

Is NATO's name fake news?

Here are 30 member countries in NATO. Only 16 of them have beach-front on the North Atlantic.

<i>With</i>	<i>Without</i>
Belgium	Albania
Canada	Bulgaria
Denmark	Croatia
Estonia	Czech Republic
France	Greece
Germany	Hungary
Iceland	Italy
Latvia	Luxembourg
Lithuania	Montenegro
Netherlands	North Macedonia
Norway	Romania
Poland	Slovakia
Portugal	Slovenia
Spain	Turkey
United Kingdom	
United States	
TOTAL: 16 countries	TOTAL: 14 countries

It is true that many of those without beachfront on the North Atlantic do have beachfront on the Mediterranean. Albania for example.

Likewise, Ukraine has beachfront on the Black Sea. Well, so does Russia – and on the North Atlantic too.

It seems to me that there are blurred lines between what the European Union is, and what NATO is.

Let put it in these terms. Mexico is not on the North Atlantic. But it is a card-carrying member of NAFTA (North American Free-Trade Agreement). If Mediterranean countries can join NATO, why isn't it recruiting in the Caribbean as well?

The answer seems to lie in the fact that when NATO was born in 1949, the European Coal and Steel Community was not yet born. It came into being in 1952, and in 1958 it upgraded into the European Economic Community. In 1967 that evolved into the European Community, then in 2009 into the European Union. This may be a bit over-simplified, but my point is that NATO was there first, and the European Union came along later.

NATO is more of a military and security formation, and of course bridges the Atlantic Ocean. It was originally the bulwark against communism, during the Cold War. Whereas the EU's purpose was basically to unify Europe internally -to prevent further wars.

All this totally confuses me when I think of the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ukraine. Neither of which are members of NATO. They both sit on the Black Sea, on the edge of Asia. They are both Slavic nations, over in Eastern Europe. Remember that the Czechs and Slovaks split right

after the Cold War ended. The post-war arrangements had forced them into one country- Czechoslovakia, and they never bonded. They couldn't get a divorce fast enough. What does that tell you?

Ukraine is far from the North Atlantic. How did all these land-locked countries or countries like Turkey with beachfront on the Mediterranean and/or the Black Sea (Turkey has both) get into an alliance that stretches all the way across the ocean and right across North America to include California? It's ridiculous. California's beachfront is on the Pacific!

Now that the EU has grown up and the peace in Western Europe seems to have bonded nations together, some rationalization is needed between NATO and the EU. It has been NATO's expansion into regions far from the North Atlantic that has ruffled Russia's feathers. To my way of thinking, this doesn't add up. NATO and the EU should sit down and rationalize why they exist and try to reduce the duplications and redundancies. Certainly the continent of "Europe" has been said to reach all the way across to the Ural Mountains. But that is east of Moscow!

They say that it takes two to tango. I think that NATO and the EU need to eat some humble pie and admit that they have pushed Russia to the brink. They have coveted the Ukraine. The question has to be asked – did NATO step out of bounds? Did it provoke Russia's anger?

I will never condone violence, but before this war escalates, NATO and the EU have some home-work to do. The best way to avoid any escalation is to agree that the way forward is dialogue and negotiation. Switzerland is a neutral country smack in the middle of Western Europe. Why can't Ukraine be the neutral country smack in the middle of Eastern Europe?

We know that regions like Scotland in the UK, Quebec in Canada and Catalonia in Spain are "*separatistas*", each in their own way. Why can't the Russian population in eastern Ukraine be allowed some space for grace? If they have issues, Russia should not have to invade like it did into Crimea, and like it has recently into mainland Ukraine. Turf wars create more problems than they solve, which is precisely why Ukraine must remain neutral. Violent incursions are not the way to seek separation in a constitutional democracy. Western Europe is no stranger to this phenomenon, and should recognize that its expansionism has not been a welcome trend in Eastern Europe. It has been provocative.

Right across the Mediterranean from Turkey is Eritrea. It separated from Ethiopia after a long and bitter war. Now Tigray is making a bid to follow in its footsteps. But the democratically-elected government of Ethiopia is using ugly force to prevent that. The same people who condone Ethiopia's violence as necessary are critiquing Russia's aggression as un-necessary. Isn't that a double-standard?

"Before you criticize the spec of dust in someone else's eye, remove the plank from your own eye!"