



TRANSATLANTIC VISION 2030

Renewing the partnership

Stimulating debate through thought papers

The folly of not taking the Transatlantic partnership seriously

The case against the case against the West

Simon Serfaty

Introduction

“Foreigners are not like the folks I’m used to,” reportedly said Lyndon Baines Johnson. If asked, the U.S. President might have added that Europeans came closest to the foreigners he wanted to know and was prepared to trust. This condition is not limited to Johnson however, for it is there that Europe-born America did and completed its hegemonic apprenticeship, in wartime in 1917 and 1941, and in peacetime after 1947 and 1989. Moving into a new century, it is still in Europe that Americans feel most at home, especially now that the former Old World has been recast as an American-inspired European Union.

Yet, two decades after it was viewed as a leading contender for global primacy, Europe is questioned, and the future of its relationship with the United States is at risk. Lacking money, people, capabilities, will, and leadership, the EU struggles to grow into the ever closer union to which it still aspires and to remain the co-partner America still hopes it can become. To be sure, this is not the first time either side of the Atlantic doubts the other while the states of Europe question each other. But late in the 2010s, it may well be the first time such concerns are equally spoken and heard everywhere in a moment of extreme turbulence when Europe’s perceived inability to step up and keep up appears to match America’s interest in stepping down and move away.

What will become of a US-less and EU-light de-Westernizing world where a growing number of illiberal hegemonies now speak a globalist language that sounds like some form of broken English and is heard with heavy foreign accents – no longer Japanese but increasingly Chinese and even Russian and Arabic, all languages difficult to master on either side of the Atlantic? The simple, two-word answer is – nothing good. Only later, wrote Philip Roth, does “the relentless unforeseen,” first chronicled as an epic, reveal its hidden narrative and consequences with tones of inevitability. Why wait another decade, though? Read that epic now: for the past 30 years, there has been much brutality, little justice, no moral certainty, unprecedented inequality, and growing disorder and resentment – enough to serve as a fair warning about what may be coming next. It is as if after 75 years of steady march forward History would be making a U-turn, back to places to which it had pledged never to return, meaning back to the “jungle” of a world astray.

Admittedly, this is no belle époque for the United States and the states of Europe, whether separately or together. U.S. President Donald Trump calls the EU “a foe”, and French president Emmanuel Macron declares NATO “brain dead.” These institutions, remember, were delicate and even unnatural constructs, neither of which was expected to last *pour toujours*. Yet, it would be a folly to abandon either too soon and to the benefit of the first newcomer. After half-a-century of total wars, History’s verdict is without appeal: a death sentence for the aged nation-states of Europe which have become too small to live on their own, a life sentence for their citizens who must accept their new institutional personality atop their national identities, and an irreplaceable second home for the American prodigy whose wartime journeys to Europe ended up being more entangling than initially assumed.

That is the core of the West: if not Europe as a Union, how; if not the Union with America, with whom; if not now, when? Somewhere beyond the persistent forecasts of the end point of both the American idea and the idea of Europe there is a Euro-Atlantic world restored: this essay is, therefore, a case against the case against

the Transatlantic Partnership. The case begins with some quick reflections on the geopolitical map ahead – the world needs the West – before closing with a short map of ten rest stops which the United States and Europe might use along the way – the West needs the West.

Mapping Expectations

Fragments of Great Power politics cloud the forecasts of changed relations between a declining and anxious West and an ascending and vengeful Rest. Is the reported devaluation of American power and leadership irreversible? Is the European project of peaceful integration stalled or even ending? Are we entering a new era of de-integration, across the Atlantic and around the world? As the future unfolds, who will steal the show – China, in or with Asia; Russia, in or in spite of Europe; dozens of lesser states that claim influence in excess of their capabilities, and capabilities in excess of their influence? And where will the show play out – in the “blood-stained sand” of the Middle East, with old foes like Russia and China in worn-out theatres like Europe-East and Northeast Asia, or among and with the 40 to 60 failed or failing states, most of them in Africa and now home to over two billion people, 65 million of them said to be refugees on the move elsewhere?

A geopolitical pas de quatre	Strategic choreography
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The US is the world’s only complete and durable power: this is no time for a time out. ▪ For Europe to be a world power, it must complete its Union and achieve strategic autonomy. ▪ Russia’s resurgence is dangerous but it is not sustainable: over time it is a <i>demandeur</i> state. ▪ The rise of China is a strategic reality in and beyond Asia, but the way ahead will be hard and turbulent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The US and the EU form the world’s most credible G2 – a complementary relationship of power and weaknesses. ▪ Russia’s future is with but not in the West, neither on top nor far away with the Rest . ▪ China is the primary Asian power, but the US remains a vital power in Asia for reassurances and balance. ▪ The Greater Middle East is a strategic dark hole – the new Global Balkans for the twenty-first century.

Here we go again, deep into another geopolitical transition and in need of order during a moment of geostrategic mutation. Having gone through a full range of structural alternatives, from multi- to bi- to unipolar, including numerous hybrid options in-between, the world is left with any number of powers with all sorts of capabilities used for different and conflicting purposes – a world increasingly de-territorialized and turning post-polar. Indian scholar Amitav Acharya has called it a “multiplex world,” meaning, a global movie theatre where different films are shown simultaneously on several giant screens for audiences with different tastes and watching habits. The image works: to each state its favourite show, for every show its favourite lead star, and for each star a favourite audience.

Europe, as a Union and with the United States

Over two-and-a-half decades ago, a newly-launched European Union was viewed as a leading contender for global primacy; now, its institutional future is questioned. To be sure, such doubts are not new. But notwithstanding the traditional peloton of American and European professional Euro-sceptics, these doubts are all the more vocal as Europe’s inability to step up and stand high matches America’s willingness to stepping down and lie low.

Admittedly, recent trends have not been good for either and both. Most generally, there has been too much politics and not enough policy in the national capitals but too much policy and not enough efficacy out of their institutions, national and multilateral; and too much ambition and not enough conviction from the top down but too much resentment and not enough time from the bottom up. Most pointedly, the appeal of integration has faded, and me-first populist voices remind citizens everywhere of their attachment “to city, language, race, history, myth, gods, and religion,” as political scientist Robert Dahl put it 30 years ago. These are the allegedly “little people” who fear the “anonymous others” who deny them the voice and the attention they used to have. In 2016, a nearly simultaneous Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and presidential election in the United States appeared to maximize these trends. Absent Britain and lacking a credible partner across the Atlantic, the EU is not just smaller and weaker; it is also geographically amputated, historically crippled, and strategically astray. But absent the EU, the same can be said of Britain and even, arguably, of America, possibly proudly first but alone.

But wait. There is more to the EU than Brexit (and, for that matter, more to Brexit than the EU) and there is more to America than Trump (and, for that matter, less to Trump than America). As a result, there is a hidden upside to the turbulence of the Trump and Brexit years. While the endless debates surrounding the latter revealed the costs of leaving it (and, if only implicitly, its benefits too), the reaction to the former has reminded the NATO members of the added costs and risks of living with less America. Time to do some geostrategic accounting then: lacking bulk, people, capabilities, and will, no European power can be a sovereign world power without the others – the states of Europe in need of their Union, the Union in need of the United States, the United States in need of the Union cum Britain, and Britain in need of its most willing, capable, and compatible allies across the Channel and the Atlantic. The lessons of the past 30 years, since Berlin and the fall of the wall, are unmistakable: if you are a member of the EU, stay in, at least pending the consequences of Britain’s experiment; if you’re not a NATO member, join, as Ukraine has already shown.

Au fond, strategic conditions for the Euro-Atlantic West have not changed. Early on, the alliance between the United States and a few European states was designed to keep Russia out, Germany down, and America in. Now, the Euro-Atlantic partnership aims to keep a surging Russia at a distance, bring a weary America closer, and move the EU up the ladder of more evenly shared responsibilities. Moving the EU up will confirm it as a wholesome partner with the strategic autonomy and relevant capabilities needed to act on things which its counterpart is not well-suited to address, historically, geographically or politically, and which, therefore, it cannot do or cannot do as well or does not want to do altogether.

Qui fait quoi, then-French president Jacques Chirac used to ask? The vast area of North Africa and the Sahel, which many view as an especially significant near-term threat to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, is an example among others of the need for EU leadership, not because America has a bad history there but because it has none, as compared to France and some other EU members with more experience, though often born out of some bad history.

The conclusion is known: Don’t tell America what it can do for Europe or Europe for America but ask what both can do for and with each other. And in that spirit, a New Transatlantic Agenda is long overdue, not only for what it will specifically say but also for the demonstration of the partners’ shared will to assume a role that is commensurate with their interests and capabilities. Meantime,

- ***Think small and go short.***

Whether real estate developer Donald Trump mastered “the art of the deal” can be argued one bankruptcy at a time. But however American voters deal with this argument, what was mastered if anything is the “big” deal. In a moment of great geopolitical turbulence and geostrategic volatility, however, an everything-for-everything, now-or-never deal on any issue of significance is a non-starter. For Europe to go short and think small, at least in the meantime, is to find ways to the smaller deals, one step and one issue at a time: to be the cop on the beat to give the West a good name or the first responder after some pyromaniac has lit the fire – to be a mediator, an umpire, a nurse, or an architect; a point guard, pivot, or just a bench player; whatever is needed to avoid dead ends and collisions ahead. However Europe chooses to play any of these roles, it can be quite effective – a “deconflictionary” role which keeps the protagonists talking (with Iran and in the Middle East for example), a representational role which keeps the West present in America’s absence (with China and in Northeast Asia for example), and a modest interventionist role which can bring a measure of stability where there is none (in the Sahel and elsewhere in Africa, for example).

- ***Step up and keep up.***

On both sides of the Atlantic the road map to 2030 demands more from the EU and its members, including post-Brexit Britain, and more from NATO and its members, including post-Trump America. While more balance between and within both institutions is imperative – which demands from all EU and NATO members to step up – neither institution nor any of its members can be, nor aim to become, sufficient because all are necessary for the smart use of their complementary power. For Europe, a mere return to its perennial institutional debates will not move the partnership beyond America’s “me, Tarzan” dialoguing with “you, Jane.” Unless the capability gaps across the Atlantic and within Europe are reduced – which demands from each institution and

their members to keep up with each other – defence cooperation will become increasingly difficult and eventually cease to be operational.

Besides enhanced and more efficient (meaning, less wasteful) defence spending, there is value-added in more transatlantic and intra-European cooperation to share technologies with an overdue reform of export controls and greater access to markets. In this context, the case for Europe's strategic autonomy – as distinct from independence – is a case for stronger transatlantic security, based on an acknowledgement of Europe's global responsibilities met with the United States rather than without or against it, as well as with a U.S. commitment to consult with its partners before a decision is made rather than after: in short, counterparts as distinct from counterweights let alone counterfeits.

Russia – against the West but with little of the Rest

At the edge of Europe, Russia is known for its ability to promote instabilities in societies that are historically unstable and on which it can impose its brand of imperial stability, either by force or through political surrogates. There is another thing for which Russia has come to be known, however, which is that it is ill-equipped to maintain its control for long. George Kennan, the father of containment, understood it when he urged patience with Moscow after World War II but also after the Cold War; Bush-41 did too when he envisioned a post-Soviet world order which would transcend Russia and make Europe whole and free; and so did Obama, who viewed Russia as a “regional power” with no global potential for lack of capabilities and know-how. Whatever the reference, of all the powers bidding for world primacy, Russia is the most in need of capable strategic partners that compensate for its weaknesses; but even when finding any partner, it is also the least likely to keep them. Lacking followership, Russia cannot claim leadership, or sustain it when claimed.

Adding to Russia's need for allies is a geopolitical reality that keeps it strategically vulnerable to a populous China next to its near-deserted territories in the East, to post-Soviet Muslim republics sensitive to Islamic influence in the South, and to enlarged NATO and EU institutions that shrink its security and economic space in the West. That is much for any one state to manage, let alone a state like Russia, which lacks in competence, organization, and renewable resources. In short, even as it shows military preponderance in Europe and competes for global influence, Russia lacks the ability and capacity to remain a world power on its own. It is a demandeur state; its future is not in but with the West, neither on top of or even with the Rest.

Since the Soviet collapse, Euro-Atlantic relations with Russia have suffered from two key misunderstandings. In the 1990s, the focus was on an economic and political transition that could be managed and even expedited with targeted technical cooperation. This was an ancient Wilsonian idea abandoned after World War I, revived during World War II, resurrected after the Vietnam War, and adopted anew after the Cold War: that Russians can be taught how to elect good governments, which will next learn sound rules of democratic governance, discover the satisfactions of a free society, and enjoy the benefits of an open market economy. Seemingly, Putin failed to attend these classes as he grew ever more resentful of Western institutions and their involvement in a post-Soviet Russia which Boris Yeltsin's feeble leadership had made particularly vulnerable.

Throughout, there has also been a second misunderstanding, namely, that foreign and security policy interests would converge when Russia abandoned its imperial career after it had turned into a democratic state like any other. That also proved to be wrong, not only because of lingering anti-Soviet sentiments in the West, which kept Russia away from the “common home” to which Gorbachev aspired, but also because of an excess of Russian feeling for a home of their own in Europe-East, from which it is intent to keep the West away. Without real prospects of, or much interest in, NATO or EU membership, Russia is not a European power, but even remaining a power in Europe without engaging either Western institution will be difficult. Past Putin, in 2024 or a bit later, Russia, faced with unanswerable demands for gratification at home and mounting adversarial pressures, will eventually fade as an ageing, lonely, mistrusted, and declining power increasingly stressed for lack of resources at home, credibility in Europe, and relevance abroad. Meantime,

- ***Don't let Russia be Russia.***

This is not about Putin because of Russia; it is about Russia with Putin. Always a dangerous rival, this complex and complexed power resists the idea of having just foreign countries in its vicinity – they can only be either

vassals or rivals, probed for weaknesses and harassed for concessions. Strategic patience is how that condition was successfully managed during the Cold War, with the strategy of containment devised as a third way between war and appeasement. With post-Soviet Russia's imperial envies revived in Europe and, less predictably, globally as well, more patience is needed. For in the end history tells us that Russian expansion has its own laws of diminishing returns and that its global forays neither last long nor end well: as an overextended and exhausted Russia runs out of resources, people, capabilities, and even security space it will run out of time, by which point pivoting West will be its best remaining option – echoes of Gorbachev's strategic dead end after Brezhnev's losing challenge to the United States and the rest of the world for primacy in Europe and influence in the world.

And,

- ***Don't indulge but don't provoke.***

Nearing the end of his current (and final?) mandate in 2024, Putin is not merely an opportunist and an improviser: he is also a strategist and a survivor. He chooses his time to pick his fights, which he next wages the time-tested Russian way – hard, long, and dirty. Don't wait for him to change course without trying not only to preserve but also add to previous gains – like Stalin negotiating with Churchill and Roosevelt at Yalta in January 1945, or Brezhnev with Nixon in Moscow in May 1972 and Reagan in Reykjavik in October 1986. In Europe-East including Ukraine (and not only Crimea), but also in regions less known to Russia like the Middle East (and not only Syria), Putin manipulates facts and fiction – weapons he does not have, money he cannot spend, allies he cannot keep. But better than many of his counterparts in the West, Putin can separate the fiction he tells from the facts he knows, which keeps him open to negotiations after he has shown his resolve and bet his bargaining chips: don't indulge, therefore, but don't provoke either, until it is time to engage him one little something at a time.

China – ascending and assertive

What of China, then? Over 20 years ago, with post-Soviet Russia astray, China was courted as a gigantic market ideally suited for a surging American economy – a peace dividend – at a time when Japan was beginning its long descent from presumed economic primacy and Europe, a newly-declared Union, was suffering from crippling economic stagnation. Yet, by position alone, both a satiated America and an institutionally exhausted EU were already emerging as the unintended adversaries of an ascending China which aspired at being more than a Western clone as a credible economic associate and a reliable co-producer of regional security. To a substantial extent, Trump has gone the next step as it was his stated intention from the start to confront China, but also as George W. Bush, too, had expected to do at the start of his own presidency. While September 11 derailed any thought of collision with China for Bush-43, it is the North Korean crisis which proved to be an unwelcomed diversion for Trump in 2017, which the U.S. president has been struggling to end or minimize in order to focus on his initial goal, which is to redirect China's competitive race with and ahead of America.

It would be premature, however, to anticipate another great divide between a large and U.S. led pro-Western bloc and a smaller and China-led Eastern bloc. For one, China's pace to primacy should not be overstated. According to researchers at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Chicago, its annual economic growth has been exaggerated by an average of 1.7 percentage points a year for at least 9 years (2008-2016), leaving the nominal size of the Chinese economy nearly one-fifth lower than its official level at the end of 2018. Other reported claims of emerging strategic parity or even superiority also exaggerate the pace of China's military and technological growth relative to the United States. These fears echo the misleading projections of Soviet strategic parity and coming superiority in the 1970s and, now like then, understate not only the current gaps but also the U.S. ability to respond to its rivals' challenges with surges of its own. Remember: the final test of ascendancy is its sustainability: this is a test of resources, competence, and luck – and the evidence

that China – its government, its institutions, and its people – is prepared to pass that test is not yet persuasive. In other words, while Russia runs out of time, China still needs more of it, which is what the first skirmishes of a protracted trade war started in June 2018.

To hamper the Chinese prospects further, an expansionist and domineering China is also a growing concern for its neighbours. Take Japan, closer to the Western core than any other state in Asia: even as confidence in Trump falls sharply (barely three-in-ten Japanese), fears of China and its President Xi Jinping are twice as bad (only one in six), which strengthens Japan's alliance with the United States relative to China and in spite of its growing misgivings about many of Trump's policies and much of his behaviour. Lacking an effective institutional structure for order, as was created in and for Europe after 1945, and losing the multilateral benevolence it enjoyed over the past 30 years, China's bilateral relations in Asia suffer from a surplus of history that causes insurmountable alliance handicaps (between South Korea and Japan, for example, or Vietnam and China, China and Pakistan, Pakistan and India, and so forth) and a deficit of geography (like China's 2,600-mile border with Russia plus another 13 other border-sharing neighbours, four of them nuclear) with disputed territorial issues nearly everywhere (including Taiwan, once again at centre stage). In short, unlike Europe, Asia has not mastered its past yet, which leaves many emotional red lines.

Still, even while China struggles with its ambitions and the countries of Asia struggle with their demons,

- ***Don't give China a pass.***

Hegemonic upgrades do not come easily, but the Western strategy of normalization, which made it easier for China to become the power it wants to be – namely, second to none – has run its course. A weak or weaker China may be cause for some concern, but the consequences of a strong and ever stronger China have become cause for even more concern – enough, in any case, for a strategic reset of our relations. Strategic patience has its limits: China is not turning into a Western democracy at home, is not a willing or constructive strategic partner abroad, and is not willing to play by the rules either at home or abroad. On the whole, it is a consumer, not a producer, of stability, affluence, technology, and security. Yet, how China might respond to higher resistance from the West and others, and what it will do next while preparing for its date with greatness in 2049 if not much earlier is not clear. What Professor History makes amply clear, however, is that arguing that hostility breeds hostility is a self-defeating argument for complacency and passivity. The search for a new approach to China is not a Trump-conceived American issue; this is a past-Trump issue for Europe as well, and it will be best addressed and managed jointly rather than separately.

- ***Beware of Asia's century of total wars***

While the rise of Asia must be taken seriously and accommodated prudently, and not just China's, Asia may be inching tragically closer to pre-1914 Europe than to post-1945 Europe, when it was coached to tame its Westphalian history. This is not good news: it is in the Euro-Asian world that History has been at its worst, the site of more than half of its 21 worst wars and massacres, including six of the worst 10, measured in terms of casualties adjusted for population changes. The risk is that Asia's century might take a turn for the worse, with a nuclear square dance choreographed by China (with Russia, North Korea, Pakistan and India) and staged for a global audience left unable to ignore it. Forget, then, about tales of bilateral collusion with multiple G2s allegedly welcomed or sought *hors* Asia by the United States and Europe, or Russia and others.

Tales of collision in Asia are more telling: according to the Pew Research Center, more than one-in-two Chinese view America as their main rival in Asia and as the major threat to their interests in the world, but it is with Japan that six-in-ten Chinese fear a military conflict most – a fear shared by eight

in ten Japanese, and found, however differently, in other sets of bilateral relations throughout Asia: South Korea and Japan with North Korea in the mix; India and Pakistan with China involved; Vietnam and China with the United States in the middle outline the trilemmas emerging in the region, made all the more delicate as many of these historical conflicts have a dangerous nuclear dimension. In short, there is no Sleeping Beauty here: Asia is awaking in its most unsettled state in several decades and as the plausible theatre of a new century of total wars. There is plenty the West needs from Asia, including stability, but there is also much the countries of Asia need from the West, including balance.

The Greater Middle East – the fire next time?

To paraphrase the geopolitical expert (and baseball great) Yogi Berra, U.S. Cold War policy in the Middle East was 90 percent about Israel, with the other half about oil and the rest about the Soviet Union. That left little room for anything else, as was shown on September 11, 2001 and the endless wars that followed, and next with the Arab Spring of 2011 and its turbulent aftermath. Now, the region stumbles beyond reason, in the Arab streets and among their struggling governments: under such conditions, even a perfect policy perfectly executed would stay short of perfect results.

The U.S. involvement in the Middle East during the Cold War was challenging but surprisingly not costly. For one, after Europe's withdrawal from a region which it had long dominated, the U.S. goals remained relatively limited: to keep Moscow away, oil supplies steady, and Israel safe. For most of that period, the statistic that matters is zero-zero military casualty for the United States up to 1983 (in Lebanon) and zero regime change intervention after 1953 (in Iran), but also zero effectiveness in ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the region's central conflict throughout the Cold War, and in enhancing human rights and Western values, arguably the region's most neglected issue. Throughout Europe remained critical of each US initiative until it seemed to be working, at least for a while.

How has the United States performed since? In one word, poorly. So many promises have been lost in the Promised Land as to leave each US president responsible for his own missteps – Clinton's mismanaged Camp David II, Bush's revanchist mishandling of the wars of 9/11, Obama's misreading of the Arab Spring, till Trump's failed "deal of the century" and betrayal of the Kurds. And, of course, don't forget everyone else, including European and Arab leaders who came long before but have not been entirely forgotten. Now, past a broken Arab-Israeli peace process, it is the whole region which is broken into a multitude of territorial and sectarian pieces, and absent a local will to fix it, or even agree over which of its parts needs fixing first, there is little opportunity or will to fix anything at all.

At least, the interstate wars between Israel and its Arab neighbours were of a kind Israel could win on the cheap and America could end on the quick, until the next time. But present and future wars are of a kind which cannot be won or easily ended even as their costs grow tragically and their results fall steadily. Under such conditions, thinking the same thoughts and coming to the same conclusions to justify the same policies and the same strategy is a good standard for insanity. But what else can be done – wait for Russia to rebuild Syria, with an assist from Turkey; ask Iran to stabilize Lebanon, with Syria's blessing; expect the Saudis to settle Yemen and restore Libya while the Palestinians learn how to be good Israelis; ask Israel to be good in Gaza and patient with Iran? Under such conditions, even Yogi Berra's arithmetic cannot measure the confusion and the risks ahead.

Who lost the Middle East? Everyone. What will come next? One small war at a time, this has the potential to combine into one big war – a "global war of de-territorialisation," like the smaller Balkan region of old, another place with more nations than states and fewer states than nations, which turned inadvertently into a world war in 1914. There is no big deal in the works, and as peace is carved into ever smaller pieces, it will also have to be restored one piece at a time before it is made whole again, if ever.

A STRATEGIC ROAD MAP

The strategic road map to 2030 unfolds in three tenses: the past of things future, the future of things present, and the present of things past. Adopt them all when embracing the transatlantic partnership from this year on – Europe’s suicidal past before it got started absent the United States, its institutional achievements while it kept going with U.S. support, and the waste for both Europe and the United States should their partnership be terminated too early or abruptly.

The past of things future,

The strategic vision improvised by Truman after 1945 was neither American nor European. It was a Western strategy for a transatlantic order in which America’s European identity was reset and Europe’s geography recast, with defeated Germany in and Soviet Russia out. Thirty years after these goals were met during the Reagan-Bush three-term co-presidency, there is no need for a new vision – just stay the course.

First, the Transatlantic Partnership is vital if any sort of rules-based order is to emerge over the next decade. Yes, America’s leadership has been poor of late, and Europe’s followership reluctant, more or less understandably. But even so, the United States and Europe are indispensable partners which remain united by the interests and values they share with each other more and more evenly than with others. Alternatives like a so-called Anglosphere of democratic states or an allegedly European Europe going from the Atlantic to the Urals or a geostrategic U.S. pivot to the Pacific with Australia, Japan, India, and others lack the compatibilities and complementarities of the Euro-Atlantic partnership.

Second, the United States is preponderant in most dimensions of power – it is the world’s most *complete* power. Reports of its demise are once again premature. For allies and adversaries alike, the facts of American power are not questioned – only how and where it is used, how well and why. However, for Europe to be a capable partner, its capacities need to be compatible with its global responsibilities and interests as a leading power in the world. NATO cannot be turned into a universal social worker any more than the EU can become a global security provider. With each institution relying on the other in the areas it does least or less well, institutional complementarity is about power *and* weaknesses, and America and Europe complete each other on behalf of shared interests and common goals. This, however, is not a plea for an artificial division of labour between so-called soft and hard security issues which, even when deemed separable cannot be separated without harming the policies designed to address them.

Third, complementarity of membership in NATO and the EU remains desirable. The six countries that signed the Rome Treaties were all NATO members; 35 years later at the end of the Cold War, the European membership of NATO-15 and EU-12 was nearly identical; and since the Cold War enlargement has affected both institutions almost evenly, with only two of the 13 new NATO members and 5 of the 16 new EU members not members of the other institution too. Post-Brexit but also without Turkey, this convergence now looks beyond reach, at least for a while. To avoid more separation, and possibly reduce the pressure for more NATO or EU enlargement on the quick, consultation between the 35 members of EU-28 and NATO-29 (including 21 post-Brexit European countries) should be reinforced to ease Euro-Atlantic consultation before decisions are made by or for either institution, thus making them all partners and allies of choice for joint or complementary action by either of the institutions to which they do not or cannot belong.

Fourth, a limited liability partnership can nevertheless suffice if tensions across the Atlantic were to increase further, during a second Trump presidential term or an extended post-Brexit transition. But whatever its scope, the test of the partnership will be over its members' commitment to U.S.-EU-NATO cooperation and complementarity. Admittedly, an extended Trump presidency would likely have consequences for the rest of the decade, including a possible phase-out from an "obsolete" NATO by a date which the US president might want to make certain – as early as 2024 but no later than 2029, with bursts of targeted EU-bashing accompanied by offers of closer bilateral security relations outside NATO but also the EU. Still, there is one conclusion at least about which History's verdict is final: America, Europe, and the world are better off when America stays fully in (1945) than when it stays away (1914, 1939), steps down (1919) or stands aside (1991). Whatever the outcome of the next American election this verdict will still apply to issues of shared and compatible interest – even when these interests are not evenly acknowledged or co-managed by the individual members of the Alliance (as distinct from NATO) and the EU (including the United Kingdom, whether as a member or a non-member).

The present of things past,

Expectations of a quick transformation of post-Soviet Russia were overstated, and so was the assumption that a prosperous China would soon turn into a constructive strategic partner. These expectations have not met the test of time. Whatever the next decade brings, Russia and China are today's adversaries. Both will form alliances with our adversaries, though not with each other, and both will attempt to turn our allies into adversaries while building an illiberal world order that ignores Western values and governance. However, this assessment points to a bleak future only to the extent that either side of the Atlantic moves away from the other and both object to doing together what may prove too difficult to do separately.

Fifth, the rise of China as a dual superpower – economic and military – is nearly certain, whatever its pace in a region where little history has been settled and five nuclear powers are in place, including two of them highly unstable and potential first users. Unlike the Soviet Union, which could not match let alone surpass America's superiority, China can, although the road ahead is getting bumpier and the risks of a crash real though not fatal – with falling growth, rising instabilities, bad demographics, growing global resistance and regional challenges, and little adaptability. As was shown by President Reagan after three decades of global rivalry with the Soviet Union, strategic restraint has its limits. Seven decades after the West allegedly "lost" China, it is now a power in the world and the foremost power in Asia, but it is not Asia's partner of choice and not yet a world power. While the behaviour of a rising power cannot be predicted, tumultuous relations with China are likely to be an enduring feature of the years to come, and they will be handled best if the United States and Europe cooperate rather than compete as powers in Asia with significant experience and substantial interests throughout the Continent.

Sixth, the Cold War is won, but Russia is neither done nor defeated. For the *Russkiy Mir* – the Russian world that comprises parts of Kazakhstan and sizeable populations in the Baltic States – there is nothing modest about its natural sphere of influence over its European neighbours and their attachment to Moscow. Now, only a short quarter of a century after its most recent defeat, Russia acts like it won the Cold War, as it calls for NATO to be disbanded and the EU to be neutered while blatantly intervening in their members' national elections and spreading new instabilities in faraway areas of vital interest to them. Yet, faced with bad geopolitical conditions all around, economically vulnerable and with few capable friends, Russia's future is with but not in the West, including the United States and Europe, and neither in nor with Asia, including China. Better than most of his counterparts in the West and elsewhere, Putin can separate the facts he knows from the fiction he creates – weapons he cannot afford, allies he cannot keep, or time he does not have. And as its most maximalist foreign policy ever leaves an exhausted post-Soviet Russia out of resources, people,

capabilities, and even security space it will also run out of time, by which point turning to the West will come naturally – echoes of Gorbachev's strategic dead end after Brezhnev's final attempt to challenge the United States for primacy in Europe and for influence in the world.

The future of things present,

No strategic black hole is deeper, wider, and darker than the Middle East, the pivotal threat to the next world order. What the West has done to Islam is a matter for scholars to continue to debate for the decades to come; what Islam can still do to the West is a more pressing question to address for the coming years. Now, even Yogi Berra's flawed arithmetic cannot measure the current moral confusion and strategic threat.

Seventh, the Greater Middle East is a region fully opened to civil conflicts and Great Power interventions, with no happy ending in sight and global escalation always possible. The credibility of the United States is evaporating, Europe's power is lacking, and the West is losing its influence; instead, Iran's influence is expanding with that of its surrogates relative to other local powers that risk half-hearted reforms at home and make bold but indecisive policy choices abroad. Meantime, prospects for a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have faded without any plausible alternative in sight, and sectarian conflicts are escalating within and across borders with no visible solution at hand; and while Egypt struggles to gain some balance and stability, Turkey regains its imperial stagger as the dominant Sunni power tempted to reassert its past Ottoman ambitions over its de-territorialized neighbours and minorities. In short, with so many lone rangers all over, the Middle East is a mess, which no one can afford to ignore and no one can afford to lead, whether to save the region from itself but especially to save itself from the region.

Eighth, the revisionist awakening of Turkey, which conceded the region to an imperial West in 1916, and the imperious rise of Iran, which hopes to regain the region on behalf of its own brand of Islam, create new layers of instabilities, in the Middle East and therefore globally. With regard to Turkey, the West has been losing its appeal. While Turkey remains fit for NATO because of its military capabilities, NATO itself is not because of the alliance handicaps it brings – for its forays in past Ottoman territories or an opening to Russia for example; and even if the EU suits Turkey because of the economic advantages it offers, Turkey does not because of its democratic deficits. Don't make of Turkey an orphan, however: NATO and its members must give it the strategic respect Turkey needs to keep it on board, and the EU and its members the economic support Turkey needs for its secular democracy to endure.

Ninth, with regard to Iran, the post-1979 revolutionary face-off with the West has run out of time. As a defiantly desperate regime chooses confrontation with the United States over the "maximum" economic sanctions imposed since Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord, and as Israel (and possibly the United States too) confirms its determination to deny a nuclear Iran even at the price of a war, this is the most immediate threat in the region, with a potential for a serious military clash at any moment. Make no mistake: however, whenever, and wherever a war starts with Iran, the risk is to enter a catastrophic nuclear escalation unless it is ended quickly by a third party. Relative to the United States but also to other states in the region Iran's threshold of pain is much too high for them to afford a conventional or asymmetrical war for long – a pain which Iran can now inflict readily, widely, and unpredictably in places and at moments of its own choosing.

Tenth, for many years, and preceding Trump, the road map to a two-state solution has been closed for major repair amidst growing doubts about the U.S. reliability as an honest broker and the legitimate no-bid contractor needed for the reconstruction work. The resulting vacuum leaves Europe as a main Western diplomatic rampart against the unwanted ascendancy of newcomers like Russia, the destructive incompetence of new regional bullies like Saudi Arabia, the dangerous

provocations of revolutionary powers like Iran, and even, of late, the ineffective assertiveness of newly revisionist powers like Turkey. That the United States is not doing well should not be an alibi for the states of Europe to do less: Lacking the will to assert itself as a power in the Middle East, the risk for Europe is to evolve into a Middle Eastern power as regional instabilities continue to spill over across the Mediterranean. Be modest, though, and stick to what can be done because we know how and we also know how urgently it is needed – improved governance, contain corruption, reduce inequalities, and all these small things that often populate *les grandes affaires* in their most difficult moments.

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Nearly fifteen years ago, when I wrote *The Vital Partnership*, the word “vital” was picked for its dual dictionary meaning as necessary but also energetic: necessary as the indispensable axis of stability for a then-emerging new world order, and energetic because of its nature as an organic process of integration in Europe and with the United States. The continued imperative of a vital transatlantic partnership still lies in its identity – as an unmatched community of common goals, compatible interests, and overlapping values. Long past the Cold War, the transatlantic partnership remains vital to prevent a renewed Russian sphere of influence in non-EU, non-NATO Europe and defeat the subversive effects of its illiberal brigade in the EU; to counter its destructive penetration in the Greater Middle East and balance its pervasive action elsewhere in Asia and Africa; and to embrace and promote their common values with respect to democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the climate, as well as sustain a rules-based multilateral trading system that applies to all.

In a moment impregnated with a certain air of destiny, divisions between the United States and Europe, as well as among the states of Europe, are serious because the issues are serious, many of them possibly existential. These divisions are placing the transatlantic partnership in jeopardy at a time when unity is essential, indeed still vital – not because absent their alliance the United States and Europe would be denied a future but because that future would be less promising, more dangerous, and less comfortable. Past-Trump and past Brexit, then, let’s be sure to reset the clock right, at half before the EU and half before NATO – meaning, the time needed to pursue their institutional and strategic finality respectively. As Winston Churchill reflected in 1919, many futures ago, “The true nature of nations is what they do when they are tired.” Our Western democracies have rarely been as tired as now. But whatever their reasons, this is no time for them to walk away from their achievements of the past seventy years, including a Western alliance that defeated History in Europe and kept the West firmly in place elsewhere. As Angela Merkel poignantly reminded Harvard’s new graduates in May 2019, “Anything that seems set in stone or inalterable can indeed change,” whether for the much better as her experience of things past shows or for the much worse, as she may be thinking of things future. In one sentence, the long-time Chancellor of the country that contributed so much to the miseries of the first half of the past century made the case for the transatlantic partnership.

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Simon Serfaty is a Professor of US Foreign Policy and Eminent Scholar with the Graduate Program in International Studies at Old Dominion University (ODU) in Norfolk, Va. He also is the Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair (emeritus) in Global Security Studies and Geopolitics at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC.