

Le Bull in La French China Shop. Macron and Trump

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Asked if President Donald Trump's highly critical tweets about French president Emmanuel Macron were unpleasant and inelegant, Macron elegantly replied, 'you summed up everything.'

Yes, they were unpleasant and inelegant, to put it mildly. Worse, Trump's tweet barrage came on the same day France was commemorating the murder of 130 Parisians by gunmen in 2015. A senior French press official claimed Trump 'lacked common decency.' Making matters worse, Trump refused to show up at a graveside memorial for American GI's killed in the bloody, 1918 Belleau Wood battle. He went the following day to another memorial closer to Paris.

A major faux pas, Monsieur le President Trump. You need some foreign policy pros instead of the amateur ideologues who have made a huge mess of the nation's affairs and image.

This row arose after Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg and called for a common European army to 'complement' NATO.

Earlier, Chancellor Merkel stated that Europe could no longer depend on the US for its protection.

Merkel's frank talk was clearly a slap in the face to the prickly Trump, whose aggressive policies have put the US in confrontation with Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, Venezuela, Cuba and much of the Muslim world.

In effect, Germany and France, Europe's two big powers, were declaring independence from US hegemony seven decades after the end of World War II. Many Europeans – and certainly Germans – consider their nations still militarily and politically occupied by the American Imperium. How else could the US National Security spy agency (NSA) get away with tapping Angela Merkel's cell phone with nary a German protest?

Given Russia's military and financial feebleness (a defense budget less than one tenth of the US), what reason is there for a major US military presence from Spain to the Baltic and Black Sea? There are still US military bases in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany (34 bases), Belgium, Holland, Britain, Turkey, Denmark, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Kosovo, Greece and soon Poland.

Large parts of Europe are still militarily occupied by the US. Amazingly, the European Union, the world's most important economic power, has very little self-defense capability. Instead, the US-runs and finances the lion's share of NATO. Just as during the old Cold War, the Warsaw Pact was run from Moscow, so NATO is directed by Washington, and is a major

component of US global power.

Nations that do not have their own military forces have very little sovereignty. Costa Rica is one charming exception. Great powers like France, Britain and Germany must command a good portion of their own military forces or join them in a common armed force. This is what Merkel and Macron were proposing, to Trump's fury.

During the 1950's, Europeans agreed to NATO as much in fear of a recurrence of the horrors of two European wars as fear of Soviet invasion, though the latter was very real at the time. Even the Swiss built fortifications designed to stop an invasion by the Soviet Red Army, and France began work to up-gun and reinforce the Maginot Line defenses.

The angry Trump fired back by reminding France that it was rescued in two world wars by the United States, had major economic problems, and could not trust the Germans. This is a favorite theme of French-hating, know-nothing conservatives and neocons. I suspect their hatred of France comes from being mistreated as tourists by rude waiters in Paris restaurants and sneered at by snooty French as uncultured boors and rustics. Trump's core supporters – Evangelical Christians – mostly regard French and other Europeans as degenerate, godless, Christian-haters.

They conveniently forget, or don't know, that French soldiers and sailors delivered decisive victories over British forces during the American Revolution. A key cause of the French Revolution was national bankruptcy caused by King Louis' heavy spending on military help to the US war of independence.

When I'm in Metz, France, I always go to salute the statue of the Marquis de Lafayette who led French forces helping the American Revolution. Without French help, Americans might be today caught up in the ghastly Brexit mess.

NATO provides huge geopolitical influence to Washington and enormous amounts of military sales. Small wonder the US rages when any mention of an independent European military is voiced. The idea assails America's domination of Europe and the use of NATO to impose its will on the Mideast, Africa and western Asia.

Ironically, Trump's evident hatred for Europe and calls by his neocon Praetorian Guard for the US to dominate the entire globe have made Europe turn away from its old subservience to Washington and talk about real independence. But building true Euro-armed forces will be frightfully expensive and politically fraught. Watching EU squabbles over farm laws and other economic issues hardly inspires confidence. But the EU must have its own defense capabilities if it is to escape permanent thralldom to the United States.

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