



Kremlin Support for European Army

OE Watch Commentary: Weakening the NATO alliance remains a key strategic objective for the Kremlin. Rather than portraying the alliance as a guarantor of European stability, Kremlin officials claim that NATO is merely a façade for US hegemonic designs. In their description, they allege that Washington exploits its predominant role in NATO to oppress the valid national interests of other members. This sentiment was played upon by the Kremlin after the recent discussion regarding the possibility of creating a European armed force.

The first accompanying excerpt, from the official government news agency *RIA Novosti*, describes comments made by President Putin during the recent WW I commemoration in Paris in November. When asked about the possible creation of an alternative all-European armed force, Putin stressed that because “Europe is a powerful economic entity, powerful economic union... it is quite natural that they want to be independent, self-sufficient, sovereign in the field of defense and security.” In Putin’s view, belonging to an alliance weakens the notion of sovereignty. He went on to point out that such a development is “a generally positive process in terms of strengthening the multi-polarity of the world.”

The second excerpt comes from comments made by a Russian think-tank director, Alexander Vedrussov, published in the pro-Kremlin daily, *Izvestiya*, and which reiterate and reinforce the Kremlin’s argument. The author asserts that “the possibility of the building of all-European armed forces enhances the significance and independence of the EU.” This expert then provides his explanation as to how the US became so powerful: by delaying its entry into WW I and by allowing the “Soviet Union [to bear] the brunt of the annihilation of Nazism... the United States ... emerged [as the] winner and principal beneficiary.”

The author concludes by claiming that “Russia wants to see the European Union united and prosperous,” however, “such considerations do not apply to NATO,” which Russia regards “as a rudiment of the cold war which has ‘survived its own venom.’” He calls for the EU to “escape from beneath US tutelage,” which happens to align with “the interests of Russia,” and its vision “of multi-polarity.” The Kremlin remains intent upon weakening the NATO alliance and sees the creation of a European army as a key step to achieve this objective. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Об армии ЕС и отношениях с США: Путин дал интервью во время визита в Париж (On the EU army and relations with the United States: Putin gave an interview during a visit to Paris),” *RIA Novosti*, 11 November 2018. <https://ria.ru/world/20181111/1532562803.html>

During his visit to Paris to attend the celebrations of the centenary of the end of the First World War, Vladimir Putin gave an exclusive interview to RT...

Putin called the EU’s desire to ensure its security with its own forces understandable and natural.

“...In principle, Europe is a powerful economic entity, powerful economic union, and in general it is quite natural that they want to be independent, self-sufficient, sovereign in the field of defense and security,” Putin said... He stressed that this is “a generally positive process in terms of strengthening the multi-polarity of the world.”

“In this sense, our positions overlap with France,” Putin added.

Source: Aleksander Vedrussov, “Вместе с Европой (Together With Europe),” *Izvestiya*, 12 November 2018. <https://iz.ru/810995/aleksandr-vedrussov/vmeste-s-evropoi>

The functions staged in Paris on the centenary of the end of WWI were certainly not merely a memorial gathering. Against the backdrop of the festivities timed for the date the argument over the fate of current global security structures has intensified markedly....

The centenary of the end of the WWI represents for Europe a veritably important date. The military dispute, the main winner of which was actually the United States, cost the continent more than 20 million lives. Observing neutrality right up to 1917, the Americans joined the combat operations just a little over a year before they ended, but enjoyed the fruits of victory in full. Four most powerful European empires were left beneath the ruins of war, whereas the young North American state swiftly filled the international vacuum that had formed.

Not even this was the main outcome of the carnage, senseless from the perspective of the interests of the European peoples. The unresolved contradictions of WWI made practically inevitable the next, even bloodier, global conflict. The United States also emerged from this a winner and principal beneficiary, incurring incomparably fewer human and material losses than Europe...The Soviet Union bore the brunt of the annihilation of Nazism and at an incredible price enforced peace on the aggressors in 1945.

...Russia wants to see the European Union ‘united and prosperous.’ Such is the consistent and high-minded position expressed by President Putin repeatedly. At the same time, on the other hand, we have repeatedly made clear to our partners that such considerations do not apply to NATO. Russia continues to regard the North Atlantic alliance as a rudiment of the cold war which has ‘survived its own venom.’ A European Union that is ‘independent, self-sufficient, and sovereign in the field of defense and security’ really does correspond to the pan-continental demand for escape from beneath US tutelage and, consequently, to the interests of Russia, which sees an enhancement of the status and role of the EU as a most important component of the consolidation of multi-polarity.

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