

Why Europe will be willing to pay more for its defense

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The June 13 editorial [“Mr. Gates’s sermon”](#) claimed that European nations are unlikely to contribute more to NATO when the United States is reducing its military capabilities. This statement is misguided for two reasons.

First, U.S. military capabilities are not shrinking. President Obama wants want our “roles and missions examined,” but the \$400 billion in “cuts” that he recently requested are over 12 years. This will occur by holding growth in spending below inflation, a very small cut in real terms. But the majority of the money comes from cutting planned spending rather than current spending. Only in Washington do accounting gimmicks count as budget cuts.

Second, it not evident that Europeans will continue to spend less on defense if we spend less. But they will certainly maintain current spending if we continue to subsidize their defense. U.S. leaders have scolded NATO members over sharing the burden for decades, but no incentive has existed for them to spend more. Ending the lavish wealth transfer payments by American taxpayers will force Europe to pay for its own security.

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