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Prospects for a Common transatlantic strategy to address newly emerged threats and challenges: complexity and response.

An account of the past

There is nothing especially surprising about the emergence of new threats and challenges to transatlantic security. The question is whether these threats are of a new kind, and powerful enough to challenge the transatlantic community's capacity to adapt. As this essay will argue, we must now deal with issues representing historical discontinuities: with tends and events for which long-established techniques offer no pre-existing solutions. We face the unprecedented. But in order to face it, we should begin with a serious look at what we have been until now, as prelude to a discussion of what we are becoming.

The concept of transatlantic security was born during the Second World War, out of the "special relationship" between the United States, Britain and the governments- in-exile of allied nations under enemy occupation. At war's end, the United States' resolved to continue that relationship, but in an unconventional way. We demobilized. We contemplated imposing generational retribution on the defeated states. But we chose instead to embark upon their political and economic reconstruction as part of a new system of states which would include the victors as well as the vanquished.

To do this, American leaders decided to embrace the great and awful lessons of the preceding twenty-five years: that the war was the result of a collective failure by free nations to respond to aggression, and that this aggression was the political consequence of a nearly universal economic collapse.

American leaders believed that the only way to prevent yet another war would be to construct an international system based on the principle of collective security. They also believed that it was imperative to create international economic institutions for collective defense against the great twin-destroyers: hyper-inflation and depression. American leaders also believed that democracy and freedom were the greatest prizes of victory, and that these needed not only to be restored to peoples who had lost theirs, but brought to peoples whose governments had been the quintessential expressions of tyranny.

From these convictions came a stunning American departure from their isolationist tradition. This reversal made it possible for a still doubtful nation to support full American engagement in the creation of universal, multinational institutions. American leaders invested their hope for the future in a system for collective security embodied by the United Nations Security Council - - and in the collective economic institutions that were created at Breton Woods.

Soviet aggression cut short that vision, as it -- in Churchill's words – rang down an "Iron Curtain across Europe", behind which the captive East European states were chained to Soviet ideology, Soviet institutions, and Soviet economics. Because of this division, Europe was destined to live for another generation under the shadow of a third world war, with potential consequences even more disastrous than its predecessors. Under these harsh circumstances, the intended security relationships hardened into a regional military alliance, and the principle of global collective security was transmuted into the Balance of Terror, buttressed by the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction.

During this time, American policy regarded Western Europe as the geo-political hub of the world. All American relations and interests elsewhere were regarded as appendages of a Euro-centric grand

strategy, the point of which was to preserve the independence and freedom of Europe, as inseparable from our own. The United States obviously had vital interests in other parts of the world, for which it was prepared to go to war: notably, in Korea. For almost twenty years, however, American leaders viewed Communist China and its actions as attributes of policies made and decisions taken in the Kremlin as the dominant partner. We further understood the Kremlin to be focused on winning control over the European heartland, because this would at last establish the communist revolution where it always was supposed to have been, according to the dictates of Marxist ideology.

The physical and political containment of the Soviet Union was the core of trans-Atlantic strategy. But it was the self-isolation of the Soviet system that led to its stagnation, slow decay and ultimate collapse. With this event, the Atlantic coalition was able to return to is founding vision: to the prospect of Europe at last free and whole; to the possibility of constructing global peace and prosperity on the basis of collective security against aggression; and to the development of collective global supports for economic stability and growth.

To some it appeared that these events also meant that the transatlantic relationship had not only fulfilled its promised, but outlived its utility. NATO was depicted as obsolete. And it was assumed that the United States and Europe would now have divergent priorities: in the case of the United States, it would be the expansion of democracy and free-market principles on a global basis; and in the case of Europe, it would be the establishment of a full-blown political, economic and defense identity for the continent.

History, however, abhors a straight line. NATO has survived by absorbing nations previously held tightly by the Soviet Union, and by embracing security missions that go well beyond the defense of

the European continent. The European Union has evolved into an ever more universal regulatory system for the continent, but not yet into a vessel for its spiritual identity.

An account of the challenges

In the years since the end of the Cold War, the world has dramatically transformed itself, and there is no end in sight to this period of unprecedented change. Some of these changes have sufficient force and momentum to threaten the adaptive capabilities of the transatlantic system. .

To begin with, the experiences and memories that originally bound the United States and Europe together are fading along with the generation that knew them. This does not mean that NATO and the European Union have been frozen in time. Far from it. Both systems have remained vital by expanding in the direction of universality. However, this expansion means incorporating new members whose attitudes and priorities are yet to be fully absorbed within either system.

It is not just a question of mutual adjustment between the old core of NATO or of the EU on the one hand, and new members on the other. The transatlantic alliance, and its major components, simultaneously undergoing rapid, deep change.

Europe's demographic future is one of aging, diminishing populations, struggling to absorb but not truly welcoming fast-growing numbers of outsiders. That is a consequence in the first place, of the increasingly fluid market for labor that moves legally within the European Union. It is also the consequence of the ability of large numbers of persons to enter the Union illegally. Both trends are subject to sharp acceleration.

If the European Union finally accepts Turkey as a member, then at that moment, the very definition of what it means to be European will be changed. Incorporating Turkey may well be a brilliant and creative step, but only subsequent events will prove it. In any event, even without Turkey, the growth of Muslim communities across Europe is raising profound issues about the structure of law, legitimacy and politics. As for illegal immigration, there is every reason to count on its continuing to surge, as the result of the forces of poverty and demography, intensified by the unfolding consequences of climate change.

The United States is no longer a polity representing a single, dominant ethnic group. It is a multi-racial society, with a very large and rapidly growing Hispanic component, along-side other vigorous minority groups, especially those originating in Asia. In many ways, this mixture of peoples continues to make the United States stronger, providing that in each generation, we manage to transmute our differences into a higher unity.

But even if the American "melting pot" continues to function, its contents are changing. The ties of American citizens, by heritage, to countries of origin in Latin America, Asia and Africa are reflected in the political priorities of differing ethnic communities, as they find their voices within the political system. The emotional pull of "the old country" now means something completely different to scores of millions of Americans, than it did in the days when it could only mean "Europe."

American economic power is under challenge, partly because of gross errors in policy on our part, and partly as the consequence of the inevitable emergence of other peers: including the European Union and China. America finds itself at the entrance to a trap of its own making, as the result of excessive debt and excessive reliance on imported energy. Our future is mortgaged to sources of

finance abroad, notably in China, and to financial systems that are beyond national (and perhaps, international) control.

In addition to foreign debt, there are other liens against the future of the American economy, written in denominations of about a trillion dollars each. Among these are: the full cost of the war in Iraq; the cost of sustaining the viability of our social contract, in the form of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; and the need for massive rehabilitation of the country's infrastructure. If these and other fundamental needs are not satisfied, there will be severe costs in terms of the performance of the American economy, and quite possibly in terms of public attitudes towards some very fundamental values.

In short, both of the trans-Atlantic partners are facing deep societal issues, which can have the effect of changing the dynamics of their relationship with each other. Moreover, there are other challenges to transatlantic security that are the consequences of profound changes originating outside both the United States and the European Union, but embracing them both. .

Globalization is a hybrid of the classical doctrine of Free Trade, and the revolutionary impact of the internet on the organization of economic activity. Globalization has helped to build wealth on an unprecedented global scale. But even good things have costs. As is the case in Europe, in America there are limits to public tolerance for the dislocations caused by globalization. This is especially true when these dislocations are seen to be the result of systematic abuse by some of our most serious competitors.
Nowhere is that collision between principle and reality more painfully clear than in the failure of both the European Union and the United States to deal with agricultural subsidies, which have distorted our own economies and disrupted our efforts to continue the expansion of globalization.

Other examples of major, challenges are:

- The world-wide subordination of industrial and agricultural activity to extortionate prices for energy.
- The continued accumulation of immense financial surpluses at the disposal of state-run sovereign funds.
- The metastasis of networked terrorism and networked crime
- The reappearance of fanatical religious passion as a world-wide threat to rational secularism.
- The onset of global climate change.

Each of these challenges represents a cluster of interactive problems, for which no single solution is a decisive answer, and for which no single one of our institutions is adequate as a basis for effective management. It is also especially important to recognize that problems such as these are almost certain to be become mutually interactive and self-reinforcing.

The rapidly developing global crisis over prices for foodstuffs is a precise case in point. This crisis is the product of the convergence and interaction of factors previously thought of as distinct. Once co-mingled and co-active, however, these factors produce a compound new challenge that cannot be managed by segmenting issues, but only by integrating solution s and institutions.

European and American systems of agricultural subsidies and trade restraints did not cause this crisis. However, our respective agricultural politics and policies have the potential to lock the crisis into place, and even to transform it into a general threat to the institutional foundations of world trade.

France (if not the EU) now suggests that the correct response to food shortages is for other parts of the world to imitate Europe's Common Agricultural Policy. But the CAP is notorious as a major source of distortion in the agricultural economies of developing

states. It is a policy in the service of Europe's domestic political realities. EU stubbornness on this point has already contributed to the failure of the Doha Trade round, thereby threatening to stop the process of trade liberalization that has contributed so mightily to our general prosperity. In fairness, the same judgment obviously would apply to certain components of the US system of agricultural subsidies and tariffs, particularly as they relate to energy policy, through the conversion of foodstuffs into fuel.

Responses

We face important challenges to our institutions of governance at all levels: national, regional and trans-national. Neither the US nor the European Union presently have the capacity to achieve the fusion of trade, finance, industry, and scientific innovation needed to deal with complex and highly interactive issues of this sort.

The on-going consolidation of executive European political authority is an important part of any solution to this problem, because it is sine qua non for more coherent US-European responses. The United States, for its part, must recommit itself to collective action and give up the now discredited image of American omni-competence.

There are some more formal proposals that address the requirement for strengthening trans-Atlantic institutions: for example, to provide NATO with its own funding authority; to replace consensus procedures by majority vote; and even for the creation of a US-European economic union. These are constructive ideas, in that they illustrate the need for greater strength at the center of the transatlantic relationship. But such revolutionary measures are very unlikely to be adopted.

It might be better for us to find ways to strengthen existing means for coordination, especially where economic and traditional

security issues overlap. These matters are dealt with by separate consultative procedures, without much cross-communication. It is actually time, for American and European policy-making institutions alike, to revisit their basic definitions of the concept of security.

We obviously continue to face physical threats, but the management of these is no longer sufficient to assure the security of our respective societies. Mismanagement of the global financial system is at least as likely to bring us all down as would be an act of violence. However, in national governments and in our approach to trans-Atlantic security, we treat these matters as inherently separate.

Most important of all, we ought to revisit some first principles. What is it, in the age of globalization, that actually defines and distinguishes the transatlantic relationship from all the other trans-continental and trans-hemispheric relationships that both partners have been developed? Is this relationship still something unique and vital in the world; or is it now just one international system among many? For what issues do Europe and America alone constitute a sufficient quorum?

The trans-Atlantic system, despite its immense resources, is no longer sufficient for the management of this new generation of threats and challenges. We are now part of a global "system of systems." Our destinies are no longer determined exclusively by what we bring to each other. Going forward, our destinies depend on what we collectively bring to the larger community of nations, not only at the level of resources but of values.

These values were never based on unity of race, or unity of religion, or on unity of material economic interest. They were (and still are) based on belief in the individual as the object for which the state exists, rather than the other way around. They represent

belief in law as the constraint of power rather than the protection of privilege, and they speak to freedom of initiative and of conscience. They relish texture and difference, as adornments rather than shortcomings of the social order. They act to protect the right of each generation to at least partly determine the future, rather than to be governed entirely by the past. The essence of transatlantic security remains the protection of these values against new forces that may yet overwhelm them. The challenge is to find new patterns of analysis and of action that are adequate for the purpose.

We must, finally, recognize that major threats to the trans-Atlantic partners are also major threats to global security, and require action envisioned, planned and executed on that scale. Trans-Atlantic security, in other words, now depends increasingly not just upon what Europe and America offer each other, but upon what our partnership offers to other parts of the international system. Much has changed, but in any possible global security network, the United States and Europe must continue to provide an indispensable core of inspiration and consensus.

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