

Growing nervousness in Europe over Trump

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A week ahead of the inauguration of the new US President, nervousness is growing in Europe over Donald Trump. Initial hopes that Trump would moderate himself after the election campaign and pursue a course within conventional Republican politics have not been realised. Trump's press conference on Wednesday served to confirm for many that their worst fears are being confirmed.

The closer Trump gets to the White House, the more justified are the fears about the future, the Spanish daily *El País* commented. According to the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, a man is entering the Oval Office who does not see the power of his country "in always seeking consensus," but who "built his own success on his own perceptions, resentment and persistently mobilising people against someone."

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* stated, "There is no sign of a transformation into the statesman who would rather bridge divides than build walls." And the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* remarked, "Whoever still hoped that the populist election campaigner Trump would transform himself into a sober statesman would do well to abandon such hopes."

The European fears relate to the internal stability of American society, the consequences of Trump's "America first" policy for the world economy and above all the consequences for American foreign policy.

The relative stability during the past 70 years in Europe, where, throughout the 600 years from the Hundred Years War to the Second World War, wars took place at regular intervals, was closely bound up with the global pre-eminence of the United States and the Transatlantic alliance.

Originally directed against the Soviet Union, NATO developed into the world's most powerful military alliance. It was retained after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and served, notwithstanding internal

conflicts, as a tool of the Western powers for joint imperialist interventions. The wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya were thus waged under the command of NATO.

The mere possibility that Trump could align with Moscow at NATO's expense therefore triggered panic in many European governments. Even though the Obama administration's aggressive confrontation with Russia met with criticism in Europe, almost all of the European media have greedily lapped up the allegations that Russia manipulated the US elections and could blackmail Trump, and are backing Obama.

Several comments expressed the hope that the scandal could be used to apply pressure to Trump to make him distance himself from Moscow. As France's *Le Figaro* remarked on the latest allegations against Trump, "The reconciliation with Russia desired by the future US President is becoming complicated, he is running the risk of always being treated like Putin's lackey."

Stefan Kornelius stated in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that the document alleging that Russian intelligence had compromising material about Trump had to be "taken seriously irrespective of all unverified allegations, ... because the US intelligence agencies are taking it seriously." He even suggested the possibility that a provocation by the intelligence agencies was involved, "That the agencies are resorting to unusual methods in order to prevent the self-declared system destroyer Trump from beginning his work."

Kornelius expressed the hope that the "toxic mixture of sexual extremism and the possibility to be blackmailed, concealed under the fur cap of the Russian intelligence services," would "even reach those Trump voters who have thus far forgiven their idol all errors and for being loudmouthed. These voters are Trump's only power base. If he loses them, he will lose everything."

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* called on the US spy

agencies to “thoroughly examine the accusations about Trump’s connections with Russia,” and placed its hopes in the Republican majority in Congress stopping Trump. There the “wheat” is separated from “the chaff, the sycophants and flatterers who would rather look at Trump beyond the Russian danger, and by contrast those who have not lost an eye for overriding interests.”

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also intervened in the controversy by warning of attempts at Russian influence in other NATO members. “Any attempt to externally intervene in national elections or influence them is not acceptable,” he stated.

However, the *Times* of London is of the opinion that the strategic reorientation of the United States, already indicated under Obama, can no longer be prevented, “Mr Trump intends to forge a rapprochement with Russia, and to challenge China’s military and economic ambitions. Both amount to radical departures from existing US foreign policy. It is time for the West to take seriously the idea that together they form a considered strategy to reposition America.”

The European NATO members fear a breakup of the military alliance in which the United States continues to be by far the strongest member, not merely due to military considerations. A weakening of NATO would also accelerate the disintegration of the European Union and raise once again all unresolved problems which threw the continent into two world wars during the last century.

The social, economic and political tensions within Europe are already extremely sharp. In most countries, right-wing, nationalist forces are on the rise. Britain voted to leave the European Union and other countries could follow.

Economic historian Adam Tooze noted in a contribution for *Die Zeit* the importance of the United States in the past for the foreign policy of Germany, which is the European country with the largest population and economy. Under the title “Farewell to the USA,” he wrote that America had resolved “the problem of foreign relations, of power, the relation Germany maintained with the world.” He added, “Cold War, NATO, the European integration backed by America, the United Nations—this was the framework thus far.” Tooze concluded by asking what would happen if America gave up this role, “Where is Germany’s place in the world then?”

The German bourgeoisie answered this long ago. For three years, it has been intensively working to rehabilitate German militarism and is raising the demand to be the hegemon and leading power in Europe—which is inevitably meeting with opposition in other countries.

The ruling class in Germany and other European countries have no other option in their response to the collapse of the post-war capitalist world order, which has found its sharpest expression to date in the election of Trump, than resorting to militarism and constructing a strong state, with which they are preparing to suppress social and political opposition.



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