

**MAKING SENSE OF**  
**International**  
**Relations Theory**

edited by  
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*To the University of Connecticut undergraduates in  
my course "Security and Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia,"  
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## 2.2 Karen Ruth Adams

### Structural Realism: The Consequences of Great Power Politics

Because “the fates of all the states . . . in a system are affected much more by the acts and the interactions of the major ones than of the minor ones,” structural realists tend to focus on the actions and interactions of great powers (Waltz 1979: 72–73, 161–176).<sup>1</sup> Yet structural realist theory can also illuminate the challenges less powerful states face. In fact, without considering the structure of the international political system, it is impossible to understand why weak states select the policies and undergo the experiences they do. Thus, to explain the 1998–1999 war in Kosovo, I examine the effects of international anarchy, polarity, relative capabilities, and the security dilemma on the Yugoslavian government’s ability to maintain a monopoly of force over all of its territory, the US decision to intervene when the government was trying to reassert control over Kosovo, and the conduct, outcome, and consequences of the intervention.<sup>2</sup>

I argue that the ultimate causes of Yugoslavia’s civil wars were anarchy, Yugoslavian weakness, unipolarity, and the security dilemma. Unipolarity was especially important. In the multipolar and bipolar eras, when Yugoslavia’s independent, integral existence served the interests of the world’s great powers, they helped create, re-create, and maintain it. But as bipolarity waned, the United States redefined its interests, inadvertently reducing the Yugoslavian government’s power relative to its constituent republics and creating insecurity within the state. I also argue that anarchy and unipolarity affected the US decision to intervene in the Kosovo war and the conduct and outcome of the war. The United States faced neither an international sovereign to keep it from intervening nor a peer to make it think twice before doing so. Moreover, unrivaled power enabled it to dominate NATO decisionmaking and compel the Yugoslavian government to stop attacking Kosovar Albanians. Finally, I argue that Kosovo’s current limbo makes it possible that the former Yugoslavia will once again be a stage upon which great power politics play out.

#### ■ Systemic Sources of Yugoslavia’s Civil Wars

Although “war begins in the minds and emotions of men, as all acts do” (Waltz 1959: 9), the permissive cause of war is international anarchy. Because there is no world government to prevent states from using force,

states may pursue policies of war in their efforts to survive and pursue any other goals they may have (Waltz 1959: 232–233; Waltz 1979: 91). Moreover, even if states do not choose war, they may find themselves embroiled in one, either because other states attack them or because they stumble into the security dilemma.<sup>3</sup>

International anarchy is not only the permissive cause of international war; it is also the permissive cause of civil war. Because there is no international sovereign to protect states from domestic dissent or make them treat their inhabitants fairly, domestic actors may use force to resist governmental directives, and governments may use force to compel them to comply. When this occurs, the state’s hierarchy is weakened, and domestic politics come to resemble international ones. Political outcomes no longer bear the imprint of law or authority. Instead, they reflect the relative capabilities of the participants. When the government is politically, economically, and militarily strong relative to domestic dissidents, it is likely to prevail.<sup>4</sup> When the government is weak, it may lose some of its territory through secession, or it may lose the monopoly of force over all of its territory through revolution, disintegration, or collapse (Adams 2000: 2–5). Because the stakes are so high—state death on the one hand and elimination of domestic dissent on the other—the actors in domestic political crises respond to and worry about others’ capabilities. Thus, like international actors, they can become entangled in the security dilemma and end up fighting wars no one wants.<sup>5</sup>

Weak states should be more vulnerable to civil war than their stronger counterparts, for two reasons. First, weak states are likely to have been the targets of great power conquest and intervention in the past. Thus their international borders, as well as their domestic political and economic systems, may have been constructed primarily for the convenience of outsiders. When this is the case, groups within the state often have strong desires for secession, irredentism, or restitution—desires that the state, in its weakness, may lack the capability to head off or satisfy. Second, weak states are unlikely to have the capabilities to adapt to changing international and technological circumstances. Thus weak states that manage to satisfy their populations in one period may find it difficult to do so in another, especially if international or technological changes beyond their control—such as great power decline, changing international polarity, or military and economic revolutions—make great powers that once helped them less willing to do so (Adams 2002, 2003–2004).

Thus, in applying structural realist theory to understand the causes of Yugoslavia’s civil wars, it is necessary to consider Yugoslavia’s relative capabilities. It is also necessary to explore the possibility that historical great power interventions planted the seeds of domestic discontent and to examine the effects of systemic changes in bringing discontent to a boil.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the possibility that the wars arose from domestic security dilemmas.

In 1989, when one of Yugoslavia's constituent republics (Slovenia) first declared its independence,<sup>6</sup> Yugoslavia's economic and military capabilities were dwarfed by those of the strongest states in the international system. Moreover, only in terms of military personnel did its economic and military capabilities exceed the international average (and they were just 107 percent of average).<sup>7</sup> Thus Yugoslavia was weak relative to both the strongest states in the international system and the average state in the system. Given international anarchy, this weakness made Yugoslavia vulnerable to war.

Yugoslavia's weakness in 1989 was by no means new. For centuries, its history was a story of conquest and intervention by great powers. Although Serbia was the most powerful state on the Balkan peninsula at the beginning of the fourteenth century, it was no match for the Ottoman Empire, which conquered it in 1459 and occupied it for more than 400 years. After 1867, when Russia (which was competing with Austria-Hungary for influence in the Balkans) pressured the Ottomans to leave, Serbia gained its independence. But in 1914, it was conquered again—this time by Austria-Hungary, which feared growing Russian influence in the region and Serbian plans to unify with or conquer Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia (all part of the Austrian Empire) and Albania and Macedonia (which remained under Ottoman rule).<sup>8</sup> After World War I, Serbia came back to life as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929), but it fell again during World War II, this time to Germany and Italy and their allies.<sup>9</sup> The country was liberated in 1944 only because the Allies opened an Eastern front in the Balkans and supported the efforts of Yugoslavian communist partisans led by Marshal Tito (Allcock 2000: 236–238).

Given Yugoslavia's history of conquest and rebirth at the hands of great powers, we should not be surprised if its domestic political history is punctuated by civil conflict. Moreover, we should expect its civil conflicts to have roots in and be strongly affected by great power politics. Yugoslavian history strongly supports these expectations. From the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918 until the present day, Yugoslavians have disagreed with one another about what kind of state Yugoslavia should be. Moreover, many of these differences are the result of great power occupation and intervention. For example, the presence of ethnic Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo can be traced to the Ottoman conquest of Serbia in 1459, which pushed Serbs north into Austria and brought other groups (such as Albanians) into erstwhile Serb lands. Similarly, the introduction of Islam to Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Albania can be traced to the Ottoman policy of granting land and lower taxes to converts (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2002,

vol. 14: 601). Likewise, the post-World War I creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes did not simply reflect the aspirations of these groups. Instead, the birth and borders of this state reflected the designs and desires of some of the most powerful states in the international political system: the United States, which espoused Woodrow Wilson's ideas about national self-determination; France, which sought a Balkan line of defense against Germany; and Italy, which wanted to expand its coastline (Jelavich and Jelavich 1977: 298–304). Yugoslavia's rebirth as a multinational state after World War II also reflected international considerations, especially the Allies' belief that such a state would most effectively limit German influence in the region (Allcock 2000: 236–238).

The combining and dividing of ethnic groups during centuries of great power intervention made ethnic differences important throughout the decades of Yugoslavian unity. Yet the salience of these differences and the violent or pacific nature of their resolution waxed and waned in response to international circumstances. When Serbia, with Russia's assistance, became independent of the Ottoman Empire, Albanians living in Serbia were pressured to emigrate. Most of them went to Kosovo, which (with Albania) remained under Ottoman control. As the empire weakened, the possibility of an independent, unified Albania arose but was lost as Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro attacked the nascent Albanian state (which was even weaker than they) and divided it among themselves. From 1912 to 1915, Serbian and Montenegrin armies ruthlessly consolidated their control over Kosovo. In 1915, with Austria's conquest of Serbia, the tide turned and Albanians became Kosovo's privileged group—until Serbs returned with the Allies and began a new round of reprisals (Judah 2000: 11–20).

During the interwar years, the Yugoslavian government closed Albanian schools in Kosovo, encouraged Serbs and Montenegrins to move to the region and appropriate Albanian lands, and pressured Albanians to emigrate to Turkey (Judah 2000: 21–26). In the absence of effective domestic opposition, what was to prevent it from doing so? Unlike the Albanians, the Yugoslavian government had an army at its disposal. Moreover, in the 1920s there was neither a world government nor any great power interested in making the government treat Albanians differently.

During World War II, the situation changed again. Yugoslavia was divided among five Axis powers, and all Yugoslavians, but especially Serbs, were brutalized.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when the war was over, the challenge was to manage deeper divisions than had ever existed before. For decades, Tito's communist government did so very effectively. It devolved considerable authority to Yugoslavia's six constituent republics and later to Serbia's provinces. Moreover, it used Western-bloc aid and loans to fund a proportional distribution of government jobs and budget outlays (Crawford 1998: 207–222; Woodward 1995, chap. 2).

Yugoslavia's Cold War alliances had no effect on the systemic balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. But the 1948 expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Communist Information Bureau (Curtis 1990) left it without allies just as the United States was trying to encourage states to break with Moscow. Thus Yugoslavia received considerable US assistance, and this assistance kept it in business. US military aid helped Yugoslavia deter the Soviets from intervening in Yugoslavian politics as they had in East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and US financial assistance provided Yugoslavia's republics and territories with incentives to hang together.

External assistance fell off substantially after the late 1970s, when the oil shocks led the United States and its European allies to erect trade barriers and provide less capital. Combined with large international loans resulting from high oil prices and pressure from the US-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) to liberalize in exchange for further assistance, this threw Yugoslavia into economic crisis and the government became less able to satisfy its citizens (Woodward 1995: 47–57).<sup>11</sup> In the late 1980s the demise of the Soviet Union further weakened the state. Specifically, it released Yugoslavians from their fear of Soviet takeover (and hence their loyalty to the government), and it meant that the United States redefined its interests in the region. Instead of supporting the Yugoslavian government to maintain an international balance of power to its liking, as great powers had done throughout the multipolar and bipolar eras, the United States began to lend its voice to calls for the speedy democratization of the country (Allcock 2000: 242–244; Woodward 1995: 148–152). In doing so, it inadvertently contributed to the election of separatist governments in Slovenia and Croatia, as well as to the civil wars of the early 1990s in which the Yugoslavian army and Serbian leaders tried to stop their secession, seize parts of Croatia and Bosnia with substantial Serb populations, and retain control of the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

The inconstancy of international assistance in an anarchic world was not the only cause of Yugoslavia's civil wars. It was just a permissive cause. World leaders and Yugoslavian leaders could have made other decisions. But the space in which leaders could operate was very constrained. With the end of the Cold War, Western-bloc countries came under domestic pressure to cut their military and other Cold War-related spending. Moreover, with the decline of the Yugoslavian economy, which affected different parts of Yugoslavia differently, a domestic security dilemma was building. Slovenia benefited from falling commodity prices and IMF pressure to liberalize trade and halt subsidies to poorer regions and began to buy commodities abroad instead of from Serbia. Throughout the 1980s, it had full employment. In Serbia, by contrast, unemployment was 17–18 percent from 1981 to 1985; in Kosovo it was over 50 percent. Thus as Serbia

lost its traditional markets and subsidies, it tried to recapture control of the federal budgets for Kosovo and Vojvodina, which had been devolved to them in the 1960s (Woodward 1995: 63–65). But these measures to increase Serbian security were contrary to the greater independence that Kosovar Albanians increasingly sought (Judah 2000: 38–40, 309). Moreover, as the situation between Serbia and Kosovo worsened and Eastern European borders frozen by the Cold War began to thaw, Yugoslavia's most advanced republics, Slovenia and Croatia, began to look west to Europe and ally with states that could help them adjust to the changing international economy (Judah 2000: 56–57; Woodward 1995: 72). By the late 1980s, both were talking about secession. Slovenia and Croatia did not intend to make Serbia insecure, but their moves toward independence nevertheless created insecurity in Serbia. As Serbs saw the economic, political, and military system crumble for lack of Slovenian and Croatian support, they became more responsive to Slobodan Milosevic's calls to create a Greater Serbia (Woodward 1995: 68–69, 74, 133).<sup>12</sup>

By mid-1992 the post-World War II Yugoslavian state had disintegrated with the secessions of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, due to the weakness of the new Yugoslavian state, comprising just Serbia and Montenegro, Milosevic effort to capture land in Croatia and Bosnia had failed. Thus the government's goal was simply to hang on to its remaining territory, including Kosovo and Vojvodina, with their energy-generating capabilities and mineral and agricultural wealth (Allcock 2000: 427; Woodward 1995: 29). For several years it looked like the government's capabilities relative to the Kosovar Albanians, who barely had the capability to wage a campaign of passive resistance, would enable it to do so. But when the Albanian economy and government collapsed in 1997, Kosovar Albanians suddenly had easy access to arms and a neighboring state from which to launch raids (Judah 2000: 61, 67, 126–134). By August 1998 the KLA controlled 40 percent of Kosovo and was attacking police, assassinating officials, and targeting government buildings and installations (Layne and Schwarz 1999). Thus the Yugoslavian government was at once fearful that it would be further dismembered and determined to see that this did not occur. In the absence of a world government to provide for its security and regulate its response to the Albanians' campaign for independence, the government had to help itself if it was going to survive. Moreover, it could do what it liked to undermine the secessionist movement. Thus the Yugoslavian government mounted a counterinsurgency war against the KLA until the United States and NATO launched the spring 1999 bombing campaign known as Operation Allied Force and compelled it to stop.

Thus structural realist theory illuminates a great deal about the causes of Yugoslavia's civil wars. It demonstrates that Yugoslavia's vulnerability

to war arose from its weakness. It also calls attention to the role of historical great power interventions and recent international political changes in creating ethnic conflicts and bringing them to a boil. Finally, structural realist theory suggests that the wars arose out of two security dilemmas, one international and the other domestic. First, as the Soviet Union declined and unipolarity emerged, the United States redefined its security in terms of the spread of US political and economic values, but this inadvertently reduced the security of the Yugoslavian government it had long supported and created an opening for civil wars contrary to US security interests. Second, as Yugoslavians watched their state weaken, they took steps to provide for their own security. But the steps taken by each group increased the insecurity of the others. Because there was not a strong Yugoslavian government, another great power, or an international sovereign to mediate their differences, Yugoslavians fell to war.

#### ■ Systemic Sources of US Intervention

International anarchy means that there is nothing to prevent states from intervening in the affairs of others. Weak states such as Yugoslavia are especially vulnerable to intervention, because, if either their stronger neighbors or the most powerful states in the system take an interest in directing their affairs, there is little such states can do to stop them. Great power intervention in the affairs of weak states is more likely in a unipolar system than in multipolar or bipolar ones, for the dominant state in a unipolar system faces no significant opposition from other states. Yet great power indifference to weak states is also most likely in a unipolar system, because the dominant state has no reason to worry that other great powers will manipulate situations to their advantage. Thus it is difficult to say whether great power intervention in weak states should occur most often in unipolar, multipolar, or bipolar eras. All we can say with certainty is that weak states should always be vulnerable to intervention, because anarchy means there is nothing to rule it out and great power “tempts one” to intervene, whether to balance the power of other states or simply “for the ‘good’ of other people” (Waltz 1979: 27).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the unbalanced power of the United States has left it free to follow its whims. Nowhere is this more clear than in the US position on Yugoslavia’s civil wars, which has changed repeatedly.<sup>13</sup> During the Yugoslavian government’s war with the Kosovar Albanians, unipolarity enabled the United States to switch from calling the KLA a “terrorist group” (US special envoy Robert Gelbard, quoted in Judah 2000: 138) to intervening on its behalf—all without fear of sparking a crisis among the major states in the system. Moreover, unipolarity allowed the intervention to be predicated on a motley collection of goals—

from President Bill Clinton’s lofty aim of ensuring human rights (Clinton 1999c) to the less noble goal of maintaining US dominance by perpetuating and expanding NATO (Kurth 2001), preempting the formation of a European defense identity,<sup>14</sup> and warning “rogue states” that they should not challenge the international status quo (Chomsky 1999b: 6–8).

International anarchy and relative capabilities also played a role in the intervention. Anarchy’s effects are obvious in the ability of the United States and other NATO countries to flout the NATO Charter, ignore their obligations as United Nations members to obtain a Security Council resolution authorizing war, and disregard international “norms” against intervening in the domestic conflicts of other states.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in the absence of a world government, the United States and NATO were not obliged to intervene in similar ways in similar conflicts elsewhere in the world. Structural realist theory suggests that if states are treated differently, either they have different capabilities or a powerful state is being fickle (because it can be). Because Russia and China, which are far more powerful than Yugoslavia, and Turkey, which is a US ally, have not faced international opprobrium for similar human rights abuses in Chechnya, Tibet, and Kurdistan (Kurth 2001: 80–81), the effects of relative power and privileges of great power are clear.

#### ■ The Conduct and Outcome of US and NATO Intervention in the War

When Operation Allied Force began, the United States, NATO, and the Yugoslavian government moved from “diplomacy backed by force” to “force backed by diplomacy” (US secretary of state Madeleine Albright, quoted in Clark 2001: 253). Specifically, the United States and its allies used force to compel the Yugoslavian government to accept the terms of the February 1999 Rambouillet Agreement, which guaranteed a NATO peacekeeping mission if the KLA abandoned its goal of independence from Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavian government used force to resist. Because the war that ensued was thus the continuation of international politics by other means (Clausewitz 1976: 87), anarchy and polarity affected both its conduct and its outcome.

#### *US and NATO Strategy and Operations*

Because the United States intervened in the Kosovo war with the assistance of its NATO allies and because all nineteen of NATO’s member states participated in decisionmaking for OAF and fourteen contributed aircraft (Arkin 2001: 1, 21), the operation is widely regarded as “the most multilateral campaign ever” (Betts 2001: 126). Yet the dominant power of the United States was decisive. More than 80 percent of the weapons delivered

by the alliance were of US origin (Arkin 2001: 21). Moreover, the strategy and operational guidance for the use of these weapons consistently reflected US priorities.

In their war with the Yugoslavian government, the United States and NATO adopted a compellent, air-war strategy (Art 1980: 7–10). Specifically, they bombed governmental installations and other targets in Serbia to convince the Serb-dominated Yugoslavian government to stop its counterinsurgency operation against the KLA and accept the Rambouillet Agreement. This strategy was adopted because the United States preferred it. In spite of support for a ground campaign among US Commander in Chief of European Command (CINCEUR) and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR) General Wesley Clark, British prime minister Tony Blair, and other NATO allies, the Clinton administration repeatedly ruled out the ground option (Clark 2001: 206, 269, 319, 330, 332, 450; Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000b: 162, 164).

US dependence on NATO in implementing this air-war strategy has been vastly overstated. The administration's decision to cloak the operation in NATO garb was a tactical choice driven by Clinton's need for domestic legitimacy and the convenience of using regional air bases. Moreover, as William Arkin explains, "US planning for what would become Operation Allied Force began prior to and proceeded separately from the planning effort within NATO. . . . [E]ven as the conflict began, separate NATO and 'US-only' tracks continued, with alliance members denied the details of US cruise-missile strikes and operations by B-2 and F-117 stealth aircraft" (2001: 3). Furthermore, it was up to the United States to decide whether operational details would be determined in the NATO track. As CINCEUR and SACEUR, US general Wesley Clark had two bosses: the United States and NATO. But as CINCEUR, Clark had a great deal of discretion about when to activate the NATO decisionmaking process, and he used this discretion to advance US interests.<sup>16</sup> When he did not do so to Washington's satisfaction, he was overruled and ultimately fired (Clark 2001: 227, 278, 288, 319, 411, 451).

Because NATO had no intelligence capabilities of its own, it relied almost exclusively on whatever intelligence the United States was willing to share. Thus 99 percent of target nominations originated in the United States (Clark 2001: 427). Moreover, it was the United States that initiated the process of target-by-target approval by civilian leaders (Clark 2001: 201–202, 224; Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000b: 163); preauthorized targets only if they "were projected to generate . . . small numbers of accidental casualties" (Clark 2001: 236, 317); ordered aircraft to fly above 15,000 feet to reduce the risk of allied casualties (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000b: 161); nixed the use of Apache helicopters to diminish the Yugoslavian government's ability to attack Kosovar Albanians (Clark 2001: 227, 278,

288, 303, 319); and ordered the escalation of the bombing campaign in the final week of the war (Clark 2001: 352–353). Thus it was simply not the case that NATO members "all [had] a vote on everything" (US major-general Charles Wald, quoted in Cohen 2001: 51) or that NATO opted for "lowest common denominator tactics" (US retired admiral Leighton Smith, quoted in Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000b: 159). OAF was waged from Washington.

As a result, understanding the conduct of OAF requires an understanding of US decisionmaking. As always, factors at the individual and state levels of analysis—especially Clinton's aversion to casualties and the Pentagon's desire to stick with the preestablished two-major-theater war strategy instead of committing to the only operation the United States actually had under way (Clark 2001: 265, 306, 313, 421, 456)—were extremely important. But these factors were far more salient in the unipolar international political system than they would have been in a bipolar or multipolar system, for unipolarity meant that the conflict had virtually no chance of escalating into a confrontation that would directly threaten US security. Policymakers could afford to indulge the belief "that the campaign will last two nights and that after two nights, Mr. Milosevic would be compelled to come to the table" (a senior US general, quoted in Arkin 2001: 2), and the Pentagon could afford to conduct bureaucratic politics as usual. Had the threat to the United States been greater, the operation would have been conducted differently (Posen 1984: 233–235)—as demonstrated by the fact that the only time Clark obtained Washington's support for using the Apache helicopters was after Russia sent troops to occupy the Pristina airfield (Clark 2001: 392).

### *Yugoslavian Strategy and Operations*

Just as the dominance of the United States strongly affected NATO's strategy and operations, the weakness of the Yugoslavian government left an indelible mark on its approach to the war. How could it be otherwise? Yugoslavia's gross national product (GNP) and defense budget were less than 1 percent of NATO's (Posen 2000: 49). Moreover, its recent civil wars and eight-year international isolation meant the military capabilities the government did have were degraded and outdated.

Given the great and growing disparity between Yugoslavian and NATO military forces, the Yugoslavian government's decision to fight the United States and NATO instead of yielding to their demands requires explanation. Here again, anarchy and polarity played vital roles. Anarchy meant that the Yugoslavian government was concerned with its survival (which was jeopardized by the Rambouillet Agreement)<sup>17</sup> and there was no one to stop it from doing whatever it took to survive. Moreover, because unipolarity made states uncomfortable with US power, Yugoslavia hoped to benefit

from opposition to the US-led war effort within NATO and from Russia and China.

Because it was outgunned, Yugoslavia (like other weak states such as Finland, Switzerland, and Sweden) adopted a strategy of conventional deterrence.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, it attempted to demonstrate its ability to “make [NATO’s] pain exceed its gain” so the allies would give up and go home. This strategy had three elements. First, to deter a ground invasion, Yugoslavia tried to eliminate the KLA from as much of Kosovo as possible and reinforce, hide, and harden its military capabilities in the province. Second, to strain the alliance’s solidarity and tax its logistics, it tried to create a refugee crisis. Third, to weaken the allies’ resolve, Yugoslavia called attention to collateral damage and international tensions caused by NATO attacks (Posen 2000: 50–54).

Operationally, the key to implementing this strategy was to deter the allies from flying below 15,000 feet by using Yugoslavian air defense capabilities often enough to frighten them but not so often that the allies could gather enough information to target Yugoslavian defenses. This would provide cover for Yugoslavia’s counterinsurgency campaign against the KLA and expulsion of Kosovar Albanian civilians (Posen 2000: 54–58).

### **The War’s Outcome**

Despite the enormous gap between Yugoslavian and NATO capabilities, Yugoslavia held out for seventy-eight days, successfully played air-defense cat-and-mouse throughout the war, and obtained a far more favorable peace agreement than Rambouillet. Together, these aspects of the war’s outcome confirm that, in an anarchic system, power—even unbalanced power in a unipolar era—does not equal control (Waltz 1979: 191–192).

Carl von Clausewitz’s observation that “everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult” was not given much credence by the US policymakers who believed the Yugoslavian government would surrender in just two nights. But it should have been, for great power does not guarantee the weather. Neither does great power ensure effortless management of the “countless minor incidents—the kind you can never really foresee” (Clausewitz 1976: 119). Friction and the fog of war are part of the terrain in all wars and should have been expected to be especially troublesome in a multilateral effort. After all, although the United States continually overrode the objections of its allies,<sup>19</sup> it still had to deal with them. Moreover, although the unbalanced power of the United States meant that Russia, China, and other states were reluctant to come to the aid of the Yugoslavian government, because the US and NATO strategy was to attack targets “with little true military justification” (Arkin 2000: 48), there was nothing to stop the government from using the capabilities it had. Thus Yugoslavia employed and preserved its air-defense system for the duration of the war

(Posen 2000: 58–62). Given allied (especially US) concern with combat fatalities, this meant that NATO planes rarely flew below 15,000 feet. As a result, Yugoslavian troops were able to degrade the KLA’s capabilities, push the KLA and hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanian civilians into Albania and Macedonia, and reinforce the government’s military capabilities in Kosovo (Posen 2000: 62–66; Clark 2001: 251, 422). Yugoslavia successfully raised the costs NATO would have to bear to invade the country and, in doing so, contributed to US opposition to a ground war.

Yet Yugoslavia’s success in creating a refugee crisis did not fracture the alliance. Because the crisis created an even larger problem for an already weak Europe, it enhanced European willingness to endure US unilateralism—at least in the short term. Moreover, despite several shocking incidents of collateral damage, as well as the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy, Yugoslavia was never able to drive enough of a wedge among the NATO allies or between NATO and Russia or China to obtain significant assistance in the war. Russia did what it could with the capabilities it was willing to risk on a conflict that did not directly imperil the Russian homeland.<sup>20</sup> But none of this caused more than a few ruffled feathers in Washington (Clark 2001: 209, 212, 226). It did, however, demonstrate the limits of Russia’s ability to oppose the United States and, as such, provided the impetus for Yugoslavia and Russia to try to end the war.

By mid-May 1999, it was clear that neither Russia nor China was able or willing to deter further NATO attacks and that Yugoslavia’s success in deterring a ground war in Kosovo had no effect on the vulnerability of its industry and infrastructure. In fact, as the war dragged on, the United States and NATO struck more and more targets, including factories, bridges, government buildings, and electrical installations. Thus, in the end, the result foreshadowed by the power imbalance did unfold: the Yugoslavian government agreed to accept some of NATO’s terms.

But Yugoslavia did not accept all of NATO’s terms. In fact, with German and Russian help, it negotiated a deal that was far more lenient than Rambouillet. Whereas Rambouillet had called for the withdrawal of Yugoslavian military and police forces from Kosovo, a NATO military presence in Kosovo and throughout Yugoslavia, and, within three years, elections and other measures to determine whether Kosovo would secede from Yugoslavia (“Rambouillet Agreement” 1999), the peace agreement simply provided for the withdrawal of Yugoslavian military and police from Kosovo and the introduction of an international military presence in the province. The stipulations that the forces would be under NATO command, that they would have access to all of Yugoslavia’s territory, and that there would be a firm process and timetable for determining Kosovo’s final status were eliminated. Moreover, although the peace agreement provided for “substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo,”

it also recognized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, provided for the demilitarization of the KLA, and gave the UN Security Council the primary responsibility for Kosovo's political administration, including determining its final status ("Peace Agreement" 1999).

This result reflected, at once, Yugoslavia's inability to shield itself from further attacks and NATO's inability to obtain the conditions set out in the Rambouillet Agreement without waging a ground war that its dominant member, the United States, saw as peripheral and possibly damaging to its interests. Once again, great power interest in Yugoslavia had waxed, then waned. But although the United States and its NATO allies obtained less from the war than they sought, their power still got them quite a bit. Their troops occupied the territory of another state, and the leader of that state was tried in a war-crimes tribunal set up by a state that refused to subject itself to the International Criminal Court.<sup>21</sup> Thus both the conduct and the outcome of the war illustrate that, in an anarchic system, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides 1993: 290).

#### **The Peacekeeping Operation**

Today, anarchy's effects are evident in the allocation of peacekeeping sectors among members of NATO's KFOR, as well as in the performance of nonsectoral responsibilities such as providing economic assistance for reconstruction and responding to flare-ups in other sectors. The effects of anarchy are also evident in Russia's participation in the peacekeeping operation and in the lack of authority of the international organizations involved in the operation.

As the dominant state in the world, the United States has the greatest capability to take on peacekeeping and other "system management" responsibilities (Waltz 1979, chap. 9). But the United States also has the greatest capability to walk away from such responsibilities, for its exposure to problems is low. Besides, apart from US citizens, who can make it take on such responsibilities? Thus, although when KFOR peacekeeping sectors were allocated the United States could have chosen the "most sensitive" northern sector of Mitrovica, which borders Serbia, it chose the southeast sector, which "appeared to be the easiest."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, despite its military and economic dominance, in 2000 the United States contributed just 20 percent of the troops in Kosovo and 13 percent of the funds used to administer the territory (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000b: 165–166). Moreover, although the United States sometimes comes to France's aid when violence erupts in Mitrovica, sometimes it does not (O'Neill 2002: 43; International Crisis Group 2002: 12).

The effects of anarchy are also apparent in Russia's role in the peacekeeping operation, which provides further evidence that power does not

necessarily lead to control. In the international system, agreements hold when they are compatible with realities on the ground. On paper, NATO won the war. But because NATO troops did not invade Kosovo during the war, the fighting over the province was still up for grabs. As negotiations to end the war were drawing to a close, Russia threw a wrench in the long-laid peacekeeping plan by demanding control of the northern sector and sending 200 troops to secure the Pristina airfield, from which it planned to deploy troops north (Clark 2001: 369, 371–378). Russian weakness—specifically its inability to compel Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria to allow it to use their airspace—left it unable to implement this plan. But Russia's position at the airfield and Clark's inability to convince Britain to respond to the Russian deployment with force meant that the United States and NATO agreed to put 750 Russian troops in charge of security and transport at the airfield and to allow 3,600 others to participate in operations in the French, German, and US sectors (Clark 2001: 390–402; Gall 1999; US Department of State 1999a).

Anarchy's imprint is also evident in the lack of authority of the various international organizations involved in the peacekeeping operation. Although, on paper, administrators on the civil side of the operation are appointed by the UN secretary-general, states have pressured Kofi Annan not to select his preferred candidates.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, although the commanders of the five sectors are supposedly subordinate to KFOR, they also report to their own national governments (O'Neill 2002: 43). Thus rules of engagement vary from sector to sector.<sup>24</sup>

#### ■ **Consequences of the War**

One of the central insights of structural realist theory is that state actions in international anarchy often have unintended consequences (Waltz 1979: 64–65). Here again, the Kosovo war provides ample support for the theory. Although anarchy and unipolarity were the permissive causes of the war, the desire to stop human rights abuses, strengthen NATO, and preserve the international status quo were important immediate causes. Yet the effects of the war on Kosovo, NATO, and the international balance of power have been and are likely to continue to be contrary to these intentions.

Since the war, Kosovo has been "one of the most dangerous places on Earth" from the standpoint of individual security (Taylor 2002). As time passes, the situation is likely to become even worse, for three contradictory pressures are at work: the peace agreement stipulates that Kosovo is part of Yugoslavia; Kosovar Albanians still want to secede from Yugoslavia; and the province has been divided into five occupation zones commanded by states whose interests have a good chance of diverging. Thus the conflict continues to simmer as the KLA tries to drive Serbs from Kosovo and

resists KFOR pressure to disarm, and as the Yugoslavian government reestablishes control of the northern part of the province. But if and when the UN Security Council takes action on Kosovo's final status, the KLA resumes its efforts to secede, the government makes a bid to retake the province, or the occupation forces are withdrawn, the conflict could come back to a boil.

Because there is no world government to enforce a resolution between Yugoslavian and Kosovar Albanian claims to Kosovo or compel the occupation forces to remain indefinitely and rationalize their administration of the province, Kosovo's best chance for peace probably lies in the consolidation of Yugoslavian authority over the area north of Mitrovica and the steady handing over of UN and KFOR authority to Kosovar Albanian authorities. Yet even this is no guarantee of peace, for once KFOR troops leave the province there will be nothing to stop Yugoslavia from reclaiming Kosovo, or Kosovar Albanians from claiming land north of Mitrovica, as well as parts of Macedonia and Albania. Besides, just as the creation and re-creation of Yugoslavia after World Wars I and II depended on great power politics, a measured and forward-thinking withdrawal of KFOR occupation forces depends on NATO cohesion and Russian and Chinese acquiescence, neither of which is assured.

Instead of strengthening NATO, the Kosovo war weakened it. US NATO allies came to view the alliance as a US appendage or rubber stamp, and the United States came to see it as an encumbrance.<sup>25</sup> Thus OAF is likely to be remembered as NATO's first and only war. Moreover, because the stability of the Balkans directly affects the political, economic, and social stability of several of the major European states and because European and US forces are already deployed in Kosovo and Bosnia, these former Yugoslavian territories could well be where European states come together to balance US power. Already, there is movement toward a unified European approach, as the French and British occupation sectors and the Italian and German sectors prepare to merge, while the US sector, where the United States has built a large base, continues to function independently (KFOR 2002; Finn 2002). But whether the United States and Europe become competitors in Kosovo depends on developments in the larger international political system.

Structural realist theory "predicts that balances disrupted will one day be restored," for "dominant powers take on too many tasks beyond their own borders" and "even if a dominant power behaves with moderation, restraint, and forbearance, weaker states will worry about its future behavior" (Waltz 2000: 27–28). Since the demise of the Soviet Union, there has been an imbalance rather than a balance of power. The war and peacekeeping operation in Kosovo starkly demonstrated US dominance. Despite Russian and Chinese opposition to violating Yugoslavia's sovereignty, the

United States led NATO to war. Despite allied opposition to the way the war was fought, the United States stuck to its high-altitude, air-war strategy. Despite fighting the war to end "instability in the Balkans so . . . bitter ethnic problems are resolved by the force of argument, not the force of arms" (Clinton 1999c), the United States negotiated a peace agreement likely to lead to further instability. Finally, despite having the greatest capability to manage the postwar situation in Kosovo, the United States has repeatedly passed the military and economic buck. Yet although the Kosovo war and peacekeeping operation have underscored US dominance, they have not called forth a new balance of power. Europe, Russia, and China would clearly like to balance US power, but they are not yet able to do so. In the anarchic international political system, capabilities, not intentions, are what transform the balance.

### ■ Conclusion

Neither Yugoslavia's disintegration nor US intervention in the Kosovo war was foreordained. Yugoslavia could have adopted policies more conducive to domestic harmony, and the United States could have been more mindful of Yugoslavia's dependence on US aid. But due to the structural constraints of international anarchy, polarity, relative capabilities, and the security dilemma, "patterns of behavior nevertheless emerge" (Waltz 1979: 92). The causes, conduct, and consequences of Yugoslavia's civil wars conform closely to structural realist expectations about these patterns. Yugoslavia, a weak state, experienced both civil and international war. Moreover, the United States, a state with unrivaled power, intervened in Yugoslavia's domestic problems and dominated international decisionmaking about how to respond to them. But US power did not lead to control. In fact, the more the United States exercised its power, the more other states sought to curtail its reach.

Given the scope and scale of US dominance, much could change in Kosovo before a new balance of power emerges. Depending on how "the spirit moves it" (Waltz 2000: 29), the United States could take over the whole peacekeeping operation, walk away altogether, hold its position in the southeastern sector while the European sectors are consolidated, or even lead the way to a lasting settlement. None of these possibilities can be ruled out. In an anarchic realm, dominant power gives its possessor "wide latitude in making foreign policy choices" (Waltz 2000: 29).

Already we have seen the range of action permitted by US power. Great powers have always blown hot and cold in the Balkans, but the United States has changed its position several times in the past two decades, from supporting the Yugoslavian government during the Cold War to intervening against it in 1999, then limiting US responsibilities as the

peacekeeping operation got under way. In 2005, despite George W. Bush's 2000 campaign promise to get US forces out of the Balkans, the United States continued to occupy one-fifth of Kosovo.

As permanent members of the UN Security Council, the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China can each veto changes to KFOR's authorization, as well as any measure resolving Kosovo's final status. More important, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United States have troops on the ground. Thus, barring US domestic pressure to withdraw from Kosovo or negotiate a lasting settlement before new great powers rise, Kosovo could be among the places US power is first checked when a bipolar or multipolar system emerges. But even if the Kosovo conflict winds down or the United States is balanced on some other stage, international anarchy and Yugoslavia's relative weakness mean that whether Yugoslavia survives, dies, or is further dismembered will continue to hinge on the assistance and indifference of states far more powerful than itself.

#### ■ Notes

1. For comments on earlier versions of this chapter, I thank Andrew Bacevich, Rachel Bzostek, Mark Gasiorowski, James Hardy, Michael Lipson, Susan Martin, Christopher Muste, Michael O'Hanlon, Karl Roeder, Rosemary Shinko, Jennifer Sterling-Folker, and Kenneth Waltz. I also thank Lise Howard for bibliographic suggestions, and Rebekah Bowlin, Paula Duncan, Geoffrey Plauche, and Kathryn Weir for research assistance.

2. Contrary to those who call Yugoslavia "Serbia" after 1992, I follow the preferences of the state itself. Because Serbia and Montenegro called the new state they created in 1992 the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and, under pressure from the European Union (EU), renamed it Serbia and Montenegro in 2003 (Simpson 2003a, 2003b), I use those names for these periods. On the decision of the UN Security Council not to recognize the FRY as the successor government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, see Woodward 1995: 251. On the difficulties of using diplomatic recognition as an indicator of a state's existence (or, in this case, its name), see Adams 2003.

3. The security dilemma arises when the actions that a state takes to secure itself backfire by inadvertently making other states less secure and thus more likely to do something that harms the state. On the international security dilemma, see Glaser 1997, Herz 1950, Jervis 1978, and Waltz 1979: 186–187.

4. On the importance of overall capabilities (not just military ones), see Waltz 1979: 131.

5. On the domestic security dilemma, see Kaufmann 1996, Posen 1993, Rose 2000, and Snyder and Jervis 1999.

6. On September 27, 1989, the Slovenian Republican Assembly declared that Slovenia was "an independent, sovereign, and autonomous state" with the right to self-determination and secession. Similar declarations were made in July 1990, June 1991, and September 1991 (Higham, Mercurio, and Ghezzi 1996: 66–68).

7. In 1989, Yugoslavia's gross national product (GNP) per capita was just 10 percent of Switzerland's (the richest state in the world on a per capita basis); its energy consumption (a good indicator of economic development) was just 2 percent

of that of the United States (the state that consumed the most energy); and its military spending was less than 1 percent of that of the United States (the state with the largest military budget). Moreover, its annual military budget and iron and steel consumption, which are good indicators of military capability, were 41 percent and 92 percent of the international average, respectively. Yugoslavia's economic capabilities were even lower. Its energy consumption was 84 percent of the international average; its total population and urban population were 74 percent and 59 percent of average; and its GNP per capita was 68 percent of average. Statistics on GNP per capita are derived from Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive 2001. Those on energy consumption, military expenditure, military personnel, iron and steel production, total population, and urban population are derived from Singer and Small 1999.

8. In 1913, Austria's population was seventeen times larger than Serbia's. Moreover, its army and military budget were eleven and thirty times larger, respectively (Singer and Small 1999). Thus Serbia's relative weakness was clearly an important source of its vulnerability to conquest.

9. In 1941, when Germany invaded Yugoslavia, Germany's population was more than five times larger than Yugoslavia's, and its military was more than forty-five times larger (Singer and Small 1999).

10. Germany occupied Serbia and established a fascist state in Croatia and most of Bosnia. Italy took Montenegro and (through Albania, which it had conquered in 1939) annexed Kosovo. Finally, Germany and Italy divided Slovenia, Hungary got Vojvodina, and Bulgaria absorbed Macedonia. "Of [the Serbs] living outside Serbia proper, one third were murdered by the Croatian *Ustashe*, one third were forced to convert to Catholicism, and one third were deported to Serbia. Irregular Serbian forces . . . retaliated in similarly brutal fashion, and after the war exacted their revenge on tens of thousands of Croats" (Daalder 1996: 40). Moreover, Serbian and Montenegrin settlers in Kosovo were killed and expelled by Albanians avenging their treatment during the interwar years (Judah 2000: 26–27).

11. As S. Woodward explains, "all economic indicators were negative and worsening after 1982. By the end of 1984 the average income was approximately 70 percent of the official minimum for a family of four, and the population living below the poverty line increased from 17 to 25 percent" (1995: 52, 55). From 1979 to 1991, Yugoslavia's growth in gross domestic product fell from 15 to 5 percent.

12. When the new nationalist government in Croatia purged Serbs from public payrolls in 1990, Serbs feared a return to the anti-Serb violence of World War II (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 2002, vol. 14: 641).

13. In March 1991, President George H. W. Bush said that the United States would not "encourage or reward those who would break up Yugoslavia." Two months later, he cut off aid to the government, only to reinstate it after several weeks (Higham, Mercurio, and Ghezzi 1996: 67). Similarly, in June 1991, Secretary of State James Baker told Slovenia and Croatia the United States would not recognize them if they declared independence, but six months later the Bush administration did just that (Judah 2000: 76). Finally, after Senator Robert Dole criticized the Clinton administration's Bosnia policy during the 1994 congressional elections, arguing that the UN peacekeeping operation made the United States look weak, the administration moved from peacekeeping to aiding the Bosnians and Croats (Claiborne 1993).

14. The Bush administration's inaction in Bosnia in 1991–1992 may have reflected its hope that Europe's involvement there would tie up Germany's newfound relative power so that it would not try to build a European alternative to NATO (Higham, Mercurio, and Ghezzi 1996: 10; Woodward 1995: 153). If so, the

strategy met with early success, when efforts to activate the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe stalled due to the requirement that decisions be made by consensus and efforts to enforce European-brokered peace agreements floundered on the rocks of European military weakness (Daalder 1996: 59–60). But by December 1998 the EU had begun to adopt common foreign and security policies, and Britain and France had agreed to work toward a European military force that could act even when NATO and the United States preferred not to become involved (Whitney 1998). Thus the Clinton administration's attention to Kosovo can be seen as an attempt to head off increasingly active and focused European military efforts by demonstrating, as Madeleine Albright liked to put it, that the United States was "the indispensable nation."

15. The NATO Charter stipulates that NATO is a purely defensive alliance (*North Atlantic Treaty*, arts. 1, 3, 5–6). According to the UN Charter, which all UN members promise to uphold, regional organizations such as NATO can be used to enforce peace only with the authorization of the Security Council (*Charter of the United Nations*, art. 53). The United States and NATO did not approach the Security Council for a resolution authorizing Operation Allied Force because it was clear that Russia and China would veto such a resolution (Ibrahim 1998). On international norms against intervention, see Jackson and Zacher 1996: 24, Zacher 2001, and Wendt 1999: 279.

16. For example, toward the end of the war when Yugoslavia had promised to withdraw in exchange for a suspension of the bombing, Clark "decided that the way to do this was simply to stop dropping bombs, without formally requesting any measures from the political machinery at NATO. That way, if we needed to resume the strikes, there was no formal diplomatic permission required" (2001: 370).

17. The agreement would have provided for unrestricted movement and basing of NATO forces throughout Yugoslavia ("Rambouillet Agreement" 1999, app. B).

18. This discussion is based on inferences from Yugoslavia's Cold War strategy and actions in the Kosovo war (Posen 2000: 40–41), because despite speculation about "Operation Horseshoe," a Yugoslavian plan for expelling ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, Yugoslavia's actual strategy and operational plan remain unclear (Judah 2000: 240; Mertus 2001: 142).

19. For example, the United States denied Greek, Italian, and German requests for bombing pauses, ignored French and German concerns about collateral damage, and rejected British calls for a ground war (Clark 2001: 209, 330, 350–354).

20. Russia canceled US-Russian military contacts, suspended cooperation with NATO, threatened to pull its troops out of Bosnia, introduced a Security Council resolution calling the war a "flagrant violation of the UN Charter," and deployed an intelligence ship to the Mediterranean (Clark 2001: 197, 209, 212, 226).

21. In June 2002, in an effort to obtain an exemption for US forces from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the United States threatened to pull its forces out of Kosovo and vetoed a Security Council resolution renewing the mandate for peacekeeping and police forces in Bosnia. Several weeks later, it received a one-year exemption, which was renewed in 2003 (Schmemmann 2002a, 2002b; Barringer 2003).

22. "That way," a senior military official told Clark, "we can withdraw early, and leave it to the Europeans" (Clark 2001: 163). France chose the northern sector.

23. In 2003 the United States rejected one of Annan's favorite candidates for the position of UN mission head because he opposed the US war against Iraq. Italy

rejected another candidate because he was on the outs with the Italian prime minister (Dempsey 2003; McGrath 2003).

24. The rules of engagement in the French sector have been especially contentious, for two reasons. First, unlike KFOR troops in other sectors, which were ordered to stop revenge attacks on Serbs by Kosovar Albanians, French troops were ordered "to let them pillage." Second, France has effectively partitioned its sector, establishing a checkpoint at the Ibar River in Mitrovica that prevents Kosovar Albanians from returning to their homes in the northern part of the northern sector and allows Serbia to reestablish control over that territory, which is the part of Kosovo that has the most mineral wealth and is closest to the Serbian border (O'Neill 2002: 44–46; International Crisis Group 2002: 3–4, 12–13). According to the International Crisis Group, "Belgrade's institutions . . . operate with full impunity" north of the Ibar River (2002: 3).

25. Just a month after the war ended, German foreign minister Joschka Fischer questioned US hopes to use NATO as an expeditionary force in the future (Dennis et al. 1999) and affirmed the quest for a common European foreign and security policy in which Germany would take "a leading role" ("Germany Comes Out of Its Post-War Shell" 1999). Two years later, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, NATO invoked the mutual defense clause in its founding treaty for the first time in history. But while Washington "obviously want[ed] the NATO stamp of approval in making Mr. bin Laden a target," it did not ask NATO to join the war on terrorism (Daley 2001: B6). Neither did it ask NATO to join the 2003 war against Iraq. Instead the United States asked individual NATO countries to participate (Gordon 2002).