

Euro peace: The sounds of silence

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*Eurospeak: “peace” via US missile bases, a mobile missile “blanket”, a “convention” on cybercrime, “Long live NATO!” **Eric Walberg** strains to hear a Euro voice of reason*

After being the playground for 20th century militarism, after finally uniting with no enemies in sight, you think that Europe would be the world’s bulwark for peace. But a continent that rejected the US war in Vietnam is in thrall to US militarism as never before. None of the European peoples support the current wars and arms race, yet Euro governments dutifully cough up troops to send to Afghanistan. Many sent forces to Iraq. All of them are happy members of NATO, which is unashamedly the forward presence of the US military around the world, having long ago cast aside any pretense of defending Europe from the dreaded communists.

There have been rare glimmers of protest — the German and French refusal to back the invasion of Iraq, and the grassroots Czech campaign against the Star Wars base. Germany’s *Die Linke* is the only party to call for immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and has surged past the Greens to 14 per cent, but it will be kept out of any future government. Messy coalition politics (in the worst case, the safe “grand coalition”) allows the US to bully weak little countries into keeping “defence” policy bi-tri-partisan. “Kick the bums” out, as happened last in Poland in 2007, did not mean an end to the unpopular missile base plans there, nor an end to Polish troops in Afghanistan, though 81 per cent want the troops home now.

Only the nasty Soviets dared stand up to the US, forcing it at the height of detente — the nadir of US empire — to sign the ABM treat in 1972. 9/11 provided an all-too convenient excuse to tear that treaty up. The remnants of the Soviet Union, the “authoritarian” Russians (read: still the bad guys) managed to sort-of stand up to the bully, threatening to put nuclear missiles in Kaliningrad and offering him carte blanche in Afghanistan in exchange for keep Star Wars out of Russia’s backyard. The desperate need by the US for Russian cooperation in fueling the slaughter in Afghanistan may have actually slowed the juggernaut, with rumours that the Poles and the Czechs will just have to do without.

But not to worry. Already, others are offering to fill the breach, notably, Turkey, Israel and the latest darlings, Kosovo and Georgia. And who needs glaringly permanent bases anyway? Mobile missile launchers can do the trick. Boeing announce it “is eyeing a 47,500-pound interceptor that could be flown to NATO bases as needed, erected quickly on a 60-foot trailer stand.” The fixed-site ground-based interceptor deployment planned for Poland was politically risky and the mobile interceptor could “blunt Russian fears of possible US fixed missile-defense sites in Europe.” Yes, substituting a mobile missile launcher “globally deployable within 24 hours” instead of missiles permanently stationed at a location known to Russia will no doubt reassure them..

This new fad of mobility is part of the latest US military strategy for global domination, and an acquiescent Europe is the centrepiece. The Obama administration has requested \$600 million in funding for the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS), a joint US-German-Italian-NATO interceptor missile “blanket”. Whether or not the Czech and Polish bases go ahead, the German and Italian people will no doubt be forced to drink their cup of MEADS. After all it will provide a nifty transportable system allowing the deadly missiles “to accompany expeditionary ground forces to wherever they are deployed.”

In any case, the US will soon have its Prompt Global Strike system to “provide the US with the capability to strike virtually anywhere on the face of the earth within 60 minutes” and the hypersonic Falcon missile-launched vehicle that could hit targets anywhere on earth within 35 minutes. This gives America the “forward presence it requires around the world without the need for bases outside the US” whatsoever. Even if the US alienates every last country, it can still destroy the world in 35 minutes. That’s a relief.

In case you still think all this has something to do with North Korea or Iran, vice chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright in a moment of rare candor boasted: the US has the “capability to take on 15 inbound intercontinental ballistic missiles simultaneously using 30 GBIs [ground-based interceptors]. That’s a heck of a lot more than a rogue nation could fire.”

This dance of death, whether populated by wallflower or mobile missiles, is not new. It was going on even as the dust was settling after WWII.. One of the chief purposes of the founding of NATO in 1949 — before the Soviet Union had the atomic bomb — was to allow the US to station its nuclear weapons in Europe. Although Washington’s arsenal of nuclear warheads in Europe was reduced after the end of the Cold War, hundreds of American nuclear weapons remain on the continent. Is it any wonder Russia, having long ago taken all its nuclear toys home, balked at letting the US station its Star Wars bases, an integral part of its first strike world nuclear “umbrella”, next door in Poland and the Czech Republic? Now we’re back to square one. Imagine we are living in 1946, “fresh” from Hiroshima, with the US Star Wars system deployed not just in Europe but around the world as integral to a US first-strike nuclear weapons strategy. Where is the Euro voice of reason?

But this complicity is not limited to bombs. The bombs are now launched by computers and require secure information delivery systems. To ensure no nation loses its sense of security due to cyber attacks, incapacitating its now electronically controlled military hardware, China and Russia have called for a treaty, along the lines of the successful chemical weapons treaty, to stop the current cyber arms race. Russia’s proposed treaty would ban a country from secretly embedding malicious codes or circuitry that could later be activated from afar in the event of war, ban attacks on noncombatants and the use of deception (anonymous attacks), and require broader international oversight of the Internet.

The US argues that a treaty is unnecessary. It instead advocates improved “cooperation” among international law enforcement groups. The peaceful Europeans to the rescue. US State Department officials hold out as a model the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, which took effect in 2004 and has been signed by 22 nations, including the US but not Russia or China. Russia objects that the European convention on cybercrime allows the police to open an investigation of suspected online crime originating in another country without first informing local authorities, infringing on national sovereignty.

US “logic” is to second guess your “enemy” and outdo him technologically. Oh, and call for “cooperation”, that is, get everyone you can to provide information for you. That’s fine for a subservient Europe, but just doesn’t fly for Russia or China. The US notoriously refuses treaties, or neglects to have them ratified by the Senate, as with the Law of the Sea, Conventions for the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Rights of the Child, Cluster Munitions and Mines, to name just the most relevant. Other nations are not to be trusted, and it’s best to develop the lethal stuff yourself first. A treaty merely hampers your efforts to defend yourself. A psychologist might point out that this obsessive distrust is because the patient subconsciously realises he is untrustworthy and projects his own untrustworthiness onto others.

The US could dictate an end to nuclear weapons and bring peace to the world overnight, but it must reject its imperial NATO strategy in favour of a truly multilateral UN strategy. Must the world wait for the US empire to burn itself out, like a star, expanding as its energy runs out, before imploding? Europe, the only world actor that can get a sympathetic hearing in the US, has a moral obligation to try to make the bully see reason.

Is there any chance of this? Nikolai Trubetskoi, in *Europe and Man* (1920), argues that Eurocentrism is really no different than the Prussian nationalism that was behind WWI and would reach its apogee in WWII, the only difference being that European cosmopolitanism cloaks itself in universality in order to draw in converts from non-European civilisations. Having rebuilt itself on the ruins of its imperial past, Europe is the main beneficiary of the current US imperial world order, and would face a fate similar to the US if the latter collapsed. Whether or not a lot of “wogs” are killed in colonial outposts in its defence is neither here nor there. Whatever the US needs to maintain the status quo is agreed to with no worries about morals or ethics. Hence the deafening silence.

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