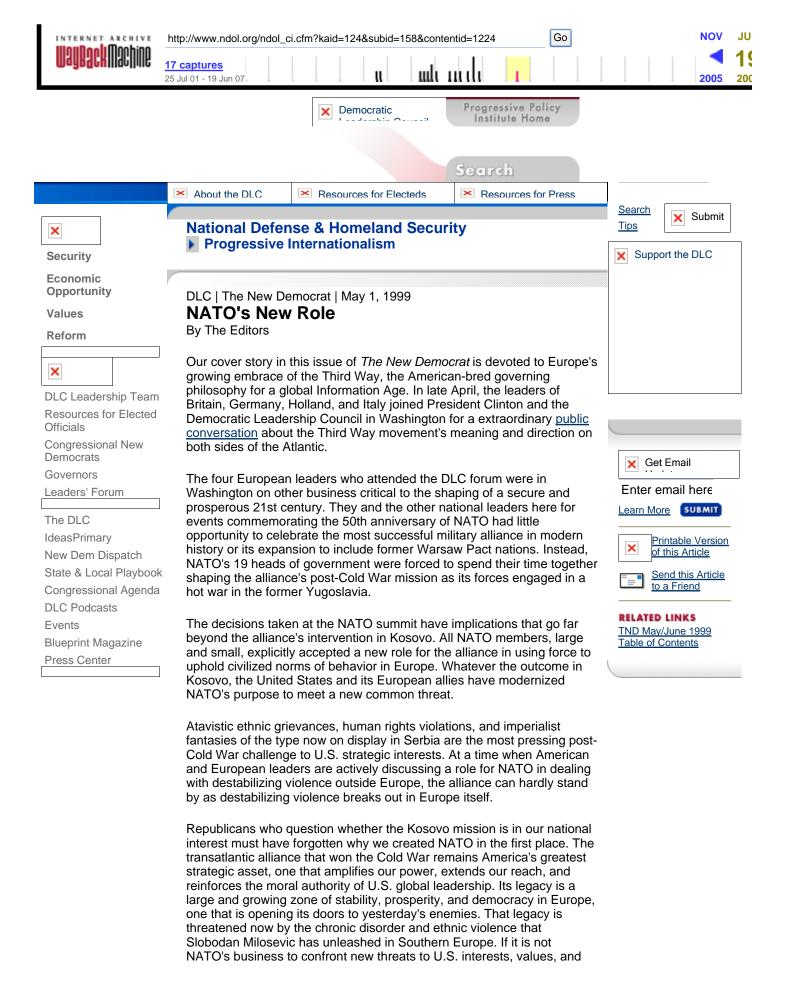
DLC: NATO's New Role by The Editors



friends in Europe, then we may reasonably wonder what purpose the alliance serves today. To argue that maintaining NATO's unity and credibility is not a vital American interest is essentially to argue against the whole rationale of collective defense that brought NATO into being.

It's increasingly clear that maintaining NATO's unity was a large factor in the gamble by President Clinton and European leaders that air strikes alone would bring Milosevic quickly to the peace table. The gamble did not initially work, but the desire to keep the alliance in synch was sound. In Washington, NATO leaders showed a renewed resolve to reverse Milosevic's thuggish actions in Kosovo, and to give military officials new leeway to match their means to the mission.

It remains for President Clinton and other NATO leaders to make it clear to the American and European people that we are involved in a war, not a peacekeeping or refugee-relief mission. War is not a video game; it means risking and accepting casualties. And while NATO's technological superiority does mean we can mete out vast punishment from the skies on male-factors while minimizing our own casualties, it does not rule out casualties.

If this mission is to succeed, NATO must quickly eliminate any hope in Belgrade that our intervention will stop the moment our televisions display the names of casualties or film of POWs being paraded past jeering Serb crowds. We are confident that U.S. troops, and the people whose interests they are fighting for, will accept sacrifices to stop aggression and ethnic cleansing in Europe, just as they have done in far graver circumstances before.

That's worth remembering as NATO marks the beginning of a second half-century with a new purpose. Americans have fought two hot and one cold war in Europe in this century to oppose aggression, oppression, and the slaughter of innocents. At the end of this century, it's no time to give up the fight. The NATO confer- ence and the DLC's Third Way event showcased a new generation of center-left leaders who have abandoned the left's traditional reluctance to use force and are determined to meet the challenges of economic globalization and regional turmoil. Now, more than ever, the Atlantic Alliance is America's most important asset in shaping the world of our future.

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