



Did Globalization, Nationalism, and Climate Change Functionally End the Transatlantic Alliance?

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During the Cold War, the Transatlantic Relationship (the post-World War II aligned “western democracies”) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) faced a common enemy that required members to minimize disagreements to focus on the threat from the Soviet Union, the spread of communism, and its iron grip on Eastern Europe. Other than a few hot button issues like the placement of cruise missiles in the 1980s, the bond between members remained strong no matter which political party or coalition governed member countries. With the fall of the Soviet Union that finally brought freedom for Eastern Europe and new members to NATO in the 1990s and the 2000s, NATO’s purpose seemed to have ended. Yet, it remained in existence.

As new members joined, two other events occurred that would eventually threaten the existence of the Transatlantic Relationship and NATO. First, China gained entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, thereby ushering in the globalization of trade and access to both a billion-person market for exports and hundreds of millions of cheap laborers for manufacturing inexpensive imports. Secondly, climate change became a growing issue for progressives in America and their bedfellows along the more nuanced political spectrum in Europe, which resulted in a war on carbon-based energy in many member countries. Those two events contributed to the rise in nationalism throughout the Transatlantic Relationship, as citizens pushed back on the elite’s drive for a global solution (e.g., the Yellow Vest protests in France; election of Donald Trump in America).

President Trump acknowledged this rising nationalism in his inaugural address by stating: “We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world, but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first.” Many criticized Trump’s nationalism, but, as with much about Trump, he was more an effect of global changes than the cause. For example, it was nationalism that spurred both France and Germany to oppose George W. Bush’s war in Iraq and saw their leaders overtly campaign for reelection on anti-Americanism because of lucrative commercial ties both countries had with Iraq.

Nearly twenty years later, the convergence of globalism, nationalism, and climate change is undermining alliances and the ties that bind us following World Wars I and II. If America and Europe cannot find common cause against global threats emanating from Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, then one must ask whether NATO should continue to exist in its current form and with its current members and whether the Transatlantic Relationship has become little

more than verbiage to warm the hearts of diplomats and those of us fond of the Transatlantic Relationship.

Some might argue that the current crisis between Ukraine and Russia shows NATO's continued relevance, but that argument overlooks the obvious tensions within NATO concerning Germany's growing relationship with Russia and its hesitancy to unequivocally support NATO action vis-à-vis Russia's clearly provocative actions against Ukraine. Moreover, it ignores the entire ongoing debate within America about whether Ukraine presents any national security interest worthy of U.S. action and whether Russia remains a threat to Europe writ large versus just its near abroad. Russia may possess the nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union, but it isn't the Soviet Union.

Globalism Created a Zero-Sum Trade Game Focused on China

Following China's entry into the WTO in 2001, every country raced to take advantage of China's consumer market and its cheap labor. Due diligence and caution went out the window as access to China was made dependent upon sharing Intellectual Property (IP) and technology with Chinese "partner" companies. Not surprisingly, companies with ties to the communist Chinese government arose using that IP and technology – and in some cases after outright corporate espionage – to undermine the foreign companies that had entered China.

China's enormous market and cheap labor caused western companies and politicians to overlook its mercantilism, IP rights theft, and human rights abuses. The simple goal was to export as many higher end products and services like luxury cars and consultants to China to keep things humming at home, while also importing lower end goods like trinkets and clothes to keep shelves stocked and prices down.

Just in the last year we've seen corporations like Nike, Coca-Cola, and the National Basketball Association prostrate themselves to China and ignore China's ethnic cleansing of Uighurs at the same time those companies lecture Americans about the woke Black Lives Matter movement. The current Winter Olympics being held in China is more of the same, as corporations conveniently put on blinders to China's human rights abuses and media companies adopt China's spin on its actions. This trade with blinders focus worked wonderfully until people realized there was a steep cost to playing with China.

In America's Rust Belt, entire physical manufacturing plants were literally taken apart bolt-by-bolt, shipped to China, and rebuilt, which left entire communities with high unemployment and little hope. Making this disaster even worse was the shutdown of coal-fired power and steel plants and the coal mines that fed those plants. China helped alleviate that mass suffering with the flow of fentanyl through Mexico, contributing to the massive opioid epidemic in which the Rust Belt became Ground Zero. With overdose deaths approaching one million since 2010, many of these blue-collar unionized communities ditched the Democratic Party and placed their hopes in the tough-talking, populist Trump.

Similar trends occurred across Europe in which citizens increasingly demanded results from elected officials, especially against the vice grip comprised of the impacts of globalization and the influx of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. The Brexit vote in the United Kingdom was fundamentally all about taking back powers ceded to the European Union following years of economic decline for the middle class and poor.

Now, so many American and European companies are either handcuffed to China due to manufacturing plants there or have supply chains almost entirely dependent upon Chinese companies that taking tough stances against the Chinese government has become extremely difficult. Even when a leader like Trump was willing to take aggressive stances against China, European countries refused to support him because they dare not risk endangering their trade with China. As a result, China operates with little fear from its dependent corporate clients in America and Europe. Concerns over China's actions vis-à-vis Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Uighurs increasingly fall on deaf ears, as keeping trade with China matters more than ensuring democracy in Taiwan for thirty million Asians and stopping the ethnic cleansing of a religious minority.

Even after it looks more and more likely that China created the COVID-19 strain at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (with the U.S. apparently funding the gain-of-function research) and failed to prevent its escape from the lab resulting in the deaths of millions and massive global economic harm, neither America nor Europe has responded in any way diplomatically or economically. Trump's aggressive stance on China was rejected by European leaders. This nonresponse comes even after we know that, in the first four-to-six weeks upon learning about COVID-19, China stopped travel from the Hubei Province to the rest of China while allowing international travel to America and Europe to continue without restriction, which ensured it would rapidly spread across the globe. It also comes despite China refusing to share key documents and information with investigators and guaranteeing that no comprehensive forensic investigation of COVID-19, as done with every other deadly virus, will ever be possible.

Given the enormous trade that occurs between countries, it does not appear America and several key European countries will set aside trade with China and unite to confront the Chinese government over its economic and human rights abuses or its role in the COVID-19 pandemic. The fracturing of the Transatlantic Relationship over trade with China grows each passing month, as allied countries try to outmaneuver each other, thereby emboldening the Chinese government.

Nationalism Widened Gaps in the Alliance as Citizens Demanded Accountability

Most famously, Trump heralded the concern of American taxpayers over the cost they bore to fund NATO and the defense of Europe. This concern has only increased as Germany moves to become further enmeshed with Russia despite the entire point of NATO being to protect Europe from Russia. Americans simply don't understand why they largely must fund NATO to protect Europeans from Russia while European countries fail to meet the defense spending requirement of NATO and, worse, increase ties to the petrostate thug Vladimir Putin. There is a

direct line from German Social Democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's positions on Russia to his post-chancellorship appointment on the boards overseeing Nord Stream 1, Nord Stream 2, Rosneft, and Gazprom. This line still reverberates within German's Social Democrat Party.

The fact of the matter is Trump, like his predecessor Barack Obama, was right to demand more from NATO members who were not meeting the 2% defense funding requirement. It frankly has more to do with possessing the capabilities to project power as a continent less dependent on U.S. help than ensuring NATO as a group is spending enough money on defense. After all, if each country is spending properly on defense, then not only is NATO as a group stronger and more capable, but each country will possess more than diplomats to rein in despots. As President Ronald Reagan famously maintained: "Peace through strength." Not one European country can project power against Russia or China without substantial American intelligence and military support. That is a significant problem for Europe.

With the increasing rise of China and its hostile military ambitions extending far beyond Chinese waters, America must reprioritize its defense priorities and assets to meet that threat. As noted above, every leader is putting what is best for his or her country vis-à-vis trade with China ahead of NATO unity and the Transatlantic Relationship. Such a nationalistic approach by each allied country, while expected, is, frankly, short-term thinking. China's aim is global domination, which is no different a threat to free people than the Soviet Union was during the Cold War. If we cannot unite around that threat and reform existing institutions like NATO to meet that threat, then the Transatlantic Relationship will become little more than a tourism-focused friendship.

Given the political pressure from citizens and businesses for China-driven imports and exports, it simply may be too late to expect America and Europe to disentangle trade from China in order to reduce dependencies so that, together, they can confront China as they so successfully did the Soviet Union.

Climate Change Increased Dependencies on Rogue Regimes Further Damaging Unity

Can you imagine how European leaders would have reacted and treated Trump/America had he done the following acts:

- Assassinated with deadly radiation poisoning Alexander Litvinenko in London, which left dangerous traces of polonium across London;
- Attempted to assassinate with deadly radiation poisoning Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, which left dangerous traces of polonium in Salisbury that poisoned a police officer;
- Assassinated Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Berlin via gunshots;
- Invaded parts of Mexico and Canada (i.e., Ukraine and Georgia);
- Killed dozens of journalists in America equivalent to Anna Politkovskaya; and

- Routinely jailed opposition leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer (i.e., Alexander Navalny).

Rest assured, European leaders rightfully would have loudly condemned Trump, isolated him diplomatically, decreased ties to America during his presidency, and used supranational organizations to minimize his power. Few, if any, of them would have given Trump any credibility.

Yet, Putin has done those very acts and paid no real price for doing so. Even more shocking, after committing those acts, some European countries have **strengthened** ties to Putin/Russia, as most vividly demonstrated by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that will **increase** Germany's and Europe's natural gas dependency on Russia. Such fecklessness clearly has emboldened Putin to the point he can deploy over a hundred and ninety thousand troops and weapons on the border of Ukraine without any consequences other than threatened economic sanctions – though Germany seems lukewarm to even those measures.

This madness is being driven because of Europe's zeal to reduce carbon emissions by eliminating the use of coal, shutting down nuclear power plants, and ceasing energy exploration and production in lieu of wind turbines and solar panels that do little good when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine. As Bjorn Lomborg has noted, far more people die from cold than from heat every year, with longitudinal data showing twenty times more. Can anyone fathom what would have happened had Western Europe intentionally made itself more dependent on the Soviet Union for key resources during the Cold War?

At the same time, upon taking control, the Biden Administration squandered the energy independence achieved under Trump and reenergized Barack Obama's "war on carbon" by shutting down pipelines, limiting exploration and production, bullying Wall Street to defund carbon-based energy companies, and pulling permits and federal leases previously granted. Even worse, in order to appease Germany, Biden removed Trump's sanctions that had stopped completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Opening the valve to let natural gas flow now only rests upon the backbone of a Russian-dependent Germany.

The result of this Transatlantic Relationship war on carbon: skyrocketing oil and natural gas prices in American and Europe due to supply constraints, as well as higher prices for consumers to drive their cars and heat their homes. The only winners are Putin, China, and Middle East despots.

Is There a Future for NATO and the Transatlantic Relationship?

As the response to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine demonstrates, it is difficult to achieve unity within the Transatlantic Relationship and NATO. The fact that the United Kingdom flies around German airspace to deliver weapons to Ukraine or that Germany stops Estonia from shipping weapons to Ukraine or that Germany and France will agree to meeting with Russia and Ukraine without America involved vividly shows the challenges with keeping NATO members

aligned. It often appears European counties only want America involved when it is convenient for them or saves them money, but will toss America to the side when it benefits them politically or commercially. American taxpayers simply will not tolerate such behavior and still be expected to largely fund NATO.

The same analysis applies to China. Our European allies seek to gain trade advantages from China that undercut America. Yet, those same countries want the American military to provide them security when needed. Those two facts cannot continue to exist at the same time. America and Europe should enter a free trade agreement that is truly free from tariffs and subsidies then use access to our combined markets to make the world safer and global trade freer.

United, our markets, money, and militaries can make a real difference. Divided, our opponents can weaken us via zero sum trade and foreign affair policies. America cannot fight in both Europe and Asia if Russia and China continue to divide America's military focus due to its current obligations under NATO and its desire to keep China boxed within the South China Sea.

If NATO is to survive in the 21st century, either it must unite against Russia or make its existence and membership about something other than Russia. With the Russia-China partnership, NATO members cannot compartmentalize their policies by seeing Russia as a threat, but China as a reliable trade partner. If the Transatlantic Relationship is going to thrive, it must reduce the influence of globalization, nationalism, and climate change zealotry so that each member's agenda on trade and decarbonization are balanced more properly by the security and freedom of its members. Making America and Europe dependent on dictators and despots for key goods is utter madness.

The future of both the Transatlantic Relationship and NATO depends on America and Europe being more than nice places to vacation and study abroad programs for their citizens.