

## Foreign Policy Focus – Emergence of Conservative Nationalism Ideology Signals the End of American Leadership at NATO

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Conservative Nationalism, which touts the preservation of national and cultural identity by attacking liberalism in an existential fight against wokeness, educational elitism, xenophobia, immigration, and globalists, is now one of the main themes defining the Republican Party. This shift reflects a political movement that has been afoot in Europe for some time now that is strengthening its foothold on our shores. One need only look at evolving foreign and foundational domestic policies implemented at home by Hungarian strongman Viktor Orbán, whose upcoming visit to Mar-a-Lago next week further amplifies this dangerous dalliance with the global authoritarian leader club. Back in the Sunshine State, Governor DeSantis echoes Orbán with his own attempted putsch against gender identification and Liberal Arts Education, aka “free thought.”

When the former President incoherently manifests flagrantly false conversations with the world's leaders, it is not meant to be literal. Instead, it signals to those listening that Conservative Nationalism is the political philosophy guiding the Republican Party's platform. However, even among conservative groups and leaders of so-called nationalist countries, a coherent or consistent approach to policy, both domestic and foreign, has been challenging to peg against rhetoric.

For the year 2023, Poland contributed 3.9% of its GDP as a percentage to national defense, ahead of only the United States at 3.49%. Hungary's position in the top 8 defense spenders, at 2.7% GDP, may come as a surprise considering their close relationship with Moscow and ideological and policy differences from NATO and the Economic Union despite strong similarities in strategic interests. The bottom line is that no country in Europe will be able to go it alone when it comes to producing guns and butter, especially with aging populations causing economic strain on ingrained social programs.

If anything, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Republican Party's capitulation to Russia following the lead of former President Trump, has strengthened Europe's resolve to get its affairs in order. Because of these factors, and the United States' perceived lack of reliability, this is likely to be the first year in a long time when European members of NATO will move to increase contributions to meet or exceed the 2% defense spending contribution.

Broader implications of not supporting Ukraine should be of utmost concern in the event one of the NATO member states, namely Poland or the Baltic countries, is threatened or, worse, invaded. This result is something that short-term campaign stump speeches have yet to think out, which should come as no surprise, given the prior administrations' tendency to make mindless remarks and concoct scattered responses.

Railing against NATO and cuddling up to Russia, while nonsensical to most Americans, has a voice and a following. Although not practically thought out past November, even this perception is reverberating worldwide, as “The City on the Hill” that President Regan spoke of may not remain the beacon of hope our allies, or the rest of the democracies on our planet, expected us to be.