

## **Trump Is Right - Dump NATO Now**

By David Stockman, via Contra Corner blog, 26 March 2016

If you want to know why we have a \$19 trillion national debt and a fiscal structure that will take that already staggering figure to \$35 trillion and 140% of GDP within a decade, just consider the latest campaign fracas. That is, the shrieks of disbelief in response to Donald Trump's sensible suggestion that the Europeans pay for their own defense.

**The fact is, NATO has been an obsolete waste for 25 years.** Yet the denizens of the Imperial City cannot even seem to grasp that the 4 million Red Army is no more; and that the Soviet Empire, which enslaved 410 million souls to its economic and military service, vanished from the pages of history in December 1991.

### **What is left is a pitiful remnant**

What is left is a pitiful remnant—145 million aging, Vodka-besotted Russians who subsist in what is essentially a failing third world economy. Its larcenous oligarchy of Putin and friends appeared to live high on the hog and to spread a veneer of glitz around Moscow and St. Petersburg. But that was all based on the world's one-time boom in oil, gas, nickel, aluminum, fertilizer, steel and other commodities and processed industrial materials.

Stated differently, the Russian economy is a glorified oil patch and mining town with a GDP the equivalent of the NYC metropolitan area. And that's its devastating Achilles Heel.

The central bank driven global commodity and industrial boom is over and done. As a new cycle of epic deflation engulfs the world and further compresses commodity prices and profits, the Russian economy is going down for the count; it's already been shrunk by nearly 10% in real terms, and the bottom is a long way down from there.

The plain fact is Russia is an economic and military weakling and is not the slightest threat to the security of the United States. None. Nichts. Nada. Nope.

Its entire expenditure for national defense amounts to just \$50 billion, *but during the current year only \$35 billion of that will actually go to the Russian Armed Forces. On an apples-to-apples basis, that's about three weeks of Pentagon spending!*

Even given its non-existent capacity, however, there remains the matter of purported hostile intention and aggressive action. But as amplified below, there has been none. The whole demonization of Putin is based on a false narrative arising from one single event.

To wit, the February 2014 coup in Kiev against Ukraine's constitutionally elected government was organized, funded and catalyzed by the Washington/NATO apparatus. Putin took defensive action in response because this supremely stupid and illegal provocation threatened vital interests in his own backyard.

### **The openly hostile government installed in Kiev**

The openly hostile government installed in Kiev the very next day by the State Department threatened to join NATO, persecute the Russian-speaking minority in eastern Ukraine,

renounce its multi-billion financial obligations to Moscow and imperil Russia's rental arrangement for the homeport of its Black Sea naval fleet in Sevastopol (Crimea). The latter has been the historic anchor of Russia's national security policy under czars and commissars alike.

Moreover, the putsch installed by the "regime change" crowd at the CIA, State Department and so-called Endowment for Democracy while Putin was minding his own business at the Sochi Olympics was crawling with adherents of the "Right Sector". The latter is a fascist movement that looks to a World War II Nazi collaborator, Stepan Bandera, as its national hero.

That's right. The new prime minister imposed by US Assistant Secretary of State and card-carrying neocon, Victoria Nuland, and affectionately known as "our man Yats" was part of a neo-Nazi cabal.

### **The bellicose incitements of the NATO apparatus**

Moreover, without the prodding of Washington and the bellicose incitements of the NATO apparatus, Europe wouldn't even need a military alliance. Save for the manufactured and unnecessary conflict with Russia, Europe has no industrial state enemy on the planet; it doesn't need to spend even the \$250 billion or 2% of GDP that it collectively allocates to defense (waste) at present.

The whole confrontation with Russia including the self-inflicted economic folly of the anti-Putin sanctions is the handiwork of a war machine and its bureaucratic auxiliaries that are long past their sell-by date. That is, the entire "Russian threat" narrative is concocted by generals, admirals, spies, diplomats and other national security apparatchiks who would otherwise be out of power, jobs and cushy pensions.

**Naturally, Trump's GOP rivals crawled out of their time warps to calamity-howl the very idea of getting realistic about NATO.**

**Not surprisingly, Governor Kasich said Trump was "dead wrong",** and then unleashed another barrage of his patented beltway stupid-speak:

*We clearly have to make sure we strengthen NATO, we have to make sure that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin understands we will arm the Ukrainians so they fight for freedom," Kasich told Anderson Cooper. "We need NATO. NATO is important; we all wish they would do more."*

The man is still campaigning for the Lithuanian vote in Youngstown—so maybe he has no particular reason to think about the matter. But at least someone should disabuse him of the fairy tale that the nationalist politicians, crypto-Nazi thugs and thieving oligarchs who seized the Ukrainian government are some kind of latter day "freedom fighters".

**But Ted Cruz is another matter.** When it comes to foreign policy, the guy is just plain whacko. He has been so pumped full of neocon ideology that he fairly oozes jingoistic bile:

*“It has been Russia’s objective, it has been Putin’s objective, for decades to break NATO. What Donald Trump is saying that he would unilaterally surrender to Russia and Putin, give Putin a massive foreign policy victory by breaking NATO and abandoning Europe.”*

**Needless to say, there is not a single accurate point in that statement.** The truth is more nearly the opposite. And that begins with George H. W. Bush’s 1989 promise to Gorbachev that in return for his acquiescence to the reunification of Germany, NATO would not be expanded by “a single inch”.

### **NATO should have declared victory and been disbanded**

NATO should have declared victory and been disbanded. The defense budget should have been drastically reduced to a homeland defense force because there were no industrial state enemies left in the world.

As it happened, the Elder Bush’s sensible promise was torn-up and dropped into the White House waste basket by Bill Clinton in the mid-1990s. It seems that his reelection was threatened by charges from the GOP rightwing that he was soft on defense. So his solution was to invite Poland, the Baltic states and most of the remainder of the now disbanded Warsaw Pact to join NATO.

What should have been a vestigial alliance of 15 nations slated for zero was transformed into a menacing “Gang of 28” that virtually surrounds Russia. Yet aside from the now 25-month old conflict over the Ukrainian coup and the 2008 intermural fight over the borders of Stalin’s home country of Georgia between Moscow and a local crook, there was never any conflict at all.

During 15 years in power from 1999 through February 2014, Putin had demonstrated no desire whatsoever to swallow non-Russian peoples. And he has made it clear since then through the Minsk agreement that he supports an independent government in the Ukraine—so long as the legitimate demands of the Russian-speaking Donbas region for a measure of autonomy and safeguards are implemented.

**Nor is there a shred of evidence that Moscow is about to invade the already harmless Baltic States or highly independent Poland, let alone the rest of Europe.**

**So the whole case for NATO’s continued existence turns on the Ukraine matter, and there the facts and history leave no doubt.**

### **Crimea has been part of Russia since 1783**

Crimea has been part of Russia since 1783 when Catherine the Great bought it from the Turks for hard cash. Thereafter she made Sevastopol the homeport for the Great Black Sea Fleet that has ever since been the fundamental bulwark of Russia’s national security.

For the next 171 years Crimea was an integral part of Russia—a span that exceeds the 166 years that have elapsed since California was annexed by a similar thrust of “Manifest Destiny” on this continent, thereby providing, incidentally, the United States Navy with its own warm-water port in San Diego.

While no foreign forces subsequently invaded the California coasts, it was most definitely not Ukrainian rifles, artillery and blood which famously annihilated The Charge Of The Light Brigade at the Crimean city of Balaclava in 1854; they were Russians patriots defending the homeland from Turks, Europeans and Brits.

Indeed, the portrait of the Russian “hero” hanging in Putin’s office is that of Czar Nicholas I. His brutal 30-year reign brought the Russian Empire to its historical zenith, but, ironically, he is revered in Russian hagiography for another reason—namely, as the defender of Crimea, even as he lost the 1850s war to the Ottomans and Europeans.

At the end of the day, it’s their Red Line. When the enfeebled Franklin Roosevelt made port in the Crimean city of Yalta in February 1945 he did at least know that he was in Soviet **Russia**.

Maneuvering to cement his control of the Kremlin in the intrigue-ridden struggle for succession after Stalin’s death a few years later, Nikita Khrushchev allegedly spent 15 minutes reviewing his “gift” of Crimea to his subalterns in Kiev in honor of the decision by their ancestors 300 years earlier to accept the inevitable and become a vassal of Russia.

### **Crimea part of the Ukraine’s geography by happenstance**

So Crimea only became part of the Ukraine’s geography by happenstance during the Soviet era of the mid-1950s. Yet its re-annexation—upon a 90% favorable vote in the referendum—after the provocations of February 2014 has become the basis for virtually reigniting the Cold War.

Moreover, the fact that Crimea and the nearby industrial heartland of the Donbas are Russian speaking is not something “trumped up” by Putin. In fact, it is soaked in an 85-year history of blood.

During the 1930s Stalin populated the eastern industrial region (Donbas), which was the coal, steel, machinery and chemical backbone of the Soviet Union, with transplanted Russians for a perverse reason. He knew the Ukrainian Kulaks that he had liquidated in their millions during his catastrophic forced collectivization campaign were seething with hatred for the red regime in Moscow and could not be trusted to remain subjected.

Sure enough. The Ukrainian nationalists of Kiev and the western regions joined the Nazi Wehrmacht on its way to Stalingrad, liquidating Jews, Poles and Reds by the tens of thousands as they marched east in 1943; and after the Red Army finally broke the bloodiest siege in history, the Russian-speakers of the Donbas joined the Red Army on its march back to Germany, liquidating Ukrainian Nazi collaborators in their tens of thousands in retaliation.

**So all the Washington sabre rattling about the Ukraine is rooted in an abiding ignorance about the Ukraine’s History of Horribles. The current renewed flare-up of this tragic history was self-evidently and wantonly triggered by Victoria Nuland’s coup; it was not some nefarious aggression by Putin!**

And that gets us back to the original question. What kind of warped thinking holds that the addition of Albania, Croatia, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia, among the other economic and

military midgets, to an obsolete NATO alliance adds one iota of safety and security to the citizens of Lincoln NE, Spokane WA or Worcester MA?

The answer is that it is not thinking at all. It reflects the dreadful inertia of a war machine that has sunk its tentacles deep into the nation's economy and process of political governance. Now it virtually defies history and bleeds the nation white.

After the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 and the death of the Soviet Union was confirmed two years later when Boris Yeltsin courageously stood down the red army tanks in front of Moscow's White House, a dark era in human history came to an end.

The world had descended into what had been a 77-year global war, incepting with the mobilization of the armies of old Europe in August 1914. If you want to count bodies, 150 million were killed by all the depredations which germinated in the Great War, its foolish aftermath at Versailles, and the march of history into the world war and cold war which followed inexorably thereupon.

To wit, upwards of 8% of the human race was wiped-out during that span. The toll encompassed the madness of trench warfare during 1914-1918; the murderous regimes of Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism that rose from the ashes of the Great War and Versailles; and then the carnage of WWII and all the lesser (unnecessary) wars and invasions of the Cold War including Korea and Vietnam.

**The end of the cold war meant world peace was finally at hand, yet 25 years later there is still no peace because Imperial Washington confounds it.**

In fact, the War Party entrenched in the nation's capital is dedicated to economic interests and ideological perversions that guarantee perpetual war; they ensure endless waste on armaments and the inestimable death and human suffering that stems from 21st century high tech warfare and the terrorist blowback it inherently generates among those upon which the War Party inflicts its violent hegemony.

### **A virulent threat to peace still lurking on the Potomac**

*So there was a virulent threat to peace still lurking on the Potomac after the 77-year war ended. The great general and president, Dwight Eisenhower, had called it the "military-industrial complex" in his farewell address, but that memorable phrase had been abbreviated by his speechwriters, who deleted the word "congressional" in a gesture of comity to the legislative branch.*

So restore Ike's deleted reference to the pork barrels and Sunday afternoon warriors of Capitol Hill and toss in the legions of beltway busybodies that constituted the civilian branches of the cold war armada (CIA, State, AID etc.) and the circle would have been complete. It constituted the most awesome machine of warfare and imperial hegemony since the Roman legions bestrode most of the civilized world.

In a word, the real threat to peace circa 1990 was that *Pax Americana* would not go away quietly in the night.

In fact, during the past 25 years Imperial Washington has lost all memory that peace was ever possible at the end of the cold war. **Today it is as feckless, misguided and bloodthirsty as were Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg, Vienna and London in August 1914.**

Indeed, there is no peace on earth today for reasons mainly rooted in Imperial Washington - not Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Damascus, Mosul or even Raqqa. The latter has become a global menace owing to what didn't happen in 1991.

*What should have happened is that Bush the elder should have declared "mission accomplished" and slashed the Pentagon budget from \$600 billion to \$200 billion; demobilized the military-industrial complex by putting a moratorium on all new weapons development, procurement and export sales; dissolved NATO and dismantled the far-flung network of US military bases; slashed the US standing armed forces from 1.5 million to a few hundred thousand; and organized and led a world disarmament and peace campaign, as did his Republican predecessors during the 1920s.*

Self-evidently, none of that possibility even entered the discourse in the Imperial City. Yet questioning NATO is actually a proxy - belated as it is - for re-opening the questions that were buried after 1991.

**No wonder the Washington War Party has greeted Donald Trump's impertinence with such rabid disdain.**