

# #1508 On the Questionable Usefulness and Longevity of NATO

Intro 8-20-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left* podcast, in which we shall take a look at the history of NATO and its role in the world after the fall of the Soviet Union, which has come back into focus due to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, sparking previously neutral countries to request NATO membership, all while and eye to the future causes speculation on how NATO should respond to the growing geopolitical influence of China. You got all that?

Clips today are from *The Real News*, *American Prestige*, *Democracy Now!*, and *World Review*, with additional members-only clips from *The Real Story* and *Today, Explained*.

## Nato and China: A new rivalry? Part 1 - The Real Story - Air Date 10-22-21

[00:00:43] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** We'll talk about the history of NATO in a moment, but how would you say the Alliance has remained relevant since its foundation after World War II?

[00:00:53] **JULIAN LINDLEY:** NATO has been in constant what they call "adaptation" since 1950 and the first what they call "strategic concept." The strategic concept really sets the direction of travel for the Alliance for the next decade. We're about to have a new one in 2022. I think the most obvious example of that was in 1999, when NATO went out of so-called NATO area, there was a big debate whether NATO would stay within its very strict Euro-Atlantic area, or engage in security threats beyond its traditional treaty area. And that was because NATO is also shifting from collective defense to crisis management. So it is in the nature of NATO, the Alliance, to adapt, to transform and change. It's always done that. And it's about to do it again, big time.

[00:01:41] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Let's just go back and unpack the history a little bit more. Claudia, remind us why NATO was created.

[00:01:47] **CLAUDIA MAJOR:** NATO was created actually as a life insurance for the European countries after World War II. It was about defending a free Europe against the Soviet Union and keeping the US in Europe.

That was one of the key lessons Europeans actually had to learn after World War I, after World War II, that the security is linked to a strong US commitment to Europe. So it was actually teaming up as free European countries to defend the political idea, this free Europe against the Soviet Union.

And this was the core task at the beginning: Collective defense against the Soviet Union, put simply, have NATO strong, so not be obliged to use it. That's an interesting thought to say, if you have a strong deterrence and a strong defense in the best case, that will rule out a war..

[00:02:39] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Let's -- because it's nice to revel in a bit of history -- let's have a reminder of the birth of NATO.

[00:02:47] **ARCHIVE NEWS CLIP:** In the Pentagon in Washington, the North Atlantic Defense Committee composed of the 12 Atlantic PAC nations, meets for the first time. US Defense Secretary Johnson is named chairman. Mr. Johnson speaks of America's desire for unity against aggression.

We in the United States, gentlemen, insist that peace today can be chiefly assured through strength, our combined military strength and economic strength.

[00:03:17] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** That's the then-US Defense Secretary Lewis Johnson, as reported by British Pathé back in 1949. That foundational idea took NATO through the cold war.

After the collapse of communism, NATO's focus undoubtedly changed, there was big expansion. How do you think it changed in those years after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

[00:03:38] **KURT VOLKER:** Well, there are two things, and I'm not sure that this is a change. NATO's focus was always security. And during the cold war, there was a grave and immediate security threat from the Soviet Union. And many countries were dominated by the Soviet Union, central and Eastern Europe, that had Soviet troops on their territory, they were not able to choose their own governments democratically. So they were basically behind an iron curtain, as we said, off limits. When first the Berlin wall came down and then Soviet Union fell, these countries were now able to come back to a European

family that they had always belonged to. And so they were seeking the same types of security for the future that the Western European members of NATO had had all along.

The second is that there were other parts of Europe, and Julian mentioned this in terms of crisis management and projection of security, other parts of Europe, such as in the Balkans where states collapsed. The former Yugoslavia collapsed. You had ethnic wars and religious wars and risks of ethnic cleansing, Serbs, Croats, Albanians, et cetera, and NATO decided to intervene in order to stop the blood, stabilize the situation on the ground, and eventually create a pathway for long term sustainable development of democratic systems, market economies, and security.

So these twofold aspects, one of them was bringing in countries that had been frozen out for a long time, and the other being able to project security to areas where security had collapsed.

## **The History of NATO Expansion w/ Joshua Shifrinson - American Prestige - Air Date 3-18-22**

[00:05:13] **DANIEL BESSNER - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** So why don't you just set the scene for what was happening in the late 1980s, early 1990s, when the Soviet Union is really on its final legs? Now, the way the story is usually told is that the Berlin Wall signals the end of the Cold War, you know, formal hostilities, and informal hostilities, between the United States and Soviet Union. And then, of course, in December 1991, the Soviet Union, after various socialist republics themselves kind of voted to secede from the Soviet Union, essentially collapses. And then we of course have various rounds of NATO expansion over the 1990s and 2000s. So Josh, why don't you just start at the beginning of the story wherever you think it's most important.

[00:05:50] **JOSHUA SHIFRINSON:** Sure. So, that's a really good introduction. So, let's back up though, really, to the beginning, right? Because the heart of the Cold War, at least in Europe, was this question of the future of Germany. And this question of whether, uh, Germany would be one state, two states, and if it was gonna be one state, how would it be aligned? Would it be aligned with the U.S.? Would it be aligned with the USSR or something in between?

And this what became known as "the German question" really drove many of the strategic calculations of the U.S., the USSR, the smaller European actors. So at the contest, this is well recounted in Marc Trachtenberg's excellent book *A Constructed Peace*. So just take that as a given, because when the Berlin Wall falls in November of 1989, it's both the epitome and the starting gun that this German question - whether Germany would be unified and if so, whether it would be aligned with the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union or with the U.S. and NATO, or neutral - was gonna be back on the European agenda. And after this... and this is relevant because the U.S. doesn't want to see what was then west Germany out of its Alliance system, worrying that doing so would collapse NATO. And the Warsaw Pact, and so did the Soviet Union, was keenly aware that if East Germany left this, left the alliance, that the Warsaw Pact would also collapse and Soviet influence in Europe would be in total arrears.

So the fall Berlin Wall was the starting signal of a bunch of problems coming down the pipeline. And so after a period of hemming and hawing it became clear at the very end of 1989 into early 1990 that, indeed, Germany was gonna reunify in some way, shape, or form, raising this question, Well, where would it be aligned with? Would it be neutral? Would it be in one camp or another? And the Soviets, uh, were trying to slow the process down, even though the Germans, West Germans in particular, really wanted to accelerate the process. And so in early 1990, we kinda reached this decision point. We, the United States reached this decision point of saying, okay, we're gonna allow, we're gonna support German reunification, but we want the result to be a unified Germany within NATO. We do not wanna see a unified Germany outside of NATO because the U.S., again, wants to retain influence via NATO and what will be post-Cold War Europe, and the U.S. certainly doesn't wanna see a unified Germany aligned with the Warsaw Pact. That would, you know, that would be verboten, if you were, uh, in American policy circles.

And so the question became, What would it take to move the Soviets on this issue? Cuz the Soviets have the opposite preferences. And so in February of 1990, uh, then Secretary of State Jim Baker, then Deputy National Security Advisor, Bob Gates, and a host of others, fly to Moscow. They tell Soviet leaders under Mikhail Gorbachev's government that if the Soviets consent to German reunification within NATO, then NATO would expand... would not expand even one inch to the east.

Now there's been a debate for a very long time over whether that pledge just referred to East Germany, meaning to the east of West Germany, or whether it referred to, uh, Eastern Europe and the areas to which NATO later expanded as a whole. And I think the documentary record we've had over the last decade or

so really settles dispositively that they were referring to a broader pledge that NATO would not go east, meaning into East Germany or further parts.

[00:08:56] **DANIEL BESSNER - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** So maybe you could actually dig in on that for a second. Why do you think it's so clear that that was the claim? What does the documentary record actually say without reading documents?

[00:09:04] **JOSHUA SHIFRINSON:** Sure. So for one thing, uh, American policy makers, and Soviet policy makers, were keenly aware that the, that... as with East Germany so with the whole of Eastern Europe. So there was kind of this broad discussion that all of Eastern Europe is in play. And even the whole of the Warsaw Pact is in some sense, uh, in play. Point number one. Point number two, when you look at internal American conversations from this period of time, it's clear they're thinking over the future of Europe as a whole, not just the future of East Germany, right?

The question of Germany is embedded in this larger question, about the future of European security order. But let's pretend you haven't read the documentary record. You don't have time to go through it. We don't even need to do that. Because we now have documentary evidence from a year later from March 1991, where the quad leaders of NATO, meaning what was then unified Germany, uh, the political director for the German Foreign Ministry, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, and their French and British counterparts are discussing this question of, Will NATO expand, could NATO expand into Eastern Europe as the, as then Poland, then Czechoslovakia, and other states then wanted NATO to do?

And American and West German and German leaders were very clear in saying we made a promise to the Soviets last year, meaning in 1990, that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe. Therefore we can't act on what the Poles, the Hungarians, the Czechoslovaks, all want. So you don't even need to read the political dialogue. We now have speech evidence from people who had need to know what was being promised, saying, Yeah, we made this promise, or these commitments, as you were.

[00:10:35] **DEREK DAVISON - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** So I think that this was a historic lost opportunity. The fact that NATO continued after the end of the Cold War and let alone expanded. So why did the United States, why were they so set on continuing NATO after the end of the cold of war? Um, is it just that they want economic access to Europe? They wanna dominate the security order? They wanna basically dominate the globe? It's the

search for primacy. We need to be prime everywhere for now and forever, et cetera, et cetera. Is that the basic gist of it?

[00:11:02] **DANIEL BESSNER - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** And I'm curious, Josh, if there's anything in the documentary record, like, did anybody consider this question? Like, what are we still doing here? Now that the Soviet Union's fallen, Warsaw Pact has fallen, why are we still continuing? Should we think about dissolving or turning NATO into something else or, you know, uh, adopting some other kind of framework? Was there any discussion of that?

[00:11:24] **JOSHUA SHIFRINSON:** Well, so let me take the second question from you, Derek, and then I'll turn to Danny's question cause they go together very nicely.

Derek to your question. Um, there were people calling for transforming NATO into a cooperative security institution doing away with NATO entirely and crafting a different European security order. Uh, some people were saying, Hey, look, the U.S. only went into Europe after the Cold War. It had to be dragged in. You know, it didn't really wanna do it. Uh...

[00:11:49] **DEREK DAVISON - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** You mean after the end of World War II.

[00:11:51] **JOSHUA SHIFRINSON:** After the end of World War II, excuse me. The U.S. had to be dragged... it didn't really wanna do it, you know, with Truman and Eisenhower all wanted the U.S. to get out. So what the heck are we still gonna do in post-Cold War Europe, Derek, to your question? The problem is, the latter group saying, What the heck are we doing here?, we're kind of called isolationists. And we're kicked outta the policy discussion. The Bush administration really isolated - the H.W. Bush administration, excuse me - really isolated them, the policy audience. And these...

[00:12:15] **DANIEL BESSNER - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** What? Is somebody wielding the term isolationist in a bad faith way to criticize...

[00:12:24] **DEREK DAVISON - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** That never would've happened. I don't believe it, Josh.

[00:12:25] **DANIEL BESSNER - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** No, come on.



[00:12:26] **DEREK DAVISON - HOST, AMERICAN PRESTIGE:** On this, on this podcast, we respect America.

[00:12:29] **JOSHUA SHIFRINSON:** Now, what's the phrase I'm looking for here, uh, you might think that I couldn't very, I couldn't possibly comment? Also from that time period, also, but the other piece here, this call for a cooperative security order, were also coming from a bunch of Europeans, Gorbachev in particular, but also some of the Eastern Europeans and the U.S. was really worried about it, right? The U.S. didn't like the idea of, didn't think a cooperative security order would work in the first place and also was worried about its own influence, recognizing for example, that the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, was not an institution that was favorable for the United States.

So there were these voices pushing for something else, but they were pretty much isolated and blocked outta the policy agenda. And we should be, we should be clear here. Um, Gorbachev had very little political capital by this time. The Eastern Europeans are all seeking economic aid. So their interest in the security order is kind of secondary to these bread and butter issues.

So the idea of somehow keeping the broad parameters of Cold War era, European security intact had a lot of momentum behind it. But Danny, to your question, why does that translate into NATO sticking around? And why does that translate into NATO then expanding? You raised the questions about economic access. Is it about security? Is it about primacy? I would just say NATO was a Rorschach test. It's whatever policymakers wanted it to be. It checks all these boxes. So for those who think that the U.S. has to prepare the ground for economic influence in Europe and keeping NATO intact and keeping influence over the future of Western European security order, uh, is a great way of ensuring some market acts to having some leverage on that.

For those thinking, Hey, maybe the Soviet Union or Russia will come roaring back one day, uh, NATO's a way to hedge against that. There are even those who are worried about the European Union, which was first getting started at this point in time, transitioning from the EC into the EU, might one day be a security competitor to the United States.

And so NATO being around was a way to kind of keep that lid on. That's a primacy agenda. So in some ways it's the goose that lays the golden egg. It can be whatever you want it to be. And policy makers don't need to decide between these somewhat contradictory impulses and because primacy and unipolarity are so, uh, advantageous to the U.S., some of these problems can just be swept

under the rug or some of the assumptions don't need to be assessed very carefully.

## **German Peace Activist Warns Finland Joining NATO Could Be Step Toward Nuclear War with Russia - Democracy Now! - Air Date 5-13-22**

[00:14:43] **AMY GOODMAN -HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Can you talk about this decision made by Finland's president and prime minister and the significance of this? It looks like Sweden is, you know, at their side in this.

[00:14:56] **REINER BRAUN:** You know, it's, again, a significant change in the security system in Europe. Above all and first, it is a break of a contract. Finland has a contract with Russia — first contract is from 1948, the second one is a new one from 1992 — which described neutrality and friendship between Finland and Russia as the background of their common relations. And Finland has not — had not canceled this treaty, so they are going against this treaty, which is a quite illegal action they are doing.

The second point is the relations between Central Europe or NATO and Russia by the military spending is about 50-to-1 up to now. Now it will be 70- or 80-to-1. And it is obviously that Russia will be react. So we have again a continuation of the escalation spiral in the center of Europe, and this is not peaceful. What should be the next? Should be the next Moldavia and Georgia? Should be the next that we — that Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan will join NATO? It will be the next, Japan?

And what are the reaction of Russia? They will bring more nuclear weapons to the border of Poland and the Baltic countries. They will enlarge their military spending. Peoples on both sides will suffer. So it is definitely a step absolutely on the wrong direction, which is definitely not helpful for coming to a new security architecture after hopefully ending so quick as possible the war in Ukraine.

What we need are negotiations, and for Finland, which has a history of neutrality — Finland was a country of the OSCE and the CSCE agreements. There were the meetings, were in Helsinki. This time will be over. Finland will give up its independent, active position bringing East and West together, only for joining NATO, only for being a very small part in the NATO architecture.



This is really an unpolitical and unsecurity step for a calm security system in Europe.

And NATO is the biggest military alliance in the world. NATO is the biggest military spender. Sixty percent of the whole money which is spending worldwide is spending by the NATO countries. So, this NATO summit will send signs in the absolutely wrong direction: more militarization, more actions against Russia and China, more encircling of these two countries.

And we want to protest and convince more parts of the public that this is the wrong way. This is the way to catastrophe. This is a way in a new nuclear war will be the final nuclear war. We cannot do this kind of politics when you want to solve the climate problem, when you want to overcome hunger. Hunger becomes much stronger since we have the Ukrainian war. How should these people in Africa survive when there are no crops any longer coming from Ukraine and Russia?

So, we want to say signs that we need an alternative politics. So our summit is a summit for making propaganda and actions for a policy of common security, which on the background says we have to take in account the security interests of all countries. And we need, nationally and internationally, a process of disarmament. It is not possible to spend any longer 2 trillion of U.S. dollars for military purposes, when people are suffering and when we do not know how to solve the climate problems.

## **How Nato can protect Ukraine, with Anders Fogh Rasmussen - World Review from the New Statesman - Air Date 6-20-22**

[00:18:46] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** You spoke about the unity of the west, but of course there is this question as to the membership of Finland and Sweden in NATO. Turkey has indicated that it is not willing to approve those bids for membership. Do you think Finland and Sweden are going to join NATO?

[00:19:02] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** Yes. I'm... so at the end of the day, Finland and Sweden will join NATO. I also think that the NATO summit by the end of June will be the event in which the two countries are invited to join NATO. By the way, the two countries are already invited to participate in

the summit in Madrid. After that we'll go through a lengthy parliamentary process in all 30 allied parliaments.

In the meantime, big allies like the United States, the UK, France and other countries will provide, on a bilateral basis, the necessary security guarantees to both Finland and Sweden to avoid any, uh, Russian attack against the two countries in this interim period.

[00:19:53] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** And when you were Secretary General of NATO, did you expect that the Alliance would eventually expand to incorporate Finland and Sweden? I know you've been a very vocal advocate of further expansion, uh, to Ukraine and to Georgia. Did you ever think that this would happen?

[00:20:07] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** No, I hoped it would happen, but I didn't expect it, uh, because I know the mentality, the discussion, in two countries. But thanks to Putin, again, that very sad backdrop of his invasion of Ukraine, the mentality, the attitude in the two countries changed almost overnight from only about 15-20% in favor of joining NATO. Now it's pretty close to 70% in favor of joining NATO. So Putin has achieved exactly the opposite of what he wanted. He has achieved a strength in NATO. He has achieved a NATO that is much closer to Russian borders.

[00:20:57] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** You've advocated for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. Do you still think they could join NATO?

[00:21:04] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** I think NATO should uphold the decision taken back in 2008, when we decided that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO, if they so wish. In the meantime, a lot things have happened. And recently President Zelensky indicated that Ukraine may be willing to give up its application for membership of NATO. Ukraine may be willing to accept a status as a neutral country. That's for Ukraine to decide. However, if that is going to happen, Ukraine will need another kind of security guarantee instead of the security guarantee they could have achieved through an outright NATO membership. So we will have to discuss which kind of security guarantees could be provided to Ukraine in the case of a non-NATO membership. And that could be the right to have a robust Ukrainian defense. It could be security guarantees provided by a group of international security guarantors. It could be the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, at least temporary, to monitor a peace agreement and also to prevent future Russian attacks against Ukraine.

So some of these elements could be discussed in exchange for the acceptance of a status as a neutral country.

[00:22:42] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** What would the difference be between security guarantees issued by a group of countries, many of which would be NATO members, and NATO membership.? What's the functional difference?

[00:22:51] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** Yeah, that's hard to say right now. To become a member of nature would be to get an ironclad, uh, security guarantee. Because, we all know that the famous Article 5 in the NATO treaty states that we consider an attack on one ally an attack on all. So eventually we will come to the aid of a country that has been attacked. So I'm sure that, had Ukraine been a member of NATO, Ukraine wouldn't have been attacked by Russia because Russia would know that would initiate a military conflict with NATO.

Whether an alternative security guarantee could provide the same ironclad guarantee against a Russian attack, that remains to be seen. That's very much dependent on the character of those security guarantees, but actually President Zelensky asked me to lead a group international experts to prepare recommendations for, uh, the Ukrainian government as to how such security guarantee could be elaborated.

[00:24:13] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** And do you have any idea what they might look like?

[00:24:16] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** I think, apart from what I've already mentioned, the right for Ukraine to have its own robust defense, security guarantees from a group of international guarantors, possibly, uh, deployment of, uh, peace... international peacekeeping force. I think such a security guarantee should also include a European trajectory where Ukraine is granted a status as a candidate country for European Union. That's no guarantee of membership, but it's at least, it's a goal that you could work towards. And I also think that conventional rebuilding efforts of Ukraine should be included in security guarantees.

[00:25:05] **IDO VOCK - HOST, WORLD REVIEW:** Over the past 30 years, NATO has expanded eastwards including many former communist countries, uh, which used to be allies of the Soviet union and Moscow. Vladimir Putin says that he fought the war in Ukraine to prevent Ukraine joining NATO and to

prevent the expansion of NATO to Russia's borders. Did NATO expansion cause the war in Ukraine?

[00:25:26] **ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** No. It was a decision taken in the Kremlin, uh, that caused the war. And I think time has come to really counter that myth, that NATO or the Western countries have given assurances, uh, to Russia that we wouldn't expand eastwards. Let me remind you that it's not because of a NATO campaign to enlarge the organization that we have seen a number of enlargements since the end of the Cold War. These enlargements are due to former communist states' desire to join NATO, to get the ironclad security guarantee. And I think instead of accusing NATO of being responsible for a war that has been initiated by Russia, Russia should reflect a bit on why is it that Russia's neighbors so strongly desire to join NATO, to get security guarantees. Obviously, that's because they feel threatened by Russia. If Russia adopted a more friendly attitude towards its neighbors, developments might have gone in another direction. But that's the reason, uh, why we have a war in Ukraine.

## **Anatol Lieven on NATO Expansion & What a Ukraine Peace Settlement Could Look Like - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-30-22**

[00:26:57] **AMY GOODMAN -HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** If you can start off by talking about all these developments? As we're broadcasting, President Biden is actually holding a news conference in Madrid, but the increased troop presence in Europe, Poland establishing a permanent base, Finland and Sweden coming in to the alliance, and inviting South Korea and Japan, New Zealand and Australia to — not into NATO, but to this meeting, so they can start to talk more about what NATO is considering a threat: China.

[00:27:34] **ANATOL LIEVEN:** Well, that's a lot to cover. I suppose one thing to note is that, as your report said, I think, today Russia announced that it was withdrawing from Snake Island in the Black Sea on the coast of Ukraine, which it has been occupied since the beginning of the war. And Russia said, of course, it was doing this as a gesture of conciliation, but the general analysis is that Russia was withdrawing from Snake Island because it was simply suffering too many casualties and losses of ships to hold it.

Now, you know, I think what that does indicate pretty clearly is that on top of the way that Russia was defeated by Ukrainian forces with Western weaponry outside Kyiv, has been fought not quite to a standstill, but almost, in eastern Ukraine, you know, Russia is not the — nearly the military great power that the Russians obviously thought it was, but that it was also portrayed as in the West. And, in fact, a former NATO secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, has acknowledged this. So you see, there is a certain dissonance between Russia's actual military strength and performance and NATO's response, because, you know, to be blunt, if Russia takes weeks and weeks to capture one small town in the Donbas, the thought of it invading Poland or Romania, it's not actually serious in military terms.

And as far as Finland and Sweden is concerned, well, you know, one understands perfectly why they have been so alarmed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but it is also true that Russia has not threatened either of them militarily since the end of the Cold War. So I suppose that's one thing to point to.

I mean, as far as China is concerned, there are, I suppose, two points to raise. The first is that to have set out on a focus on the Chinese threat, while at the same time being deeply embroiled in acute tension with Russia and backing the other side in a war with Russia, you know, does not look like wise strategy for NATO. You know, there should have been some attempt to ratchet down tensions with one or the other.

I suppose the other obvious point to make is, as you said, I mean, NATO stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. You know, the members of NATO are all on or close to the North Atlantic. The United States is there because it is an Atlantic power. To the best of my knowledge, China is not present in the Atlantic Ocean. And it does raise the question both of whether NATO should — whether NATO's charter in fact allows it to deal with China as a threat, or whether you should have a quite different organization for that, but also, of course, whether China is actually a threat to the North Atlantic countries or such — as such, or whether it is only in fact a threat to American primacy in the Far East, which is a very different question.

[00:31:28] **NERMEEN SHAIKH:** I mean, Anatol, when this announcement was made by NATO to include China, they said that China represents — threatens NATO's, quote, "interests, security and values." And together with making this statement including China, they also for the first time invited countries from East Asia, as well as Australia and New Zealand — Japan, South

Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Could you explain why you think they did that now and what this implies for the long-term goals of NATO?

[00:32:09] **ANATOL LIEVEN:** There are two reasons. I mean, one is that, obviously, as China becomes more and more powerful, economically stronger and stronger, it does raise understandable anxieties in the democratic countries of the West. That, however, is not the same as a security threat to Europe.

And the other — and as far as values are concerned, well, you know, I was listening to the program. I have to say it really seems to me that the obvious threats to Western liberal democracy are internal. You know, they are about all the things that we know about: socioeconomic inequality, demographic change driving internal extremism, and cultural anxieties. And China actually has nothing to do with any of this. You know, to some degree, it is actually a distraction. And remember, I mean, you know, the whole point of NATO in the end is to defend Western liberal democracy. Now, by looking militarily at China, even to a degree by — not by supporting Ukraine, you understand — that's absolutely right — but by building up this idea of Russia as a massive threat to the West, is NATO really concentrating on the most important dangers to liberal democracy, I wonder.

[00:33:57] **NERMEEN SHAIKH:** And as far as — to turn now to what the situation in Ukraine is, your recent piece for The Nation is headlined “A Peace Settlement in Ukraine.” If you could elaborate the argument that you make there, and, in particular, the point that you make regarding the status of the Donbas and Crimea and why that must, in any peace settlement, be left for future negotiations?

[00:34:29] **ANATOL LIEVEN:** Well, the thing is that the first Russian demand, a treaty of neutrality, has actually, in principle, been accepted by President Zelensky. You know, it's there on the Ukrainian presidential website. The point being, as Zelensky has said, that before the Russian invasion, he went to NATO countries and asked for a guarantee of NATO membership within a reasonable space of time, five years, and they all said, “No, no, no, sorry, you're not going to get in.” So, you know, fairly enough, Zelensky said, “OK, then, why not a treaty of neutrality?”

Now, of course, the Ukrainians have asked for some very, very firm guarantees of Ukrainian security as part of a treaty of neutrality. Those, however, I think we won't go into detail about now, but they are negotiable. You know, we can think of some good ways of addressing that.



The territorial issues are much more complicated, because there are basically incompatible positions there: the Ukrainian insistence on full sovereignty over all Ukrainian territory as it existed when Ukraine became independent in 1991, and the Russian claim of sovereignty over Crimea and recognition of independence of the Donbas separatist republics. And then there is the issue — you know, I'm sorry, it gets horribly complicated, but these issues always are. There's the point that Russia has recognized the independence of the Donbas republics on the whole administrative territory of the Donbas, but actually still has not occupied that whole territory. You know, half of it is still in Ukrainian hands. So it's going to be very hard to negotiate.

However, the Ukrainians have said that if Russia will withdraw from all the new territory it has occupied since the invasion began, Ukraine is prepared to essentially shelve the previous territorial issues for future negotiation — at least that's what Ukraine said previously, but there have been wildly different statements coming out of the Ukrainian government. It's clear that there are — well, firstly, that there are deep divisions within the Ukrainian government and elites. And secondly, of course, once again, I mean, very, very understandably, as the war has progressed, as the destruction by Russia has got worse and worse, as there are these revelations of Russian atrocities, so, naturally, the Ukrainians have been more — become more and more embittered, and more and more of them have decided that they have to fight through to total victory.

But I think, you know, we also have to recognize that viewed from outside — I mean, I've said that I think it's quite impossible now for Russia to win a total victory in Ukraine, but it does also look very unlikely that Ukraine will be able to win a total military victory over Russia. So, in the end, one way or the other, we're going to end up with some sort of compromise.

[00:37:28] **AMY GOODMAN -HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** So, Anatol, if you can comment on the G7 reaching an agreement around a price cap on Russian oil exports, and the backfiring of the sanctions? The New York Times writes, “Despite the sanctions, Russia’s revenues from oil sales have been on the rise, a function of soaring fuel prices, while consumers around the world have faced mounting pain at the gasoline pump.”

[00:37:57] **ANATOL LIEVEN:** Well, two things about that. The first is that, you know, Western governments should have thought about this before the war, this threat, a very, very obvious one, and done much more to try to avert the war by seeking, well, for example, the treaty of neutrality which Ukraine has now offered, because, I mean, you know, obviously — I mean, not just oil and gas, but food, as well. It was perfectly obvious that massive sanctions against Russia

would have this effect on global energy and food prices. So, you know, that's the first thing.

The second thing is that, look, we don't know, but there are already obvious splits behind the scenes between — both between European governments but also between some European governments and America, on the approach to the war in Ukraine and a peace settlement. And, I mean, European officials I've talked to in private have said that, you know, going into the autumn, if Germany is facing a winter of a widespread contraction of German industry as a result of lack of energy, if European governments are going into a winter with energy shortages, with radically higher energy prices, if there are by then either serious threats of global recession or if we're already in a global recession, then, of course, I think you are likely to see much more pressure for a — some attempt at a compromise peace, or at least an agreed ceasefire in Ukraine. And what I tried to do in my essay for The Nation was to suggest to Western policymakers some of the contours — in my view, the only viable contours — of what such a peace settlement could look like.

## **Nato and China: A new rivalry? Part 2 - The Real Story - Air Date 10-22-21**

[00:40:01] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** The perceived threat to alliance members from Russia is nothing new. And we've really, I think, given a good sense of how NATO has wrestled with Russia over the years. But more recently, another nation has been increasingly cited as a real threat to the rules-based order. And that's China. Jens Stoltenberg is NATO Secretary General. In February, he told our world affairs editor, John Simpson, that the problem with China is that it doesn't share the values common among NATO member-states.

[00:40:27] **NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG:** We see how China is oppressing minorities in their own country. We see how they crack down on democratic forces in Hong Kong, but also how they're bullying neighbors, other countries all around the world, the way they have tried to bully Australia, Canada, but also my own country, Norway, when the, Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize committee awarded the Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident. So the rise of China is something we had to take very seriously. And that's exactly what we do by making this more and more important for the NATO alliance.

[00:40:59] **JOHN SIMPSON:** Some people of course say that the best way to stop a nation that's bullying others is to create a formal alliance against them. In this case, perhaps an alliance of maritime democracies. Is that what you're thinking of?

[00:41:14] **NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG:** NATO will remain a regional alliance, Europe and North America, but we need the global approach because more and more of the threats and challenges we face are global cyber terrorism, but also the rise of China. And we are working on how to further strengthen the partnership we have with like-minded democracies, including democracies in the Asia Pacific like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea.

We're also looking into whether we can have new partners, for instance, in Latin America, Africa. But this is not about having a formal alliance, meaning that the security guarantees, what we call Article Five, the promise to protect and defend every ally which is attacked. So an attack on one will trigger the response from the whole alliance. That will not apply. We are not thinking about extending our collective security guarantees, but working with like-minded democracies.

I also think that we need to be sure that we maintain our technological edge. China is investing heavily in new technologies, disruptive technologies, and using them in military capabilities. NATO has always had the benefit of having a technological edge. We need to keep that also, when we address the rise of China.

[00:42:31] **JOHN SIMPSON:** But we can expect that NATO's priority going forward is China and the rise of China.

[00:42:41] **NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG:** China is becoming more and more important for NATO because the rise of China is shifting the global balance of power. And that matters for us. We also have to understand that China is coming closer to us. We see China in cyberspace. We see China being responsible for disinformation, for instance, related to the COVID-19 pandemic. And we also see China investing heavily in critical infrastructure, telecommunications, other types of infrastructure in NATO-allied countries.

And we have to make sure that we have resilient societies, resilient infrastructure which we can rely on in times of peace, crisis, and conflict. And then we had to take into account the risk of foreign investments, foreign control, for instance, by China.

[00:43:29] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking to the BBC earlier this year, and making it clear that isn't advocating broadening the alliance, getting away from its geographical definition, but he is talking about shifting priorities.

Claudia Mayor, do you share that view that in a way China should become the number one priority now?

[00:43:49] **CLAUDIA MAJOR:** Not, not really. I mean NATO's core task is the defense of the Euro-Atlantic area. I think the challenge is that China is already very active in this area as the secretary general outlined. And I think we don't have luxury actually to choose.

We are in a moment where we often call the strategic simultaneity. So we need to deal with big power threats from China and Russia. And these threats take different forms: military, cyber, nuclear, informational. But we also need to keep the ability to deal with traditional threats, like terrorism at the Southern flank.

And he didn't mention that, but I think it's important to underline, we also have a threat from the inside in NATO, too. NATO is only as strong as the allies make it. So the greater the divisions in NATO, the more Russia and China will be able to exploit disagreements or coerce or isolate individual allies.

So we as NATO or NATO as an alliance actually has to deal with both Russia, China, and traditional threats like terrorism, but -- and that's extremely important -- NATO is not able to do it on its own because China is not only a military threat; it's challenging Europe on the competitiveness of our industry, to the robustness of our democratic institutions, values like human rights.

So we need to think what institution is best placed to address what challenge.

[00:45:17] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** It's a very big thought and I want to come back to it. But Kurt Volker, just on the narrow point then, there are many threats. Clearly NATO has to manage many things. But if we are looking for a priority, a single priority, what's top of that list? Should it be China?

[00:45:31] **KURT VOLKER:** Well, I think the framing, the question in such a way, maybe misses the point a little bit, in my view. The priority for NATO is security, the security of its members. What threatens the security of its members? A lot of different things. Cyber attacks, physical military aggression

in Eastern Europe from Russia, intervention in our electoral systems, disinformation. China also is a threat, as you're discussing. So all kinds of things. And I think it's kind of misleading to say, we're gonna choose. We're only gonna deal with the Russia threat. We're rolling in to deal with the China threat. We're not going to deal with the disinformation threat because that's somebody else's business.

I think that we need to think of security as a whole. And NATO should be talking about and consulting among the members. Sometimes we'll decide that NATO's maybe not the best instrument for acting in order to protect ourselves against a given threat. But it ought to be the place where we talk about it and decide how do we think about it collectively as allies, what's the best approach, and how do we need to do for our own security.

[00:46:39] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** I think both Kurt and Claudia agreed that actually China was one among many, and it wasn't perhaps sensible to single it out. I wonder how you would describe China's place in the panoply of defensive and security issues that NATO has to look at?

[00:46:55] **MEIA NOUWENS:** I think what a previous speaker just said about security being much broader than just defense and how our understanding of security should change actually brings China much closer to NATO and its priorities than it has done in the past. There's a whole host of challenges, of course, from investment and things like critical infrastructure -- thinking of ports, national telecommunications and energy networks, to investment in strategic industries that have an impact on our ability to innovate in defense in the future, practices of industrial espionage, and of course, disinformation, cyberspace as well.

And then of course there are real military challenges that China poses in our own backyard, such as the PLA Navy's growing Blue Water capabilities with ships that have sailed to the Baltic and the Mediterranean seas in order to conduct live fire drills and exercises, some together jointly with Russia. Then, of course China's longer-ranged, more advanced nuclear and conventional missile capabilities as well, which we often frame in the perspective that they can now reach America, the American continent in the US's shores. But of course can also fly the other way and reach Europe as well. So there is a concern for Europe and I think for NATO, the concern here should be that it isn't going to war with China anytime soon. It should be that NATO allies need to have a coordinated approach or at least understanding of what the most important challenges are to NATO. And secondly, how to address those challenges collectively.

[00:48:23] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** But that brings us back, Julian Lindley-French, to a point that Claudia was making. It's a very long list that we've just heard from Meia. What institution is best really to counter the threat from China? Is NATO the right one?

[00:48:38] **JULIAN LINDLEY:** No, the US is the right power to confront China, along with democracies in the Indo-Pacific region. But look, NATO is built around the United States. Anything that affects United States affects NATO. NATO's worst-case nightmare -- and NATO is a worst-case collective defense alliance at the end of the day -- is an America that's overstretched by China's rise as a power, that finds itself facing simultaneous engineered crises in the Indo-Pacific, in the middle east, possibly the Arctic -- and China has declared itself to be a near Arctic power -- and in conjunction with its increasingly important partner, Russia, in which the Americans simply cannot be strong everywhere all the time.

And that's why clearly the rise of China impacts upon NATO because it impacts upon the United States. But the inference of that is that the only way that America's continuing security guarantee to Europe through NATO can be maintained is if Europeans do an awful lot more for their own defense in and around Europe through NATO. That is the essential dilemma that the rise of China creates for NATO.

Even if NATO is not going to be the institution which directly confronts -- or dare one say contains -- Chinese power in the Indo-Pacific. It's hard to see, given the shift in the balance of power taking place, that the Americans themselves can contain that threat, unless they themselves rely more and more on allies.

So it's not just that Europeans need a strong US. The US increasingly needs strong European allies to cope with its own security dilemma in the face of an emerging China.

## **Why is China supporting Russia on Nato? - The Real Story - Air Date 2-18-22**

[00:50:20] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** I think we can all agree that the relationship between China and Russia is definitely moving closer, but can you give us an example of this new, deeper Russia-China relationship?



[00:50:30] **SERGEY RADCHENKO:** Well, one of the remarkable developments over the last 20 years has been the ability of China and Russia to manage their differences. There were predictions of them coming to frictions in central Asia, for example, but they have been able to negotiate those differences and actually work together in central Asia, through Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which was dismissed, uh, as dictators' club years ago. Yet it still survives and provides a valuable forum for their cooperation.

[00:51:02] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** So never underestimate the ability to cooperate. Can you give us one example or illustration of this, uh, Sino-Russian coziness?

[00:51:11] **BONNY LIN:** So one example of this is the deepening military cooperation between the two countries looking just at the past year. We've seen China and Russia engage in air exercises, land exercises, as well as maritime exercises. One of the more recent exercises this January was a combined naval exercise between China, Russia, and Iran in the northern Indian Ocean.

[00:51:33] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** What's an example of that commitment?

[00:51:35] **ROBERT DALY:** Well, whether they're new best friends or not, we'll get into in a minute, but they are certainly aligning a lot of their interests, including in the cybersphere, where both China and Russia are defenders of what they call "cyber sovereignty", by which they mean they don't want a free and open global internet within their borders. They also use cyber tools to attack and influence other countries, not necessarily working together, but certainly taking pages out of each other's books.

[00:52:01] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** So learning lessons from one another. Fascinating. Yes. Plenty to get into. I want to though, just pull back a bit. After the Second World War, China and the Soviet Union, as it was then, became the two big communist countries in the world. So it seems reasonable to assume that they were friends and allies. Sergey, there was a Sino-Soviet alliance in the 1950s, but it didn't last for long. Tell us about this early relationship.

[00:52:25] **SERGEY RADCHENKO:** So the alliance was concluded in February 1950. It was supposed to be eternal and unbreakable alliance between two communist brothers. The problem from the outset was that it was not an alliance of equal. So the Soviet Union was obviously the elder brother. China was the younger brother and it was expected to defer to Soviet wishes. Now,

Mao Zedong, the Chairman of Chinese Communist Party, was willing to do that for as long as Stalin was the leader of the Soviet Union. After Stalin died in March 1953, new Soviet leaders came to the fore and then Nikita Khrushchev became the leader eventually. And from Mao's perspective, you know, Khrushchev was no one. So he did not want to defer to Khrushchev's wishes. And quickly you had divergence emerge between China and the Soviet Union in ideological divergence, you know, Mao had his own priorities with regard to global communism, how to pursue policies towards the West, for example. Khrushchev had his own priorities. So there was a growing disagreement between the two, the hierarchical structure of the Sino-Soviet relationship was actually very fragile. And as a result by the late 1950s, this alliance started to crack and then in the 1960s, it fell apart. as things got...

[00:53:45] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Well, there was a war, wasn't there, over the border in 1969?

[00:53:48] **SERGEY RADCHENKO:** Well, in 1969, there was a border conflict between the two, but even before then, in the course of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, tensions really flared up and Soviet diplomats in Beijing by 1967, feared for their very lives. So this was an alliance that on surface appeared very solid and really frightened the West. But in reality, it turned out to be extremely fragile.

[00:54:13] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Now the crucial point about the deterioration of relations that you've just described is that it allowed the U.S. to pursue a policy that became known as triangulation, to build a relationship with China against Russia. And that process led to the historic visit of President Richard Nixon to China and his meeting with Chairman Mao.

[00:54:32] **PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON:** This is the hour. This is the day, for our two peoples to rise to the heights of greatness, which can build a new and a better world. And in that spirit, I ask all of you present to join me in raising your glasses to Chairman Mao, to Prime Minister Cho, and to the friendship of the Chinese and American people, which can lead to friendship and peace for all people in the world.

[00:55:12] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger had engineered what became, I think it's fair to say, the most significant geopolitical realignment of the Cold War. Now in the years that followed, the Soviet Union, of course, collapsed and Russia went through a period of upheaval and economic turmoil. Meanwhile, China opened up and began to grow economically and relations

were improving. So in a fast forward to 2001, there was a Sino-Russian treaty of friendship. It was the basis for economic cooperation and friendly relations. And then jump forward another 20 years, to this month to February 2022, and we arrive at the eve of the Beijing Winter Olympics. We have President Putin, the guest of honor, standing next to President Xi and declaring a new era in the global order. The two men express support for their respective territorial claims in Ukraine and Taiwan, they rejected the expansion of NATO, and declared that friendship between the two states has no limits. Bonny Lin, this statement: it's long, it's detailed. How significant is it?

[00:56:13] **BONNY LIN:** I would say it's a very significant statement in three respects. First, as you mentioned, the timing. The statement came right before the Beijing Olympics, which is the event that China has spent years and billions preparing for. So having this meeting between Xi and Putin at this critical juncture in China shows the importance that China attaches to it. Second, as you highlighted, this state was very long. It covered almost all aspects of cooperation, coordination between the two countries. And the third, what I wanna point out is, the content. It highlights, as you mentioned, the growing convergence between China and Russia, and secondly, all the various areas of current cooperation, but also potential cooperation looking forward. For example, what the two sides are already doing in terms of pushing back against democracy and human rights. Further areas of cooperation include infrastructure, global economic development, COVID, climate change, military security issues, including nuclear war, uh, arms trades, opposing AUKUS... the list just goes on. It's a very long document, identifying many areas of cooperation.

[00:57:15] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Robert Daly, a long document, a thorough document, you might say. You've already cast out on the strength of this relationship, but doesn't the very detailed nature of what we've seen suggest that this is designed to be deep and strong?

[00:57:29] **ROBERT DALY:** It's certainly designed for that. And I agree with Bonny about the significance of the document. But as you pointed out at the beginning, during the period of Sino-Soviet alliance, at the beginning of the Cold War, you had a lot of grandiose statements about how eternal this would be. And we just heard Richard Nixon being equally grandiose. So it is true that Putin and Xi share a very strong desire not to have their choices shaped by the West led by the United States and they do not want to have their countries defined and morally insulted by a global discourse that they see as led by the United States. So their national dignity, as well as the personal power of both men, requires them to push back against this. And this is, you know, we need to

pay serious attention. We've already mentioned cyber. They're working together militarily. They are claiming that the United States is in decline, but there are still limits. I think that the danger right now is understating the importance of this quasi-alliance. We don't want to overstate the differences, but they remain pretty deep. China has sincere admiration for Putin, but I would argue, and this is a broad brush, that China still disdains Russia, civilizationally, in many ways. And Russia, isn't actually at the popular level, very interested in China. There's still a lot of really straight up yellow hordes racism within the foreign ministry. And if you go to a bookstore on the Arbat in Moscow, you will see *Rick and Morty* posters and *Simpsons* DVDs, and really no interest in Chinese culture or institutions manifested in Russia. So it is a serious coming together of these two powers, but we do need to keep an eye on the limits.

[00:59:09] **ARCHIVE NEWS CLIP:** Sergey Radchenko, do you think that sort of people-to-people contact is important in this context?

[00:59:14] **SERGEY RADCHENKO:** Well, I agree with Robert to a certain extent. I mean, obviously Russians see themselves as Europeans first and foremost. So there is this attraction, civilizational attraction, towards Europe. Uh, with China, it seems that the Russian perspective on China has been shifting. If you'll back to their history, there have been times when the Russians were very apprehensive and fearful of China and when worried about their security of, in Siberia, you know, at that time, of course, China entertained territorial demands towards the Soviet Union, but those problems have been resolved. And it seems that the Russians are coming to see China increasingly as a reliable neighbor. But I agree that at the social levels, the ties are not particularly strong.

## **Finland and Sweden have entered the chat - Today, Explained - Air Date 5-23-22**

[01:00:00] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** Earlier in the show I rattled off all the NATO member nations, and I've got one more list for you now: all the countries whose territory makes up the Arctic: You've got Canada obvi, Denmark via Greenland – did you know Greenland belongs to Denmark? Fun fact – Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the United States via Alaska, and Russia.

Now, if Finland and Sweden join NATO, Russia will be the only Arctic country that isn't with NATO, and that presents its own set of geopolitical tensions,

because the Arctic ice is melting and militaries are moving in. To find out more, we called up Helsinki, Finland.

[01:00:41] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** Charly Salenius-Pasternak. I'm a leading researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

[01:00:49] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** We asked Charly what it would mean for the Arctic if Finland and Sweden joined NATO.

[01:00:55] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** I think it's going to fundamentally allow the US, Europe, NATO to reconceptualize all of defense and security in northern Europe, including the European portion of the Arctic.

[01:01:14] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** And it turns out, apart from NATO, the Arctic's got its own club to foster cooperation.

[01:01:20] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** It's the Arctic Council. It was formed with the idea that this is generally going to be a place where you talk about climate, environment, indigenous populations, things like that, as well as practical security, search and rescue, stuff like that. That's been the one place where their thinking has been is, let's discuss broad, impactful issues here.

[01:01:43] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** You don't hear a lot about Arctic politics. Is that because they're, thus far, they've been relatively functional?

[01:01:51] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** During the Cold War, it was, of course, one of the most militarized areas in the world because of US-Soviet nuclear activities. Then there was the idea that there are a lot of natural resources and some sort of an Arctic exception was discussed. There could be wars and conflicts elsewhere, but in the Arctic, there would be peace, in fact. And everyone should benefit from the economics. And this idea flourished, I think, until probably 2014 and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, when the war originally started in Ukraine, when cooperation was dialed down there across some of these different fora. So you could say that it's so far away, in some ways, from the central places of conflict in global politics that it just usually doesn't rate a mention of the news.

On the other hand, you could say for some decades it was definitely one of the places where you could get countries that view the world and how the world

should operate quite differently, get them to actually cooperate. So probably a mixture of it is a little remote, and for a moment at least, there was a lot of potential for cooperation.

[01:03:06] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** And how might the potential for cooperation change if two Arctic nations, Finland and Sweden, become members of NATO?

[01:03:16] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** One of the things that Russia has liked is that Finland and Sweden were not NATO members, but because of this limitation, the Arctic Council security issues weren't to be discussed there, even if those were precisely the ones that might have been good to discuss. So how will it change? I think, fundamentally it depends much more on what will be Russia's desire to have a relationship, and what kind of a relationship, with the rest of the Arctic countries, the rest of the West, and that will flow into the Arctic.

So there are a lot of issues that need to be discussed, including cooperation in, again, climate change, search and rescue, stuff like that, which really needs to get done just regionally, but it is a little bit held hostage by the broader tensions. When Finland and Sweden join NATO, there might actually be an odd silver lining here, which is the US had, some time ago, suggested that the security issues, which weren't to be discussed in the Arctic Council, they can be discussed in the NATO-Russia Council. But of course that would have left Finland and Sweden out, nonstarter. But now if Finland and Sweden are becoming members in NATO, there's a chance that you actually discuss security policy, defense, in an established forum, the NATO-Russia Council, which is one of the side reasons probably why that council hasn't been completely tossed off a cliff after this expansion of the war. So I guess that's maybe the silver lining? In the future there could be a place where all of the Arctic countries meet to discuss the hard security stuff as opposed to the broader, environment, climate, indigenous people issues.

[01:05:08] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** And is Russia going to be receptive to that?

[01:05:11] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** It doesn't seem like there's a great desire to engage in serious cooperation. At the same time, while they often make headlines, there are always glimpses of these, what are called, confidence building measures, things that both sides do:



[01:05:32] **CBS NEWS NORAH O'DONNEL:** Tonight, US led NATO troops and Russian forces are ramping up intense war games in the region, signaling both sides are preparing for possible conflict.

[01:05:41] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** If there's going to be a large weapons test or military exercise, at least I'll say we, the West, NATO tends to stick by them.

[01:05:49] **CHARLIE DAGATA:** Winter exercises like these are meant to counter Russia's home field advantage, waging war against an enemy that specializes in fighting in Arctic conditions.

[01:06:01] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** And these may seem insignificant, but they're actually important because there seems to be very little else.

[01:06:07] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** Is there a chance here that you start to see military build up in the Arctic the way you did back in the Cold War as a result of NATO expansion or the current conflict in Ukraine?

[01:06:20] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** You've actually seen it for a number of years already. It depends entirely on whose story you listen to, so I wouldn't pin the expanded war in Ukraine now or Finland and Sweden's membership in NATO into that. Russia has strengthened its Arctic military capabilities over a number of years, by Finland's borders and has introduced weapons systems, hypersonic quasi ballistic...

[01:06:49] **CBC NEWS:** As you say it can travel at 20 times the speed of sound, they can be mounted on top of an ICBM, and can carry nuclear weapons of up to 2 megatons. ... make sharp turns and take unpredictable courses on the way to it's target, making it more difficult to intercept.

[01:07:09] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** It made the Northern Fleet, so now we're talking about the northwest of Russia, all arctic, its own military district. It is such a critical part of Russia's nuclear second strike capability.

[01:07:22] **60 MINUTES DAVID MARTIN:** Admiral James Foggo, the commander of US Naval Forces in Europe, is particularly concerned about this submarine—the Severodvinsk—nuclear powered and armed with land attack cruise missiles with a range greater than one thousand miles.

[01:07:37] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** So it is already militarized, but certainly if you include the northernmost parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway into the Arctic, we've seen very large NATO military exercises. Most recently, about a month and a half ago, Cold Response 2022, which is one of the largest NATO exercises since the end of the Cold War.

[01:08:00] **NORWEGIAN SOLDIER:** So today, we're doing mission specific training in preparation for exercise Cold Response 22, and we're doing specifically on off drills onto CH-53 Super Stallions.

[01:08:12] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** There's an increasing creeping militarization in the region, and who started depends on whose story you listen to.

[01:08:21] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED:** We're in this strange situation where with one hand, the United States is funding a huge portion of Ukraine's war effort, and with the other, it's in negotiations with Russia to exchange nationals and involved in this sort of quasi-harmonious situation in the Arctic. Is it possible to, at the same time, be in conflict with and in cooperation with a country like Russia or a country like the United States, with these superpowers? Is that sustainable?

[01:08:53] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** I think it's almost a necessity, because also I have to throw in China in here, which presents itself as a "near-Arctic country," a designation that the Arctic countries don't agree on, but it gives some idea of China's interests, which are primarily, probably economic in the region. But as we know, economics and military security stuff is increasingly intertwined.

[01:09:16] **JULIE GOURLEY:** Better to have China under the tent with all of us than not.

[01:09:22] **CHARLY SALONIUS-PASTERNAK:** Norway, a much smaller country, Russia, of course, cooperate on search and rescue, and it's one of the issues discussed quite broadly in an Arctic context because everyone has an interest in this. So it's just being pragmatic, which from a Finnish perspective is how politics is done. Finland's probably more interested in combating climate change than Russia is, but Finland realizes that if Finland is just yelling at Russia and not trying to coax Russia into cooperating in the Arctic on mitigating or preventing climate change, Finland's efforts won't be enough. So I think this thinking is quite natural for most Finns, and I would suspect

ultimately for a global power like the US, part of this may be actually relearning lessons from the Cold War.

## Final comments on the systemic reasons that NATO still exists and how we should replace it

[01:10:13] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Real Story* describing the origins and evolution of NATO. *American Prestige* focused on NATO after the unification of Germany and how it has become the multi-tool of foreign policy. *Democracy Now!* looked at the dangers of adding new NATO members right now. *World Review* spoke with a former NATO secretary general about the options to give Ukraine some protection without full NATO membership. *Democracy Now!* discussed NATO's role regarding Russia, China, and the need to seek peace in Ukraine. And *The Real Story* discussed the perceived threat of China. That is not just military, calling into question, whether NATO is the right body to deal with the situation.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *The Real Story*, looking at the history of the relationship between Russia and China, and *Today Explained* discussing the complications of the Arctic as Finland and Sweden prepared to join NATO. To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to your new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at [bestoftheleft.com/support](https://bestoftheleft.com/support) or shoot me an email to request a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

And now, I just have a few thoughts to wrap up the show today. Quick thought on how we got to now, like, why does NATO still exist? This answer usually comes in the form of motivations. So there's the story we tell ourselves, which is sort of like inertia. Like, "well, we already had this alliance, so we might as well keep it. I mean, sure, the Soviet Union collapsed, but I mean, that doesn't mean we have to give up our alliance." And then beyond that there are all those promises we made to not expand the alliance because it would be seen as threatening, or antagonistic or at the very least, sort of a dick move. The most positive perspective you could have on that is that we really never intended to expand NATO, but then all those countries were asking so nicely and we just couldn't say no.

But then on the flip side, according to NATO critics, the NATO member states led by the US were power hungry, militaristic bullies, who would never think of giving away any advantage they had and figured they'd go ahead and look to expand that power by actively recruiting new members, all while keeping the military industrial complex happy.

Well, with the way systems work, it doesn't have to be either of those extremes, and the bottom line is that intentions, as is so often the case, don't matter all that much when dealing with other humans. So if I were going to try to sum up real quickly why NATO still exists today in the form that it does, is because members of that alliance, obviously, primarily the US, followed a sort of rational self interest, and what we didn't do was give a shit what anyone else thought. So it's not like nefarious or malevolent to follow your own rational self-interest, but if you don't care what anyone else thinks, you don't care what impact your actions will have on others, then you can be expected to be seen as a bit of a dick, and for those actions to come back to haunt you later on. That's all I'm saying.

So it is for this reason that I think that spending a lot of time assigning motive when it comes to something as complicated as international alliances will inevitably, number one, oversimplify the situation and number two, redirect the debate into a sort of cul-de-sac of accusations and defenses over motive rather than impact, and impact is way more important.

For instance, if you make a promise to not do a thing, like expand a military alliance, and then you do that thing, then the reason why you did it only matters, a very small amount to the person or people or country you made the promise to. There'd have to be some really serious emergency to excuse the breaking of a promise. Like, you got a call that your mother was in the hospital and you had to rush to be with her, and so you had to admit Poland into your military alliance, and you didn't have time to call and explain yourself because visiting hours were ending soon. Something like that.

What matters a lot more than intention is the fact that breaking a promise, turns you into someone who can't be trusted, which poisons relationships going forward, which is exactly what happened. And that's what happens when you follow a rational self-interest even if it's not nefarious, or malevolent, or even imperialistically minded. It could just be, "this seemed like it made sense for good people and safety and security. Let's just do that." The bottom line is that if you only think about how to benefit yourself and your friends and you spend no time thinking about the needs of your adversary, you are more likely to exacerbate that adversarial relationship and heighten tensions with them, which

is exactly the opposite of what NATO claims they are there to do. And those actions were taken, that alliance was expanded in direct opposition to warnings that had been made over and over and over again for decades, that keeping NATO in place much less expanding it would definitely, definitely cause problems down the line.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not one of those people who thinks that the actions of NATO are solely or even primarily responsible for the actions of Russia in Crimea or Ukraine. There is a whole lot of history and a whole lot of internal politics at play there as well. If you want my take, checkout episode "1474 Invasion of Ukraine: Some Context" from March 4th.

And speaking of nuance, I wanna mention Code Pink here as well. It was actually a member of Code Pink who recommended this topic to me and I thank them for that. They have been on this story and running their NO to NATO campaign for a good long time. That said, I think they have a bit of a messaging problem with that campaign, particularly at a moment in time when opinions toward NATO are shooting up in response to the war in Ukraine, as evidenced, most starkly, by citizens of Finland and Sweden shifting their opinions enormously in favor of joining as members.

The messaging problem they have is, I think, most similar to the calls to defund the police. Now I know, and you know, that defunding the police is a call to redirect that funding to better ways of keeping community peace. The messaging problem is that not everyone knows that. Well, the NO to NATO campaign has a very similar call to action, though I didn't know it until today when I finally read all the way to the bottom of an article on their website about NATO, which finally said, "They should realize that the only permanent solution to the hostility generated by this exclusive divisive alliance is to dismantle NATO and replace it with an inclusive framework that provides security to all of Europe's countries and people without threatening Russia or blindly following the United States in its insatiable and anachronistic, hegemonic ambitions."

There. I finally get what they're going for. Because I'm a pretty open minded guy, when I heard NO to NATO, down with NATO, dismantle NATO, I was like, I'm open, let's hear it. And I just didn't know what was going to be done in its place, or if anything would be done in its place, or if there's literally nothing good about NATO or if there are some good things, but we'd lose them. But no, okay, it turns out they're in favor of replacing it with something that's better. Great. Perfect. I wish I heard that more often. I would love to spend time

focusing more on positive visions than the negative things in the present that need to be dismantled. Let's focus more on what we need to build.

NATO is an entity with a somewhat complicated history and not a small amount of baggage. It may be that the alliance has simply outlived its usefulness, but that doesn't mean that international cooperation isn't still a good thing. It just means we need to reassess from time to time and make sure that the tool we are using is the right one for the job, not just the one that we have most closely at hand.

As always keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991 or by emailing me to [jay@bestoftheleft.com](mailto:jay@bestoftheleft.com). That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Brian for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show cohosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at [bestoftheleft.com/support](https://bestoftheleft.com/support), through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app.

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