



# Nato's Mixed Motives

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The small minority of people who have followed events are perfectly aware that the major reason for bombing Yugoslavia in March 1999 was to demonstrate NATO's new mission in time for the organization's 50th anniversary in April. NATO needed a new *raison d'être* following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact.

## **'Humanitarian Intervention'**

Aggressive wars and imperial enterprises are usually carried under the disguise of noble pretexts. The pretexts change, but each must seem plausible in its own historical period. The notion of 'humanitarian intervention' grew out of a combination of contemporary factors: the drastic decline of progressive political thinking at the end of the Cold War, the decline of the protective role of the weaker national governments, the rise of 'non-governmental organizations', the multiplication of internal armed conflicts often along ethnic lines. The idea was 'in the air', a product of the *Zeitgeist*. In the early nineties, it was theorized by one of the most prestigious United States 'think-tanks', the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In 1992, the Carnegie Endowment published a book entitled *Self-Determination in the New World Order*. Not terribly interesting in itself, the book is quite interesting in retrospect because it foreshadowed, prior to the election of Clinton, the policy of the Clinton administration in Kosovo. Not only that, it was the product of a team of policy-makers who went on to design that policy.

So, allow me to quote: 'As of mid-1992, neither the United States nor the world community has reached a point where humanitarian calamities resulting from self-determination claims or internal repression automatically trigger collective military intervention to accomplish strictly humanitarian objectives. But humanitarian intervention will become increasingly unavoidable'.

In the post-Cold War world, the Carnegie Endowment study noted, 'groups within states are staking claims to independence, greater autonomy, or the overthrow of an existing government, all in the name of self-determination'. In regard to these conflicts, 'American interests and ideals compel a more active role'. The United States will have the final word as to when and how to intervene. 'The United States should seek to build a consensus within regional and international organizations for its position, but should not sacrifice its own judgment and principles if such a consensus fails to materialize'.

What is noteworthy here is that the United States policy-makers proposed 'collective military intervention', and not any sort of diplomatic or political solution, as the inevitable outcome of 'self-determination claims', which could be expected to meet with 'internal repression'. And already in 1992, this military action was labelled 'humanitarian intervention'.

The statement that 'humanitarian intervention will become increasingly unavoidable' was a self-fulfilling prophecy in the unusually literal sense that those who made it helped it come true.

The 1992 book, *Self-Determination in the New World Order*, was the product of a group of foreign policy specialists brought together by the Carnegie Endowment President to work out new policy options for the post-Cold War period. That president was Morton Abramowitz, a former US ambassador to Thailand who has specialized in intelligence matters, and who went on to be a champion of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and an advisor to the Kosovo Albanian delegation at Rambouillet; Abramowitz has since become president of the influential Council on Foreign Relations. He is also on the board of the International Crisis Group, the Brussels-based think-tank that formulates policy options for the 'international community' in Bosnia and Kosovo, and is financed by both Western governments and private foundations, notably the Soros foundation. Abramowitz may be considered the *éminence grise* behind the US policy of support to the Albanian secessionists in Kosovo.

The Abramowitz group of specialists that pondered the theory of 'humanitarian intervention' in the early 1990s included Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke and Leon Feurth, who is the foreign policy advisor to Albert Gore, now vice president and leading candidate for the presidency to succeed Clinton. The authors of the book I have cited on *Self-Determination in the New World Order* were Morton Halperin, head of State Department policy planning under Madeleine Albright, and David Scheffer, who is Albright's special envoy for war crimes issues.

So, here we have a team that first evolved the theory of 'humanitarian intervention' and then put it into practice. From what I know of American policy-makers I would not, however, leap to the conclusion that this is a conspiracy. Rather, I think it is closer to hubris: the arrogance of a small elite group of people who take it upon themselves to decide how to use the immense military power of the United States, and who never question their own right to do so or their own righteousness. Madeleine Albright is widely quoted as having asked rhetorically

what good it was to have the world's greatest military power if one didn't use it. Having found what they consider a theoretical excuse to use that power, they eagerly seized what looked like a perfect occasion to put it into practice. They probably convinced themselves. They imagined that they were 'present at the creation' of a new era of unchallenged US power, that they were constructing something grandiose. . . when in reality they embarked on a frightful course of destruction.

### **The military-industrial complex**

It was commonly said in Washington that 'NATO must either go out of area, or out of business'. Such expenditure, and such a massive US military presence in Western Europe were no longer credible in the defensive terms of the North Atlantic Treaty. To survive, it was argued, NATO had to be expanded in two ways: it needed to take in new members from the old Soviet bloc, and it needed to extend its mission to the defence of vaguely defined 'security interests' of its members anywhere in the world.

Why was such expansion needed? Experts searching for new 'strategic threats' were unable to agree on anything convincing. But the think-tanks and futurologists continued to search for plausible reasons because they were handsomely paid to do so. The institutes that finance such theorizing in search of enemies are funded by the industries and financial institutions that profit from Pentagon contracts and related sales to US military allies.

The arms industry needs NATO. In the past half century, the military-industrial complex has become a determining factor in US public life, subsidizing advanced industrial research that gives the United States its commercial advantage in high tech fields, financing political campaigns and controlling major media. Expansion of NATO means new markets for US military contractors. To join NATO, Central Eastern European countries will be required to strain their budgets in order to procure the latest US military equipment. Poland alone is expected to buy 100 to 150 new fighter planes, meaning contracts worth some two to six billion dollars for Lockheed or Boeing. Not surprisingly, then, the reluctance of many US congressmen to endorse NATO expansion was overcome by a powerful lobby, the US Committee to Expand NATO, presided by Lockheed's chief executive. It was US private corporations and not Member State governments that provided the US\$8 million to pay for NATO's birthday party in April 2000.

This direct interest of the arms industry goes hand in hand with the more general US interest in strengthening NATO as the primary instrument for maintaining US supremacy over its main economic partner, the European Union. In the race between the EU and NATO to take over the former communist countries of Eastern Central Europe, NATO has been winning. The militarization of the Yugoslav crisis has greatly contributed to this militarization of European unification.

However, President Clinton could not tell the American people: 'We are going

to expand NATO to help the arms industry earn more billions of dollars'. Nor could he even say: 'We are going to bomb Yugoslavia in order to assert NATO's predominance over the European Union as the instrument of European integration'. What he could say was 'humanitarian intervention'. And the amazing thing is, the American people believed him.

### **The new world order**

One last citation from the Halperin-Scheffer book: 'The vision of a "new world order" since 1990 has been a world with one superpower – the United States – in which the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle, disputes are settled peacefully, aggression is firmly met by collective resistance, and all people are justly treated'. This is a remarkable statement since it refers to a 'rule of law' that has not yet been written and implicitly rejects existing international law as 'the rule of the jungle'. To quote further: 'International law – as it always has done – will respond and adjust to the behaviour of nations and the actions of multilateral institutions'. The NATO war against Yugoslavia, in flagrant violation of existing international law, announced the new dispensation.

A major feature of this 'new world order' is the demolition of national sovereignty, an essential principle of existing international law. A world with a single superpower is a world where only that superpower has a sure claim to 'national sovereignty' – an outdated concept for the rest. Lesser sovereign nations are to be broken down not only from the outside, by the pressures of economic globalization, but also and more acceptably from the inside. The reason is simple: weak governments of small states cannot protect their resources or the welfare of their populations from the demands of 'the markets', that is, from the interests of transnational investment capital.

The Carnegie Endowment in 1992 not only developed the theory of 'humanitarian intervention' but undertook a campaign to win over powerful media figures and politicians to this new policy option. The Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, with no experience or even notable interest in international affairs, eventually turned over his foreign policy to the Abramowitz 'humanitarians'. The liberal media adopted the themes with enthusiasm.

Madeleine Albright saw the Kosovo crisis as a unique opportunity to impose the new 'strategic concept' of unlimited 'out of area' engagement by a major *fait accompli* justified as 'humanitarian intervention'.

The United States is a 'free market democracy' with emphasis on the 'market', which includes a 'free marketplace of ideas'. The marketplace is in fact largely monopolized by economic interests and mass media, but it is free in the sense that there is no official ideology. There is, instead, a sum total of best-selling ideas – which have actively been promoted by opinion-making institutions. This shifting best-seller list of ideas makes up the ideology, and the public opinion, of the moment.

Foreign policies also need to sell themselves on a very special, bifurcated

marketplace. There is the 'up market' of the professional geostrategists, the 'foreign policy community' with its think-tanks, elite clubs and sober publications. And there is the 'down market' that goes all the way down to the British tabloids. A successful policy will be one that can sell itself both to the up market, as being in line with dominant interests, and to the down market, as appealing to ready stereotypes and gratifying emotions.

'Humanitarian intervention' is essentially for the down market, even though it may involve prominent intellectuals and famous show business celebrities. For the 'up market', there is Zbigniew Brzezinski and his *realpolitik* objective: 'to perpetuate America's own dominant position for at least a generation and preferably longer still'. This involves creating a 'geopolitical framework' around NATO that will initially include Ukraine and exclude Russia. This will establish the geostrategic basis for controlling conflict in what Brzezinski calls 'the Eurasian Balkans', the huge area between the Eastern shore of the Black Sea to China, which includes the Caspian Sea and its petroleum resources, a top priority for US foreign policy.

The Brzezinski geostrategy may recall the quip about NATO and Europe: 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. Can this be exactly what the Germans want, now that Germany is back to being what its leaders call a 'normal' power? Brzezinski openly wants to prevent a juncture between Germany and Russia that would lead to a European superpower out of US control.

This and other considerations may suggest that the German-American strategic partnership is not quite as solid as claimed. But for the moment it is interesting to see how the divergent geopolitical aims and approaches of Germany and the United States have combined to tear apart Yugoslavia in what I would call a two-phase movement.

### **Destruction in two phases**

Transforming Yugoslavia from a medium-sized independent state, with a unique reputation in the region for resistance to foreign empires, into a series of ethnic statelets whose economic assets can be easily expropriated and whose territory can be used for NATO bases on the way to Ukraine and the Caspian certainly fits in generally to the Brzezinski scheme of things.

However, it seems that the initial support to secessionist movements in Yugoslavia came from Germany, not from the United States. And again in Kosovo, there are strong indications that Germany was the first to provide support for the Albanian secessionist movement, including the KLA. In both cases, Germany was the first to intervene, but the United States, with agile opportunism, managed to take control of the game and play it to American advantage. The game is not over.

In this two-phase movement, Germany and its traditional *völkisch* – which might be roughly translated as ethnic nationalist or separatist – approach to Central Eastern Europe dominates the first phase of attack against the targeted

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nation-state. In the second phase, the United States takes over with a rhetorical 'multiculturalism' justifying a takeover of political and economic decision-making by the 'international community'.

In Germany, the *völkisch* approach was flagrant in the right-wing press, as in the case of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) in the 1930s. The SA was a paramilitary organization of the Nazi Party, known for its violent and racist activities. The SA was instrumental in the takeover of power by the Nazis in 1933.

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an attack by Serbs on everybody else. By supporting the Albanians in particular, the United States has adopted an ethnic policy parallel to that of Germany. In Kosovo, the armed Albanian separatist rebels provided the 'self-determination claims' causing 'humanitarian calamities' needed to trigger 'collective military intervention'.

US support for the Bosnian Muslims was of a different nature. United States support for the Bosnian Muslims apparently had less to do with Yugoslavia than with the opportunity it offered to pursue a strategic alliance with such important allied Muslim states as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan, and to prove that despite its unswerving support to the State of Israel, America really loved Muslims. And indeed, the United States has repeatedly favoured Islamic political currents as an effective counter balance to nationalisms that risk endorsing protectionist economic policies. As an added bonus, support for Muslim Bosnia could prove a thorn in the side of Germany, which had moved so rapidly to assert its influence in Croatia.

The US sponsorship of a Muslim Bosnia was the first part of 'phase two': support for independent Bosnia-Herzegovina was definitely not *völkisch* but was cast in terms of multiculturalism. In this respect, the sporadic Serbian attempt to gain Western sympathy by recalling Serbia's historic role as bulwark of Christian civilization against encroaching Islam misfired badly. It appealed only to a small and isolated fringe on the far right. For the most part, contemporary public opinion in the West is too ignorant about the Balkan past to understand the historical basis for this argument and instead projects its own past – the Crusades, colonialism, exploitation of Muslim immigrant workers – onto the Serbs. Support for the Muslims was even a sort of atonement for past Christian sins. Izetbegović was celebrated as a champion and martyr of tolerance and multiculturalism. The Serbs thus became the scapegoat for the bad conscience of that part of the West – including precisely the liberal currents traditionally allied with the Serbs – that is more ashamed than proud of its 'Christian heritage'.

### **The new crusade**

Despite the role of right-wing nationalist movements in the dismantling of the old Yugoslavia, the NATO crusade against Belgrade has been pursued most vigorously by centre left political formations in the NATO countries in the name of 'humanitarian intervention'. This represents the second phase, with its American ideology and harmony with the goals of US-sponsored globalization.

The political centre left represented by this generation of American liberal and European social democratic leaders, in the absence of effective economic policies to promote the social justice they traditionally claim to serve, have in the past decade found a successful role for themselves as ideological apologists for globalization. These politicians are the ideal salesmen for globalization with a human face, in the name of human rights without borders as the virtuous cause they need in order to distinguish themselves from 'the right', presumed to be indifferent to human suffering. Obligated to accept tax breaks for big investors,



mass dismissals of factory workers and cutbacks in social programmes, in terms of domestic policy the 'third way' retains its position on the left primarily by championing cultural diversity. The enemy can no longer be capitalism, accepted as the best and only socio-economic system. The enemy now is nationalism, portrayed as the source of all modern evil. For the 'third way' of the left, we are living in a world where dominant economic forces, known euphemistically as 'the markets' are neutral and innocent arbiters of all things, whose influence can only be healthy and even benevolent. Like theologians of other religions, since their god – the Market – is almighty and good, they are left with the problem of evil in the world. This must come exclusively from bad people who adopt wrong ideas, and foremost among these wrong ideas is 'nationalism'. The erstwhile champions of working class internationalism thus transform themselves into champions of international financial capital. This ensures them much more favourable media coverage than their predecessors.

In the United States, an extremely nationalist country where schoolchildren are required to pledge allegiance to the flag every morning, anti-nationalism is today the dominant ideology – for the rest of the world. The Yale-educated US Deputy Secretary of State, Nelson Strobebridge ('Strobe') Talbott the Third, perfectly reflects current American ruling class attitudes when he writes: 'I'll bet that within the next hundred years (...) nationhood as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority'. The origin of that authority is implicit in the title of his essay, 'America Abroad; The Birth of the Global Nation', published in the July 20, 1992 edition of *Time* magazine. Making the matter quite clear, he adds the observation that such multilateral financial institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 'can be seen as the protoministries of trade, finance and development for a united world'.

The political editor of the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman, celebrated the start of the bombing of Yugoslavia with a notorious article announcing frankly that 'the hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist' and that 'for globalism to work, America can't be afraid to act like the almighty superpower that it is'.

Friedman illustrated his praise of globalization as the ultimate guarantor of world peace by a detail that must be particularly appreciated in Belgrade: 'It's true', he wrote, 'that no two countries that both have a McDonald's have ever fought a war since they each got their McDonald's'. He called this 'the Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention'. Except that it is not true. To be sure, with all its McDonald's, Serbia did not attack the United States, but those McDonald's did not prevent the United States from attacking Serbia.

In Europe, anti-nationalism has been indispensable in the promotion of European unification. The more the European Union has been reduced to an instrument of transnational business and finance, the more it has been necessary, in public rhetoric, to stress its noble mission of putting an end to the national antagonisms that led to major European wars. The nation-state has been

stigmatized as the cause of war, oppression and violation of human rights. This interpretation overlooks both the persistence of war in the absence of strong states and the historic function of the nation state as the most effective existing framework for the social pact enabling citizens to build structures of social protection and cultural development, as well as to develop legal systems able to provide equality before the law and to defend citizens' rights. Demonizing as 'nationalism' the only existing context for the functioning of institutionalized democracy obviously facilitates the dictates of 'the markets', which are innocent of nationalist prejudice.

In this regard, we can see why, among the various 'nationalisms' that have accompanied the collapse of Yugoslavia, the only 'bad' nationalism in the NATOland perspective has been Serbian nationalism. Various factors may be mentioned, such as the strength of the Croatian nationalist and Albanian lobbies, the traditional German-Austrian policy, the belief – whether true or not – that Serbia was more attached to socialism than the other parts of Yugoslavia, and even, allow me to say, certain bad mistakes or misdeeds made by Serbian nationalists, who are human like everybody else. However, the fundamental political fact is that Serbian nationalism is inextricably linked to the Serbian view of their role as state-builders in the Balkans. This was an asset to the Western allies at the start of the twentieth century. But now is a time when the great powers are not trying to build states, but to weaken them in favour of 'the markets'.

### **Germany and the United States**

In the interplay of German and American propaganda against Yugoslavia, a very particular role has been played by the German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer. The traditional right-wing ethnic or *völkisch* German policy was contrary to the anti-nationalist liberal ideological climate of post-Cold War Europe. True, it was alarmingly successful in Germany in gaining support for Croatian secession, but the *Serbien muss sterben* revival was not translatable in the rest of the European Union (except, of course, Austria) and was totally unsuitable for winning consensus for German military intervention in the Balkans. In order to reverse Germany's post-World War II policy of never sending military forces against another country, it was necessary to come up with arguments that silence the peace movement whose conspicuous blossoming in the 1980s had done so much to create the image of a new, peaceful Germany the Russians could trust with reunification. For this task, nobody could be better suited than the German Greens' chosen leader – chosen, incidentally, above all by the German media, who for well over a decade had 'discovered' in Fischer a 'realist' to celebrate, thus strengthening his position within his own party. From the time the Greens were first elected to the Bundestag in 1993, the German media featured Fischer's clever speeches and contrasted favourably his 'realism' with the supposed 'fundamentalism' of his more principled colleagues.

Almost as much as his friend in Frankfurt, Dany Cohn-Bendit, Joschka

Fischer owed his political success to having been selected by the media for star status. This of course has much to do with talent in expressing ideas that suit the economic interests controlling those media.

During the peace movement of the 1980s, Fischer defended NATO against critics within his own movement by an anti-nationalist argument: the 'keeping Germany down' function. German nationalism, he argued, could best be kept under control within the NATO framework. This was not very original, and indeed largely echoed positions within the Social Democratic Party. Much more original was his argument, as it emerged in the mid-1990s, in favor of sending German military forces to Yugoslavia. The argument was simplicity itself, and went like this: 'There are two "never again" principles in the Green identity. One is "never again war", and the other is "never again Auschwitz". . . when they clash, as in Bosnia – or later Kosovo – one has to be sacrificed to the other'. Thus all that was needed was a massacre, real or staged, labelled 'Auschwitz' and the German Luftwaffe could take to the skies and bomb Belgrade just as in 1941, this time alongside the Americans.

Fischer's line of argumentation and his attachment to 'multiculturalism' produced a rationale for aggression against Serbia far more acceptable to his NATO allies than that of his conservative predecessors. Indeed, the enthusiasm in Washington over the surprising rise of this self-educated, one-time street-fighting 'revolutionary' is so amazing as to suggest some sort of prior meeting of minds. Before Fischer even took office, Richard Holbrooke declared that he would make 'a great foreign minister'.

Fischer earned his place in the highest councils of power by his remarkable success in changing the look and the official rationale of German policy toward Yugoslavia from its original focus on ethnic identities to something quite different but still peculiarly German – a sort of penance for Auschwitz. This was a properly German excuse for 'humanitarian intervention'.

In this way, German and American elements have merged in the ideological construction used to justify military aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and occupation of Kosovo. The pretext had to be extreme to justify violation of virtually every relevant treaty or international convention.

The success of this 'humanitarian' lie can be illustrated by a paradox. The protests in Seattle last December against the World Trade Organization showed that a huge new popular movement is developing to oppose 'globalization'. The

globalization. The war against Yugoslavia was deliberately launched by Madeleine Albright and her colleagues in order to initiate a new phase of imperialist intervention, more dangerous and destructive than the imperialism of the past. This is the truth that must be recognized for justice to be done.