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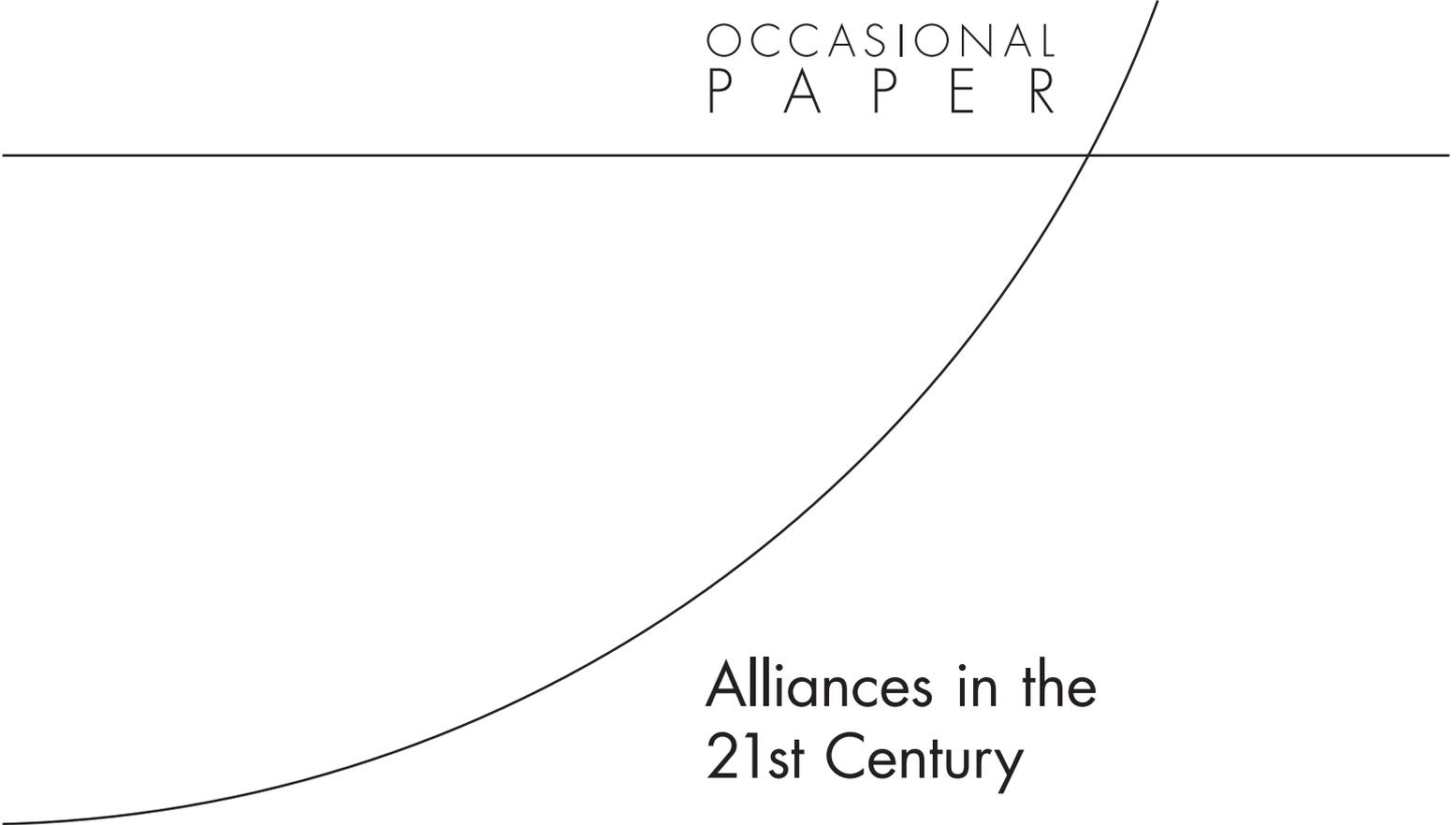
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Alliances in the 21st Century

Implications for the US-European
partnership

Jeremy Ghez

Supported by the French Ministry of Defence

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Preface

This paper, supported by the French Ministry of Defence's Delegation for Strategic Affairs (*Délégation aux Affaires stratégiques, DAS*), provides a categorization of alliances and partnerships. This categorization identifies the major thrusts bringing allies closer together and sheds light on the growing diversity of strategic partnerships and the purposes they fulfil. The paper argues that commonalities in political culture and in constructed identity can constitute a strategic asset for better coordination and greater predictability among allies – and thereby lead to the formation of “natural alliances”. The paper concludes by discussing implications for the transatlantic partnership.

The report should be of interest to students of international relations who are particularly interested in the topics of alliances and the transatlantic partnership. It can also offer food for thought to policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic and in regional institutions such as NATO and the European Union as they look to adapt the partnership to the new international landscape.

The paper draws from research published in 2010, called *The Enduring Partnership? The Transatlantic Community as a Natural Alliance*, which is referenced in the bibliography. This research was based on a literature review, data analysis and interviews with key stakeholders and observers of the transatlantic partnership. It lasted from 1 September 2007 until 1 June 2010.

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Summary

Determining what makes a 21st-century alliance strategic is the source of much confusion and many disagreements and misunderstandings between transatlantic partners. As a result, over the past two decades the latter have experienced difficulties in finding a clear consensus about the features of a strategic alliance. The subsequent tensions and frustrations among transatlantic partners suggest that the US-European relationship is undergoing a significant identity crisis in spite of the specific features that make it a unique and unprecedented relationship. Some observers go as far as to claim that excessive focus on these supposed commonalities in political culture and shared values have prevented European allies of the US from acting pragmatically in defence of well-defined and concrete interests. Like-mindedness may be nothing more than declaratory according to this view.

This paper offers a different perspective. It argues that a pragmatic approach to international affairs is not one that is necessarily and exclusively inspired by power considerations, economic ties and *realpolitik*. In fact, commonalities in political culture and in constructed identity can constitute a strategic asset for better coordination and greater predictability among allies. Enhanced awareness of these commonalities in political culture can help allies to maintain a high degree of cohesiveness and allow them to better coordinate their reactions – therefore leading to the formation of “natural alliances”. Finding a new blueprint for the alliance does not only entail focusing on tactical considerations. It should also lead transatlantic partners to consider the value-added nature of this common strategic narrative. This does not mean that traditional alliances, based on tactics and whose strategic usefulness has been widely documented and is intuitively straightforward, are outdated. But it does suggest that another dynamic, based on identities and which may have been muted by the Cold War, has the potential to play a more fundamental role in an uncertain landscape, in particular in redefining the purpose of the transatlantic alliance. There may therefore be more than one dynamic shaping alignments among states.

A categorization for alliances

As a result, a more rigorous categorization of alliances could be particularly helpful to better understand the major thrusts bringing allies closer together or driving them further apart, and to shed light on the growing diversity of strategic partnerships and the purposes they fulfil. Understanding the differences between the driving forces of alliances also has policy implications for the United States and European powers in the new strategic

landscape: rather than being a source of confusion, this diversity can potentially offer greater leverage to these countries, through an appropriate mix of alliances fulfilling different purposes within a broader strategy. But in order to reach these objectives, the concepts of “alliance” and “partnership” must be unpacked. The categorization that this paper offers draws a distinction between tactical, historical and natural alliances.

Tactical alliances are perhaps the most straightforward form of state alignments and the kind most students of international relations would think of initially. The primary purpose of a tactical alliance is to counter an immediate threat or adversary that has the potential to challenge a state’s most vital interests. Tactical alliances are instrumental and often opportunistic in nature as they allow states to address a pressing and urgent issue. Leaders usually justify them on the basis of conditions on the ground and by the imperatives of *realpolitik*. Historical instances include alliances in 19th-century Europe, the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of nonaggression signed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, as well as the relationships that Israel maintains with its Sunni neighbours and the United States with China.

The notion that some alliances are more resilient than others because they capitalize on a long historical tradition of cooperation is very intuitive. There is, therefore, a useful distinction to make between tactical and historical alliances. Historical alliances are enduring partnerships that sustain in spite of significant ruptures or changes in the international system. The structural features of such an alliance, which outlast time- or threat-specific contingencies, empower allies to sustain cooperation, relying on past successes as focal points to justify additional partnerships. The “shadow of the future” weighs in on a historical alliance because uncertainty about international prospects makes the partnership an attractive tool to hedge against a wide variety of scenarios. Historical allies tend to accept short-term compromise that may not be fully congruent with national interests, in the hope that they will obtain some benefits in the longer run. Such a trade-off is impossible within the framework of a tactical alliance. In fact, historical alliances constitute a heterogeneous set of partnerships by nature but offer state actors the possibility of guarding against a wide set of historical contingencies, as ruptures may weaken some of these partnerships and strengthen others. They differ from tactical alliances because of their ability to redefine their purpose in spite of a significant structural change in the international landscape that would have rendered a tactical alliance moot. An instance of a historical partnership that this paper discusses is the lasting relationship between Riyadh and Washington.

The concept of natural alliances goes beyond partners’ shared sense of history by additionally hypothesizing commonalities in political culture and in narratives about how the world works or *should* work. These commonalities adapt to the new landscape through a constant reconstruction of the identities of natural allies who seek to tell or retell history to better face the present and to adjust to the future. Existing ties and institutions that formalized the relationship allow the alliance to self-sustain and to strengthen over time. A natural alliance is therefore resilient and is likely to better resist exogenous shocks, though these may affect it in the short run. It does not exclude disagreements and tensions, but reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings in the long run. The US-European partnership offers an interesting case study that this paper analyzes at length.

Identifying natural allies

Commonalities do not only play a significant role in providing partners with a shared strategic blueprint for the future. They also have the potential to be a coordination device for natural allies who are then better able to coordinate their reactions to current international affairs and crises. As a result, in practice, if a set of countries are natural allies, one would expect: a) greater commonalities in terms of political culture relative to the rest of the world, and b) greater commonalities in terms of reactions to international crises relative to the rest of the world. Identifying natural allies therefore means measuring these commonalities between a set of potential partners and relative to a broad range of countries.

Two datasets and a statistical tool can help this measurement. The World Values Survey database offers an attractive operational tool in that regard by providing the answers to a wide range of questions that all relate to a country's political culture. The PEW Global Attitudes project offers various cross-country polls covering reactions to international crises across a wide set of nations since 2001. The aggregation of this project's data is indicative of commonalities in terms of the reaction of countries to current international affairs. Multidimensional scaling is a useful tool that provides a visual representation of differences and similarities between all countries sampled in a two-dimensional plot. The closer two countries appear to one another on the plot, the greater the correlation between the responses of their respective populations to the poll questions. Populations in countries appearing further apart gave responses that were dissimilar relative to the rest of the world. As a result, clusters of countries on the graphs would suggest greater commonalities in terms of political culture and in terms of reactions to international crises relative to the rest of the world.

When this approach is applied to transatlantic countries in comparison to other nations of the world, it is found that the US-European partnership has been a natural alliance since at least 1991, although there are four noteworthy caveats: (1) it is inaccurate to exclude New Zealand and Australia from this natural alliance, although they do not belong to the transatlantic community; (2) apparent societal shifts in Japan and South Korea since 2000 could further challenge the geographic denomination of the transatlantic community in time; (3) Turkey, a historical ally of fellow NATO partners, consistently displays greater commonalities with Muslim countries relative to Western countries; and (4) the extent to which Eastern European countries are part of this natural alliance is still unclear.

Policy implications

This paper argues that if strategists understand the different natures and drivers of alliances, they can gain greater leverage by finding an appropriate mix of alliances, each fulfilling a different purpose within a broader strategy. Evidence suggests that is not yet the case. For instance, a US-Chinese condominium may very well have replaced the transatlantic community in the psyche of some US policymakers, in spite of other objective economic indicators that point to the significant integration of the transatlantic economy. Yet, in the long run, calls for a "Bretton Woods II" proposal suggest that while there are ways for China and the United States to manage this interdependence bilaterally, the long-term and sustainable solution lies in the establishment of a multilateral system that would

provide the international economy with a new organizing framework. The United States would strongly increase its leverage and the credibility of its bargaining position towards Beijing if it included its natural European allies in the negotiations.

Evidence presented in this paper also suggests that Turkey is an undeniable outlier in the description of the international landscape. Ankara certainly fits the description of a historical partner of the United States and of Western Europe, yet it does not appear to be a natural ally of its transatlantic partners, according to the definition and the framework that this paper provides. Independent of the explanation that one favours to explain this paradox, this paper argues that the inability of Ankara and the European Union to reach a deal regarding Turkey's EU membership relates to a large extent to Europe's current institutional and identity crisis. The United States, Turkey and some European states such as the United Kingdom tend to consider the European Union as a historical endeavour uniting a set of historical partners. Other nations, especially continental powers such as France and Germany, tend to consider the European Union as an enterprise going beyond a shared sense of history and relying on a common – perhaps Christian – culture. These conflicting views on what the European project is – or should be – explain to a large extent the disagreements regarding Turkey's legitimate claims. In this sense, both Turkey and the European Union question each other on their respective identities and regional and global roles.

Finally, this paper argues that common values are not merely a political tool used by state leaders in need of consistency among allies. They are also a fundamental characteristic of the US-European partnership. However, the evidence also suggests that it would be artificial to limit this partnership and the standards, norms and values that it stands for to a regional reality, linking both sides of the Atlantic. This suggests that the debate over NATO becoming global should not only be about the increasingly international nature of the organization's missions, but also about the involvement of international partners, or even the NATO membership of Asian countries, given these proximities and the potential for a common strategic blueprint. This analysis provides the missing roadmap to start NATO's globalization process. In addition, institutional broadening of the alliance, beyond NATO's traditional concerns, and further political integration of the transatlantic countries would allow the latter to address the wide set of challenges that they face today, in particular those that relate to the management of the global commons.

An institutionalized EU-US partnership need not be an exclusive club seeking to balance non-Western countries, and it need not be formal either. A decentralized network could suffice in generating a strategic vision that would make the existence of a common blueprint among transatlantic partners official. Such an open-ended, non-exclusive club offers the most robust framework to preserve the model of cooperation and consultation at a time when there is significant temptation to revert to the 19th-century system of organized rivalries. In this sense, discussion of natural allies should not be understood as a confirmation of the potential for the “clash of civilizations” that Samuel Huntington described, but rather as a call to recognize the existing similarities between transatlantic partners that make this alliance undeniably different and that could be the foundation of a shared strategic blueprint. The current confusion about what makes an alliance strategic or “special” suggests that transatlantic allies have not yet recognized this difference, let alone taken action to draw all the benefits from the opportunity.

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1.1 **What makes an alliance “strategic” today?**

Determining what makes a 21st-century alliance strategic is the source of much confusion and many disagreements and misunderstandings between transatlantic partners. As a result, over the past two decades the latter have experienced difficulties in finding a clear consensus about the features of a strategic alliance.

For instance, Washington has always considered Turkey to be a strategic ally of the West – most notably because of Ankara’s membership of NATO – and a legitimate candidate for EU membership. Traditional European powers such as France and Germany do not refute the first statement regarding the strategic relationship between Turkey and the West. Yet what the United States has officially presented as an obvious and logical consequence of this strategic relationship – the legitimate aspiration of Turkey to enter the European Union – seems neither obvious nor logical to France and Germany, the organization’s two historical pillars.

Similarly, the United States’ European partners have warily observed President Obama seek new ties in uncharted territories, especially in Asia. Their fear is that the new international landscape has pushed the United States to reconsider the strategic significance of the European continent and that Washington will grant less importance to the voices of European capitals in their choices. This wariness may be merely the expression of Europe’s refusal to take note of its decline relative to the Asian continent. Yet it also suggests that the traditional European partners of the United States still consider themselves to be Washington’s most reliable allies in a complex international landscape that calls for more predictability and not necessarily for more diversity in partnerships.

More recently, this situation has also generated some tensions between the United States and individual European partners, alert to the growing importance of rival European allies of the United States. During a recent visit of the French president to Washington, Barack Obama stated that America does not have “a stronger friend and a stronger ally than Nicolas Sarkozy and the French people”.¹ This immediately triggered bitter comments from British observers who saw in Obama’s words an additional piece of evidence that Washington was downgrading their so-called “special relationship”.² However, the most vigilant observers of international relations noted that, far from being an exceptional

¹ Obama (2011).

² For example, see Mackay (2011); Shipman (2011); and Poirier (2011).

statement about the relationship that Washington maintains with a close ally, Obama's words – or their equivalents – have been repeatedly used by his and previous US administrations to characterize relations between the United States and United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Canada, Australia and Israel.³

1.2 Pillars of a new blueprint for the transatlantic partnership

These tensions and this frustration among transatlantic partners suggest that the US-European relationship is undergoing a significant identity crisis in spite of the specific features that make it a unique and unprecedented relationship.

In particular, the widely documented and accepted argument that this relationship is based on mutual interests, a shared sense of history and common values has led to a paradox: transatlantic partners appear to be at a loss when it comes to taking advantage of this uniqueness and adapting the partnership's foundation and institutions to the new century. Some observers go as far as to claim that excessive focus on these supposed commonalities in political culture and shared values have prevented European allies of the US from acting pragmatically in defence of well-defined and concrete interests.⁴ Like-mindedness may be nothing more than declaratory according to this view.

This paper offers a different perspective. It argues that a pragmatic approach to international affairs is not one that is necessarily and exclusively inspired by power considerations, economic ties and *realpolitik*. In fact, commonalities in political culture and in constructed identity can constitute a strategic asset for better coordination and greater predictability among allies. The political and social relationship between Western Europe and the United States that the 1941 Atlantic Charter institutionalized and which has been continuously updated ever since has produced a common strategic narrative. Enhanced awareness of these commonalities in political culture can help allies to maintain a high degree of cohesiveness and allow them to better coordinate their reactions – therefore leading to the formation of “natural alliances”. Finding a new blueprint for the alliance does not only entail focusing on tactical considerations. It should also lead transatlantic partners to consider the value-added nature of this common strategic narrative.

This does not mean that traditional alliances, based on tactics and whose strategic usefulness has been widely documented and is intuitively straightforward, are outdated. But it does suggest that another dynamic, based on identities and which may have been muted by the Cold War, has the potential to play a more fundamental role in an uncertain landscape. There may therefore be more than one dynamic shaping alignments among states.

³ For a detailed analysis, see Zakaria (2011).

⁴ For example, see Shapiro & Witney (2009).

1.3 The need for a rigorous categorization

The logic that would drive US officials to characterize France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, Jordan, Canada, Australia and Israel – and perhaps others – is straightforward: each of these countries plays a significant role in the United States’ alliance portfolio.

Yet these alliances do not follow the same logic, nor do they fulfil the same foreign policy objectives. In fact, the confusion and the subsequent misunderstandings and disagreements between transatlantic partners are all testament to the increasingly complex nature of alliances in an international landscape that seems constantly in flux and which requires states to hedge against a wide range of diffuse and uncertain risks. During the Cold War, the United States and Europe prioritized the security of NATO allies and a limited set of strategic partners in the containment of the Soviet threat. The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of a single, overriding and existential threat made the strategic differences between allies more salient, in particular because not all partnerships are fit to address the widening range of threats that the United States must tackle. However, this outcome did not lead to the disappearance of NATO or to the end of Washington’s privileged relationship with its European allies. Instead, it widened the United States’ horizons in terms of alliances. Washington now thinks in terms of NATO allies, major non-NATO allies and ad hoc, instrumental partnerships that are no less strategic in nature. Contrary to what European fears suggest, Washington’s European partners may still be as strategic as before. The challenge lies in understanding the more precise nature of the different ties between Washington and the rest of the world, including European capitals.

A more rigorous categorization of alliances could be particularly helpful to better understand the major thrusts bringing allies closer together or driving them further apart, and to shed light on the growing diversity of strategic partnerships and the purposes they fulfil. Understanding the differences between the driving forces of alliances also has policy implications for the United States and European powers in the new strategic landscape: rather than being a source of confusion, this diversity can potentially offer greater leverage to these countries, through an appropriate mix of alliances fulfilling different purposes within a broader strategy. But in order to reach these objectives, the concepts of “alliance” and “partnership” must be unpacked.

This paper seeks to develop a formal categorization of alliances by identifying three broad but revealing features of current alliances, namely their instrumental, their historical and their political and cultural motivations. The analysis is divided into three chapters: the first develops this categorization and describes the drivers of tactical, historical and natural partnerships; the second briefly describes a methodology that identifies natural allies – the type of alliances that may be the least understood – and applies it to the case of the transatlantic partnership and to NATO in particular; the final chapter explores the policy implications of this categorization and the existence of natural allies for the transatlantic partnership.

2.1 **Conflicting definitions**

Traditional definitions of the concepts of alliance and partnership tend to place emphasis on the existence of a common powerful rival, threat or adversary that drives states seeking balance closer together. These definitions cannot conceive of an alliance without the existence of a rival country or a threat, and they suggest that an alliance is unlikely to outlive the rival or threat it was designed to counter. In this reading of alliances, the relevance of these definitions in the post-Cold War landscape stems from the need for greater flexibility in a particularly uncertain environment. And thus, according to this view, ad hoc alliances will have the greatest ability to address a wide set of contingencies while allowing states to avoid burdensome entanglements that can be a source of tension.⁵

This stance continues to shape to a large extent alliances that are put together to tackle pressing and overriding issues. The “Coalition of the Willing” is perhaps the most recent and illustrative instance of an instrumental, ad hoc alliance meant to meet the particular end of toppling Saddam Hussein. Yet by reducing alliances to mere instruments of individual countries’ foreign policies, one cannot explain repetitive alignments in international relations and, more broadly, the resilience of some partnerships, including the transatlantic alliance and its most salient manifestation, NATO. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, defence pacts have tended to broaden and to include less narrow contingencies.⁶ Open-ended or stand-alone alliances that are not threat- or adversary-driven may therefore fulfil the strategic role of allowing states to hedge against growing global uncertainty. Paradoxically, the need for more flexible policies may lead states to seek greater predictability and less flexibility in their ties to other states. This can explain the persistence of alliances such as NATO and, more generally, the transatlantic partnership.

⁵ Rajan Menon defends this view. He argues (2007; p. 3–22) that US partnerships in Europe are a mere legacy of the Cold War and “have become impediments that inhibit creative strategic thinking at home, while infantilizing our partners who live under the American shadow”. He concludes that only “contingent alignments and specific coalitions created for particular ends” will lead to successful and efficient outcomes.

⁶ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita argues (2006; p. 530) that “in the nineteenth century, defence pacts were typically couched in very specific language that laid out exactly what circumstances had to arise before the alliance promise of mutual defence would be invoked. Today, defence pacts, such as NATO... are much broader, with few narrowing contingencies. Perhaps this broadening of defence pacts reflects the difficulties inherent in anticipating what might arise in a world with many more democratic governments that must be responsive to the changing wants of their constituents.”

The apparent contradiction between these two narratives on the effects of international uncertainty on state alignments stems from diverging definitions of alliances. In fact, repetitive alignments throughout the modern era have largely shaped the current systems – with an emphasis on the plural – of alliances and have led to extremely diverse outcomes in terms of nature of partnerships. Beyond the unique concepts of alliance and partnership lies a diverse set of realities. By shedding light on these realities, this paper seeks to unpack these concepts and to understand their influence in the current strategic landscape.

2.2 **A categorization of alliances**

A recent review of the theoretical literature in political science and economics presented in another piece of research uncovered three different types of alliances: tactical, historical and natural alliances.⁷ This section seeks to clarify the definitions and features of each of these as well as the links between them.

2.2.1 **Tactical alliances**

Tactical alliances are perhaps the most straightforward form of state alignments and the kind most students of international relations would think of initially. The primary purpose of a tactical alliance is to counter an immediate threat or adversary that has the potential to challenge a state's most vital interests. Tactical alliances are instrumental and often opportunistic in nature as they allow states to address a pressing and urgent issue. Leaders usually justify them on the basis of conditions on the ground and by the imperatives of *realpolitik*. The most revealing instances of this reality are offered by 19th-century Europe and World Wars I and II. For instance, the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of nonaggression signed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union is illustrative of tactical alliances. The degree of confusion and the lack of strategic analysis and foresight on the part of Western Europe led the Allied powers to underestimate the substantial geopolitical consequences of Hitler's annexation of Austria and Sudetenland. But Hitler's expansion in Eastern Europe was particularly worrisome to Stalin who saw in Nazi Germany and the Third Reich project a major threat to his country's territorial integrity. Stalin's proclivity for cold, amoral and strategic calculations provided the Soviet leader with foresight that contrasted with Western attitudes of the time and that justified an alliance with Hitler in spite of striking ideological differences. In this context, the Soviets considered the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as the appropriate tool to draw the contours of Eastern Europe and preserve their sphere of influence in the region; Hitler, meanwhile, thought of this improbable and temporary rapprochement as a strategic move to keep Stalin in check during his confrontation with Western democracies. Hitler's domination of Western Europe, as early as 1940, made the pact irrelevant.⁸

A strong geopolitical interest or the identification of a common threat to both countries' survival therefore helps to sustain tactical alliances. But once the interest changes or is redefined, or once the threat disappears, tactical alliances cannot persist. In fact, the

⁷ Ghez (2010).

⁸ Kissinger (1994), pp. 332–68.

paradox of tactical alliances is that even if they act as catalysts of tensions, they do not exclude a rapprochement between members of two different coalitions or the possibility of a quick collapse of an alliance. The current and implicit relationship between Israel and some Sunni countries – Saudi Arabia in particular – is a useful example: Iran’s potential acquisition of the nuclear bomb has represented an overriding threat driving former enemies closer together despite a relative status quo on the major topic of hostility, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Saudi authorities had arguably foreseen the coming challenge by making their own peace plan public as early as 2002 – that is, before the US intervention in Iraq. The subsequent fall of Saddam Hussein empowered Iran (where a majority of the population, 90 per cent, is Shia), which emerged as a major powerhouse of the region and only accelerated this improbable rapprochement. However, there is no evidence that this tactical alliance – which is based on the common objective of containing Iran’s influence in the region and countering its nuclear ambitions – could extend to other realms of cooperation or could be sustained if the Iranian threat disappeared.

Tactics should also be understood as part of a broader strategy. They are not necessarily or uniquely military in nature, even if they are often painted as such. In fact, tactical alliances are often the result of pragmatic reflections by leaders who are seeking to achieve short-term objectives that are part of a wider and longer-term strategy. For example, the current relationship between the United States and China is indicative of the complexities of coordination and tactics in the international realm. While some characterize the relationship as a “marriage of convenience” and therefore as a traditional tactical alliance,⁹ others consider that it displays the features of a cold war in which a durable entente will never be possible in spite of temporary truces.¹⁰ But the truly atypical aspect of this relationship lies in the fact that its primary objective is to manage the extreme state of economic interdependence – and its principal result, commonly referred to as “global imbalances” – through a hypothetical G2 and through the so-called strategic dialogue. Admittedly, the realms in which US and Chinese powers are rivals far exceed those in which they cooperate. Divergent approaches to the Copenhagen summit in December 2009 and tensions between Google and Beijing illustrate the frailty of the relationship. Nevertheless, attempts to manage extreme interdependence through a form of institutionalization of the partnership suggest that both powers could consider favouring, to some extent, a relationship based on common interests and objectives rather than on systematic rivalry.

It is noteworthy that a tactical rapprochement does not require a sense of friendship or sympathy or the total absence of tensions prior to the alliance. Neither does it exclude hostility in the future. While they are opportunistic in design and are valued as such by diplomats, the true efficiency of tactical alliances lies in the extent to which they improve the overall strategic position of a country with predefined long-term goals.

⁹ For example, see Karabell (2009).

¹⁰ Admittedly, ambiguity and subtlety always seem to have played a crucial tactical role in the US-Chinese relationship. Nixon’s triangular approach during the Cold War and the subsequent rapprochement with Beijing in order to further isolate Moscow had already hinted the ambiguous nature of the relationship that hostility and rivalry could not characterize alone. See Kissinger (1994), p. 703–32.

2.2.2 Historical alliances

The notion that some alliances are more resilient than others because they capitalize on a long historical tradition of cooperation is very intuitive. For instance, the claim that the US-Saudi alliance is strategic not merely because it is tactical but also because it relies on a long tradition of cooperation is straightforward. The partnership was first formalized by President Roosevelt and King Abdul-Aziz on the USS *Quincy* at Great Bitter Lake in Egypt in February 1945. In exchange for a continuous supply of oil from Saudi Arabia, Roosevelt guaranteed the kingdom's long-term security. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity, the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the fall of Saddam Hussein, though they profoundly changed the strategic landscape in which Saudi Arabia operates, never challenged the foundations of the initial partnership. The two countries have continuously reinvented the purpose of the alliance despite ruptures in the international system. The repeated interactions over time have strengthened the partnership and have allowed cooperation to extend to other dimensions. In addition, the alliance has displayed a remarkable resilience in spite of strong disagreements between the United States and Saudi Arabia on issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and Iraq. The gratifications that Saudi Arabia receives beyond these disagreements have proven to have more weight in their strategic calculus. This is not to say that future contingencies and ruptures will not challenge the partnership's foundation.

There is, therefore, a useful distinction to make between tactical and historical alliances. Historical alliances are enduring partnerships that sustain in spite of significant ruptures or changes in the international system. The structural features of such an alliance, which outlast time- or threat-specific contingencies, empower allies to sustain cooperation, relying on past successes as focal points to justify additional partnerships. The "shadow of the future" weighs in on a historical alliance because uncertainty about international prospects makes the partnership an attractive tool to hedge against a wide variety of scenarios. Historical allies tend to accept short-term compromise that may not be fully congruent with national interests, in the hope that they will obtain some benefits in the longer run. Such a trade-off is impossible within the framework of a tactical alliance.

Very different historical contingencies can lead to the emergence of historical alliances. While the US-Saudi alliance emerged with a pragmatic agreement between two leaders, the basis of the US-Japanese and the US-German alliances was, paradoxically, a military occupation that followed a very violent conflict. Regime changes in Japan and Germany, as well as substantial aid on the part of the United States, allowed these two partnerships to sustain over time. An additional distinction can be made between historical alliances that solely rely on a sense of shared history – like the US-Saudi relationship – and those that also rely on an institutional dimension like commonalities of regime types. The US-Japanese and US-South Korean relationships arguably obey that institutional and historical logic. The variety of these historical alliances suggests that countries can diversify their alliance portfolio by maintaining different types of alliances *and* by building long-term relationships that are based on different logics.

Historical alliances constitute a heterogeneous set of partnerships by nature but offer state actors the possibility of guarding against a wide set of historical contingencies, as ruptures

may weaken some of these partnerships and strengthen others. They differ from tactical alliances because of their ability to redefine their purpose in spite of a significant structural change in the international landscape that would have rendered a tactical alliance moot.

2.2.3 Natural alliances

The concept of natural alliances goes beyond partners' shared sense of history by additionally hypothesizing commonalities in political culture and in narratives about how the world works or *should* work. These commonalities adapt to the new landscape through a constant reconstruction of the identities of natural allies who seek to tell or retell history to better face the present and to adjust to the future. Existing ties and institutions that formalized the relationship allow the alliance to self-sustain and to strengthen over time. A natural alliance is therefore resilient and is likely to better resist exogenous shocks, though these may affect it in the short run. It does not exclude disagreements and tensions, but reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings in the long run.

The US-European partnership offers an interesting case study. Historical ties as well as America's involvement in the European continent throughout the 20th century suggest that the US-European relationship is a historical partnership. But the alliance seems to go well beyond a mere sense of shared history and displays what can be characterized as a shared intellectual DNA. The different waves of European migration to the United States since the early 17th century and, conversely, the United States' political influence on Europe through its interventions in the two World Wars, in the reconstruction of the continent after World War II, and during the Cold War, have been two significant components in the two parties' constructed identity.¹¹ In this regard, the institutionalization of the relationship between the two partners, through the Bretton Woods agreement and especially through the creation of NATO, was at the basis of the grand bargain between the United States and Western Europe. Calls for a "Bretton Woods II", for reform of the United Nations Security Council and International Monetary Fund, and for continued discussions regarding NATO's global role seem to suggest the quasi-universal dimension of these references. In particular, the formalization of the partnership and the resulting institutions have emerged as strategic assets that introduce some predictability among allies in a strategic landscape characterized by deep uncertainty.

The extent to which this process is indicative of the future resilience of the partnership will be a true test of the notion of natural alliances. However, from a historical perspective it is noteworthy that international powers have traditionally been concerned with the "healthiness" of the international system, as Metternich was in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat, or as the United States was in the aftermath of World War II and in the early stages of the Cold War.¹² In other words, the realist imperative, which addresses the most expedient threats to a nation's interests through a set of short-term strategies and tactical alliances, is not the only driver of a country's foreign policy. In the long run, a deeper and more diffuse force – a "liberal" imperative – leads an international power to take note of

¹¹ Author's interviews with key NATO and EU officials as well as policy analysts (Brussels, Belgium, and Paris, France, September to October, 2009).

¹² NSC-68 is an illustrative example. See National Security Council (1950).

major sources of uncertainty and the need to hedge against future and potentially harmful contingencies. The liberal imperative requires building partnerships that go beyond serving a country's short-term objectives and tactics. It entails some homogeneity across actors sharing a similar strategic blueprint for the future. Major crises or the immediate aftermath of a significant conflict offer major international powers and institutions the opportunity to overhaul the structure of the international system so as to correct previous flaws and introduce some predictability and order into it.¹³ On both sides of the Atlantic, the US-European partnership, to the extent that its stakeholders can rely on a common strategic blueprint for the future, may serve this exact purpose and has the potential to confirm the relevance of natural alliances in the current and uncertain landscape.

2.2.4 **Overlapping and changing alliances**

Alliances are all strategic in nature. In fact, there is no necessary ranking between the three different types of alliances described above. Tactics are not the sole expression of the pragmatism of states, especially because history and commonalities in political culture, by introducing some predictability in international relations, can also be at the heart of a strategic approach to an international issue. Similarly, these dynamics are not necessarily exclusive. A natural alliance may also rely on a historical component and be at times justified by tactics. The advantage of categorizing alliances lies in distinguishing between the three potential layers of state cooperation, which can enhance the accuracy of predictions regarding their long-term sustainability.¹⁴

In addition, the nature of an alliance may evolve over time. The example of the strong tactical alliance between Syria and Iran is particularly illustrative. In many ways, this axis is instrumental and opportunistic as it ties two regimes which do not have particularly strong allies otherwise. In addition, despite the religious kinship that has motivated the relationship since its inception on the Iranian side, Syria has a long tradition of secularism and considered such religious ties in a pragmatic and instrumental way rather than in a dogmatic one. Recent events in the region, including the Iran-Iraq war and the fall of Saddam Hussein, have not profoundly changed the terms of this alliance since Iraq was a common enemy. The rise of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon could affect the overall distribution of power in the region, especially to the detriment of Syria, but has not done

¹³ Ikenberry (2000).

¹⁴ This distinction can also allow us to assess the effects of misperceptions of the nature of an alliance. There are potential diverging views of an alliance, even among states that constitute it. If one state considers an alliance – or even a potential alliance – as natural while the other considers it as merely tactical, this can help explain state miscalculations without abandoning the assumption of state rationality. The instance of the Anglo-German relationship at the end of the nineteenth century is particularly illustrative from this point of view. Bismarck considered that a war between the two countries was inconceivable. Emperor William II not only found such a war impossible but also yearned for an alliance with United Kingdom. Such an alliance with autocratic Germany was unthinkable on the British side because it would have involved an open-ended military alliance that British leaders abhorred at the time, and they suspected that Germany would obtain a strategic edge on the continent and upset the balance of power that London valued greatly. In reality, throughout the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom had never considered its support or even its neutrality towards Germany on grounds other than tactical ones. This made a long-term rapprochement between United Kingdom and Germany impossible, most notably because Germany overestimated the benefits that the British would associate with such a partnership and was too demanding in their bargain. See Kissinger (1994), pp. 180–88; Dehio (1963), pp. 219–20; and Hoborn (1951), pp. 45–52.

so in a way that has questioned this partnership yet. The real challenge to this solid Damascus-Tehran axis could come from a rapprochement between Syria and Israel through a resolution of the Golan Heights issue or, more broadly, from a rapprochement between Syria – where a majority of the population is Sunni even if the ruling El-Assad family is Alawite, an offshoot of Shia Islam – and its Sunni neighbours. Conversely, a softening of relations between Iran and the West on the nuclear issue could potentially make the Syria-Iran alliance useless or irrelevant for Tehran.¹⁵ In other words, the continuation of the Damascus-Tehran axis in spite of significant structural ruptures in the international landscape would suggest that the partnership's motivation has gone beyond tactical considerations. It would thus become a historical partnership.

2.3 **Diverse natures of alliances**

The underlying question that this categorization of partnerships sets lies in finding a possible “alliance mix” similar to the right “policy mix” that economic policymakers often seek – by combining fiscal and monetary policies for instance – to reach their objectives. In other words, can tactical, historical and natural alliances be considered as strategic complements in a country's alliance portfolio? Such strategic complements between these different dynamics can have a significant impact in terms of foreign policy outcomes. The next chapter seeks to ascertain which states of the transatlantic partnership fit the definition of natural allies, and the final chapter discusses the issue of finding an effective “alliance mix.”

¹⁵ For additional details, see Wehrey et al. (2009).

Commonalities in terms of political culture and identity are at the heart of a natural alliance, as the previous chapter discussed. These commonalities do not only play a significant role in providing partners with a shared strategic blueprint for the future. They also have the potential to be a coordination device for natural allies who are then better able to coordinate their reactions to current international affairs and crises.¹⁶ As a result, in practice, if a set of countries are natural allies, one would expect: a) greater commonalities in terms of political culture relative to the rest of the world, and b) greater commonalities in terms of reactions to international crises relative to the rest of the world. There is no necessary causal relationship between these two components but just a mere correlation – countries displaying greater commonalities in terms of political culture also display greater commonalities in terms of reactions to international crises at the same time.

Identifying natural allies therefore means measuring these commonalities between a set of potential partners and relative to a broad range of countries. This chapter describes the data and the tool used to conduct this measurement and applies the approach to countries in the transatlantic community.

3.1 **An approach to measuring commonalities**

Political culture is the set of values and beliefs about political systems, practices and standards that a population considers appropriate and through which a country's elite and policymakers interpret the threats and opportunities of the international strategic landscape. Describing several national political cultures and comparing them requires an

¹⁶ There is an interesting analogy to be made with Thomas Schelling's story of the husband and the wife lost in a mall. Schelling claims that the spouses will have an easier time solving what game theorists would characterize as a multiple equilibria game compared to mathematicians, in particular because they share the same intellectual software that plays the role of a coordination device in this case. In Schelling's own words, "People *can* often concert their intentions or expectations with others if each knows that the other is trying to do the same. Most situations – perhaps every situation for people who are practiced at this kind of game – provide some clue for coordinating behavior, some focal point for each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do. Finding the key, or rather finding *a* key – any key that is mutually recognized as the key becomes *the* key – may depend on imagination more than on logic; it may depend on analogy, precedent, accidental arrangement, symmetry, aesthetic or geometric configuration, casuistic reasoning, and who the parties are and what they know about each other." The argument about natural alliances is therefore less about bloodlines or kinship and more about like-mindedness. Schelling (1957; 1963, pp. 21–22).

extremely meticulous and time-consuming effort. Similarly, while measuring commonalities in terms of reactions to current international affairs is an easier task because these reactions are less complex to define, making multilateral comparisons in an informative way can still be challenging when the sample of countries is large.

Two datasets and a statistical tool offer a viable alternative to this issue. The World Values Survey database¹⁷ offers an attractive operational tool in that regard by providing the answers to a wide range of questions that all relate to a country's political culture. Although it does not represent all aspects of the country's political culture, aggregating the data offers the opportunity to make comparisons across countries and measure similarities and differences among them. The PEW Global Attitudes project offers various cross-country polls covering reactions to international crises across a wide set of nations since 2001.¹⁸ The aggregation of the data that this project offers is indicative of commonalities in terms of the reaction of countries to current international affairs.

Multidimensional scaling is a useful tool in this context as it aggregates the relevant information and provides a visual representation of differences and similarities between all countries sampled in a two-dimensional plot.¹⁹ The closer two countries appear to one another on the plot, the greater the correlation²⁰ between the responses of their respective populations to the poll questions. Populations in countries appearing further apart gave responses that were dissimilar – that is to say, displaying a lower correlation coefficient – relative to the rest of the world.²¹

This approach helps us ascertain the extent to which a set of countries constitutes a natural alliance. One would expect to see such countries clustering in the graphs, as this would suggest greater commonalities in terms of political culture and in terms of reactions to international crises relative to the rest of the world. The next part of this chapter applies this approach to the transatlantic partnership.

3.2 The transatlantic partnership as a natural alliance?

An application of this approach, relying on the World Values Survey data since 1981 and the PEW data since 2001, to countries of the transatlantic partnership suggests that the US and non-Communist Europe constituted a political community since 1981 and a natural alliance since at least 2001 (in spite of some specific and noteworthy caveats and in spite of the fact that the cluster's boundary becomes increasingly blurry). The multidimensional scaling plots are presented in the Appendix.

¹⁷ Especially categories E, F and G of the database. For a broader description of the data, see Ghez (2010).

¹⁸ The fact that these data are only available starting in 2001 means that establishing whether or not an alliance is natural can only be possible during or after that year.

¹⁹ I conduct multidimensional scaling using the following software and reference: Borgatti, Everett & Freeman (2002); Handwerker & Borgatti (1998).

²⁰ Correlation is the measure for similarity that multidimensional scaling uses in this case.

²¹ For a multidimensional scaling user guide and a more in-depth discussion of the advantages and the pitfalls of this approach, see Ghez (2010), Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

Commonalities in terms of political culture, especially when measured using the category of the World Values Survey that focuses on politics and society, are highly significant between the United States, its NATO partners and non-NATO and non-Communist European countries as well. Figures 1 and 2 in the Appendix provide an illustration of these realities for 1989–93 and 1999–2004 respectively. Starting in 2001 – the beginning of the PEW project – the data suggests that these commonalities correlate with similarities in reactions to international crises that are greater relative to those between the United States and other countries of the world, as shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5. These findings suggest that the United States and Western European countries are natural allies.

Four caveats are also informative – perhaps even more so than the previous conclusions. Firstly, since 1981 and in each instance they are included in a sample, both Australia and New Zealand consistently display comparable levels of commonalities with the United States relative to Washington’s European allies.²² Secondly, in the same vein (though this trend is more recent), Japan and South Korea have increasingly displayed greater commonalities with the United States since 2000 as Figures 3, 4 and 5 suggest. While the drivers of these two caveats may be quite intuitive, they also suggest that it would be artificial to limit the existence of the political community and natural alliance in question to the shores of the Atlantic. Thirdly, and in contrast to the first two caveats, Turkey is a consistent outlier compared to the rest of its transatlantic and NATO partners, displaying greater commonalities with fellow Muslim countries relative to its European partners (according to Figures 3, 4 and 5). Turkey certainly fits the description of a historical ally of the United States and of European countries, but does not appear to fit the definition of a natural ally of this set of countries. Lastly, the extent to which Eastern European countries of the Communist bloc are part of the natural alliance is an open question. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have displayed increasing commonalities with Western Europe and the United States relative to other European partners – as Figure 3 suggests – while other Eastern European countries still seem distant. In this specific case, time and continued political and economic integration through NATO and the European Union may lead to these differences shrinking. The evidence suggests though that these nations do not currently fit the description of natural allies of the United States and Western Europe.

The next chapter discusses the policy implications of these findings.

²² Figure 4 in the Appendix illustrates this reality for Australia. For other illustrations, including for New Zealand, see Ghez (2010), Appendix H and Appendix J.

The analysis presented in this paper suggests that unpacking the concept of alliances can shed light on the different drivers of state alignments. In particular, applying this to the transatlantic community, several sets of policy implications can be drawn which can alleviate the consequences of the confusion and the disagreements that this paper began by describing. This chapter will focus on three specific policy implications: finding the right alliance mix in the current international landscape, the Turkish enigma and its meaning for the current European institutional crisis, and the future of the US-European alliance.

4.1 **Finding the right alliance mix and addressing the Asian challenge**

As the introduction suggested, the diversity of alliances should not be a source of confusion if the different natures and drivers of state alignments are properly understood. In fact, if strategists understand these different natures and drivers, they can gain greater leverage by finding an appropriate mix of alliances, each fulfilling a different purpose within a broader strategy.

Washington's ability to manage the extreme state of financial interdependence with Beijing is illustrative from this standpoint. A US-Chinese condominium may very well have replaced the transatlantic community in the psyche of some US policymakers, in spite of other objective economic indicators that point to the significant integration of the transatlantic economy.²³ The explanation for this shift in the psyche of US policymakers is intuitive and straightforward: the potential for interdependence to shape the future financial architecture of the international system as well as the geopolitical relationship between Beijing and Washington is significant in the short run. The threats associated with a failure to efficiently manage this extreme state of economic interdependence override other considerations, in particular those that relate to adapting the international financial system to the new economic and financial landscape.

Nevertheless, in the medium and in the long term, calls for a "Bretton Woods II" proposal suggest that while there are ways for China and the United States to manage this interdependence bilaterally, the long-term and sustainable solution lies in the establishment of a multilateral system that would provide the international economy with a new organizing framework. It seems very hard to conceive that a G2, composed merely of China and the United States – and whose existence and relevance is put into question by

²³ For example, see Hamilton & Quinlan (2011).

Chinese authorities themselves – would be able to generate an agreement and the adherence of the rest of the world. In particular, the United States would strongly increase its leverage and the credibility of its bargaining position towards Beijing if it included its natural European allies in the negotiations. Joint pressures and incentives from the United States and European countries will constitute a far more efficient strategy to convince Beijing to adapt the current international system based on free markets and political liberalism. In other words, a US strategy seeking to exploit the benefits of an alliance mix would rely on a tactical alliance with Beijing to manage extreme interdependence and on a natural alliance with its European partners to preserve the features of the international system that Washington considers vital in the long run.

It is noteworthy that this path is not the one that has been taken by the Obama administration during the summit of Copenhagen or during other US-European summits. The significance of Asia in the agenda of the current administration is also justified in many respects, most notably because of the size of the stakes involved in the short run in the region. But striking the right “alliance mix” would mean for Washington considering the diversity of the alliances that the United States maintains so as to gain greater leverage and credibility. In fact, a strategy based on the combination of a tactical alliance with Beijing and a natural alliance with European countries is likely to yield greater benefits than a strategy based on either one of these relationships exclusively. This observation is particularly true in the framework of negotiations regarding a “Bretton Woods II” agreement but is also applicable to issues that relate to the management of global commons, such as the environment, access to space, and free transit in the seas and the cyber domain.

4.2 **The Turkish enigma and the European institutional crisis**

Turkey is an undeniable outlier in the description of the international landscape that the previous chapter provided. Ankara certainly fits the description of a historical partner of the United States and of Western Europe: the country is a steadfast NATO ally and its relationship to the organization has not yet been challenged by significant ruptures in the international system. In this context, what do Turkey’s recent policy shifts in its region, the implementation of what is known as the “zero-problem foreign policy” and its widely documented effects entail?²⁴ One can offer two fundamental readings in the light of the previous discussion.

A first narrative points to the overriding threat that the Soviet Union represented to Turkey. Because this threat was existential in many respects, it muted the differences in terms of political culture and identity between Turkey and its other NATO allies. According to this view, these differences were always significant but less relevant in the Cold War era. The most recent shifts of Turkey’s foreign policy result from the end of the Cold War and the greater leverage Ankara has to express these differences. This view suggests that natural alliances are particularly important in a post-Cold War setting given the more diffuse nature of the threats that major powers must face.

²⁴ For a detailed explanation of this strategy, see Davutoglu (2010). For a discussion of the effects of this strategy, see, for instance, *The Economist* (2010).

The second narrative hypothesizes that these differences were not always significant but that the end of the Cold War and Turkey's inability to access EU membership led the country to rethink its regional and international role. In other words, Ankara reconstructed its identity to retell its past – and grant, once again, a greater share to its Ottoman past – in order to better adapt to the current and changing landscape. This view explains the most recent shifts of Turkish foreign policy as relying on the idea of the reconstruction of Turkish identity. It strengthens the notion that Turkey is not a natural ally of the West but does not inform nor change Ankara's status as a historical partner.

In reality, their diverging interpretations of the Turkish reality notwithstanding, these two narratives suggest that the inability of Ankara and the European Union to reach a deal regarding Turkey's EU membership relates to a large extent to Europe's current institutional and identity crisis. The United States, Turkey and some European states such as the United Kingdom tend to consider the European Union as a historical endeavour uniting a set of historical partners. Other nations, especially continental powers such as France and Germany, tend to consider the European Union as an enterprise going beyond a shared sense of history and relying on a common – perhaps Christian – culture. These conflicting views on what the European project is – or should be – explain to a large extent the disagreements regarding Turkey's legitimate claims. In this sense, both Turkey and the European Union question each other on their respective identities and regional and global roles.

4.3 **The future of a regional partnership: towards institutional broadening?**

Common values are not merely a political tool used by state leaders in need of consistency among allies. They are also a fundamental characteristic of the US-European partnership, as the evidence presented above suggests. However, the evidence also suggests that it would be artificial to limit this partnership and the standards, norms and values that it stands for to a regional reality, linking both sides of the Atlantic. In particular, Asian countries such as Australia, New Zealand and more recently Japan and South Korea display the same features as Western European countries do relative to the United States. This suggests that the debate over NATO becoming global should not only be about the increasingly international nature of the organization's missions. To some extent, NATO's prolonged presence in Afghanistan has solved this debate. This discussion also suggests that NATO could consider involving international partners, or even allowing Asian countries into NATO, given these proximities and the potential for a common strategic blueprint. The argument has been made elsewhere²⁵; the current analysis provides the missing roadmap to start NATO's globalization process.

More generally, the US-European partnership has gone beyond the mere military realm, as the previous discussion of the calls for a "Bretton Woods II" suggested. As a result, institutional broadening of the alliance, beyond NATO's traditional concerns, and further political integration of the transatlantic countries would allow the latter to address the wide set of challenges that they face today, in particular those that relate to the management of

²⁵ For example, see Daalder & Goldgeier (2006).

the global commons. In the context of a profound economic and systemic crisis, further integration would also enable transatlantic partners to reaffirm the virtues of an international system based on multilateralism, free markets and political freedom. It would provide transatlantic partners with the ability to manage their relationships with their fellow partners.

In particular, if European countries want to bind the United States to multilateralism and push Washington to pay greater attention to European points of views, it is in their interest to join a multilateral forum or consultation mechanism in which the United States will participate and in which they will have greater bargaining power. Conversely, US policymakers often point to Europe's lack of strategic thought and consistency across a wide set of issues. The United States will have greater leverage to increase burden sharing in exchange for greater consultation. More profoundly, such a forum could help participants develop a more precise and better-defined strategic vision for the future, which in turn will allow them to better coordinate and to better manage their disagreements.

An institutionalized EU-US partnership need not be an exclusive club seeking to balance non-Western countries, and it need not be formal either. For instance, Mark Leonard once described the European Union as “a decentralized network that exists to serve its member-states” – a view which arguably fits the traditional British description of the organization.²⁶ Such a decentralized network could suffice in generating a strategic vision that would make the existence of a common blueprint among transatlantic partners official. If this network is successful in generating an alternative to which other countries of the world could subscribe, there is no evidence that its creation would result in a confrontation with emerging political powers from Latin America, Asia or the Middle East. This open-ended, non-exclusive club offers the most robust framework to preserve the model of cooperation and consultation at a time when there is significant temptation to revert to the 19th-century system of organized rivalries.²⁷

In this sense, discussion of natural allies should not be understood as a confirmation of the potential for the “clash of civilizations” that Samuel Huntington described,²⁸ but rather as a call to recognize the existing similarities between transatlantic partners that make this alliance undeniably different and that could be the foundation of a shared strategic blueprint. The current confusion about what makes an alliance strategic or “special”, which the first section of this paper described, suggests that transatlantic allies have not yet recognized this difference, let alone taken action to draw all the benefits from the opportunity.

²⁶ Leonard (2005).

²⁷ For example, see Simón & Rogers (2010).

²⁸ Huntington (1996b).

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Identifying natural partners in the transatlantic community

This appendix presents the five graphs on which the analysis in Chapter 3 is based.

The first two plots are based on data drawn from the World Values Survey, using the online data analysis tools.²⁹ There were in total five different waves for this survey: 1981–84, 1989–93, 1994–99, 1999–2004 and 2005–08. The two plots are based on the second and fourth waves respectively. Three of the database’s seven categories of variables were used. The first category is “Politics and Society” (Category E). It regroups a set of variables that is the most straightforward descriptor of a country’s political culture. In this category, questions explore what respondents consider to be a legitimate political approach to issues and appropriate forms of actions. In the later waves of the survey, starting with the second one, additional questions, relating to societal governance and weighting the struggle between conservative and liberal forces, increase the disposable information on the country’s political culture. The last two waves of the survey include perceptions of democracy, poverty, immigration and foreign countries.

The “Religion” (Category F) category might almost be considered as a misnomer, as it relates more to what Huntington once called the “separation of spiritual and temporal authority”.³⁰ Such a struggle, which translates into different roles for religion in society, also shapes a country’s political culture. In commentaries and cross-country comparisons of Europe and the United States, this religious feature often stands out as a defining difference. Europeans have established a strict separation between religion and “secularist” state. In the United States, policymakers designed the separation of church and state as a safeguard against religious persecution – and thus as a guarantee of freedom to practice any religion of one’s choosing – rather than a means to completely eliminate religious influence in society. Religious denomination – on which Huntington concentrated³¹ – and the actual importance and influence of religion in society may therefore be of equal

²⁹ World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis. As of 24 May 2011:
<http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAanalyze.jsp>

³⁰ Huntington (1996a).

³¹ Huntington states (1996b, p. 42) that “of all the objective elements which define civilizations... the most important usually is religion, as the Athenians emphasized. To a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world’s great religions; and people who share ethnicity and language but differ in religion may slaughter each other, as happened in Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia and the Subcontinent.”

importance. As a result, in an analysis and comparison of political cultures, the religious dimension plays a fundamental role.

Very much like the variables of the “Religion” category, variables included in the “National Identity” (Category G) group can potentially point to major differences across societies in the transatlantic community. Questions in this category – which is the most succinct of the database – relate to the relationships individuals maintain with their countries, regions and localities and the degree to which they are nationalistic.³²

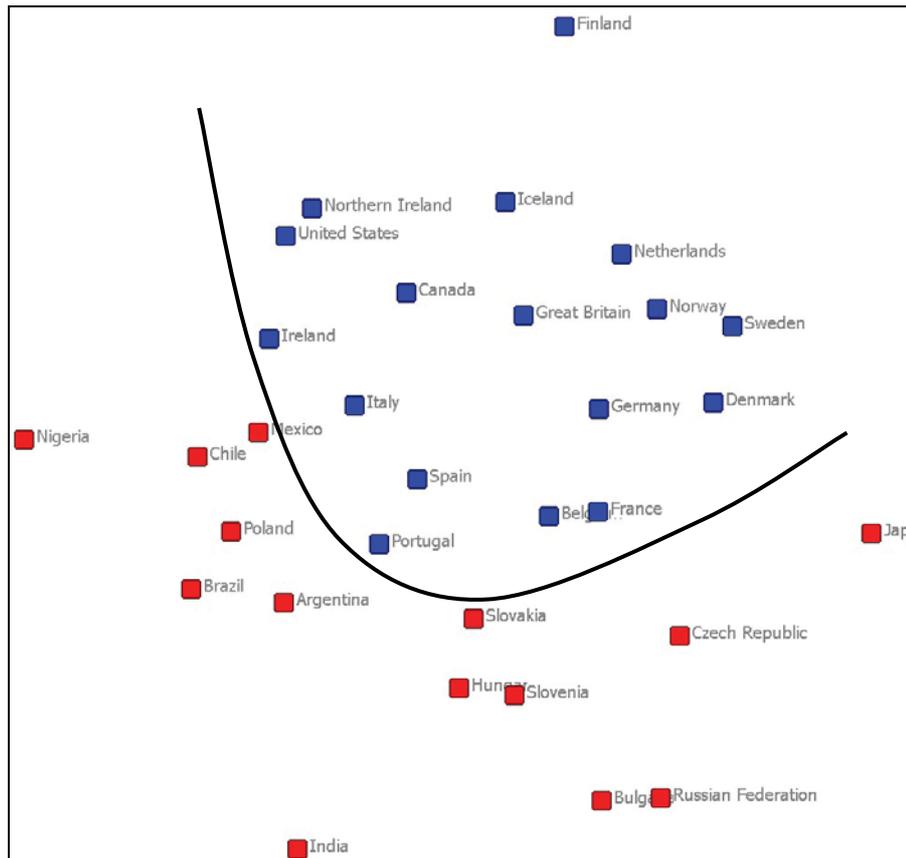


Figure 1. World Values Survey, 1989-93

³² For more information on the specific questions used in both of the plots, see Ghez (2010), Chapter 4 and Appendices G and H.

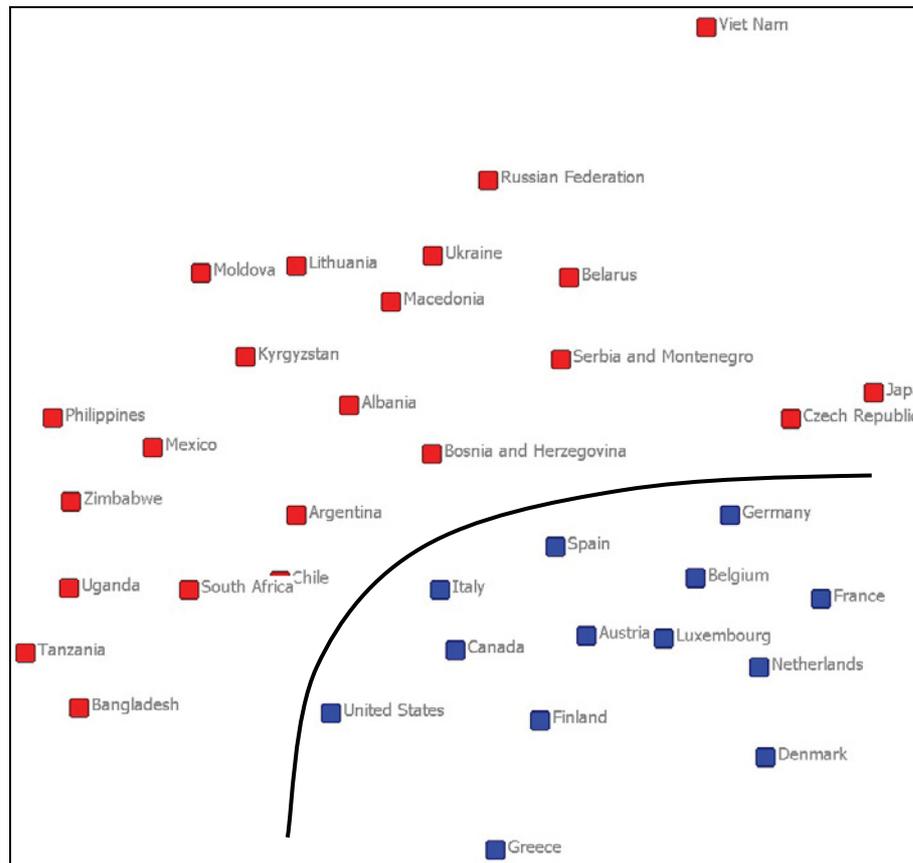


Figure 2. World Values Survey, 1999–2004

The last three plots are based on polls drawn from the PEW Global Attitudes project, which has administered a series of cross-country surveys since 2001. The questions in these polls address the reactions and attitudes towards current international affairs, international crises and issues relating to outlook and the global commons. Data were drawn from the PEW Global Attitudes project website for different surveys between 2001 and 2009.³³ The next three plots are based on a set of polls administered in 2002, 2003 and 2006.³⁴

³³ See Pew Global Attitudes Project, Survey Reports. As of 24 May 2011: <http://pewglobal.org/category/survey-reports>

³⁴ See Pew Global Attitudes Project (2002; 2003; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c). For more information on the specific questions used in both of the plots, see Ghez (2010), Chapter 4 and Appendices I and J.

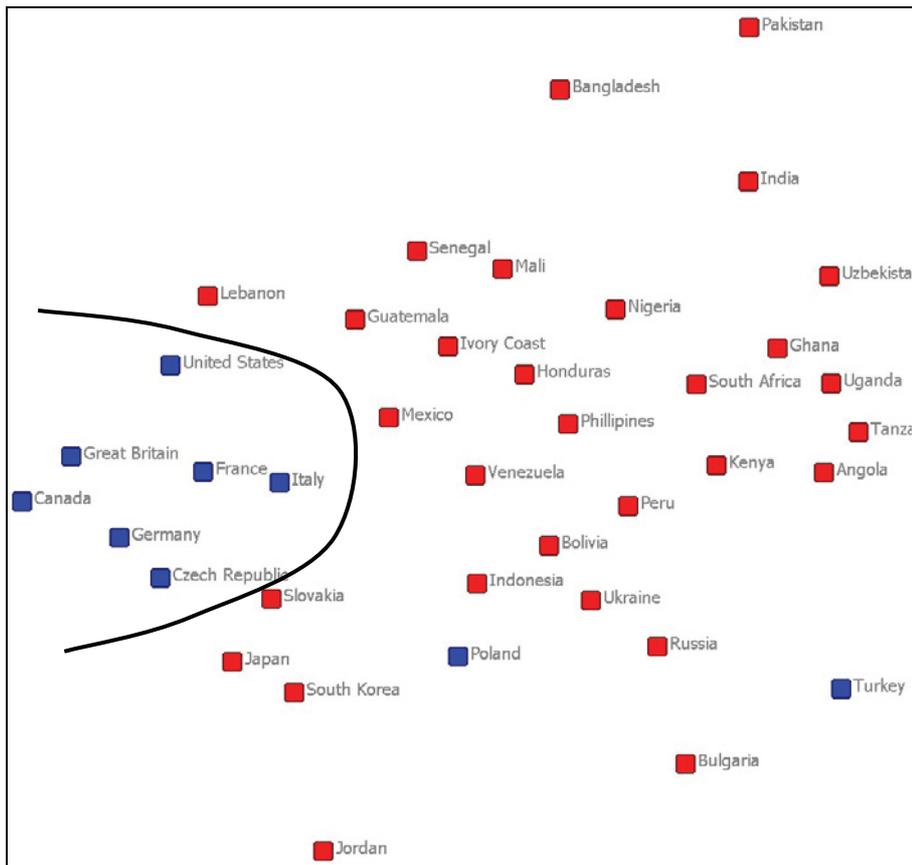


Figure 3. What the World Thinks (PEW), 2002

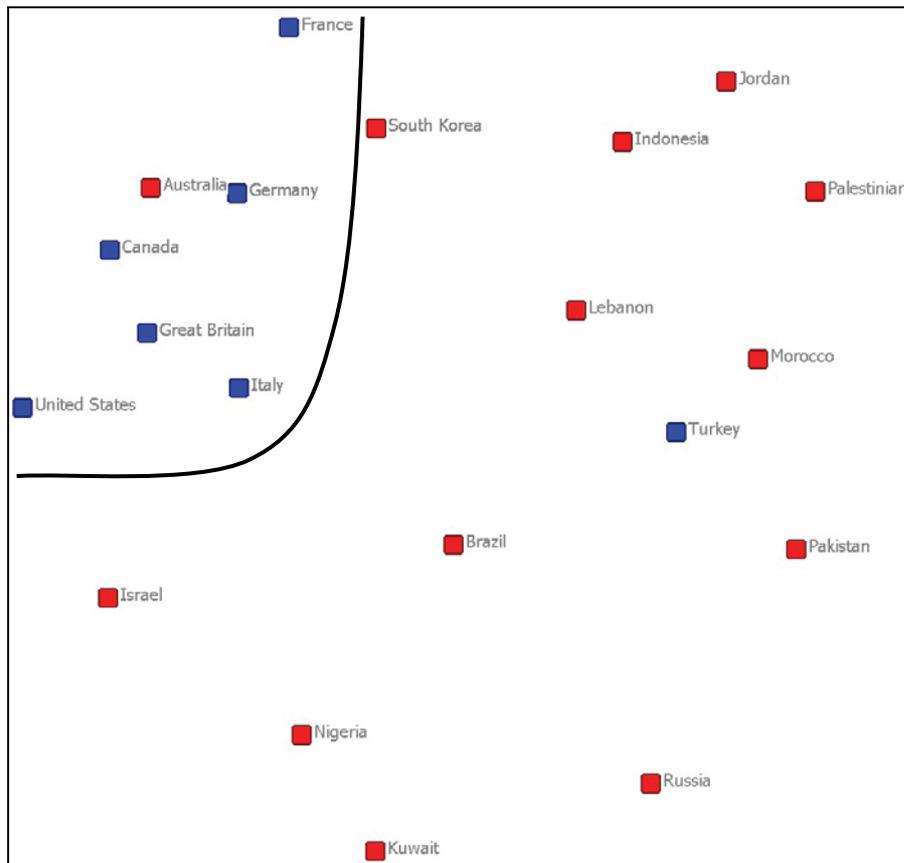


Figure 4. Views of a Changing World (PEW), 2003

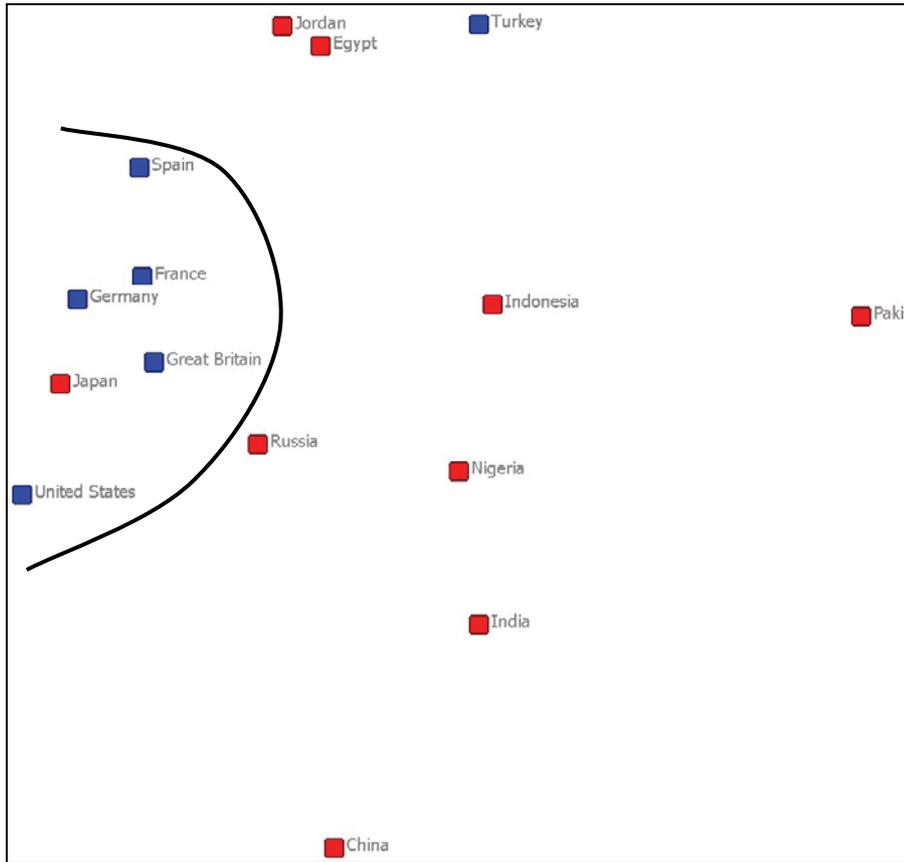


Figure 5. Pew Global Attitudes Project Data, 2006