



## When Foreign Policy Becomes Farce: Bring Brazil Into NATO?

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NATO's European members are in one of their periodic states of funk. When Joe Biden was elected president, they believed that the good times were back, with Washington unashamedly putting them first. Then Biden withdrew U.S. forces from Afghanistan – without asking the continent's permission.

What followed was much whining and caterwauling about Europe's lack of independent military capabilities. Thierry Breton, the European Union's Commissioner for the Internal Market, which covers defense production, observed that the EU had "learnt the hard way" about the need to possess the "attributes of hard power" and the ability to operate militarily at "full autonomy." It really isn't a new lesson – Europeans have been talking about having a continental defense strategy and force for decades, to little effect. So long as Washington is willing to protect them they are going to remain dependent to save money despite the consequent indignity.

This time won't be any different.

Indeed, NATO's promotional efforts remain bizarre. After National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's visit to Brazil last month, there is talk of bringing that nation into the alliance. Although the Biden administration denied reports that it offered Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro NATO partnership status in return for rejecting Huawei telecommunications equipment for its 5G system, the National Security Council's Juan Gonzalez responded: "We do support Brazil's aspirations as a NATO global partner as a way to deepen security cooperation over time between Brazil and the NATO countries."

NATO partnership status is not NATO membership, though it is a common gateway into the alliance. Ukraine, desperate to clamber onto America's official defense dole, has been pushing for partnership status. Whether Bolsonaro wants more is unclear, but two years ago President Donald Trump suggested adding Brazil to NATO. At a press conference after meeting with Bolsonaro, Trump said: "I also intend to designate Brazil as a major non-NATO ally, or even possibly – if you start thinking about it – maybe a NATO ally. I have to talk to a lot of people, but maybe a NATO ally."

His efforts went nowhere since it was a truly moronic idea. Article 10 of the NATO treaty allows "any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty." Which means Brazil is not

eligible to join. (For the geographically challenged, Brazil is in South America, not Europe. Even a creative judge would find it difficult to get around this requirement.) In contrast, Colombia has been designated a NATO partner, which allows cooperation and is not geographically bounded.

Even if the transatlantic alliance was willing to change its rules, why would Brazil want to join? NATO was created in 1949 to institutionalize American protection of war-ravaged Western Europe from the Soviet Union. Brazil faces no traditional military threats. Even its most important military issues are domestic. From 1964 to 1985 a military junta held power. Today some Brazilians fear the military might intervene again, this time on behalf of Bolsonaro or someone else.

Analyst Andrew Korybko was particularly critical of the proposal: "This is delusional because Brazil has no legitimate interests in partnering with NATO. Its security threats are mostly unconventional ones related to deforestation in the Amazon, drug and human trafficking, and illegal immigration. Brazil therefore would hardly gain anything from this partnership, let alone after meeting the U.S.'s reported precondition of banning Huawei and consequently ruining relations with China."

Nor does the idea make the slightest sense from Europe's standpoint. Brazil could do little to aid North Atlantic security. The country is not a global military power. Would Brasilia build a navy to patrol the sea lanes to Europe? Create an expeditionary armored division to plug any gap in the lines after the revived Red Army launched its attack into Poland? Station an air wing at airbases in the Baltic states to strike Moscow? Develop a few nukes to drop on the Kremlin?

Yet being a member of NATO would make the US, Canada, and Europe responsible for Brazil's defense. The idea that the Europeans, who won't do much *to defend themselves*, would cross the Atlantic to aid a country with which none have a serious relationship beyond private commerce is beyond hilarious. As it is, even the Baltic countries and Poland, which wail incessantly about the supposed Russian threat, do little on their own behalf, spending just two cents on the Euro for their defense. Many European governments barely pretend to have a military.

Even if they bother to deploy a few troops, the Europeans aren't interested in defending each other. According to a Pew Research Center poll last year:

"Despite the organization's largely favorable ratings among member states, there is widespread reluctance to fulfill the collective defense commitment outlined in Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty. When asked if their country should defend a fellow NATO ally against a potential attack from Russia, a median of 50% across 16 NATO member states say their country *should not* defend an ally, compared with 38% who say their country *should* defend an ally against a Russian attack.

Publics are more convinced that the US *would* use military force to defend a NATO ally from Russia. A median of 60% say the US would defend an ally against Russia, while just 29% say the US would not do so. And in most NATO member countries surveyed, publics are more likely to say the US *would* defend a NATO ally from a Russian attack than say their own country *should* do the same."

Who imagines that these countries would rush to Brazil's defense?

Adding Brazil is not the first bizarre idea for NATO expansion. The rush eastward has made no security sense. At least Montenegro is in Europe, even if it is a little bit like the Duchy of Grand Fenwick. There has been some support to add Asian nations, most often Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Fifteen years ago James Goldgeier of the Council on Foreign Relations suggested that expansion outside of Europe would be advantageous, "especially at a time when Europeans are having trouble meeting their own defense commitments." Yet if Europeans won't pay for their own defense, why would they invest to protect other countries halfway around the world? (Last month Germany sent a solo frigate, the Bayern, to Asia, apparently to impress China with Berlin's vast military might and resolve. Beijing reportedly went into panic-mode. Not!) And why would Asian nations spend their money to defend Europe?

However, proving that there really is nothing new in the policy world, earlier this year the Atlantic Council promoted the idea of adding Mexico to NATO. No one, really no one, can seriously argue that adding Mexico would bolster Europe's defenses against Russia. Rather, the idea was to motivate "the US Latinx community to become champions of the Alliance." Seriously.

Explained the advocates: "Eventual Mexican membership in NATO may be a necessary ingredient for keeping the United States invested in European security over the long term. This suggestion is made with an eye toward the reality that economic and political power in the United States is shifting to places and populations with fewer traditional ties to Europe such that broadening NATO's appeal to a diversifying US public is imperative."

It is creepy enough to claim that American citizens of Hispanic descent don't care about NATO if it advances US security but would get wildly excited about the transatlantic alliance if it protected *Mexico*. Seriously? And if Washington's commitment to NATO is so fragile that this sort of legerdemain is necessary to bolster public support, the game already is lost. Who else might be appealed to in a similar fashion – why not add Nigeria, Egypt, India, Vietnam, Haiti, Samoa, Cuba, and Taiwan in order to appeal to other American ethnic constituencies? Or go big and bring in Russia and China, to maximize public support!

If NATO has a meaningful purpose, it is to defend Europe. If the Europeans aren't serious about protecting their own continent, they aren't going to defend anyone else. Instead of further expanding America's military liabilities around the world, to Brazil and other non-European states, Washington should end its system of military welfare for prosperous and populous allies. The only way Europe will ever fulfill its own responsibilities is when America stops doing them for it.

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