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## **Europe and the US in the Face of Common Challenges.**

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Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here. I am glad that my friend Karsten Voigt from Berlin sees himself as an optimist and an Atlanticist regarding the future. I, too, am an optimist regarding NATO's future in ways that may be even more radical or profound.

Let's step back and ask ourselves the following question: What are the major political and military challenges facing the United States and Europe in the 21st century? And is there a role and need for an Alliance like NATO in facing them? From my perspective, the answer to that question has to be 'yes.'

The reasons for my resounding 'yes' are clear if we conduct a brief tour d'horizon of the world and assess the major strategic challenges facing the West. Where we stand? We have a combination of good news and bad news. The good news is that the great strategic problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of the European landmass are largely solved. I know that it is easier for an American to make such a bold statement than it is for a European given the current sense of malaise within the EU. But the toppling of communism and the successful integration of the eastern half of the continent into the structures of NATO and the European Union has been a tremendous historic accomplishment. As a result, Europe today is more democratic, prosperous and secure than any time in last hundred years. For the first time since the beginning of the last century an American President goes to work and no longer worries about the danger of a war in Europe. That is a dramatic shift that all too many people take for granted.

The bad news is that the terrorist attacks of September 11th have or at least should have opened our eyes to the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> century, too, is likely to be a dangerous century. While certainly different, the new threats we face are very real. I know that many strategists have been issuing such warnings for many years but the shock of September 11<sup>th</sup> has crystallized that fact and led to the shaping of a new consensus.

If I look out into the world today I see three major strategic challenges facing the West. I believe that in the case of two of them NATO has a central role to play. The first challenge is of course in Asia. It arises from the need to prevent proliferation in and from North Korea as well as to manage a soft landing when that archaic communist and totalitarian regime finally collapses and paves the way for Korean reunification. The second and perhaps larger challenge is managing the rise of Chinese power, the issue of Taiwan and the integration of China into a larger framework that helps it become a constructive and not a destructive power. Last but not least, there is the question of Japan and its future role in a new multilateral regional security system that also includes a unified Korea and an emergent China.

But let's be honest. Today these are not questions that NATO needs to address. Alliance members are not looking to NATO to address them; nor is the region turning to the Alliance. I suspect I am one of the more ambitious voices calling for Alliance reform, but not even I see a common geopolitical horizon that extends that far east. The European Union and major European powers often have a commercial view or strategy toward this part of the world but not a collective strategic one. Some years back Bob Blackwell, Steve Larrabee and I wrote an article in *The Washington Quarterly* where we were among the first arguing that NATO had to be able to act beyond Europe and think globally. But we also pointed out that this did not mean that NATO had to tackle the problem of the Spratley Islands. I think that assessment is still correct.

Instead, our criteria must be that NATO must be able to act to protect the vital interests of its members from the most important challenges they face. And if we use these criteria, there are two major strategic challenges that we must tackle. One is the question of how we

address those countries to the East of the new borders of an enlarged European Union and NATO.

Having successfully anchored states from the Baltic to the Black Sea in the West, what do we do about Belarus, Ukraine and the South Caucasus? And what about Central Asia? Moreover, when do we acknowledge the fact that Russia is drifting on the wrong direction and that the policy line we have pursued over the last decade vis-à-vis Moscow has essentially failed? I call this NATO's new eastern agenda. The core question we face is whether the West is again prepared to make another major effort to extend the borders of democracy and security further to the East. I hope we can come back to all of these issues in the subsequent discussion.

The other far more dangerous challenge facing the West lies in what we now refer to as the Greater Middle East -- that area extending from North Africa to Afghanistan. During most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the greatest threats to international security and world peace emanated from Europe and Eurasian continent. Europe had the distinction of the place where the greatest wars had started and potentially the greatest wars could start. Thank God that is no long the case. If we ask ourselves today where the greatest threats to Western security are likely to emanate from in the future, then the answer is from the Greater Middle East. It is here that we find the toxic mix of new radical and totalitarian ideologies, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. It is the problems of this region that are likely to preoccupy Western statesmen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century just like the problems of Europe and Russia preoccupied us for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I often point out to some of my European friends that if you live in Washington, DC today, the chances of a weapon of mass destruction actually being used in our city are probably greater than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis. Clearly, the threat we face today is different since during the Cold War we worried about a cataclysmic confrontation that could have destroyed much of the world in a Soviet-American nuclear exchange. Here we are talking about use of a single or a small number weapon of mass destruction. But I suspect that the actual likelihood of WMD use against the West is actually much higher today than it was during the Cold War. As someone who now sits on the Emergency Preparedness Committee of his son's school in Washington where we wrestle with the issues of how to prepare for a biological weapons attack or a dirty nuclear weapon, this is not an abstract theory.

So the fundamental question we face today is whether we can reorganize the West to face these new strategic challenges in the East and in the South. In the early 1990s many of us popularized the slogan that NATO had to go out of area or it would go out of business. That reflected our recognition that the Alliance had to reorganize itself to address the problems of projecting stability beyond its borders because that was where the real and potential problems lay. Could we take an alliance that was focused on defending Western Europe and transform into alliance that would assume responsibility for the security of Europe as a whole? Out of that insight grew an agenda that included military intervention in the Balkans, NATO enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and the efforts to build a new post-Cold War partnership with Moscow. In spite of the claims of many critics that it could not be done, that became the central and organizing agenda of the trans-Atlantic community in the 1990s.

Today we face the next challenge on a much grander scale. Can we reorganize the West to project stability further eastward into places like Ukraine, Belarus and the broader Black Sea region? What would a policy that helps halt Russia's slide into authoritarianism and instead put Moscow back on a democratic track look like? And, above all, can we come up with a new grand strategy to address the problems of the Greater Middle East and help the region transform itself into a set of societies that stop producing people who want to kill us and

increasingly have the capacity to do so? Can we organize the West to deal with the most pressing strategic challenges of the next fifty years as effectively as we dealt with the challenges of the last half a century?

What would such a strategy look like? I sometimes use the metaphor of a new Harmel Report. In the annals of NATO history, the Harmel Report of course goes down as the strategy that helped win the Cold War. To use a sports metaphor, it consisted of a combination of the West playing both offense and defense. Defense was deterrence – i.e. the need to have a credible defense from the military threat we faced at the time. Equally important, however, was the offensive component of our strategy, which was political and was aimed at opening up, softening up and eventually transforming the communist system from within.

Let's take the same concept today and try to apply it to the strategic challenges I laid out earlier – what I called the New Eastern Agenda and the Greater Middle East. What are the needed components of a defensive and an offensive strategy? Today defense would consist first and foremost of trans-Atlantic homeland security because the greatest chance of an attack is a terrorist one. This is the modern day equivalent of the Fulda Gap where we will have to defend ourselves if and when attacked. And it is therefore reassuring that at the height of the trans-Atlantic split over the question of war in Iraq when many of our leaders were not speaking to each other, people as politically different as John Ashcroft and Otto Schilly continued to work very closely together to build closer cooperation across the Atlantic on these issues because they are our first line of defense.

Homeland security is of course not the only defense we need. NATO also needs to have a modest expeditionary capability so that it can play a more significant role in the future if we face another scenario like Afghanistan where we had to intervene in the region – which is why building NATO's Rapid Reaction Force is so critical. Equally if not more important, we need modern forces for major stability or peacekeeping operations in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. In the short-term, this is where we can already see the mismatch between demand and supply. One can also envision a demand for NATO forces of this type in scenarios in the Southern Caucasus or elsewhere. So the problem the Alliance faces today in this realm is already that there is perhaps too much rather than too little for it to do.

But the critical question is what the offensive piece of a new Western grand strategy along these lines might look like. Quite frankly, we already have a good idea conceptually of the kinds of changes NATO needs to make. The real questions center on whether we have the political will and resources to implement the changes we know in our hearts and minds that we need to make. But we are on much shakier ground when it comes to designing the offense component of this strategy, in other words the political strategy to help project democracy to the countries to the East of NATO's new borders or the even harder project of dealing with the internal pathologies of the Greater Middle East. Frankly, the person who fines tunes NATO's RRF so that it actually works the next time it is called on will not win the Nobel Peace Prize. The person who figures out what a trans-Atlantic strategy to promote democracy in the Greater Middle East looks like in practice just might.

I want to briefly talk about the internal American debate over the role Europe should or should not play in such a strategy. There is a growing consensus in the United States that the Greater Middle East is the fundamental strategic challenge of our era. There is also a consensus emerging that we need a long-term strategy aimed at the democratic transformation of the region. Increasingly, the issue is not whether we should try to do this but how and with whom. And it is here that the American debate over our relations with Europe intersects with the debate on the Greater Middle East. For fifty years Europe was an area where there was a broad consensus in American thinking across the political aisle.

Today that is no longer the case as we have seen the fragmentation of the past American consensus on how to think about Europe's role in American foreign policy as a growing number of conservatives have concluded that Europe and the trans-Atlantic Alliance today no longer are or should be as central in American foreign policy.

Today one can find three very different views in the American political debate.

The first view argues that the purpose of our strategic partnership was to win the Cold War, a goal that has been accomplished. It rejects the idea that a unified Europe will be a close strategic partner of the U.S. in facing threats beyond the continent. A strong unified Europe, it argues, will inevitably be built on an anti-American foundation and thus produce an actor skeptical and probably hostile to US interests beyond Europe. Rather than build up Europe to expand its global role, the United States should seek to prevent such a development.

This school therefore argues that Washington should rethink its traditional support for European integration. I remember the first time I met John Bolton. At the time I was a senior State Department official and Bolton was a senior scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. We were on a panel debating ESDP. I argued that ESDP was in America's strategic interest because we wanted a strong Europe that could act as a partner but that we had to work to make sure it was pro-Atlanticist. In contrast, Bolton argued that ESDP was a potential threat to us because it would inevitably produce a competitive or hostile Europe under French leadership. The United States, he continued, should pursue a policy of divide and conquer to thwart it. Astonished, I turned to Bolton and said: "I had heard that people like you existed but have actually never met one in person." At the time, that view was outside mainstream American thinking. Today John Bolton is Undersecretary of State and one can find his view openly argued in some conservative journals.

A second less hostile and more representative conservative view is represented by Robert Kagan in his by now famous article entitled "Power and Paradise." Kagan's argument boils down to the following: Europe's healing of itself has removed the continent as a major source of threat and American strategic preoccupation. This is a tremendous historic accomplishment the U.S. must welcome. And Europe's attempt to further build its unity is the way to keep Europe peaceful and secure. But it is naïve to believe that the United States and Europe will be close strategic partners in the future. America and Europe are drifting apart for many reasons. The asymmetry in power and the gap between a Hobbesian and Kantian view of the world create a strategic mismatch that will be increasingly difficult to bridge.

In contrast to the first view, this school does not believe that America and Europe will be hostile or strategic competitors. On the contrary, it argues that we can and should have close and good relations – especially in the areas of commerce, tourism, etc. Moreover, both sides should certainly search for foreign policy common ground. But we shouldn't expect to be close strategic partners as in the past. Above, all, American policy can't be premised on relying on Europe's close strategic support. This is not, Kagan would argue, something to get all worked up about. It is the natural adjustment of this relationship to a new era.

A third school, which I belong to, rejects the thesis that the US and Europe are drifting apart or becoming strategically incompatible, insists that the U.S. desperately needs strategic partners given the problems we face, and maintains that Europe is our natural coalition partner. It asserts that it is possible to create a new strategic partnership if both sides make the same political investment in a common strategic response to the new threats we face. Having largely finishes the job of building a new peace structure in Europe, this school argues, the next logical evolution in the U.S.-European relationship is to recast it to meet the greatest threats to both of our interests—all of which now emanate from beyond the continent and many of which articulated in the Greater Middle East. When Bob Kagan and I

end up on panels arguing our respective views, he refers to this as Ron's version of Martin Luther King's "I have a dream!" speech. The implication is clear. It is highly desirable in theory but unrealistic in practice. I argue, in turn, the same about his view.

What does the Bush Administration think? The interesting thing about this Administration is that all three views coexist, not always peacefully, within its ranks. This is one reason why the Administration has often had such a hard time speaking with a single consistent voice when it comes to Europe. Even senior Administration officials remain unsure as to what the President himself truly believes or thinks on these issues.

So which way is America headed? I believe that the U.S. is turning back to Europe for several reasons. First, the costs and limitations of unilateralism are becoming increasingly and vividly clear. Second, I think the intellectual and political trend is shifting as well. While the writings of Bob Kagan or the comments of John Bolton may dominate the op-ed sections as well as the headlines of newspapers, they do not necessarily represent the dominant view when it comes to actual American policy. That, I would argue, is moving in my direction, even under the Bush Administration. When I look at the Administration's thinking on a possible trans-Atlantic strategy for the Greater Middle East, for example, it increasingly looks like similar to the ideas that some of my Democratic colleagues and I have been putting forward for the last two years. And if a Democrat defeats President Bush in our elections next year, you will clearly see a shift in U.S. policy along these lines.

And what about Europe and the Europeans? What do you want? Are you, too, up to meeting these challenges? Here, too, I see progress taking place, albeit more slowly than I would wish for. When I started to discuss the agenda we are debating today some two years ago, many European interlocutors dismissed these ideas as crazy. Now every week or so I have a deputy foreign minister or leading parliamentarian coming to me and say: 'OK. I basically agree with your thesis. But where and how do we start coming up with a new strategy?' I wouldn't say we have won the debate in Europe, but there is a sizable and growing group of leaders that agrees with the strategic analysis I have put forward here.

We should have no illusions. What we are talking about doing is going to be hard. It will require a level of enlightened strategic behavior the West has not always shown itself to be capable of. At the end of the day I believe that the United States and Europe will coalesce around a new strategy along the lines I have argued for here today for one simple reason. In my view, we have no choice. The problems are real and the only way we can successfully tackle them is if we do it together. The only question open in my mind is whether we as an alliance of democracies are capable of recognizing this in advance and coming together preemptively to organize ourselves to meet these challenges – or whether real world crises in the region will end up driving us back together albeit in a helter-skelter manner. And this is fundamentally a question of leadership on both sides of the Atlantic. To be sure, there are those who argue that it is too hard, the challenges too big and that we shouldn't even try as we are likely to fail. Speaking to a Polish audience, I need not remind you that many of these same critics said the same thing a decade ago about enlarging NATO.

What we need is another generation of leaders of the caliber of Harry Truman and his European counterparts. I often ask myself: What would Truman tell us if he were to come down from the heavens and join this conversation? Would he say, 'Gosh, this is a bridge too far for us?' Or would his advice be, 'Damn it, pull up your socks, lock you brightest diplomats and strategists in a room and sit down and start hammering out a common strategy to meet the challenges of your age just like we did in ours.' I think we all know what the answer to that question is. And I hope we don't need to experience another attack like September 11<sup>th</sup> to reach that conclusion.

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