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## *Understanding NATO, Ending War*

On 4 April 2019, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, better known as NATO, marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its existence with a conference attended by the foreign ministers of member nations in Washington DC. This will be complemented by a meeting of the heads of state of member nations in London next December.

Coinciding with the anniversary event on 4 April, peace activists and concerned scholars in several countries conducted a variety of events to draw attention to, and further document, the many war crimes and other atrocities committed by NATO (sometimes by deploying its associate and crony terrorist armies – ISIS, Al Qaeda, Al Nusra – recruited and trained by the CIA and funded by Saudi Arabia, other Gulf countries and the US directly or through one or other of its many agencies: see ‘NATO – No Need – NATO-EXIT: The Florence Declaration’), the threat that NATO poses to global peace and security as an appendage of the US military, and to consider ways that NATO might be terminated.

These protests and related activities included several outlined in ‘No To NATO: Time To End Aggressive Militarism’ which also explains how NATO ‘provides a veneer of legality’ when ‘the US is unable to get the United Nations Security Council to approve military action’ and ‘Congress will not grant authority for US military action’ and despite the clearcut fact that NATO has no ‘international legal authority to go to war’, the grounds for which are clearly defined in the Charter of the United Nations and are limited to just two: authorization by the UN Security Council and a response in self-defense to a military attack.

The most significant gathering of concerned scholars was undoubtedly the ‘Exit NATO!’ conference in Florence, Italy, which culminated in the Florence Declaration calling for an end to NATO. See [‘The Florence Declaration: An International Front Calling for NATO-Exit’](#).

If NATO’s record of military destruction is so comprehensive – in the last 20 years virtually destroying Yugoslavia (balkanized into various successor states), Iraq and Libya, while inflicting enormous damage on many others, particularly Afghanistan and Syria – how did it come into existence and why does it exist now?

### **The Origin and Functions of NATO**

Different authors offer a variety of reasons for the establishment of NATO. For example, Yves Engler argues that two of the factors driving the creation of NATO were ‘to blunt the European Left’ and ‘a desire to bolster colonial authority and bring the world under a US geopolitical umbrella’. See [‘On NATO’s 70th anniversary important to remember its anti-democratic roots’](#) and [‘Defense of European empires was original NATO goal’](#).

But few would disagree with Professor Jan Oberg’s brief statement on the origin of NATO: ‘Its raison d’etre... had always and unambiguously been the very existence of the Soviet Union... and its socialist/communist ideology.’ See [‘NATO at 70: An unlawful organisation with serious psychological problems’](#).

In other words, NATO was established as one response to the deep fear the United States government harbored in relation to the Soviet Union which, despite western propaganda to the contrary and at staggering cost to its population and industrial infrastructure, had led the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

As Professor Michel Chossudovsky elaborates this point: The NATO ‘alliance’ of 29 member states (with Israel also a de facto member), most with US military bases, US military (and sometimes nuclear) weapons and significant or substantial deployments of US troops on their territory, was designed to sustain ‘the de facto “military occupation” of Western Europe’ and to confront the Soviet Union as the US administration orchestrated the Cold War to justify its imperial agenda – global domination guaranteed by massive US military expansion – in service of elite interests (including the profit maximization of the military industrial complex, its fossil fuel and banking corporations, and its media and information technology giants).

While NATO has the appearance of a multinational military alliance, the US controls NATO command structures with the Pentagon dominating NATO decision-making.

NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) are Americans appointed by Washington with the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg performing merely bureaucratic functions.

In light of the above, Chossudovsky observes: 'Under the terms of the military alliance, NATO member states are harnessed into endorsing Washington's imperial design of World conquest under the doctrine of collective security.' Even worse, he argues, given the lies and fabrications that permeate US-NATO military doctrine, key decision-makers believe their own propaganda. 'Immediately after the Cold War, a new nuclear doctrine was formulated, focused on the preemptive use of nuclear weapons, meaning a nuclear first strike as a means of self-defense.' More recently: 'Not only do they believe that tactical nuclear weapons are peace-making bombs, they are now putting forth the concept of a "Winnable Third World War". Taking out China and Russia is on the drawing board of the Pentagon.' See 'NATO-Exit: Dismantle NATO, Close Down 800 US Military Bases, Prosecute the War Criminals' and 'NATO Spending Pushes Europe from Welfare to Warfare'.

So, given the ongoing military threats – with an expanding range of horrific weapons (including, to nominate just two, 'more usable' low yield nuclear weapons and technologies on 'weather warfare' offered by the military/nuclear corporate war planners) that threaten previously unimagined outcomes – and interventions by a US-led NATO, with Venezuela and now Iran the latest countries to be directly threatened – see "Dangerous game": US, Europe and the "betrayal" of Iran – as well as a gathering consensus among peace activists and scholars of the importance of stopping NATO (particularly given the many opportunities, beginning with aborting its origin, that have been missed already as explained by Professor Peter Kuznick: see "Obscene" Bipartisan Applause for NATO in Congress) how do we actually stop NATO?

While several authors, including those with articles cited above, offer ideas on what should be done about ending NATO, Chossudovsky offers the most comprehensive list of ideas in this regard well aware that stopping NATO is intimately connected to the struggle to end war and globalization. Chossudovsky's ideas range from organizational suggestions such as integrating anti-war protest with the campaign against the gamut of neoliberal economic 'reforms' and the development of a broad based grassroots network independent of NGOs funded by Wall Street, objectives such as dismantling the propaganda apparatus which sustains the legitimacy of war and neoliberalism,

challenging the corporate media (including by using alternative media outlets on the Internet), providing encouragement (including information about the illegality of their orders) for military personnel to refuse to fight (perhaps like the GI coffeehouse movement during the US war on Vietnam: see 'The story of the GI coffeehouses'), working to close down weapons assembly plants and many other suggestions. See Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War and 'NATO-Exit: Dismantle NATO, Close Down 800 US Military Bases, Prosecute the War Criminals'.

Given my own deep interest in this subject of US/NATO wars and in developing and implementing a strategy that ends their war-making, let me elaborate Chossudovsky's explanation of NATO's function in the world today by introducing a book by Professor Peter Phillips.

In his book Giants: The Global Power Elite, Phillips observes that the power elite continually worries about rebellion by the 'unruly exploited masses' against their structure of concentrated wealth. This is why the US military empire has long played the role of defender of global capitalism. As a result, the United States has more than 800 military bases (with some scholars suggesting 1,000) in 70 countries and territories. In comparison, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia have about 30 foreign bases. In addition, US military forces are now deployed in 70 percent of the world's nations with US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) having troops in 147 countries, an increase of 80 percent since 2010. These forces conduct counterterrorism strikes regularly, including drone assassinations and kill/capture raids.

'The US military empire stands on hundreds of years of colonial exploitation and continues to support repressive, exploitative governments that cooperate with global capital's imperial agenda. Governments that accept external capital investment, whereby a small segment of a country's elite benefits, do so knowing that capital inevitably requires a return on investment that entails using up resources and people for economic gain. The whole system continues wealth concentration for elites and expanded wretched inequality for the masses....

'Understanding permanent war as an economic relief valve for surplus capital is a vital part of comprehending capitalism in the world today. War provides investment opportunity for the Giants and TCC elites and a guaranteed return on capital. War also serves a repressive function of keeping the suffering masses of humanity afraid and compliant.'

As Phillips elaborates: This is why defense of global capital is the prime reason that NATO countries now account for 85 percent of the world's military spending; the United States spends more on the military than the rest of the world combined.

In essence, 'the Global Power Elite uses NATO and the US military empire for its worldwide security. This is part of an expanding strategy of US military domination around the world, whereby the US/ NATO military empire, advised by the power elite's Atlantic Council, operates in service to the Transnational Corporate Class for the protection of international capital everywhere in the world'.

In short, ending NATO requires recognition of its fundamental role in preserving the US empire (at the expense of national sovereignty) and maintaining geopolitical control to defend the global elite's capital interests – reflected in the capitalist agenda to endlessly expand economic growth – and particularly the profits the elite makes by inciting, supplying and justifying the massively profitable wars that the US/NATO conduct on its behalf.

So if you thought that wars were fought for reasons other than profit (like defense, a 'just cause' or 'humanitarian' motives) you have missed the essential function of US/NATO wars. And while these wars might be promoted by the corporate media as conflicts over geostrategic considerations (like 'keeping open the Straits of Hormuz'), access to resources ('war for oil') or even markets (so that we can have US junk-food chains in every country on Earth), these explanations are all merely more palatable versions of the word 'profit' and are designed to obscure the truth.

And this raises another question worth pondering. Given that wars are the highly organized industrial-scale killing of fellow human beings (for profit) as well as the primary means of expanding the number of fellow human beings who are drawn into the global capitalist economy to be exploited (for profit) and the primary method used for destroying Earth's climate and environment (for profit), you might wonder if those who conduct wars are sane. Well, as even posing the question suggests, the global elite – which drives wars, the highly exploitative capitalist economy and destruction of the biosphere – is quite insane. And there is a brief explanation of this insanity and how it is caused in the article 'The Global Elite is Insane Revisited'.

### **Stopping NATO**

So if war is precipitated and now maintained perpetually by an insane elite that controls and utilizes the US and NATO military forces to secure profits by killing and exploiting

fellow human beings while destroying the climate and environment, how can we stop it? Clearly, not without a sophisticated strategy that addresses each dimension of the conflict.

Hence, my own suggestion is that we do three things simultaneously:

1. Invite participation in a comprehensive strategy to end war, of which NATO is a symptom
2. Invite participation in one or another program to substantially reduce consumption to systematically reduce the vital driver of 'wars for resources' (which will also reduce the gross exploitation of fellow human beings and humanity's adverse impact on the biosphere), and
3. Invite participation in programs to increase human emotional functionality so that an increasing proportion of the human population is empowered to actively engage in struggles for peace, justice and sustainability and to perceive the propaganda of elites and their agents, including NATO functionaries and corporate media outlets, without being deceived by it.

There is a comprehensive strategy to end war explained on this website – [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#) – which includes identification of the two strategic aims and a basic list of 37 strategic goals to end war. See '[Strategic Aims](#)'.

There is a strategy for people to systematically reduce their consumption and increase their self-reliance mapped out in '[The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth](#)'. But if you want a simpler 12-point list which still has strategic impact, see 'The Earth Pledge' included in '[Why Activists Fail](#)'. If you want to better understand why people over-consume, you can find out here: '[Love Denied: The Psychology of Materialism, Violence and War](#)'.

There is a process for improving your own emotional functionality (which will develop your conscience, courage and capacity to think strategically) described in the article '[Putting Feelings First](#)'. If you would like to assist children to grow up without emotional dysfunctions, consider making '[My Promise to Children](#)'. If you want to read the foundation behind these two suggestions, see '[Why Violence?](#)' and '[Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice](#)'.

Complementary to these suggestions, you might like to sign the online pledge of 'The People's Charter to Create a Nonviolent World' which links people working to end violence in all contexts.

There is one question that remains unaddressed by the suggestions above: How do we mobilize sufficient people (both anti-war activists and others) and organizations (including anti-war groups and others) to participate in the effort to end elite-sponsored war, including its organizational structures such as NATO?

Given the notorious difficulty of mobilizing activists to act strategically in any context (a much more complex version of the basic problem of mobilizing people), my primary suggestion is that individuals within the anti-war movement invite other individuals and activist groups to choose and campaign on one or more of the strategic goals necessary to end war listed in 'Strategic Aims'. While some activist groups are already working to achieve one or more of these strategic goals, we clearly need to engage more groups to work on the many other goals so that each of these goals is being addressed. War will not be ended otherwise.

One thing that a section of the climate movement does well is to research and report on those banks, superannuation funds and insurance companies that provide financial services, loans, investment capital and insurance cover to fossil fuel corporations and to then invite concerned people to sign standard letters sent to these organizations requesting them to cease their support of fossil fuels. The anti-war movement could usefully emulate this tactic (on a far wider scale than has existed previously) in relation to weapons corporations and to invite individuals and organizations everywhere to boycott banks, superannuation funds and insurance companies with any involvement in the weapons industry.

But this is just one simple tactic (involving no risk and little effort) on a small but important range of 'targets' in the anti-war struggle. Unfortunately, there are plenty more targets that need our attention and that will require more commitment than signing a letter given that, for example, essential funding for the weapons industry is supplied by government procurement programs using your taxes.

Similarly, we need individuals and groups working to mobilize people to substantially reduce their consumption, and individuals and groups working to mobilize people to prioritize their emotional well-being (the foundation of their courage to act conscientiously and strategically in resisting war, exploitation and destruction of the

biosphere generally). If we do not undertake these complementary but essential programs, our efforts to end war will be endlessly undermined by our own fear and over-consumption.

Because, in the final analysis, it is our fearfully surrendered tax dollars and our dollars spent consuming the resources seized in wars that will ensure that elite-driven wars for profit by the US and NATO will be financially sustained, whatever words we utter and actions we take.

So our strategy must address this fear and over-consumption too if it is to have the sophistication and comprehensiveness necessary to shut down NATO and end war.

Biodata: Robert J. Burrowes has a lifetime commitment to understanding and ending human violence. He has done extensive research since 1966 in an effort to understand why human beings are violent and has been a nonviolent activist since 1981. He is the author of 'Why Violence?' His email address is [flametree@riseup.net](mailto:flametree@riseup.net) and his website is [here](#).

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