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## Challenges for a Transatlantic Cohesion: An Assessment

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## Challenges for a Transatlantic Cohesion: An Assessment

Look at any large newspaper or international journal and more often than not there will be an article on the future of the Transatlantic alliance. Most of these articles express the commonly held attitude that the relations between the United States, Canada, and Europe are doomed to split. They claim that the most recent conflict among these countries, the American-Iraqi war, will be the cause of the shattering of the alliance.

However, the author of this paper does not assume that the Iraq war, or any other recent occurrence, will break the Transatlantic alliance. The American and European economies, among the largest in the world, are so intertwined that it would be very harmful to each, or even impossible, to split one from another. On the contrary, it is assumed the United States and Europe will grow closer still as Western ideals are attacked. The alliance among Americans and Europeans is too strong of a partnership and there is too deep of a relationship for a small debacle like the conflict over the present Iraqi war to cause those involved to cut the strings that bind them together.

Recent occurrences show the transatlantic alliance will not be diminished but grow stronger still. The recent election of Germany's new Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who is more pro-American than her predecessor, Gerhard Schroder, and the fact that France's Jacques Chirac, in his last year serving as president, has recently become more pro-American looks very appealing for the future of the transatlantic community. The recent additions of the Eastern European countries to the European Union also bode well for the future of the alliance because they, too, are more pro-American.

Examples of the West working together in order to protect its own ideals include the Danish cartoon incident and the Iranian nuclear crisis. In both instances, American and European beliefs and issues were attacked, and they drew together to ward off these common threats. This action portrays the fact that the transatlantic relationship is not doomed for failure, but instead, is relevant and important. The following will also discuss the future of the Transatlantic alliance.

The relationship among the United States, Canada, and Europe began after World War II. At that time, Adolf Hitler had recently been defeated and most of Western Europe needed to be rebuilt. Therefore, the United States provided much sought after economic and technical assistance to these countries as part of the Marshall Plan. This plan showed Europe that the United States was serious about helping them rebuild, and strengthened the relationship across the Atlantic because Europe knew they could trust the Americans.

The American fear of the Soviet Union and its threat of infecting the world with Communism led the United States to contain the Soviet Union. William Hitchcock states, "The constant lurking threat of the Soviet Union, its willingness to use military force to protect its sphere of influence, and its sponsorship of large Communist parties in the West spurred Europeans to make common cause with the United States." Indeed, the threat of the Soviet Union led to one of the greatest alliances in recent history. While the alliance may have started because Europe needed help rebuilding after World War II and needed protection from the Soviet Union, it quickly grew into an undoubtedly strong political alliance as common interests were realized. Organizations such as the North Atlantic Trade Organization were set up in order to protect Europe from falling to Communism. NATO also helped strengthen the relationship between America and Europe. At the start of the organization, the relationship was built on the agreement that the United States military would protect Europe in case of an attack from the Soviet Union; however, it later evolved into a military alliance where an attack on one would equate to an attack on all. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the relevance and importance of the transatlantic alliance was questioned. However, the alliance, whether it started out as it or not,

grew to be such a strong alliance because there is a common culture and common interests among the countries involved.

While Europe may no longer be as high of a security priority for the United States as it was during the Cold War, it is still America's most needed and important ally because both Europe and the United States find the global economy, the environment, human rights, and democracy very important. Arguably, there are no other countries in the world that would make better allies for Europe or the United States than Europe and the United States. While they do have petty arguments, they agree with one another when the issue is of great importance. Some may argue that the recent disagreement among the allies over the Iraqi war show a deep-set interest conflict among Americans and Europeans. Robert Kagan's argument that Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus comes to mind. However, I believe the recent disagreement is actually a conflict among leaders and policies, not among ordinary citizens within the countries involved. When asked what the problem with the US is, a large majority, seventy-four percent, of Germans identified George W. Bush as the problem; while only around twenty percent believed America was the problem. Therefore, there is no great problem among Europeans and Americans. They, for the most part, have the same beliefs and are concerned with the same issues.

This point is further argued by Eric Alterman when he argues, "the roots of the differences between the two lie at the level of leadership [and] at the most common level (the people themselves), Europe and the U.S. are still close." American President George W. Bush will complete his presidency in 2008. France's Jacques Chirac is in his last year of his presidency, and Angela Merkel is now Chancellor of Germany, taking Gerhard Schroder's place. There will soon be a complete change in all of the leaders involved in the difficulties of the Iraq war; therefore, perhaps these 'deep-set' problems that led some to believe the end of the Transatlantic divide was certain, will dissolve.

Philip Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro agree that indeed, "American and European interests and values – the ultimate drivers of long-term policy – remain highly similar." Therefore, America and Europe would be unwise to break their long-standing alliance due only to the fiasco with Iraq because they have the same interests in the long-run. There is no way a relationship that is so strong will be so easily destroyed. The United States and Europe are like siblings. They argue over every little thing, but in the end there is no doubt that they would stick together. It is impossible for the United States and Europe to agree on everything, and with every good relationship, it is important for it to continue throughout the good and bad times. Every time a conflict in the alliance occurs, there is a newspaper article claiming that the current problem is bigger than any other conflict that the alliance has dealt with, and that it may signal the end of the relationship. In short, the recent disagreement over the Iraqi war is not the end of the alliance, but merely one more problem the transatlantic alliance will overcome. About forty years ago, "Henry Kissinger was writing about the troubled partnership," of the Transatlantic alliance. The relationship has survived long after the start of the plethora of articles claiming the doom of the bond among Europe and the United States, and it will survive the present day disagreements because it is in no way a regular relationship. This is a bond among those countries built on the same, non-negotiable beliefs of democracy and rules of law.

Furthermore, recently the United States and Europe have actually started working together on certain issues. The disagreements over Iraq seem to have forced the transatlantic community to see how important it is for them to remain united. No good came out of America bashing or of acting unilaterally. Examples of the allies pulling together in order to confront an enemy attacking their shared rights and beliefs include the Danish cartoon fiasco and the Iranian nuclear problem.

In September 2005, twelve cartoons were published in *Jyllandsposten*, a Danish newspaper. The reactions to these political cartoons put Denmark, a country not commonly in the lime-

light, on the map. Everybody, from Professors to high school drop outs, was talking about these cartoons. The political cartoon that gained the most attention involved Mohammed wearing a bomb-shaped turban. The main problem most Muslims had with the cartoon was that in the Islamic religion, it is not allowed to characterize Mohammad in any way.

An apology was demanded from the newspaper, but it was not given. The Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, declined the request for a meeting with eleven ambassadors from Muslim countries on the basis that freedom of speech and of the press was a main basis for democracy and could not be compromised. The issue with the cartoons soon turned into a question of whether or not the West would stand up for its customs and mores, including freedom of speech.

“President George W. Bush called Denmark’s Prime Minister Rasmussen to offer his support.” The American President even took it upon himself to express to Mr. Rasmussen that he supports his decision to remain strong about not apologizing for his country’s belief in free speech.

It was reported in the Brussels Journal that, “Muslim fundamentalists even threatened to bomb the paper’s offices and kill the cartoonists.” These fundamentalists were adamant that the cartoonist who drew the political cartoons and the publisher of the newspaper be punished for their blasphemous acts. Some even called for a trial of those responsible; they could not understand that no crimes were committed. It was also reported that other European newspapers published the Mohammad cartoons. These European newspapers published the cartoons in support of Denmark’s Prime Minister’s decision. This was a gesture towards Denmark that they too supported freedom of speech and would stand by these beliefs; thus, showing that they would not back down to outside pressure.

The Muslim fundamentalist outcry soon turned into an all out attack on the West, not just Denmark, as they also attacked the Norwegian embassy in Syria. These fundamentalists were not discriminatory toward the Western countries that they attacked. Instead of attacking only Danish embassies or products, they attacked Western embassies in general. This would be like a person cutting down all trees simply because one fell on his or her house. The disagreement on these Muhammad cartoons grew into a war of ideals, specifically between Middle Eastern and Western ideals. A North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) base was attacked in Maymana, a remote northern Afghani city, by protesters. The fact that a NATO base was attacked merely portrays the actuality that the Muslim Fundamentalists viewed this as an all out attack against the West.

The countries in the transatlantic alliance uphold the same ideals and beliefs that were attacked by these Muslim fundamentalists because they are Western countries as well. “The ideas that conquered the world - peace, democracy, and free markets- were fundamental to the creation of the Alliance;” and therefore, are not taken lightly. A country that upholds these beliefs must not simply set back as they are being attacked. Due to the Muslim cartoon fiasco, these countries have made the realization that those countries that comprise the transatlantic community, and other Western countries, are all they can rely upon. Small disagreements with Muslim countries can soon turn into problems between the Middle East and the West. These disagreements can easily escalate into war. If the countries of Western ideals - of democracy and freedom of speech, are attacked, they will need to rely on each other in order to protect themselves and their beliefs.

The world must ask what exactly does Iran, a very large oil producer, want with nuclear power. The Iranian government adamantly argues that it wants to enrich uranium in order to create nuclear power plants. However, they have turned down both an American and Russian proposal to supply all the nuclear fuel Iran would ever need to run a nuclear power plant. That hardly seems like the policy of a country attempting to provide its citizens with alternative power sources to oil.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty, entered into force in 1970, was set up to prevent the

spread of nuclear weapons, and the treaty incorporated safe guards, which include inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, to verify compliance with the treaty. Iran is a member state of this treaty and as such should uphold its values. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been having problems with Iran. In 2004, they reported that Iran was not forthcoming about its nuclear programs, Iran did not ratify the new protocol of the NPT which gave inspectors greater liberty in each member state's borders, Iran threatened that it would launch a pre-emptive strike if it felt another country was preparing to strike its nuclear program, and that it would begin enriching uranium. When Iran removed inspector seals and began enriching uranium it successfully sabotaged its two year negotiations with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The IAEA has since declared its nuclear program is in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Big Three of Europe, as they have been called, have continued at their attempts to settle Iran's nuclear program dispute through negotiations. In 2005, President Bush even declared that he would put American weight behind Europe's effort. This action would be the start of the new American attitude towards international negotiations. Unlike Iraq, it seems like the Bush administration will be more adamant to allow negotiations, and not be so willing to escalate problems into war.

The last thing the world needs is another nuclear weapon wielding state, and Iran has the nuclear capability to reach Europe; therefore, Europe has been aggressively attempting to negotiate with Iran in order to entice them to halt their uranium enrichment program. However, peaceful negotiations have failed in their attempts. The largest blow to these negotiations arose in August when, "negotiations between Iran and France, Germany, and Britain collapsed after Tehran rejected a basket of economic and political incentives offered in return for a permanent end to uranium enrichment." It seems like there is nothing more that can be accomplished through negotiations. The Iranian government is standing hard fast on its belief that it has the right to enrich uranium for its own nuclear power plants, but the world is still uncertain nuclear power plants are Iran's only desire.

"The United States and its European allies [reported] that Iran's intransigence over its nuclear program has left the world no choice but to ask for the U.N. Security Council to take action against the Islamic regime." They want the United Nations to allow the IAEA to reinforce its rights under the Non-Proliferation treaty. The United States and Europe have been working together to ensure the good of all. It is in every State's best interest to force Iran to end its uranium enrichment peacefully. However, if economic sanctions or the actual destruction of Iran's nuclear facilities is needed, it seems like the Transatlantic community will work together.

Among those states in both the Transatlantic alliance and the UN Security Council, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom are in support of strong measures, which include deadlines, to force compliance of Iran. Europe and America are working together on the Iranian nuclear crisis because they both understand that Iran is a danger to their well being, and the stability of the International community. Iran has reported that it has weapon capabilities that can reach Europe, and the United States, which has been on a mission to eradicate terrorists from the world, understands that Iran is a much greater threat than Iraq.

Taking a completely different attitude towards traditional American allies than in the events leading up to the Iraqi war, the Bush administration remains adamant in its decision to work with Europe with regards to the Iranian case. Condoleezza Rice traveled to Germany, France, and Britain at the end of March in order to discuss the Iranian issue. This shows Washington views diplomacy with Europe as very important.

It is essential that the international community, not only those in the transatlantic alliance, remain strong and united when confronting Iran. A united Transatlantic position is important in this nuclear crisis because Iran will have a very strong negotiation position if it can exploit American and European differences and thus cause a break in the alliance. At the moment,

Washington, Paris, London, and Berlin are working together for the common good as the security of the world may be determined by the ability of the international community to get Iran to halt its uranium enrichment policy. The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, denies the Holocaust and called for Israel to be wiped off of the map earlier in the year. He is, arguably, not a rational person; and therefore, cannot be trusted with a nuclear weapon.

America and Europe do share a common set of core values; and so, should work together, especially in the Middle East, as America has the military might and Europe has the economic resources to really harm a country like Iran. Europe is Iran's principal trading partner, and it will remain in this position for the foreseeable future. The fact that Germany's new Chancellor, Angela Merkel, remains committed to be united with Washington on its Iranian policy, is very important because Germany is actually Iran's largest trading partner. Tehran will be economically harmed if trade between Germany, or Europe in general, comes to a halt. The truth is that the United States and Europe need each other if they want to combat Iran's nuclear policy. America will need Europe to agree to economic sanctions against Tehran because continued trade with one's largest trading partner will allow economic survival even if trade with every other country in the world ceases to exist. However, if economic sanctions do not cause the Iranian government to halt its nuclear program, Europe will need America's strong military to join with them and war against Iran.

As expressed in the Iranian nuclear crisis, the United States and Europe have been working together in able to stand strong and united against Iran. Neither side is willing to allow Iran to become the new Iraq. It is imperative that the transatlantic community remain unified against the common threat of Iran, and the alliance has finally realized this importance. This realization can be portrayed in the actions taken by the Bush administration. Condoleezza Rice traveled to Germany, Britain, and France to discuss Iran, and President Bush both stood behind the Big three's negotiations with Tehran and discussed Iran's future with Germany's Chancellor Merkel. After the disagreements over Iraq, the fact that America and Europe are working so closely together is no small development.

Quite often, whether in newspapers, on the television news, or in journal articles, there is at least one article or segment on the end of the Transatlantic alliance. At the moment the claim is that the Iraq war and America's choice at unilateralism was the straw that broke the camel's back so to speak. Still, others argue that a large amount of work needs to be done in order for the alliance to remain strong and relevant. However, let us ask whether or not the end of the Transatlantic alliance is even feasible. If Europe, or the United States, decided tomorrow that they see no real need for the alliance and wish it to end, could the strings be cut?

The United States and Europe have been allies and have cooperated for such a long time. Their goals and futures are so intertwined that they may indeed never be untangled. The American and European economies are so intermingled that they would suffer if one or the other tried to lessen their relationship. They are each others largest trading partners. It would be very far fetched for the United States and Europe to somehow not be partners. The end of that relationship would be like ending the bond of two best friends who have grown up together. In short, the end of the Transatlantic alliance is unfathomable.

The most striking example of just how important America and Europe are to each other's trade and investment is that, "U.S. assets in Germany alone are greater than total U.S. assets in the whole of South America, and there is more European investment in Texas than all the U.S. investment in Japan." Though the relationship among Europe and the United States may have started out as a primarily military alliance to ward off the Soviet Union, that basic sort of alliance has long since past.

The Transatlantic alliance has survived the death of the Cold war because it evolved into much more than a military alliance. Similar ideals such as democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech, and a liberal economy bind Europe and America together. There is no question that the alliance will survive small conflicts like the Iraqi war as long as the much stronger ideal

that Europe and the United States are primarily the only countries in the world with the same like-minded ideals. The problems with the Middle East, such as the Danish cartoons and the Iran nuclear crisis, have illustrated to those in the Transatlantic alliance that no matter how many small, petty arguments they get in, when it is truly necessary to band together, the United States and Europe can count on each other.

Angela Merkel has recently been elected as Germany's new Chancellor. She is decidedly much more on America's side than Chancellor Schroder. A German government more apt to agree with American views is a much needed element if the disagreements over the Iraqi war are going to be mended.

American and French relations have also improved drastically since the fiasco with the Iraq war. Jacques Chirac and George W. Bush stand together, united against Iran producing nuclear weapons. It has been argued that the French have even taken a tougher stance on Iran than the United States, with the French Foreign Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, openly accusing Iran of lying about their nuclear intentions. The fact that President Chirac and President Bush have been more apt to get along lately is very good for the Transatlantic alliance and its goals in the international community.

The alliance between America and Europe was further strengthened with the additions of Eastern European countries into the European Union in 2004 because they are arguably more pro-American than most Western European countries. They do not want to dispel America out of Europe so to speak because American influence balances against the influence France and Germany have over European Union policy. They do not want France and Germany to have the ability to hijack the European Union.

No good came out of the disagreements between America, Germany, and France during the Iraqi war, and one can assume the leaders in those respective countries have since realized that as well. There have not only been changes among the German and French government, but also the in the United States government. The Bush administration has learned to be more patient with the world because it is important to have all on board in order to have a good outcome. The idea of having patience was portrayed when United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, "voiced confidence [that] Washington and its allies would reach agreement on a text to pressure Iran even if it takes longer than previously thought." Therefore, President Bush has not been quick to call for war or economic sanctions alone.

It is necessary for the West to stand united and firm against those who may choose to attack it. No good will come out of the fact that an enemy sees the cracks in the relationship among political leaders. In order for the Iranian government to view the West's threats as real and intimidating, those in Washington, Berlin, Paris, and London must remain firm and work together.

The Transatlantic alliance is in no position to break apart any time soon. It has existed since the end of World War II, strengthened by the policy of containing the Soviet Union by the United States, and has grown into so much more than a military alliance. It is set in the beliefs of democracy, liberal economy, and rules of law. Those in the Transatlantic community comprise what many deem the West. Their beliefs and views continue to be attacked by such regions as the Middle East. As such, they will stick together in order to protect their beliefs and show the world they will not give up their way of life.

The Iraqi war fiasco demonstrated to the Transatlantic community that it is of utmost importance to stick together. They now know nothing good arises from acting unilaterally or bashing America. This new attitude has been portrayed by the actions taken by Washington, London, Berlin, and Paris. The Bush administration has not been as adamant as it was in the past to rush the world into war, but instead it has been patient with the diplomatic process. The West, and much of the world, has been working together to send Iran to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

There has been a change of government in Germany, as Angela Merkel, who is more pro-



American than Gerhard Schroder, is Germany's new Chancellor. France's Jacques Chirac, in his last year as President, seems more pro-American than he was in the past. President George W. Bush realized the importance of Europe to America, and as such, has attempted to work more with Europe, rather than against them.

The fact that the Eastern European countries, which are more pro-American than Western European countries, have joined the European Union will help the Transatlantic community become stronger still as they will not be so willing to turn their backs on the United States.

They, like the United States, do not want the two large powers of France and Germany to have the ability or power to hijack the European Union.

When discussing the Transatlantic alliance it is also necessary to discuss the economy of both the United States and Europe because the economy plays a large part in the relationship. Their economies are so intertwined it would be very difficult, or even impossible, to break them apart. America and Europe are each other's largest trading partners, and it seems as if this strong relationship will continue into the future.

The problems the Transatlantic alliance, the West, have with the Middle East are only the beginning. It is necessary for the West to stick together as its beliefs and views will continue to be attacked. The Danish cartoon fiasco and the Iranian nuclear crisis are only the tip of the iceberg. Throughout these difficulties, however, the Transatlantic community was able to stick together; which is important because their enemy will be able to sense a problem and wedge itself into that problem if any hint of a break in the alliance is shown. The recent amicable relations between the United States, France, and Germany will continue to grow stronger still as their shared ideals are attacked by the rest of the world.

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