

From the horse's mouth

Kissinger exposes lies behind US-NATO war

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In the course of a newly published article criticizing the Clinton administration's war policy in Yugoslavia, Henry Kissinger is obliged to expose some of the basic claims underlying the pro-war propaganda of the US and NATO. Appearing first on the May 24 Internet edition of *Newsweek* magazine, the article, entitled "New World Disorder," carries the following blunt summary:

"The ill-considered war in Kosovo has undermined relations with China and Russia and put NATO at risk."

Kissinger portrays the Clinton administration's policy in the Balkans as a combination of political opportunism, incompetence and recklessness. He is particularly concerned with the long-term consequences for US relations with Russia and China, as well as the alliance between the US and the European powers.

The following excerpt provides a fair sampling of his appraisal:

"The rejection of long-range strategy explains how it was possible to slide into the Kosovo conflict without adequate consideration of all its implications—especially the visceral reaction of almost all nations of the world against the new NATO doctrine of humanitarian intervention. Before the start of the bombing, it was conventional wisdom in Washington that Serbia's historic attachment to Kosovo was exaggerated and that Slobodan Milosevic was looking for a pretext to get rid of the incubus it represented—which a few days of bombing was supposed to supply. But what if Serbia, the country that fought the Turkish and Austrian empires and defied Hitler and Stalin at the height of their powers, did not yield? How far were we willing to go?"

Kissinger's article reflects divisions within the American foreign policy establishment not simply over the current war, but over the longer-term international

strategy of US imperialism. The former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State under Nixon, and leading architect of the Vietnam War, Kissinger is no less ruthless a proponent of the global economic, political and military ambitions of US capitalism than those whom he is attacking. His differences with Clinton concern not the goal of US foreign policy—world domination—but rather the strategy and tactics required to achieve their common aim.

In the end, notwithstanding his criticisms, Kissinger concludes that the present war must be pursued, with ground troops if necessary, in order to salvage the credibility of the Atlantic Alliance.

In citing Kissinger's remarks, the *World Socialist Web Site* in no way supports his, or any other faction within the US establishment. It is, however, important to bring to the attention of our readers around the world the statements of this high-level representative of American imperialism which expose the claims being made to justify the war against Yugoslavia. Precisely because they come from within the foreign policy elite, they underscore the cynicism and deceit that pervade the US-NATO attack.

First, on the immediate origins of the war: the official line is that Yugoslavia precipitated the NATO bombing when it refused to sign on to the "peace accord" agreed to by the major NATO powers and the Kosovo Liberation Army in Rambouillet, France. Clinton has repeatedly described Rambouillet as an honest and humane attempt to negotiate a settlement acceptable to all those interested in peace.

Here is what Kissinger has to say:

"Several fateful decisions were taken in those now seemingly far-off days in February, when other options were still open. The first was the demand that 30,000 NATO troops enter Yugoslavia, a country with which

NATO was not at war, and administer a province that had emotional significance as the origin of Serbia's independence. The second was to use the foreseeable refusal as justification for starting the bombing.

“Rambouillet was not a negotiation—as is often claimed—but an ultimatum.”

We would suggest, based on Kissinger's own words, adding to “ultimatum” the word “provocation.”

As to the cause of the mass exodus of Kosovars into neighboring countries, the US and NATO continue to insist that the initiation of bombing played no role, and the responsibility lies entirely with the Serbs and their policy of “ethnic cleansing.” Kissinger is obviously not prepared to swallow this canard. He writes:

“No provision was made for a war of attrition or the flood of refugees it was bound to create—not to speak of the ethnic cleansing that the war has accelerated and intensified.”

On the motives behind the bombing, Kissinger points out the massive contradictions that undermine the claims of a “humanitarian” war. He writes:

“No issue is more in need of rethinking than the concept of humanitarian intervention put forward as the administration's contribution to a new approach to foreign policy. The air war in Kosovo is justified as establishing the principle that the international community—or at least NATO—will henceforth punish the transgressions of governments against their own people. But we did not do so in Algeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Croatia, Rwanda, the Caucasus, the Kurdish areas and many other regions. And what will be our attitude to emerging ethnic conflicts in Asia, for example in Indonesia and the Philippines? The answer often given is that we act where we are able to without undue risk, not elsewhere. But what are the criteria for this distinction? And what kind of humanism expresses its reluctance to suffer military casualties by devastating the civilian economy of its adversary for decades to come?...

“A strategy that vindicates its moral convictions only from altitudes above 15,000 feet—and in the process devastates Serbia and makes Kosovo unlivable—has already produced more refugees and casualties than any conceivable alternative mix of force and diplomacy would have. It deserves to be questioned on both political and moral grounds.”

At one point, Kissinger comes close to admitting that

behind the humanitarian posturing lies a strategy for imperialist domination. Speaking of the reaction of Russia and China to the war, he says:

“Their leaders are products of societies that interpret decisions about war and peace according to whether they enhance a nation's security or other vital interests. If they can discern no such traditional rationale to US behavior, they ascribe our motives not to altruism but to a hidden agenda for domination.”

Further on, he elaborates on this point:

“Every nation views international events through the prism of its history. And to China, the new NATO doctrine of humanitarian intervention evokes Europe's unilaterally proclaimed civilizing mission of the 19th century, which led to the fragmentation of China and a series of Western interventions.”

Kissinger devotes the bulk of his article to a sober examination of the dangers within current US policy of a trajectory toward war with China. He issues the following warning:

“We must not repeat in Asia the emotional and unthought-out policies that brought us such grief in the Balkans. The law of unintended consequences still operates.”

Coming from an expert on the use of American military force to suppress other nations, this projection of greater wars to come should be taken seriously by workers and the public at large.



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