NATO's intervention in Kosovo may signal a significant shift in Western attitudes toward principles of sovereignty and non-intervention. Such a shift could pose serious implications for East Asia. These were the conclusions of a multi-disciplinary workshop at the Australian National University, organised by the International Policy Forum and chaired by Roland Rich, Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The workshop programme included sessions on NATO intervention in Kosovo and international norms before turning to an examination of comparisons with and implications for Taiwan, East Timor and Irian Jaya.

The workshop began with one panel member severely criticising NATO's bombing of Serbia. NATO's action, this argument went, had little to do with offering assistance to the Kosovars. Instead, the NATO campaign sought to assert the relevance of NATO in the post-Cold War era and to maintain the United States' international leadership role.

According to this argument, the latter factor was most important; US leaders feared Serbia might combine with nationalist or communist elements in Russia or Commonwealth of Independent States to challenge US-led Western dominance in Europe. Slobodan Milosevic, embodying the last bastion of resistance to this dominance, had to be cut down to size.

Furthermore, Western leaders misinterpreted the perceived success of bombing before the Bosnian peace negotiations in Dayton. They thought Milosevic would abandon his own campaign in Kosovo at the first hint of allied Western force, giving the West an easy victory. They failed to consider that Milosevic might negotiate on Bosnia, but would not negotiate away parts of Serbia's traditional homeland.

Consequently, the argument continued, Milosevic's continued defiance would undermine NATO's credibility as a security organisation and would cost both the United States and United Kingdom their diplomatic leadership roles, opening space for the United Nations and 'other
power centres', such as Moscow and Beijing, to assert authority.

However, the majority of panel members rejected this initial argument. NATO must receive some credit for preserving peace in Europe for the past 50 years. Several countries are currently seeking admission to NATO. Further, NATO has effectively provided protective cover to other Balkan states fearful of Serbian reprisals. Few felt the bombing campaign would damage NATO's credibility.

Nor did panel members agree the United States felt threatened by Milosevic or potential Serbian alliances with Russia or CIS members. Milosevic and Serbia, it was agreed, are not so important. And though Russia might disagree with American hegemony in Europe and would happily see it diminished, Russian strategic interests do not significantly diverge from American and Western European strategic interests.

Instead, the panel agreed NATO's action stemmed from humanitarian concerns. The West, to its shame and discomfort, did not act in Rwanda and was late in acting in Bosnia. Western leaders could not allow another ethnic cleansing campaign to go unanswered. In choosing to act through NATO, Western political leaders appeared to embrace a major paradigmatic shift. Defined by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, this shift qualifies the principle of non-intervention, declares that dictators cannot be appeased, and requires an internationalist response. Panellists noted the irony that Britain, punching well above its political and military weight, should define the Western response.

The action of the United States, through its membership in NATO, exemplifies this shift. With no expectation of material reward, the US acted outside its own hemisphere to intervene in a conflict of limited significance to American interests in the name of human rights.

Laudable though the principles of the Blair doctrine might be, NATO's action poses difficult problems. For example, to justify NATO's action, the West expanded its normative and territorial reach. NATO attacked a non-member state without provocation. To do so, NATO redefined its sphere of influence. Once considered a part of Europe's frontier, the Balkans were redefined as 'the heart of Europe'. Western leaders had to redefine the role and scope of a European security organisation because the only international security organisation, the United Nations, was incapable of action.

What, then, might this mean for East Asia?

Superficially, key elements of the Kosovo crisis resemble recent events across the Taiwan Straits. For example, both Kosovo and Taiwan asserted their rights to self-determination. This provoked violent reactions from central governments: Serbia sent troops into Kosovo; China conducted missile exercises, with missile splashdowns in Taiwan's waters. In turn, these reactions provoked outside intervention: NATO commenced bombing Serbia; the United States sent two carrier groups to the Taiwan Straits.

However, the two cases differ quite markedly. First, unlike Kosovo, Taiwan is an already viable state; it is highly defensible, has a vibrant economy and justifies its independent existence not on ethnic difference, but on the fact that Taiwan is democratic, whereas China is not.

On the other hand, a strong China claims sovereignty over Taiwan, not a weak Serbia. Again, the differences are immense. China has a seat on the UN Security Council, possesses nuclear arms, and boasts a rising economy which many analysts think will one day challenge that of the United States. In short, while Serbia might not matter, China certainly does.

Consequently, Taiwan could poison US–China relations, a relationship on which global stability
relies heavily. Although the United States ducked formally granting recognition to Taiwan, Taiwan remains a strong American policy interest. Stronger still is China's interest in Taiwan leading panellists to question whether Chinese leaders could politically survive the "loss" of Taiwan.

Bilateral relations between the US and China remain keenly poised. Chinese opposition to NATO's campaign in Serbia, NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, and American charges of Chinese nuclear espionage have caused acute feelings of suspicion between the two countries. Small state adventurism, such as unilateral moves by the Philippines to assert its claim over Mischief Reef in the Spratley Islands, could cause a split in US–China relations, prompting a realignment of power and a new Cold War.

Small state adventurism aside, there is little cause for alarm in American–Chinese relations, but this is not to say a crisis could not occur. China's one country/two system solution is unworkable in the long term because neither China nor Taiwan can trust the other: China cannot trust Taiwan not to declare independence; Taiwan cannot trust China not to change the rules if Taiwan agrees to submit to China's sovereignty claims. The Hong Kong precedent will be studied closely.

Nonetheless, Blair Doctrine will not be extended to Taiwan. Fortunately, states balance their own self-interest with norms. The question of Taiwan's self-determination is irrelevant to US–China relations as both powers are more important to each other than Taiwan is to either.

The same can be said of East Timor but for different reasons. Although the right of self-determination might be applied in this case, the situation is complicated by several factors. For example, no regional security force equivalent to NATO exists in Southeast Asia to ensure self-determination. This would surely be required as Indonesian support for self-determination is rhetorical at best and is not consistent with Western conceptions of self-determination.

In addition, Indonesia has actively sought to dampen separatist aspirations in East Timor by moving Javanese into East Timor. According to a panellist, 25 per cent of East Timorese are Javanese immigrants. A similar policy was successfully used in Irian Jaya. After coercing Irian Jaya's leaders to vote for integration into Indonesia, the Indonesian government then moved thousands of people into Irian Jaya under the policy of transmigration. Today, 800,000 of Irian Jaya's two million residents are transmigrants.

In essence then, NATO's action in Kosovo might suggest a desire by Western leaders to construct new standards of legitimate governance in the international community. In this case, Western leaders must not only codify the rules for humanitarian intervention, but must also persuade non-Western governments to accept the new norms. If compliance cannot be enforced except through military means, Western powers do not have the necessary infrastructure to enforce norms outside of Europe and the Americas.
**INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND STRATEGIC STABILITY:**
**KOSOVO AND LESSONS FOR EAST ASIA**

Mills Room, Chancelry Building
Australian National University

Wednesday 12 May 1999

**Programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30–9.30</td>
<td>NATO Bombing, Kosovo and Strategic Stability in Europe</td>
<td>Dr R. R. Miller, 'Transitions in Communist Systems' Project, ANU Dr J. P. Fonteyne, Law Faculty, ANU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30–10.30</td>
<td>Strategic Stability, the UN System and International Norms: Law and Morals</td>
<td>Associate Professor Robert McCorquodale, Law Faculty, ANU Dr Jacinta O'Hagan, International Relations Department, ANU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30–10.45</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45–11.45</td>
<td>Taiwan, Norms of Recognition and Self-Determination, and Strategic Stability in Asia</td>
<td>Dr G. Noble, International Relations Department, ANU Dr Greg Austin, Northeast Asia Programme, ANU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45–12.45</td>
<td>East Timor and Irian Jaya: Representation of Ethnicity in the Conflict between Self-Determination and National Cohesion</td>
<td>Dr Alan Dupont, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Mr Gavin Mount, International Relations Department, ANU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.45–1.00</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Mr Roland Rich, Centre for Democratic Institutions, ANU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>