

Europeans Balk at Their Role in NATO

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Robert Gates' recent public diatribe against the 28 members of NATO (1) who are "consuming security and not producing it," and not doing their fair share in the bloody fighting, is either a warning or harbinger that the relationship between the U.S. and the European nations is changing. European nations are refusing to participate in America's wars, and the U.S. doesn't like it.

The Europeans willingly have played along with the U.S. desire for empire as long as they are called upon to specialize in "soft" humanitarian development with the U.S.'s having to conduct the "hard" combat missions. What is clear is that the needs, both economically and politically, of the 28 nations are going in different directions and there is little unity among NATO members. Europe apparently does not share the U.S. vision of U.S. hegemony and empire.

Since the founding of NATO in 1949 to aid in the defense of Europe as well as to maintain the peace and cooperation in warring Europe after two world wars, its European members have been groomed to support U.S. foreign policy. In effect, what has emerged is a perpetual upside-down Marshall Plan, financed and dominated by the U.S. American taxpayers currently fund 75% of all NATO's military spending. (2) This enables the U.S. to spread its hegemonic designs upon the rest of the world by relying on its European allies under the guise of "defense" of the North Atlantic nations.

While the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) could have developed the pan-European military capacity that would have allowed Europe some semblance of control over its own destiny, the Europeans alternatively opted for "emphasizing institutions rather than actual military capabilities." (3)

This past decade, to again justify its continued existence, NATO has moved away from its rationale of countering the Soviet Union and Eastern block during the Cold War to the "War on Terror" with its never-ending worldwide military exercises and enterprises filling the coffers of American corporations.

One by one, European nations have been brought into the alliance, grabbing at the accoutrements held like a carrot attached to a stick in front of their noses. While the U.S. missile defense system and other military investments have provided a sense of security, jobs, and technology to many countries, today's NATO, with its missile defense program, largely bases its existence on the argument that it can hold Iran aggression in check.

It has been a good deal from the European angle, members agreed to participate in NATO most ostensibly to gain access to the military and intelligence technological windfall that this country offers to its allies -- i.e. as long as the Americans fund the operations, Europeans don't have to engage in the fighting and killing and, there is little loss of European lives.

For the past 60 years, why should the European countries have developed, built and maintained their own military alliance and defense when they could rely on the Americans to do it? Taking and consuming the carrot is much cheaper than providing the know-how and actual hard cost of the

weapons and militarization.

While Gates says, "Part of this predicament stems from a lack of will, much of it from a lack of resources in an era of austerity," he doesn't acknowledge that these countries still have to answer to the concerns of their people who have not been willing to have their youth sacrificed and die at the rate that Americans are willing. It appears that the people of Europe don't want to turn their economies into an expensive military support system for the rich. "National Security" and military hardware don't hold as much sway overseas as they do here. Unlike American policy makers, many Europeans demand (and receive) universal medical care, a safety net, and workers' rights and jobs.

It is an interesting development because, while the U.S. can buy and bully many nations on this globe, it can't do so to the European nations. Europe is not a united states or a confederation; it is, rather, a continent divided up into independent nations that have their own elections. These nations have governments and parties that regularly change; they are separate nations accountable to the people who elected them and not to U.S. military needs. What country could level a full-fledged attack against Europe? It is ridiculous to think that European nations need NATO. European countries could easily withdraw from NATO and leave the U.S. to fight its own wars.

One also can wonder if Europe is playing a passive-aggressive role with the U.S.? Have they hoodwinked the U.S. leaders after all? While each European nation has its own national military forces, and is very willing to play, share, profit to some degree, and learn from the joint NATO skirmishes and exercises around the world, will it emerge leagues ahead of the U.S. in terms of the resources and technological knowledge it has been gaining? Or, on the other hand, by not developing a viable European-wide defense system that meets its own needs, is it thereby not risking the wrath of the developing countries the U.S. wants to dominate?

One thing is certain, the U.S. dictates NATO's policies in accordance with U.S. interests. Gates makes it crystal clear that it "would be a grave mistake for the United States to withdraw from its global responsibilities," including its expanding "engagement in Asia." Gates believes that Europeans should be proud of their role as backers of the U.S. imperialistic objectives throughout the world.

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[1] (See the Department of Defense's article by Jim Garamone, "Two-Tiered NATO 'Unacceptable,'" 6-10-11)

[2] "The U.S. Burden," SF Chronicle, Editorial, p. A13, 6-15-11)

[3] Gordon, Philip H., "NATO After 11 September," Survival, vol. 43, Winter 2000-02, pp. xx-xx

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