

The Unrightful Removal of US Troops from Germany

To begin, I must establish a position of condemning excessive involvement of foreign powers in the governments, military, and cultural practices of other, often less powerful nations. In my opinion, historically, no such action ever had a positive outcome for the latter party. For example, this “helpful” but secretly dominating practice can be seen in situations such as the continued Western involvement in African nations long after they were granted independence: the relationships between powerful countries such as the United States and Russia, and resource-rich nations in the sub-Saharan continent are more often than not only truly beneficial to the ones who hold the most power, as they use friendship to reap the benefits that the former did not sow. This, of course, is not to directly compare the US-German troop withdrawal to the remnants of colonialism in Africa, but I believe that this discussion illustrated my point that the deep intermingling of nations often comes at a price.

Considering that U.S. troops already were present in Germany post-Cold War and their presence has only been gradually reduced since then,¹ the idea of removing this foreign involvement is off the table. Of course, some individuals, like Łucja Cannon, may say that this removal of troops might support my belief condemning too much foreign involvement. The catch, though, is that the “removal” is more of a “relocation,” as about 1,000 of the 9,500 troops that are being withdrawn from Germany are expected to be relocated to Poland,² perpetuating unnecessary foreign involvement. It is for this reason that I fundamentally disagree with the position that Cannon takes when saying that the relocation is a “timely readjustment.”³ In addition, looking at the history of Russian or Kremlin involvement in the general business of foreign nations that were not already taken underneath the wing of the United States, so to say, I believe it is logical to accept the lesser evil and use the present U.S. involvement in Germany to deter Russian influence, as Ian Brzeziński observes in his article.

Accepting and arguing for Brzeziński’s position as representing the lesser evil, it is necessary to further develop the point regarding the dangers of leaving a nation around Russian presence without a deterring force. A prime example of this would be the 2014 annexation of Crimea, where no U.S. troops were present in the area prior to the conflict which resulted from a “disputed referendum” to join the Russian Federation.⁴ I imagine that no such issue (or at least not to such a great scale) would have occurred with a U.S. presence deterring the perpetrator.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-approves-plan-to-withdraw-one-third-of-us-troops-from-germany/2020/06/05/987b2d38-a775-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html

² <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/06/24/1000-more-us-troops-to-poland-as-trump-and-duda-discuss-natos-eastern-flank/>

³ [3] <https://amgreatness.com/2020/06/19/troop-pullout-from-germany-is-a-timely-readjustment/>

⁴ <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>

Moving to the economic aspect of the issue at hand, President Donald Trump has cited one of his reasons for the withdrawing of 9,500 troops from Germany as the “delinquency” in German spending compared to other NATO nations.⁵ According to official NATO data from November 2019, his claims seem to be correct: while the U.S. has been projected to spend 3.42% of its GDP for defense in 2019, Germany has only been projected to spend 1.38%.⁶ Looking at the debate at hand strictly financially, the withdrawal of troops makes sense -- there should be no reason for countries, especially those as powerful and wealthy as Germany, to almost consistently perform below NATO guidelines when it comes to expenditure. The issue here is that no conflict or debate should be looked at from a strictly financial point of view. Yes, German officials might not be prioritizing meeting the NATO expenditure guidelines, but circling back to my previous point regarding limiting foreign influence, I believe that the best solution would be leaving troops where they were stationed in Germany, for the sake of nations that may not necessarily need this foreign intervention. This is not to say that all intervention is bad, but it should rather be carefully evaluated by the nation accepting aid (in any form) whether it is truly necessary.

In conclusion, the points that resonated with me the most were those made by Ian Brzeziński, speaking out against the Trump administration’s withdrawal of troops from Germany. Of course, this is not to say that Łucja Cannon made points that could be flat-out dismissed, but her interpretation of NATO security and strong backing on financial aspects of the situation cause me to lean away from fully agreeing with what she writes.

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⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/30/trump-approves-plan-to-withdraw-9500-us-forces-from-germany.html>

⁶ https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_pr-2019-123-en.pdf