2.6 The NATO bombing campaign: Operation Allied Force

Conceptual understanding

Key concepts

- Change
- Significance
- Perspective

Key question

- How did the international community respond to the crisis in Kosovo?

The Kosovo campaign was a just and necessary war. And I believe that Blair, of whom I have many criticisms, in this case showed real determination in conducting it.

— Margaret Thatcher, 2002

If we lose this war, NATO is ended.

— Ivo Daalder, 1999

The NATO bombing campaign against Serbia lasted for 77 days and was finally brought to a conclusion on 10 June 1999. The decision to use force was controversial: NATO launched an attack against a sovereign state attempting to quell a domestic insurgency. The legitimacy of NATO’s action had been questioned from the start. Bear in mind that NATO was an organization founded after the Second World War to defend Europe against aggression that was thought might come from the Soviet Union. By taking sides in a domestic dispute, NATO was acting beyond its own supposedly neutral position. It had existed for years and had never, up until the short campaigns against Bosnian Serbs in 1994–95, used its military power. There had even been a joke circulating that suggested the acronym "NATO" stood for “No Action, Talk Only”. Now NATO’s actions proved this wrong.

NATO was going to use its considerable firepower against a sovereign state in defence of an ethnic group, and without the approval of the UN Security Council. In the years prior to the bombing campaign, a relatively small number of around 2,000 people had been killed in the violence in Kosovo. This was hardly genocide. Nor could the number of refugees driven from their homes by the conflict be called an overwhelming human tragedy, as we had seen in Rwanda, the Congo and other parts of the world. Fewer than 250,000 people had been displaced by the conflict in Kosovo up until that time. However, when all was said and done, NATO and the international community had tried to solve the problems emerging in the Balkans. There was a firm belief, even if to some it may have been unjustified, that the actions of Milošević over the last decade had shown him to be unscrupulous in his exercise of power. Diplomatic means had been tried, coercive pressure had been applied, and none of it seemed to work. Now it was the turn of force, plain and simple.
In the air campaign, which lasted 77 days, approximately 38,000 missions were flown over "enemy" territory. Of these, one third were strike missions, where specific targets were hit. Extraordinarily, by the end, only two allied aircraft failed to return and there were no combat fatalities. It was a remarkable example of a precision campaign against an enemy that had used all means at its disposal, including hiding military hardware in hospital areas and schools, and moving troops under the cover of Red Cross convoys. Operation Allied Force was easily the largest combat operation in the history of NATO and the most sustained military operation in Europe since the Second World War. It was also probably the most successful example of strategic bombing in the history of warfare. In total, 14 allied nations contributed aircraft: the USA provided the lion's share of over 700 aircraft, while the rest of the allies supplied just over 300. Of the latter, the French and Italians provided the most, while Britain was the fourth largest contributor.

_I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war._

— Bill Clinton, 1999
Source B
A Dutch political cartoon from 1999.

First question, part b – 2 marks
What is the message of the cartoon in Source A?
Now answer the same question with reference to Source B.

First question, part a – 3 marks
Why might the cartoon in Source A be seen as ironic? Explain your reasoning.
Now answer the same question with reference to Source B and explain your reasoning.

Initially, the Western allies thought it would be a short campaign lasting only a few days, and after which Milošević would agree to terms. In Bosnia, that is what had happened, but it soon became clear that both sides had miscalculated. In a television address to the American people, President Clinton announced that the USA would not be putting troops on the ground. Some in the military thought this was a mistake as it showed the Serbs that, if they could survive the bombing, perhaps they could exploit the potential divisions within the Western alliance. Clinton’s public statement indicated that the Western allies might face domestic pressure from those opposed to the use of force. It is also possible that the Serbs thought that the Russians, led by Boris Yeltsin, would come to their aid in some form or another.

Targeting the Serbs
You go after the head of the snake, put a dagger in the heart of the adversary, and you bring to bear all the force that you have at your command.
— US General Michael C. Short, 2000

The air campaign had been devised by NATO commanders to hit Serbian targets hard and fast in a devastating display of firepower; it was designed to bring about a change of heart from the Serbian leadership. Over 1,000 targets had been identified throughout Yugoslavia, which included military installations and the security forces themselves, as well as facilities, factories and state infrastructure.
There were political constraints in fighting this campaign: dealing with an opponent militarily had to be balanced with the political ramifications of winning the war. Essentially, this meant it was a "consensus war" that had to be fought by a large number of countries, all of which had to agree to hit specific targets. Politicians demanded the power to approve or veto the potential strike targets of the allied aircraft. General Michael C Short, who directed NATO's air operations against Serbia in 1999, said:

_There were numerous occasions where airplanes were airborne, and the senior national representative would run in to me and say, "Our parliament won't allow us to strike that target," or, "Our authorities will not allow your airplanes, which took off from our soil, to strike that target."_

— Michael C Short, 2000

These considerations could and did lead to some frustration and probably prolonged the campaign.

After the war, General Short became a critic of NATO's conduct with regard to how political requirements influenced target selection and other issues.

**Why did NATO have to fight in this manner?**

NATO needed to:

- be able to take advantage of its massive air superiority
- avoid, at least if possible, putting ground troops into the area
- be seen to be minimizing the casualties in the combat zone
- avoid direct conflict between the Yugoslav military and NATO combatants.

_Belgrade is a city of Europe, and you cannot launch a military campaign without the support and the understanding of the people that support the governments who take that decision._

— NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, 1999

**How the war was fought**

The superior weaponry of the NATO allies could immediately be seen in the first three days following the expiry of the 24 March deadline when hundreds of targets were hit. In total, 1,000 aircraft were involved. In addition, Tomahawk cruise missiles fired from aircraft, ships and submarines played a crucial role in the air campaign. An estimated 450 missiles were launched, destroying over 50% of key headquarters and power stations. Mostly launched from the sea, these missiles achieved a 90% success rate in hitting vital targets. Each missile cost approximately US$1 million.

The opening days of the campaign saw the destruction of Serbia's air defences and key military targets. After that, operations focused mainly on smaller targets on the ground and in Kosovo and Montenegro. As in most military campaigns, the opinions of the military commanders fighting the war were sometimes at odds not only with the politicians and diplomats conducting the war on another level but also, to lesser but important extent, with the civilian populations involved. We have seen how the role of the media played an increasingly important part in the conduct of war in Rwanda and in recent conflicts. In Yugoslavia.
the government in Belgrade was especially concerned that the
public saw the war only through the lens of the government, and
Serbia quickly portrayed itself as the innocent victim of NATO
aggression, trying to maintain its own territorial integrity.

The position of the UN was difficult. UN Secretary-General Kofi
Annan supported the intervention in principle, even though the
Western powers had not used the Security Council. However, the
UN had identified the Kosovo crisis as a threat to international
peace and security through its resolutions in 1998. NATO did not
ask the UN for authorization to use force because of the opposition
it would have received from the Russians and the Chinese, as well
as their probable use of their respective vetoes. Annan agreed that
there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the
pursuit of peace, but was critical of NATO taking unilateral action,
arguing that the Security Council should have been involved in
any decision to resort to the use of force.

The day that Operation Allied Force began, Annan issued this
statement:

I speak to you at a grave moment for the international community. Throughout
the last year, I have appealed on many occasions to the Yugoslav authorities and
the Kosovo Albanians to seek peace over war, compromise over conflict. I deeply
regret that, in spite of all the efforts made by the international community, the
Yugoslav authorities have persisted in their rejection of a political settlement,
which would have halted the bloodshed in Kosvo and secured an equitable
peace for the population there. It is indeed tragic that diplomacy has failed,
but there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of
peace. In helping maintain international peace and security, Chapter VIII of the
United Nations Charter assigns an important role to regional organizations.
But as Secretary-General, I have many times pointed out, not just in relation to
Kosovo, that under the Charter the Security Council has primary responsibility
for maintaining international peace and security — and this is explicitly
acknowledged in the North Atlantic Treaty. Therefore, the Council should be
involved in any decision to resort to the use of force.

— Kofi Annan, 1999

The air campaign continues

In the West, the images of refugees fleeing the fighting
as Serbian troops moved in and began to "cleanse"
areas of KLA resistance did not help the cause of the
Serbian government. However, those images were
clearly, if ever, seen within Serbia and Montenegro.
The high percentage of support sorts (where targets
are identified by accompanying aircraft, as opposed
to strike sorts where aircraft use their weaponry)
was a result of the special circumstances of the war
and the aims established by NATO. These aims were
first published in a 17-point statement, almost a
month after the bombing campaign was underway. It
is worth examining some of these points, which are
given on the following page.

Javier Solana (1942 — present)

Javier Solana served as Secretary General of NATO from
1995 until the end of 1999. Born in Spain in 1942, he
was a professor of Physics before entering politics and
becoming a member of parliament, where he served
for almost 20 years. He took the post in NATO and
immediately had to confront the problems caused by
the Bosnian war and NATO's intervention there. Solana
is widely seen as being an effective leader of NATO
during his period in office and after he stepped down he
took up a role in the EU. He was knighted for his work in
diplomacy by the King of Spain in 2010.
Extract from NATO’s Statement of Aims.

- Agree to the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons, and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organizations; and

- Provide credible assurance of his [Milošević’s] willingness to work for the establishment of a political framework agreement based on the Rambouillet Accords.

6 NATO is prepared to suspend its airstrikes once Belgrade has unequivocally accepted the above-mentioned conditions and demonstrably begun to withdraw its forces from Kosovo according to a precise and rapid timetable.

14 We reaffirm our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries in the region.

17 It is our aim to make stability in Southeast Europe a priority of our trans-Atlantic agenda. Our governments will cooperate ... in forging a better future for the region, one based upon democracy, justice, economic integration and security cooperation.


It is clear, at least in some of the statements, that NATO had clarified its war aims and was determined to deal with the problems of the refugees as well as attempting to solve the wider regional issues.

Operation Allied Force was a remarkably successful air campaign and marked a turning point in aerial warfare for the 21st century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the primitive aircraft then in existence were used primarily for reconnaissance, to provide information for the artillery to range their guns and hit their targets. Once aircraft began to be armed with weapons that grew more sophisticated as technology developed, they were used in conjunction with other branches of the military in a more strategic manner. The most notable example of this is probably the use by the Nazi war machine in carrying out blitzkrieg (“lightning war”) during the Second World War. The weapons used in Operation Allied Force were guided by sophisticated global positioning satellite technology and so-called “smart” bombs, which could hit precise targets in a manner that avoided casualties. Long-range missions with the sophisticated B-2 stealth bomber were carried out from bases as far away as the USA. Flying halfway around the world to drop their 2,000-pound bombs and returning safely demonstrated the intensive use of modern precision-strike systems. Amazingly, only two aircraft were lost and no servicemen were killed on active service.

Pilots carrying out NATO operations reported some of the difficulties in fighting a consensus war where individual targets had to be identified. It was determined that flying and bombing would be from 15,000 feet, to avoid planes being put at excessive risk from surface-to-air missiles such as Stingers. Without troops on the ground to find the Serbs, support air spotters had to direct bombers to their targets. One pilot, Squadron Leader Christopher Huckstep of the Royal Air Force remembers one example:
Found the target, (he said) happy with that. I can see the little tiny vehicles that we’re talking about. And then just as I round out to set up for the attack, the American calls... “Hold it!” or words to that effect. “There’s a civilian bus has pulled up next to them.”

— Christopher Huckstep, 2000
The CNN webpage has details of each day of the bombing, gathered from press conferences. These feature a number of NATO's military personnel, including NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark, speaking about the day's missions and targets.

You can learn a lot from listening to some of the content, such as the following:

- NATO military spokesman Colonel Konrad Freytag Uses maps to explain days 17 and 18 of NATO air attacks on Yugoslavia
- British Air Commodore David Wilby describes days 9–16.
- US General and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark describes days 1–8.

The air strike was postponed

In fighting this war, NATO was spending a lot of its assets to get relatively little in return, but that was the nature of the air campaign in Kosovo. Accidents inevitably happened. Some of the more publicized news stories in the air campaign were just those: the few mistakes that were made and which resulted in casualties and headline news.

Mistakes made: Collateral damage in the air war

The term “collateral damage” refers to damage inflicted on people or structures other than the intended target. Collateral damage happens in any war and may include civilian casualties or damage to structures such as schools, hospitals or other public buildings.

In the middle of April, NATO targeted what it thought was a military convoy. However, the strike hit a column of Kosovar Albanian refugees, killing more than 80 civilians. It was a mistake, but one which highlighted the risks of the campaign; it was used by the Serbs, who showed these pictures of dead civilians on Belgrade television stations, as propaganda. A week later, when NATO leaders gathered for the 50th anniversary celebrations for the founding of the organization, there was some disquiet about how the air war was progressing.
The accidental attack on a convoy, 14 April 1999

In a strike against a convoy believed to consist of Yugoslav army troops, NATO planes struck a column containing a number of Albanian refugees. They were located over a 12-mile stretch of road near the village of Djakovica in Western Kosovo, close to the border with Albania. A total of 82 were killed and 50 injured in the attack. The event was the biggest military blunder of the campaign. It is useful to examine this tragedy as a means of ascertaining how mistakes are made in war and also how events such as these can be used as propaganda in the media.

_NATO does not strike anything which is not directly connected with fuelling the Yugoslav war machine._

— NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, 1999

Initially, the German defence minister accused the Serbs of the bombing, but the next day NATO acknowledged that it was responsible and that about a dozen planes had been involved in attacks on more than one convoy, dropping a total of nine bombs. The organization said in a press release that the attack was carried out because military vehicles were presumed to be in the area: "Serbian police or army vehicles might have been in or near the convoy". The spokesman clarified that the mistake had been made because the lead vehicles of the convoy had "several characteristics of military movement — uniform size, shape and colour as seen from the air, as well as consistent spacing between vehicles and a relatively high speed" (see http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/un/nato061300.htm#1VB2).

Later that day, Serbian authorities took foreign journalists to the scene to show them the site of the attack. They found scenes of disaster, with "bodies charred or blown to pieces, tractors reduced to twisted wreckage and houses in ruins" (http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/Nabmn200-02.htm).

It was useful for the Serb authorities to highlight such mistakes. NATO on the other hand, while acknowledging its "mistakes", blamed the government of Slobodan Milošević for the incidents. Days later, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea referred to the lack of constraints on Milošević’s government regarding press freedom:

_Night and day, I am under pressure from journalists to justify NATO’s actions, but I am struck that Slobodan Milosevic is not asked to justify anything ... Milosevic is unaware of the constraints connected with the media._

— Jamie Shea, 1999

The UN investigation that took place after the war blamed the mistake on the height the aircraft were flying over the supposed target:

_It is the opinion of the committee that civilians were not deliberately attacked in this incident ... it is difficult for any aircrew operating an aircraft flying at several hundred miles an hour and at a substantial height to distinguish between military and civilian vehicles in a convoy. As soon as the crews of the attacking aircraft became aware of the presence of civilians, the attack ceased._

— ICTY report

A cartoon published in the UK newspaper, The Times, on 16 April 1999
The pressure on NATO to accomplish the task was greater after this example of collateral damage. However, pressure is always felt more keenly in a democracy where the different constituents have the freedoms often curtailed under more authoritarian governments. In spite of NATO protestations that it was not targeting civilians, the attack increased international pressure to halt the whole campaign.

**The man in charge of the war**

US General Wesley Clark commanded NATO forces during Operation Allied Force in the Kosovo war and served as the Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO from 1997 to 2000. Born in 1944, he graduated as valedictorian of his West Point class in 1966 and gained a degree from the University of Oxford in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Clark served in the US army for over 30 years, including in Vietnam, where he was wounded and received commendations.

Clark was an academic as well as a military man, and was appointed to US European Command in the summer of 1997, during the Clinton administration. He had served in the Bosnian war, meeting a number of the Serb leaders including Milošević. His approach was sometimes criticized by politicians back home when he pushed for the deployment of ground troops. Clark was, though, a popular and successful commander in winning the war against Serbia. He was frequently seen in media broadcasts, and came across to the public as a straight-talking, effective military commander. Clark led NATO to victory and, as there were no combat deaths during the campaign, he became the first US general to win a war without losing any soldiers in combat.

At the end of the war in July, it was reported that Clark would be relinquishing his position as NATO commander and returning to the USA. This tarnished his reputation, and evidence suggests that it was due to issues such as his strong advocacy of the use of ground troops and his high public profile. These views alienated some of Clinton’s top advisers in the Pentagon and members of the National Security Council (NSC). Clark did have his strong supporters, however, among them Swamie Hunt, former ambassador to Austria.

Hunt wrote directly to the White House on 30 July 1999, asking the president to consider the consequences of removing General Clark. Extracts from the letter are given below. This source is an unusual example of an appeal sent by a private individual to the White House, indicating support for one of the key players in the Kosovo war.
Letter from Swanee Hunt to the White House on 30 July 1999, asking President Clinton to allow General Clark to continue as NATO commander.

Dear Mr. President,

The International Herald Tribune and Boston Globe have, very sadly, carried several stories of your administration publicly slapping General Wesley Clark following his successful leadership of the Kosovo campaign. I believe you can turn this around, and I respectfully ask that you make amends for this public disgracing of one of your most courageous advocates. Wes Clark should serve out his full term as NATO commander. He has been a robust champion for you in winning the war in Kosovo, and he has earned the respect of our NATO allies... From what I read, he now appears to retain his command without the support of key players in the Pentagon, and, most importantly, without your backing. As a direct result, he will be unable to speak convincingly for us or for NATO.

How on earth can a military leader face a Milošević with that sort of apprehension about his career? Should he look at the enemy in front of him, or over his shoulder? Wes leaned forward, and thank God he did. He should not be punished now by those who disagreed. History will show he was one of the only right-thinking military leaders in this whole Balkan mess. If he is now disgraced, that lesson will become precedent in future military situations... You have displayed exceptional leadership in this recent conflict. Please don’t let a passionate advocate for your values and vision of a multi-cultural world, in which tyrants are courageously confronted, be publicly demeaned because of internal disagreements within your administration. Your leadership is needed now.

Sincerely, Swanee.

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of this source.

General Wesley Clark was not reappointed to command NATO. He retired from the army in 2000 and later entered the political arena, running for the presidency in 2004 as a democrat. He lost the nomination to John Kerry.

Waging war
Despite the gap between the two sides in air power, the Yugoslav army was in fact one of the best-equipped military forces in Eastern Europe. In size, the army was approximately the sixth largest in the world and possessed a considerable amount of ex-Soviet weaponry. For most of the time though, it had to hide from air attacks carried out by NATO forces and it turned out to be remarkably successful in doing so. In part, the Serbs were able to do this due to the rugged terrain of Kosovo.
and Southern Serbia, as well as the very poor weather experienced during the campaign, which lasted two and a half months before it finally came to a close in June 1999. In addition, the Serbs put their troops under bridges, in villages and towns, and anywhere near to civilians to make it more difficult for the allied forces to attack. Locals even reported seeing Serb soldiers walking in civilian convoys to avoid being targeted and using Red Cross vehicles to transport military equipment, an act specifically banned by the Geneva Convention.

In April, to put further pressure on the Serbian government, NATO took the bombing campaign into Belgrade itself. NATO Commander Wesley Clark recognized that “it was time to ratchet up the intensity of the air campaign. We had to take the targets in downtown Belgrade under attack. We had to go to the headquarters of the organization that were doing the ethnic cleansing” (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/clark.html).

Missiles took out the Ministry of Interior in downtown Belgrade and then concentrated on electrical grids, refineries and bridges. On 23 April, NATO aircraft attacked media outlets, bombing the Serbian state television in Belgrade, one of the companies run by Milošević’s wife, Mirjana Marković. Eleven civilian employees were killed in the strike, which became one of the more controversial of the campaign. The facility was undoubtedly being used to disseminate war propaganda, and so was considered a legitimate target.

There is a link here to the case study on the Rwandan genocide. Recall the debates over the Hutu use of RTLM radio and Kangura newspaper to broadcast the killings and identify targets during 1994.

US pilots were interviewed later on their experiences. These interviews demonstrate the concern as well as the level of training and skill required to fight in a way that minimizes collateral damage. Captain Thad Darger, who flew one of the A117 stealth fighters recalls, “The plane is flying itself. The auto pilot on the stealth fighter was made to take us to the target, to get us there on time”. On his last mission, he “was given a target, specific to the 117 community, we call it a ‘non-collateral damage target’ where we couldn’t accept anything besides the target itself being destroyed ... I was probably as nervous as I’ve ever been in my life for the last 60 seconds. It was exciting” (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/darger.html).

One of only two allied aircraft shot down in the air war, an F-117A stealth fighter was brought down over Serbia in the first week of the bombing campaign. It is now on display at the Museum of Aviation in Belgrade. The aircraft, called “Something Wicked”, was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile battery at 8.15am on 27 March 1999. The Serbian crew reportedly saw the aircraft on their radar when its bomb bay doors were opened. The crew fired a surface-to-air missile, striking the aircraft and bringing it down. The NATO pilot ejected and was rescued.
 CHAPTER 2.6: THE NATO BOMBING CAMPAIGN: OPERATION ALLIED FORCE

The bombing of the Chinese embassy, 7 May 1999

In one of the most infamous mistakes of the campaign, on 7 May 1999, NATO aircraft bombed downtown Belgrade, accidentally hitting the Chinese embassy and killing three journalists. The embassy building was hit by five bombs from aircraft that had taken off from bases in the USA. The real target, the government supply and procurement building, was over 400 metres away, and the embassy was struck as a result of a technological error made by the CIA intelligence operatives guiding the NATO planes to targets in the city that evening. The US government later said that the mistake had been made due to “outdated maps”.

The Chinese reaction was swift and severe. Li Peng, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, called it a “gross violation of China’s sovereignty” (http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200006/13/eng20000613_42856.html). US embassies and businesses in China were attacked and protests took place in Chinese cities. These continued for four days until Chinese state television allowed a broadcast by President Clinton, in which he publicly apologized for the error. Subsequent investigations supported the accidental nature of the bombing, but the incident worsened relations between NATO and the Chinese and Russians, both of whom were against the use of force. Later in 1999, the US government agreed to pay $28 million in compensation for damage caused to the Chinese embassy.

Working together: NATO allies and public opinion

At the same time as force was being used, diplomatic efforts were being employed in an effort to get Milošević to agree terms. At the start of the air campaign, Clinton had denied that the USA would be putting ground troops into Kosovo: “I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war”, he stated in his 24 March address to the American people. This angered some in the military who saw the similarities to the USA’s role in Vietnam: the USA’s ability to win a war being held back by political necessities. In a sense, NATO was fighting with one arm tied behind its back. General Short commented:

If you take the country to war ... then you get it done as quickly as you can ... We use force as a last resort, in the NATO alliance and in my country, so when the decision is made to use force, then we need to go in with overwhelming force, quite frankly, extraordinary violence that the speed of it, the lethality of it ... the weight of it has to make an incredible impression on the adversary, to such a degree that he is stunned and shocked.

-- Michael C Short, 2000
However, all governments in the West were concerned about public opinion. They had to be. Some believe that the pressure from a critical public certainly encouraged Milošević to take his chances and stand firm. He had seen the NATO alliance in action in the four days of bombing raids conducted by Britain and the USA in December 1998 against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. These had precipitated protests in Western capitals and Milošević thought that, if Serbia could be resolved to resist, then pressure might also be brought on allied governments at home to halt the bombing. This, with the support he believed Serbia would get from Russia, might help Serbia’s position in a negotiated settlement.

The impact of a sustained and bloody bombing campaign on civilian centres such as Belgrade could backfire on the allies. In an interview after the Kosovo campaign NATO Commander Wesley Clark reminded people that:

In Europe, quite understandably, there’s a terrible aftermath of World War Two. There are memories of the terror of bombing, and what it does to civilian populations. Many NATO leaders, as children, experienced the aftermath of World War Two or lived through bombing raids. There was a particularly vicious German raid against Belgrade on April 6, 1941 where 17,000 people reportedly were killed in Belgrade in a single night – a real blot in German memories, and in the memories of many others. European leaders were acutely aware of the sensitivity of their publics to the dangers of unrestricted aerial warfare. So we had to explain that we weren’t into unrestricted aerial warfare. We had to convince them of the validity of the targets, the accuracy of the delivery systems, the skill and courage of the airmen, and their ability to deliver weapons with pinpoint accuracy. Over a period of time, we did that ... our plan was to escalate as rapidly as possible, to do as much as we could. But we also recognized that no single target, no set of targets, and no bombing series was more important than maintaining the consensus of NATO.

— Wesley Clark

In the end, public opinion in the West was critical at times but the media campaign and the conduct of the war were sufficiently balanced to achieve consensus and support from the vast majority in the NATO countries.

Right now, in the middle of Europe, at the doorstep of NATO, an entire people are being made to abandon their homeland or die – not because of anything they’ve done, but simply because of who they are.

— Bill Clinton, 1999
Ethnic cleansing and the refugee crisis

What the Serbs were doing to the civilian population in Kosovo certainly encouraged public opinion in the West to support the NATO campaign. One of the principal aims of Operation Allied Force had been to respond to the campaign of ethnic cleansing being carried out by the Serbs against the Kosovar Albanians. If the aim of the air campaign was to quickly persuade Milošević to change his mind and abandon Kosovo, and to stop his campaign of ethnic cleansing, then the allies were disappointed. By day 4 of the bombing campaign, there was a mass exodus of people from Kosovo. It was, of course, entirely predictable that the Serbian government would have used the NATO attack as a cover to continue its campaign against the Kosovars, and some Western analysts were critical of the NATO campaign because it added to the misery of many refugees. The scenes of civilians streaming out of the province were alarming for many.

The allies coordinated humanitarian assistance operations under the umbrella of what was known as Operation Allied Harbour, which continued both during and after the conflict. Soon, statements were being made by NATO leaders to justify the continued bombing campaign and to clarify the aims of NATO. In a speech given in Norfolk, Virginia, USA in April 1999, Clinton said:
Our objective is to restore the Kosovars to their homes with security and self-governance. Our bombing campaign is designed to exact an unacceptably high price for Mr. Milosevic's present policy of repression and ethnic cleansing and to seriously diminish his military capacity to maintain that policy.

— Bill Clinton, 1999

The bombing of Belgrade in April certainly accelerated the process of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. There was now evidence of large-scale operations going on throughout the province, with the police, local forces and the Yugoslav military involved. Few really predicted the scale and the speed of expulsions from Kosovo. Within three weeks of the start of the bombing, over half a million refugees had left Kosovo and fled to neighbouring countries. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that a total of 850,000 ethnic Albanians were forced out. This represented more than 80% of the population of the province, and in all, a total of 90% of all the Albanians were forced to move (see http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/10/26/under-orders-war-crimes-kosovo).

One Serb soldier described how they went about the process.

There was a system that was applied throughout all the Yugoslavian wars. You would surround the village on three sides, and the fourth would be left for the civilians to run out of, so they had the opportunity of leaving the village. When a young Albanian was caught, it was assumed he was KLA. He'd be taken away and questioned, and afterwards he'd be shot. The questioning was a formality.

— Anonymous Serb soldier, PBS "Frontline", 2000

The NATO bombing campaign had not caused the campaign of ethnic cleansing but it certainly provided the impetus and the cover for the Serbian authorities to carry out their plans, thus accelerating the movement of people out of the province. It probably also contributed to some of the atrocities that were committed by the Serbs. The frustration and resentment many Serbs felt might be blamed on the Kosovar Albanians, and revenge killings certainly happened as a result. One of Milošević's aims appears to have been to take advantage of the bombing to get rid of as many Albanians as possible in Kosovo. At the borders, many refugees were stripped of their valuables and belongings, as well as their personal identification documents, even their car license plates, in a strategy known as "identity cleansing". This illegal practice supports the argument that what was happening was a deliberate policy carried out by the Serbian authorities, which would have made it much more difficult for refugees to return to their homes.
If the first few days of the Operation Allied Force had not been good publicity for NATO, the images coming out of Kosovo of the lines of refugees tarnished the image of the Serbian government in the eyes of the world. By the end of March, tens of thousands of Albanian refugees had been lined up at gunpoint and deported from the country, many of them into Montenegro. One of the more controversial questions is whether this was a planned campaign by the Serbian government. According to Human Rights Watch, the forced expulsions were well-organized, suggesting that they had been planned in advance. Many towns and villages were cleared and people were escorted towards the border on buses, trains and convoys of tractors.

A number of short video clips showing refugees are available, many of them on YouTube. For example, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcW3Y9Zf0H8 and watch the clip [14 minutes 30 seconds] Kosovo Refugee Crisis - US Soldiers on Trial - NATO bombs Belgrade [1999].

This video is particularly worth seeing for its coverage of the refugees on the Macedonian and Albanian borders. In addition, it has interviews with relief agencies, material on the captured US airmen when their plane was shot down over Serbia, as well as material on the bombing campaign against Belgrade. Finally, there is an interesting interview with a Serbian government spokesman, who argues that the NATO bombing has caused the refugee crisis.

Why were Kosovar Albanians forced to leave?
The forced mass exodus of Kosovar Albanians served the Serb purpose in a number of ways.

- It may have been intended rapidly to change Kosovo’s demographic make-up.
- It may also have been done with a view to forcing a split into separate Serbian and Albanian provinces.
- Finally, the very nature, speed and ruthlessness of the forced expulsions may have been designed to tie down NATO’s efforts, weaken their resolve to fight and to terrorize people into submission.

**Thinking and communication skills**


With a partner, discuss and make notes on what you think the cartoon is trying to portray.
Ultimately, the forced exodus achieved none of these things. The sight of helpless refugees provoked sympathy for the Kosovars and outrage against the Serbs for their actions. Whether these expulsions were a planned campaign coordinated by the Belgrade government has been called into question. Information came out very soon after the start of NATO’s bombing campaign suggesting that the expulsions were part of long-term Serbian planning.

**Operation Horseshoe**

The name given by the Serbian government to the plan of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo was Operation Horseshoe (or *Potkova*). In April 1999, the German foreign ministry said it had received information about the operation from the former Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadezhda Neynski, during a television documentary. Although she claimed it could “not be verified”, the plan showed a concerted campaign to rid Kosovo of as many Albanians as possible. This would be done in two phases: first, destroy the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA); and second, “cleanse” Kosovo of ethnic Albanians. The latter phase would be accomplished by squeezing the Albanian population from three sides, and driving the population out through the south-western corner of the province and into Albania and Macedonia: a horseshoe strategy.

In April 1999, Germany’s Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping said:

*The clear objective (of Operation Horseshoe) was to ethnically cleanse Kosovo and remove the whole civilian population. The operation was prepared by President Milosevic and his regime. It was organised at November 1998, started during the Rambouillet negotiations and intensified after the talks ended.*

— Rudolf Scharping, 1999
The Serbs denied there was a systematic plan to rid Kosovo of the Albanians, but that they were entitled to move elements of the population "for their own safety". They claimed it was NATO bombing that was driving refugees out of the province. Amnesty International stated there was clear evidence that Yugoslav security forces were expelling ethnic Albanians en masse from their homes, and committing war crimes, including rape. After the war, the ICTY brought charges against Milošević and other Yugoslav officials for this forcible population displacement. However, the existence of a formal government plan (Operation Horseshoe) has never been clearly proven. Critics of the NATO policy called the revelation of Operation Horseshoe "Western disinformation" designed to justify the continued bombing. At his trial in The Hague, Milošević denied the existence of the plan and, in the end, documents regarding Operation Horseshoe were withdrawn from the trial proceedings, as they could not be independently verified. In 2001, a German documentary called It Began With a Lie claimed there was no clear evidence of the planned campaign to rid Kosovo of ethnic Albanians. To date, the Serb government continues to deny there ever was a plan, and Serbian security files remain closed to the public.

![Image](image.png)

Hundreds of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo arrive in trucks at the Albanian town of Kukes in March 1999, bringing with them tales of psychological terror and brutal killings by the Serbs.

Communication skills

Go to: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYW0ui?I_v](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYW0ui?I_v)

Watch footage from the German documentary It Began With a Lie, presented on YouTube in two parts, with German commentary and English subtitles.
Source A

An 11-year-old girl who survived the massacre at Prekaz in February 1998 recalls what happened.

We heard shot noise, we heard the tanks. ... We went in the basement, covered ourselves with the blankets and laid down. [My uncle] and his wife were upstairs.

*How long did the fight last?*

Three days and three nights. ... The third day they shot at us and killed my uncle. He was in the other room. [My cousin] saw him and said “They killed our father,” and started crying and he shot three times in the air. [Then the Serbs] threw a grenade in the room. [My cousin] got wounded and almost everyone else. [His sister] was trapped because something from the sofa was on her leg. My mother said we should help her but they threw another grenade in another room. All were killed almost. Me with my sister were alive, and [two of my cousins] ... I asked [my cousin] where [her brother was]. She said he went out. Two policemen came near the door and they threw another grenade in. They killed [her]. I was left alive with my other sister only. They called me. They were speaking Serbian, I didn’t know what they were saying so I thought I’d run away. My sister was screaming. I realized they had taken her. They were looking if anyone was left alive and he noticed that I was breathing. They captured me and they took me out and I saw my sister dead outside. They put me in a truck. ... One policeman asked me where was [my uncle and my father]. I told him they were in Germany. One policeman was fooling around with me, he touched my hair. I took his hand away and said, “Don’t touch me.” They put me in a van and took me to the factory. They left me there and covered me with a sack. ... Then they took me with the other people and left me with them. Then they let us go ... Some friends of my sister took me with them. I stayed with them three days and then my uncle came and took me to K.

Source B

A 45-year-old female survivor of the January 1999 massacre at Račak recalls what happened.

At six in the morning we were asleep. We heard shootings. My daughter said we should take some things, but I said we should just run away. My brother came [and] called us to go to him; as we were going they shot him first in the leg. We lay down. ... One of my cousins wanted to help my brother but he was killed. Also my brother was killed at that time. ... We tried to run away. We knew that the [OSCE] observers were in Shtimje, and we tried to go there. I crawled to the house, I left the dead there. I tried to save the others of my family. But here they fired again and more civilians tried to run away. They fired with all the weapons they had ...

There were some other people killed and injured. The police came later and found us there, around 50 people, men, women and children. They took us men out. When I went out I saw the policemen putting their masks on. Some of them were local Serbs who worked in the police force. Three of them I knew very well and I recognized them. ... We were 22 men. They put us in line. They told to one of them, “You are in the KLA.” They tied our hands, and told us to leave. We ran, and fell in a hole. They fired at us, and we didn’t move so that they would think that we were dead. We were like that for some time. Afterwards I came to take the bodies of my brother and my nephew. ... I learned later that the others in that place were massacred very bad. They cut the head from one of them, took out a heart from the other. The world must know that Serbs left women without husbands, mothers without children. ... Yes, I think it is worth it. I am 45 years old, and all these years, no Albanian did anything to any Serb. But they did terrible things to us.
Source C

Another female survivor of the January 1999 massacre at Račak recalls what happened.

We were sleeping around six o'clock. My husband heard the noise and we ran. ... All our family ran for their lives. They started shooting at us. My husband was shot... My husband was shot for the second time and died. My second son was shot also, my husband's brother as well. ... We ran then, when I came back I saw my son dead. ... We were afraid to stay in our houses so we just left the bodies there and we went in the bushes hiding. We were without water, without food. It was very cold. ... Serbs did terrible things to our people. I have lot of pain. I have five others [remaining in my family] but my pain for the two [I lost] is so big. The international community helped us but I don't know what is going to be in the future. One thing we know. We don't want to see any Serb here. Our heart is burned. They killed, massacred, raped our children. I can't imagine living with them anymore. ... They (the Serbs) drove us out of the mountains and beat us, separated the men and finally we arrived in Albania. They took money from us, they took women, they killed a child in the main street. ... I thank them [NATO] they did what they could. Thank God they came with the land forces, because from air they were doing nothing. ... I am still afraid. I don't know why NATO still takes care of Serbs. I am a woman but if I can I would do something to them. Personally I can't see a Serb living here.

Source D

An account from a Serbian soldier who served in a tank unit in Kosovo.

There was a village around B. Early in the morning, we were given an order to take the village in front of us ... that's how it was said ...we have to take this village ... we were told to take our places and wait for the support which was the police. ...They arrived, we had to take our positions and fire a few projectiles, after which the [police] would go into the village. This particular one was Albanian civilians, there were and because there was no plan was this big incident where one because one of his friends was previous night, took around 3 children, put them against the wall, and shot them. ... When he heard the news that his first neighbour was killed in the bombing, he wasn't the same person any more. He went berserk. I was just passing when I saw a lot of civilians, mainly women and children. They were crouching. He was in front of them with a machine gun. From the noise of the motor I couldn't make out what he was saying to them, I just saw that he was shouting at them, he was probably saying that they were guilty for his neighbour's death. He lifted his gun and started firing at them. The women and children were just falling. When he finished his business, his crime, he turned around and went away. They were left there lying in the grass. I felt crazy, heavy. My colleague was trying to calm me down saying. "You didn't do this, you are not to blame for this, we had to come here, we were mobilised. You have your family at home. Think of them. You have to make it back." He managed to calm me down a little, but that picture will be in front of my eyes for the rest of my life.

First question, part a – 3 marks
In what ways does Source C suggest that it would be very hard for the two ethnic groups to live side by side again in the future?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to their origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source A and D for anyone wanting to understand the role of ethnicity in the war.

Third question – 6 marks
What evidence is there in Sources A-D that the police were involved in the process of ethnic cleansing?

Third question – 6 marks
What evidence is there in Sources A-D that individuals acted out of their own volition?
The end of the bombing campaign

In April, pressure began to grow among the allies for ground forces to be used in Kosovo. The biggest proponent was the British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Statements made by President Clinton in March regarding the use of US soldiers on the ground had been questioned by both the military hierarchy and other allied governments. Nevertheless, as we have seen, maintaining the integrity and unity of the coalition forces under NATO command had been achieved, and the bombing campaign had undoubtedly brought about severe strains on the Yugoslav government, destroying much of its ability to resist. On 24 May, NATO attacks destroyed Serbia’s power grids in and around Belgrade, and news was leaked of the possible use of ground troops. That week, Clinton made the following comment to King Abdullah of Jordan:

I don’t think that we or our allies should take any options off the table, and that has been my position from the very beginning.

— Bill Clinton, 1999

It can be argued that this had not been Clinton’s position from the beginning. This comment represented a change of tone that opened the possibility that troops might be deployed; this, together with the success of the air strikes, almost certainly convinced Milošević that a new phase was coming. It was time to make some kind of peace.

At the same time, behind the scenes, diplomats were trying to find a resolution to the conflict without rewarding Milošević with a division of the spoils or seeing Kosovo still occupied by Serbian forces. The impetus for negotiation came, not surprisingly, from Serbia’s old ally, Russia. The leader of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, had sanctioned Security Council resolutions, but would not have approved any military action through the UN. Both Russia and China opposed the use of force and, of course, both wielded veto power in the Security Council.

It was time for Russia once again to play its role as supporter of the Serbs. Yeltsin sent his representative Viktor Chernomyrdin, former Russian prime minister, to Belgrade for talks with Milošević. Chernomyrdin was to meet with Milošević on a total of five occasions. Below is an extract from an interview in which he describes his impression of meeting the Yugoslav president and outlines Russia’s concerns at NATO actions.

I met Milosevic five times. Five times I flew out to Belgrade. But only last time, fifth time, I’ve been there with [Finnish President] Ahtisaari. I was always on my own before. Milosevic made great impression on me in the beginning of my first meeting, which was a bit unusual. He was calm and purposeful. He was confident in that he was right, he would win, NATO would lose and his nation was supporting him, which was true at that time. There was no opposition. Everybody was in harmony. We had long nonstop dialogue for 8 or 9 hours. I was convincing him: why he was not right, what could happen, what will happen and how will be all end up. The fact is when someone talks about those events or regulation of the process or stopping war; then, everybody emphasizes that it was Milosevic who gave up. It wasn’t like that. ... Both sides settled by compromise; both Milosevic
and NATO. The compromise was from both sides. When I was convincing Milosevic, I convinced USA and the other countries' leaders the same time. So they came to decision and we could stop this war all together as a result.

Russia was acted towards in not polite way. First time since the Second World War, the Alliance invaded the independent country, Russia was against. China was against. If you remember, Security Council didn’t approve. Two countries out of five were against. It happened first time in postwar history. We knew it was a humiliation of my country. It was sacred to me to stand up for my country, first. Second, I knew that there were many people who wanted Russia to join this conflict. Who wanted? Well, first of all Milosevic. He tried very hard to join us [sic] this conflict, to defend Serbs.

— Viktor Chernomyrdin, 2000

Communication and thinking skills

1. In the interview above, Chernomyrdin comments, "Both sides settled by compromise: both Milosevic and NATO". From your own knowledge, what do you think were the "compromises" each side had to make in order to come to an agreement for a ceasefire?

2. What do you think Chernomyrdin means by "Russia was acted towards in not polite way"? How far might those who sympathize with Russia's position agree and why?

3. What impression do you get from this extract of how diplomacy was able to bring about a ceasefire?

4. The value of a primary eyewitness in situations like this is extremely high, but it can also be problematic in trying to determine what actually happened. Why might this be so? Is there any bias evident in this extract? Although Chernomyrdin spoke some English, what might be lost in translation given the language he is being interviewed in is not his primary language? When addressing each of these issues, try to explain your reasoning.

Meanwhile, the EU asked Ahtisaari to support the Russian efforts for a negotiated settlement. Together, Ahtisaari and Chernomyrdin went to Belgrade to meet Milosevic in May. A week later, Yeltsin invited Milosevic to Moscow and informed the Serbian leader that Russia would support an international proposal for a 10-point programme calling for a ceasefire, international monitoring and a settlement of the Kosovo issue. Russia's own economy was hurting badly, and Yeltsin needed backing from the West. Supporting Milosevic was looking like a poor option to the Russian leadership. On 10 June 1999, the ceasefire agreement was incorporated into UN Security Council Resolution 1244, bringing about a formal end to the war in Kosovo. The air strikes stopped. NATO had won the war.

In Belgrade, Milosevic tried to put on a brave face. On 10 June, he spoke in a televised address to the nation following the suspension of the bombing and the beginning of the Serb withdrawal from Kosovo. It is worth examining elements of this speech to ascertain how political leaders can choose to interpret victory from defeat and to retain their own political position in the face of what had been, for Milosevic, the fourth loss in a war since he came to power in 1989.
Communication, thinking and social skills

Work with a partner to examine the two sources below. Source A is a speech made to the Yugoslav people by President Milošević in Belgrade on 10 June 1999. Source B is a speech made on 11 June 1999 in Washington by President Clinton, who is flushed with victory as he addresses the American people.

With your partner, choose one of the speeches each and, as you read yours, note:

- how the president makes use of language and imagery
- how the president makes use of nationalism
- where there are appeals to emotion
- which segments of society are appealed to in particular
- how the president begins and ends his speech
- how "misdirection" is used to get a point across
- how the president is using the media.

Consider drawing a chart or a table with columns such as "Language and imagery", "Nationalism", "Appeals to emotion", and so on, to help you record all the relevant points. Take turns with your partner to present and explain the notes you have made about the speech you analysed.

Source skills

Source A

Serbian President Milošević addresses Yugoslavia. This speech was made on 10 June 1999 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The remarks were delivered in Serbian and translated by the Associated Press.

Dear citizens. Happy peace to us all!

At this moment, our thoughts go out to the heroes who have given their lives for the defense of the fatherland in the struggle for freedom and dignity of our nation. ... 462 Yugoslav army soldiers and 114 police were killed. We shall never be able to repay them. The entire nation participated in this war - from babies in hospitals to intensive care unit patients, to soldiers in air defense trenches and soldiers on the borders. The people are the heroes and should feel like heroes and behave as such: with dignity, nobility and responsibility. Throughout the rallies in this past year in our country, one motto was often heard: We will not give up Kosovo.

We never gave up Kosovo.

Today, the territorial integrity and sovereignty is guaranteed by the G-8 nations, the U.N. This guarantee is in the draft resolution. Open questions regarding the possible independence of Kosovo in the time before the aggression have been sealed with the Belgrade agreement.

Source B

US President Clinton addresses the USA: "We did the right thing". This speech, made on 11 June 1999, is President Clinton's address to the nation on the conflict in Kosovo.

My fellow Americans, tonight, for the first time in 79 days, the skies over Yugoslavia are silent. The Serb army and police are withdrawing from Kosovo. The 1 million men, women and children driven from their land are preparing to return home. The demands of an outraged and united international
community have been met. I can report to the American people that we have achieved a victory for a safer world, for our democratic values, and for a stronger America.

The result will be security and dignity for the people of Kosovo, achieved by an alliance that stood together in purpose and resolve, assisted by the diplomatic efforts of Russia. This victory brings a new world view that when a people are singled out for destruction because of their heritage and religious faith and we can do something about it, the world will not look the other way.

I want to speak with you for a few moments tonight about why we fought, what we achieved and what we have to do now to advance the peace. ... We should remember that the violence we responded to in Kosovo was the culmination of a 10-year campaign by Slobodan Milosevic, the leader of Serbia, to exploit ethnic and religious difference in order to impose his will on the lands of the former Yugoslavia. That's what he tried to do in Croatia and Bosnia and now in Kosovo. The world saw the terrifying consequences. ... For these atrocities, Mr. Milosevic and his top aides have been indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The consequences of the conflict

The establishment of Kosovo Force (KFOR)

When the fighting had stopped, the peacekeepers could move in. Ironically, in the years to follow, considerably more soldiers died in that role than during the war itself. The mandate to maintain peace is often costly. A task force of peacekeepers, Kosovo Force (KFOR), was created through the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10th, and its principal objectives were to bring about the return of a safe and secure environment for the people of Kosovo. These would be achieved through:

- the immediate and verifiable end of violence and repression in Kosovo
- withdrawal from Kosovo of military, police and paramilitary forces
- establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo, to be decided by the UN Security Council
- the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons, and unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations
- a political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for a substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet Agreement and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)
- the demilitarization of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)
- the stabilization and economic development of the crisis region.

KFOR was to operate under the auspices of the UN but to remain under NATO’s military command. In total, 30 countries – the 19 members of NATO and 11 “partners for peace” – pledged 48,000 troops to serve as the peacekeeping force in the area. They were to be sent there under the name “Operation Joint Guardian” and would ensure the immediate withdrawal of Serbian forces within 11 days of the signing of the agreement. The largest contingent of forces came from the UK, which contributed 13,000 soldiers. Germany sent 8,000 troops; the USA and France each contributed 7,000; and the Italians sent 5,000. Those countries willing to send soldiers to join the peacekeepers and to make a political statement of support included Switzerland, Morocco, Finland and the Ukraine. KFOR’s first commander was to be Lieutenant-General Michael Jackson from the UK.

*KFOR is a force designed to promote democratic values and human rights, not to destroy them.*

— Jamie Shea, 1999

The task facing the soldiers of KFOR was not a combat operation but a role supporting the development of a stable and peaceful Kosovo, and to ensure that the terms of the agreement through Resolution 1244 were met. Thus, ensuring security and maintaining public order, facilitating the return of displaced persons, confiscating illegal weapons, providing medical assistance and expediting the return to a functioning political, social and economic life were all included in the mandate. Special attention had to be paid to the protection of minorities. On June 12, 1999, the work began.

The five leading NATO members – the USA, the UK, France, Germany and Italy – were each given a zone or sector of Kosovo to administer, following a similar arrangement used in the Bosnian war. The British were to control the capital, Priština, and the airport. An incident happened right at the beginning of the KFOR mission that illustrated the fragility and complexities of such peacekeeping operations.
The incident at Priština, June 1999

There was a confrontation between the incoming troops of KFOR and Russian forces over control of Priština International Airport on 12 June 1999, just as the ceasefire had been agreed. The Russians were eager to secure a foothold in Kosovo, having helped to negotiate the ceasefire agreement and having been frustrated throughout the NATO campaign by their inability to influence events. Without prior warning, Russian military high command dispatched about 250 elite Russian soldiers to take control of the airfield. Upon hearing the news, General Wesley Clark, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, asked NATO Secretary General Javier Solano if he had complete control over the mission and whether he was authorized to put soldiers on the ground. Receiving an affirmative answer, General Clark ordered the NATO troops closest to the airport to take control by force if necessary. These happened to be British soldiers under the command of Lieutenant-General Michael Jackson. Jackson wrote later in his autobiography:

_I've thought about this quite a bit since, and my view is that the Russians were making a point by sending a column into Kosovo. They had been worsted in the Cold War, and there was considerable upset, even indignation, on the Russian side about NATO's expansion and the fact that the alliance had undertaken military action against Serbia without a UN Security Council resolution. The intervention was a reminder that the Russians were still players on the world stage, that they still needed to be treated with respect._

— Michael Jackson, 2007

Clark’s contentious decision to challenge the Russians when they were landing soldiers at the airport in Priština was a risky manoeuvre. At the time, Clark’s order was to disarm the Russian soldiers, which would have been highly confrontational. The leaders on the ground refused to do this. Instead, Jackson met the commander of the Russian force, shared a whisky with him and sorted out the potential problems. Jackson refused to enforce Clark’s orders, which were to block the runway and prevent more Russian soldiers landing. Jackson reportedly told Clark, “I’m not going to start the Third World War for you” (in an interview on news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/671495.stm).

△ Lieutenant-General Michael Jackson (right) with NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark (centre) and Charles, Prince of Wales, in Kosovo
Referring to General Clark, Jackson commented:

*Wes Clark was something of a loner, a driven, intensely ambitious man with a piercing stare. Often described as “tightly wound”, he seemed to bring a disturbing zeal to his work. He had a reputation as a very political sort of general, antagonising his military superiors by going over their heads when they did not give him what he wanted. He was not popular among many of his colleagues, who knew him as the “Perfumed Prince”. Like Bill Clinton, he had adopted his stepfather’s name, and, like Bill Clinton, he came from Little Rock, Arkansas. A Vietnam veteran, Wes Clark was a highly educated man – and, again like Bill Clinton, a former Rhodes scholar.*

— Michael Jackson, 2007

Clark’s order to block the runway probably also served to alienate some diplomats back in the USA and contributed to the decision to bring him home early from his NATO command. The episode illustrated not only the fragility of relations between the major powers, but the strength and determination of NATO to follow through with its mission.

At first, the KFOR soldiers who served in Kosovo faced all kinds of humanitarian problems in trying to establish a safe and secure environment. Technically, this meant treating everyone as fairly as possible: the Serbian soldiers in the province, the KLA guerrilla fighters, and civilians of all ethnic groups. In order to establish a safe and secure environment, we need to examine the social and economic consequences of the campaign, the damage to infrastructure in the region, as well as the refugee crisis. After the immense dislocations and deaths as a result of the Bosnian war and the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation, the allies had now committed themselves once more to administer another part of the former Yugoslav state, at great expense and for the unforeseeable future.
The bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade

Source A


Source B


Li Peng, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, said in Belgrade Monday that peace cannot be forged out of bombings. Referring to air strikes against Yugoslavia by a US-led NATO force last year, Li said the assault was a violation of the intent of the United Nations Charter and universally recognized norms governing international relations. The air strikes seriously threatened stability in Europe.

“Today, the gun smoke has dissipated. But, regrettably, the Kosovo issue is unresolved,” Li told a joint session of the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia. “Regional conflicts and disputes can only be resolved through peaceful consultations by parties concerned.”

Li said the US missile attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade 13 months ago that killed three Chinese journalists and rendered the embassy building unusable is “a case of grave international wrongdoing seldom seen in the history of diplomacy and a gross violation of China’s sovereignty.” “The attack outraged the Chinese people,” said Li, who arrived in Belgrade on Sunday for a three-day official visit. The embassy bombing and the deaths of the Chinese journalists sparked anti-American protests in China.

Li expressed his gratitude for the help provided by Yugoslavia. China is in favour of multi-polarity because it is better than having the world dominated by one country. “Given the complexity of international affairs,
it is harmful and also impossible for any one country or a handful of countries to dominate international affairs,” Li asserted.

Source C


BELGRADE, May 8 (Saturday) – NATO missiles plowed into the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during a ferocious allied bombardment Friday that also struck the Interior Ministry and army headquarters and again plunged the capital city into darkness.

The official New China News Agency reported that two staff members were killed, two were missing and more than 20 injured. The strike on the embassy, which NATO acknowledged and said it regretted early today, seemed likely to complicate Western efforts to secure a diplomatic settlement to the Kosovo conflict and to raise new strains in U.S.-Chinese relations.

The government in Beijing, which has opposed the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia since it began 46 days ago, is a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, which means it could veto the peace framework the United States, its leading allies and Russia agreed to Thursday and want the council to approve. China called the council members into session today to consider the embassy bombing but the United States said the airstrikes would not stop, Reuters news agency reported.

Earlier Friday, NATO cluster bombs struck a residential neighborhood and hospital grounds in Nis, Yugoslavia’s third-largest city, killing at least 14 civilians and wounding 30 others. NATO said later that it was “highly probable that a weapon went astray and hit civilian buildings” during an attack on a nearby airfield. Chinese television carried an extensive report on the bombing during its noon newscast. A somber announcer read an official statement condemning the “gross violation of China’s sovereignty.” The statement said, “the U.S.-led NATO attack used three missiles from different directions to attack China’s embassy in Yugoslavia.”

“We are greatly shocked by reports of NATO’s bombing of the Chinese Embassy. We strongly condemn NATO’s act and express our indignity,” Qin said. “NATO should be held responsible for all consequences,” he added, and repeated China’s call for an immediate halt to the bombing.

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, alliance officials said that while each target was “meticulously planned” to minimize civilian loss of life, they acknowledged the strike on the embassy, “NATO regrets any damage to the embassy or injuries to Chinese diplomatic personnel,” a statement said.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said NATO authorities were investigating the Chinese Embassy bombing but could provide no details. “It is a heavy night [of bombing] in Belgrade,” Bacon said, with the attacks focusing on “power facilities and command and control targets.” Friday’s attacks on Belgrade broke a four-day period of relative calm in the capital and concluded a day of relentless allied bombing across the country.

At about 9:25 p.m. (3:25 p.m. EDT), power went out all over Belgrade, the result of an apparent hit on the city’s electric power grid. Anti-aircraft fire lit up the clear night sky.
Source D

Anti-USA protestors in Beijing in May 1999.

First question, part a – 3 marks
In what ways does Source D confirm the information given by Li Peng in Source B?

First question, part b – 2 marks
In Source A, why is the NATO bomb pointing to the pile of bodies in the top right corner of the cartoon?

First question, part b – 2 marks
What is the message of the cartoon in Source A?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to their origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source B and D for anyone wanting to study what happened as a result of the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

Fourth question – 9 marks
Using the sources and your own knowledge, assess the importance of the NATO strike against the Chinese embassy in the Kosovo campaign between March 1999 and June 1999.