

SPECIAL REPORT

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James Jay Carafano, PhD, Nile Gardiner, PhD, Walter Lohman,  
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KATHRYN AND SHELBY CULLOM DAVIS INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY

## About the Authors

**James Jay Carafano, PhD**, is Vice President of, and E. W. Richardson Fellow in, the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation.

**Nile Gardiner, PhD**, is Director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, and Bernard and Barbara Lomas Fellow, of the Davis Institute.

**Walter Lohman** is Director of the Asian Studies Center of the Davis Institute.

**Theodore R. Bromund, PhD**, is Senior Research Fellow in Anglo-American Relations in the Thatcher Center.

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# How and Why American Conservatives Must Fight for the Future of the Transatlantic Community

*James Jay Carafano, PhD, Nile Gardiner, PhD, Walter Lohman, and Theodore R. Bromund, PhD*

**T**he American experiment is rooted in Western religion, culture, and ideas, and over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries was recognized universally as the basis of modern Western civilization and the foundation for good governance and a just society. Like for all civilizations, foundational concepts are constantly under challenge, reinterpretation, and revision. Westerners' belief in immutable rights, however, is the idea that brought the two sides of the Atlantic together—and gives them common cause in facing the world's challenges every bit as much as a convergence of material interests. This belief and partnership are worth preserving—and it is why American conservatives have a stake in the future of the transatlantic community.

American conservatives should be vested in the future of the transatlantic community. Here is why.

Conservatives are realists.<sup>1</sup> The state's responsibility is to protect the interests of Americans. Preserving a successful transatlantic community is a vital U.S. interest. The freedom, security, and prosperity of all Americans is best secured within a strong and self-confident transatlantic partnership.

Conservatives believe in inalienable individual rights. Chief among them, America's role as an "exceptional nation" was founded on the creed that the people are sovereign.<sup>2</sup> Government governs by the consent of the people, on their behalf. This belief draws on a common legacy from within the transatlantic community, a heritage that helped forge America's conceptions of itself. Preserving the ideals of popular sovereignty and individual liberty within the community is vital to holding steadfast to the truth that immutable rights are the foundation for legitimate governance for America and for countries across the Atlantic. This is the real glue that holds the community together, allows both sides of the Atlantic to act together in trust and confidence, and empowers both sides to tackle global challenges together.

For the sake of both U.S. interests and American values, it makes sense for American conservatives to take a leadership role in the future of the transatlantic community.

Knowing how to secure the future of the transatlantic partnership begins with:

1. Understanding the community's importance to safeguarding U.S. interests and values;
2. Assessing the key disagreements and divisive issues threatening the future of the community; and
3. Identifying the leadership role that American conservatives can play in making the community a success in the 21st century, including describing the dialogues in which conservatives should be participating and the agenda they should emphasize.

## **Part I. America's Interests and Values in the Transatlantic Community**

Since before his election, President Donald J. Trump declared that his priority was to put "America first." One could argue that centering policy on a phrase with so much negative historical connotations was bound to lead to misunderstanding. Nevertheless, interpretations that Trump's use of it represents a transactional, myopic, self-centered, unprincipled, isolationist, and unilateral policy perspective do not square with the Administration's aspirations nor with its actions.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Trump White House's strong commitment to the transatlantic community remains an element of continuity in modern U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. and Canada, in partnership with friends and allies across the Atlantic, represent a powerful global force. The 51 countries in the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) area of responsibility include approximately one-fifth of the world's population, 10.7 million square miles of land, and 13 million square miles of ocean. Some of America's oldest (France) and closest and most reliable allies (the United Kingdom) are in Europe.

Over the past three years, America's re-engagement with Europe has continued, and even accelerated.<sup>4</sup> The resurgence of Russia, brought into starkest relief with its seizure of Crimea in Ukraine, and the continued fight against the Islamic State in Iraq, Syria, and Libya brought Europe back into the top tier of U.S. international interests, and Washington

increased its financial and military investment in support of NATO's deterrence capabilities. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Europe continue to share a strong commitment to the rule of law, human rights, free markets, and democracy.

In short, there is more continuity than change in the transatlantic partnership. America has demonstrated commitment to the transatlantic community for decades, through Administrations led by both political parties, during and after the Cold War. This Administration has placed renewed emphasis on the partnership. Why? The answer is twofold: because the transatlantic partnership is consistent with (1) U.S. interests and (2) American values.

**An Anchor for American Interests.** The U.S. is a global power with global interests and responsibilities. In particular, the government must safeguard the nation's three top vital concerns—(1) defense of the homeland, (2) stability in critical regions, and (3) preservation of the right of states to freely transit the global commons. All three goals are best served by effective U.S. actions in three crucially important parts of the world—the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe. These three regions link the U.S. to the rest of the world. They host American forces so they can be forward present to protect U.S. interests, and serve as springboards that enable the U.S. to get where it needs to be to protect its interests. Collectively, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance is in and of itself a critical political-military force. America's bilateral relations with nations of the transatlantic community are just as crucial. It is not just the major powers, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and France that matter. For U.S. efforts in ensuring regional stability in an age of great power competition, “small powers” are more important than ever.<sup>5</sup> There are three reasons why small states matter to the United States, particularly in the context of the transatlantic community, Western Europe, and great power competition.

First, geography matters. In geopolitics—as in real estate—a critical consideration is “location, location, location.” To a major power, another country's greatest asset might be its map coordinates, not the size of its arsenal or bank account. Part of the reason why the U.S. must insist that NATO continue to keep its membership door open is because there are nations whose accession would enhance collective security due to their geographical location that are still not included.

Second, freedom matters. Like-minded nations make better partners. One of the reasons why NATO works is because the Alliance is a partnership of free nation-states. The foundational rationale of the transatlantic Alliance is that free and independent states have the right to associate for

the purpose of collective security. To close NATO's door to new members would undermine what NATO stands for: the right of free peoples to choose their future.

Third, contribution matters. Small nations can be net contributors to peace, security, and economic development. The nation of Georgia, for example, had the largest per capita troop contribution to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan—despite being a non-NATO nation.

America's economic ties to the region are likewise crucial. A stable, secure, and economically viable Europe is in America's economic interest. For more than 70 years, the U.S. military presence has contributed to regional security and stability, economically benefiting both Europeans and Americans. The economies of the member states of the European Union, along with the Albania, Canada, Great Britain, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Turkey, and the United States, account for more than half of the global economy. America, Canada, Great Britain, Iceland, and the members of the EU are also each other's principal trading partners. In addition, the U.S. is actively economically engaged with European countries, such as Georgia, Kosovo, and Ukraine, which are neither members of the EU or NATO.

Europe is also important to the U.S. because of its geographical proximity to some of the world's most dangerous and contested regions. From the eastern Atlantic Ocean to the Middle East, up to the Caucasus through Russia, and into the Arctic, Europe is enveloped by an arc of instability. The European region also has some of the world's most vital shipping lanes, energy resources, and trade choke points.

European basing for U.S. forces provides the ability to respond robustly and quickly to challenges to American economic and security interests in and near the region. Russian naval activity in the North Atlantic and Arctic has necessitated a renewed focus on regional command and control and has led to increased U.S. and allied air and naval assets operating in the Arctic. Americans often think of U.S. forces in Europe in their principle role of the defense of Europe, forgetting that equally important, the U.S. presence in Europe facilitates America's ability to project power around the world to protect vital American interests.

**A Foundation of Transatlantic Identity.** In reflecting on what binds Americans together, it is important to consider Western civilization with the seriousness it deserves.<sup>6</sup> Together, the transatlantic community constitutes an authentic civilization that defines its purpose and who Americans and Europeans are.

Civilizations do not constitute the problem of which Samuel Huntington warned; they are the answer. The West should be worried less about

them clashing, and start thinking more about how the interaction between authentic civilizations can be a constructive force for the common good of human community.

Rather than demolishing Western civilization, ostensibly to promote equality, combat racism, redistribute income, denounce racists, and “Islamophobia”—rather than treating civilization as something that divides us—any civilization ought to be thought of as something that lifts humans to their better natures. What makes a civilization valuable as an instrument for knitting people together? It is its capacity to respect and improve the human condition.

In the new age of great power competition, some civilizational pretenders are not so great—and pose a threat to global stability. Just as the Soviet empire was the great inauthentic claimant of the past century, there are dark shadows today. The category of false claimants, which have no legitimate part in a discussion of how civilizations should shape the modern world, include Islamism, Putinism, or the Chinese Communist Party’s appropriation of Confucianism. These ideologies are threats to global harmony; and, while they are overlaid on deep historical roots, they do not constitute authentic civilizations.

Thus, understanding the foundation of transatlantic values and their importance to America begins by dismissing the notion that a civilizational approach to geopolitics, properly understood, is toxic. This is particularly important for understanding the constructive importance of Western civilization.

Part of the intensely adverse reaction to President Trump’s touting of “America First” stems from recalling the complicated history of the movement that opposed U.S. entry into World War II before Pearl Harbor.<sup>7</sup> After the war, there was a strong reaction against the Western chauvinism professed by Charles Lindbergh and others. Progressive scholars, such as Howard Zinn, William Appleman Williams, Edward Said, and Noam Chomsky, championed historical revisionism. Western civilization was not merely not superior, they explained; the West was also inherently corrupt, a malevolent influence suffused with imperialism, greed, and intolerance.

Zinn complained in “Columbus and Western Civilization”—his chapter in the 2001 *You Are Being Lied To*—that “in these five hundred years of Western civilization, of Western domination of the rest of the world, most of those benefits have gone to a small part of the human race. For billions of people in the Third World, they still face starvation, homelessness, disease, the early deaths of their children.”<sup>8</sup> For him, the West had done nothing right, and its legacy was not worth preserving.

There was also an effort, if not to discredit Western civilization entirely, to make the case that no civilization had the right to assert its superiority over others. Political movements that began to take off in the 1970s not only promoted parity among civilizations, but embraced hostility toward the notion of civilizational hierarchy. The argument was for a more diffuse, secular conception of society with a grab bag of personal preferences substituting for a cohesive identity.

What all these 20th-century critics had in common was an effort to disentangle the present from the past by denigrating or expunging the idea of a civilized Western world. But while Western—and all other—civilizations have been and are imperfect, there is something about the idea of them that had proven utility for humanity. For instance, as Vaclav Havel, president of the Czech Republic at the time, described in a 1994 address:

The large empires, complex supranational entities or confederations of states that we know from history, those which, in their time, contributed something of value to humanity, were remarkable not only because of how they were administered or organized, but also because they were always buoyed by a spirit, an idea, an ethos I would even say by a charismatic quality out of which their structure ultimately grew. For such entities to work and be vital, they always had to offer and indeed did offer, some key to emotional identification, an ideal that would speak to people or inspire them, a set of generally understandable values that everyone could share. These values made it worthwhile for people to make sacrifices for the entity that embodied them, even, in extreme circumstances, the sacrifice of their very lives.<sup>9</sup>

**Civilizations are valued not because of their longevity, but because of what they promise and what they deliver.**

Civilization provides the moral foundation of a society; precepts to build on. Therefore, it is difficult to answer the question of who Westerners are, and why they form a common community, without considering the foundational civilization on which they stand.

In addressing what Western civilization is, there is admittedly great confusion. Within the EU there is much discussion of “European values.”<sup>10</sup> In the U.S., liberals often talk about “progressive values.”<sup>11</sup> Conservatives, however, have a different conception of foundational ideas. It is not that conservative ideals are immutable because they are old. They are valued because they have proven their value over time. They are principles worth conserving because they are rooted in human nature. Foundational to Western civilization is the conception of natural rights. This is the belief that

humans possess immutable rights, regardless of government, religion, or community. In the Western heritage, this is expressed as the preservation of human liberty. It is this Western construction that led the American founding fathers to establish a particular system of governance known as popular sovereignty, where sovereign powers are vested in the people themselves. The government of the state serves to implement the will of the people. It is the construction of this form of governance that led to Americans describing themselves as the “exceptional nation.” As Heritage Foundation Vice President and scholar Kim Holmes explains, what makes America exceptional was that

America was founded on the creed of establishing and protecting liberty. That’s what the Declaration of Independence is all about. The Constitution was written as well to provide not only a unified and functioning government, but the protection of individual rights. These ideas may have been born in England, Scotland, and even France, but they took shape in a particular way in the American Revolution.<sup>12</sup>

The American experiment is rooted in Western religion, culture, and ideas, and over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries was recognized universally as the basis of modern Western civilization and the foundation for good governance and a just society.

Times change. Foundational concepts are constantly under challenge, reinterpretation, and revision. The conception of Western civilization is no different. Westerners’ belief in immutable rights, however, is the idea that brought the two sides of the Atlantic together—and gives them common cause in facing the world’s challenges every bit as much as a convergence of material interests. This belief and partnership are worth preserving.

## **Part II. Challenges to the Freedom, Prosperity, and Security of the Transatlantic Community**

While shared interests and values argue that the transatlantic partnership should be pulling Americans, Canadians, and Europeans together, there are forces pulling them apart. What are these forces? Often this is the answer given: Donald Trump is the problem. That answer is unsatisfying. The President’s manner of statecraft may be unconventional. His style may be distasteful to some on both sides of the Atlantic. But reducing the strains in the transatlantic relationship, the challenges that keep both sides from acting in concert, to the aesthetics of the American President, is more than

unhelpful. It is destructive. It distracts leaders on both sides of the Atlantic from focusing on addressing the real and core issues.

American conservatives have a special obligation to understand what divides the two sides and why. They are most vested in the partnership and the ones most motivated to address the differences—not papering them over. The challenges to the transatlantic community span the moral and physical dimensions and are global in scope. The most problematic ones ought to be the focus of conservative efforts. They include:

**Managing Multilateralism.** Europeans believe that America is abandoning multilateralism. Many in the U.S. view this criticism as an effort to constrain American power and hamstring the U.S. in protecting its own interests.

Since the earliest days of the republic, the United States has evinced wariness of foreign commitments, treaties, and other “entangling alliances.” This perspective instilled a deep skepticism of treaties and international organizations that has influenced America’s foreign policy for centuries. For instance, aside from a special arrangement with Panama, the U.S. did not enter into a treaty or alliance with any nation until World War II. Indeed, as with Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, even when an American President was keenly supportive of an international organization, it was no guarantee that the American people or Congress would support U.S. participation.

Since World War II, the U.S. has joined the U.N. and allied with other nations to jointly advance security and economic interests and counter threats. In practice, the U.S. enters into an astonishing number of international agreements. So far in 2019, under President Trump’s leadership, the U.S. has signed 13, including six Senate-ratified treaties.<sup>13</sup> Overall, however, ratification of multilateral treaties by the U.S. remains rarer—and more contentious—than in European countries and has resulted in the U.S. rejecting a number of treaties deemed non-controversial by its European allies.

By contrast, Europe is today the foremost champion of international organizations, treaties, and international norms and law. From the International Criminal Court to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, from the Paris Agreement on climate change to the Iran nuclear deal, the Europeans lead the charge to negotiate multilateral agreements on human rights, arms control, environmental concerns, and virtually every issue of international concern.

The different perspectives are, in no small part, due to drawing different lessons from World Wars I and II. In Europe, the conflicts were blamed on nationalistic and militaristic rivalries. Their solution was to suppress

those rivalries through the creation and promotion of supra-national entities, such as the EU, and the codification of rules and international law as an alternative to armed conflict. As Europe increasingly embraced these endeavors, it has reduced its military investments and, thereby, left no alternative but to double down on the approach even when it proves insufficient.

On the other hand, the U.S. has recognized the need to invest in the military in order to counter threats from abroad. Although still wary of alliances, treaties, and international organizations, the U.S. was willing to accept these multilateral commitments on a case-by-case basis in order to advance its national interests. The key difference, however, is that the U.S. continues to view multilateral commitments through a national interest lens, while Europeans are far more likely to equate multilateral interests with national interests.

**Future of European Integration.** For many Europeans, greater integration is not only a strategic priority, it is the crucial pillar of European identity. Americans are more ambivalent. While some support greater European integration, others are indifferent, or openly hostile. Further, many Americans are puzzled that some Europeans are themselves highly critical of further European integration, yet staunchly support continued membership in the EU. These confusions and divisions are exacerbated by the divergent visions for the future of Europe.

A Europe that is “whole, free, and at peace” has become a modern-day mantra, as frequently repeated by American leaders as by Europeans. For some, the EU is an essential contribution to a successful Europe—as part of the greater Atlantic community. To others, the EU is the goal and, in and of itself, an essential consolidation of economic, social, foreign, and security policy into a single European polity. The distinction makes a difference. One interpretation argues that the future of Europe is about the transatlantic community. The other suggests it is about the future of the EU.

Divisions are not new. They predate the Trump Administration. For years, some European leaders described the next steps in European integration as European autonomy—meaning a Europe acting as an independent global power. These calls have only grown. In June 2016, the EU published *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*.<sup>14</sup> It was arguably the first EU document to see strategic autonomy as a policy objective. As a result, today there are two very different visions for a Europe “whole, free, and at peace”—one within the context of the traditional transatlantic community and the other not.

Trumpian rhetoric aside, the reality is that U.S. engagement with Europe has always had its ups and downs.<sup>15</sup> Yet, one issue has been a persistent

irritant within the community that has made the normal ebb and flow of transatlantic relations unusually tense. On June 23, 2016, in the largest democratic act in British history, and after a lengthy and public debate, the British people voted in a national referendum to leave the European Union. Since then, the EU, and too much of the British political class, has tried to frustrate and minimize the outcome of the referendum. While the Obama Administration strongly backed “Remain” (the forces that wanted to keep Britain in the EU), the Trump Administration has rightly stated that Britain’s choices are Britain’s to make, and emphasized its desire to negotiate a major and ambitious free trade deal with the United Kingdom. A U.S.–U.K. free trade agreement (FTA) will only be possible if Britain fully exits the EU, which it is currently scheduled to do on October 31, 2019.

The risks of frustrating Brexit are significant, as detrimental to Europe as to Britain and the U.S. The delays in exiting the EU have already done serious damage to the major political parties in the U.K., and raised the profile of alternative parties. The vote to exit the EU was a democratic act: Frustrating it will do major, and possibly irreversible, damage to the U.K.’s political system. It would repeat the invariable tendency across the EU, which is that the EU forces those who vote against it to vote again until they get it right—such as when Irish voters were made to vote a second time, after rejecting the EU’s Lisbon treaty in 2008.

Frustrating Brexit would also make it impossible to conclude a U.S.–U.K. FTA, an obviously logical goal that would already exist if Britain had not joined the European Economic Community in 1973. But most fundamentally, the vote for Brexit was a vote for national sovereignty. In the end, undermining national sovereignty risks the very foundation of the transatlantic community.

**Dealing with Russia.** The transatlantic community does view the challenges posed by the regime in Moscow from a common perspective. Some of the deepest divisions on the danger of Moscow are among the European nations themselves.

Europeans often express uncertainty about U.S. policy toward Russia—in part because President Trump’s tweets and public statements imply to them that he is questioning the NATO alliance and cutting deals with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In fact, American policy toward Russia has been to push back against Moscow’s aggression, and to increase the costs of actions that threaten U.S. allies. In 2019, the U.S. suspended the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in response to Russia’s decades-long and systematic escalation of its violations. The U.S. has also enacted sanctions relating to Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, meddling in

U.S. elections, and Russia's use of chemical weapons on European soil in Salisbury, England, in 2018. The U.S. has also expelled dozens of Russian officials, and shuttered the Russian consulates in San Francisco and Seattle.

The European response to Russia has been less certain and coherent in practice. There are differences between the United States and some of its European allies when it comes to confronting Russia. Some countries have shown a tendency to take a softer approach toward Moscow. The Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, and the leader of Italy's populist Lega party, Matteo Salvini, argues that Russia was within its right to occupy Crimea. Hungary uses a bilateral dispute with Ukraine over the teaching of Hungarian to a small minority in Ukraine to block NATO–Ukrainian cooperation. The question of how to best serve Europe's energy needs is also a divisive one. Germany is desperate to see the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline project completed. The Nord Stream 2 project, which would connect Germany with Russia via pipeline, is neither economically necessary nor geopolitically prudent. Rather, it is a political project to greatly increase European dependence on Russian gas, magnify Russia's ability to use its European energy dominance as political trump card, and specifically undermine U.S. allies in Eastern and Central Europe.

The latest example of Europe's split thinking on Russia is the recent decision, by majority vote, to restore voting rights to the Russian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)—after Russia's voting rights were withdrawn following its illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2014. France, Germany, Italy, and Spain voted to restore voting rights to the Russian delegation.<sup>16</sup> The United Kingdom was the only large country to vote against restoration of Russian voting rights. Central and Eastern European countries also voted against restoration, with the delegations of Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia walking out of PACE in protest and solidarity with Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> This opposition illustrates the clear and real divides among Europeans in punishing Moscow for its destabilizing interference in Western European peace and security.

**Managing Relations with China.** The U.S. and Europe also have different perceptions of China. The destabilizing rise of China stands as the principal concern to the U.S., while in Europe, there is no consensus on the threat posed by China, despite growing evidence of malicious Chinese activities.<sup>18</sup>

The destabilizing aspects of China's rise was most notably recognized in the 2017 National Security Strategy, and was reflected in the Administration's quickly adapting to promote the concept of a "free and open Indo-Pacific." That noted, there was significant uncertainty among U.S.

allies in the region over how the U.S. would follow through on its goals as stated in the strategy. There was confusion over the differences between the new strategy and the Obama Administration's concept of a U.S. "pivot to Asia." Allies have had to adjust to a change in leadership style in the White House. There have been some unnecessary bumps in the road during this transition (contentious negotiations over basing arrangements, for example), but America's principal alliances with Australia, Japan, and South Korea are healthy. In addition, the U.S. is increasingly looking to Europe for solidarity in dealing with China.

The U.S. emphasis on China is not matched in Europe. Although Europeans are increasingly wary of Chinese influence in Europe, they do not see themselves as part of a great power struggle. In addition, there is little appetite for NATO to engage in the issue. Further, Europeans fret over the nature of U.S. strategy toward China and its impact on globalization. Some fear that the U.S. is laying the groundwork for a so-called G-2, a grand bargain with China where the two powers make all the big decisions and divide the world between them. Alternatively, some worry that the U.S. plan is to "decouple" the East from the West, reviving the Cold War and forcing everyone to pick sides.<sup>19</sup>

Debates within the transatlantic community over Huawei, a major Chinese telecom company controlled by the Chinese government, illustrate the difficult issues confronting the alliance. In the U.S., a view of China as adversary is gaining ascendance, and that the U.S. must prevent it from using its government-controlled companies to gain a position in the United States' fifth-generation (5G) wireless networks that could directly impinge on security. Such a presence would be a clear national security threat that could decisively compromise American telecommunications and data infrastructure—including the communications integrity of the U.S. military and intelligence community. In contrast, several European nations already rely heavily on Huawei software and hardware in their telecom infrastructure. Some argue that Huawei products are so financially competitive that they have little alternative. They also argue that firewalls can be built against national security risks from the company's products.

**Constraining Iran.** How to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat remains one of the biggest dividing issues between the United States and European allies. It is a source of significant tension between Washington and the EU in general, and key European capitals, especially Paris and Berlin.

President Trump sent a strong message to Tehran and to Europe. By steadily escalating economic sanctions, pushing back against Iranian troublemaking through the coordinated efforts of a network of allies, and with

firm diplomacy backed up by the credible threat of force, the Trump Administration hopes to induce the regime to abandon its hostile foreign policy.

In contrast, the EU was willing to accept the status quo under the Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Further, a large number of European—especially French and German—firms have invested in Iran. EU trade with Iran soared from \$9.2 billion in 2015 to \$25 billion in 2017. Ultimately, individual European governments and the EU seemed unwilling to choose between doing business with the Iranian regime and working with the United States in reining in Iran’s ambitions.

The Trump Administration strongly called for European allies to withdraw from the Iran deal, effectively constraining Iran’s nuclear and missile ambitions and ending its ability to support terrorism. European support for the Iran nuclear deal, however, remains. Principally, the EU sees no practical alternative and believes that reneging on an agreement negotiated in good faith undermines the likelihood of future negotiations.

**Keeping Free Markets Free.** Global economic freedom declined over the past year, part of a disturbing trend that ought to be a concern on both sides of the Atlantic.

On the constructive side, the United States and the countries of Europe share a broad commitment to the principles of economic freedom that underpin high levels of prosperity. Eighteen European countries share with the United States a designation in The Heritage Foundation’s *Index of Economic Freedom* of “free” or “mostly free.” Many Eastern European countries are among the fastest risers in the *Index*, but Russia, Moldova, Belarus, and Ukraine continue to lag, as does Greece.<sup>20</sup>

The U.S. and European countries engage in dynamic trade in goods and services that was valued at about \$1.3 trillion in 2018. The U.S. typically runs a deficit in goods trade with European countries that is sometimes partially counterbalanced by small surpluses in the services trade. The United States and the European Union are massive investors in each other’s economies, with total stocks of foreign investments totaling at least \$5 trillion and the EU slightly more invested in the U.S. than vice versa.

Despite these large trade and investment flows, which demonstrate the high level of economic interaction that is extremely valuable to both the United States and its European partners, there are frictions in the relationships. The U.S. does not have an FTA with the EU or any European country outside the EU. Both the U.S. and Europe tend to apply relatively low tariffs on goods imports, so most problems in the economic relationship arise from various types of non-tariff barriers, including safeguards or anti-dumping measures. For example, recent U.S. tariffs on steel, aluminum, washing

machines, and solar panels have engendered retaliatory moves by Europe, hurting businesses and consumers in both regions.

Of more long-standing concern are structural differences in economic regulations and government subsidization of manufacturing and agriculture, particularly in Europe. Attempts to negotiate a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement have floundered over differences in such areas. Energy is also an issue, with European dependence on Russian gas (through pipelines such as the controversial Nord Stream 2 project) generating concern both in the U.S. and parts of Europe. Strategies for mitigating or adapting to threats from climate change are the subject of heated debate in both the U.S. and Europe, with Europe's more aggressive approach to mitigation strategies putting it in conflict with the U.S. in various international fora.

The inherent tension between the controlling tendencies of governments and the entrepreneurial freedom of an unfettered marketplace has heightened around the globe, but particularly within the transatlantic community, evident most notably in increased protectionism and politically motivated government spending. Part of the fault here spans both sides of the Atlantic.

**Providing for Collective Defense.** The strains in U.S. and European approaches to collective defense transcend the current Administration's incessant demands on burden sharing. They represent a fundamental challenge to the future of NATO and European security.

The greatest external security threats to Europe are the destabilizing actions of the regime in Moscow and problems from the Greater Middle East spilling over into Europe. The EU does not have the capacity to deal with either of these threats. European security is only practical within the context of collective defense within the transatlantic community. Concomitantly, a peaceful and stable Europe is a vital U.S. interest.<sup>21</sup> Yet, despite these realities, real tensions over security policies persist.

Among European countries, what frustrates efforts at collective defense is a lack of a common threat assessment. Some European states, for example, are deeply concerned about the threat of Russian military incursion and other destabilizing activities. Others are virtually indifferent. Europeans also disagree about the nature, scope, and proper response to the Iranian threat and security concerns presented by China.

Further, Europeans disagree about the best way to address future security challenges. Some argue for closer cooperation within the transatlantic community, increased defense investments, and more equitable burden sharing. Others believe the best course is a more independent and autonomous European security identity with greater investment in European

defense industries and increased capacity for the EU to direct and conduct security activities.

As for an independent European security identity, the U.S. is skeptical, believing that wasting money on European collective security arrangements reduces the strength and effectiveness of NATO, the cornerstone of Europe's security. As such, the Administration argues that the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation has moved Europe one step closer to squandering the benefit of NATO membership.<sup>22</sup> Pursuing an EU army undermines European security because it would outsource defense to unelected officials and compete with NATO for defense resources. European nations need to invest more in NATO, increase their own military strength, and keep the United States involved in the security of the continent.

One area of particular concern to the U.S. is nuclear policy. The U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty after years of Russia's violations contributed to a resurgence of beneficial discussions about the role of nuclear weapons and arms control in advancing Alliance security and consequences of arms control failures in Europe. As Russia continues its belligerent actions and pursues a nuclear weapons modernization program to back them up, the role of continued discussions between the United States and its European allies will likely increase.

U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe will continue to be the most visible reminder of U.S. commitment to allied security. Russia might try to challenge this commitment and will try to sow disunity among allies. While U.S.–Russia negotiations on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty extension do not directly involve U.S. allies in Europe, America's European allies will want to be informed on the status of these negotiations as well as on the need to modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent. It will be a challenge for the U.S. to keep its allies united in the face of Russian pressure.

**Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change.** Americans have not prioritized climate change as a public policy priority, while Europeans have. There are also differences on energy policy, which affect the approach toward climate change as well as related economic and security issues.

Within the U.S., climate change remains a highly divisive issue. Nevertheless, the intensity of interest as a stand-alone public policy issue is in decline. In January 2019, for instance, a Pew Research poll asked what the top priority should be for the Trump Administration and Congress. The percentage of respondents who answered climate change finished 17th out of 18 issue areas. Conversely, in a poll of voters in eight different European nations, climate change ranked second among the responders' top concerns.<sup>23</sup>

Another disparity between Americans and Europeans on climate policy is the difference in willingness to pay for climate action. Natural resource production is a critical component of the American economy. The United States is the world's largest supplier of crude oil and natural gas. Although America's coal industry is in relative decline, coal still provides 27 percent of the country's electricity generation, and domestic producers exported a record 15 percent of overall production in 2018. Not only are businesses directly and indirectly benefitting from America's resource abundance, households also benefit from more affordable energy. Climate policies that increase electricity and gas prices directly harm families and businesses and have adverse economic consequences that reverberate throughout the economy.

A January 2019 poll conducted by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 68 percent of Americans oppose paying an additional \$10 per month to fight climate change. Forty-three percent of respondents were not even willing to pay an additional dollar on their electricity bill to combat climate change.<sup>24</sup> Europeans, on the other hand, have traditionally accepted higher electricity and fuel prices, and policymakers have not incurred the political blowback that occurs in the U.S. However, the "yellow vest" protests over fuel taxes in Paris have awakened some price sensitivities that were previously dormant.

Yet another reason why energy and climate policy is different between the U.S. and Europe is America's skepticism of international climate treaties. International negotiations have centered on placing the economic burden of addressing climate change on a few dozen developed countries while asking nothing of more than 150 developing countries. But the primary source of greenhouse-gas emissions is increasingly the developing world. Because the United States represents only a portion of global greenhouse-gas emissions, the entire world would have to fundamentally change how it consumes energy to make any impact on the climate. However, assuming that developing countries will forego cheap abundant carbon-dioxide-emitting energy for more expensive intermittent sources is pure fantasy. Developing countries are expanding their use of renewable power sources, but not to the extent that it will have any meaningful impact on global temperatures. While some countries are shuttering their coal-fired plants, others in both developed and developing countries are building new plants and expanding the life of existing generators.

The Paris Climate Accord has been celebrated as a breakthrough achievement of the world's developed and developing countries coming together to fight climate change, but it is anything but. With no enforcement

mechanisms and no repercussions for failing to meet emissions-reduction targets, countries are essentially free to do whatever they want, meaning they will continue business as usual. Global compliance with the Paris agreement has been nothing short of abysmal. In fact, most nations will soon fail to meet the deadlines to which they agreed. The original hope that each nation's contribution might somehow push other countries to "do more" is not playing out. This deal is a hodgepodge of arbitrarily defined commitments with no enforcement mechanism and was doomed from the start. The U.S. was right to be skeptical of international agreements where America commits to costly emissions-reduction regulations and wealth transfers but fails to accomplish any meaningful temperature mitigation. Nevertheless, Europeans interpret the U.S. position as not taking climate change seriously.

An additional challenge related to the climate-change debate is energy security. In addition to wanting cleaner energy, Europe must diversify its energy sources to avoid dependence on Russian oil and gas, which would make it vulnerable to extortion and threats from Moscow that would affect the supply and cost of energy in Western Europe. Many in Europe would prefer to achieve this diversification through the use of renewable energy sources. That strategy may be economically infeasible. In addition, Europe will always require sustainable energy alternatives to supplement renewables. Russian energy projects and investments are strategically designed to undermine European energy security. Responding to Russian designs is a key challenge for the transatlantic community.

**Effects of Secularization and Undermining Family Values.** There is mounting divergence over whether societal norms undermine the traditional belief that families and religion are the bedrock of every civilization since they (not the state) provide irreplaceable support for individual flourishing and the nurture of children. These debates are reflected in growing domestic, regional, and international threats to marriage, the natural two-parent family, and religious freedom.

One trend underlying this debate is the increasing advocacy of socialism—on both sides of the Atlantic, which supplants the importance of family and individual responsibility with increasing dependence on government.

In America, socialism is increasingly appealing to the young. Despite the lessons of the Cold War, over 50 percent of millennials today express the desire to live under socialism or communism. In Europe, there is growing skepticism of socialism, as evidenced by the results of the recent elections for the European Parliament in which British, French, and Italian populist and nationalist parties surged. On the other hand, some populist parties also

embrace socialist economic policies.<sup>25</sup> There are many cautionary tales from Europe that Americans can highlight to illustrate the perils of socialism. For instance, Britain's system of socialized medicine enabled a "medical board" to override the parental rights of a sick child, Charlie Gard, and to prematurely end life-saving health care for him. This has led American lawmakers to introduce legislation to protect parental rights in health care. Similarly, there are lessons that Europeans can draw from pro-family organizations in the U.S., such as the organized resistance to sexual indoctrination of children through legislation limiting sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) curricula in public schools.<sup>26</sup>

Proponents of SOGI ideology are aggressively attacking religious freedom in Europe and America through regional and international organizations. Religious leaders, institutions, and communities provide strong support for marriages and families. But SOGI non-discrimination laws have been used to criminally prosecute Christian clergy in Europe who have defended marriage between one man and one woman.<sup>27</sup> SOGI laws brought about an end to Catholic adoption services in the United Kingdom and they have been used to punish Christian bakers for declining to support same-sex marriage in both continents.<sup>28</sup> Now, the U.N. human rights bureaucracy is actively promoting limits on religious speech that questions transgender theory and same-sex marriage. Also in the U.K., the government allowed prison inmates to self-identify their gender. Male sex offenders began to "identify as women," were moved to women's prisons, and then sexually assaulted female inmates. The government has since had to revise its policies.

Meanwhile, both Europe and America are experiencing a rapid breakdown of the traditional family and feeling the accompanying socioeconomic consequences. In the U.S., 40 percent of children are now born to an unmarried mother. In Europe, the number is similar, with France having the highest rate of out-of-wedlock births at 60 percent. The rise in single motherhood means that individuals have fewer private resources for childrearing, which in turn creates a greater appetite for socialism and its entitlements. The growth of the state means greater taxation, greater government expenditures, and ultimately reduced prosperity for average citizens.

In addition, the fertility rate has dropped below the replacement rate in both continents. The growing elderly population in Europe is leading to lower economic growth, high public debt, intergenerational tensions, and higher health care and pension costs. According to United Nations population data, one in four Europeans is at least 60 years old.<sup>29</sup> These demographic trends have already contributed to a deficit of European workers and greater need for immigrant labor. The lack of assimilation

by recent immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers has increased social balkanization and the demise of Europe's historic cultures. Should America continue to follow Europe down the path of declining marriage and fertility rates and family breakdown, it can also expect greater need for foreign labor, social fragmentation, and decreased understanding of the Judeo-Christian roots of liberal democracy.

American conservatives and liberals have been sparring over these issues for decades. At the same time, Europe is anything but of one mind on addressing these challenges. There are many pro-family and pro-religious-freedom actors in Europe, including the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), the Vatican, and political parties and religious leaders in Britain, France, and Georgia. Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia support the traditional family through constitutional referenda defining marriage as between one man and one woman. When it comes to social values, these countries align more closely with conservative Americans than with trends in Western Europe.

**Rising Anti-Semitism and Islamist Extremism.** The anti-Semitism and Islamist extremism afflicting the U.S. and Western Europe initially look similar, with far-left, far-right, and Islamist extremists all providing varying degrees of concern. In reality, there are differences in the manifestation of these ideologies and crucial differences in the governmental response. In America, anti-Semitism is primarily a phenomenon with close ties to white supremacism. (The Pittsburgh Synagogue shootings in October 2018 were a recent demonstration of this.) While a white supremacist element still exists in Europe,<sup>30</sup> modern-day anti-Semitism is inextricably and overwhelmingly tied to mass immigration and Europe's increasingly large Muslim population.<sup>31</sup> Muslim rejection of Western values and segregated Muslim communities are more of a concern in Europe than in the U.S., where Muslim immigrants have generally integrated themselves into American society.

Yet a divergence in the nature of the problem pales in comparison to the divergence in approaches to tackling it. Part of this pertains to the legal approach. The Conservative government in the U.K., for example, banned one far-right group;<sup>32</sup> despite the U.S. far-right scene being arguably more virulent, the U.S. has preferred to focus on prosecuting individual offenders for planning specific acts of violence.<sup>33</sup> Yet Europe is also increasingly going down a path of legislating against "hate speech" (defined in the U.K., for example, as an offense "where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual

orientation or transgender identity”).<sup>34</sup> Advertisements on buses and other public transportation encourage citizens to report potential hate speech to the police.<sup>35</sup> The U.S., on the other hand, has far more robust protections concerning freedom of speech, though there is increasing advocacy in the U.S. to expand laws against hate crimes to include “hate speech.”

Beyond the question of legalities, Europe tends to develop comprehensive government counter-extremism strategies to deter people from violent ideologies.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. takes a more hands-off approach, looking to prevent violence rather than combat particular ideologies. This divergence can partially be ascribed to the destructive experience Europe had with extreme ideologies in the 20th century. Yet the difference between American and European attitudes also partially reflects a philosophical divergence, and not one necessarily dictated by “liberal vs. conservative” or “left vs. right.” Europeans are more relaxed about the state setting the parameters for freedom of speech and dictating what constitutes extremism and what does not.

Taken together, these issues reflect the top tier of political, environmental, economic, security, foreign policy, and social issues that strain the common bonds holding the community together. They do not portend a great divorce in the transatlantic community. On the other hand, both sides ignore these issues at their peril. Unaddressed, they will continue to frustrate the transatlantic partnership and the community’s ability to jointly address its great global challenges.

### **Part III. Leading the Transatlantic Community into the 21st Century**

Conservatives are the essential force for carrying the transatlantic partnership into the future—for one simple reason: They are resolute in their commitment to keep America free, safe, and prosperous, and a successful transatlantic partnership significantly contributes to that commitment. Conservatives have a vested interest in continuing to make the transatlantic community a success.

The traditional frameworks that facilitated transatlantic discussions have strained to keep up with the dynamic challenges facing the community. Relations remain strained despite the fact that the Trump Administration’s policies have proven themselves as sensible, and Europe has not been torn apart by a populist furor as many had feared. Existing frameworks and institutions, such as annual conferences conducted by nongovernmental organizations, need to be bolstered and supplemented with authentic conversations that tackle the tough issues. Three separate dialogues are needed to help bridge the transatlantic divide. Conservatives have a unique role to play in each.

**Dialogue on Common Concerns.** American conservatives cannot just talk among themselves. They cannot ignore the aspects of the transatlantic partnership with which they often disagree, such as the indifference of some Europeans to meeting their responsibilities to collective defense. They must engage in the big conversations in a constructive manner with the breath of the transatlantic community right, left, and center. The best place to start is on issues of common concern, where there is space for open and honest dialogue.

Today, the transatlantic community's greatest long-term geopolitical challenge is the rise of China. Managed the right way, China's re-emergence on the world stage could be a tremendous boon to mankind. Getting it wrong could end in catastrophe. There are many reasons for China's centrality to international peace and well-being in the 21st century—the size of its population; the size of its economy; its geography spanning from Central Asia to the Western Pacific; historical connections to, as well as claims on, its near abroad; its massive, increasingly varied, role in international value chains; its growing military and presence in international organizations; and sophistication of its political class, among many other things. Both the U.S. and Europe recognize the importance of China and as a result have been shifting ever-greater resources to the Pacific.

Another area of potential convergence is the undeniable expansion of Chinese influence in the United Nations and other international organizations. A Chinese national currently leads four U.N. specialized agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and the International Telecommunication Union). By contrast, France, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. together lead four. As Chinese influence has grown, so has its ability to assert policies that are at odds with Western interests or are designed to blunt U.N. mechanisms deemed troublesome or problematic by China. Given the priority that the U.S. and Europe both place on China, as well as America's and Europe's long-held, deep civilizational linkages and modern-day cooperation in diplomacy and defense, it would be an error of epic proportions not to work together to manage the challenge.

Given the shared priority that the U.S. and Europe place on China and their long-held, deep civilizational linkages—as well as modern habits of cooperation in diplomacy and defense—it would be an error of epic proportions not to work together to manage the challenge.

The task demands it. This is obvious every day at an operational level, and perhaps in no area more critical than in communications technology. The West cannot afford an evolution into a bifurcated global communications network in which the U.S. and Europe are on opposing sides. In addition to

impeding cooperation in the Indo–Pacific, such bifurcation would impede America’s and Europe’s ability to coordinate the defense of the community and deal with the challenges posed by Russia and the Middle East.

On trade, both Europe and the U.S. have an interest in bringing the Chinese into compliance with their World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments. Both sides of the Atlantic must stand together for human rights in China’s Xinjiang province and in Tibet, and for rule of law in Hong Kong. The two sides should be of one mind in protecting the right of the Taiwanese people to determine their relationship with China, and they have a common interest in international investment standards and Chinese adoption of these standards.

This means talking to each other about China at every level of government, making the most of current intergovernmental mechanisms for doing so, and creating new ones. It means listening more than admonishing one another.

Most of all, the West has to stay true to itself and maintain the courage of its own convictions. Liberal democracy and commitment to free markets are great strengths, not weaknesses. The vagaries of each will occasionally create tensions in the transatlantic partnership. But both sides have to know that these are temporary and that in the end, their shared values will enable them to confront the challenges posed by China together.

If the two sides can rebuild strong transatlantic bridges on issues of common concern, such as managing global relations with China, they will have a renewed platform and relationship for expanding the conversation with confidence to other issues, from climate change to trade.

**Straight-Talk Dialogue.** There are also sharp differences between the U.S., Canada, and Europe which cannot be resolved by ignoring them.<sup>37</sup> These differences will merely breed distrust within the transatlantic community. The West’s enemies will exploit these differences to sow suspicion, confusion, and animosity. Above all, American conservatives ought to be leading the call for straight-talk on tough problems.

To undercut the insidious inter-community squabbling, the United States must have clear and unambiguous policies on the issues most vital to transatlantic security as it sees them. If America has good ideas, the U.S. must defend them forcefully, not apologize for having different views. In turn, powerful American opposition to, and strong leadership against, bad ideas will eventually make an impression in the most powerful places in Europe. Further, an unambiguous U.S. stance on transatlantic issues will likely embolden other countries around the world to stand with the U.S. In contrast, if Americans are ambiguous or indifferent on issues that are important to them, others will fill that space for them.

In addition, the United States should remain resolute about what its allies need to bring to the table. That includes: meeting defense spending targets, improving infrastructure to support the forward defense of NATO, and enhancing deployment and mobility of defense assets. Most of all, America and Europe must show solidarity against Russian meddling in the West. It is true that standing up to Russia is more difficult for Russia's neighbors; but no nation should receive a free pass for enabling or making excuses for Russia, undermining NATO members, or tolerating Russian corruptive influences.<sup>38</sup>

Straight talk is decidedly not an anti-EU agenda. The United States and the EU can work on many issues—China, trade, the Balkans, and energy, to name but a few. The problems of the EU are for Europeans to sort out. Clearing the air on the tough issues in the transatlantic community can only help to create better conditions for the Europeans to deal with Europe's problems. In that vein, the United States should unequivocally reject the EU's plans for a non-NATO European defense force, an initiative that competes directly with NATO for already scarce resources.

Some in Europe believe that the answer is to simply wait for a post-Trump presidency. Some in America agree. But simply pining for a more pliant American leader, a cheerleader for the European project, is no answer at all. It is whistling past Europe's graveyard of troubles.

Those Europeans and Americans who have nothing but disdain for President Trump need to look beyond their distaste. It is in their self-interest that the next steps in U.S. foreign policy focus on the very real threats facing the transatlantic community and build on the significant accomplishments of the past two years.

**Conservative Coalition Dialogue.** Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic have a common interest in advancing a transatlanticist agenda. This agenda rests on a firm belief in a strong NATO, robust national defense, a commitment to strong borders, national sovereignty, self-determination, free trade, and economic freedom. Conservative values, ideals, and principles must be at the very heart of a transatlantic alliance that has defended the West for 70 years, and which must continue to do so in the decades to come.

Despite these common interests and goals, there is a growing disconnect and distance between conservatives in continental Europe and conservatives in the United States. Conservatives in the United States and Europe must not allow their policy differences to feed into the anti-U.S. hostility in some European countries, or to be exploited by isolationist forces in the U.S.<sup>39</sup>

It is disconcerting to see rising anti-American sentiment in Europe, not only from the socialist Left, cloaked in antipathy toward the Trump Administration's policies, but also from some on the hard Right. At the same time, in the United States, there have been reckless calls from isolationists outside government for the U.S. to disengage from Europe, reduce its commitment to defending the frontiers of NATO, and withdraw from the traditional leadership role that America has played on the world stage.

There must be greater cross-Atlantic dialogue between conservatives. The annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), the biggest conservative gathering in the United States, with 10,000 attendees and hundreds of thousands watching online, is a powerful forum for European conservative leaders and thinkers to present their ideas to a large American audience, and discuss and debate key issues from the rising Russian threat to controlling borders. From the main stage to breakout panels, CPAC provides a large-scale venue for the U.S. and European conservative movements to engage with each other and work together in strengthening the transatlantic alliance.

U.S. conservative think tanks and public policy organizations should host more delegations from all parts of Europe, as well as European ambassadors, for roundtables and conferences on U.S. soil. This should also include collaboration with leading European conferences wherever possible, such as the Munich Security Conference, providing venues and speakers in Washington, New York, and other major U.S. cities.

In addition, it is important to have American conservative representation at the biggest European foreign and security events, including Munich, the Konrad Adenauer Security Conference in Berlin, and the German Marshall Fund Brussels Forum. Far too often, American conservatives are absent at key dialogues in Europe where U.S. foreign policy is discussed, allowing attendees an inaccurate or distorted picture of current U.S. policies on NATO and Europe, feeding into a false narrative that the United States is undermining the transatlantic alliance and long-standing international partnerships.

The transatlantic alliance is incredibly important to the defense of the free world. As President Trump remarked in his speech in Normandy on the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 1944, "to all of our friends and partners: Our cherished alliance was forged in the heat of battle, tested in the trials of war, and proven in the blessings of peace. Our bond is unbreakable." Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic must work to ensure that this powerful alliance endures for generations to come, forged in the principles of liberty and freedom.<sup>40</sup>

## Recommendations

American conservatives need an agenda for which to advocate. Within the context of the three dialogues just described in Part III, conservatives should lead, as appropriate, in encouraging U.S. policies for, and transatlantic cooperation on, the challenges to a continuing and effective transatlantic partnership.

**Diplomacy.** American conservatives should:

- **Support the enlargement of NATO.** An open-door policy for qualified countries has contributed greatly to transatlantic security since the first round of enlargement in 1952, helping to ensure the Alliance's central place as the prime guarantor of security in Europe. The North Atlantic Treaty's Article 10 states that any European state that is "in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area" should be eligible to join the Alliance.<sup>41</sup> This policy is crucial to the future collective security of the community. In particular, the U.S. and its allies should work towards membership for Georgia, Kosovo, and Ukraine.
- **Promote bilateral engagement** and accelerate the strengthening of ties to North, Central, and Southern Europe. NATO is the cornerstone of the transatlantic political-security alliance, but the best way to sustain a strong base is from the bottom up. The foundation of transatlantic security is the bilateral alliances and partnerships, starting with Iceland in the mid-Atlantic and running from the U.K. across the Western frontier from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic. Part of the effort to strengthen ties would inevitably include the Arctic. From a security perspective, it makes little sense not to think of the Arctic in the context of security in the Baltic and Nordic regions. Essential cooperative efforts would include bilateral military planning, exercises, deployment and forward basing, energy cooperation, and promotion of foreign direct investment.
- **Stand strong against Russia.** There is no evidence that Putin is willing to be more conciliatory toward the West or enter into any serious confidence-building measures in the near term, such as more robust arms control initiatives. Therefore, in the near term, the U.S. must continue a campaign to minimize Russian capacity to destabilize Europe. The divisive issues in the transatlantic community require

U.S. leadership and attention. Russia is at its most aggressive when it senses division. While it is Europe that is on the front lines with Russia, the United States needs to show leadership in the region. Europe is most united on confronting adversaries like Russia when there is a clear, unambiguous, and strong demonstration of U.S. leadership on the continent.

- **Seek out common ground for facing China.** America's and Europe's common values, history, and habits of cooperation are an extremely valuable asset. Multilaterally, the U.S. and Europe need to take strategic steps to ensure that Chinese influence is reasonably mitigated, and that its leadership is restricted and channeled to the parts of the United Nations and other international organizations that do not directly undermine shared transatlantic interests. Bilateral cooperation could be the most helpful for blunting some of China's most excessive behavior. Several European states have a major profile in the Indo-Pacific, especially economically, but also in others, such as in development assistance and arms sales. As a group, these countries are the biggest investors in China and are its second-biggest trading partner. France has a significant territorial presence, accompanying populations, and military presence. The British have less of a presence, but are directly useful to common transatlantic interests given their integration with the American military. American conservatives should encourage the Administration to make the most of operational synergies across diplomatic, economic, and military issues.
- **Increase maximum pressure to contain and roll back Iranian influence.** Iran remains the chief threat to U.S. interests, U.S. allies, and regional stability. Economic sanctions have reduced Iran's oil exports to less than 1 million barrels per day, which has severely undermined Iran's state-dominated economy, diminished government revenue, and made it more difficult for Tehran to prop up the Assad regime in Syria and finance its proxy militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. Washington must also maintain military forces in the region in order to deter Iranian aggression and work with U.S. allies to strengthen missile defenses in order to offset the threat of Iran's arsenal of ballistic missiles, the largest in the Middle East.

The U.S. and the U.K. should:

- **Recommit to the U.S.–U.K. Special Relationship.** The United Kingdom has always been America’s anchor for the transatlantic community. That link today is more important than ever, whether Britain stays in the European Union or not. Indeed, the value of the relationship would be enhanced, not diminished, by Brexit. A U.K. independent of the EU offers the promise of a new economic powerhouse in Europe. American conservatives should strongly support a U.S.–U.K. FTA.<sup>42</sup>

**Security.** The U.S. should:

- **Sustain America’s own investments in defense.** If the U.S. were somehow able to double defense spending overnight, the U.S. military would not be able to spend it. Production capacity for planes, ships, ammunition, and repair parts could not absorb such a huge increase, nor could the military recruit and train the people it would need to increase its capacity for operations. Yet, the military does need to expand, old equipment needs to be replaced, and expendable items, such as fuel and ammunition, are needed in greater quantities to support essential training. A clear commitment to gradual increases in defense spending, sustained over time, especially for acquisition programs, would place the military on a stable path toward ensuring that the U.S. has the defense capabilities needed to protect its vital interests.
- **Move NATO’s forward defense eastward.** Current U.S. basing structures in Europe harken back to a time when Denmark, Greece, and West Germany represented the front lines of freedom. The security situation in Europe has changed, and the U.S. should account for this shift by establishing a permanent military presence in allied nations further east, including the Baltic states and Poland.
- **Press Europeans to support NATO first, and to share more of the burden.**<sup>43</sup> The EU is not the answer to Europe’s military woes. Instead, the U.S. should push for more NATO-centric solutions that will ensure that all advancements in European defense capabilities are undertaken through the NATO alliance, or at least on a multilateral basis. Every euro spent on EU defense initiatives is one less that is

available for the common defense through NATO. European capitals should focus their energy and resources on NATO rather than creating more institutions and signing up for further military commitments within the EU. This is the only way the United States will see greater burden sharing from the West Europeans.

- **Modernize the transatlantic nuclear umbrella.** The United States must modernize its arsenal of warheads, delivery systems, and nuclear weapons infrastructure supporting the U.S. deterrent mission. Europeans should be strongly supportive of U.S. efforts, since U.S. strategic forces are crucial to sustaining the extended deterrence of the American nuclear umbrella over the transatlantic community. Nuclear weapons will continue to be important to U.S. and allied security for decades to come because they deter large-scale attacks against the United States and its allies. As U.S. systems age and phase out of their service lives, it is critical for U.S. and allied security that the U.S. not have a gap in its nuclear-deterrent capabilities. Over the next 15 years, the United States has to modernize each leg of its nuclear triad: (1) bombers, (2) intercontinental-range ballistic missiles, and (3) submarines and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Without leadership focus and proper resourcing, the nuclear weapons modernization program will not be successful. As the missile threat advances, so must U.S. missile defense programs. In the near term, the United States ought to improve capabilities of existing missile defense interceptors. In the medium term to long term, the United States must develop and deploy a comprehensive, layered missile defense system, including interceptors in space.
- **Think beyond the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).**<sup>44</sup> New START, between the United States and the Russian Federation, is set to expire on February 5, 2021. The treaty restricts each country to 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers; 1,550 accountable nuclear warheads; and 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM and SLBM launchers and bombers. Absent a fundamental change in Russia's behavior, the extension of New START is not in the U.S. interest. The Trump Administration should not extend New START at this time. The Russian Federation is not a trustworthy partner, and the treaty's contributions to U.S. national security are limited. The United States has a unique opportunity to put its arms

control policy on a sounder footing. Funding nuclear weapons modernization and rejecting arms control agreements that do not serve U.S. national security are good first steps. America's European allies should support the U.S. in pressing Russia to comply with arms control agreements.

**Technology.** The transatlantic community should:

- **Protect cyber and telecommunications networks.** For security and governance purposes, the community should be prepared to operate in a global environment characterized by networks that are developed and run by foreign actors opposed to Western interests—especially China. These “zero trust networks” are proliferating globally as nations prioritize short-term expediency over long-term security when it comes to next-generation wireless networking and other telecommunications infrastructure. Operating in the new global environment will require new networking strategies as well as new developments in data management and security.<sup>45</sup>
- **Block vulnerabilities and untrusted companies.** Members of the community should block any foreign technology from their markets that creates vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure or that provides hostile foreign actors with “backdoors” to their data. Doing so will impose significant pressure on China and spur security research that will incrementally improve the safety of the hardware and software supply chains. The U.S. should encourage others to adopt mechanisms similar to the U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which has the authority to block foreign companies, even from non-controlling foreign investments, if they have a history of producing hardware or software with vulnerabilities. Governments should narrowly exercise this current authority to mitigate the challenge of Chinese and other malicious foreign investments.<sup>46</sup>

**Economic.** The transatlantic community should:

- **Resist protectionism.** Tariffs, quotas, and threats to abrogate existing agreements are costly and create harmful uncertainty for businesses, potential investors, and allies. The global network of like-minded states broadly committed to the principles of economic freedom is an enormous asset, and a better approach to advancing economic interests is

to strengthen the partnership with those states to include joint actions (including restrictions on trade in extreme cases) in order to encourage greater openness and respect for the rule of law in countries still lagging in those areas. Eliminating tariffs or other import restrictions on intermediate goods used by firms in their manufacturing processes is also desirable. Industrial tariffs are incompatible with the complex supply chains employed by major manufacturers to increase their productivity, and they raise the costs of manufactured products.

The United States should:

- **Take the lead in improving economic relations with China.** The Administration needs to reach agreement with China that addresses some of the major structural impediments for American business trading with and operating in China. These include, most prominently, concerns over intellectual property rights, but also the restraints on market access that limit international engagement in the Chinese economy and enable the worst of its business environment. At the same time, the Administration needs to fully unwind the tariffs it has imposed. It should shift attention to WTO-compliant ways to enforce the rights of its businesses—even as it builds consensus with Europe on necessary reforms to the WTO. The U.S. can also send the right economic message to China by being a leading force pressing for economic freedom in the region. The U.S. has to be out front encouraging economic liberalization in the region across sectors—goods, services, and investment. The U.S. can do that through bilateral arrangements, including with the EU. U.S.–EU negotiations, however, cannot be about regulatory harmonization, which simply gives both sides common red tape; the focus of their joint effort has to be on lowering tariff and non-tariff barriers and promoting economic freedom.

The U.S. and the U.K. should:

- **Implement a U.S.–U.K. FTA.** A bilateral FTA would be good for the economies of both nations. It would demonstrate the commitment of each to promoting economic freedom, and would be a further manifestation of this close and enduring relationship. An FTA would also be an opportunity for both nations to negotiate a modern free trade area based on sovereignty and freedom, which would establish a standard that should be applied to other trade negotiations.<sup>47</sup>

The transatlantic community should:

- **Promote the role of women in societal leadership.** Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic should acknowledge and support, as the Trump Administration has done, the fact that “women provide essential contributions to forging lasting solutions to conflict, terrorism, and crisis” and play a crucial role in economic development.<sup>48</sup> As the Administration also acknowledges, women’s “perspectives and leadership are too often untapped.” The U.S. should work with friends and allies to advance a strategy that is not only in the best interests of the United States, but promotes “global peace and stability by enhancing women’s leadership in efforts to prevent conflict, stem terrorism, and promote security around the world.”

**Climate and Energy Policy.** The transatlantic community should:

- **Restart the climate-change debate.** Instead of continuing down the same path of tried-and-failed international climate negotiations, the U.S. should work with a smaller group of nations through informal arrangements, such as the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate Change. Objective and transparent science should be an important tool for informing public policy. Independent efforts to more accurately determine the severity of the effects of climate change would better educate policymakers so that they can take any necessary actions that are cost-effective, verifiable, and effective.
- **Oppose Nord Stream 2.** The Nord Stream 2 pipeline project that would connect Germany with Russia is neither economically necessary, nor is it geopolitically prudent. The U.S. should continue its determined opposition to the pipeline, which in particular threatens allies in Eastern and Central Europe. The U.S. should consider sanctioning entities developing the pipeline and work with the EU and like-minded allies in delaying or terminating the construction and operation of Nord Stream 2.
- **Continue to support the Three Seas Initiative.**<sup>49</sup> The initiative consists of 12 central and eastern European countries situated between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The Three Seas Initiative aims to strengthen

trade, infrastructure, energy, and political cooperation among its member states. A key component of the initiative is ensuring greater energy security for Europe.

- **Support the Southern Gas Corridor project.** As Europe seeks alternatives to Russian gas, the Southern Gas Corridor, which in part will run through Georgia and the Balkans, will play an important role. The U.S. should strongly support this project and encourage the EU and other European allies to aid in its development.<sup>50</sup>

**Social Policy.** The U.S. should:

- **Work more closely with European allies to advocate for religious freedom at U.N. human rights meetings** (such as at the U.N. General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women), emphasizing the positive role of religious actors in strengthening and supporting marriages and families and thereby combatting poverty. European allies can emphasize similar themes within EU bodies.

Both sides of the Atlantic should:

- **Strengthen transatlantic cooperation on social issues.** This effort should include: better information-sharing on best practices for supporting the family and examples of the damaging impacts of socialism and SOGI ideology on the family; more robust arguments about family structure as an anti-poverty strategy; and stronger religious-freedom advocacy in international and regional fora to counter aggressive efforts to limit the ability of religious leaders, institutions, and communities to support families. In particular, U.S. and European conservatives need to establish comprehensive and sustained frameworks for exchanging ideas and information on social issues.
- **Reject both anti-Muslim rhetoric and the cynical ploy to use “Islamophobia” to shut down efforts to combat Islamist extremism.**<sup>51</sup> Civil society in the transatlantic community can both serve to preserve religious liberty and reject extremist ideology.
- **Fight back against anti-Semitism.** The EU has often claimed that championing human rights is a priority. Americans should take Europeans at their word and press them to join the U.S. in championing

religious freedom, including and in particular, challenging anti-Semitism worldwide. The transatlantic community should combine its diplomatic and commercial heft in support of the protection and welfare of Jewish communities, in Europe, the U.S., and around the world.

Each of these recommendations may not fit neatly into each dialogue, but they each need to be part of the conversation and of the agenda for bridging the differences across the Atlantic.

A daunting agenda it is. No matter. It is well worth the effort.

Nothing good and important happens in global affairs without leadership. It is time for American conservatives to take up the challenge—and lead.

## Endnotes

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