

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**Center of Gravity Schizophrenia over Kosovo:  
An “Eccentric” War in Need of a True Clausewitzian Analysis**

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## **Center of Gravity Schizophrenia over Kososo: An “Eccentric” War in Need of a True Clausewitzian Analysis**

### Center of Gravity Schizophrenia?

In mid-September the *Washington Post* carried a three-installment review on the conduct of the Kosovo conflict entitled “The Commanders’ War.”<sup>1</sup> It alleged a telling division over military strategy between Lt. General Michael Short, USAF, operational air commander of the Allied air campaign, and General Wesley Clark, USA, NATO’s chief military commander (SACEUR). The reported Short-Clark disagreement usefully exposed the dilemma of defining the enemy’s “center of gravity.” For Short, a veteran airman, the center of gravity rested in Belgrade with Milosevic and strategic targets. For Clark, a former ground commander, the center of gravity resided with the fielded Serbian forces in Kosovo and operational targets. Dozens of articles have since appeared in military journals to reinforce this simplistic interpretation of the disagreement between the two generals.<sup>2</sup> The analysis below attempts to show such a dichotomy is, at best, facile; at worst, it shows a lack of understanding of the framework for military strategy.

What the generals’ reported disagreement actually unveiled was the kind of complex political constraints that can be, and generally are, imposed upon military strategists. The imperative of maintaining cohesion among the 19-nation alliance, fears of civilian and allied casualties, etc., skewed a purely rational and comprehensive (read:

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Priest, “The Commanders’ War,” *Washington Post*, 19-21 September 1999, sec. A, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., John A. Tirpak, “Short’s View of the Air Campaign,” *Air Force Magazine* 82, no.9 (September 1999): 1-7, and Stephen P. Aubin, “Operation Allied Force: War or “Coercive Diplomacy,” *Strategic Review* (Summer 1999): 4-12.

clean-cut) approach to the conflict. It is this political skewing that explains *the apparent center of gravity schizophrenia* highlighted in “The Commanders’ War,” just as it also explains why the allies prosecuted a limited, incremental air-only campaign. Ultimately, with the lapse of time, reflection on this political skewing may also lead to a re-evaluation of the critics’ charge that the Kosovo conflict represented: (a) *an ineffective “prolonged” operation* because the aim for which we entered the war, to stop the exodus and slaughter of Kosovars, was not achieved; and, (b) an end to the conflict that was *not a true victory* since the division of power and the design of a multi-ethnic autonomous region remained very much in question.

#### An “Eccentric” War, a NATO Success

Before proceeding to the analysis of the enemy’s center of gravity, it is important to note at the outset that Kosovo was an “eccentric” war.”<sup>3</sup> A Cold War regional collective defense organization, NATO undertook the its first war and largest campaign. It did so without specific Security Council authorization, acting offensively out-of-area (a non-Article V mission) against a sovereign country to prevent internal oppression. The expanded parameters for the character of war (“the ‘who and why’ of war”) were new ground for NATO.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Walker, “Air Power for Coercion,” *Royal United Services Institute Journal* (August 1999): 15.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. opposes in principle UN approval for non-Article V mission, believing that it would give Russia and China veto rights over NATO actions to protect critical allied interests. The Europeans, on the other hand, had, until this conflict, insisted on explicit UN “legitimization” for non-article V missions, e.g., Bosnia and Croatia in the early 1990’s. In explaining the French decision to go to war in March 1999 without UN authorization, Prime Minister Jospin indicated expediency was the motive, “...Since the Security Council was not able to act, we must act on our responsibilities.” A French parliamentary report after the war gave guarded approval to the “political revolution” permitting NATO to intervene in a sovereign country to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. NATO may well have set a precedent in the Kosovo war that a UN imprimatur on intervention for humanitarian ends, while desirable, is not necessary. See Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O’Hanlon, “Unlearning the Lessons of Kosovo,” *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1999):135-136; and Congressional Research Service Report, “Operation Allied Force: Lessons Learned,”

The unusual conduct of the war (“the ‘how’ of war”) appeared to defy conventional U.S. doctrine: early ruling out of the use of ground forces, gradual application of air power that was restricted to high altitude delivery to reduce the danger to allied pilots, and tight constraints against some civilian targets. All were at odds with conventional doctrine to apply optimal joint forces for decisive results and U.S. Air Force doctrine to maximize shock with simultaneous effects-based targeting.<sup>5</sup> Still, the war proved to be the most precise and lowest collateral damage air campaign *in history*. NATO lost zero aircrews in 78 days of round-the-clock operations that included 38,000 combat sorties. Thirteen of the 19 allies contributed forces; the three two-week-old new members were fully engaged and supportive. In the end, NATO secured its objective to compel FRY forces out of Kosovo (*with* Russian diplomatic cooperation, in itself was no small feat). Over one million refugees were rescued. Some process of recovery was underway. FRY President Slobodan Milosevic, now an indicted war criminal, was more isolated from the community of nations, weakened militarily, politically, and economically.<sup>6</sup>

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(Washington, D.C.: 1999, unpublished manuscript), CRS-20-21, which cites Jean-Michel Boucheron (rapporteur), “Le Cout de la participation de al France aux operations menees en vue du reglement de la crise au Kosovo, Committee for Finances, Economy, and Planning, National Assembly, 5 July 1999; and Jacques Isnard, “Le Limites de la participation francaise a la 'Force alliee,” *Le Monde*, 6 July, 1999, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> See Stephen Daggett and Nina Serafino, “The Use of Force:Key Contemporary Documents, CRS Report 94-805 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 17, 1994), which discusses the 1984 Weinberger doctrine’s six test for use of U.S. combat forces, including that they should be committed “wholeheartedly;” the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, emphasizing that U.S. forces should fight jointly; and the 1993 Powell doctrine that “we should always execute decisive results.” Also see, Eaker Colloquy on Aerospace Strategy, Requirements, and Forces held on August 16, 1999 in Washington D.C, titled “Operation Allied Force: Strategy, Execution, Implication.” (Hereinafter cited as Eaker Colloquy.)

<sup>6</sup>Department of Defense, Joint Statement on Kosovo after Action Review presented by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen and Gen. Henry H. Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 14 October 1999, pp.1-3.

<sup>7</sup>George Robertson, UK Secretary of State for Defense, “War in Kosovo, Some Preliminary Lessons,” *Royal United Services Institute Journal* (August 1999):15.

Thus, despite some critics' harsh assessment of the initial results of the conflict, we may nonetheless declare "NATO won!" NATO won the war because it demonstrated resolve to confront forcefully a humanitarian catastrophe in Europe, and because, for sound defense reasons, it chose to prevent a spill-over to, and destabilization of, Yugoslavia's neighbors. NATO stayed united in the face of exceptionally tough challenges, although this unity resulted in a perhaps less-than-optimum campaign to obtain a less-than-optimum peace. A defining accomplishment of the Kosovo conflict was that the NATO alliance – *our center of gravity* – held. "None of the individual nations wanted to break ranks and all recognized that if NATO failed, the consequences for the refugees and for international security would be profound and dangerous."<sup>7</sup>

#### Center of Gravity Theorists: Clausewitz and Warden

Two military theorists present concepts of the enemy's center of gravity pertinent to the center of gravity dichotomy described in "The Commanders' War." Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian general writing 150 years ago, proposes a timeless definition and framework for analysis. John Warden, a contemporary Air Force Colonel, refines Clausewitz's center of gravity ideas to elucidate a model for modern air power warfare that could have been applied in Kosovo. Each theorist provides a distinct vision for, and penetrating insights into, the character and conduct of our most recent use of force. The greater vision and the clearer insight, however, clearly belong to Clausewitz.

Clausewitz: Kosovo, A Cabinet War that Missed the Fundamentals, or Did It?  
The Need to Think, and Re-Think Center of Gravity

Briefly, Clausewitz defines the center of gravity (“schwerpunkt”) as the most important source of the enemy’s power and a principal objective for defeat. It is “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends...and against which all energies should be directed.” “The first task” in planning for war is to identify the enemy’s center of gravity. It is the most effective target for a strike, and the most effective strikes come from the enemy’s center of gravity. Clausewitz lists *examples* of diverse centers of gravity: the army in the usual operational context; in a country subject to domestic strife, generally the capital; in small countries that rely on large ones, the army of the protector; in alliances, the community of interests is what the enemy would want to unravel; and *in popular uprisings, the personality of leaders and public opinion.*<sup>8</sup>

Clausewitz imposes a strict sense of discipline on the strategist to distill the sources of power in a given case into *one identifiable center of gravity*. It is “a major act of strategic judgment” to identify correctly the centers of gravity and how to hit the enemy’s exact center of gravity. In a strictly military sense, a major battle is a collision between two opposing centers of gravity, a “zweikampf”, literally “two-struggle.” “Consequently, any partial use of force not directed toward an objective that either cannot be attained by the victory itself or that does not bring about the victory should be

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<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to summarize Clausewitz. An attempt is made here to present the basic concept of center of gravity, with a sensitivity to quoting selectively. Clausewitz and Warden both use the term in the singular and the plural; tactically, operationally, and strategically. Specific references to Clausewitz’s “center of gravity” in this paper are not individually cited but appear, unless otherwise cited, in Carl von Clausewitz, eds./trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 485-487,489,595-597,617-619,623-624. (Hereinafter cited as *On War*.) The author relied upon Christopher Bassford’s introduction in “Clausewitz and his Works,” (Carlisle: Army War College, May 1998), <http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/CWZSUMM/CWORKHOL.htm>.

condemned.” One must constantly seek out the center of power, “daring all to win.” He suggests that “no matter what the central feature of the enemy’s power may be – the point on which all efforts must emerge converge - the defeat and destruction of the fighting force remains *the best way to begin*, and in every case will be a significant feature of the campaign.” Still, he admits that even in the center of gravity context , “the basic condition does not consist merely in the greatest possible concentration of forces; they must also be *deployed in a way that enables them to fight under sufficiently favorable circumstances.*”

Applied to Kosovo, Clausewitz’s center of gravity concept has continuing relevance. One may extrapolate from *a literal reading* of Clausewitz that the enemy’s center of gravity was with *the leader* Milosevic himself, and not with the Serb field forces in Kosovo. NATO might well have been able to resolve the crisis more quickly and decisively by concentrating on this fact, aiming its sights on targets Milosevic really cared about and establishing an early information operation to influence Yugoslavian *public opinion*. In this case, air power offered a *better deployment* of alliance forces than ground troops, particularly as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had already initiated the land war.

Clausewitz is not limited, therefore, to “his own vantage point in time and place... where the actual clash of men on the front is the only way or the best way to wage war,” as Warden claims in developing his model for employing air power in the twenty-first century.<sup>9</sup> Certainly Clausewitz’s focus is on describing what he knows from

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<sup>9</sup> John A. Warden, “Employing Air Power in the Twenty-First Century” from *The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, ed. Richard Schultz, Jr. and Robert Pfaltzgraff (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 1992), 52.

his own experiences, but he specifically does not exclude the reality of others' experiences or new technologies. He is open that "these truths need to be authenticated by experience."<sup>10</sup> Three theorems below demonstrate the richness of using Clausewitz's *On War* as an interpretive guide in understanding the Kosovo war from the enemy's center of gravity perspective:

*1. We still may not have identified the enemy's center of gravity in the Kosovo war.*

On at least one point, all observers of the Kosovo tend to agree: We do not know exactly "what made Milosevic cave?" Until we know this, we cannot identify the enemy's true center of gravity. All we have is an array of speculation. Dana Priest in "The Commanders' War" argues that the late May allied bombing of Mount Pastric in support of a KLA offensive was "a turning point" that signaled that the U.S. was prepared to begin a new phase of aggression with ground troops – that "all options were on the table."<sup>11</sup> Michael Ignatieff insists that the May 24 heavy munitions attack against Belgrade's main power grid was "the single most effective military strike of the campaign ... Once the power went off in Belgrade, Milosevic's command and control structures were disrupted and civilian support began to ebb." He later suggests, however, that the real breaking point was Russia's message conveyed privately from Russian envoy Chernomyrdin to Milosevic that "the game was up" by which "the diplomatic encirclement of the Milosevic regime was complete."<sup>12</sup> The list even extends to damage inflicted on Milosevic's and his cronies' personal

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<sup>10</sup> *On War*, p. 137, 141.

<sup>11</sup> Priest, "Commanders' War, 19 September 1999.

property and financial assets.<sup>13</sup> Was the outcome simply a matter of asymmetric parallel attacks and enemy attrition? Clausewitz stresses the importance of the destruction of the enemy's will ("war is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will") rather than merely the destruction of the enemy's physical forces. He employs a dynamic image to illustrate opposing centers of gravity – a wrestling match. In a wrestling match, there are many points and kinds of contacts involving a combination of skill, intellect, strength, creativity, chance, etc.<sup>14</sup> Robust columns of Serb forces departed Kosovo at the war's end. NATO commanders reportedly concluded that the Yugoslav 3<sup>rd</sup> army could have held out for weeks, even months.<sup>15</sup> We are unlikely to know where the enemy's real center of gravity was until Milosevic decides to tell us - and then could we believe him?

2. *With overwhelming superiority of forces, it was less critical to identify the enemy's exact center of gravity in the Kosovo conflict.*<sup>16</sup>

NATO had the ability to project far superior force, qualitatively and quantitatively, through air power and ground forces. Serbia was a small, economically weak country with limited air and surface-to-air missile assets, and no source of re-supply. It had no

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Ignatieff, "The Virtual Commander," *New Yorker*, 2 August 1999, 35-36.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Erlanger, "NATO Raids Send Notice to Milosevic: "Businesses He Holds Are Fair Game," *New York Times*, 22 April 1999, 15.

<sup>14</sup> *On War*, p. 75, 90, 219; Bassford, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Damage to Serb Military Less Than Expected," *New York Times*, 28 June 1999, p.1; and Priest, 21 September.

<sup>16</sup> The Vietnam experience with guerilla warfare and high political constraints on targeting suggests that the definition of "overwhelming superiority of forces" is dependent upon the character and conduct of the conflict. In Kosovo, there was no dispute among the military authorities that the allies had forces sufficient to win the war.

military allies, having alienated most of the world to include Russia, with its ethnic cleansing activities. It was unable to defeat the KLA ground operations without exposing its own forces to a devastating air attack. NATO-friendly countries surrounded it on all sides.<sup>17</sup>

For Clausewitz, the center of gravity forces the strategist to focus, to separate the important from the unimportant, “to sacrifice nonessentials for the sake of essentials.” He suggests and fixates upon this mental construct to prioritize limited resources and manpower, conceding that in his day most wars would be fought between powers of near equal strength. Clausewitz implies that if the commander relies upon “overwhelming” superiority to vanquish an enemy, this superiority would need to be “great enough to counterbalance *all other contributing factors*.”<sup>18</sup> It was clearly not his preferred course of military strategy, but he does admit to the possibility, even though it compromises the principle of economy to pursue a quick and decisive outcome. After 78 days of an air campaign, NATO claimed to have destroyed 80 percent of Yugoslavia’s modern aircraft fighters, reduced Serbia’s capacity to make ammunition by two-thirds, eliminated all of its oil refining capacity; and destroyed a sizeable share of the infrastructure used to support its military. But in Kosovo, only half of its artillery and one-third of its armored vehicles were destroyed – the weather, the difficulty of isolating military targets from 15,000 feet, and NATO’s vulnerability to media attacks constituted “other contributing forces” that, fortunately, did not counterbalance NATO’s force superiority.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Cordesman, “The Lessons and Non-Lessons of the Air and Missile War in Kosovo,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 3 August 1999, p.3-4.

<sup>18</sup> *On War*, p. 194-196.

<sup>19</sup> Cordesman, p.5-6.

3. *Political constraints infuse all aspects of war, including center of gravity identification.*

The political consensus-building process within NATO severely restricted the prosecution of the Kosovo conflict. “The Commanders’ War” cites SACEUR Clark admitting “I was operating with the starting assumption that there was no single target that was more important, if struck, than the principle of alliance consensus and cohesion.” The articles detail the frantic and exhausting brokering Clark conducted from his office at SHAPE among his many masters – the 19 NATO ambassadors, NATO’s Secretary General Javier Solana, and, as commander of EUCOM, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President.<sup>20</sup> Short, some distance away at U.S. air command in Italy and protected from these diplomatic pressures, was more at liberty to complain about NATO “tank plinking” in Kosovo rather than going full-force after strategic targets in Belgrade.<sup>21</sup>

Clark’s statement points to the famous centerpiece of Clausewitz’s theory on war. “War is merely the continuation of policy by other means.” As an “instrument,” or tool, of policy, military leaders must be subordinate to political leaders and strategy must be subordinate to policy. “Policy,” Clausewitz observes, “will permeate all military operations, and insofar as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them.”<sup>22</sup> The identification of an enemy’s center of gravity, therefore, must also be consistent with, appropriate to, and, in some sense, dependent upon the political

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<sup>20</sup> Priest, “Commanders’ War, 19 September 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Tirpak, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> *On War*, p. 605-608, 87..

purposes of the military operation. The center of gravity cannot be isolated from its political context. Critics of the war railed against “coercive diplomacy.” But the charge that “the concept behind Operation Allied Force was more an extension of the pattern of diplomacy backed by force witnessed throughout the Clinton administration than it was a serious military campaign with clear-cut objectives” misses this essential nexus between policy and military strategy.<sup>23</sup>

Michael Ignatieff ventures that “Clausewitz would have called Kosovo a cabinet war,” in a final paragraph of an early August *New Yorker* article analyzing how NATO had invented a new kind of war:

Unlike the Gulf War, the Kosovo war did not mobilize hundreds of thousands of men. It mobilized opinion around the world, but it was fought by no more than fifteen hundred NATO airmen and the elite Serbian air-defense specialists, probably numbering in the hundreds. It did not end in unconditional surrender, the fall of a regime, or anything that could be called definitive. It produced “an end state,” still open to final definition. It was a virtual war, fought in video-conference rooms, using target folders flashed on screens, and all that Clark ever saw of the rush of battle was on the gun-camera footage sent every night on secure Internet systems to his headquarters in Belgium...Cabinet wars do not end with parades, garlands, and civic receptions, or with sorrowful ceremonies at graveyards. For cabinet wars never reach deep into the psyche of a people; they do not demand blood and sacrifice, and they do not reward their heroes.<sup>24</sup>

President Clinton’s declaration on March 24 “I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war” underscored the domestic constraints NATO’s national leaders faced.<sup>25</sup> Keeping ground forces out of Kosovo and relying upon high-technology air power minimized the possibility of casualties, lessened the peoples’

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<sup>23</sup> Aubin, p.6.

<sup>24</sup> Ignatieff, p.36.

<sup>25</sup> R.W. Apple, Jr., “Nimble Security Juggler: Sandy Berger, The Strategist and Politician,” *New York Times*, 25 August 1999, p.1.

equity in the conflict, and thereby avoided a test of commitment for this controversial and “eccentric” war. As the war progressed, however, the stakes increased. Politically there was no alternative to a NATO victory. NATO proved willing to loosen the political restraints and threaten the use of ground troops.<sup>26</sup> It may be a charitable interpretation to suggest that President Clinton’s May 18 statement, “I don’t think we or our allies should take any options off the table” represented not a lack of strategy, but an adjustment in strategy to achieve a political objective.<sup>27</sup> The conduct of the war itself clearly indicated that the military goals of Operation Allied Force were crafted and adjusted to maintain political consensus among the allies and to respond to what public opinion and domestic politics would bear.<sup>28</sup>

#### Conclusion: Warden’s Model vs. Clausewitz’s Theory

John Warden, an architect of the Gulf War strategy, draws upon Clausewitz but dismisses his theories as essentially obsolete in the application of modern air-power doctrine. Warden echoes Clausewitz in approach - the aim of the air campaign should be the enemy’s center of gravity, “that point where the enemy is most vulnerable and where an attack will have the best chance of being decisive, ” and that “wars are fought to convince the enemy leadership to do what one wants to do.” For Warden, however, military strategy should be employed primarily to “strategically paralyze” an adversary’s

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<sup>26</sup> AP news wire dispatch, September 1, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Apple, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> Congressional Research Service Report, “Operation Allied Force: Lessons Learned” (unpublished) astutely tracks the matching of restated and revised political objectives and military goals during the course

leadership. Destruction of the enemy forces is not required to achieve political objectives.<sup>29</sup>

In an attempted refinement of Clausewitz, Warden proposes that the enemy's center of gravity is "*a system*" of five concentric rings: field forces, population, infrastructure, essential production, with leadership occupying the central and ultimate ring. An air campaign should focus on changing the mind of enemy leadership by paralyzing it - either by attacking the leadership and its operating systems directly, or by attacking capabilities in outer rings to impose both physical and psychological paralysis on the enemy leadership. The ubiquity of air power means that it will be the key force when ground or sea forces are inadequate because of insufficient numbers or inability to reach the enemy center of gravity. With the development of stand-off precision weapons and its ability to conduct parallel warfare, air power can target all five rings simultaneously and continuously until the enemy's leadership concedes.<sup>30</sup>

The deficiency in Warden's argument is that he claims to propose a one-size-fits-all "*model*" for American operations well into the twenty-first century," that "if followed, will lead to realization of the political aims of the war..."<sup>31</sup> In making this claim, Warden fails to grasp Clausewitz's first premise of military theory: "Given the nature of the subject, we must remind ourselves that it is simply not possible to construct a model for the art of war that can serve as scaffolding on which the commander can rely

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of the war, p. CRS-3-5. Also see, Daalder and O'Hanlon, p.130, who suggest that there were two wars - one unsuccessfully fought to prevent the explosions; the other won by demonstrating NATO's resolve.

<sup>29</sup> Warden, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> David Tretler, "The Theory and Practice of Air Power," 18 October 1999. Unpublished lecture notes from a lecture presented at the National War College.

<sup>31</sup> Warden, p.54.

for support at any time.”<sup>32</sup> Clausewitz recognizes that no two wars are identical - the nature of every war is determined by the dynamics achieved among the three elements of his Trinity (the people/passion, the military/creativity and the government/reason) on each side and between each side. Military theory should be descriptive of war, not prescriptive.

Warden’s argument thus invites the misleading Clark-Short center of gravity dichotomy reported in “The Commanders’ War” and leads to the fallacy of trumpeting success in the Gulf War as the vindication of strategic bombing in all cases. Hence the absurd observations appearing in military and strategic reviews of the Kosovo conflict: “It took NATO 30 days to do what General Normal Schwarzkopf and the Coalition did in about three days of the Gulf War” without acknowledging the essential differences in the character and conduct of the two conflicts.<sup>33</sup>

Warden apparently also neglects to consider that “a nodal analysis” of the concentric rings might involve the kind of political constraints imposed upon the operation by individual members of the NATO alliance.<sup>34</sup> For example, in the Kosovo conflict, French President Chirac wanted a veto over targets in Montenegro and British Prime Minister Blair wanted a veto over targets that would be struck by B-52 bombers taking off from British soil, according to the account in “The Commander’s War.”<sup>35</sup> Nor does Warden’s so-called “effects-basis paralysis paradigm” heed Clausewitz’s counsel

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<sup>32</sup> *On War*, p. 140.

<sup>33</sup> Aubin, p.5.

<sup>34</sup> Committee One, National War College Class of 2000: Captain Mark Emerson (USN), Lt. Col. Gary Wohlering (USAF), and Lt. Col. Derrick Jarvis (USAF), interviewed by the author, 15 October 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Priest, “Commanders’ War, 19 September 1999

that the aim of combat “is to destroy the enemy’s forces as a means to a further end, but that the ultimate outcome of war is not always to be regarded as final.”<sup>36</sup> If Milosevic, as the ultimate center of gravity, had been killed in a NATO attack, it is highly doubtful that ethnic hatred and violence in Kosovo would have ceased without a Serb force withdrawal from Kosovo; indeed his death may well have incited further atrocities. Leadership paralysis cannot in and of itself automatically effect lasting political change.<sup>37</sup>

Clausewitz theories are classic because they envision a framework for military strategy and analysis which recognize that war is not a constant, that each war is “eccentric” with its own distinctive character and conduct. Centers of gravity may be identified as military objectives, but are unlikely to be quickly achievable – no matter how superior or modern the forces and technology - without an understanding of political constraints. Warden’s model is not without value, but it represents a strategist’s approach, not a theorist’s framework. It should be regarded with the same degree of skepticism that we would have viewed a nineteenth century military strategist claiming to present a model for all operations “well into” the twentieth century.

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<sup>36</sup> *On War*, p.80,

<sup>37</sup> Howard. D. Belote, “Paralyze or Pulverize? Liddell Hart, Clausewitz, and Their Influence on Air Power Theory,” *Strategic Review* 27 (Winter, 1999): 40,45.

## EPILOGUE

Several new developments have occurred since the drafting of this paper that do not conflict with its findings.

On November 7, 1999, the *New York Times* reported authoritative sources had confirmed NATO was closer to ground war in Kosovo than was widely thought. In early June, British Prime Minister Blair had ordered prepared 30,000 letters to reservists in order to have 50,000 troops – half the standing army – ready to deploy to Kosovo. On June 2 – the day before Milosevic agreed to NATO's terms - key U.S. advisers had set a decision date for June 10 to begin preparations for a September invasion. The U.S. Ambassador to NATO reported that he believed that he could sell a ground war to more reluctant partners, the Germans, Italians, and the Greeks. The meeting broke up with an understanding that of three American goals for the war – NATO victory, holding the alliance together, and keeping Russia on board – victory had become the only outcome that mattered. Clinton would have to sign off on a invasion within the next few days. At about this same time, Chernomyrdin and Finnish President Ahtisaari reportedly told Milosevic that NATO would hit the city harder and was bound to invade. Additionally, Chernomyrdin made it clear that Russia would provide no more help to the Serbs.

On November 11, 1999, the *New York Times* noted that both France and the U.K. had published reports on lessons learned from the Kosovo conflict. Neither of these reports was available to the author. The State Department has not published a similar report, but has commissioned a long-term study. The *Times* also reported that Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor for the UN War Crimes Tribunal, had submitted a November 10 report to the Security Council indicating that some 2,108 bodies had been unearthed in Kosovo to date – a number far less than original estimates of 10,000-100,000.

On November 7, 1999, the *Washington Post* carried a detailed study of polling data suggesting that the American people were far more tolerant of American casualties in war than American leadership, military and civilian.

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