NATO powers made a tremendous amount of information readily accessible: NATO press briefings are all available online, the U.S. Department of Defense and U.K. Ministry of Defense both publicly released reports on the conflict, and the NATO commander, General Wesley Clark, wrote a memoir of the conflict, *Waging Modern War*.<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>2</sup> “Strategic attack involves the systematic application of force against enemy systems and centers of gravity, thereby producing the greatest effect for the least cost in lives, resources, and time. Vital systems affected may include leadership, critical processes, popular will and perception, and fielded forces.” It is unclear what purposeful military action would not fall under this definition; United States Air Force, *Air Force Doctrine Annex 3-70: Strategic Attack* (LeMay Center for Doctrine, 13 August 2014), 2, <https://doctrine.af.mil/DTM/dtmstrategicattack.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> This thesis cites NATO documents individually, but the overall collection is hosted at <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/all-fce.htm>.

Western sources are valuable for their sheer volume of information and have relatively few inconsistencies or gaps in the primary statistics provided. While crucial, they still require critical reading to place them in context, because they all come from agents with motives beyond the purely historical.

A major weakness in the historical record is the lack of source material from the Yugoslav government or major third parties like Russia. Transcribed interviews with the Yugoslav general Nebojsa Pavkovic, the Russian envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin, and with Vladimir Putin all are available, but Slobodan Milosevic did not write a memoir prior to his death, and all Yugoslav government documents in English were obtained through secondary sources and have inconsistencies. Valuable for its scope is the book *Milosevic and Markovic: A Lust For Power*, by the Yugoslav journalist Slavoljub Djukic, who was not a member of the regime, but was present through the events that led up to Allied Force.

Beyond the primary sources, there is a vast library of writing in the secondary realm, but most works focused on the military operation seem to come from a narrow range of organizations—most of them directly affiliated with the U.S. Air Force. Many of these studies specifically focus on the operational aspects of Allied Force and seek to refine—but not innovate—the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the Air Force. There is a strain of contrarian literature, mostly focusing on the lack of focus in the NATO strategy, which this thesis also addresses. In general, the secondary literature is segregated by source, with the Air Force establishment writing positively about operational airpower doctrine—as would be expected—and with more academic sources avoiding the operational details and writing less favorably about the strategy in Allied Force.

This author has strived to control for bias in the source material, but is forced by availability of information to write primarily about the physical effects of Allied Force, rather than the intent of the participants. This limits the conclusions which can be drawn on certain points, particularly on the efficacy of coercive mechanisms which produce primarily psychological effects, but the overall results of the operation are still clear. It is

also appropriate, because explosions are much louder than words during warfare, so the effects of military action carry more weight than the largely-unseen intentions.

#### **D. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

This thesis is organized into six chapters. This introduction presents and describes the problem, justifies the model and priority of analysis, and delineates the sources which will be used for that analysis. The second chapter explains the history of airpower doctrine and coercion theory, explaining why they are each limited and why neither can provide a useful explanation alone. The third chapter establishes the relevant facts of Operation Allied Force, explaining the history of Kosovo and setting the conditions for the case analysis.

The fourth and fifth chapters are devoted to analysis of Allied Force in operational and strategic terms, respectively. The fourth chapter analyzes operational mechanisms and assesses the efficiency with which military force was converted to coercive leverage. The fifth chapter analyzes coercion from the strategic perspective, establishing and evaluating principles and issues relevant to coercion regardless of the operational mechanisms used.

The primary finding of this thesis is that Operation Allied Force was an instance of operational doctrine being substituted for coherent strategy. Though this substitution achieved effective results, it did so with great inefficiency and under the most favorable conditions possible. To improve the outcomes of future military interventions, it is essential that the United States military and political leadership devotes far more resources to overall strategic planning rather than hoping that operationally proficient military personnel will unknowingly accomplish an effective strategy.

## II. RELEVANT THEORY

Most literature on Operation Allied Force uses either airpower doctrine or coercion theory for the analytical model. Airpower, while a field of military doctrine, is a field still mostly theoretical from the lack of case studies unblemished by the effects of ground warfare. Coercion is similarly starved of cases where coercion was intentional and unequivocally successful. With no ground combat and successful coercion, Allied Force is a case highly analyzed by both fields. Because this thesis seeks to explain that success in terms of both schools of thought, this chapter will examine the roots and present state of operational airpower doctrine and strategic coercion theory.

### A. AIRPOWER

Since the development of combat aircraft, there has raged a debate on their use— independently, as *airpower*, or as a supporting arm to land and naval forces. The founding thinkers of airpower doctrine were military officers like Giulio Douhet, William “Billy” Mitchell, and Hugh Trenchard, all advocates for independent air forces. Initial works on the subject, such as Douhet’s seminal 1921 book *The Command of the Air*, were more focused on ensuring the funding and independence of air forces than critically examining how such air forces would practically be employed. Even today, airpower theorists tend to be air force officers, and their writings unsurprisingly focus on the primacy of airpower and the necessity for long-range bombers organized within independent air forces. This thesis uses current United States Air Force publications as its standard for current airpower doctrine.

#### 1. Independent from Land or Sea Power

A declaration common to airpower advocates was that air warfare is categorically different from land or naval combat: Douhet insisted that “never before in all the history of humanity has there appeared a war arm which can be compared to the air arm.”<sup>4</sup> The biggest battle most early air forces fought was for funding during the interwar period, so

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<sup>4</sup> Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 179.

the most constant element of early airpower doctrine was organizational independence, rather than any principle of operational use. Operational divergence could also be explained by language barriers: although Douhet was an influential thinker, *The Command of the Air* was not fully translated into English until 1942.<sup>5</sup> A partial translation in 1922 probably influenced Billy Mitchell and the U.S. Army Air Corps, but there was significant divergence from Douhet's operational concepts.<sup>6</sup>

Organizational dynamics remained a major factor throughout the interwar period. Three nations, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, all organized their air arms differently and all would have ample opportunity to put their respective doctrines into effect in World War II. By the end of World War I, the United States had four services with aviation combat experience—the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard—and their views of airpower diverged significantly.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the United Kingdom only had one air arm, the Royal Air Force, created by the merger of the British Army's Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service.<sup>8</sup> Germany, under the Treaty of Versailles, had no air force, but a number of German officers were busy devising airpower doctrine. These organizational differences, together with other national circumstances, would create visible differences in the doctrine developed.

America and Britain had similar postwar circumstances of large navies, small armies, and sanctuary as islands. In America, Mitchell demanded an independent air force to defend against foreign air threats, and as an economical way to defeat enemy fleets at sea.<sup>9</sup> The vastness of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans made this argument difficult, but the U.S. Army Air Forces would try to prove it when an enemy fleet came into range of land-based aircraft at the Battle of Midway. A total of sixteen high-altitude

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<sup>5</sup> Philip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 108.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Scheina, "A History of Coast Guard Aviation," *Commandant's Bulletin* 21–86 (October 10, 1986): 13, <http://www.uscg.mil/history/articles/CGAviation.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 34.

<sup>9</sup> William Mitchell, "The Development of Air Power," in *The Impact of Air Power: National Security and World Politics*, ed. Eugene M. Emme (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1959), 171–72.

attacks by B-17s and a torpedo attack by B-26s caused virtually no damage; Navy dive bombers would prove themselves far more lethal against enemy ships.<sup>10</sup> Even before this opportunity for the Army to attack an enemy navy, organizational politics had kept the naval aviators firmly in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and committed to service-specific tactical doctrines rather than the idea of independent airpower.

In Britain, bombing aircraft had been able to circumvent the protection of the English Channel and the Royal Navy as early as January 1915, upsetting a centuries-old sense of safety.<sup>11</sup> Even the limited capabilities of the German zeppelins and early bombers so alarmed the British public that the Royal Air Force was formed and given unified control of all military aviation.<sup>12</sup> Though many in Britain subscribed to Douhetian ideas of offense—the oft-quoted phrase “the bomber will always get through” comes from a 1932 speech to the House of Commons by a former Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin—this ideology moderated as World War II approached, with Fighter Command formed in 1936 and the introduction of Hurricane and Spitfire fighters in 1937 and 1938.<sup>13</sup> After the fall of France in 1940, the Battle of Britain proved that bombers could be stopped by air defenses, but it did not defeat the idea that bombers could have strategic effects independent of the ground war.

Germany’s Luftwaffe, with very different organizational circumstances, produced much more realistic airpower doctrine. With their military limited by the Treaty of Versailles, rather than battlefield decimation or budget cuts, the Germans reformed deliberately, taking advantage of their reduced organizational inertia to build a balanced force.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with *Directives for the Conduct of the Operational Air War* in 1926, the Luftwaffe published a series of comprehensive doctrine documents, largely echoing

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<sup>10</sup> “Battle of Midway: Army Air Forces,” Naval History and Heritage Command, March 26, 2015, <http://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/battle-of-midway-army-air-forces.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 108; “RAF Timeline 1930–1939,” Royal Air Force, Accessed October 24, 2015, [http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/raftimeline\\_19301939.cfm](http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/raftimeline_19301939.cfm).

<sup>14</sup> James S. Corum, *The Luftwaffe: Creating the Operational Air War, 1918–1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 52–54.

Douhet's principles, but in terms more aligned with the traditional German army than an independent air force.<sup>15</sup> In addition to discounting the inevitability of bombers reaching their targets, German planning did not expect poison gas attacks on population centers and placed limited stock in terror bombing because effects on morale had been inconsistent during World War I.<sup>16</sup> Between the doubt of Douhet's absolutism and the dominance of the army in the German military structure, it is logical that the Luftwaffe is well known for its dive-bombing and other tactical actions.

The Luftwaffe still espoused independent airpower, but the doctrinal realism that victory would come on the battlefield meant that bombing of the enemy homeland and rear areas was designed to erode military capability and military morale, not directly influence political leadership.<sup>17</sup> The Luftwaffe's execution of strategic bombardment was also hampered less by doctrine than by limitations in aircraft engines. Prototypes of four-engine heavy bombers flew in 1936, but were so underpowered that the Luftwaffe staff tabled the program, intending to skip a technological generation and build heavy bombers when engine technology had matured.<sup>18</sup> This technology gap, rather than doctrinal decisions, was what limited the size of Luftwaffe aircraft.

## **2. Promises and Limitations of Technology**

The operational proscriptions of interwar airpower doctrine were based on generous assumptions of future technology. At the end of World War I, when Douhet was writing *The Command of the Air*, a typical bomber was the open-cockpit Caproni Ca.36, with a bombload of 800 kilograms, a top speed of 87 miles per hour, and a maximum range of 372 miles.<sup>19</sup> From this starting point, Douhet imagined bombers bristling with

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<sup>15</sup> Corum, *The Luftwaffe*, 83.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>17</sup> Major General Max Wever, "Doctrine of the German Air Force," in Emme, *Impact of Air Power*, 184; General Wever, whose first name is given variously as Walter, Walther, or Max, was the Luftwaffe's first chief of staff, from September 1933 until 3 June 1936 (his death). This speech is heavily cited in Corum, *The Luftwaffe*, 137–140.

<sup>18</sup> Corum, *The Luftwaffe*, 172–73.

<sup>19</sup> "Caproni Ca. 36," National Museum of the US Air Force, April 7, 2015, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/MuseumExhibits/FactSheets/Display/tabid/509/Article/197396/caproni-ca-36.aspx>.



guns and flying in defensive formations, as American bombers would fly their daylight raids over Europe in World War II.<sup>20</sup> Billy Mitchell would make a similarly prescient mental leap, describing “aerial torpedoes ... kept on their course by gyroscopic instruments and wireless telegraphy ... in a sufficiently accurate way to hit great cities”—reasonably describing early cruise missiles like the V-1s fired on Britain late in World War II.<sup>21</sup> These predictions were bold, but not impossible, showing the optimism of early airpower thinkers.

This technological optimism logically carried over to one of the most basic issues in warfare—hitting the target—but with notably less vindication. Douhet’s imagined account of a future air, *The War of 19--*, included in the 1942 translation of *The Command of the Air*, suggested that accuracy was unimportant in terror bombing, but that the resultant carpet bombing would be mathematically precise.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, German scientists worked to make precision technologically feasible with radio navigation, blind-bombing systems, and research on bomb ballistics.<sup>23</sup> In the United States, the vaunted Norden bombsight was coupled with a bomber’s autopilot to provide correction for wind and motion to the bombardier, in an attempt to “drop a bomb into a pickle barrel,” as propaganda put it.<sup>24</sup> For all this effort, accuracy was dismal: on the American daylight raid against Schweinfurt in October 1943: only one bomb in ten landed within 500 feet of its target; the Butt Report of 1941 found that in night bombing only three of five British crews got close enough to their targets to drop bombs; and only one of five managed to put bombs within five miles of its target.<sup>25</sup> Precision, while a desirable capability, had been given a place in doctrine totally disconnected from technological reality.

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<sup>20</sup> Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 346.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, “Development of Air Power,” 173.

<sup>22</sup> Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 347.

<sup>23</sup> Corum, *The Luftwaffe*, 112, 114, 174–76.

<sup>24</sup> “Norden M-9 Bombsight,” National Museum of the US Air Force, May 4, 2015, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/MuseumExhibits/FactSheets/Display/tabid/509/Article/196340/norden-m-9-bombsight.aspx>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 1, 303 note 1.

### 3. Doctrine and Theories of Victory

Early airpower theory tended to intermingle effects on material and popular morale, not separating different attacks based on their contributions to the strategic plan. Douhet insisted on “breaking down the material and moral resistance” of the enemy, but he remained vague in targeting guidance.<sup>26</sup> When postulating the psychological effects of bombing, he originally only considered the effects of workers fleeing war factories; in his later work *The War of 19--*, Douhet suggested that victory could come by putting “the enemy populations under intolerable conditions of life, making them sue for peace.”<sup>27</sup> After World War I, Douhet believed there would be no limited wars. He ascribed a “social” character to World War I, and believed that future conflicts would follow the pattern of entire societies engaging in the war effort.<sup>28</sup> As part of this total mobilization, Douhet believed that the population would demand control of a nation’s politics and that a collapse of popular morale would bring defeat, regardless of military strength; citing the collapse of Germany in 1918 as proof.<sup>29</sup> Douhet did not, however, propose anything more specific than terror bombing to replicate the effect.

Later theorists did not deny the psychological effects that bombing could cause in a population, but neither did they focus on specific ways to achieve these effects. Unwilling to plan for poison gas attacks and lawless warfare, as Douhet had, most interwar air forces developed theories of industrial attack: either material destruction of factories or stymying war production by demoralizing workers.<sup>30</sup> In Britain, Hugh Trenchard was highly influential as the first head of the Royal Air Force, although he was less prolific a writer than Douhet or Mitchell. In 1946, he summarized his principles of air power, including using a “strategic bombing force” to attack the “enemy’s means of

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<sup>26</sup> This translation uses the British spelling *moral* rather than the American *morale*; Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 175.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 188, 362.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> Douhet believed that “every convention loses its value” in a world war; *Ibid.*, 309; Mitchell, “Development of Air Power,” 173.

production and his communications.”<sup>31</sup> This focus on destroying the enemy industrial base was common to American and British doctrine, leading to the Combined Bomber Offensive during World War II. This aspirational doctrine relied heavily on tactical assumptions and untested precision bombing technology, but it crucially provided both air forces with strong reasons for their independent existence during the interwar period.

#### 4. Adjusting Action but Not Doctrine

The Royal Air Force and U.S. Army Air Forces espoused precision bombing as World War II began, but both switched to area bombing—in effect if not in principle. The British were conscious of their switch, turning to night area bombing to compensate for increasing casualties and unimpressive daylight accuracy.<sup>32</sup> These attacks, although known to be on civilians, were justified by considering “industrial workers as a factor of production.... Thus the attack on morale merged with the attack on the economy.”<sup>33</sup> American leadership remained committed in principle to precision bombing of industrial targets in Europe, but following the high losses of the October 1943 raid on Schweinfurt, there was broader use of “blind” bombing on instruments, and more incendiaries in the ordnance mix.<sup>34</sup> In the Pacific, American leadership believed that “Japanese industry was so dispersed ... that it was impossible to separate civilian from industrial targets,” and firebombing was thus a justified attack on industry.<sup>35</sup> Despite this functional abandonment of prewar precision bombing doctrine, Carl Spaatz, the first Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, espoused the same precision attack doctrine in a 1946 article that had been seen years earlier.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hugh M. Trenchard, “Air Power and National Security,” in Emme, *Impact of Air Power*, 193.

<sup>32</sup> Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 177.

<sup>33</sup> Richard J. Overy, *The Air War: 1939–1945* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 106.

<sup>34</sup> Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 228–29.

<sup>35</sup> Overy, *Air War: 1939–1945*, 107.

<sup>36</sup> General Carl A. Spaatz, “Strategic Air Power in the European War,” in Emme, *Impact of Air Power*, 228–29.

## 5. Independent Strike Doctrine Today

Based on decades of experience and technological advancement since World War II, airpower doctrine still holds to many principles of the early thinkers; focusing on organizational independence and operational proficiency instead of strategic thought. One of the most significant recent works of doctrinal theory, Colonel John Warden's *The Air Campaign*, specifically focuses on "the very complex philosophy and theory ... at the operational level."<sup>37</sup> Written in 1988, *The Air Campaign* benefits from decades of technological development and combat experience that writings from Douhet and Mitchell lacked, but it remains centered on what aircraft and aerial weapons could do, not what had to be done to win wars.

Warden discusses attacking the enemy's will to resist in only one of his ten chapters, focusing almost entirely on maximizing the efficiency of air power in destroying military resistance as part of an operational campaign, not directly strategic attacks.<sup>38</sup> Warden concluded that "the will to resist collapses when the armed forces no longer can do their job or when the economy no longer can provide essential military—or civilian—services."<sup>39</sup> Warden felt that "direct attacks on the enemy civilian population may seem a viable way of breaking the national will" but that even limited success required incredible resources and caused massive collateral damage.<sup>40</sup>

Official doctrine has no better focus on exactly how airpower will contribute to strategic victory: per the current *Air Force Doctrine Annex 3–70: Strategic Attack*, strategic attacks seek "to weaken the adversary's ability or will to engage in conflict, and may achieve strategic objectives without necessarily having to achieve operational objectives as a precondition."<sup>41</sup> This definition emphasizes the ability of *strategic attack*

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<sup>37</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), xvii.

<sup>38</sup> Chapter 9: The Orchestration of War, benefits from more historical background than Douhet and other interwar authors, but ultimately does not make any clearer distinction between material and morale targets than previous writers; *Ibid.*, 129–134.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> United States Air Force, *Strategic Attack*, 2.

to bypass the tactical and operational levels of war (by flying over them), but does not make the strategic choice between attacking the enemy's ability or will. Airpower doctrine clearly requires that air forces be capable of *independent* action, lest they be a mere auxiliary to an army or navy, but does not constitute a strategy.

## **B. COERCION**

There is no shortage of literature on coercion and coercive diplomacy, far beyond the ability of this thesis to review or reconcile. Therefore, the sources of strategic theory will be limited to Thomas Schelling's *Arms and Influence*, which effectively defined the field of coercive diplomacy during the Cold War, and Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*, generally regarded as the foundation of Western strategic thought. Two studies contemporaneous with Operation Allied Force, Robert A. Pape's *Bombing to Win* and *The Dynamics of Coercion* by Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, are used to define operational mechanisms. The intent of this section is to use those works to define the model of coercion and a consistent vocabulary for the remainder of the thesis.

### **1. Roots in Clausewitz**

In *On War*, written well before combat aircraft, Clausewitz identifies the political and psychological roots of warfare, laying the groundwork for the eventual development of coercion theory. He could not, however, conceive of going around enemy armies—rather than through them—to directly attack enemy homelands. Based on his military experience, there was only one variety of war: “an act of force to compel.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, while Clausewitz identifies war as “a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means,” he derides a “rational” war in which “one would never really need to use the physical impact of the fighting forces”—the essence of coercion—as “war by algebra.”<sup>43</sup>

Although he did not define coercion, Clausewitz did define the algebra that later theorists would expand upon, equating an enemy's “power of resistance” to the product

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<sup>42</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 87, 76.

of “*the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will.*”<sup>44</sup> Later authors have expressed this in a cost-benefit equation, completing Clausewitz’s logic that “if the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make” and by extension, “the smaller the penalty you demand from your opponent, the less you can expect him to try and deny it to you.”<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Coercion Defined

Schelling, writing during the Cold War, expanded these principles into a game-theory model of coercion as an independent strategy of international action. He defines two uses of power: the *power to force* compliance and the *power to hurt* an enemy until compliance is preferable to continued pain, making the difference between brute force and coercion the “difference between taking what you want and making someone give it to you.”<sup>46</sup> He also laid the framework for how force would be used in these two paths: “brute force succeeds when it is used, whereas the power to hurt is most successful when held in reserve. It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply.”<sup>47</sup> The concepts of reserving force or of telegraphing future attacks would be utterly foreign to earlier theorists like Clausewitz, before nuclear weapons provided such an abundance of assured destructive power that some could safely be held back.

With coercion now a viable course of action, Schelling defined the basic principles, identifying coercion as violence-backed diplomacy rather than a strictly military endeavor. Successful coercion requires the enemy to understand the violence being threatened and the accommodation being demanded, and to be confident that

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<sup>44</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

<sup>45</sup>  $R = B \times p(B) - C \times p(C)$ , defining the value of continued resistance  $R$  as equal to the product of the potential benefit  $B$  and the probability  $p(B)$  of attaining that benefit through resistance, less the potential cost  $C$  multiplied by the probability  $p(C)$  of that cost being incurred by resistance, in Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 16; Clausewitz, *On War*, 77, 81.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

cooperation is the surest way to avoid further pain.<sup>48</sup> Even with this simple rational framework, Schelling made no “promise that the distinction will be made, and the strategies enlightened by the distinction, every time some vicious enterprise gets launched.”<sup>49</sup>

### **3. Operational Mechanisms of Coercion**

At the end of the Cold War, even after decades of historical examples of bombing campaigns, it was still not clear whether coercive bombing worked, or exactly what qualified as a coercive campaign. Robert A. Pape identified forty bombing campaigns from World War I to Operation Desert Storm, defining sixteen as successful coercion, using four different coercive mechanisms: denial, punishment, risk, and leadership decapitation.<sup>50</sup> Byman and Waxman expand on this, redefining Pape’s mechanisms into five: denial, weakening, unrest, power base erosion, and decapitation.<sup>51</sup> These five categories effectively summarize the broadest interpretation of coercion theory today.

### **4. Vocabulary of Coercion**

Is coercion war or diplomacy? It is both. Coercion requires the combination of threatened violence and diplomacy, even if either the threats or the demands are only implied. Schelling’s work on coercive diplomacy focuses on the use of threats in a primarily diplomatic exchange, where violence may not be used, but still is possible. Alternatively, many historical cases of coercion occurred during wartime, without explicit demands or necessarily intent, but their effects were coercive instead of forcible.<sup>52</sup> Creating a dichotomy between coercive violence and other warfare is not practical; Clausewitz’s definition of war as a continuation of politics with the addition of violent means easily fits coercion as well.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 3–4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 52, 57.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>52</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 12–13.

<sup>53</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

Schelling draws a distinction between *diplomacy* and *force*, but as processes, not means. Regardless of the means, diplomacy is an interaction where “there must be some common interest, if only the avoidance of mutual damage,” so the use of coercive violence to ensure the adversary’s interest is within the realm of diplomacy.<sup>54</sup> Force, however, is not concerned with the adversary’s desires, merely their capability to resist by force of their own. Regardless of the means used, an objective can be given in diplomacy, coercive or otherwise, or it can be taken by force, but not both.<sup>55</sup>

Within the field of coercion, there are two common dichotomies. First, *deterrence* and *compellance*: deterrence convinces an adversary not to act, while compellance—a term coined by Schelling—convinces the adversary to make a positive action.<sup>56</sup> Second, *denial* and *punishment* mechanisms: denial prevents the adversary from carrying out the act in question, while punishment exacts a price for the act being carried out but does not prevent it.<sup>57</sup> However, for denial to be coercive, the coercer must impose costs on the enemy’s (military) capabilities for attempting the act coercion seeks to prevent, so all coercion imposes costs to change the enemy’s behavior.

## 5. Characterizing Allied Force

A common misconception is that because Allied Force used military force, it could not be diplomacy, but discrimination between force and diplomacy is made by the target of the campaign—ability or will—not the means used. An enemy needs both ability and will to attack, so forcible denial or deterrence will produce the same result on the defensive, but on the offensive the difference is clear: an enemy who lacks the ability to resist is still not necessarily compliant, whereas an enemy whose will has been broken can be compelled to comply. Allied Force was clearly compellance instead of forcible seizure, with NATO using a combination of denial and punishment mechanisms, so it is essential that the analytic model be coercion and not airpower.

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<sup>54</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>57</sup> These examples are in terms of deterrence; one of the weaknesses of denial as a coercive mechanism is that it is not easily rephrased for compellance.



### III. RELEVANT HISTORY

Figure 1. Serbia and Montenegro, 2000.



The United States did not officially recognize the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: “the U.S. view is that the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), has dissolved and that none of the successor republics represents its continuation.” Source: “The World Factbook: Serbia and Montenegro,” Central Intelligence Agency, 2000, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/download/download-2000/index.html>.

The former Yugoslavia, its successor states, and their ethnic divisions are complicated issues at best. The intent of this chapter is to present the facts essential for the reader to make sense of the analysis chapters. Many sources will use *Serb*, *Serbian*, and *Yugoslav* interchangeably, but this confuses ethnic groups and nationalities: although the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was dominated by the republic of Serbia, and the Serb ethnic group dominated Serbia, the terms are not equivalent. For that matter, most state nationalities in the Balkans are also ethnic identities, so that in 1999 the majority of

Kosovars—residents of Kosovo—were ethnically Albanian, but Serbian citizens. This thesis refers to the Yugoslav government and people, only using Serb as an ethnic characterization and using Serbia only when that is more specific than Yugoslavia.

#### A. SERBIA’S PLACE IN YUGOSLAVIA

Serbia existed variously as a kingdom, empire, and a collection of principalities for centuries until being conquered by the Ottomans in the late 14th century. Serbia would be ruled by the Ottomans until independence in 1878, and the new Kingdom of Serbia would grow to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes following World War I. As the home of South or *Yugo* Slavs, this kingdom adopted the name Yugoslavia in 1929, and after the Nazi occupation and liberation reorganized as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), a federation of six republics: Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>58</sup>

The multi-national SFRY began to unravel after the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, as ethnic nationalism in the constituent republics overpowered Tito’s brand of communism. In the 1974 constitution of the SFRY, the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina had both been elevated to a status similar to the six republics, giving the two provinces more weight than the Serbian republic of which they were part.<sup>59</sup> This unnatural power imbalance was one of several factors which fed a rise in ethnic nationalism. Serbs were the largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia, but not overwhelmingly so: as the SFRY broke up, Serbs were a solid majority in Serbia and Montenegro, but only significant minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.<sup>60</sup> With these inherently

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<sup>58</sup> “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Kingdom of Serbia/Yugoslavia,” U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, September 30, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/countries/kingdom-of-yugoslavia>.

<sup>59</sup> Roland Dannreuther, “War in Kosovo: History, Development and Aftermath” in *Kosovo: Perceptions of War and Its Aftermath*, ed. Mary Buckley and Sally N. Cummings (New York: Continuum, 2001), 16; Kosovo (capital in Pristina) is as depicted in Figure 1 and Vojvodina (capital in Novi Sad) is in northern Serbia.

<sup>60</sup> As of 1991, Serbs were 62.6% of the population in Serbia and Montenegro, 31% in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 12.2% in Croatia; “The World Factbook: Serbia and Montenegro,” “The World Factbook: Bosnia and Herzegovina,” “The World Factbook: Croatia,” Central Intelligence Agency, 2000, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/download/download-2000/index.html>.

unstable ethnic fractions, the 1986 circulation of a “blatantly nationalistic memorandum” by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) signaled the beginning of the end of the SFRY.<sup>61</sup>

The SANU memorandum and Serbian nationalism would empower the rise of Slobodan Milosevic. In 1988, Milosevic saw an opportunity to seize the support of nationalists by endorsing the SANU memorandum, driving his election to the presidency of Serbia in 1989.<sup>62</sup> As a champion of Serb nationalism, Milosevic purged the media to protect like-minded intellectuals, who in turn drove the nationalist movement to new heights of support for Milosevic.<sup>63</sup> Milosevic consolidated power in Serbia, but in doing so moved Serbia further away from the other Yugoslav republics.

In 1991 and 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina all declared independence from the SFRY, while Serbia and Montenegro remained unified as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), but this new Yugoslavia was not universally considered a successor to the SFRY. Except for Macedonia, every declaration of independence was accompanied by violence, leading the period to be known as the Yugoslav Wars. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established in mid-1992, and the United States became directly involved in March 1993, enforcing a no-fly zone over Bosnia with Operation Deny Flight.<sup>64</sup> Violence continued intermittently for the next two years until Muslim and Croat forces took the offensive in the spring of 1995, and UNPROFOR was brushed aside by the Bosnian Serbs, who seized UN-secured weapons and conducted the Srebrenica massacre.<sup>65</sup> This period of bloodshed ended after NATO launched a bombing campaign, Operation Deliberate Force, bringing the Serbs to the negotiating table and leading to the Dayton Accords and the insertion of the NATO

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<sup>61</sup> Slavoljub Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic: A Lust for Power*, trans. Alex Dubinsky (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 16.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 28; “The Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1990–1992,” U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, September 30, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/breakup-yugoslavia>.

<sup>64</sup> “Breakup of Yugoslavia,” U.S. Department of State.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

Implementation Force (IFOR) into Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>66</sup> Both Deliberate Force and the continued involvement of NATO in the former SFRY would influence the eventual Allied Force.

## **B. KOSOVO'S PLACE IN SERBIA**

Kosovo resonates deeply in Serbian cultural history from the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. In Serbian lore, Lazar—most often described as a prince, but the most powerful of the various Serbian noblemen—was visited by an angel who offered him the choice of earthly victory or a martyr's death, and “as Serbs understand this legend, Lazar's choice of the ‘eternal kingdom’ secured for Serbs an eternal claim to Kosovo,” even as Serbia would fall to the Ottomans in the wake of the battle.<sup>67</sup> Sabrina Ramet therefore dubs Kosovo “the Serbian ‘Jerusalem’”—consecrated territory beyond the claim of any non-Serb power.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the Serb cultural claim to Kosovo, by the 1990s the population and politics was distinctly non-Serb. Tito sought to ease the nationalist tensions which threatened the stability of Yugoslavia, but in the case of Kosovo it meant empowering a province where the already-minority Serb population was declining, and would drop to roughly 10 percent by the mid-1980s.<sup>69</sup> Kosovar Albanians had been agitating for greater independence since 1968, and one Titoist solution had been to suppress the protests of Kosovar Serbs and Montenegrins, yielding to the demographics of the province but feeding Serbian nationalist sentiment.<sup>70</sup>

## **C. THE HOLBROOKE AGREEMENT TO ALLIED FORCE**

Slobodan Milosevic, originally having used Serbian nationalism and ethnic tensions to win election as Serbian president in 1989, was still in power in the late 1990s.

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<sup>66</sup> “Breakup of Yugoslavia,” U.S. Department of State.

<sup>67</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, “The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Ends: Kosovo in Serbian Perception” in *Kosovo: Perceptions of War and Its Aftermath*, ed. Mary Buckley and Sally N. Cummings (New York: Continuum, 2001), 30.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 25–27.

The presidency of Serbia was limited to two four-year terms, so in 1997 Milosevic was elected President of the FRY, maintaining his power in Belgrade. The new President of Serbia, Milan Milutinović, was a figurehead, powerless to an extent that would gain him an acquittal at his war crimes trial in 2009.<sup>71</sup>

In 1998, fighting between FRY forces and the ethnic-Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army led NATO to become involved in Kosovo in addition to the alliance's role in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This fighting caused at least 1,500 deaths and left hundreds of thousands homeless; in response, NATO threatened an air campaign similar to the previous Deliberate Force if a ceasefire was not reached.<sup>72</sup> This ceasefire in October 1998, the Holbrooke Agreement, allowed unarmed monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) into Kosovo, but did not change the overall status of the province.<sup>73</sup>

This agreement was short-lived in its effectiveness—hostilities renewed in December—and damaged the credibility of NATO. Even while making the agreement, the Yugoslav government seemed to doubt NATO's commitment: General Nebojsa Pavkovic, commander of all Yugoslav troops in Kosovo, "didn't have any valid reason to believe them" because "they had no reason to get involved in the internal politics of another country, so we couldn't believe them."<sup>74</sup> The Yugoslav journalist Slavoljub Djukic echoed this sentiment: "The [Rambouillet] talks fell through, but many Serbs felt they would resume.... Milosevic, persisting in his belief that NATO was bluffing, felt that he could continue to play cat-and-mouse with the Americans and still reach an agreement."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Kosovo Trial Clears Serbia Leader," *BBC News*, February 27, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7911761.stm>.

<sup>72</sup> "NATO's Role in Relation to the Conflict in Kosovo," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, July 15, 1999, <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/history.htm>.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Holbrooke, interview transcript, *Frontline*, February 2000, transcript, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/holbrooke.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Nebojsa Pavkovic, interview transcript, *Frontline*, PBS, February 2000, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/pavkovic.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 130.

The Rambouillet Conference had come in early 1999 after the Racak massacre and the expulsion of OSCE monitors. The proposed Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo would effectively remove Kosovo from Yugoslav control, requiring removal of nearly all forces and granting extraterritoriality to the NATO forces who would occupy the province.<sup>76</sup> This plan was eventually accepted by Kosovar Albanian representatives, but rejected by the Yugoslav delegation: after the Kosovars signed, Milosevic was given an ultimatum to sign or be bombed.<sup>77</sup>

Richard Holbrooke, who delivered the ultimatum to Milosevic in March 1999 and received his refusal in person, was convinced that Milosevic no longer thought NATO was bluffing about military action.<sup>78</sup> Regardless, Milosevic could not expect to remain in power if he surrendered Kosovo to a foreign power without resistance and he wagered that NATO lacked the capability or persistence to wrest Kosovo from Yugoslav control, forcing NATO to make good on its threats. Airstrikes began on March 24 and continued until June 10, when Yugoslav forces began withdrawing to allow the entry of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), which remains in the province to this day.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Rambouillet Accords: Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo,” United Nations Security Council, 58, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990123\\_RambouilletAccord.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990123_RambouilletAccord.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Richard Holbrooke, interview transcript.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> “Operation Allied Force,” United States Air Force, August 23, 2012, <http://www.afhso.af.mil/topics/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=18652>.

## IV. OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Clausewitz defined an enemy's "power of resistance ... as the product of ... *the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will.*"<sup>80</sup> Rather than ending resistance by using brute force to degrade the enemy's means, coercion uses threatened punishment to diminish an enemy's will. Threats only affect the enemy's will if they are operationally plausible and attack objects of strategic value to the target actor, so while the execution of threat mechanisms is an operational matter, the selection of a course of action requires knowledge of the enemy's strategic values and is therefore a strategic choice. This chapter will analyze the mechanisms defined by Byman and Waxman—*denial, weakening, unrest, power base erosion, and decapitation*—based on how their effects occurred in Operation Allied Force.<sup>81</sup>

### A. DENIAL

As Byman and Waxman explain it, "denial works when adversary leaders recognize that they cannot gain benefits and will continue to pay costs if they do not concede."<sup>82</sup> The initial plan for Allied Force called for attacking Yugoslav forces to prevent their goal of ethnically cleansing Kosovo, and destroying them if the government of Slobodan Milosevic did not concede.<sup>83</sup> Coercive denial is most effective as a defensive strategy, so it was a poor choice for Allied Force, but it may have been selected for its similarity with conventional land warfare doctrine. NATO did inflict costs on the Yugoslav forces, but they were not unacceptable, and NATO never prevented the Yugoslav military from occupying Kosovo or attacking Kosovar Albanians.

#### 1. Preventing Yugoslav Goals

NATO's airstrikes into Kosovo focused on targeting heavy equipment, dooming the effort from the beginning because destroying tanks and artillery did not prevent

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<sup>80</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 50.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>83</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 198.

Yugoslav forces from occupying Kosovo, brutalizing Kosovar Albanians, or holding off the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Even if all their tanks, personnel carriers, and artillery had been destroyed, soldiers would still have capabilities similar to the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) police and the Serb irregular groups in Kosovo. To dislodge the infantry who were actually occupying Kosovo would have required a ground invasion by NATO, which did not occur, or airstrikes to inflict tens of thousands of casualties on the occupiers, which also did not happen.

The OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission, compiling 2,764 refugee interviews and other reporting, found that the vast majority of human rights violations and massacres were conducted without reliance on heavy weapons.<sup>84</sup> Over the course of the conflict, over 860,000 Kosovar Albanians became refugees—over half the Kosovar Albanian population—and the refugee flow did not appreciably slow until mid-May, when the bombing had already been underway for six weeks.<sup>85</sup> Although NATO had “forced the Serb military and police heavy equipment into hiding,” most evidence contradicts the associated claim that “these forces were unable to conduct their planned, unrestricted operations against the Albanian populace in Kosovo or against the KLA.”<sup>86</sup>

An additional argument, that NATO's airpower could turn the tide of ground combat in favor of the KLA, was proven false by the failure of Operation Arrow. This offensive, launched in late May by 4,000 KLA guerrillas, made little progress in opening a corridor from Albania to the interior of Kosovo.<sup>87</sup> Although a NATO spokesperson claimed the guerrilla activity created a “target-rich environment” of responding Yugoslav forces, bombing did not help the KLA capture much ground.<sup>88</sup> NATO officials asserted

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<sup>84</sup> “Kosovo / Kosova, As Seen, As Told: An Analysis of the Human rights Findings of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission, October 1998 to June 1999,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 10, [www.osce.org/odihr/1772?download=true](http://www.osce.org/odihr/1772?download=true).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 167–69.

<sup>86</sup> General Wesley K. Clark and Brigadier General John Corley, “Press Conference on the Kosovo Strike Assessment,” (press conference, Headquarters, Supreme Allied Command Europe, Mons, Belgium, September 16, 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/p990916a.htm>

<sup>87</sup> Dana Priest and Peter Finn, “NATO Gives Air Support to KLA Forces,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 1999, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/stories/military060299.htm>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*



that intelligence from KLA scouts on the ground increased the targeting effectiveness, but they also admitted that “what really counted” was the bombing of targets inside Serbia, rather than attacking the forces in Kosovo.<sup>89</sup>

## 2. Inflicting Costs

After the attempt to deny Yugoslav forces their goals in Kosovo, the remainder of the denial effort was a punishment campaign against those forces. All coercion requires inflicting costly damage on the enemy, though the punishment in denial is unique in targeting the enemy military, rather than the civilian government or economy. For the punishment campaign, typical measures of performance like speed of advance, territory held, and remaining useful (friendly) forces were not applicable, so analysts recorded damage to Yugoslav units. The most identifiable elements of a military unit is its heavy equipment, so vehicles and artillery pieces were used as a surrogate for the overall strength of units. Counting destroyed vehicles is appropriate to assess the specific task of finding and destroying enemy vehicles, but expanding it to a measure of overall effectiveness increases the reliance on assumptions and wishful thinking—similar to the body counts in Vietnam.

Estimates of Yugoslav heavy equipment in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 are incomplete and require interpolation, and assessments of NATO’s strike effectiveness are all based on considerable assumptions and guesswork. A common starting point is the self-reporting of the Yugoslav government; the declared strength of the 52nd Corps, the primary maneuver element of the 3rd Army in Kosovo, was 375 armored vehicles, 358 artillery pieces, and 9,068 troops.<sup>90</sup> Those numbers would put approximately one-fifth of Yugoslav armor and between 10 and 30 percent of Yugoslav artillery in

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<sup>89</sup> Matthew Kaminski and John Reed, “NATO Link to KLA Rebels May Have Helped Seal Victory,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1999, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB93111487041973149>.

<sup>90</sup> “As Seen, As Told,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 51; these declarations were according the Clark-Naumann Agreement of 25 Oct 1999, the text of which is available in Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO’s War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 256–258.

Kosovo.<sup>91</sup> The OSCE estimated that there were 15,000–20,000 regular Yugoslav soldiers in Kosovo by April 1999, territorial reservists mobilized from Kosovo and surrounding areas, and nearly 30,000 police and Serb paramilitaries.<sup>92</sup> By comparison, the active duty strength of the Yugoslav Forces was between 85,000 and 114,000.<sup>93</sup>

How much the NATO bombardment affected these forces in Kosovo is heavily debated. The report of the Kosovo Mission Effectiveness Assessment Team, presented on September 16, 1999, by General Wesley Clark and Brigadier General John Corley, U.S. Air Force, is the most optimistic assessment of effectiveness against heavy equipment. NATO's postwar estimate of Yugoslav equipment deployed to Kosovo was roughly 800 armored vehicles and 750 artillery pieces—twice the prewar declaration—of which NATO was confident of striking nearly 250 armored vehicles and nearly 400 artillery pieces.<sup>94</sup>

NATO defined a “successful ‘strike’” to mean that “the weapon impacted a valid target,” but not necessarily that the target was destroyed.<sup>95</sup> Only 44 armored vehicles and 20 artillery pieces were confirmed as *catastrophic kills* by finding substantial wreckage in postwar investigation.<sup>96</sup> Had strikes been causing serious damage, hulks of destroyed vehicles should have been in much greater evidence, because disabled armored vehicles are heavy and typically require specialized recovery vehicles to salvage.<sup>97</sup> These

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<sup>91</sup> The uncertainty in artillery is based on how mortars are classified by different sources; Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, “Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, Information on the Army of Yugoslavia, Annual Data Exchange,” cited in Bruce R. Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War: Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 55.

<sup>92</sup> “As Seen, As Told,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 50.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*; Clark and Corley, “Kosovo Strike Assessment.”

<sup>95</sup> Clark and Corley, “Kosovo Strike Assessment,” Slide 31, <http://www.nato.int/pictures/1999/990916/b990916zc.jpg>.

<sup>96</sup> Stephen T. Hosmer reports 14 tanks, 12 self-propelled guns (probably the tank-like M36)—explaining the 26 “tanks” found by NATO—and 18 armored personnel carriers; Stephen T. Hosmer, *The Conflict Over Kosovo: Why Milosevic Decided to Settle When He Did* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 83; John Barry, “The Kosovo Cover-Up,” *Newsweek*, May 14, 2000, <http://www.newsweek.com/kosovo-cover-160273>; Clark and Corley, “Kosovo Strike Assessment,” Slide 29, <http://www.nato.int/pictures/1999/990916/b990916zc.jpg>.

<sup>97</sup> For example, a T-55 tank weighs 34 metric tons, and a comparatively light vehicle like the BOV armored car weighs over 9 tons; Christopher F. Foss, *Jane's Tank Recognition Guide* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 74, 272.

inconsistencies cast significant doubt on the assessed effectiveness of NATO's airstrikes, and even by NATO's generous assessment, less than half the targets identified and attacked were hits.<sup>98</sup>

More pessimistic assessments of the bombing's effectiveness tend to use Yugoslav government sources, which display their own inconsistencies. Yugoslavia's Annual Data Exchanges for the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control claim that during 1999 only 30 armored vehicles and 35 artillery pieces were lost, and the number of mortars increased.<sup>99</sup> In addition to admitting to only 9 tanks destroyed, while NATO found wreckage from 26 tanks, the declarations omit two vehicle types—the BTR-50 personnel carrier and M36 self-propelled gun—though NATO presented clear photographic evidence of both in Kosovo.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the January 1, 1999 declaration claims a total of 1,025 tanks, the exact number allowed to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under the Agreement, and the only tank losses admitted were of the newest model, suggesting that a number of older tanks had been retained in an undeclared status and were returned to declared service to replace losses.<sup>101</sup> Using either set of estimates, there are serious inconsistencies in NATO's claimed effectiveness, and there are no rigorous estimates of soldiers, police, or paramilitary personnel killed, wounded, or otherwise removed from the battlefield.

### 3. Coercive Effectiveness

For denial to occur operationally, Yugoslav forces had to be unable to retain the benefit (Kosovo) and attempting to do so had to be costly. For denial to be strategically

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<sup>98</sup> A total of 1955 targets were attacked, yielding 974 successful strikes, a total which includes other military vehicles such as trucks, for which prewar estimates were not available; Clark and Corley, "Kosovo Strike Assessment."

<sup>99</sup> Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, "Annual Data Exchange," in Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 55. Yugoslavia declared the loss of a single 2S1 Gvozdika under "artillery," but because it is a self-propelled howitzer, this author includes it under the expansive "armored vehicles;" separate from towed artillery.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.; the Kosovo Strike Assessment presented a narrated video of a convoy including a BTR-50 and included a recognizable picture of a disabled M36; Clark and Corley, "Kosovo Strike Assessment," video, <http://www.nato.int/video/990916a.mpg>, and Slide 29, <http://www.nato.int/pictures/1999/990916/b990916z.jpg>.

<sup>101</sup> Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, "Annual Data Exchange," in Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 55; "Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control," OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5, [www.oscebih.org/documents/osce\\_bih\\_doc\\_1999073011120616eng.pdf](http://www.oscebih.org/documents/osce_bih_doc_1999073011120616eng.pdf).

relevant, the target of coercion (Slobodan Milosevic) had to find those costs to the Yugoslav forces unacceptable and determine that concession was preferable to further suffering. Therefore, the coercive value of a denial strategy was dependent on Milosevic valuing the Yugoslav military.

From the limited evidence available, it is unclear whether Milosevic had any special feelings for Yugoslav soldiers or whether he was willing to sacrifice them to maintain control of Kosovo. General Clark had “seen first-hand Milosevic’s keen interest in and knowledge of military matters,” as a Milosevic was “a well-trained and educated reserve officer.”<sup>102</sup> From that, Clark concluded that Milosevic “couldn’t stand to have these forces seriously hurt.”<sup>103</sup> Contrastingly, Slavoljub Djukic recounted that in the army, Milosevic’s “academic marks were high, but his physical condition and military preparedness were debatable.... His former classmates maintain that he never ran and never lifted anything heavier than a spoon.”<sup>104</sup> Even if Milosevic was emotionally invested in the military, Kosovo was Serbian soil, so it seems unlikely that military casualties would easily influence his decision-making.

#### **4. Strengths and Weaknesses**

Denial was an ineffective mechanism of coercion in Allied Force because both operational requirements—inflicting costs and denying the benefit—could not be met by NATO, and it does not appear that Slobodan Milosevic was especially vulnerable to coercion by denial. In 1999, the NATO air forces committed were an order of magnitude larger and a generation more advanced than anything the Yugoslav air force had.<sup>105</sup> Resisting and complicating the NATO air campaign were fixed air defenses, mobile air defenses, passive protection measures, and environmental factors, and NATO was only able to partially mitigate these issues. Yugoslavia’s air force, despite some modern

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<sup>102</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 241.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>104</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> NATO began the campaign with 344 aircraft deployed (and B-2s flying from Missouri) and concluded with over 1,000 aircraft deployed; Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 31–32; in contrast, Yugoslav started with 75 fighters and a number of attack jets; Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 29.

equipment, was hopelessly outmatched by NATO's fighters. NATO fighters shot down six Yugoslav jets, and destroyed one hundred on the ground, effectively eliminating the Yugoslav air force within days.<sup>106</sup> Fixed surface to air missile (SAM) sites were heavily hit and mobile SAM systems prioritized survival over lethality, so Yugoslav gunners only managed to down two allied warplanes during the entire conflict.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the lack of significant casualties, NATO aviators were still hampered by surviving air defenses, passive Yugoslav defenses, the environment, and NATO rules. The threat of mobile SAMs forced NATO crews to carefully plan flight paths, remain at high altitudes, and fly suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) missions for the entirety of the conflict, reducing efficiency. The U.S. Department of Defense's After-Action Report also admits that "reliance on camouflage and concealment protected much of the Serbian force" and that cloud cover impeded air strikes on 54 of 78 days in the campaign.<sup>108</sup> Yugoslav forces also exploited NATO's restrictive rules of engagement by locating equipment in civilian areas. Later in the campaign, when KLA forces had begun passing precise intelligence to NATO forces, Yugoslav targets could still move in the time NATO's air tasking cycle took to plan and execute a strike mission.<sup>109</sup> These defensive measures did not destroy NATO warplanes, but played a large part in reducing NATO's effectiveness against Yugoslav forces in Kosovo.

This limited efficiency made it difficult for NATO to inflict unacceptable costs, and it made it impossible for NATO to deny Milosevic control over Kosovo. Denial is most effective as deterrence, because a defender will already possess the objective being denied and only needs to hold it. Holding ground against the enemy is a classic function of armies, so it is possible that denial was chosen as a mechanism because the commanding general, Wesley Clark, was defaulting to his Army background. However,

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<sup>106</sup> Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 69, 64.

<sup>107</sup> Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 30.

<sup>108</sup> Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 61, 60.

<sup>109</sup> Kaminski and Reed, "NATO Link to KLA;" the 3-day delay was most likely due to the 72-hour process of building missions and assigning assets to fill a 24-hour Air Tasking Order (ATO); Kevin Conner, Paul Lambertson, and Matthew Roberson, "Analyzing the Air Operations Center (AOC) Air Tasking Order (ATO) Process Using the Theory of Constraints (TOC)" (master's thesis, Air Force Institute of Technology, 2005), 12.

NATO could not effectively deny Yugoslavia control of Kosovo unless a ground invasion seized and held the province, and such a ground force was far more than NATO political leaders could approve. Because denial was neither effective at denying the objective nor efficient at punishing the enemy, it was not coercively effective in Kosovo.

## **B. WEAKENING**

Weakening “targets the entire country with the threat of pain,” in the knowledge that some pain will be directly felt by the targets of coercion.<sup>110</sup> It is most efficiently manifested in targeting industrial networks and government power structures, a strategy extremely similar to traditional U.S. Air Force strategic bombing doctrine. This similarity, and the exceptional proficiency at executing that doctrine, explains how weakening was so effective in Allied Force.

### **1. Weakening the Yugoslav Economy**

The collapse of the SFRY had left the successor republics in dire economic straits. The Soviet-era economy of the federation had relied on centralized industries and interdependence between the constituent republics, leaving the remaining economies weak and inflexible, and potentially vulnerable to coercive pressure. The start of the Yugoslav Wars in 1991 seriously hurt the Serbian and Montenegrin economies, with output halving by 1993, and the situation was worsened by U.N. sanctions.<sup>111</sup> The FRY was in serious economic trouble by the late 1990s, with unemployment estimated over 35 percent in 1995 and existing manufacturing jobs concentrated in heavy industry.<sup>112</sup> The economy was also intentionally mismanaged, as Maja Miljkovic and Marko Attila Hoare explain: Milosevic “stimulated corruption and criminal activities linked to the informal and black market economy, meanwhile those strong and viable firms that did exist but whose managements were politically opposed to the regime were destroyed or

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<sup>110</sup> Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 76.

<sup>111</sup> “The World Factbook: Serbia and Montenegro,” Central Intelligence Agency, 1998, ProQuest (189255137).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

taken over, regardless of the economic cost.”<sup>113</sup> Even after sanctions were lifted in December 1995, corruption and the lack of cooperation on human rights and war crimes issues limited outside investment, leaving the economy stagnant into the late 1990s.<sup>114</sup>

Allied Force began with the destruction of air defense targets, but after that target list was exhausted, NATO began striking dual-use targets. Those hit were significant: thirty-five major bridges, over half Yugoslavia’s petroleum reserves, and all the nation’s oil refineries.<sup>115</sup> The air campaign damaged or destroyed “40 percent of capacity to repair armored vehicles, half of capacity to produce explosives, 65 percent of capacity to produce ammunition, and 20 percent of capacity to assemble and repair aircraft.”<sup>116</sup> Ammunition production and vehicle repair would have been essential to a ground war, but the ability to repair aircraft would have been of limited use with the Yugoslav air force wiped out early in the bombing campaign.

Because the Yugoslav economy was poorly diversified from heavy industry, the damage caused by even a military-focused bombing campaign was incredible. Djukic cites estimates of \$85–215 billion in damage; in comparison, the Yugoslav GDP was estimated at \$24.3 billion before the conflict.<sup>117</sup> NATO cut power to 70 percent of the nation in the first attack on the electrical grid, at first using specialized bombs to limit the duration of the outages, but later attacks used conventional bombs and caused long-term damage.<sup>118</sup> Such destruction was relatively simple for NATO to execute, so the bombing campaign would continue to traumatize Yugoslavia as long as NATO had targets.

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<sup>113</sup> Maja Miljkovic and Marko Attila Hoare, “Crime and the Economy under Milosevic and his Successors,” in *Serbia since 1989: Politics and Society under Milosevic and After*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet and Vjeran Pavlakovic (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 197.

<sup>114</sup> “Serbia and Montenegro,” Central Intelligence Agency, 1998.

<sup>115</sup> Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Interviews at U.S. European Command, November 12, 1999, cited by Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 45–46.

<sup>117</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 137; “Serbia and Montenegro,” Central Intelligence Agency, 1998.

<sup>118</sup> Carlotta Gall, “No Water, Power, Phone: A Serbian City’s Trials,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1999, ProQuest (431176854).

## 2. Coercive Effectiveness

Only leaders absolutely unconcerned with the welfare of their nations cannot be coerced by weakening. It is unclear how directly weakening drove the coercion, but it did present the strongest ultimatum: if Yugoslavia did not surrender Kosovo, NATO was threatening to destroy Yugoslavia as a functioning nation. If Milosevic valued anything beyond his own power and survival, NATO's weakening strategy clearly threatened it. If anything, weakening was less effective because the Yugoslav economy was so weak to begin with; more than a few bombs were dropped on already-idle factories.<sup>119</sup>

## 3. Strengths and Weaknesses

The Air Component Commander for Operation Allied Force, General Michael Short, seems to have been attempting to fight a conventional war against the industrial base and government facilities of Yugoslavia, rather than attempting coercion at all: in February 2000 he insisted that when politicians ask "military force to solve a problem that politicians could not, then they need to grit their teeth and stay with us."<sup>120</sup> This and other statements indicate that Short had not been using force to enable a political solution, but had been trying to fight a conventional war. Short correctly identified major failings of the campaign, seeing the "random bombing of military targets" as wasted effort and that the "targeting philosophy clearly has to be agreed upon before we start," but this only reinforces how much overlap existed between the operational bombing doctrine that Short was using and the strategic use of weakening.<sup>121</sup>

Despite a deficit in strategic planning, the U.S. Air Force excelled at the operational task of precision bombing, and was able to credibly threaten virtually any fixed target in Yugoslavia. Regardless of which targets were most valued by Slobodan Milosevic, NATO's effectiveness in hitting fixed targets guaranteed that Yugoslav resistance would be costly in general: the very definition of weakening. Even though

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<sup>119</sup> William M. Arkin, "Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?" *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 56, No. 3 (May/June 2000): 47–48, DOI: 10.2968/056003011.

<sup>120</sup> Scott A. Cooper, "The Politics of Airstrikes," *Policy Review* 107 (June/July 2001): 2, ProQuest (216427742).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*



weakening was not an explicitly planned mechanism, it was the best executed and appears to have put the most pressure on the Milosevic regime.

### **C. UNREST**

Denial and weakening both threaten material assets of a nation, but the other mechanisms—unrest, power base erosion, and decapitation—pressure enemy leaders personally by threatening their office, power, and survival. The largest-scale mechanism, unrest, requires a coercer capable of affecting popular sentiment to threaten the target leader’s domestic political support, but it is only effective if that support is valued—non-democratic nations would logically be less vulnerable to unrest than democracies. Also, changing popular sentiment in a foreign country is very difficult, so unrest is easiest in nations where the population is already indifferent or opposed to government policies. NATO’s advantages and Yugoslavia’s vulnerabilities were not aligned to favor unrest as a strategy in Allied Force.

#### **1. Fomenting Unrest**

Initially, Yugoslavs rallied behind the government when the bombing began, giving Milosevic a temporary boost in support. Djukic, far from a Milosevic loyalist, describes how “NATO’s raids served to redirect their mounting intolerance of the regime toward America, Great Britain, and France, traditional allies from whom democrats in Serbia expected assistance, not bombardment.”<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the state of emergency allowed Milosevic to clamp down on the press even more than he had previously done. Government propaganda was pervasive to the point that no press was fully trusted: even in Belgrade, where satellite dishes and Internet connections made Western news readily available, residents put little stock in either Yugoslav or Western media, but in a wartime atmosphere, the first instinct of Yugoslavs was to support their government.<sup>123</sup>

As the conflict dragged on, no propaganda could conceal the effects of NATO bombing. The precision munitions employed by NATO caused relatively few

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<sup>122</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 133.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Dobbs, “The War on the Airwaves; Serbs Ridicule TV Atrocity Reports,” *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1999, [www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic](http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic).

casualties—roughly 500 civilians and perhaps a thousand soldiers were killed throughout the entire campaign—but destruction of infrastructure like bridges and the electrical grid could not be hidden from citizens.<sup>124</sup> While Belgrade itself was relatively lightly hit, Novi Sad, the provincial capital of Vojvodina and second largest city in Serbia, lost all three of its bridges over the Danube in the first month of bombing.<sup>125</sup> On May 2, in the air campaign's sixth week, the first attacks were carried out on the electrical grid, blacking out 70 percent of the country.<sup>126</sup> NATO “regret[ed] the inconvenience that power outages have caused to the Serb people,” but insisted they would continue until Milosevic met their demands.<sup>127</sup>

## 2. Coercive Value of Unrest

Even as the destruction became impossible to ignore, it did not lead to political upheaval in Serbia. As Mila Radavanovic-Zececic, a resident of the hard-hit Novi Sad, said: “Do you think when we are in a war and have bombs falling, that we can think about politics?”<sup>128</sup> Sabrina Ramet notes anti-war protesters in late May, but numbering in the hundreds, they were not a serious threat to the Milosevic regime.<sup>129</sup> Even NATO briefers understood that pummeling an already-struggling population would not prompt political change: “We don’t want the population to get the message, [we] think they got the message years ago when their standards of living started plummeting as a result of the misrule of the current government. No, we want the regime to get the message.”<sup>130</sup>

Even as attitudes began to change, airstrikes did not rapidly create the widespread anger that unrest requires. It took weeks before the pro-regime rallies and concerts ended,

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<sup>124</sup> Arkin, “Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?” 49; “Officially, between the onset of the state of emergency and the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo, there were only about 650 casualties,” but this figure of military losses is likely incomplete; Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 137.

<sup>125</sup> Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 37–38.

<sup>126</sup> Gall, “No Water, Power, Phone.”

<sup>127</sup> Jamie Shea, “Morning Briefing” (Press Briefing, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, May 3, 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/b990503a.htm>.

<sup>128</sup> Gall, “No Water, Power, Phone.”

<sup>129</sup> Ramet, “Kingdom of God,” 36.

<sup>130</sup> Shea, “Morning Briefing” (May 3, 1999).

and when dissent appeared it mostly took the form of antiwar rallies and draft-dodging instead of direct advocacy for regime change.<sup>131</sup> One explanation for this failure to mobilize against the government was the state's control of the media, presenting an unopposed government narrative of the conflict. While this propaganda did not necessarily convince many, it confused and divided the potential anti-regime groups, and poisoned the credibility of all media reporting, so there was nothing to unify around.<sup>132</sup>

Allied Force left most Yugoslavs suffering and unhappy with their situation, but did not result in significant political change. When Milosevic did stand for reelection in late 2000, he was ousted by a candidate who shared many of his nationalist positions. That successor, Vojislav Kostunica, appears to share Milosevic's demagoguery concerning Kosovo's eternally Serbian nature, but because he was not the leader to lose Kosovo, he is not willing to fight NATO for it.<sup>133</sup> To replace the leader without significant change in policy might have been justification for a coup, but it was not a compelling reason for a mass uprising to develop, so unrest was never an effective mechanism of applying coercive pressure to Milosevic.

### **3. Strengths and Weaknesses**

Although Yugoslavia was putatively democratic, it was a poor candidate for fomenting unrest. The Serbian nationalism that drove the Yugoslav policy in Kosovo was popular among the Serbian majority of Yugoslavs, leaving no internal divisions to exploit. NATO's only means of changing sentiment would be inflicting mass suffering, but by 1999 there were few opportunities to inflict noticeable suffering: Yugoslavia had already experienced years of warfare, over one-third of workers were unemployed, and the respective Serbian and Montenegrin economies were still struggling from the wars in

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<sup>131</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 136–137.

<sup>132</sup> Dobbs, "The War on the Airwaves."

<sup>133</sup> After Kosovo declared independence in 2008, Kostunica addressed a rally with uncompromising statements: "Kosovo belongs to Serbia. ... That's how it has been forever. That's how it's going to be forever." While Kostunica was speaking to an extremely partisan rally, and making statements he would never have to back up, his political leaning was still unmistakable; Vojislav Kostunica, "The Promise is Given, Kosovo is Serbia as Long as We Live," (speech, Belgrade, February 21, 2008), [http://www.spc.rs/eng/promise\\_given\\_kosovo\\_serbia\\_long\\_we\\_live](http://www.spc.rs/eng/promise_given_kosovo_serbia_long_we_live).

the early 1990s.<sup>134</sup> NATO bombs could still deny basic services to the Yugoslav population, but doing so created destitution which precluded political mobilization.<sup>135</sup> One thing that NATO did do was to literally bring the war home—the earlier wars had been fought outside of Serbia, mostly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but NATO struck in the hearts of major Serbian cities and hit widely-used infrastructure like transportation and the electrical grid.

To foment unrest requires far more than simply applying force; it also requires an effective campaign of political messaging. The panic that Douhet predicted bomber raids would cause has never been borne out by history; a better model is the political campaigning of insurgents, which has been successful in history. In insurgency warfare, the operational objective is legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people, therefore a power—either insurgents or an outside actor—must degrade the legitimacy of the target state’s government in order to move the population towards unrest.<sup>136</sup> The population of Yugoslavia had been so inured to propaganda that political messaging was ineffective and thus unrest never developed, despite the suffering that NATO bombs were causing.

#### **D. POWER BASE EROSION**

Where unrest tries to change the minds of the massed populace, power base erosion targets a narrower group of key supporters with more focused force. It requires detailed knowledge of the nation’s power structure to threaten the right supporters and precision military capabilities to make those threats specific, but the value of insider support is more universal than popular support—no leader can rule without a trusted inner circle.

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<sup>134</sup> “Serbia and Montenegro,” Central Intelligence Agency, 1998.

<sup>135</sup> Gall, “No Water, Power, Phone.”

<sup>136</sup> Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (FM 3–24, C1) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2 June 2014), 1–19.

## 1. Crony Attack

Slobodan Milosevic's hold on Yugoslavia appeared vulnerable to supporter targeting or *crony attack*, but it took a relatively long time for any plan along those lines to form. Large portions of the economy had been subordinated to the political purposes of the Milosevic government and this patronage was heavily reflected in the ownership of dual-use targets. Virtually every major industrial target was owned or operated by a political ally: the Sloboda factory in Cacak (ammunition), the Zastava plant in Kragujevac (armored vehicle repair), Jugopetrol and Technogas (petroleum) were all controlled by leaders of Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) or his wife Mirjana Markovic's Yugoslav United Left (YUL) parties—the petroleum companies being controlled respectively by the speaker of the Serbian parliament, Dragan Tomic, and by the Serbian prime minister, Mirko Majanovic.<sup>137</sup> The media and its propaganda usage was also dominated by party loyalists: one office complex housed four media outlets and the headquarters for both the SPS and YUL.<sup>138</sup> Eventually, NATO planners came up with the “3M” targeting plan, targeting the Milosevic regime's “money, MUP (Ministry of Interior), and media.”<sup>139</sup> Unfortunately, it did not dominate targeting and “on the ground the message could hardly be extracted from the background noise.”<sup>140</sup>

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Yugoslavia was a good candidate for power base erosion, but efficient execution would have required significant prior planning and detailed analysis of the governmental power structure. Operationally, power base erosion used many of the same methods as weakening—a strength of the U.S. Air Force—simply focused on a more discrete group of targets. The prolonged bombing hurt everyone in Yugoslavia, but because the plans to target Milosevic's power base were formed late in the air campaign and were never the primary focus of bombing efforts, Milosevic's power base did not suffer

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<sup>137</sup> Julian H. Tolbert, “Crony Attack: Strategic Attack's Silver Bullet?” (master's thesis, Air University, November 2006), 33–34.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>139</sup> Arkin, “Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?” 50.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

disproportionately, nor was their evidence of those supporters putting substantial pressure on Milosevic to accommodate NATO's demands.<sup>141</sup>

Power base erosion, like unrest, requires a messaging campaign to be successful. For this message to be acted upon, it must be discernable and supported by a pattern of physical effects. A clear enough pattern of effects could both convey and support a simple message without accompanying words. In Allied Force, however, Milosevic supporters never got a clear message and even if they had, NATO's attacks did not establish a strong pattern to support it.

## **E. DECAPITATION**

Even more specific than power base erosion, decapitation is a threat directly against the target leader. It is the most powerful threat possible against a target leader, but also the most difficult to credibly make, because it requires the capability to kill or capture an enemy leader, on short notice and without the element of surprise. Decapitation of political leaders is not a usual American or NATO strategy, and there was no indicated plan to threaten or attempt decapitation during Allied Force.

### **1. Decapitation Effects in Allied Force**

NATO bombs did kill General Ljubisa Velickovic, the deputy commander of the Yugoslav Air Force, but he was the only senior leader to become a casualty during Allied Force, and appears to have been hit unintentionally.<sup>142</sup> Milosevic's official residence in Belgrade was hit on April 22, and the presidential villa in Dobanovci was hit multiple times in May, but NATO insisted these attacks were against the command and control facilities at those locations.<sup>143</sup> While these attacks may have been interpreted as attempted assassinations, Milosevic had options to mitigate the threat and this danger does not appear to have produced leverage.

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<sup>141</sup> Hosmer, *Why Milosevic Decided to Settle*, 73–74.

<sup>142</sup> Phil Davison, "NATO Kills Top Serb Officer in Air Raid," *The Independent*, 02 June 1999, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/nato-kills-top-serb-officer-in-air-raid-1097498.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Hosmer, *Why Milosevic Decided to Settle*, 74.

## **2. Strengths and Weaknesses**

Even if decapitation is ineffective as a coercive mechanism, replacement of a target state's leadership can aid the negotiation process, because new leaders may have the personal freedom to make concessions their predecessors could not. Byman and Waxman refer to the "audience costs" in domestic politics as leaders try to be "viewed as strong and as resistant of foreign pressure."<sup>144</sup> These domestic concerns can drive leaders to make hardline statements and take uncompromising positions that are difficult to retreat from, but new leadership may not be as trapped.

### **F. EFFICIENT MECHANISMS IN ALLIED FORCE**

Application of sufficient violence will eventually result in some effect, but the intent of this chapter was to determine which mechanisms were most efficient in Allied Force at converting military action to operational effects and then converting those effects to coercive pressure on Slobodan Milosevic. Denial was a clear failure, weakening was clearly effective, and the remaining mechanisms are difficult to precisely assess without more evidence. The largest determinant of effectiveness was the mechanism's fit with NATO's capabilities at the time: destroying an army from the air was difficult for even the most capable air force, making denial impossible without ground forces, but NATO, and particularly the United States, was superlatively capable at bombing industrial and infrastructure targets, making weakening easy to execute, even if it was not explicitly planned. This suggests that the utility of each coercive mechanism is heavily dependent on the capabilities of the coercer and the conditions of the target state, and to a far lesser degree dependent on the coercer's intent in execution.

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<sup>144</sup> Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 36.

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## V. THEORY OF STRATEGIC VICTORY

Operational success is irrelevant if it does not serve a strategic goal, so every military campaign needs a theory of victory: an explanation of how it will contribute to strategic success and thereby support national policy. Coercive campaigns carry additional stipulations because they require the grudging cooperation of the enemy; requiring that a theory of coercive victory not only explain the conduct of war, but also explain the strategic goals of war termination. In addition to the coercer having a viable theory of victory, the target must find the planned threats credible, understand what is demanded of them, and accept that trade. The target government cannot have its own theory of victory, or it will likely pursue that avenue until forcibly blocked. This chapter addresses how these five principles were, or were not, addressed during Operation Allied Force.

### A. HAVE A PLAN

In his autobiography, General Wesley Clark quoted Clausewitz: “No one in his right mind would, or ought to, begin a war if he didn’t know how to finish it.”<sup>145</sup> Without a theory of victory, a strategist will have no way to predict whether a given operational action will help, hinder, or be irrelevant to the goals of the conflict. Coercion may succeed without an explicit plan, threats, demands, or even intent by the coercer—many historical case studies are of this unexpected sort—but luck is not a strategy.<sup>146</sup>

Unfortunately, Allied Force was not planned in great depth, beginning with the target list. Clark describes how Allied Force began with only “one hundred or so [targets] currently ready to go,” a list that would be exhausted within days.<sup>147</sup> To add targets required analysis of military value, likely Yugoslav military casualties, risks from a near-miss, and collateral damage estimates for each possible weapon, all before a target faced

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<sup>145</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 179; Clausewitz, *On War*, 579.

<sup>146</sup> Both Pape’s *Bombing to Win* and Byman and Waxman’s *Dynamics of Coercion* analyze a number of historical cases before the modern theory of coercion was developed in the 1960s.

<sup>147</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 198.

further review in Washington, DC, “and finally ended up on President Clinton’s desk for his approval.”<sup>148</sup> As a result, approving targets became the bottleneck in the system and some targets were struck simply because they passed legal approval, not because they were of great value to the coercive campaign.<sup>149</sup> Logically, it was still better to drop bombs without a plan than to pause and publicly confirm that lack of a plan, but not much better.

In addition to a lack of planning before the conflict began, there was a lack of information on which to base the planning that was done. Based on the desert combat experience of the Persian Gulf War, Clark’s staff “used the best planning system that we had in the Air Force, but it didn’t do well with bad weather;” a substantial issue when weather would impede airstrikes for two-thirds of the campaign.<sup>150</sup> That such a fact could surprise NATO—which had conducted Operation Deliberate Force in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995—is troubling.

More troubling than the weak operational planning, on March 28—four days into the operation—Clark found himself asking NATO Secretary General Javier Solana what the political objectives for the campaign were.<sup>151</sup> In addition to Clark not knowing the political objectives his military strategy should support, there were also significant differences among the NATO nations.<sup>152</sup> Holding the alliance together would be a major achievement, but one that should have been accomplished before the airstrikes began, and the weakness of NATO’s planning hamstrung every following effort in the campaign.

## **B. MAKE CREDIBLE THREATS**

Coercion is based on threats, so the credibility of those threats is of paramount importance. All coercive mechanisms work by threatening a higher cost than the target

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<sup>148</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 201.

<sup>149</sup> Arkin, “Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?” 47–45.

<sup>150</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 237; “Cloud cover was greater than 50 percent more than 70 percent of the time. Weather conditions allowed unimpeded air strikes on only 24 of 78 days,” Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 60.

<sup>151</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 218.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 236–240.

can bear, and since military force is ultimately finite, high credibility is essential to threatening a high expected cost. To make a threat credible, coercers must establish their willingness to use particular levels of force, and they must establish that the threat being made is within that range of credibility. In some scenarios, particularly in cases of compellence, the threat must be repeatable until compliance is achieved.<sup>153</sup> If a coercer cannot convince the target that a given threat is plausible and credible, carrying out the threat will help make next iteration of threats more credible.

Slobodan Milosevic left no writings or records of his decision-making during Allied Force, but he suggested to Richard Holbrooke that he believed some use of force would occur. Holbrooke delivered the last ultimatum in March 1999: “He knew the bombing would start immediately after our departure,” and Milosevic confirmed that ““Yes. You’ll bomb us.””<sup>154</sup> Despite believing that force would be used, it seems that Yugoslav leadership doubted that it would truly be “swift, severe and sustained”—Holbrooke’s carefully chosen words.<sup>155</sup> According to Nebojsa Pavkovic, commander of Yugoslav forces in Kosovo: “We used to study their possible strategy, etc. We knew that they wanted to scare us into surrender,” but “I didn’t think that it would last for 78 days.”<sup>156</sup> Military leadership did not ignore the threats—command centers and other predictable targets were abandoned when NATO bombs hit them—but it does not seem that anyone believed NATO’s campaign would continue indefinitely.

Increasing the magnitude of the threatened air campaign was not realistic, and the only effective way to increase the credibility of the threat was to begin carrying it out, so some measure of violence was probably inevitable in the spring of 1999. NATO’s demonstrated willingness to continue and escalate the air campaign gave increased credence to the threat of continued escalation. NATO’s credibility was further reinforced by the alliance’s unwavering persistence in the face of collateral damage incidents, the

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<sup>153</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 70.

<sup>154</sup> Richard Holbrooke, interview transcript.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Nebojsa Pavkovic, interview transcript.

most diplomatically significant of which was the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

While bombing their embassy seriously damaged relations with the Chinese, a side effect was convincing Yugoslavs of NATO's strength and seriousness. One Belgrader wondered "how can such a small power do anything, when the U.S. can do this to China?" and believed that NATO was willing to bomb as long as necessary.<sup>157</sup> The way NATO made no public shifts after noteworthy instances of collateral damage—and definitely gave no sign of a pause in the bombing—made it clear that nothing short of Milosevic's concession to NATO's demands would end the bombing.

The trouble with credibility is that it costs the coercer. Not every bluff will be successful, so establishing credibility will undoubtedly require some otherwise avoidable violence, with the associated costs of using force. Ironically, NATO's lack of combat losses reduced the credibility of their commitment, while the shoot-down of Yugoslav MiG-29s on the first night of airstrikes emphasized that the Yugoslavs were willing to die to hold Kosovo.<sup>158</sup> Establishing NATO's credibility to threaten a 79th day of bombing took the alliance 78 days of bombing, at the cost of billions of dollars.<sup>159</sup>

### **C. COMMUNICATE DEMANDS AND THREATS**

In the violent diplomacy of coercion, communication retains the same essential position it holds in other forms of diplomacy. Demands must be communicated with enough specificity and clarity that the target can understand them, otherwise compliance will be a matter of chance and guesswork, rather than cooperation or negotiation. Threats should also be communicated in specific terms, but vagueness in threats carries less of a

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<sup>157</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Embassy Attack Followed By Defiance Toward NATO," *New York Times*, May 10, 1999.

<sup>158</sup> As Clark recalls, "Secretary General [Javier Solana] reasoned that if Milosevic and the Serbs were going to fight back, then the fight might go on for some time, and that the losses of aircraft might draw the Serbs deeper into the conflict," Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 196.

<sup>159</sup> The Department of Defense estimated \$3 billion of incremental costs, not counting the loss of two aircraft in combat, other aircraft and two deaths in unit training missions of units deployed to the region; Steve Bowman, *Kosovo and Macedonia: U.S. and Allied Military Operations* (CRS Issue Brief No. IB10027) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003), 8, ii, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=443078>.

penalty: vague demands can lead to disagreements over compliance and perceptions of bad faith, while vague threats are merely inefficient. In Allied Force, NATO was very specific and clear in their demands, but made threats so vaguely that an outside observer might not know if they were intentional.

### **1. In Words**

NATO specified five demands of the Milosevic government:

[1] Ensure a verifiable stop to all military action and the immediate ending of violence and repression;

[2] ensure the withdrawal from Kosovo of the military, police and paramilitary forces;

[3] agree to the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence;

[4] agree to the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organisations;

[5] provide credible assurance of his willingness to work on the basis of the Rambouillet Accords in the establishment of a political framework agreement for Kosovo in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>160</sup>

These demands were reiterated daily by NATO spokesman Jamie Shea during his morning briefing to the press.<sup>161</sup> By voicing their demands constantly and publicly, there was no way NATO leaders or diplomats could be confused, and there was no reason these demands should be mistaken as ambiguous or flexible by the Yugoslav government. NATO's demands had been delivered in private prior to the air campaign; if they had remained private, Milosevic could have attempted to negotiate them down to less stringent and less specific conditions, but making them public limited the alliance's flexibility, making the demands more credible as well as unambiguous.

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<sup>160</sup> North Atlantic Council, "The situation in and around Kosovo" (Statement Issued at the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 12th April 1999), <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99051e.htm>.

<sup>161</sup> Shea, "Morning Briefing" (May 3, 1999).

Of NATO's five demands, only the first and last have any vagueness, but removing Yugoslav forces from Kosovo and allowing international military forces in would guarantee the others by removing the physical ability by Yugoslavia to conduct further violence, obstruct humanitarian efforts, or interfere with Kosovo's political process. Because the handover of control in Kosovo was the underpinning condition of compliance, NATO made sure that it was unambiguous. Milosevic had indicated a willingness to accede to NATO's demands on June 3, but NATO kept the pressure on—not suspending combat operations for nearly a week—until the details of the Military Technical Agreement had been finalized for the Yugoslav withdrawal to be “rapid ... total and ... effectively verifiable.”<sup>162</sup>

Against these very specific demands, NATO was making very non-specific threats. The ultimatum delivered by Richard Holbrooke on the eve of the bombing campaign had threatened “swift, severe and sustained” attacks, but these terms did not appear to be specific enough for Milosevic to understand.<sup>163</sup> Milosevic did understand that NATO would bomb Yugoslavia, but there is no evidence either he, or Holbrooke, knew the scope of the attacks which would ultimately take place.

## **2. In Actions**

The other way to issue threats was “communication by detonation,” as William M. Arkin described it, who also noted that NATO's strikes followed a pattern more clearly defined by legal and political restraints than a positive plan.<sup>164</sup> This apparent lack of a targeting plan was accurate: the target list when the bombing began was roughly one hundred targets, all in the Yugoslav air defense network.<sup>165</sup> Without specific coercive threats established beforehand, non-specific violence drowned out words once the bombing began.

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<sup>162</sup> Jamie Shea, “Morning Briefing” (Press Briefing, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, May 4, 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/b990504a.htm>; “Operation Allied Force Update” (Press Briefing, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 10 June 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/u990610a.htm>.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Holbrooke, interview transcript.

<sup>164</sup> Arkin, “Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?” 48.

<sup>165</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 198.

Violence is inherently a less precise medium than words, but destruction carries far more weight than denunciation, so precise military force is essential to effective coercive messaging. Allied Force and the 1995 campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Deliberate Force, both had high use of precision munitions: the earlier operation actually used a higher percentage (69 percent to Allied Force's 35 percent).<sup>166</sup> Allied Force also saw the combat debut of the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), the first all-weather guided bomb, as laser- and electro-optically guided weapons required visibility over the target, but JDAMs guided by Global Positioning System (GPS) signals in all weather and lighting conditions.<sup>167</sup> These new weapons gave NATO an unprecedented ability to hit targets precisely; a necessity for specific messages to be discernable from bombing.

Even as NATO demonstrated great precision in bombing, many confused this with intent in targeting, making mistakes hard to dismiss. On the night of May 7, NATO aircraft attacked a building in Belgrade believed to be the Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement and precisely hit all aimpoints—perfect precision—but the mission had been planned based on inaccurate information: the building was the Chinese Embassy.<sup>168</sup> Chinese sources “claimed that the embassy bombing could not have been accidental because the vast array of American intelligence means focused on Yugoslavia precluded such a mistake,” forgetting that even the NATO intelligence services had weaknesses, and ground-level intelligence in Belgrade was one of them.<sup>169</sup> At this point, the precision of the attack worked against NATO's message: the fact that the bombs had only destroyed part of the building, even being fused to detonate on a specific floor, was seen as proof that the attack had been precisely planned against the embassy, irrespective of

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<sup>166</sup> Richard L. Sargent, “Aircraft Used in Deliberate Force,” in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Col. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2000), 199; Scott F. Murray, “The Moral and Ethical Implications of Precision-Guided Munitions,” (master's thesis, Air University, June 2003), 8, note 20.

<sup>167</sup> “Joint Direct Attack Munition GBU-31/32/38,” United States Air Force, August 22, 2015, <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/FactSheets/Display/tabid/224/Article/104572/jointdirectattackmunitiongbu313238.aspx>.

<sup>168</sup> Jamie Shea, “Morning Briefing” (Press Briefing, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, May 8, 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/b990508a.htm>.

<sup>169</sup> James D. Perry, “Operation Allied Force: The View from Beijing,” *Aerospace Power Journal* (Summer 2000): 85–86, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj00/sum00/perry.pdf>.

the number of Yugoslav targets hit in the same precise fashion.<sup>170</sup> Intelligence can never be overvalued in coercion, because precision strikes inherently appear intentional and meaningful, so unintended consequences carry as much weight as intended ones.

NATO's threats were never specific, summing to the general message that bombs would continue to destroy important infrastructure indefinitely, but the operational efficiency of strikes on infrastructure gave this threat enough magnitude to compensate for its vagueness. Even with this undeniable threat, the clarity of NATO's demands was essential to the success of coercion. Uncertainty in one could be compensated for, but had both threats and demands been unclear, negotiations would have been very difficult.

#### **D. MAKE THE TRADE ACCEPTABLE**

Even if the target of coercion finds the coercer's threats credible, and understands the demands being made of them, concession still will not occur until it is the most acceptable option available to the target. This does not mean the coercer's demands must match an objective standard of moderation: in World War II, the United States obtained nearly-unconditional surrender from Japan by credibly threatening the lives of millions, and Pape (writing prior to Allied Force) called Japan's surrender "the most successful case of modern military coercion."<sup>171</sup> Regardless of the scale of the threats and demands being made, coercion works best when the demands are less onerous than the threats, but not by too much.

In the case of Kosovo, the Rambouillet Accords demanded too great a concession for relief from NATO's initial threats to be an acceptable exchange, requiring a painful bombing campaign before the threats increased to outweigh the demands. NATO leadership was not willing to modify the demands, but failed to understand the disparity between the initial threat of a still-unplanned air campaign and the demand that a Serbian leader cede effective sovereignty over Serbian territory. This apparent underestimation of the value of Kosovo, combined with an apparent Yugoslav underestimation of NATO resolve, created a significant disagreement over what concessions were reasonable.

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<sup>170</sup> Perry, "View from Beijing," 86.

<sup>171</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 87.



The pricing of threat relief can occur in isolation, but is more credible with a basis in prior agreements. Unfortunately for NATO, previous negotiations had devalued the alliance's threats. NATO had already threatened air attacks to secure a ceasefire between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Yugoslav forces—the Holbrooke Agreement—in October 1998.<sup>172</sup> This agreement allowed unarmed monitors into Kosovo, a significant concession from Milosevic's previous refusal of an outside presence, but it also established that NATO would settle for far less than was demanded at Rambouillet. In 1999, NATO made similar threats as before, but demanded far more, so Milosevic initially had reason to believe they would compromise their demands.

Coercion rarely targets a nation; it generally targets either a single leader or a small group of government officials, so the trade must be acceptable to them specifically, rather than merely acceptable to the nation as a whole. Withdrawing from Kosovo would impose a clear cost on Milosevic's power and political future: folding without resistance would have likely guaranteed his loss in the next election or worse; political assassinations were not uncommon in Yugoslavia.<sup>173</sup> Between the domestic threats, the low credibility of NATO's threats, and his belief that NATO would compromise on its severe demands, concession was initially the worst of several options for Slobodan Milosevic.

#### **E. LIMIT THE TARGET'S OPTIONS**

Coercion is intended to cut straight to the postwar negotiations, as Schelling explains: "If there is no room for doubt how a contest in strength will come out, it may be possible to bypass the military stage altogether and to proceed at once to the coercive bargaining."<sup>174</sup> This is not to say that the target state must be powerless—coercion only happens when the target state still has options—but concession must be the preferred choice. The simplest way to make concession the best choice is for the coercer to limit the options a target state has left.

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<sup>172</sup> Richard Holbrooke, interview transcript.

<sup>173</sup> Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic*, 106–114.

<sup>174</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 12.

The first Yugoslav option was an attempt to counter-coerce by denial, seeking to deny NATO a military victory and inflict unacceptable losses on the strike aircraft. NATO planners expected and prepared for this; the first “measure of merit” for the air campaign was to minimize casualties to aircraft and crews.<sup>175</sup> As General Clark recalls: “It drove our decisions on tactics, targets, and which airplanes could participate.... If we wanted to keep this campaign going indefinitely, we had to protect our air fleet.”<sup>176</sup> NATO’s efforts paid off, and Yugoslav defenders were only able to down two aircraft while NATO destroyed the majority of the Yugoslav air force.<sup>177</sup> Surface to air missiles would remain a persistent operational nuisance, but not a politically noticeable threat.

Failing to deny NATO militarily, Yugoslavs tried to break the alliance’s political cohesion by delaying, distracting, and otherwise giving wavering governments reasons to claim victory and cease bombing. This strategy was also expected by NATO political and military leaders, who agreed that “at the political level the measure of merit is to retain alliance solidarity and the full support of our regional partners.”<sup>178</sup> At the military level, General Clark’s previous knowledge of bombing campaigns included study of Operation Rolling Thunder, the unsuccessful 1965–68 effort in Vietnam. A fixture of Rolling Thunder, which Clark desperately wanted to avoid, was a bombing pause. Some believed a pause “would serve as an inducement on the other side to begin the negotiations,” but Clark felt that “Milosevic and his generals knew exactly how to contact us if they wanted us to stop the bombing.”<sup>179</sup> While NATO had not planned for a long campaign—Secretary General Solana originally estimated “days, not months”—the alliance addressed its internal political concerns and publicly demonstrated a unified commitment to continue the bombing campaign until results were achieved.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 183.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>177</sup> Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 69, 64.

<sup>178</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 184

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 177, 205.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 208

Vital to maintaining domestic support within NATO nations was the avoidance of civilian casualties or other politically unpopular effects, done through careful strike planning and the use of very precise munitions. Through the entire air campaign, civilian casualties were estimated around 500 dead, a low enough total that the deaths of 20 train passengers on the Grdelica Klisura railway bridge were a significant story.<sup>181</sup> Even this limited collateral damage gave the Milosevic government hope that collapsing political support would end the bombing campaign. Had NATO lacked precision bombing capabilities, it would have been very difficult to maintain political support and control over the air campaign.

In addition to attacking NATO's cohesion, Milosevic attempted to gain the support of Russia, believing that Russia would intervene with sufficient influence to end the air campaign. Immediately after bombing began, Russian President Boris Yeltsin had issued a statement condemning the action, calling for Kosovo's status to be resolved through negotiation and vaguely allowing for potential military action, so Milosevic could reasonably hope for more substantial support.<sup>182</sup>

Russia was in significant financial trouble at the time, and needed to secure loans from the International Monetary Fund, but just as crucial was their need to protect their prestige on the world stage.<sup>183</sup> Vladimir Putin, then Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, later insisted that Russia's relationship with NATO relied on being "treated as an equal partner."<sup>184</sup> Russia's cooperation with NATO would presumably be enough to keep future NATO interventions away from more vital Russian interests, such as the conflict then raging in Chechnya. Had Russia's diplomatic outrage ever become more substantial, the situation could have changed in Milosevic's favor, but

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<sup>181</sup> Arkin, "Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?" 49; Nardulli et al., *Disjointed War*, 46; Jamie Shea and General Wesley Clark, "Press Conference" (Press Conference, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, April 13, 1999), <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/p990413a.htm>.

<sup>182</sup> Mary Buckley, "Russian Perceptions," in *Kosovo: Perceptions of War*, ed. Buckley and Cummings, 161.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>184</sup> Vladimir Putin, with Nataliya Gevorkyan, Natalya Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 177.

when Russia's position changed, it was not in Yugoslavia's favor: special envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin joined Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to present a NATO-crafted ceasefire agreement to Milosevic on June 3.<sup>185</sup>

When Milosevic conceded to NATO's demands in June 1999, he was not overpowered or in immediate personal danger, but he was out of options to control his and Yugoslavia's fate. The Yugoslav military was intact but unable to prevent NATO's continued bombing, and while strikes were relatively toothless against forces in Kosovo, strikes within Serbia were incredibly destructive to infrastructure, giving the alliance potential leverage to pressure Milosevic. These strikes were affecting the people: polling found that the number of Yugoslavs who "trusted Milosevic most" dropped from 30 percent prewar to 15 percent immediately after the bombing stopped.<sup>186</sup> Despite this, Milosevic still saw options until Russia compromised with NATO, and then he realized that concession was a foregone conclusion.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

This chapter established the basic issues a coercive strategy must address. In the absence of a planned strategy, tactical and operational events will probably produce one, but an incidental strategy is unlikely to be efficient or decisive. In Allied Force, NATO's plan was weak and incomplete, giving the operational realities great opportunity to shape the strategy, rather than the other way around. Operational proficiency and skilled diplomacy would eventually make NATO's threats credible and reduce Slobodan Milosevic's options to the point that concession was the best choice, but there was more luck and coincidence than planning in NATO's strategy.

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<sup>185</sup> Victor Chernomyrdin, interview transcript, *Frontline*, PBS, February 2000, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/chernomyrdin.html>.

<sup>186</sup> Ramet, "Kingdom of God," 37.

## **VI. COERCION IN THE FUTURE**

Operation Allied Force was the largest-scale instance of a coercive campaign, particularly among the successful cases, that the United States has been involved in the post-Cold War era. That makes it the best evidence for future coercion, within the circumstances of the case. This chapter will review what NATO—dominated by the United States—did well, what it did poorly, and provide recommendations for how Allied Force could have been fought more efficiently.

That counterfactual case will not happen, though, so this chapter will also cover issues not tested in Allied Force, either because they were irrelevant to the case or because they did not exist yet. Since 1999, there have been great strides in military technology, both in the use of guided weapons by American forces and the proliferation of anti-access technologies to likely adversaries. In addition to the expansion and advancement of existing technologies, whole new categories of technology have been militarized, enabling new possibilities for operational mechanisms in coercion. These technological advances have overwhelmingly made strikes on military targets relatively harder and attacking civilian targets easier, so they also emphasize the legal issues with coercive uses of force.

### **A. NATO'S PERFORMANCE IN ALLIED FORCE**

NATO dominated the skies of Yugoslavia, but struggled to bring this dominance down to ground level. Despite the substantial efforts devoted to fighting a ground war from the air, this effort ran counter to the core doctrine of the U.S. Air Force, which flew the vast majority of sorties in Allied Force, so results were limited. In areas where the campaign emphasized doctrinal strengths, like the bombing of strategic targets inside Serbia, the alliance performed extremely capably. Overall, NATO's overwhelming force made the inelegance of its employment moot, but this success would have been incomplete without the vital diplomatic successes, bringing Russia into the NATO camp and also holding the alliance together.

## **B. ALLIED FORCE DONE BETTER – A COUNTERFACTUAL**

It is important to understand the limits of even the best strategy: it can maximize the results achieved in a given situation, but it cannot change the initial conditions. Given NATO's demands and Slobodan Milosevic's domestic political position, a concession would have been unlikely without actual violence, regardless of how well NATO's operation was planned or how limited Milosevic's options were. Even faced with only two options—resistance or concession—resistance would have carried fewer initial costs for Milosevic, and once bombs fell and blood was shed, domestic anger would have made concession even more politically costly. Had NATO's operational efforts been of maximum efficiency, focusing on industrial targets, transportation, and the power grid of Serbia from the beginning, domestic support for Milosevic would have plausibly declined much faster and made accepting NATO's demands the rational choice much earlier. In this author's estimation, the best-case operation would have still taken 4 to 6 weeks to coerce Milosevic—better than the 11 weeks of the real Allied Force, but far longer than prewar estimates.<sup>187</sup>

## **C. ADVANCES IN OFFENSIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Sensor and weapons technology has advanced dramatically since 1999, enabling great strides in hunting and killing mobile targets like the Yugoslav forces deployed to Kosovo, but much more modest gains in the ability to attack fixed targets. Allied Force featured the combat debuts of the B-2A *Spirit* stealth bomber and the GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), a combination which allowed the U.S. Air Force to deliver a 2000-lb bomb within 10 meters of any point in the world, unmolested by air defenses.<sup>188</sup> This incredible capability for coercion by weakening has been difficult to improve upon: today's JDAMs come in several sizes and can be dropped from virtually any aircraft in the U.S. inventory, but greater precision yields diminishing returns in attacks on fixed targets.

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<sup>187</sup> This estimate is based on the assumption that moving strikes on the electrical grid forward from the sixth week (May 4<sup>th</sup>) to the first two weeks of strikes moves the rest of the historical timeline similarly.

<sup>188</sup> The B-2 was the only JDAM-capable aircraft in Allied Force, but today virtually every U.S. aircraft can drop them; "Joint Direct Attack Munition," United States Air Force.

The most noticeable shift in the years—and wars—after Allied Force has been the expansion of the persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities needed to suppress an army from the sky. The MQ-1 *Predator* drone was developed in the mid-1990s and saw limited use in Allied Force, but today it is the ubiquitous face of American airpower over Afghanistan, Iraq, and numerous other countries.<sup>189</sup> The perfusion of surveillance drones, targeting for a much broader array of guided weapons that can be carried by virtually any platform, leaves little technical reason for a modern airstrike to miss even a mobile target. The lessons learned about operational shortcomings in Allied Force have been heavily studied by the U.S. Air Force. Had today’s capabilities been available against Yugoslav vehicles in 1999, NATO would have found more of them and hit many more of them, making the attempt at coercion by denial more operationally efficient, although still strategically misguided.

#### **D. ADVANCES IN DEFENSIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Unfortunately for any attempts to re-fight the 1999 campaign, other nations also studied Allied Force. The bombing campaign was only possible due to the weakness of Yugoslav air defenses, so nations opposed to the United States are purchasing advanced missile systems like the Russian S-300.<sup>190</sup> These longer-ranged SAMs are complemented by complex deception plans using advanced decoys, GPS jammers, and target dispersal to complicate any U.S. bombing campaign. NATO aircraft carrying air-to-surface weapons only comprised about 14,000 of 38,004 total sorties in Allied Force, and only three-quarters of that 14,000 were strike sorties, the remainder being flown to suppress air defenses.<sup>191</sup> The sortie breakdown will be weighted even further against strike missions as ISR sorties expand—they were only 5 percent of U.S. Air Force sorties in Allied Force.<sup>192</sup> The United States continues to develop ways around anti-access technologies,

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<sup>189</sup> “MQ-1B Predator,” United States Air Force, September 23, 2015, <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/FactSheets/Display/tabid/224/Article/104469/mq1bpredator.aspx>.

<sup>190</sup> Alexander Natruskin, “Iran Plans to Sign Contract for Russian S-300 Missiles Next Week,” *Reuters*, August 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/18/us-russia-iran-arms-idUSKCN0QN11B20150818>.

<sup>191</sup> Department of Defense, *After-Action Report*, 68–69, Figures 13 and 14; “Operation Allied Force,” United States Air Force.

<sup>192</sup> “Operation Allied Force,” United States Air Force.

but every support asset increases the cost and difficulty to drop each bomb, so it is imperative that future operations make every bomb count.

#### **E. NEW CATEGORIES OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY**

In addition to making existing categories of ordnance more effective, military scientists are also continually researching new categories of weapon, and the most notable introduction since Allied Force was kinetic cyberwarfare. Making a public debut with the discovery of the Stuxnet virus damaging centrifuges in Iran’s nuclear program, such precise cyberweapons offer the possibility of extremely discriminating, covert attacks. Unfortunately, these weapons still require very specific tailoring to function—Stuxnet is believed to have been tested on centrifuges in Israel identical to the ones it targeted in Iran—and therefore must remain covert to be effective, eliminating most of their usefulness as a coercive threat.<sup>193</sup>

#### **F. LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN COERCION**

All mechanisms become coercive when they are used to *hurt* rather than confining themselves to a contest of military force, raising questions about the principles of *military necessity* and *humanity* under the laws of war.<sup>194</sup> Most historical cases of coercion sidestep these issues by occurring (often unintentionally) within a conventional war, so it is unclear where actions toward strictly military aims end and coercive actions begin, but this historical solution is unhelpful for planned coercive efforts in the future.

In his memoir of the conflict, General Clark insists that attacking Yugoslav ground forces “was a political, legal, and moral necessity” because the intervention in Kosovo was being justified on humanitarian grounds: “How could we morally justify not striking at the Serbs on the ground, if we had the ability to do so?”<sup>195</sup> Unfortunately,

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<sup>193</sup> William J. Broad, John Markoff, and David E. Sanger, “Israeli Test on Worm Called Crucial in Iran Nuclear Delay,” *New York Times*, January 15, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/middleeast/16stuxnet.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/middleeast/16stuxnet.html?_r=0).

<sup>194</sup> The principles of the law of war are discussed in U.S. Department of Defense, *Law of War Manual*, (Washington, DC: June 12, 2015), 50–69, <http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Law-of-War-Manual-June-2015.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 241.



ineffective attacks on troops in Kosovo diverted resources from strikes inside Serbia which could have shortened the conflict, thereby limiting the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Future campaigns will have to address this divergence between ruthlessly effective coercive targeting, which maximizes suffering in hopes of a shorter conflict, and force scrupulously focused to minimize damage outside of immediate military necessity, which would limit violence to the battlefield but allow the enemy to fight far longer. There is no easy way to address this, other than intensive planning before the conflict begins.

## **G. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Clausewitz insists that “the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking.”<sup>196</sup> This precept has been proven correct by history, and it carries two points that are vital to success in coercion. First, strategy must be produced jointly by politicians and generals to ensure that military plans will achieve political ends, that political ends are achievable with the forces allocated, and that each group understands the other’s intent. This planning must incorporate both groups at all stages, and must plan out every phase of the war with all contingencies: ideally, coercion makes actual violence unnecessary because there is no way the coercer will not win.

Second, planning for coercion must establish the parameters of the conflict, which are as much about the target as the coercer: the plan must determine who (in the target state) will be coerced, what is to be demanded, and how the coercer will apply sufficient leverage to the target to make concession preferable to resistance. Pressuring actors who lack the power to deliver the coercer’s demands will not succeed, regardless of the pressure applied. In the same vein, demands that would carry overwhelming costs for the actor surrendering them will fail, regardless of their overall cost to the target state. Selecting a target actor with the power to deliver and determining how much concession would cost them is the first part of planning coercion, but equally vital is knowing how much force will be needed to apply pressure, determining how much force is available, and adjusting demands as necessary.

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<sup>196</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

This planning must take place at the political level, outside the military command structure even though senior officers will be involved, because military officers in isolation tend to hew to their service doctrine regardless of the situation, as was demonstrated in Allied Force. This is not to suggest that service doctrine is incorrect or harmful, but that expecting generals to act outside their service cultures is historically unwise. Therefore, one necessary strategic choice is the appointment of a commander, specifically chosen for the kind of war being planned. Allied Force—an operation dominated by the U.S. Air Force—was commanded by a U.S. Army general simply because he was Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, at the time, and the initial strategy correspondingly reflected an Army point of view. Appointing an Air Force general would not alone have been a strategy, but would have led to more efficient operational employment of airpower.

Coercion is not a military operational field, so there are no doctrinal publications that address the topic at the strategic level. The most applicable military publication is probably Field Manual 3–24, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, which emphasizes tactics and principles to gain popular cooperation rather than seizing objectives by force. The principles of legitimacy and unified civil-military action are very applicable to coercion: coercive diplomacy can only occur within a framework that both parties accept, and coercion can only succeed when there is a unified solution between the political and military commanders.<sup>197</sup> Coercion is the epitome of “political intercourse, carried on with other means,” and so both politicians and masters of the other means—the military—must be intimately involved.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (FM 3–24), 1–8 to 1–14.

<sup>198</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

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