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## United States Military Forces in the Balkans: Ending the Deployment

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**Abstract.** This article explores the political psychological implications of ending the deployment of United States (US) military forces in the Balkans.

A current Issue in the US presidential campaign involves the candidate of the Republican Party advocating that US military forces should not be on the ground in the Balkans--specifically in Bosnia and Kosovo. The candidate's contention is that the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should be responsible for ground deployments with the US providing logistics, intelligence, and air support. The political psychology of the candidate's argument deserves some analysis.

The candidate maintains that US military deployments for peacekeeping and other operations other than war lower US military morale and re-enlistment rates. The logic appears to be that more deployments engender lower morale, fewer deployments engender more morale. Is this the kind of military that the candidate desires--one that signs on not to be often deployed?

The candidate maintains that US military deployments for peacekeeping and other operations other than war keeps the US military away from what should be its only mission: to deter and fight a war. The logic appears to be that operations other than war have little, if any, cross-generalization of skills with war. Yet the discerning military expert might well identify much in the way of cross-generalization, including the very act of deployment and all that this act constitutes. Moreover, employing military forces to deter conflict without warfighting is by no means a new development.

The candidate does not strongly consider the psychological effect of precluding US military ground deployments in conjunction with other NATO forces. One political psychological Issue is a nexus of Eurocentric concern--viz., whether not equally sharing risk can induce changes in the cohesiveness and viability of NATO as an alliance, undermine the current European effort to increase its military prowess, and lead to provocative linkages between European countries and Russia. Another is whether a new US policy against most, if not all, military deployments in operations other than war would strengthen, weaken, or have no effect on allied, neutral, and adversarial perceptions of US resolve to pursue its security interests. Still another is whether the US would be and would be perceived as discounting the significance of operations other than war when such operations may well be becoming more and more important in security matters in an era of globalization. Should the US military really accept becoming all dressed up with nowhere to go?

Political psychologists can engage in significant applied research to help validate the Republican contention that US military forces are currently over-deployed and mis-deployed. This research also might validate the perspective that moving away from operations other than war would be the true index of even more noxious consequences. (See Fine, G. A., & Holyfield, L. (1996). Secrecy, trust, and dangerous leisure: Generating group cohesion in voluntary organizations. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59, 22-38; Gopher, D., Itkin-Webman, T., Erev, I., Meyer, J., & Armony, L. (2000). The effect of shared responsibility and competition in perceptual games: A test of cognitive game-theoretic extension of

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

signal-detection theory. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 26, 325-341; Holmes, S.A. (October 22, 2000). Gore assails Bush on plan to recall U.S. Balkan force. *The New York Times*, p. A1, A16; Horvath, P. (1999). The organization of social action. *Canadian Psychology*, 40, 221-231; Thompson, L., Fine, G. A. (1999). Socially shared cognition, affect, and behavior: A review and integration. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 278-302.) (Keywords: Balkans, NATO, Operations Other Than War.)