

BRUSSELS FORUM PAPER SERIES

TRANSATLANTIC POWER FAILURES

*America and Europe, seven years after 9/11:
Hard power humbled, soft power exposed,
and a looser, more pragmatic relationship*

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THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES

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STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

Seven years after Sept. 11, 2001, it is clear that the West's swift and decisive reaction to the atrocities perpetrated by Al-Qaeda produced far greater confusion—both intellectual and political—than clarity. It sparked off a fierce competition among thinkers, policymakers, and politicians to articulate the definitive conceptual freeze-frame of the new era. America's and Europe's respective global roles were described in terms of the starkest possible dichotomies—hard power versus soft power, might versus right, unilateral versus multilateral, hegemon versus counterweight, revolutionary versus status quo, and transformational versus incremental. (Not to mention planetary metaphors and the proliferation of sensationalist prefixes like hyper- and *über*-.) In America, the “Global War on Terror” became the all-encompassing strategic paradigm of U.S. foreign policy. The policies and actions (including war) that it engendered were accompanied by an extraordinary amount of hyperbole and hubris. Most of Europe, for its part, rejected the global war on terror paradigm. But it developed a countervailing dialectic that was no less problematic, based as it was on a complacency that occasionally verged on the delusional. At times, one might have thought that America and Europe, in a warped echo of the

Cold War, had become *each other's* ideological opposites. Certainly it seemed that the rift in the transatlantic relationship had become unbridgeable.

Today, the mood could not be more different. A spirit of calm, pragmatic cooperation pervades the transatlantic alliance. Where common purpose seems unattainable, both sides quietly agree to disagree. Much of this new attitude is based on the rational realization that the areas of agreement are substantial, and that Europeans and Americans will often, but not always, need each other to attain their goals. Some of it, no doubt, is based simply on lowered expectations. Yet the desire to cooperate is rooted in a more durable insight—the mutual humiliation of finding that the maximalist notions of power have failed on both sides of the Atlantic. Nor was the failure merely one of ideas. Policies were based on these ideas, with lethal consequences. Thousands of men and women have suffered and died because of them.

This essay examines the massive power failures that occurred after 9/11 on both sides of the Atlantic. It analyzes ideas and policies. It asks: What failed, and why? What remains valid, and worth preserving? And what is the way forward for the transatlantic relationship?

A spirit of calm, pragmatic cooperation pervades the transatlantic alliance.

2 AMERICA: THE LIMITS OF SUPREME POWER

Given subsequent events, it is ironic that George W. Bush and his administration came into office with a realist agenda and attitude toward power. They took a dim view of foreign interventions, and an even more dismissive one of lengthy post-intervention stabilization missions,¹ or of conflict mediation in the Middle East. All of these were regarded as Clintonian aberrations from strategic prudence. The Bush administration's interest in Russia, America's former enemy, was lukewarm at best, as was its respect for the United States' traditional allies in Europe. It had little time for the postwar institutions that had engaged America in multilateral negotiations, including the UN and NATO. China, in contrast, was an object of intense and overwhelming concern. The debate on the challenge posed by a rising China was characterized by a strident insistence on the need to preserve absolute American dominance through hard power, which suggested a very genuine fear.

Even before 2001, a Republican-dominated Congress had forced a reluctant Clinton administration to create two bipartisan commissions on special strategic threats, one to focus on missile defense, and the other on space. Both were driven mainly by apprehensions about Chinese military modernization, and they were chaired by the same retired businessman, Donald Rumsfeld. As Secretary of Defense, Rumsfeld announced a radical program of military transformation that—had it ever been fully implemented—would have provided the U.S. armed forces with an unchallengeable technological supremacy while at the same time drastically reducing ground troop numbers and closing bases overseas.

The attacks of 9/11 led to a radical shift in the administration's focus. In principle, the action against the Taliban was an act of self-defense

¹ Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000.

on the classic model, undertaken in accordance with international law, and sanctioned by the UN and NATO. In other aspects, it was a startling departure from traditional procedures. Despite the immediate invocation of the mutual defense clause in Article V of the NATO Treaty by the alliance after the attacks, the expeditionary force that set out to remove the Taliban and root out Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was not a NATO force in the strict sense. It was backed by what was soon to be known as a "coalition of the willing," led by the United States. The military campaign itself was equally unconventional, relying on a combination of air power and small numbers of Special Forces aided by locals on the ground. Nor was much thought given in those early days to the aftermath of intervention—the assumption being that the Western forces would withdraw quickly after having fulfilled their mission and the Afghans would return to governing, or at least taking care of, themselves.

What mattered, or seemed to matter, at the time was this: America had succeeded, with a little bit of help from its friends in Europe, in changing the regime of a profoundly conservative Muslim society by force (but with a minimum of effort), and with the blessing of the liberated population. Suddenly, it appeared that short, limited wars using less than overwhelming force and a handpicked collection of allies had become a realistic option for a transformational foreign policy. Thus, the Bush doctrine was born.² For the genuine neoconservatives in the President's administration, this presented itself as a brilliant shortcut to promoting liberal democracy around the world. For the rather less reform-minded faction of Thucydidean tragic realists,

² Robert Kagan observes that this doctrine is rooted in a tradition of American foreign policy that is as old as the Republic; see his *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World From its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, New York, 2006.

headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, it was a shortcut to prolonging American supremacy.

There were more attacks by Al-Qaeda and by Al-Qaeda-inspired groups, from Western Europe to Turkey to Kenya; many others were prevented. But it soon became evident that the Afghan example—state-sponsored terrorism—was, rather than a new pattern, a rare exception. This new breed of terrorists communicated and crossed over borders with ease. It was (and remains) necessary to mount a long-term, internationally coordinated effort against this strategic threat, using the entire foreign policy toolkit, including military power—preferably striking it at its source, rather than defending against its impact at home. It was (and still is) also clear that given the open, permeable borders of Western societies, any effective security concept would have to move seamlessly from the domestic to the foreign arena. This realization was the origin of what was promptly hailed as the new overarching paradigm of American grand strategy: the “Global War on Terror,” GWOT for short.

Together, the GWOT and the Bush doctrine seemed to have finally brought back the stark strategic clarity of the Cold War, much-mourned after 1989—a new enemy (instead of Russia, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists), a new military strategy (instead of deterrence based on mutually assured destruction and conducted in the framework of NATO, limited wars undertaken with allies chosen ad-hoc), and finally, a new political endgame (instead of containment, transformation and assimilation into the universe of liberal democracies). This was to be the new conceptual framework of American hard power. It was first put through its paces in Afghanistan, then in a number of more or less related side engagements all over the world; and finally and most disastrously, in Iraq.

Where Did Things Go Wrong? And Why?

Afghanistan, the purported first case study for the new framework, has been disproving it for at least three years, and in each of its elements. The Taliban regime was routed. Yet the arch-enemy and mastermind of 9/11, Osama bin Laden, remains at large, having foiled repeated attempts to catch him; worse, the terrorist movement he created has grown and mutated, becoming a decentralized global Al-Qaeda franchise. Meanwhile, Western soldiers across Afghanistan are facing a bewilderingly diverse array of violent opposition, from Islamist terrorists to disgruntled warlords to angry opium farmers. Likewise, limited force and a small number of allies were enough to change the regime in Kabul, but not enough to stabilize its replacement. As a result, the Western military presence has multiplied, spread, and solidified across the country; it is looking increasingly beleaguered, even desperate. Finally, Afghanistan held a loya jirga to elect a president and vote on a constitution, as well as an election; but the expected transformation into a self-governing, rights-regarding democracy simply has not happened.

Indeed, failure appears a lot more likely today than it did in 2003 or 2004. The intervention gave Afghanistan a degree of peace and stability its traumatized people had not seen in a quarter-century. To some extent, the return of wide-spread violence is the result of success, or at least of a more coherent and determined military engagement by Western forces. But the overall record of the international community in Afghanistan today falls far short of its own ambitions and standards—worsening security, a hypertrophic drugs economy, rampant corruption, and fragile political institutions. A lack of overall strategic direction, flawed coordination between coalition members, donors, and international institutions, and probably unrealistically high expectations are all to blame.

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Nevertheless, the United States' long-exclusive focus on counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan, as well as its protracted reluctance to fully engage with the NATO-headed stabilization operation inserted after the removal of the Taliban to shore up the new order, did not help. The search for senior Al-Qaeda leaders was bungled because the Pentagon's civilian leadership was still trying to prove that the method that had toppled the regime in Kabul was the fail-proof new formula for modern warfare. Glaring tactical mistakes in the conduct of its early military operations—foremost among them an undue reliance on air power, with a heavy penalty in civilian casualties—lost the Americans many sympathies among the Afghan population. The mistreatment of prisoners, in Bagram and in Guantánamo Bay, reinforced the impression that America had exempted itself from a system of rules designed to civilize warfare, which it had itself once helped create.

To the extent that NATO has explicitly staked its reputation on the success of the Afghanistan operation (rather than, say, on its further enlargement or its success in transforming and democratizing the Cold War armies of its new members), failure would also undermine the military and political credibility of the alliance itself—with potentially fatal results. A ruthlessly realist approach might of course suggest that chasing away Kabul's Taliban rulers had been enough to satisfy the requirements of self-defense, and that the Western coalition might then have withdrawn with its honor intact. But NATO long ago embraced what former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell once called the "China shop rule"—you break it, you own it. The precedent was created in the international protectorates NATO guarded or still guards in Bosnia and Kosovo; it could not do otherwise in Central Asia without exposing itself to the accusation of double standards.

The Afghanistan operation had hardly gotten underway when the GWOT began to expand to other theaters and an increasing number of unrelated operations. Here too, the vaunted clarity of the new strategic paradigm soon proved illusory. Places as far afield as Yemen, the Philippines, and Somalia have been searched not only for Al-Qaeda, but for other groups whose activities are regional or local, and whose connection with Wahhabist Sunni fundamentalism is tenuous or non-existent; at the same time, veritable hotbeds of radical Islamism in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia were left untouched. The "enemy," clearly, was not so easily defined after all. The promise of the "new wars"—short, sharp, decisive, and preemptive, if necessary—was not kept either. The GWOT umbrella now covers operations that are precisely the reverse. The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), created by 15 countries in 2003 to counteract the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and material, is reputed to have been quite effective; but it is an open-ended multilateral intelligence and policing operation designed to prevent and deter. Probably one of the least-known anti-terror operations is the extensive and hugely expensive coalition naval operation CTF-150, which has been patrolling the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa, and the Indian Ocean around the straits of Hormuz (it is the German navy's largest ever postwar operation) for more than half a decade now. This glorified international Coast Guard has boarded and searched thousands of ships, but its effectiveness in the search for terrorists remains doubtful. None of these operations appear to be headed toward a conclusion—much less a victory—or, for that matter, a transformative political effect.

The GWOT's final apotheosis was America's war to depose the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. The official rationales presented for this war at the time were many and varied, shifting (sometimes within a week) from preemption, to weapons of mass

destruction, to an Al-Qaeda link, to democracy promotion in the greater Middle East. In essence, however, this was a war of choice, undertaken by the Bush administration to change not just a regime, to liberate an oppressed population, or to change the balance of power in the region, but to impose a new order on the world. Iraq was to be the ultimate proof of the new doctrine of American power, if not (hence the ominous remarks about “dominoes” and “who’s next” by the likes of Richard Perle) the last time it would be put into action.

The reasons for removing Saddam Hussein from power were excellent. The Iraqi ruler’s paranoia and brutality stood out even in a region not known for enlightened political leadership. The 1988 poison gas attack against the Kurdish town of Halabja, which killed more than 5,000 people (the largest chemical weapons attack against a civilian population in modern times), would today suffice to bring him before the International Criminal Court. By the mid 1990s, when he was forced to open his country to UN weapons inspectors, he had amassed—or tried to amass—chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons material in quantities so enormous and lethal it warranted his qualification as a threat of the first order for the region and beyond. The material found by the inspectors was destroyed under UN supervision. Considering the Iraqi leader’s record, it was prudent to assume the worst—meaning that he would continue trying to avail himself of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). And, given the mass destruction unleashed during and after the tyrant’s removal, it is worth keeping in mind that, despite all the manipulation of intelligence by the proponents of the war, the world will probably never know whether Hussein did not at least retain a “breakout capability” to make WMD. Truly, the Iraqis, their neighbors, and the world at large were lucky to be rid of Hussein. The military campaign to remove him, in the spring of 2003, was fast and effective, and none of the accompanying catastrophes predicted so gloomily by so many came

to pass during it: the use of WMD or SCUDs, an attack on Turkey, burning oilfields, refugee floods, or terrorist strikes in the West. For a brief, hopeful phase, it seemed the new doctrine might be working after all—enemy identified, check; short, sharp war, check; political transformation, well, at least the Iraqis cheered, at first.

Once more, the grand new concept disappeared in the fog of a chaotic and violent reality. The successful military removal of the Iraqi dictator has long since been overshadowed by the multitude of disastrous errors that preceded and followed it. Intelligence was stove-piped, manipulated, or simply wrong. The administration entered into diplomacy to convince the international community and its NATO allies of the need to go to war with Iraq belatedly, and with bad grace. Europeans who dared dispute the need to go to war against Iraq were brushed off at best, or subjected to political “disaggregation” tactics at worst. A link between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda—the main argument for treating the action against Hussein as part of the GWOT—was sought energetically, but never found. Plans drawn up for stabilizing the country in the aftermath of the war by the U.S. State Department were blithely dismissed by the Pentagon’s civilian leaders as unnecessary. Those same leaders also tragically underestimated the fierce resistance that U.S. forces and their allies would meet after the dictator had been brought down. For far too long, U.S. troops were neither trained nor equipped to deal with the guerrilla tactics of attrition used by Iraqi militias and terrorist groups. Rather than being put on the next plane home, they had to be reinforced many times over. And where the Bush administration’s master strategists had focused their sights on removing an Iraqi reinvention of Adolf Hitler, they were suddenly faced with a roiling mess of hostile factions. America’s political and military administrators on the ground were utterly unprepared to handle the vicious

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sectarian and ethnic divisions (and interference by neighbors such as Iran and Syria) that flared up after the iron brace of Baathist nationalism, which had formerly clamped together Iraq's Shias and Sunnis, its Arabs and Kurds, had been wrenched away and discarded. The appalling revelations about torture and mistreatment of prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison tarnished America's image—particularly in the Arab and Muslim world—but by no means there alone. Again, as in Afghanistan, there was no clear enemy, no clear victory, and no clear political endgame in Iraq.

Over time, the Bush administration did correct many of its original assumptions and policies with regard to Iraq—proof of its ability to learn from mistakes, and its willingness to stay the course, despite heavy losses. But the changes came late and reluctantly, and much collateral damage was done in the meantime. Traditional allies from Europe to the Middle East were alienated, including staunch friends like Turkey, and loyal participants in the Iraq campaign, like Poland. As the situation in Iraq worsened, troops and attention were withdrawn from Afghanistan, with predictable consequences. At the time of this writing, the tactical changes and the troop “surge” brought about by U.S. General David Petraeus appear to have finally given Iraq and the coalition operation an unprecedented degree of stability and calm—as evinced by an increase in refugee returns, a sure sign of confidence in a stabilization operation. What is needed now to consolidate this achievement is a political “surge,” a workable and legitimate system of governance for Iraq. It will be the hardest task of all.

The GWOT has forced some unpleasant political compromises on the Wilsonian reformers in the Bush administration as well. They were compelled to turn a blind eye to the considerable democratic shortcomings of older friends, like Saudi Arabia;

and to enter into new or deeper alliances with states that were even more authoritarian and much less stable, like Pakistan, or Uzbekistan, and assorted other Central Asian dictatorships. None of these relationships sat very well with the Administration's emphatic commitment to bringing democracy and freedom to the world.³

Putting counterterrorism at the heart of NATO's strategy, as was decided at the Prague Summit in 2002 on the Bush administration's urging, has proved to be similarly problematic. Patient intelligence work, police, and judicial cooperation (and, in the long-term, political coordination, development aid, and nation-building) are the core instruments of counterterrorism. Yet, the necessary secrecy and bilateral nature of intelligence-sharing never really fit in with the alliance's deliberative and multilateral culture. And while the military has a part to play in the global fight against terrorism, it is one of last resort; absent preventive action, the military is tasked when all other options have failed. Moreover, except in the rare instances of state sponsorship, terrorism is a tactic, and used by non-state actors operating either from already within the target state, or from home bases in failed or failing states. In the former case, combating the threat lies first and foremost with the police, and the military plays an auxiliary role at best; whereas the latter case presents legal, political, and military challenges that weigh against forcible intervention except in very special instances. To further complicate matters, there may be sensible reasons for not going to war against state sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran, or sanctuary-givers, like Pakistan. Finally, moving the fight against terrorism to the forefront of NATO's *raison d'être* distracted the alliance from distinctly less fashionable, but no less crucial military tasks, such

³ George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, February 2, 2005, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html>.

as the continuing stabilization operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. As a vehicle for making NATO more “relevant,” counterterrorism was a misguided choice. Hence the lack of enthusiasm for this move among Western militaries.

The GWOT has also become a rationale for the introduction of far-reaching changes in the United States’ application of international law. Partial application of the Geneva Conventions, unfair arrests, indefinite detentions without trial, torture, renditions, and expulsions, as well as the creation of special courts with limited trial rights for the accused (the “military commissions”)—collectively, these practices amounted to a repeal of the principle of reciprocity in humanitarian law. (This is why the JAGs, the lawyers of the armed forces, were among the first to protest against these innovations.)

Last but not least, the GWOT approach to Islamic terrorism has had a deep impact on America’s constitutional order. In a country whose profoundly humane and liberal culture had seemed, throughout the totalitarian horrors of the 20th century, to make it robustly and blissfully immune to authoritarian temptations, the intelligence services were ramped up dramatically and civil liberties were challenged systematically. The elaborate justifications proffered for enlarging the power of the national executive at the expense of the other branches of the government in the name of homeland security were reminiscent, at worst, of the political theorist Carl Schmitt’s notion of a “permanent state of emergency.”

In short, the GWOT (reaffirmed in the 2006 National Security Strategy⁴) is directed against a tactic rather than against a clear enemy. It puts undue emphasis on the military instruments

of counterterrorism, lacks a definition of victory or even a political endgame, and risks undermining America’s liberal constitution.

The Bush administration has been making adjustments, most notably in its second term. The changes go far beyond implementing the lessons learned from the military operations of Afghanistan and Iraq; in fact, they involve a number of things the world was once emphatically told no U.S. administration would ever again say or do. Their cumulative effect amounts to a reassessment of the GWOT, which de facto is no longer an all-encompassing rationale for a U.S. grand strategy.

Washington now listens to and consults with allies, in Europe and elsewhere; it has adopted a constructive attitude not just toward NATO, but also toward the European Union and its efforts to develop its own foreign and security policy, and even the UN; it has adapted its military planning to include asymmetric warfare and stabilization operations as core missions; it has held or announced talks with nations formerly discarded as “evil,” such as North Korea or Iran; and it has engaged in multilateral fora on climate change. It has even begun to get involved in the search for an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Domestically, the swingback of the pendulum from hubris to critical self-examination is also very much in evidence, from the courts to the media, political campaigns to public opinion.

Nonetheless, American power is undeniably diminished. The United States will remain the world’s sole superpower. In terms of the sheer quantity, quality, and strategic reach of its hard power, it stands alone, and will continue to do so for decades at least. But people, not weapons, are the ultimate measure of a nation’s hard power. America’s proud armed forces are stretched, depleted, and demoralized. Superior firepower

⁴ The first words of the introduction are: “America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face—the rise of terrorism...” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>.

can win battles. However, as the United States learned in Afghanistan and Iraq to great cost, other, more intangible assets are needed to win in a war of attrition waged by an enemy that prefers death by suicide to ideological or political compromise. America's officer corps is notoriously reticent about political matters in public. So it is all the more noteworthy when a recently returned U.S. operational commander in Iraq pointedly recommends that more money should be spent on the non-kinetic aspects of foreign policy, and suggests it be used instead for strengthening the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as reviving the U.S. Information Agency.⁵

⁵ Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, with Maj. Stephen M. Smith, "Learning From Our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future," *Military Review*, September-October 2007.

Hard power supremacy also matters less than it used to in international affairs (and definitely less than the authors of the Bush doctrine thought it would). The vibrant diversity and democratic freedom of American culture will forever attract people around the globe. Yet America's soft power, too, is much reduced. Its economic influence has been diluted due to its growing budget deficit and the shrinking value of the dollar. Most damaging of all for the United States, however, has been its perceived loss of legitimacy worldwide. Even a superpower needs legitimacy, and power alone—contrary to Thucydides' theory—will not supply influence. In a globalized world, the opinion of the weak is a powerful weapon.

3 EUROPE: SOFT POWER DELUSIONS

Transatlantic disagreements on the uses and maintenance of power were many, varied, and acrimonious before Sept. 11, 2001, and indeed before the shift from a Democratic to a Republican president. But the disputes had tended to focus on specific topics—missile defense, per capita defense spending, or NATO enlargement. The attacks of 9/11 and their turbulent aftermath forced a shocked Europe to consider straightforwardly, and on a collective level for the first time: What power does Europe possess, and what kind of power does it strive to wield?

This was a question most Europeans thought was unfair—mainly because they were unprepared to answer it. Some, because they took power for granted as a function of national sovereignty and therefore not worth elaborating upon (the British and the French); others, because they had over time sublimated a revulsion against their own horrific historic abuses into a generalized power taboo, accompanied by a gratifying sense of moral superiority (the Germans). It may be necessary to be a superpower with a certain sense of mission, a Protestant concern with responsibility, and a healthy dose of narcissism in order to develop a discourse on power as nuanced and robust as that to be found in postwar American strategic thinking. In any case, it had no genuine equivalent in European writing until 9/11.

Unsurprisingly, it was an American, the historian Robert Kagan, who provided the first attempt at an answer to the question of Europe's power.⁶ Europeans, Kagan argued, are fond of treaties, international law, and international institutions because they are weak and in denial of their weakness. In psychological terms, this diagnosis interpreted European multilateralism—and ultimately the European

Union itself—as a coping strategy to prevent cognitive dissonances when confronted with the reality of Europe's loss of influence in the world. Predictably, this did not go over well in Europe.

But just how much power does Europe have?

This much was true: Europeans, having depended on American support for their defense during the Cold War, convinced themselves that the “peace dividend of 1989” meant there would be no more wars. The irresistible logical conclusion was that Europe might now reduce or even completely get rid of its national defense budgets and armed forces. Hard power, many Europeans argued, had become a historical anachronism; as, in fact, had history itself.

Somalia, Cambodia, Rwanda, and the Balkans taught them otherwise. It took the United States to push and then lead them into intervening to stop the killing in Bosnia as well as in Kosovo. But the horror of not having prevented genocide on their doorstep shamed most European countries—foremost among them the United Kingdom and France—as well as an entire generation of policymakers into reconsidering their deepest convictions about the legitimacy of the use of force.

Shortly thereafter, British Prime Minister Tony Blair changed the face of Europe by making a decisive push toward a genuine European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). The idea was a half-century old, but the creation of a real common security and defense policy for Europe was conceivable only under the leadership of Europe's two nuclear powers. For France, such a step followed naturally, even necessarily, from its concept of a federated European superstate. Britain, for its part, saw an opportunity for a tradeoff whereby its leadership on a core European issue (security) would allow it to hold back on another (the currency union), thereby allowing it to be both progressively pro-

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⁶ Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review*, June/July 2002; extended version in *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York, 2003.

European, and traditionally on both sides of the fence. The result of this convergence of strategic convictions was the 1998 Declaration of Saint Malo, in which Paris and London agreed to push toward the development of a “hard” ESDP.

The NATO air campaign over Kosovo in 1999 was the first real war fought by most of the participating European nations in two decades; for some, it was the first since 1945. After years of fruitless squabbles over burden-sharing and defense budgets in the alliance, the difficulties and dependence the Europeans experienced in coordinating the Kosovo action with the Americans galvanized many governments into understanding that they needed to comprehensively modernize their armed forces. This included even the Germans, who arguably had a greater distance to cover than any other country in Europe, with armed forces specialized almost entirely in defensive land warfare, and a profoundly pacifist public that had agonized even over humanitarian intervention in Bosnia. Unfortunately, the insight into the necessity of military reform was tempered by the equally forceful reality of a Europe-wide economic downturn, as well as competing domestic demands for dwindling state budgets.

Despite all this, it was already clear then that Europe would be engaged in nation-building on its southeastern borders for at least the coming decade. And European armed forces did go on to play a central role in the stabilization of both Bosnia and Kosovo, supplying the bulk of NATO forces in the region. The task appeared as one both fitting and demanding for Europe; no one imagined responsibilities on a larger global scale.

By the hot, dry summer of 2001, transatlantic anxieties were running high once more because of mounting violence in another tiny country on the southeastern brim of Europe, Macedonia. There, a prickly and insecure government was

threatening massive retaliation against attacks by Albanian terrorist insurgents, some of whom had figured prominently as Kosovar freedom fighters two years earlier. The beginning and the end of transatlantic ambition that year was preventing another Balkans conflagration. NATO and the European Union formed a small, 3,500-strong task force under the inimitably pompous name of Operation Essential Harvest, the first such cooperation ever undertaken by the two organizations. There was much celebration and backslapping in Brussels after it began to disarm the combatants. That was on August 27.

The supremely bitter irony of the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath for the transatlantic alliance was that they showcased, like no other event since the end of the Cold War, the glaring imbalance in what was at least *nominally* a mutual defense arrangement. The reality had been that no one had ever expected or even imagined an invocation of the NATO Treaty’s Article V to arrive in the form of anything other than a call to America to come to Europe’s aid—because the assumption was that America would be forever strong, and Europe forever weak. But it was the United States, not Europe, that was attacked. It was the Europeans who offered military assistance to America, and they were rebuffed. Several of them did finally join in the U.S.-led combat coalition that overthrew the Taliban in Afghanistan, and performed creditably. From the Americans’ point of view, the participation of their traditional allies reinforced the action’s legitimacy rather than its firepower.

Seven years later, Europe has come a long way from the free-riding insouciance of which it was once—and with some justification—accused. On the national level, most of them have reviewed and reinforced their intelligence and counterterrorism capabilities, with a noticeable impact on the quality of transatlantic cooperation; this despite the fact that the concept of a GWOT elicits almost

universal skepticism among Europeans. Most countries in Europe (including Germany) have devoted considerable resources on improving the strategic and combat capabilities of their armed forces. Some have even (again, including Germany) increased their defense budgets. Several participated in combat operations in Iraq, some sustaining heavy casualties. And Europe continues to supply the bulk of the troops in the Balkans and Afghanistan—mostly stabilization forces, it must be said, but often in hostile environments.

On the EU level, too, serious efforts to boost Europe's hard power have been made. The European Security Strategy of 2003 is both a thoughtful response to America's National Security Strategy of 2002, and a revolutionary document for the European Union, the first effort ever made by European leaders to agree on threats and strategy; work on a revised version is underway. The European Battlegroups, a rapidly deployable force for robust sub-combat missions first conceived in 1999, reached full operational capability in January 2007. On the institutional side, there is now a Political-Military Committee and a planning cell in Brussels, as well as the new European Defense Agency, tasked with helping EU member states develop their defense capabilities. The attacks of 9/11 pushed the European Union, if not into acting globally, at least into thinking about its security in global terms.

Talking the talk (including creating the committee in which to do it) is standard European operating procedure. But the European Union has also begun to walk the walk. By the end of 2007, it had run a dozen crisis-management operations. Most of these were small and civilian in nature, although EUFOR, a medium-sized military operation based in Congo to assure stability during the 2006 election, served as a genuine deterrent against violence. Currently, there is an EU police mission operating in Afghanistan, and the European Union is deploying

its largest civilian law and order mission ever to Kosovo following the Serbian province's declaration of independence in mid-February. Just a few weeks earlier, EU member states had sent another medium-sized operation to Chad, albeit reluctantly.

The sober fact remains that the European Union still has a long way to go to prove itself in the domain of hard power. All modernization efforts notwithstanding, European armed forces are generally far behind their American ally in terms of technology, as well as with regard to their strategic and expeditionary capabilities. More than a decade has passed since Srebrenica, nine years since Kosovo, and seven years since 9/11, but in Kosovo and Afghanistan, it is still NATO that keeps the peace, not the European Union. European forces participating in the Afghanistan missions of ISAF and OEF have either preferred to keep away from combat, or participated armed with impenetrable national caveats.

This may be a sensible division of labor between America and Europe, given America's superior combat capabilities. But it is also a reality check for all those in Europe who have been energetically ringing the death-knell for NATO. For a European Union with 27 member states, and a total of 1.8 million men and women under arms, but incapable of pacifying without outside help a province one quarter the size of Switzerland, some measure of humility does seem more appropriate than vainglorious chatter about a *Europe-puissance*.

But what about the other kind of power, the one so many Europeans like to think we have a monopoly on—or, at the very least, much to teach America about? "Soft power" is a term notoriously hard to pin down, or, for that matter, to translate into other languages: the German version, *Zivilmacht* (literally, "civilian power") is especially clunky, with its undertones of governance by bureaucracy. Essentially, "soft power" describes the magnetic

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pull exercised by a state that bases its legitimacy on its respect for rights and rules, and on the attractiveness of its culture for neighbors and strangers alike. By those standards, today's European Union is an extraordinary achievement for peace, stability, and prosperity on a continent ravaged by war only a half-century ago. Several neighbors are standing in line to become members of the EU club. European economies are doing well after years of malaise. Russian oligarchs vie with each other to buy companies, mansions, and soccer clubs in Europe, and the Russian state keeps buying choice new showpieces for its extensive collection of pipelines across the continent. Migrants from Africa to China undertake long and perilous journeys to be allowed to do the work in Europe that Europeans consider beneath their dignity.

Europe's soft power success has produced its own variants of hubris, from the languidly superior ("The European Union is the most developed example of a postmodern system"⁷), to the breathlessly hyperbolic ("India, Brazil, South Africa, and even China...will join the European Union in building a New European Century"⁸). France gave us the theory of Europe as "counterweight" to the American *hyperpuissance*, according to then-Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine. During the war of words that preceded the military intervention in Iraq, Western European politicians and intellectuals competed with each other to depict

Europe as a moral counter-Utopia to America.⁹ (The lowest echelon of this debate in Europe—the counterpart of the haranguing, bullying tone that became commonplace in Washington for a while—was a cacophony of conspiracy theories about the "real" reasons America had gone to war, from oil to world domination. Like all conspiracy theories, they cast rather more light on their originators than on their ostensible subject.)

German soft power, in particular, is accounted second to none in Europe—at least by the Germans. There is some justification for this conviction. Germany has invested large amounts of time, expertise, and money in nation-building for the Balkans and Afghanistan. The German armed forces, too, have gained considerable skill and respect in a dozen or more peacekeeping and stabilization operations since that first foray *out of area* to Somalia in 1993. But the effort of overcoming decades of pacifist training has bred its own complacency. No speech, no editorial on foreign policy is considered complete without an approving reference to *Zivilmacht*, and the moral force of its example to other nations. Take this conversation about NATO in Berlin, not many months ago: One speaker comments dryly that if even the mild-mannered Canadians are snarling at the Germans because of their reluctance to send combat troops to Afghanistan while their soldiers are dying in the country's south, Germany may soon find itself somewhat lonely within the alliance. Cue a flaming look of disapproval from another member of the

⁷ Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century*, London, 2003, p. 36.

⁸ Mark Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the Twenty-First Century*, London, 2005, p. 4.

⁹ A prime example was the essay by a group of intellectuals headed by Germany's Jürgen Habermas and France's Jacques Derrida that appeared in several European newspapers at the same time on May 31, 2003; it ran under the title "Kerneuropa als Avantgarde" in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The vision of Europe in this piece and many other articles spawned by it derived most of its strength from the negative American foil held against it—rather than from its intrinsic qualities or innovative ideas. Indeed, the glorious future invoked by Habermas et al. for 21st century Europe looked disturbingly like the Germany of the 1980s.

group, a minor public figure, as it happens, and this response: “Well, then it’s high time *they* took a leaf out of *our* history book, isn’t it?”

Translated from the Germans, this means: If the Bundeswehr takes less fire in Northern Afghanistan, that is due not so much to circumstances in the areas where it is stationed, but to the fact that Germans in general behave better, as a result of the thorough accounting the Germans made of their crimes after 1945. In sum, this argument goes, atonement is Germany’s chief political capital, its very own soft power. (Even assuming this to be reasonable, it would still raise the question of what it is exactly that Canada should atone for in order to gain the same degree of moral, and hopefully physical, inviolability.)

Another idiosyncrasy of German thinking about power is that Germans—and they alone in Europe—tend to argue as though the exercise of soft and hard power were binary options, possibly even a fundamental choice between two different moral planets. It is all the more remarkable because the more expansive and robust Germany’s military engagements become, the more Germany congratulates itself on its soft power. NATO’s air campaign over Kosovo was a combat mission; Germany was part of it. Germany signed off on the military removal of the Taliban leadership, and granted overflight rights for the bomber planes heading eastward. It participated in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) early on in Afghanistan with a naval contingent and special forces. However, when one of the Bundestag mandates for participating in allied operations comes up for renewal, an anguished public debate about *Zivilmacht* ensues. Presumably, much of this is designed to let the country reassure itself that it remains the benign and unaggressive global citizen it strove so earnestly to become. Still, to those not literate in German anxieties, it must occasionally sound as though Germany was taking its inspiration from

Doris Day, of whom the pianist Oscar Levant joked, “I knew her before she was a virgin.”

Luckily for Europe, neither the British, nor the French, nor the Swedes or the Poles have qualms about using the entire gamut of their toolbox of power, from diplomacy and suasion to military force.

Still, Europe’s soft power has distinct limits, although to hear its citizens talk about it, Europe is a super-soft power on a par with America at the very least. Take enlargement; that legendary battle-cry of the late 1980s, “Europe, whole and free,” was a stroke of genius. Sadly for the Europeans, it was conceived by Americans.¹⁰ And they were right; enlargement—of NATO and of the European Union—was an inseparable aspect of the reunification of Europe, atonement for historic injustices and guilt, and a preserver of the liberties gained in 1989. Yet Washington’s determined advocacy for the Baltic NATO candidacies in the early 1990s met with reluctance among many Europeans. Oddly, Germany, a country that might be expected to understand best what it meant to be liberated, was more reluctant than most. The cyber-attacks from Russia on Estonian Internet servers in 2007 were proof (if any was needed) that the United States had been right to take Baltic security concerns seriously. When the European Union admitted ten new, mostly Eastern European members in May 2004, enthusiasm in “old Europe” was noticeably muted. When Bulgaria and Romania joined in January 2007, the grumbling was hard to ignore. But the most heated animosities were reserved by the Germans and the Poles for each other, as though Berlin and Warsaw had both found their very own “rogue state” next door. “Enlargement fatigue,” as used by many Western

¹⁰ The expression was used in a speech by U.S. President George H.W. Bush in Mainz, May 31, 1989; <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

Europe’s soft power has distinct limits.

Europeans, often seems to refer not so much to the candidates waiting outside as to those who have just come in, slammed the door, and are demanding their turn in the armchair by the fireplace.

Granted, the progress of democratization in the new member states has been slow and full of populist pitfalls, even if they were generally swifter in undertaking economic and social reforms than many of their Western European counterparts, hampered by decades-old traditions of statist or corporatist policies. The accompanying process of dealing with their own historic guilt—the legacy of Communist dictatorship, and, in some cases, of collaboration with the Nazis—has likewise been anything but smooth for the new members, whether they decided to close the files, or undertake a national witch-hunt, as in the Kaczynski brothers' Poland.

Western Europeans have by now achieved a fairly honest reckoning of their own historic guilt, be it for colonialism, mass killings in the Spanish Civil War, French torture of Algerian insurgents, or, in the German case, war crimes and the Holocaust. But it took decades to take on that responsibility, or even to think it necessary. Many forget that Europeans were free and able to examine their history because of what a German chancellor—although he meant something quite different at the time—once called *die Gnade der späten Geburt*,¹¹ which translates loosely as “the grace of a free birth in peacetime.” More precisely, Europeans were *given* that peace and freedom in 1945. The United States played the largest and most decisive part in that gift, and soon thereafter generously added the wherewithal to make something out of it, with the Marshall Plan. The dark passages in our own history, our present freedom, and our luck in having been able to move from one to the other, are more than

¹¹ Helmut Kohl, in a speech before the Israeli Knesset on January 24, 1984, explaining that his post-war birth had saved him from association with the crimes of the Third Reich.

reason to find empathy and patience for the new-old neighbors as they undertake a similar passage.

Membership in either the European Union or NATO may not soon (or in some instances, ever) be an option for the other candidates, officially acknowledged or not, who are knocking at their doors: Belarus, Ukraine, the Balkans, Turkey, and the Southern Caucasus. Yet hopes of entering and enjoying the benefits of these Western clubs in one way or another are what drives democratic and economic change in these countries. For these reforms along the Eastern flank of the present-day European Union to prosper and succeed would be a stupendous achievement, the completion of what was begun in 1989. Their failure, conversely, would run counter to America's and Europe's values as much as to their strategic interests.

Strange to say, this fact seems to be far more generally recognized on the other side of the Atlantic. On the one hand, Europe's commitment to the universality of human rights would seem to logically imply that it should champion the rights and freedoms of Belarusian dissidents, or Georgian journalists and judges, as seriously as those of Afghan prisoners of war in Guantánamo Bay. On the other hand, instability, or interference by an increasingly assertive Russia, is first and most immediately felt in Europe. The Black Sea region, in particular, is to Europe's energy security in the 21st century what the Fulda Gap was to its territorial security in the 20th century. And the direction taken by Turkey, a secular Muslim democracy with growth rates just short of 10 percent, can surely not be indifferent to a Europe with 15 million Muslim inhabitants. We have not given much indication that we realize what is at stake here for us. Moreover, if membership is not an option, it becomes all the more important to define what the other policy options are. The European Neighborhood Policy, which regulates relations with a dozen or so neighbors from Moldova to Morocco,

is no more than a cover for a lack of ideas—as Europe’s neighbors are painfully aware. But are we?

Legitimacy, a core quality of soft power, is undermined by opportunism, double standards, failing to follow through on proclaimed convictions, or collusion with authoritarian rulers. Europeans eagerly diagnose all this in American foreign policy. Of course, opportunism may from time to time be, well, opportune, even for a democracy. But, occasionally, the criticism is on the mark, as when Vice President Cheney, in a 2006 speech in Vilnius, expressed his admiration of Kazakhstan’s ruler Nursultan Nazarbayev, while at the same time condemning Russian authoritarianism. It was a far cry from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s 2005 Cairo speech, in which she admitted that America’s pursuit of stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East had “achieved neither.”

But are we Europeans really so much more virtuous and consistent, and as virtuous and consistent as we think? Not only Americans, but African human rights activists too have cause to deplore the fact that Europeans—Germany and France before all others—see China first and foremost as the biggest business opportunity on the planet. Europe’s commitment to good governance and sustainable development, which it enforces rigorously in its dealings with other countries, somehow regularly drops off the agenda in negotiations with Beijing. Not just Iranian and Arab dissidents, but Europe’s friends in Israel as well have watched with growing concern as Europeans all dithered over finding a common strategy toward Iran, and then dithered again over sanctions. One may criticize Cheney’s comments on Kazakhstan, but it was the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that awarded the Central Asian country its annual rotating chairmanship. And what about Berlin’s soothing comments about Uzbekistan, an egregious human rights violator who also happens to harbor a German airbase that is of crucial

importance for its operations in North Afghanistan? Europeans decry the existence of Guantánamo Bay, but have done little to support European nationals imprisoned there, and have quietly colluded in the U.S. renditions policy they otherwise loudly criticize.

Europe’s eastern neighbors anxiously note that the European Union still seems incapable of developing a coherent approach to energy security. Meanwhile, a Russian energy policy operating with surgical precision is filleting Europe’s oil and gas economy like an orange (a practice once labeled indignantly as “disaggregation” when a recently-installed Bush administration decided to pursue its European security relationships bilaterally). It has remained for German policymakers, however, to describe their own role in this distinctly non-integrative approach as *Annäherung durch Verflechtung*, or rapprochement through the interlocking of our economies. On closer inspection, it would seem that the interlocking is proceeding apace, but strictly in one direction—downstream. But then the Germans cultivate a view of Russia as a “strategic partner,” which makes their neighbors, and a few of their friends, jittery anyway—whether it is Social Democrats talking of Germany’s “equidistance” between America and Russia, or Christian Democrats suggesting there could be a “community of values” between Germany and Russia.¹²

In short, if soft power means acting credibly and consistently on convictions and values—the power of good example—then Europe still has some work to do. The available evidence suggests this is not widely understood. Clear-eyed self-criticism remains a rare commodity.

¹² For a revealing version of traditional postwar German thinking about Russia, see Egon Bahr, “Europe’s Strategic Interests: how Germany can steer Europe toward greater global autonomy,” in the transatlantic edition of *Internationale Politik*, Summer 2007, p. 10. To be fair, the notion of a strategic partnership and the policies it entails have been criticized vigorously by a younger generation of German parliamentarians, as well as by most of the German press.

Are we Europeans really so much more virtuous and consistent, and as virtuous and consistent as we think?

4 A LOSER, MORE PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIP

With less than a year left in the Bush presidency, and new or newish leaders in key European countries, the pressing question becomes: What remains after the humbling of American hard power, and the exposure of Europe's soft power delusions? And what will be the way forward now for the transatlantic relationship?

On the U.S. side, the conventional wisdom of the season is to point to the adaptations made by the Bush administration in its second term, and to dismiss the post-9/11 "neoconservative agenda" and any ideas or policies associated with it as historically anomalous or simply failed. This would be a mistake. There were always equal parts of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan in neoconservative thought (not to mention its grandfather, Woodrow Wilson). Pre-emption has been U.S. policy for decades and will remain in America's toolbox, not as a stick in the corner, but as a reluctantly-used last resort. Regime change can be a necessary act of self-defense, as was the case in Afghanistan in 2001; or the consequence of humanitarian intervention, as was the departure of Slobodan Milosevic after the Kosovo campaign in 1999. Democracy promotion, "decontaminated" (Thomas Carothers) from the association with military force, continues to be a central element of any foreign policy, which holds that what happens inside states can be as relevant for global security as their actions on the global stage.

More importantly, in a globalized world that is currently experiencing an authoritarian renaissance, a retreat to an exclusively interest-based realism is not an option for the West. Sheer dominance doesn't get you influence in a world with free flows of goods, people, and information. Money does, as the success of Chinese foreign policy in Africa demonstrates, or Russia's energy policy in its Eastern European neighborhood, for a time. How long this bought legitimacy will last is a matter of speculation. But to copy the cynical realism of these regimes

would be to fall into the trap of self-doubt that is intrinsic to liberal democracy.¹³ For legitimacy is rooted in the very nature of Western systems of governance—the fact that they are rights-regarding, participatory, and equitable, and willing to export peace, prosperity, and stability rather than to keep them for themselves. Conversely, the fact that autocracies are none of these things is a permanent drain on their legitimacy.

On the European side of the Atlantic, nothing is left over of the intellectual architecture erected to counter American hegemony and the Bush doctrine—perhaps because its older parts were already derelict (multilateralism for its own sake) or based on shaky foundations (soft power supremacy), and the new ones too flimsy to withstand serious strain (Europe as counterweight). There is less talk in Europe than in America, though, about turning back the clock to a supposedly preferable earlier age. Europe knows that it has changed, and that there is no way back. The enlargement of the European Union from 15 to 27 members, as well as the impact of 9/11, have forced Europeans to tear their gaze away from their collective navel, and to consider seriously Europe's role in the world. Hard power, transformational thinking, coalitions of the willing—all these have entered not just the vocabulary, but the political practice of Europe.

In sum, seven years after the attacks of 9/11, both sides of the transatlantic relationship have seen the weaknesses of their supposed core strengths exposed, and have made efforts to adjust. The realization that several newly confident authoritarian powers are on the rise around them may also have served to reinforce the insight that America and Europe are—mostly, at any rate—each others' best hope. All this has made the

¹³ See Lawrence Freedman, "The Transatlantic Agenda: Vision and Counter-Vision," *Survival*, Winter 2005-06, p. 19.

relationship itself looser, but also more pragmatic and flexible, a framework that might yet prove as durable as the earlier version based on ancestry, gratitude, and a common threat. Last, but not least, the transatlantic alliance's relationships with the rest of the world have now become more important than the relationship itself.

Just how durable it is, however, will depend on the partners' ability to deal with the bewildering multiplicity of threats, challenges, and opportunities now lying before them. The threats we are aware of (the "known knowns," in the immortal phrase of a former member of the Bush administration) would be quite enough by themselves to test the new partnership style, from half a dozen classic state-based conflicts (Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, Kosovo, Iran, and Pakistan) to non-state-based cross-border threats like terrorism and proliferation. The challenges, too, range from the state-based (such as the rise of China and Russia) to a broad spectrum of critical transnational issues that require sharp observation at all times and, at worst, are capable of a catastrophic impact on international security and stability (resource competition, migration, financial market and currency volatility, climate change, and pandemics).

The transatlantic responses to these threats and challenges will include all the traditional tools of statecraft, like diplomacy, deterrence, and defense. But America and Europe will also have to learn to do much better at nontraditional approaches, such as relinquishing the ideal of dominance or control for one of risk management, as well as consequence management, in those instances where the risk becomes reality. It may prove possible to adapt the architecture of existing institutional frameworks of multilateral governance, from the UN to NATO and the EU, in order to increase their efficiency, to reflect the new geopolitical landscape, and to offer stakeholder positions to rising powers. But

it is equally conceivable that opposing factors, from simple inertia to one or more international players acting as spoilers, will prevent any such development. Consequently, it is highly likely that the present trend toward governance through a proliferation of informal, self-appointed *political* coalitions of the willing will solidify.

The complexity and perpetually shifting nature of this landscape of threats and challenges makes it all the more essential that America and Europe energetically grasp the opportunities to shore up bulwarks of international stability and responsible governance. The chance of pacifying Iraq or Afghanistan (against all odds and despite many mistakes) is a strategic opportunity of the first order; so is managing the transition of Kosovo from protectorate to independent entity. The same goes for supporting democracy movements in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and encouraging the westward course of Turkey. Domestically, integrating Muslims into secular societies, and protecting civil liberties against the encroachment of national security, would go a long way to restoring lost credibility.

The competition to describe the nature of the strategic choice, or choices, lying before the alliance now is as fierce as it was seven years ago, if not quite as gloomy. Selective cooperation (Richard Haass), a focused partnership for incremental improvements (Kori Schake), vision versus counter-vision (Lawrence Freedman), victory or holocaust in the war on terror (David Frum and Richard Perle), offshore balancing and restraint (Barry Posen), European post-modernity or Russian "sovereign democracy" (Ivan Krastev), cooperation, stagnation or Russian rollback (Ronald Asmus), "ethical realism" under the conditions of a "Great Capitalist Peace" (Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman), "realistic Wilsonianism" (Francis Fukuyama), "selective engagement" (Charles Kupchan and

Peter Trubowitz), a “Cold War” against terrorism (Phil Gordon), a “concert of democracies” (Ivo Daalder and James Lindsey), fighting against “Islamofascism” (Norman Podhoretz), advancing the rule of law and international institutions (John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter), “smart power” (Joseph Nye), liberalism versus autocracy (Robert Kagan), and finally, no choice at all except acceptance of the inevitable because there is already a parallel “world without the West” (Nazneen Barma, Ely Ratner, and Steven Weber). These are only some of the options on offer. The international

strategic thinkers’ community does not appear to be reduced, nor its conceptual arsenal depleted.

Finding and applying the right mix of idealism and realism does matter. But success, for the new, looser, and more pragmatic transatlantic relationship, will also depend on some even less tangible qualities—courage, strong nerves, and strategic patience. They will be tested regularly.

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