

Kosovo, Kashmir and the New York Times

The Editorial Board
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Imagine that Tuesday's edition of the *New York Times*, a newspaper which has spearheaded the media propaganda campaign in support of the US-NATO war against Yugoslavia, carried an editorial written along the lines of the following excerpts:

"Serbia and the United States have long engaged in cycles of confrontation and rapprochement, with war and threats of war followed by pledges of cooperation. Now the latest promises of peace have yielded to the worst fighting in decades. The provocation is the presence of well-armed Islamic militants holding mountainous positions on Serbian territory, seeking independence for Kosovo, Serbia's only Muslim-dominated state. Serbia, which has tried bombing and shelling to dislodge them, is rightly demanding that the United States help in removing the guerrillas as the first step toward defusing the current crisis....

"Past uprisings in Kosovo have drawn in hundreds of thousands of Serbian troops and cost thousands of lives. Serbia says that the US has aided the insurgents. The US says it has merely supplied 'moral support' to indigenous 'freedom fighters'....

"In recent years, Serbia has been lamentably slow in recognizing that it could not crush the Muslim rebellion in Kosovo by force alone. But the intervention of militants this spring has been widely condemned as a provocation by the US....

"Serbia has so far shown commendable restraint, but warns that time is running out. If the militants are not removed, Serbia says, it fears being unable to get supplies to places that need them before the next snowfall in August. Frustrated by its failure to dislodge the militants, Serbia might be tempted to send troops into Albanian territory. That would be a serious escalation, all the more worrisome because both countries possess nuclear weapons.

"No rapprochement can occur without some sort of a political resolution of Kosovo's status. Any such

solution would probably have to be a creative mixture of self-government for the Kosovans with some kind of political association with both Serbia and perhaps Albania. But no solution can be achieved under the threat of military action."

This commentary did not, of course, appear in yesterday's *Times*. But the exact words, except for the names of the countries, did appear. The editorial was headlined "Dangerous Escalation in Kashmir." We have merely substituted Kosovo for Kashmir, Serbia for India, and the United States (or Albania) for Pakistan.

There is an obvious conclusion to be drawn from this exercise. The pronouncements of the *Times*—and by extension, the commentary which appears throughout the corporate-controlled American media—do not arise from an analysis based on objective standards which have universal applicability. What the *Times* damns in Kosovo—the attempt by a regional power to maintain its authority against a secessionist movement armed and backed from outside—it comments on sympathetically in Kashmir.

The critical—but unstated—factor is the attitude of the US government and Wall Street to the regional power. In Kosovo, Serbia has been regarded as an obstacle by Washington. Hence the demonization of Milosevic by the media and his indictment by the UN war crimes tribunal. In Kashmir, the US government is cultivating relations with both Pakistan and India. In the decade since the end of the Cold War, during which Pakistan was a US ally and India was aligned with the Soviet Union, India has embraced the US economic agenda and opened up its economy to foreign capital. The US has avoided provoking either side in the Kashmir dispute, if anything, tilting slightly towards India.

As a consequence, the editorialists of the *Times* are compelled to make a much more careful and sober estimation of the conflict in Kashmir, instead of

engaging in the tub-thumping moralism which has characterized their commentary on Kosovo.

Under other circumstances, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee could have found his mug shot on US magazine covers while the editorial pages of the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, etc., thundered about the necessity for the "international community" to halt the atrocities being committed by Indian troops in Kashmir, and the Pentagon drew up lists of bombing targets in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

Or, in the event the CIA and Pentagon adopted a pro-Indian position, the American media would highlight alleged connections between Pakistan and Osama bin-Laden; guerrillas previously depicted as "freedom fighters" would be transformed into "terrorists;" and the cruise missiles would be targeted against Lahore and Karachi.

The launching of air strikes against a nuclear-armed India or Pakistan is not yet on the Pentagon's agenda. But far more have died in Kashmir over the past five years than were killed in Kosovo before American bombs began to fall. India claims sovereignty over Kashmir and rejects any international intervention in the conflict. Yugoslavia took a similar position on Kosovo, until the bombing.

On what basis of international law can the *New York Times* uphold India's actions in Kashmir, while condemning Yugoslavia's actions in Kosovo? How can the *Times* insist that in Kashmir, "No solution can be achieved under the threat of military action," while in Kosovo, all-out air war and military occupation *are* the solution. We live in an age where such glaring and obvious contradictions, both in the formulation of US foreign policy and its justification in the American media, go essentially unchallenged.



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