

War and Destabilization: NATO Expansion and the European Union Crisis

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Obama attends summit in Warsaw amid a national outbreak of racial unrest in the United States

A meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member-states in Warsaw, Poland agreed to expand the presence of western-allied troops in the region further intensifying tensions with the Russian Federation. In addition to a broader presence in the European theater there was a decision to escalate the deployment of imperialist forces in Afghanistan after a nearly fifteen year occupation led by the United States.

During the course of the summit a string of police killings of African Americans in the U.S. forced President Barack Obama to address the situation in a press conference. While the administration made plans to escalate its military presence in Europe and other regions of the world, a war was escalating inside the founding country of NATO where tens of millions of African Americans, Latinos, and other people of color communities live under a virtual police-state.

These manifestations prompted by the brutal law-enforcement extrajudicial executions from Mississippi to Louisiana and Minnesota sparked protests and civil disobedience resulting in the closing down of major thoroughfares and expressways. The demonstrations were largely organized over social media where a storm of facebook postings and twitter feeds revealed that the masses of youth and workers were fed up with these unjustified acts of lethal force.

On July 7 five police officers were killed and seven wounded when they were struck by sniper fire in downtown Dallas, Texas. Subsequent reports of shootings involving civilians firing on law-enforcement agents took place in several states including Tennessee, Missouri, Georgia and Michigan. The alleged gunmen in Dallas, Micah Xavier Johnson, had expressed dismay and anger over the police killings of African Americans.

Johnson, a former U.S. army reservist, served in Afghanistan as part of the Pentagon-led NATO occupation which has continued for a decade-and-a-half. Over the period of time since the invasion of Afghanistan, thousands of U.S. and NATO troops have been killed on the battlefields of this country along with Iraq and the Horn of Africa nation of Somalia.

Pentagon and NATO forces bombed the North African state of Libya for seven months in 2011 killing an estimated 50,000-100,000 people and displacing at least two million. The infrastructure of Libya was destroyed during the 2011 war. Libya once the most prosperous state on the continent has been rendered to abject poverty becoming a principle source of instability and human trafficking throughout Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean

region spreading into Southern, Central and Eastern Europe itself.

Even short-term prospects for a shift in U.S. imperialist policy are not apparent. The presidential campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders provided an alternative to voters who were alienated from both the racism of billionaire Donald Trump for the Republicans and the equally racist-militarist Wall Street legacy of former Secretary of Hillary Clinton. The previous New York Senator, and wife of the 1990s President Bill Clinton, advocated policies which escalated Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) destabilization efforts in Africa and other parts of the world. The administration of Obama enhanced and expanded the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) while the exponential growth in the prison industrial complex overseen by the Clinton administration of the 1990s, reinforced national oppression and imperialism domestically and internationally.

Nevertheless, with Sanders' endorsing Clinton on July 12, millions of young, working class and nationally oppressed voters are left angry and disappointed that all of their efforts are being encouraged to enter a presidential campaign that will maintain the status-quo. Consequently, it is not surprising that so many people are marching through the streets and defying state law-enforcement agencies. There appears to be no alternative except taking to the streets in mass demonstrations against the racist and economically exploitative system.

NATO Plans Further War and Destabilization

In a press release issued by NATO it says: "On Friday (July 8), leaders decided to strengthen the Alliance's military presence in the east, with four battalions in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on a rotational basis - to be in place starting next year. They also agreed to develop a tailored forward presence in the south-eastern part of the Alliance. Allies also declared Initial Operational Capability of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense, pledged to strengthen their own cyber defenses, and recognized cyberspace as a new operational domain." (July 9)

Moreover, the press release says, "on Saturday, leaders took decisions on projecting stability through support for partners - including an agreement to start training and capacity building inside Iraq. Leaders also decided that NATO AWACS surveillance planes will provide information to the Global Coalition to counter ISIL, and agreed to an expanded maritime presence in the Mediterranean Sea..... Allies and partners contributing to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan met with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah. They agreed to continue the Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016, and confirmed funding commitments for the Afghan forces until 2020. The last session of the Summit was a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, where Allied leaders reviewed the security situation with President Poroshenko, welcomed the government's plans for reform, and endorsed a Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine."

Nonetheless, in order for these projects to be effective the question of EU unity and functionality is essential. The current turmoil inside EU bloc with the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom on June 23 bringing to the fore mounting tensions over a number of fundamental issues including the mass migration of Africans, Middle Easterners, Asians and even East Europeans to Britain, has brought about a political crisis of leadership within both the ruling Conservative and opposition Labor Parties. Despite widespread propaganda to the contrary leading EU member-states including Britain, France, Italy and Germany are

experiencing economic problems related to the persistence of unemployment and the rise in the rates of poverty.

The Brexit vote has plunged the British and western capitalist ruling circles into fears of another major recession perhaps even of greater magnitude than the events of 2007-2009, where millions were thrown out of work. In addition to job losses, there was the crisis of home foreclosures and evictions dislocating millions more mainly within the U.S. however not limited to the world largest economy. Low-wage employment has become the norm for many youth and older workers with no program by the ruling class to raise salaries and provide security to working families and communities.

France has been the scene of weeks of labor unrest with clashes between protesters and security forces. Garbage has piled up in the streets of Paris while the European Parliament is attempting to figure a way to minimize the political and financial damage caused by the divisions in Britain along with the growth in right-wing governments and political parties from France to Hungary and Poland.

On July 11, the fractured Conservative Party of Britain announced that Theresa May, the Home Secretary, will take over the leadership of the ruling group hastening the exit of David Cameron who announced that he will step down on July 13. Although May says she will hasten the exit from the EU and unify the Conservative Party, the road to her ascendancy was muddled by a five-way factional struggle for the leadership of the Tories.

The opposition Labor Party is also split with the leader Jeremy Corbyn ignoring a vote of no-confidence by an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians demanding his resignation. Corbyn, who is considered to be to the left of many Members of Parliament (MPs), labeled as Blairites, has pledged to call a membership vote in order to maintain his position.

An article published over the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on the split within the Labor Party, by political correspondent Chris Mason says: "Here is the row for Labor over the next few days: The rules for leadership elections. And here is the row for Labor after that: What does its future look like? Crucially, one could determine the other, but there are no easy answers whatever happens. If Jeremy Corbyn wins again, what do the 80% of Labor MPs who think he is a loser do? If Mr. Corbyn is beaten, or not able to stand, tens if not hundreds of thousands of Labor supporters will feel cheated, even robbed. That is why there is now open talk of Labor splitting in two: A party whose history can be traced back to the dawn of the 20th Century, ceasing to exist as we have long known it to." (July 10)

Adding to the tensions within the Labor Party, Corbyn's challenger Angela Eagle had her office vandalized. Corbyn in a public statement called for calm. Eagle suggested that Corbyn should restrain his supporters implying that they were involved in the breaking of her office window.

Corbyn's statement stressed in regard to the "attack on Eagle's office, 'It is extremely concerning that Angela Eagle has been the victim of a threatening act and that other MPs are receiving abuse and threats. As someone who has also received death threats this week and previously, I am calling on all Labor Party members and supporters to act with calm and treat each other with respect and dignity, even where there is disagreement. I utterly condemn any violence or threats, which undermine the democracy within our party and have no place in our politics.'"

In specific reference to the role of the EU in the forward going plans of NATO this same press release notes that “In the margins of the meeting, the Secretary General signed a Joint Declaration with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, taking partnership between NATO and the European Union to an ambitious new level. The Declaration sets out areas where NATO and the EU will step up cooperation – including maritime security and countering hybrid threats.”

The Use of “International Law” to Rationalize Imperialist Expansion in Asia-Pacific

Beyond the provocations and military encirclement of the Russian Federation, the Pentagon and State Department “pivot to Asia” is a major aspect of imperialist foreign policy. The July 11 decision by an International Tribunal in Holland at The Hague, which rejected all claims by the People’s Republic of China to sovereignty over the South Seas, provides a pseudo-legal cover for further military intervention in the Asia-Pacific region. This purported impartial court system has always been biased in favor of the United States and its imperialist and neo-colonialist allies around the world.

The Chinese leadership responded immediately to the decision saying that it was not bound by this court. Although the imperialist system claims the decision is legally binding, there is no mechanism for enforcing it, and Beijing, which declined to participate in the tribunal’s proceedings, said again on July 12 that it would refuse to abide by its arbitrary claims.

New York Times coverage of the Netherlands decision and China’s position, notes that Beijing’s leader

“Speaking at a meeting with European leaders, President Xi Jinping was defiant, reasserting China’s claim to sovereignty over the South China Sea ‘since ancient times,’ the state-run People’s Daily reported. His remarks echoed a statement from the Foreign Ministry. The tribunal’s decision ‘is invalid and has no binding force,’ the ministry said. ‘China does not accept or recognize it.’”

Beijing also said in the full statement:

“China is always firmly opposed to the invasion and illegal occupation by certain states of some islands and reefs of China’s Nansha Qundao, and activities infringing upon China’s rights and interests in relevant maritime areas under China’s jurisdiction. China stands ready to continue to resolve the relevant disputes peacefully through negotiation and consultation with the states directly concerned on the basis of respecting historical facts and in accordance with international law. Pending final settlement, China is also ready to make every effort with the states directly concerned to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature, including joint development in relevant maritime areas, in order to achieve win-win results and jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

China respects and upholds the freedom of navigation and overflight enjoyed by all states under international law in the South China Sea, and stays ready to work with other coastal states and the international community to ensure the safety of and the unimpeded access to the international shipping lanes in the South China Sea.”

(http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/12/c_135507754.htm)

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