



Partnership in Peril

The Populist Assault on the Transatlantic Community

By Vikram Singh, Dalibor Rohac, and Danielle Pletka July 2018

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Introduction and summary

Populism, in and of itself, is not inherently bad. However, authoritarian populists who deny their political opponents' legitimacy and divide society into a group of good, ordinary people and a corrupt, out-of-touch elite pose a threat to democracy and tend to degrade democratic institutions once in power. In Turkey and Hungary, for example, populist leaders have subverted independent institutions and weakened checks on executive power.¹ Beyond frequently attacking domestic media, stacking their courts, and oppressing political opposition, authoritarian populists also often rail against multinational organizations and agreements.²

In earlier publications this year, a joint Center for American Progress and American Enterprise Institute team examined what is driving the success of populists in the United States³ and Europe.⁴ This report examines how populism on both sides of the Atlantic has weakened core transatlantic institutions such as the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and emboldened the West's adversaries, including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Until the United Kingdom's vote to leave the EU in June 2016—also known as Brexit—populist attacks on traditional structures of international affairs such as the EU, international trade regimes, or NATO appeared to be second-order concerns. Multinational organizations have always been a political punching bag, but the political rhetoric did not translate into reality. Brexit intensified pressure on transatlantic ties by showing that fragmentation of these structures was possible. Although many European nations had grown closer over the 70 years following World War II, Brexit showed that consolidation is not inevitable. Soon after Brexit, former U.S. Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton joined her opponent, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, in rejecting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP),⁵ foreshadowing the Trump administration's flirtation with protectionism, including a possible exit from the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁶

The backlash against international cooperation, multilateralism, and the transatlantic alliance was long in the making. For decades, European allies have failed to invest in their military capabilities, relying instead on the U.S. security guarantees extended through NATO.⁷ U.S.- and European-led military interventions in

Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya have mired the United States and Europe in long and unpopular wars. Limited intervention in Syria similarly failed and led to much of the refugee crisis that hit Europe's shores in the summer of 2015. Such foreign policy failures coincided with a deepening frustration over the transformation of the international trading system and integrated capital markets. Globalization ushered in unprecedented worldwide growth and broadened prosperity, helping to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty.⁸ However, it also led to economic stagnation and structural unemployment, particularly in the West. This is to say nothing of the global financial crisis of 2008 and its impact on the middle class in developed economies as well as on the confidence in the free enterprise system's ability to deliver shared prosperity. The shortcomings of the EU, NATO, WTO, and other forms of international cooperation have provided a fertile ground for those calling to upend existing structures.

Every day, the crisis seems to be reaching new depths. Speculations about America's commitment to NATO are rampant, not least because of President Trump's transactional attitude toward the United States' European allies and Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. "Will they reimburse the U.S.?" he asked on Twitter ahead of the alliance's summit in July 2018.⁹ Showing a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of NATO, President Trump claimed the alliance's newest member, Montenegro, could drag America into a catastrophic war: "They have very aggressive people. They may get aggressive, and congratulations, you're in World War III."¹⁰ Of course, it is Russia that attacked non-NATO countries, including Georgia and Ukraine; conducted cyberattacks against NATO members such as Estonia; and attacked elections across the United States and Europe.¹¹ Montenegro's NATO membership deters such aggression and reduces rather than increases the likelihood of war.

President Trump's assault on Europe is being met by growing anti-Americanism across the Atlantic, reminiscent of public opinion in the run-up to the Iraq War.¹² Moreover, President Trump's counterproductive trade war against America's allies as well as its adversaries is another source of new economic vulnerabilities and tensions. The United States and its partners across Europe suffer from conflicting views on whether to stand up to or appease an aggressive Russia, with several European nations agreeing with President Trump on a conciliatory stance toward President Putin. Within European nations, political parties on the left and right also argue against standing up to Russia. Collectively, the transatlantic community finds itself more dysfunctional than ever before and unable to respond to common challenges: Russia's belligerence, the rise of China, cyberthreats, Iran's destabilizing regional behavior, or nuclear proliferation. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán went so

far as calling for the creation of an illiberal state that is free of what he calls “Western European dogmas.”¹³

Instead of making futile attempts to conserve the status quo, American and European leaders have to think about what comes next. The transatlantic partnership as we have known it may be ending, but rising demagogues cannot have the last word. The goal of this report is to start building a positive agenda for how the transatlantic partnership can be reinvigorated in a politically sustainable, even populist, way. Vigorous support for cooperation among transatlantic partners and a proactive agenda for reform and modernization to address the real concerns that populists exploit can turn the tide and ensure a renewed transatlantic community preserves peace and builds broad prosperity for decades to come.

NATO needs to adapt to the new security environment and ensure a greater alignment of understanding of existing security threats as well as of shared values. The EU needs to complete its institutional infrastructure to become a coherent, governable body that does not stumble from one crisis to the next. A sensible, nondoctrinaire approach to immigration is necessary to harness its benefits without alienating the electorate. Furthermore, both the political right and left need to make a stronger case for economic openness as a cornerstone of the West’s prosperity.

Defending democracy and underwriting the transatlantic partnership

Scholars at the Center for American Progress and at the American Enterprise Institute have often found themselves on opposing sides of important policy discussions. Yet, at a time when the fundamental character of western societies is at stake, what unites us is much stronger than the disagreements that we have.

The threat of authoritarian populism will not recede unless a new generation of political leaders offers a credible agenda for improving people’s lives that is more appealing to the public than the populist alternatives. The defense and rebuilding of democratic politics and discourse, however, requires sustained intellectual engagement. It demands a reinvigorated case for how liberal democracy, openness, pluralism, and a rules-based international order can deliver on the promise of shared prosperity and common security. (see Appendix for the full statement of aims)

Populists' views converge against transatlantic institutions

Both as a candidate and as president, Trump assailed America's European allies as free riders who did not share the burden of mutual defense. The low levels of Europe's defense spending and military readiness were of concern to previous administrations, including those of former presidents Barack Obama¹⁴ and George W. Bush.¹⁵ President Trump, however, took his criticism to new heights, making the alliance appear more like a protection racket than a partnership. President Trump even suggested that the United States would honor Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty only "if [NATO countries] fulfill their obligations to us."¹⁶

In the run-up to the recent NATO summit, President Trump stated that "NATO [was] as bad as NAFTA," referring to the North Atlantic Free Trade Association.¹⁷ President Trump similarly claimed that the EU was established to "take advantage" of the United States and was "worse than China" on trade.¹⁸ President Trump also called for Russia to be readmitted to the Group of Seven without any conditions over the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea—events that led to Russia's ouster in the first place. President Trump hinted at recognizing the Crimea occupation as legitimate in 2016¹⁹ and as recently as June 2018.²⁰ Ahead of his summit with President Putin in July 2018, President Trump called Europe a foe and blamed America's "foolishness and stupidity" for its bad relations with Moscow.²¹ The meeting was a clear public relations win for the Russian regime. In fact, before the summit was even over, Russian state-sponsored RT ran a jubilant headline, "Breaking a downward spiral: Trump-Putin meeting a breakthrough regardless of practical outcome."²² The populist left in the United States rejects President Trump's anti-immigration stance, but it shares with him a tradition of skepticism about NATO. The 2016 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein, who sat at an RT gala in Moscow with President Putin and former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, justified Russian aggression because "NATO has been surrounding Russia with missiles, nuclear weapons, and troops."²³ Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) has recently been supportive of NATO, saying in 2016 that the alliance needed more American resources, not less, and that "we have to work with NATO to

protect Eastern Europe against any kind of Russian aggression.”²⁴ Back in 1997, however, he was concerned about the alliance’s expansion to the East, saying “it [was] not the time to continue wasting tens of billions of dollars helping to defend Europe” and asking why the United States was “militarily provoking Russia.”²⁵ Sen. Sanders made the latter remarks at a time of high hope for cooperation between Russia and Europe—and even future NATO membership for Russia—but he was reflecting the deep undercurrent of skepticism about the alliance on the American left.

During the 2017 French presidential campaign, far-right candidate Marine Le Pen of the National Front and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s extreme-left movement, La France Insoumise, shared common ground critiquing the EU and NATO. According to Le Pen, “[t]he EU is deeply harmful, it is an anti-democratic monster. I want to prevent it from becoming fatter, from continuing to breathe, from grabbing everything with its paws.”²⁶ Meanwhile, Mélenchon said of NATO, “We cannot keep on following the USA’s war tank. We have nothing to do within NATO.”²⁷ Le Pen called Putin “a patriot ... attached to the sovereignty of his nation. He is aware that we are defending common values ... those of the European civilization.”²⁸ Mélenchon, in turn, defended Putin’s seizure of Crimea from Ukraine: “Crimea’s ports are vital for Russia’s security. It is absolutely clear that the Russians will not be pushed around.”²⁹ Both candidates proposed taking France out of NATO’s integrated command.

For another example of European populists questioning the value of NATO, consider Germany’s right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and left-wing Die Linke. Die Linke’s Sahra Wagenknecht said, “NATO is increasingly becoming an alliance of war,” which is under the influence of the United States and poses a ‘concrete threat’ to Europe’s peace and stability.”³⁰ AfD leaders embraced Putin and portrayed NATO as an aggressor. For example, AfD’s former leader Alexander Gauland said that Germany should recognize Crimea’s reintegration with Russia and that “expansion of NATO in contradiction with the oral agreements that had been agreed with Russia during the negotiations for reunification is a fault.”³¹

In the United Kingdom, mainstream Labour and Conservative party leaders opposed Brexit. Yet Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn kept a low profile during the campaign precisely because he had only grudgingly accepted his party’s opposition to Brexit.³² After the vote, Corbyn said, “there were some problems before the referendum with the EU ... There is an agenda in Europe which is not something Labour would support which is the free market agenda.”³³

Another unifying factor for populists of the left and right are their often similar positions on the EU, NATO, and Russia. Both also respond to the demand created by the failure of long-established parties and institutions to mitigate cultural and economic pressures—from large-scale migration to chronic underemployment.³⁴ Economic forces alone do not drive support of extreme politics. Populist political figures and parties are faring well among both the working and upper class and in countries with double-digit unemployment such as Italy, France, and Spain as well as those with low unemployment such as Germany, Hungary, and the United Kingdom.³⁵

Cultural factors, including outright racism, play a role. Many populists capitalize on concerns about migration and fears of terrorism in Europe and the United States. As the authors discussed in earlier joint CAP and AEI reports, nativism, anti-immigration, and anti-Islamic positions have proven politically effective—even in countries with very little immigration such as Hungary and Poland.³⁶ Leaders such as Trump, Orbán, and Salvini share a tactic of inflaming fears about migration. President Trump regularly claims immigrants entering in the United States without authorization are the main cause of crime—even though immigrants commit crimes at lower rates than American-born citizens.³⁷ Salvini began turning away refugee boats, refusing them to touch Italian soil.³⁸ The policy outcomes of these political positions often include denying the legal rights of asylum seekers or actions such as the separation of asylum seekers from their children in the United States.³⁹

But whatever the exact mix of economic and cultural reasons for the rise of authoritarian populism, many populist leaders and supporters see a lot to criticize and rally against in established transatlantic institutions.

The transatlantic alliance is not obsolete

Populist critiques of the transatlantic alliance start from observations that are not necessarily wrong and can, in fact, be compelling. As many of those populist leaders correctly posit, NATO's and America's actions in the world do not always succeed; European allies do not take adequate responsibility for their security; and America is often expected to do too much—and receives too little credit for its efforts. For example, even when European allies such as France take on significant burdens such as support for counterterrorism in Mali, they depend on the United States for everything from aerial refueling to reconnaissance to strategic airlift to get their troops to the theater.⁴⁰ On some occasions, Washington expects too much of its partners. The EU's institutional architecture, too, leaves it vulnerable to justified criticisms. Yet, noting the imperfections of the transatlantic partnership has led many supporters of far-left and far-right populists to the erroneous conclusion that international institutions and the transatlantic alliance have only helped globalist elites take advantage of ordinary, hardworking citizens—be they Americans or Europeans.

In reality, both the United States and Europe derive important strategic and economic value from a strong EU; a powerful NATO that deters common enemies; and other forms of international cooperation that depend on transatlantic bonds. Europe's NATO and EU members have been spared the devastating wars that characterized the continent during the time of disruptive nationalisms of the 19th and 20th centuries. And although the benefits of union are now widely questioned, Europe's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) tripled from the end of World War II to the year 2000 as its hours worked declined by one-third. Since 2000, per capita GDP in the EU has nearly doubled, even with the 2008 economic crisis.⁴¹

Because the United States is the most powerful NATO member and the EU's most important trading partner, its broad attack on the transatlantic partnership has a significant and lasting impact. In the near term, President Trump's bluster may raise pressure to increase defense budgets in Europe or renegotiate

trade regimes. Over time, however, this approach is bound to be destructive. The transatlantic partnership rests on the view that cooperation will ultimately result in policies that produce a greater public good. Reducing the relationship to a purely transactional system contributes to a Hobbesian might-makes-right atmosphere in which leaders cannot make the compromises that facilitate broad consensus and longer-term mutual benefits.

A key question for NATO is the common perception of shared challenges. Differences in opinion between the United States and some NATO countries, as well as within those countries, regarding the threat of Russia and Putinism place the alliance at risk. Discrepancies in views regarding defense spending and the necessary level of military readiness are harmful to the alliance as well. Finally, an unwillingness to respond to democratic backsliding in its own member countries place not only the alliance but also the postwar order in danger. The consequences of those differences—in some cases, of those failings—are grave. Even the perception that the United States does not live up to its own democratic standards will encourage budding authoritarians in Turkey, Hungary, Poland, and even Italy to see themselves on the winning side of a more nationalistic, less cohesive alliance in the future.

When the largest member in an alliance uses its power to bully and instill fear rather than underwrite and invest, other partners will rightly believe that this member wants more of a Warsaw Pact of client states than a North Atlantic community of partner nations. Like common threats and shared values, larger and wealthier countries' investment in any alliance serves to build cohesion.

Arguing over trade and tariffs will deepen those crises and accelerate momentum toward a decisive rift in transatlantic alliances. Similarly, notwithstanding substantial negotiations over the end, for example, to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran Deal, and half-hearted efforts to tweak NAFTA, U.S. willingness to walk away from substantive multilateral commitments will diminish trust in Washington and American leadership.

Splendid isolation will not solve the issues that have driven political support to America's populists. In national security terms, isolation leaves the United States more alone more often in confronting international threats. From terrorism to transnational epidemics, America benefits from intelligence and cooperation with its European partners. In terms of geopolitics, only American adversaries will benefit from a fragmented transatlantic partnership. In addition, it is

incorrect to suggest that NATO's sole purpose is to confront the East. Even absent Russia's ominous turn, NATO has helped shape responses to the challenge of terrorism and other shared threats. And NATO bases and U.S. forward placement in countries such as Germany provide not just deterrence to protect Europe but also vital logistical support for U.S. operations in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Africa. America's wounded receive critical lifesaving medical attention at the U.S. Army's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

The EU and NATO need to adapt to the 21st century. If left- and right- wing populists are the only political leaders to call for change, they will set the terms and will continue to erode both structures. The prospect of war in Europe was never eliminated. If the EU and NATO decay rather than adapt to the new era, the risk of war can—and will—return. Finally, it is self-evident that dissension among traditional allies will preclude focus on other pressing threats, allowing solvable problems to build into major crises.

A new transatlantic partnership

The recent NATO summit started with President Trump threatening to “go it alone”⁴² but ended with his declaring success and saying that as a result of his demands, NATO is “much stronger than it was two days ago.”⁴³ An excessive focus on President Trump can easily distract from the fact that other populist political leaders echo his attacks on NATO and the EU. Despite generally strong European public support for NATO and the EU (60 percent of Europeans say EU membership is a good thing, according to the Eurobarometer survey⁴⁴), authoritarian populists are tapping into public frustration to weaken the institutions. Those who believe in the need for a thriving transatlantic partnership in the 21st century need to develop a robust defense of the partnership and a reform agenda that stays true to fundamental liberal values.

The institutions will need to stand up to members violating rules and norms. As the example of the EU’s stalled rule of law procedure against Poland shows,⁴⁵ formal mechanisms alone are not enough. NATO lacks even those, however, and risks extending its security guarantees unconditionally to an increasing number of countries that fall short of standards of democratic governance—such as Hungary and Poland—and that even behave increasingly like U.S. adversaries rather than allies—such as Turkey.

Standing against fragmentation, however, will be difficult and costly. First, there must be a renewed commitment to the institutions. For NATO, that will mean honoring and going beyond the two percent rule to ensure additional investments are designed to meet actual strategic requirements—not just manage political pressure. Second, the consequence of any NATO or EU member abandoning basic democratic principles must be severe if the institutions are to survive as structures that advance shared interests and values. That means resolve in the face of backsliding members—a resolve that has been lacking to date.

Those communities grew from six founding EU members and 12 founding NATO members and built on a power of attraction that led other nations to reform. They can only endure by staying true to those high ideals and shared rules. Structural factors including changing demographics, low rates of economic growth, and the prospect of further immigration inflows suggest the rise of authoritarian populism will transform Western politics in a durable way, instead of being just a temporary blip.

The center cannot hold by appeasing the enemies of democracy and democratic alliances, whether they are external or come from within. Instead, responsible political leaders must lead efforts to celebrate the benefits of cooperation and develop a modernization and reform agenda to address voters' concerns and the need for shared security and prosperity. As populists in power further curtail fundamental freedoms and mask their own shortcomings with scapegoats, an opening for pragmatic leaders and established institutions can create a new path for reliable partnerships to be found.

So far in Europe, only French President Emmanuel Macron seems to have a plan for a broad and populist defense of the European institutions by trying to transform his La République en Marche party into pan-European force.⁴⁶ Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini of the far-right, anti-immigrant, anti-Europe Northern League is standing against Macron.⁴⁷ Now the most powerful politician in Italy, Salvini is looking to create what he called a "League of Leagues" by "bringing together all the free and sovereign movements that want to defend their people and their borders."⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, whose country currently holds the presidency in the Council of the EU, has been seeking to charter a third way between an unqualified embrace of the EU and anti-immigration nativism.⁴⁹ A political crisis has besieged German Chancellor Angela Merkel as she has tried to navigate between her more centrist policy views and increasingly successful populist political foes. All of this should concern the United States as even staunch defenders of European community, such as Macron, are advocating for more independence from Washington.

Nationalism and sovereignty are important social forces, as is the popular discontent with center-left and center-right elites. The challenge NATO and EU proponents face is not to squelch those upstarts in order to preserve the status quo. Rather, it is to present an alternative and realistic set of reforms that affirm

what the transatlantic partnerships have accomplished; accept valid critiques about the failings of post-World War II structures; and present viable solutions to today's challenges. Among these reforms:

- Ensure that NATO is adapted to the challenges of the present era, with a more equitable sharing of the burden of defense spending and with a common perception of the security threats facing the Western world. This may require renegotiating treaty documents, reinvigorating alliance structures, and rethinking headquarters agreements.
- The alliance should become more of a two-way street, with membership—and the attendant Article 5 security guarantee—reserved for countries that live up to the values on which NATO was founded. NATO cannot be a blanket security guarantee for those that transgress democratic norms.
- Transatlantic partners must stop being naïve about the ability of authoritarian regimes around the world to use their tools of multilateral cooperation against them. China's accession to the WTO, for example, enables Beijing to use market access for its own gain while remaining zealously protectionist at home. Similarly, Russia threatens NATO allies both tacitly and explicitly in order to raise doubts about the wisdom of alliance commitments among its members.
- The EU needs reforms: to turn the EU into a coherent and effective geopolitical actor without stomping on the legitimate differences of opinions that exist between its member states; to reduce its creeping democratic deficit; to address the division of power between national governments and Brussels; and to stop the monetary union from being a chronic source of instability. The EU also needs more effective defenses against authoritarianism in its own ranks. The membership carries substantial privileges, and in order to survive and prosper, the EU will have to hold its members to high standards of domestic governance.
- Both the EU and the United States must work to ensure that governments are in control of border and migratory flows in a reasonable and humane way that comports with international law. The experience of recent years suggests that the EU's and United States' perceived loss of control over these flows, as in the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, has empowered extremists to an unprecedented degree. The recurrence of such situations, as well as a perceived porousness of the U.S. southern border, are deeply corrosive to trust in center-right and center-left governments. When political extremists block reasonable solutions—as has

happened repeatedly with U.S. immigration reform efforts⁵⁰—leaders must be resolute and cross party lines to push through compromise.

- European and U.S. leaders should recognize that there is greater consensus on the left and right in support of open and free trade that is also fair⁵¹ and build upon shared goals rather than double down on divisions. Policies that are likely to bring shared economic prosperity and opportunity, particularly for those who have been left behind by the ongoing processes of globalization and automation, are possible and necessary.
- Embrace explicit expressions of democratic values that underscore political, economic, and human freedoms as the common standard of reference for Europe, the United States, and other allies, friends, and partners. Use that common standard as a barometer and be vigilant about countries that start to diverge from it before it is too late.
- Clearly admit the failings and frailty of the decades-old Atlantic compact and seek to modernize and rebuild it rather than patch up individual sources of conflict.

Conclusion

People of good will, whether among populist upstarts, established political parties, or elsewhere, will not succeed in building lasting institutions without a clear admission of the rickety and inadaptable nature of certain postwar structures. The foundations of those structures are vital; both NATO and the EU have delivered unprecedented security and prosperity unthinkable even 70 years ago. But refreshing and reforming them has never been a priority, and it should come as no surprise that their weaknesses and failings have been exploited by opportunists and adversaries, not to mention legitimate claimants who sense their institutions have failed them.

This admission can form the foundation of a genuine and sustainable transatlantic renewal built on shared values and goals. For those who continue to insist that the old ways are the best ways, their path is demonstrably failing. You cannot beat something with nothing, and the time has come for defenders of the greatest alliances the world has known to accept that fact and begin a transatlantic renaissance.

About the authors

Vikram Singh is a senior fellow for National Security, Democracy, and Technology at the Center for American Progress. Previously, he was the vice president for National Security and International Policy from 2014 to 2017. Singh supports the National Security team on defense policy, diplomacy, and Asia policy. He oversees the Center's program on defending liberal democracy and American alliances as well as a new initiative on restoring the web as a force for democracy. He also convened and served on the Center's task force on U.S.-India relations. From 2009 to 2014, Singh held senior positions at the U.S. Departments of Defense and State, including as the deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia and as deputy special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He was a fellow at the Center for a New American Security from 2007 to 2009. Singh started at the Department of Defense as a presidential management fellow and served in a variety

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Dalibor Rohac is a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he studies the political economy of the European Union. He is also a visiting fellow at the University of Buckingham's Institute of Economic Affairs in London and a research associate at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies in Brussels. Before joining AEI, Rohac was affiliated with the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity and served as deputy director at the London-based Legatum Institute. In 2009, he interned at the office of the president of the Czech Republic in Prague. In addition to dozens of academic articles in peer-reviewed journals, Rohac has written about European affairs for *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Affairs*, and many other outlets. His book, *Towards an Imperfect Union: A Conservative Case for the EU*, was included on *Foreign Affairs* magazine's list of best books of 2016. Rohac holds a Ph.D. in political economy from King's College London, an M.Phil. in economics from the University of Oxford, an M.A. in economics from George Mason University, and a B.A. in economics from Charles University in Prague.

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and Reform in the Arab World: Empowering Democrats” (AEI, 2008). A regular guest on television, Pletka appears frequently on NBC News’ “Meet the Press.” Her broadcast appearances also include CBS News, CNN, C-SPAN, and MSNBC. She has been published in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Hill*, and *Politico*, among other outlets. She has an M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and a B.A. from Smith College.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank all of their workshop participants for their valuable insights and suggestions.

Appendix

CAP-AEI project on defending democracy and underwriting the transatlantic partnership

Statement of aims

On both sides of the Atlantic, free, open, and democratic societies are facing a challenge. An intellectual vacuum is forming in the political center, where traditional political platforms and leaders are experiencing a decline in their popular appeal. Meanwhile, authoritarian populists of various stripes, many with covert or open ties to the Kremlin, are stepping in to fill the emerging void.

Scholars at the Center for American Progress and at the American Enterprise Institute have often found themselves on opposing sides of important policy discussions. Yet, at a time when the fundamental character of Western societies is at stake, what unites us is much stronger than the disagreements that we have.

The threat of authoritarian populism will not recede unless a new generation of political leaders offers a credible agenda for improving people's lives that is more appealing to the public than the populist alternatives. The defense and rebuilding of democratic politics and discourse, however, requires sustained intellectual engagement. It demands a reinvigorated case for how liberal democracy, openness, pluralism, and a rules-based international order can deliver on the promise of shared prosperity and common security. Through this project, we aim to provide such a case, built around five ideas:

- As a system of government, liberal democracy has no appealing alternatives. People deserve to live under governments that are responsive and accountable to them and that are subject to binding constitutional and legal constraints.
- As a general rule, openness—both to trade and migration—makes societies more prosperous and resilient. Policymakers need to make sure that the benefits of openness are shared fairly, but going back to a world of autarchic, closed societies is not an option.

- International cooperation is valuable. While international organizations and alliances may require updating, an international system based on rules and cooperation between liberal democracies is vastly preferable to the zero-sum world of warfare and protectionism that was the norm throughout human history.
- Authoritarian regimes are not benign. In fact, they are actively undermining liberal democracies. Liberal democracies should not seek confrontation, but—especially after the experience provided by years of Russian disinformation efforts in Europe and in the United States—they need to appreciate that, within the international realm, authoritarian regimes pursue different objectives than societies with governments that are accountable to the people and respect the rule of law.

Ideas matter. The critical debates about the future of our societies are never settled once and for all. They take place in every generation. Fearless, fair, and honest debate is a crucial mechanism to advance human dignity and freedom and to achieve human potential. It is time that our generation mounts a solid intellectual defense of the cornerstones of democratic social order.

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