

Video: NATO 2020: A Coalition of the Unwilling

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The problem with alliances is that they ultimately either become victims of their own success, or cannot figure out what to do with themselves once the original rationale disappears. The original Cold War-era NATO was a relatively cohesive entity led by one of the two superpowers, with most of its members being the industrialized democracies of Western Europe, with West Germany being its eastern-most European member, and alliance planning revolving around USSR. But even then there were cracks in the alliance. Italy, for example, had nearly no role to play as it did not border any Warsaw Pact country and did not practice deploying its forces to West Germany to practice its defense against the anticipated Warsaw Pact invasion. And while Greece and Turkey were ostensibly part of that alliance as well, in practice they spent more time clashing with one another than planning for joint action against the USSR.

The end of the Cold War made the problem of alliance cohesion far worse, for two reasons. One, it quickly added as many members as possible thus greatly expanding its geographical extent, and two, it lost that single unifying factor in the form of USSR. Today's NATO is a patchwork of mini-alliances revolving around the United States which is determined to replace the alliance aspect of NATO which assumes that all members have interests that are to be taken into consideration, by patron-client relationships.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the goal of the United States is global domination. This goal is shared by the entire political elite and major portions of the population, though it is nearly never discussed openly or directly. Instead, it is framed in terms of "American Leadership", "New American Century", and of course "American Exceptionalism" which is used to justify any policy that violates international law, treaties, or agreements. Given that every country which has not recognized "American Leadership" is described as a "regime", there is no indication the US elite is interested in anything resembling peaceful coexistence with other sovereign states.

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NATO plays a double role in achieving that goal. First, it is a military alliance that projects military power against anyone refusing to accept "American Leadership". Military contributions by European member states are certainly important, not least by giving America the veneer of international legitimacy, but the presence of US bases on the European continent is far more so.

US forces stationed in or staged out of European naval, air, and land bases are indispensable to its efforts to control the MENA region and to promote the US policy of driving a wedge between Europe on the one hand and Russia and China on the other. Secondly, a European country's membership in NATO means a sacrifice of considerable

portion of its sovereignty and independence to the United States. This is a wholly asymmetrical relationship, since US bases its forces in European countries and sells its weapons to them, not the other way around. The penetration of a European country thus achieved allows US intelligence service to develop agent networks and to employ the full range of lobbying techniques which have been particularly visible in the US efforts to press F-35 aircraft into the hands of NATO member states.

America's self-appointed task is made not easier or harder by the fact that today's NATO is therefore fragmented along both geographic and national power lines. The geographical divide is plainly easy to see: Norway and Denmark mainly care about the Arctic, Poland and Romania obsess about Russia, Mediterranean countries freak out about what's happening in North Africa. The wrangling over sending more troops to Mali or to Estonia is the reflection of the differing security concerns of individual members of the far-flung pact. The power divide is less easy to see but more problematic for Washington. V_3 (A2) Of the European powers, only four—Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain—may be considered to be powerful and independent political actors with which the US has to contend on anything like an equal basis. The first three form the core of the European Union, whereas Great Britain opted for Brexit, likely in part because of the looming big power struggle between the US and the EU that has the potential of degenerating into a destructive trade war. It is doubtful that the skirmishes over Huawei and North Stream 2 are anything but the opening salvos in the confrontation over whether the EU will emerge as a political actor independent of the US, or be reduced to a collection of client states. Unfortunately, America's task is made easier by the fact of the intra-European divisions mentioned above.

United States is pursuing development of several hypersonic missile systems with the aim of ultimately fielding very large numbers of them in order to be able to launch disarming first strikes against Russian and Chinese nuclear arsenals. Since the weapons themselves are relatively short-ranged (though that may change once the US allows New START to lapse), they require basing close to their intended targets. That means having to find countries willing to base them in Europe, where it is liable to provoke a political debate of the magnitude comparable to that of the original Euromissile controversy of the 1980s. Since Germany is not interested in being reduced to the status of a US client, it has resisted the US on a variety of fronts, including the North Stream 2, the refusal to buy F-35s, and now also the lack of desire to host the new US missiles. Even the German defense spending increases are intended at least as much to counter US influence in Eastern Europe as the supposed Russian threat to NATO. The United States has responded using the usual array of tools: economic sanctions on any and all European entities participating in the project and even using the gas, apparently launching a cyber-attack that US-friendly German intelligence promptly blamed on Russia, and also threatening to move US troops out of Germany and possibly to Poland. There is even discussion and rumors that US nuclear weapons stationed in Germany might be moved to Poland.

The outcome of this so far is a power struggle between two NATO allies, US and Germany, over the political alignment of a third—Poland. While Germany has the power of EU institutions on its side and massive economic gravitational pull, US has cultivated a cadre of friends, possibly intelligence assets, as a result of post-9/11 collaboration in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the realm of intelligence-sharing. This has produced a government more than willing to deploy US troops, missiles, and even nukes on Poland's territory. The power of US influence is visible in Poland's weapons procurement: Patriot, Javelin, HIMARS, F-35, and not a single comparable European system in recent years. The US weakness in this

confrontation consists of the unwillingness to subsidize Poland economically which, combined with the ruling party's fiscal irresponsibility, will make it difficult for the country to maintain its anti-German course in the longer term.

While in Eastern Europe US national security state is using Poland as a proxy against Germany, in the Mediterranean it has adopted Turkey as a proxy against France and Italy. After some hemming and hawing, the US hawks dropped the Kurds yet again, with Trump happily taking the blame, in order to piggy-back on Erdogan's Libya ambitions to curtail French and Italian interests there. To be sure, Turkey retains far more autonomy in the relationship than Poland, which was unable or unwilling to play US and Russia and EU against one another in order to secure a measure of freedom of action. But the US Congress measures to allow the purchase of S-400 weapons from Turkey is an indicator that Turkey's behavior is once again useful to the US. And even though Turkey was excluded from the F-35 program, its firms continue to make components for various assembly plants. The result has been a number of stand-offs between Turkish warships on one hand and French and Italian on the other off the coasts of Libya. And whereas France and Italy are backing the Marshal Haftar's LNA, Turkey's preferred proxy is the GNA, leading to a veritable "anti-Turkey" alliance being formed that includes Turkey's old time NATO adversary Greece. While the US is officially aloof of the entire situation, in practice controlling Libya's oil is part of the Washington strategy of "energy dominance" every bit as the North Stream 2 sanctions are.

The remarkable part of these two sets of conflicts among NATO powers is that in both cases Russia has sided with Germany and France against the US in both cases. It is Russia's policies that are more beneficial to French and German interests than America's, since Russia is not actually seeking to monopolize energy supplies to Europe in the way that the US clearly and openly is.

So far the US strategy consisted of steadily ratcheting up pressure through sanctions and proxies and occasional intelligence-generated anti-Russia provocations (sometimes helpfully delivered by British agencies), trying to find that happy middle of policies that actually force Germany, France, and Italy to change their policies and which do not force a permanent breach in the trans-Atlantic relationship. But the cracks in the relationship are clearly visible and they are not attributable to Trump's erratic and brusque manner. It is the US Congress which passed the successive rounds of anti-North Stream 2 sanctions, with strong partisan majorities. It means the assertion of US control over European major powers is part of the US agenda. Since that agenda is motivated by a US political and economic crisis of a magnitude not seen since the 1930s, there is little likelihood Biden's presidency would represent a radical departure from the current trend.

Of course, for Germany, France, and Italy to successfully resist US encroachment they would first need to transform the EU into something closer than a federation. The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic crisis already providing considerable impetus for such a transformation, America's insatiable appetites might provide the rest.

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