

## Operation Kinetic: Stabilizing Kosovo

by Sean M. Maloney

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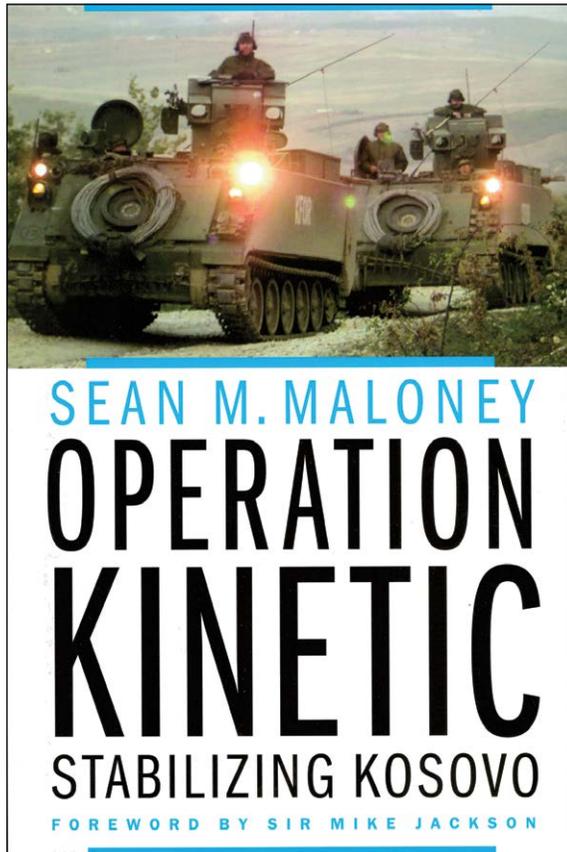
Much has been written upon the crises in the Balkans. These crises are highly relevant today, given Russia's seizure of the Crimea. The right to self-determination versus territorial integrity is at the heart of both of the Crimea and Kosovo. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, and in 2019, enjoyed its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary under international administration as a de facto UN protectorate. Much has been written about Kosovo's incredibly-complex geo-political situation. The preponderance of literature to date has focused upon a breadth of perspectives from all sides; among them, self-determination vs. territorial integrity, nationalism, international and humanitarian intervention, insurgency, ethnic cleansing, stabilization, institutional capacity building, and peacemaking. Few, if any, have specifically focused upon the Canadian aspects related to peacemaking in Kosovo.

A look at the Canadian contribution to stabilizing Kosovo in the late-1990s has been long in the coming. The events of 9/11 in 2001, and the West's focus upon the Middle East distracted the international community's interest in the Balkans for well over a decade. Much has been written on the Afghanistan campaign generally, and the Canadian involvement in particular. Therefore, it comes as a welcome surprise to finally see the very first comprehensive treatment of Canada's commitment to NATO's mission in Kosovo. In effect, Sean Maloney has succeeded in writing a highly-accessible publication. He has chosen a balanced blend of analytical synthesis and anecdote rather than a historically-replete account of the Canadian military in Kosovo, and in so doing, he has avoided the soporific pitfalls of a strictly-scholarly work. *Operation Kinetic: Stabilizing Kosovo* brings the character and colour of our Canadian Armed Forces soldiers, sailors, and aviators serving on operations to life, and ultimately, makes the book a more memorable read.

Maloney offers a uniquely-Canadian perspective with respect to Operation *Kinetic* as part of a NATO-led multinational peace enforcement mission. The importance of this work to the CAF *in particular* and to Canadians *in general* is not insignificant. Largely due to the nature of Canada's contribution-style of warfare, it is not often that its professional military efforts on operations receive such due attention. Kosovo is no exception. Canada's absence from the Balkans Contact Group and its battle group plus contribution compared to the Contact Group's multinational brigades (French, Italian, German, British, and American) appeared to relegate the story regarding Canadian influence in Kosovo to the back seat. As prelude, Maloney's detailed account of Canada's political manoeuvrings to ensure American commitment to the peace enforcement mission, as well as his follow-on account of Canada's tactical actions on the ground compared to those of our Allies, sets to re-balance the narrative in this regard.

Maloney has made the effort to ensure his work is written on two levels; one that will appeal to the military community and military historians, and one that will appeal to the wider public. His efforts to succinctly explain military doctrine, organizational structures, and operational functions will grant the wider public a better understanding of how western militaries organize and operate, and it will allow them to better take in the nuances and atmospherics expressed in the extensive primary source anecdotes offered throughout. For military historians and the military community, Maloney's well-researched *Operation Kinetic* will bring reminders of how military operations were conducted in Bosnia, although with much better rules of engagement and armour inn Kosovo. In fact, the plan and execution of the NATO intervention into Kosovo is considered a political and military blueprint for intervention in 'conflict less than war,' despite the serious and significant obstacles and frictions that are highlighted by Maloney throughout. Canada had its own trials to overcome, including the negative effects of alternate service delivery with respect to strategic deployment and sustainment, as well as the legacy of Somalia.

Maloney's extensive experience in the Balkans is brought to bear by virtue of his outlining the geo-political arc from 1389, through to the post-Cold War break-up of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, in order to set the scene for Serbian Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing reprisals in Bosnia and Kosovo. This is an absolutely essential requirement for the reader to best understand the complexities and particularities of battle-group operations described later in the text. Maloney has also not missed out on the comparative effectiveness of the Canadians and their new military systems in theatre, such as the eight-wheeled *Coyote*



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reconnaissance platform, and the *Griffon* rotary-wing surveillance and utility platform. Specific chapters have been allocated to each, including explanations regarding their development and innovative use by soldiers and aviators towards peace-enforcement in theatre. Strangely enough, we learn that some of these surveillance systems were used to keep our supposed-Allies in line and on mission. What follows are two sections on battle group operations, the first based upon the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and the second applicable to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment. Both chapters are replete with anecdotes related to operations, and Maloney's assessment of their value to stabilization throughout Kosovo, albeit mostly within the United Kingdom's Multinational Brigade Group (Centre) area of operations, captures well the evolution of battle group operations over the one-year arc; from forced entry, through peace enforcement, and finally, to stabilization. He then finishes with an account of Canadian forces involved in sustainment operations that should satisfy both professional and armchair logisticians.

Ultimately, Sean Maloney delivers an excellent analysis of the Canadian contribution to military intervention in Kosovo, balancing the geo-political and strategic context with tactical operations in theatre. His extensive primary source research and experience reveal some striking insight and detail, and his comparative assessment of Canadian military effectiveness within the multi-national brigade and theatre are significant contributions to our understanding of the Canadian efforts in Kosovo. It is, however, his thorough use of anecdotes to paint a truly-Canadian perspective of Operation *Kinetic* that makes this publication a worthwhile and refreshing read, one that is uniquely Canadian.

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