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UK parliamentary panel demands NATO prepare for confrontation with Russia

By Julie Hyland

1 August 2014

The UK's parliamentary Defence Committee has demanded that Western military powers strengthen NATO to prepare for confrontation with Russia.

The report by the cross-party group of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs complains that the "NATO alliance has not considered Russia as an adversary or a potential territorial threat to its Member States for twenty years" and has now only been "forced to do so as a result of Russia's recent actions" in eastern Ukraine.

In the interim, NATO alliance has been weakened as member states have cut their defence budgets leaving it "ill-prepared" to face up to Russian "aggression" and potentially lacking the "collective political will to take concerted action..."

To remedy these supposed failings, the Defence Committee calls on September's NATO summit in Wales to expand the "existing NATO rapid reaction force", undertake the "pre-positioning of equipment in the Baltic States", establish a "continuous (if not technically 'permanent') presence of NATO troops in the Baltics" and re-establish "large-scale military exercises including representatives from all NATO Member States." It also advocates an increase in defence spending by all member states.

Most significant is the committee's proposal that the alliance should broaden the terms of Articles 4 and 5 in its founding treaty, which trigger collective action in the event of an "armed attack" on a NATO ally.

The "criteria, doctrine and responses to calls under Article 4 for 'collective security' support against asymmetric attacks" must be re-examined, it states. In particular, it argues that the word "armed" should be removed from Article 5 so as to enable action in response to any form of attack. This should include Russia's ability to "paralyse an opponent in the pursuit of its interests with a range of tools including psychological operations, information warfare and intimidation with massing of conventional forces," even where such actions are not "attributable".

The report gives the lie to Prime Minister David Cameron's supposed reassurances that Britain is not "going to start World War Three" with Russia over Ukraine.

After comparing the crisis in Ukraine to the crises that triggered World War I and World War II, Cameron stated Wednesday: "We are not about to launch a European war, we are not about to send the fleet to the Black Sea, we are not looking for a military confrontation, but what we should do is use the economic power that we have."

The Defence Committee's report is part of an ever more frenzied propaganda campaign aimed at accelerating NATO's long-standing geostrategic designs on the Russian Federation, including through military confrontation.

Contrary to the Defence Committee's presentation of NATO standing on the sidelines of events, the alliance has pursued this strategy ever since the liquidation of the Soviet Union in 1991. Beginning that year, the Western powers—with the US and Germany in the lead—set about dismantling Yugoslavia by recognising the breakaway states of Slovenia, Croatia and then Bosnia, and culminating in the NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999.

This was followed by the sponsoring of the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia in 2003, and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004—both aimed at bringing to power pro-Western regimes. In August 2008, the US encouraged a Georgian assault on the breakaway South Ossetia province.

Pushed onto a back foot by the failure of the Georgian operation, as well as the disastrous outcomes of Western interventions against Afghanistan and Iraq, NATO ambitions were revived when Russia blocked its plans for direct military intervention against Syria last August.

Washington and the EU activated plans for regime change in Ukraine, after then President Viktor Yanukovich rejected proposals for closer EU ties that involved the imposition of draconian austerity measures against the population.

As Washington's top US State Department official Victoria Nuland admitted in her infamous "fuck the EU" phone conversation, the US had spent \$5 billion building up pro-Western "opposition" forces and seized the moment.

With the support of Germany, the US backed the so-called Maidan protests, relying on fascist thugs and provocateurs to violently engineer Yanukovych's removal and install a government of extreme right-wingers and oligarchs.

Now, in the latest stage of this conspiracy, NATO and the EU have seized on the tragic crash of Malaysia MH17 in eastern Ukraine to further their criminal objectives.

Two weeks on, the Western powers have not produced a shred of substantive evidence to back their claims that pro-Russian separatists, backed by Moscow, were responsible for the deaths of the 298 people on board. In fact, satellite and intelligence evidence provided by Russia, coupled with the aggressive actions of the Ukrainian regime to prevent access to the crash site—including the systematic bombardment of towns and cities in the vicinity—point to the likelihood that forces aligned with Kiev were responsible for downing the aircraft.

Nonetheless, Washington and the EU have announced sweeping sanctions against Moscow in the wake of the crash.

The immediate aim of the financial sanctions announced in the last weeks is to encourage Russia's oligarchs to depose President Vladimir Putin and install a more pro-Western regime.

But as the UK Defence Committee report makes clear, the US and the major European powers are not only prepared to wreck the Russian economy, with potentially grave consequences for the world economy as a whole. Nor are they restrained by the possibility that their actions will lead to civil war within Russia itself.

Their ultimate goal is the dismemberment of the Russian Federation and the seizure of its vital resources, even if their reckless gambit risks nuclear war.

General Philip Breedlove, NATO's top commander in Europe, told a briefing in Naples last week that the alliance's base in Szczecin, Poland is to be transformed into a staging post with "pre-positioned supplies, pre-positioned capabilities and a basing area ready to rapidly accept follow-on forces".

The UK is playing a central role in these provocations. In October, NATO's Exercise Black Eagle will begin in Poland, in what has been described as a "show of strength" against Russia.

The British government has announced it is sending a "battle-ready" unit to participate—comprising 1,350 troops and more than 350 armoured and other vehicles, its largest commitment in the region since the Georgian provocation in 2008.

Light infantry troops from the UK's 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, are also participating later this month in the US-led Exercise Sabre Junction in Poland, involving 16 NATO and partner nations.