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War over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age

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necessary probing questions and providing key guidance.

These issues are especially salient now, as the United States contemplates undertaking military operations that would have profound strategic and political implications, and when indications of significant differences exist between civilian and military leaders concerning strategy and objectives, be it against terrorism or militant Islam.

Eliot Cohen is professor of strategic studies at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. A prolific author on strategy, he has served on the Office of the Secretary of Defense policy planning staff and is currently a member of the Defense Policy Board, advising the secretary of defense. *Supreme Command* is a must read for the highest civilian and military leadership and should also rank high on military professional reading lists.

JAN VAN TOL
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Bacevich, Andrew J., and Eliot A. Cohen, eds. *War over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001. 223pp. \$22.50

During the 1999 Nato-U.S. war against Serbia over Kosovo, an unprecedented number of strategic and defense thinkers published their opinions on what became known as Operation ALLIED FORCE. Most thought and comment at the time was extremely critical of the Clinton administration's efforts to formulate and execute the operation.

Critics bemoaned a warfighting policy that appeared pointed in the direction of a new Vietnam, focusing on gradual

escalation of air strikes without the threat of ground forces. In the end, the Nato coalition forces appeared victorious but weighted with the indefinite mission of peacekeeping in that troubled and violent province. The leader of the Serbian effort, Slobodan Milosevic, ended up on trial for war crimes at the Hague. The leader of the Nato-U.S. armed forces, General Wesley Clarke, left his post shortly after the victory under circumstances that looked at the time like a relief for cause. In late summer 2002, Nato soldiers continued their frustrating mission of keeping ethnically divided Kosovars from killing each other—welcome to “Victory,” post-Cold War style. While such behavior and commentary seem unusual, the real issue is this: does the 1999 Kosovo “war” provide a signpost for future conflicts in the early twenty-first century, or is that conflict an aberration best relegated to discussions among armchair warriors comfortably fortified with vintage brandy?

In their book *War over Kosovo*, Bacevich, Cohen, and their contributors make compelling arguments that the Kosovo War is a signpost, a cautionary tale of the extent and limits of post-Cold War superpower politics. Besides the articles by the editors, the contributions are by William Arkin, James Kurth, Anat Lieven, Alberto Coll, and Michael Vickers.

Readers should note well that this is a book with an attitude. Its articles, uniformly excellent and insightful, accept, even embrace, controversy. Given the nature of the war, such a position for the book should seem normal.

William Arkin's lead article, summarizing the history of the conflict, should become the standard for historians and

strategists seeking to understand the war in some form less than book size. Arkin advises readers not to be deceived by appearances or Powerpoint briefings on just what decided victory for the Nato allies. The article certainly should replace the disingenuous official Kosovo report by the secretary of defense used in the curriculum of the Naval War College and other service schools.

However, the Arkin piece is only the appetizer. There is insufficient room to highlight all the fine articles in this review, but two struck this reviewer between the eyes. In the first, Anatol Lieven warns American “hawks” not to believe Kosovo is a model for future wars but that the conflict “will persuade . . . adversaries to confront the West indirectly, using nonstate actors.” This was written before 11 September 2002. Lieven points out that the chaotic, decentralized, and violent nature of likely future conflict environments, including Afghanistan, can negate the high-technology advantages of the West, forcing the fighting down to earth on conditions more to the liking of the enemy. Reading Lieven, and then watching General Tommy Franks tell U.S. troops in Afghanistan that the war will be a long one, made this reviewer’s hands cold and sweaty. In the second article, Andrew Bacevich conducts a revisionist tour de force describing the evolution of the Clausewitzian “remarkable trinity” as it applies to the United States, focusing especially on the latest changes effected by the Clinton administration and first demonstrated in Kosovo. At the risk of simplification, Bacevich would have the current trinity composed of a globally involved government able to use a professional, not

conscript, armed force wherever it wants in face of an uninterested public—as long as the conflict is quick and bloodless. Whether or not one agrees with Bacevich’s premise and findings, the power and flow of the author’s conceptualization is truly impressive.

This is a necessary book for those who teach and practice national security. The writing and thinking are deep and compelling. One must congratulate the editors for their selections. One also must hope that defense decision makers, as well as students who will form the next generation of leadership, will read and pay serious attention to the works in this book.

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Locher, James R., III. *Victory on the Potomac*. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2002. 507pp. \$34.95

Jim Locher describes the history of the intense bureaucratic struggle to redesign relationships between the Joint Chiefs of Staff, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, secretary of defense, the president, and Congress. The prolonged struggle culminated in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. This document is thought by many to be the most sweeping military reform of the last forty years. Senators Barry Goldwater and Sam Nunn believed the system was broken and consequently was providing low-quality military advice to the secretary of defense. Others, particularly the service chiefs and the secretary of defense, strongly disagreed with this assessment. *Victory on the Potomac*