

Sixty-Six Years of NATO. This is “Not a Peace Program, it is a War Program,”

By [Global Research](#) and [Global Research](#)
Global Research, April 07, 2015
[Journalitico](#)

Theme: [History](#), [United Nations](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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NATO was established 66 years ago on April 4, 1949.

About three and a half months later, on July 26, Senator Robert A. Taft, the son of President William Howard Taft, made a speech explaining why he voted against its establishment.

It's clear now that he could foresee what those blinded by triumphalism and ideology couldn't see. He was no apologist for communism or the USSR, but he knew that a military pact against Russia was a provocative act and one more likely to lead to aggression and insecurity than peace and stability.

This is “not a peace program, it is a war program,” he said.

“...the treaty is a part of a much larger program by which we arm all these nations against Russia. A joint military program has already been made. It thus becomes an offensive and defensive military alliance against Russia. I believe our foreign policy should be aimed primarily at security and peace, and I believe such an alliance is more likely to produce war than peace.”

“A third world war would be the greatest tragedy the world has ever suffered. Even if we won the war, we this time would probably suffer tremendous destruction, our economic system would be crippled, and we would lose our liberties and free system just as the Second World War destroyed the free systems of Europe. It might easily destroy civilization on this earth...”

Taft could see the Russian perspective clearly, without necessarily agreeing with it — and he understood that it ought not be disregarded out of hand — the de rigueur starting point in Washington today.

“If we undertake to arm all the nations around Russia from Norway on the north to Turkey on the south, and Russia sees itself ringed about gradually by so-called defensive arms from Norway and Denmark to Turkey and Greece, it may form a different opinion. It may decide that the arming of western Europe, regardless of its present purpose, looks to an attack upon Russia. Its view may be unreasonable, and I think it is. But from the Russian standpoint it may not seem unreasonable.”

“How would we feel if Russia undertook to arm a country on our border; Mexico, for instance?”

Taft went on to argue that there would be only “one real hope” for peace in the world. It would be an “association of nations building itself to abide by a law governing nations and administered by a court of legal justice”. Such a judicial finding “must not be subject to veto by any nation”, he said.

Three years earlier the United Nations had been founded. Taft regarded the young UN as an organisation looking in the right direction, but one that was deeply flawed.

As his predictions on NATO turned out to be true and justified, so too did his criticism of the United Nations. The UN veto power, held by five nations, has added to its ineffectiveness as a supposedly diplomatic and democratic organisation.

There may be some debate to be had about the legitimacy of a veto power — but add to those criticisms Washington’s complete disregard for the UN Security Council and you have an organisation which is essentially useless because one of its members operates outside its bounds at all times.

While the UN these days rarely serves anyone well, NATO serves the interests of only one of its members.

Finally, on NATO, Taft said:

“...as set up, it is a step backward — a military alliance of the old type where we have to come to each others’ assistance no matter who is to blame, and with ourselves the judges of the law.”

Sixty-six years later and NATO still exists, as many have argued, for no good reason; to counteract threats which are either imagined or which only exist because NATO itself exists. Or worse, to lend legitimacy to the geopolitical whims of its only beneficiary.

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