



# 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*

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### Executive summary

This is no belle époque for the United States and the states of Europe, whether separately or together. Yet, it would be a folly to abandon either too soon. After a century of total wars, History's verdict is without appeal: if not Europe as a Union, how; if not the Union with America, with whom; if not now, when? Simply stated, this is the case against the case against the Transatlantic Partnership – the West needs the West.

Deep into a turbulent moment of geostrategic mutation. the world is left with any number of powers with all sorts of capabilities for conflicting purposes. Yet, still standing ahead of an expanding peloton of great or middle powers and new influences, we find:

**First, Europe, as a Union and with the United States,** notwithstanding the recent trends on both sides of the Atlantic. Au fond, strategic goals for the Euro-Atlantic West have not changed much. Early on, it was designed to keep Russia out, Germany down, and America in. Now, its aims to keep Russia at a distance, bring America closer, and move the EU up.

**Second, Russia – against the West but with little of the Rest.** Of all the powers bidding for primacy, Russia is most in need of capable partners that compensate for its weaknesses. In short, Russia lacks the 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 nor with the Rest.

**And third, China – ascending and assertive.** By position alone, America and Europe are the unintended adversaries of a surging China which aspires at being more than a Western clone. The pace of China's military and technological growth may well be exaggerated, however: the final test of ascendancy is its sustainability, and there is no conclusive evidence that China is meeting that test.

The strategic road map to 2030 is likely to meander, periodically closed for repair and re-routed as surprises keep emerging, unexpected and, most of the time, less than good, with ten toll booths standing out:

**First**, the Transatlantic Partnership is vital if any sort of rules-based order is to emerge over the next decade. How Europe handles its Brexit and Americans manage their election are two of their most immediate hurdles to a much needed and comprehensive New Transatlantic Agenda.

**Second**, the United States is and will remain preponderant in most dimensions of power – it is the world's most *complete* power. For Europe to be a capable co-partner, its capacities need to be compatible with its global responsibilities and interests as a world power with strategic autonomy.

**Third**, complementarity of membership in NATO and the EU remains desirable. Post-Brexit but also past Turkey, this convergence now looks beyond reach. To avoid more separation, there should be closer consultation between the 35 members of EU-28 and NATO-29.

**Fourth**, a limited liability partnership may suffice to achieve some measure of EU-US-NATO complementarity if tensions across the Atlantic increase, with a second Trump presidential term, an extended or mismanaged post-Brexit transition, or new economic and financial turbulence.

**Fifth**, the rise of China as a dual superpower – economic and military – is nearly certain. Although China is now a power in the world, it is not yet a world power. The final phase of its rise, likely to be tumultuous, demands for the United States and Europe to cooperate rather than compete.

**Sixth**, the Cold War is won, but Russia is not done. Yet, even as it calls for NATO to be disbanded and the EU to be neutered while intervening in their members' elections, Russia's future is with but not in the West, including the United States and Europe.

**Seventh**, in the Middle East, America's credibility is gone, Europe's power lacking, the Western role diminished, and non-Western influence disruptive. In short, it is a mess, which no one can afford to ignore or lead, whether to save the region from itself or to save itself from the region.

**Eighth**, the revisionist awakening of Turkey and the imperious rise of Iran create new layers of instabilities. Turkey remains fit for NATO, but NATO itself may no longer be; and even while the EU suits Turkey, Turkey does not. Making of Turkey an orphan, however, is not an option.

**Ninth**, Iran's post-1979 revolutionary face-off with the West has run out of time, with a potential for a serious military clash at any moment. Make no mistake: wherever and whenever

a war starts, the risk is to enter a catastrophic escalation unless it is ended quickly by a third party.

**Tenth**, the road map to a two-state solution has closed amidst doubts about the U.S. reliability as an honest broker and the lack of a no-bid contractor for reconstruction work. The vacuum leaves Europe as the main Western rampart against the ascendancy of hostile newcomers.

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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.