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ATLANTIK-BRÜCKE E.V.

Is a Comeback Possible? Why We Can and Must Reinvent the Transatlantic Relationship for the 21st Century

Speech at the Atlantik-Brücke-Day
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Thank you very much for the invitation to speak to this year's annual meeting of the Atlantik Bruecke. For decades the transatlantic relationship has been sustained by the wisdom and generosity of a handful of key countries devoted to US-European cooperation. Germany has been among those countries. Perhaps no country has given more to transatlantic relations over the decades than Germany has. Many institutions – including the German Marshall Fund of the US where I currently work – were created by German vision and resources. Other institutions have helped to nurture and create generations of leaders who have provided the brains and muscles to this relationship through times good and bad. The Atlantik Bruecke is one of these institutions and I would like to acknowledge the contribution you have made and continue to make today.

A special word of thanks goes to my good friend Tom Enders who invited me to be with you today, and who has now assumed a key leadership role in the Atlantik Bruecke. Tom and I have several things in common which have contributed to our friendship over the years. We are in many ways the last of the Cold War generation on both sides of the Atlantic – young men for whom the final phase of that struggle was a formative experience. We cut our teeth on the politics and strategic issues of those years, issues like the NATO dual track decision, Soviet 'peace campaigns and eventually the collapse of communism and German reunification in NATO and the subsequent enlargement of both the EU and the Alliance to Central and Eastern Europe. It was a dramatic time and one where close US-German and transatlantic ties and friendship were essential to the right outcomes. In a way, our cooperation at that time was so natural and so successful

that we started to take it for granted. It seemed so commonsensical, so enduring and permanent.

Tom has since gone on to become a recognized leader in German industry. I went into the world of ideas and think tanks and subsequently dabbled a bit in politics and diplomacy. But one thing I think both Tom and I have in common is our commitment to the transatlantic relationship. And we have learned in recent years that this relationship is far less sturdy than previously assumed. I know I am not revealing any secrets here when I say that the last seven years have been among the worst in transatlantic relations. I think it was especially shocking for people like Tom and me to see how quickly a relationship built over decades and which had been so strong could unravel so quickly. The damage done to transatlantic relations in recent years has been nothing less than stunning. Who was responsible – or rather irresponsible - is an issue we will continue to debate for a long time. My own view is that historians will look back on this period as one where leaders on both sides made spectacular mistakes, but perhaps that issue is indeed best left to the historians or at least to after dinner drinks.

Today I want to look forward, not backward, and address the issue of whether we can put it back together again – the “it” being the transatlantic relationship. I have used the phrase “comeback” in my title deliberately – because that is what I think we should be talking and thinking about. Are we in the West – led by Americans and Europeans -- capable of coming back as an Atlantic alliance of democracies to defend and promote our values against a new generation of challenges and threats in the 21st century? Are we capable of reinventing the transatlantic relationship in the wake of the Iraq war and everything else that has gone wrong? Do we have the ideas, the political will and diplomatic smarts as well as the leaders to do so?

If you look at the newspapers and the commentary on transatlantic relations, you might conclude that we do not. A new conventional wisdom has emerged which suggests that we are culturally and politically incapable of cooperating to defend our societies and to make the world a better place and that the US-European relationship is in a state of permanent and irreversible decline. Indeed, if you go into a book store or go online you can see that a cottage industry has sprung up analyzing all the ways in which we Americans and Europeans differ and how deeply ingrained those differences are in our psyche, culture and history. When I read such arguments, I can't help but scratch my head and wonder how it ever was that we managed to run the most successful alliance in history for fifty years.

I don't buy it. At times I fear we have succumbed to a new intellectual fashion, one that is not supported by our own history, including the lives and experience of many people in this room. I worry that we are in danger of losing our self-confidence, of giving up on the transatlantic relationship at some gut level, thereby allowing this trend to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I think it is time to stand up and to make the argument that we must, can and will put this relationship back together again.

So my message to you this evening is a positive one. First, I believe that we can and must put the transatlantic relationship back together. The recreation of the West based on US-European cooperation continues to be one of the strategic imperatives of our time. The reason is simple. Neither of us alone is likely to succeed in confronting the challenges of our era if we fail to do so. Our future political freedom, economic welfare, security and ability to shape the world in a manner conducive to our own values and interests depend on it.

Second, we are at a historically pivotal moment. It is not just any moment but an enormously critical one. There is a new window of opportunity opening to reinvent our alliance and to repair the damage of recent years. The political stars have already started to realign themselves in Europe in a way that creates a new opening for the two sides of the Atlantic to come back together. It is a window or opening that we dare not miss or fail to take advantage of. A parallel process is underway in the United States, although I suspect the real window there will only fully open with the elections a new President. But then we will have the chance -- the best chance we are likely to have for many years to come -- to reinvent this relationship. To take advantage of that window, we need to start thinking now in bold terms of what that new agenda can and should be that will bring us back together. We need to build the intellectual ideas and political capital that can then be used when the moment is ripe.

Finally, I believe it is the task of the next generation -- the generation of the Tom Enders of the world -- to play a leading and leadership role in this effort. In saying that, I want to pay tribute to everyone in this room who has made their contribution to closer understanding and cooperation between the US and Europe. You were great leaders and we benefited from your work and wisdom. But it is time for a new generation with a different set of experiences, relationships and ideas to take the baton and to lead us out of the troubled times we have been through, to frame a new agenda and to reinvent this relationship and make it as meaningful for the 21st century as it was in the second half of the 20th.

I. Why a Comeback Is Needed

What I am saying is, of course, not intellectually chic or fashionable. Many commentators -- and perhaps many of you in the audience -- no longer believe it is possible to recreate what we used to call the West. I beg to differ. I believe it is both possible and necessary. My colleague and friend Bob Kagan has generated a lot of publicity by arguing the opposite: Europeans are from Venus and Americans are from Mars, as he once put it, and being driven further and further apart as the Cold War recedes as a unifying element. In short, so the argument goes, it has simply become too hard to work together with Europe and America must therefore increasingly go it alone. Bob has a brilliant mind and a wicked pen and he has posed some tough questions for us to reflect on. Frankly, you can read the same argument in reverse on a regular basis in European newspapers and journals which also argue that we have become too difficult for you to work with as well.

With all due respect, I disagree with this view. In my view, we have not been driven apart by some anonymous intellectual and cultural forces, forces that have driven us apart like tectonic plates and suddenly rendered us incapable of working together. It is not that I don't believe that Americans and Europeans are different. Of course we are. We always were. But are the differences today really that much greater or more profound than ten or twenty years ago? In my view, they are not. And I believe that by attributing our problems to these structural issues we are in a sense letting those truly responsible to avoid the historic responsibility they bear. After all, if the crisis we have been through is attributable to broader structural changes, then at the end of the day no individual leaders or policies are to blame.

I believe that the crises we have been through have been man made. They were not inevitable but avoidable. And I believe what man has screwed up he can probably repair --- with better leadership and better policy. I also think that in our constant discourse about how we are different, we have lost a sense of historical perspective. I suspect that the values gap in the 1950s or 1960s was actually greater than it is today. Yet those years were arguably the height of transatlantic cooperation. Such differences did not prevent us from prevailing in the Cold War, from achieving a unified Germany in NATO – or from intervening in the Balkans to stop genocide or from expanding the EU and NATO to anchor the eastern half of the continent to the West. These were historic accomplishments which were only possible because of the closest cooperation across the Atlantic.

I was personally fortunate enough to take part in one of those successes -- the intellectual and political effort to reinvent and enlarge the Atlantic Alliance in the 1990s. Others in this room were key players in some of the other accomplishments I mentioned. In practically each case, critics told us it could not be done. I also remember how – a decade ago -- another US President was often greeted in Europe by tens of thousands of demonstrators cheering him as opposed to demonstrating against him. I mentioned this to provide a bit of perspective – as well as to perhaps instill a bit of hope and self-confidence in ourselves. What we have experienced in recent years was not inevitable. It can be turned around. We live in a time when we need to lift our political sights once again and to generate some political and strategic imagination – and not succumb to the transatlantic malaise that seems so widespread today. It is badly needed at a time when the world is becoming a much more dangerous place where our cooperation is a necessity.

If I look at the list of pressing foreign policy problems we face today – ranging from all the problems in the Middle East to a less democratic, more nationalist and assertive Russia to the implications of the rise of China – there is not one that either the United States or the European Union can successfully solve on its own. If I think about our future welfare and look at investment and trade flows, I see that our economic prosperity depends much more on each other than it does on the rest of the world, a fact that Chancellor Merkel recognized in her initiative for a new transatlantic marketplace. And if I look at the challenges of climate change, energy, development and poverty reduction or fighting disease, I know we all recognize that these are global

problems requiring global responses. But we know in our heads and in our hearts that we will be much more likely to come up with such a response if the US and Europe are together.

II. A New Window of Opportunity

Why do I say that there is a new window of opportunity? Why do I think that the stars are realigning themselves to make such a shift possible across the Atlantic? A large part of my answer is the changing of the guard that has taken place in Europe and which will take place in the United States. The key protagonists from the breakdown in transatlantic relations that took place in conjunction with the Iraq war have largely left the political stage. Gerhard Schroeder was the first to go. His replacement by Chancellor Merkel has already had a clear and positive impact on transatlantic relations. There is little doubt in my mind that the Chancellor would be willing to go further in mending ties if she could find the right partners in Europe and in Washington. Helmut Kohl was the key to the reinvention of the Alliance in the 1990s and Merkel will undoubtedly be a critical figure if we are going to re~reinvent the Alliance in the years ahead.

The stars are also realigning themselves in Paris with the departure of Jacques Chirac. President Sarkozy is an interesting political personality for many reasons. One of them is that he is the first French leader in decades who has what you might call a non-ideological view of the United States. Unlike his predecessors, he does not have hang-ups about the United States. He does not seek to use or instrumentalize America as an issue domestically or internationally. Neither does he demonize American capitalism nor does he believe that American power is a bad thing that needs to be balanced or countered. He admires some things and dislikes others about the United States. He wants a better and more normal relationship with the United States.

Sarkozy presents the best hope in a longtime for a breakthrough in US-French relations.

He has appointed an impressive foreign policy team that has similar views. The list starts with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner who is the closest thing in France to what we Americans would call a liberal hawk and humanitarian interventionist. Sarkozy has also brought back the highly respected Jean-David Levitte to be his national security advisor in the Elysee. Levitte was the key figure in France's effort to reintegrate with a changing NATO in the 1990s. He, too, is held in enormous respect in Washington. In short, we have a very different and much more positive lineup in Paris to renew and rebuild relations with France in the years ahead.

The story from London is or will not in my view be different. As much as Americans admired Tony Blair, I think we all realized that it was time for him to step down as he had ceased to be as effective a leader as he once was. I do not believe the speculation one reads in parts of the British and European press that Prime Minister Gordon Brown will distance himself from the United States. I suspect he will try to differentiate himself from his predecessor on domestic issues. But he understands that for any British Prime

Minister it is all but compulsory to be on good terms with the United States. And Britain's interest in maintaining the strongest possible ties with Washington remains intact. Gordon Brown will in my view also be a strong advocate of reviving the transatlantic relationship.

The final piece which has not yet fallen into place is, of course, the election of a new President in the United States. It is probably safe to say that many people wish that the elections in the US were this November and not next year. We are currently witnessing the onset of what we in Washington call the lame duck phase of a Presidency. It has happened much earlier than usual and at a time when the US faces many more serious challenges around the world. But the question is not only what or who will be President after Bush. I think there are some bigger changes taking place in the United States. In a much more basic sense, I believe the policies of recent years that contributed to the breakdown in transatlantic relations on the American side have been largely discredited.

In the United States, the unilateralist moment is over. Americans know it and are demanding a different approach. One can see this in the positions that the candidates for the Presidency in 2008 are already starting to assume. Not a single one is running as the successor to George Bush on foreign policy. Indeed, they are all urging the need for America to rebuild its image abroad, to renew Alliance and to find new partners – precisely because they understand that America needs these things more than ever before. As many of you know, I happen to be a Democrat and a supporter of Hillary Clinton. However, I want to say quite clearly that I expect the next President – irrespective of which he or she is a Republican or a Democrat – to make the repair of the transatlantic relationship a top priority.

I detect signs of a parallel rethinking in Europe. Here, too, the counterweight moment has also come and gone -- and failed. To be sure, it may continue to have defenders among some intellectuals and in the media and among some political parties. But we all know in our hearts that it, too, failed to provide answers to any of the major problems you face today. It, too, left Europe worse off. That is one reason why it has disappeared from the official rhetoric of Berlin and even Paris. I also sense – and hope – that Europe may be starting to regain its self-confidence as the economy again grows. Let us also hope that the recent progress made under the German EU Presidency in breaking the institutional gridlock will continue and Europe will be able to develop the next steps in becoming a more effective and coherent foreign policy actor.

I also want to address the problem of public opinion and the estrangement that has taken place between European publics and the United States in recent years. It is a huge problem and challenge. The individual who will be in charge of repairing America's global image under the next President clearly has a big job. We have witnessed a historic collapse in European confidence in the United States and in American global leadership. That drop has often been the greatest in the countries that were once the closest to us – Atlanticist countries like the United Kingdom, the

Netherlands and Germany in particular. In a nutshell, America lost its closest friends, many of whom also feel they had lost the United States they had known and admired.

I have spent a lot of time in recent years studying this decline and the reasons for it. I don't underestimate how difficult it will be to turn it around. At the same time, I do believe there is the potential for what we Americans would call a significant public opinion bounce in Europe – especially in those Atlanticist countries where we have lost the most ground. I say this for two reasons. Most Europeans made up their mind about George Bush a long time ago. Frankly, I suspect there is literally nothing President Bush could still do today that will shape his stance in European public opinion. The onset of a new President, however, will lead Europeans to reopen their views and take another look at the US and its policies. I also believe that many Europeans are uncomfortable with their current bad relationship with the United States. It is not natural and not in your own interest. Many people in Europe are looking and hoping for a way to repair ties – and the onset of a new President can provide that chance if we on both sides of the Atlantic use that window skillfully.

III. A New Agenda

So what should a new strategic agenda for reinventing the transatlantic relationship look like? If the West is to make a comeback, what are the top strategic priorities we need to find common ground on? I am currently working on a little book on the United States and Europe. I am not going to reveal all of my new ideas or secrets this evening. After all, if I did, you might never invite me back or buy my book! But in a nutshell, I believe the answer to that question is fairly straightforward. There are three central foreign policy challenges that American and Europe must face together.

The first of these is the wider Middle East. This is the part of the world that is likely to produce the greatest challenges and threats to our common security for years and perhaps decades to come. Whether it is dealing with the aftermath of the war in Iraq, the need to stabilize Afghanistan, Iran's quest to acquire nuclear weapons and regional hegemony or the broader need to find ways to support positive democratic reform and good governance in this region, many of the top foreign policy challenges we face are concentrated in this part of the world. And none of them are going to be solved unless and until the US and Europe find more common ground in terms of how to address them. To be sure, we can't do it by ourselves. But transatlantic cooperation is a necessary if not sufficient condition for making progress toward peace and stability in the wider Middle East.

The second challenge we face is the need for a new Eastern strategy that addresses the future of enlargement, how we work to consolidate democracy beyond the current borders of the EU and NATO as well as our policy toward Russia. Our thinking on these issues today is caught in a paradigm developed over a decade ago. But a lot has changed since then -- in terms of the Western consensus on enlargement, the different needs of the very different kinds of countries that we are now trying to anchor to the West and, last but certainly not least, in terms of the kind of partner we face today in

Moscow. Simply put, the strategic rationale and policy tools developed over the last decade no longer deliver the right policy answers for a different set of countries and strategic challenges.

In the 1990s the policy challenge we faced was to consolidate democracy in Central and Eastern Europe while embracing Russia and working to develop a parallel partnership. Today we have a divided West suffering from enlargement fatigue; a new and at times less attractive but strategically important set of candidate countries who are weaker; and a less democratic and more nationalist Russia less interested in our cooperation and determined to halt or even roll back democratic consolidation on its borders. Those of us who were important participants in the shaping of the old paradigm must now step forward and help modernize it. In the early and mid-1990s, a new Eastern strategy was a central part of reinvention the Atlantic Alliance for the post-Cold War era. Today a new Eastern strategy could once again become part of a new agenda to bring the US and Europe back together in the wake of the Iraq war. But for that to happen, we need to have an open and honest debate about the way forward.

The third key foreign policy challenge that the United States and Europe must confront is the rise of China and the future of security in Asia more broadly. And beyond these strategic issues are the challenges of poverty and development, climate change and energy as well as combating the spread of disease and the foster of better government and democracy around the world. Can anyone seriously look at this list of future challenges and try to argue that the need for US-European cooperation is a thing of the past?

We also need to reform our key institutions in order to better equip ourselves to address such challenges. In this regard, I believe it is time for the United States to rethink its policy toward the European Union and European integration more broadly. The challenges of the 21st century and America's changing strategic needs are making the United State dependent on the EU as much as an effective NATO. The United States should support the creation of a strong, politically cohesive and outward-looking EU capable of becoming a global strategic actor and jointly confronting common challenges around the world. Philosophically, the United States needs to return to the spirit that guided US policy in the 1950s and 1960s when Washington favored a unified and Atlanticist Europe. In practical terms, the United States needs to pursue policies that help empower those European countries that share this vision of the EU. As opposed to being ambivalent about the EU or trying to keep it down, Washington should be seeking to help build it up

There are four fundamental reasons why the United States has a real and growing interest in the success of the EU and European integration more broadly. The first is simply to sustain peace and stability in the Europe of today. Just imagine what the world would be like if Washington today – in addition to the problems of the broader Middle East and Asia – was also confronted with the prospect of strategic turmoil on the continent. The success of the EU is the best guarantee that Europe remains peaceful, democratic and secure in the decades ahead.

The second reason is the stake that Washington has in the EU remaining a magnet helping still fragile democracies on the continent's periphery. That list starts with the Balkan countries and Turkey, reaches deep into Eurasia to include Ukraine, and extends to Georgia and the southern Caucasus. While the United States has played a key role in supporting democratic breakthrough, the EU is critical to help lock in enduring change in these countries. Only a more politically cohesive, unified and self-confident European Union is likely to be willing and able to continue to enlarge and anchor these countries to the West.

The third reason why the United States has a growing interest in the success of the European Union is the need for strategic cooperation between the United States and Europe to meet the new challenges of the twenty-first century. Imagine two lists: the first contains the top ten American priorities in terms of strategic cooperation with Europe in 1975 or 1985 (that is, toward the end of the Cold War); the second contains the top ten strategic priorities today, or ten years from now. It is safe to say that a majority of issues on the first list would have been tasks for NATO. The second list would look very different: it would contain problems that were more global, less military, and where the EU either already has responsibility or aspires to acquire it in the future.

Last but not least, the United States and the EU have the potential to form a natural coalition of democracies to confront new challenges around the globe. When the United States and the EU cooperate, they have the ability to attract other countries and regions to coalesce around a common view. The ability to set that kind of agenda will in all likelihood decrease over time as other countries grow in stature and power. This makes it all the more important to use this historical opportunity to shape a world and a global system that is conducive to Western values and interests.

This is not just theory. The ability to influence Russia, for example, is directly affected by the degree of US–EU cohesion. When it comes to the grand task of managing the rise of China as a global economic and military player, Washington and Brussels are clearly in a better position to influence Chinese behaviour if they have a common approach. To be sure, today the United States and the EU have been at odds on many of the issues of global order and governance. The other truth is that there has never been a real strategic dialogue or an effort to narrow the gap on these issues akin to what America did during the Cold War or what Europe has done to create a common foreign and defense policy. American should make this shift for our own reasons. Yet a shift in US policy along these lines would also help boost America's image on the continent. There are few steps that will go further in restoring that goodwill than a clear American commitment to the successful creation of a strong Europe.

There is an equally ambitious agenda when it comes to NATO. After the end of the Cold War, NATO faced a fundamental choice: reinvent itself or gradually wither away into meaninglessness. After a period of drift and indecision, NATO opened its door to enlarge and include new members; and it acted militarily beyond its borders in Bosnia and Kosovo. By so doing, NATO met the strategic imperatives of the initial post-Cold

War era. A new era began after the terrible events of September 11, 2001. Today the Alliance must reinvent itself, yet again. Its new threats no longer come primarily from within Europe (although some of them have active cells in Europe).

Plain and simple, NATO must become a more global Alliance, one that takes it to countries and regions beyond the European heartland and on missions beyond the imaginations of the founding fathers. Yet they are necessary if the Alliance is to fulfill a core mission that has not changed much since 1949: providing for the common defense and advancing the common interests of its members. Some tentative steps have already been taken, notably in Afghanistan, but a formal restatement of NATO's purposes, agreed to by all its members, is necessary and, five years after 9/11, overdue. Afghanistan is the first, but certainly not the last, mission distant from Europe in which NATO is fighting an unconventional war along with non-NATO and non-European partners.

There is no lack of crises for NATO to contribute to resolving. The United States and Europe face a growing need to jointly project stability, conduct peacekeeping and stability operations beyond the continent in general, and in the wider Middle East, in particular. In addition to Afghanistan, the Alliance should be prepared to assist the UN mission in Lebanon, should the situation there deteriorate. Even as the West seeks to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, NATO should be preparing plans on how to contain and deal with the consequences of a nuclear-armed Tehran if currently pursued diplomacy fails. And, if the shock of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the early 1990s provided an important impetus for reinventing NATO a decade ago, then the need to halt the horror taking place today in Darfur should be an equally powerful incentive to rethink how this Alliance can be used to meet the moral and humanitarian challenges of today.

A centerpiece of the Alliance's reinvention in the 1990s was its enlargement to include new members. NATO's enlargement to new democracies from the Baltic region to the Black Sea is now recognized as a historic accomplishment, but it was much criticized at the time. It is crucial that NATO's door remains open and that the prospect of future enlargement into Eurasia and across the wider Black Sea region be kept alive. There are other challenges and opportunities for NATO. Should the Alliance assume a role in homeland security, given the fact that neither the EU nor individual nations are in a position by themselves to respond to the consequences of a catastrophic terrorist attack? Should NATO play a role in the realm of energy security, not only vis-à-vis Russia, but also in terms of coming to the aide of threatened Middle Eastern countries whose energy infrastructure is critical for the West's economic health?

Thus far the Alliance has taken rhetorical steps towards a more global role. A visit to NATO's headquarters reveals that the Alliance is engaged in a wide range of new activities, much of it in the form of contingency plans. But, one should not confuse busyness with strategic relevance or actual operations. Today, the Alliance is probably less central in Western thinking and policies than at any time since its creation. Compared to the long list of strategic challenges the West needs to address, what is

most striking is how modest and minimalist NATO's current agenda is. Most of the issues mentioned above are not on the agenda or even part of the important conversations taking place in Brussels and Mons, and even less so at leadership levels.

NATO will never generate the political impetus and leadership to reinvent itself unless we face that truth and openly debate what this Alliance can and should become. Can the United States and Europe come together to address the new threats to Western values and civilization? In the new global security environment, NATO has to address the gravest threats to its members' security -- even if those threats emanate thousands of miles away from the European and American heartland. If NATO does not take them on, we will all be less safe, the world will become more dangerous and the Alliance will again risk becoming irrelevant. At stake is nothing less than our ability to recreate the West to meet the strategic challenges of our time.

IV. Conclusion

In concluding, I remember once visiting Tom Enders at his home outside of Munich. We were sitting in his study. Tom had a bust of Otto von Bismarck behind his desk. I knew Tom was a strategic thinker and that he was willing to buck political correctness. But this was quite a statement. It was a time when concepts like strategy or "German interests" were very un-chic and figures like Bismarck largely taboo. I have to admit I was a bit envious. It took me a long time to find my own bust of Bismarck but eventually I found one. Today it sits proudly in my library as well.

I have the bust of a second strategist and leader in my library -- Harry S Truman. He is my favorite American President. One of several reasons I admire Truman so much is his role in establishing the Atlantic Alliance. He did so in concert with European leaders at a time when many thought it could not be done -- including some of Truman's own advisers. But Truman understood the strategic imperatives of his time and the fact that the US and Europe had to come together in a new way to confront the challenges they faced. He ordered his advisers to find ways to make it work and he built an Alliance to create forms of strategic cooperation that were at that time unprecedented in history. That is why we consider him a great leader. Does anyone doubt the fact that we would be able to reinvent the Atlantic Alliance if we again had leaders of that caliber?

It is also the kind of leadership we need today. In the years that have passed since the end of the Cold War, and as we have gone through divisive debates over intervening in the Balkans, enlarging the EU and NATO or intervening in Afghanistan, I have often found myself asking what Truman and the other founding fathers of the transatlantic community would want us to do if they were alive today. What would they recommend if they could somehow look down upon our debates today? Would they be muttering that the transatlantic relationship has passed its prime and that it has simply become too hard to work together?

I doubt it. I suspect they would be telling us the need for transatlantic cooperation is now going up, not down. I suspect they would find the ideas of American unilateralism

or the notion that the EU should be a counterweight to the United States delusional. I suspect they would be urging us to resist the current chic anti-American or anti-Europe sentiments one finds on both sides of the Atlantic and to instead apply our smarts to developing ever deeper forms of cooperation to address very new and different yet equally existential challenges. They probably would address us with a mixture of dismay and sternness – dismay over how badly transatlantic relations have been managed and sternness in urging us to pull together and recognize the obvious – that the great democracies on both sides of the Atlantic again need to come together to address the biggest challenges of the day.

With the proper leadership, I believe we are capable of making a comeback in transatlantic relations. The time has come to try to turn our debate around and develop the ideas that can help us do so. It is up to people like the ones in this room to step forward and to develop and make that case. Who else do we expect to come up with these ideas and initiatives if convinced Atlanticists like ourselves won't do it? To be sure, it will not be easy but the good things in life rarely are. As in the past, Germans and Americans must be in the lead and at the core of the effort to reinvent the transatlantic relationship for the 21st century if we are to continue to be successful in defending our homelands, our security and our values in what is likely to be an increasingly tumultuous and dangerous world.

Thank you very much.