

Creating a Global Alliance of Democracies...



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Beyond its military backbone, NATO is first and foremost a political alliance. While NATO's military backbone has never been stronger than today, the equivocal political commitment of some NATO leaders has raised questions about its future.

This situation is not new. I have seen predictions of NATO's as well as the transatlantic alliance's demise throughout my lifetime. But every time

NATO's obituary is written, a new challenge arises for which it must develop a response – from the Cold War to the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya and – today – revisionist powers deploying hybrid threats.

I do not pretend that NATO is free from challenges: President Donald Trump's ambivalence about Article 5, President Emmanuel Macron's 'brain dead' comment, democratic waywardness from Ankara to Budapest, and intra-NATO fracas such as in Libya or Turkey-Greece tensions are all examples hinting at the work ahead of us. Still, those predicting NATO's demise must answer one question: What is the viable alternative in a world on fire?

For the United States, even in the 'America First' era, Congress and the State Department are convinced that America's competitive advantage over China is its ability to unite a large number of democratic allies. President Trump may have damaged NATO with his announcement about the US troop withdrawal from Germany and comments about delinquent spenders. However, he has also given some NATO states the kick they needed to rise to their own defence-spending commitments.

For Europe, it is fallacious to believe we can replicate NATO. On one side, the European Union adds real value to its member states' security efforts: From hybrid threats like cybersecurity, election meddling and money laundering to fighting terrorism and 5G. The EU has the ability to legislate while

NATO does not. Its efforts to coordinate procurement and R&D are essential to giving European allies capabilities they lack, such as heavy lift. On the other hand, Brexit means that around 80 percent of NATO defence spending will come from outside the EU. A European Army would be a paper tiger.

For Germany, the loss of NATO, following on from Brexit, would also mean grappling with a neo-Gaullist vision of European member states under a French umbrella. Would Germany want to play second fiddle to the EU's last remaining nuclear UN veto power?

Against this reality, the time has come to move past a gloomy, self-doubting, self-fulfilling 'Westlessness' prophesy that has become too prevalent in European policy circles. Instead, let us begin to be more optimistic about our common democratic values and find new ways to sustain them from within.

We can achieve that in three ways. First, with a renewed US effort for global leadership. Second, by striving for a rekindled transatlantic alliance. Third, with a new focus on building an alliance of democracies around the world.

US global leadership is indispensable in our world. The United States did not become a hegemon by accident, nor was the confluence of American leadership and relative global peace a coincidence. America became 'great' because it built a world order in its democratic rules-based image, learning from hard lessons that US isolationism only emboldens autocrats and dictators, who do not stay in their neighbourhoods. To 'Make America Great Again', it needs to re-discover what made it so great before: its determined global leadership role.

In Europe, we have lost the bigger picture as well, opting to put our narrow commercial interests ahead of the bigger picture. While Nord Stream 2 best epitomizes this attitude, the big test will be China. Will Europe put mercantile priorities ahead of its values and collective security?

The measurement of our self-interest must not only be trade surpluses or defence-spending, but our common ability to defend the freedom-loving alliance. Here is where we can articulate this common mission: in a unifying project to build a Global Alliance of Democracies.

Such an alliance would not replace multilateralism nor would it replace NATO, but it would prevent multilateralism's reconfiguration by autocrats and it would give NATO an added purpose. Organized as a loose group of states with common goals and values, it could be overseen by a D10 group – similar to that mooted by Britain – adding India, South Korea and Australia to the existing G7 member states.

The modalities are open for discussion, but a Global Alliance of Democracies will only succeed if it focuses on results. This should include opening commerce and trade between free peoples, supporting emerging democracies and building a global framework for the next industrial revolution, for example where data can flow with greater trust based on clear democratic standards.

If we prophesize the doom of NATO, the result would be the democratic world descending into a transactional abyss. That would be bad for all NATO allies, and the cause of freedom and democracy. So let us look at the bigger picture and find new ways to restore the pillars of freedom and democracy that we already have.

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...to ensure collective
security