Regime Change Without Military Force: Lessons from Overthrowing Milosevic

BY GREGORY L. SCHULTE

"Gotov je!" ("He's finished!")
—Serb resistance slogan, directed at Milosevic

After a decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Obama Administration has adopted a new defense strategy that recognizes the need to limit our strategic ends in an era of increasing limits on our military means.[1] The strategy calls for armed forces capable of conducting a broad range of missions, in a full range of contingencies, and in a global context that is increasingly complex. It calls for doing so with a smaller defense budget. Opportunities for savings come from reducing the ability to fight two regional conflicts simultaneously and from not sizing the force to conduct prolonged, large-scale stability operations.

Seemingly missing from the new defense strategy are the types of wars we fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both started with forcible changes in regime – the armed ouster of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein from their positions of power. In each case, the rapid removal of leadership was followed by lengthy counterinsurgency operations to bring security to the population and build up a new government. The duration and difficulty of these operations and their cost in deaths, destruction, and debt were not understood at their outset.

Whereas past defense strategies foresaw the prospect of forcible regime change,[2] the new defense strategy does not. Thus, absent a direct threat to U.S. vital interests, any future endeavors to oust unfriendly leaders are likely to be pursued by non-military means. U.S. military forces may play a supporting role at most. Libya and Syria demonstrate the new defense strategy in action. While regime change has been an objective, the United States has worked through partners and limited or ruled out the use of military force.

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If U.S. policymakers consider non-military regime change in the future, they may wish to look for lessons learned before Afghanistan and Iraq, lessons learned from the 2000 overthrow of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. While the circumstances were unique and perhaps uniquely favorable to a democratic transition, many of the lessons are probably enduring.

Deposing a Dictator[3]

In 2000, Slobodan Milosevic, then president of what remained of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,[4] set the stage for his own demise. He did so by calling for elections, seeking to bolster his legitimacy at home and abroad, while miscalculating his own ability to fix the results.

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Personally and politically, Milosevic had survived North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Operation Allied Force, 78 days of air strikes against Serbia and its forces in Kosovo the year before. While longer than the United States or its allies anticipated, the campaign of military strikes and non-military measures ultimately succeeded, compelling Milosevic to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, withdraw Serb security forces, and consent to the introduction of a UN administration and NATO-led force, but leaving Milosevic in place.

Milosevic was a survivor. Despite instigating ethnic violence and genocide in Bosnia and Croatia in the early 1990s, he had emerged unscathed as leader of Serbia and signatory of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. Many analysts predicted that the 1999 NATO air strikes would cement Milosevic's grip on power. Instead, Milosevic was weakened, his political legitimacy tarnished at home and abroad.

Milosevic's confrontation with the UN and NATO isolated him internationally. He also faced growing opposition domestically. In September 1999, opposition rallies in twenty cities in Serbia urged Milosevic to resign. The police and army cracked down, but Milosevic's regime had difficulty suppressing opposition leaders and the student movement OTPOR – Serbian for "resistance." OTPOR, a loosely organized network of activists trained in peaceful resistance, used a variety of nonviolent tactics to excoriate the regime and build popular support.

In January 2000, OTPOR organized an Orthodox New Year's Eve rally against Milosevic's rule. In April, 100,000 citizens of Serbia gathered in Belgrade to call for early presidential elections. In May, Serbian opposition parties, despite a history of fragmentation and in-fighting, united under the Democratic Opposition of Serbia. They put forward a single candidate for the elections: Vojislav Kostunica.

In July, Milosevic made his mistake, announcing early elections in September. Milosevic probably gambled that he could control the media, divide the opposition, and deny them time to organize and build support. He probably also gambled on stuffing the ballot boxes, particularly those coming over the border from Kosovo, still nominally part of the Yugoslav republic.

The democratic opposition of Serbia stayed united. In August, OTPOR launched a country-wide campaign dubbed "Gotov je!" – "He's finished!" Volunteers pasted "Gotov je!" stickers across Serbia, including over Milosevic's campaign posters.

For the September elections, OTPOR and the opposition recruited, trained, and organized more than 30,000 volunteers to monitor the

DoD photo by Senior Airman Sean Worrell, U.S. Air Force (released)

Former President Bill Clinton speaks to American, British, and French troops deployed to Skopje, Macedonia, on June 22, 1999. Many of the troop will become part of KFOR.

vote. The United Nations (UN) and NATO collaborated to interdict stuffed ballot boxes coming from Kosovo. When the observers announced the victory of Kostunica, the Milosevic-controlled Federal Election Commission called for a runoff. A united opposition refused and called for a general strike.

In October, coal miners – previously among Milosevic's strongest supporters – went on strike and then led a march on Belgrade, using a bulldozer to push away barricades. Serbia's police and military, in contact with the opposition, refused to intervene. It seemed that Milosevic had passed the tipping point that all despots fear: when the regime fears the people more than the people fear the regime.

Milosevic acknowledged defeat on October 6 after a private meeting with the Russian foreign minister. Standing before the television cameras, Milosevic looked stunned. His self-confidence shattered, he was finished. "Gotov je!" had gone from slogan to reality.

Under international pressure, the Serbian government arrested Milosevic in April 2001, and then extradited him to The Hague to be tried for war crimes before an international tribunal. The "Butcher of the Balkans" died of a heart attack before his trial could conclude.

Milosevic's death precluded justice, but his removal from power set the stage for bringing democracy to Serbia and bringing Serbia back into Europe. While NATO's relations with Russia were severely strained, the interests of the Serb people, the region, and the United States and its allies were well served.

Supporting the Overthrow

The people of Serbia ousted Milosevic, but they had help. Even before NATO's air strikes, President Clinton and his foreign policy team had decided that Slobodan Milosevic, while a signatory of the Dayton Peace Accords for Bosnia, was an obstacle to peace throughout the region. In September 1998, in the face of anti-Albanian violence in Kosovo instigated by Milosevic, the U.S. Administration agreed to develop and implement a strategy to weaken his rule.

In December 1998, the basic strategy was approved. The first element was to strengthen democratic forces in Serbia, including the political opposition, student movements, and independent media. The second element was to bolster President Djukanovic of neighboring Montenegro, an increasingly independent province of the federal republic, as a counterweight to Milosevic. The third element was to undermine Milosevic's pillars of power. These were identified as his security services, finances, and control of the media.

This basic strategy, adapted as necessary to changing circumstance, remained in place through the 1999 air campaign, which helped set the conditions for Milosevic's removal, and through 2000, when Milosevic was removed from power.

Setting the Conditions

NATO's air campaign, initiated in March 1999, was aimed at protecting the Albanian population

in Kosovo, not at toppling Milosevic. In April, with Milosevic refusing to meet NATO demands, the Administration agreed to a strengthened effort to support his removal. In a major address, President Clinton publically called for a "democratic transition in Serbia, for the region's democracies will never be safe with a belligerent tyranny in their midst."[5]

NATO aircraft dropped leaflets reminding the Serbian people of the luxurious lifestyle of Milosevic's son while their own sons were being sent to Kosovo to fight

As Allied Force extended into May, the Administration broadened its politico-military planning from air strikes backed by diplomacy to a more comprehensive strategic campaign. The campaign encompassed a wide range of diplomatic, information, military, economic, and financial measures and sought to bring pressure directly on Milosevic and his regime. A diplomatic effort, lead by Strobe Talbott, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, was designed to show Milosevic that he was faced with increasing international isolation and a withdrawal of Russian support.

Immediate military objectives of the strategic campaign plan remained focused on reducing Serbia's ability to conduct operations in Kosovo. However, intermediate objectives now included exacerbating the security forces' discontent with Milosevic's leadership, convincing Milosevic "cronies" that a settlement – including through his possible removal – would be better than continued recalcitrance, and building public discontent and opposition with Milosevic's continued rule.

NATO air strikes began including regime-related targets such as leadership, state-controlled media, and crony assets that met legal targeting requirements. They were complemented by diplomatic efforts, economic sanctions, and information operations designed to isolate Milosevic and undermine his pillars of support. A "Ring Around Serbia" of radio stations broadcast truthful information into the country, undercutting Milosevic's efforts to squash reports of defeats and defections. NATO aircraft dropped leaflets reminding the Serbian people of the luxurious lifestyle of Milosevic's son while their own sons were being sent to Kosovo to fight.

In the final weeks of the air campaign, the United States used the diplomatic end game to keep Milosevic isolated internationally. A newly issued war crimes indictment against Milosevic helped discourage diplomatic free-lancing by outside parties. The goal was to deny Milosevic international recognition that he could use to restore political legitimacy at home. In the end, rather than sending Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to negotiate a settlement with Milosevic, who would have used such a meeting to elevate his standing, a NATO general met with Serbian counterparts to agree on military technical arrangements to codify his surrender.

NATO's air campaign weakened Milosevic. It also strengthened the resolve of the nineteen NATO allies that Milosevic had to go. This set the stage for a concerted international effort, after the air strikes, to force him out.

Forcing Him Out

In July 1999, a month after the successful conclusion of NATO's intervention, the President's foreign policy team agreed to pursue an aggressive democratization program for Serbia. The program continued efforts to undermine Milosevic's sources of power, including through support for independent media. It also put increased emphasis on building a cohesive and effective opposition. President Clinton publicly announced additional funding to support democracy.

Using that funding, non-government organizations like the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) began providing advice and support to independent civil organizations and opposition parties. IRI helped organize training of OTPOR in strategic non-violence. NDI used polling data to help opposition candidates understand Milosevic's political vulnerabilities and the importance of unifying behind one candidate. With U.S. encouragement, neighboring countries provided a safe place for the opposition to meet, strategize, and train.

Vojislav Kostunica was a committed Serb nationalist and by no means the "U.S. candidate." Indeed, he and his close advisors had a decided anti-American streak. However, the administration believed that Kostunica would abide by his country's constitution and international commitments. Equally important, polling data showed Kostunica was the only member of the opposition who could beat Milosevic. Quiet U.S. engagement, backed with polling data and conditions on electoral support, encouraged the opposition to unify behind him.

With the opposition growing stronger, in February 2000 the President's foreign policy team adopted an updated strategy for regime change. The strategy pressed forward with isolating Milosevic and promoting opposition unity and effectiveness. It targeted sanctions against Milosevic's regime and its supporters and sought to demonstrate that his removal would benefit the Serb people. Finally, the strategy sought to shore up Kosovo and Montenegro against any attempt by Milosevic to foment a crisis to distract from his growing problems in Serbia.

After Milosevic's July call for elections, the administration again updated its plans. The updated plan, agreed in August, aimed at making the elections a referendum on Milosevic – seeking to discredit him – while fully recognizing that he would spare no effort to rig them. The plan involved supporting the political opposition in presenting a unified challenge and maximizing the cost to the regime of committing electoral fraud. Planning involved efforts to expose cheating, channel public anger, and encourage civil disobedience immediately after a stolen vote.

The administration also developed a plan to deter Milosevic from launching a spoiling attack on Montenegro, concerned that he would do so as a way to interdict support for the opposition or as an excuse to call off the elections. The United States provided diplomatic and economic support to the Djukanovic government and conducted robust information operations based on military activities in the region in order to keep Milosevic and his generals uncertain about a possible NATO or U.S. response to an attack.[6]

The administration also sought to bring Russia on board. The White House urged the Kremlin to support a unified opposition and the removal of Milosevic by the end of the year should the elections be stolen or Milosevic launch an attack on Montenegro. Securing Russian support was a challenge, given Moscow's opposition to NATO's air campaign the year before, but seemed to pay off in the end game, when Milosevic stepped down immediately after a meeting with the Russian foreign minister.

At the beginning of September, with the opposition unified and polling showing decreasing popular support for Milosevic, the President's foreign policy team reviewed its strategy. They agreed on a subtle but significant shift in objective: rather than treating the elections as an opportunity to discredit Milosevic and thereby support regime change over the longer term, the administration would support the opposition in using the elections to achieve his immediate removal.

Concerned that Milosevic would use an active American role to rally nationalists behind him, the President's foreign policy team decided to take cues from the Serb opposition immediately following the elections. It further decided to keep the Europeans in the forefront to showcase the broad based nature of international opposition to Milosevic's rule. It agreed to encourage Moscow to support the opposition publicly, which it did not, and tell Milosevic to go privately, which it possibly did.

Efforts to oust Milosevic came at the end of President Clinton's second and last term in office. There was reason for concern that Milosevic or his supporters could perceive that they would "wait out" the Clinton Administration. With White House encouragement, both Presidential candidates signaled support for Milosevic's removal, and efforts were made to convey their positions to those around Milosevic.

Consolidating the Results

When Vojislav Kostunica assumed the Yugoslav presidency, the United States and European Union (EU) laid out a road map for normalization of relations. President Clinton wrote to Kostunica personally to underscore the U.S. administration's commitment to normalization and the consolidation of democracy in Serbia. U.S. developmental assistance shifted from support for the political opposition to institutional reform.

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The lifting of UN and other multilateral sanctions helped establish the legitimacy of the new government, allowed it to return to international organizations from which it had been barred, and opened the door to economic recovery through the restoration of trade and investment. Over the longer-term, the prospect of EU accession gave considerable incentive to implementing democratic reform and cooperation with the international war crimes tribunal.

Keys to Success

Success did not manifest itself in a coup d'état or a bullet to the head. Milosevic's decision to step down was his own. No longer alive and a liar when he was, we will never know what motivated Milosevic during his final days in power. Presumably he calculated that his grip on power was about to be lost and that his personal interests – perhaps even his personal survival – were best served by stepping down.

Opposition leaders and student activists played the lead role in putting Milosevic in this position. However, their courage and determination would probably have been for naught without the international effort, organized by the United States, to level the playing field and undermine Milosevic's legitimacy and sources of power.

Keys to success for the U.S.-led international effort included:

- Understanding and undermining Milosevic's sources of power;
- Isolating him and delegitimizing his leadership at home and abroad;
- Quietly uniting, training, and supporting the domestic opposition;
- Preparing to consolidate a transition to a new, democratic leadership;
- Deterring a spoiling attack on Montenegro.

Also key was the international nature of the effort. Secretary of State Madeline Albright and her senior advisors were in regular contact with European counterparts. The EU pointedly

excluded Serbia from a new Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, demonstrating that a democratic Serbia had a place in Europe, but that a Serbia ruled by Milosevic did not. With U.S. encouragement and support, former activists from new NATO members helped train OTPOR, and military officials from NATO partners in the region warned their counterparts in Serbia against support for a falling regime.

Another key to success was the interagency nature of the effort. Senior interagency bodies met regularly to approve strategy and review implementation. A senior advisor to the Secretary of State oversaw strategy development and implementation. An ambassador in a neighboring country coordinated efforts in the field. The staff of the National Security Council coordinated interagency efforts, including sanctions, information operations, and politico-military planning. The Intelligence Community played a critical role in this whole-of-government effort through its analysis of political developments and opportunities within Serbia as well as other supporting activities. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) played a similarly important role through its support for democratization activities through nongovernmental organizations such as the NDI and IRI.

A final key to success – indeed a prerequisite – was a Presidential decision at the outset that U.S. national interests, including peace in the Balkans and the success of our military commitments there, required the removal of Milosevic. Presidential commitment remained essential, including in face of an end game that could have turned violent, but fortunately did not.

The role of the military was limited, though it did play an important supporting role. In 1999, Allied Force did not seek to dislodge, Milosevic but an important secondary objective was to loosen his grip on power. In 2000, the military played an important role on the periphery of Serbia: stabilizing Kosovo through the establishment of KFOR and deterring a Serb spoiling attack on Montenegro. Thus the main military contribution was to contain within Serbia the struggle for its leadership.

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Together these efforts tipped the psychological climate in Serbia in the direction feared by all despots: to the point where the regime feared the people more than the people feared the regime. At first a slogan, "Gotov je!" – "he's finished" – became reality.

Lessons for Regime Change

Regime change without force succeeded in Serbia, but the context was unique. Milosevic, while brutal, never directed at Serbs the same the level of violence used by other regimes against their own citizens. The Serb opposition was able to use peaceful resistance and the ballot box; other regimes may more ruthlessly suppress any dissent. The United States had strong partners in ousting Milosevic, united through alliance and a shared horror of his atrocities; other regimes might not be so regionally isolated. Europe was able to exercise significant "soft power" through the attractive prospect of EU accession; such instruments might not always be so available or effective. The eventual ouster of Milosevic did not lead to a widespread breakdown in governance and security; this could be a real risk in other cases, particularly if prolonged internal division has weakened institutions or degenerated into sectarian strife. Finally, Milosevic lacked the will or means to lash out against the United States

and EU; other leaders, threatened with overthrow, may be ready to strike the U.S. or allied homelands, or forces with terrorism, cyber attacks, or even weapons of mass destruction.

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Thus any consideration of regime change as an end must start with an understanding of the context, to include: the international and regional environment; the country, its people, and its institutions; and the nature and interests of the regime. Is the regime vulnerable to inside and outside pressure? Is there a viable opposition with capacity to govern and values and interests aligned with our own? How might a regime react with its survival threatened? What about third-party reactions? What risks might these pose to U.S. interests? Is there adequate domestic support in the U.S. and partner countries, particularly if the risks materialize? Absent an imminent threat, can the United States credibly defend the legitimacy of what amounts to interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?

Interfering in a country's internal political structure entails great uncertainty and risk. In the case of Serbia, success was by no means guaranteed. U.S. efforts to oust Milosevic spanned two years. They could have easily spanned two administrations, particularly had not Milosevic misjudged in his call for early elections. Widespread violence in Serbia, a spoiling attack against Montenegro, or renewed fighting in Bosnia or Kosovo were all real risks that were fortunately avoided. A regime change strategy is no sure thing, particularly without the use of military force.

If regime change is deemed desirable and feasible despite these uncertainties and risks, the experience of overthrowing Milosevic offers some general lessons. Specifically, it suggests a whole-of-government approach to:

- Develop an in-depth intelligence assessment of the regime, its supporters, and its vulnerabilities;
- Identify and undercut key pillars of power (e.g., police, state media, close associates);
- Attack the regime's legitimacy through international isolation and information operations;
- Secure the widest possible international support, particularly in the regime, and use it to show that regime change will lift international isolation and bring benefits to the country;
- Help the opposition to unify, to identify regime weaknesses, to communicate with the public, and to expand its operations;
- Co-opt or marginalize potential spoilers, whether opposition leaders or outside powers;
- Convince the ruler that being out of power is safer for himself and his family than being in power; and/or convince those around him that forcing his departure is essential to their political, economic, or personal survival;
- Block courses of action that the ruler might take to distract the population, undercut the opposition, or fracture international cohesion;
- Lead an international effort, synchronizing the activities of others, leveraging their knowledge and influence, while minimizing U.S. visibility as necessary to protect the opposition legitimacy;
- Prepare to consolidate an expeditious transition to democratic government by extending recognition, providing assistance, lifting sanctions, and otherwise helping to establish its legitimacy at home and abroad;
- Seek and showcase U.S. domestic bipartisan support to discourage the regime from

concluding or suggesting to its supporters that it can outlast a particular administration.

As reflected in the very first step, the role of intelligence is essential. Foundational intelligence for regime change requires collecting against some very hard targets: the perceptions, intentions, and decision-making process of an autocratic leadership and the networks of people, power, and money that cement its grip on power. Intelligence also must play a role in validating or questioning the assumption of policy makers. Will, for example, power transition without violence? Will key institutions hold or disintegrate? Is the opposition capable of effective governance? How are third parties likely to react?

Skillful and knowledgeable diplomacy is also essential. Maintaining cohesion between the U.S. and its international partners is critical. This is a classic role of traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy. However, another type of diplomacy is also required: diplomacy that reaches into the society and its governing structures to develop understanding of the regime and its control mechanisms, to seek out strengthens and vulnerabilities, and to build partnerships with the opposition and civil society. This type of diplomacy may be conducted in safe havens in neighboring countries. It may increasingly be conducted in the cyberspace of the country itself. It may be conducted among and through the country's diaspora, including in the United States. It may also be conducted through regional partners with contacts and understanding that exceed our own.

Simultaneously, diplomatic and developmental efforts need to lay the groundwork to help the opposition assume the responsibilities of governance. Plans and capacity for election monitoring, institution building, and security force vetting and reform are important aspects of this work, as is partnering with other countries that have resources and influence to help consolidate a democratic transition. Whether supporting regime change or preparing for its aftermath, a conscious decision needs to be made about the level of U.S. visibility. In some cases, it is prudent to hide the hand of the United States, or to mask it as part of a larger effort, to avoid tainting the opposition or causing unhelpful reactions by governments supportive of the regime or suspicious of our motives.

the Defense Department might need to conduct planning, exercises, and preventive deployments, preferably together with allies or partners

The military might have a role, but largely in support. Even without strikes from the air or "boots on the ground," the Department of Defense can support intelligence collection directed at the regime and its security forces. It can also help, as appropriate, with providing the opposition intelligence, training, and other support. The Defense Department can contribute to whole-of-government efforts to weaken the regime's sources of power. This might include information and cyber operations to disrupt command and control of security forces, thereby sowing confusion, sapping morale, encouraging defections, and degrading the regime's ability to conduct internal security operations. It might include using military-to-military relationships with countries in the region to contact elements of the regime's security forces and to encourage, facilitate, and even reward defections. Finally, the Defense Department might need to conduct planning, exercises, and preventive deployments, preferably together with allies or partners, to help deter regime military actions and reassure neighboring countries that might otherwise feel threatened.

The Council of the European Union

Former Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica (right) with former EU High Representative Javier Solana at press conference.

Implications for Ousting Assad

A dozen years after supporting a successful change in regime in Serbia, the United States has now committed to non-military regime change in Syria. While some lessons from Serbia may apply, the circumstances are vastly different.

Syria is not Serbia. The sectarian politics and level of violence are completely different. So are the leaders and their opponents. Milosevic, while brutal, never directed at his opponents the same level of violence used by Assad. The Serbian opposition was relatively unified and used peaceful opposition and the ballot box, whereas the Syria resistance is divided and has taken up arms. Milosevic had the diplomatic support of Moscow and Beijing, as Assad does today, but never the active backing of a state like Iran. And Milosevic, unlike Assad, did not have access to chemical weapons.

Regime change in Syria is most likely to come from within. Moreover, the violence and sectarian conflict do not bode well for a peaceful and democratic transition after Assad's removal. Compared to Serbia, the U.S. influence is limited over the violence struggle for power within Syria, particularly given the conflicting interests inside and outside that country. Nevertheless, the United States and its partners may still have some leverage to shape the outcome.

Relevant lessons from the overthrow of Milosevic center around the need to work with like-minded countries to increase opposition unity, undermine Assad's sources of power, and prepare for transition after his ouster. Given the enormous risks of armed intervention, the military role is best kept limited to supporting whole-of-government activities to undermine the morale and cohesion of Assad's security forces

and to working with neighboring countries such as Turkey and Jordan to deter Syrian military provocations and contain the violence to Syria.

Conclusion

In a world of continuing challenges and increasing complexity, regime change will retain its apparent attractions. Ousting a tyrant can seem more attractive politically and acceptable morally than dealing with a despotic regime. Deposing dictators can beckon as a seemingly decisive way to advance our interests and spread our values.

However, the Obama Administration's new defense strategy seems to preclude forcible regime change of the type exercised in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is a reasonable approach as we look back on the unforeseen costs and balance future interests against declining resources. Even non-military regime change may require means that we do not have – such as influence over opposition – or pose risks that we wish to avoid – such as sparking sectarian violence.

Rather than seeking to overthrow a regime, seeking to influence the regime's behavior or contain its impact may be a more prudent approach. The challenge is to influence without bestowing legitimacy, while explaining the purposes of our engagement at home and abroad.

Dealing with the regime in the short term does not preclude sowing seeds of democracy for the long-term. Indeed, encouraging democracy through public diplomacy and support to civil society may be the most effective and sustainable approach to regime change, even if the results are not always immediate.

In those limited cases when a more interventionist approach seems desirable and feasible, the overthrow of Milosevic offers some useful lessons. Foremost among these is the importance of understanding the nature of the regime and its sources of power. As in the case of Milosevic's Serbia, undercutting these sources of power in partnership with a unified opposition may be the best way to loosen a tyrant's grip on power and ultimately convince him that "he's finished." PRISM

Notes

[1] "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," , January 2012, available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf>.

[2] The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review called for forces to wage "two nearly simultaneous conventional campaigns" and to be prepared in one "to remove a hostile regime, destroy its military capacity and set conditions for the transition to, or for the restoration of, civil society." See "Quadrennial Defense Review," (February 6, 2006), 38.

[3] A version of this section, together with lessons learned, was included in: Gregory L. Schulte, "Overthrowing Milosevic: Lessons for Syria?" (August 15, 2012), available at: <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=1307>.

[4] In 2000, following the breakup of Yugoslavia and NATO's intervention in Bosnia then Kosovo, the Federal Republic consisted of Serbia (Milosevic's center of power) and an increasingly autonomous Montenegro (now independent). Kosovo (also now independent) was legally part of the Federal Republic, though formally autonomous and administered by the United Nations. While Milosevic was nominally President of the Federal Republic, his real authority was increasingly limited to Serbia.

[5] President Clinton's remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in San Francisco, April 15, 1999.

[6] More about this plan is described in an earlier article by the author. See Gregory Schulte, "Deterring Attack: The Role of Information Operations," , (Winter 2002-3), 84-89.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Kaily Brown

A team leader for a U.S. Special Operations Cultural Support Team, hands out utensils in the village of Oshay, Afghanistan.