



# KOSOVO

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## Challenging the Mainstream Media on the Russia-Georgia War

By Garry Leupp, Dissident Voice

<http://www.dissidentvoice.org/2008/08/challenging-the-mainstream-media-on-the-russia-georgia-war/>

(Excerpts)

The parallel between Kosovo and South Ossetia is not of course exact. Kosovo plays a more important role in Serbian history than South Ossetia in Georgian history. It experienced a far more dramatic ethno-demographic change in the last century and a half than South Ossetia. (A 1871 report by an Austrian officer indicates that Kosovo was 64% Serb, 32% Albanian, whereas the Kosovars are now 92% of the total.)

Serbs can protest that the mere reproduction rate of Albanians in Kosovo shouldn't have entitled the Kosovars to seize the Serbian heartland with its churches, monasteries and battlefields rich in heroic historical memory. I don't think Georgians can make a similar argument about South Ossetia; the Ossetians (who may be related to Iranians) seem to have predominated in the region since around the fourteenth century.

The premise for the U.S./NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was that Kosovars were being persecuted by Serbian authorities. U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen declared, "We've now seen about 100,000 military-aged men missing... They may have been murdered," while a State Department spokesman warned, "There are indications genocide is unfolding in Kosovo." (One thinks of the Russian accusation of "genocide" as it was reported 1500-2000 Ossetian civilians had been killed in the Georgian attack.)

Actually it turns out only about 2000 civilians were killed in Kosovo between 1998 and 1999—around the number of South Ossetians killed by Georgians in just a few days. (To put this into perspective, there are about 100,000 South Ossetians in a region measuring 3,900 square kilometers and about two million inhabitants of Kosovo measuring 11,000 square kilometers.) A German court determined in March 1999 that, "Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have neither been nor are now exposed to regional or countrywide group persecution in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." Does it not look as though the premise of persecution justifying outside intervention is much stronger in the South Ossetia case?

Before commencing the bombardment of Yugoslavia (again, the first such bombardment in Europe since World War II), the U.S. presented Belgrade with the "Rambouillet Accords" ultimatum: either allow NATO forces to operate at will and



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tax-free throughout the entire territory of Yugoslavia (once proudly non-aligned during the Cold War), while they secured Kosovo as Yugoslav federal troops withdrew—or be subject to attack. The U.S. made demands no sovereign state could accept. Russia in contrast has not demanded the right to move its troops at will throughout Georgia. It gave Tblisi no ultimatum before responding to what appears to have been a brutal sneak attack.

NATO bombed Belgrade for three months in 1999. The bombing of the Serb Radio and Television (RTS) headquarters in Belgrade on April 23 killed 16 RTS civilian technicians. Russia has reportedly attacked the Vaziani military airbase outside Tbilisi and military targets in the capital city to “punish” Georgia for the South Ossetia attack and, no doubt, its embrace of an unofficial military alliance threatening to Russia.

Perhaps if the proposed cease-fire does not hold, Tblisi will encounter the same fate as Belgrade. But I think it more likely that the Georgian authorities will capitulate immediately to the invaders’ demands, which are more measured than the demands presented Milosevic.

Regardless of these differences between Kosovo and South Ossetia, Moscow seems to be saying: You cannot violate international law with your constant aggressions and provocations of Russia—a country seeking warm ties with the U.S. and Europe—without expecting us, at some point, to respond in kind. You cannot say it’s fine, as a “special exception” to violate the sovereignty of our traditional Serbian allies by delivering a state to the Kosovars while damning us for invading Georgia to defend the Ossetians. You have created this problem, and more to come.