

**UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF
THE KOSOVO CONFLICT**

By

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**Every good deed has consequences—many
of which are unintended.**

Decisions have consequences. Most include both favorable and unfavorable outcomes. A good decision-maker will identify and consider all the likely consequences of a pending decision. Unfavorable outcomes will not be ignored or rationalized away but given proportionate weight in the decision process. When this is done, unintended (not anticipated) outcomes will be minimized

When the decision was made by NATO to launch a declared conflict against Yugoslavia, several consequences of the decision were acknowledged, reported and discussed in the media. The final decision was rationalized by arguing that numerous humanitarian considerations and preventing a major conflict in the Balkans outweighed the monetary and personal costs of the conflict, and the monetary and personal costs of peacekeeping after the conflict ended. An unstated consideration was the need to define a long-term mission for NATO now that the Cold War was over. The unintended consequences of NATO's decisions that were not considered, or if considered, never acknowledged by NATO included:

* Increased defense spending worldwide, i.e., a new arms race. A nation that believes justifiably or otherwise, that at some future time its internal decisions may bring down the wrath of NATO, will spend more on arms, not less. An unintended consequence of its action will be proportionate increases in defense spending by its neighbors.

* The race among nations to become nuclear powers will accelerate. Countries that cannot match NATO's conventional forces will opt for a nuclear and/or chemical/biological weapon capability. And it is quite likely that smaller nations will pool resources to achieve this capability.

* Alliances, as counterweights to NATO, under whatever guise, will increase. A Russian-Chinese alliance in some form is almost a certainty. In this respect, Russia fears NATO expansion to the East. China fears American involvement over Tibet and Taiwan.

* No matter NATO's good intentions, a precedent has been set by the air strikes against Yugoslavia. NATO's action was "out of theater," that is, not contemplated in NATO's charter. Grievances worldwide, real and imagined, will have their supporters within NATO countries. One may be sure that the Black community in the United States will not stand idly by should a "Kosovo" occur in Africa. No NATO nation with significant minority population will be exempt from such pressures.

* A poor example has been set for the upcoming generation. The message now is "Might makes right." In other words, NATO, or the United States acting unilaterally, will act when it has overwhelming power. When it does not, for example, in responding to China's repression of Tibet, nothing will be done. Secretary of State Albright's rationalization that "We do what we can do" has a hollow ring indeed.

* United States military spending, by definition, must increase given the fact that we must allow for deployment of our military forces not only when our national interests are threatened, but also when they are not. To a lesser extent such will also apply to other NATO member countries.

* With a U.S. led NATO demonstrably willing to militarily involve itself in humanitarian/political causes worldwide, the opportunity for mischief by America's most likely adversaries increase exponentially. For example, we will probably never know why the People's Republic of China failed to act against Taiwan at the height of NATO involvement in the Balkans.

If the United States continues on its present path, it is not too much to ask that to the greatest extent possible, both favorable and unfavorable consequences of any future military action be candidly stated and debated.

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