



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 17, 2022

United States Not Obligated to Go to War by NATO Treaty

With a missile explosion in Poland — a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) — initially blamed on Russia (incorrectly, it turned out, as the missile was determined to have come from Ukraine), the specter of war with a nuclear-armed country should alarm every American.

After all, as is so often said, Article V of the NATO agreement obligates the United States to go to war against any non-NATO nation attacking a NATO member. Or at least that is what most people think.



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Article V states, “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

While this appears to obligate the United States, and all other NATO members, to go to war should one of its members be attacked, that is not actually the case.

Appearing Wednesday on Fox’s *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) noted that, while everyone always cites Article V, another provision of the 1949 agreement — Article XI — contradicts that popular interpretation. Article XI states, “This Treaty shall be ratified *and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.*” (Emphasis added.)

In other words, any military action by the United States would still require that our country follow our Constitution. In the Constitution of the United States, the power to authorize war is clearly given to Congress. While Article V contemplates “such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force,” it certainly is not required.

NATO was formed in 1949, ostensibly to prevent a Joseph Stalin-led Soviet Union, which already had imposed Communist dictatorships over much of Eastern Europe, from expanding into Western Europe. While the United States and the Soviet Union certainly were at odds during what was dubbed the Cold War, they never had a direct military confrontation, and the Soviet Union never tried to take over any nations of Western Europe.

Considering that the Soviet Union imploded in 1991, one would have thought that NATO would have followed it into the dustbin of history. As even one of its staunchest supporters — UN Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick — said at the time, “Now we can be a normal country again,” asserting that the United States no longer had a need to defend Western Europe, and that U.S. troops could now come



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But that proved not to be the case. Indeed, if anything, NATO's missions have actually expanded beyond the borders of Europe. While no doubt many NATO proponents sincerely believed the organization was necessary to keep the Soviet Union in check, there was always an ulterior motive for many of its early supporters — and for its defenders today. NATO was part of the long-range plan by proponents of creating regional governments and eventually merging them into a global governmental system.

Indeed, the Treaty made clear from its inception that it was dedicated to the “purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” The UN is referenced throughout the Treaty, not only in the preamble, but in Articles I, V, VII, and XII.

It should also be noted that, even without Article XI's recognition that each member nation retained the right to follow its own constitution, the U.S. Constitution was going to remain the supreme law for the United States — not the NATO agreement. The Constitution explicitly states that any treaty entered into by the United States had to follow the “authority” of the United States, which is, of course, as Article VI of the Constitution says, the “supreme law of the land.”

That being said, the U.S. Constitution is so regularly ignored by elected officials in all three branches of our federal government that we cannot count on it being followed. There is little doubt that, were an actual invasion of one of the NATO allies to occur, few in Congress would cite Article XI, or our own Constitution, but would instead quote Article V of the NATO agreement.

Fortunately, the missile landing in Poland did not come from Russia, and no one is calling for war with Russia because of it. For that matter, no one is calling for war against Ukraine, either. But it should serve as a warning to all Americans. We are in an agreement that might very well entangle us in a war that has little to nothing to do with our own national security.

As George Washington said in his 1796 farewell address,

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connexion as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities....

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements.

The lesson is clear. We need to get out of NATO as quickly as possible — and while we're at it, we need to leave the United Nations as well.



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