Kosovo and the end of the United Nations?

Introduction

Kosovo is not a security issue for Europe only: it must be seen in the context of global political processes. In this chapter, I argue that Kosovo was an episode in the long-term process of the domestication and marginalisation of the United Nations (UN) by the United States. These relations of domination are underpinned by Manichean dichotomous myths of good and evil and by rituals of enemy construction. Yugoslavia (Serbia) assumed the role of evil enemy, allegedly committing grave human rights’ violations and, in Kosovo, even genocide. The complicity of Kofi Annan’s UN appears to give the US the sovereign right to decide about global friends and enemies, in the name of a universal morality that it legislates, interprets and implements.

Although the systematic domestication of the UN began in the Reagan era, following the defeat of radical Third World calls for reforms, I start by reconstructing the 1990s’ conflict between the United States and Boutros-Ghali’s UN. This opens a window to an understanding both of the meaning of earlier actions and of the course of later developments in global politics, including Kosovo. What happened between the United States and the Boutros-Ghali-led UN in 1992–96? I treat Boutros-Ghali’s book Unvanquished. A U.S.–U.N. Saga,¹ a story about his five-year term as UN secretary-general (1992–96), as a crucial new piece of evidence.²

On the basis of Boutros-Ghali’s testimony, and with the help of theoretical and explanatory literature, I formulate four principles of the US foreign policy of the 1990s, and show how Boutros-Ghali seemed to offend all of them. These offences explain why the US wanted to get rid of Boutros-Ghali. In addition to drawing on explanatory theories, I supplement this evidence by an analysis of published UN documents, that is, press releases, speeches, reports and agendas. I also utilise a number of second-hand sources that make reference to US policy statements and opinions expressed by the UN.
Having completed an analysis of the reasons for Boutros-Ghali’s expulsion, I discuss the functioning of the US-domesticated UN, led by the new secretary-general Kofi Annan. As it will turn out, recent developments, including the Kosovo episode, seem to confirm both the reconstruction of the deep grammar of US foreign policy and my analysis of global relations of domination.

This chapter is first and foremost a contribution to discussions about the prospects and consequences of US hegemony. These discussions originated in the debate about the hegemonic stability theory that took place in the late 1970s and for much of the 1980s. Following the end of the Cold War, the same assumptions, themes and tenets reappeared in the revisions of the Cold War’s history and in the topical security policy discourse about unipolarity and US hegemony. In contrast to neo-realism, my focus is on social meanings and practices, relations of domination, and their political economy underpinnings. From this angle, I analyse the global consequences of the tendency on the part of the US towards an ‘ever-harder will’ and increasingly ‘narrow power’. My rather strong conclusion will be that the US – currently driven, torpedo-like, by a predestined and potentially destructive programme – tends to be dangerous both to itself and to the world as a whole.

The UN has had a useful role in alleviating and transforming conflicts in global politics. Kosovo indicates that the domestication and marginalisation of the UN has already seriously impaired its role and capabilities. In addition, the UN has also had a lot of potential in the governance of processes known as globalisation. Yet, there seems to be very little room to rejuvenate, empower or democratise the UN. Therefore, it is my further argument that the time may have come to build foundations for a new, universal, global political organisation, at first perhaps in spite of the will of the US (and its closest ally, the United Kingdom).

Principles of US foreign policy in the 1990s

First principle: The US is the world leader and others should follow it

In his book *Unvanquished. A U.S.–U.N. Saga*, Boutros-Ghali depicts himself as a Western-minded scholar and politician. In the mid-1950s, when Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, Boutros-Ghali, already active in Egyptian politics, was labelled ‘pro-American’ and was not permitted to travel abroad. In the UN office of secretary-general, more than thirty years later, he recognised ‘America [as] the only superpower’ and argued that ‘the first priority of a Secretary-General has to be the relationship between the United States and the United Nations’. However, he also asked for relative autonomy, for instance in a meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher and the US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright:
‘I know that I must have the US support to succeed. But,’ I said, ‘please allow me from time to time to differ publicly from US policy. This would help the UN reinforce its own personality and maintain its integrity. It would help dispel the image among many member states that the UN is just the tool of the US’ . . . I was sure that Christopher and Albright would understand my point of view. I was completely wrong. My words appeared to shock them . . . They didn’t speak . . . It would be some time before I fully realised that the United States sees little need for diplomacy; power is enough. Only the weak rely on diplomacy . . . But the Roman Empire had no need for diplomacy. Nor does the United States. Diplomacy is perceived by an imperial power as a waste of time and prestige and a sign of weakness.9

When it became clear in 1996 that the US was ‘not in favour’ of his re-election for a second term as secretary-general, Boutros-Ghali made inquiries about the reasons for this opposition to him. He found the response hard to believe: ‘Boutros-Ghali has been too independent.’10 One US official even explained that ‘he would not do what we wanted him to do as quickly as we wanted him to do’.11

Was Boutros-Ghali ‘too independent’? There are reasons to believe that he was. During his five-year term, Boutros-Ghali had many substantial disagreements with the US. He did not approve of the standard Western anti-Serb interpretation of the events in Bosnia. Furthermore, he accused the Clinton administration of prolonging the conflict by its vacillating policies and myopic and one-sided criticism of the Vance–Owen plan: ‘The United States wanted to reduce the 43 per cent of the territory that the Vance–Owen plan gave the Serbs. It would take two and a half more years of bloody war and war crimes before the United States, at Dayton, would give the Serbs 49 per cent.’12

As for Somalia, ‘Clinton’s inclination was to blame the United Nations for what had been entirely an American disaster’.13 In the cases of Libya and Iraq, Boutros-Ghali claimed that the Western powers were acting against international law.14 Clearly, for the US all this constituted too much independent thinking. Even worse for Boutros-Ghali, he considered himself a man of principle. Irrespective of the context, he could not accept the anti-diplomatic rudeness of the US foreign policy makers. Although he was ready to make compromises towards meeting the US demands for full and absolute sovereignty, reverence for its power and respect for its national interest, he could not accept the total denial of the principle of the equality of states.15 Nor could he accept the way the US chose to violate international law as it wished.

At the very end of his term, in autumn 1996, Boutros-Ghali wrote *An Agenda for Democratisation*, a follow-up to his *An Agenda for Peace* and *An Agenda for Development*.16 The latter half of this text, which he wrote himself – even against the advice of many members of his staff – is entirely dedicated to the democratisation of international relations. This is the most
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radical and frank of all of the texts he wrote as secretary-general, and it stemmed directly from his personal experiences both as an African and as secretary-general. As he explains in his *A U.S.–U.N. Saga*:

The U.S. veto was a rejection of democracy. That America would argue for democracy within every state but reject it in the world’s organisation of states was a theme heard over and over in the Arab and third-world press. It seemed strange to me too, because the key theme to my term as secretary-general was democratisation. The fact that a single vote – that of the United States – could dictate the outcome at the United Nations threatened hopes for increasing democratisation on the international scene.17

The *Agenda for Democratisation* emphasises that although ‘interrupted by the Cold War’, democratisation in accordance with the spirit of the UN Charter is also about ‘the project of democratic international organisations’.18 ‘A supportive international environment for democracy’ requires, in the post-Cold War situation and the context of globalisation, ‘democratisation at the international level, so that democratisation within States can take root, so that problems brought on by globalisation which affect all States may be more effectively solved and so that a new, stable and equitable international system can be constructed’.19

Second principle: *US foreign policy is constituted by Manichean myths and rituals of enemy construction*

Boutros-Ghali is very explicit about the first principle, but in explicating the second we need some external help. My theory-informed claim is that the US foreign policy discourse is based on the Manichean dichotomy between good and evil. This claim, although able to explain a number of Boutros-Ghali’s concerns, has both a methodological and a normative problem. Methodologically, it is problematical because it is so strong and simple that it tends to eradicate nuances and complications. Normatively, it is problematical because it lapses so easily itself into a form of Manicheanism. So let me explicate this claim.20 The claim is that there has been a tendency in post-Second World War US foreign policy discourse, first of all, to imagine a morally pure ideal: ‘free market, human rights and democracy’.21 Second, the actuality of the real world is counterpoised to the ideal. There is totalitarianism, tyranny, un-freedom, violation of fundamental human rights and violence. Less radically, there is also the corrupted and sinful world that leans towards state-centrism, collectivism and socialism, although this partially deviant element may respect, for instance, human rights and the principles of liberal democracy (think about the ‘corrupt’ and often criticised and ridiculed case of the ‘Third Way’ of Sweden22).

As in many other cultures, in the US there is a widely felt need for something that would give meaning to life and world history. Because of its
artificial nature and abstract individuality, this need may, indeed, be particularly strong in the United States. Purpose also gives legitimisation to a state and its decision making. Hence the struggle to make the world accord with the morally pure ideal.

The most common way of finding purpose and legitimacy is by way of constructing enemies. First, the enemies are named or labelled. Second, this naming has to be legitimised in public. Third, myths demonstrating the necessity or inevitability of ‘X’ being an evil-doer are told and circulated. Fourth, these labels, legitimisations and myths, are sedimented into the deep structures of discourses, from where they can be drawn – also for strategic purposes. Fifth, rituals of ‘realism’ and crudeness performed against the evil-doers serve as ‘vivid re-enactments of the myths’ essential themes’.23

Boutros-Ghali’s problem was that although he accepted the basic tenets of the moral ideal of the capitalist market economy, of human rights and democracy, he was an outsider both to the USAmerican myths and practices of constructing enemies. Let’s consider again the substantial disagreements between the Clinton administration and Boutros-Ghali. The case of Bosnia is perhaps the most telling of them all:

One week later, Carrington and I met on the thirty-eighth floor of the United Nations. ‘If I may update you on Bosnia-Herzegovina,’ he said, ‘most people see it as poor Muslims being put upon, wicked Serbs, and neutral Croats. In fact, the Serbs are wicked, but so are the others.’ I was inclined to agree with him. The West seemed to regard the Serbs as the only wrongdoers, whereas I felt that no party in Bosnia was free of at least some of the blame for the cruel conflict.24

But, if this is true, why were the Serbs chosen as the enemy? The Slovenians and the Croats are supposedly Western, in contrast to Muslims and Serbs. But why Serbs, not the Muslims? My hypothesis is that it was because the Serbs were willing – unlike the other nations of Yugoslavia – to continue the identity of Yugoslavia and its unifying Socialist Party. Thence, the others could be seen as legitimate liberation movements fighting against the corrupted evil-doers, namely the Serbs still inclined to bad socialism.25 Of course, as Peter Viggo Jakobsen has pointed out, the Croats and the Bosnians were busy constructing this image of the Serbs in the US. They hired public relations firms to give them a better image in the US; moreover, the Croats and the Muslims had powerful friends in Washington – something that the Serbs did not have.26 Furthermore, in the course of the war, this image was reinforced by Serb dominance in the battlefield and the related atrocities. Whatever the true explanation, clearly Boutros-Ghali offended the USAmerican myths and the US sovereign right to determine the identities of the evil enemies.

This was repeated with regard to the Middle Eastern enemies Iraq and Libya. By thinking and arguing that it was the West, and not the Arab usual
suspects, that was violating international law, Boutros-Ghali intervened in Western myth making and its rituals of enemy construction. Quite innocently, his judgement may have been made in his capacity as a legal scholar (between 1949 and 1977, Boutros-Ghali was professor of international law and international relations at Cairo University) and an international civil servant aiming at impartiality, but that excuse was unavailable to the US and the UK.

Third principle: US foreign policy should maximise the instant support of public opinion

Media and public opinion figure everywhere in Boutros-Ghali’s book. In many cases, the media are described as a strategic instrument for politicians. Strategic actions were conducted by way of leaking information – and, at least as often, misinformation – to the media. The US foreign policy makers used this tactic also against Boutros-Ghali.27 Many analysts agree: cases such as the (second) Gulf War and Haiti show how the US government has been using the media in support of its preferred policies.28

For Boutros-Ghali, even when the media were apparently representing actualities (‘news about recent developments’), they seem to have, rather, constituted those actualities, often on the basis of systematic distortion and misrepresentation. Commercial media seem to operate outside the scientific principles of source criticism and public verifiability, and the democratic principles of accountability. The result tends to be a set of very specific social practices resembling Baudrillard’s infamous self-referential system of simulation, in which all sense of truth and origin is lost in the play of endlessly replicating systems of commodified signs and images.29

Sometimes, in Boutros-Ghali’s story, the function of the commercial media is simply to draw attention away from real world issues.30 People were, for instance, busy watching the Olympic Games in Atlanta and nobody paid any attention to the ‘diplomatic embarrassments to the Clinton administration delivered in Yaoundé, Beijing and Moscow’.31 Moreover, it has been argued that with the increased privatisation and commercialisation of the globalising media, there is a real tendency for ‘info-tainment’ and ‘titty-tainment’ – with strong tendencies to reduce everything to entertaining simulation – to substitute debates and documentaries for in-depth public affairs analyses.32 Again, this tends to detach media representations from external reality and create instead a system of self-referential commodified signs.

Yet, the media are powerful in structuring political actions. Among politicians and analysts alike, there is a sense of the increased importance of real-time television in particular. Also, in Boutros-Ghali’s story, the media appear constantly to have been setting the stage for public politics. Somalia is a case in point:
Television news programs, which earlier had aroused a groundswell of public sympathy for the victims of famine imposed by Somali gunmen, now broadcast, over and over again, distressing scenes of the captured American helicopter pilot and the footage of the dead US Ranger being dragged through Mogadishu streets. Congressman Charles Rangel, an old friend, told me that the American public was particularly outraged by this event because those who were dragging the body of the American soldier were black.33

Consequently, the public opinion of newspaper editors and congressmen ‘surged strongly against the US presence in Somalia’, although, according to Boutros-Ghali, in reality ‘the October 3 raid had in fact dealt an almost devastating blow to Aidid’s position’.34 But the media seemed to be interested only in the dramatic sensations of the killings of the USAmerican soldiers.35

Boutros-Ghali also provides further structural criticism of the commercial media (in the US, in particular). An important theme of the book is the alleged short-termism of the media and its fatal consequences to the UN. Only sudden violence and dramatic failures seemed to be gaining attention; all success stories were silenced because there is nothing dramatic about them.36 Let me try to analyse the role of the media in US foreign policy in greater depth.

Firstly, the US foreign policy makers seem to have been guided by the rule of instant maximisation of favourable public opinion, which is constituted by two interrelated things: media coverage and framing; and weekly or monthly opinion poll results.

Secondly, only the USAmerican opinions count, since only the citizens of the US can vote in elections or lobby effectively in Washington. Even that audience is unrepresentative: around only 40 per cent of Americans vote, and lobbying requires money and contacts. Moreover, although the US media corporations have been globalising since the 1970s, this globalisation is asymmetrical: the US is a huge exporter and a very modest importer of movies, popular music, TV programmes, news, books, magazines, advertisements, and associated lifestyles and values.37 Most USAmericans are never exposed to foreign news, documents or entertainment, not even foreign material in English. And even when their interest is aroused they are usually ignorant of the very basics of the countries, regions and organisations concerned. Consequently, given also the tendency of the media towards mere simulation, it is possible to mislead and manipulate US citizens, particularly by ritually re-enacting the fundamental myths and their essential themes referred to earlier.

Thirdly, USAmerican public opinion follows the commercial logic of the media, for which sex and violence (including death/war) are topics warranting by far the most intensive coverage.38 This seems to be due to the commercial exploitation of fundamental fears and desires of the human condition; and due also to their strong contrast to the boring reproduction of everyday
necessities and tightly regulated behaviour at work. Sensationalised spectacles of love/sex and violence/death are captivating – but only for a while.

Fourthly, there are two rules of operation that public opinion seems to follow in relation to foreign policy: (a) a successful and limited war tends to unite the nation behind the president and his administration; but (b) there is only limited toleration for media representations of dead US soldiers, a legacy of the Vietnam experience. Hence, a limited and low-risk use of military force in particular can serve to increase the support of public opinion; even higher risks may be tolerated if vital values and interests are presumed to be at stake. The real risk is, of course, that there will be casualties and an escalation of hostilities from which there is no exit, i.e. a full-scale war.

Finally, although these globalising media presuppose some kind of crude global ethics – ‘The evil-doers are killing them/us, and something has to be done!’ – it follows the logic of selective sensationalism. How does the system of selection function? There seems to be a hierarchy in the value of human beings. On the one hand, USAmericans are irreplaceable and the most valuable; West Europeans come a close second; and at very bottom are black Africans, while others fall somewhere in-between. On the other hand, a capability to pay yields disproportional coverage (also because the advertisers are more interested in paying customers). Indeed, it can also be asked: how is it possible to get covered if you are not rich? ‘Maybe you have to die in large numbers in one spot at one time.’ So the rules behind the selection of topics come down to sensationalising dramatic situations and selecting the people in terms of their geographical location and wealth. Sensationalism is what really matters: even poor and less valuable people can be covered if they die in large numbers in one spot at one time.

The implication of enemy construction is that the ‘evil-doers’ are denied their humanity. They can be killed. Given that an evil-doer can be located, it is often good politics for US foreign policy makers to attack foreign, mostly unfamiliar, places by military means – but with the condition that there is no real or significant (perceived) risk to US soldiers. Technologically advanced ‘air campaigns’ and particularly attacks by cruise missiles are the optimal military facilities for these purposes.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Yugoslavia have been very good targets, because very few USAmericans have more than a very superficial knowledge of these countries anyway. They are good targets also because human life in those countries is considered much less valuable (particularly the lives of the evil-doers, whether presumed terrorists, fundamentalists, ethnic cleansers, supporters or soldiers of a tyrant, etc.) than are the lives of USAmericans. At the level of legitimisation, these kinds of military actions constitute rituals of ‘realism’ and crudeness against the evil-doers.

However, while the architecture of the new world order may consist of simulations, its impact will be all too real for those actors that are targeted
militarily, punished economically, or otherwise threatened. In the 1990s, the US has intervened dozens of times in different countries in all continents, and has imposed new unilateral economic sanctions, or threatened legislation to do so, 60 times on 35 countries which together represent 40 per cent of the world’s population. Sheer economic interests apart, these sanctions have typically stemmed from the (simulatory) process of identifying evil-doers and punishing them.

Fourth principle: The US stands for the absolute, global freedom of corporate capitalism (except sometimes in the US)

Boutros-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Development* begins with the premiss that the motor of development is economic growth. The book assumes that a vibrant private sector and participation in an open world economy are the conditions for achieving this aim. Yet, Boutros-Ghali did not satisfy the orthodox economic political aspirations of the US foreign policy makers. After all, from 1974 to 1977, Boutros-Ghali was a member of the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the Arab Socialist Union, and until assuming the office of secretary-general of the UN he was also vice-president of the Socialist International. Also, in the 1990s, despite his ‘modern’ outlook, Boutros-Ghali was too much of a social democrat to accept USAmerican free-market fundamentalism.

What was the principle that Boutros-Ghali offended? It seems that the US stands for the absolute global freedom of corporate capitalism. Suffice it to point out here that the origins of this preference lie in the rise of the group of USAmerican statesmen, capitalists and labour leaders in the 1930s and 1940s. This group identified Americanism with liberalism. The turn to neo-liberalism in the 1970s meant, ideologically, that this group was reconstituted along more orthodox lines. Consequently, the US started to assert its visions and interests unilaterally. Since the early 1980s, the US has acquired an increasingly strong grip on the systems of global governance, and has advocated the absolute global freedom of corporate capitalism everywhere, having indulged in partial state regulation of the market since the 1930s. Relations of domination also play a role in multilateral negotiations and arrangements. The initiatives for further liberalisation and corporate privileges have come from Washington, with the ever-loyal support of the UK. Since the US has had the largest resources, routinely used as leverage in negotiations, with the best-informed and best-equipped staff to take care of its national interests, such multilateral arrangements have constantly reflected the vision of the absolute freedom of corporate capitalism, and have also protected the areas vital to the ‘national interest’ of the US.

US policies may have benefited the USAmerican national economy, but the rest of the world has been doing much less well since the Bretton Woods era. Besides economic indicators showing worsening global conditions, the
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poor of the world are now absolutely poorer than they have been since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Except for some improvements in health care and literacy, absolute and relative poverty have increased not only in Africa, but in Asia, the CIS countries, Eastern Europe and Latin America. In 1998–99, with the world gross output per capita growing at the rate of 1.5–1.8 per cent, more than eighty countries have lower per capita incomes than a decade or more ago, and at least fifty-five countries have consistently declining per capita incomes. The income gap between the 20 per cent of the world’s people living in the richest countries and the 20 per cent in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960. Income inequalities have also risen sharply within the rich countries – particularly in the US and the UK – and the global poor are now as poor or poorer than they were in 1820.

It is in this context that Boutros-Ghali’s social democratic tenets offended US foreign policy makers:

The rich countries feared the rise of another movement from the poor regions of the world demanding redistribution. They were inclined to dismiss the entire subject with the assertion that development was a concept whose time had gone; any country nowadays, they said, could emulate the ‘Asian tigers’ if it could just summon the will to adopt the market economy. Yet this was patently impossible for the poorest of the poor, particularly Africa. They lacked the human resources, the capital, and the infrastructure to take advantage of the new global economy. And soon the Asian economy itself would falter.

As if to foment the fears of the US and the UK, Boutros-Ghali himself argued that ‘the gap between rich and poor was becoming morally insupportable and economically irrational, even for the wealthiest nations of the world’. To grasp the extent and substance of these disagreements, let us have a quick look at his Agenda for Development. In it, there is a strong emphasis on the need for active governmental intervention. Against the strictly universalist principles of structural adjustment programmes like the International Monetary Fund and those of the World Bank, the Agenda underlines the crucial differences between contexts of development. ’As conditions, circumstances and capacities differ, so too must the mechanisms for generating growth.’ The Agenda is also explicitly in favour of ‘land reform and other measures of social justice’, and there is also a commitment to full employment, poverty reduction, and improved patterns of income distribution through greater equality of opportunity. All of this amounts to too much independent thinking.

The limits of US domination in the UN

The US had its way: Kofi Annan became the new secretary-general as of 1 January 1997. UN developments, decisions and actions after Boutros-Ghali have certainly not helped to dispel the image that the UN is merely a tool of
the US. Since the early 1980s, the US has, step by step, secured a stronger hold over the UN, also by means of financial conditioning. In 1985, the US Congress passed legislation that posed a serious threat to the financial situation and organisational principles of the UN. The Kassebaum Amendment provided that the US could pay no more than 20 per cent of the annual budgets of any part of the UN system without weighted voting on budgetary matters. A more implicit condition was to make the discourses and policies of the UN more pro-American (and pro-Israel). Also US budget cuts led to American withholdings from the UN budget. Yet, simultaneously, the US rejected the proposal to reduce the US contribution of 25 per cent of the UN budget.

The result has been a constant financial crisis for the UN (many countries have followed the example of the US in not paying their dues in time), and an annual struggle over the US arrears. In effect, the Clinton administration has continued the agenda that was set by Reagan: the stated object is to ‘reform’ the UN, but a failure to ‘reform’ according to US guidelines may lead to the withdrawal of the United States.

The outcome of these financial and political pressures has been a gradually increasingly USAmericanised United Nations. Boutros-Ghali allowed for an over-representation of USAmericans in top UN jobs (also in the name of efficiency and a merit-based system) – and when he occasionally struggled against it, the US got its way anyway. On top of the overall change in the UN system after Boutros-Ghali, the thirty-eighth floor is also controlled by USAmericans. Half of Kofi Annan’s speechwriters are USAmericans, and in effect the speechwriters act as the secretary-general’s censors. Yet, this strengthening of the US grip over the UN system has not changed the financial stand of the US.

Although the US can, to a large extent, control the bureaucratic system of the UN – and even censor discussions and research reports – and although the US can use its superpower status, ties of alliance, consent, loyalty and gratitude, as well as its financial and diplomatic resources, as leverage in persuading and inducing other states to agree with it, it can never control the UN system totally. No matter what the US does, there are other permanent members in the Security Council who can, at any time, choose to vote differently. Even the disempowered General Assembly has the power to deny the vote of the US because of its illegal arrears (a threat that has been repeated annually).

Also, from within the UN system – either spontaneously from the less obedient UN agencies or from the transnational civil society that is being incorporated into the functioning of the UN – ideas and initiatives can and do come up that are not in accordance with the principles of US foreign policy. Hence, for the US, the UN is a constant nuisance. So no matter how USAmerican the UN in fact becomes, it can still refuse to grant authorisation for US actions, or can even come up with initiatives that go against the
will of the US. And although UN authorisation and the UN logo have often been useful, there are thus sufficient reasons for the continued US hostility towards, and impatience with, the UN.

The UN after Boutros-Ghali: implementing the will of the US in Kosovo and elsewhere

There are thus two major tendencies: the USAmericanisation of the UN; and the marginalisation of the UN. Along these lines, there have been substantial changes since Boutros-Ghali. Let us consider his *An Agenda for Peace*. Despite disagreements between Boutros-Ghali and the US (and other Western countries) on a number of crisis situations, the concepts introduced in *An Agenda for Peace* have turned out to be the least controversial. In fact, they have been path-setting and widely accepted. Concepts such as ‘peace making’ and ‘peace enforcement’ are now part of the mainstream Western security discourse. Rupasinghe has suggested that ‘the world’s military establishments have seized upon these military elements in *An Agenda for Peace* and have been keen to interpret the United Nations’ enhanced profile in terms of greater role for their own interests’.

However, the pluralistic nature of the UN and its Security Council has been a major problem for the US (and the Western Alliance). The authority of the UN has given, and may give, legitimacy to peace making and military operations, but within the UN it has also been possible to legitimately contest US moral, legal and factual interpretations – in effect, the claims to unproblematic leadership; the autonomous rituals of enemy construction; and the domestically driven or interest-based imperatives to act ‘decisively’ in certain, selected cases.

From this perspective, the undeclared NATO war against Yugoslavia also can be seen as a Western liberation from the constraints of the UN – with the approval of its new secretary-general. For years, as long as the situation – and the struggle against Serb repression – remained non-violent, the US and the West did not pay much attention. Once more systematic violence was started by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the situation deteriorated quickly. The Serb police started fighting back by crude means familiar from other anti-guerrilla wars. Quickly, Kosovo became an issue, and thereafter increasingly made the headlines and TV news. As the media demanded in early 1998, ‘something had to be done’.

At first, the UN authorised the actions. UN Security Council Resolution 1160 of 31 March 1998 condemned the violence of both sides and advocated autonomy for Kosovo within Yugoslavia. After the fighting of the summer of 1998 and the consequent flood of mostly Kosovar Albanian refugees, Security Council Resolution 1199 of 23 September 1998 was directed more clearly at the Serbian security forces. Since Bosnia, it has been self-evident...
that Serbia is the principal evil-doer, not least for Mrs Albright. However, mainly because of the resistance of Russia and China, the new resolution stopped short of authorising the use of force. Next day, although the use of force was not authorised by the UN, the NATO Council asked the member states to make commitments to participation in air strikes against Yugoslavia. Finally, UN Security Council Resolution 1203 of 24 October 1998 confirmed and validated the tentative treaties on armistice and its surveillance. The task of supervision was given to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Despite the armistice, new violent incidents had occurred already before Christmas 1998. On 21 December, a Serbian policeman was shot dead in Podujevo, and three days later the KLA declared the armistice void. In early January 1999, both sides committed further acts of violence. On 15 January, in Racak, following a Serbian police operation, the bodies of forty-five Kosovar Albanians were shown to the OSCE and, most importantly, the Western media. On the basis of Ambassador William Walker’s offhand and rather one-sided interpretation, this incident was broadcast widely as a cold-blooded massacre by the Serbs – naturally accompanied by graphic pictures of the bodies. It led to further outraged demands ‘to do something’. Moreover, Kofi Annan accused the Serbs of ‘disproportionate use of violence’.

A new threat of air strikes by NATO followed. A 21-day limit was set for both parties. This brought them to the negotiation table in Rambouillet, France. In effect, at the Rambouillet negotiations NATO put forward an ultimatum to Yugoslavia: ‘Either you accept our peace plan, or we will bomb you until you will do so!’ After a confused period of hesitation and resistance, the KLA accepted the plan on 18 March 1999 (in any case, the Kosovar Albanians would not have been bombed), but the Serbian authorities did not. Why? The public picture of the negotiations remains unclear. Nonetheless, there appears to have been an agreement about the basics of autonomy and the political organisation of Kosovo. There may have been some remaining disagreements about the authority and entitlements of the KLA, but it seems that the main reason was that Yugoslavia did not accept the contested Appendix B: Status of Multi-National Military Implementation Force of the agreement.

Mrs Albright gave this new text to the parties only eighteen hours before the end of talks. Yugoslavia would have accepted the OSCE presence, and was ready to negotiate the composition of ‘international presence’, but could not accept foreign military troops – and the NATO troops in particular – and their far-reaching rights to operate freely and with immunity anywhere in Yugoslavia. In a resolution of the Serbian Parliament just before the bombing, when that body rejected the presence of NATO troops in Kosovo, support was given to the idea of UN forces to monitor a political settlement there. For these reasons, a widespread suspicion emerged that Appendix B
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was merely an excuse for the war against the ‘evil-doer, Serbia’, and that the real reasons for the war lay, in part, somewhere else.\(^{67}\) The war may have been an attempt to draw attention away from the Monica Lewinsky affair in the US; and/or to reinforce the US leadership in NATO; and/or to extend the mandate of NATO and give it an independent and central position in the management of global security. Because Yugoslavia did not want NATO troops on its territory, it got war with NATO. Directly, the NATO bombings caused the death of, perhaps, 2,000 people, many of them civilians (roughly as many casualties as in the Kosovo crisis before the war). The infrastructure and economy of Yugoslavia was badly damaged, and the cost of reconstruction alone will be at least US$40 billion. No one has even tried to measure the loss of output and the decrease in the living standards of the citizens of Yugoslavia. The NATO countries spent some US$50 billion on the war, more than their annual official development assistance budget. Indirectly, the bombings precipitated the war between the KLA and the Serbian authorities in Kosovo, with a consequent death toll of 5,000–10,000 people. The bombings, the war and the related Serbian criminal terror campaign led also to a huge refugee problem: most Kosovo Albanians fled from their homes for one reason or another. Last but not least, the war also led to increases in NATO military expenditure and triggered a further development of European defence capabilities.\(^{68}\)

Kofi Annan made the UN complicit with the US and the UK in NATO’s bombing. Even though it was widely accepted that the NATO bombings verged on a breach of international law, particularly the UN Charter but also NATO’s own founding document, the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, Kofi Annan did not, at this point, raise any criticisms of NATO (though he has subsequently raised some critical questions).\(^{69}\) Instead, he repeatedly gave his support to the Western interpretations, actions and peace plan. Before the bombings, he criticised Serb actions in Kosovo for breaching humanitarian law.\(^{70}\) After the bombings had started, he ‘urged the leaders of the North Atlantic Alliance to suspend immediately the air bombardments,’ on the condition that the Yugoslav authorities accept all the conditions that NATO had put forward.\(^{71}\) A few weeks later, he appears to be giving a moral justification for his compliant position in terms of the rights of Kosovo Albanians:

No government has the right to hide behind national sovereignty in order to violate the human rights or fundamental freedoms of its peoples. Whether a person belongs to the minority or the majority, that person’s human rights and fundamental freedoms are sacred. Emerging slowly, but I believe surely, is an international norm against the violent repression of minorities that will take precedence over concerns of state sovereignty.\(^{72}\)

In the absence of condemnation of the violation of existing international law, and in the absence of any mention of the procedures according to
which new international law should be legislated and violations of universal morality determined, Kofi Annan’s compliance at the time of crisis seems to have far-reaching consequences. What is particularly important in this context is that it seems to give the US (and the US-led NATO) what it wants:

(a) unquestioned leadership;
(b) the sovereign right to determine global friends and enemies, in the name of the universal morality that it legislates, interprets and implements;
(c) sovereign right for the US government to act in accordance with its domestically driven public opinion imperatives, and its economically or militarily driven national interests, given that those interests are compatible with universal morality.

The UN’s compliance is guaranteed even when UN procedures are disregarded. Parallel to these three consequences is that Kofi Annan’s compliance has authorised the further marginalisation of the UN in global peace, security and human rights matters. His attempts to defend the principles of the UN Charter appear weak. It is also telling that US officials appear to be blaming the UN for the post-war situation in Kosovo, a situation that was brought about by NATO. Besides marginalising the UN, and making it a scapegoat for NATO’s failures, the Kosovo episode has also contributed to an obscuring of the everyday violence and suffering that exists in the global political economy. More than ever, political attention and funding are concentrated on short-term crises.

Conclusion: the dangers of hard will and narrow power

In a book written almost forty years ago, The Nerves of Government, Karl Deutsch maintained that will is related to power. An actor or an organisation may try to act ‘in character’, that is, by refusing to learn and by remaining unchanged. This is what Deutsch calls ‘hard will’. He explained that ‘by the power of an individual or organisation, we then mean the extent to which they can continue successfully to act out of their character’. Power is therefore also the ability of organisations ‘to impose extrapolations or projections of their inner structure upon their environment’. He argued that ‘power in this narrow sense is the priority of output over intake, the ability to talk instead of listen’. In this sense, the US is more powerful than ever. Yet it has also become more dangerous than ever, for such ‘narrow power becomes blind, and the person or the organisation becomes insensitive to the present, and is driven, like bullet or torpedo, wholly by its past’.

Will – like character – is constituted by one’s understanding of the world, of genuine identity, of the right conduct of action, as well as by one’s historically constructed interests and preferences. In the absence of resistance and conflicts, narrow power can continue to resemble Richard Ashley’s
understanding of hegemony as ‘an ensemble of normalised knowledgeable practices, identified with a particular state and domestic society, that is regarded as a practical paradigm of political subjectivity and conduct’. However, the more there are differences, organised resistance and systematic conflicts, the more the attempt to act in character will become violently Weberian. Indeed, some already argue for stronger and more decisive US actions, on the grounds that the chief threat to the unipolar system is US failure to do enough (perhaps also because of the constraints of domestic public opinion and international law). An actor’s fate can also be self-destructively wilful if the actions upon that will turn out to be counterproductive. As Deutsch argues:

Will and power may easily lead to self-destructive learning, for they may imply the overvaluation of the past against the present and the future, the overvaluation of the experiences acquired in a limited environment against the vastness of the universe around us; and the overvaluation of the present expectations against all possibilities of surprise, discovery and change.

At the moment, the tendencies to simply reinforce the hard will and narrow power of the US seem strongest: the relative success of the privileged US economy within the largely stagnant and very unstable global economy; and the apparently unquestioned success of the US in imposing its will upon the world. At play is also the traditional Hegelian fallacy of identifying success with being right. Moreover, it is its political success that gradually destroys the possibility of the US elite hearing anything different. The domestication of the UN is a case in point. Kosovo is merely an indication of this more general tendency. Perhaps only a major economic collapse of the US would enable it – in particular, its foreign policy-makers – to learn something new and, in particular, to learn to listen to others. But perhaps even the now long-overdue stock market crash will not be enough.

The UN’s General Assembly has been the only truly global public political forum for which all states are equal. It has provided a framework for decolonisation and the pursuit of the reform of international institutions. The UN Charter has provided seeds for a claim made on behalf of an alternative organising principle of world affairs, namely for a democratic community of states, with equal voting rights in the General Assembly of nation states, openly and collectively regulating international life in accordance with the UN Charter and human rights conventions. Despite its many practical shortcomings and problematic state-centrism, the UN has thus provided a forum, constituted by legal procedures and rules, where differences have encountered each other in a peaceful manner and where, sometimes, common policies on a number of issues have been worked out.

The domestication of the UN by the US has severely damaged both the moral basis of UN pluralism and the legal procedures and rules on which
the UN has been based. After the events of the last fifteen years, very little of the spirit of the UN Charter is left; and NATO is seriously aspiring to the role of the global security organisation. There are also very few signs to indicate that the US would allow a rejuvenation or a democratisation of the UN, or even grant more autonomy to the present UN. Nor is it easy to organise resistance against US hegemony in the struggle for transformations within the UN without becoming just another enemy for the US, given its economic privileges and interests, its Manichean tendencies, and the entanglement of its public politics with the functioning of the short-sighted, self-referential and simulatory commercial media. It is likely that the consequent confrontation would quickly bring any progress made to a halt.

Hence, the UN can only survive and succeed in transforming itself with the help of organised, non-confrontational, external support. The best way seems to be to tackle an essential aspect of globalisation, at first without the consent of the US, by organising an arrangement that will also yield revenues to the global community. In effect, this means global taxation, but first on a non-universal basis. A means of feeding part of the revenues into the UN system should be found. In this way the UN could be emancipated from the financial stranglehold of the US. Even this may be difficult to achieve. It is telling that, in January 1999, the 1996 Helms–Dole Bill was re-introduced in the US House of Representatives (Prohibition on United Nations Taxation Act of 1999). This bill prohibits US ‘voluntary and assessed contributions to the UN if the UN imposes any tax or fee on US persons or continues to develop or promote proposals for such taxes or fees’. Even remote association with attempts to seize control over globalisation by means of introducing global taxes or fees may thus turn out to be detrimental to the UN.

However, the idea could be to develop a system of taxation outside the UN framework and then to feed part of the revenues into the UN system. By selectively allocating the funds to those activities that have been governed on a more democratic basis, the systematic bias of the present UN system could be dissolved. This should also open up a public political space for differences. But even then there is no guarantee. After all, the special veto power accorded to the permanent members of the UN Security Council may eternally prevent all changes.

David Held has observed that ‘the titanic struggles of the First and Second World Wars led to a growing acknowledgement that the nature and process of international governance would have to change’. Perhaps the choice, then, is either to wait passively for the next titanic catastrophe which is likely to come in one form or another, or to begin building a parallel and more efficient and democratic global system than the UN. In the latter case, we can at least hope for an opportunity to transform that parallel system into a new universal political organisation, which perhaps will help prevent that catastrophe from ever occurring.
Notes

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2 Because of classification, relevant primary source materials for US foreign policy and UN-related meetings and negotiations in the 1990s are scarce. I do not presuppose the truth of Boutros-Ghali’s interpretations. However, I take Boutros-Ghali’s explanation of his disagreements with the US to be a substantially true account of his position and an accurate reproduction of others’ comments and statements. Should any evidence to the contrary emerge, at least some aspects of the following reconstruction will have to be revised. Obviously, an analysis of different interpretations of the same events and episodes would provide a methodologically more full and reliable account.


4 In his revision of the Cold War’s history, Robert S. Snyder argues that ultimately the breakdown between the US and the Third World revolutionary states was prompted by the revolutionary states, and that consequently US policies in the Third World were not mistakenly aggressive. Quite the contrary: Snyder implies that US interventions were well justified. See Robert S. Snyder, ‘The U.S. and Third World Revolutionary States: Understanding the Breakdown in Relations’, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 2 (June 1999). David N. Gibbs, an associate professor of political science at the University of Arizona, has disputed Snyder’s claims and raised some important questions, most prominently: does...
international relations scholarship suffer from biases, or blinders, that favour official US policy? Is it influenced too much by the post-Cold War triumphalism of political culture in the United States? In a sense, my paper follows this line of inquiry. See Greg Nowell, ‘Prof. Gibbs vs. ISQ’, Chronicle of Higher Education, no. 6 (1999).


Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 303.

Ibid., p. 6.

Ibid., p. 198.

Ibid., p. 290.

Ibid., p. 291.

Ibid., p. 71.

Ibid., p. 105.

Ibid., pp. 186, 296.

Ibid., see for example on pp. 115–16.


Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 319.

Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Democratization, article 32.

Ibid., articles 58 and 60, respectively.


My argument should thus be distinguished from David Campbell’s post-structuralist claim that identity necessarily (logically) gives rise to an evil ‘other’.
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24 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 42.

25 It is noteworthy that ‘Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo’ (23 February 1999) declares that ‘the economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles’.


27 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, see e.g. pp. 5 and 271.


30 For an interesting account of ideology as unknowing, i.e. as processes and systematic absences that make something unknown, not understood, hidden, undiscussed and/or distorted, see N.J. Thrift, ‘On the Determination of Social Action in Space and Time’, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, vol. 1, no. 1 (1983), p. 45.

31 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 286.


33 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, p. 107.

34 Ibid., p. 106.

35 Jakobsen, ‘Focus on the CNN Effect’ (p. 134) agrees that these pictures mattered, but claims that they affected only the timing of the US withdrawal: ‘The Clinton administration had already begun contemplating a withdrawal when the 18 soldiers were killed on 3 October 1993’ (p.136). But this only serves to prove the point. Because of the potential media effect on public opinion, casualties are not tolerated.

36 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished. See for example p. 172.

37 Herman and McChesney, The Global Media, p. 152.

38 This is also recognised by the US entertainment industry, for instance in the films: Bob Roberts. Vote First, Ask Questions Later, where the principal character is a part-time entertainer (a right-wing version of Bob Dylan) who resorts to imaginary violence against himself in the face of major revelations about his connections to financial scandals and drug trafficking; Primary Colors, which is a (serious) parody of Clinton’s first presidential campaign; and Wag the Dog, which

In an article that tries to demonstrate that the American public is ‘pretty prudent’ and able to discriminate against cynical manipulation of the ‘rally round the flag’ effect, by econometrically analysing opinion polls over 1949–84, Lian and O’Neal argue nonetheless (p. 294) that ‘a favorable response by the general public to a use of force is more likely when the US is involved in a severe crisis and the president’s actions are prominently reported [in the media]; in addition, a president’s popularity is more apt to be boosted when the country is not at war or fatigued by war, when his popularity is low initially, and when there is a bipartisan support for his actions’. Bradley Lian and John R. O’Neal, ‘Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 1993). These tests do not capture the CNN effect or the world historical context of the late 1980s and 1990s. The CNN – real time global TV – effect is a relatively new phenomenon. Moreover, since the late 1980s, the US ‘has not been at war or fatigued by war’, but has rather been euphoric about, and reassured by, the end of the Cold War and the revival of its hegemony. There is every reason to believe that the manipulation effect has become stronger since the mid-1980s.

As it was succinctly put by P. Sainath in ‘Dead Reckoning’, *The Guardian*, 7 August 1999.


Agenda for Development, articles 47–50, 65, 82.
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51 Ibid., article 67; see also articles 64, 94–5, 141.
52 Ibid., articles 23 and 43.
54 Ibid., p. 73.
55 Judith Miller, ‘As US Relations with UN Languish at a Low Point, Is Clinton or Congress to Blame?’ (New York Times, 5 August, 1999), writes: ‘The U.N. official said American resentment was stronger under the Clinton administration than it was even during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who made no secret of his low opinion of the United Nations. “At least with Reagan we knew where we stood and the United States more or less paid its bills on time,” the official said. “But Clinton has made so many unfulfilled promises, then he stabs us in the back and tells us that he feels our pain.”’
56 ‘Merits’ mean degrees from Harvard, Yale and other US ‘ivy league’ universities.
57 Boutros-Ghali, Unvanquished, pp. 230–1.
58 In Latin, the term censor means an assessor or a critic, someone who is entitled to give an opinion or an appraisal. A systematic bias in censoring also means, of course, censorship in the modern sense of the term. It is very questionable whether there is any freedom of speech in the UN.
61 Although I have not been able to confirm this, it seems that Kofi Annan was, in fact, at least in his personal capacity, very angry with the US on the evening of the first crisis meeting of the Security Council. If this really was the case, then it is likely that Kofi Annan’s press statements of the time were censored and re-written by his speechwriters. After the crisis, Kofi Annan has indeed raised some critical questions. See his article ‘Two Concepts of Sovereignty’ in The Economist, 18 September 1999: ‘To those for whom the Kosovo action heralded a new era when states and groups of states can take military action outside the established mechanisms for enforcing international law, one might equally ask: Is there not a danger of such interventions undermining the imperfect, yet resilient, security system created after the second world war, and of setting dangerous precedents for future interventions without a clear criterion to decide who might invoke these precedents and in what circumstances? Nothing in the UN Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders. What the Charter does say is that ‘armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest.’ But what is that common interest? Who shall define it? Who shall defend it? Under whose authority? And with what means of intervention?’
62 In fact, on the basis of the later reports of the Strategic Issues Research Institute, the OSCE and the EU Expert Forensic Team, it seems that the Serbian police operation, following killings of Serbian police in the area, was pre-announced to the OSCE observers and the media, who were allowed to attest the scene. A battle between the KLA and the Serbs broke out. Some fifteen KLA fighters were killed. After the defeat of the KLA in Racak, the Serbian police arrested and probably also shot some twenty civilians (apparently, some of them had...
tried to escape, and a few succeeded). The murder of these people was as illegal and immoral as it was unnecessary; but it hardly constitutes a case of ‘systematic cold-blooded massacre of civilians’, not to speak of ‘genocide’ or ‘ethnic cleansing’. Rather it should be seen as a hot-blooded revenge for the KLA actions. See Pekka Visuri, *Kosovon sota* (Helsinki, Gaudeamus, 2000), pp. 88–94.

63 *The Economist* (‘Kosovo on Hold’), 27 February–5 March 1999, writes: ‘OR ELSE. That is what the West told the Serbs and ethnic Albanians gathered in the French chateau of Rambouillet for an extended fortnight of negotiations this month: agree to the West’s plan for NATO-policed autonomy for Serbia’s southern province of Kosovo, or else. Or else what? Well if the Serbs say no, we’ll bomb them. And if the Kosovars say no? Er, well, they won’t.’

64 Nothing short of full independence, with practically no regard to the Serbian population, would have been enough for the Kosovo Albanians. See R. Jeffrey Smith, ‘Rebels’ Intransigence Stymied Accord’, *Washington Post*, 24 February 1999. It is possible that the Kosovo Albanians accepted the agreement only because they were assured that this would lead to air strikes against Yugoslavia. See Visuri, *Kosovon sota*, p. 99.

65 The relevant information is publicly available on the internet: ‘Full text of Kosovo Agreement’, BBC World News, 23 February 1999, available online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_285000/285097.stm (accessed 5 January 2001). BBC World News reproduced the text of the final conclusions released in a statement issued at the end of the Rambouillet Kosovo peace conference. Conclusion 3 reads: ‘These have been complex and difficult negotiations, as we expected. The important efforts of the parties and the unstinting commitment of our negotiators Ambassadors Hill, Petritsch and Mayorsky, have led to a consensus on substantial autonomy for Kosovo, including on mechanisms for free and fair elections to democratic institutions for the governance of Kosovo, for the protection of human rights and the rights of members of national communities; and for the establishment of a fair judicial system’. The next day BBC World News summarised the negotiations. There was an agreement for substantial autonomy for Kosovo; a military conference was set for March 15; and the principle of a peace deal. There was no agreement on NATO presence in Kosovo; technical details of autonomy; and signing a formal peace deal. (‘Warring Sides Play Down Kosovo Deal’, BBC World News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_285000/285082.stm [accessed 5 January 2001]). See also P. de la Gorce, ‘Négociations en trompe-l’œil’, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1999. The full text of the Rambouillet ‘Interim Agreement for Peace and Settlement in Kosovo’, 23 February 1999, can be found for instance at http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/dossiers/kosovo/rambouillet.html (accessed 5 January 2001).

66 The full paragraph from Steven Erlanger (‘Milosevic’s New Version of Reality Will Be Harder for NATO to Dismiss’, *New York Times*, 8 April 1999) goes as follows: ‘Those questions were summarized today by President Clinton: ‘It is not enough now for Mr. Milosevic to say that his forces will cease-fire on a Kosovo denied of its freedom and devoid of its people. He must withdraw his forces, let the refugees return, permit the deployment of an international security force. Nothing less will bring peace with security to the people of Kosovo.’ The reference to an international force instead of a NATO force [in Clinton’s speech] was a
small but significant shift. In a resolution of the Serbian Parliament just before the bombing, when that body rejected NATO troops in Kosovo, it also supported the idea of United Nations forces to monitor a political settlement there. 


68 Ibid., pp. 163–84.

69 The Economist (‘Law and Right. When They Don’t Fit Together’, 3–9 April 1999) argued that most legal experts say the bombings are against international law, although they may be morally justified. On the other hand, Martti Koskenniemi, in his keynote address on ‘Challenges to International Law, Organisation and World Order’ at the IPRA conference in Tampere, Finland, 6 August 2000, argued that it is always possible to find international legal reasons for bombings, for instance by extending the meaning of ‘self’ in the notion of self-defence, or by arguing that the oppression of Albanians is against the UN Charter, and therefore there must be means to address the problem. Although in abstract that may be the case, in concrete contexts these argumentative possibilities may not be plausible. Indeed, I find it highly implausible to identify the self of Kosovo Albanians (and the KLA in particular) with the self of NATO. Moreover, if ‘self’ is interpreted as an empty signifier, the notion of self-defence would become a totally open justification for any kind of military aggression by any party in any conflict situation with any mutual violence (and the UN Charter forbids, in general, the use of violence). And even if the UN Charter established a need for ‘doing something’ about human rights’ violations, that ‘something’ does not imply military aggression. It could imply a military intervention only if it could be shown that there is no alternative to the use of violence. Ultimately, the legal and moral arguments for the NATO war against Yugoslavia come down to this TINA (there-is-no-alternative) view. If I am right that the remaining unacceptable issue at the end of the Rambouillet negotiations was Appendix B of the agreement, the TINA claim is not only false; it is ridiculous. Also, see note 62 above.

70 ‘Secretary-General Gravely Concerned at Escalation of Violence in Kosovo’, press release SG/SM/6936, 22 March 1999. See also the first statement after the war started, ‘Secretary-General Profoundly Outraged by Reports of “Ethnic Cleansing” Conducted by Serbian Forces in Kosovo’, press release SG/SM/6942.


72 ‘Our Differences Can and Must Be Outweighed by Our Common Humanity’ Stresses Secretary-General in Commencement Address to University of Michigan’, press release SG/SM/6977, 30 April 1999.

73 See Kofi Annan’s earlier article ‘Walking the International Tightrope’, The New York Times, 19 January 1999; see also note 64.

74 ‘But from that same moment it was clear that part of the US strategy was to set up the UN (already denied adequate resources, personnel and authority) as the fall guy for the not-so-peaceful conclusion of the Yugoslavia war. The US rejected any UN role in decision making about military action. But now Washington holds the UN accountable for the messy and violent aftermath of the US-NATO war.’ P. Bennis, ‘The Law of Empire: The US Sets Up the UN to Take the Blame in Kosovo’, Baltimore Sun, 19 August 1999.

75 As was forcefully pointed out by Koskenniemi; see note 70 above.


81 For an argument that the Tobin Tax (currency transactions tax) can be realised in two phases, first on a non-universal basis, then globally, and that the organisation governing it should assume a democratic structure and a policy of selectively supporting the UN, see Heikki Patomäki, ‘The Tobin Tax: A New Phase in the Politics of Globalisation?’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 17, no. 4 (August 2000); and, much more thoroughly, Patomäki, *Democratising Globalisation. The Leverage of the Tobin Tax* (London, Zed Books, 2001).

82 The Bill was introduced in reaction to Boutros-Ghali’s proposal of a modest levy on international air fares, which provoked very angry reactions in Washington. See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, ‘Global Leadership After the Cold War’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2 (March–April 1996). Other proposals include currency transactions tax (the Tobin Tax); arms sales tax; proceeds from mining the seabed; a pollution tax; a tax on international trade; a tax for parking geo-stationary satellites and for using electro-magnetic spectrum; charges on maritime ocean transport; on fishing rights in high seas; on maritime dumping of wastes; and on advertising via TV channels that span the globe. About these proposals, see South Centre, *For a Strong and Democratic United Nations. A South Perspective on UN Reform* (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp. 89–90.