A stable peace on the planet in many respects also depended on peace of Europe. The whole of Europe has been trampled by jackboots and sodden with the blood of its peoples. No part of the continent has been spared the horrors of war from ancient times to our day. It had witnessed the Greco-Persian and the Punic wars, the campaigns of Alexander the Great, the conquest of Gaul by Julius Caesar, the movement of the Goths against Italy, the wars of the Huns against the Goths, the struggle against the invasion of Genghis Khan, the conquest of the Scandinavians, the Crusades, dynastic wars of the feudal lords, the Napoleonic wars for the division and the repartitioning of the World, wars that lasted seven, thirty and even one hundred years. Both World wars began in Europe.

NATO was always intended to be both more and less than a military alliance. The original idea was the brainchild of Britain’s foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin. In Jan 1948, Bevin suggested to Washington that it would be possible to stem the further encroachment of the Soviet tide only “by organizing and consolidating the ethical and spiritual forces of Western civilization”.

The alliance had been created in 1949, in order to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and to solve the German problem.

Besides preventively deterring the elusive Soviet threat, did NATO fend off other threats to Europe’s peace? “Keeping the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down” has been cited as a triple raison d’etre ever since the alliance’s first secretary-general, Lord Ismay, uttered the quip. Yet the notion of German menace was a fallacy. The first West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, had a hard time convincing his compatriots that the new German state needed an army at all. The alliance justified German rearmament on the
specious grounds that Germans has to be contained in a Western defence structure to proclivities; this excuse was originally intended to reassure the fearful postwar generation in France. Once the West had been reassured, the curious idea took hold that even the Russians liked NATO because it kept the German Bundeswher under American rein.

When Soviet power collapsed in Eastern Europe in 1989, an intense debate developed over the roles Europe’s security institutions should play in the new era. Some, led by Moscow, favored abolishing both the Warsaw pact and NATO and giving primacy to a pan-European collective security organization, perhaps in the form of a strengthened Conference on Security and Cooperation on Europe. Others, led by Paris, believed that NATO was still needed, but that primacy should be given to European institutions such as the Western European Union and the European Community, which became the European Union (EU) when the Maastricht Treaty and European Union went into effect in November 1993. Still others, led by Washington and London, believe that direct American engagement in European security affairs is still indispensable and that NATO, which provided the organizational framework for American engagement in Europe, was indispensable as well. According to this line of thinking, NATO is needed to be preserved, reformulated, and made the centerpiece of Europe’s new security architecture.

European war has been avoided; who deserved the credit for that, as with anything that did not happen, will remain forever uncertain. Did NATO deter intended Soviet aggression? Did it curb the bellicosity of Germans and keep the lid on a crisis? Did it shorten the Cold War, bring it to a happy end? Did it keep the nuclear genie safely under control while the conflict lasted? Did it husband its other military forces well? With the Cold War over, evidence is now available to broaden the judgment on NATO and help provide answers to questions like these.

NATO is not only a political and military reality but also an institution with a powerful legacy of historical success. Almost half a century of democracy,
stability, and prosperity in Western Europe, with most of those years passed
under stressful Cold War conditions, has been possible because of NATO's
defensive umbrella. This protection has also symbolized moral values in
international affairs.

NATO has been eminently successful in achieving the goal of deterrence.
As a NATO publication has expressed it: “Not one square inch of free territory in
Europe has fallen under Soviet domination since the signature of the Treaty”.

Now that the object has been achieved, voices are being raised suggesting
that the marriage should be dissolved and its partners left free to look elsewhere
for their security. But another characteristic of arranged marriages was that they
did not dissolve even after the children had grown up. For one thing, a household
had been created that remained the family home. For another, spouse had grown
used to one another, and even if there was still little affection, they had learned
to make allowances for each other’s infirmities. For a third, they could think of
no other arrangement that was equally convenient to both. Most important of all,
a separation was likely to have serious repercussions for their extended families
and the society that surrounded them. So it is with NATO. It has built up a
politico-military infrastructure that integrates the armed forces of much of
Europe and provides the United States with a unique capacity to influence the
policy of its allies and vice versa. It remains, astonishingly and perhaps absurdly
and the Americans can meet to discuss their politico-military problems and
make provisions for them.

Advocates of NATO expansion had given their views as follows;

First, it was said that NATO enlargement was needed to deter Russian
aggression in Eastern and Central Europe.

Second, advocates of NATO expansion maintained that, even if there is no
Russian military threat, membership should be offered to Central Europe
because this would “project stability” into the region. Michael Mandelbaum
argued that NATO expansion would extend the Alliance’s “Zone of Stability”
eastwards, while Volker Ruhe insisted that “if we do not export stability, we will import instability.

Third, advocates of NATO expansion maintained that, because it would take many years for former Warsaw Pact States to meet the economic and political standards of the European Union, the West must do something to reassure these states about their prospects of being fully integrated into the West. So NATO must provide a political and security anchor to these countries to the West.

Fourth, advocates of NATO expansion, claimed that taking steps to bring Visegrad states of Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia into the Alliance would help to dampen aggressive nationalism and promote democracy in the region.

There is nothing wrong with inertia so long as its keeps the object moving in the right direction, and few would deny that continuously solidarity and cooperation between the United States and the Nations of Europe remains an unexceptional goal. It might be argued that a military alliance is no longer a military threat, but it should be remembered that NATO was not just a military alliance in the first place. Today the threat that made its members emphasize their obligations under Article 5 at the expense of those under Article 2 no longer exists. So far as Article 2 is concerned, there is no reason why the membership of the Alliance should not be indefinitely extended, and the more widely the better. Who could possibly object to “the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being”? If that were all that was involved the partners could extend their family indefinitely and rub along forever. Even the obligations undertaken under Article 5, the regard an armed attack against one or more of the members as an attack against them all, are not especially rigorous: all that the parties undertake to assist the parties so attacked is to take “such action as [they] deem necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain international peace and
security. What action is deemed necessary is left to the discretion of each party, and armed forces is seen only as a possible option.

As the allies developed this comprehensive framework to reconcile contending interests and ensure NATO’s relevance for the 21st century, they began realizing that their plans for the future were mocked by the reality of war in Bosnia. They had treated Bosnia and Herzegovina as backwater, lying beyond the formal NATO treaty area, lacking in interest for all but a few of them, and clearly contained within its remote corner of the Balkans. That analysis proved unsound. As the moral and political implications of war and atrocity intruded on public attention, the allies came to see that NATO could achieve little else unless it also stopped the Bosnia war. They were finally impelled to use military force in the successful air campaign of August – September 1995 when they understood that allied credibility and political support for the broader security agenda demanded intervention in Europe’s only open conflict. Responding decisively to ethnic conflict thus became an added NATO mission.

A prime one was that active diplomacy needed military backing to be effective. NATO had provided that instrument. Without NATO’s support, the UN could simply not have enforced the Adriatic embargo or the No-Fly Zone over Bosnia. UNPROFOR personnel would not have the protection afforded by NATO air power as they carried out humanitarian and related peacekeeping tasks in threatening circumstances. The UN could not handle by itself the ever-increasing demand in the fields of crisis prevention and conflict resolution. There is no doubt that close cooperation between the UN and organizations such as NATO will be increasingly important in the future. The Western powers backed by NATO’s military capability, finally succeeded in stopping the killing in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995.

In a very real sense, a Bosnia that had almost destroyed the alliances proved its salvation. The alliance’s actions in Bosnia brought every element of its future into play. Its military commands were reconfigured in particular to deploy combat forces through the Implementation Force, then the Stabilization Force,
now the European Force (EUFOR) in Bosnia learned new political-military duties of peace making. Built relations with the U.N. and Non governmental organizations and integrated operations in space and air, at sea and land.

With military success in Bosnia and its new security architecture in place, by 1997 NATO was finally ready to decide which central European countries should be asked to joined. Three countries of Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic were chosen at the Madrid summit on a compound of several criteria.

NATO needs to take steps to ensure that old, new, and prospective members live to its political standards, thereby securing the organization’s coherence and relevance. If NATO is truly dedicated to protecting democracy human rights, and the rule of law, its own membership cannot be exempt from upholding those principles. The golden ring of NATO membership has certainly served as a powerful incentive for internal reform and modernization throughout central and eastern Europe.

For many months in 1998, the allies temporized in the face of conflict and atrocity in Kosovo, as they has earlier done with Bosnia. Kosovo did present special problems it was part of sovereign state, not independent; the U.N. Security Council has not asked NATO to act; and allies differed about the desirable outcome of the crises. Most insisted that the ambition of Kosovar Albanians be limited to some form of autonomy with few prepared to accept independence for Kosovo. Nevertheless, in October, 1998, NATO decided to use airpower to Serbian assaults, based on each ally’s judgment of the legal basis for doing so, but most allies were relieved that a cease-fire agreement obviated the need to act. In February, 1999, however, renewed fighting and Serb atrocities required NATO to confront its responsibilities again. This time, before the alliance’s resolve could be tested, the parties to conflict agreed to bargain at an Anglo-French peace conference at Rambouillet, France. The alliance did undertake to provide an implementation force if peace were achieved, structured along the lines of the Stabilization Force in Bosnia. After the collapse of
negotiations and a major Serb military assault on Kosovo, NATO finally agreed to redeem its pledges to act.

Serbia’s decision to end the war over Kosovo is treated by many as a capitulation. The peace deal was however, very different from the Rambouillet draft accords, Yugoslavia’s rejection of which in March 1999, had provided the occasion for NATO’s attack. NATO officials do not like to acknowledge these differences. They have a logic to paint the outcome of the war as a complete victory – more than ample reward for the preceding eleven weeks of military effort and political stress. And there is little doubt that NATO achieved more of its objectives in this war than did the Serbs. But the Serbs did not come away with nothing. The peace deal leaves open the possibility of a continued Serb political struggle for Kosovo. It attenuates the very real possibility opened by the terms of the Rambouillet accords that NATO would use its new presence in Kosovo to push for further demands on Serbia. Milosevic can claim credit for these changes with his nationalist supporters; he can also claim that he did not give in without a hard fight. In contrast to the terms of the Rambouillet accords, the Serbs achieved five gains.

First, the UN rather than NATO is the overarching political authority in Kosovo. Thus Serbia now has two friendly great powers – Russia and China – with influence over Kosovo’s political future.

Second, the legitimate political consolidation of Kosovo’s independence may prove impossible.

Third, the UN resolution is slightly more respectful of the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” with reference to Kosovo than was the Rambouillet document, though this is a subtle and perhaps debatable point. Fourth, the presence of Russian troops in Kosovo must be counted a Serb gain. Although Russian peace keepers may well have been deployed had Serbia accepted the Rambouillet plan, this was not to assume once that the UN became the overarching political authority in Kosovo, it would have
been very difficult for NATO to legitimately block the presence of Russian
troops, even though NATO was the designated military presence.

Fifth, the built-in ability of the Rambouillet accords to lead to further
NATO military interventions against Serbia has been eliminated. The strange
clause of the Rambouillet accords (Appendix B, paragraph 8), tacked on late in
the negotiations, that would have given NATO troops the freedom to operate
anywhere in Yugoslavia was gone.

Since the NATO victory and the withdrawal of all Serb police and
Yugoslav troops in June 1999, Kosovo has been occupied by the Kosovo Force
(KFOR)-42,000 troops dominated by NATO — and theoretically governed by the
United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). UN Resolution 1244, which
formally ended the war, recognizes Yugoslav sovereignty while instructing
UNMIK to establish the institutions of ‘substantial autonomy and self
government’ within Yugoslavia, ‘pending a final settlement’. NATO and Russia
say that independence is, therefore, out of the question. However, the Albanians
of Kosovo will never accept any kind of Yugoslav rule.

Contention centered on the very concepts of self-government and
‘substantial autonomy’. While these concepts were perceived by the international
administration as it key policy objectives, they meant very little to Albanians or
Serbs. Both sides continued to pursue their competing objectives; secession and
independence for the Kosovo Albanians; and preservation of Yugoslav
sovereignty and return to rule from Belgrade for the Serbs. Thus, any policy
decision undertaken by the international administration towards self-government
and substantial autonomy was constructed by the local rivals as a move towards
independence, and any decision appearing to preserve Yugoslav sovereignty, as
a move away from independence and towards the reintegration of Kosovo into
Yugoslavia.

The main cause from optimism, however, is that the international
administration now enjoys the confidence of both sides, a marked contrast to
summer 1999, when UNMIK and KFOR were received as liberators by the
Kosovo Albanians and as an occupying force by the Serbs. The Serbs, both in Kosovo and Belgrade, are now prepared to cooperate – not merely by out of pragmatism but also because they believe that the international administration can be an impartial and constructive player. The positive relationship establishment by the new regime in Belgrade with the major international actors in Kosovo has been a significant help. The Kosovo Albanians continue to maintain a high degree of confidence in the international administration and are largely convinced that the international community will not allow Kosovo to fall under Serb rule again.

The conflict between Milosevic and the rest of the international community was at its very essence a conflict between two visions of Europe one vision – Milosevic’s vision - is of a Europe of nationalism, authoritarianism and xenophobia; of a past that nobody should want to visit. The other vision – the vision of NATO Allies, EU members states and many Partner countries – is that of integration, democracy and ethnic pluralism. In short, the Euro-Atlantic community of the future.

Kosovo is now one of the most difficult and complex issues, not only for the Balkans but, with its wider implications, especially, for the UN and European Union and, to some extent, for the USA and NATO. The FRY was transformed into the Association of the two States of Serbia and Montenegro. The Constitutional Charter of this new association treats Kosovo as a part of Serbia.

The Situation in Kosovo and around remains as complex as ever, due to the opposing positions of both sides Serbia and Kosovo Albanians. In the international community, divergent voices are heard on the future of Kosovo. The prevailing thinking, especially in UN and EU, seems to be that it is still too early to try and determine the final status of Kosovo. They feel that before discussing the final status of Kosovo, first certain conditions should be created. These include among others, the return of refugees and freedom of movement for all and a situation of security for Serbs and other non-Albanian ethnical groups. One of the arguments against the independence of Kosovo is that, it could lead to the
changing of borders, which is against basic provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, 1975. However, the borders in the Balkans are practically fixed since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

Kosovo's international status is strange in that although it is formally a province of the Republic of Serbia, actual administration is presently conducted by the United Nations with no involvement on the part of the Serbian governments (under Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999; The government of the province is the responsibility of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Under the terms of the Kumanovo agreement and subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which ended the Kosovo War, security is provided by the Kosovo Force, (KFOR), which is led by NATO and is answerable to UNMIK.

The Albanians reject Serbian sovereignty, most Kosovo Albanians also do not believe that the Serbian side will respect Albanian rights. On the other side Serbia is adamantly opposed to the independence of Kosovo and for historical and religions reasons continues to see the province as the heartland of Serbian culture. The international community is reluctant to see Kosovo become independent, as its independence without Serbia's consent would violate international law (The principles of territorial integrity and noninterference in internal affairs). It could also potentially provide a precedent for the secession of the Republika Srpska from Bosnia, which could re-ignite the war in that country. The most likely outcome is the indefinite continuation of the current situation (with EU institutions taking over the roles of UN and NATO, a process which can be observed in present-day Bosnia).

The Suggestions to the Kosovo problem can be considered as follows:
1. Independence of Kosovo – For the time being this option does not look realistic or promising, not only because of the Serbian resistance, but also it seems that the international community (UN, EU, USA) is not, as yet, inclined to accept such a solution.
2. Return to Serbia under its Sovereignty - Such solution seems at the moment also unlikely and the international community might not be willing to impose it.

3. Continuation of the present status – in the absence of a final solution, this option might be necessary. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the UN would be ready to play its role through UNMIK much longer. They may prefer to ultimately hand Kosovo over to the EU.