

# Editor's Note: The Essence of an Era

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Sometimes a single word captures the essence of an era. This is particularly true in contemporary political and military affairs. Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Haiti—each conjures up images of crisis and decision. In this vein, the signature word of the moment is Kosovo. Nearly a year after the first bombs were dropped, the meaning of this latest military operation remains the subject of intense debate.

A relatively minor crisis in the annals of modern history, Kosovo will never resonate as deeply as the great crises of the twentieth century. And yet, the shadow of Kosovo lingers over the end of one century and the beginning of another. Perhaps this is because Kosovo is both symptom and symbol of our current condition.

The Kosovo operation, in all of its political and operational complexity, shows us the fault lines in international politics today. In Kosovo, we see the possibilities of an international community committed to fighting for human rights. At the same time, we see the great costs and difficulties of using force in the pursuit of peace.

Perhaps the most visible fault line revealed in the Kosovo crisis is the artificial and narrowing divide between national and international justice. How should war crimes and crimes against humanity be adjudicated? Are national governments, using the concept of universal jurisdiction, capable of pursuing those who have committed such crimes? Are UN-sanctioned ad hoc tribunals a sufficient answer? Or is the proposal to move more robustly toward a functioning International Criminal Court a better alternative? Atrocities committed in Yugoslavia are only the latest example of the growing docket of international crimes backlogged in this evolving system. The dispute over General Augusto Pinochet and the ongoing struggle for justice in Cambodia are similar cases for those committed to the twin values of peace and justice.

If there is one undeniable and universal trend of this political moment, it is an insistence on individual responsibility. It is no longer enough to justify one's actions in terms of necessity and *raison d'état*. Nor is it enough to excuse human suffering by pleading impotence in the face of the inexorable forces of politics, including that new all-powerful force, globalization. *New York Times*

columnist Thomas Friedman's oft-quoted remark about the Internet—"Everyone is connected but no one is in charge"—is only partially true. The world is connected in new and qualitatively different ways, but we are still able to hold individuals accountable for their choices. Human interest has come to the fore as never in the past.

This journal is offered in the spirit of genuine intellectual exploration, and with a deep commitment to providing resources to people who seek a rigorous analysis of the trends and choices before us. Ethical reflection is not a luxury—it is a duty of every citizen and every individual who seeks to live a decent and just life. While this journal does not pretend to have definitive answers to these difficult questions of life and death, peace and justice, it does hope to provide clarity, creative insight, and guidance to those seeking answers for themselves.