



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 9, 2018

NATO Supporters Fear That Trump Threatens the Alliance

Tobias Bunde, head of policy and analysis at the Munich Security Conference, is worried about whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) can survive the presidency of Donald Trump. Bunde added that NATO will “very likely never be defeated by outside forces,” but lamented that the alliance is “undermined from within — by a couple of illiberal governments in the Alliance, and now even by the U.S. president.”



Support for NATO has been a fundamental pillar of American foreign policy since it was founded in 1949, but as NATO leaders gather at its headquarters in Brussels this week, their concern is that the leader of its most powerful member nation, Donald Trump, might launch into renewed criticism of it. Trump said at the G7 summit recently that NATO was “as bad as NAFTA.”

Trump has argued that NAFTA is not in the best interest of the United States, and he is now questioning whether NATO is in the best interest of America.

Imagine that: a president of the United States who puts the interests of the United States first.

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Trump recently wrote to about a dozen NATO members, chastising them for not following through with a pledge made in 2014 to spend two percent of their GDP on their own defense. Currently, only three European countries have managed to achieve this goal. This has led Trump to accuse many NATO allies of expecting America to carry the financial burden of the alliance, treating the United States like “schmucks.”

Tomas Valasek, director of Carnegie Europe, expressed concern that Trump has undermined the ability of NATO to deter potential aggressor nations, stating: “We’ve had violent falling outs over Libya, Iraq in 2003, but it’s qualitatively different in that the biggest of the allies doesn’t just have disagreements with us, but actually seems willing to walk away.”

Should the United States “walk away” from NATO? Following his election, Trump raised eyebrows when he referred to NATO as “obsolete.”

NATO was formed in a different era, in the aftermath of World War II, as the Stalin-led Soviet Union brought many countries in eastern Europe behind the tyranny of the “Iron Curtain” — nations such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. The Russian war machine appeared to many in the West poised to sweep across western Europe as well, taking over the western part of Germany, France, and perhaps even Great Britain.

Certainly, that was the stated reason given for creating the extraordinary NATO alliance, and an attack upon one of its members was considered an attack upon all of its members, thus telling Stalin that he would face the military might of the United States should he attempt to expand the Soviet empire westward.



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It is vitally important to understand, however, that NATO also had a deeper purpose, which was to end forever America's traditional non-interventionist foreign policy and tie us to Europe. And as long as the Russian Bear was a military threat, Europeans could count on the United States being heavily involved in Europe's affairs — and wars.

But as Jeane Kirkpatrick explained in 1990, "There is no mystical American 'mission,' or purpose to be 'found' independently of the U.S. Constitution," which was only to "provide for the common defense" of the United States — not Europe.

According to President Kennedy's biographer, Richard Reeves, when President Dwight Eisenhower left office in 1961, he urged the incoming president, John Kennedy, to begin the withdrawal of America troops from the continent. "America is carrying far more than her share of the free world defense," Eisenhower said then.

It is difficult to see as to how this is substantially different from what Trump has asserted: "The countries aren't paying what they're supposed to pay."

As Kirkpatrick stated in 1990, "Foreign policy becomes a major aspect of a society only if its government is expansionist, imperial, aggressive, or when it is threatened by aggression."

It is possible to believe that the argument of Kirkpatrick's scholarly essay could be repeated by Trump today (although certainly in a different style and tone than Kirkpatrick) when she observed, "The United States performed heroically in a time when heroism is required," but "the time when America should bear such unusual burdens is past. With the return of 'normal' times we can again become a normal nation."

No wonder Pat Buchanan has called Kirkpatrick the "the good Neocon."

And nearly 60 years after Eisenhower suggested it was time for American forces to come home from Europe, perhaps it is time for Americans to quit being treated, in Trump's articulate words, as "schmucks."



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