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NATO Talks a Sham: War in Afghanistan Is Not Ending

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is **not** a benevolent organization. NATO is **not** about the North Atlantic and it's **not** about our collective defense.

NATO is a cost-sharing organization that finances aggressive military action. By hiding behind the claim that the organization provides for 'common defense,' NATO allows us to wage wars of choice under the guise of international peacekeeping. The most recent example was the unconstitutional war in Libya where NATO, operating under a United Nations mandate to protect civilians, instead backed one side in a civil war and pursued a policy of regime change.

Today, NATO leaders are meeting in Chicago to discuss the future of Afghanistan. The talks are being billed as discussions of plans to end the war. The war in Afghanistan is not ending. These talks are simply about financing the next phase of the war.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement between the U.S. and Afghanistan commits us to the country for at least another decade, despite public support for the war being at an all-time low. The United States will **pay for half** of the estimated \$4.1 billion per year cost of supporting 352,000 Afghan army and police officers. Afghanistan's contribution will be \$500,000. The rest will be financed by our 'NATO partners.' It is not surprising that support for the war among NATO members is waning, with France threatening to pull out its troops by the end of this year.

Our participation in NATO comes at a great financial cost to the U.S. We contribute the majority of funds for NATO's common budget, including 25% of the military budget. Between fiscal years 2010 and 2012 alone, we contributed more than \$1.3 billion to NATO's military budget. We also incur significant costs through the deployment of our forces in support of NATO missions. According to *The Atlantic*, the war in Libya cost the United States \$1.1 billion.

NATO was originally founded to provide a strategic counterbalance to the Soviet Union. Its founding purpose no longer exists, but NATO continues to circumvent the authority of the United Nations and to provoke other nations. NATO is an anachronism. Instead of trying to bolster the organization, we should begin serious discussions to dismantle it.