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## Eastern Europe and the Habit of Servitude

Posted By [Justin Raimondo](#) On July 23, 2009 @ 9:00 pm In [Uncategorized](#) | [3 Comments](#)

With the end of the cold war, and the implosion of the Soviet empire, one would have thought the entanglements engendered by half a century of US-Russian hostility would have ended. One would, unfortunately, be quite wrong. It wasn't enough that we nurtured and emboldened the resistance movements in Central and Eastern Europe: it wasn't enough that we helped the newly-freed "captive nations" throw off their chains, and enter the international scene as fully-fledged political and economic entities – oh no. There was more to come.

As the Berlin Wall was falling, and West Germany moved toward unification with its truncated Eastern half, George Herbert Walker Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev came to an [understanding](#): the Russians would let the Germans go provided Moscow received assurances that NATO would not expand to include the former Russian satellites. However, the military-industrial complex in the US had [other plans](#), and it wasn't long before NATO expansion was endorsed by both major parties in the US, and the former nations of the Warsaw Pact switched allegiances, entering NATO [nearly en masse](#).

NATO, created ostensibly as an American shield against the alleged threat of Russian aggression – a threat that never materialized — has taken on a life of its own, independent of the original reason for its existence. Its continuance is proof that a government program, once started, is nearly impossible to stop: the huge bureaucracy and the economic interests that feed off it were not about to give up their honey-pot, and, indeed, NATO has become the chief repository of the "Atlanticist" (i.e. interventionist) impulse, which mandates massive US military intervention in a region where we have no business being.

But even this is not enough for our post-cold war clients – they want more. More attention, more subsidies, and more US intervention, as evidenced in a [recent letter](#) signed by a number of former heads of state and self-proclaimed "intellectuals" — a good number of [ex-Communists](#) kicked out of office for [malfeasance](#) of one sort or another, combined with the usual subsidized "intellectuals" on the payroll of the [National Endowment for Democracy](#), the US government's version of the Comintern.

Getting past the initial rhetorical flourishes, and flattery of their Washington paymasters, the real meat of the "Open Letter" is all about the alleged threat represented by Russia:

*"Storm clouds are starting to gather on the foreign policy horizon. Like you, we await the results of the EU Commission's investigation on the origins of the Russo-Georgian war. But the political impact of that war on the region has already been felt. Many countries were deeply disturbed to see the Atlantic alliance stand by as Russia violated the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the territorial integrity of a country that was a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace and the Euroatlantic Partnership Council -all in the name of defending a sphere of influence on its borders."*

Perhaps those "storm clouds" have clouded the vision of the signatories, who cannot be unaware of the OSCE's [initial](#) investigations into the Georgian conflict – which clearly point to Georgia, and not Russia, as [the aggressor](#). The international media, bamboozled by Georgia's public relations blitz – as opposed to the characteristically clumsy Russian effort – did an about-face when the smoke cleared. As Seumas Milne [pointed out](#) in the *Guardian*:

*"Two months after the brief but bloody war in the Caucasus which was overwhelmingly blamed on Russia by western politicians and media at the time, a serious investigation by the BBC has uncovered a very different story.*

*"Not only does the report by Tim Whewell – [aired this week on Newsnight](#) and on [Radio 4's File on Four](#) – find strong evidence confirming western-backed Georgia as the aggressor on the night of August 7. It also assembles powerful testimony of wide-ranging war crimes carried out by the Georgian army in its attack on the contested region of South Ossetia.*

*"They include the targeting of apartment block basements – where civilians were taking refuge – with tank shells and Grad rockets, the indiscriminate bombardment of residential districts and the deliberate killing of civilians, including those fleeing the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali. The carefully balanced report – which also details evidence of ethnic cleansing by South Ossetian paramilitaries – cuts the ground from beneath later Georgian claims that its attack on South Ossetia followed the start of a Russian invasion the previous night."*

Installed in power by the US-financed –and –supported "[Rose Revolution](#)," Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili is a tyrant who ordered troops into the streets of Tbilisi to [beat protesters](#), routinely accuses the opposition of "[treason](#)," and fills his notoriously gulag-like jails with dissidents. This is the man these "democrats" and "intellectuals" are rallying to support. A more disgusting sight would be hard to imagine, but even more revolting (and revealing) is their outright warmongering:

*"Despite the efforts and significant contribution of the new members, NATO today seems weaker than when we joined. In many of our countries it is perceived as less and less relevant – and we feel it. Although we are full members, people question whether NATO would be willing and able to come to our defense in some future crises. Europe's dependence on Russian energy also creates concern about the cohesion of the Alliance. President Obama's remark at the recent NATO summit on the need to provide credible defense plans for all Alliance members was welcome, but not sufficient to allay fears about the Alliance's defense readiness. Our ability to continue to sustain public support at home for our contributions to*

*Alliance missions abroad also depends on us being able to show that our own security concerns are being addressed in NATO and close cooperation with the United States."*

What "crisis" do these "intellectuals" live in fear of? A Russian invasion? Oh please – spare us the melodrama! If anyone has to fear an invasion, it is [the Russians](#), who face a "missile defense shield" installed in Poland and the Czech republic that would give NATO forces an impregnable shield as they advanced on Moscow. NATO forces presently are stationed at the Kremlin's doorstep, and could occupy the city in a few hours. This provocation has, understandably, alarmed and enraged the Russians, and led to the re-ignition of a dangerous arms race, threatening to undo the enormous gains made in the field of nuclear disarmament since the cold war's end.

The signatories whine that Central and Eastern Europe is "no longer at the heart of American foreign policy" – they want a return to the "good old days" of the cold war, when Europe was divided into two hostile camps, and the prospect of an armed conflict hung over the heads of the peoples of Europe (and the world) like a nuclear sword of Damocles. Their nostalgia is not only misplaced, it is perverse: there is no good reason their region of the world should be at the heart of American foreign policy, and their whining and whinging fails to provide us with a convincing rationale for why it should be otherwise.

They want more NATO "protection," and more subsidies in the form of military aid, and yet are forced to recognize that the peoples of their own region want nothing to do with NATO, as polls in virtually every one of the new NATO members have shown. They explain this away, however, as just the fault of the Bush administration:

*"We must also recognize that America's popularity and influence have fallen in many of our countries as well. Public opinions polls, including the German Marshall Fund's own Transatlantic Trends survey, show that our region has not been immune to the wave of criticism and anti-Americanism that has swept Europe in recent years and which led to a collapse in sympathy and support for the United States during the Bush years. Some leaders in the region have paid a political price for their support of the unpopular war in Iraq. In the future they may be more careful in taking political risks to support the United States. We believe that the onset of a new Administration has created a new opening to reverse this trend but it will take time and work on both sides to make up for what we have lost."*

It is "anti-Americanism," you see, to oppose NATO membership – it just couldn't be a desire to stay out of a looming confrontation with the Russians, now could it? Aside from that, however, this comment about the unpopularity of the Iraq war is telling: it was indeed unpopular in Central and Eastern Europe, as it was all across the globe, and yet the governments of that region fulsomely supported it, including most of the signatories of the "Open Letter." So what they are saying is: you owe us.

But do we? Does Obama? One tends to doubt whether the new administration will be willing to honor such a debt, but given the strong whiff of Russophobia coming from the White House these days, one cannot be sure of anything.

Indeed, the Obama administration has [refused to back down](#) from one of George W. Bush's more outrageous foreign policy innovations – installing destabilizing missiles in Poland and the Czech republic, and re-starting the cold war. Furthermore, Joe "Loose Cannon" Biden has

recently declared that support for Saakashvili's Georgia is a "[bipartisan](#)" phenomenon. This "Open Letter" is an effort to push the administration in a direction it is already going.

Yet, the signatories complain, they are "nervous" about the "trans-Atlantic" relationship, worried that the promise of change means the US-financed gravy train will come to an end. And so they have a number of concrete proposals, number one being that we must keep stationing destabilizing weapons in the region so as to provoke the Russians to the maximum degree possible. Their rhetoric is so disingenuous, and oily, that I reproduce it here in order to demonstrate the full depth and breadth of its windy self-important hypocrisy:

*"Third, the thorniest issue may well be America's planned missile-defense installations. Here too, there are different views in the region, including among our publics which are divided. Regardless of the military merits of this scheme and what Washington eventually decides to do, the issue has nevertheless also become — at least in some countries — a symbol of America's credibility and commitment to the region. How it is handled could have a significant impact on their future transatlantic orientation. The small number of missiles involved cannot be a threat to Russia's strategic capabilities, and the Kremlin knows this. We should decide the future of the program as allies and based on the strategic pluses and minuses of the different technical and political configurations. The Alliance should not allow the issue to be determined by unfounded Russian opposition. Abandoning the program entirely or involving Russia too deeply in it without consulting Poland or the Czech Republic can undermine the credibility of the United States across the whole region."*

Ah yes, their publics are "divided," i.e. [overwhelmingly opposed](#) – these "intellectuals" sure are good at substituting euphemisms for hard facts. What's interesting, here, is that these "missile defense installations" are discussed in terms of a potential Russian threat – and yet the official American explanation for their installation is the supposed "threat" of an Iranian missile attack on, say, Prague, or Warsaw! Naturally, the Russians [sneered](#) at this clueless and transparently false rationale, and yet, even as the United States continues to repeat it, these "intellectuals" seem completely unaware of it.

Why does the US need to "commit" to the defense of Central and Eastern European states whose borders are notoriously protean, and whose relations with Russia and with each other are tumultuous, at best? NATO membership for these states creates a tripwire that could entangle us in any number of conflicts: if these guys have their way, we would be committed to the "defense" of the ethnically Moldavian provinces of Romania against separatist movements. Russian speakers in Ukraine and some of the Baltic states are seeking some sort of political and/or cultural autonomy – will we go to war (or even threaten war) to prevent that?

We are told there are a "small number of missiles" in Central and Eastern Europe, and yet this number could easily increase – as indeed it would if the renewed commitment to NATO the authors of this letter envision comes to pass. Surely they wouldn't oppose such an increase.

The cold war was a dark time: no one who claims to represent liberalism, democracy, and peace could possibly pine for its return, as the signatories of this letter clearly do. And yet there is more at work here than a desire to renew their meal ticket as NATO dependencies: there is also the habit of servitude.

For decades, the "captive nations" looked to Russia for leadership, and subsidies – including the provision of oil and natural gas at below market prices. Now that this relationship no longer exists, a substantial portion of their Westernized elites are looking to the US (and the EU) to fill the gap. The habit of servitude is hard to break – especially when it comes with all kinds of material goodies.

The servility and obsequiousness of this letter is painful to read, and should enrage any East European patriot who values the independence and integrity of his or her nation. These "intellectuals," bought and paid for as they are, have no compunctions about ceding either their independence or integrity, since they never had any to begin with. They are like dogs set loose without a master, wandering aimlessly in search of someone to command them, and whining – baying at the moon – at the prospect of standing alone.

Well, isn't that just tough. It is time for the United States to start pursuing its own interests, not the "Atlanticist" vision of a "collective security" [designed](#) to entangle us in Europe's ancient feuds. NATO should have been retired when the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet empire was defeated by its own unwieldiness. Instead, it has been retooled and reconfigured into an instrument of US aggression, extending its tentacles throughout [the Caucasus](#) and [Central Asia](#). And the Obama administration, which is noticeably Euro-centric, shows every inclination of following the very bad advice proffered in the "Open Letter" – to the detriment of our own national interests.

It's interesting that the signatories mentioned, in their text, the various [oil pipelines](#) snaking their way across the Caucasus and Central Asia, showing that they not only understand but also speak the language of corporatism, which equates the national interest with the corporate interests that manipulate US foreign policy. They want "energy independence" – which appears to be a synonym for a free lunch. When the Russians stopped subsidizing oil destined for Ukraine, Dick Cheney [railed](#) against Russian "imperialism" – as if playing by the rules of the marketplace were a form of "aggression." Now the authors of this letter are singing the same song, expecting the new administration to join the refrain.

The ghosts of the cold war haunt us yet. Will we ever rid ourselves of these hectoring spirits, who wail that we have "abandoned" them – even as a weak and stumbling Russia continues to fade into irrelevance? Somehow, I suspect not