



Amb. (ret.) Kurt Volker

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The European Union as a Partner Against Russia Aggression

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, and all the distinguished Senators here today, for the opportunity to testify about the European Union, Russia, and U.S. interests more broadly on this, the 68th Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

It is an honor to be here.

I would like to make four basic points. I'll come back to each of these in turn.

- First, a strong and healthy Europe, including the European Union and a strong NATO Alliance, is a fundamental American national security interest.
- Second, Europe is facing severe political, economic and security challenges such as we have not seen since the establishment of NATO and the European Coal and Steel Community, the EU's predecessor, generations ago.
- Third, Russia is a major player in both creating and exploiting these challenges, seeking to weaken Europe, weaken the transatlantic tie, and advance perceived Russian interests in the region and globally.
- But finally, all that being said, just because Russia is involved does not mean it is the determining factor in Europe, nor that it will be successful in the long run. Our values and our transatlantic community are far stronger than that.

To the first point. America is a nation founded on core values of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights. These are universal values, shared by people around the world – though not always by governments.

To the extent these values are respected and advancing around the world, America finds a more peaceful, more prosperous, and more friendly global environment. The realization of these values makes for a better and safer world. On the other hand, to the extent these

values are being trampled, America will face a growing threat to its well-being, interests and ultimately, its national security.

Europe is the part of the globe where these values are most deeply embedded, and where governments join the United States in addressing challenges to shared values and shared interests around the world. A strong Europe, with democracy, prosperity, and security, is the best possible partner for the United States globally.

Values-based democracy is not unique to Europe. Japan, South Korea, Australia and many other nations are part of this broad, values-based community. But Europe has long stood out for its cohesiveness and willingness to take on broader challenges in Alliance with the United States.

A strong Europe is a strong trading partner. It generates jobs in the United States. It shares political influence globally. It has key votes in the United Nations, the G7, the IMF and other multinational organizations. It sends forces to join us in coalitions from Afghanistan to Syria and beyond. It provides massive humanitarian and development assistance. And Europe is facing threats from terrorism and from Russia and other quarters just as we are, and it is working with us to deal with them.

A strong Europe is a core American interest, and the European Union has helped make Europe strong. By overcoming political divisions, trade barriers, internal customs and immigration obstacles, and a thousand other regulatory issues, the EU has made Europe a single market that works.

How the EU evolves in the future, to take account of the democratic wishes of its own people, is for Europeans to decide. But whatever course this takes, it is clearly an American interest for Europe to be a strong and effective partner for the United States.

Second, Europe, and the European Union specifically, are facing grave challenges, both internal and external. And these challenges spill directly into NATO as well.

Internally, Europe's finances remain in intensive care. The Euro-zone debt crisis has been managed but not solved. Growth has continued to be slow. Economic differences have drawn a wedge between Germany and EU members on the periphery. Weak economies have led to demands for change.

Mass migration has overwhelmed the ability of many countries to absorb the newcomers. This has put pressure on internal security, schools, health systems and so forth. These new migrants come on top of already existing, and largely non-integrated immigrant communities in every European country. In most cases, these migrants are of different ethnicity, religion, culture and education from local populations.

Europe's elites have sought to be compassionate to the migrants, but have been too slow and timid in responding to the concerns of European populations.

This has caused a backlash among local populations, strengthening far-right and far-left movements, a rejection of elites, and a rejection of traditional politics and institutions, by many within Europe's populations.

In the UK, these perceptions contributed to the "Brexit" vote. With the UK now leaving the European Union, the EU itself is going through a crisis of defining what the EU will be in the future. While elites want to double-down on the unity of the EU, many in the public want to follow the British in re-asserting greater national identity.

Externally, Russia has sought to overturn the post-Cold-War settlement of Europe by redrawing borders using military force. Russian forces occupy parts of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, and in a brazen show of force, Russia simply annexed the Crimean peninsula.

But other external factors are also at play – the crisis in Syria, the lack of governance in Libya, the difficult partnership with Turkey, the competition with low-cost Chinese goods... all of these are also putting pressure on Europe.

Third, Russia is a player in many of these challenges. It has helped create some of them – such as undermining security in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and increasingly, the Balkans. And Russia has worked to exploit challenges facing Europe in order to weaken Europe and advantage Russia wherever possible.

For example, in addition to its invasions of its neighbors, Russia has:

- Engaged massively in advancing propaganda throughout Europe – both in local languages and among Russian speaking populations. This includes major investments in RT and Sputnik;
- Used "fake news" and hacking and trolling to influence and distort European public perceptions about issues;
- Used energy as leverage on European governments' decision-making;
- Used investments, trade deals, consulting arrangements, and more, to create centers of economic interests within European that are closely tied to Russia. These centers then act internally in societies to pressure governments into more pro-Russian policies;
- Engaged in direct "financing" – for example, making funds available to the National Front in France, or to Jobbik in Hungary;
- Engaged in provocative military behaviors, such as air and sea-incursions, massive military exercises, and threats of nuclear targeting and missile deployments, in order to raise the level of concern in Europe about confronting Russia anywhere.

Many of these actions sound familiar to American ears as well. But let us also be clear in Europe, as we are clear in the United States.

But just because Russia is doing these things does not mean that Russia is the *decisive* Most of Europe's challenges are built on their own dynamics. Russia exploits opportunities, and is willing to be brazen in its actions. But it is not now, nor will it ever be capable, of defining the future of Europe or the United States.

Russia faces major challenges of its own – from demographics to a declining and undiversified economy, corruption, political decay. It is playing a weak hand well – but make no mistake that it is a weak hand.

Ultimately, while the values and institutions of Europe – and the United States – are strong, Russia's institutions are weak, and its people will have to reckon with the failings of their own leaders.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, that concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

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