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Welcome to NATOstan

By Pepe Escobar
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Be afraid. Be very afraid. At the [Lisbon](#) summit this Friday and Saturday, a gargantuan, innocuously sounding, self-described "military alliance of democratic states in Europe and [North America](#)" that happens to be a Cold War relic sits in its own nuclear-adorned couch to speculate what it is actually all about.

In this otherwise Freudian scenario, the guest of honor is United States President Barack Obama, who imperially presides over the other 27 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, all duly acknowledging their tributary vows and commitments on everything from European-wide missile defense (subjected to the US global missile shield) and permanent stationing of hundreds of US nuclear bombs in Europe to the turbo-charging of cyber warfare (subjected to the Pentagon's new Cyber Command), a blitzkrieg of navy patrol stunts on the globe's strategic sea lanes, and the spread of military bases guarding strategic nodes of Pipelineistan.

In short: the menu in Lisbon is a Pentagon steak with bearnaise sauce. Indigestion guaranteed - and no money (as in overvalued euros) back.

Less is more is not our thing

In Lisbon, NATO is endorsing a new "Strategic Concept" - a sort of letter of intentions reviewed every decade. This is the first one since 1999 - and consequently the blueprint for the early 21st century. NATO secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen has been

spinning it as "more effective" (as in improved missile defense and cyber defense); "more engaged" (as in swarming with global "partners"); and "more efficient (as in firing 4,000 people from their command structure).

Here - complete with made in China piped bird singing - [1] one may see how NATO loves to bathe itself in a "hills are alive with the sound of music" atmosphere. And here, one sees what "Strategic Concept" seems to be about. [2]

Add the Rasmussen rant, and one finally finds what's been lost in translation: NATO is now effectively being christened as the ultimate Transformer global Robocop, consigning the helpless UN to a New York sand box.

NATO has left [Western Europe](#) a long time ago; too small, too provincial. It's already in Central and South Asia as well as Northeast [Africa](#), interlinked with the Pentagon's AFRICOM (only five countries - Eritrea, Libya, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sudan and Zimbabwe - are not Pentagon-related). Way beyond the Afghan killing fields, NATO is fast becoming a huge "forward operating base" for policing the Middle East, Africa, Asia and even the South Atlantic, where the Pentagon reactivated the Fourth Fleet; as much as the 2009 military coup in Honduras worked and the 2010 in Ecuador didn't, Brazilians are very much aware of the Pentagon and NATO's designs in Central and South America, and will definitely put up a fight.

Spoiler alert: Americans not anesthetized enough by the current porno-scanner/federal pat-down theater of the absurd taking place at their [airports](#), and impoverished, crisis-hit Europeans won't fail to notice that "more effective, more engaged and more efficient" NATO is spectacularly losing a war in Central Asia as we speak.

Gucci in da house

Anyway, soon Europe may be wildly celebrating a continent-wide missile dome able to protect everyone from Ibiza to Innsbruck and Munich to Monte Carlo from those evil (non-existent) Iranian missiles, as well as from those existent, zany but effective Taepodong-2 from Pyongyang. Call it the Gucci Star Wars.

The Gucci shield will be duly joined by the Dior bombshells - as in the US-owned 200 to 350 nuclear weapons sleeping in NATO bases in Belgium, Holland, [Germany](#), Italy and Turkey (plus the 300 nuclear bombs owned by France and the 225 by Britain). Crucially it is these five "bomb resident" countries that would launch the US babies in any eventuality, something that makes a mockery of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which, by the way, Iran has subscribed. The bottom line: NATO may hold a portfolio of as many as 900 nuclear weapons in Europe. It's like comparing Real Madrid or Bayern Munich with a North Korea third division team.

Last month, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did not allow any ruffles in her Hermes scarf, forcefully stating, "NATO must remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear

weapons exist." And Rasmussen hit the home run, adding, "the anti-missile defense system is a complement to nuclear deterrence, and not a substitute."

Is anybody complaining about all this nuclear paranoia? Not really. Rasmussen is right when he spins about NATO's "partners"; it's virtually everyone and his neighbor (75 nations, almost 40% of the UN), from the Central Asian "stans" in the Partnership for Peace to the Middle Easterners in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative; from the "contact countries" in East Asia/[South Pacific](#) to the Troop Contributing Nations for International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (that includes Mongolia and Tonga). Not to mention the all-important NATO-Russia Council (Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is the first Russian leader to actually go to a NATO summit). Needless to say, all these "partners" have also gone to Lisbon.

Turkey shoot, anyone?

Even though its *raison d'être* was to defend Western Europe from the Soviet Union, it's useless to expect NATO at the Lisbon summit to clarify what the hell it is actually accomplishing in Central Asia/ Afghanistan (see [Have \(infinite\) war, will travel](#), Asia Times Online, November 18, 2010). It's safer to attribute to the realm of a Tom & Jerry cartoon the fact that NATO is more terrified of some ragtag Taliban than it was of the Red Army.

Anyway, what matters is the infinity of it all. Not only US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and General David Petraeus, the coalition military commander in Afghanistan, are lobbying for Infinite War. British Defense Chief General Sir David Richards has just told the Daily Mail, "NATO now needs to plan for a 30- or 40-year role to help the Afghan armed forces hold their country against the militants." Talk about Enduring Freedom.

Yet Afghanistan, that infinite quagmire, is just an appetizer. NATO is being cannily sold to world public opinion as being entitled to raise hell anywhere it pleases - leaving the UN Security Council, expanded or not, in the dust. Precedents exist - as in the illegal, failed narco-mafia state Kosovo, not by accident extensively dubbed NATOstan.

A convincing argument can be made that everywhere the Pentagon/NATO "intervened" - from the Balkans to Afghanistan to Iraq - the mess has reached Gotterdammerung proportions. Who cares? The Pentagon has planted Camp Bondsteel - its largest base in Europe - in Kosovo; and it has also planted precious mega-nuggets in the Empire of Bases in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The "spoilers" in the Pentagon/NATO's Brave New World blockbuster are undoubtedly Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and Myanmar. None of them will be easily intimidated. Russian leadership is too wily to be easily co-opted - although Pentagon/NATO encroachment in the form of missile defense bases along the entire length of Russia's borders is relentless.

NATO claims that it welcomes its "partnership" with Russia. But now there's a new

element in the game to force - or not - Russia to play the missile defense ball (after all the decision to go all out has already been made.) Let's call it the Turkey shoot.

The Pentagon/NATO ploy of building a multi-layered missile defense system to "protect Europe" from those non-existent Iranian nuclear-armed missiles would be a dim-witted prank if it had not already attracted the attention of the usual Eastern Europe suspects - Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania. Turkey is a much more complicated case.

According to Turkish press reports, Ankara will only accept a missile defense system if the system is NATO's, not American; if the system is deployed in all 27 NATO countries; and if NATO does not place Turkey in the unenviable position of frontline state just as it was during the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

But part three of this equation is exactly what the Pentagon has in mind - especially now that the axis Ankara-Tehran-Damascus is a reality, not to mention the developing entente cordiale between Ankara and [Moscow](#). Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu anyway has made it clear, "We do not want a Cold War zone or psychology around us."

But Cold War remix it is, and Turkey runs the risk of being just a paw in their game. Profiting from NATO's new Strategic Concept, the ultimate goal of the US global missile dome - complete with cyber warfare and Prompt Global Strike - is to encircle the heart of Eurasia and isolate, who else, Russia, Iran and China. War is peace. Welcome to the pleasure dome. Welcome to NATOstan.