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The Uselessness of NATO

By Justin Raimondo
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The latest entrant into the NATO alliance, Montenegro, underscores both the absurdity of this archaic cold war relic and the dangers it poses to the United States.

Yes, Montenegro is a real country, kind of: with a little over 600,000 citizens, and around 5,000 square miles, it has an army of under 2,000 soldiers and sailors. During the medieval era it was divided into warring clans who were unified only by their fierce opposition to Ottoman rule: the boundaries, and the rulers who presided over what became a duchy, were fluid, like the boundaries of neighboring Balkan states whose instability and propensity for conflict gave rise to the phrase “balkanization” as a synonym for volatility. Once the ancient bastion of Serbian nationalism – the country was bombed by the US during the Kosovo war – Montenegro’s demographics underwent a transformation and now the country is pretty evenly split between Serbs and other nationalities: the country’s politics, too, are polarized, with the pro-Serb pro-Russian opposition parties and the pro-EU pro-NATO parties almost evenly matched, although the latter have tenuous control of the government at present.

A referendum severing Montenegro from the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav Federation was successful, but only after a protracted campaign by the state-controlled media – already in the hands of pro-NATO forces – and a 1997 coup led by Milo Djukanovic, the current President. The *New York Times* describes President Djukanovic as “notoriously devious,” and he is otherwise known as “Mr. Ten Percent,” an allusion to his reputation for corruption. The elections

in which Djukanovic displaced his former friend, Momir Bulatovic – both had previously been Communist Party officials with no history of dissidence – featured gangs of Djukanovic’s supporters attacking the opposition, 40,000 questionable voters suddenly added to the rolls, voters registered multiple times, and other “irregularities.” As I reported at the time:

“On election night, as the Djukanovic forces celebrated their victory by shooting their kalashnikovs into the air, the security forces and the secret police moved in on opposition headquarters and cordoned it off.”

This is “democracy” in Montenegro. And it’s been downhill ever since.

The 2006 independence referendum passed the required 55% margin by a few thousand votes, and Djukanovic has managed to retain office by hook or by crook up until now. The most recent elections, however, ended inconclusively, with the ruling party short of a majority able to form a government. Djukanovic and his Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) campaigned as NATO’s champion, portraying the election as a referendum on the two issues dividing the country along ethnic and ideological lines: Djukanovic’s proposal that Montenegro join both NATO and the European Union.

In what has become a trend of late, the campaign was the occasion for the DPS to charge that the Russians were plotting to steal the election on behalf of Russian “agents,” and a complicated plot was invented, featuring an alleged GRU agent who was supposedly scheming to seize the Parliament building, assassinate Djukanovic & Co., and establish a pro-Russian regime. There is no evidence to support these charges, which the *New York Times* called “murky.”

In short, this is a somewhat more dramatic version of the same charges Hillary Clinton leveled at Donald Trump during the American presidential contest. (In Germany, too, a version of the “Russians-will-hack-the-election-results” meme floated here by US intelligence agencies and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein is currently being circulated.)

Montenegro is a cauldron of ethno-nationalist tensions that could explode into a civil war – or a cross border conflict with any number of its neighbors – at a moment’s notice. The NATO treaty requires signatories to come to the aid of member states who face aggression or any sort of conflict. Montenegro is currently involved in border disputes with Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia. Furthermore, it is bedeviled by a pan-Albanian nationalist insurgency that claims southern Montenegro as part of “Greater Albania,” not to mention a pan-Slavic nationalist movement that wants reunion with Serbia and looks to Russia as its lodestar.

Put another way: the country is a ticking time bomb just waiting to go off. Its membership in NATO would require the United States to intervene if any one of these incipient conflicts flared into violence. Divided as it is into pro-Russian and anti-Russian factions, Montenegro is the perfect fulcrum for a wider conflict between the US/NATO on the one hand and Vladimir Putin on the other.

Do we really want to lay the groundwork for World War III with nuclear-armed Russia in order to incorporate Montenegro’s tiny make-believe “army” into NATO?

In a sane world, the clear answer would be: of course not. But we are living in the world created by our political class, which is bound and determined to police the “world order” and push the boundaries of their bankrupt empire as far as their hubris will take them.

The reality is this: we are paying out billions of dollars in order to bear the costs of NATO, while our shiftless “allies” have refused to pay their fair share and instead use their wealth to subsidize generous welfare states – while importing hundreds of thousands of refugees from the devastated sites of their foreign wars.

And why are we footing their bill? In order to “protect” them from a nonexistent threat which hasn’t existed (if it ever did) since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet empire.

During his campaign for president, Trump said that not only is NATO “obsolete,” but that he would have to reevaluate the utility of the alliance to American interests, and that he would think twice about coming to the defense of its deadbeat members. This is half right: what’s needed is a firm commitment to get out of NATO and let these nations defend themselves. NATO is not only expensive, it’s a system of tripwires, any one of which could set us on the road to a military confrontation with Russia.

So let Montenegro join NATO if it wants – juts as long as we are on our way out as they come in.