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## Highwire act across the Atlantic

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Europe awaits the arrival of President Bush. The visit — his first to Europe since the attacks of September 11 — will be judged both on substance and style. Many of our allies will focus on his address to the German Parliament on Wednesday, hoping for insight into what role the president envisions for Europe in meeting the many global challenges facing both sides of the Atlantic. Do the president and his administration view the Europeans as essential or irrelevant? Striking as this dichotomy may seem, there is evidence that both views are held by different actors within this administration. The Europeans want to know which view the president embraces.

The concern in Europe is that, rather than sharing his vision of a revitalized trans-Atlantic partnership, the president will focus solely on the recent, encouraging progress made concerning Russia's integration into the West. He will herald the recent nuclear arms treaty with Russia as the true end of the old era of U.S.-Russia relations, and tout the upcoming NATO-Russia summit, where he and other heads of state will formally launch the NATO-Russia Council, as the beginning of a new era. Europe will interpret such a focus as a depressing indication that the administration has yet to sort out its policy toward ostensibly its closest allies. For those who believe the Europeans have much to offer the United States, such a scenario would mark a huge missed opportunity.

Three tensions currently strain trans-Atlantic relations. First, the gap in military capabilities across the Atlantic has become a chasm. On Sept. 12, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history, but the ensuing war in Afghanistan was fought not by the alliance, but by the United States and a few key allies. One reason for this was the Bush administration's view that the military advantage our European allies would bring to the battlefield was not significant enough to outweigh the cost to military efficiency of including them in battle plans. Increasing U.S. defense spending will only serve to reinforce this gulf. Clearly, this technological divide is not new. However, during the Cold War, the United States believed its European allies in NATO were essential to any conventional defense of continental Europe from a Soviet attack. In May 2002, the Bush administration sees the existential threats to the United States coming from global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and it does not see the Europeans as providing any vital military contribution in meeting these new threats. This metamorphosis has been under way since the fall of the Berlin Wall and can no longer be overlooked.

Second, our European allies complain about the willingness, if not preference, of the Bush administration to use unilateral means to reach a chosen end. Whether it is unsigning the treaty creating the International Criminal Court or plotting to overthrow Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration seems to disregard the views, preferences, or support of its allies as a factor in its policy decisions. Because the United States is the one remaining superpower, this singular

position and the resources that go along with it mean it can, in many cases, undertake successful action on its own. Any of these actions, however, carry deep consequences for European security and thus our allies across the Atlantic find it irritating at best and reckless at worst to find the United States implementing policies with which they fundamentally disagree.

Third, the Bush administration and its European counterparts have to sort out whether they want to share responsibilities or work out a division of labor. In the case of Kosovo, the two sides shared responsibilities. They fought the war together — albeit with the United States shouldering the heavier burden — and undertook jointly the post-war tasks of peacekeeping and reconstruction — albeit with the Europeans in the lead. The competing model favors a division of labor, playing to each side's strengths, under which the United States fights the wars and Europe keeps the peace. This model appears to have support within the halls of the Department of Defense.

The United States and Europe now face the challenge of managing these tensions. Mr. Bush has a unique opportunity to meet this challenge during his trip. Certainly, he will be met by demonstrators and those who are deeply critical of U.S. policy. But the majority of Europeans still look to the United States for global leadership and expect from Mr. Bush a vision of a peaceful, democratic, prosperous future that includes a central role for them. The United States may well not always want to go it alone and, in truth, will not in every instance have the capabilities to go it alone. The partners most likely to share our world view and thus share the burden are the Europeans. When united, the two sides of the Atlantic can have an impact on world politics that is substantial and unmatched.

The president has an opportunity this week to harness that potential. That should be at the top of his agenda.

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