

Air Power and the Coercive Use of Force

In June 2000, Brigadier General John D. W. Corley, director of studies and analysis for the U.S. Air Force's European headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, made a bold proclamation after the publication of his 10,000-page report on the 1999 air campaign over Kosovo, Operation Allied Force. He declared, "We were able to take on [Slobodan] Milosevic and vanquish him. We were able to meet this objective through the hard leverage of aerospace power."¹

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's strategy review at the Pentagon is examining the force structure the military will need for the conflicts in the next decades. General Corley's remarks and the outcome of Operation Allied Force support a tendency to view air power as the cheap and easy military solution to foreign policy problems and to lend support to three axioms that have become generally accepted by policymakers. First, air power saves the lives of U.S. soldiers on the ground. Second, the advanced technology of precision-guided munitions reduces collateral damage, thus making war less bloody and more morally acceptable. Third, fear of this sophisticated technology coerces an enemy to do our will. In sum, advocates of air power claim that it is a silver bullet—an infallible, invulnerable instrument with universal application.

Although Corley's views rightfully praise the consistent and dependable performance of the U.S. military, one should not blindly accept the conclusions of his report and the general utility of air power. The belief that air power used alone can vanquish an enemy is dangerous for any strategic thinker or policymaker. Operation Allied Force was a successful test of the

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North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) will and cohesion. Its lessons, however, are not found in its victory, but in its problems and paradoxes.

Although Operation Allied Force enjoyed a successful conclusion, it taught the military about the limits of air power as a coercive tool: morally and practically, its use does not come without risks or costs. These lessons caution the U.S. military and senior policymakers not to become overconfident in its ability to coerce but to explore more deeply the concept of coercion in order to define explicitly the role and capabilities of the U.S. military in international conflicts.

Coercion and Capitulation

From the outset of Operation Allied Force, the expectation that air power would have an influence on the flow of refugees confuses the capabilities of air power. As a practical matter, no military alternative that would have prevented the expulsion of 800,000 Kosovar Albanians at an acceptable cost to the allied coalition was plausible. Decisionmakers chose air power because it was an act that could be done, and done quickly, even though it hardly related to the situation on the ground.

Many in the defense community, including those who flew in Operation Allied Force, were acutely aware of the limits of air power. After the first days of bombing, pilots' reactions mirrored those of many editorial writers, who asked, "What is air power doing to stem the flow of refugees?" The air campaign coincided with—but did little to deter—the intensification of Operation Horseshoe, the Serb military effort to expel ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. Airmen understood that their mission was not to curb this tide but to destabilize Yugoslav president Milosevic's regime, even though his seemingly successful effort to cleanse Kosovo ethnically appeared to undermine their efforts. Milosevic's eventual capitulation surprised those who flew in the war as much as it did the general public, and many airmen did not believe that the 11 weeks of bombing had directly caused Serb forces to retreat from Kosovo. Operation Allied Force was an aberration because coercion of the regime worked without occupying Kosovo, and NATO was lucky it did. The operation also was an aberration because of the minimal collateral damage to all parties.

The defense community faces a challenge because its last major victory, Operation Desert Storm, was also an aberration, for two primary reasons. First, Iraq chose to fight the coalition symmetrically; for example, Saddam Hussein did not use chemical weapons against Israeli cities. The Iraqi army, however, had less firepower and was not nearly as well trained as the U.S. forces were. Second, the battlefield was well defined and had a contained the-

ater of operations. Policymakers are in danger of using these past victories as examples of U.S. capabilities without considering the fortunes we enjoyed.

NATO was lucky in Operation Allied Force for three fundamental reasons. First, the Serbian Integrated Air Defenses (IADS) did not actively challenge the allied air campaign. The Serbian military conserved its resources—surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), anti-aircraft artillery, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other heavy equipment—and waited for the alliance to fold. As a result, NATO's opposition was not a true competitor, much less a peer competitor. NATO would have lost more aircraft if the Serbian IADS had more aggressively confronted it.

Second, dramatic scenes of 800,000 Albanian refugees flooding into neighboring countries strengthened NATO's resolve. Had it not been for the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, in all likelihood the length and scope of the campaign would have resulted in more significant opposition from U.S. and allied policymakers. At the fiftieth anniversary celebration of NATO in April 1999, during the height of the conflict, allied leaders codified their resolve and pledged to bring the mission to its successful conclusion. Lastly, NATO was fortunate in Operation Allied Force because Operation Horseshoe did not call for genocide. Had Milosevic ordered the systematic killing of Kosovar Albanians rather than their forced removal from Kosovo, the end story would be of the severe limitations of air power and U.S. military power in general, because expelling Serbian forces from Kosovo and stopping a genocide would have required a significant ground force. The United States would likely not have stepped away from a massacre of thousands upon thousands of Kosovar Albanians, but the mission would have been challenging and costly.

When Operation Allied Force began, most in the military heard or read transcripts of President Bill Clinton's speeches to the U.S. people, in which he proclaimed:

Our strikes have three objectives: First, to demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's opposition to aggression and its support for peace. Second, to deter President Milosevic from continuing and escalating his attacks on helpless civilians by imposing a price for those attacks. And, third, if necessary, to damage Serbia's capacity to wage war against Kosovo in the future by seriously diminishing its military capabilities.²

Charged with this mission, aviators, typically sarcastic, joked among themselves in the ready room, "Now, how are we going to stop this ethnic cleans-

It is dangerous to believe that air power used alone can vanquish an enemy.

ing from a jet? If Serbs line up Albanians and start shooting them, what are we going to do? Maybe we could fly over, drop a flare, and yell at them to stop shooting!” Such flippant and cynical comments were born from the realities of the battlefield the aviators faced. A pilot in an airplane does not easily grasp the logic of the landscape beneath him, no matter how accurate his targeting pod or his radar.

The crew of an aircraft can be expected to bomb a fixed target for which they have a satellite image, even with significant cloud cover. Technology

allows aviators to determine which part of a building to hit for maximum effect and even what damage can be expected on the surrounding structures, all while avoiding air defenses as simple as a man with a shoulder-fired missile or as complex as a fiber-optically linked, multitiered radar operations sector. To be expected to stop lightly armed military police from killing unarmed civilians, however, mismatches the mission and the means.

Airmen did not believe that 11 weeks of bombing caused Serb forces to retreat.

In the celebratory aftermath of achieving these objectives, the United States must remember to match a particular use of military force to its foreign policy objectives and not depend solely on “victory through airpower.” “The distinction between the power to hurt and the power to seize or hold forcibly is important in modern war.”³ Air power only offers the ability to hurt, not the ability to seize or to hold. If air power is the only tool, the critical question becomes how much damage the opposing side is willing to incur. Such a military strategy is not necessarily related to vanquishing the enemy. Initiative is ceded to the targeted side, for the opposition’s reaction to the pain inflicted determines the length and effectiveness of the bombing.

When the enemy has a much greater stake in the outcome, coercion is a risky and uncertain course of action, as evident in Operation Allied Force. NATO’s overconfidence in the utility of air power was deflated when the flow of Kosovar Albanian refugees did not slow. Air power did, however, ultimately succeed in inducing Serbia’s capitulation and the entry of a NATO-led occupation force into Kosovo. Operation Allied Force was a splendid success because it facilitated the arrival of ground forces without the struggle of fighting for the territory. Credit for the operation’s success does not lie exclusively with the coercive use of air power but rather the confluence of several factors: the threat of a ground invasion, the withdrawal of Russian diplomatic support, and the increasing damage wrought by the air campaign.

Ultimately, Operation Allied Force is a study in military coercion, or compellence, a term coined by Thomas Schelling (which here is used interchangeably with coercion). Schelling wrote, "Compellence has to be definite: we move, and you must get out of the way."⁴ Military compellence is tricky because neither the target nor the force of destruction is the decisive factor, but rather the reaction to the military action. Moreover, predicting the effect of the use of force is impossible. Once force is committed, if the target's behavior does not change, the only options are escalation or admission of failure.

Empowering the Enemy

The initial miscalculation of Operation Allied Force has its roots in the successful outcome of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs in Operation Deliberate Force in 1995. Bosnia had been divided in half by the summer of 1994, and fighting had subsided. The relative calm ended in the spring of 1995 with a Bosnian Croat offensive. On several occasions, NATO bombed Bosnian Serb ammunition sites, inciting the Serbs to take hostage several hundred European peacekeepers from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia. Thus, coercive bombing backfired.

Violence escalated with attacks by Bosnian Serbs on two safe areas: Sarajevo and Srebrenica. Srebrenica was especially terrible—the world witnessed mass executions, deportations, and ultimately on July 16 the fall of the city to the Bosnian Serbs. Finally, on August 28, 1995, the Serbs shelled a Sarajevo marketplace, killing nearly 40 people and emboldening NATO to launch Operation Deliberate Force. The operation ultimately consisted of 293 aircraft from eight NATO countries flying 3,515 sorties during two weeks. The stated aim of the campaign was to shift the military balance in favor of the Bosnian Croats and to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to cease their military offensive against the Bosnian Croats and accept a peace deal. Initially, attacks focused exclusively on Serbian command-and-control sites, SAM and anti-aircraft artillery sites, and supporting radar and communications facilities. In other words, they concentrated on the integrated air defenses in Bosnia. Later attacks targeted ammunition dumps, artillery positions, communications links, supply storage areas, and finally some key bridges used to support Bosnian Serb military operations. Planners carefully selected the targets to avoid destroying the entire Serbian infrastructure. The air strikes, however, never altered the military balance. The Croatian ground offensive accomplished that.

The strikes were even suspended on September 2 for two days to test Serbian compliance with NATO's demands, reminiscent of Operation Line-

backer II and the Paris peace negotiations with North Vietnam in 1972. NATO involved itself in a classic exercise in coercion. Air Force chief of staff General Ronald Fogleman emphasized this point, stating that the aim of the bombing was “not to defeat the Serbs, but simply to relieve the siege of UN safe areas and gain compliance with UN mandates and thus facilitate ongoing negotiations to end the fighting.”⁵

Ultimately, NATO secured safe areas, removed offensive heavy weapons, and reopened airport and road access to Sarajevo. Perhaps most importantly, the campaign’s success laid the foundation for the Dayton peace accords, signed in Paris on December 14.

The lesson drawn from Operation Deliberate Force seems to have been the vindication of air power’s effectiveness as a coercive instrument, forgetting the enormous risks involved in such a strategy. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the primary negotiator of the Dayton agreement, observed that the air campaign had made a “huge difference” in helping to bring about an acceptable outcome.⁶ Yet the Dayton accords resulted from a truly fortuitous confluence of events. Two military operations drove the Bosnian Serbs from the Krajina region: the NATO air campaign and the Bosnian Croatian ground offensive. The Croatian offensive resulted in a close approximation of the nearly equal division of Bosnia in 1994, thus negating many of the Bosnian Serb gains of the previous year. Moreover, Milosevic abandoned the Bosnian Serbs at Dayton to secure Serbia proper and Yugoslavia. Thus, air power was only part of a series of circumstances that drove the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate a settlement.

Lost in the celebration over the Dayton accords was a serious analysis of the effects of coercion. Throughout Operation Deliberate Force, the power to de-escalate the conflict was in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs, whose pain threshold was the determining factor in negotiating a settlement. What if the Bosnian Serbs had accelerated the violence and continued the siege on Sarajevo and Srebrenica? What if Milosevic had supported the Bosnian Serb offensive with equipment or manpower? The NATO allies may have been in the same position as during Operation Allied Force: executing what many characterized as a “bomb and pray” strategy.

Limits of Coercion

Operation Allied Force was an extremely focused and destructive use of force. One of the most important questions that remains from the operation is one of *jus in bello*, the judgments made about the conduct of war. Kosovo may have changed the moral reality of war, which also changes strategy, tactics, and war in general.

In World War II, the United States and its allies inflicted as much damage on Japan and Germany as they were capable of inflicting. In *Danger and Survival*, McGeorge Bundy portrays the decision to bomb Hiroshima as one in which no one in the upper reaches of the U.S. government raised the question of civilian casualties. In contrast, during the Persian Gulf War, enormous effort was made to reduce circumstances in which civilians would be killed. No doubt there has been a learning curve from World War II to Kosovo. Today, pursuing a policy of the purposeful and intentional killing of civilians is unacceptable, both to the U.S. public and among the world's decisionmakers.

Many reasons exist for the strong consensus on limiting the destructiveness of force, but two rationales stand out when considering the use of air power. First, most U.S. military commitments in the last 50 years did not constitute a direct threat to the United States and therefore did not merit extraordinary use of force. Compare this situation to the threats faced during World War II and the bombings deemed necessary to contain the war in Asia and Europe. Thus, the greater the direct threat, the easier it is to do otherwise reprehensible things. In altruistic interventions such as Kosovo, U.S. tolerance for civilian deaths diminishes.

The second reason we have come to believe in limiting the destructiveness of force is the myth of precision. The image of a laser-guided bomb hitting the correct window of a building should not disguise the truth of its destructiveness. As happened in Kosovo, accidents can still occur and civilian loss can be catastrophic.

The moral realities of war and U.S. sensitivity to the loss of life directly affected how Operation Allied Force was conducted. The minimal collateral damage made the war a success in the eyes of the general public. These factors, however, limited the alliance's ability to conduct a coercive air campaign against Serb forces rapidly. Although moral considerations can constitute a valid limit on coercive strategy, practical limitations can also get in the way of a successful campaign.

Operation Allied Force demonstrated the difficulty of determining the enemy's center of gravity and choosing which targets to hit. Those airmen flying the operation's missions were acutely aware of the disagreement between General Wesley Clark, the supreme allied commander, and Lieutenant General Martin Short, the Joint Forces air component commander, about Yugoslavia's strategic center of gravity.

In a now well-known exchange, during one of the daily video teleconferences, Short expressed satisfaction that, at last, NATO warplanes were

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about to strike the Serbian special police headquarters in downtown Belgrade. “This is the jewel in the crown,” Short said.

“To me, the jewel in the crown is when those B-52s rumble across Kosovo,” replied Clark.

“You and I have known for weeks that we have different jewelers,” said Short.

“My jeweler outranks yours,” said Clark.⁷

Short has continued to voice his disapproval of the restraints placed on targets during the campaign. In a statement before the Senate Armed Service Committee, he reiterated, “I believe the way to stop ethnic cleansing was to go at the heart of the leadership, and put a dagger in that heart as

rapidly and as decisively as possible.”⁸ Clark, on the other hand, believed that the air campaign should focus on the fielded forces in Kosovo conducting the ethnic cleansing campaign, and thus contended that having the B-52s bomb the Serb forces in Kosovo, rather than focusing on targets in Belgrade, would have a stronger effect.

The disagreement between Clark and Short about the Yugoslav center of gravity is

instructive about the use of air power for the future, especially if one advocates the sort of bombing campaign Short does. The theory holds that these targets are the Achilles’ heel of the enemy; that, if destroyed, the central leadership will be isolated and the enemy’s military will collapse under light military pressure due to a lack of guidance. In Operation Allied Force, these targets were Milosevic, his cronies, and the industries and buildings they personally valued, such as counterintelligence, security forces, loyal military units, and the related communications facilities.

Such a strategy has historically been ineffective.⁹ The only successful case of wartime assassination by military forces was that of Japan’s Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto in World War II, and it had no effect on the outcome of the war. The operation in Panama in 1989 demonstrated how difficult it is to find an enemy leader, when it took U.S. troops days to apprehend General Manuel Noriega. Also, efforts to target Hussein during the Persian Gulf War proved unsuccessful. Short’s type of strategy also sacrifices much of the moral authority the United States brings to a conflict, not to mention the presidential directive prohibiting the assassination of foreign political leaders. Furthermore, accomplishing the mission does not guarantee the end of conflict or a predictable succession. During Operation Allied Force, Serbs were hostile to the bombing, no matter how much they despised Milosevic. Images of Serb civil-

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ians wearing t-shirts with targets on them should have warned us that the strikes were not likely to end Milosevic's political control of Yugoslavia or break the will of the people. Indeed, it was an internal democratic movement that led to the downfall of Milosevic, not an air campaign.

What is missing in Short's calculation of targeting Yugoslavia's central leadership and communications facilities is a view of the total costs of a bombing campaign. One cannot think of the costs of war only in terms of friendly casualties. Short's center of gravity carried with it a huge moral cost. Had the United States turned out the lights in Belgrade, destroyed all the bridges (which almost happened anyway), and eliminated the leadership in Belgrade, the result would have been an enormous loss to the Serb population and the likelihood of more incidents akin to the bombing of the Chinese embassy. Such a campaign could have been waged successfully, but doing so would have wreaked more havoc than allied leaders were willing to accept. This type of campaign also risks a disproportionate use of force, with the harm done outweighing the military necessity of such means. Indeed, coercion carries with it the possibility of undermining the larger good the United States is pursuing in the campaign. As Elliot Abrams cautioned in this respect, the picture "of a superpower willing to bomb but not to fight, willing to inflict a tremendous amount of pain on others to avoid the slightest risk to itself ... that is a picture that should repel us."¹⁰

Lost in the celebration over Dayton was a serious analysis of the effects of coercion.

If one assumes, however, that Clark was correct in his view of the Yugoslav center of gravity being the fielded Serb forces in Kosovo, more effort should have been placed on these units. Such a focus, however, again demonstrates the limits of air power. Air power relies exclusively on accurate and timely intelligence for effectiveness. Weather, terrain, camouflage, and concealment, among other factors that have always influenced military operations, often hinder such intelligence. A costly demonstration of these challenges was the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy. The Persian Gulf War spoiled the United States and its allies, because the desert provides a much easier intelligence and targeting challenge than the mountains and forests of Yugoslavia. Serb forces went to great lengths to hide their equipment, avoid overhead detection, and disperse their troops.

Clark's and Short's disagreement, coupled with their joint commitment to using airpower, evolved into a dual-track strategy in the first week of the air campaign, with nighttime attacks on preplanned targets in Kosovo and

Serbia proper, and daytime “kill boxes,” in which pilots would loiter above Kosovo looking for targets of opportunity—that is, the Serbian Third Army. The daytime sorties proved to be a Herculean effort with few measurable successes. The Serbian fielded forces operated primarily out of Fiats, Volkswagens, and other civilian vehicles, not tanks and armored personnel carriers. The difficulty of targeting became apparent early in the conflict in the unfortunate attack near Dakovica on a refugee convoy presumed to be a troop movement of Serb forces.

Pilots faced severe targeting problems from the first day they flew the daylight kill boxes. Dozens of aircraft would fly into Kosovo seeking Serb military forces in Kosovo, only to find no targets the vast majority of the time. The Serbs were not in the open where the airmen could detect them. Moreover, without troops on the ground to act as forward air controllers to direct pilots to the location of enemy forces, the possibility of finding a target was even more improbable. Instead, bombs would be dropped on relatively insignificant “dump” targets, like roads, or brought back to base to be used another day.

Airmen were acutely aware of the impact of even one misguided bomb or missile. The United States possesses powerful technology, but that is no guarantee against grievous mistakes, such as the accidental bombing of a Danubian bridge when a passenger train was crossing it. Certainly, precision weapons allow fewer aircraft to destroy more targets, but war is always destructive, no matter how precise the weapon.

A focus on the fielded forces in Kosovo also lent itself to an ill-advised dependence on quantifying the campaign. The raucous debate over the number of Serb military targets destroyed by allied aircraft detracted from the overall aims of the mission and undermined the concept of coercive strategy. In the end, the dueling opinions of Clark and Short accomplished what they intended. In concert or independently, however, evidently neither was going to be as effective as it was intended, due not only to the fog and friction of war but also the decision not to send ground troops into Kosovo.

Lessons for the Future of Air Power

Operation Allied Force offers many important lessons when considering the use of force for the future. First, although Operation Allied Force was not a punitive strike, punitive strikes are political and air power is a relevant tool to make a political statement. Such actions carry much less risk than using air power as a coercive tool. Generally, punitive strikes serve domestic interests and rarely have strategic effect. Often the determination of “how much is enough” is driven by the interpretation of public opinion. From the raid on

Libya in 1986 to the cruise missile attacks on Iraq in 1993 to the 72 hours of air strikes against Iraq in December 1998, operations such as these have satisfied political concerns, answering the call, "Do something!" What they do, however, results in little change to the strategic realities on the ground.

Second, Operation Allied Force taught the military what potential enemies have learned in the decade since Operation Desert Storm. Aviators who flew in both campaigns faced the pressing challenge of neutralizing the enemy's extensive network of lethal SAMs. The Iraqi air defense forces paid a heavy price in the beginning hours of Operation Desert Storm, with hundreds of HARMs (high-speed antiradiation missiles) raining down on detected radars. Iraqi radar operators were intimidated into operating in less-than-optimal modes for the rest of the war, out of fear of antiradiation missiles. This lesson was not lost on the Serbs, who kept most of their SAMs hidden and the SAM radars dormant, deliberately husbanding their assets out of respect for, or fear of, the allied antiradiation missiles. Throughout Operation Allied Force, a credible SAM threat to allied aircraft persisted, but the use of HARMs during Operation Allied Force proved to be much less effective than in Operation Desert Storm. In the last 10 years, the Serb military and other potential enemies learned a great deal, potentially limiting future dominance of airspace, especially given this surface-to-air threat.

Third, Operation Allied Force should serve as a warning. After Operation Desert Storm, Eliot Cohen warned of the seductiveness of air power when he compared it to modern teenage romance in its seeming propensity to offer political leaders a sense of "gratification without commitment."¹¹ Air power is often viewed as the universal remedy when diplomatic means are exhausted. Bombing is not a strategy, however, and coercive bombing campaigns have a spotty record. Policymakers should therefore be mindful of the fact that air power carries enormous risks and costs.

U.S. Leadership and the Use of Force

Airmen who flew in Operation Allied Force were probably still safer flying over Kosovo, and being shot at by SAMs, than the ground troops, albeit unopposed, carrying M-16s in Pristina as part of the NATO-led occupation force. The troops on the ground are carrying out the heavy lifting and most dangerous part of the operation in Kosovo. The Kosovo peacekeeping mission is an extension of Operation Allied Force, and the United States and its allies should not believe that they have executed an operation without costs.

Humanitarian uses of the military, such as in Kosovo, are not likely to abate in the near future. As retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, the

former commander in chief of Central Command, stated in a speech to the U.S. Naval Institute in March 2000:

[W]e're going to be doing things like humanitarian operations, consequence management, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement. ... And somewhere else along the line we may get stuck with putting a U.S. battalion in place on the Golan Heights, embedded in a weird, screwed-up chain of command. And do you know what? We're going to bitch and moan about it. We're going to dust off the Weinberger Doctrine and the Powell Doctrine and throw them in the face of our civilian leadership. ... [M]ore and more U.S. military men and women are going to be involved in vague, confusing military actions—heavily overlaid with political, humanitarian, and economic considerations. And representing the United States—the Big Guy with the most formidable presence in the area—they will have to deal with each messy situation and pull everything together.¹²

Zinni touched on an important part of the military's role as it has evolved over the past decade. The military is not designed well for nation-building and

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other missions with which its civilian leaders have tasked it. Despite these shortcomings, the military will continue to face these challenges as the only entity of the U.S. government capable of the mission. Clark, reflecting on KFOR, the NATO-led military force in Kosovo, recently lamented that he needed Robert Komer and CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, a civilian pacification organization in Vietnam headed by Komer that worked side-by-side with the U.S. military) in Kosovo to handle the

peacekeeping and nation-building tasks of the mission. Until the United States rebuilds its nonmilitary diplomatic tools, however, the military may be the only U.S. organization that can facilitate change in postconflict situations.

To avoid shirking its leadership responsibilities, the United States must recognize its extraordinary role in the world and understand and accept the ambiguous and complex political circumstances in which its military will be asked to operate. When deciding to use force, the United States must prepare itself for the possible consequences and enter into such commitments without any illusions regarding what force can do, what harbingers of success or failure may accompany such commitments, and what the costs may be. It cannot assume that the situation on the ground will lend itself to symmetrical battles or situations where coercive strategies will work.

Since World War II, U.S. policymakers have sought military solutions to political problems. The president has been tempted to seek help from the

military because of its ready availability and international image of transcendence. No people or nation, it seemed, could stand against the U.S. military. This attitude is the exact opposite of those that existed in the wake of the failure in Vietnam, when policymakers believed that the United States could accomplish relatively little by force of arms. Today the pendulum has swung again to an overzealous confidence in the United States' ability to accomplish its goals.

On the use of force, often the question is not whether to use force, but how. Military force will remain relevant to a variety of tasks, and the U.S. military will be ordered to carry the lion's share of any demanding military operation. Nevertheless, the extraordinary success of Operation Allied Force carries with it a dangerous confidence. Our success should be celebrated, but the United States should be wary of resting on its laurels and expecting optimal war-fighting scenarios with asymmetric competitors. Remaining a great power depends on the U.S. ability to adapt to the fog and friction of war, not simply to possess overwhelming firepower. Successful execution of a coercive strategy also demands that the United States do more than possess the airplanes and weapons to do the mission, but also maintain a realistic understanding of what it can hope to accomplish.

Notes

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
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