

“The Importance of Transatlantic Cooperation During the COVID-19 Pandemic”

Statement of
Dr. Karen Donfried
President, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

July 14, 2020

Chairman Keating, Ranking Member Kinzinger, and other members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment to address the importance of transatlantic cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to make clear that the views I express are mine alone. I am not speaking for the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which does not take institutional positions on policy issues.

Allies matter. They especially matter when times are tough. And these are tough times. One need look no further than the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only had profoundly negative health consequences, but also ushered in tremendous economic hardship. When we have faced tough times in the past, transatlantic cooperation has proven essential to finding effective solutions to shared challenges—for the United States and Europe, and for the world. That remains the case today. Unfortunately, however, as the pandemic confronted Americans and Europeans, rather than boosting cooperation, the pandemic has exposed just how bad relations between the two sides of the Atlantic had gotten. This fraying of transatlantic ties reflects years of grievances and disagreements over defense spending, trade, technology issues (ranging from digital tax and privacy to 5G and competition), and much more.

Divergent national responses to this latest coronavirus crisis have brought new sources of tension and complaint. Even as the pandemic spawned the latest round of transatlantic grievances, it can—and should—also provide countries a needed spur to move beyond ongoing disputes and focus on a new transatlantic project: forging cooperative responses to the pandemic. The United States government and its European counterparts urgently need to work together to tackle the coronavirus to ensure consistent supplies of personal protective equipment from reliable sources, to develop an effective COVID-19 vaccine, and to protect the flow of medically accurate facts and reliable information to their citizens. Looming over all of this is the relationship of the United States and Europe to China. How we Americans and Europeans collectively manage this pandemic carries important consequences for our overall relationship to China.¹ My goal in this testimony is to make clear how the United States can meet these coronavirus-related challenges most successfully by cooperating with its European partners. Crisis brings opportunity, both to develop more effective policies and to build a renewed sense of transatlantic solidarity that can last through this crisis and beyond.

¹ The 2018 National Defense Strategy identified the primary concern in U.S. national security as the reemergence of long-term strategic competition from China and Russia, which are described as revisionist, authoritarian powers.

Opportunity Knocks: The Search for PPE and the Race for a Vaccine

Five months into our daunting battle against COVID-19, Americans still face shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE). That reality has led some to call for the United States to no longer rely on other countries for PPE and related medical supplies. The goal is to shift production of those supplies back to the United States and close supply chain vulnerabilities. The reaction in Europe has been similar. European Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said in a debate on April 19 on Czech television that “this crisis has revealed our morbid dependency on China and India as regards pharmaceuticals. This is something that makes us vulnerable and we have to make a radical change... We will reassess the (supply) chains... and try to diversify them and, ideally, produce as many things as possible in Europe.”²

Experienced voices on both sides of the Atlantic, however, are discouraging us from that approach; rather than hunkering down, the advice is to implement existing plans for stockpiling, encourage diversity of supply, and keep trade free of barriers.³ While many members of the European Union turned to national solutions at the start of the pandemic, increasingly they are looking to EU solutions. European Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan recently spoke at the European-American Chamber of Commerce and said his “message to Ambassador Lighthizer [U.S. Trade Representative] is that we can reduce tariffs on pharmaceutical and medical, we can frame standards on technology and we can work together on WTO. As soon as the US and EU came together, China did a 180-degree spin. We are losing a lot by not working together.”⁴ Since March 19, Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun has been holding weekly deputy minister-level coordination calls with transatlantic allies and partners, including the European Commission, and one topic has been facilitating “the maintenance of critical supplies of vital protective equipment and medical supplies.”⁵ Drilling down on the issue of supply chain resilience is an important topic for further discussion and action.

Given the keen interest Members of Congress have in ensuring their constituents, including frontline health care workers, have PPE, the House Foreign Affairs Committee could establish a parliamentary dialogue with European counterparts to map out legislation that might be needed on these issues. U.S. interests will be best served if we aim not for strict self-sufficiency, but for broad resilience. That goal can be best achieved by cooperating with our closest allies. The United States should play a leadership role in building more integrated supply chains across the transatlantic space to ensure that neither the United States nor our European allies are dependent on critical supplies from China or Russia.

² “Jourova slams Europe’s ‘morbid dependency’ on China,” *Euractiv*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/china/news/jourova-slams-europes-morbid-dependency-on-china/>.

³ John Murphy, “Learning the Right Lessons: Safeguarding the U.S. Supply of Medicines and Medical Products,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce, April, 17, 2020, <https://www.uschamber.com/issue-brief/learning-the-right-lessons-safeguarding-the-us-supply-of-medicines-and-medical-products>; Sybrand Brekelmans and Niclas Poitiers, “EU trade in medical goods: why self-sufficiency is the wrong approach,” *Bruegel Blog Post*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.bruegel.org/2020/04/eu-trade-in-medical-goods-why-self-sufficiency-is-the-wrong-approach/>.

⁴ Extracts from Commissioner Phil Hogan’s remarks at European-American Chamber of Commerce event on Transatlantic Leadership Post-Covid,” Speech, European Commission, July 1, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/hogan/announcements/extracts-commissioner-phil-hogans-remarks-european-american-chamber-commerce-event-transatlantic_en.

⁵ “Transatlantic Cooperation on COVID-19,” Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, Department of State, May 12, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/transatlantic-cooperation-on-covid-19/>.

The race to develop a COVID-19 vaccine illustrates a similar tension between the impulse to withdraw from the world and the impulse to cooperate with like-minded countries. Creating this vaccine is of paramount importance to the United States and to every other country. Without a reliable treatment for COVID-19, the only way to envision a return to some semblance of pre-coronavirus life is an effective vaccine that has been produced in large scale and distributed globally. Seventeen vaccine candidates are already undergoing clinical trials. Four candidates are being tested in the United States, two in the United Kingdom, and two in Germany.⁶ The motivation countries feel to discover an effective vaccine has also pitted them against each other out of fear the discoverer would, at least initially, hoard vaccine supplies for its own citizens.

Some argue this global competition is leading countries to make bad choices. One example being cited is the decision by the German government to pay 300 million euros to purchase 23 percent of CureVac, a German biopharmaceutical company developing a COVID-19 vaccine. Reportedly, the driver for this acquisition was President Trump ruminating about paying CureVac to relocate to the United States and the German government's outraged response to nip that idea in the bud. Politico's Elizabeth Ralph wrote: "While scientists try to collaborate across national boundaries, national leaders are caught up in an old-fashioned game of one-upmanship – a competition that is driving, and in some cases complicating, the most consequential medical challenge of the 21st century. Public health experts say we should be worried."⁷ There is concern that "vaccine nationalism" could lead countries to take shortcuts or even cheat, ultimately lengthening the path to a reliable vaccine.

The real competitor of the United States in this space, however, is not Germany, France or the United Kingdom; it is China. The virologist leading China's vaccine project said in March: "If China is the first to develop this weapon with its own intellectual property rights, it will demonstrate not only the progress of Chinese science and technology, but also our image as a major power."⁸ Of the 17 vaccine candidates mentioned above, six of the trials are taking place in China.

The United States has shunned multilateral efforts, including a European-Union-hosted summit with participation ranging from Australia to China and South Africa.⁹ The focus of U.S. efforts is Operation Warp Speed, an enormous federal effort to make Covid-19 vaccines and treatments available to U.S. citizens as soon as possible. As of early July, the U.S. government has invested close to \$4 billion in companies developing vaccines.¹⁰ The EU launched a vaccine strategy in June designed to "secur[e]

⁶ Claire Felter, "What is the World Doing to Create a COVID-19 Vaccine?," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, June 30, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-world-doing-create-covid-19-vaccine>.

⁷ Elizabeth Ralph, "The Dangerous Race for the Covid Vaccine," *Politico Magazine*, July 7, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/07/07/vaccine-race-covid-national-pride-348072>; see also Bill Alpert, "Germany Makes a Bid Bet on a Covid-19 Vaccine Developer Once Coveted by Trump," *Barron's*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.barrons.com/articles/germany-makes-a-big-bet-on-a-covid-19-vaccine-developer-once-coveted-by-trump-51592235902>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lorne Cook, "World leaders pledge billions for virus vaccine research," *AP*, May 4, 2020, <https://apnews.com/23b052324d5da5126ecc842ca6cd1ea1>.

¹⁰ Katie Thomas, "U.S. Will Pay \$1.6 Billion to Novavax for Coronavirus Vaccine," *New York Times*, July 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/health/novavax-coronavirus-vaccine-warp-speed.html>.

swift access to vaccines for Member States and their populations while leading the global solidarity effort.”¹¹

This race for a Covid-19 vaccine is presently a test of transatlantic cooperation. *The opportunity is to break out of the prevailing nationalistic tendencies and foster cooperation between the U.S. and Europe to allow for more effective competition with China.*

Opportunity Knocks: Providing Reliable Information

Facts may be stubborn things, but the World Health Organization has warned about an “infodemic” of false information about the coronavirus. For democracies to function, access to reliable information is critical. During a pandemic, that access can mean the difference between life and death. Colleagues with GMF’s Digital Innovation and Democracy Initiative analyzed outlets sharing false content and were struck by the volume of coronavirus stories. Misleading and inaccurate articles carried headlines like “STUDY: 26 Chinese Herbs Have a ‘High Probability’ of Preventing Coronavirus Infection.”

Conspiracy theories spreading fears of so-called “forced vaccines” are already spreading on social media. Based on their research, my colleagues offered a five-point plan for how policymakers and platforms should address this coronavirus “infodemic,” ranging from creating a fund for local journalism to holding platforms responsible for harmful viral misinformation.¹² *This proposed policy roadmap on how to combat the “infodemic” is useful not only for U.S. policymakers, but also as the basis for a transatlantic policy dialogue in light of the shared interest our European counterparts have in safeguarding the information ecosystem, building on the work of the Commission on both disinformation and a Digital Services Act.*

Beyond the false information being pedaled, some foreign actors are using the coronavirus pandemic to manipulate information and use that disinformation to seek to undermine Western democracies. In Europe, the tsunami of misleading and false information circulating about Covid-19 led the European Commission and the European External Action Service to announce on June 10, 2020, stepped up actions to tackle disinformation. The 17-page “joint communication” called, among other things, for greater transparency of online platforms (such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter) about disinformation and an “intensified role” for online platforms by asking them to “make available monthly reports on their policies and actions to address COVID-19 related disinformation.”¹³ While the EU previously had

¹¹ “Coronavirus: Commission unveils EU vaccines strategy,” Press Release, European Commission, June 17, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1103. See also Michael Peel, Peter Foster, and Jim Pickard, “Britain weighs joining EU pact to buy vaccine stocks as US scoops up supplies,” *Financial Times*, July 4-5, 2020; and Jillian Deutsch, Cristina Gallardo, and Ashleigh Furlong, “UK snubs EU invitation to purchase vaccines, choosing to go it alone,” *Politico*, July 10, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/10/uk-snubs-eu-invitation-to-purchase-vaccines-choosing-to-go-it-alone-356641>.

¹² Karen Kornbluh and Ellen P. Goodman, “Five Steps to Combat the Infodemic,” Transatlantic Take, German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 26, 2020, <https://www.gmfus.org/blog/2020/03/26/five-steps-combat-infodemic>. See also Kornbluh and Goodman, “Safeguarding Digital Democracy,” Report, German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 24, 2020, https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Safeguarding%20Democracy%20against%20Disinformation_v7.pdf.

¹³ “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Tackling COVID-19 disinformation—Getting the facts right,” European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

pointed to Russia as a bad actor in the disinformation space, in this document China is mentioned by name for the first time as having “engaged in targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns around COVID-19 in the EU, its neighbourhood and globally, seeking to undermine democratic debate and exacerbate social polarization, and improve their own image in the COVID-19 context.”¹⁴ *The communication also calls for increased cooperation with third countries and international partners, an offer the United States could pick up in this common fight against disinformation.*

GMF’s Alliance for Securing Democracy is producing original analysis and tracking messaging from Chinese and Russian state-backed media and diplomatic actors to analyze the geopolitical impact of the crisis.¹⁵ Colleagues have analyzed the extent to which the pandemic has “spawned an epidemic of online disinformation, ranging from false home remedies to state-sponsored influence campaigns.”¹⁶ They have also tracked the extent to which China is using ever more assertive tactics in an attempt to shape perceptions of the pandemic.¹⁷ *Congress has a key role to play on drafting legislation to combat disinformation; this is an area ripe for transatlantic cooperation. The United States can learn valuable lessons on how European countries and institutions have responded to disinformation.*

In fact, the European Parliament voted on June 18, 2020, to establish a special committee on foreign interference to “provide a common, holistic, long-term approach to addressing evidence of foreign interference in the democratic institutions and processes of the EU and its Member States,...including disinformation campaigns on traditional and social media to shape public opinion.”¹⁸ The special committee will investigate vulnerabilities and evaluate EU and national actions in order to release, 12 months later, a final report presenting factual findings and recommendations for legislative and non-legislative measures to be taken. Several aspects of the European Parliament’s approach stand out: (1) the cross-party nature of the effort to set up this special committee; (2) the holistic approach to foreign

Brussels, June 10, 2020, p. 9, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-tackling-covid-19-disinformation-getting-facts-right_en.pdf.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁵ Coronavirus and Information Manipulation, Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/coronavirus-and-information-manipulation/>.

¹⁶ Lindsay Gorman and Nathan Kohlenberg, “Combating the Coronavirus Infodemic: Is Social Media Doing Enough?,” Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 27, 2020, <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/combating-the-coronavirus-infodemic-is-social-media-doing-enough/>.

¹⁷ Jessica Brandt and Bret Schafer, “Five Things to Know About Beijing’s Disinformation Approach,” Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 30, 2020, <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/five-things-to-know-about-beijings-disinformation-approach/>. See also Jessica Brandt and Nathan Kohlenberg, “How Beijing Exploits Inflammatory China Virus Rhetoric,” Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, April 3, 2020, <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/how-beijing-exploits-inflammatory-china-virus-rhetoric/>.

¹⁸ “Proposal for a Decision,” European Parliament, June 11, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2020-0190_EN.pdf. See also “Parliament sets up special and inquiry committees and a permanent subcommittee,” Press Release, European Parliament, June 19, 2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200615IPR81228/parliament-sets-up-special-committees-and-a-permanent-subcommittee#:~:text=The%20special%20committee%20on%20foreign,rules%20were%20breached%20or%20circumvented>. And Kristine Berzina, Nad’a Kovalcikova, David Salvo, and Etienne Soula, “European Policy Blueprint for Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies,” Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, June 2019, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/european-policy-blueprint-countering-authoritarian-interference-democracies>.

interference and the willingness to investigate areas of that interference beyond the run-up to elections; and (3) the focus on learning from various democracies' best practices to counter foreign interference and enhance the whole-of-society resilience.

As the United States works to build greater resilience to both misinformation and disinformation, as the members of this subcommittee well know, one important arrow in our quiver has been the federally funded media entities, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and Radio Free Asia (RFA), which are overseen by the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and reach a total of roughly 340 million people abroad. The new Open Technology Fund has worked with innovators around the world to produce critical Internet freedom tools. USAGM's mission "is to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy."¹⁹

New USAGM CEO Michael Pack set off a firestorm of controversy when he immediately took action to fire several top executives and remove the boards of the constituent entities on June 17, 2020.²⁰ In Congress, bipartisan concern has been expressed in both chambers. In the House of Representatives, Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul spoke out almost immediately in separate statements. On July 1, seven U.S. Senators – four Republicans and three Democrats – wrote Pack a letter underscoring that "[w]e are at a critical moment in history where malign actors including Russia, China, and Iran, are using advanced tools and technology to undermine global democratic norms, spreading disinformation, and severely restricting their own free press to hamper access to independent news for their citizens...[who] turn to outside media as their only trustworthy source of unbiased, accurate news." The Senators underscored that "the credibility and independence of these networks [at USAGM], as required by law, is critical for audiences overseas living under repressive regimes" and state their intention "to do a thorough review of USAGM's funding to ensure that United States international broadcasting is not politicized."²¹

When Mr. Pack fired Jamie Fly as the broadcaster's president, RFE/RL had been moving toward restarting service in Hungary, after having shut it down in 1993 in the belief that Hungary had established itself as a democracy. According to Fly, in "Hungary's heavily polarized media landscape, we will try to be that neutral ground where people of all political viewpoints can find information."²² USAGM was responding to an erosion of press freedom in Hungary under nationalist Prime Minister Orban. Fly also felt an important task for RFE/RL was to fight fake news from Russia and increasingly from China; he had expressed concern about "a renewed push by Chinese propaganda outlets and trolls on social media trying to seize the narrative."²³ Fly's commitment to fighting for press freedom and against disinformation stands out as an exemplary hallmark of his leadership at RFE/RL; his removal undermines these efforts.

¹⁹ See website of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, <https://www.usagm.gov/who-we-are/mission/>.

²⁰ Pack's actions have been challenged in a case before the District of Columbia Federal District Court.

²¹ Jennifer Hansler, "Lawmakers demand answers on firing spree at global media, *CNN*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/19/politics/usagm-firing-lawmakers-reaction/index.html>; letter can be found at: https://fm.cnbc.com/applications/cnbc.com/resources/editorialfiles/2020/07/01/July1_LTR_to_Michael_Pack.pdf

²² Felix Schlagwein, "Radio Free Europe rebrands in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania," *DW*, April 4, 2020 (<https://www.dw.com/en/radio-free-europe-rebrands-in-bulgaria-hungary-and-romania/a-53000510>).

²³ *Ibid.*

*Americans and Europeans share an interest in making sure efforts to support a free press and to provide reliable news are not diminished in the most vulnerable parts of Europe and around the world. One of the best ways to push back on authoritarian regimes and empower their citizens is through truthful, transparent information; an ideal common project for the United States and Europe is providing the ability for individuals living in closed systems to access outside information. Our shared commitment to a free press is a hallmark of our democracies and has been at the core of what unites us.*²⁴

Opportunity Knocks: Meeting the Challenge of China

My fundamental argument that the United States and Europe will be more effective in meeting the challenge of COVID-19 if we cooperate carries significant implications for the broader relationship with China. China is a commercial partner and rival, as well as a political adversary, of the United States and Europe. Given this multi-faceted relationship, both sides of the Atlantic are struggling with how to manage China's rise and the accompanying challenges. Unfortunately, the United States and Europe have largely addressed those challenges separately. The failure of the two sides of the Atlantic to forge a coordinated – if not common – strategy on China has weakened their ability to hold China accountable for its initial handling of the virus, counter Chinese messaging during the pandemic, and construct a joint approach to diversifying supply lines.

During the initial part of the coronavirus outbreak, in the face of medical supply shortages, both Europe and the United States turned inward. Washington ordered the company 3M to halt its exports of N95 masks and to reroute its overseas production to the United States as part of a broader effort to meet domestic demand, loosening restrictions only in the face of vocal backlash. The European Union banned the export of face shields, protective garments, masks, and gloves for the same reason. Even within the European Union, which is supposed to be a single market, Germany and France initially blocked the export of needed medical equipment to other EU members. For example, only after pressure from the Swedish government did French officials lift its export restrictions on masks and rubber gloves (which a Swedish firm was trying to send to Italy and Spain from a storage center in France). Meanwhile, the United States was slow to offer any help to its counterparts, including Italy, its hardest hit European ally.

Russia and China rushed to exploit the vacuum created by this harsh transatlantic reality. On March 22, Russian President Putin sent nine planes full of medical equipment to Italy, a mere 24 hours after having spoken to Italian Prime Minister Conte. The Russian aid turned out to be controversial, with some reports claiming much of the shipment was of little or no practical use, but Italians welcomed the help, feeling abandoned by their traditional allies. China had responded even more quickly to Italy's plight, shipping specialized medical staff, masks, gloves, and ventilators. Italian Foreign Minister Di Maio applauded the

²⁴ Paul Farhi, "After departure of Voice of America editors, new Trump-appointed overseer fires heads of four sister organizations," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/media/after-departure-of-voice-of-america-editors-new-trump-appointed-overseer-fires-heads-of-four-sister-organizations/2020/06/18/db8822ca-b166-11ea-8f56-63f38c990077_story.html; Courtney Buble, "Senator Asks Inspector General to Investigate Global Media Agency Firings," *Government Executive*, June 25, 2020, <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2020/06/senator-asks-inspector-general-investigate-global-media-agency-firings/166449/print/>; Zack Cooper and Laura Rosenberger, "Gutting USAGM Hurts Our Ability to Compete with China and Other Authoritarian Regimes," Alliance for Securing Democracy Blog Post, German Marshall Fund of the United States, <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/gutting-usagm-hurts-our-ability-to-compete-with-china-and-other-authoritarian-regimes/>.

effort, rejoicing that “there are people in the world who want to help Italy.” Other countries, including Spain, France, Greece, and the Czech Republic, also expressed gratitude for Chinese help.²⁵

Altruism, however, was not the only motivating factor behind this Chinese aid. GMF colleagues mapped China’s assistance to 27 countries across Europe between March 12 and April 20 and found that the assistance by Chinese authorities and companies reflected national and economic interests, not simply humanitarian impulses. Relying on an aggressive and often biting messaging campaign, the Chinese government worked to deflect blame from China’s own failings in response to the virus, portray itself as the de facto world leader, and criticize Western democracies for their (mis)management of the pandemic. China’s sustained communications strategy and diplomatic push targeted a global audience to portray China as a partner of first resort – not the United States or even the EU.²⁶ In April, the EU began to mobilize, announcing substantial financial, economic, and medical support programs, but considerable damage to European cohesion had already been done.

Public perceptions of China on both sides of the Atlantic are revealing. On June 30, GMF, together with France’s Institut Montaigne and Germany’s Bertelsmann, released *Transatlantic Trends*, a survey of public opinion in France, Germany, and the United States. The survey was conducted twice – in January and in May – allowing us to compare pre- and post-COVID-19 opinion. One of the most interesting questions asked which actor is most influential in global affairs. Before the pandemic, all three countries chose the United States. By May, that was still the case, although percentages were smaller across the three countries. In contrast, China’s influence had soared. In January, 6% in the U.S., 12% in Germany, and 13% in France viewed China as most influential (when compared to the U.S., EU, and Russia). When re-surveyed in May, the percentages doubled to 14% in the U.S., 20% in Germany, and 28% in France. Importantly, China’s rising perceived influence in global affairs is seen increasingly as negative, with double digit increases between January and May—a 10 point increase in France to 58% (up from 48%), a 10 point increase in Germany to 61% (up from 51%), and an 11 point increase in the U.S. to 57% (up from 46%).²⁷

These public attitudes match the transatlantic conversation among government officials. Both EU and U.S. government officials now acknowledge that the two sides need to do more together on the China challenge. When reporting out to press on a video conference the EU Foreign Affairs Council had with Secretary of State Pompeo on June 15, EU High Representative Borrell noted his suggestion to Secretary Pompeo that the EU and the U.S. launch a bilateral dialogue “on China and the challenges that the more assertive attitude of China is bringing to the world stage.” Borrell referenced the importance of both

²⁵ Karen Donfried and Wolfgang Ischinger, “The Pandemic and the Toll of Transatlantic Discord,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 18, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-18/pandemic-and-toll-transatlantic-discord>; see also Lara Marlowe, “Coronavirus: European solidarity sidelined as French interests take priority,” *The Irish Times*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/coronavirus-european-solidarity-sidelined-as-french-interests-take-priority-1.4216184>; BBC News Russian, “Coronavirus: What does ‘from Russia with love’ really mean?,” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52137908>.

²⁶ Etienne Soula, Franziska Luetge, Melissa Ladner, and Manisha Reuter, “Masks Off: Chinese Coronavirus Assistance in Europe,” Policy Paper, Alliance for Securing Democracy and Asia Program, German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 2020, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/masks-chinese-coronavirus-assistance-europe>.

²⁷ “Transatlantic Trends 2020: Transatlantic opinion on global challenges before and after COVID-19,” Bertelsmann Foundation, German Marshall Fund of the United States, and Institut Montaigne, https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/TT20_Final.pdf.

cooperating “closely” to address these issues jointly and looking for “common ground to defend our values and our interests.”²⁸ Ten days later, Secretary Pompeo spoke at a session of Brussels Forum, GMF’s signature annual conference, and announced that the United States had accepted Borrell’s proposal to create a U.S.-EU Dialogue on China, “a new mechanism for discussing the concerns we have about the threat China poses to the West and our shared democratic ideals.” In discussing the China challenge, Pompeo noted that “[t]here is a transatlantic awakening to the truth of what’s happening.”²⁹ Reportedly, EU diplomats have suggested the dialogue could be a forum for combatting Chinese disinformation.³⁰

While the specific topics of the U.S.-EU dialogue must still be clarified, this Pompeo-Borrell channel could be paired productively with a dialogue between Members of the House of Representatives and of the European Parliament. Last month, parliamentarians from multiple countries (including the U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, Germany, European Union, Japan, Norway and Sweden) announced the launch of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) to work toward “reform on how democratic countries approach China.”³¹ From the United States, Senators Rubio and Menendez participate.

IPAC could be complemented productively by a Congressional-European Parliament Dialogue. Precisely because it is so difficult for a diverse group of 27 European countries to agree on a common approach, particularly when it comes to as multifaceted an issue as relations with China, it would enhance understanding and help establish a common perspective if American and European lawmakers were to engage regularly, share information, and wrestle with long-standing concerns over everything from disinformation, emerging technologies, and investment screening to Hong Kong and human rights.

Opportunity in Crisis

Now is the moment for the United States to exercise its immense global leadership potential, even as we are fighting a surge of COVID-19 cases. The countries of the European Union, unlike the United States, appear to have flattened the curve effectively. According to Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases showed, as of June 28, 3,832 cases for the EU and

²⁸ “Video conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers: Remarks by High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell at the press conference,” European Union External Action Service, Brussels, June 15, 2020, <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/80898/video-conference-foreign-affairs-ministers-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-en>.

²⁹ Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, “A New Transatlantic Dialogue,” U.S. Department of State’s Transcript of Remarks at GMF’s Brussels Forum, June 25, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/a-new-transatlantic-dialogue/>. Reports that National Security Adviser O’Brien was traveling to Europe with Deputy National Security Adviser Pottinger to discuss China on July 13 sparked confusion about the relationship of those consultations with O’Brien’s counterparts from the U.K., France, Germany, and Italy to the U.S.-EU Dialogue announced by Secretary Pompeo; see Daniel Lippmann, “Trump national security adviser heading to Europe for talks on China,” *Politico*, July 12, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-national-security-adviser-heading-to-europe-for-talks-on-china/>.

³⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-pompeo-eu/u-s-and-eu-must-face-down-china-together-pompeo-says-idUSKBN23W2KA>.

³¹ Robin Emmott, “U.S. and EU must face down China together, Pompeo says,” *Reuters*, June 25, 2020, <https://www.ipac.global/>; <https://www.newsweek.com/us-japan-lawmakers-opposing-parties-unite-world-end-naive-china-strategy-1509029>.

38,192 for the U.S.³² The staying power of this pandemic, particularly visible here in the U.S., should propel us, together with our closest allies in Europe, to form the core of a worldwide response to the pandemic. These proposed initiatives are one way to express transatlantic solidarity, to meet specific challenges of this pandemic, and to position the United States and Europe for a post-COVID-19 world marked by great power competition. It is in our shared interest to face the current reality of COVID-19 together. Transatlantic ties have frayed. That makes the need for forging a common path all the more pressing, if all the more difficult.

³² Felix Richter, "The State of the Unions," Statista, June 29, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/chart/22102/daily-covid-19-cases-in-the-us-and-the-eu/>.