

Germany's Refusal To Fund 2 Percent Of Its Defense Is Not The Action Of An Ally

German leaders should be allowed to see how safe and united the European Union remains when all the American troops move out from everywhere east of the Thames.

Bob Gates, perhaps the most farsighted post-Cold War defense secretary, presciently predicted in 2011 “that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress—and in the American body politic writ large—to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense.”

Gates, who once rightly understood that the Saudis would fight Iranians to the last American, also essentially hinted the same with regards to Germany and Russia, “nations apparently willing and eager for American taxpayers to assume the growing security burden left by reductions in European defense budgets.”

Put simply, he was saying the Germans would talk about an international liberal order for as long as Americans would pay to defend it. The day they are caught not tangibly supporting this order, they would throw a tantrum and blame Washington. “Future U.S. political leaders—those for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me—may not consider the return on America’s investment in NATO worth the cost,” he said.

The last two weeks have brought back this long-time question, as Germany yet again reneged on its pledge to increase its defense budget, which was already far short of the required 2 percent of gross domestic product to uphold North Atlantic Treaty Organization commitments. Under a nominally conservative leader in Angela Merkel, the German government is apparently struggling to have a defense budget of 1.3 percent of GDP, and reports show it is set to decrease to 1.2 percent by 2023.

In short, Germany is not even trying to increase NATO funding, but actually

planning to decrease it, in a rub to the American and British taxpayers who subsidize European security. Adding insult to injury, some German politicians accused the American ambassador to Germany, Richard Grennell, of acting like a colonial viceroy or high commissioner of an occupying force, and wished he would leave Germany immediately.

Yes, you read that right. Germany refused to pay for its share in NATO, and when the American ambassador pointed that out, the German leaders wanted to make him a “persona non grata” and take away his position. In a similar timeframe, which I am sure is “purely coincidental,” the EU fined Google for the third time, and Germany signaled it would continue to be protectionist in trade.

Grennell has been one of the most effective President Trump picks. He managed to align European sanctions against Iran, deport Palestinian terrorist Rasmea Odeh, and get East European countries to agree to increase their defense budgets after 15 years of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations failing to move the needle.

But as reality bites, former Cold War rivals like China and Russia return to Cold War form, and the EU turns into a liberal empire, the question before Americans (and the British, while we are at that) is what to do with Germany. Berlin is not behaving like an ally, and not even behaving like a partner with whom Washington can have a tactical alignment. Germany is openly hostile to America while, in perhaps the most insufferable development, sanctimoniously lecturing America.

Ever since Trump won, partly as a reaction from American taxpayers opposed to foreign interventionism and permanent sacrosanct alliances, there has been a conventional wisdom of sorts that the Great Grand Mutti, Merkel, is the next leader of the liberal world order. Sometimes this position is laid at the feet of French President Emmanuel Macron or Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, but Merkel is worshipped by the Max Boots and the Anne Applebaums of the world.

Oddly, however, I have yet to see a single op-ed on how Merkel is wrecking the very foundation of Euro-Atlantic peace by importing Russian gas to Europe and calling for a European army to replicate NATO, while simultaneously ruling out spending on NATO. So, what should the Brits and the Americans do?

NATO was formed in the mid-20th century, in the words of Lord Ismay, to keep the Germans down, the Americans in, and the Russians out. It was primarily a geopolitical alliance. Everything else was secondary.

NATO meant to ensure that no single hegemon dominates the European continent ever again, and American hegemony in the Western hemisphere was by design, not a flaw. It was needed, as the Western European states were weak and subject to Soviet threats—which vanished as early as in the mid-sixties.

John Kennedy, for example, as early as in the mid-sixties, said, “We cannot continue to pay for the military protection of Europe while the NATO states are not paying their fair share and living off the fat of the land. We have been very generous to Europe and it is now time for us to look out for ourselves.”

The new reality, however, is that NATO is bloated and the German strategy of buckpassing is evident. Contrary to popular opinion, the first NATO expansion idea in the early 1990s was from Germany, under the cynical and crafty Volker Rühle, who was clear about German frontiers shifting towards Russia. It was not the East Europeans, who even though were rightfully feeling threatened by Russia, driving the enlargement.

Alongside Madeline Albright, Rühle convinced the Clinton administration to push east, spreading the liberal institutions that now form the backbone of the new EU imperium. Germany, which could field at least five divisions of troops within days in 1991, cannot fly even four Tornado jets now. The country that pioneered undersea warfare has no active submarine fleet, because it has completely buckpassed the security burden on the United Kingdom and the United States, while bloating its social welfare state.

It was Germany that has consistently opposed American concerns about Huawei and Chinese infiltration. Germany has stifled Euro growth, increasing its own competitive advantage, leaned towards Russia even at the cost of European security, and consistently opposed further European self-sufficiency in defense, while duplicating NATO bureaucracy and calling for an ineffectual EU army. Not to mention, again, Germany’s mindless sanctimony and holier-than-thou posturing.

It is a curious twist of irony that some Americans are so opposed to their own president, and arguably their own national interest, that they cannot even unify

behind this simple bipartisan issue that has vexed American leaders since 1960s. If Grennell were genuinely acting as a viceroy, then he would not push the supposedly colonized states to arm up, but that truth is lost on liberal ideologues, who are determined to blame America first for this growing trans-Atlantic rift.

The reality is this: You cannot lecture the people who provide security to you, and definitely cannot subvert their interests, without expecting an eventual pushback. It goes against prudence, it goes against realism, and it goes against basic sense of justice and fairness.

It is said that the cure starts from the moment the problem is diagnosed. The problem here is a great power, the biggest right in the heart of Europe, actively ignoring common sense, and acting in a hostile manner.

German leaders want to “decolonize” Europe from the United States. So be it. Let them take care of their own business, and see how safe and united the European Union remains when all the American troops move out from anywhere east of the Thames.

The return of geopolitics and great power rivalry also means sterner words instead of wishy-washy signaling. At the minimum, East and Central Europeans should be given a choice: to be under the dictates of Berlin, or to follow Washington. After all, that’s what Germany wants, isn’t it?

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