Why is NATO[1] Fighting?

by Swass Distribution[2]

NATO is currently engaged in a war against the Serb Army and Special Police Forces. This action consists of constant bombing throughout Serbia. This document simply questions NATO's reasons for fighting this war.

We aim to present material in a nonpartisan, unbiased fashion. We hope that you are informed about the current situation in Serbia, know how to stay informed, and will take an active role in determining the outcome of future events.

Thank you for your time.

Why should you care?

1. People are dying.
2. People are being denied basic freedoms and human needs.
3. The United States and other NATO member countries are spending billions of dollars in taxpayers' money to fund this war.
4. Future international relations and foreign policy may depend on the outcome of this war.
5. Your country's foreign policy is your foreign policy.
6. You can make a difference.

The primary official reason for bombing, as given by NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, is that "we must halt the violence and bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe now unfolding in Kosovo"[1]. This justification is generally accepted by the mainstream media as an admirable, yet difficult, goal. A few considerations call this motive into question, however.

[1]North Atlantic Treaty Organization (http://www.nato.int/)

[2]Swass Distribution (http://web.mit.edu/swass/) is an MIT student group with purpose to convey and maintain a sense of human reality. We wish to understand the workings of our world. Any interested persons are welcome to join us. Please consult our web site for further information.

1. *The decision to attack by bombing.*
   Bombing has required the pull-out of UN[3] observers, caused the Serbs (unable to retaliate) to lash out at the Kosovars and given them an incentive to defeat the separatist, guerilla KLA[4] as rapidly as possible, while leaving intact most of their military and paramilitary forces. Total ethnic Albanian deaths before the bombing were around 1,500 and have risen to 4,600[5] (excluding the thousands of Serb civilian casualties)[2, 3]. Two weeks after the bombing began, the number of refugees jumped from 400,000 (with 30,000 leaving Kosovo) to over a million (with more than 400,000 leaving Kosovo)[4].

   Shortly before the bombing, the CIA, Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned Clinton that bombing alone could not be expected to help the Albanians and was more likely to escalate the carnage[5]. NATO's General Wesley Clark described the escalation as "entirely predictable," further remarking, "I can't say I'm surprised by any of this. The military authorities fully anticipated the vicious approach that Milosevic would adopt, as well as the terrible efficiency with which he would carry it out"[6, 7].

2. *Aversion of diplomatic solutions.*
   From the beginning of the crisis, Serbia has repeatedly made offers for a peaceful settlement. The day before the bombing, the Serbian National Assembly rejected the Rambouillet[6] demand for military occupation and called on the OSCE[7] and the UN to facilitate negotiations leading "toward the reaching of a political agreement on a wide-ranging autonomy for Kosovo"[8]. The primary difference between Serbia's and NATO's offers lies in the nature of the peace keeping force: Serbia will allow lightly armed UN peace keepers in Kosovo from non-NATO countries while NATO demands 30,000 primarily NATO troops occupying the entire country (detailed in Appendix B of the Rambouillet treaty).

[3]United Nations (http://www.un.org/)

[4]Kosovo Liberation Army

[5]Conservative NATO estimate.

[6]http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/dossiers/kosovo/rambouillet.html

[7]Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (http://www.oscebih.org/)

If NATO is not waging war for their stated reason of protecting innocent life, then why? The most likely reasons are geopolitical; as Clinton put it, we cannot allow our power to be challenged by a conflict "at the doorstep of NATO"[9]. Unfortunately, the costs of maintaining NATO's credibility and reinventing this formerly *defensive* alliance have fallen largely on the Serbs and Albanians.

Another reason to consider is justification for defense spending. The US Fiscal Year 2000 Budget Proposal (before the bombing) included a $12.6 billion increase in military spending and a $112 billion increase in military spending over the next six years[10]. At first this request was questioned since military spending accounts *for over 50%* of all US discretionary spending and this was the first proposed increase in military spending in 14 years. Yet since the bombing Congress has willingly approved the military budget as well as appropriated additional funds for the Kosovo crisis[10, 11]. Moreover, "the annual budget for US diplomatic programs and initiatives is $16.7 billion" while "this year's planned spending *increase* for the Pentagon *alone* is $20 billion. Finally, NATO is waging war with previously untested military equipment (planes, bombs, etc.); the defense industry is without a doubt gaining new clients by direct result of NATO's war.

Both those for and against the bombing agree that it is "unilaterally rewriting the rules [of U.S. intervention]"[12]. These rules, according to Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington, are presenting many developing countries with the United States as "the single greatest external threat to their societies"[13]. The precedents set in the Gulf and Yugoslavia will determine the priorities, methods and the role of international law and the UN in American intervention well into the next century.

The wars of the future will likely be fought for traditional reasons (oil, territory, trade, etc...) that the vast majority of the population will likely misinterpret for humanitarian pretexts. Unfortunately, the mainstream media uncritically echos the government claim that we are bombing Serbia to protect the Albanians, thus avoiding a vitally important debate about the motivations and future of U.S. foreign policy.

As citizens in a democracy, we are responsible for the actions of our elected officials. What do you believe?

What *you* can do right *now*:

1. *Research*
   Inform yourself about the Kosovo situation: http://web.mit.edu/swass/

2. *Contact elected officials.*
   Elected officials *do* listen to their constituents, especially registered voters. Calling/writing/e-mailing your congressmen can have a significant impact on government policy. Consult the Write Your Representative site: http://www.house.gov/writerep/

3. *Register to vote.*
   Voting is your guaranteed direct influence on government policy. Swass Distribution has voting registration forms and information about voting in Massachusetts. Email yegg@mit.edu to have a form delivered to you.

References

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[10] Center For Defense Information. The fiscal year 2000 military budget, 1999. http://www.cdi.org/dm/1999/feb99dm.pdf.

[11] Center For Defense Information. Do we really need three new fighters?, 1999. http://www.cdi.org/dm/1999/apr99dm.pdf.

[12] Michael J. Glennon. New interventionism. *Foreign Affairs*, 5/6 1999.

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