

# Dreaming Up a Reason for NATO's Relevance

European leaders still rattle their tiny sabers at Russia, but Donald Trump's election has spread confusion across NATO nations that had dutifully climbed aboard the New Cold War express, says ex-British intelligence officer Annie Machon.

By Annie Machon

A few months ago during the seemingly endless U.S. election, Donald Trump said NATO is not a gift that America can keep giving. In his stated view, the other member states should make a greater financial contribution (the U.S. currently contributes 70 percent of NATO's budget) and, if not, they could not expect automatic protection in the face of an attack.

On Nov. 13, after Trump's victory, NATO Secretary General and former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg wrote a think piece in the U.K.'s *Observer* newspaper, and acknowledged the need for more widespread contributions while crying up the historic importance and future need for NATO by citing growing Russian "assertiveness" (diplo-speak for "aggression") and the threat from international terrorism.

I was invited onto RT to analyze this and am here expanding on some of the points I made in an always-all-too-brief interview.

Stoltenberg was right to acknowledge Trump's concerns about the contributions to NATO. But I think he was also addressing another and already-serving president somewhat closer to home – head of the European Commission and totemic Eurocrat Jean-Claude Juncker – who for a while now has been plotting an integrated European Union army and who ramped up the rhetoric last week after Trump's victory. The head of NATO is naturally not going to be too happy that the E.U. is poaching on his territory as the supposed military defender of Europe.

It was also reported in *The Observer* that France and Germany are planning to announce the acceleration towards an E.U. army over the coming weeks. So much for European-wide consensus. It would appear that Juncker also sees this as a bargaining position in future Brexit negotiations, if Britain ever does get around to triggering Article 50 for withdrawing from the E.U. Any E.U. army would need the U.K.'s contribution – not just the armed forces, which are the second largest in the E.U., but also continued close cooperation with the intelligence agencies.

After all, if both the U.K. post-Brexit and the U.S. after the ascension of

Trump become increasingly isolationist and isolated, it would be natural for the two countries to pivot towards each other to the increasing exclusion of Europe. The U.K./U.S. “special relationship” has always been heavily predicated on the uniquely close working relationship of their spies, and the E.U. will fear being left further out in the cold.

So, if Juncker carries on regardless with his vanity E.U. army project and Britain agrees to contribute post-Brexit, there may be other sweet deals to offer to the U.K. during the Brexit negotiations. At least, that seems to be the position that Juncker is oiling his way towards. But the fundamental question has to be asked: why, now, do we need either a New Model E.U. army or the cavalier NATO?

Stoltenberg tried to address this in his article: “In the last few years we have seen a dramatic deterioration of our security, with a more assertive Russia and turmoil across north Africa and the Middle East. Nato allies have responded together. We have implemented the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the cold war. [...] This is deterrence, not aggression. [...] Nato also continues to play a crucial role in the fight against terrorism. Every Nato ally is part of the US-led coalition against Islamic State.”

### **The Dubious Group Think**

Let us unpack these comments. Firstly, is Russia indeed becoming more of a military threat, or is this just so much diplomatic grandstanding? After all, is it Russia or NATO that has been more, umm, “assertive” over the last 27 years?

In answer, I refer you back to an article I wrote two years ago after the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Referencing the work of former senior CIA officer and fellow Sam Adams Associate, Ray McGovern, it made clear that a deal was made between the Soviet Union of the time and the U.S. – and that, in return for the withdrawal of 260,000 Soviet troops from East Germany and the reunification of Germany, NATO would not move one inch further east than the German border.

Well, today we can see the result of these negotiations – another 12 countries, most in Eastern Europe and right up to the Russian border, have been assimilated into NATO. Recently within most of these border countries large-scale military exercises have been provocatively and publicly staged, plus missile “defense ” systems have been planted in the fertile paranoiac soil of an increasingly aggressive and nationalistic Poland.

Yes, Russia has in retaliation been conducting its own border exercises. The leadership has to be seen to be doing something, otherwise it will appear weak

and not protecting its own people. That might be “assertive,” but it’s certainly not “aggressive.”

Nor let us forget the fact that, in 2008, NATO was warm towards the idea of Ukraine and Georgia joining, provided they could meet a few conditions. This would be taking Western forces directly into Russia’s backyard. It would be encircling Russia’s border with the rest of Europe with a new “Iron Curtain.” And I have to say that **IS** is an aggressively political move at the very least.

How did this play out? Well, first stop for the campaign of Russian demonization was Georgia, under Western neocon puppet President Mikhail Saakashvili , invading a small and ethnically Russian segment of Georgia, South Ossetia. Russia responded by protecting the population, and then was excoriated across the Western world as conducting an unprovoked invasion of Georgia. This myth has long been exposed factually, but it is the hysterical headlines of the time that residually stick in most people’s minds.

Similarly in Ukraine. In 2014, a coup against the elected head of state, Viktor Yanukovich, apparently partly orchestrated by the U.S. as we know from an intercepted call between the Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for Europe Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt. Interestingly, it was Yanukovich who blocked Ukraine’s accession to NATO after his election in 2010, perhaps an additional motivation for the 2014 coup.

All this laid bare the fact that the U.S. had pumped \$5 billion in to subvert the Ukrainian state during the post-Soviet years and that, in the face of European concern about the worsening crisis, the U.S. pronounced – in the tender words of Victoria Nuland – “fuck the E.U.” And yet still the E.U. acquiesced to U.S.-led sanctions against Russia that have hit the E.U. economy hard.

### **Pot and Kettle**

Despite this history of interference in the politics of other nations, the U.S. government accused Russia of meddling in the 2016 presidential elections. The old story of the pot and kettle springs to mind.

Add to this a probably NATO-approved strike on a Russian jet involved in the Syrian conflict earlier this year by NATO member Turkey (at the time one of the closest trading partners of Russia and which, temporarily, caused bilateral damage that has since been repaired) and the military wing of Western interests is not exactly coming up smelling of roses. (The Russian pilot bailed out but was then shot to death by Turkish-backed Syrian rebels on the ground.) Perhaps NATO was just being “assertive.”

So to Stoltenberg’s second point of justification for NATO: the success that it

has had combating the threat of international terrorism. Where can I start with this? Since NATO invoked Article 5 (when one state is attacked, all must respond) in the wake of the 9/11 attacks against America, Western countries have been dragged into war after illegal war across the Middle East, central Asia and North Africa.

Let us examine the roll call of successes: Afghanistan (now largely back in the hands of Taliban warlords and supplying ever more heroin to the illegal drug trade that goes toward funding terrorist groups, including ISIS); Iraq, now a basket case and the cradle of ISIS; Libya ditto plus the drugs; Yemeni communities being vaporized with “precision” bombs by U.S. proxy Saudi Arabia; and the bloody catastrophe of Syria of course.

So the NATO Secretary General’s second justification of the organization’s continued existence is not exactly what one would call compelling. But I suppose he had to try, when Juncker’s threatened *folie de grandeur* that is the E.U. army is even less inspiring.

So, back to President-elect Donald Trump. What will he do, faced with this mess of competing Western military/security interests and Euro-bureaucrat careerists? Perhaps his U.S. isolationist position is not so mad, bad and dangerous as the wailings of the Western liberal press would have us believe?

American “exceptionalism” and NATO interventionism have not exactly benefited much of the world since the end of the Cold War. Perhaps the time has indeed come for an American Commander-in-Chief who can indeed cut deals to cut through the saber-rattling rhetoric and, even unintentionally, make a significant contribution to world peace.

Stranger things have happened. After all, outgoing President Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize a mere eight months after his inauguration, more a hoped-for aspiration than a recognition of any accomplishment, and we see how that worked out.

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