Trump Blackmails NATO Using Russia for Intimidation

On July 10, the US President Donald Trump began his journey to Europe with a visit to Brussels to attend the NATO summit which is going to be rather complicated. A sheer discrepancy is becoming obvious: Trump believes that the US is spending a disproportionate amount of money on keeping the armed forces in Europe and elsewhere in behalf of the whole West, as well as on the NATO military programmes, while the Europeans are avoiding performing their duties. Which is actually true. According to various estimates, the US accounts for 60% - 70% of the NATO programme funds (Nota Bene: the defence budget items of the North Atlantic Alliance reach $ 1.4 trillion), while the existing arrangement having the European countries spend at least 2% of their budgets on defence is not fulfilled by all the countries. Actually, only France and the UK are doing it, but then they spend more money on their own military programmes than they do on the NATO projects. Due to saving up on the defence expenditures, Germany has a budget surplus of $ 34 b, which is especially infuriating for Trump, whose anger goes to Angela Merkel personally as well. According to the US President, it is this fact that accounts for the fast rate development of the German economy, while the US is providing defence for Germany and the whole European Union.

In the meanwhile, the Old Europe represented by Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Austria, etc is clearly tired of the excessive dependence on the US in the military sphere and security matters, even more so now that they have a clear understanding: Russia is not going to attack Europe, all it wants is just a full-fledged trade, economic and political cooperation on equal terms. Russia is not an enemy of the EU, but a partner, and a crucial one in the energy sector.

Furthermore, these countries are unwilling to participate in the operations led by Washington DC outside the NATO jurisdiction, such as in the Middle East. And where a traditional area of their influence is concerned, they act on
their own, without any support from Washington DC. For instance, Paris prefers to act on its own in the Sahara-Sahelian area and in Central Africa, its former colonies that are rich in mineral resources. Germany, Italy and Spain are generally unwilling to interfere in other countries’ affairs. Meanwhile, the US are incurring major expenses on its military presence in the Persian Gulf, basing a whole fleet there and keeping the largest military air bases (Nota Bene: a lot of these costs are covered at the expense of the Arab states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)). It should be noted that it is the EU that consumes the oil and gas produced in this region, and not the US.

At the same time, the Baltic states and several Eastern European states (like Poland and Romania) that are equally unwilling to expend a lot on their defence are playing the ‘Russian threat’ card in every which way and are eager to appease the US in every respect, providing it with bases and accommodating the US troops and armaments on their territories. Only in order to spite Russia. Although the rationally thinking politicians in those countries have a clear understanding that Moscow has no need for invading these countries. But they are guided by the nationalist malice and the historical antagonism towards their rich and powerful neighbour in the east.

Only the UK, the loyal watchdog of the US, is eager to join the US military campaigns, from the conflict in Iraq to the Syrian Civil War. At the same time, the EU is not going to follow the anti-Iranian policy of Washington DC and sever the economic ties with Tehran, despite Trump’s ultimatum to accomplish this by November 1. And for Trump, Iran is the arch enemy in the region and has to be crushed.

However, beneath the perfunctory disagreements between the US and the EU on the NATO and in general, there is clearly another important factor in effect, a purely economic one. The arguments as per Trump’s logic are more or less like this: Germany and Europe are spending dozens of billions of dollars on the Russian oil and gas. Russia, being one of the potential enemies of the NATO, is using it to strengthen its own defence and conduct its national foreign policy, including that concerning Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, etc. And the US has to pay for all this ‘outrage’ from the point of view of countering the Russian expansion. This logic, by the way, is quite clear in the statement made by Trump on his arrival to Brussels.

However, what Trump is unambiguously implying the Europeans should do is stop buying the Russian oil and gas. They should switch to the American LNG and shale oil, the export cost of which is much higher than that of the Russian energy shipped to Europe. But Trump does not care that the EU would buy it at a loss, since, according to his logic, “it will be fair and will greatly contribute to the security” (Nota Bene: military security) of Europe itself. According to Trump, the Russian export of oil and gas, first and foremost, on the European market, is the key resource for Moscow’s “planned aggression” against Ukraine and the Middle East. However, Europe can make up for its “wrongdoing” by purchasing oil and gas at a high price from the US and cutting down on purchasing them from Russia.

This line of reasoning is solely based on considering the US interests exclusively. It serves as a basis for all the plans and actions of the Trump administration on imposing sanctions on the Russian projects like the Nord Stream and the TurkStream. The gas war has been waged by Washington DC against Moscow in all areas in order to weaken Russia. Trump’s belligerent rhetoric in this respect has nothing whatsoever to do with any planned aggression against Russia, who has not been a military enemy of the US for a very long time, being rather a very convenient target for mass media purposes both in the US and in the EU. By blowing the “Russian threat” bogey out of proportion, the White House is trying to implement its global economic objectives of weakening any international competitors, be it Europe, China, Japan or Russia, and undermining the Russian economy in order to spread discord and get a change of power in the Kremlin. In the military respect, the “Russian threat” has not been a real issue for the US and the NATO for quite a while. It is no accident that, in the early 2000s, the George Walker Bush administration had to raise the topic of international terrorism as a substitute for countering the Soviet (Russian) threat. Because one has to justify the militarising the US foreign policy and allocating hundreds of billions of dollars to develop the military industrial sector whose products are imposed on the European NATO member states and the rich states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). However, international terrorism proved largely a fabrication, an ephemeral illusion. After 9/11 (Nota Bene: it still remains unclear who organised this tragedy, was it Al-Qaeda or the US government?) That was why international terrorism emerged as some kind of a substitute for the Soviet military threat. However, when the Americans lie about international terrorism, they are at least doing it in pursuit of their imperial ambitions. And it is unclear why many other countries followed this thesis.

In any case, in Brussels, Trump will naturally use Russia to intimidate his NATO partners and demand that they fork out to buy the American oil and gas. The hard negotiations strategy is always the same for Trump the businessman: he needs to make his partner face the prospect of a crisis and then offer a solution at a lower price. It has been clear
all along that Trump has been conducting his politics the way he would manage a business. Though one has to act in a subtler and softer manner in politics. But Trump is not a professional politician, he is a businessman. His objective is to decrease the US expenditures on the counterproductive international commitments (by employing any means including utter blackmail), make all the other states pay for them and preserve all the privileges of the US as the only superpower in the world.

He will intimidate the Europeans with Vladimir Putin and offer Syria to the latter, thinking that it will appease him. But Trump's logic is universally the same: make others do the work for him and pursue the US interests exclusively. That is, at the expense of others, but making profit for the US. Trump has the same approach in the Asia Pacific and in East Asia. Trump's objective is not at all to resolve the North Korean issue, but to create the unacceptable threat of potential increasing Chinese influence in the region for Japan, which will make it spend much more money on defence and security, enabling the US to cut down on its own expenses while preserving the total balance. Although the question remains: does everybody in Europe, Japan, China and Russia understand it? Moscow has to. Since the Helsinki summit is much more important for Trump than for Russia.

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