

**STRATEGY  
RESEARCH  
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**THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL ADVISER  
IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS**

**BY**

**MR. DAVID A. LANGE**

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**The Role of the Political Adviser in Peacekeeping Operations**

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## ABSTRACT

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With political advisers now supporting military leadership at all levels of command in Bosnia, it is reasonable to assume that future multinational peacekeeping operations will place demands on governments and alliances to provide political advisers with a specific set of core competencies. This paper examines NATO's peacekeeping experience in Bosnia and the theater commander's responsibilities to show why political advisers have become essential. It illustrates how, in a political-military environment where tactical decisions influence policy, and political decisions impact operational matters, the role of the political adviser has grown in importance. And as evidenced by the NATO Peace Stabilization Force experience, it proposes a model for measuring the relevance of the political adviser. It provides a description of the peacekeeping environment, postulates the commander's primary concern in peacekeeping operations and details the functions and levels where the political adviser must successfully operate in order to support the commander.



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No major proposal required for war can be worked out in ignorance of political factors;...

--Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*<sup>1</sup>

A major theme of Clausewitz's work "On War" was that military considerations subordinate themselves to the political point of view. The primacy of political influences in the conduct of war established by Clausewitz in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century equally applies to peacekeeping operations today. The negotiations that led to the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia demonstrated the truth of Clausewitz's observation. The successful application of NATO's military power created the conditions for diplomacy to achieve a political end.<sup>2</sup> And as the international community works with Bosnia to build a multi-ethnic, democratic society, NATO's military presence continues to serve political goals.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace, commonly referred to as the Dayton Agreement, described an ambitious future for a nation emerging from a civil war. It envisioned a society based on democratic values, with multi-ethnic institutions sharing power. In order to balance the interests of the three ethnic groups involved in the conflict, Serbs, Croats and Muslims, Dayton proposed complicated governmental structures. Based on formulas that reflect Bosnia's ethnic composition, all three ethnic groups are represented in national institutions.<sup>3</sup> Two mini-states, referred to as entities, are in theory subordinate to the national institutions. One entity, known as the

Federation, is a mixture of Muslim and Croat cantons. The other entity, the Republic of Srpska, is predominantly Serbian.

Creating the government institutions called for by the Dayton Agreement is an enormous task. Each ethnic group has different strategic goals in post-war Bosnia. The Muslims, the weakest ethnic group, are a majority in few cantons. They see their survival in a strong national government where they retain influence disproportionate to their numbers. The Croats in the Federation look to Croatia as the source of their security. The Bosnian Croat goal is a weak central government, with power concentrated in the cantons where local leaders will be free to maintain ethnic ties with Zagreb without interference. The Bosnian Serb goal is to merge the Republic of Srpska with Serbia. For that reason, the RS advocates minimal involvement with the National government. When these divergent political strategies are combined with massive population dislocation, destroyed infrastructure and a ruined economy, the vision of Dayton seems almost unreachable.<sup>4</sup>

NATO sent a Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) into this environment in December 1995. The alliance recognized the inherent political nature of the Bosnia peacekeeping mission and as NATO's ambassadors prepared to approve IFOR's operations plan, they discussed whether they should provide the IFOR commander a civilian political advisor. One NATO member expressed concern over the potential for a senior diplomat to bypass the military chain of command and report directly to NATO's political body. Without the right terms of reference, a political adviser could create

opportunities for NATO's highest political body, the North Atlantic Council, to become involved in day-to-day operational decisions, thus undermining the authority of the commander.<sup>5</sup>

NATO ultimately agreed to designate a political adviser and by the third extension of NATO's mandate in Bosnia in the summer of 1998, the value of a senior civilian advisor who could assist the commander in analyzing and shaping the political environment was firmly established. In the fall of 1997, a total of four political advisers were accredited to NATO's Peace Stabilization Force (SFOR) headquarters in Sarajevo. Two political advisers were assigned to the personal staff of the U.S. Commander (one NATO and one U.S.), while the French and British Deputy Commanders each had their own national adviser. Political advisers were found at subordinate levels as well. The Commanders of the Multinational Division – North and the Russian Brigade saw fit to augment their staffs with political advisers as well.

With political advisers now supporting military leadership at all levels of command in Bosnia, it is reasonable to assume that future multinational peacekeeping operations will place demands on governments and alliances to provide political advisers with a specific set of core competencies. This paper examines NATO's peacekeeping experience in Bosnia and the theater commander's responsibilities to show why political advisers have become essential in peace support operations. It illustrates how, in a political-military environment where tactical decisions influence policy, and political decisions directly affect operational matters, the role of the political adviser has grown in

importance. And based on the SFOR experience, it proposes a model for measuring the relevance of the POLAD. What follows is a description of the peacekeeping environment, the commander's primary concern in peacekeeping operations, and the functions and levels where the political adviser must operate successfully in order to support the commander. The descriptions will be illustrated with examples from recent events in Bosnia.

### **Peacekeeping Operations are Predominantly Political-Military Operations**

The Commander of NATO's Peace Stabilization Force (COMSFOR) met with his primary staff early on New Year's Day 1998.<sup>6</sup> He was concerned over developments in the Republic of Srpska. Madame Plavsic, the President of Bosnia's Serb entity, had taken a bold step the previous summer and split from her ultra-nationalist party, the SDS. She also dissolved the RS parliament in an effort to break the lock Serb hard-liners had on power. The citizens of Srpska responded to her call for a new government, one less corrupt and more willing to abide by the terms of the Dayton Agreement, by electing a slight majority composed of opposition parties. With this result, Madame Plavsic had an historic chance to forge a coalition free of the influence of indicted war criminals. But her next challenge was in getting the members in session, which in some cases would require newly elected representatives to cross ethnic boundary lines, so they could vote to form a government. The hard-liners had sabotaged her initial attempt to seat parliament and their strategy would be to disrupt the next session as well. If they could keep

parliament from sitting, they could insist that Madame Plavsic's potential coalition was not a viable option and the momentum would swing back to the hard-liners.

The political adviser's analysis of the situation prompted COMSFOR to set in motion a strategy that denied the hard-liners their strengths, thereby increasing the probability the opposition parties would be able to form a coalition. To nullify SDS intimidation that included threats of violence, SFOR ensured that the non-Serb delegates would have transportation and security across the inter-entity boundary line to Bijeljina, the site of parliament. To exploit the ultra nationalists' fear of open government deliberations, he ordered SFOR to erect a television antenna to ensure that parliament's proceedings would be transmitted live. With a live broadcast, it was believed the SDS might be less likely to disrupt the meeting because it would show the electorate who was responsible for the inability of their government to function. Finally, he placed a visible SFOR presence in and around Bijeljina to reinforce the message that SFOR was in charge of the situation.

The Republic of Srpska parliamentary session began in the afternoon of January 12, 1998 and continued into the early hours of the next morning. President Plavsic succeeded in forming a coalition, in spite of a last ditch attempt by the SDS to obstruct progress by walking out. With SFOR's behind-the-scenes help, this political development, which would have been unthinkable a year earlier, allowed the Republic of Srpska to begin the process of complying with the Dayton Agreement and signaled the birth of a viable opposition to hard-line influence.

The foregoing example was not an isolated case of military meddling in political affairs; the primary task of the theater commander is to shape the political-military environment. In the months prior to President Plavsic's parliamentary success, SFOR had stopped the ultranationalist Serb SDS from using the media to spread anti-democratic propaganda, disbanded its secret police, foiled a coup attempt in Banja Luka against Madame Plavsic, and ensured that Srpska's parliamentary elections were peaceful and fair.

SFOR's shaping of the political landscape through decisive use of military capabilities involved significant risk. International, NATO, and U.S. support for a continued commitment to Bosnian reconstruction would have been threatened if the results of any SFOR intervention had been unsuccessful. Failure would have also had serious consequences for regional and internal stability. But there was no way to avoid these risks. The Stabilization Force Commander, as the theater commander of the NAYO-led multinational peacekeeping operation, is at the center of the political-military interface on a daily basis. NATO has given him the mandate to influence Bosnia's political environment in positive ways.<sup>7</sup> Uniquely positioned to exercise coercive diplomacy, his most pressing challenge is to employ military capabilities creatively to induce political compliance with international agreements from ethnic based governments that do not consider compliance to be in their best interests.

## **The Model**

Based on an analysis of the environment and tasks performed by the SFOR political advisers, it is possible to propose a model for Commanders and political advisers to use in future peacekeeping deployments. Because mandates and location will vary, not all the elements of this model will apply to each peacekeeping operation. It is likely however, that there will be two overriding factors in any peacekeeping response to a crisis situation and the model is built around these factors. The first one is the political nature of peacekeeping operations; the second is the multinational character of the peacekeeping effort.

In the model the y-axis shows the functional levels where the political adviser must focus. The x-axis displays the primary tasks that must be performed by any political adviser. Not all tasks are performed at each level and the model shows which tasks generally apply at each level. It should be noted that this model is based on a relationship between the commander and the political adviser that gives the political adviser a high degree of independence and latitude to operate. The desire of the commander to empower or constrain the political adviser can extend or collapse the model along either axis.

| Levels of Operation | Tasks             |                 |                               |                                      |                                         |                         |                          |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                     | Establish Liaison | Transmit Policy | Determine Future Developments | Determine Effect of Political Events | Determine Effect of Military Operations | Develop Strategic Plans | Maintain Unity of Effort |
| Within Theater      | X                 |                 | X                             | X                                    | X                                       | X                       |                          |
| Regional            | X                 |                 | X                             |                                      | X                                       |                         |                          |
| National-Domestic   | X                 | X               | X                             |                                      | X                                       | X                       | X                        |
| National-Foreign    | X                 | X               | X                             |                                      |                                         |                         |                          |
| International       | X                 | X               | X                             |                                      | X                                       | X                       | X                        |
| Non-governmental    | X                 | X               | X                             |                                      |                                         |                         | X                        |

### Role of the Political Adviser

Figure 1

### The Levels of Operation

The political adviser must monitor six distinct levels of political activity in order to cover the full spectrum of developments that affect peacekeeping operations. These levels are described and illustrated below.

*Within Theater.* This level refers to political developments that occur internal to the commander's area of direct responsibility. In the case of the NATO Stabilization Force in 1997 and 1998, it concerned the strategies and actions of the Bosnian political and military leadership at the national, entity and local levels. The significance and pace of political developments within theater, in conjunction with COMSFOR's mandate, meant that the theater commander's immediate attention and SFOR's emerging strategies were focused at this level. To ensure that the commander acts with the best, most current information, the political adviser must understand how the goals and strategies of the various political interests interact in order to identify significant developments, assess their implications, and recommend countermeasures. In Bosnia, this meant seeking and relaying information on national, entity, and local issues, organizations, and personalities.

In July 1997, SFOR apprehended an ethnic Serb indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal. The apprehension threatened the hard-line status quo in the Republic of Srpska and many government officials were reluctant to conduct government business fearing they were the subjects of additional secret indictments. Predictably, the reaction in the Republic of Srpska was immediate and violent. The international community was targeted with a series of terrorist acts that were designed to frighten international aid workers, isolate the populace from outside influences, and promote solidarity among ethnic Serbs. Republic of Srpska leaders pronounced the reaction a "spontaneous" demonstration of an outraged population against an illegal apprehension. An analysis of the violence, however, when considered in light of RS strategic goals, presented a different picture. Based on the pattern of the attacks, SFOR had reason to believe the

violence was coordinated by the hard-liners for political ends. As a result of the political adviser's recommendation, a meeting was arranged in Pale between COMSFOR and the Serb member of the Bosnian tri-presidency. COMSFOR made clear the risks that were involved with the Republic of Srpska strategy and within a matter of days, in a clear validation of the SFOR assessment, the attacks stopped.

*Regional.* A theater that requires a peacekeeping deployment to maintain stability is often situated within a regional framework of political forces that generate instability. These regional forces influence political and military developments within the commander's area of responsibility. For example, two of the signatories of the Dayton Agreement and controlling figures of the political landscape within Bosnia were in Croatia and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. Political issues that were defined by ethnic interests, especially those concerning Serbs or Croats within Bosnia, often required intervention in Belgrade and Zagreb to resolve. The political adviser must understand how and when regional centers of gravity are likely to come into play in order to develop strategies that use their influence to help achieve objectives within theater.

Spring in Bosnia historically saw an increase in activities that crossed entity boundary lines. Muslims traveled in busses, often unannounced, to visit gravesites and former homes while Croats and Serbs established roadblocks and burned houses to keep ethnic minorities from returning. During one particularly active period of house destruction in the Federation in the spring of 1997, SFOR's assistance was sought to combat the civilian sabotage that was covertly being organized by local police and supported by Bosnian

Croat political leadership. The solution involved close SFOR coordination with international organizations like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Learning in advance when an ethnic group was preparing to cross the entity boundary line and where it was planning to go, SFOR was able to coordinate the details of these crossings with the United Nations' International Police Task Force and Bosnian civilian authorities. By focusing on the future, SFOR found it was possible to prevent surprises, provide necessary security, and develop contingency plans to prevent and deal with violence. A permanent solution, however, lay beyond SFOR's influence. Bosnian Croats were not burning houses based purely on ethnic considerations, but rather in accordance with strategic goals formulated in Zagreb. In order to affect the center of gravity behind the theater events, SFOR worked with the international community to formulate a demarche that put pressure on Croatian authorities to end their support for such attacks.<sup>8</sup>

*National-Domestic.* The national-domestic level refers to the political actions of the nation providing the senior military commander, in this instance, the United States. At the national-domestic level, a number of U.S. agencies and branches of government participate in establishing the goals and objectives for peacekeeping deployments. The White House, Department of State, Department of Defense and Congress all interact to set or change the conditions under which a U.S. theater commander operates. Agencies and branches of government, however, are frequently interested only in a specific aspect of the overall national policy. The U.S. Agency for International Development for example, may administer economic aid in support of broader U.S. objectives such as refugee return. Congress, on the other hand, may be concerned with reconciliation of the

former warring factions as a measure of the requirement for a continued U.S. financial and military commitment. The political adviser must maintain contact with each of these agencies and branches of government in order to determine what organization is setting which policies and what the goals are behind those policies so that the U.S. commander can best support Washington's intent.<sup>9</sup>

There are significant policy differences between a Republican controlled U.S. Congress and a Democratic administration concerning the deployment of U.S. forces in support of the Dayton Agreement. The length of the mandate, cost of the deployment, and mission of the forces have all been subject to debate at various times and Congress has played an active role in shaping the Administration's policy. In order to stay informed of the situation in theater, Congress has sent the Government Accounting Office to Bosnia at six-month intervals to collect data in addition to organizing the visits of over forty congressional delegations within one twelve month period. Each delegation, depending on its composition and the committees represented, had a unique range of interests. Representatives sitting on Intelligence Committees may be concerned with the risk involved in operations to apprehend indicted war criminals. Readiness Committee members are interested in assessing the effect of long term peace operations on the maintenance of combat skills. Appropriation Committee staffers, prior to votes on supplemental budget requests, seek to judge whether congressional funding has improved Bosnian living conditions. The regional U.S. commander must have accurate information regarding the interests and information needs of each delegation if he is to support Congress or the executive departments and agencies in their efforts to develop

appropriate policy. In the fall and winter of 1997-1998, a number of congressional delegations visited Sarajevo to explore the necessity of extending the SFOR mandate. Not all of these delegations were convinced that sufficient progress had been made to warrant an extension. By accurately describing the issues and concerns of each delegation, the political adviser played a key role in ensuring that congressional and administration representatives received a uniform, objective picture of developments and trends in theater, thus promoting the formation of a consistent U.S. policy. The result was congressional support of administration proposals to extend the SFOR mandate.

*National-Foreign.* In a multinational peacekeeping operation, this level bears particular attention. Not only Washington, but all capitals providing forces to a multinational operation make decisions that affect the participation of their respective contingents. National sensitivities and unarticulated policies can affect the execution of alliance decisions. The thirty-nine nations that make up the Stabilization Force routinely review the SFOR commander's operational decisions. In SFOR headquarters, senior national representatives on the staff report to their capitals on how the commander executes alliance political guidance. Nations may also pursue national political and economic policies that are contrary to consensus decisions made with their consent in international forums. When national policies begin to run counter to coalition consensus, national intent is often evident first in the diplomatic arena. Furthermore, SFOR operational decisions may also produce disagreement within the coalition. The political adviser must stay abreast of other nations' policies in order to alert the commander to differences that could complicate operations.

The return of refugees to Bosnia is a case in point. Many of the international organizations charged with refugee return were concerned that conditions were not adequate for ethnic groups to resettle in areas where they would be in the minority. Property laws that restored pre-war housing to rightful owners were not yet in place, stable municipal governments had not been installed, and sufficient jobs had not been created. These concerns were also shared by SFOR. If resettlement was premature, the ensuing violence could threaten the secure environment SFOR was charged with maintaining. Premature resettlement also increased demands on an aid system that was already strained. Although the United Nations encouraged countries hosting Bosnian refugees to allow them to remain, not all nations that bore the burden could afford to support them indefinitely. Germany, which hosted the overwhelming majority of Bosnian refugees, was under intense domestic political pressure in 1997 to begin sending refugees home.<sup>10</sup> Those pressures resulted in a national policy that was in conflict with the international community's goals. In spite of international pressure, Germany began repatriating refugees in significant numbers. The political adviser's access to these types of policy decisions allowed COMSFOR to stay abreast of such diplomatic developments affecting the security environment for which he was both responsible and accountable.

*International.* At the international level, a variety of organizations must be monitored to determine the future environment. Alliances such as NATO or the European Union, security organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation, Europe, or the United Nations, and ad hoc groupings like the Contact Group or the Peace

Implementation Council, seek consensus from national policies that are often divergent. At various times, these organizations have evaluated the adequacy of entity compliance with international mandates and the effectiveness of military interventions on the political environment. They also promulgated additional compliance milestones resulting in new missions for the theater commander. The ability of the political adviser to obtain advance notice of international initiatives directly aided SFOR's efforts to plan for their execution.

The political adviser's diplomatic contacts made it a routine task to obtain national positions and coordinating drafts of communiqués prior to the meetings of the international organizations mentioned above. More often than not, the positions and initiatives of the lead nation developing the draft were retained in the final version. The Contact Group, for example, reached consensus on most issues regarding the status of entity compliance and maintained general agreement on what the next steps should be prior to the conclusion of its formal meetings. During 1997 and 1998, monitoring developments at the international level and obtaining advance notice of potential policy decisions was perhaps easier than at any other level.

*Non-governmental.* Peace operations are host to a multitude of non-governmental and private volunteer organizations. These organizations operate within the constraints of the political-military environment and seek to change it in order to improve their own effectiveness. They place demands on military capabilities as they strive to provide aid quickly in an unsure security environment and their success or failure has a significant effect on peacekeeping missions. The need for SFOR's presence was in part tied to the

progress these organizations made in helping Bosnia restore itself. By providing liaison with senior management of non-governmental and private volunteer organizations, the political adviser can discover and encourage ways to increase mutual cooperation.

Removing the estimated one million mines in Bosnia is a high priority effort supported by a number of agencies in addition to SFOR. One Congressional delegation that toured Sarajevo in February 1998 expressed interest in devoting resources to removing mines from a cultural landmark in the city as a symbol of religious reconciliation. The delegation's staff contacted the political adviser and requested assistance in finding a donor to finance the effort. By working with the principal agency responsible for demining in Bosnia, the political adviser was able to find a donor nation willing to finance the effort and then to have the priority for demining in the area raised.

### **Each Level of Operation Interacts with the Other Levels**

None of the six levels described above is independent of the others. Developments within theater interact and influence developments at the regional, national and international levels. The connectivity is seamless and the speed can be instantaneous.

In the summer of 1997, the International Police Task Force (IPTF), as required by the Dayton Agreement, was in the midst of restructuring the entity police forces through a number of initiatives. Personnel strengths were reduced to fulfill civil law enforcement

requirements; when compared to the pre-Dayton requirements for paramilitary capabilities within the local police forces, all such forces faced substantial downsizing and retraining. Prospective police officers were vetted to ensure that applicants with questionable backgrounds were prevented from joining the force. Long barrel weapons were forbidden unless authorized in advance by the IPTF, and undemocratic practices, such as mobile police check points, were banned. A centralized police academy was established and training was provided in western policing standards. Progress was slow, but the IPTF was confident that Federation and Republic of Srpska police forces could be restructured according to the IPTF timetable.

The Republic of Srpska specialist police, however, posed a problem for the IPTF. Operating under the control of the ultranationalist Serb hard-liners (SDS), the specialist police had been used to intimidate the civilian population, particularly political opponents. They were also involved with organized crime activities. Their refusal to cooperate with the IPTF restructuring program was a cornerstone of the hard-line strategy to prevent the Republic of Srpska from implementing the Dayton Agreement. To bring the Republic of Srpska specialist police into compliance with the restructuring program, the IPTF worked through the United Nations to gain support in national capitals and within NATO and in August 1997, NATO directed SFOR to treat paramilitary police units as military forces. Once they had been so designated, SFOR gained the authority to inspect their facilities, confiscate weapons, and force compliance with the restructuring guidelines. Thus a political decision by the Serb SDS (theater level) was taken by the UN International Police Task Force (international level) to Washington and other capitals

(national level) resulting in a new political-military mission directed by NATO  
(international level) for the commander of SFOR (theater level).

In addition to the relationships among the six operational levels, there were also relationships among the three levels within theater. Local politically motivated events such as house burnings, physical intimidation by police, or refusal to recognize municipal election results, were carried out at the direction of entity or national leadership. To address local problems, it was necessary to find resolution at higher levels. Thus, the international community's demands to dismiss local mayors and police officials in response to these types of events could only be satisfied with a combination of political and economic incentives directed at the entity or national level.

Interaction among operational levels adds complexity to the political-military environment. National policy objectives shape alliance consensus. Local political events result in compliance judgements and new missions from international organizations. NGOs and PVOs attempt to gain access to military capabilities through national and international organizations. For the purposes of analysis, the levels are distinct, but in practice, the ability of the political adviser to predict changes in the political environment and recommend strategies depends on the ability to understand how the levels interact and influence each other.

## Key Tasks

Of the many tasks the political adviser must perform to support the needs of the strategic or operational commander, seven stand out from the others. Each task may be performed at one or more of the levels identified in Figure 1.

*Establish Liaison.* This is the core task, the one on which all the others depend. The political adviser's effectiveness is defined by the ability to obtain and pass on information that is normally not available in military channels. To do this, it is necessary to establish working relationships with key personnel within a wide variety of organizations at all six operating levels. Without reliable sources of information to explain the background, intent, and likely outcome of deliberations on issues that will shape the political-military environment, it will be impossible to perform the other tasks identified in Figure 1.

As the senior civilian on the commander's staff, the political adviser is the logical person to establish contact with senior personnel of non-military organizations. A typical week in the SFOR commander's schedule included meetings with members of Congress, allied Ministers of Defense, NATO ambassadors, one or another of the Bosnian presidents, UN special representatives, and senior personnel from the Department of Defense and State. To prepare for these meetings, the political advisers coordinated with the visiting agencies to establish expectations for each visit, identify issues for discussion, and recommend SFOR positions. These informal contacts followed no established hierarchy or previously recognized organizational relationships.

Madeline Albright's first visit to Bosnia as Secretary of State occurred in June 1997. The State Department had been advocating that SFOR play a more active role in supporting reconstruction and reconciliation efforts, in part because the full extent of SFOR's activities was not known in Washington. Through the political adviser's liaison with the Department, it was agreed that her discussion with COMSFOR would focus on how SFOR could accelerate the pace of nation building.<sup>11</sup> This insight laid the groundwork for the Secretary to tour SFOR activities in a way that would highlight military support to the civilian normalization process and provide a more balanced view of SFOR operations than apparently had been reported to her.

*Transmit Policy.* Because policy is established at many levels during multinational peace operations, there is no established information network for gathering and passing policy decisions to the theater commander. Nor is there a formal system for requesting the theater commander's input to the policy debate. Likewise, no feedback mechanism exists to gauge the effect of policies that have been implemented. The political adviser's working relationships with civilian organizations at the national-domestic, national-foreign, international and non-governmental levels make that individual a natural conduit for identifying and transmitting emerging policy decisions to the theater commander.

In the spring of 1997, the Department of State assumed the interagency lead in developing a political-military plan for implementing the Dayton Agreement. The impetus for the plan came from the need to develop milestones for completing the nation-

building tasks prescribed by the Dayton Agreement, which a year into NATO's mandate had shown little progress. A concept for creating the multiethnic institutions and the democratic reforms necessary for SFOR's withdrawal therefore could help offset some of the criticism resulting from the slow pace of ethnic reconciliation.

The political-military plan identified initiatives the international community could take to entice or coerce entity cooperation. As a statement of U.S. policy objectives, this plan would shape the deliberations of the Contact Group (the U.S., UK, France, Germany and Russia), the Peace Implementation Council, NATO, the UN, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation, Europe. The political-military plan would also provide important insights regarding future changes to the political-military environment and provide opportunities for SFOR to harmonize military activities to support political goals. The political adviser obtained a copy of the plan and provided COMSFOR details of interagency decisions and initiatives with potential implications for SFOR.<sup>12</sup> Since there was no formal means to inform COMSFOR of U.S. policy objectives for Bosnia, the political adviser was free to take the initiative to meet the commander's needs.

*Determine Future Developments.* The political adviser's most difficult task is accurately predicting future political developments at all levels. The political jockeying for advantage among the three ethnic groups (Muslim, Serb and Croat), SFOR, and the international community can best be described as a multidimensional chess game. At the regional, national, and international levels, a variety of interests shape political-military positions, such as the nature and duration of mandates, troop strengths, and mission

requirements. The ability to identify likely outcomes is a valuable capability for the commander. It extends the time available for planning and focuses contingency planning on the most probable options and it allows staffs to be proactive rather than reactive.

Being predictive in the political-military environment involves discerning emerging trends and likely outcomes through extensive use of diplomatic contacts. There are many examples of how the political adviser's diplomatic contacts provided advance notice of political decisions to the SFOR commander. Insights obtained from national delegations to the UN enabled the political adviser to predict emerging UN missions in theater and mandates in the region. Outcomes of UN deliberations over resolutions to increase the size of the International Police Task Force in Bosnia or to extend the mandate of the Preventative Deployment in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were identified prior to the passage of Security Council decisions. Reports received from NATO sources provided COMSFOR advance notice of decisions on political guidance, rules of engagement, and representative tasks in advance of the formal approval of military operational plans. Draft statements from Contact Group member nations identified international community initiatives that would likely require SFOR support, such as the requirement to help enforce the use of common vehicle license plates throughout Bosnia. By obtaining early warning of the elements of the arbitration decision for how Brcko would be administered (a city claimed by all three ethnic groups), SFOR was able to draw up contingency plans that addressed how security would be maintained in response to possible reactions to the decision. At all levels, the political adviser was a source of

political intelligence enabling the commander to see the "battlefield" and prepare for probable developments.

*Determine Effects of Political Developments on Military Operations.* This task and the next one are opposite sides of the same coin. Political developments in theater were highly likely to elicit a response from the international community. When an ethnic group or entity failed to comply with provisions of the Dayton Agreement, the response usually involved some sort of sanction or deadline from the international community. Frequently, when a decision was imposed in Bosnia, SFOR was required to play a role because there were no other means of enforcing it. And because diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions were largely ineffective, it was relatively easy for political advisers to identify political decisions that would affect the military mission.

One of the goals set by the international community was the establishment of an independent media. After SFOR had apprehended the first indicted war criminal in July 1997, the SDS-controlled media in the Republic of Srpska described SFOR as an occupying force and made comparisons between SFOR and Nazi Germany. The goal of the campaign was to cause mistrust and incite violence against the international presence. The international community repeatedly warned the RS to stop spreading malicious propaganda and established a media board with the task of setting standards for objective broadcasting.

As expected, when the ultranationalist Serb SDS continued to violate the international community's standards, the Office of the High Representative and national capitals requested that NATO shut down the offensive broadcasts by force. NATO in turn directed SFOR to occupy the transmission towers that the SDS used to broadcast the offensive material, effectively removing a powerful weapon from the Serb arsenal. SFOR successfully coerced the Republic of Srpska into removing ultranationalist hardliners from the broadcast system and abiding by standards for objective reporting established by the media board.

*Determine Effects of Military Operations on Political Developments.* The reverse of the previous task is the requirement to determine how military operations will affect the political environment. These are often second and third order effects which affect several operational levels. Once Madame Plavsic had established control of the Republic of Srpska government in January 1998, she announced she was moving the capital of the Republic of Srpska from Pale, an SDS stronghold, to Banja Luka. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), the senior diplomatic presence in country responsible for Dayton implementation, was concerned that the SDS would use the time between the announcement of the decision and its implementation to destroy records of SDS involvement with organized crime and illegal financial activities. OHR asked NATO headquarters to have SFOR seize government buildings in Pale and prevent the removal and destruction of records.

The SFOR political assessment expressed concern about the effects of having SFOR soldiers and vehicles occupy buildings and seize records, for a seizure action seemingly would play right into the hands of the hard-liners. Although it would achieve the goal of obtaining possible evidence of illegal SDS activities, it would also create the false impression that Madame Plavsic was working closely with NATO to maintain her hold on power. Not only would it raise questions about her legitimacy and her ability to govern, it would lessen the credibility of the Republic of Srpska police, raising questions about the ability of the International Police Task Force to institute reforms. Most troublesome of all, it would validate for some the SDS propaganda that SFOR was an occupying force. After reviewing known and potential consequences of the proposed course of action, SFOR was able to convince NATO and the OHR to adopt a more reasonable course of action: allow Madame Plavsic to organize a government controlled move of ministries and records and to call on indigenous police forces for security. In the event, the move of ministries and records occurred with minimum attention and no overt opposition from the Serb hard-liners.

Propose Strategies. The most important value added to a peacekeeping operation by any political adviser is the ability to recommend strategies on how to shape the political environment. This task requires synthesizing advance information and analysis of political developments at the various levels in a way that relates to the commander's intent. If, for example, the commander's goals are to maintain a secure environment, promote the creation of democratic institutions, and assist refugee returns, the political adviser must be able to recognize how everything from tactical developments on the

ground to political maneuvering at the international level could help or hinder achievement of those goals. The political adviser can then propose strategies the commander can employ to promote favorable trends and to counter opposing ones.

The majority of SFOR's strategies were developed in response to maneuvering by the political entities and ethnic groups within theater. Every event, whether a staged demonstration in a town threatened by returning minority refugees, or refusal by entity presidents to compromise on designs for national symbols, was designed to further the strategic goals of each ethnic group. Such an incident occurred in January 1998 when Muslim police in Sarajevo arrested a Serb accused of murder, after he crossed into the Muslim part of the city. The primary political concern of the Office of the High Representative was that the arrest would spark retaliation in the form of arrests of Muslim citizens by the Serb side. There were also concerns about the consequences of the arrest, such as whether a Serb could receive a fair trial in the Federation, whether there was a violation of rules associated with the apprehension of war criminals for a crime alleged to have occurred during the war, and what effect the arrest might have on freedom of movement throughout Bosnia. Peaceful demonstrations by Serbs in the Serb area of Sarajevo called for the return of the individual to the Republic of Srpska and there was fear the demonstration could erupt in violence.

The OHR strategy was to turn the case over to the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague as a way to avoid the political repercussions. The SFOR political analysis however, suggested that another course of action was possible. It recognized the

potential problems, but saw the case as an opportunity to demonstrate that Bosnians were prepared to manage their own affairs. A strategy was proposed to COMSFOR based on an analysis of the arrest and Serb reaction.<sup>13</sup> The arrest appeared to have been proper and in accordance with international standards, so there was no reason to transfer the case to the Hague. Serb reaction, in contrast to the violence that occurred after the arrest of indicted war criminals the previous summer, was local and relatively peaceful. Instead of being a liability, if the process were managed carefully, the arrest could provide an opportunity to show that former warring factions were capable of administering justice and that the entities could cooperate. By urging restraint by the Republic of Srpska, and by taking steps to ensure the trial had appropriate visibility, a fair trial had the potential to open other areas of cooperation between the entities as well.

COMSFOR met with the political leadership of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation to test their willingness to cooperate. He inquired whether each side was prepared to act in a responsible manner. He received assurances from both sides that they were prepared to let the justice system work. Most important, the case proved to be the catalyst necessary to get the Republic of Srpska and the Federation into direct discussions on a broad range of issues that had until then been beyond their ability to negotiate. COMSFOR's willingness to assume risk turned an event that could have driven the entities further apart into an opportunity for reconciliation.

*Maintain Unity of Effort.* Many diverse actors with potentially conflicting objectives try to influence the political environment during peacekeeping operations. It is impossible

for the commander to maintain contact with all the individuals and agencies that shape policy. Consequently, the political adviser will be an advocate for strategies and policies the commander deems necessary. By ensuring that the commander's views are incorporated into policy debates, especially at the national and international levels, the probability increases that policy decisions will take into account the strengths and limitations of military power. Military staffs have corresponding structures and organizations at higher and lower levels, and military personnel talk to their counterparts on a daily basis. In the diplomatic and political realms, however, there is no staff organization charged with presenting the commander's view. The POLAD can help maintain unity of effort by speaking for the commander in political and diplomatic fora on a wide range of issues.

## **Conclusion**

In a multinational military staff, political advisers are not the sole source of political information or advice. The intelligence community, planners, operators, special staff and field commanders routinely provide political assessments and recommended courses of action. The senior commander must avail himself of all the points of view at his disposal. But by virtue of the political adviser's direct relationship with the commander and the ability to deal with organizations and levels not normally linked to a peacekeeping headquarters or to subordinate military commanders, the political adviser is uniquely positioned to enhance the commander's ability to shape the political-military

environment. Individuals selected as political advisers for peacekeeping operations must be experts in the practical application of military and diplomatic means in order to develop strategies that support the commander's objectives. They must be familiar with the roles and missions of national, regional and international institutions. They must also have the analytical skills necessary to synthesize information and recognize developments that are significant for the political-military environment. The demand for individuals with these skills will increase as international coalitions use military forces to export stability to regions of instability.

WORD COUNT = 7,200



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 608.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of how military capabilities were employed to end the conflict in Bosnia, see Richard Holbrooke To End a War, (New York: Random House, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia Herzegovina, November 21, 1995, for a description of the institutions and formulas required to ensure balanced ethnic representation.

<sup>4</sup> More than divergent political goals complicate the process of reconstructing postwar Bosnia. See P.H. Liotta and Anna Simons, "Thicker than Water? Kin, Religion, and Conflict in the Balkans," Parameters 28 (Winter 1998-99): 11-27.

<sup>5</sup> In military operations there is a natural tension between political and military decision-makers over where the lines of authority fall. Those charged with setting political goals, providing political guidance, and managing political repercussions, perceive a need for continuous information on the status of the military operation in order to ensure goals and guidance remain relevant. Those concerned with implementing the political guidance and achieving the goals through the application of military capabilities desire to maintain maximum flexibility and freedom of action. The concerns at NATO regarding the need for a Political Adviser were a reflection of this natural tension.

<sup>6</sup> The Commander of SFOR conducted daily morning meetings with his principal staff. These meetings were used to update the Commander on the situation over the last twenty-four hours, highlight significant upcoming events and discuss strategies for implementing SFOR objectives.

<sup>7</sup> The SFOR mandate has significantly evolved since the initial deployment of IFOR. Although SFOR has always interpreted its mandate to include civilian support tasks in addition to the military tasks spelled out in Annex 1-A of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, SFOR support to civilian implementation became more pronounced in the summer of 1997 when the international community and NATO became frustrated with the lack of progress in meeting the Dayton Agreement's goals.

<sup>8</sup> In order to coordinate activities within theater and maintain unity of effort, the heads of all the primary international agencies in Bosnia meet weekly at the Office of the High Representative's Headquarters in Sarajevo.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the interagency process and culture, see Thomas Gibbings, Donald Hurley, and Scott Moore, "Interagency Operations Centers: An Opportunity We Can't Ignore," Parameters 28 (Winter 1998-99): 99-112. See also Mark R. Walsh, and Michael J. Harwood, "Complex Emergencies: Under New Management", in the same issue.

<sup>10</sup> Germany hosted approximately 320,000 Bosnia refugees in 1996-1997, more than the total in all other European countries combined.

<sup>11</sup> Department of State perceptions concerning the level of SFOR support to civilian implementation were established during a series of meetings in Washington and Sarajevo between the SFOR U.S. Political Advisor and Department of State personnel, May 19-23, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> The Political-Military Plan was obtained by the SFOR U.S. Political Adviser during a visit to the Department of State, Washington D.C., May 19-21, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> The strategy proposal was discussed during a meeting between the Commander, SFOR and the SFOR U.S. Political Adviser, Sarajevo, February 12, 1998.

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Walsh, Mark R., and Michael J. Harwood, "Complex Emergencies: Under New Management." Parameters 28 (Winter 1998-99): 39-50.