



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on April 27, 2017

The President and NATO

During his campaign for president, Donald Trump frequently employed the word “obsolete” to register his negativity about the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#). After he won the election and was only a few days away from inauguration, he repeated his dour opinion on January 16, 2017, with “I said a long time ago that NATO had problems. Number one, it was obsolete because it was designed many, many years ago.”



Now that he is president, he has reversed his view on NATO. On April 12, 2017, [he declared](#), “I said it was obsolete. It’s no longer obsolete.” But there has been no alteration within NATO during the past year. Trump had just met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the White House. The NATO chieftain, who has never considered the alliance obsolete, smiled broadly at the Trump reversal.

Born in 1949, NATO cited [Article 51](#) of the UN Charter for its authorization to exist. The official NATO Handbook (1995 edition) contains the text of the pact’s Preface and 14 short articles. That NATO is a UN stepchild is clearly spelled out in Article 1 stating, “The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.” Explanatory text appearing in the NATO Handbook clearly states that the pact was “Created within the framework of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.”

Because the pact is a treaty, Senate ratification had to be gained. Then-Secretary of State Dean Acheson, one of its most determined champions, stated during a March 1949 speech that NATO “is designed to fit precisely into the framework of the United Nations.... The United States government and the governments with which we are associated in the treaty are convinced that it is essential measure for strengthening the United Nations.” There was no hiding the fact that NATO was designed to be a UN stepchild.

In short order, 12 nations from Western Europe and North America signed on as founding members. The pact’s [Article 5](#) states “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” That provision encouraged 13 senators to refuse their support, not nearly enough to block U.S. entry into the alliance. So NATO began and the American people were left with an impression created by the media and NATO supporters that its entire purpose was to prevent any additional Soviet expansion westward.

The UN/NATO combination then proceeded to assure that America would never again win a war. Consider: The Korean War became a stalemate and NATO’s hand was in it from the beginning. The Vietnam War, fought under a NATO clone called SEATO, ended in defeat for the United States. The wars in which Americans were fighting and dying were now being fought without the constitutional requirement for a congressional declaration of war. Highly questionable NATO forays into Bosnia and Somalia followed. Authorization for the war in Iraq came directly from the UN. And the United States is now 14 years into a NATO-authorized struggle in Afghanistan. NATO now has 27 member nations.

NATO has never been “obsolete.” It has greatly aided its UN sponsor in the gobbling up of more aspects of national sovereignty. So, Trump was wrong when he said NATO had become a useless alliance



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because it was “obsolete.” And he is additionally wrong to give it his newly created approval. What he should do is work to have the [United States withdraw](#) from both of these entangling alliances. The millions who voted for him would surely cheer such moves. And America would cease to be the world’s policeman, an assignment nowhere found in the U.S. Constitution to which the president and many other federal officials swore a solemn oath to uphold.



John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS](#) blog and is reprinted here with permission.



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