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America should stop paying to defend the world

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Donald Trump is a genius for gaining media attention. Sometimes his opinions also reflect basic common sense.

Consider his complaint that Washington's prosperous allies in Asia and Europe don't pay enough in return. Defenders of the status quo contend that it is in America's interest to subsidize its allies, as if they were defending the United States.

Advocates of the status quo also argue that U.S. allies contribute to U.S. basing costs. That's true but irrelevant. The fact that countries defended by America help cover Washington's cost of stationing U.S. troops is notable only because allied free- (or cheap-) riding has been so shameless for so long.

As I pointed out in CNN online: "The most important cost for America is that of creating the forces deployed, wherever they are stationed. Every security commitment requires additional personnel and equipment. America's oversized military budget reflects America's many formal and possible security guarantees: 27 NATO members, alliance wannabes Georgia and Ukraine, various East Asian allies and friends, several Middle Eastern and Central Asian nations."

Washington accounts for roughly 40 percent of the globe's military outlays in order to project power on behalf of other states. Providing a defense shield for war-ravaged nations originally made sense. But that world has passed away.

Washington should stop defending its prosperous, populous allies. They should pay for their own defense and confront future security threats as equals.

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