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MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2010

Can America Count On Europe Anymore?

By Paul Starobin
NationalJournal.com

"The demilitarization of Europe -- where large swaths of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it -- has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st," Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared in a Feb. 23 speech to NATO officers and others at the National Defense University in Washington.

Is Gates right? What exactly does "the demilitarization of Europe" mean for U.S. national security interests? Should Americans care if Europe has to live in the shadow of a militarily superior post-Soviet Russia? Is NATO, alas, a lost cause?

Gates' perspective also suggests that, unless the United States is to go it alone in the world, it will need to cultivate partners among rising nation-states, such as India and Brazil, that are more or less U.S.-friendly (at least not enemies) and, unlike Europe, are rebuilding their militaries. In short, should the U.S. be planning for a post-Europe world? Does Europe still matter? Can we count on Europe any more?

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MARCH 8, 2010 12:01 PM



NATO: Fading Utility

By Col. Joseph J. Collins
Professor, National War College

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Chrchill said that "there is at least one thing worse than fighting with allies -- And that is to fight without them." While true on its face, the performance of the continental members of the Nato alliance in Afghanistan leads one to wonder whether or not this is still true.

Perhaps the greatest mystery is why Nato, in a fit of exuberance in 2006, decided to take over the entire military mission in Afghanistan. Most Nato nations have participated in operations in Afghanistan, but only the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, France (in very small numbers) and a few Central European nations have actively engaged in combat. The great powers of continental Europe have in effect decided to be present in a war zone, but not to fight. The Germans in particular have made a fetish out of refusing combat and even avoiding the use of the "c" word. They will

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fight in self defense, but their risk aversion has made many wonder why they are bothering to do what they do. The safe part of northern Afghanistan under their watchful eye has gone from "white&quo...

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The Need for Balance

By **Gordon Adams**

Professor of International Relations, School of International Service, American University

The question gives rise to the need for serious alternative thinking.

Perhaps the Europeans are on to something. If the new QDR is any indication, the US is prepared to expand military missions and military budgets as far as the eye can see. This will come at perilous cost to our role in the world, the acceptability of US foreign policy, and our federal budget.

Perhaps the Europeans don't need to do more; and perhaps that does not mean they are "free riders" on the US, but are moving to a different view from that of the US about what international security requires, and the role military force provides in bringing security and stability.

Unlike Jim Thomas, I do not assume that a US strategy of "doing less" should be intended to incentivize the Europeans to "do more." Perhaps we need to "do less" in our own interests, regardless of what the Europeans think or do. And perhaps they do not need to "do more" to ensure their security, if by "doing more" we mean "spending more on...

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The U.S. Should Cost-Minimize

By **Paul Starobin**
NationalJournal.com

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I'd like to post a guest comment from an expert source, Jim Thomas, who is Vice President for Studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington. Jim served for thirteen years in a variety of policy, planning and resource analysis posts in the Department of Defense. He spearheaded the 2005-2006 Quadrennial Defense Review and was the principal author of the QDR report to Congress.

The erosion of European military capability has been underway for decades. While successive generations of senior American officials have lamented growing capability and interoperability gaps between the US military and its European counterparts, as well as the general lack of European seriousness about collective security, it is ironically the US defense posture itself that has permitted – indeed even encouraged – "free riding" by the European allies.

Why should the allies spend more on their own defense when the direct threats to Europe have receded, or intervene beyond Europe to protect their interests when the United States wil...

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UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS

By **Michael Brenner***Professor of International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh*

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Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is touring Europe cajoling government leaders to do more for the team. Augmented European contributions are the means to the overriding end of prosecuting the multiform 'war on terror.'

We know the litany by heart. America is Europe's savior – three times in the 20th century. Europeans depend on us for securing their well-being. They need and want our leadership. They are rudderless and querulous if left on their own. Their governments never express full gratitude, though, for all that we do for them. Europeans have become free riders who let the United States pay in blood and dollars in undertaking onerous enterprises that serve their interests as much as ours. They refuse to hold up their end – not spending enough on the military and not sending enough troops to fight in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

We bend our ear to hear with satisfaction those farsighted European statesmen who courageously assure us that all this is true and shameful. Thus we welcome the voices of Lord George Robertson, of ...

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MARCH 8, 2010 7:41 AM



Understanding Europe's Military Weakness

By **Christopher Preble***Director of Foreign Policy Studies, Cato Institute*

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It would be unwise for Americans to write off Europeans as a lost cause, congenitally dependent upon U.S. military power, and unable to contribute either to their own defense or to policing the global commons. We can't count on Europe -- right now -- but that doesn't mean we can *never* count on Europe in the future.

Americans who complain about Europe's unwillingness to play a larger role in policing the globe, and who would like them to do more, should start by exploring the many reasons why Europe is so weak militarily.

Consider, for example, Europe's half-hearted and inconsistent steps to establish a security capacity independent of NATO -- and therefore independent of the United States -- since the end of the Cold War. Such proposals have failed for many reasons, but we shouldn't ignore the extent to which Uncle Sam has actively discouraged Europe from playing a more active role. Most recently, Hillary Clinton expressed the U.S. government's [position](#) that political and economic integration would proceed under the EU, but security would continue to be provided by NATO. This echoes similar comments made by the first Bush and Clinton administrations with respect to European defense. (See, for example, Madeleine Albright's [comments](#) regarding European Defence and Security Policy (EDSP) in 1998).

We can dismiss such comments as useful cover for Europeans who were looking for an excuse to cut military spending in the first place. The demographic pressures of an aging population consuming a larger share of public resources are being felt in many advanced economies, but are particularly acute in Europe.

But the problem goes well beyond the fiscal pressures associated with maintaining an adequate defense. Washington has been openly hostile to any resurgence of military power in European, no matter how unlikely that might be, on the basis of what political scientists call hegemonic stability theory. That theory holds that it is better for security to be provided by a single global power than by regional players dealing chiefly with security challenges in their respective neighborhoods. The argument is that such self-sufficiency is dangerous, that it can lead to arms races, regional instability, and even wars. One can think this a smart philosophy or a dumb one, but

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we can't ignore that it has guided U.S. foreign policy at least since the end of the Cold War. **MARCH 8, 2010 7:40 AM**

It could be argued that the costs to the United States of providing such services for the rest of the world are modest, but that is ultimately a judgment call. To be sure, the dollar costs will not bankrupt us as a nation, but Americans spend \$2,700 per person on our military, while the average European spends less than \$700. The bottom line is that Europeans have little incentive to spend more because they don't feel particularly threatened, and they aren't anxious to take on responsibilities that are ably handled by the United States. The advocates of hegemonic stability theory would declare that a feature, not a bug. Mission accomplished.

And that might be true, if the greatest threat to global security were a resurgence of conflict in Europe, and if it is truly in the U.S. interest to forever have allies with few capabilities and many liabilities. But that seems extremely shortsighted. The sweeping political and economic integration in Europe has dramatically reduced the likelihood of another European war. In the meantime, the fact that we have many allies with little to offer by way of military assets, and even less political will to actually use them, is forcing the U.S. military to bear the disproportionate share of the burdens of policing the planet. And in the medium- to long-term, while I doubt that we will be facing "a militarily superior, post-Soviet Russia," allies with usable military power might ultimately serve a purpose if Moscow proves as aggressive (and capable) as the hawks claim.

In short, Secretary Gates's comments last month suggest that he has stumbled upon the realization that being the world's sole superpower has its disadvantages. This by itself would be a significant shift of U.S. policy, and therefore drew favorable comments by others who welcome such a change. (See, for example, [Justin Logan](#), [Steve Walt](#), and [Sean Kay](#).)

Getting Europeans to take a more active role -- even in their own backyard -- will be difficult, but not impossible. It starts with blunt talk about the need to take responsibility and to assume a fair share of the burdens of policing the global commons. But we've heard such comments before. What is also needed is greater restraint by Washington, behavior that over time will force the Europeans to play a more active role.

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It's Our Business Too

By [Col. Robert Killebrew](#)
(U.S. Army, ret.), Consultant

As we all know, Secretary Gates is just the latest in a long line of Secretaries of Defense to ask the Europeans to get serious about their own defense. Even when the Warsaw Pact was at the door, there was considerable angst on this side over NATO defense contributions.

But any longtime observer of the Alliance should be pleasantly surprised that it's held together as well as it has, and that we will shortly have 50,000 NATO troops alongside ours in Afghanistan. Even if many of them operate under instructions that keep them on the combat sidelines, they represent manpower and resources that we or the Afghans would have to replace were they not there. And lest we forget, some of them -- notably but not exclusively the Brits and the Canadians -- have fought hard and have taken heavy losses; that is especially true for Canada and its excellent, if underequipped, forces. The transition of NATO from an exclusively static alliance to an expeditionary one is remarkable, and would have been laughingly dismissed twenty years ago. The new challenges the Alliance faces -- among t...

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The Long And Winding Road

By **Ron Marks**

Senior Vice President for Government Relations, Oxford-Analytica

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The last hit song in the Beatles' extensive music catalog was the "Long and Winding Road." It was a mournful tune about the end of a long relationship. And so we stand with the nations of Western Europe today. As Donald Rumsfeld once said derisively "the Old Europe."

I agree with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. The time has come for the United States to seriously look at our arrangement of alliances around the world; and particularly at NATO and the political and militarily flaccid Western European countries within.

Our current military and diplomatic needs must reflect the realities of the 21st century world. The up and comers like Brazil and India matter far more going forward than a prostrate Germany or a bellicose, but ineffective France. Our interests lie in alliances in the politically and economically vibrant areas of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Let the Western Europeans stir in their own lethargic juices and continue to extend help to those in Eastern Europe who see us as their active ally.

There was inevitability...

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