



Poland Wants Britain to Help Stick Washington With Bigger NATO Bill

Doug Bandow

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No one seriously expects the Dutch, Italians, or Spanish to provide permanent garrisons for Poland. The Germans, who publicly oppose the idea, won't be coming. Only Britain and France are realistic candidates, and both only reluctantly halted further cuts in their military budget. Which leaves only you-know-who. Poland's new government wants a deal with Great Britain. Help us get a NATO, meaning American, garrison, and we'll agree to limit European migrant flows to Britain.

British Prime Minister David Cameron was rebuffed when he sought Warsaw's support for his European Union reform plan. However, over the holidays Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski said "Of course, Britain could offer something to Poland in terms of international security." He went on to complain that "there aren't, aside from a token presence, any significant allied forces or defense installations, which gives the Russians an excuse to play this region."

Indeed, as host of the July NATO Summit Poland made clear that squeezing alliance members for military support would be its primary objective. Polish President Andrzej Duda made the issue a priority: "We need a greater presence of NATO in this part of Europe." He called for allied bases in Poland and said: "We need more guarantees from NATO, not only we as Poland, but the whole of central and eastern Europe in the current difficult geopolitical situation."

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Only Britain and France are realistic candidates, and both only reluctantly halted further cuts in their military budget. They aren't likely to tie up significant combat units in Poland.

Which leaves you-know-who. In fact, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg mentioned the critical factor ever so discreetly when he stated of the Warsaw Summit: “we will further strengthen the bond between Europe and North America on which our Alliance is founded.”

That is, the U.S. will be cajoled to continue defending a continent which doesn't see much need to defend itself.

Last year NATO-Europe collectively came in at about 1.5 percent of GDP, well short of the two percent objective. Only Estonia, Greece (to confront Turkey), Poland (first time ever), and the United Kingdom made that level.

Even two percent isn't much if you believe your country is threatened by the authoritarian, aggressive power next door. Yet Poland, while unwilling to exert itself, demands that other NATO members commit to its defense.

Latvia and Lithuania can't be bothered to spend two percent of GDP. Turkey also fails the two percent test, despite in turn threatening fellow NATO member Greece, whining about the impact of the Syrian civil war, and shooting down a Russian plane over Syria.

Everyone simply assumes America will do whatever is necessary.

Of course, the “Russian threat” is not as great as the Poles would have others believe. There have been no Russian threats against the central and eastern Europeans. Vladimir Putin has not indicated his interest in a war to conquer his neighbors.

Even Poland appears secure. Moscow is unpleasantly aggressive, taking bites out of Georgia and Ukraine, yet its ambitions appear bounded, largely limited to preventing further NATO expansion up to Russia's borders. Nothing suggests that Putin wants Russia to try to digest millions or tens of millions of Georgians and Ukrainians, let alone troublesome Poles living in historically Polish territory.

Even the Baltics, with varying populations of ethnic Russians, don't appear to be of much concern to Russia. Attempting to grab a majority-Russian city or other territory would offer few benefits at high cost.

Washington should call a halt to the European game of playing the U.S. Of course, American officials always have been complicit.

The Europeans want to leave the dirty work of defending their continent to Washington. The U.S. wants to be in charge. Everyone is happy.

Except the American people.

But the game no longer can continue. America no longer can defend its populous and prosperous allies.

However, they will do nothing so long as the U.S. does most everything. Washington must do less.

Starting at the Warsaw Summit. If London supports Polish plans for a NATO garrison, let Britain offer the first troops for that purpose. Anyone else voting yes should be invited to join in.

U.S. officials should note that America remains a bit busy elsewhere—fighting in Afghanistan and the Middle East, garrisoning Japan and South Korea, patrolling the world's oceans, and maintaining troops all over “Old Europe.” Washington will allow the Europeans to take the lead in their continent's defense.

The case for a U.S.-dominated NATO disappeared years ago. The allies should discuss how they will defend themselves in the future.

Poland wants to make a deal putting a NATO tripwire on its territory. Washington should make clear that irrespective of what other nations want, the Americans won't be coming.

Doug Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is the author and editor of several books, including Foreign Follies: America's New Global Empire (Xulon).