

Why is Russia Necessary for NATO to End the War against Yugoslavia?

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Russia can very well complicate and prolong the war by supplying arms and ammunition to Yugoslavia. They can also assist Yugoslavia with sophisticated arms including cruise missiles.

WITH the intensification of bombing raids on Yugoslavia by NATO, diplomatic efforts are being increased to find a honourable exit for NATO. More than forty days of air raids, the solution is no way nearer than it began. President Milosevic has not yet buckled to NATO at the time of writing. It is an irony that NATO failed to protect the Kosovar Albanians which was their principal purpose for bombing raids from the very beginning. NATO has no doubt gained the control of air space on Yugoslavia but cannot control what is occurring on the ground. Serbian armed forces and police continue to be engaged in ethnic cleansing leading to the mass exodus of Albanian refugees to the neighbouring countries.

NATO appears to be placed in a very big dilemma. The main actor of NATO, the US, does not agree to put ground troops in Kosovo, partly because of congressional objection. Although the British Prime Minister Tony Blair during the NATO's 50th anniversary in Washington made efforts to persuade President Clinton to commit ground troops, the answer from the President was reportedly vague and not assuring.

Given this reality, nobody knows how long the bombing will continue. Furthermore out of the 600 air mission per day, one or two air raids will miss the target leading to the killing of innocent civilians including the Albanians. The military experts believe that such accidents are bound to happen and NATO can only minimise them to the extent possible. The only fall-out from the accidents appears to be the adverse reaction of the public against the bombing in NATO countries.

The 19-country NATO alliance remains united because of Serbian atrocity. However, the unity might crack any time. Greece and Italy are the most vulnerable ones because of their domestic pressure not to support NATO's air strikes. There are no French air craft in the

skies over Serbia. Only Britain supports strongly the present course of action.

NATO realises that without ground troops it cannot win in months. Many former US Generals have openly maintained this view. The air raids must continue for prolonged periods so as to degrade and cripple the military might of Yugoslavia. There is no timeframe for this to happen. It appears that NATO has run out of options in the Balkans. No wonder NATO wants to get out of this war with honour and desired result by reverting to diplomacy. Furthermore NATO realises that it is not merely the winning of war only against President Milosevic. In the end it is the restoration of political stability through establishing democratic institutions in the Balkans and the rehabilitation of the refugees and internally displaced persons in Kosovo and Serbia. The task of fixing damaged infrastructures will be a gigantic one costing billions of dollars. Many believe that a mini Marshall Plan will be necessary to revitalise the economies of Balkan countries with western aid.

NATO has compared President Milosevic with Adolf Hitler and that rules out any leader of NATO to meet and negotiate with President Milosevic, even he wanted. The letter to President Clinton sent through US human rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson by President Milosevic with the offer to negotiate directly with President Clinton appears to be a non-starter. No western leaders can meet with President Milosevic who has been demonised in the media.

The question is: how to end the war? Who will be the go-between? Here Russia comes in the picture for several possible reasons.

NATO leaders are seen to be polite with Russia. What they are saying is that Russia's engagement is important to them in finding a diplomatic solution but at the same disagree with what Russia proposes.

NATO makes it very clear that Russia is a valued member of the Contact Group and the US leaders are in constant touch with their Russian counterparts in respect of a negotiated solution.

The bottom line appears to be that Russia should not be seen to be humiliated. They must be kept in humour by NATO leaders.

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the reason why the UN Secretary General kept himself in a low key in the conflict.

Russia at the same time wants to be seen playing a role in ending the conflict. Russia's opposition to NATO's action provides its credibility in the eyes of Yugoslavia. Its loud and rhetorical public support for the traditional ally Yugoslavia gives them an edge over others to be able to speak to Yugoslav's leaders. If Russia had not opposed NATO's action the West would have ignored Russia's role in the conflict. Russia wants to demonstrate to the West that it is capable to help them when they are in trouble. This role provides Russia as an equal partner with NATO but also may bring monetary assistance for its troubled economy from the West.

The visit of various Russian leaders to Belgrade emphasised their role to bring an end to this conflict. The diplomatic move by Russia's special envoy former Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin to Belgrade and to Washington appears to be a serious attempt to resolve this conflict. To many observers, President Milosevic appears to be softening his ground. The release of the US soldiers and the despatch of a personal letter to President Clinton through Reverend Jesse Jackson seem to indicate his flagging an olive branch to NATO's principal actor.

NATO realises that air power cannot win this war or any war and at the same time does not commit its troops on the ground. Therefore there appear to be two options: one is the diplomatic solution and other is that "something might happen" to the demise of political fate of President Milosevic. Since the latter appears to be remote at this point in time, diplomatic negotiation appears to be the only glimmer of hope in this seemingly unwinnable conflict.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN in Europe, Geneva.

NATO, Kosovo and Russia

by Eqbal Ahmad

NATO's present quandary over Kosovo is the first such penalty Moscow has inflicted upon it. Russia's Great Slavs exercise an overriding influence on Serbia's Little Slavs. Yet, they did little to convince Slobodan Milosevic to accept the Euro-American proposal, or a version thereof, for defusing the Kosovo crisis. They have not actively discouraged Milosevic's ethnic cleansing campaign, a human disaster that may have a lasting adverse impact on the future of the Balkans.

NATO heads of state gathered in Washington D.C. to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the alliance which was founded on April 4, 1949. What was billed as a "gala" celebration of western success and solidarity, has turned out to be a sombre conference on the crisis over Kosovo, a crisis NATO's leaders created for themselves from an excess of ambition and insouciance.

The discomfiture is especially Washington's, the site of the conference. Moscow and Belgrade must be watching with satisfaction. NATO's alternatives in the Balkans are stark. To fight or lose, that is the question before it, and NATO is not wanting to do either. "This is an American-led organization", the *New York Times* of April 22 quotes a senior European official. But America is caught in a paralyzing contradiction. It has long nourished a conviction of 'manifest destiny' but its ruling establishment and also the ordinary citizens are haunted by the experience of Vietnam where the United States sustained a great defeat, both moral and physical. This peculiarity of contemporary American posture in the world: the US is determined to play the role of the world's paramount power but it does not wish to bear the costs. Its instinct is to 'show the flag' where necessary, but it is not willing to put uniformed American boys and girls in harm's way.

The outcome is a reliance on remote warfare — air raids, missile strikes, naval blockades and off-shore bombings. Here, a primary lesson from Vietnam is forgotten. The Vietnamese had successfully asserted the superiority of men over machines; they defeated the cumulative presumption of modern technology. When George Bush decided at the end of Desert Storm that the "Vietnam syndrome is over," he may not have realized that technology had triumphed over Saddam Hussein but in America the inhibition against ground war remained.

The Gulf War may have stimulated another illusion: the Sheikhs of Arabia paid the dollar bill of Desert Storm. Europeans shall be less generous.

The stakes are high and going higher by the day. "If we do not achieve our goals in Kosovo, NATO is finished as an alliance". Senator Joseph R. Biden warned in a speech to the Senate Committee on Foreign

Relations. "Kosovo has brought NATO into the never, never land," says David Gompert, formerly a White House national security staffer and now Vice-President of the Rand Corporation. Senator John S. McCain, a presidential hopeful from the Republican party, has been lambasting Clinton for starting the air war without contingency plans for ground action. Britain and France are reported to be adding to pressure for introducing ground forces in Kosovo.

All are looking to Moscow, hoping it will pressure Milosevic to agree to a settlement and save NATO the hard choice. Yet, there is no evidence so far that the United States, Britain and other NATO countries are willing, in return, to admit to their ill will with regard to Russia and reverse their unilateral initiatives toward permanently diminishing its future as a power. The expansion of NATO is but one, albeit most significant, example.

NATO was created as a "purely defensive" military alliance during the cold war. This rhetoric never changed even though the alliance was used as the mechanism for speeding up the arms race which put unbearable burdens on the USSR under which it finally collapsed in 1989-1990. Russia dismantled its empire, the Warsaw Pact disbanded, and the cold war ended. The West deemed itself victorious. It had no viable enemy, and no need of NATO. Yet, the United States embarked on a plan to expand NATO to former Warsaw Pact countries, the strategic underbelly through which had entered the invaders one more devastating than the other - Napoleon, Hitler - into the Russian heartland. As if to add insult to injury, the United States also embarked on a systematic effort to limit Russia's access to the energy resources of Central Asia.

The intent was hegemonic rather than adversarial. The language of "crisis management" and "partnership" was employed to hide a harsh reality which was that a former superpower was being encircled in order that its influence shall not extend again beyond its borders, so that it may be decisively "contained" becoming a

The Struggle for Enlightenment

by Ziaur Rahman

The politics of change may not come from our national leadership, but it can surely come from within our tender souls. Extending a Hobbesian notion, that 'man was born an angel but society pollutes him', I suggest that let us strive to reach out for the angel in all of us and work to attain the level of consciousness which will enliven the angel-like characteristics within us.

THE dawn of a new century is quickly creeping in. The world is moving at a breakneck speed to meet the challenges of the future. They are designing and reengineering plans to succeed in the new global village, i.e., the world at large. This scenario is prevalent across the globe. I wonder if we, the Bangladeshis, are using common sense to understand our plight in the coming age of competition in all spheres of human activity. To all intents and purposes, I am alarmed at our country's predicament, which fails to assure a strong destiny for our future. Questions abound in my mind, but the solutions are hard to come by. The history of Bangladesh has been an ever unfolding story of bad dreams. But where is the silver lining in the cloud? How long can we continue to be prisoners to our faulty systems of governance, politics of hooligans and the morally deranged lunatics, who prowl our national landscape? Do they cast any semblance of justice, authority or knowledge for proudly directing our future? Many of us allege that democracy prevails in Bangladesh, but let us not take this mockery any further. Since when has any government, for that matter, even listened to the voices of our people? As soon as a new regime comes to power, they suddenly elevate themselves next to the altar of the Almighty. Suddenly, many of these so-called public servants become sword-wielding, unscrupulous and nefarious government appointed 'masts' in their respective political jurisdictions. I ask my fellow readers, do we want such persons dictating the future? and more so, that of our future progeny? I sure would hope not.

Should we, the civilized law-abiding citizens of this country, not muster some political will to quell the onslaught of such profligate individuals, who happen to be our so-called guide to the path of peace and prosperity? I fail to fathom what went wrong, when we took an eternal oath to create an independent Bangladesh free from the oppressions of tyranny and set out to establish a model country based on the rule of law and good governance — where, according to Abraham Lincoln, 'a government for the people, by the people and of the people' would prevail.

Alas! Where in the hollow trenches of our souls have our spirited zeal and eternal oath withered? Has our national character slowly but surely devoured our senses of justice, spirit and the zest for voicing our solemn oaths through which we brought about the birth of a new nation? Today, we are at the brink of a similar struggle. However, it is a pity that the enemy today is within. The enemy

is maliable subsidiary of the sole superpower. One of my earlier essays concluded that Moscow's corrupt and ineffectual leaders will not be able to deter America's determined effort to expand NATO into Eastern Europe. It read in part:

"The United States and its NATO allies are playing, nevertheless, a risky game. Their cold war strategy of containment has metamorphosed into a policy of encircling Russia and reducing it to a dependency, preferably a prosperous one. But Russia is not Japan or Korea. It is too large and resource-filled a country to remain a toothless giant, even in a golden cage... So if Moscow's demoralized and divided leaders do acquiesce, their acquiescence may prove historically more dangerous than did the German surrender to the Treaty of Versailles, Germany, after all, was punished for starting and waging a war. Russia is being penalized for ending one."

All are looking to Moscow, hoping it will pressure Milosevic to agree to a settlement and save NATO the hard choice. Yet, there is no evidence so far that the United States, Britain and other NATO countries are willing, in return, to admit to their ill will with regard to Russia and reverse their unilateral initiatives toward permanently diminishing its future as a power. The expansion of NATO is but one, albeit most significant, example.

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lies in the souls of every Bangladeshi. Let us search deep into our moral consciousness, where true enlightenment lies and can develop each one of us. Although, it may sound farfetched like, but I propose we wake up one sunny morning, take a firm vow to strengthen our moral fibre and disseminate the same feelings with conviction to our near and dear ones.

Slowly but surely, we will take the first step to a brighter future. The politics of change may not come from our national leadership, but it can surely come from within our tender souls. Extending a Hobbesian notion, that 'man was born an angel but society pollutes him', I suggest that let us strive to reach out for the angel in all of us and work to attain the level of consciousness which will enliven the angel-like characteristics within us.

Time and again by incompromising and corrupt government officials. My apologies to all of those officials who do not fall under this category. However, I sincerely urge my fellow citizens to be more vocal if inactivity on the part of a government official leads to your economic or mental misfortunes.

Time for a new beginning has arrived; we must not surrender to intimidation from corrupt public servants and must learn to stand firm and compromise nothing less than perfection. Perfection is a key concept missing from our country. Imperfection has plagued our country in such a way that subconsciously we tend to accept the dismal predicament. I would strongly urge you to refrain from collapsing into such a drudgery, to raise your consciousness and to at least voice the wrongdoings within the government and the political and socio-economic processes. We must ask: Why is it that every government uses the national television channel as its sole franchise? Why is there only a semblance of press freedom when we know that democracy cannot thrive without the absolute freedom of press? Why cannot we have our national armies and police forces above bipartisan bickering? Why can we not have independence of judiciary? And why does not the Government face up to its challenge of social, educational and economic improvement and let go of its lip-service of committing to such improvements? The 'whys' abound in historic proportions of our country.

As a country, Bangladesh may be poor, but nonetheless we must raise our heads as proud citizens. However, the current politics of chaos and corruption leaves no room for us the ordinary citizens to proudly present ourselves as "Bangladeshis." Bangladesh is a hapless victim of negativism in the world arena. It is still viewed as an utterly poor nation, which cannot live without the charity of the developed world. My question is, 'do we intend to live with such characterization? If I had any self-respect, I would do my best to dispel this by my works and achievements. Do we, the Bangladeshis, really have any achievements to deserve such characterization? I think not. So, let us embark on developing our national image, retract from political vendettas and rebuild our national infrastructure, our own selves and our communities at large. This is the only way to prosperity and to rightfully put the map of Bangladesh among the prominent nations of the world.

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Living in this Troubled World

by Dr M Zakir Husain

The health deficits are of course all avoidable in the first place or at least can be overcome in the short term. But what is often missed are the hidden yet serious psychological damages caused during catastrophic events.

PLANET Earth, the only one in the universe, is seemingly in turmoil. Our world on the eve of the twenty-first century has all the potentials and promise of a just, humane, and orderly world with peoples and nations living more in tolerance, mutual respect, and wilful cooperation than in violence and hatred; a world of sharing and caring, and not a world of fractious competition and confrontation. Yet in spite of all this, the world of ours today remains divided, ravaged by conflicts that erupt every now and then, where people by the millions are perpetually in search of shelter and safety driven from the homes of their ancestors. And the numbers are

ical after-effects on the numerous men, women, and children in our world torn and beset with strife and conflict, brutality and deprivation nearly always manmade.

Cambodia killing fields,

brutal genocide in Rwanda, east

Timor boiling pot, and now

Kosovo crisis in the heart of Europe are prime examples of humanitarian catastrophes. Indeed these are troubled times; the world seems to be in turmoil resurrecting old wounds and creating new scars.

As stated before, it is bad and sad enough, but the added irony is that humankind at the threshold of the new millennium could not yet come out of this antiquated and misplaced warp of violence and killings of a past era that should have been forgotten and worn. Among others, one reason at the root of it might be the fact that our political, social and economic management remain faulty and outdated; way behind our other human achievements in science, communication, and technology.

Regrettably, the gap seems to be getting wider.

Each of the major crises has been invariably associated with great humanitarian catastrophes; each catastrophe extracts a heavy toll of health deterioration; in each case the children, the women, the elderly and the poor suffer excessively, if not nearly exclusively. The health deficits are of course all avoidable in the first place of at least can be overcome in the short term. But what is often missed are the hidden yet serious psychological damages caused during these catastrophic events, again particularly affecting the young and the children. The

mental trauma of children who witnessed their parents' deaths, women who suffered rape and other indignities, men and women who were mutilated and tortured are left with deep psychological scars often with devastating and damaging long term impact. This probably is the greatest single tragedy of the ethnic and other human conflicts.

The world of humanitarianism is familiar with the relief and physical rehabilitation — food, clothes, tents, sanitation, water — a gigantic and essential undertaking without which many more deaths would occur. But the invisible damage of psychological trauma can be even more catastrophic than death itself. Death brings an end to all suffering but with one with a fractured psyche has to cope with a deep seated mental trauma and disability for the rest of one's life. The psychological injuries and scars are not easy to heal or erase.

In Yugoslavia and in Kosovo in particular, hundreds of thousands of children and women in particular have suffered various types and degrees of mental shock and trauma; many of them will bear the effect till much later in life; left unattended many will be consigned to a life of abnormality unable to cope with the demands of normal learning and growth, normal life and socialisation. Yet, the irony is that much of this will not be immediately evident and therefore unattended.

This is the age of the media and information. Neither print or electronic literature nor television imagery capture of convey the psychological trauma of the victims of calcu-

lated mass atrocities including mass rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing.

It seems inevitable that the future has in store more conflicts and catastrophes; a tolerant and just world order seems a long way off. In the meantime, while relief agencies cope with the physical needs of food and shelter, the international health community has to think hard and come up with a more significant and timely way of preventing and early treatment of psychological trauma associated with humanitarian disasters especially those due to brutal civil strife and racial wars.

Perhaps it is for WHO to take the initiative to address this aspect of current and future human crisis to make psychological restoration and rehabilitation a fully integrated component of all humanitarian operations even in the pre-emptive, planning and preparatory stages. The world is, and may indeed remain, in turmoil; more humanitarian crises are likelier than not; yet, it is all the more reason to put due focus upon the hidden danger and damage associated with these crises now rather than later; the cumulative damage and long-term human suffering at individual level may be so staggering it will put the international community to even further shame than it already is.

The cost of human endeavour and scientific and technological resources to share peace and harmony, to minimise human deprivation and suffering would be smaller by far than that of waging wars and stoking ethnic hatred or that of seeking violent means of extinguishing them.

Garfield

