

# The Japan Times

## **No surprise defense-dependent allies like Clinton**

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No doubt, Hillary Clinton is the world's candidate for president. The Washington Post titled one article: "The World is Pulling for Clinton."

One reason is Donald Trump's ugly populism. America is not unique in that respect, however. In Europe a gaggle of populist parties are on the march, some actually having entered government.

Even more important to foreign governments is Washington's commitment to subsidize the defense of virtually every advanced nation. The Europeans, who collectively possess a combined economy and population larger than those of America, treat Washington's defense shield as a given. They then scrimp on their militaries, preferring to underwrite bloated welfare states.

That a President Trump might upset this convenient deal horrifies the continent's leaders. One European official told the New York Times: "Everyone is freaking out that he might actually win." France's Francois Hollande, a socialist who specializes in spending other people's money, said that Trump "makes you want to retch."

For Western Europe there really isn't much of a threat to defend against. However, the Eastern Europeans have been wailing about the supposed Russian threat, and their western neighbors have not been inclined to do much in response. Instead, everyone expects the U.S. to rush to the rescue — as it always has done. Indeed, the Obama administration has done its best to constantly "reassure" its allies, which they interpret to mean that they can freely ignore American pressure to spend more.

Asia is no different. Japan and South Korea also look at America's defense promises as an entitlement. No matter that Japan long had the second largest economy on earth. Surely the Japanese should not be expected to inconvenience themselves to protect their own interests.

The Korean disparity is even more dramatic. The South enjoys 40 times the GDP and twice the population of North Korea. Nevertheless, Trump's complaint that South Korea has lived off of the U.S. military set off a cavalcade of complaints in the South Korean press.

Until recently the Philippines was even more insistent on winning U.S. backing against China. Philippine politicians from the president on down have spent years scheming to entangle America and borrow the U.S. military to challenge Beijing. President Rodrigo Duterte has taken a very different approach, but his pivot to China may not outlast his term in office.

Foreign officials apparently cannot imagine a world in which Washington does not provide for their nations' defense. The New York Times reported on "the undercurrent of quiet desperation" in European officials who came to watch the U.S. election.

"Of course we are worried, especially those people from NATO countries," said one. This reliance on Uncle Sam means that "We have a lot of skin in the game," according to Peter Wittig, Germany's ambassador to the U.S.

Josef Joffe of Die Zeit newspaper argued: "If a President Trump made true on his threats against NATO, the suddenly exposed Europeans would have to make nice with Russia." Actually, there is an alternative. The Europeans could spend more on their own defense. However, Joffe apparently doesn't view such a possibility as worth mentioning.

And both the Obama administration and Clinton campaign have done their best to convince the Europeans that America will always do its duty as the former see it, that is, put the interests of nominal allies before that of the U.S. For instance, Julianne Smith, who worked for Clinton after serving under Vice President Joseph Biden, said she found her role at the Democratic convention to "reassure Europeans." Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright complained about Trump's threats to "walk away from our friends and allies," that is, expect them to act as mature states rather than welfare dependents.

No wonder the New York Times proclaimed that the Europeans found a "soothing" message in Philadelphia at the Democratic national convention. An Italian diplomat told the Times that "I've seen a genuine willingness to stay engaged," defined as America protecting everyone else's interests.

There are, of course, lots of good reasons to vote against Trump. But perhaps the best justification for voting for him is to upset the expectations of those who believe that U.S. taxpayers exist for the benefit of the rest of the world. Surely countries capable of defending themselves and their regions should do so.

Americans should vote for whoever they believe would best serve the U.S. They should be suspicious if other nations strongly prefer one candidate. Those in Washington should take the interests of others in account, but should never forget who they are obligated to serve.

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