

July 15, 2018 – SPENGLER

It's Spengler Day. Spengler was the pseudonym of David Goldman who originally wrote for the Asia Times. He has a column now in Pajamas Media. His first essay is; Israel Shows What Alliances Are For.

A residual rancor against America's \$3 billion military aid budget to Israel still can be detected in the corners of the conservative movement. Yes, Israel is the only democracy in the region, and yes, Israel is an American ally, but Israel is out for Israel's interests just as America is out for America's interest -- so why should American taxpayers subsidize the powerful and prosperous Jewish state?

Never mind that the \$3 billion in military aid amounts to a Pentagon subsidy for American arms manufacturers. Never mind also that Israeli military technology and intelligence make an enormous (and largely untold) contribution to American security.

There's a reason to maintain alliances in the cold light of Realpolitik which conservative isolationists refuse to consider: Allies can do things that we want done at much less risk to us and at far lower cost than if we were to do them directly.

Israel has substantially reduced Iran's military capacity in Syria, for example, and has done so without provoking a confrontation with Russia. If the United States were to use its own planes to bomb Iranian installations in Syria, that would constitute a direct challenge to Russia's presence in the country, and lead to a strategic confrontation that we do not want (and the isolationists want least of anyone). But Israel can do so, because Israel is no threat to Russia, and Israeli bombing raids in Syria do not humiliate the Kremlin. Israeli action keeps the matter on the local level, rather than escalating it to a matter of global tension. ...

.. the United States gets enormous benefits by locking Israel into American weapons systems. First of all, Israel's military R&D makes a huge contribution to our security. Its anti-rocket system, Iron Dome, was a minor miracle that the Pentagon did not believe possible at the time. More importantly, it aligns Israel with American interests, and encourages Israel to continue to take risks on our behalf.

All of the above should be obvious to anyone who knows the basic facts. President Donald Trump understands it clearly, and has done more than any American president to foster the Israeli-American alliance since Harry Truman recognized the new Jewish state in 1948. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that isolationists who still grumble about our alliance with Israel are victims of an ugly obsession.

Appearing in Asia Times, he says NATO's problem is that Europeans won't fight.

It is refreshing to hear an American president call the Europeans out for the sybarites and deadbeats they are

President Trump outraged European opinion by denouncing his allies on the far side of the Atlantic for their failure to meet NATO's spending target of 2% of GDP.

Other alliance members, he added, should spend 4% of their output on defense, just like America does. His dudgeon at the Europeans was more than justified: the Europeans really are deadbeats who don't pay their fair share of the cost of defending their own countries and leave the burden in the hands of American soldiers and taxpayers.

Trump's remonstrations will fall on deaf ears. Why should Europeans spend money on arms, when they have no intention of using them?

A recent opinion poll found that small minorities in the core European members of NATO were willing to fight for their country under any circumstances. ...

... Something more than Locke's notion of a mutual protection society is required if we are to justify the state's monopoly of violence, its right to imprison or kill criminals at home, and to demand of its young people that they shed blood in its defense. The state must be imbued with a sense of the sacred and must stand surety for the continuity of our lives with those of generations that follow. It must preserve a heritage and a culture that allows our words and deeds to speak to future generations just as those of our ancestors speak to us.

Today's Europe is something of a Lockean dystopia: It is composed of individuals concerned mainly about their own hedonic enjoyments, who want the government to protect them from want and disease, but have no desire whatever to defend their nations, which are on a slow boat to extinction in any event.

It is refreshing to hear an American president call the Europeans out for the sybarites and deadbeats they are, rather than repeat the old cant about the glories of the Atlantic Alliance and the gallantry of America's allies.

Then he suggests that Trump could be one of our country's great foreign policy presidents.

Below I repost Uwe Parpart's Asia Times analysis of the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore. Liberal media is aghast at the president's rough handling of Canadian boy-band frontman Justin Trudeau, and his confrontational approach overall at the Group of Seven summit. When the dust settles, though, Trump may accomplish what eluded Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama: a stabler and safer world without the need for millions of American boots on the ground. He well may go down in history as one of our great foreign policy presidents. It's not in the bag, but it is within sight. ...

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Pajamas Media - Spengler

Israel Shows What Alliances Are For

by David P. Goldman

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Israel has been doing this for almost half a century. In 1982, Israel's air force shot down almost 100 Russian-built fighters flown by the Syrian air force in what was dubbed "the Beqaa Valley turkey shoot." A combination of new American look down/shoot down radar and Israeli drone technology and other new technologies developed by America and Israel turned top-of-the-line Russian aircraft into junk. If the United States had done this to a Russian ally, it would have meant war. When Israel did it ostensibly on its own account, though, the Russians watched in stupefaction and silence. That was a turning point in the Cold War: the Russians understood immediately that they could not control the skies in a conventional war, and that Western air superiority nullified their vast investments in manpower and tanks on the Central Front.

Communism collapsed because Russia's generals understood that massive American investments in frontier military technology, including missile defense, would give America an

insuperable advantage. Russia was already spending up to a quarter of its national output on defense and simply couldn't compete.

That is what motivated the Gorbachev reforms that cracked the foundation of Communism.

The cheapest and most cost-effective investment America made through the whole of the Cold War was military aid to Israel.

Iran is one of America's biggest worries today. One rogue nuclear state, namely North Korea, has given us endless headaches; a second rogue nuclear state controlled by the mad mullahs of Tehran would be worse. We do not want to invade Iran, as the isolationists fear, but we need to contain it. Israel is doing a great deal of our dirty work for us, at risk to its own military personnel, and at considerable risk to its own civilian population, which lives under the shadow of 120,000 rockets pointed at it by Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese cat's paw. Israel's adroit diplomacy and superb military capacity help us navigate a geopolitical minefield, avoiding a dangerous and unnecessary confrontation with Russia.

The optimal way to deal with Iran is to help bring down the Islamist regime. Iran is rotting from the inside, like the old Soviet Union, but much worse and much faster. Regimes do not simply fall of their own weight, however. They must be humiliated in a way that persuades some insiders that the smart money is on a fast exit. In Iran's case, the mullahs taxed the creaking domestic economy to fund massive foreign commitments in Syria, as I documented a year ago in *Asia Times*. The beating that Israel has given the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps and its motley mercenary army in Syria humiliates the regime, and contributes to the overall goal of regime change. No American boots on the ground, and probably no American planes in the air, will be required. That's what the Israeli alliance contributes.

The old canard that American backing for Israel alienated prospective allies in the Arab world has disappeared, now that the Sunni Arab states find themselves in a de facto *alliance with Israel* against Shi'ite Iran. The argument always was silly -- the Arabs respect strength and loyalty to allies, not flattery -- but now it simply has been superseded by events.

To be sure, Israel's economy is sufficiently large that the elimination of U.S. military aid would not make a great deal of difference. But the United States gets enormous benefits by locking Israel into American weapons systems. First of all, Israel's military R&D makes a huge contribution to our security. Its anti-rocket system, Iron Dome, was a minor miracle that the Pentagon did not believe possible at the time. More importantly, it aligns Israel with American interests, and encourages Israel to continue to take risks on our behalf.

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Asia Times - Spengler

NATO's Problem is That Europeans Won't Fight

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by David P. Goldman

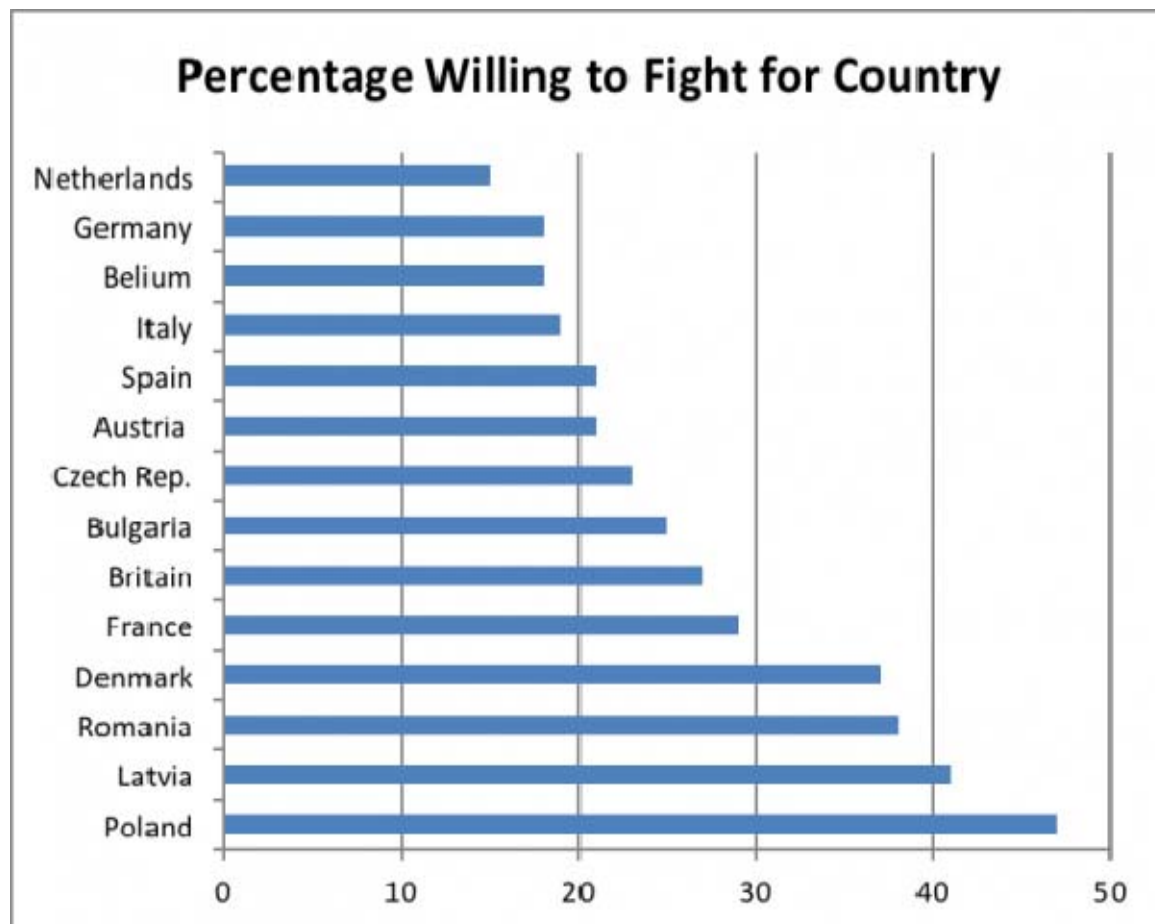
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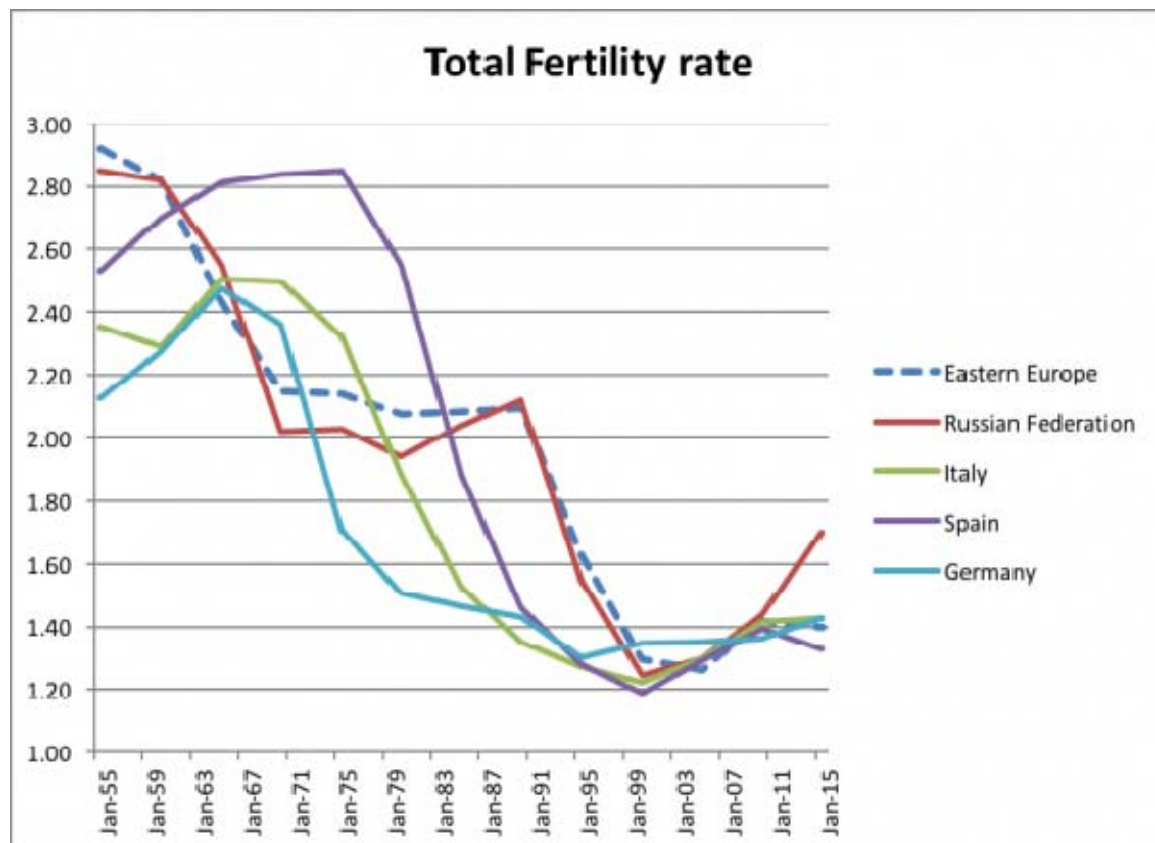
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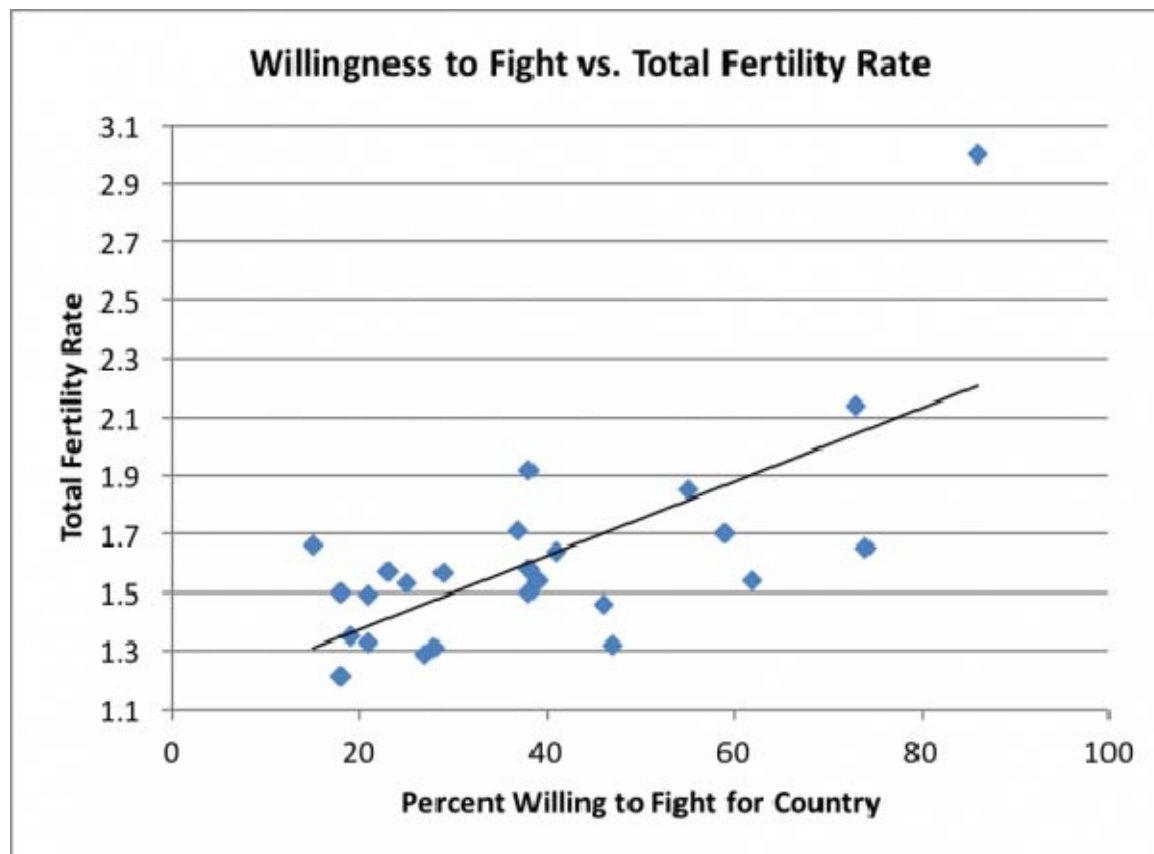
At the bottom of the rankings were the Netherlands and Germany, at 16% and 18% respectively; at the top was Poland, with 48%. Outside of European NATO, 56% of Russians, 66% of Israelis, 44% of Americans and 74% of Finns said they were willing to fight. The Israeli number reflects the diffidence of Israeli Arabs, who comprise about one fifth of the population. One wonders what would happen if Finland were to invade the Netherlands.

If you don't plan to fight, you don't need weapons, and it is no surprise that Germany, with its budget surplus, can't bring itself to vote for urgently-needed funds for its military. Germany's armed forces are in disrepair; a German brigade designated to lead a NATO rapid response force has only nine of the 44 tanks it requires and only four of the country's military aircraft are combat ready.

If there's nothing you're willing to die for, there's probably nothing you're willing to live for, either, I argued in a 2014 essay on the hundredth anniversary of the First World War (see "Musil and Meta-Musil"). It should be no surprise that there is a reasonably close correspondence between the willingness of the Europeans to fight for their nations and their willingness to have children. If you care so little for your country that you will not defend it, you are likely to be too absorbed in hedonistic distraction to bother with children. Conversely, if there are to be no future generations, who will lay down his life to fight for them?



The chart below compares the total fertility for European countries (and adds Israel for good measure; that's the lonely dot in the upper-right-hand quadrant). The r^2 of regression is about 50%, with significance at the 99.9% confidence level.



Russia is indeed a potential threat to NATO, although the likelihood of a Russian attack on any NATO member is vanishingly small for the interim. The Russians are willing to fight, unlike the Western Europeans. Coincidentally, Russia's total fertility rate has recovered remarkably and now stands about 1.7 children per female, close to that of the United States – and from the available Pew Survey data, that rate applies to European Russians as well as to Russian Muslims.

Russia remains below replacement fertility – about 2.1 children – and its population continues to decline, but far less quickly than the consensus believed it would only a few years ago. Vladimir Putin runs a nasty regime in which nosy journalists fall out of windows and regime opponents disappear, but Russia nonetheless has succeeded in reviving something of its national spirit where the Europeans have not.

The matter of dying for one's country always has constituted a paradox in classical liberal thinking, by which I mean the viewpoint of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the English philosophers who argued that governments are formed by individuals who feel insecure in a "state of nature" and cede some of their personal sovereignty to the state in return for protection of life and property.

The idea is preposterous, but sadly influential. If governments are formed by individuals solely to protect their sorry persons and filthy lucre, why would any of these individuals lay down his life to defend the government, allowing those who do not die to benefit as free riders? In Locke's day, to be sure, the British Army hired starving Irishmen and dispossessed farmers to do its fighting. When Napoleon unleashed the full force of citizen armies upon his European neighbors, classical liberalism had nothing more to say.

Something more than Locke's notion of a mutual protection society is required if we are to justify the state's monopoly of violence, its right to imprison or kill criminals at home, and to demand of its young people that they shed blood in its defense. The state must be imbued with a sense of the sacred and must stand surety for the continuity of our lives with those of generations that follow. It must preserve a heritage and a culture that allows our words and deeds to speak to future generations just as those of our ancestors speak to us.

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North Korea and Iran are decisive issues: Will America and its allies be subject to blackmail by rogue nuclear states? There is a grand compromise that might work in the case of North Korea, and the president reportedly has already put it on the table: Formal diplomatic recognition of the Pyongyang regime in return for full de-nuclearization. In the case of Iran, the president's tough stance and close coordination with our ally Israel has already pushed Iran back in Syria and put the Islamist regime under extreme stress.

Of course, Trump can't please everybody. German Chancellor Angela Merkel complains that Trump is being too nice to Russia by suggesting that it rejoin the Group of Seven. Considering that Germany spends just 1.2% of GDP on defense and can't get more than four fighters in the air at any given moment, that's *chutzpah*. Merkel's policy is to talk tough about sanctions against Russia while rolling over for Putin when it comes to Germany's gas supplies, which will be supplied by the just-started Nord Stream II pipeline from Russia. Germany likes to wag a finger at Russia over its depredations in Ukraine, but only 18% of Germans say they will fight to defend their country. Trump's policy is to rebuild American strength and stand up to Russia, while looking for ways to strike agreements with Russia--on American terms. That's the difference between speak softly and carry a big stick, and declaim loudly while waving a bratwurst. If the Germans don't want to spend money on defense, let alone fight, that's their business, but they shouldn't lecture us about how to handle the competition.

Just what has the Group of Seven accomplished in the last dozen years? Who can remember a single line of a single communique? And what is the group worth without Russia? "We have a world to run," Trump said, and the effort requires having Russia at the table.

I'm guardedly hopeful about the Singapore summit. The foreign policy elite despises America's president, who is an amateur in international relations. But the elite knows that it has failed miserably since the end of the Cold War -- for example Prof. Michael Mandelbaum, whose 2016 book *Mission Failure* catalogs the collective blunders of the establishment since the end of the Cold War (see my [notice](#) at Claremont Review of Books).

Trump is doing much better than Clinton, Bush or Obama. And he has the chance to be one of the greats.







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Lefty Lucy

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Today's toon suggested by John the Econ

