

Kosovo Seminar

Lucy Webster

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Asking what the United States is doing to formulate new strategies and policies to deal with the world of the 21st Century, Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) opened the October 13 seminar on Kosovo: New Paradigm or Object Lesson. Organized by ECAAR and the Center for Defense Information, the seminar consisted of three panels: The War in Kosovo, The U.S. Military Buildup and Rational Readiness and America's Global Role.

Schumer set the theme of the day stating that “we can't afford to keep planning to fight the Soviet Empire on the one hand, and expect to meet the strategic challenges of the 21st Century on the other.” Spending over \$70 billion on the F-22 program, but less than \$1 billion in 1999 on counterproliferation programs was an unacceptable mismatch in funding priorities. “...[I]n order to figure out the best way to structure the military budget, we must first determine our global strategy: our procurement decisions must follow our grand strategy, not the other way around,” he continued.

This theme was developed more fully by the speakers on the U.S. military buildup and rational readiness. Prof. Kori Schake of the National Defense University said U.S. defense spending had been reduced by about one third since the height of the Cold War, and force reductions were about the same, while commitments had not been reduced by any comparable amount.

This, she stated, raised several questions. First, the strain on personnel probably contributed to low retention rates and meant that many skilled sergeants left before they became the topnotch master sergeants on which the quality of U.S. forces depend.

The disjunction between capacities and commitments also made one ask whether the military was preparing for the kinds of threats it was most likely to face. “That means,” she continued, “we need to think in new ways about asymmetric risks, about terrorism, and about whether you need the existing large building blocks for major theater wars or rather more numerous, smaller, more flexible capabilities.” She stressed that it was a question of risk management.

She expressed concern about other trends: The tendency to use military force as the main tool of American diplomacy, and congressional add-ons for things like construction projects when the need is to close unused bases, and to focus on expenditures that help carry out the national defense policy.

Dr. Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution agreed that readiness had been strained, but said one should also note “how good the force still is.” The question of what size forces are deployed for specific operations raised the question of “what's so hard about having 6,000 U.S. Army troops in Bosnia when you've got 500,000 in the force”? Part of the reason for that, he said, was the two-war strategy. “The Army is required to maintain a force structure that envisions two somewhat miniaturized, but still pretty comparable Desert Storm-like wars in two places at the same time.” What is needed is a somewhat nuanced focus on what sort of alternative two-war requirement would be suitable and acceptable to those who are critical of present commitments.

Admiral Eugene Carroll, Jr., of the Center for Defense Information, said there are no peer powers or alliances that pose any significant military threat to the United States or its allies, nor will there be any for the next 15 to 20 years at the earliest, except for Russia's strategic nuclear weapons. What we do face is global violence in the form of civil wars, political terrorists, irredentist movements and occasional trans-border wars. But in no place is

there a threat of direct land, air or naval attack against U.S. forces or territory.

Nevertheless, current U.S. strategy dictates that we maintain combat ready forces capable of fighting and winning two major regional conflicts nearly simultaneously, without help from friends or allies. Thus the United States is to sustain a high level of forward military presence, with nearly 250,000 combat ready forces continually deployed on foreign soil and seas.

Franklyn Spinney, who stressed that he was speaking for himself and not for his employer, the Department of Defense, said U.S. military readiness is deteriorating rapidly, but not for lack of money.

In fact, he said, we are spending money like we never spent it before on forces, but people in the field are hurting. One reason concerns the rising cost of modernization. Another is that, while all forces were reduced one third, combat forces have declined by some 40 to 50 percent. Understrength units and shortfalls in critical skills mean that, in addition to the low percentage of troops deployed, there is also a low percentage of deployable troops deployed.

Action in Kosovo Highlights Problems

The implicit question addressed by the one day seminar was whether NATO's campaign against Yugoslavia gave new focus to the mismatch between U.S. military capacities and global challenges.

On this point, Senator Schumer said he was concerned "that the Kosovo victory will lull us into a false belief that America can solve all the world's problems by bombing from 15,000 feet." "In fact," he continued, "most military experts agree that the biggest threats to global peace and security. . . will be from escalating regional conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

"We must devise new military strategies that adapt to these new realities. That means restructuring our military — as Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki stated recently — to become lighter, more flexible and agile. The new focus needs to be on quick deployment, light armor, and a greater prepositioning of heavy weapons."

Impact of the Bombing Campaign

James Galbraith developed the case against bombing as an effective approach to military goals. As regards Kosovo, he said, "a bombing campaign cannot be calibrated to prevent, or forestall, or even much impede, a campaign of expulsion of a civilian population on the ground." (see the article on pages 8 and 9.)

Richard Kaufman, who had played a key role in organizing the seminar, said that NATO estimates that 150 Yugoslav tanks were destroyed was later revised downward to 93 and that some unofficial estimates are much lower.

Andrew Cockburn, author of several books on military, security issues, thought that even the widely quoted Serb figure of 13 tanks destroyed by NATO may be an over-estimate. Although General Wesley Clark reported 93 Serb tanks as destroyed, he could only identify 26 tanks and selfpropelled field artillery pieces on the ground when he went to look for them.

In view of this lack of success against military targets, Cockburn thought the main lesson learned by NATO was probably that more ruthless and earlier attacks on civilian targets would be needed for success in the future.

Kosovo, Russia and Expanding NATO

Richard Kaufman said the Kosovo events reinforce remilitarization trends as countries conclude that it is more than ever in their interests to be inside rather than outside the NATO military alliance.

Colonel Edward L. King, a long-time senior military advisor in the Senate, stressed his conclusion that expanding NATO was an incautious step, increasing commitments and undermining prospects for good relations with Russia. He also said that NATO should keep its core mission of defense and not try to become a European fire brigade. Instead, the United States “should welcome and faithfully support the encouraging efforts of European leaders to create a creditable, autonomous EU military force.”

America’s Global Role

Michael Intriligator, UCLA professor and vice chair of ECAAR, opened the panel on America’s Global Role saying U.S. involvement in Kosovo, as well as the expansion of NATO were at the cost of “being blindsided, not looking at more important problems in the world,” most particularly the U.S. relationship with Russia, helping them to implement treaties to destroy and dismantle weapons of mass destruction. He also stressed the fact that military action under the U.N. system requires U.N. endorsement.

Lucy Webster, who chaired the seminar and circulated a paper, raised a related point. She asked whether closer cooperation with Russia might not have led to an abstention by Russia and China on a Security Council decision to send a large number of peace-enforcement troops into Kosovo to separate the Serb military from the Kosovar civilians. For the future, she thought that NATO resolve could be used in this way instead of bombing.

Senator Gary Hart said a high priority was “to integrate Russia into the West.” Ever since August 1991 there had been no real debate on what are current threats to U.S. security. Both political “parties found it convenient to just coast along . . . on Cold War energy and the national security structures laid down in the Cold War.”

Outlining his own policy ideas, not as co-chair of the U.S. Commission on National Security for the 21st Century, Hart said the U.S. should take the lead in internationalizing peacemaking. This does not mean high-performance weapons — “more people have been killed in the last decade by machetes.”

At the same time energy independence was important; the U.S. should not fight for Saudi oil. And regarding “an attack on the homeland of the United States, the Trident submarine, the B-2 bomber, highprecision munitions . . . are not going to stop the threat.” For this he proposed fuller use of the National Guard.

The Idea of Sovereign Responsibility

John Steinbruner of the Brookings Institution said Russian “isolation and economic weakness is by far the greatest danger to the United States.”

Kosovo, he said, represents “a new security imperative of very great consequence. This has to do with defending legal order generally.” When legal order breaks down as in Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, or Kosovo, there is “an incubation of illegal activity which can and does globally extend itself.” We are seeing the early stages of a doctrine of sovereign responsibility, with an obligation to uphold a minimal legal standard; and if a country can’t or won’t, the international community has to do it on behalf of everyone. We and everyone else, will have to be the world’s policeman.

If in 1998 the U.S. president had said the threat to the people of Kosovo was one for the international community,

he could have gone to Russia and China and said that this should be done through the Security Council, but that action would be taken in any case. Yugoslav sovereignty would remain, but international force would be used to “restore the legal standards that the parties cannot attain.” If the U.S. had said it was going to organize such a force, Russia and China might have helped, to maintain sovereignty and protect people.

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