



NATO

What Is It Good For?

**A Stop the War Coalition Briefing
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Introduction

In December 2019, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation will be marking seventy years of existence with a Summit of Allied leaders in London. US President Donald Trump is set to be in attendance alongside the leaders of the other twenty-eight nations which make up the Western military alliance.

Established at the onset of the Cold War, NATO was instrumental in nuclear brinkmanship. Although not officially involved in any wars during its first forty years of operation, NATO helped to foster a climate in which nuclear war was possible, and in the thirty years since the end of the Cold War and the downfall of the Soviet Union NATO has been marked by expansionist aggression.

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Since 1999, NATO has added 13 new member states, all in Central and Eastern Europe and as of 2019 officially recognises four more aspiring members in that region, including Ukraine. This, despite Western assurances at the end of the Cold War that there would be no eastwards expansion of NATO. NATO claims these additions are designed to deter Russian aggression but many question whether this expansionism threatens to provoke a new Cold War.

Meanwhile, NATO is approaching twenty years of disastrous occupation in Afghanistan and the wounds inflicted by its onslaught on Libya continue to widen. There is also continued speculation over expansion into Latin America.

In many circles the existence of NATO and Britain's membership of the alliance are unquestionable. This briefing is designed to raise questions as to whether this aggressive military alliance is still fit for purpose in the 21st century and why, after multiple

military failures from Afghanistan to Libya, it remains unchallenged in foreign policy circles.

NATO is by design a powerful arm of US foreign policy, and in the hands of the reckless Donald Trump we must step up our campaigning against it. The 2019 summit in London is a crucial opportunity for the anti-war movement to oppose NATO's nuclear warmongering and interventionist agenda.

Right: President Donald Trump and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 2017.



The Cold War and the Origins of NATO

Lindsey German

After two world wars in the space of a few decades, the mood of millions of people across the world by 1945 was to bring about peace and to create a world free from the threat of war. However, it was clear right from the moments that the Second World War ended that horrific new means of waging war were being developed, and that the peace that so many cherished was in danger of being short lived.

In August 1945, the US dropped nuclear weapons – atom bombs – on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The effects were devastating. Within seconds of the bomb over Hiroshima being detonated during morning rush hour in the city, a huge fireball formed, and neutrons and gamma rays reached the ground causing radioactive injuries. Direct burns came from infrared energy produced.

The bomb killed 100,000 instantly, with at least another 100,000 dying more slowly from radiation sickness and other effects. When rescue teams arrived later in the day there was little to rescue, just huge numbers of dead bodies.¹ The effects and consequences of the bombing were kept largely secret from the public, as were those of another bomb dropped on Nagasaki three days later. That same month Japan surrendered, marking the conclusion of the Second World War, which had already ended in Europe in May 1945.

The bombing was a new departure – the development of a superweapon which was so destructive that it could wipe out whole cities. The Second World War had already seen terrible bombing of civilians – in Dresden and Hamburg in particular, but also in Tokyo where the city's largely wooden houses burned into a firestorm.

While the story broadcast by the US to justify Hiroshima was that it saved American lives by ending the war quickly, so preventing Japan from continuing military resistance, there is evidence that Japan was already trying to surrender, and that US military commanders themselves did not see the bombing as strategic militarily.² In reality, it is more likely that the US wanted to use its 'superweapon' to

underline its dominant role militarily and politically following the war. The detonation of the atom bomb was about strengthening US power. It was also about containing Russian expansion in the east, since the USSR had entered the war against Japan in early August 1945.³

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The political developments apparent even before the war ended became much more pronounced in the months after. Whereas the war had been won by an alliance of the US, alongside Britain and France, with the USSR, even before the war was over there were signs of divisions between the allies, who had different war aims and goals. The peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945 were about the divisions of post war power around the world, centring on Europe but also looking globally for potential spheres of influence.

The US was particularly determined to assert its pre-eminence as a superpower, the only country whose military and civilian economies had grown during the war. This was in strong contrast to the old fading imperial powers of Britain and France, whose economies were ravaged by the war, as were those of the rest of Europe. It was clear that the main rival to the US was the Soviet Union, which had emerged strengthened by the war, despite its terrible losses and privations, and which controlled large parts of Eastern Europe.⁴

By the following year, tensions between the two were much more apparent. Winston Churchill made his Iron Curtain speech in the US which outlined the divisions and was a clear attempt, with US support, to politically label the developments of an East and West Europe.

US President Harry Truman then spelt out his famous doctrine in 1947 when he argued for aid to Greece and Turkey, arguing that 'it must be the policy of the United States to support free people



President Truman signing the document implementing the North Atlantic Treaty in the Oval Office, 1949.

who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures'.⁵ This is often regarded as the beginning of the Cold War; the long period following the Second World War where there was not major war between the two major superpowers of the US and USSR but where military rivalry manifested itself in proxy conflicts across the globe.

Linked to the doctrine which increasingly pitted the 'free world' against the Eastern Bloc (and after 1949 Mao's China) was the Marshall Plan. Economic help was delivered to war ravaged Europe but came with a high political price and was explicitly linked in Italy to supporting right-wing parties against the Communists. The strategy was also aimed at tying Western Europe into a military alliance with the US, one in which the latter was able to play a major role politically as well as militarily.

The Birth of NATO

This period marked the beginning of the development of NATO, the military alliance spearheaded by the US which centred on Western Europe. It was born out of rising tensions between East and West Europe which centred on the divided country of Germany and the divided city of Berlin, which was controlled by the old allies. By the end of 1947, with Stalin also forming the Cominform of representatives of East European states, divisions were hardening. It was then that Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary in the Attlee Labour government, suggested a military alliance to back up the economic reconstruction underpinned by Marshall aid.⁶

This led to the Brussels Treaty, set up in 1948 between Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg,

Britain and France for mutual self-defence, article IV of which stated that if one party was attacked, the others would offer 'all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.'⁷ This was followed in 1948 with talks between the US, Canada and Britain about the formation of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

These talks were against the background of rising tensions with the Eastern Bloc over Czechoslovakia and Berlin, which was subject to a blockade by the USSR, eventually broken by the Berlin airlift. These and other disputes created an atmosphere where mutual Western defence was deemed necessary. After consulting with the Brussels Treaty states, negotiations began, and NATO was established in the spring of 1949.

There were objections within what could now be called the Western powers to NATO – from the US over the cost of maintaining a military presence in Europe, from France over the desire by the US to allow the Federal Republic of Germany to rearm. But the growing tensions worldwide helped to smooth its path.

These included the USSR testing its own nuclear weapon in 1949, demonstrating that events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had set off a new arms race to develop ever more deadly weapons. By the 1950s the US was also testing for the even more deadly Hydrogen bomb.

The victory of the Chinese revolution under Mao Zedong in 1949 altered the balance of forces internationally and led to fear of the spread of 'communism' across the Far East. Indeed, the major wars of the Cold War – in Korea and Vietnam – were fought in this theatre. In addition, the slow break-up of the old colonial empires of the European powers was leading to national liberation struggles across Africa and Asia – often backed by the USSR and China.

Minds were concentrated particularly by the Korean War which broke out in June 1950, leading to more enthusiasm for arms spending (the British government sent troops to this war and increased its military spending, as did the US). Truman also used this opportunity to send more troops to Europe and to carry through the project of an integrated NATO command, with an American general as Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The war between the North and South in Korea was seen very much as a proxy conflict between the USSR and US, and this hot war helped to develop the Cold War which was to dominate international relations and politics for almost the next 40 years.

During much of this time there was an uneasy balance of power maintained, in part due to the awareness that both superpowers possessed nuclear weapons which could annihilate whole cities and that therefore they would never be used. In 1954, the Warsaw Pact was established, which was



Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher reviewing troops on the south lawn of the White House, 1988.

the Eastern Bloc equivalent of NATO – a military alliance headed by the USSR. By the 1950s, the US deployed more weapons, including nuclear ones, in Europe, and NATO became consolidated as an organisation. There was continued alarm over the supposed threat of invasion from the east, much of it shown to be exaggerated, and – despite French objections – German rearmament helped boost NATO weaponry.⁸

Growth and Consolidation

Despite challenges to the alliance, most notably over Suez in 1956, when the US was on opposite sides to Britain and France, NATO grew and consolidated itself. Major flashpoints included the crisis over Berlin which broke out again with the building of the wall dividing the city in 1961, and over the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the world appeared to be on the brink of nuclear war between the superpowers.

However, there was no outbreak of war and the later years of the 1960s and early 1970s marked periods of detente between the major powers, where there were explorations of nuclear arms control and treaties recognising the division of Germany.

These were also becoming much more difficult times for the US. Its disastrous intervention in the Vietnam war brought military defeat at the hands of a guerrilla army, mass opposition to the war at home, and helped precipitate an economic crisis which weakened the US position internationally and made its military commitments harder to sustain. The US also experienced the Vietnam syndrome following its humiliating defeat and withdrawal, which made it much less keen on direct intervention.

However, its role in NATO remained as it always had been – absolutely at the centre of the military alliance, where it remains to this day.

Détente Curtailed

By the end of the 1970s, détente was once again on the back burner and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 as US President ramped up the Cold War again. With conflicts over the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and increases in USSR arms spending, Reagan, eagerly abetted by Margaret Thatcher, wanted to restore US military and economic pre-eminence across the world. It was now that Reagan

proposed siting ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons in Europe – at Greenham Common in Berkshire and in Germany, which met with bitter opposition from a revived peace movement.

This renewed Cold War put even greater pressure on the Eastern Bloc. A new arms race put the state dominated economies at a major disadvantage, as did the beginning of reconstruction of the world market after the economic crisis. Reagan’s policies were designed explicitly to put economic pressure on Russia, and this was successful, although it also meant huge increased commitment from the US on its arms spending. At the height of the Reagan arms boom, it was spending 7% of GNP on the military - double that of other NATO countries:

‘The US had economically undermined the East European economic structure by means of the arms race, but the scale of arms spending needed to do this had also eroded its own economic advantage over its Western rivals.’⁹

The symbolic end of the Cold War was November 1989 when the wall which had divided Berlin for nearly 30 years was torn down. It marked decisive victory for one side, but also the beginning of a new period of conflicts and war, one where NATO’s role also changed dramatically.

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6 Beschloss, Michael, *Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents From The National Archives*, Oxford University Press. 2006 pp194–99.

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Out of Mind and Out of Area: NATO Since the Cold War

Chris Nineham

The end of the Cold War created a problem for the US. The public rationale for NATO had been the defence of the West against the Soviet Union, but in reality, it had been crucial in providing the US with a bridgehead to Europe and Asia and imposing US leadership of the Western Alliance. The US emerged from the Cold War the unchallenged world power, but its leaders knew it needed to continue to deploy force to stay in position and they worried that the demise of the West's main enemy would weaken US control over its allies.

There was a debate about how to respond. Some argued for closer relations with post-Soviet Russia, a limited reduction in arms spending and the benefits of a peace dividend. They lost the argument. US President Clinton's hawkish advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski – on the winning side – later summed up the US's three priorities as 'to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence amongst the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected and to keep the barbarians from coming together'.¹ By barbarians he meant Russia and China. As in the Cold War years, NATO was needed to ensure US influence in Europe and to contain competitors. But the US would need to provide its allies with a new rationale.

Looking Outwards

The new mission was presented in terms of security and the defence of western values, but at its heart it was about projecting US power and preventing the emergence of new challengers. A 1992 Pentagon strategy document spelt out the thinking:

'Our primary objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the old Soviet Union or elsewhere... the new strategy requires that we work to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would be sufficient, if tightly controlled, to generate global power'.²

When NATO was relaunched at the Rome summit of the Atlantic Council in 1991 the stress was on a new series of 'multifaceted and multidirectional' risks to

security. 'The monolithic, massive threat that has been the main security concern of the Alliance for the last forty years may have disappeared' but the military dimension remained essential and 'the new fact is that it will be more than ever at the service of a broad concept of security'.³

The US slogan for NATO was 'out of area or out of business'. Drawing NATO into ambitious external military action – useful in itself of course – was the key to the US regaining leadership of Western Europe. NATO forces had already played an important role in the first Gulf War of 1991. In 1994, NATO aircraft were involved in military operations in Bosnia, shooting down Serbian planes in its first aggressive action.

As the former Yugoslavia unravelled, partly as a result of the actions of some Western powers, NATO began its first major intervention, presented as a war to stop ethnic cleansing of Kosovans by Serbia. This, the first of the modern 'humanitarian wars', involved a 78-day long bombing operation of Serbia using 23,000 bombs. Kosovo became a virtual NATO protectorate. 'Today, NATO faces its new mission: to govern' was the comment from the Washington Post.⁴

The US remained dominant in the alliance as NATO took on its new role. 75% of the aircraft and 90% of the bombs and missiles used on Serbia were supplied by the US, and they ran the command and control operation. Of the 2,000 targets hit by NATO aircraft in Serbia later documented by the Pentagon, 1,999 were chosen by US intelligence and only one by Europeans.⁵ NATO's 'out of area' role was confirmed at its Washington Summit in 1999 while the bombing of Serbia was in progress. For the first time, the option of running 'crisis response operations... outside the territory of the Alliance' was written into the NATO rule book.

The Washington Summit also reaffirmed the complete dominance of the US over NATO. A 'European defence identity' was sanctioned, but only under the auspices of the wider alliance. It was agreed that the key positions of NATO command were appointed by the US President and that, as before, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe would always be a US general.⁶



Meeting of ministers of defence at NATO HQ, 2013.

Pushing East

In 1991, as the Warsaw pact fell apart, US Secretary of State James Baker assured the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move East of Germany. 'NATO will not extend by a single inch to the East,' he promised.⁷ Baker's promise was broken time after time in the years that followed. NATO expanded to incorporate its first three former Warsaw Pact countries – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary – a month before the 1999 attack on Serbia. This took NATO right to the borders of Russia. In 2004, seven more Eastern European countries joined including the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – all formerly part of the USSR. By 2019, thirteen Eastern European and Balkan countries had joined NATO, three more were candidates for membership and twelve new NATO bases had been built east of Germany.

During the same period, NATO was linked tightly to the project of European political union. The European Union Maastricht Treaty of 1992 enshrined the right of EU states to be part of NATO and defined NATO as the foundation of the defence of the EU. This had several effects; it tied the EU to the US, it linked EU expansion of the Western military alliance and in the process it further

alienated Russia. This was a price well worth paying for a strategy that met two of the US's key aims; to head off the possibility of any rapprochement between Russia and Western Europe and to open up Eastern Europe to Western business. It was a strategy that would take the West to the brink of war with Russia.

Taking Chances

The September 2001 attacks on the US gave the neo-conservatives in Washington the chance to push for war. Their real concern was the possibility of challenges to their control of Central Asia and the Middle East. As a Pentagon report spelt out two weeks after the attacks, 'there is the possibility that a military rival with a formidable resource base will emerge in Asia'.⁸

The first response was the 2001 assault on Afghanistan. The initial bombardment and invasion were carried out by the US-led and UN backed International Security Assistance Force. But in the summer of 2003, NATO announced that it had taken over control of ISAF, with, it claimed, a 'UN mandate'. But no UN resolution was passed or even debated to confirm this until 2006. Afghanistan has turned out to be the West's Alliance's longest war.

The war has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Afghan civilians, the destruction of much of the countries' infrastructure and the resurgence of the Taliban, the organisation the invasion was supposed to root out. NATO played an important background role in the disastrous war on Iraq that followed eighteen months after the Afghan invasion. A NATO training mission was set up in Iraq to help create efficient armed forces and NATO personnel were involved in a wide range of support and intelligence roles.

NATO moved centre stage in the War on Terror when it headed up the West's attack on Libya in March 2011. The war was justified to the world as a humanitarian mission to protect the insurgent people of Benghazi from attack by Libyan President Colonel Ghaddafi. It turned out to be a seven-month assault which led to regime change and the killing of Ghaddafi. In those months NATO carried out 30,000 missions deploying 40,000 bombs and missiles. Libya was left devastated and dysfunctional, a war zone contested by at least three armies.

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NATO went on to play a key support role in the Western intervention in Syria. Much of the operation was co-ordinated from NATO warships based in the port of Iskenderun in Turkey. Emails from Hilary Clinton that later leaked showed that this war effort too had as its aim as regime change. Given the 'strategic relationship' of Iran and Syria, she argued:

'The overthrow of Assad would constitute an immense benefit for Israel, and it would also diminish the understandable Israeli fear of losing their nuclear monopoly'.⁹

Turning Up the Heat

The 2014 crisis in Ukraine was partly the fruit of NATO's push eastward. As NATO progressively increased its influence in the region Ukraine's President Kuchma had signed a NATO-Ukraine Action Plan and committed to joining NATO in 2002. His successor President Yushchenko was invited to the Brussels NATO summit in 2005 and the 2008 NATO summit green lighted Ukraine's entry. Ukraine looked set to join. But in 2010, newly elected President Yanukovich signalled he had no intention of joining the Alliance. By this time,

NATO officials had developed close links with parts of the Ukrainian military. The anti-government demonstrations that started in early 2014 were used as a pretext for NATO to reassert its influence.

This pressure exacerbated already existing tensions. When President Yanukovich was forced to flee and the country plunged into civil war Putin annexed the Crimea and the Donbass region in the East went into opposition to the Kiev government. The Kiev parliament voted for an 'irreversible course of Ukraine towards Euro-Atlantic integration'¹⁰ with the aim of full membership of NATO and the EU. This commitment in a deeply divided country on Russia's border carried with it the serious risk of drawing Russia and the West into conflict. The continuing crisis in Ukraine could be repeated in a whole series of countries bordering Russia that have been drawn into NATO's orbit.

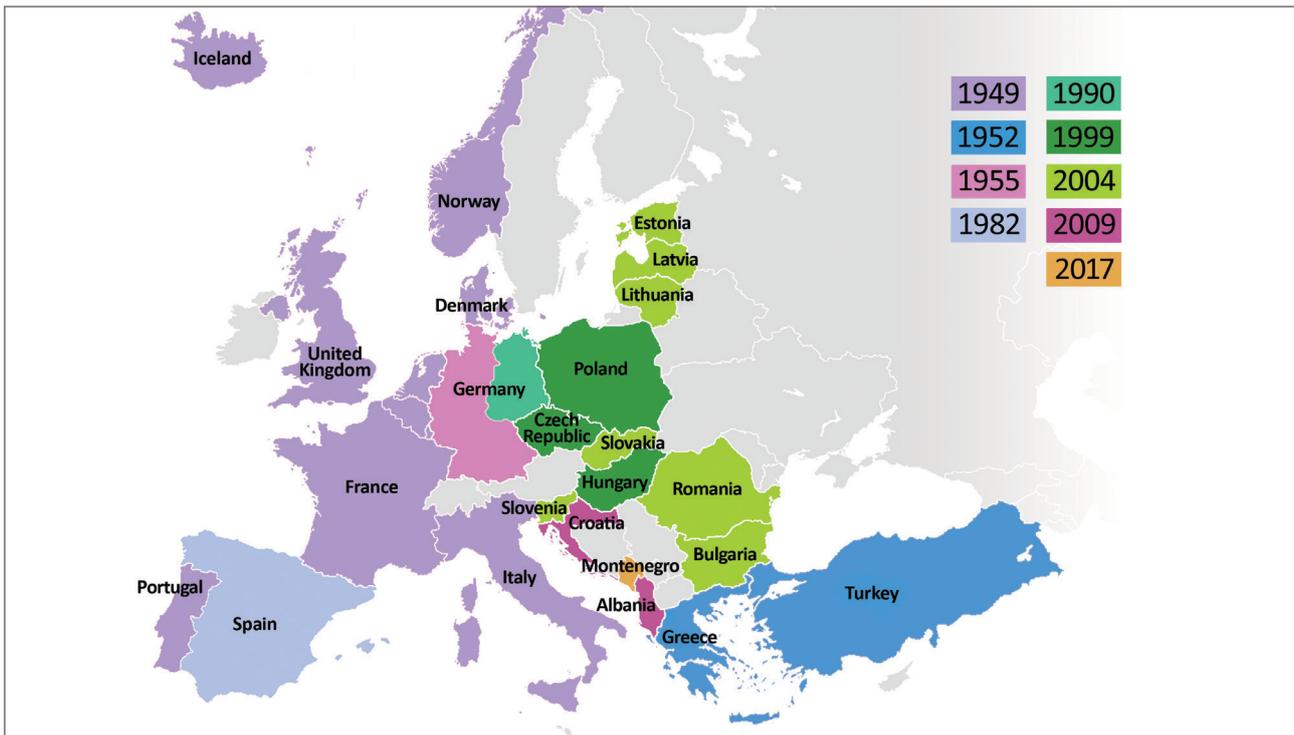
From 2014, NATO stepped up its pressure on Russia. That year NATO's summit in Wales announced a 'Readiness Action Plan' 'to respond quickly and firmly to new security challenges'¹¹ created by 'military aggression of Russia against Ukraine'.¹² From 2014-2018 the US spent ten billion dollars on increasing US and NATO firepower in the region. US forces were stationed permanently on Polish territory and massive military exercises were conducted in the Baltic states – Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine – which are now effectively integrated into NATO operations.

Going Global

Meanwhile the push to internationalise NATO continues. Recent US strategy documents are clear that China and Russia – not non-state actors – are the main threats. In Central Asia, Georgia is working closely with NATO and the Alliance continues to 'deepen cooperation' with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This is partly to challenge the Russian led Eurasian Economic Union.

NATO is also participating in the 'pivot to the East' designed to block China's military ambitions. It has concluded a strategic agreement with Japan that 'broadens and deepens the long partnership'¹³ and a similar pact with Australia. Colombia has become NATO's first partner in Latin America. But the Middle East remains vital.

The US may be moving towards fossil fuel self-sufficiency as a result of shale-based production, and oil consumption in the West maybe beginning to decline, but neither of these are the main points.



China and India's oil needs are rising, and they are both heavily dependent on supplies from the Gulf. Control of oil production and distribution remains the key to global power projection. In the words of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies,

'As the world's only superpower, [the US] must accept its special responsibilities for preserving access to worldwide energy supply'.¹⁴

Building on the experience of leading the attack on Libya, NATO is developing its relations with four Gulf monarchies – Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait and Qatar – and is heavily implicated in the escalating campaign against Iran.

NATO's accelerating 'out of area' interventionism, its growing tendency to push for regime change, its increasingly openly confrontational stance to China and Russia have nothing to do with peace and security. They are policies driven by the priorities of the US in an increasingly conflicted world, and by European countries' desire to make use of US military power and to pursue their own regional and international interests. This approach is increasing tension and generating dangerous flashpoints around the world. But Trump's belligerence and brinkmanship are straining relationships within the Western alliance and the warmongering and provocations of the man who is de facto leader of NATO are causing anger and anxiety around the world. NATO – never capable of winning popular support for its agenda of domination – has been hiding in the shadows for too long. We must shine a light on it before more damage is done.

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Yugoslavia: NATO's Illegal War

Carol Turner

Twenty years ago, on 24 March 1999 NATO's aerial bombardment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began. It lasted 78 days, focussed on Serbia which included the autonomous province of Kosovo in the south and home of the Federal government, Belgrade, in the north. The bombing ended on 10 June, when President Slobodan Milosovic conceded to a UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with a NATO-led military presence, KFOR, responsible for establishing a safe environment and freedom of movement under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Thousands of civilians were dead or injured, around one million people had fled Kosovo¹, and Serbia was home to the greatest number of internally displaced people and refugees in Europe.

The Kosovo War was NATO's illegal war in Europe, the first time in its 50-year history the North Atlantic Alliance had used military force without authorisation by the UN Security Council. US President Bill Clinton led the call for intervention, with strong support from Prime Minister Tony Blair. In a statement to the British parliament on 25 March 1998, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced: 'last night NATO air forces commenced strikes against military targets in Yugoslavia.' The government, he said, was 'acting on the legal principle that the action is justified to halt a humanitarian catastrophe'.²

Speaking to an American audience a few weeks later, Tony Blair defended the bombing of Yugoslavia: 'No one in the West who has seen what is happening in Kosovo can doubt that NATO's military action is justified.' He went on to elaborate what would become known as Blair's doctrine of humanitarian intervention – shifting away from respect for the sovereignty of nations, the non-intervention principle enshrined in the UN Charter, to the notion that the international community had a responsibility to intervene for the purposes of 'delivering humanitarian aid, deterring attacks on defenceless people, backing up UN resolutions and occasionally engaging in major wars... as we are currently doing in the Balkans'.³

The attempt to justify military action as a humanitarian intervention was a signpost to the 21st century wars that would follow.

The legal basis NATO claimed for bombing Yugoslavia rested on three assertions:⁴

- that the operation was lawful;
- that the possibilities of a reasonable and peaceful settlement had been exhausted;
- that the force used was necessary to avert what would otherwise be a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo.

There is little if any factual or moral foundation for any of these claims. On the contrary, accumulated evidence strongly suggests that NATO bombing helped create, not avert, a humanitarian disaster.

The bombing went far beyond the military targets sanctioned under international law. By the end of NATO's campaign bridges had been demolished blocking access to the Danube, and road and rail routes severely disrupted; water treatment facilities, electricity generating plants and other civilian infrastructure had been smashed; public buildings had been targeted – including the main TV station and the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade; and some important cultural sites laid waste.

Under-Reported

Western reports of civilian casualties and incidents in which civilian installations were bombed consistently under-reported what was happening. Human Rights Watch, the most frequently quoted source of civilian casualties put the figure at between 489 and 528.⁵ The actual number is likely to be considerably higher. Margit Savovic, Chair of the Yugoslav Committee for Cooperation with UNICEF, for example, told a press conference in May 1999 that some 1,200 civilians had been killed and 5,000 wounded, a large proportion of them children. The Yugoslav Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a two-volume *White Book*, documenting every instance of bombing in which civilians were killed or injured and/or civilian property and installations damaged or destroyed. Each case was



PHOTO: NATO

Tony Blair speaking at NATO HQ, 1999

backed up by detailed photographic and forensic evidence and/or witness testimony.⁶

As information about the impact on civilians began to emerge, a growing number of lawyers and other specialists contested the legality of NATO's action. Less than halfway through the bombing, *The Guardian* cited a statement by Group 17, economists from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank whose brief was to promote a free market economy in Yugoslavia. Bombing was causing 'no material and even political damage to Milosevic, but only to the citizens of Yugoslavia'.⁷ It was: 'destroying the country's civilian industrial capacity and public works, including its highway, rail and communications networks. It has halved economic output and thrown more than 100,000 people out of work...'⁸

Air strikes destroyed the Zastava car factory in Kragujevac, central Serbia, putting more than 15,000 people out of work, along with 40,000 more who were employed by subcontractors. The 14 Oktobar factory which made construction equipment and bulldozers was reduced to rubble, putting more than 7,000 people, a quarter of the town's entire workforce out of a job.

Environmental degradation added to the growing list of concerns. Large quantities of chlorine and other noxious gases were released into the air when a petrochemical plant at Pancevo was bombed. The

world watched for days as images of the raging fire filled TV screens.

Two oil refineries and most of their storage tanks were destroyed. Damage to filtration plants resulted in a scarcity of clean water. One estimate suggested only 30% of Belgrade residents had access to running water. Air strikes on electricity generating facilities seriously disrupted the power supply. The latter hit hospitals and medical centres particularly hard. Alice Mahon MP, Chair of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Civilian Affairs Sub-Committee and leader of the UK campaign against NATO intervention, commented at the time 'that sounds like a strategy of terror against the civilian population'.⁹

After the Bombing

The mayhem did not stop when the bombing ended. A year later, under the noses of 36,000 KFOR troops, a quarter of a million Serbs, Roma, Jews, Muslim Slavs and other minorities had been forcibly expelled from Kosovo by the Kosovo Liberation Army. The *Guardian* reported that Kosovo had become a 'smugglers paradise' supplying 40% of the heroin sold in Europe and North America'.¹⁰ Amnesty International documented how, since the establishment of UNMIK and deployment of KFOR, Kosovo 'has become a major destination country for women and girls trafficked into forced prostitution'.¹¹

NATO's claim that all possibility of a peaceful settlement had been exhausted was equally controversial. A statement from the Contact Group¹² meeting of 23 February 1999, a month before airstrikes began, records that negotiations had 'led to a consensus on substantial autonomy for Kosovo, including on mechanisms for free and fair elections to democratic institutions, for the governance of Kosovo, for the protection of human rights and the rights of members of national communities; and for the establishment of a fair judicial system'.¹³

The third plank in NATO's justification of war was the assertion that force was necessary to prevent the 'ethnic cleansing' of Kosovo's majority Albanian-origin inhabitants. This claim – at the heart of the US and Britain's political validation of the war – is perhaps the most dubious of all. The Yugoslav government insisted that the exodus from Kosovo began *after* 24th March and took place as a direct result of the bombing – a view supported by some powerful voices among the NATO allies. Lord Carrington for example, a former General Secretary of NATO and chair of the European Conference on Yugoslavia as well as Foreign Secretary in Margaret Thatcher's government, argued that not only did NATO bombing fail to avert ethnic cleansing, it actually caused it.¹⁴

In June 2000 the Foreign Affairs Select Committee published its report on Kosovo. Contrary to the stance taken by the British government it came to the view that NATO's military intervention was unlawful: 'Our conclusion is that Operation Allied Force was contrary to the specific terms of... the basic law of the international community.'¹⁵ Against much of its own evidence, however, the Select Committee maintained that: 'NATO's military action, if of dubious legality in the current state of international law, was justified on moral grounds.'

If the reasons given by NATO for its bombardment of Yugoslavia don't stack up, then what was the war about?

Civil War

Civil war began in 1991. Slovenia's declaration of independence from the Federal Republic in June led to a 10-day conflict between the Slovenian Territorial Defence and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). It was low intensity fighting. Slovenian estimates put JNA casualties at 44 dead and 146 wounded, with 19 casualties and 182 wounded on the Slovenian side, and 12 foreign citizens killed before Yugoslav

forces withdrew.¹⁶ While the JNA undoubtedly had the military edge, one significant factor in the outcome seems to be the reluctance on the part of the Yugoslav Federation to send its troops, largely conscripts, into battle against its own citizens.

Events leading up to the outbreak of civil war go back a decade. From the 1950s-70s, the concurrence of three favourable conditions meant Yugoslavia enjoyed a period of economic growth, industrialisation, and relative political stability:

- Under the presidency of Josip Broz Tito, war hero and architect of the Socialist Federal Peoples Republic, Yugoslavia pursued a relatively independent economic course, subordinated to neither the United States in the west or the Soviet Union in the east.
- As one of the most ethnically diverse countries of Europe, the constitution of the Socialist Federation aimed to unite the peoples living there by a series of checks and balances that assured respect for national rights. Economic planning reinforced this principle, by providing for the redistribution of resources from richer to poorer areas of the Federation.
- And, at the height of the Cold War, Yugoslavia occupied a unique geo-political position on the border between West and East Europe. As a non-capitalist state outside the Warsaw Pact it balanced between the two blocs – the US in the west, the Soviet Union in the east – and was courted by both.

Yugoslavia did not escape the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s and Milosevic's predecessor had introduced free market reforms that were impoverishing the population. The collapse of the Soviet Union which began in the late 1980s, followed by the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and reintroduction of capitalism into Eastern Europe meant Yugoslavia's role as a bridge between the two worlds became less important, and economic assistance less forthcoming as a result. The Yugoslav economy was in freefall. Regional disparities widened, income inequality increased, and unemployment shot up. In this context, Slovenia the richest part of Yugoslavia decided to go it alone.

Croatia and the Aftermath of War

Croatia was next in line, encouraged by its historic partner Germany, which was looking to expand its

regional reach and dominance within the European Economic Community (EEC). Between 1991-1995 forces loyal to the government of Croatia fought for independence. As a matter of historical record, the biggest single 'ethnic cleansing' of the civil war took place in the Krajina, an autonomous Serb region of Croatia, when the Croat forces drove between 150,000 and 200,000 Serbs out after a two week battle that UN monitors described as a systematic campaign of destruction.

The expulsion of Croatian Serbs was part of Operation Storm, the Croat Army's last battle before independence was recognised and the largest European land battle since World War II.¹⁷ A journalist reporting for The Independent from Knin, Krajina's capital city, described the UN dossier on Serbs expulsions as 'an endless litany of horror, reported by teams of human rights monitors whose words go unheeded'.¹⁸

The wars scotched any possibility of the Balkans acting as an independent alternative to great power politics in the foreseeable future. NATO was crucial to this outcome.

Once Croatia fell, it became inevitable that Bosnia-Herzegovina, the most ethnically mixed area of Yugoslavia, would follow suit. Like Croatia, Bosnian independence was sponsored by Germany. Bosnian Serbs, in favour of remaining within Yugoslavia, boycotted a 1992 independence referendum in which only the Croatian and Muslim populations voted.

The result was a massive majority for secession; but the turnout failed to reach the required proportion to make it constitutional. Nonetheless, independence was declared a few days later, recognised by the EEC in May, and war broke out in June. Deadlock ensued, with neither side was able to bring the civil war to a military conclusion until NATO intervened. Air-strikes from 30 August to 20 September 1995 brought negotiations between the US and Yugoslav Federation governments that resulted in the Dayton Agreement of November that year.

The civil war left the rump of Yugoslavia exhausted and defeated. The wars had scotched any possibility of the Balkans acting as an independent alternative to great power politics in the foreseeable future. NATO was crucial to this outcome.

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4 Mark Littman QC, 'Neither legal nor moral: how NATO's war against Yugoslavia breached international law', *Committee for Peace in the Balkans*, September 2000.

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11 'Kosovo: trafficked women and girls have human rights', Amnesty International archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20071013123632/http://web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/stories-9-eng>

12 The Contact Group was an informal arrangement, with no secretariat or permanent staff, first created by the NATO allies in response to the civil war in Bosnia earlier in the decade. It comprised of the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, whose meetings were attended by representatives of NATO and the EU Council and Presidency.

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NATO's Nuclear Sharing

Kate Hudson

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a nuclear-armed alliance which insists that a nuclear capability is essential to the security of its members. However, most of its 29 member states do not possess nuclear weapons. Only three of its members have their own arsenals – the US, France and the UK, but the rest are required to participate in the ‘sharing’ of around 180 US nuclear weapons. Although only five countries physically ‘host’ these weapons (B61 nuclear free-fall gravity bombs), all NATO members are required to share in the responsibility for maintaining the weapons in Europe and in the event of war, ‘host’ country aircraft will deliver the bombs. Around a further 300 or so B61s are stationed at US bases in Europe under US control intended for delivery by US aircraft.

Hans Kristensen explains the ‘sharing’ arrangements:

‘The “host” weapons at the national bases are under the custody of U.S. Air Force Munitions Support Squadron (MUNSS) in peacetime, but the weapons are stored in underground vaults inside the protective aircraft shelters just a few meters below the wings of the aircraft. In times of war, the weapons would be handed over to the non-nuclear countries if the U.S. president authorized employment of the weapons. But even during peacetime, the U.S. Air Force equips the allied aircraft with the electronic and mechanical interfaces, and trains the pilots to load and employ the weapons.’¹

The ‘shared’ bombs are stationed in five countries: at the Kleine Brogel air base in Belgium (10-20), at the Büchel Air Base in Germany (10-20), at the Volkel air base in the Netherlands (10-20), in Italy at the Aviano and Ghedi bases (60-70) and at Incirlik airbase in Turkey (60-70). While the governments of these countries have never officially declared the presence of these weapons, both former Italian President, Francesco Cossiga, and former Dutch Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, have confirmed their existence.

Opposition

There is strong opposition to these weapons being sited in Europe, including from some of the host

nation governments. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands have all, unsuccessfully, called for the removal of US nuclear weapons from their countries. The response to their request has been that NATO decisions are consensus-based and all member states would have to agree to their removal. However, B61s used to be sited in Greece and up to 100 in the UK, but these were removed, respectively, in 2001 and between 2004 and 2008. In the case of the UK it was indicated that it was the result of persistent popular protest.

All NATO members are required to share in the responsibility for maintaining nuclear weapons in Europe.

But it is not simply the fact that these nuclear weapons are based in Europe that attracts criticism. There is widespread concern about the type of nuclear weapons as well. The B61 is a so-called ‘tactical’ or non-strategic nuclear weapon. This means it is a low-yield weapon, designed primarily for use on the battlefield. ‘Strategic’ nuclear weapons, like those of the UK’s Trident nuclear weapons system, are designed to hit major targets, like cities or major industrial areas, in the interior of enemy territory. The B61 has a variable yield, of between 0.3 to 340 kilotons that can be adapted according to the scenario in which it might be used. This clearly shows that ‘low-yield’ is a misnomer; the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima was 15 kilotons.

Tactical nuclear weapons are also more vulnerable than strategic nuclear weapons to terrorist acquisition, because of their generally smaller size, greater numbers, wide distribution and less sophisticated locking and safeguard technology. This is particularly worrying when considering that the Turkish nuclear weapon base is less than 70 miles from war-torn Syria. The wisdom of storing such a large nuclear weapons stockpile in such a volatile region must be in doubt.

The siting of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe originated during the Cold War. As Tim Street from the Oxford Research Group observes:



NATO headquarters.

‘The justification given for the deployment of these weapons was the need to deter an attack on European NATO allies by the Soviet Union’s conventional military forces. It was argued that Moscow’s superior numbers of troops, tanks and artillery threatened Europe and had to be countered. The US spread its nuclear weapons strategically across several bases in Europe, supposedly providing the alliance with a ‘flexible response’, meaning the ability to control escalation during a conflict, with the first use of nuclear weapons not ruled out.’²

NPG

Whether or not NATO states are directly involved in the nuclear weapons hosting, they are all part of NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) – with the exception of France, which has chosen not to participate and unlike the UK, its nuclear weapons are not assigned to NATO. The NPG is NATO’s ‘senior body on nuclear policy issues’, founded in 1996 to provide a consultative process on nuclear doctrine within NATO.³

Ted Seay, former arms control advisor to the US Mission to NATO has pointed out some of the problems with NATO’s ‘shared’ B61s – notably that they are militarily useless. The B61s were first deployed in the Cold War, when the potential battlefield was Europe and the bombers would be within range of supposed eastern European targets.

‘NATO plans call for the loading of B61 bombs at “shared” bases in, e.g., Germany, onto German Tornado aircraft, thence to fly toward designated targets with an escort of NATO air defence suppression aircraft. Since distances between NATO’s nuclear air bases and any conceivable targets are far greater than they were in the 1980s, mid-air refuelling will be a must. In short, the B61 ‘threat’ is hardly likely to keep Mr. Putin awake at night.’⁴

Given that NATO, including the NPG operates by consensus, the question remains as to how rapidly a decision on the use of B61s could be made – if at all. NATO members were divided over action on the Iraq war and President Bush proceeded with the war on Iraq in 2003 with support from a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ instead. NATO members

today also have different political and security priorities. As Ted Seay observes, 'In time of crisis, Turkey will never go on record as having approved the dropping of B61s on targets inside Iran, nor will Germany agree to join the consensus to drop nuclear weapons on Russia.'⁵

These situations, he says, are simply not credible, and other national leaders are well aware of this. 'In short, NATO believes it can deter Russia or other potential malefactors with an obsolete nuclear bomb system, delivered by short-range fighter-bomber, and which requires multiple aerial refuelling missions to arrive at any target outside NATO Europe. Needless to say, this is not the stuff of which "deterrence" is made.'⁶

NPT Breach

What is never acknowledged by official sources is that nuclear 'sharing' is actually illegal. Having US nuclear bombs in Europe conflicts with the legal obligations of the signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Article I of the NPT forbids the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states: 'Each nuclear-weapon state party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly.'

Article II imposes a complementary requirement on non-nuclear weapons states not to 'receive the transfer' of nuclear weapons. NATO nuclear sharing breaches these obligations as it is intended to allow the transfer of US nuclear weapons to non-nuclear allies – Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey – to deliver in time of war. NATO asserts that NATO's nuclear sharing agreement predates the NPT and claims that it doesn't involve the transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless NATO has gone to war, in which case the treaty would no longer apply.

These are dubious excuses to put it mildly. As Acronym points out:

'If any other NPT states tried to share nuclear weapons using similar arrangements, the NATO countries would be the first to condemn them for breaching Articles I and II of the NPT. Yet if they adopted the US/NATO interpretation of their NPT obligations, Russia could reintroduce nuclear weapons into Belarus for wartime use by Belarusian armed forces; or China could create nuclear sharing arrangements with North Korea. In effect, NATO has

established and continues to maintain a privileged practice that it would not want others to emulate.'⁷

NATO's excuses for its breach of the NPT have been the subject of much debate and disquiet amongst signatories to the NPT over the last few decades. In 1985, the NPT Review Conference agreed as part of its Final Document that the Treaty remains in force 'under any circumstances', thus negating the argument that war would invalidate Articles I and II. Since then, a growing number of NPT signatories, including more than 100 states in the Non-Aligned Movement, have called on NATO members to bring their policies into line with their NPT obligations.

Even though the UK does not host US bombs any more, the UK's nuclear weapons system has been assigned to NATO under the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement. Ultimately, this means that the UK's nuclear weapons could be used against a country attacking (or threatening to attack) one of the alliance member states since an attack on one NATO member state is seen as being an attack on all member states. NATO also rejects a policy of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons.

Upgrade

In 2013, the US administration initiated a Life Extension Programme for the current B61 models deployed in Europe, extending their life by up to 30 years and significantly enhancing their capabilities. This new model, the B61-12, can be accurately steered, is earth-penetrating and is due by 2020. The yield of the bomb can be adjusted, making it more usable, and it is expected to cost over \$8 billion, marking the US's ongoing commitment to the nuclear-sharing arrangement. Moreover, several NATO members plan to upgrade their fighter-bomber planes. Together, this represents a significant enhancement of US nuclear capability in Europe.

Withdrawal

The US should withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. This would ensure compliance with the NPT Articles I and II. The presence of these weapons endorses the dangerous concept that non-nuclear countries may adopt nuclear roles on behalf of nuclear powers, and this has to be confronted and ended.

Withdrawal could also pave the way for further negotiations on nuclear weapons reductions with Russia, thereby potentially having a positive impact,

both reducing the ongoing tensions between NATO and Russia and having a potentially positive impact on future multilateral negotiations. At a time when the Trump administration is pulling out of arms control treaties and agreements, this would be a very welcome development. Peace organisations across Europe are active in their opposition to NATO nuclear weapons in Europe and the peace movement here in the UK needs to increase its activity on this front.

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NATO: Designed to Impose American Power on Europe

John Pilger interview

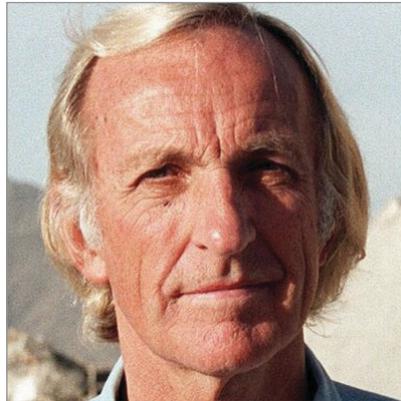
It has been announced that Donald Trump will be attending the London NATO conference in December. What kind of role do you think NATO is likely to be discussing in a Trump led western alliance?

I'm not sure Trump is leading the NATO alliance; one day he hates NATO, the next he thinks it's a good thing as long as it does what he wants. The Pentagon will play its usual dominant role; the generals and their allies in the national security establishment and Congress have been the political force in Washington since Barack Obama gave them the key. There will be pressure to build up forces on Russia's western flank (a Pentagon favourite) and to declare Iran a renewed enemy (a Trump/Pence favourite). Britain will sing from its anti-Russia playbook. On foreign policy, the EU is so weak and deferential – Germany aside – it's impossible to say which American insanity will be adopted.

NATO likes to present itself as a force for peace and stability in the world. What is your assessment of the strategic role of NATO during the Cold War?

NATO was, is, an American invention designed to impose American power on Europe. The Alliance achieved this during the Cold War and successfully spread the illusion – long debunked in declassified files – that Russia was a threat to all we hold dear. Today, NATO exists as a provocateur to post-Soviet Russia, with its undeclared American goal of breaking up the Russian Federation. Some of the Europeans running NATO's war bureaucracy are as zealous as the Americans, such as the secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, a rabid propagandist.

Over the last twenty years, opposition to war has grown in Britain and in many parts of the world. What do you think is the significance of the movements against the West's wars?



The anti-war movement had its memorable successes during the 1980s when it effectively stopped the deployment of US medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe. These were the heady days of Greenham Common and a million people filling Manhattan for the Freeze Movement.

Since then, there hasn't been an international movement. In Britain and around the world, there were

huge rallies and marches in February 2003 against the invasion of Iraq; and Stop the War has endured remarkably and can claim to have kept the threat of war in the consciousness of many people in this country. In the US, the election of Barack Obama killed the anti-war movement, which is now lost in identity politics and the seductions of a parochial 'new left' in the Democratic Party, as keen for war as any. The danger this presents is the great unspoken. As Washington desperately seeks to maintain its faltering dominance over world affairs, there is the familiar smell of fascism and of beckoning disaster. Never has a truly international anti-war movement been more urgently needed.

**Join Stop the War today:
www.stopwar.org.uk**





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