

# Why NATO is re-inventing

Europe

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**T**HE North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which did not disband when the Soviet threat, against which it had been created in 1949, disappeared and the cold war ended is now to acquire a global reach. The NATO leaders meeting in Prague agreed to set up a 20,000-strong "rapid response force" (RRF) for high-intensity warfare anywhere in the world.

It will "target modern security threats, rogue states and terrorist groups". Put simply, it will give teeth to the WTO and IMF-WB, enforcing their will globally, opening up the economic space for the western capital and ensuring its access to natural resources everywhere. It will not be impeded by outmoded notions like respect for sovereignty, except where the other side can oppose it with deterrent force. NATO's RRF will be a part, or an instrument, of the market's invisible hand where recalcitrant forces may get in the way of that hand.

NATO declares that its military intervention will be swift and of high intensity. It thus projects the experience of the recent US intervention in Afghanistan into the future. High-intensity means that the conflict will not tend towards the absolute, to use Clausewitz's terminology, but start with a high level of violence. This will shorten its duration and minimize the intervening powers' casualties. It will also show the other states the fate to expect in case of the defiance of the multinationals.

Of course, all relationships have two sides. Israel's selective violence is answered with political action and escalating violence with suicide bombings. Calling such resistance terrorism may satisfy the occupying powers, but has no relevance to the struggle itself. France's refusal to recognize the Vietnamese Liberation Army terming it "les pyjamas noirs", did not, after all, modify the outcome of the war.

Secondly, whatever the level of violence unleashed right from the beginning, wars are still fought for political objectives. RRF's objective cannot be to annihilate the whole population of a country. It would rationally be the destruction of the core of the resistance, while sparing the rest of the population to run the country and its economy according to the requirements of the First World. This itself poses a political limit to the escalation of violence.

Thirdly, in some cases, it may not be possible for NATO to distinguish popular resistance from a state's action. And where a state truly fails, the intervening force will have to directly confront a popular resistance. In both these cases, the intervention will be prolonged and the face of battle changed, as a "northern alliance" may not be available in each case, its availability being dependent on the country's internal contradictions.

The strategy of swift and extremely violent intervention is meant to avoid being sucked into a prolonged war, involving ground fighting. Yet this same strategy, with its weak political aspect, is the most likely to generate a prolonged conflict. The contradiction which it

means to escape is inherent in the military action itself, since violence can be an instrument of politics, it cannot be a substitute for it.

The relentless and unplanned devouring of raw materials at an increasing rate makes imperative the total control of the globalized capital i.e. of the advanced countries, over all the sources of raw materials in the world. Here the RRF and its global reach become indispensable.

The states of the Third World are required to adapt their economies constantly to suit the requirements of the globalized capital. They are helped in it by the IMF, etc., with "structural adjustment programmes", euphemistically called "reforms." If a state meets with popular resistance to performing this

al labour power that was possible only through the re-establishment of serfdom.

Secondly, Eastern Europe ensured the perpetuation of its backwardness by specializing in agriculture, when Western Europe was launching on capitalism and the beginning of industrialization.

Today, Eastern Europe renews institutionalized unequal exchange with its western neighbours but at a higher level of social evolution. Now, it specializes not in agriculture but in the second stage of industrialization. The former members of the Soviet bloc have a high level of education and culture and have reached the stage of heavy industry with commensurate technology. The problem with them has been that their workers had come to regard full employment as their right and

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function of surrendering its natural resources and supplying cheap raw materials and industrial goods to them advanced countries or to absorbing the surplus product of the latter, it is adequately armed to maintain law and order.

This internal tension is likely to arise the earliest on account of the need to lower the purchasing power at home in order to pay the tribute to the advanced countries in the shape of the servicing of debts and the supply of under-valued raw materials and industrial products. Another source of tension would be their effective de-industrialization as a result of the opening of their markets to the goods of the advanced countries in the name of competition.

When a state fails to overcome popular resistance or where it may itself come in the way of the neo-colonial relationship, it can be declared a "failed state" and the RRF used to correct the situation.

Before Europe launches on a new global order, the continent is itself united economically and, now, militarily, though it excludes Russia, which is too big to manage and which, moreover, still carries some remnants of a socialist culture. However, for the rest of Eastern Europe, unity heralds a "third serfdom."

It may be recalled that, when Western Europe took to mercantile capitalism in the sixteenth century, the eastern part of the continent began to specialize in supplying it with food-grains and agricultural raw materials. This led to, indeed necessitated, a revival and strengthening of serfdom there. The Eastern European ruling classes benefited from the steady and assured exports. But this steadiness was attained only by lowering the prices of these exports though a reduction in the cost of reproduction of the agricultur-

had resisted the intensification of labour.

It took a few years of "shock therapy" to reconcile them to unemployment and lower wages. Eastern Europe, therefore, enters the new arrangement with Western Europe with an industry one stage behind that of Western Europe and a substantially lower wage-level, in short with the mechanism of unequal exchange in place. It is the beginning of the "third serfdom."

Even when the Eastern European economies will not equalize. Neither will the unequal exchange disappear. Capitalism does not equalize. It creates poles. The wages in Eastern Europe will, for long, be lower than in the other part; in some regions, far lower. The reason for it will be lower productivity in the modern sector in the East and the fact that the movement of labour power between the two parts will continue to be restricted in view of the wage differential between them.

Even with full freedom of movement, levels of prosperity can differ between them due to historical factors, a difference in productivity and the fact that the labour in advanced countries counts as more complex. This has been the case even within the Western European countries e.g. Italy, Spain and even England. Therefore, Eastern Europe, even when fully united with Western Europe, will continue to yield value to the latter, though it will shore in the proceeds of the unequal exchange of Europe as a whole with the Third World.

As to the Third World itself, it is as essential to the reproduction of capital in the First, as are its backwardness and poverty. However, the element of political instance has grown in its relationship with the First World under the new global order, though the economic instance

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continues to be its basic aspect. As a result, the Third World states have become the crucial interlocutors of the multinationals, directly or through the IMF-WB, WTO etc.

When these states were first confronted fully with the contradiction between their own territoriality and the globality of the multinationals in the seventies, they attempted to exercise some influence on the globalized capital by a "new world economic order." The concept was not clearly defined except for asking for some consideration about the widening scissors in the world trade. However, the slogan was devoid of content, since these states did not couple it with any programme for a new internal economic order in these societies. The Third World ruling classes were demanding a privilege for themselves which they were not willing to extend to their peoples.

Today, the Third World states accept that their ability to influence the conduct of the multinationals is almost nil. Instead they have to adjust themselves to the giants. These states are now required to:

(a) maintain law and order in their territories and specially prevent the rise of any forces inimical to the operations of the multinationals;

(b) train and maintain an industrial reserve army to be available to the globalized capitals when needed, either locally or in the advanced countries;

(c) prevent this manpower from moving at will to the advanced countries, so the wage differential between the two worlds remains;

(d) promote creation of a class locally which would absorb the surplus product of the advanced countries in exchange for under-valued local raw materials and industrial goods;

(e) create the infrastructure needed for economic growth and establish such industries as the local capitalists are not able or willing to set up, either because they lack money or because of long gestation period. These should, however, be de-nationalized later, thus utilizing the tax revenue for enhancing private accumulation, internal and multinational;

(f) preserve the system put in place by colonialism and neo-colonialism which forces unequal exchange upon the Third World.

The objectives of the multinationals themselves are determined by the imperatives of the reproduction of capital in the advanced countries. Capital exists to earn profit. Otherwise, it is just a sum of value. It can be said to reproduce when it returns to its point of departure with profit added to it. However, this requires the realization, i.e. sale, of the product. The problem here is that, whatever Marx may say in his famous schema of simple reproduction (Capital, Vol. II) or Lenin in his "Imperialism...", the entire product of an advanced capitalist economy cannot be realized at its value within that economy itself. The capital can reproduce itself only if part of the product is realized in the pre-capitalist or in a less developed capitalist economy, involving, in both cases, unequal exchange. ■