

EU's Plan to Bolster Own Defence Makes Sense Amid US Foreign Policy Shift

By Conrad Black

The European Union has just announced an [800 billion-euro](#) expansion of military expenses over the next five years. To achieve this objective, member states are being excused from observing the EU guidelines on avoidance of deficit financing, and a special program is being established by the union itself with a loan of 150 billion euros to individual members to assist them in meeting newly raised requirements for collective defense.

This, like the robust European response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine—which has largely gone unnoticed due to the Trump administration's complaints that the United States has been paying an inordinate share of the cost of the war—demonstrates that the European ambition to retain its independence and be a substantial force in the world is greater than was readily appreciated, both in Russia and North America.



A German Air Force soldier prepares a vehicle before a convoy leaves to transport Patriot mobile defence surface-to-air missile systems to Poland from Gnoien, Germany, on Jan. 23, 2023. Annegret Hilse/Reuters

The European Union on balance has been a disappointment. Twenty years ago, its collective GDP was approximately equal to that of the United States, [and today](#) it is only about half of U.S. GDP. Part of this uncompetitive result is the defection of the United Kingdom from the EU, but the great majority of European underperformance is due to overregulation, excessive taxation, and the compulsive massaging about income in [Danegeld](#) to the working class and the small farmer.

The reasons for this expensive placebo for the masses of Europe can be easily understood by anyone with even a cursory knowledge of European history. But as the recent German elections indicate—and even the hesitant efforts of the Macron regime in France confirm—and as Italian prime minister Giorgio Meloni has proclaimed, a course correction is necessary to assure European economic growth and a rising standard of living. Europe is also in desperate need of a higher birth rate among the majority nationalities, or at least the ability to attract assimilable immigration, to ensure that the old continent does not succumb to either geriatric perils or the agitation of immigrant communities actively hostile to the societies into which they have moved.

The shift in U.S. foreign policy being enacted by the Trump administration—though it could have been better enunciated, particularly in respect to Canada—is a logical response to the evolution of strategic events in the world since the end of the Cold War 35 years ago.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew Western Europe well and was fluent in French and German, and his family's considerable fortune was derived from trading in the Far East. Roosevelt saw that if there wasn't an American presence in Western Europe and the Far East, the entire mass of Eurasia would be in danger of falling into the hands of regimes hostile to democracy, and the security of the Americas would be at risk every generation. He was the chief architect of the strategy that led to the Soviet Union bearing a disproportionate burden in World War II. Among the [Big Three allied powers](#)—the USSR, USA, and British Empire—the Soviet Union endured over 90 percent of the casualties and 95 percent of the physical damage in subduing Nazi Germany. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Americans occupied or liberated France, Italy, Japan, and most of Germany, and the USSR gained a temporary and widely resented occupation of Eastern European countries of lesser strategic value, which they were committed to evacuate.

The allied powers pledged at Tehran and Yalta to assure absolutely free democratic elections in all liberated countries and to evacuate all of them except Germany. The Western allies fulfilled their pledges, the Soviet Union did not, and the Cold War began. But with a strong American presence in Western Europe and the Far East, the American-devised strategy of "[containment](#)" of the Soviet Union was successful, and the Communist Bloc disintegrated after 45 years without a shot being exchanged between it and the Western powers. The United States devised the successful containment strategy and implemented it, but it must be said that allied leaders contributed importantly to the victory of the West. Margaret Thatcher, Pope John Paul II, Helmut Kohl, Francois Mitterand, Brian Mulroney, and in their time, Charles de Gaulle, Konrad Adenauer, and Giulio Andreotti all contributed importantly to the Western victory in the Cold War.

The United States has no natural ambition to be involved in

other parts of the world; its only concern is not to be threatened. Unlike empires built on steady expansion like Rome or colonial projection like Britain and France, the United States populated and developed the great center of North America, but beyond that has never remained long in any place where its presence was not desired, as it demonstrated in Cuba and the Philippines. It has absolutely no desire to maintain a large military presence in Europe, and only did so to keep potential threats far away from its own shores. That was a strategic policy that commended itself in days when Germany was, as far as the Anglo-French democracies were concerned, an unreliable and potentially dangerous country. It was long a truism to say that Germany was too late unified, had never determined if it was an Eastern or Western-facing country, and could not assure its own security without frightening or violating its neighbors.

President Eisenhower overcame the resistance of Mr. Churchill and of the French government in bringing West Germany into NATO and approving its partial rearmament in 1954–55. President Reagan and President George H.W. Bush were essential to the reunification of Germany, which Prime Minister Thatcher, President Mitterand, and President Gorbachev favored; only the United States had no fear of a united Germany. Now that Germany is comfortable in the cocoon of economic and military allies, and all the states that were its mortal enemies to the West are its allies now, Western Europe has four or five times the economic strength of a Russia that only contains half of the population of the old Soviet Union. And Western Europe can easily match and surpass Russia in military capacity.

The United States is now responding to the threat from China, as it did to the threat from the Soviet Union, by assembling a containment strategy. To be maximally effective, this will include Russia as well as India, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, and,

depending on events, Taiwan. Europe and America, though their relations should always be cordial, do not need each other as they did when the USSR was threatening all of them. Europe is not a serious force in the Pacific, and its military role should now be to ensure the security of Western and Central Europe and maintain a general alliance with the advanced countries of the Commonwealth, the United States, and its Pacific allies. Ideally, NATO would be reconfigured as a worldwide defensive alliance of democratic countries.

But in the meantime, Europe is absolutely correct to assure its own defense—which it has the means and the technical ability to do—and those European countries that wish political integration should achieve it while those that wish to retain their sovereignty should do so in alliance with federal Europe, the UK, as well as Canada and the United States.

Beneath all the bluster and posturing, international relations are devolving sensibly.

First published in the [Epoch Times](#)