

## THE CLOSEST OF STRANGERS: GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### I.

For most of the half-century following the Second World War, the Atlantic Alliance was the linchpin of relations between the United States and Europe. Throughout the Cold War years, we were united by fundamental common interests in the preservation of individual freedom, the defense of democracy against authoritarianism, and the maintenance of world peace.

The success of the Alliance was remarkable. Through mutual cooperation within a strong framework of regional and international institutions and an underpinning of broadly shared aims and values, peace was preserved, Europe was rebuilt, Germany was reunited, and the Cold War was brought to a successful end. Trade barriers fell, world trade expanded, the international financial system was strengthened, European unity made remarkable strides, and people's standard of living rose to unprecedented levels. The commonality of our fundamental interests was rarely in doubt, and the positive and strong relationship between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany remained a key element of Western unity.

The future, however, has recently looked less promising. The twenty-first century is still in its beginning stages, but to say that the first years have not been auspicious as regards the continuation of the strong and harmonious partnership between our two countries is to state the obvious. At no time since the end of the war have there been more tensions, sharp words, and policy disagreements between us, with language on both sides that would have been unthinkable even a few short years ago. The discordant tone in official relations, recent efforts to mute it notwithstanding, has had disturbing spillover effects on the media and public opinion. Emotion rather than restraint has been the order of the day, especially as regards the events in Iraq and the Middle East, but on other issues as well. The differential spin in reporting on the same events in Iraq and the Middle East, as well as on domestic developments in our two countries by, say, the German public television stations ARD and ZDF and the major German print media on the one hand, and their American counterparts on the other, has been startling.

Never since the Second World War has German public opinion been as negative and critical of U.S. policies as today: 70 percent or more of Germans are said to disapprove of U.S. policy on Iraq, anti-Americanism is disturbingly high, and critical stereotypes of U.S. society, never far below the surface, have once again blossomed. The openly polemical anti-Bush books of Michael Moore grace German bestseller lists and are given credence as gospel truths. What I think of his views is often the first question from the floor when I speak to German audiences, particularly young people. Nothing has struck me as more surprising and worrisome than repeatedly being greeted with standing ovations when I have expressed reservations about elements of U.S. policy, or the stony silences I have encountered when defending others. Recent statistics indicating that noticeably fewer German students are currently choosing the United States for their overseas studies may be just another indication of this situation.

Nor is this an entirely one-sided matter. On the U.S. side, criticisms of German policy and a more negative attitude toward German domestic problems have also been evident. I am not merely referring to Secretary Rumsfeld's disdainful dismissal of Germany as part of an old, less relevant Europe. I have in mind also the depiction of the Federal Republic as the sick man of Europe, unwilling to invest in its own defense, and as a sclerotic welfare society, living beyond its means, losing its competitive edge, and incapable of achieving needed reforms. Occasionally, such unflattering stories have been coupled with thinly-veiled complaints about German ingratitude for U.S. postwar aid, the defense of Berlin, and the American military shield against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and with portrayals of the Federal Republic as a weak and willing junior partner of French obstructionism bent on creating Europe as a third force standing apart from America, rather than as a partner in a strong U.S.-European alliance.

These are dangerously distorted attitudes on both sides, and perhaps I have stated them somewhat starkly. In all fairness it needs to be said that the worst may be behind us, and that the recent evidence is that cooler heads may yet prevail. The German Chancellor and the U.S. President have lately taken pains to project a more positive image, though hardly yet a close one. And *Time* magazine's recent cover story on what is right with Germany also signals a less sour mood. Perhaps a major German publication will soon make a reciprocal contribution and point out what is right in the United States. Perhaps such an article is already in the works somewhere. It wouldn't hurt.

The basic fact nevertheless is that the future of the U.S.-German partnership remains uncertain. The American people have just elected George W. Bush to a second four-year term. Within two years or less, Germany

will similarly vote on a new government. The time is opportune, therefore, to step back and examine some basic questions. To wit: In the changed circumstances of the post-Cold War world, what remains of the past assumptions of mutual interest on which our previous close relations were based? Is the old logic of the Atlantic alliance, the framework for close U.S.-German relations, obsolete, as some have alleged, or is there a compelling case for it even under the different conditions of today and the foreseeable future? If so, what is the likelihood of a return to civility and mutually beneficial cooperation, and what must be done on both sides to bring it about?

It is these questions that I want to address this evening. Before doing so, however, allow me a brief personal aside. Germany is the country of my birth, but I left it at age thirteen, and for most of my life, America has been my home. Since the early 1950s, I have been a frequent visitor to Germany in official and private capacities, during my two tours of duty in three different Democratic administrations, and in other years as an academic, businessman, and banker. More to the point, for the last six years as much as a quarter or more of my time has been spent in Berlin, helping the German authorities to create the Jewish Museum there. In a real sense, therefore, throughout much of my professional career, and particularly in recent years, I have had a foot in both worlds. Of course, I know my own country best, but I have also come to know Germany rather well, and have learned to admire the country's remarkable rise from the disaster of National Socialism into a strong and stable Western democracy. My current activities in particular have brought me into contact with a broad spectrum of the political establishment, and with German citizens in all walks of life; including young Germans, with whom I speak frequently, and who visit our museum in large numbers.

This is the personal perspective I bring to the subject under discussion. And here I am reminded, finally, that Helmut Schmidt, who occupied this podium a year ago, began his remarks by professing his warm feelings for the United States, and the confession that if unable to live in Germany, emigrating to America would have been his next best alternative. I can reciprocate, even if only in part. I don't know about emigrating: I had to do that once, in the opposite direction, and reversing track a second time would frankly not be an option for me. Yet, much like his warm feelings for America, I too have a soft spot for Germany. Not, to be sure, for the old Germany of my youth, but for the postwar Germany of today.

I have great respect for the strength of German democracy, for its talented people, and for their commitment to building a tolerant and socially just society. I also especially respect the effort of current generations to confront honestly the Nazi crimes of the past, to make amends

where possible, and to remain vigilant against racism and bigotry in all its forms.

What critical comments I shall make regarding recent German policies and pronouncements are therefore offered in a spirit of friendship and understanding. They will in any case be more than even-handed regarding what has transpired in each of our countries. For in this, I have a very clear conviction: Whatever the merits of the disagreement between us over Iraq and other matters, mistakes were made in the diplomacy of both countries, and unnecessarily so. For this, I think, there is plenty of blame to go around.

## II.

The essence of the case of those who hold that the recent U.S.-German unpleasantness over Iraq is not merely a temporary estrangement, but evidence of a long-term structural divergence of national interests is as follows. With the end of the Cold War, the argument goes, the Atlantic Alliance has declined in importance, and the same applies to a close U.S.-German partnership, because the strategic priorities of the two countries have moved in different directions. Freed of the need for protection from the Soviet threat, Germany is less dependent on the United States, and is bound to be a less reliable U.S. partner. Its primary focus is on regional relations within the EU, enlarged to 25 members, and less on allying itself with U.S. global interests. The enlarged EU, moreover, is a work in progress, with weak and uncoordinated defense capabilities and without a common foreign policy. Germany's weight within the EU and the surrender of some degree of sovereignty to it limit the Federal Republic's freedom of action and lead to a preference to pursue German influence on wider non-European issues through the rule-making of international institutions, while avoiding confrontation in favor of negotiation and compromise in all but the most dire situations of imminent danger.

In contrast, it is said, U.S. priorities are overwhelmingly global, and have shifted from a focus on Atlanticism and Europe to remaking the Middle East and to bilateral relations with others. Germany is a regional power, the United States a distinctly global one. As the world's only superpower, America has less interest than Germany in strengthening the power of the UN and other multilateral institutions, instead preferring to maintain freedom of action to use its overwhelming military power, and to focus on traditional diplomacy with key sovereign states such as Russia and Japan, and rising new powers like China and India. In a world with many new problems, U.S. strategic priorities have shifted to fighting terrorism and to dealing with major trouble spots outside Europe, those

constituting the greatest threats to world peace: the Middle East, Central Asia, and Korea.

This, in brief, is the core argument underlying what Henry Kissinger has termed the “structural estrangement” of America from Europe. There are several variants and extensions of this basic idea. Some Europeans, for example, see in U.S. policies under Bill Clinton, and more explicitly under George W. Bush, not only hegemonic but much more sinister motives. The Bush doctrine of preemption and prevention is for them a clear manifestation of American imperialism. Some go further and suspect the United States of having abandoned its long-standing support for European unity and of being engaged in a policy of benign neglect, if not a deliberate effort to undermine the EU, in order to clip the wings of a pesky competitor and to facilitate picking off individual EU countries in *ad hoc* “coalitions of the willing.”

This type of argument, it seems to me, raises the following questions worth further analysis: Are the differences in our respective current strategic priorities real, and are they sufficiently fundamental to signal an inevitable, permanent estrangement between us? Or, to the contrary, are there both traditional and new common interests between us that provide the basis for a U.S.-European partnership at the beginning of the twenty-first century, much as it existed in the second half of the twentieth? In other words, is what unites us still more important than what divides us, and could a reinvigorated Atlantic partnership continue to serve our mutual interests?

### III.

As to the first point, it is certainly true that our respective strategic priorities have changed and diverged in some important respects. Recent world developments have fundamentally altered the situation on both sides of the Atlantic, and it is obvious that our partnership during the Cold War was based on some circumstances that are now history: first and foremost, fortunately, the need to counter the Soviet threat to Europe. It is equally true that, as new issues have arisen—enlargement of the EU, world terrorism, new trouble spots in the Middle East and in Central and East Asia—our respective foreign policy priorities have shifted as well.

A further important post-Cold War factor with significant implications is that the United States now stands as the world’s sole superpower. Militarily, both in size and advanced weaponry, we live in a new world in which the U.S. dominates without real counterweights. In absolute numbers, its almost half-trillion-dollar annual military budget practically equals that of the entire rest of the world combined; it is three times that of all other NATO countries, and eight times that of Russia and of China.

It is, however, still only 3.5 percent of the U.S. GDP, attesting to yet another important reality: the great strength and vitality of the American economy over recent years, and U.S. success in achieving a relatively more rapid adjustment to globalism, in contrast to a number of EU countries. This is especially true of Germany and France, where this process has been more halting, growth in productivity and GDP sluggish, and unemployment high.

Finally, the September 11 attacks on the United States and the menace of international terrorism have clearly had a differential impact on American priorities on the one hand, and on those of Germany and the rest of the EU on the other. It is therefore hardly surprising that it should have evoked a different intensity of responses between us. It is, after all, Americans who are the terrorists' principal declared targets and America which has suffered the greatest losses. Moreover, it is American soldiers who are the first to be put in harm's way when trouble erupts.

All this is true enough, but the question is whether, as has been suggested, it follows that the United States will permanently downplay the importance of its relations with Europe, and that German policy will shift inward toward its EU relationships at the expense of close relations with the United States. On the surface, this may appear to be a logical inference, but it strikes me that the following alternate hypothesis is equally plausible. Simply put, it is that many vital common interests between us remain, that equally critical new ones involving both common dangers and shared opportunities have arisen, and that this constitutes a sufficient basis and, indeed, a strong argument for a mutual commitment to a refocused transatlantic alliance and the close U.S.-German relations that have served us well over many years.

Underlying this hypothesis stands the conviction that though differences exist between us that will not be easily resolved, there remains enormous potential strength in Atlantic unity far greater than any of us can marshal alone to confront critical common challenges in the years ahead. This audience is certainly familiar with most of them, so I shall merely list a few of the most important ones. To begin with, we surely have a common interest in countering the threat to our security from instabilities in the Middle East. Whatever our past disagreements over the U.S. military intervention in Iraq, working toward the establishment of a stable, peaceful and, hopefully, democratic government in Iraq is of equal importance to us. So is collaboration in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and in dissuading the Iranians from going nuclear. In the best of circumstances, ending Iraq's endemic violence, mending its broken economy, and repairing its shattered institutions will require great effort over many years. Everyone today knows that the United States cannot do this alone, and that the United Nations will have to play an

important role. But Germany, the EU, and the United States have a particular stake here, and a coordinated effort of a strong Atlantic partnership and common strategies among our countries possessing most of the needed resources have to be the essential components for achieving the positive outcome that would benefit us all.

Our fate is just as much intertwined in countering world terrorism and dealing with the conditions that spawn it. The United States may have borne the brunt of the threat to world security from the perversions of Muslim fundamentalist fanatics on September 11, but their terrorists have little regard for national borders. They can, and do, strike anywhere: in Spain, Italy or Turkey just as much as in the United States. French, Italian, German, and other EU citizens are subject to the risks of kidnapping, murder, and general mayhem no less than Americans. There is, it seems to me, an urgent need for a permanent defense framework, for clearly coordinated policies and tactics to fight terrorist plots, and for a common Western strategy for dealing with the circumstances that enable the terrorists to mobilize misguided young recruits for their cause.

The list of further vital common priorities is long. There is a broad community of interests between us on such important issues as nuclear non-proliferation, the danger of the dispersion of tactical nuclear weapons, and in protecting our common environment, to name just a few. In all these instances, coordinated U.S. and EU efforts are critical, much as they are when it comes to our vital common stake in the health of the world economy.

Together, the EU and the United States account for roughly half the entire world's output. The U.S. is the top destination of EU exports and the top source of imports into the EU. In fact, at something like \$1 billion a day in transatlantic trade and investment flows, the EU and U.S. have by far the largest bilateral trading and investment relationship in the world. Something like a million telephone calls between Europe and North America and, I am told, an unbelievable 1.4 billion email messages are exchanged every day.

Within this broader context, the U.S.-German relationship is particularly important. Germany is the largest U.S. export market on the continent, and the United States is a key market for German goods. Outside the petroleum sector, Germany's direct investments in the U.S. rank first; German companies employ over a million U.S. workers; and for some of the largest companies, a quarter or more of total world revenues are generated here. For Daimler-Chrysler, in fact, the United States represents close to 50 percent of worldwide sales. The stake of U.S.-owned companies in Germany is similarly very large. The United States and Germany, moreover, have much that binds and that cannot be forgotten. We are both vital parts of Western society and our people share common

Western values. Forty-two million Americans have, in part, a German heritage. These are ties that are not easily broken.

Close trade and investment ties have been the key to our prosperity. Collaboration within the Atlantic Alliance in building and supporting the institutions that made this progress possible has been the means. I would argue that we continue to face a number of challenges together: to lead in negotiating the lowering of trade barriers through the WTO; coordination between our finance ministers and central bankers to ensure the stability of the world financial systems; support for the IMF and World Bank; working together to promote economic development; and the integration of the rising economies of China and India into the global system.

#### IV.

This leads us to the next question: Is the experience of the last several years convincing evidence that in spite of these many common interests, our strategic priorities have diverged so fundamentally on other matters as to deprive a continued alliance of its essential basis?

This is what some have argued, but I question it, because though it is true that it has been a particularly difficult time of controversy and disagreement, the immediate past may not provide us with a particularly good view of what lies ahead. It is equally plausible that this may merely have been an unfortunate accident of history, that our recent problems were exacerbated by special, albeit temporary circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic which obscured our common interests and intensified our differences, but which are not a good guide to the future.

The radical shifts in U.S. foreign policy in the years between 2001 and 2003 were a major factor, so let me address these first. Following a disputed election decided in the courts, the administration that took office in the United States on January 20, 2001 chose to break sharply with decades of bipartisan consensus over the fundamental principles of U.S. foreign policy, embarking instead on an alternative course long advocated by a small group of intellectuals, the so-called neo-conservatives.

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of “neocon” views. Suffice it to say that the name itself is probably a misnomer because the neocons are not conservatives at all, at least not in any traditional sense, and are better described as radical activists. While they have been around a long time, they were and remain a small minority of moralists with a simple black-and-white view of a world split between good and evil. Because the United States holds the preponderance of military power, they believe that it should, when necessary, be used preemptively and unilaterally to promote good and defeat evil, by which they mean to spread democracy around the world. They consider military power the key to the relation-

ship between nations, and have a decidedly less favorable view of, if not disdain for, for traditional diplomacy and international institutions, treaties, and commitments that restrict the freedom of the United States to act as it wishes. Nor do they attach high value to the effectiveness of so-called “soft power,” such as economic incentives, alliances, and moral example.

For various reasons of politics and personality, the neoconservatives directly influenced the foreign policy of George W. Bush in the early years, a trend first apparent when the Bush administration proclaimed its intention to renounce several important international agreements, among them the International Court of Justice, the Kyoto Protocols on Global Warming, and the 1972 ABM Treaty with Russia. There were legitimate problems with each of these, but it was the needlessly peremptory manner and harsh rhetoric, eschewing effective international consultation, that understandably gave our alliance partners the impression that America no longer cared for the views of others and was bent on unilaterally imposing its will.

Yet the neocons have never reflected the mainstream thinking of foreign policy leaders in either of the two major political parties. It was the national trauma of September 11 that created the unique circumstances of an alliance between the neocons and other powerful nationalist voices on the right inside the Bush administration—the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense come to mind—that convinced an inexperienced president to reject the advice of the ablest foreign policy leaders in his own party, including many who served under his father, and to abandon traditional diplomacy based on alliances and international consensus in favor of unilateralism and military intervention, which, at a moment of national agony, found bipartisan support in Congress.

I do not refer to attacking Al Qaeda and the ousting of the Taliban in Afghanistan, for which there was good reason and widespread international support. I do have in mind the notion of an “axis of evil,” the promulgation of the doctrine of military preemption backed by so-called “alliances of the willing,” and, finally, the invasion of Iraq.

It was these policies that brought about the severest strains between us and created the understandable impression that the United States had permanently embarked on a new road, turning its back on traditional alliances and curtailing American support for the United Nations and international law. The fault here was on the American side, but it needs to be said that the severity of the ensuing transatlantic disputes and polemics was caused not by these U.S. actions alone, but also by the nature of the less-than-subtle responses from a Europe unable to speak with a single voice, and with domestic problems and special circumstances of its own, including a tense election campaign underway in Germany. The aggressive maneuverings of the French to organize oppo-

sition to U.S. actions were unwise and needlessly provocative, and played into the Bush administration's hands. And the unfortunate impression from Berlin that Chancellor Schröder was whipping up opposition in Germany for his own political purposes further fed the flames. Referring to the possibility of an American policy of adventurism was unwise. Schröder's blunt public statement that Germany would not support the United States, even if authorized by the Security Council, was not merely unhelpful, it was unnecessary. It was, unfortunately, a particularly inopportune moment for dealing with this crisis in a more measured manner, particularly in Germany, or calmer spirits might have prevailed. It cannot be said that it was diplomacy's finest hour—on either side.

Yet those who saw in this crisis a permanent and unbridgeable divergence of strategic priorities between us may wish to reflect again. The prospects for so radical a permanent change in U.S. foreign policy—the triumph of emotion and misguided ideology over considered long-term national interest and historical experience—were never very good. Recent developments appear to have borne that out.

Had the administration's Iraq policy fulfilled its promises, the story might have been different, at least for a time. But that was not the case. In fact, few of the predictions and claims made for it were realized. U.S. military power succeeded brilliantly in ousting an awful dictator in record time, yet in the absence of international legitimacy, it created serious problems that remain unresolved. American soldiers were not welcomed as liberators. As of now, close to 1,300 American soldiers have died, many more thousands were wounded, and the numbers are still rising. Iraq is in turmoil, and the number of Iraqi victims is in the tens of thousands. More than 150,000 foreign troops, mostly Americans, occupy the country, and will have to remain there indefinitely. Few knowledgeable observers still believe that anything approaching western-style democracy will take root any time soon. Stability in the Middle East and progress in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remain elusive, and the fight against Al Qaeda and their sympathizers has, if anything, been complicated. The terror threat in the United States, we are told, has not abated, but worldwide anti-Americanism has risen, at the cost of undermining a precious national asset: our moral authority.

Rhetoric aside, all this is well understood here and is having an impact, with the administration already having moved to adjust the course of its foreign policy, in acknowledgment of what James Mann has called their "spent vision." Traditional diplomacy is again in the ascendency, and a number of steps have already been taken to repair relations with our traditional allies, including Germany. Signals have gone forth for a greater willingness to share power with the United Nations, accompanied by open appeals for military and peacekeeping help in Iraq and

elsewhere. References to the once loudly proclaimed “axis of evil” are no longer being heard. Talk of spreading democracy around the world behind U.S. military strength has been muted and has lost its meaning in the face of the reality of Pentagon and budget constraints. The neocons, meanwhile, are in some disarray and, at least for the time being, their influence has waned.

I realize that some may argue that these are mere tactical moves, and that it says nothing about a fundamental change in the direction of U.S. foreign policy under a second four-year George W. Bush administration. That is possible. Yet there are a number of signs that important lessons have been learned, and in Congress there has clearly been a mood shift in both parties. The enormous cost of the Iraq war—\$200 billion and rising casualties—has been sobering, and the effects on the budget and the military, the constraints this imposes, and the need for international support and alliances are increasingly understood. My point is that it is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that the foreign policy the re-elected U.S. president will pursue will be more cautious and marked by more realism and reliance on traditional diplomacy and alliance than before.

## V.

This, then, leads me to a few final thoughts on where this leaves us for the future. For almost half a century, the Atlantic Alliance served us well, and a close U.S.-German partnership was one of its key components. Though we had a common Western strategy, the transatlantic dialogue was rarely free of controversies, sometimes quite fundamental and emotional ones, over East/West tactics, nuclear policy, and issues of trade and finance. The Cold War was difficult and tense, but we understood that in the interrelated world of the last half of the twentieth century, neither of us could fight it alone. Whatever the arguments, we were determined not to repeat the mistakes of the interwar years, and we knew that we shared common interests in defending our democratic way of life, the security of our people, the health of the world economy, and the maintenance of peace. We understood that we needed each other, and so together we created the regional and international institutions that provided the framework for the alliance. Our partnership stood as the cornerstone of our foreign policies and led to the successful end of the Cold War and an unprecedented rise in the standard of living of our people.

Today the West faces another critical time, with dangers no less severe in a world in which technology has intertwined our affairs more closely than ever. Perhaps the risks we confront at the beginning of the twenty-first century are even greater and more complex than those of the

last decades of the twentieth. The times are different, and there are new divergences of viewpoints and strategic priorities. Yet, as I have argued, our common interests remain compelling.

We are now in a critical period of opportunity for reflection and policy reassessment in the United States, in Germany, and in the EU. Elections will be held, choices will be made, and much is at stake. I would suggest that there is evidence of a return to internationalism and alliances in U.S. foreign policy, though it would be an overstatement to say that the outcome of the debate on this side of the Atlantic is a foregone conclusion. From the earliest beginnings of this republic, there has always been a desire for freedom from entangling alliances, and once upon a time the oceans surrounding this continent were a formidable protective barrier making American isolationism a plausible policy. We last pursued an isolationist policy, with unfortunate consequences, during the period between the wars. Wisely, we chose differently after 1945, because we had learned from the past and understood that to fight the Cold War in the modern world, only a policy of internationalism based on a strong alliance with the other Western democracies would work.

Today we live in a different world, a world in which the United States stands alone with overwhelming military power. It is a world in which many of the rules of the game have changed, a world threatened not by military conflicts between the uniformed armies of sovereign states, but by shadowy terrorist fanatics and criminal gangs who strike whenever and wherever they please. Writing in *The National Interest* during the height of the controversy between us just before the invasion of Iraq, Josef Joffe observed that, in what he called a dependency-unhinged unipolar world, the old Atlantic Alliance had died a slow death beginning in 1991.

That is the way it may have seemed then, but I have argued that eighteen months later one can no longer be so sure. On both sides of the Atlantic, there are signs of renewed reflection, signs that the lessons of history and the experience of the immediate past have been learned: that while the dependencies of the Cold War are gone, others no less compelling have taken their place. So it may be—and this is my hope—that the report of the Alliance's demise may prove to have been premature and that there is sound basis, with carefully prescribed remedies and a wise regimen of rehabilitation, for reviving it.

In the United States, certainly, there is a better understanding of the limits of our overwhelming military and economic power. In this regard, a recent comment from Henry Kissinger caught my attention. There are three things a statesman can learn from history, he said: a sense of direction, humility, and a feeling for the interrelatedness of events. A sense of direction defines the limits within which action is possible, and Kissinger expressed grave doubts about people who advocate the rapid transfor-

mation of a society, especially through foreign advice. Quoting Bismarck, Kissinger noted that humility was central for both a people and for statesmen. Finally, understanding the interrelatedness of events means understanding the period in which one is living. Thus, he pointed out, it is critical to remember that in our globalized world different parts of it live in different time periods—the West in the twenty-first century, the Asian world in nineteenth-century Europe, and the Middle East in seventeenth-century Europe. I wish he had explained more clearly to the American president that establishing democracy by force in seventeenth-century Iraq is highly problematic, and that this sound advice would have been heeded earlier.

Now there are signs that our policies are being adjusted and moving in the right direction. It is not too late. The EU and the United States are Western democratic pluralistic societies with similar values, though not always necessarily identical ones. In a fundamental sense, we have common interests and face common threats. Therein, I believe, lies the case for a concerted mutual effort to rebuild our Atlantic Alliance. For this, we must carefully consider our options, remember the lessons of history, and choose wisely. The United States would do well to recognize that military might alone cannot prevail, and by itself is an inadequate instrument of foreign policy, particularly for a democracy in which the political leadership is dependent on the will of the people; that a more prudent mix of hard and soft power is a more effective policy basis.

The EU and the Federal Republic also face an important choice. The debate is between those who believe that there is political gain in opposing the United States and that Europe should look inward and build institutions that enable it to stand apart as a third force, and those who prefer Europe pursuing its common interests in an alliance with the United States; between those who emphasize the divergent strategic priorities between the U.S. and the EU, and those who argue that there are common interests that outweigh them. It is the latter who, I am persuaded, have by far the better argument.

So, let us learn from the past. What is needed now is a coordinated approach, with specific steps and initiatives to give new substance to a reinvigorated alliance. In this, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States have an opportunity once again to form a close partnership and to play a leading role.

The Atlantic Alliance was a great success, and the U.S.-German partnership served both countries well. That is the experience on which we should draw. It will require the mobilization of substantial manpower and financial resources on both sides, probably for an extended period of time. This too needs to be understood in Germany and within the EU. For Europe to speak with a more equal voice in the Atlantic dialogue will

mean making more commensurate contributions to a common effort. More effective economic performance is a prerequisite for this, which is why steadfastness in the current restructuring efforts is so important. Above all, it will require imagination, statesmanship, patience, and careful diplomacy. The three-quarter billion people of the Atlantic area have much to offer and, allied together, can be a powerful force. The late George Ball, a close friend of that great European visionary statesman Jean Monnet, was a wise and courageous practitioner in foreign affairs. He was my friend and mentor, and I admired him greatly. When the stakes were high and the battle was joined, George was fond of observing that Monnet had taught him that optimism was the only sensible philosophy of life for an intelligent man or woman. Let us remember his advice.

### Note

The text of the lecture was slightly revised and updated for publication in December 2004.