

The new NATO's long march toward World War III

by Umberto Pascali

If NATO air strikes were to take place, then "the United Nations regime would have been violated by NATO with all the resulting consequences. We are talking about aggression, and states under aggression must have means to defend themselves."

—*Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, March 23*

Any NATO military action without UN Security Council authorization "will not be accepted by the international community and would violate the UN Charter." —*Qin Huasun, China's UN representative, and president, UN Security Council, March 23*

"By using NATO to attack a sovereign nation we are about to turn the Alliance on his head. NATO is not an offensive alliance. . . . It was created to prevent aggression against the sovereign nations of Europe."

—*Sen. Robert Smith (R-N.H.), March 23*

These three statements were made just 24 hours before cruise missiles from NATO warships in the Adriatic Sea began to hit Kosova, Montenegro, and Serbia. Indeed, these statements are a taste of a growing reaction that has reached unprecedented levels in Russia—where Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev talked about a "new Vietnam in the middle of Europe"—but are also widespread in many Western countries, including the United States. This reaction, both popular and institutional, has little or nothing to do with a defense of, or sympathy toward the Serbian *Duce*, Slobodan Milosevic. In fact, it is known that Russian diplomacy has tried to push Milosevic to stop his attacks against the ethnic Albanians—attacks which ultimately gave the pretext to the "men of peace," such as British Prime Minister Tony Blair, to push for the bombings and the rumored intervention of ground troops to follow.

In reality, the precedent established by the NATO operation against Serbia is potentially much more dangerous than the specific operation itself—many observers are nervously using the expression "World War III." *It establishes for the first time*, since the creation of NATO on April 4, 1949, the following precedents that were never voted on or approved by the members of the alliance, and are not to be found in the NATO basic texts:

1. NATO can intervene militarily out-of-area, in contravention of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

2. After 50 years, NATO is no longer a "defensive alliance," but has now become an "offensive alliance."

3. NATO has arrogated to itself the right—against its founding document—to intervene against any sovereign country.

4. NATO has arrogated the right to do so without, and even against, the mandate of any institution, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), or the United Nations, as is explicitly demanded by the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty.

5. Finally, the "new NATO" arrogates the right to go to war without the formal consent or mandate of the parliaments and congresses of member countries.

These are not formal or legalistic points; as we shall see, any one of them can potentially spill the blood of many wars to come, and issue a death sentence for the principle of national sovereignty. The pretext used to justify these precedents has no real importance. For example, the British House of Lords potentially destroyed one of the key corollaries of national sovereignty when the U.K. government arrested on its territory a foreign former head of state. The fact that the person used to establish the precedent, Augusto Pinochet, fit into the category of "criminals," does not change the disruptive potential of that decision.

In the case of the air strikes on Serbia, the formula used was that of "overwhelming humanitarian necessity" and the need to stop Milosevic. But the new principle established in this way cannot and will not be abandoned. A military attack against a sovereign nation now is "legally" acceptable. Whoever controls the NATO machinery—and we are not talking about the elected institutions of the member countries—can, at this point, unleash an attack on a sovereign country, provided that a media campaign has "established" that the country is a "rogue state," or is in other ways distasteful.

It would be difficult, even impossible to find anybody who would put his right hand on the Bible to testify that the motive for the war campaign of Tony Blair or Al Gore is "humanitarian," or that "philanthropic reasons" dictate that Kosova is to

be transformed into a “NATO protectorate” under Sir Michael Jackson, one of the main persons responsible for the 1972 “Bloody Sunday” in Derry, Northern Ireland. It would be difficult as well to find any Balkan insider who believes that the help given to Milosevic and to war criminal Radovan Karadzic by some of the highest-ranking British and French intelligence officers in Bosnia, was just a case of “mistakes” or “individual faults.”

Indeed, the NATO that is bombing Serbia now has little to do with the organization that was created 50 years ago. The “new NATO” is the product of a process that started in 1991, in the post-Berlin Wall era, and reshaped the organization to potentially become the modern instrument of a new British colonial-style “gunboat” diplomacy. As is well known, the *modus operandi* of the British colonial empire was to assemble a fleet of the most modern gunboats to blackmail any country or population in the “Third World” of that time, which refused to submit and to give up their sovereignty. A few examples or precedents—e.g., the technologically unchallengeable bombing of a port—were enough to “send the message” that it were unwise to resist.

The smoking gun

Though the process of creating the “new NATO” started after the end of the Cold War, the legal precedent for this “independent” policy is more recent. It dates to Nov. 13, 1998, when a coalition of forces, both inside and outside the United States, seemed to be able to block the insane “bomb Iraq” plans. That day, the annual Plenary Session of the North Atlantic Assembly (NAA, the organization of NATO countries’ legislators) approved a report on Kosova, and the resulting “Policy Recommendation 278.” France’s Arthur Paecht, general rapporteur on “Stability in South-Eastern Europe: An Ongoing Challenge,” stated in his conclusions:

“The humanitarian catastrophe that is in the making in Kosova must be avoided at all costs. . . . It is essential to demonstrate to Mr. Milosevic that the brutal repression of Kosovar Albanians will not be allowed.”

Thus, “barring early results, the international community must be ready to use force to impose a cease-fire; NATO should be ready to act under the authority of a UN or OSCE mandate if possible; there is, in any event, sufficient ground in international law for NATO to act without such mandate in order to avoid crimes against humanity and to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

On the basis of this report, the assembly voted up “Policy Recommendation 278.” “Recommendations” are addressed to the NATO countries governments and to the NATO Secretary General and NATO Council. They carry weight in the national parliaments and congresses, and rarely are dismissed.

“The Assembly,

“1. Convinced that the international community and the Atlantic community, in particular, have a responsibility to

FIGURE 2
The Kosova crisis region



contribute to the restoration of stability . . . in Southeastern Europe; . . .

“Urges the member governments and parliaments of the North Atlantic Alliance. . . .

“i. to make clear that the Allies are ready to use force and that they will not hesitate to implement their plans if diplomatic and economic measures remain insufficient to bring about a cease-fire;

“j. to seek an international mandate for military intervention, while considering that the use of force in the present situation of Kosova is already legitimized by existing international law. . . .”

The NAA annual session in Edinburgh provoked furious reactions from the Russians, and heated debate among the NATO members themselves. Gen. Valery Manilov, first deputy of the Russian general staff, in an interview with Itar-Tass news service, labelled any NATO military action taken outside the treaty area without a UN or OSCE mandate as a “totally unacceptable . . . act of aggression.” This point is of crucial importance for Russia and China, because, after the unilateral U.S.-U.K. decision to bomb Iraq, without an explicit mandate by the UN Security Council, they see the last remaining diplomatic mechanism available to them in questions of NATO military operations—namely, their veto power in the UN Security Council—now gone. With the Edinburgh resolution, for the first time, this point was made not de facto, but legalistically, *de jure*.

During the debate in Edinburgh, the French delegates argued that such a decision could push other countries to do the same, thus undermining international law. On the other side, the fact that the rapporteur who presented the resolution was

French, confirms, in the view of experts, the division inside France itself. It was also reported that the push to pass through this formulation came from four legislators: two Americans and two British (two close allies of Blair: the heads of the Foreign and Defense committees in the House of Commons).

Although the official precedent established in Edinburgh is not a formality, the consequences are appalling. In fact, the Edinburgh session was dedicated to preparing the basis for the key NATO meeting that is expected to establish the final word on the globalization of NATO: the 50th anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C. in April. A comment by Radio Free Europe on Nov. 16 stressed that “the resolution is a non-binding recommendation, but the definition of the scope of the Alliance’s activity is at the heart of a debate over NATO’s new ‘strategic concept’ due to be adopted at the summit in Washington in April. The concept is to prescribe NATO’s role and direction for the years to come.”

Finally, to underline the symbiotic connection between the NAA and NATO as such, the Assembly decided to change—after more than 40 years—its name into “NATO Parliamentary Assembly.”

The new NATO and shock therapy

The process of transforming the “old NATO” into the “new NATO,” started officially with the summit of the NATO heads of state in Rome on Nov. 7-8, 1991. The summit approved the “Alliance New Strategic Concept,” which this April’s Washington summit is due to act on.

What was the “New Strategic Concept”? What was it supposed to achieve? We should go back to 1991.

Although formally the Soviet Union still existed, the Berlin Wall had collapsed in 1989, and the general understanding of most governments and people, both inside and outside Europe, was that the Yalta division of the world was finished, the Soviet empire was *kaput*, and that a future of cooperation and economic development was just around the corner for countries which were to regain their full national sovereignty, heretofore limited by the conditions of the Cold War. Although Deutsche Bank president Alfred Herrhausen, the strategist of an ambitious plan for large investments for the economic development of the former Soviet bloc, had been assassinated on Nov. 30, 1989, just three weeks after the collapse of the Wall, nevertheless, both Europe and the United States were still nominally committed to the idea that the development of eastern Europe was the “business of the century.”

Together with the “inevitability” of economic development, another idea was widespread: that NATO, created to defend Europe and the United States from the Soviet threat, was no longer really necessary. Although NATO would remain as an institution for an undetermined period of time, there was no question that it would ultimately wither away.

Instead, two parallel processes were put in place. First, the plans for economic development were smashed by the

imposition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank “shock therapy,” which destroyed the limited productive apparatus in the former East bloc. Second, NATO not only had no intention of fading away, but instead, a series of proposals was floated to demonstrate that NATO was to be broadened and made more efficient. The model this “new NATO” was to follow, was that debated already at that time in Great Britain as the “new British security policy,” then formalized in the British “Strategic Defense Review.”

This “Review” led to a radical metamorphosis of the British Armed Forces, based on the assumption that neither the United Kingdom, nor any NATO country, would be directly threatened by military force. The “operational scenario” is not that of an all-out war, but “a major crisis involving our national interest, perhaps on NATO’s periphery or in the Gulf.” Furthermore, the British military machine, which always had an “expeditionary” character and structure (designed for its colonial empire), was to reconfirm this concept, abandoning any idea of a large territorial army and focussing instead on “flexible, mobile,” very sophisticated formations that could very rapidly be operational in any corner of the world.

It is not difficult to recognize in this scheme the characteristic (though modernized) of the old British colonial Navy. In fact, the NATO summit that agreed on the “New Strategic Concept” was not much more than a formalization of what had been triggered by the previous NATO summit in London in July 1990. Of course, in the interval between the two meetings, a new “fact” intervened: the war against Iraq, pushed by Margaret Thatcher and George Bush. “Desert Storm” was used as a precedent to demonstrate that NATO must remain in effect. What was theoretical in London, became concrete in the NATO meeting in Rome.

The Alliance’s New Strategic Concept

At their meeting in London in July 1990, NATO’s heads of state and government agreed on the need to transform the Atlantic Alliance, to reflect the new, more promising era in Europe. While reaffirming the basic principles on which the Alliance has rested since its inception, they recognized that the developments taking place in Europe would have a far-reaching impact on the way in which its aims would be met in the future. In particular, they set in motion a fundamental strategic review. The result was the “New Strategic Concept.”

It was difficult to demonstrate the necessity of a transformed and upgraded NATO in 1989-90. The document signed by NATO heads of state in November 1991 is not vehement on the question of the “new model”; nevertheless, it establishes crucial points that will be carried later to the extreme. Namely, that the *raison d’être* for NATO now is “ethnic rivalries,” “crisis management,” the fight against “weapons of mass destruction” in the hands of supposedly uncontrollable forces, and the undefined concept of defense

of “global stability.” None of the points of the document are justified by the 1949 Treaty. The document reads in part:

“7. The security challenges and risks which NATO faces are different in nature from what they were in the past. The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO’s European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy. . . .

“8. In contrast with the predominant threat of the past, the risks to Allied security that remain are multi-faceted in nature and multi-directional, which makes them hard to predict and assess. NATO must be capable of responding. . . .

“9. Risks to Allied security are less likely to result from calculated aggression against the territory of the Allies, but rather from the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in central and eastern Europe. . . . They could lead to crises inimical to European stability and even to armed conflicts, which could involve outside powers or spill over into NATO countries.”

At this point in 1991, there was nothing under way in Yugoslavia that would have led anyone to imagine what would happen when Milosevic was given the green light to go on a rampage, one absolutely against any rational, strategic—even chauvinistic—interest of Serbia. On the other side, it is clear that the eyes of the drafters were pointed in the direction of the social earthquakes that were to result from IMF economic conditionalities. Indeed, it was at this moment that the IMF was solidly planting its shock therapy roots in eastern Europe. Instead of plans for economic development, such as those advocated by Herrhausen, and in much more explicit and elaborated form by Lyndon LaRouche, plans which would have guaranteed stability through prosperity, the financial elite of Wall Street and the City of London was going for a scorched-earth policy. Upheavals were to be expected. The financial elites’ solution: Use the military instrument to guarantee that shock therapy would continue to be enforced.

The document also begins to prepare the ground for “non-Article 5” out-of-area operations. Article 5 of the 1949 Treaty calls for NATO intervention only if a NATO member is attacked or threatened on its own territory. That is what made NATO a “defensive organization” for 40 years. But the new document states:

“12. Any armed attack on the territory of the Allies, from whatever direction, would be covered by Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty. However . . . Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, disruption of the flow of vital resources and actions of terrorism and sabotage. . . .

“13. . . . The end of East-West confrontation has greatly reduced the risk of major conflict in Europe. . . . On the other hand, there is a greater risk of different crises arising. . . .

“14. . . . The changed environment offers new opportuni-

ties for the Alliance to frame its strategy within a broad approach to security.”

In the New Strategic Concept, the use of the military becomes just one of the tasks of the new NATO. It is now to have responsibility in the fields of diplomacy, politics, and other basic functions that had been a necessary and integral part of the sovereign duties and rights of individual member states. In regard to management of crisis and conflict prevention, the document states:

“31. In the new political and strategic environment in Europe, the success of the Alliance’s policy of preserving peace and preventing war depends even more than in the past on the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy and successful management of crises affecting the security of its members.”

And, it advances the idea of NATO as “peacekeeper,” on behalf of, for the moment at least, the UN:

“41. In peace, the role of Allied military forces is to guard against risks to the security of Alliance members; to contribute toward the maintenance of stability and balance in Europe. . . . They can contribute to dialogue and co-operation throughout Europe by their participation in confidence-building activities, including those which enhance transparency and improve communication; as well as in verification of arms control agreements. Allies could, further, be called upon to contribute to global stability and peace by providing forces for United Nations missions.”

There is a particular stress on the need for “flexibility” and “mobility,” with an eye on new types of deployment:

“52. In order to be able to respond flexibly to a wide range of possible contingencies, the Allies concerned will require effective surveillance and intelligence, flexible command and control, mobility within and between regions.”

Out-of-area deployments: How Iraq and Yugoslavia ‘solved the debate’

At the North Atlantic Alliance meeting in Edinburgh, one of the key reports, “NATO Forces: Preparing for New Roles and Missions,” was presented by Lorenzo Forcieri. It analyzed the gulf between the 1991 strategic concept and the “revised” concept that is to be inaugurated in April in Washington. Forcieri stressed that after the 1991 summit in Rome, a debate began on whether out-of-area operations were to be accepted. “Although the Alliance’s New Strategic Concept of 1991 was one of the most innovative steps . . . the collapse of the Soviet Union outdated it,” he said. “The disappearing of this entity calls for a revision of NATO’s assigned role. . . . Second, the Gulf war and the crises in former Yugoslavia solved the debate on the possibility of NATO undertaking ‘out-of-area’ operations and strengthened the practice of co-operation with non-NATO countries. Both these concepts were just at an embryonic stage in 1991.”

“Preparing for New Roles” stresses repeatedly the providentiality of the explosion in Yugoslavia. “It should be recognized that a crisis in any part of the world can potentially

affect our national security. During the Cold War, crises were seen through the spectrum of East-West confrontation. Therefore crisis management was linked to [that confrontation]. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of ethnic rivalries and intercommunal conflicts has initiated a new consensus that unstable situations, such as experienced in the Balkans, represent potential crisis. This second generation of crisis management requires arbitration and growing international intervention. . . .”

Indeed, the role played by Milosevic in the Balkans represents one of the biggest spurs the NATO “globalizers” have had to justify the implementation of their schemes.

The NATO bombing under way now on Kosova, Serbia, and Montenegro, can be seen as a coherent conclusion of those premises. The involvement of NATO in the Balkans was parallel to the strategy of NATO enlargement in eastern Europe, until the recent induction of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO, a few days before the bombing started. The implied promise that attracted so many countries was: If you join, you will have credibility with financial institutions such as the IMF and you will be “protected.” In a large region scorched by the shock therapy, such a proposal is very difficult to refuse, even if it is illusory.

From ‘between peace and war’ to war

The document “NATO Forces: Preparing for New Roles,” from Edinburgh in November 1998, reads: “The concept of crisis can be interpreted in many different ways. In this report it refers to the area between peace and war. . . . In contrast to the traditional clear-cut distinction between war and peace, since the end of the [Cold War] we have been confronted with a situation which cannot be considered either fully fledged war or peaceful coexistence. . . . They fall in a . . . gray area that includes ethnic conflicts, religious controversy, and territorial claim.”

Indeed, this concept of “no war no peace,” and the “crisis management” of such a situation, has progressively dominated the thinking of the “new NATO” strategists for years. There is almost no resemblance to the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty.

First, in the treaty there is an evident stress on the role of the UN. Though this is by no means a guarantee of respect for national sovereignty, it does establish a forum in which any out-of-area operation has to be discussed and mandated. Despite the obvious faults of the double standard system of the UN Security Council Permanent Five members (with their right of veto) and rotating members (without such a right), still, that situation somehow reflected Franklin Delano Roosevelt rejection of anything that smelled or felt like British colonial methods, including the unconditional, unchecked power to impose its rule based on pure force, in any corner of the world. We do not intend to glorify the creation of NATO in 1949. Most probably, if President Roosevelt had not died prematurely, the world would not have been divided by an

“Iron Curtain,” despite all the efforts of Winston Churchill. Rather, programs of economic development would have rapidly transformed Russia and the British colonial empire, and the British methods of “divide and conquer” would have been brought to a halt after the end of World War II.

The text of the Treaty reads:

“The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples. . . . They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.

“Article 1

“The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. . . .

“Article 3

“In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack. . . .

“Article 4

“The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened. . . .

“Article 5

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force. . . .

“Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.”

On March 24, 1999, after the air strikes against Serbia had started, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan went before the media to plead that “the UN should be involved in the process.” For many, those words marked the end of the postwar era. Now the UN has been superseded by an “independent” NATO that draws its power neither from institutions representing world’s countries, nor from the institutions of the member countries. Who is then pulling the strings? I will take this up in a forthcoming article.