

Trump Is Right about Europe

What Next?

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President Donald Trump has been criticized for his comments on NATO, along with his demand that member states pay more for the upkeep of the organization, and it is the usual list of suspects who have raised the alarm. Thus, European leaders, the pro-Europe elites in most American think tanks, academics in Ivy League and East Coast universities, and the New York- and Washington-based media have chastised Trump for undermining the transatlantic alliance. In response to Trump's concerns, French president Emmanuel Macron has warned that Europe has focused too much on growing as a market and that the United States now pays more attention to the Pacific rather than to Europe.¹ Further, he adds, China's rise marginalizes Europe. Of course, all this is because Trump supposedly does not understand the foundations of a classical liberal-democratic international order. The fact is, however, that Trump does understand the shift in global politics, while the Europeans and the Europhiles are pursuing an obsolete foreign policy. What this article argues is that Europe can still be relevant, if the United States views the continent not as a military partner to engage in long-range military power projection but, instead, as an economic, diplomatic, and soft-power proponent that helps bolster world order.

Europe Is Aging

For several reasons the classic liberal-democratic order, with Europe playing a central role in it, has changed, and the primary reason for this is demographic. Any look at European demographics shows that the continent is aging and, in many cases—particularly Eastern Europe—is losing population. Table 1 shows the extent to which this decline is taking place in the Western world and Japan; table 2 shows the countries experiencing major population decreases; and table 3 shows the oldest populations in the world:

In many of these countries, the government has tried to exhort the population to produce more children with little effect: Denmark had a national “sex week” that did little to raise the number of births;² Vladimir Putin has repeatedly told Russians it is their patriotic duty to breed;³ and other European nations have sought to give mothers incentives to stay at home and have children. None of these tactics have worked and, instead, we have what in some countries are irre-

versible population declines. Such aging populations also have a major impact on how a government's financial resources are utilized.

Table 1. Demographic transition in Western nations

Country	2015 Population (Millions)	2030 Population (Millions)	2050 Population (Millions)	2015 Median Age	2050 Median Age
Australia	23.9	28.4	33.4	37.5	41.4
France	64.3	68	71.1	41.2	43.9
Germany	80.6	79.2	74.5	46.2	51.4
Italy	59.7	59.1	56.3	45.9	51.7
Japan	126.5	120.1	107.4	46.5	53.3
Russia	143.4	138.6	128.5	38.7	40.8
Sweden	9.7	10.7	11.8	41	42
United Kingdom	64.7	70.1	75.3	40	43.3
United States	321.7	355.7	388.8	38	41.7

Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*

Table 2. Major population decreases

Country	2015 Population in Millions	2050 Population in Millions
Bulgaria	7,150	5,154
Romania	19,511	15,207
Ukraine	44,824	35,117
Moldova	4,069	3,243
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,810	3,069
Latvia	1,971	1,593
Lithuania	2,878	2,375
Serbia	8,851	7,331
Croatia	4,240	3,554
Hungary	9,885	8,318

Source: UN Population Prospects, 2015

Table 3. World's oldest population, 2015–2030

Country	Median Age 2015	Country	Median Age 2030
Japan	46.5	Japan	51.5
Germany	46.2	Italy	50.8
Martinique	46.1	Portugal	50.2
Italy	45.9	Spain	50.1
Portugal	44.0	Greece	48.9
Greece	43.6	China [Hong Kong]	48.6
Bulgaria	43.5	Germany	48.6
Austria	43.2	Nonspecified Area	48.1
China [Hong Kong]	43.2	Slovenia	48.1
Spain	43.2	South Korea	47.5

Source: UN Population Prospects, 2015

In most European nations, the emphasis is on free healthcare and a heavily subsidized education program. Moreover, European electorates are tired of the austerity measures that center-right governments pushed through in Europe after the 2008 financial crisis, because such measures led to cutbacks in the social programs that Europeans now take for granted. The reaction in fiscally conservative and abstemious nations like the Netherlands and Finland has been to elect governments that will increase public spending. Even in Britain, whose national leadership still fancies itself as a global power, one of the main claims made by the Brexiters was that leaving Europe would free up hundreds of millions of pounds for the National Health Service—which turned out to be a false claim. Thus, even Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged that a Conservative government would spend up to 100 billion pounds on infrastructure and social welfare projects, and after gaining reelection, he has stated that his government will spend on building infrastructure—railways and highways—as well as invest in an improved health-care system. Consequently, the main cutbacks in European expenditures have come in the field of defense.

Reduced Defense Expenditures and Force Levels

Across Europe, countries have cut back their defense expenditure and significantly reduced force levels as well as force structures. Neutral Sweden, at the height of the Cold War, was able to put 800,000 active soldiers and reserves in the field, but today, its forces have been reduced to 14,000 regular troops.⁴ Short of the outbreak of a major European war, it is unlikely that Sweden could even bring its force levels back to a more modest level of 100,000. At the height of the Cold War, Germany used to have thousands of operational Leopard tanks, but today it

only has 311 tanks in its inventory—only 95 of which are operational. The Netherlands got rid of its armored regiment in 2011 but subsequently revived it by integrating it into the German command structure and leasing German Leopard tanks to carry out the regiment's functions.⁵ The table below shows how severe the cutbacks have been in NATO forces:

Table 4. Manpower & aircraft cuts in the major NATO nations, 1977–2018

Country	Army 1977	Army 2018	Aircraft 1977	Aircraft 2018
Britain	177,600	82,050	450	258
France	338,500	112,500	470	294
Germany	345,000	60,900	462	211
Italy	240,000	102,200	296	260

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: IISS, 1977 and 2018).

These figures would paint an even starker military picture if we take into account how many weapons systems are actually operational on any given day in the armed forces of these countries. A 2018 report stated that only four of the 128 of the Luftwaffe's fleet of Eurofighter combat aircraft were combat ready, and other NATO air forces have similar problems with maintaining an operational fleet.⁶ Worse, the Luftwaffe, in 2019, stated that it only had two-thirds of the combat pilots it needed to maintain a fighting force, since pilots were resigning to join the lucrative civil sector.

One can argue that current aircraft are far more capable than the ones in NATO inventories in 1977, but in the 1970s, European air forces had far more aircraft that were operational and could be put into the fight. If you can only put up 2–3 squadrons at any given time, then what you bring to the fight is actually quite limited—however you may finesse it at a NATO meeting. There is, after all, considerable heft to the Russian argument that quantity has its own quality.

When one looks at the actual defense expenditures, President Trump's case about the nonperformance of NATO becomes even stronger. The magic number in NATO is supposed to be that member countries spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, but a recent NATO report paints a dim picture of the extent to which countries are meeting this target. The countries that exceed the target of 2 percent, in order of actual percentage of GDP spent, are the United States, Bulgaria, Greece, United Kingdom, Estonia, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. But if one looks at the some of the bigger countries of NATO, the numbers are dismal to down-right embarrassing.



(NATO photo by Spanish Sgt. First Class David Vivar, LANDCOM Public Affairs Office)

Figure 1. NATO Commanders Conference. US Air Force Gen Tod D. Wolters, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, meets face to face with Allied Command Operations commanders and representatives from Allied Command Transformation at NATO Allied Land Command Headquarters in Izmir, Turkey, 29 January 2020, to discuss a number of issues, including NATO priorities and how the alliance is evolving to meet contemporary challenges in the defense of the alliance.

For 2019, it is estimated that France is spending 1.84 percent of GDP, Germany 1.38 percent of GDP (and has made a commitment to increase defense expenditure to 2 percent of GDP by 2031), Canada spends 1.38 percent of GDP, Italy spends 1.22 percent of GDP, while Spain spends a low 0.92 percent of GDP.⁷ A country like Spain, therefore, would have to double the percent of GDP it spends on defense to meet the target, and that is highly unlikely to happen.⁸ And to put this in perspective, as a report by Tony Cordesman at Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington points out, the cuts in NATO countries led to the US share of NATO expenditure rising from 71.1 percent in 2010 to 73.9 percent in 2017.⁹

Further, one needs to ask the important question, in an age where the world's greatest security challenges are posed by the non-Western world and potentially China, can 2 percent of GDP allow Europe to participate effectively in "out-of-area" operations around the world? Macron's dire warning about NATO is, therefore, right. He has warned that Europe is at "the edge of a precipice. If we don't wake up . . . there's a considerable risk that in the long run we will disappear geopolitically, or at least that we will no longer be in control of our destiny. I believe that very deeply."¹⁰

Yet the European Union (EU) itself is no longer an Atlantic-oriented organization, as it continues to have a burgeoning relationship with China. According to statistics for 2019, released by the EU Directorate of Trade, the EU–China bilateral trade (and the new numbers are for 27 nations; thus, not including the United Kingdom) has crossed 547 billion Euros and accounts for 13.5 percent of global trade.¹¹ If one were to add significant non-EU NATO countries like Britain and Norway, these numbers would be even higher. Additionally, Chinese firms have made huge investments on the continent, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) continues to gather momentum in Europe and around the globe.

The Consequences of COVID-19

Compounding the problem is the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has global repercussions but is especially virulent in what it has done to European countries like Italy and Spain and could potentially do to France and the United Kingdom. At the time of writing, it is not known how long the pandemic will impact global society, but one thing is clear: citizens around the world, especially in the West, where the consequences have been well-publicized through traditional and social medias, will call for increased investments in healthcare, civil defense, and social welfare programs to avoid repeating in the future the chaotic and tragic events of early 2020. One must expect to see Western nations invest in building a robust reserve capability in the healthcare systems to be able to successfully tackle the outbreak of a future pandemic, and, once again, it will most likely lead to demands for curtailing defense expenditure.

And Then There Is Brexit

The United Kingdom is the third-largest contributor to the EU with 11.88 percent of the total budget, and once London leaves the union, the shortfall will have to be made up by the other 27 member states. Some states, like Italy and Spain, which have their own financial problems, will balk at paying more, while others, like Greece and Portugal, are not in the position to ever pay more. However, the EU is the primary institution that these countries want to support, and whatever noisy promises they may make about backing NATO will be little more than a symbolic effort.

The problem for the Trump administration is that we have seen this movie before, because, since the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower, American presidents have demanded, unsuccessfully, that NATO members pay their fair share for the maintenance of the organization. President Trump, like all other American presidents, has walked away with promises that the Europeans are un-

likely to keep or, as the above analysis shows, cannot keep. Nor do the Europeans have an incentive to do so, because they recognize that the United States, despite making threats, will not pull out of NATO because Washington sees the defense of Europe as one of the pillars of its international security policy. Given these constraints, what can be done to secure the American perception of world order and international security?

From Western World Order to World Order

To have a different security policy, one needs to have a different perception of world order, and that means moving away from the world order that the United States constructed at the end of World War II by forming the UN and the Bretton Woods economic system. After setting up these international institutions, the United States then led the Western European nations into NATO. All these institutions were established on the bases of Western liberal ideas, but with the rise of countries like India, Indonesia, Brazil, and, most importantly, China, we are slowly but surely moving away from a Western world order to a truly international world order, where nations from all continents will help shape the future of the international system. To put this in perspective, the failed League of Nations had only 58 members, the UN, initially, had 51 members, and now has 196 members. More importantly, this growth of the international system is marked by a shift in the global economy—Asia now accounts for 40 percent of global GDP but 70 percent of global growth.

In Washington, some officials have recognized the inevitable future, and steps are being taken to accommodate rising non-Western powers. The Trump administration, much like the preceding Obama administration, has been working to build an international order that is more Asia-centric and one that makes NATO be more accountable for being a permanent financial defaulter. In this Asia-centric foreign policy focus that President Macron worries about, it is countries like India that have become important, since it is clear that Europe could not do extended operations, or for that matter even get to, the Indo-Pacific conflict region. Just as the United States recognized at the end of World War II that colonialism was dying and, therefore, pressured both the British and the French to give independence to their colonies, Washington is now shaping a different world order recognizing that the old order does not have the ability to counter or manage current global challenges.

The Obama administration tried to do this with its “Pivot to Asia,” but like all pivots, the administration had to swivel back to the Middle East. The Trump administration also put Asia, and the containment of China, front and center in its *Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)* and its *National Security Strategy (NSS)*. Unlike

Obama, however, Trump has not made the mistake of being sucked back into the swamp called the Middle East. Trump has created a smaller military footprint in Syria and is working a peace deal with the Taliban to end America's longest war. This disengagement from the Middle East and Central Asia will allow the Trump administration to do what the George W. Bush and Obama administrations could not do—take on the challenge of a rising China.

In two ways, the Trump administration has put teeth into the containment of China. First, the *NPR* has explicitly stated how the United States will modernize its nuclear capabilities to strengthen the deterrent against China and Russia. The United States will build low-yield nuclear weapons, long-range cruise missiles, a long-range bomber, and dedicated combat aircraft. In choosing to develop a low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile and a new long-range cruise missile, the *NPR* states this obviates the need for a host nation, thereby recognizing the fickleness of alliances in the modern era.

Secondly, President Trump has sought to reduce American military commitments abroad, especially in the Middle East, to focus on China—something both President Bush and Obama unsuccessfully sought to do, as they were dragged back into the Middle East conflicts. President Bush had labeled China the America's strategic competitor, while Pres. Barack Obama sought to pivot to Asia; yet, neither president was able to focus on the Chinese challenge. President Trump, in contrast, has sought, till now, to stay out of the Middle East quagmire to pursue the challenge posed by a China as it seeks to create a global economic order in which Beijing is the dominant actor. The American attempt to restrict the growth of Huawei's 5G network around the world is one example of the Trump administration's approach of tackling the Chinese challenge head on. Thus, the United States has not expanded the conflict in Syria and, for now, has ratcheted down the conflict with Iran.

The United States and the Future of Europe

If one goes by the above analysis, certain trends become clear: militarily, Europe will focus on traditional and nontraditional threats in its different subregions of Northern and Southern Europe; European defense budgets will continue to contract as these countries face the challenges posed by aging populations that require healthcare and advanced social services; and, as a consequence, expecting NATO to do out-of-area operations like Iraq or Afghanistan is unrealistic.

Additionally, it is not clear whether the EU will survive as a coherent economic, political, and military entity. Brexit may be the first of several exits from the EU, as nation-states see themselves better off being out of the monetary union (Greece, for example, in its financial crisis did not have the luxury of devaluing the Drachma

and, instead, had its financial options constricted by being part of the Euro zone). Further, the fact remains that there is a cultural and economic divide between the older, western members of the EU and the newer, eastern members of the EU. What is called Western liberal values are not being displayed in countries like Hungary and Poland, where right-wing populist regimes are proclaiming anti-immigrant policies and violating the EU's Dublin agreement on refugees. Alongside the question of differing values lies the problem posed by migrant labor. Part of the support for Brexit came from people who were alarmed by the inflow of intra-EU workers (particularly Polish citizens) into the country. Even earlier, in France, Nicolas Sarkozy was able to run a successful presidential campaign by raising fears about a country overrun by Polish plumbers. Nationalist and subnationalist sentiments that continue to grow in Europe, coupled with the divergence in societal values, could potentially lead to fragmenting of the union.

Alongside the political fragmentation, there are concerns about the future viability of the Euro in its present form. Some analysts suggest that as financial worries increase in Europe the push may come for dividing the continent into several Euro zones that reflect the existing economic disparities in the broader region.¹² Countries like Greece, Spain, Italy, and several Eastern European nations could be moved into a separate financial category, thereby ensuring greater financial stability but lowering the economic power of the Euro and the EU. The possibility, therefore, exists of a far more fragmented EU, where the integration of the last three decades starts to unravel on the rocks of nationalism and economic disparities. At the same time, however, Western nations share values and world views with the United States, so the question arises as to how to leverage this shared outlook, and the continued economic strength of the EU, with the changes in the international system?

Additionally, the increasing challenge posed by nontraditional security issues that are now creating serious problems for the future is reshaping European security. Illegal and refugee immigration have now become central concerns for the NATO countries, as refugees from Syria and economic migrants from Africa continue to come across the Mediterranean and pose economic, social, and security challenges to the state structures of Europe and to the EU itself, with some member nations disregarding the Dublin accord on refugees. This raises the question can an EU survive where the Western wing attempts to retain its liberal-democratic values while the eastern wing moves more toward authoritarian and xenophobic structures? There is, instead, the real possibility that Europe takes a different form by jettisoning parts of the eastern wing that are less productive, less well-educated, and verging on authoritarianism—and the latter is the greatest concern, since it goes against the democratic tenets that are enshrined in the EU's constitution.

To sum up, we are seeing a Europe that is older, focused on internal issues, concerned with the economic and social welfare issues of its populations, and incapable of doing a sustained military operation in out-of-area scenarios. Moreover, there is a real question over the future of Europe as a united political and economic entity. Given these facts, what should the future of the US–Europe relationship look like in the future? The answer lies in leveraging those areas where Europe has great capacity and, more importantly, willingness to contribute to the maintenance of the global commons and for a world order.

Europe and the China Challenge

The US *National Defense Strategy (NDS)* and the *NSS* both state that China is the most pressing challenge to the United States in the near to medium term. The *NDS* argues that, “China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future. The most far-reaching objective of this defense strategy is to set the military relationship between our two countries on a path of transparency and non-aggression.”¹³ One of the tools to meet this challenge is to harness the economic and soft power that Europe has and can be successfully used to further American and Western interests in the international system. In the competition with China, the EU has a record that reflects both its strengths and weaknesses as an international actor.

Militarily, the EU is unlikely to send forces to the Indo-Pacific and is incapable of sustaining a significant force in the region. The force structures of the NATO member nations are not focused to project power over long distances for an extended period, and then there is the question of the sensitivity to casualties. This despite the fact that they have aerial refuellers, aircraft carriers, and, in the case of France and Britain, nuclear submarines. The problem will not be of equipment but instead of budgets and the public’s unwillingness to fight a battle thousands of miles away from their homeland for a cause that is grounded in power politics rather than an existential threat to the survival of the nation or the European continent—and the latter would motivate the national populations of Europe to militarize and wage war. In the light of this constraint, it is necessary to look at Europe through a different lens that emphasizes the EU rather than NATO.

European Soft and Economic Power

While Europe's military power is declining and its ability to project and sustain military power abroad weakens, it has enormous levels of soft and economic power that it continues to use across the world. Europe's corporations, ranging from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, still produce high-quality and technologically advanced products, from aircraft (Airbus) and telecommunications (Ericsson and Nokia) to the high-fashion products from Italy. These products make Europe a formidable competitor in the global markets, and countries around the world want technological inputs and investments from Europe. In fact, the Chinese have long told the Europeans that they would buy anything with the name Airbus on it if European nations were to lift the arms embargo put in place after Tiananmen Square and, instead, provide military technology to Beijing.¹⁴ In contrast, the EU remains a major supplier to other Asian nations and helps to upgrade their military technologies against a China whose indigenous defense technologies are growing impressively.

Additionally, there is the soft power Europe derives from the fact that alongside the United States the European nations have some of the finest universities in the world, which attract students from around the world. The Chinese now do the most authoritative ranking of universities in the world, and it is interesting to see which nations have the most universities among the top 500 in the world.

Table 5. Nations with the most universities in the top 500 (2019)

Country	Universities in top 500
USA	137
China	66 [9 in 2003]
Germany	30
Australia	23
France	21
Italy	18
Canada	16
Netherlands	12

Source: Shanghai Jiao Tang University, Academic World Rankings 2019.

Further, Project Atlas provides the data on just how many international students there are and what are their countries of destination to embark on their studies.

Table 6. Countries with most international students (2019)

Country	Number of Students
USA	1,095,299
UK	496,570
China	492,185
Canada	435,415
Australia	420,501
France	343,400
Russia	334,497
Germany	282,002
Japan	208,901
Spain	120,991

Source: Project Atlas, 2019.

While it is difficult to assess what will happen to the international flow of students in the short term, due to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the long run it is difficult to stop the global flow of students from around the world to seek higher education. Europe, therefore, along with other Western nations like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, will remain in the forefront as knowledge economies that provide a twenty-first-century education to students from around the world and, in doing so, will serve as a counter to the Chinese push to achieve supremacy in international affairs.

One of the most important trends of the twenty-first century is the international quest for global intellectual labor. Countries around the world now compete for the best academic and industrial minds, as nations seek to remain relevant in the race to be a knowledge economy. To achieve this goal, different countries now teach courses in English, attract international students with financial packages, and, in countries like Canada and Australia, make it easy for such students to obtain residency and jobs. The link between such students and their countries of origin gives the Western nations significant influence around the world, and the United States should be looking to see how it can use the EU's intellectual capital to its advantage.

So, what does all this mean for the United States as it seeks to secure the world order it created at Breton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks, with the formation of the International Monetary Fund and the UN, to last into the twenty-first century? The answer lies in accepting that the United States will need new partners as well as old ones in the coming world order and that the role played by traditional partners will change.

New partners like India will be central to a policy of containing China and ensuring that Beijing remains a stakeholder in the international system as opposed to being a revisionist power. New Delhi will certainly be able to provide military muscle in the Indo-Pacific region, though, admittedly, it will take time for India to reach the ability to provide a challenge to China in the Indian Ocean or even further out in the Strait of Malacca or the South China Sea. For that to happen, the Indian Navy will have to grow into a true blue-water fighting force, something it aspires to be with the buildup of a carrier force and a nuclear submarine fleet.¹⁵ So, while regional powers provide the muscle, the EU can provide the intellectual, diplomatic, and economic capability to balance the rapid growth of Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific.

Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Noah Barkin has suggested several ways to have a US–EU agreement to balance the economic and technological challenge posed by China. These include holding the Chinese to be accountable and transparent in their pursuit of the BRI, filing a joint complaint on Chinese misbehavior to the World Trade Organization, and the US and the EU working together to create a 5G network that rivals the one Huawei is putting in place.¹⁶ While such steps are necessary, they are akin to trying to put a finger in the dyke and to stem the economic and technological juggernaut that is China. Further, for those seeking to contain China, much in the same way that the West contained the Soviet Union in the Cold War, there seems to be a lack of understanding that the containment of the Soviet Union was not only done by the buildup of military weapons but also by the dispensing of economic assistance and helping develop countries across the world—and all this began with the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe. Where then does Europe fit in when searching for an economic policy to contain Chinese expansion?

Put simply, it is time for the US and the EU to work together to provide an alternative to the economic system that the Chinese are presenting as the rosy future for most of the world. With the BRI, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Program (RCEP)—for the Indo-Pacific—and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Chinese are seeking to create an alternative economic system in which they are the hegemonic power. The Chinese are able to do this because they have ambition, vision, and resources and, therefore, are willing to commit around a 1 trillion USD to the building of the BRI. They are also putting pressure on countries like India to adopt the Chinese version of 5G, since that would mean a huge market for China and a level of connectivity that would be difficult for the rest of the world to resist.

Given this fact, the US and the EU need to do three things immediately, and they have economic, scientific, and technological clout to bring this about: (1)

present the world with an alternative vision to the BRI and RCEP, (2) help build a Western 5G around Asia, and (3) take the lead in assisting with environmental cleanups in some of the most polluted countries in the world. None of these measures are military ones, but, in the long run, they will be the ones that transform the international system and help maintain Western influence and goodwill in the twenty-first century.

An alternative to RCEP would have the US and the EU join the Trans-Pacific Partnership and ask that India, as the second-most populous country in the world, be included as well. Rather than provide an alternative to the BRI the US-EU partnership could provide the technologies that add value to the infrastructure created by the Chinese. Thus, while China may be laying down fiber optics and 5G, American and European corporations can provide the software and services that would allow these nations to better integrate into the global economy. In doing so, it would give the countries that are concerned about growing Chinese influence through the BRI room to maneuver in the international economic system.

In the case of 5G, the key is to seek to put a Western network into countries like India, which are as suspicious of Chinese intentions as some of the countries in the West. If India, Japan, Korea, and Singapore were on a Western 5G network, it would counterbalance the power of the Chinese network and alleviate fears in Washington that the Chinese were technologically outstripping the West.

Finally, the pressing need for environmental cleanups in the non-Western world is something that a US-EU partnership would be well-suited to address. One of the silver linings of the COVID-19 lockdown of nations around the world is that pollution levels sank dramatically in many countries. This has led to the realization that living in a polluted society is not an inevitability but, instead, a bad choice that countries lived with because they felt they were helpless to change the state of affairs. A well thought out and funded environmental assistance program would have tremendous soft power, since it would show a West that is willing to counter the economically deterministic policies of China with a soft-power approach that cares for the global human condition. Such an approach would find a ready audience and willing participants among the environmentally conscious nations of Europe. All that is required is a vision for an alternative and more humanistic world order and the willingness to fund it.

To sum up, a militarized Europe is the thing of the past but a Europe that is willing to promote humanistic values and technological modernity could be a valuable ally in maintaining American influence in the international system.

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