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A Transatlantic Strategy to Promote Democratic Development in the Broader Middle East

Since the September 11 attacks, a number of U.S. and European strategists have stepped forward to call for a fundamental paradigm shift in how the United States and Europe engage the broader Middle East—that wide swath of the globe, predominantly Muslim and overwhelmingly authoritarian, stretching from Morocco to Afghanistan. The West, they have argued, must abandon the chimera of stability offered by an autocratic status quo and instead put the weight of Western influence on the side of positive democratic change. Washington and Brussels must join forces in a partnership with reformers in the region to promote democratic transformation and human development as an antidote to those radical ideologies and terrorist groups that seek to destroy Western society and values.

Such calls have been driven by a new analysis of what ails the region and how it has fueled the terrorist threat facing the West today: an explosive mix of humiliation, hatred, intolerance, and intense anti-U.S. and anti-Western sentiment that is crystallizing into a set of extremist ideologies that twists and mobilizes religion and uses terrorism to pursue its goals. It is brewing amid a context of political oppression, economic stagnation, population booms, and pervasive inequality and injustice. The United States and Europe will not be safe from the terrorism, political instability, illegal migration, or organized crime this region is spawning unless each shifts its policies to attempt to get to the root of these ills. This endeavor will simultaneously require both political freedom and human development—the kind that generates broad, sustainable improvements in people’s livelihoods, skills, dignity, and opportunities.

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The Washington Quarterly • 28:2 pp. 7–21.

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Political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic have started to embrace these calls for a paradigm change in Western policy. In November 2003, President George W. Bush officially called for a new strategy focused on democracy promotion in the broader Middle East in a major speech delivered at the National Endowment of Democracy.¹ Similar calls have been issued by European leaders, most notably by German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, who in February 2004 at the Wehrkunde security conference also

called for a policy to reorganize the West in order to help transform the region.² The issue of developing a common transatlantic approach was the subject of intense consultations both at the Group of Eight (G-8) and NATO summits in the summer of 2004.

At the same time, it is also clear that Western governments have thus far struggled to translate such bold rhetoric into a realistic and plausible strategy that can eventually achieve these goals. Critics on both sides of

the Atlantic have countered that a common and coordinated U.S. and European strategy cannot succeed and should not be pursued. Further, both sides of the Atlantic face a deep legacy of skepticism and cynicism in the region itself where autocratic leaders and democracy activists doubt whether the West is serious about promoting democratic development in the region.

Against this mixed backdrop, this article lays out the contours of what a transatlantic strategy to promote democratic development in the broader Middle East could, and should, look like. The strategy proposed here is bold and ambitious. It will not be accomplished overnight. This is a generational project for which the West must summon historic staying power. To be sure, the impetus for change must come from within societies in the region. Yet, the West can and must play a critical supporting role as a catalyst for change from the outside. Many if not most of the democracy breakthroughs around the world have occurred precisely because of the combination of pressure for change from within, coupled with support from the outside.

A transatlantic strategy to promote democracy and human development in the broader Middle East must be based on three pillars. First, it must aim to help strengthen the forces for democratic change and stable liberal democratic politics within these societies. Second, such a strategy must also work to create a more secure regional foreign policy context that can facilitate democratic transformation. Third, the United States and Europe need to organize themselves across the Atlantic and with partners in the region to sustain these policies effectively for a generation or more.

Strengthening Democracy from Within

If the United States and the EU are serious about promoting democratic development in the broader Middle East, then the issue of these states' internal order must be at the forefront of the West's official policies toward them. The quality of the West's relationship with the governments of this region must be linked to their progress in reforms. Thus far, this has not been the case, and both the regimes and potential reformers in the region know it.

What would such a policy shift mean in practical terms? A truly effective strategy to strengthen democracy and human development from within would have to be based on several key building blocks. U.S. and European governments should tie economic assistance, trade liberalization, debt relief, and political engagement to genuine political reform and good governance. Changing the incentives and calculus of governments in the region requires changing the way the West provides them with such assistance. Both the United States and the EU need to become much more serious and rigorous about conditionality in their relationships with countries in the region. Through a transparent benchmarking process, the West should reward those countries making progress on democracy and good governance and be prepared to withdraw privileges from those that do not.

The EU today already provides very substantial levels of economic assistance to the region in addition to opening up its domestic markets and offering political assistance through the Barcelona Process, launched in the mid-1990s to target the Mediterranean basin, as well as the more recently adopted New Neighbourhood policy, which aims to deepen ties with countries on Europe's periphery. Many of these benchmarks are already established in existing agreements, but the EU's track record of upholding conditionality has been underwhelming. As a result, such assistance has often ended up maintaining rather than transforming the status quo. The new "action plans" that the EU is concluding with Middle Eastern countries as part of its New Neighbourhood Initiative also have the potential to develop into a model for a tougher regime if the countries involved adhere to the attached conditions. These conditions have the advantage of being very detailed (containing 200 concrete steps for reform) and of having been negotiated with input from civil society groups as well as the regimes. The Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) is also an im-

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portant step in the right direction in tying economic assistance to political reform. It is important that standards not be relaxed as these programs become operational. Indeed, the same principles need to be extended to other existing U.S. assistance programs and not limited to the MCA.

The same principle of conditionality and performance must be extended to other aspects of bilateral cooperation and assistance as well. If supporting

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democratic change is truly to become a top priority in U.S. policy in hopes of changing the calculus of these regimes, then this new priority must impact how the United States conducts bilateral relations and cooperates with these countries. In many cases, the benefits of cooperating with the United States and the EU can also be linked to progress toward reform. They range from trade liberalization to debt relief to high-level visits, including those by heads of state. Such condi-

tionality can be discrete or even private to be effective, but what is needed is a new and different mindset toward how the United States interacts with these countries.

It is also important to reexamine the West's ties with the security and intelligence institutions of the broader Middle East's authoritarian regimes. The U.S. and European governments have close and often valuable relationships with these institutions. Such relationships provide critical intelligence for the war on terrorism, but they are also instruments of repression. Indeed, Western governments pay a price in terms of their credibility for having close ties to institutions widely perceived as pillars of an arbitrary and unjust autocratic order. These institutions must become subject to constitutional principles and proper oversight, as they are in democracies elsewhere in the world. Western influence on these countries' militaries and intelligence services must be used to foster, not impede, democratic change and to end the practice of torture.

Although the West must engage the region's autocracies, it must also step up its moral and political support for indigenous democracy activists. In many countries in the region, democracy activists already fighting for reform are harassed or even jailed as political prisoners, yet Western governments do little to lend them moral or political support. A new strategy to promote democracy must speak out more clearly on behalf of those groups and individuals already engaged in the fight. Civil society and pro-democracy forces in these countries must also become key interlocutors for the West. No senior U.S. or European leader, whether from the executive or legislative

branches of government, should visit the region without raising these issues and meeting with civil society representatives. Western governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should maintain and monitor a comprehensive list of political prisoners in the region and regularly raise their cases with host governments.

In addition, the West must increase its material support for civil society groups serving as incubators for promoting democracy and human development. A fierce struggle is underway between democratic and antidemocratic forces in these countries for the hearts and minds of their societies. The West must help empower the moderate, democratic side by supporting those NGOs working to create the foundations for more just, free, and democratic societies. Although this effort will require resources, the amount needed is a tiny fraction of what is currently spent on defense and security to combat threats from this region. Middle Eastern governments should not be allowed to restrict assistance to NGOs supporting democracy promotion activities as, for example, has been the case in Egypt.

The transatlantic community also needs to develop new nongovernmental instruments to strengthen democratic voices and civil society in the region and can do so through the creation of a nongovernmental Middle East Foundation modeled after successful efforts in both Europe and Asia. Ideally, such an effort would be transatlantic in nature and would receive financial support from both the United States and the EU. It would directly fund civil society organizations, think tanks, and civic education programs in the Middle East. It is important for the proposed foundation to be fully independent to maximize operational freedom and credibility. The mission of the U.S. Department of State and various European foreign ministries is first and foremost the management of official relations with other nations. There are limits to the degree that these same individuals can be asked to conduct state-to-state affairs with an autocratic regime effectively while simultaneously working to transform or democratize it. Therefore, a broader array of actors should assume that task.

Beyond the efforts of NGOs, contacts between people in the broader Middle East and the West must be expanded exponentially. The best weapons to assist these societies in transforming themselves are not necessarily NATO's Rapid Reaction Force, but rather the school board in Des Moines, Iowa; a local school in Munich, Germany; or a mosque in Bloomington, Indiana. The more people from the Middle East who witness democracy in action, the greater the West's potential impact will be. Such exchanges can greatly alter mutual preconceived notions and misperceptions. Both the EU and the United States should dramatically increase the number of scholarships granted to students from the region to study at Western universities.

Greater societal contact will also decrease Western ignorance about Islamic culture and religion, and vice versa. None of these programs can work, however, without a new visa regime in the United States. Just as immigration authorities create special lists to identify terrorists and criminals, they should also develop lists to expedite the acquisition of visas for well-known friends and allies who, once vetted, can remain on a fast track to gaining entry into the United States.

Western governments must also be prepared to provide technical assistance to strengthen the institutions of democratic governance in the broader Middle Eastern region, especially once genuine democratization has begun. Reforming states will need to strengthen the capacity and independence of a wide range of governance institutions, including national legislatures, the courts, counter-corruption and auditing agencies, and local governments, as well as democratic mechanisms to oversee the military, police, and intelligence agencies. Ideally, liberal reforms to strengthen the rule of law and reduce state control should be implemented before direct elections take place so that there is less at stake in controlling political power and it thus becomes less threatening for autocrats to contemplate surrendering their monopoly on power.

Finally, over time Western governments must develop a clear track record regarding their intentions in the region. Bush has spoken forcefully about the cause of freedom and democracy in the broader Middle East, but Washington still suffers from a major credibility problem. Many in the region—advocates and enemies of reform alike—doubt Western intentions, especially those of the United States. When Western leaders praise cooperation with regional dictators without mentioning democracy or human rights, it sends the wrong message to those on the front lines in the fight for democracy in their country. The West also needs to conduct more competent public diplomacy. Ultimately, however, the policy and behavior of Western governments must change. As their willingness to work and fight for democracy and human development becomes clear, attitudes in the region toward the West and its motives will change as well.

Creating an External Environment for Democratic Change

A second pillar of a transatlantic strategy to promote democracy and human development in the broader Middle East must aim at creating the kind of external environment conducive to democratic change in the region. All too often in the past, Western and Arab leaders have posited a false dichotomy between the pursuit of external security and democracy in the region, suggesting that, in the interest of maintaining security, it was necessary

to set aside democratic aspirations. Part of the paradigm shift the West needs to make is to recognize that democratic development and external security are complementary goals rather than alternatives.

It would certainly be wrong for the West to accept the argument that the key regional conflicts in the Middle East must be solved before movement toward democracy can occur, even though it is certainly easier to build and consolidate democracy during times of peace and in a secure regional environment than to attempt to do so during times of conflict and external threat. Insecurity is a breeding ground for nationalistic and antidemocratic forces, whereas democracy and regional security are mutually reinforcing. Moreover, in the Middle East, many geopolitical problems are often directly intertwined with the nature of these regimes.

This approach is by no means a new or radical departure for the West. Creating a regional security environment conducive to democracy was a central consideration in U.S. strategy toward Europe after World War II. NATO was created not only to deter a Soviet threat but also to provide a security umbrella under which fragile, postwar Western European democracies could establish themselves. The signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the subsequent creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were all part of a broader effort in the 1970s and 1980s to create a regional framework that transcended a divided Europe and fostered democratic change and that helped to ensure a soft and largely nonviolent landing when communism eventually collapsed. The need to consolidate newly developing democracies was also a key factor leading NATO and the EU to extend a security umbrella toward central and eastern Europe after the Cold War came to an end.

The many differences between past events in Europe and the situation in the broader Middle East today are well understood. Neighborhoods do matter, however, and one can hardly imagine a less auspicious neighborhood for building democracy today than the Middle East. Few, if any, effective multilateral frameworks are in place to ease bilateral or regional rivalries, let alone provide for regional cooperative security. Even if one or another Middle Eastern regime were to achieve a democratic breakthrough, the government would have few means or options to anchor such an experiment regionally. Consequently, if the West wants to pursue a long-term strategy to help promote democratic change in the broader Middle East, it must step up its efforts to resolve the region's core geopolitical conflicts and support the creation of a more peaceful security environment.

The impetus for change must come from within societies in the region.

The list of geopolitical conflicts in the region that must be addressed to help foster such an external environment is long and well known, including the Israeli-Arab conflict, turmoil in Iraq, addressing the nuclear threat from Iran, and ensuring success in Afghanistan. Such a strategy must also include promoting democratic reform in autocratic allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The EU has taken a key step forward in fully anchoring a secular and democratic Turkey by deciding to open accession negotiations, but that project may require another decade to reach completion successfully. Finally, and equally important, the creation of a Middle Eastern cooperative regional security structure, drawing on the Helsinki experience, is a key ingredient for success.

To help promote a more favorable regional context for democratic change, the United States and the EU will have to cooperate on issues where they have heretofore disagreed, at times deeply, and where transatlantic cooperation has not been a priority. Both sides will now need to make overcoming those differences a priority. While space does not allow a detailed explanation for why the United States and Europe have differed in the past, one can sketch out where potential common ground could and should lie.

A resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would clearly produce real benefits for democratic development in the region. Ending the conflict would remove a painful issue that crowds the region's political agenda and absorbs energies that otherwise could be devoted to internal reform. Autocratic Arab governments could no longer hide behind or use this conflict to deflect domestic pressures for change, and terrorists across the region could no longer exploit the situation for their recruitment efforts. The West would no longer require the cooperation of a dictatorial regime in Syria or be deterred from pushing for reform in autocratic allies such as Egypt because of their critical role in peace negotiations. Israel certainly has its own interest in the transformation of the region into a set of more democratic societies in which the forces of radicalism and terrorism are marginalized.

Many today in the Arab world see a Western and especially a U.S. commitment to the peace process as a litmus test of our intentions in the Arab world more broadly, including on democracy. To them, our credibility on questions of democracy are tied to support for Palestinian political self-determination. For these reasons, the United States and the EU should actively explore new opportunities for peace in the wake of Yasser Arafat's death. It would be a mistake, though, to suggest that a resolution of this conflict is somehow a precondition for a democracy strategy in the region. The United States and the EU can agree that peace with neighbors and democratic reform are both worthy efforts and should be parallel pursuits. Settling this conflict based on the

vision of two states living side-by-side in peace and security requires the creation of a viable and democratic Palestinian state, but also one committed to maintaining peace with Israel and preventing acts of terrorism. To sustain peace over time, Israel and an independent Palestine should be embedded in a broader multilateral security framework, which may include the United States and its European partners.

In addition, the West must succeed in the two democratic experiments in the broader Middle East in which it is already deeply engaged: Afghanistan and Iraq. Failure in either would deal a major setback not only to the populations of these two countries but also to the broader cause of democratic development in the region. The credibility of the Atlantic Alliance is on the line in Afghanistan, which the West made the mistake of abandoning once in the past—an error for which the United States paid a heavy price on September 11, 2001. Now, the United States and the EU have joined forces to help Afghanistan rebuild; develop new political institutions; and rein in warlords, drug traffickers, criminals, and resurgent Taliban cells. This effort will require a sustained transatlantic commitment to provide political, economic, and security assistance to Afghanistan for many years to come.

The situation in Iraq is even more critical and the consequences of failure even more dire. It is time for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to put aside their differences over the wisdom of the war and look forward. Even though the challenges are formidable, it would be a historic mistake to abandon the goal of establishing some form of democratic rule in Iraq. The big losers of such a strategy would be more than just the Iraqi people. The credibility of Western democracies, and especially the United States, in calling for democratic reform throughout the region will be undercut if the goal of establishing a more decent and democratic government in Iraq is abandoned. Over a period of many years, Western democracies must expand the UN mission and continue to help Iraq develop the political parties, civil society organizations, civic education, governance institutions, and electoral rules and practices necessary to sustain democracy. Democratic development will also require the West to provide for the effective training and equipping of the new Iraqi security forces and to widen the political arena to include all major stakeholders.

Third, Iran must also become a priority in a transatlantic strategy to promote democracy in the region. Tehran today exhibits a real degree of plural-

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istic politics, pitting rulers against a sophisticated if currently demoralized democratic movement. Despite recent setbacks, no other country in the broader Middle East has more potential for a democratic breakthrough. Yet, at the same time, no other country in the region is closer to acquiring nuclear weapons. In addition, the current regime's support for terrorism, directed largely against Israel, prevents a meaningful rapprochement with the West. The policy of Western governments, therefore, must seek to prevent Tehran

Creating a Middle Eastern cooperative regional security structure is a key ingredient.

from acquiring nuclear weapons and to push it to abandon terrorism while supporting grassroots efforts to advance democratic ideas and organizations.

These goals in Iran can be pursued only through a common U.S.-EU dual-track strategy offering carrots and sticks. Thus far, the United States and the EU have unfortunately not been able to agree on either the carrots or the sticks, and as a result, both policies have been ineffective. For example,

if Iran verifiably suspends its nuclear ambitions, the United States and the EU must be united in offering tangible economic and diplomatic incentives and in expanding sanctions if Iran refuses to do so. European carrots and U.S. sticks must be integrated and also supplemented with European sticks for Iranian intransigence and U.S. carrots for a changed Iranian posture.

More generally, civil society and the pro-democratic movement in Iran would benefit greatly from increased contact with the West. Although such contact requires some level of engagement with the Iranian regime, Washington's current policies make it nearly impossible for U.S. NGOs to engage or assist their democratic partners within Iran. If managed properly, lifting aspects of the current economic sanctions would not reward Tehran's dictators but would have the potential to create more political space and opportunity for the democracy movement.

The United States and the EU should also work together to complete the full anchoring of a democratic, secular Turkey in the West. Turkey stands at the epicenter of the divide between an increasingly stable and secure Europe and an increasingly unstable and insecure broader Middle East. The EU's decision to start accession negotiations with Turkey is historic. If successfully completed, this move will help consolidate and complete Turkey's transformation to secular democracy and reposition the Euro-Atlantic community in the broader Middle East. Turkey's historical trajectory and distinct brand of secularism is unique, and Ankara's relationship with the Arab Middle East is not without complications. Nonetheless, Turkey is a key ex-

ample of how Islam and democracy can thrive together. Moreover, the broader Middle East watches how the United States and the EU deal with Turkey as a test of their willingness to include a largely Muslim country in its institutions. For this reason, the EU's embrace of Turkey and its aspirations can dramatically underscore Europe's commitment to promoting democracy and human development in the region. Now more than ever, the West needs a successful, secular, and democratic Turkey at its side as a full partner in the effort to transform the broader Middle East.

A transatlantic strategy to democratize the region must not only address the West's adversaries but also acknowledge the shortcomings of autocratic regional allies, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In this case, the problem is not one of U.S. and European differences, but rather of both largely turning a blind eye to a growing problem. This issue goes to the core of the West's credibility and the need to overcome the double standard that has plagued U.S. and EU policy for decades. The United States and the EU must face the fact that terrorist groups draw support and recruits from these autocratic and formally pro-Western regimes. Promoting democratic change among allies poses a different challenge than doing so among strategic adversaries, but the effort is just as important. The United States and the EU have potentially considerable influence and leverage because these regimes are more open to the West. Indeed, in cases such as Morocco and Jordan, they have already made modest progress toward liberalization and may be closer to, and more ready for, a political opening.

At the same time, failure to change the way the United States and the EU engage long-standing autocratic allies will only exacerbate their woes in the region. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt cannot be lumped together. In fact, political change in both nations has already begun, and both will face the issue of political succession in the not-too-distant future. The questions are when these regimes will lose their grip, whether the process will be evolutionary or revolutionary, and what new political system will emerge when these regimes give way. If leaders in Saudi Arabia and Egypt initiate genuine political liberalization now, they may be more likely to shape the transition process from above and produce an evolutionary transition from autocratic rule to democracy. If they wait, however, their regimes run the risk of ending in revolution, by which more radical and less democratic forces will come to power.

Finally, the United States and the EU should collaborate in supporting efforts to create a regional cooperative security regime drawing on the lessons of the Helsinki experience in Europe and other regions. The Middle East today lacks a functioning multilateral security regime that establishes regional norms, confidence-building measures, or other forms of dialogue and politi-

cal reassurance. Such a regional architecture could help generate an environment more conducive to democratic transitions. The heart of the Helsinki process was the recognition that true security depends on relations not only between states but also between rulers and the ruled. Concepts of “invisible security” or “comprehensive security”—that all states have an equal right to security regardless of their size or that security must go beyond military affairs and include issues such as minority rights or the shared management of resources—would be major breakthroughs in the Middle East. Building such a regional cooperative security regime will require time and political capital. Nevertheless, one can hardly imagine a region in greater need of such a regime than the broader Middle East.

Reorganizing the West

The third pillar of a new transatlantic strategy requires the West to reorganize itself. If the United States and the EU truly believe that the broader Middle East is the primary security challenge facing the West in the foreseeable future, it is important to restructure Western governments, think tanks, and universities in a way that will generate the knowledge and ideas necessary to succeed. Today, however, neither the United States nor the EU is equipped to do so.

This is not the first time that the West has had to reorganize itself to meet the policy and intellectual challenges of a new era. At the end of World War II, Western governments created new international institutions because they lacked the expertise and institutions required to meet the strategic and moral challenges of the Cold War. Since September 11, 2001, the governments of the United States and the EU have been far less ambitious in adapting national security structures and multilateral institutions to meet the new challenges. The West has organizationally focused primarily on defensive measures, such as tightening borders, strengthening cooperation on intelligence gathering, and transforming defense capabilities to combat terrorists more effectively. Yet, when it comes to playing offense—developing the capacity to prevent such threats from emerging in the first place—few creative ideas or ambitious proposals have come forward. Given this deficiency, the United States and the EU must focus on reorganizing themselves in three key areas.

Both need to create a new generation of scholars, diplomats, military officers, and democracy builders who know the region’s religions, languages, history, and cultures. They have witnessed declining levels of knowledge about the broader Middle East among their populations in recent years, and this trend must be reversed. Just as a new generation of experts was groomed

to improve understanding of Europe and the Soviet Union after 1945, it is now necessary to create a vast new pool of public policy experts who combine knowledge of the broader Middle East with backgrounds in democracy promotion and strategic studies. Today, it is rare to find a program at any leading U.S. or European university that offers any course of study resembling this combination.

The United States and European governments should therefore provide support to establish new educational centers that can generate better understanding of a part of the world about which the West knows far too little. Greatly enhanced exchange programs will enable U.S. and European policymakers to gain firsthand expertise in the region, with their counterparts in government and civil society. Programs must also be established to bring together young leaders and legislators from both sides of the Atlantic to foster common approaches on issues now central to U.S. and European national security. The world of academia and think tanks will not fill this void unless prompted by governments and private foundations in the West.

Next, it is also important to reorganize U.S. and European national security and foreign policy establishments to highlight this new priority. Indeed, if promoting democracy is to become a top national priority for decades to come, it needs to be treated as such in governmental structures. At the moment, democracy promotion is buried down in the second or even third tier of Western foreign policy and foreign aid bureaucracies. The concept is considered something slightly exotic, even as a distraction from day-to-day exigencies, as opposed to a core priority, especially when it comes to the broader Middle East. Although the United States and European governments have started to reorganize in an effort to improve homeland defense as well as intelligence gathering and coordination of law enforcement agencies, there has been no equivalent upgrade in the task of democracy promotion. This, however, must change. The United States needs to be as good at fostering democratic transitions as well as supporting economic reforms as it is at toppling despots.

Governments on both sides of the Atlantic should consider separating the tasks of democracy promotion and human development from other priorities and elevating it to a senior level, where it will enjoy high-level political support and can command the resources necessary for the task. In the United States, this could mean creating a cabinet-level Department for Democracy Promotion and Development. Europe should create a position

Promoting democratic change among allies is just as important.

equivalent to the EU commissioner with the same responsibilities in the new European Commission. The rationale for this step is simple. In the United States, the State Department's mission is and should remain to conduct diplomacy, not promote democracy, and the Pentagon's mission should remain defense. The purpose, therefore, of creating these high-level posts is to give leadership and political accountability both to U.S. and European efforts to promote democratic change.

Finally, the West needs a better foundation to help generate a common transatlantic governmental approach to the broader Middle East. Despite the

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breadth of the transatlantic relationship, the two sides do not currently have a functioning mechanism to develop and coordinate such a strategy. NATO is the strongest institutional link across the Atlantic, but it is a military alliance whose focus is too narrow. On paper, the U.S.-EU relationship could become a key forum, but it will require a significant overhaul to effectively be upgraded to play this role. The Bush administration has thus far

turned to the G-8 on such issues, but the limits of that approach are also becoming apparent, as it excludes many key European nations yet includes countries like Russia, whose commitment to democracy is suspect. In the 1990s, the United States and its European allies took a transatlantic relationship that was forged during the Cold War and designed to contain Soviet power and transformed it into a new partnership focused on consolidating democracy in central and eastern Europe, halting ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and building a new partnership with Russia. Today, this relationship must again be overhauled so that it can meet a new set of challenges centered in the broader Middle East.

Reorienting the Transatlantic Alliance

One of the great historical lessons of the twentieth century is that the world is a much safer, more peaceful, and democratic place when the United States and the EU cooperate. That assessment is as true today as it was in the past. There is perhaps no more fitting task than for the democracies of the United States and Europe to come together to help promote democracy and human development in the region of the world where it is most absent and needed. It would be a critical step in combating terrorism, defusing radical fundamentalist movements, and ensuring a more peaceful and secure world.

This task is, first and foremost, a challenge for the peoples and governments of the region itself. Nevertheless, developments in the Middle East today profoundly affect the security of the United States and Europe. Western governments have taken the first steps in recognizing the failings of past policies and in articulating a vision of a dramatically new approach to the broader Middle East. What is now required is a strategy sufficiently bold and comprehensive to realize that vision.

This article distills a longer policy paper entitled "Democracy and Human Development in the Broader Middle East: A Strategy for Transatlantic Partnership," which was presented at a conference held in Istanbul on the eve of the NATO summit in June 2004. The paper was produced by a 19-member working group composed of Europeans and Americans drawn together by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and all of them contributed to the ideas presented here. The original paper can be viewed at [http://www.gmfus.org/apbs/gmf/gmfwebfinal.nsf/48A527D9949584F885256EBA0077D44C/\\$File/GMF3928%20Istanbul%20Rep%20wcov.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/apbs/gmf/gmfwebfinal.nsf/48A527D9949584F885256EBA0077D44C/$File/GMF3928%20Istanbul%20Rep%20wcov.pdf).

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