TRANSPONDER

THE BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION

December 2021 | Issue 1

TRANSPONDER

A NEW MAGAZINE FROM THE BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION

Recent years have been uneasy ones for the transatlantic relationship. There have been trying times before, but the current turbulence heralds more in the years ahead. Still, there is a promising sign that Europe and the United States will overcome the latest challenges. Since World War II, their shared values have formed the basis for wide-ranging cooperation that has survived periods of disagreement, some occasionally bordering on hostility. The foundation of the relationship has proved it can withstand such periods of instability.

What is rocking the transatlantic relationship these days? What divides us? What unifies us? Exploring these questions in a historical context is key to understanding what the future may hold for the ties that have long bound Europe and the U.S.

Foreign policy crises, trade disputes, populism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and mistrust reflect the corrosive effects of current internal and external threats to democratic systems on both sides of the ocean, and are indeed exacting a toll on the transatlantic relationship. At the same time, new technologies continue to disrupt democratic traditions. Our ways of communicating and working and our approaches are upended. A digital revolution raises questions about power and autonomy: Who will have either, or both, in the future?

This magazine, the Transponder, examines the state of the transatlantic partnership in the past and present to determine the factors needed to maintain its strength. We conclude that the short-term turbulence that lies ahead will not alter a solid bedrock.

Despite the myriad challenges and differences, we believe in the partnership's future. Young voters have demonstrated that they have similar values to those that forged the alliance and sustained it for decades. They, too, are committed to liberalism, human rights and international cooperation, even if they also advocate for significant changes to fight climate change, pursue social justice and create more inclusive economic opportunity. The rising generations are well positioned to carry the torch. We have hope for the alliance's future, trusting that the fundamental beliefs that have held it together for the better part of a century will continue to do so. The Transponder provides insight into a past and present that bodes well for the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEET CHESNEY AND EMILY!

OUR EDITOR & DESIGNER

Hi everyone, my name is **CHESNEY GARNOS,** and I am the Manager of Digital Communications & Outreach for the Bertelsmann Foundation. Additionally, I am the Editor in Chief of our foundation's magazine, the Transponder. Growing up in a rural town next to the Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota, I am an advocate for educational access to all. It should not matter where you are located in order to have access to a quality education or information. Working for this independent, nonpartisan, and nonprofit think tank (the Bertelsmann Foundation) allows me to fulfill this advocacy duty. It provides the opportunity for many to access quality education, specifically education regarding the transatlantic relationship. In this magazine, the Transponder, we examine the state of the transatlantic partnership in the past and present to determine the factors needed to maintain its strength for future generations. I hope you enjoy, and I welcome you to the first edition of our magazine.

Add me on LinkedIn here:

CHESNEY GARNOS

EMILY ROEMER

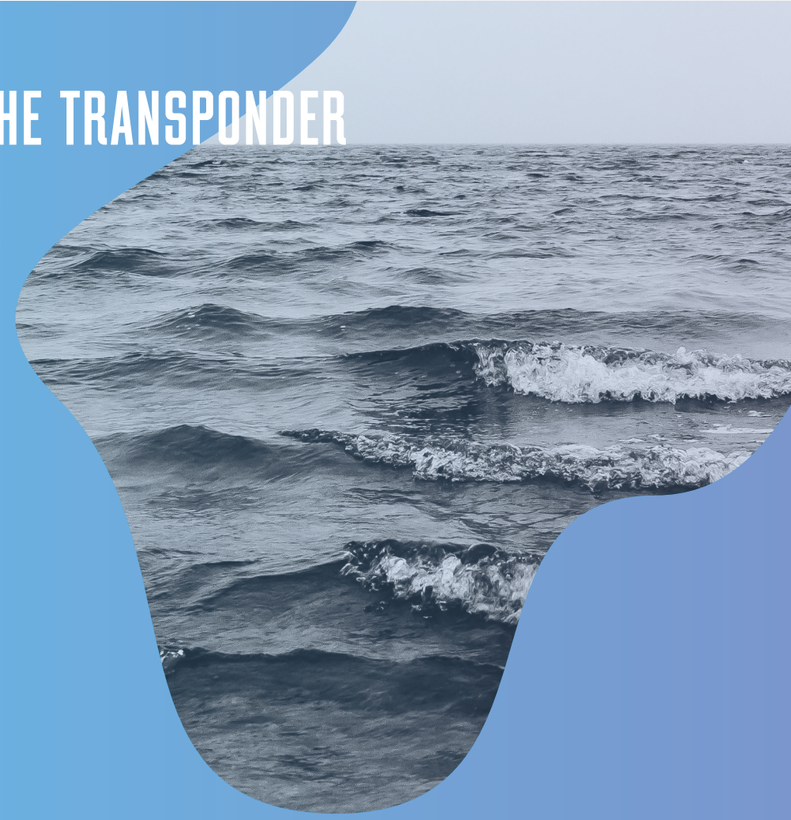
Hey ya'll! My name is **EMILY ROEMER**. I had the privilege of working with Chesney on the first edition of the Transponder — I hope you like it. I am a graphic designer and illustrator based in New York City. I am originally from Louisiana and started my company, Roemer Designs LLC, in 2018 and moved to the city shortly after. I have experience working on projects big and small, print and digital, and have really enjoyed designing and illustrating these interesting articles you are about to read.

My design practice focuses on bringing more light and color into the world. I am currently working on my Masters in Fine Arts in Design at the School of Visual Arts in NYC while also running my company. Roemer Designs offers design and art direction focusing on brand identity, story telling, and illustration. Let's make the world more beautiful, follow along @ roemerdesigns on instagram. Want to collaborate? Email me: emily@roemerdesigns.com.

Check out my website here:

10 QUESTIONS FOR THE TRANSPONDER

IRENE BRAAM:



WHAT IS YOUR MOTTO?
Always look forward.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST LESSON YOU HAVE LEARNED?
That 'change' is a hard thing to sell.

WHO IS YOUR MOST ADMIRED INFLUENCER REGARDING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP?
Madeleine Albright for her relentless and total dedication to democracy and the transatlantic relationship.

WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT?
When my son graduates from college.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE US PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR?
For chancellor, definitely Angela Merkel. My favorite president would be Harry Truman.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP?
Lack of faith and trust between Europe and the United States and convincing the next generation of the importance of this relationship.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE?
Carpe diem.

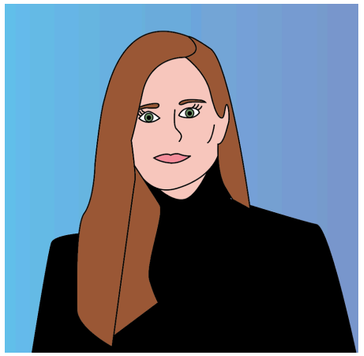
IF YOU COULD IMPLEMENT A POLICY TO IMPROVE THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
Oh, boy! This is a tough question. There is a lot to do. But we definitely need better cooperation when it comes to new technologies.

HOW DOES YOUR WORK IMPACT THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE?
I hope the work of my team and myself contributes to strengthening the transatlantic alliance by helping younger generations on both sides of the ocean learn that that relationship is something well worth investing in.

WHAT DOES DEMOCRACY MEAN TO YOU?
Freedom.

ABOUT US

The Bertelsmann Foundation (North America), Inc., established in 2008, was created to promote and strengthen the transatlantic relationship. Through research, analysis, forums, and audio and multimedia content, the Foundation seeks to educate and engage a transatlantic audience on the most pressing economic, political and social challenges facing the United States and Europe. The Foundation is the U.S. arm of the Germany-based Bertelsmann Stiftung. www.bfna.org



IRENE BRAAM* joined the Bertelsmann Foundation as executive director in April 2016. She is also the first vice president and a board director of the Bertelsmann Foundation Board of Directors.

Irene is an experienced lawyer and media expert, and worked for more than ten years with the Bertelsmann company. She began there as director of government relations of the Brussels Liaison Office in 2005 and became senior vice president of government relations in September 2011. Among her accomplishments at the company was development of a platform for global discussion about the digital transformation of the media world. The discussion was held in Brussels, Berlin, Madrid and London.

Irene represented Bertelsmann's interests in the EU and promoted the company at cultural and social events in Brussels, such as at UFA Film nights, and at previews of Fremantle Media's productions, exhibitions and public panel discussions.

After studying law at Maastricht University, Irene began her professional career in 1998 in the music industry. She headed international, legal and business affairs at Naïve Records in Paris, led business development for Midbar Tech Ltd. in Tel Aviv, and served as director of public policy and government affairs, and director of legal and business affairs, at the Universal Music Group in London and Brussels.

Irene's native language is Dutch, but she speaks fluent English, German and French, and some Spanish.

BRANDON BOHRN* joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in January 2020 as manager of transatlantic relations. As such, he oversees the Foundation's German-American relations project.

Before joining Bertelsmann, Brandon served as an intern at the U.S. embassy in Berlin, at the U.S. consulate in Düsseldorf, and in the U.S. Senate. He was also a Fulbright teaching assistant for English in Wanne-Eickel, Germany.

Brandon completed the Transatlantic Master's Program (TAM) in political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As part of the program, he spent one year as a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholar at Humboldt University in Berlin. Brandon is also a graduate of The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina. He speaks German and some Turkish.

FAITH GRAY joined the Bertelsmann Foundation at its founding in February 2008 and is the director of administration. She is responsible for the organization's financial, administrative and human resource operations.

Faith previously managed the administrative and travel units of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Washington, DC. Prior to holding that position, she worked for several years in administration at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). She held managerial and administrative positions within the dean's office of the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, and at the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities within the UCLA Schools of Medicine and Public Health.

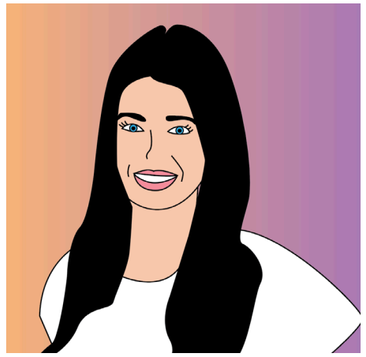
Faith has a bachelor's degree in sociology with a concentration in race, ethnicity and stratification from UCLA.

***= Article contributor**

NATHAN CRIST supports multimedia projects including a video and podcast series on democracy and transatlantic relations. Based at the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Berlin office, he also helps link DC- and Germany-based colleagues working on transatlantic topics. Nate leads website maintenance and analytics, and helps manage the Bertelsmann Foundation's social media platforms.

Nate's research and writing has focused on democracy, populism, the enlargement of the European Union in southeastern Europe, and U.S.-German relations.

Prior to joining the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2017, Nate received a master's degree in German and European studies from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He has experience in radio journalism, a participant in the International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS) of the German Bundestag and was a Fulbright teaching assistant for English in Austria.



CHESNEY GARNOS joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in June 2021 as manager of digital communications and outreach. Before joining the Foundation, she worked in the U.S. Senate, at the Milken Institute, and for the Washington, DC-based nonprofit GOODProjects.

Chesney holds a master's degree in communication studies from the University of South Dakota and a bachelor's degree from the University of South in political science and social media marketing.

Growing up in a rural town next to the Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota, Chesney is an advocate for more accessible resources and opportunities for rural communities worldwide.

SAMUEL GEORGE* is the Bertelsmann Foundation's global markets and digital advisor. Since joining the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2012, he has focused his work on economics, politics, the digital revolution, and the intersection of these issues in daily life.

His multimedia approach features documentary film, animated video and written analysis. Samuel's documentaries introduce viewers to people and communities facing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, offering candid perspectives that allow viewers to draw their own conclusions. Samuel's written work has also sought to highlight global crossroads. His publications investigate the global impact of the digital revolution, arguing that a successful digital transition requires inclusion. This work builds upon his previous research on emerging markets and the transatlantic economic relationship.

Samuel is from Philadelphia and holds a master's degree in international politics and economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC. He is currently completing a PhD at that institution.

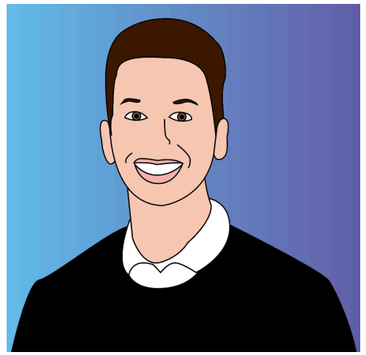
CHLOE LAIRD* joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in June 2021 as manager of transatlantic relations. She is specifically tasked with managing the Foundation's Congressional European Parliamentary Initiative (CEPI) fellowship.

A recent graduate of Georgetown University with a master's degree in German and European studies from the School of Foreign Service, she has conducted research on issues related to transatlantic security. She received her undergraduate degree in Spanish and international relations from the University of Virginia.

Prior to joining Bertelsmann, she interned with the Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington, DC and at CERPA (Centre des études, des réserves et des partenariats) in Paris. Chloe speaks French and Spanish.

MEGAN LONG,administrative assistant, joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in December 2015 and is responsible for event logistics, office travel and other administrative duties. She previously worked in academic administration at the Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington, DC. Megan managed graduate academic affairs for several departments within the CUA School of Arts and Sciences and, before that, worked in an administrative position for CUA's Department of Politics.

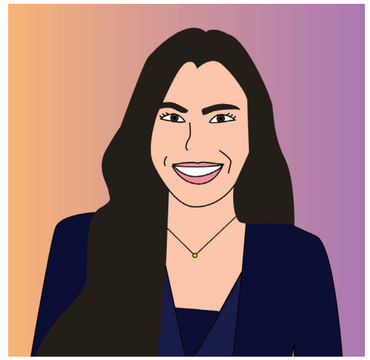
Megan has a bachelor's degree in global studies with a concentration in European integration and a minor in international business and history from Loyola University Maryland. During her undergraduate tenure, she spent one year studying Dutch at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium.



ANTHONY (TONY) SILBERFELD* joined the Bertelsmann Foundation as the director of transatlantic relations in April 2014, overseeing the project portfolio at the core of the Foundation's mission: strengthening the Euro-Atlantic partnership. His current research focuses on the intersection of technology and democracy in Europe and the United States, but draws on lessons from around the world. Tony has produced long-form publications, policy briefs, graphics books, education guides, digital animations and feature-length documentary films. He constantly explores innovative ways to connect the Foundation's work to policymakers and the public.

Tony arrived at the Foundation after seven years with the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office where he headed political and public affairs at the British Embassy's Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington, DC. He also served as the Northern Ireland government spokesman in the Americas and advised government ministers on political developments in the United States, Canada and Brazil. Prior to his tenure at the embassy, Tony held posts as a foreign policy advisor in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

Tony has a master's degree from the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies and a bachelor's degree from Tulane University.

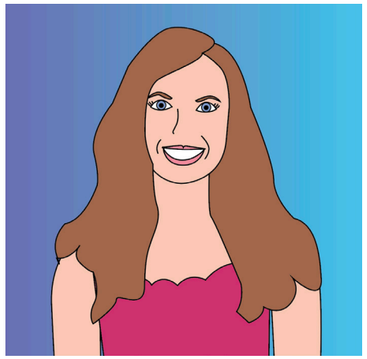


DANIELA ROJAS MEDINA joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in October of 2021 as a research analyst. Her work specifically focuses on technology policy issues and the transatlantic relationship.

A recent graduate of Georgetown University's master's of German and European Studies in the School of Foreign Service, her prior research centered around emerging technology and privacy, particularly vehicle communication technology.

Daniela received her undergraduate degree in International Politics and German from Penn State University with a minor in Global Security. Prior to joining Bertelsmann, she was a program officer at the German American Business Council in Washington, D.C. and interned with the BMW Group's Government and External Affairs team.

Originally from Venezuela, she speaks fluent Spanish and, having spent some time in Switzerland and Germany, she also speaks German.



SARA LEMING joined the Bertelsmann Foundation in November of 2021 as a research analyst.

A graduate of James Madison University with a Masters in European Union Policy Studies, where she studied in Florence, Italy and served as a graduate assistant. Her work since then has focused on transatlantic relations.

Sara received her undergraduate degree in Political Science and Leadership Studies from Christopher Newport Univeristy. Prior to joining Bertelsmann, Sara worked abroad in Brussels, Belgium as a trainee at the U.S. Mission to the European Union and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. Most recently she worked as a trainee policy adviser at the EU Delegation to the United Nations in New York City, NY and on the Government Projects team at the German American Chamber of Commerce in Chicago, Illinois.

Sara is originally from Northern, Virginia. She speaks some Spanish and is taking German courses.

Special Guest: Andrew Keen is the host of How to Fix Democracy. He contributed an article found on page 36.

***= Article contributor**

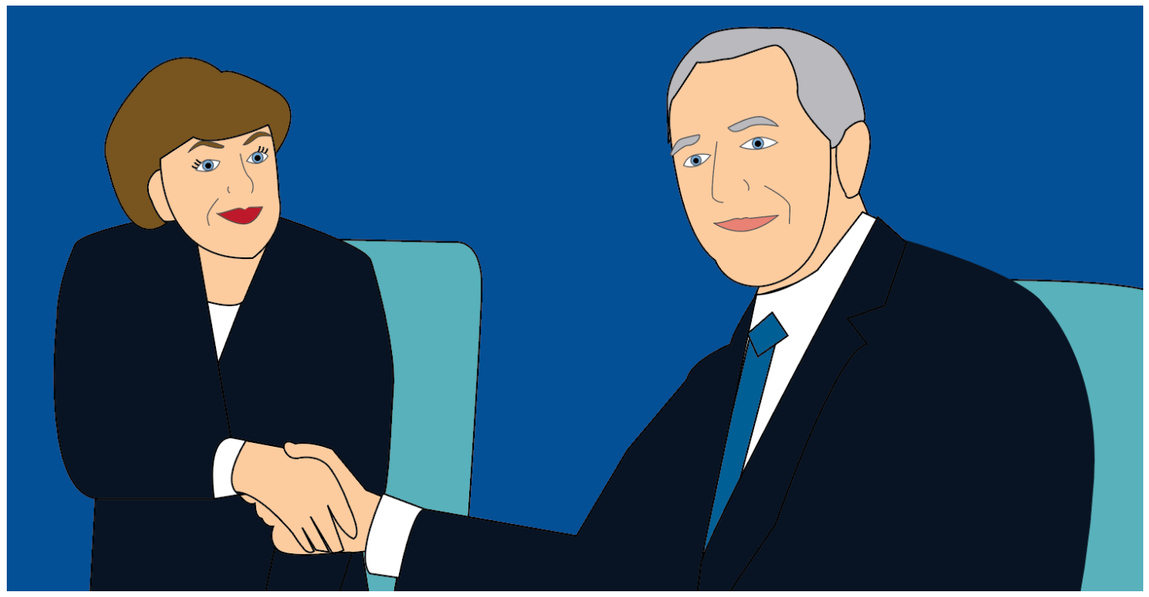
MERKEL'S LEGACY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT HER

By Brandon Bohrn

"Those expecting a renaissance in U.S.-German relations will likely be disappointed. While the relationship between the White House and the chancellery will be more cordial, the underlying policy tensions will remain. The German-American alliance is less than it used to be, unlikely ever to be fully mended, but it is still very important to the transatlantic relationship. The United States must learn to accept these ambiguities and paradoxes if the partnership is to endure."

Those words are not from 2021, as the new Biden administration began to rebuild a strong transatlantic alliance in the aftermath of President Donald Trump's departure. They are, instead, from an early 2006 analysis[1] detailing the arrival of a political unknown on the international stage, Angela Merkel. The newly elected German chancellor, whose party had just won a narrow victory, was about to undertake her first trip abroad, to Washington, as head of government. Analyses of the day questioned her political future, predicting a short stint in the driver's seat based on the unstable ground upon which she and her coalition government stood. That outlook is an example of how Merkel was and would continue to be underestimated throughout her career.

As she traversed the Atlantic to meet her American partners, Merkel was on a mission to rekindle a declining transatlantic relationship, a position in which she, as chancellor, would repeatedly find herself during multiples crises spanning four U.S. administrations. As Merkel exits political life after a 16-year reign, she leaves behind a vast legacy in the transatlantic sphere. Her departure will be felt on both sides of the Atlantic as an uncertain future lurks ahead.



TRANSATLANTIC RESTART 1.0

The U.S. was Merkel's first destination outside Europe after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Merkel, who had lived the majority of her life behind the Iron Curtain, flew to California to visit her future husband, who had taken a job at a San Diego-based software company. She reportedly "gushed about the land of opportunity"[2] and even expressed a desire upon retirement to emigrate to the U.S. and travel its expanses.

This time, however, upon arriving on American shores, she was setting out to broker a reset of the transatlantic relationship, and ultimately the first of several. Her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, had suffered a notably unpleasant relationship with the George W. Bush administration, stemming primarily from his government's disapproval of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.[3] Merkel had set herself apart from many European leaders at the time by having initially supported the campaign. Still, ahead of her trip to the Oval Office, several policy hurdles stood in the way. Germany's opposition to the extrajudicial holding of terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay topped the list. For their part, the Americans were frustrated with a lack of on-the-ground support in Iraq. They were also irritated by Germany's decision

to release an individual who had killed a U.S. service member in a terrorist attack 20 years earlier, a move dictated by opposition to American capital punishment.[4] But beyond the policy setbacks, the two leaders found common ground in their inaugural visit, most notably by discussing a multilateral, diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear program. It was the beginning of a process that would culminate ten years later in a tangible, transatlantic-brokered deal with Tehran.

Merkel made further efforts to strengthen transatlantic ties in subsequent years. Just a few months after her initial visit, she hosted in her electoral district in the eastern German state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania President Bush and the first lady. Apparently wishing to show the couple the "real Germany", she sought to forge a stronger, more personal tie with the president. Bush had visited Germany twice before, but thousands of protesters still sour over American policy in the Middle East greeted him on his previous visit one year earlier.[5] The scenes of the duo in the market square of Stralsund on Germany's northern Baltic coast are a visual testament to Merkel's long-running efforts to foster dialogue and cooperation with the U.S.[6] Bush reciprocated her gesture the following year, when Merkel and her husband visited the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas. A conversation about transatlantic cooperation took place over burgers.

Merkel and Bush put action behind their dialogue. The next year, during Germany's six-month European Union presidency, Merkel, following an annual U.S.-EU summit, helped to establish the Transatlantic Economic Council.[7] Bush, Merkel and then-EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso signed the Declaration on Enhancing Transatlantic Economic Integration and Growth to promote closer economic cooperation. This laid

the groundwork for the alliance's first hopeful trade agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The same year, in an act of cultural diplomacy, Merkel, in an event at the Library of Congress, delivered "America's Birth Certificate", the 1507 Waldseemüller map, the oldest cartographic artifact displaying the name "America".[8]

Despite Merkel's efforts to restore transatlantic ties, German public opinion of the Bush administration remained low, exacerbated by the financial crisis that accompanied the president's departure from Pennsylvania Avenue. His successor would offer another chance at a transatlantic restart.

THE OBAMA YEARS

When then-Senator Barack Obama visited Berlin during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, thousands of Germans flocked to hear him speak in front of the city's iconic Victory Column. The arrival of President Obama just a year later was a largely welcome development to the transatlantic community. Perceptions of the American commander-in-chief and of the U.S. improved across Germany and Europe after his election.

Initially, Merkel did not share the enthusiasm. She described Obama as unsteady, verbose and meddling.[9] Then the European debt crisis, a consequence of the U.S.-based Great Recession, followed on the heels of his trip. Merkel tied the crisis to "the hard lobbying of Wall Street" that had undermined Germany's efforts to regulate global finance.[10] The promise of another transatlantic restart under Obama improved dialogue and mutual respect among partners, but most policy disputes from the previous administration remained. That gradually dampened the chancellor's and Europe's view of the U.S. as a steadfast partner. On top of all that, while the war in Iraq came to an end (for a short while), the one in Afghanistan raged on, even after the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011. And despite a campaign promise to close Guantanamo Bay, Obama kept it open in the face of longstanding opposition from Berlin and other European capitals.[11]

Obama's next trip to Berlin, in 2013, was not as cordial. As he and Merkel sat in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the crowds that greeted him were far less enthusiastic than those five years earlier. The visit came mere weeks after the National Security Agency leak, revealing that the U.S. intelligence service had spied on the chancellor and other European leaders by wiretapping their phones. The news evoked strong criticism from Germany's political establishment and the public, who saw shades of tactics used during some of the darkest days of Germany's past.

Following Obama's mea culpa in Berlin, he and Merkel worked together to help the transatlantic relationship rebound again. In the wake of the scandal, transatlantic cooperation led to a once unthinkable feat of diplomacy: the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, an agreement limiting Iran's nuclear capabilities. Through further transatlantic cooperation, Washington and Europe forged the following year an international treaty under the Paris Climate Accords to combat global warming. The eventual departure of Obama from the White House, however, showed Merkel and her European compatriots that the diplomatic victories of the day could be quickly swept away by changing political winds in Washington. Indeed, a far greater threat to the transatlantic relationship now emerged, one that would ultimately test Merkel's "unwavering patience", which Obama had repeatedly experienced.[12]

THE TRANSATLANTIC RECESSION

Trump's 2016 election ushered in new challenges for Merkel and Europe. While many past policy differences remained, the spirit of dialogue and cooperation was now largely abandoned. The incoming administration seemed to disregard the transatlantic relationship and question its values. While presidents of both parties had pushed for European defense spending increases and the assumption of a more active role in security affairs, Trump went further. His criticism came through personal attacks on leaders of longstanding allies and expressing doubts about foundational transatlantic organizations such as NATO. He also withdrew the U.S. from key global initiatives that had been brokered through transatlantic cooperation.

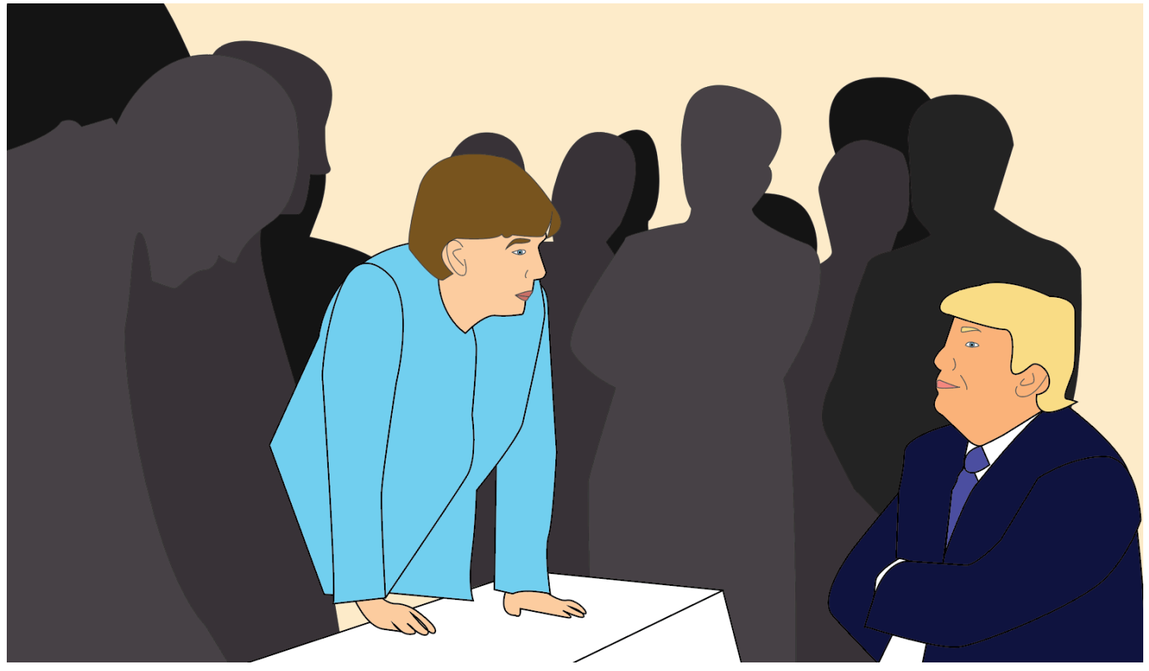
The Trump administration's disdain for multilateralism and globalization led to an American retreat from international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization eroded American reliability in the eyes of its partners worldwide. In the subsequent void, Merkel was tasked with assuming the role of "leader of the free world", helping to maintain global stability through multiple crises.[13]

The hostile nature of the Trump administration's America First foreign policy stance upended the previous decade of work that Merkel had put into the transatlantic bond. In fact, Germany bore the brunt of the anti-European rhetoric spewing from Washington. Between Trump's apparent snub [14] of Merkel's Oval Office offer of a handshake to calling Germany a "captive of Russia" [15] due to its energy relationship with Moscow, Washington's relationship with Berlin reached its lowest point in the postwar era, a feat seemingly unachievable right after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The Trump administration solidified among Merkel and other European leaders the belief that they could no longer rely on the U.S. The bipartisan consensus of a strong transatlantic relationship that had been the status quo for decades was no longer guaranteed.

ENTER BIDEN

Joe Biden's election in November 2020 was a relief among transatlanticists. Dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation between the U.S. and Europe was expected to return quickly, even if a strong relationship would not. German expectations, however, remained muted, and the Merkel government refrained from celebrating. Instead, a call for another restart to the relationship went out. Signs were initially promising as Biden's first trip abroad as president was to Europe to attend G-7 and NATO summits. European leaders felt that the U.S. was back and that their hopes following Biden's election were coming to fruition.[16] His reaffirmations of the U.S. commitment to NATO and wishes to forge a transatlantic approach to combat climate change were welcome developments.

Just a month later, Merkel was the first foreign leader to visit the White House.[17] It had been nearly three years since she was



last there and, similar to her trip 15 years earlier, a transatlantic restart was on the agenda. At the top of her list of talking points was the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that had suffered bipartisan reproach in Washington over the past three administrations. Ultimately, in a surprise move, Biden decided to forgo sanctions on the Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline, signaling a desire to win back a critical European ally at the expense of rebukes from central and eastern Europe.

The Biden administration's initial steps towards a new phase of transatlantic relations seemed to proclaim one of rapprochement and cooperation. Still, in April 2021, the Bertelsmann Foundation's and the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Trends revealed that Europeans had mixed views of the United States.[18] While the Poles largely considered the U.S. influential and reliable, the publics in the three largest EU member states, Germany, France and Italy, were less sure. Barely a majority of Germans, 51%, believed the U.S. to be a reliable partner. A former U.S. official suggested that that result was better than during the Trump years, but events that unfolded in subsequent months have likely reversed the trend. Indeed, while Merkel's and Biden's transatlantic travels were largely heralded as securing another restart, the subsequent series of security and diplomatic calamities quickly put the relationship back into rough waters at an inauspicious time. Merkel had begun exiting the stage.

DIPLOMACY IN DISREPAIR

Despite the movement on Nord Stream 2, (later to be reversed), other issues raised on Merkel's trip in July remained unsettled. Though both were rescinded several months later, Trump-era trade barriers were not lifted, and the U.S. kept in place a pandemic-related travel ban for Europeans. Then, within weeks, a security debacle rocked the foundation of the transatlantic relationship to its core.

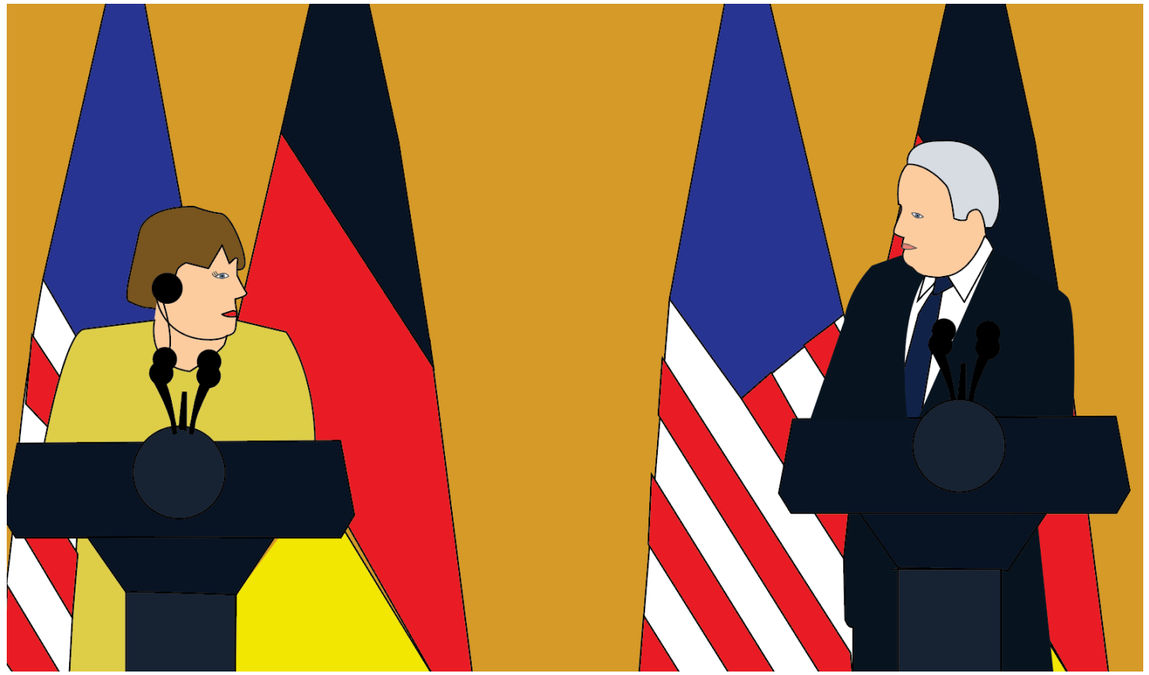
Ending the U.S.' 20-year war in Afghanistan, the longest in American history, was a largely popular move on both sides of the Atlantic. However, Biden's decision to proceed with a rushed troop withdrawal by the end of August was met with rebuke far and wide.[19] Europe's leaders were reportedly inadequately consulted on the matter, despite NATO forces' operating alongside Americans. The leaders claimed to have learned of the move at the last minute and had to scramble to remove their own troops while supporting humanitarian evacuation efforts.[20] Calls from Merkel and other European leaders on Biden to delay the timeline went unheeded. U.S. reliability received another major blow.[21]

Eager for a rebound ahead of a September meeting of the Quad countries (U.S., India, Japan and Australia), Washington moved rapidly to secure a joint defense pact, AUKUS, with the United Kingdom and Australia to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific.[22] The agreement, however, came at the financial and reputational expense of France. It upended that country's lucrative submarine contract with Australia and embarrassingly coincided with the release of a French-driven EU Indo-Pacific strategy. More striking is that the snub may not have been deliberate. Rather, the pact's implications for the French and, by connection, the Europeans may have not been fully considered.[23] Paris responded with an unprecedented recall of its ambassador to Washington, but Germany, ahead of a pivotal federal election, remained quiet.[24]

The jarring silence over the AUKUS fiasco was an indication of Merkel's chronic reluctance to take a clear stance on Beijing, preferring a balancing act between the U.S., its longstanding ally, and China, its largest trading partner.[25] Merkel visited the U.S. 20 times over the course of her tenure as chancellor, but she visited China 13 times, promoting on each occasion Germany's economic interests and largely ignoring controversial human rights issues. In the wake of Germany's recent federal election, its approach towards China could change. However, Germany's room to broker a transatlantic approach to Beijing is unclear given renewed French reluctance to cooperate with the U.S. Another policy dispute may be on the horizon.

UNCHARTED WATERS

The diplomatic setbacks suf-

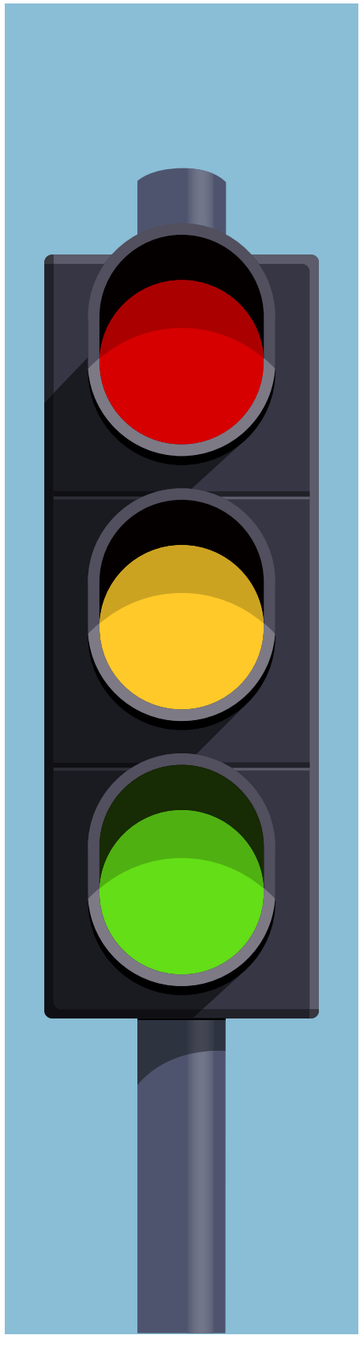


fered in the second half of 2021 are cause for extreme concern. The gulf between Europe and the U.S. appears to be widening. The negative developments also come as Merkel, perhaps the U.S.' top European ally, eyes her exit. TIME in 2010 bestowed on Merkel the title "Frau Europa", indicating her continental influence and authority. Whether she strengthened the EU enough to maintain a relationship of equals with its American counterpart will become clear in the next year. [26]

As Merkel departs, she enjoys the most favorable public views of any leader on the international stage. Fully 77% of survey respondents have confidence in her, and 79% have favorable views of Germany. [27] Former U.S. presidents have taken the time to recognize her achievements and her influence on the transatlantic bond. In a rare 30-minute television interview, Bush said that "Merkel brought class and dignity to a very important position."[28] Similarly, Obama devoted a section in his latest memoir to the chancellor, describing her as "reliable, honest and intellectually precise".[29]

Since Merkel's first trip across the Atlantic as chancellor in 2006, the U.S. and Europe have faced their fair share of challenges to their relationship. While some divergences in transatlantic interests persist, the diplomatic victories brokered between Merkel and previous administrations demonstrate the ability of the community to overcome differences and effect global change. Some perceive that the currently careening ship is sinking, but there are opportunities for a much-needed course correction. In the midst of the current tension and Merkel's departure, the ball is in Washington's court to undo recent damage. Tensions over policy disputes do not have an end date. However, mutual respect and eye-to-eye consultation among close partners are key to a solid foundation upon which the transatlantic community can achieve its full collective strength and confront the world's most pressing challenges.

ON THE WATERFRONT: PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP



Interview conducted by Anthony Silberfeld on 10/13/2021 with Constanze Stelzenmüller.

Constanze Stelzenmüller is an expert on German, European, and trans-Atlantic foreign and security policy and strategy. She is the inaugural holder of the Fritz Stern Chair on Germany and trans-Atlantic Relations in the Center on the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution. Stelzenmüller is the former director of GMF's Berlin office. From 1994 to 2005, she was an editor for the political section of the German weekly DIE ZEIT, where she had also served as defense and international security editor and covered human rights issues and humanitarian crises. From 1988 to 1989, she was a visiting researcher at Harvard Law School. Stelzenmüller's essays and articles, in both German and English, have appeared in a wide range of publications, including Foreign Affairs, Internationale Politik, the Financial Times, the International New York Times and Süddeutsche Zeitung. She is also a frequent commentator on American and European radio and television, including Presseclub (ARD), National Public Radio, and the BBC.

INTRO: On September 26, 2021, Germans launched the post-Merkel era by going to the polls to select a new parliament and governing coalition. The implications for German domestic policy are clear, but the ramifications of the results cascaded around Europe and across the Atlantic. In keeping with the nautical theme of this issue, we cover the waterfront of Euro-Atlantic topics in our short interview with Dr. Constanze Stelzenmüller, senior fellow and Fitz Stern chair on Germany and transatlantic relations at the Brookings Institution.

QUESTION: How will potential Germann coalitions approach the transatlantic relationship?

STELZENMÜLLER: At this point, the Social Democrats, Greens (SPD) and Liberals are condemned to success in a "traffic light" coalition. The CDU is clearly heading towards a major internal reckoning. I believe a German government headed by a Chancellor [Olaf] Scholz would find a lot to agree upon with the Biden administration on issues like managing the international economic order or a minimum global corporate tax. I expect the SPD and the Greens would also be in agreement – the Liberals perhaps less so – on the need for major investments in innovation and infrastructure, and, more generally, on the role of the state as a provider of public goods. Conversely, I expect there to be some distance between Washington and the SPD on issues of security and defense policy.

Perhaps the Greens and the Liberals, who are likely to provide the foreign minister, and perhaps the defense minister, can be the bridge builders here. Ironic, I know.

QUESTION: Will Germany maintain its leadership role in the EU post-Merkel? If not, who is most likely to lead?

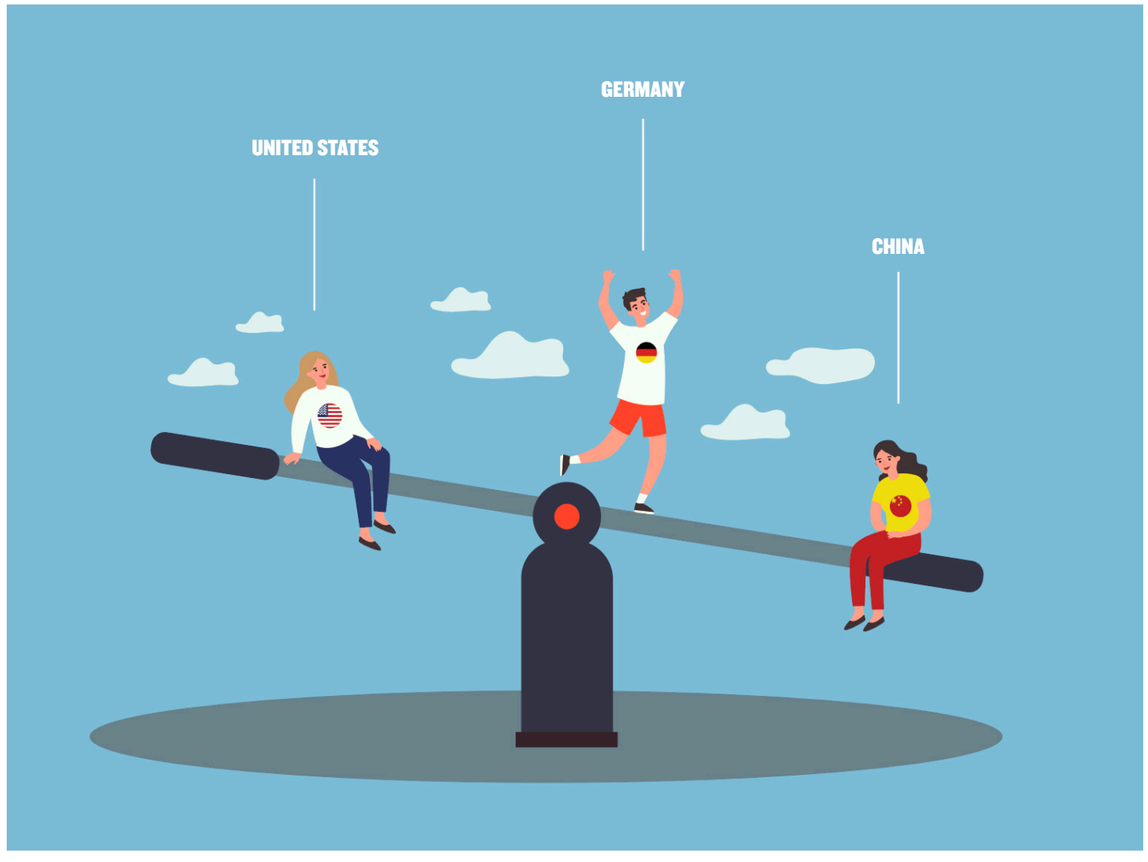
STELZENMÜLLER: I don't know whether it will. What I do know is that the next German government will be trusted by its neighbors if it consults, listens and takes their needs into account. That holds for any other country in Europe, too. We are not islands.

QUESTION: How can Germany maintain its balancing act between the U.S. and China, even as Beijing becomes increasingly assertive at home and abroad?

STELZENMÜLLER: I don't think Germany should or can realistically continue balancing between the U.S. and China. The two are not equidistant. But on this issue the debate in Berlin has moved past Chancellor Merkel's hyper-cautious approach.

QUESTION: What are the key issues that the U.S. and Europe will have to address in 2022? Where can they make progress?

STELZENMÜLLER: The U.S. is a superpower, the European Union a great power. Great powers don't get to choose key issues and leave the rest to others, or to the next government. It's everything, every day. And there is a great deal of repair work to be done at home on both sides of the Atlantic. So, perhaps on December 31, 2022, progress is no accidental wars, no economic crises, no attempts to overthrow democratic Western governments by their own citizens. I feel that's not too much to ask.



Transatlantic Trends

By Brandon Bohrn

U.S. President Joe Biden's move into the White House has presented an opportunity for a transatlantic restart. The Oval Office's new occupant has an appreciation for America's traditional European allies, who recognized this and breathed a sigh of relief during January's inauguration. Their optimism was initially warranted, with the administration's first steps confirming that a restart was underway. Washington reinstated its support for key initiatives borne out of transatlantic cooperation, such as the Paris Agreement and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Even the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines gave hope for a brighter future.

Outside the policy bubbles of Berlin, Brussels and Washington, these developments were also welcome. The Bertelsmann Foundation and the German Marshall Fund's "Transatlantic Trends 2021" showed that citizens on both sides of the ocean also favored a restart. The polling, conducted in April, showed that public appetite for increased cooperation was high, especially on combating climate change and preserving global health.

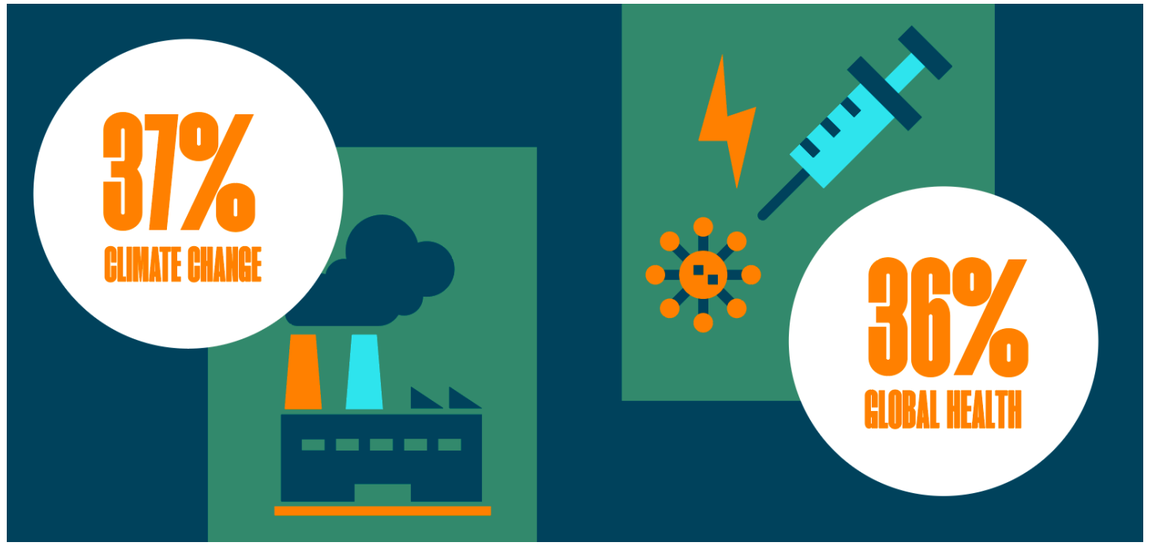
As the year progressed, however, these publics were confronted with the harsh realities of insufficient collaboration, most prominently on the two issues they named as priorities. Environmental tragedies and pandemic setbacks were the two biggest crises to hit home in subsequent months.

"Vaccine breakthroughs in late 2020 and early 2021 were, in part, a product of transatlantic scientific efforts."

A SLIGHT PLURALITY OF RESPONDENTS (37%) AMONG THOSE SURVEYED SAID CLIMATE CHANGE WAS THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE FOR TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION, AND A VAST MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS (69%) SAID THEIR GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DO MORE TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE WITH THE MOST ARDENT CALLS IN TURKEY, ITALY, SPAIN AND POLAND.

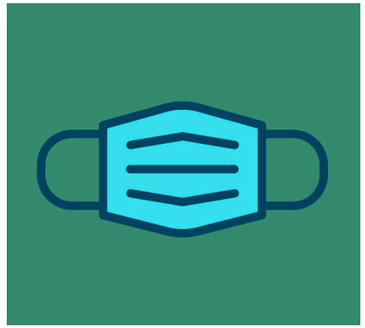
The publics were prescient. Summer 2021 showed that decades of inaction were having severe consequences in all surveyed countries.

First, shortly after President Biden's initial trip[1] across the Atlantic, a visit largely heralded as a successful reestablishment of closer U.S.-European ties, a series of flash floods[2] occurred across Western Europe. The surges enveloped entire villages across several countries, with Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg being the hardest hit. By the time the water receded, hundreds were dead. That toll and the images of flooded cities had political consequences. In Germany, outcries



over perceived shortcomings in the government response likely influenced the results of federal elections two months later.

Second, in August, a series of forest fires ravaged Turkey, Italy and Greece. The conflagrations consumed entire villages along Turkey's[3] southeastern coast, in the rural southern Italian region of Calabria[4], and on the Greek island of Evia[5]. Photos of the carnage in Antalya showed desperate locals and tourists fleeing beaches as rolling hills in the background were ablaze. Sicily recorded in the same month a blistering 49 degrees Celsius, or 120 degrees Fahrenheit, continental Europe's highest-ever recorded temperature.[6]



Across the Atlantic, Americans also felt the wrath of extreme temperatures, as heat domes descended across much of the Pacific Northwest and the U.S. heartland.[7] Nearly 200 million Americans sweltered under heat advisories throughout July and August. Soon thereafter, Ida, one of the most powerful hurricanes to hit the U.S. in recent years, wiped out towns across the Gulf Coast, displacing hundreds of thousands.[8] Heavy rainfall stemming from the storm subsequently barraged the Northeast, displaying the devastating impacts of climate change on outdated infrastructure.[9] Videos of rapidly flooding New York City subway stations provided further evidence of the need for increased environmental action.

Coincident with this series of natural disasters the COVID-19 pandemic raged on. "Transatlantic Trends 2021" found that 36% of respondents believed global health to be the most pressing issue for U.S.-European cooperation, just one percentage point behind climate change. A plurality of respondents (31%) also named pandemics as the most pressing transatlantic security challenge. The timing of the April polling, coming after several surges of infections and peak numbers in the previous winter, may well have impacted the results.[10] Still, the following months showed the continued severity of the public health crisis. By the end of 2021, over 80 million Europeans and Americans had contracted the virus, and over 1.5 million died from it. Worldwide, COVID-19 cases reached over 250 million, with over 5 million deaths. The economic toll was also forbidding. As businesses shut their doors, schools moved online and strict lockdown measures came into force, governments injected record-breaking amounts of stimulus funding to prevent economic

and social collapse. Disrupted global supply chains and travel restrictions had already resulted in trade in services and merchandise plummeting to their lowest levels in more than 30 years.

In 2020, the U.S. and Europe tried to work together to overcome the pandemic's impact.[11] Austrian and Italian companies sent medical supplies to the U.S. such as personal protective equipment and test kits. Swedish, Slovak and Irish manufacturers supplied U.S. healthcare providers with thousands of ventilators.[12] Vaccine breakthroughs in late 2020 and early 2021 were, in part, a product of transatlantic scientific efforts. Despite the cooperation, slow vaccination campaigns and vaccine nationalism eventually undermined transatlantic and global unity to defeat the virus.[13] The "my nation first" approach has been too deeply rooted.[14] As large swaths of the global community remain unvaccinated, the risk of further, potentially more transmissible and deadlier variants increased. Both sides of the Atlantic unsurprisingly found themselves battling the virus' Delta variant throughout the summer and fall of 2021. The U.S. and Europe may now have succeeded in vaccinating the majority of their populations, but the need for increased cooperation on global procurement and distribution remains.

The U.S. and Europe have both pledged to donate 300 million doses collectively by the end of 2021, but they need to do more to rein in the virus.[15] Billions of doses are required to vaccinate the rest of the global community.

Despite hopes for a new chapter in transatlantic relations, 2021 failed to provide the comeback that many had longed for in the prior four years. The environmental tragedies and myriad global health crises have revealed continuing shortcomings in transatlantic cooperation to date. In the year's devastation, however, cause for optimism remains. As the Bertelsmann Foundation's previous work showcases, experts on both sides of the Atlantic have proposed tangible ways for governments to cooperate on reducing the impacts of climate change and the risks of future pandemics. Long-term crisis management and planning are key. Promoting sustainability in free trade agreements, protecting agricultural trade supply chains, and supporting international initiatives such as COVAX are just some of the options available.[16]

Transatlanticists can also take some comfort in the overwhelming convergence of public opinion shown in the "Transatlantic Trends 2021" survey. An appetite for increased cooperation on the most pressing global challenges exists. Governments can and should satisfy it.

Transatlantic Trends 2021 is intended to provide a helpful tool for policymakers and aims to foster relevant debates, strengthen mutual understanding and build a positive agenda for transatlantic cooperation.

For more, visit: https://www.bfna.org/politics-society/transatlantic-trends-2021/

"TRANSATLANTICISTS CAN ALSO TAKE SOME COMFORT IN THE OVERWHELMING CONVERGENCES OF PUBLIC OPINION SHOWN IN THE "TRANSATLANTIC TRENDS 2021" SURVEY. AN APPETITE FOR INCREASED COOPERATION ON THE MOST PRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES EXISTS. GOVERNMENTS CAN AND SHOULD SATISFY IT."

MOBILIZING THE GRASSROOTS OF THE WORLD ON CLIMATE: A TRANSATLANTIC RESPONSIBILITY

Interview conducted by Chloe Laird on 9/21/2021 with James Bacchus.

BIO: James Bacchus is the distinguished university professor of global affairs and director of the Center for Global Economic and Environmental Opportunity at the University of Central Florida. He was a founding judge and was twice the chairman, or chief judge, of the highest court of world trade, the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva. He has judged more WTO trade disputes than anyone else, and The American Lawyer magazine has described him as "the John Marshall of the World Trade Organization". Prof. Bacchus is a former member of the United States Congress and a former international trade negotiator for the U.S. He is the author of "Trade and Freedom", published by Cameron May in London in 2004; "The Willing World: Shaping and Sharing a Sustainable Global Prosperity", published by Cambridge University Press in 2018 and named by the Financial Times as one of the "Best Books of the Year"; "The Development Dimension: Special and Differential Treatment in Trade", with co-author Inu Manak, published by Routledge Press in 2021; and "Trade Links: New Rules for a New World", forthcoming from Cambridge University Press in 2022.

INTRO: Climate change is not a national problem. It knows and sees no borders. A transatlantic approach is important for finding global solutions. Our interview with James Bacchus emphasized the importance of such an approach. If we don't coordinate actions, solutions to this looming threat remain distant.

QUESTION: Many people become disillusioned by large ambitions and what they deem to be arbitrary timelines. What do Europe and the U.S. need to do to confront climate change and maintain public optimism about success?

BACCHUS: I think deadlines are important because the overriding challenge we face in trying to mobilize international action on climate change is the fact that far too many people in the world still see it as happening sometime in the future. It's happening right now. The problem we have had is that we have not been meeting deadlines as we should, and our ambitions [for] addressing climate change have been far less than they need to be in order to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, both now and in the future. A key to trying to bring countries together to address climate change will be continued and increased cooperation among the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

QUESTION: Are there gaps in transatlantic dialogue?

BACCHUS: The dialogue is less than it should be. The remedy is to have a lot more of it and to become more serious about it. I've been encouraged in recent months [by] a return to a more constructive transatlantic dialogue with the inauguration of President Joe Biden in the United States. Of course, we need much more than dialogue on many fronts, including climate change and the connections between climate change and trade. Dialogue must be translated into mutual action.

Thus far, the Congress of the United States has been considerably less than forthcoming in responding to Biden's proposals for climate action. I am hoping that, by the time this article is printed, more action will have been taken by the United States. I'm very encouraged that the European Union is moving ahead with its Green Deal. And I'm also encouraged by the much more ambitious climate plans of the United Kingdom. Yet, more could be done if they all work in concert and in some kind of a coordinated fashion, together with other countries.

QUESTION: One of the larger initiatives coming out of Europe is the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). How will such an initiative affect the fight against climate change?

BACCHUS: The European Union has recently proposed the first trade restrictions in the world that will be based on the degree of climate action among trading countries. And this poses real challenges in terms of compliance with international trade law under the auspices of the World Trade Organization. The difficulty is in being able to justify trade restrictions when they have climate motivations and also economic motivations. This raises the question of whether they are eligible for the environmental exceptions that have long existed to trade obligations.

The Europeans have proposed what they call a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. It will not enter into force for another couple of years. I am hopeful that by then they will have fashioned their final measure in a way that will be consistent with WTO rules. It is unclear now whether what they have proposed is in fact consistent with WTO rules.

It is possible that the United States may adopt a similar set of climate-related trade restrictions, and other countries are contemplating it. I worry that we may end up in a climate trade war. We could avoid that by having all of these countries and other members of the WTO come together to establish some multilateral rules for such measures on which they all agree.

I applaud the Europeans for forcing this issue, which must be faced. We cannot take the kinds of ambitious climate actions we need to take unless it becomes possible for countries to address the economic concerns arising in their domestic jurisdictions about the possible economic impacts of these actions. And, therefore, some accommodation must be made. I think it has to be made within the WTO.

QUESTION: In your book "The Willing World" you argue for a WTO climate waiver. Can you explain what that is and how it relates to ongoing transatlantic debates around climate change?

BACCHUS: First of all, I want to em-

phasize that I believe the World Trade Organization is the right place to negotiate on the issue of climate-related trade restrictions. The OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] has raised its hand as a possible place for negotiations. I have great admiration for the OECD as it does much good in the world. But the problem in placing these negotiations within the OECD is that developing countries do not belong to the OECD. And there would be the danger that any result from an OECD negotiation would feel as if it were being imposed on the developing countries of the world by the wealthier countries, [which] are more likely to apply these kinds of climate-related trade restrictions, at least at the outset. So, I think the WTO is the right place for this issue because all the 164 members of the WTO will have an equal say in WTO deliberations and WTO outcomes.

In my view, there could conceivably be various approaches to trying to draw the line globally between what is permissible and what is not under international trade law for climate -related trade restrictions that also have economic motivations. I believe the best approach would be a waiver of the application of WTO rules in certain defined circumstances, for measures that meet certain agreed requirements.

What should those requirements be? To further carbon pricing and to facilitate the necessary green transition in the global economy, the core of the content of a WTO climate waiver should be a waiver from the application of WTO rules for trade-restrictive national measures that meet the following requirements: First, they discriminate based on the amount of carbon or other greenhouse gases consumed or emitted in making a product. Second, they fit the definition of a climate response measure as defined by the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. And third, and lastly, they do not discriminate in a manner that constitutes a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.

There are many, many nuances involved in the crafting and application of such a waiver. One obstacle with respect to the first requirement is that we have no globally agreed means of calculating and measuring the amount of carbon or other greenhouse gases consumed or emitted in making a product. The Conference of Parties (COP) has been working on this for a number of years. They need to come to an agreement, [and] such an agreement would certainly be respected by jurists in a WTO dispute settlement. In addition, with respect to the second requirement, the Climate COP has not defined a climate response measure. Quite a few years have been devoted to discussing different aspects of what climate response measures may or may not be, but this particular focus, in terms of the relationship with trade and with WTO trade obligations, has not been addressed by the COP. It needs to be. And, of course, with respect to the third requirement on arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or disguised restrictions on international trade, there is an inevitable aspect of judgment involved. Determinations will have to be made necessarily on a case-by-case basis in WTO dispute settlement. Every case is different. And the outcome of a determination in WTO dispute settlement will depend on the facts of a particular case and the details of the structure and application of a particular national measure that has been brought into question by the making of legal claims.

QUESTION: Do you believe initiatives such as the European Green Deal pave the way for policymakers to take action?

BACCHUS: There are a variety of factors that enter into creating public action, including international action. There must be leaders who are willing to go out ahead of what may happen to prevailing public opinion. Success in doing so, in my experience, depends on leaders not getting so far ahead of the people that the people cannot see them. They must be candid with the people, [educate them], and bring them along. At the same time, the people themselves must begin to look ahead, to look beyond their immediate, narrow needs to the broader and longer term, and to demand that their leaders do the same.

This is a challenge in terms of summoning popular action. It can be helped by having the right kinds of leaders, but there must also be followers who are willing to support visionary leaders. Furthermore, there must always be an understanding that many of the right kinds of action come from the bottom up. They come from what we Americans speak of as the grassroots. From the grassroots of the world, we must, and urgently need to, build up to the right kinds of global solutions.

The European Union is certainly to be applauded because it is moving ahead with its Green Deal. It is setting an example for what other countries need to do. EU leaders are facing opposition domestically, and not surprisingly, but they're going ahead nevertheless and trying to explain what is needed for the broader and longer term. Other countries should take similar actions. I'm hopeful that the United States will soon do so in the form of having the Congress pass President Biden's climate action plan.

QUESTION: What do you see as the most hopeful aspect of the transatlantic relationship for combating climate change?

BACCHUS: In my work, I have had the privilege of working with and alongside many young people from both the United States and the European Union, and the United Kingdom. I see a commonality across the Atlantic on both sides of the ocean among these young people when it comes to climate change. They understand the urgency of the issue in a way that older generations on both sides of the Atlantic do not seem to understand. And I see that as a great reason for optimism. Now, we not only need to listen to them. We need to engage them in solving these problems. And the sooner the better. I am an optimist. I believe we have each of us a duty of optimism. And I find the greatest source of optimism today in the openness of young people everywhere in the world to the social, economic and environmental changes that are necessary to achieve global sustainable development.

A TRANSATLANTIC TO-DO: CLIMATE SECURITY

By: Chloe Laird

Climate-related catastrophes have tripled over the past thirty years.[1] The United States alone experienced eight natural disasters in the first seven months of 2021, each costing more than $1 billion.[2] The evidence is clear: We face an environmental reckoning.

The immediate concerns about climate change are obvious. Humankind must ensure clean air to breathe and fresh water to drink. Yet less obvious concerns loom, and they, too, must be addressed, especially when they intersect with international security. **Climate change may not be a direct cause of war, but it has the potential to raise significantly the risk of conflict.** The Brookings Institution estimates that "changing climate patterns could drive an up to 50% increase in conflict in sub-Saharan Africa alone. This would result in several hundred thousand additional battle deaths, and the displacement of millions."[3]

That desolate scenario need not become reality. The United States and the European Union can help prevent such a bleak future.

While the U.S. may occasionally champion isolationism and the EU strives for strategic autonomy, the two powers are stronger when they work together. Tackling climate security is no exception. Both players have, in fact, worked for years to confront the threat. The U.S. Naval War College began addressing it in the 1980s[4], and the Department of Defense recognized the challenge in National Defense Strategies and Quadrennial Defense Reviews that date to the George H.W. Bush administration[5]. Most recently, Lloyd Austin, the current defense secretary, declared that the Pentagon views climate change as a strategic priority. For its part, the European Commission was one of the first supranational bodies to identify climate change as a security threat.
In 2008, it published "Climate Change and International Security', a paper that "recognized climate change as a threat multiplier that needed to be placed at the heart of EU security policy."[6]

THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE AGENDA SETTER

Europe's most important initiative to combat climate change is the European Green Deal, which aims to bring the continent to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The need to do so for security purposes is clearly noted in the effort's framing document. It stipulates that the European Green Deal "recogni[z]es that the global climate and environmental challenges are a significant threat multiplier and source of instability. The ecological transition will reshape geopolitics... The EU will work with all partners to increase climate and environmental resilience to prevent these challenges from becoming sources of conflict, food insecurity, population displacement and forced migration, and support a just transition globally."[7]

It's unsurprising, then, that many Green Deal ambitions have

important repercussions for security issues including, albeit indirectly, China's increasing global influence. The country is key to much of the world's supply chain for powering renewable energy sources, and the EU, through its Green Deal, seeks to protect itself by prioritizing the European renewables market. Financing innovative projects, building resilient infrastructure, and prioritizing offshore wind are only some of the many goals set out in the initiative.

Unfortunately, these ambitions are often just that ambitions. The "bulk of EU efforts center on awareness-raising, generic dialogue, and data gathering to help reveal the important political and strategic effects of climate change... [the EU] is more concerned with institutional mandates, capacities, and agenda setting than with tangible action and results in specific strategic contexts."[8] Norms that fail to become reality foster false hope. In October 2020, Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign affairs chief, urged the EU to "learn the language of power". One observer described this as a plea "to turn from utopian liberalism to pragmatic realism".[9] On security matters, the EU indeed struggles with turning rhetoric into action. The U.S. and its military power may be the answer to overcome this issue.

THE UNITED STATES: THE STRONG ARM

While EU policy links climate to security, the U.S. is slow to make the same connection. Climate change in Washington is more a partisan issue than a scientific one. Overcoming this approach is the first challenge facing American policymakers concerned about environmental threats. But the military, which typically garners bipartisan support, may be able to circumvent this by pushing climate action to the top of its strategic agenda.

Certain branches of the military are, in fact, already doing this. Various agencies follow a Strategic Sustainability Plan that promotes increased use of renewable energy. The Pentagon increasingly incorporates climate change into its scenario planning. And, in 2016, the Navy deployed its first "Great Green Fleet,"- U.S. warships powered by alternative energy. But there is still much work to do. In a 2019 report, the U.S. Army War College warned that "the Department of Defense is precariously underprepared for the national security implications of climate change-induced global security challenges."[10]

The military's role in confronting the security implications of climate change is important not only due to its role and influence within american society. The sheer size of the organization itself is also a critical factor, giving its actions on climate change the potential to reverberate throughout American society and beyond. By supplementing these actions with European initiatives, the U.S. military could even help create a world where climate change isn't a global enemy.

A TRANSATLANTIC BALANCE

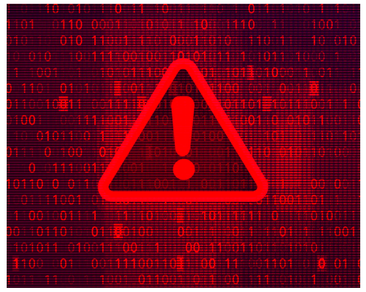
Data from the Bertelsmann Foundation and the German Marshall Fund's "Transatlantic Trends 2021" shows that climate change is a priority issue for those on both sides of the Atlantic. Fully 69% of respondents in the countries polled believe that their countries should do more to fight it, and 20% identify climate change as the biggest security threat. Even those more concerned with "traditional" security threats have begun to perceive the magnitude and implications of environmental challenges. Russia and China are increasingly cooperating, in part because the melting of Arctic ice provides alternative routes of sea access. Meanwhile, droughts portend waves of mass migration that could overwhelm Western governments.

Policymakers cannot afford to take climate change lightly. As a threat multiplier and an accelerant of instability, it is a priority agenda item for national security discussions.

The power of international alliances in the fight against climate change is substantial. "[I]nter-military cooperation in NATO can help member states pool resources and research about the crisis, and identify collectively with threats that may only affect a few members."[11] At NATO's 2021 summit, national leaders endorsed the organization's Climate Change and Security Action Plan, marking the first time the alliance is confronting climate change. Under the plan, NATO will conduct an annual climate change and security assessment and will respond to the findings accordingly. The alliance will also "develop a mapping and analytical methodology of greenhouse gas emissions from military activities and installations."[12] Powerful signals can be sent and precedents set if such ambitions are translated into action.

Writing in the Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tennessee, LTGen John Castellaw, USMC (Ret.) and BGen John Adams, USA (Ret.) argue that American "armed forces know - and we should, too - that if we fail to prepare for the risks of climate change, then our sons and daughters will have to respond to more disasters, fight more terrorists abroad, and spend more of our most precious resource, the blood of those who serve."[13] **Leaders on both sides of the Atlantic must realize that the fight against climate change starts at home and that inaction - whether a failure to lower carbon emissions or to transition to renewable sources of energy or even to believe in the environmental catastrophe towards which we are heading will have a real, enduring and profoundly negative impact on global stability and security.**

DISTORTED DIPLOMACY



By Anthony Silberfeld

How disinformation undermines the transatlantic alliance.

"The Germans have gone mad."

These memorable words appeared in a compilation of letters written by Christine, a young Englishwoman living in Berlin in 1914. Each letter, chronicling Germany's descent into militarism and societal collapse, appeared in a book predictably titled "Christine", and helped sway British and American public support for confronting a rising German threat. But here's where it gets interesting. Christine wasn't real. The book, purportedly a work of non-fiction, was written by British novelist Elizabeth von Arnim (under the pseudonym Alice Cholmondeley), and used by London and Washington as a propaganda tool to help solidify the transatlantic alliance that prevailed in World War I.
More than a century later, some of us feel nostalgic for the simplicity of Christine's letters. Yes, it was a blatant example of disinformation, but the result brought the United States and United Kingdom together in common cause to preserve freedom and democratic values. Today, the information landscape is far more complex. The variety of sources and delivery methods are seemingly infinite, while the tools to address distortions are inadequate. The result is the polarization of societies and increasing fissures that have weakened the transatlantic bond. And though it would be most expedient to pin the blame entirely on malignant actors overseas, the truth is that the damage has often been self-inflicted. This piece peers around the various corners of the virtual and physical worlds to help make sense of how transatlantic diplomacy became distorted through disinformation, and proposes a solution for bringing reality back into focus.

Political Suicide

If the old adage "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" is true, the metaphorical transatlantic chain is corroding. In 2021, the U.S. emerged from a four-year onslaught of disinformation perpetrated by none other than its own president.

According to The Washington Post, Donald Trump made 30,573 false or misleading claims while in office.

Before you reach for your calculator, I've done the math – that's more than 20 instances of disinformation per day. From trivial items such as crowd sizes to serious matters such as managing a pandemic, Americans were fed a steady diet of falsehoods that eroded trust in media, government and institutions, leading the country to turn on itself.
On the other side of the Atlantic, Europeans hardly covered themselves in glory during the same period.

The disinformation peddled during the Brexit referendum campaign ran the spectrum of credulity from British taxpayers' allegedly sending the EU 350 million euros per week to the notion that a post-Brexit trade deal with the EU would be "the easiest in human history".[1]

In 2018, Italians went to the polls and elected the far-right Lega Nord party, which ran on the steam of an anti-immigrant campaign, and the ideologically amorphous Five Star Movement led by populist comedian Beppe Grillo. Claims of "sea taxis" spiriting migrants to Italian shores and false assertions alternating between migrants' stealing jobs and straining Italy's social safety net were pervasive and highly effective. Meanwhile, a serial purveyor of disinformation, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has used widespread media control to tighten his grip on the levers of power. Creating a bogeyman in the form of George Soros has been a long-running tactic, but recent propaganda campaigns against EU institutions and COVID restrictions is the latest strategy to muddy the information space and make truth and fiction difficult to discern.
The story of how disinformation affects the body politic, however, isn't linear. In fact, it's also a mixed bag. American voters defeated Trump at the ballot box in favor of Joe Biden, a transatlanticist with a moral compass. The Italians have made their own course correction since their 2018 election and now have a pragmatic technocrat in Mario Draghi at the helm. The UK, for its part, has retained Boris Johnson as its chief executive and remains mired in post-Brexit confusion. And Hungary's Orban continues to whittle away at the edges of the European project, probing for vulnerabilities that will undermine institutions that could check his worst instincts. Unstable, polarized countries

make unreliable partners. Unreliable partners form weak alliances, and weak alliances open the door to malicious actors ready to pounce.

The Usual Suspects

When disinformation that seeks to undermine trust in Western institutions, weaken democratically elected governments, or divide societies or allies circulates, Russia is typically first on a short list of suspects. Its state-directed Internet Research Agency leveraged a $1.5 million monthly budget in an effort to turn America's electoral system upside down. Russia's interference across Europe has extended to the Brexit campaign, Italy's parliamentary contest and even Germany's 2021 election. In the last case, the Kremlin-backed network RT Deutsch pushed anti-vaccine conspiracies and echoed messaging from the far-right party Alternative for Germany. RT Deutsch's Facebook posts were seen at least 22.7 million times in the run-up to and during the campaign, making the network Germany's most dominant on social media.[2] Russia has adapted the 20th-century conception of a sphere of influence to the virtual space, giving the country a reach and capacity to shape international affairs in the 21st century at little cost. The impact of these disinformation campaigns was not limited to the victim; there was a beneficiary, too.
China has been watching Russia operate in cyberspace, seeing what works and what doesn't, what provokes a response and what is tolerated. Beijing's modus operandi used to focus primarily on cyber industrial espionage, but it has recently dedicated more resources to disinformation, building on the Kremlin's success. In 2020, Chinese agents created fake social media accounts to circulate fictitious reports of a nationwide U.S. lockdown to contain COVID-19. China doubled down on this strategy in the midst of the pandemic to achieve two complementary goals: to undermine confidence in Western countries and to deflect responsibility for the coronavirus to anywhere but China.

Moscow and Beijing's relationship in the disinformation space has evolved from master and protégé to interdependent actors. According to Brookings Study by the Brookings Institution, "In promoting its conspiracy theories, China exploits Russia's propaganda apparatus. RT and Sputnik, pro-Kremlin media outlets, are among the top five most-retweeted non-Chinese news outlets by China's state-funded media."[3] This should come as no surprise. China and Russia are interested in relative strength at this stage. They see a fragile Europe and a divided America as reducing the U.S. security umbrella in China's neighborhood, and they see NATO as a diminished counterweight to Russian aspirations in Eastern Europe. But neither China nor Russia could have achieved the success they have enjoyed in the disinformation game without a little help along the way.

The Accomplices

Perhaps it's a bit unfair to call social media platforms "accomplices" in this context. A more generous description may be "accessories".

No matter the moniker, companies such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been primary vehicles for the spread of disinformation on both sides of the Atlantic.

In an upcoming study from New York University and Université Grenoble Alpes, researchers examined Facebook pages of more than 2,500 news publishers and found that misinformation received six times as much engagement as credible news.[4] A similar problem persists on Twitter. In 2018, MIT researchers studied the engagement data of disinformation and, more interestingly, the speed at which it travels relative to factual news. According to the MIT report, "false news stories are 70 percent more likely to be retweeted than true stories are. It also takes true stories about six times as long to reach 1,500 people as it does for false stories to reach the same number of people."[5] YouTube completes this influential trifecta through the magnitude of its reach and ability to dictate the behavior of its audience. According to YouTube's own data, 80% of internet users worldwide watch 1 billion hours of content per day.[6] Its algorithm is designed to suggest content that will be most appealing to the user. In practical terms this means that once you enter a particular information space, you are unlikely to be exposed to sources that challenge the predominant views of that silo.

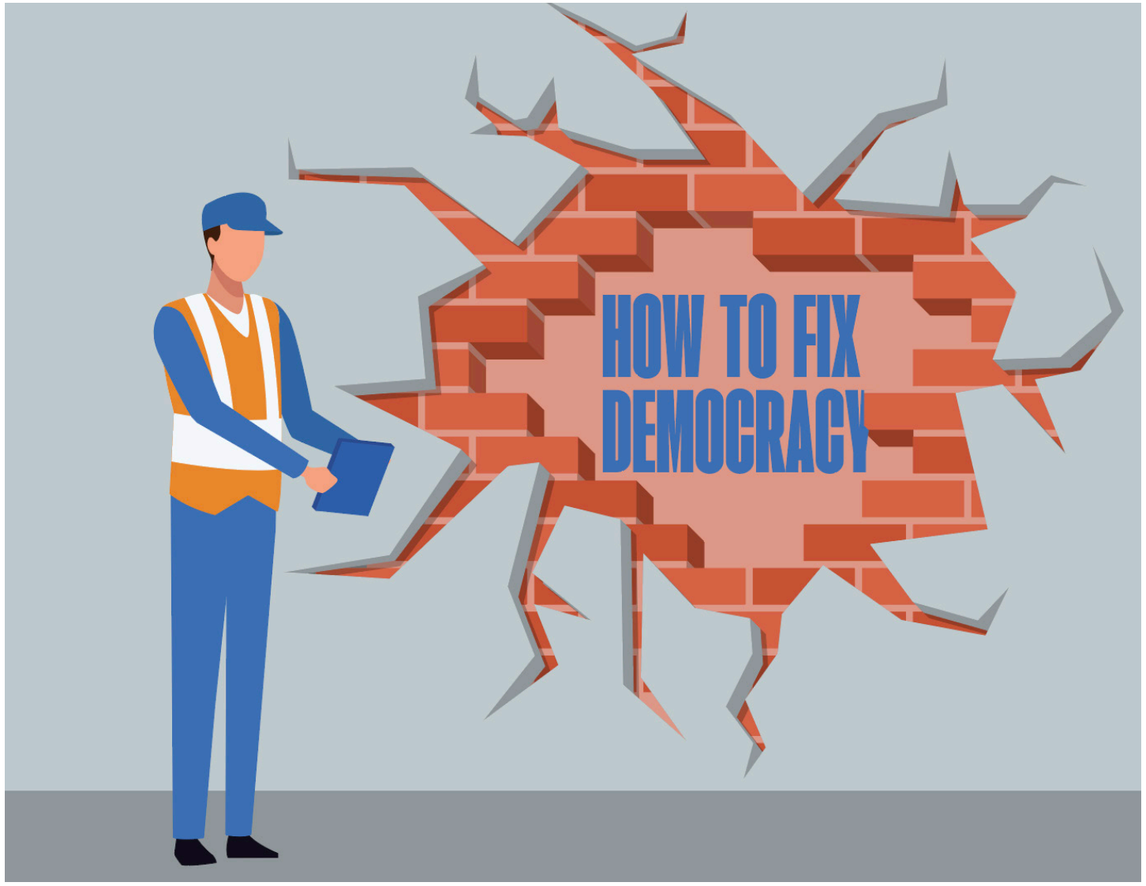
Whether you are a democratically elected politician seeking to smear your opponent or an authoritarian regime leveraging disinformation for a geopolitical advantage, social media platforms are exceptional vectors for doing the dirty work quickly and cheaply. To be fair, Facebook and Twitter have spent considerable time on the road to Damascus, but neither reached the destination. De-platforming serial violators, increasing content-moderation capacity and labeling are all positive steps, but failure to appropriately regulate what have become the world's most powerful media outlets is a failure whose consequences become apparent with each election cycle or international crisis.

From Distortion to Clarity

The transatlantic relationship thrived as the cornerstone of a stable international order for more than 70 years because it shared core values that included democracy, rule of law and freedom. That's not to say the alliance hasn't been tested. From Vietnam to Iraq to Edward Snowden to Donald Trump, cracks that needed repair have emerged over time. But what happens when the very core of the relationship is shaken? Disinformation has called into question whether Europe and the U.S. actually adhere to any of the values they profess, causing politicians and the public to wonder if the alliance can and should endure. The threats technology poses to this relationship are moving too fast to prescribe any practical remedy to head off future crises, but a viable path forward remains.

Each challenge highlighted in this article can be viewed through the prism of education. On the domestic front, improved civic education in primary and secondary schools will prepare young people to better understand history and governmental structures, and to cast a critical eye on candidates and elected officials. It will prepare them to spot charlatans who cloak themselves in a thin veneer of democratic legitimacy but use disinformation to stoke fear and division. In short, civic education might help us choose better leaders. As for the "usual suspects", a widespread program of digital and media literacy targeting those aged 55 and older would be a step in the right direction. According to a 2019 report from Princeton University, Americans over the age of 65 are seven times more likely to share disinformation than those between the ages of 18 and 29.[7] An Utrecht University study indicated that Europeans over the age of 55 are most susceptible to fake news.[8] Many young people are already receiving instruction in school or are forced to be autodidacts growing up in a digital world. It's the older generation who are most at risk, and also the most likely to vote. That's a dangerous combination that must be addressed, and tech companies have begun doing this. Twitter partners with UNESCO on media and information literacy. Facebook's Literacy Library provides lesson plans to better equip users when they log on. And YouTube has a proactive approach to prepare its site for advances in deepfake technology. But are these steps enough to make an impact?

The noxious mix of disinformation used by malign forces at home, abroad and online has dramatically distorted the transatlantic information space. This distortion has led to suspicion and mistrust from government officials down to the public, which has consequently made the world less stable. But it is never too late to rub our eyes, refocus our vision and move forward with clarity. The tools exist to do it, but does the will to act? The future of the transatlantic relationship depends on the answer.



HOW TO FIX DEMOCRACY

By Andrew Keen

I'm an interviewer. I ask questions designed to provoke conversation. My professional craft is mining the minds of others to extract their wisdom. Over the last three years, I've been lucky enough to have mined some of the wisest minds in Europe, America, Africa and Asia for their perspectives on the fate of contemporary democracy. I have done this for a Bertelsmann Foundation and Humanity in Action-supported series entitled "How to Fix Democracy".

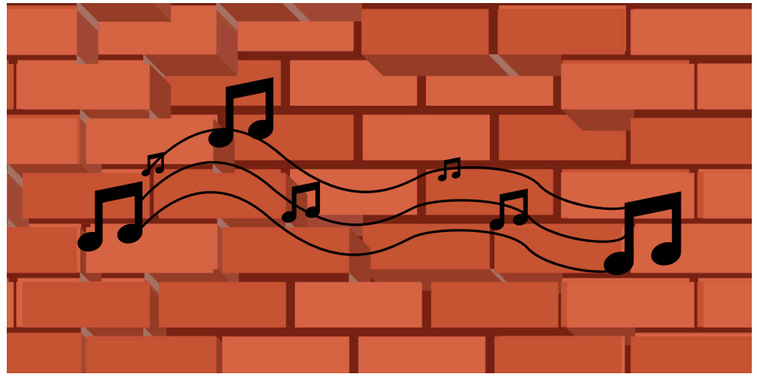
Yes, very lucky. Our illustrious guests have included Booker Prize-winning Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, 2015 Nobel Prize for economics recipient Angus Deaton, and crusading Filipino journalist and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Maria Ressa. The interviews are distributed as stand-alone, online video episodes and as a podcast series. We have also filmed a 60-minute documentary and published a book featuring some of the most memorable quotations from the nearly 100 interviews we have filmed and recorded since 2019. I am particularly proud of our 2021 book edited by a young poet named Kenneth Martin, who brings a Gen Z sensibility to our current concern with political decay and renewal.

In our age of the narcissistic strongman - of wannabe nationalist autocrats such as Russia's Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the U.S.' Donald J. Trump, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte (all men, of course) - it is not hard to provoke conversation about today's crisis of democracy. Everyone from academic experts to political activists to journalists has their own take on these political mountebanks and their existential threat to our political freedom. In today's social media-dominated populist world of Brexit, the George Floyd murder and the January 6 attempted coup/insurrection in the U.S., everyone has their own particular fix on how to fix democracy.

Thus, our "How to Fix Democracy" series. These words can be reassembled as a question: "So, how, exactly, do we fix democracy?" I sometimes pose that to my guests. But "How to Fix Democracy" can alternatively spark a practical conversation about reforming society, sometimes even as a prelude for a concrete manifesto of political and socio-economic change. That is the beauty and the problem with asking people how to fix democracy. Their answer is likely to be as all-encompassing and amorphous as the question itself.

Asking somebody how to fix democracy is like a political Rorschach test. It quickly gets to the heart of their thoughts about the state of the world. For some, fixing democracy means radically regulating capitalism and the internet. For others, it means resurrecting ancient concepts of citizenship. For the more forward thinking, it means innovating traditional political institutions and practices. And then there are even the techno-sceptics who believe that, in our radically disruptive age of artificial intelligence, fixing democracy should mean reinventing ourselves so that we don't get subjugated by robots.

Smart machines might one day threaten our species, but for the moment we interviewers remain all too human. Like any journalist, I have my own agenda, my own biases and, above all, my own style in mining the minds of others. I like to think of my trade as being akin to that of a baseball pitcher. In the style of a winning pitcher, I try to keep my interviewees slightly off-balance by varying my delivery and surprising them with unexpected questions.



Like a dominant hurler, too, I try to keep my killer pitch, my favorite question, in reserve so that I can unleash it at the climax of our conversation. In my many interviews about fixing democracy, I've always kept this particular question in my back pocket. It is my go-to question, my own signature intellectual chin music.

"WHAT SHOULD DEMOCRACY SOUND LIKE?"

What should democracy sound like? I like that this question, in our echo-chamber culture of knee-jerk political responses, amid the mass hysteria on Twitter about some ephemeral scandal or perceived injustice, has no obvious answer. It is the anti-Rorschach test. It is a question that nobody expects, one for which there is no standard political response.

It is, of course, a strange question but not one weird enough to be ignored or laughed at. As the interviewer, I learn much from the answers, which is why I particularly cherish the question. Wisdom in, wisdom out; ask a smart question and get a smarter answer.

"Mmmmm, that's a really, really interesting question," people say slowly, as if wanting to earn a few extra seconds of reflection. Then there are those few moments of silence, of serious contemplation, before they riff on their response.

I am no musicologist. But in the interviews I have conducted

worldwide over the last three years for “How to Fix Democracy”, my special question about democracy has been a musical one. From Budapest, Brussels and Berlin to New York City, Washington, DC and Zagreb, my question has been the same. I have posed it to Ressa, Turkish writer Ece Temelkuran and Bard College President and American Symphony Orchestra Director Leo Botstein.

SO, WHAT, EXACTLY, SHOULD DEMOCRACY SOUND LIKE?

Gen Z poet Martin does a great job outlining the ideal acoustics of democracy by borrowing from his experience of being in Warsaw in 2018 during the democratic activist response to the authoritarianism of the country’s ruling Law and Justice party. In his sparkling introduction to our “How to Fix Democracy” book of quotations, Martin tells us about what he calls “the polyphony” that, he argues, is “inherent to democracy”.

Polyphony, meaning music that contains multiple lines of melody, indeed captures the acoustic of the democratic activism that Martin celebrates in his essay. Those polyphonous pro-democracy demonstrations in Warsaw combine what Martin poetically describes as the “thunderous roar of thousands”, which kept him awake at night, with the “quiet, private matter” of voting one’s conscience and “writing polite letters to elected officials”. Such multiple tunes encapsulate the contradictory public and private, the seemingly incompatible you (ty – in Polish) and I (ja – in Polish) of democracy.

Martin’s polyphonic take on democracy is echoed by some our most illustrious guests in the “How to Fix Democracy” series. As a distinguished musicologist and orchestral conductor, Botstein, a fierce critic of Trump and his brand of populist authoritarianism, had a particularly measured take on democracy’s acoustic. We met in New York City a few weeks after I had returned from Berlin to film a segment of our documentary in front of the Brandenburg Gate. With Leonard Bernstein’s iconic performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall in mind, I asked Botstein if democracy had a particular song. Beethoven’s Ninth has a conveniently linear enlightenment narrative.

In explaining that both Hitler and pro-democracy demonstrators in the East Berlin of 1989 embraced Beethoven’s opus, Botstein reminds us that democracy doesn’t really have its own signature symphonic tune. The music of democracy is as messy and complex as history itself, he suggested, a particularly bracing antidote to the simplistic and optimistic “end of history” narrative that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Just as there is no end of history, there is also no terminus, no democratic synthesis, in politics. Rather than going backward or forward, Botstein explained, history - and, with it, democracy - zigzags in unexpectedly ironic ways. Nothing is inevitable, the wise Bard University president implied. Neither the triumph nor the demise of democracy is.

A few weeks after interviewing Botstein, I flew to the Croatian capital, Zagreb, to interview Temelkuran. Over tea in her small apartment in which she lives alone in a kind of informal exile, I threw my signature pitch at the longtime democratic activist and veteran of the 2013 Gezi Park protests against the neo-authoritarian Erdoğan government.

“SO, WHAT, EXACTLY, SHOULD DEMOCRACY SOUND LIKE, ECE?”

Rather than the melodiousness of Beethoven’s Ninth, Temelkuran’s response was about the noise of car doors. She smiled at the absurdity of the question. But after a few moments’ reflection, she spoke about “the orchestra of the street”. Democracy, she said, sounds like the spontaneity of a modern jazz ensemble or even the untidier polyphonic jumble of city life: the slamming of car doors, or the noise of a man and woman arguing in the street below.

“Democracy is life,” she said. And that’s exactly - in all its splendidly unmelodious disorder - what it should sound like. Erdoğan’s unnatural Turkish nationalism, like Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s narrow conception of Hungarian ethnicity or Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s intolerant notion of a Hindu nation in India, is an affront to life itself, she implied. It is an acoustic abomination, a fundamental misrepresentation of the human condition, a shrill offense to our ears. And we should fight it, she argued, by maintaining our humanity and our broad love for fellow citizens in the face of the pinched inhumanity of illiberal, anti-democratic nationalists.

Few people in the contemporary world have maintained their own humanity in the face of intolerance with more dignity than Ressa has in standing up to Duterte. I have known Ressa for years, even visiting her a couple of times in Manila, where she is now always accompanied by a bodyguard. Rather than in the Philippine capital, however, I interviewed her on the roof of a lower Manhattan hotel with a panoramic view of the Brooklyn Bridge and the permanently gray East River.

“SO, MARIA, WHAT, EXACTLY, SHOULD DEMOCRACY SOUND LIKE?”

She looked over rather sadly at the East River sludge before answering and explained that, as a child, she had played a musical instrument and loved participating in an orchestra. That’s what democracy should sound like, she said. But Ressa’s orchestral ideal is not the Hollywood-style spectacle of Bernstein conducting Beethoven’s Ninth in front of the Brandenburg Gate while the world watches. Instead, it is an

ordinary group of musicians able to combine the polyphony of many different instruments into a harmonic whole. Democracy requires people to work together, the Nobel Peace Prize winner reminded me. Democracy can’t breathe without community and citizenship. It is the reverse of divisive, autocratic politics.

Let’s imagine I am interviewing myself. If I were mining my own mind, how would I respond if asked about democracy’s sound?

My answer would borrow shamelessly from Ressa, Temelkuran, Martin and Botstein. Nobody can agree on what democracy sounds like, I would argue, because the sound contains multiple lines of ever-changing melodies that differ from country to country and from generation to generation. That’s the unharmonious point, the wisdom that I have learned from hosting “How to Fix Democracy”. As Martin wrote, the melodies represent “the messiness and beauty of the polyphony inherent to democracy”. Or, rather, that messiness is the beauty of democracy. The acoustical notes do not add up because they aren’t supposed to. Just like humanity itself.

Andrew Keen is the host of the podcast series How to Fix Democracy. Check out all of the interviews at www.howtofixdemocracy.org.

SHIFTING FOCUS: A PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSATLANTIC DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

A photo of the author filming in rural Latvia for the Bertelsmann Foundation documentary "Harmony: Latvian Democracy on Russia's Border.

By Samuel George

Why make documentary films? At the Bertelsmann Foundation, we are frequently asked why we began more than seven years ago to feature documentary films in our portfolio of work.

We know in our gut there is something deeply moving told through images. In today's world, where billions of people carry high-definition screens in their pockets, where images and audio can be shared instantaneously with almost anyone, anywhere, from across the globe, we know well the power of visuals to inform opinion, action, and even policy. We know it is a power that can be used and abused.

We know in our gut there is something deeply moving, insightful and provocative in story told through images. While we may put much work into a 100-page statistical analysis, few are likely to read it. And that readership may be confined to a narrow expert audience. We must generate inclusive conversations in which many voices are heard. And all the better to hear this input directly from the sources, themselves, which we can do through documentaries. Documentary film offers the undocumented farmworker, the Italian cab driver, or the West Virginia-based coal miner the opportunity to speak directly to anyone open to listening.

Slick Rick performs with the Go-Go band Sweat Band in 2020. A still shot from the Bertelsmann Foundation documentary "Go-Go City".

The medium's potential extends far beyond offering a convenient replacement for the written word. A well-done documentary gives viewers an experience that they may not otherwise have. It places the viewer on location and in the moment, allowing them to form their own opinions. Given the opportunity to walk a mile in another's shoes, a viewer can come to their own conclusions. And, if the Christopher Nolan film "Inception" taught us anything, the conclusions that we come to by ourselves are often the most durable.

In this article, I look back at some moments of documentary filmmaking that I found captivating over my most recent two years with the Bertelsmann Foundation. These were two years of local, national and global tumult, and my colleagues and I believe the lessons we learned in this time are critically important for those seeking to keep alive the transatlantic dream of liberal democracy.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the three documentaries discussed in this piece were all filmed in the United States. But the underlying and urgent issues of political, economic and social inclusion exist on both sides of the Atlantic.

I. Images of gentrification and resistance

For cinematic works of fiction, script writing tends to occur long before filming. A dialogue is hammered out, and the minutiae of each scene are planned right down to specific camera angles and cuts. For many types of documentary film, however, that process is reversed. The writing occurs after filming since filmmakers can't be sure what video they'll capture. In fact, over-conceptualizing before filming can skew a documentary by pre-imposing a reality that may not exist.

I felt it particularly important not to pre-define our 2020 film "Go-Go City: Displacement & Protest in Washington, DC". I am not from the city's neighborhoods that have experienced an onslaught of gentrification in the last two decades (the film's subject), and though I love the city's pulsing Go-Go music, I am no expert on the genre. The project required a conceptual openness that allowed stakeholders to guide its direction.

When filming began in early 2020, gentrification was a critical fault line on both sides of the Atlantic. As a radically new 21st-century economy took hold,

Richard “Dickie” Shannon, owner of Horace & Dickie’s, in interview for “Go-Go City.”

a small number of cities became magnet locations, attracting highly educated, trained and often wealthy young people from around the globe.

A concentration of high-end jobs in cities such as San Francisco, Amsterdam, Berlin, or Washington, DC drives up wages, which, in turn, drives up housing and business costs. But long-time urban residents may not benefit from this wealth creation. As neighborhoods rapidly transform, rents spike, property taxes jump, and local mom-and-pop shops lose their longstanding clientele while struggling to win the attention of newcomers.

“Go-Go City” shows how Horace & Dickies, a beloved fried-fish sandwich joint, was the jewel of its community for decades, only to see that community undergo rapid change. The restaurant’s income plummeted, and it eventually closed, erased from the map.

The film shows the final days of Horace & Dickies for “Go-Go City”. On its last evening, the owner, Dickie, slumped behind the counter, lost in thought. As his staff cleaned, I asked if now could be a good time for an interview. It was.

During our conversation, I asked him to reflect on the displacement he had observed over the previous 15 years.

“They call it gentrification,” he then paused briefly, his eyes flashing with emotion. “I call it cultural genocide,” he added, staring directly into the camera. Those were piercing words, said as his staff prepared to close the restaurant permanently.

When filming a documentary, far less than 1% of what is filmed makes my final cut. While 99% of my cuts may not make it, I knew immediately that that powerful statement would go into our film, and am grateful this moment was not lost like so many other nostalgic moments of closing that have scarred Washington, DC’s H Street, NE corridor.

While the recording doesn’t help those displaced, it does document that Horace & Dickies mattered. It was part of the community fabric that made Washington, DC what it was.

In “Go-Go City”, we focus on what is lost when longstanding communities are razed and replaced with luxury condo buildings and restaurants. We hoped to use the city’s beloved Go-Go music as a way to observe the beauty of Washington, DC’s culture, and to document how that vibrant culture was being muted.

Still, we couldn’t imagine how events would unfold. A month into filming, the COVID-19 pandemic made the city a ghost town.

The 2020 protests for racial justice rallied around Go-Go music in Washington, DC, and became a central focus of the documentary.

T.O.B. Band emerges triumphantly in this still shot from Go-Go City.

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 dramatically punctured this silence. As protests for racial justice gripped the city, a poetic dynamic emerged. Go-Go music became the rallying point for a series of marches and protests. Go-Go bands, performing on flatbeds towed by trucks, rolled through the same neighborhoods experiencing the highest levels of gentrification. Longtime Washingtonians rallied around the music and the culture to make their presence felt and have their voices heard.

The photo above shows T.O.B. Band performing on June 9, 2020, in a march organized by Moechella, a local movement that melds Go-Go music and activism. I had been following the march for a couple of hours, filming the previous band, Suttle Squad. By the time T.O.B. Band performed, pictured above, I was exhausted, having chased the march with equipment slung over my back. Sweating profusely, I asked the band’s tow truck driver if I could hang on to a door while he rolled on.

From the side of the truck, I had an amazing vantage point. I could see and feel the swelling emotions of pride, joy, and determination for change.

We were approaching one of Washington, DC’s famous traffic circles. I assumed the driver would stay above ground, traversing the circle, as opposed to using the underground tunnel that presented a potentially dangerous bottleneck for the crowds.

The driver chose the tunnel. This choice immediately amplified the intensity of the moment. The music reached a volume that seemed to shake the earth in the enclosed space jammed with protesters. The visuals and audio were overpowering. I kept my lens as wide as possible to capture the moment.

The photo of T.O.B. Band, taken just as it emerged from the tunnel, accompanied a general feeling of jubilation in the returning sunlight. As we merged with protesters who remained on the streets above, the moment became magical, and one we could have never planned for when preparing to film. But our initial conceptual flexibility allowed us to incorporate the protest movement into a discussion of gentrification as an expression of systemic racism.

II. Images of democracy and redemption

I am 36 years old. Bobby Perkins spent 37 years in prison. The math was not lost on me as I got to know Mr. Bobby over the weeks I spent with him in Baltimore, Maryland.

I went to Maryland to understand Americans’ experiences of the then-ongoing 2020 presidential campaign. The goal was to compare the urban and rural experience in a quasi-swing state. But I met Bobby on the first day of filming, and the project took an unexpected turn.

Bobby is part of a group of formerly incarcerated activists who fought to regain the right to vote after leaving prison. Having won, these activists are now community advocates, dedicating their lives to bringing marginalized people and communities into the democratic process. Across the United States, the voting rights of formerly incarcerated individuals has emerged as a critical issue as upwards of 80 million Americans have been exposed to the criminal justice system.

In the weeks leading up to the

Bobby Perkins walks the streets of Baltimore to get everyone to the polls in this still shot from the Bertelsmann Foundation documentary "Out to Vote".

election, I followed Bobby as he marched through Baltimore's streets, knocking on doors and stopping strangers to ensure everyone was registered to vote, and that everyone had a way to get to the polls. Where none was had, Bobby would offer a lift.

Bobby was one of three activists profiled in the resulting documentary, "Out to Vote", alongside Nicole Hanson-Mundell, executive director at Out for Justice, a nonprofit dedicated to helping those impacted by the criminal justice system, and the pair's close confidant, Monica Cooper, executive director of the Maryland Justice Project.

All three are formerly incarcerated citizens. In an era in which many states are erecting barriers to voting, I used my time in Baltimore to ask what happens when society makes democratic participation more inclusive. What happens when people such as Bobby, Nicole, and Monica regain the right to vote and become advocates for democracy?

The trio's work reveals the community benefits when released citizens can partake in the democratic process, and the film shows the power that that access to democracy can have on individuals. For Bobby, his work appears to have given new meaning to his life.

The photo of Bobby was taken on a beautiful fall day just weeks before the 2020 election outside the Out for Justice office between strolls through the city's streets.

A still shot from "Out to Vote"

Bobby Perkins reflecting on democracy in "Out to Vote".

Bobby was reflective about the meaning of being able to vote. "That's why I go out and pound these sidewalks, to register people," he said between puffs of a Newport cigarette. "Because I believe in it. I believe in the democracy."

He added that when he went to jail he was "[a]ngry at the guy who told on me, angry about getting locked up for the bank robberies. I was angry with the world. But then, as time went on, I started realizing that when you have your mind focused on something positive, nothing can stop you. If you're sincere." As he spoke, I realized that this emotional transition that had only taken him a few second to explain had probably taken him decades in prison to accomplish.

How many people on either side of the Atlantic view democratic participation as that one final opportunity on the horizon? Americans and Europeans seem to increasingly view democracy as a game for elites that is out of reach for others. That disconnection and disassociation marks a civil retreat from democratic participation.

While filming "Out to Vote", one can see the impact one individual can have on democracy. In one scene, Monica Cooper drives a 37-year-old man to the polls. Thanks to her, he is voting for the first time. On the way, he is affable but generally apathetic about his choices. He speaks of the process as if it were for others, as if democracy is not his.

The young man is a different person upon emerging from the voting booth. He is overcome with joy. The simple act of voting has, at least for a moment, transformed his perspective. Turning to the camera, he speaks authoritatively, offering advice to skeptics. "Cast your vote! It matters! Come show up! If you have a question, show up and ask the question! The best thing you can do is show up."

As a documentary filmmaker you realize it is a magical moment, and you will only have one chance to film it.

You could, in theory, ask the young man to repeat himself, but it would never be the same energy or raw emotion. How do you film a magical moment? Do you zoom in? Do you open up and try to show the voting center the background? Is the shot properly focused—that, in some ways, is most important. Do we risk cranking the ISO mid-shot and thus spiking the ability to use a long take? We are using the mic attached to the camera and need the sound to be excellent, so we better be close; but now he is moving and you are moving and it could be out of focus.

Monica Cooper drives voters to the polls in "Out to Vote".

The emotions of a first-time voter. Still shots from "Out to Vote".

The young man turns and walks away with Monica, yet we can still hear him. "I feel so great. This is the beginning to a lot more. And who knows? Maybe someday you will be voting for me!"

III. Images of steel and labor

On January 6, 2021, many Americans watched in horror as an armed mob invaded the Capitol, interrupting a normally ceremonial vote to certify the results of the then-recent presidential election.

While only a tiny percentage of Americans participated in the violence and joined into this revolt, tens of millions of Americans did vote for a candidate that severely threatened the nation's democratic institutions.

A similar number believed, despite a glaring lack of evidence, that the election was rigged or stolen. Throughout the country, individuals in positions of power sought to undermine the will of the American people. Local officials refused to certify results. Congressional representatives sought to reject those of their own states. Some senators moved to dismiss election results outright.

How did Americans get to this point? How could so many of them be willing to overturn democracy to ensure the victory of their candidate?

These are questions that think tanks, journalists, and videographers have repeatedly asked to the point of parody.

I spent months in 2021 driving back and forth from Washington, DC to Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, a small town with a massive steel mill looming overhead about 20 miles outside of Pittsburgh. During that time, I filmed with United States Steelworkers as they went on strike against the owners of the massive blue mill in town.

In Western, Pennsylvania, I got the chance to truly get to know people who felt, pardon the cliché, left behind. Left behind by the American economy, left behind by American democracy, and, perhaps most importantly to them, left behind by an employer to whom they had dedicated so much for so long.

Mill workers hold the picket line in this still shot from a forthcoming Bertelsmann Foundation documentary.

The steel mill looms over the town of Brackenridge, Pennsylvania.

They spoke of corporate greed, of outrageous wage gaps and of their union's vital importance for protecting labor standards. Some spoke of a Democratic Party that they felt had written them off.

One May morning, under a light drizzle and a gray sky, the conversation on the picket line turned political. "They say, oh, you should go get a green job. Where's the green jobs?" a middle-aged man asked rhetorically. "If there was a green job on the other side of this river, we'd all go apply right now!"

I followed up with this question. "So, the people you would look to for help, they are saying go get a green job," I began. "Do you think they realize there aren't any green jobs available?"

"Sure, they do," the picketer responded with a shrug.

"Of course, they realize," answered another, "they just don't care."

Documentary film allows viewers to join the union hall conversations, to idle away evenings on the picket line, to sit with a striking father as he tells his 13-year-old son that the karate lessons must stop. "We have to make little sacrifices so we don't lose big things, like the house," the father explains to the unconvinced adolescent.

IV. Images in and out of focus

Conversations on the job are frequently asymmetric. I ask respondents to probe their own sensitivities, their optimism, their failures and their frustrations. My favorite element of documentary filmmaking is making connections to people who I would likely never meet. And if I have one overarching observation, it is that stereotypes are almost always inaccurate, and people are far more similar than we realize. The similarity may not be in our experiences, opportunities or privileges. Rather, it is in our goals, desires and disposition. Job market frustrations, education and healthcare costs, and a sense of disconnect from policy and politics provoke similar emotions among groups of people. If strikers in exurban Pennsylvania spoke with marchers for justice in Washington, DC, they might find that they have far more in common than anticipated.

That's why the Bertelsmann Foundation produces documentaries. They provide a means for connection, for opportunities to understand and empathize with people we don't know and will likely never meet. We film these documentaries to improve trans-Atlantic and international understandings of the United States, under the belief that the better we comprehend each other, the stronger our relationships will be.

We believe that these perspectives, combined, reveal aspects of 21st-century transatlantic relations that won't be found in policy papers.

Those generous enough to share their stories with us and with viewers open a pathway to recognition. In a world that seems to make increasing numbers of people feel invisible, we try to keep them in focus.

THE BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION'S UPCOMING RELEASES:

TRANSATLANTIC PODCAST MINISERIES:
BRIDGING THE ATLANTIC

—

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2022

TRANSATLANTIC BRIEFING BOOK:

—

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2022

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION SERIES II

—

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2022

THE POLICY PRISM:
YOUR QUARTERLY TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATIVE NEWS

—

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2022

TRANSATLANTIC BAROMETER:

—

RELEASE DATE: TBD 2022

TRANSATLANTIC PERISCOPE

—

TBD, 2022

RETHINKING AMERICA DOCUMENTARY FILM

—

RELEASE DATE: JULY 4, 2022

HIDDEN LAYERS:
YOUR QUARTERLY TRANSATLANTIC TECHNOLOGY NEWS

—

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2022

INTERVIEW SERIES:

—

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2022

LOCAL 1196: A STEELWORKERS' STRIKE DOCUMENTARY FILM

—

TBD, 2022

THE BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION TRANSATLANTIC FELLOWSHIP

—

APPLICATIONS DUE BY APRIL 15TH, 2021

THE TRANSPONDER

—

RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2022

FOOTNOTES

Merkel's Legacy Footnotes:

1. https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/after-schroeder-us-german-relations-the-merkel-era
2. http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1682006,00.html
3. https://www.dw.com/en/bush-laments-soured-relationship-with-germanys-ex-chancellor-schroeder/a-6209285
4. https://www.dw.com/en/bush-and-merkel-hail-new-chapter-in-us-german-relations/a-1855733
5. https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/after-schroeder-us-german-relations-the-merkel-era
6. https://www.dw.com/en/bush-visit-bonding-over-barbecue-on-the-baltic-sea/a-2094718
7. https://www.state.gov/transatlantic-economic-council/
8. https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0706/map.html
9. https://www.wsj.com/articles/angela-merkel-german-alliance-biden-trans-atlantic-relations-11632344868
10. https://www.wsj.com/articles/angela-merkel-german-alliance-biden-trans-atlantic-relations-11632344868
11. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/obama-failed-close-guantanamo
12. https://www.dw.com/en/barack-obama-angela-merkel-a-promised-land-memoir/a-55623587
13. https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/angela-merkel-donald-trump-democracy-freedom-of-press-a7556986.html
14. https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=YizPJZOeyRs
15. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-summit/trump-calls-germany-captive-of-russia-demands-higher-defense-spending-idUSKBN1K032D
16. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/31/europe-america-shift-afghanistan/
17. https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-arrives-in-the-us-for-farewell-visit-as-chancellor/a-58265682
18. https://assets.ctfassets.net/9vgcz0fpp-kl3/74sxOYoVly3v9mvH-24L9IX/b4189c018b8538d-dace1fc37e690c09b/TT2021_Web_Version.pdf
19. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/31/majority-of-u-s-public-favors-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-biden-criticized-for-his-handling-of-situation/
20. https://www.npr.org/2021/08/28/1031965222/european-leaders-have-tense-reactions-to-u-s-afghanistan-conflict
21. https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/24/afghanistan-boris-johnson-to-urge-g7-leaders-to-boost-aid-for-refugees
22. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58564837
23. https://www.gmfus.org/news/germany-caught-middle-australian-submarine-saga
24. https://apnews.com/article/france-recalls-ambassadors-us-australia-submarines-0322cefb3783f9e90ee8f0c3a738717e
25. https://www.gmfus.org/news/germany-caught-middle-australian-submarine-saga
26. https://www.wsj.com/articles/angela-merkel-german-alliance-biden-trans-atlantic-relations-11632344868
27. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/09/22/germany-and-merkel-receive-high-marks-internationally-in-chancellors-last-year-in-office/
28. https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-arrives-in-the-us-for-farewell-visit-as-chancellor/a-58265682
29. https://www.dw.com/en/barack-obama-angela-merkel-a-promised-land-memoir/a-55623587

Transatlantic Trends Footnotes:

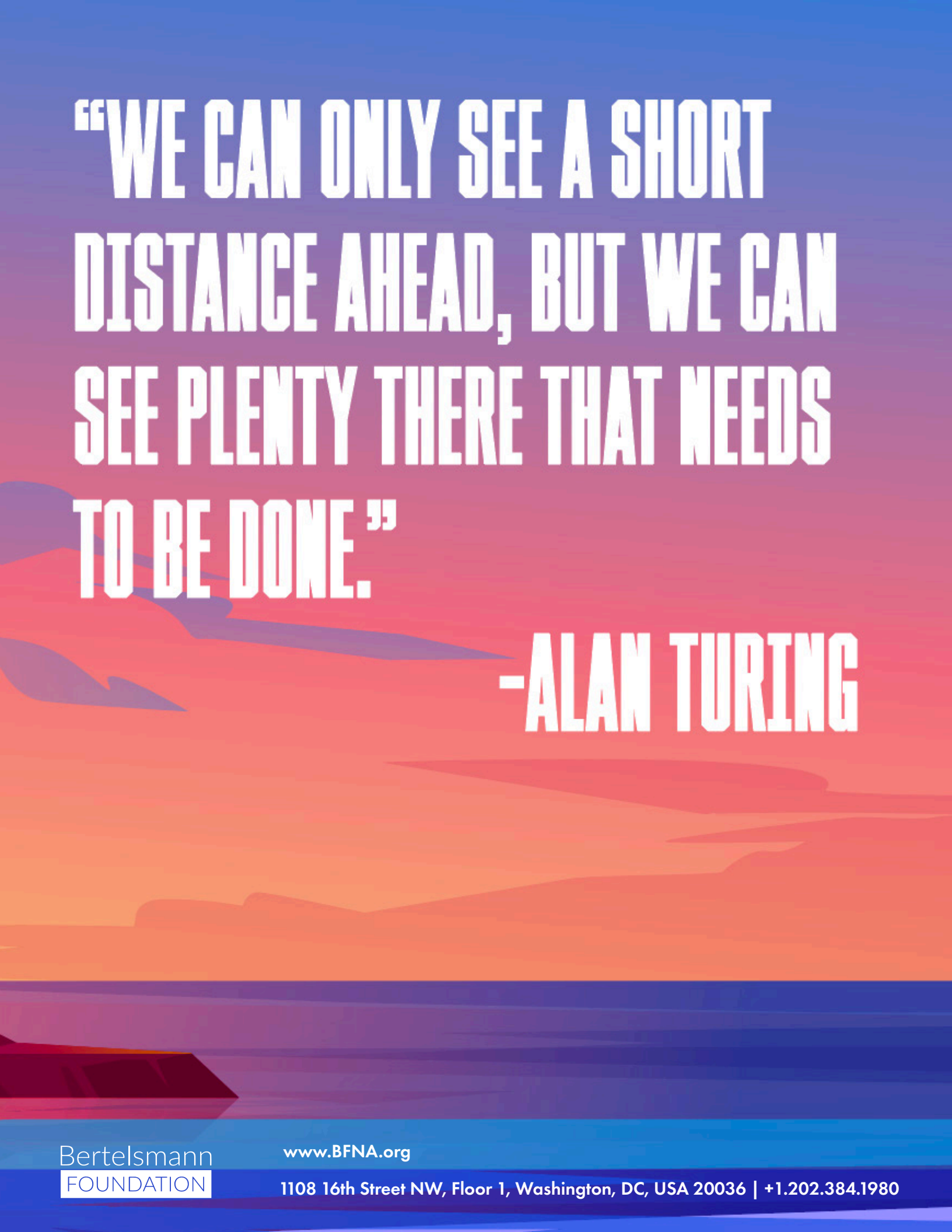
1. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/17/world/europe/joe-biden-vladimir-putin-usa-russia.html
2. https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/europe-floods-2021-climate-change-b1907311.html
3. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/13/turkey-flood-deaths-rise-fresh-fires-erupt-greek-island-evia
4. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/13/all-thats-left-are-ashes-italian-communities-count-cost-of-wild-fires
5. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/27/opinion/greece-fires-climate-change.html
6. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/12/world/europe/sicily-record-high-temperature-119-degrees.html
7. https://www.axios.com/nearly-200-million-heat-warnings-heat-domes-us-39292523-9387-4024-bd99-aa7499114a13.html
8. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58378788
9. https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/02/nyregion/nyc-storm
10. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/covid-cases.html
11. https://covid19.who.int/
12. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/united-states-america/99174/transatlantic-cooperation-fight-against-covid-19_sl
13. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/business/biontech-covid-vaccine.html
14. https://hbr.org/2020/05/the-danger-of-vaccine-nationalism
15. https://www.bfna.org/politics-society/dose-of-good-news-z6d7npgvac/
16. https://www.bfna.org/future-leadership/the-transition/

Climate Security Footnotes:

1. https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-natural-disasters-beg-climate-action
2. https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/
3. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/ order-from-chaos/2021/02/04/what-climate-change-will-mean-for-us-security-and-geopolitics/
4. https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/07/a-brief-introduction-to-climate-change-and-national-security/
5. https://www.americansecurityproject. org/issues/climate-security/
6. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/ climate_change_eu_security.pdf
7. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TX
8. https://carnegieeurope. eu/2021/07/12/eu-s-indirect-and-defensive-approach-to-climate-security-pub-84874
9. https://www.friendsofeurope. org/insights/environmental-security-and-the-eu-strategic-compass-realizing-solanas-vision/
10. https://climateandsecurity. org/2019/08/army-war-college-the-u-s-military-is-precariously-underprepared-for-climate-change/
11. https://daily.jstor.org/why-climate-change-is-a-national-security-issue/
12. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/ official_texts_185174.htm
13. https://www.americansecurityproject.org/castellaw-and-adams-in-the-commercial-appeal-if-military-sees-climate-risk-why-do-we-deny/

Distorted Diplomacy Footnotes:

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336944922_Consuming_Fake_News_A_Matter_of_Age_The_perception_of_political_fake_news_stories_in_Facebook_ads
2. https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-russia-social-media-distrust-election-vladimir-putin/
3. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/05/19/ the-kremlins-disinformation-playbook-goes-to-beijing/
4. https://www.theverge.com/platform/amp/2021/9/3/22656036/nyu-researchers-study-facebook-misinformation-engagement-election
5. https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-twitter-false-news-travels-faster-true-stories-0308
6. https://www.npr.org/2021/04/13/986678544/exploring-youtube-and-the-spread-of-disinformation?t=1631819537709
7. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586
8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336944922_Consuming_Fake_News_A_Matter_of_Age_The_perception_of_political_fake_news_stories_in_Facebook_ads



Bertelsmann FOUNDATION

www.BFNA.org

1108 16th Street NW, Floor 1, Washington, DC, USA 20036 | +1.202.384.1980