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Civil-Military Relations During Coalition Operations in the Balkans

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"Generals cannot be entrusted with anything—not even with war."

Georges Clemenceau, 1841-1929

(often given as "War is too important to be left to the generals")

War represented [for General MacArthur] the utter bankruptcy of politics, not simply the extension of politics. Consequently, in war full control, "politically, economically, militarily, must be in the hands of the military commanders, and the nation must concentrate its complete trust in the military leadership."

General Douglas MacArthur as quoted by Samuel P. Huntington

A Tradition of Civil-Military Tensions¹

A tradition of tension exists in the United States between political and military leaders. Scholars² assert this tension is natural given the opposing operational imperatives between political and military leaders. In the world of political leaders and diplomats, their instruments of statecraft tend to focus on diplomacy, consensus building, flexibility, and negotiations to attain political objectives. Conversely, the military leaders, acting with a mandate from political leaders, focus on efficient mission accomplishment through the use of lethal force to achieve political goals.

At face value, the two simple, if somewhat stereotyped, descriptions should not pose problems for either American political or military leaders. The political leaders decide when and where military force is necessary to attain or support their overall political strategy. It would seem, therefore, that the unambiguous nature of military force

serves as an effective counterbalance to the more ambiguous world of politics. Alas, the dilemma becomes clear when theory meets practice in the real world.

In practice, tension between political and military leaders occurs both during peacetime and in war. In wartime, though, the consequences of such tension often appear greater because the application of military force poses an immediate threat to lives. This tension is not unique to the United States. In fact, Eliot Cohen, recognized historian and military analyst explained, "Civil-military relationship in a democracy is almost invariably difficult, setting up as it does opposing values, powerful institutions with great resources, and inevitable tensions between military professionals and statesmen."³

Such was the case during military operations in the Balkans, where European and American military and political chiefs debated the proper courses of action to take with their nations' military forces. The conflicts with Serbia provide an intriguing backdrop for an analysis of civil-military tensions, and this essay will explore some of the complexities inherent in command relationships at the highest levels. Although the examination will reference other examples, the bulk of its conclusions will come from the Bosnia and Kosovo wars, which are unlikely to be the last conflicts of this nature that the United States—and allies from other democracies—will face.

The leaders of most Western democracies agree that the military instrument must be subordinate to policy. Yet civil-military tensions are certain to exist, and that existence produces recurring questions. Why is the political leader not always receptive to military advice? Or is this view merely a military perception? Most importantly, what can be done to minimize, or close the gap of civil-military tensions? This paper will offer suggestions for lessening the antagonisms. It contends the behavior and decision-making

of political and military leaders tend to reflect the operating imperatives of each group. Where the political leader desires flexibility and control of military force to further foreign political policy, the military leader wants to use *decisive force* to accomplish the mission while minimizing risk to friendly forces. Because the military and political operating imperatives are not always congruent, tensions may increase during the use of military force.

Much has been written about tensions within civil-military relations in the United States. The 1990's Balkan wars illustrate the complexity of relationships between political and military leaders. In each case, the military commander from a coalition nation found himself not only subordinate to his own nation's political leaders, but also to an international governmental organization such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The limited nature of these operations added to the complexity. Coalition political leaders did not seek territory or the overthrow of the Serbian government. In fact, the political leaders used military actions to support directly the diplomatic tool to compel Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milosevic, to resume negotiations.

The following case studies will analyze how civil-military tensions affected three senior military leaders who commanded operations in the Balkans. Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont of the Belgian Army, who took charge of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command under United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to direct ground operations in Bosnia, will be the first examined. As a commander, General Briquemont struggled with trying to accomplish his mission even though political leaders refused to provide him the means he requested. Second will be U.S. Navy Admiral Leighton "Snuffy" Smith, who was the commander of Allied Forces Southern Command

(AFSOUTH). The mission Admiral Smith supported received its authority from the United Nations (U.N.) but was under the command of NATO. Last will be General Wesley K. Clark who served as Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Commander-in-Chief, United States European Command (CINCEUR). In his SACEUR position, General Clark was in the NATO chain of command, whereas in his CINCEUR position, he reported to the U.S. National Command Authority (NCA). As SACEUR, he took command of Operation Allied Force, the air campaign over Serbia.

Differing operating imperatives of political and military leaders—and differing perceptions of the importance of those imperatives—cause civil-military tensions to escalate in a democracy. Such tensions can never be entirely eliminated. Yet, if both leadership groups work to understand the unique nature of the imperatives that often conflict, the tensions that were hallmarks of recent military operations in the Balkans can be lessened.

Political Versus Military Operating Imperative

Before recommending ways to minimize civil-military tensions, it is useful to understand the operating imperatives of political and military leaders and how their perceptions heighten the inherent civil-military conflict. Civil-military tension is evident across the entire conflict spectrum from peace to war. In peace, the tension is evident, for example, in the budgeting and procurement processes.⁴ The tension is most acute, however, during conflicts when the application of military force is required. That is because then the stakes are highest: lives are at risk.

Perceptions are a key component of this tension, and understanding how the two professions perceive the world and how their perceptions affect the interactions between them is essential to the analysis at hand. Greek philosopher Socrates recognized long ago that differing outlooks do not arise out of "facts"; rather, they come from each group's "perceptions" of the facts.

The differences between us that cannot be resolved, that "make us angry and set us at enmity with one another" are not usually about facts. Nor are they very often quarrels between a group of good people and a group of evil ones... Our most serious differences arise from differing visions of what is good and what is evil, from divergent definitions of the honorable and the dishonorable.⁵

General Wes Clark, SACEUR during Operation Allied Force, commented on this phenomenon as he explained that a lesson learned from the operation should be a "more sophisticated understanding of what war is." He elaborated, "There is a political dynamic that operates. And there is a military dynamic. The political dynamic is negotiation, compromise, consensus, nuances of language, incrementalism...marginalization. The military dynamic are [sic] the principles of war."⁶

General Clark's characterization of the "political dynamics" matches a U.S. State Department description of policy-making and negotiations. State Department officials at the National War College have explained that U.S. policies sometimes appear ambiguous because "strategic ambiguity is a diplomat's best friend." In other words, U.S. interests often benefit from more ambiguous policies when dealing with certain regions of the world.

While ambiguity may be the diplomat's best friend, being ambiguous is not a trait the military institution desires. On the contrary, the military trains its leaders to be decisive and to focus on accomplishing the assigned missions. There is a specific set of

principles of war, as stated by General Clark, that generally guide military leaders in planning and conducting operations.⁷

What General Clark and the State Department officials recognized is not new, but it does show that current political and military leaders are at least aware of the inherent tension between them. In fact, Richard Betts, Director, Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, explained in 1977, "Diplomats value flexibility and seek to resolve crises through negotiation... Military men, however, value certainty, are wary of bluffs, and oppose making threats that will not be enforced if the bluff fails."⁸

In the minds of political leaders, they cannot afford to relegate absolute control to the military commander because he may overshoot his target and turn a limited war into total one. This concern has a long history. Otto von Bismark, the Prussian Prime Minister and German Chancellor during the late nineteenth century, revised his early enthusiasm for armed violence after the carnage in Bohemia and France. He concluded that one could never "anticipate the ways of Divine Providence securely enough" to entrust a nation's fate to its generals.⁹

Conversely, military leaders generally prefer to employ overwhelming force both to maximize mission accomplishment yet minimize the risk of casualties. They prefer "using force quickly, massively, and decisively to destroy enemy capabilities rather than rationing it gradually to coax the enemy to change his mind."¹⁰ Today, military commanders use the term *decisive force*—that is, enough force to achieve the stated military objectives unequivocally in support of clear political objectives.

The implication of the two opposing operating imperatives has resulted in a "troubling mindset" as characterized by Dr. Richard Kohn, former U.S. Air Force

Historian and an expert on civil-military relations. He explains that "both sides have largely come to see the other not as a partner, or subordinate-superior, or as a couple that need each other, but as separate people with their own interests who are not to be trusted and sometimes not even to be respected."¹¹

An obvious solution appears all too simple. It seems political and military leaders merely need to respect each other, understand their respective roles, and cooperate in the application of military force to achieve the nation's political objectives. There is a symbiotic relationship in which the success of each leader's tools of statecraft depends on the integration and coordination with the other. But, lest one should fall victim to simplicity, the Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz warns, "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war."¹² The underlying contention is the tradeoff between political control and military expertise within the civil-military relations realm. This area is where the difficulty lies.

Case Studies—A Servant to *How Many Masters?*

Today, the United States maintains the world's most powerful military force. The nation's political leaders remain committed, as they have in the past, to protecting U.S. vital interests. The December 1999 National Security Strategy states, "In those specific areas where our *vital interests* [emphasis in original document] are at stake, our use of force will be decisive and, if necessary, unilateral."¹³ Since the end of the Cold War, however, the United States has been less reserved about using its military force to intervene in regions that did not threaten U.S. vital interests. The demise of the Soviet

Union left the United States as the world's remaining superpower. It also ushered in an era whereby employing force to support foreign policy goals no longer posed the potential threat of superpower confrontations and their associated dangers.

That disintegration of the Soviet Union, coupled with the death of Josip Broz (Tito), who has been credited as the glue that held Yugoslavia together as a nation, allowed power-seeking leaders to fan the embers of nationalism and exploit the roots of history that bound various ethnic groups in the Balkans.¹⁴ The peoples of the Balkans went to war in the past decade because their leaders led them to war. For example, Slobodan Milosevic promised the Serbs a Greater Serbian nation-state by cleansing Kosovo of the ethnic Albanians. Milosevic had made similar promises to his Bosnian Serb compatriots in 1995.

Case Study One: Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont

The United States first began its involvement in Bosnia soon after the Clinton Administration took office in early 1993. By that summer, the United Nations Security Council altered the mandate for its forces on the ground in Bosnia. The new mandate, United Nations Resolution 836, added the mission of enforcement (United Nations Charter Chapter 7), to the existing peacekeeping mission (Chapter 6). The Security Council cited the need to protect its recently developed "safe areas" policy as the reason for the enforcement mission. Despite the resolution, the Security Council nations disagreed over the proper course of action for Bosnia. The United States, for example, supported the "lift and strike" option—to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims and use air strikes to attack Bosnian Serb heavy equipment. The United Kingdom and

France strongly opposed the U.S. strategy, as implementing it threatened thousands of British and French forces contributing to the 30-nation UNPROFOR peacekeeping operations since 1992.

UNPROFOR commanders at the time had determined that the mission requirement to enforce the six “safe areas”¹⁵ would require another 34,000 troops in Bosnia. Unfortunately, disagreement over courses of actions for Bosnia and a refusal to commit additional ground peacekeeping forces resulted in a politically acceptable “light option.” This option meant that UNPROFOR would receive only another 7,600 additional peacekeepers and NATO airpower would compensate for the manpower shortages on the ground.

To direct ground operations in Bosnia, French General Jean Cot, UNPROFOR Commander, recruited Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont of the Belgian Army. General Briquemont took command of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command on 12 July 1993, and a mere two weeks later faced challenges with the NATO operation that would cause tensions between him and United Nations political leaders. He opposed strongly the U.S.-backed NATO airstrikes designed to force the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from Mount Igman, an important piece of high ground. In particular, General Briquemont criticized the strategy of the airstrikes:

The U.N., lacking the means for these resolutions [836 and 844], turned to NATO and air support to compensate for the shortages of means on the ground. After Vietnam and Afghanistan, and considering the terrain in Bosnia, how could anyone still persist in this mistaken thinking about operational strategy?¹⁶

General Briquemont was frustrated that NATO airmen, such as then-Lieutenant General Joseph Ashy, 16th Air Force Commander, at Naples, Italy, were exclusively

focused on bombing Bosnian Serb targets rather than providing him close air support. General Briquemont reminded General Ashy that "NATO should be supporting me, rather than trying to impose its vision of operations on me."¹⁷ Dissatisfied with NATO air support and frustrated by the U.N. Security Council's failure to rectify the shortfalls of NATO's bombing strategy, General Briquemont decided to take action.

When he publicly challenged the American desire for airstrikes, the civil-military tension became obvious. Madeline Albright, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, responded by insisting the Belgian government discipline General Briquemont.¹⁸ In response, the Belgian authorities supported their general, and suggested the United Nations would administer any punishment since the general worked for the United Nations.¹⁹ The general escaped any real punishment, largely because many U.N. and European political leaders shared his concern. An unnamed aide of Kofi Annan, however, acting without permission and on his own imagined authority, sent a letter directly to General Briquemont admonishing him.²⁰ General Briquemont felt that what really bothered Albright was that "everyone knew" his ultimatum, "If an aircraft of NATO is firing above Bosnia, without my permission, I am going back to Brussels immediately."²¹

This particular incident highlights a civil-military discord not unfamiliar to Americans. The most notable example was General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry Truman in 1951. General MacArthur was eventually fired for his public insubordination and criticisms of the president's policies regarding Korea. One difference between MacArthur and Briquemont's situation was that the Belgian general did not criticize his own president. In any case, this vignette raises the question of which political leaders are in a U.N. commander's chain of command. Is it the entire U.N.

Security Council or the chief of the U.N. Peacekeeping Council? Or does the commander report first to his own country's political leaders? How one answers this question likely determines who holds the military commander responsible for his actions and who the commander should seek for political guidance.

With the order to secure Mount Igman, General Briquemont was tasked to occupy positions vacated by the Bosnian Serbs. Unfortunately for the general, the U.N. Security Council only allocated the "light option" of 7,600 troops of the original 35,000 requested to enforce the safe areas. For the remainder of his tenure, though, the general received less than 3,000 more troops. Despite the paucity of means to execute the mission, political leaders in both the United Nations and the European Union continued to press General Briquemont to secure Mount Igman. As he conducted the mission, the general felt the full responsibility of command as he explained,

I had never experienced quite as profoundly what it meant to be responsible for the lives of so many men. The vast majority of them were the age of my children, because at fifty-eight I was undoubtedly the oldest military man in the field. I have always acted with the thought that a drop of blood of one of my men was a drop of my own blood and I am convinced that every soldier worthy of the name thinks this way.²²

Instead of supporting their military commander in the field, officials from the U.N. headquarters complained to General Briquemont that through his actions and words he had created friction amongst the U.N. ambassadors.²³

By November 1993, the general was tired of commanding with insufficient means. Neither he nor General Cot had been invited to the United Nations or NATO to discuss their situation with political leaders, but finally received an invitation to a 22 November 1993 meeting of the European Union (EU) foreign ministers.²⁴ Unfortunately, General Briquemont's hopes were dashed. The foreign ministers wanted him to

guarantee the security of several humanitarian aid routes in Bosnia, but would not provide the additional 4,000 troops he requested.²⁵ So, after two EU meetings and with tension building between the U.N. commanders and foreign ministers, General Briquemont quit his command in January 1994 and returned to Belgium. He explained his decision: "At the end of the day, no European country has said one word about my reinforcements. And that day I said to my minister of foreign affairs: 'No. No, I don't play ball. I go back to Belgium.'"²⁶

General Briquemont did not resign his command, or retire in protest. Instead, he quit and returned to Belgium. His decision to quit nevertheless raises a related issue of resignation by senior military leaders. In considering resignations of senior military officers, Richard Kohn and Peter Feaver contend,

Resignation accompanied by protest undermines civilian control by giving a whip to the military ("do it our way or else")—and, paradoxically, leads to an increase in the politicization of the force. For if civilians fear a resignation in the event of a serious policy dispute, they will vet the military leadership for pliability and compliance and promote only "yes-men."²⁷

General Ronald Fogleman, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force (1995-1997), had subscribed to this philosophy. He asked Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall to relieve him of his duties a year early. General Fogleman stated, "I had become ineffective as a spokesman" for the U.S. Air Force, and had "simply lost respect and confidence in the leadership that I was supposed to be following."²⁸ Even so, General Fogleman had retired, not *resigned*. The difference was more than semantic as he recognized that "a resignation in protest over policy would encroach on civilian control of the military, one of the foundations of American government and national defense, by setting a precedent that military leaders might resign instead of accept a decision they

opposed."²⁹

Whether or not a senior military leader resigns under protest, the political leader and the nation may still suffer. Most significantly, the resignation of a military leader may deny military leadership and expertise to a nation. When a democracy invests several decades of resources toward developing a senior commander, the political leader, in times of conflict, should be confident that the military commander would not likely resign if disagreements arise. In fact, the political leaders should have confidence that "the military advises and even advocates strongly in private, but, once a decision is made, its duty is to execute official policy."³⁰

Conversely, what if the military commander vehemently disagrees with the strategy of the political leader? Further, if he does not receive an audience to air his grievances or fails to convince the political leader to alter the strategy, what alternatives does he have? Should the commander be able to resign if he felt his integrity was at stake? If the political leader's orders are deemed unethical or illegal, certainly the commander should be able to resign. Morris Janowitz, renowned scholar in the field of civil-military relations, suggested that military leaders should avoid being "'overprofessionalized'—more prepared to follow orders than to exercise independent professional skill and judgment."³¹ Yet, where should the line be drawn? It would seem the bar between whether or not a commander can resign should be set rather high on the decision scale.

Case Study Two: Admiral Leighton W. "Snuffy" Smith

By the summer of 1995, the Bosnia Serbs had initiated a deliberate campaign to

seize U.N. declared "safe areas" and ultimately, to "cleanse" them of Muslims. The fall of Srebrenica and associated massacre of thousands of Muslims in July 1995 significantly impacted policies of Western governments toward Bosnia. In fact, the Srebrenica event, in large part, led the United Nations and NATO to endorse U.S. proposals to use airpower—Operation Deny Flight—in Bosnia.

In 1994, Admiral Leighton W. "Snuffy" Smith became the NATO Commander of AFSOUTH. In this capacity, he led NATO operations to include Operation Deny Flight. The air operation derived its authority from the United Nations but was under the command of NATO. In fact, Admiral Smith explained his frustration with the organizational structure:

It's the biggest damn mess in the world. Absolutely, completely unworkable. You had two political organizations—the United Nations and NATO—and they wouldn't talk to each other. ...I was completely dismayed at the fact that [when] we attack[ed] the leadership in Bosnia, the military guys in Bosnia, there was no effort to get the United Nations and NATO to agree. It was, "Smith, go over there and make damn sure these guys call you in to bomb this when this happens." And it was an impossible situation.³²

As Admiral Smith continued his support to Operation Deny Flight, he would find the continuous need to make clear that his immediate chain of command was through the NATO organization vice through the United Nations.

Using the 1993 U.N. mandate establishing "safe areas," NATO implemented a policy in which the Serbs would be attacked if they failed to keep weapons outside of established exclusion zones, or if they attacked safe areas. Despite urging from Admiral Smith, NATO airpower was infrequently requested to attack the Serbs. "And when we were, it was the classic pin-prick strike. I didn't agree with it. I felt we should have used more force earlier in the game."³³

The trigger for the eventual use of concerted air strikes occurred when the Serbs captured Srebrenica and then killed six to seven thousand Muslim men.³⁴ The event caused considerable concern in the international community. The Srebrenica massacre emboldened the British and French governments to overcome their previous resistance toward using force against the Bosnia Serbs. In response, NATO decided to enforce the 1993 U.N. decision to designate Sarajevo as a safe area.

NATO warned the Serbs that if they attacked, or threatened to attack Sarajevo, "then you will be bombed much greater than you have ever contemplated before."³⁵ Despite the warning, the Serbs shelled the marketplace in Sarajevo in August 1995.

Admiral Smith was ready to conduct air strikes. Then-Lieutenant General Michael Ryan, 16th Air Force Commander, at Naples, Italy, had developed a target list to respond to Serb attacks of safe areas. Admiral Smith had already vetted the list through the U.N. military forces commander, French General Bernard Janvier, and through his own NATO military chain of command. Thus, air strikes commenced on 29 August 1995. NATO then suspended the bombing for four days beginning on 1 September 1995 to allow for negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs regarding the removal of heavy weapons from areas surrounding Sarajevo.

During this bombing pause, Admiral Smith explained that pressure to resume bombing came from everyone, "You name it. I mean everybody that didn't have the authority to make it happen..."³⁶ In fact, one of the people exerting the most pressure was American Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. Admiral Smith described one conversation with the ambassador:

No, I never talked to anybody from the White House. The only person that I ever talked to in that crowd of people was Dick Holbrooke; and at

one or two points, I talked to Wes Clark. And at no point did I ever take orders from him. I had to make it very clear to them—and, again, I mean, I didn't do this on my own; I had very clear instructions from my boss. "This is a NATO operation. I take my orders from George Joulwan. If you want me to do something, you go through the proper channels. But I cannot, will not, should not, I simply won't take orders from you, individually. You want to talk to me, you know how to do that."³⁷

For Ambassador Holbrooke, his primary concern at that time was to resume bombing, believing that the act of bombing would help coerce the Bosnian Serbs during the negotiations. Ambassador Holbrooke's description of the conversations indicates similar tensions as Admiral Smith's:

And I talked to Admiral Smith, and I said, "Look, you know, we've got a real difference of opinion here." And he said, "Well, I follow my chain of command, don't you give me instruction through yours. You're an American negotiating team, I am a NATO commander." And I said, "No, Admiral, I'm not trying to give you any instructions; I'm just telling you that we need bombing resumed in order to get peace." And he was pretty—he's an old sea dog. He was 33 years at sea, he's a superb naval officer. This was a situation he wasn't necessarily ideally prepared for. It's tough enough to negotiate with Milosevic, but negotiating with a four-star admiral is even more difficult.³⁸

Comments from Ambassador Holbrooke indicated significant disagreements over whether bombing should resume, yet he attempted to convince Admiral Smith to resume based upon his request. Indeed, Ambassador Holbrooke explained that French General Janvier opposed resumption of bombing; British General Rupert Smith at Sarajevo wanted bombing resumed; then-Lieutenant General Wesley Clark and Ambassador Holbrooke were "begging for the resumption of bombing"; General George Joulwan, NATO Supreme Commander, was right on the fence; General John Shalikashvili, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, groped for answers; meanwhile, Secretary William Perry, Secretary Warren Christopher, the U.S. president, and leaders from Britain and France, all offered conflicting advice.³⁹

This particular situation illustrates the different perceptions of a political leader from a military leader. Ambassador Holbrooke focused on flexibility. That is, he felt Admiral Smith should have been flexible enough to resume bombing to give the negotiation team some teeth in negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs. Admiral Smith, however, was unambiguous in following his chain of command—his NATO chain of command.

A recurring theme of coalition operations is a convoluted chain of command that produces a "spider web-like" organizational structure. Ambassador Holbrooke did not fit neatly into the scheme. To Admiral Smith, the ambassador was certainly not in his NATO chain of command. Yet, Ambassador Holbrooke could not be ignored. A senior military officer working in a coalition operation must skillfully balance his many masters if he hopes to succeed and be effective, but the presence of Ambassador Holbrooke made that task especially difficult for Admiral Smith.

It is likely the tension between Ambassador Holbrooke and Admiral Smith did not just result from differing perceptions. As in any situation, personalities do matter and their personalities did not appear complementary. Interestingly, both men spent their formative years in Vietnam. The impact of Vietnam on each of them was dramatically different. Ambassador Holbrooke came to embrace the "concept of muscular diplomacy in the Balkans—bombs for peace."⁴⁰ Conversely, Admiral Smith adopted the doctrine that "acknowledged U.S. preeminence in the world but would avoid Vietnam-like entanglements and draw on the hard lessons of Beirut, Kuwait, and Somalia."⁴¹

Ultimately, Admiral Smith did receive orders to resume bombing—from his NATO chain of command. The tension between Ambassador Holbrooke and Admiral

Smith also resumed, but this time over the issue of "running out of targets." Ambassador Holbrooke even implied that Admiral Smith might be lying:

What happened was after the bombing resumed, it was only authorized for level I bombing, certain kind of targets and if you went up to level II, you would need a new authorization...Admiral Smith and others who didn't want the bombing to begin with, or wanted to end it quickly to minimize risks to their forces, began to tell us we were running out of targets...And that is one of the moments in this process I was most deeply concerned about in retrospect, because I believe now that there were plenty of targets and they could have kept the bombing going...And even at the time, Warren Christopher said to me..."I don't really believe they are running out of targets."⁴²

During the PBS Frontline interview, Admiral Smith could not understand why Ambassador Holbrooke and Secretary Christopher thought he had lied. He explained,

I find it hard to believe that Warren Christopher and Dick Holbrooke would, just out-and-out, think we were lying...If we can't say precisely what we think to the political people that give us the orders, and say, "Look, this is not a good idea," if we can't tell them what it's going to cost in terms of commitment and time, commitment and resources, lives; if we can't be honest with the politicians and have them accept it as a professional military judgment, we are in a sorry state of affairs.⁴³

This situation is disturbing, and Admiral Smith's commentary strikes a disconcerting cord regarding civil-military tension. To Richard Kohn, the distrust is not new. He explains such relationships as depending

on the people, the challenges they face. Both sides need to work at it. In last few years there hasn't been a great deal of willingness on the military side to work on it very well. In fact, there's been a great distrust and unwillingness on the civilian side too. It's just been appeasement and deference on the civilian side, holding people at a distance. There's distrust, dislike and often contempt on the military side.⁴⁴

Case Study Three: General Wesley Clark

The recent conflict in Kosovo between the Serbs and the ethnic Albanians⁴⁵

stemmed from a complex mix of ethnicity, religion, history and myths, demographic shifts, geography, and political opportunism. Serbs related Kosovo's history through epic poems as oral history from generation to succeeding generations and the history resonated deeply within Serbia's cultural memory. In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic was elected Serbian president and abolished Kosovo's Assembly. With this act, he eliminated the region's autonomy and replaced ethnic Albanians with Serbs in government and leadership positions. Even so, in 1992 ethnic Albanians elected their own president, Ibrahim Rugova, who set up a "phantom" state during the 1990's whereby ethnic Albanians ran their own institutions to include schools and medical clinics.⁴⁶

Despite many ethnic Albanians who at that time preferred peaceful means to gain independence, a small group of ethnic Albanians formed the Kosovo Liberation Party (KLA)⁴⁷ in 1991 to extract Kosovo from Serbian control through violent means. By the summer of 1998, the situation had deteriorated markedly as Yugoslavian security forces launched a series of attacks to quash the KLA insurgents. The international community became increasingly concerned as the violence extended to civilians, with both sides accusing the other of atrocities. In October 1998, under the threat of NATO air strikes by the six-nation Contact Group on the Former Yugoslavia,⁴⁸ Serbia agreed to a ceasefire and a verification regime.

This tenuous ceasefire was severely strained by both sides through several incidents of atrocities even as peace settlement talks continued at Rambouillet and Paris. Then in March 1999, Milosevic made a course change in his strategy by launching a new Serbian offensive, Operation Horseshoe. Previous operations had targeted the KLA insurgents, but this one focused on "cleansing" Kosovo of its ethnic Albanians by expelling them

from their homes and forcing neighboring countries to deal with the enormous influx of ethnic Albanian refugees.

The Rambouillet conference terminated on 19 March 1999 after the Serbian delegation, with orders from Milosevic, refused to sign the peace settlement under NATO conditions. With this breakdown, Milosevic moved to speed up Operation Horseshoe. As atrocities and ethnic cleansing against the ethnic Albanians continued, the leaders of the 19 NATO member nations agreed on the necessity of military operations to cease Milosevic's actions and to compel him back to the peace negotiations.

On 24 March 1999, NATO began a multinational coalition air campaign codenamed Operation Allied Force. At the military helm was General Wesley Clark, who served both as SACEUR and CINCEUR. Accordingly, in his SACEUR role, General Clark led a NATO operation, whereas in his CINCEUR position, he was subordinate to the American NCA.

President Clinton reported to the nation the night Operation Allied Force commenced. In his address, he stated, "We and our 18 NATO allies agreed to do what we said we would do, what we must do to restore the peace. Our mission is clear."⁴⁹ As part of the "clear" mission, he outlined three political objectives as:

- Demonstrate NATO's serious opposition to Serbian aggression⁵⁰
- Deter further attacks against civilians
- Damage Serbia's military capacity to harm the Kosovo people

Since President Clinton stated definitively that all 19 NATO nations had agreed to take part in the coalition effort, one might logically assume that NATO objectives would match those outlined by the U.S. president. Yet, on 13 April 1999, after three weeks of

coalition bombing, Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO, expressed NATO's political goals and they did not wholly match the U.S. political goals.⁵¹ Solana outlined the NATO political objectives as:

- Stop the killing in Kosovo
- End the refugee crisis and make it possible for refugees to return home
- Create conditions for political solutions based on Rambouillet Accord

Two U.S. political objectives clearly absent from the NATO political objectives included: 1) Demonstrate NATO's serious opposition to Serbian aggression, and 2) Damage Serbia's military capacity to harm the Kosovo people. Regarding the first difference, perhaps the other NATO nations did not see the need to state this somewhat obvious assertion. Given that the Alliance had already launched a military operation against Serbia, they may have felt that "NATO's serious opposition" had already been demonstrated. This objective may have been specifically stated to convince the U.S. public of the value of U.S. participation.

The second difference was more troubling. If NATO did not view "damaging Serbia's military capacity to harm the Kosovo people" as a political objective, this deviation might help explain why other NATO nations did not approve some of the targets proposed by the air campaign planners. Thus, by 13 April 1999, it appeared the United States had been participating for three weeks in an air campaign with political objectives that differed from those of its coalition partners.

Since General Clark held two separate positions, one reporting to NATO and the other to President Clinton, he was in the unenviable position of satisfying both clients. Given the differing political goals, which one should he have chosen? Analyzing his

military objectives, it appears he may have taken the common denominator approach. By carefully selecting the words, the military objective supported both U.S. and NATO goals without accomplishing objectives not listed by NATO. General Clark explained, "In terms of the military objectives, the military plan never envisioned the use of military air power to prevent, by physical intercession, ethnic cleansing."⁵² Clearly, then the military objectives did not support the U.S. political objectives even though the political leaders, specifically the president and secretary of defense, used complementary phrases. From the NATO perspective, General Clark's stated military objectives did support the NATO political goals.

In addition to enumerating U.S. political goals for the American public, President Clinton also stated unequivocally, "But I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war."⁵³ For public consumption, the president's statement asserted that a ground invasion was not an option. On the private, secret side, President Clinton's National Security Adviser, Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger, persuaded NATO Secretary General Solana to authorize General Clark's secret talks with British and U.S. officers regarding a ground force option.⁵⁴

Part of General Clark's goal was to build a strong baseline of support with the American generals for his strongly held view that a ground invasion plan should be developed. It would be a difficult sell. In fact, when he briefed the Joint Chiefs of Staff in "the tank," General Clark received a cool reception from the service chiefs.⁵⁵ The reaction he received from Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Henry H. Shelton, was even colder. Both Secretary Cohen and General Shelton both expressed their concerns to the president and reiterated their

reluctance to send in troops.⁵⁶

Despite Secretary Cohen's lack of support for a ground forces option, President Clinton had apparently agreed in a 23 May 1999 telephone conversation with U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair to give Secretary General Solana approval to develop a plan for ground operations. As the main advocates for a ground invasion, British officials were also well aware of the deteriorating relations between General Clark and Secretary Cohen, who adamantly opposed a ground invasion. In fact, the British officials even went so far as to slip General Clark their notes on conversations between the U.S. president and the U.K. prime minister. They wanted to assure that General Clark did not get a diluted account of the phone conversations filtered through the U.S. chain of command.⁵⁷

General Clark's disagreement with the Clinton Administration's initial opposition to a ground invasion raises an issue previously discussed in the case study of Belgian Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont. When the military commander vehemently disagrees with the strategy of the political leader, what options does he have? Certainly, General Clark demonstrated one option, but a dangerous and calculated one. One might argue that under his NATO hat, he was authorized to discuss strategy with British officials. General Clark's efforts to work around those who disagreed with him, however, did not contribute to healthy civil-military relations, especially when one of those individuals, Secretary Cohen, was in his U.S. chain of command.

Minimizing the "Inherent" Tensions in Civil-Military Relations

The three case studies demonstrate that tensions in civil-military relations tend to

cut across the organizational boundaries of democracies and are exacerbated in coalition operations. Multiple chains of command and international governmental organizations such as the United Nations and NATO further complicate rules of engagement and intensify personality differences.

These case studies illustrate that regardless of the nationality of political and military leaders, the behavior and decision-making of these leaders tend to reflect the political and military operating imperatives previously explored. Lieutenant General Briquemont, Admiral Smith, and General Clark all focused on accomplishing the mission with *decisive force*, and wanted "enough force" to achieve the stated military objectives unequivocally in support of clear military objectives. Each military leader struggled in varying situations to convince political leaders of what he needed to conduct the mission. Conversely, the political leaders in each case study wanted flexibility in attaining political goals. Just as the military leaders were politically constrained in their application of force, so the political leaders were constrained by domestic and international politics as to what was considered acceptable.

To be sure, examples of healthy civil-military relationships exist, but the three case studies in this paper show a disturbing trend toward lack of trust and cooperation between political and military leaders. Personalities do matter. Both the political and military leaders in the case studies exhibited differences of perception and distinctive operating imperatives with regard to their respective counterparts. Unfortunately, these differences heightened the tensions and were exacerbated when opposing personalities conflicted. The missing ingredient in the interactions was respect for the other's operating imperative and understanding of the constraints that affect the leaders' decision

making and behavior.

Since the United States and other Western democracies subordinate the military to civilian political control, the inherent tensions between the political and military leaders will continue. Thus, the issue of improving civil-military relations is of vital national importance. One starting point is for political and military leaders to understand their operating imperatives, as well as those of their counterparts.

The core issue is political control versus military expertise. The political leader must appreciate and respect the military leaders' advice and expertise, and as much as possible allow the military commander to conduct military operations in support of political goals. Conversely, the military leader must understand that ultimately, the political leaders determine measures of political success and military actions should not seek to attain more or less than the political goals and objectives intended. Further, the political goals may change—and the amount of military force allowed will change accordingly.

As more and more political leaders reach the highest levels of government without having experienced military life, the Department of Defense must undertake a series of initiatives to improve civilian understanding of military affairs. Likewise, senior officers need to do all they can to understand civilian leaders' concerns. These efforts might include team-building exercises between political appointees and their military counterparts and subordinates.⁵⁸ Further, educational opportunities at service and national war colleges serve to build cohesion and appreciation of the other's culture and operating imperative.

Minimizing the inherent tensions in civil-military relations will be possible when "thoughtful soldiers and statesmen...cooperate to restore the appropriate combination of primacy and collegiality, understanding and sense of limits, necessary to healthy civil-military relations."⁵⁹ Achieving the goal is likely to be a gradual process that does not occur overnight.

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² Samuel P. Huntington, *Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), see especially chapter 3, 59-79; and Dr. Richard H. Kohn, former U.S. Air Force Historian and Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, interviewed by author, 5 April 2001.

³ Eliot A. Cohen, "Why the Gap Matters," *National Interest*, Fall 2000, n.p.: on-line, Internet, 18 April 2001, available from <http://proquest.umi.com/fulltext.asp?PLDirect=1&resultSetId=R00000002&hitNum=1&formNum=&booleanTerm=4/18/2001>.

⁴ Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crisis* (London: Harvard University Press, 1977), 2.

⁵ David W. Levy, *The Debate Over Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995), 183. Levy paraphrased Socrates in his work.

⁶ General Wesley Clark, Retired, Stephens Corporation, Washington, D.C., interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Mace Carpenter and Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Paulk, 6 November 2000. General Clark was the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander, European Command from 1998-2000.

⁷ Joint Forces Staff College, National Defense University, *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 2000* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), 3-15. The principles of war for the United States military include mass, objective, offensive, simplicity, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, and surprise.

⁸ Betts, 36.

⁹ Holger H. Herwig, *Reader's Companion to Military History*, ed. Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 53.

¹⁰ Betts, 5.

¹¹ Kohn, interview.

¹² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119.

¹³ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the President, December 1999), 19. Admittedly, the Clinton Administration released this National Security Strategy and the current Bush Administration has removed it from the White House website stating that the current National Security Strategy is under construction. Nevertheless, it is likely that the current

administration would not deviate from using force, unilaterally if necessary, to protect U.S. vital national interests.

¹⁴ Tim Judah, *Serbs: History, Myth & the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2000), xi.

¹⁵ The six established "safe areas" composed of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihac.

¹⁶ Mark Bucknam, *The Influence of UN and NATO Theater-level commanders on the Use of Airpower Over Bosnia During Deny Flight: 1993-1995* (PhD Dissertation, King's College, University of London, April 1999), X. Bucknam translated and cited the original French documents by General Jean Cot, "L'Europe et l'Otan," *Defense Nationale* 53, no. 4 (October 1997), 94; and General Jean Cot, French Army, "Dayton ou la Porte Etroite: Genese et Avenir d'un Desastre," in *Derniere Guerre Balkanique?* 2d ed., ed. Jean Cot (France: Editions L'Harmattan, 1996), 122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69. Bucknam translated and cited portions of the original French book by Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont, *Do Something, General!: Chronique de Bosnie-Herzegovine 12 juillet 1993-24 janvier 1994* (Bruxelles: Editions Labor, 1997), 125.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 70. Bucknam translated and cited the original French documents by General Jean Cot, "L'Europe et l'Otan," *Defense Nationale* 53, no. 4 (October 1997), 94; and General Jean Cot, French Army, "Dayton ou la Porte Etroite: Genese et Avenir d'un Desastre," in *Derniere Guerre Balkanique?* 2d ed., ed. Jean Cot (France: Editions L'Harmattan, 1996), 122.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Bucknam interviewed Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont, Belgium Army, Commander of UNPROFOR's Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, July 1993-January 1994, 11 August 1998, transcript of tape recording in Bucknam's personal collection.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Citing Briquemont, *Do Something, General!*, 131.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82. Citing Briquemont interview.

²² *Ibid.*, 73. Citing Briquemont, *Do Something, General!*, 112.

²³ *Ibid.*, 81. Citing Briquemont, *Do Something, General!*, 283; and Briquemont interview.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 82. Citing Briquemont interview.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Citing Briquemont, *Do Something, General!*, 286-287; and Briquemont interview.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Citing Briquemont, interview.

²⁷ Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, "The Gap: Soldiers, Civilians and Their Mutual Misunderstanding," *The National Interest*, Fall 2000, n.p.: on-line, Internet, 18 April 2001, available from <http://proquest.umi.com/fulltext.asp?PLDirect=1&resultSetId=R00000000&hitNum=1&formNum=&booleanTerm=4/18/2001>.

²⁸ Richard H. Kohn, "The Early Retirement of Gen Ronald R. Fogleman, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force," *Aerospace Power Journal* XV, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Feaver and Kohn, n.p.

³¹ Morris Janowitz, "Toward a Redefinition of Military Strategy in International Relations," *World Politics* 26, no. 4 (July 1974): 495.

³² Admiral Leighton W. "Snuffy" Smith, Jr. (Ret), *Give War a Chance*, Interview with Frontline correspondent Peter J. Boyer, 1999, n.p.: on-line, Internet, 17 April 2001, available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/guys/smith.html>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, *Give War a Chance*, Interview with Frontline correspondent Peter J. Boyer, 1999, n.p.: on-line, Internet, 17 April 2001, available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/guys/holbrooke.html> and <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/etc/script.html>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Give War a Chance: Synopsis*, Frontline transcript, 1999, n.p.: on-line, Internet, 17 April 2001, available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/etc/synopsis.html>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Holbrooke, n.p.

⁴³ Smith, n.p.

⁴⁴ Kohn, interview.

⁴⁵ The international community uses a number of terms to describe the majority population in Kosovo. They include Kosovars, ethnic Albanians, and ethnic Kosovo Albanians. The author will refer this population as the ethnic Albanians. Prior to the Kosovo conflict, Serbs constituted less than 10 percent of the population, while the ethnic Albanians composed nearly the other 90 percent. No current census exists, but it is likely that Serbs constitute even less than the numbers that lived in Kosovo prior to the conflict. After Operation Allied Force, many Serbs left Kosovo and few have returned fearing revenge from the ethnic Albanians.

⁴⁶ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2000), 68.

⁴⁷ Prior to the March-June 1999 NATO Air Campaign over Serbia, this group was known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK). With the advent of the air campaign, NATO relabeled them as the KLA. Today, they are cited as ethnic Albanian extremists, terrorists, UCK, KLA, or UCK/KLA. The author will refer to them as the KLA unless quoting other sources who might call them otherwise.

⁴⁸ The six-nation Contact Group on the Former Yugoslavia included France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁴⁹ William J. Clinton, *Statement by the President to the Nation*, Oval Office, Washington, D.C., televised via public media, 24 March 1999.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO, "NATO is Justified and Determined," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 April 1999, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 28 September 2000, available from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/univers...5=b3941ee02c3ddde0b50f08364c0c8c64>.

⁵² Clark, interview.

⁵³ Clinton, n.p.

⁵⁴ Dana Priest, "A Decisive Battle That Never Was Series: The Commanders' War; 1/3," *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1999, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 6 October 2000, available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=...=1&Did=000000044974717&Mtd=1&Fmt=3>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Feaver and Kohn, n.p.

⁵⁹ Cohen, n.p.