



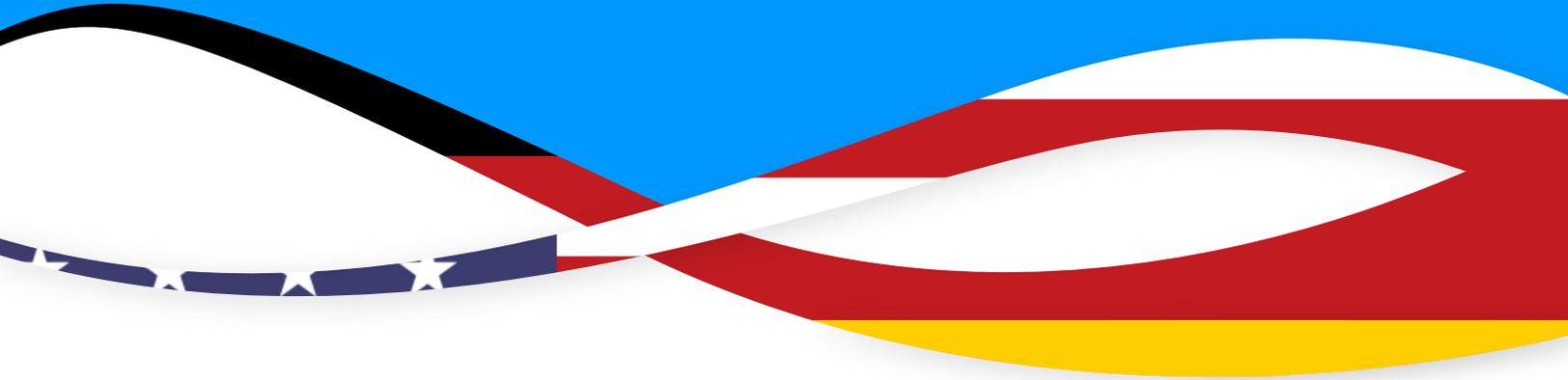
**Atlantic Council**

BRENT SCOWCROFT CENTER  
ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

US-German



Next Generation Project



# THROUGH A NEW PRISM

A Next Generation Strategy  
for the US-German Relationship



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## A Next Generation Strategy for the US-German Relationship

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Atlantic Council  
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# ABOUT THE REPORT AND THE US-GERMAN NEXT GENERATION FELLOWS

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This report was prepared by the US-German Next Generation Fellows as part of the US-German Next Generation Project. The Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security initiated the project in February 2015 to promote "new voices for a stronger US-German relationship." The Scowcroft Center selected twelve Fellows (six Americans and six Germans based in the Washington, DC area between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five) through a competitive and open application process. The report and its recommendations represent the general consensus of the Fellows, not necessarily the full view of each individual Fellow, or the views of the Fellows' employers. The report and its recommendations also do not represent the views of the Project's partner organizations or of the Atlantic Council. The Atlantic Council is a nonpartisan organization that promotes constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today's global challenges.

The Fellows are:

**David Eisler** (United States)  
Research Associate  
Institute for Defense Analyses

**Eddy Enriquez Arana** (United States)  
Assistant Professor of German and Spanish  
Northern Virginia Community College

**Eva Jobs** (Germany)  
Historian and Consultant  
Bundeswehr Military History Museum

**Gina Maria Jones** (United States)  
Special Advisor  
Defense Intelligence Agency

**Ludwig Jung** (Germany)  
Officer Trainee  
German Foreign Office  
(formerly Mercator Fellow  
World Bank)

**Lars Miethke** (Germany)  
Senior Analyst  
Avascent

**Charlotte Potts** (Germany)  
Producer  
ARD German Television

**Victoria Rietig** (Germany)  
Policy Analyst  
Migration Policy Institute

**Anna Schiller** (Germany and United States)  
Communications Strategist  
International Women's Media Foundation

**Peter Sparding** (Germany)  
Transatlantic Fellow, Europe Program  
German Marshall Fund

**Michael A. Stock** (United States)  
Europe Analyst  
Crumpton Group LLC

**Christina Tsafoulias** (United States)  
Adviser for Congressional Affairs  
Embassy of Switzerland

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**For more information about the US-German Next Generation Project, see:**  
**<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/us-german-next-generation-project>.**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The relationship between the United States and Germany suffers from disenchantment and disinterest at a time when its strength is desperately needed. The global strategic landscape is changing, with rising and revisionist powers that do not always prioritize the same core values held by the United States and Germany. A history of war, reconciliation, and friendship brought the two countries from the spring of 1945 to the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the years that followed led to a divergence in philosophies about international relations and each other's role in the world. In Germany, a growing skepticism of the United States began with a fundamental disagreement about the 2003 Iraq war, continued during the financial crisis of the late 2000s, and was laid bare by the reported activities of the National Security Agency (NSA). American apathy toward German culture beyond World War II history, Oktoberfest, and luxury cars has done little to counter the negative narratives.

But beneath the surface of stereotypes, misunderstandings, and occasional mistrust, there is a set of common principles that binds the "Next Generation" of the United States and Germany together more closely than the generations before. This generation grew up with a united Germany. It came of age with an America at war. And it observed the events that followed through a new prism, enhanced by advances in technology and global connectivity, which revealed the themes that have defined our collective values. Members of the Next Generation of both countries have a deep desire for transparency and accountability. They have a natural understanding of diversity, a passion for equality, and a demand for equal representation. They believe in many of the previous generations' values such as freedom, democracy, and individual expression. And they are connected through social networks, where they debate current global challenges in order to find their own solutions.

The Next Generation Project Fellows—six Americans and six Germans—came together with different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, but with a shared passion for the US-German relationship as well as a belief that the world is better when our bond is stronger. In the spirit of the Next Generation, this project does not want to identify a problem without offering a solution. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that there are limitations to what we could achieve with such an ambitious agenda and only six weeks to write the report. We understand, too, that structural and strategic challenges to the US-German relationship may be more influential than shared values.

THE RELATIONSHIP  
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"Through a New Prism" provides a number of recommendations to strengthen the US-German relationship, some of which suggest new areas of collaboration, while others give classic solutions a new twist. Trade negotiations need to become more transparent to become more credible. Serious public discussions about the role and limits of intelligence services are overdue. The emerging shared challenge of migration deserves joint attention, and the voices of new Germans and new Americans need to enter the bilateral dialogue. Technology can address some entrenched issues of the US-German relationship, but young voices to explain and promote technological innovation often face skepticism; their vision needs to be heeded. The representation of women in both countries' legislatures remains stubbornly low and would benefit from mentoring programs. Investments in joint military training and capabilities must continue, especially given the more nuanced public opinion both countries have developed with respect to their defense responsibilities and military deployments. And while budget cuts have become the norm rather than the exception for exchange programs, investments in such programs form indispensable links between the countries' populations and therefore should be safeguarded. Language study needs to be fostered, and curriculums need to remove outdated stereotypes about each other's country.

The US-German relationship needs less mistrust and less indifference. It needs more care, more investment, and greater rhetorical restraint. But most of all, it needs a change in perspective. This report outlines steps toward the new Next Generation prism.

## BACKGROUND

### Who Is the “Next Generation”?

No singular moment in history can define a generation. But a series of moments, linked by the stubborn arrow of time, can form the foundation for how a cohort of people views, experiences, and understands the world.

The Next Generation grew up with a united Germany. They came of age with an America at war. Some call them millennials, others Generation Y, and few agree on exactly what it means to be one of them.

Their lives have been defined by globalization, conflicts, and technology, though they may be the last generation to remember what life was like before the Internet. They remember picking up a newspaper to read about current events, even if today they prefer notifications on their smart phone. As they entered adulthood, they found themselves engulfed in a sea of information that was broadcast from more screens than there are people. They are more connected to the world and each other than ever before, even when they sometimes appear to have never been farther apart.

The Next Generation has a genuine passion for issues of global importance, bound together in a series of principles that cut across many cultures. The members of this generation demand transparency of information and accountability for actions. They grew up with a natural understanding of diversity. They care deeply about social justice, equality, and sustainability. And, perhaps above all, they have a voice that they believe deserves to be heard.

### Why Do We Need a Next Generation Strategy on US-German Relations?

“We are in Europe what Americans are in the world: the unloved leading power,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said to a group of advisers.<sup>1</sup> Merkel’s quip neatly sums up a key dynamic shaping the current US-German relationship. For the United States, being the somewhat unloved leading power is nothing new; some even consider it the price of leadership. For Germany, however, the notion of economic leadership was not meant to be synonymous with shaping world events, which underlines the perceived German reluctance to assume the role of “leader” absent a qualifying descriptor before such a weighty title.

In the world of the Next Generation, the United States cannot and should not lead alone. The challenges and opportunities of today, as well as those of tomorrow which we have not yet imagined, are too great to be solved by a single nation. Rising powers such as China, India, and Brazil are claiming their rightful place on the world stage, but on their own terms,

<sup>1</sup> Nikolaus Blome, Sven Böll, Katrin Kuntz, Dirk Kurbjuweit, Walter Mayr, Mathieu von Rohr, Christoph Scheuermann, and Christoph Schult, “‘The Fourth Reich’: What Some Europeans See When They Look at Germany,” *Spiegel Online International*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-power-in-the-age-of-the-euro-crisis-a-1024714.html>.

while a resurgent Russia seeks to reclaim its role as a great power. The fight against terrorism and violent extremism, the crisis in Ukraine, nuclear negotiations with Iran, the stability of the eurozone, and the global impacts of climate change fundamentally challenge the adequacy of our principles and institutions, as well as our policies. And these are not the only issues of global importance. Changing demographics and migration; strategic resource management of food, water, and energy; technological innovation; information and knowledge flows; economic integration; the nature and mode of security; and the challenge of governance will all test the fabric of the international system. Although these challenges unite the Next Generation, the difference in the US and German approaches toward them has driven a wedge between their people.

The authors of this report believe that, in spite of this narrative of disagreement, the Next Generation populations of both countries hold more common views on today’s challenges than prior generations—and they can share them with a click. Raised with the knowledge that the United States and Germany share many values, the Next Generation recognizes that the two countries diverge on how to implement and uphold them. Helping each other understand why they disagree—and steering the relationship to a point where they can differ but still cooperate—may change the current narrative. It may also bridge the gap toward a common future whose challenges will demand stronger ties between them.

This report is grounded in the belief that more important than the history the United States and Germany share is the future that both the people and their political leaders will help to create, sustain, and protect. This is the Next Generation strategy.

### Where Are We Today and How Did We Get Here?

The grandparents of the Next Generation, those who are still with us, remember the war that defined their generation. But it was after the war that the foundation of the US-German relationship began and continued mostly unchanged for nearly fifty years until the fall of the Berlin Wall. That generation remembers starting as enemies, reconciling, and becoming friends and allies in the pursuit of peace and prosperity.

For the Next Generation, those years are mere history, living on only through their relatives’ memories or short clips on YouTube. While cognizant of this history, they are neither beholden to it nor bogged down by it. They see the way things were between the United States and Germany in the past but do not view this as a rulebook for the future.

Today’s US-German relationship suffers from disenchantment and disinterest. In Germany, there is growing skepticism of the United States’ role in the world, grounded in



US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel prior to the start of their bilateral meeting, June 7, 2011. *Photo credit:* White House.

the fundamental disagreement about the 2003 Iraq war, exacerbated by diverging approaches to the financial crises of the late 2000s, and laid bare by the reported activities of the NSA. American apathy toward German culture beyond World War II history, Oktoberfest, and luxury cars has done little to counter the negative narratives. While the United States and Germany continue to cooperate on many international issues at the diplomatic level, the trickle-down effects of these narratives have increased political pressure, particularly within Germany, which may complicate future diplomatic relations.

The strategic landscape is also changing. The promise of lasting peace in Europe led the United States to reduce its military and diplomatic footprint in Germany over the last two decades, including a reduction of more than fifteen thousand troops in the last five years alone. Consulates have reduced staff, government investments in exchange programs have decreased, and pundits have shifted their attention from Germany and Europe to Asia, leaving some to wonder if the US strategic rebalance is, rather, a pivot away from the Atlantic.

International events since the dawn of the twenty-first century have shaped a new public discourse and highlighted the fractures in the American and German philosophies about the world. The global financial crisis of 2008 led to economic policy responses that were often at odds with each other, sparking criticism on both sides—Amer-

icans decried Germany's unwillingness to foster European growth by increasing investments in a time of dire need, and Germans viewed American deficit spending and loose monetary policy as drivers of future bubbles and busts. Germany's abstention from the UN Security Council vote authorizing the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya led to yet another rift in defense circles, winning support among the German population but causing key allies to question Germany's solidarity with them, as well as Germany's resolve for "the preservation of peace and security," as described in the North Atlantic Treaty.

And then came the NSA affair. When the story broke in June 2013, the nature of US intelligence practices and US-German intelligence collaboration stirred up a fiery public debate that swept across Germany and provoked widespread anger, especially among those who remembered the days of the German Democratic Republic's secret police state. Rallies sprang up in cities around the country, with protesters holding signs denouncing the United States and supporting Edward Snowden. The outrage found creative outlets, too: during the July 2014 World Cup match between the United States and Germany, American fans in Brazil started up a chant of "U-S-A! U-S-A!" only to be mocked by German fans who responded with "N-S-A! N-S-A!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ian Bremmer, "World Cup Chants Reveal True State of U.S.-German Relations," Reuters blog, July 17, 2014, <http://blogs.reuters.com/ian-bremmer/2014/07/17/world-cup-chants-reveal-true-state-of-u-s-german-relations/>.

Americans, and the United States government in particular, reacted with astonishment to the extent of German shock and indignation. For some, these intelligence practices were simply the price of doing business in the modern world, and they believed Germany's official response to the allegations of American spying was purposefully naive, intended to please domestic crowds. Yet, for the Germans, this view belittles the legitimate right to privacy. While the American public has largely forgotten about the scandal, and US officials prefer to move forward with continued diplomatic cooperation on other issues, some people in Germany still await accountability from the United States that is unlikely to come.

With all of this, what comes next? The events that have come to characterize the tone of the modern US-German relationship are the same that have come to define the Next Generation perspective. And that perspective, refined in the shadows of global turmoil, with unprecedented access to information and unparalleled connectivity to others, binds the Next Generation of both populations together more closely than they likely realize.



Transparency is one of the Next Generation's core values. *Photo credit: suphakit73.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Where Are We Going? How Issues We Care about Shape the Next Generation Strategy

The Next Generation sees the world through a number of lenses that color their views on all global issues, including the US-German relationship. These lenses center on the belief in, and demand for: transparency, accountability, diversity, equality, and representation. Each of these beliefs cuts across multiple issues at the heart of the US-German relationship and forms a pillar for future cooperation. Recognizing that there is no need to reinvent the wheel, the Next Generation also applauds its predecessors' achievements in strengthening the US-German relationship, while also giving a twist to time-proven solutions to transatlantic challenges.

### Transparency and Accountability

The demand for transparency and accountability has grown out of the incredible amounts of data and information available on nearly every subject imaginable. With so much information at hand, particularly regarding international events, people become skeptical when information appears hidden. The current debate around crucial issues such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a major effort to achieve a free trade agreement between the United States and Europe, can be understood against this background.

Although the German government has steadfastly supported the transatlantic trade deal, the public debate in Germany over TTIP has taken an increasingly adversarial tone. In the United States, on the other hand, the debate around TTIP has remained limited to interested circles in Washington, DC, and New York City. This is all the more astonishing as economic relations between the two countries remain essential to both sides. For Germany's trade-driven economy, the United States is the second-biggest destination of exports and the fourth-largest source of imports.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, Germany ranks as the United States' most important European trading partner and the fifth-largest trading partner overall.<sup>4</sup>

But TTIP has run into a narrative problem in Germany and several other European countries. Originally rolled out as a modern, cutting-edge deal for the twenty-first century, negotiations were approached in the same manner as previous trade deals—especially regarding initial transparency standards. Given the reluctance of negotiating parties to release the details of their talks, such as the European Union negotiation mandate, a growing mistrust and skepticism have arisen in parts of the public which now threatens the scope and chances of a successful agreement.

<sup>3</sup> German Federal Statistical Office, "Foreign Trade: Ranking of Germany's Trading Partners in Foreign Trade, 2014," April 20, 2015, [https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/NationalEconomyEnvironment/ForeignTrade/TradingPartners/Tables/OrderRankGermanyTradingPartners.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/NationalEconomyEnvironment/ForeignTrade/TradingPartners/Tables/OrderRankGermanyTradingPartners.pdf?__blob=publicationFile).

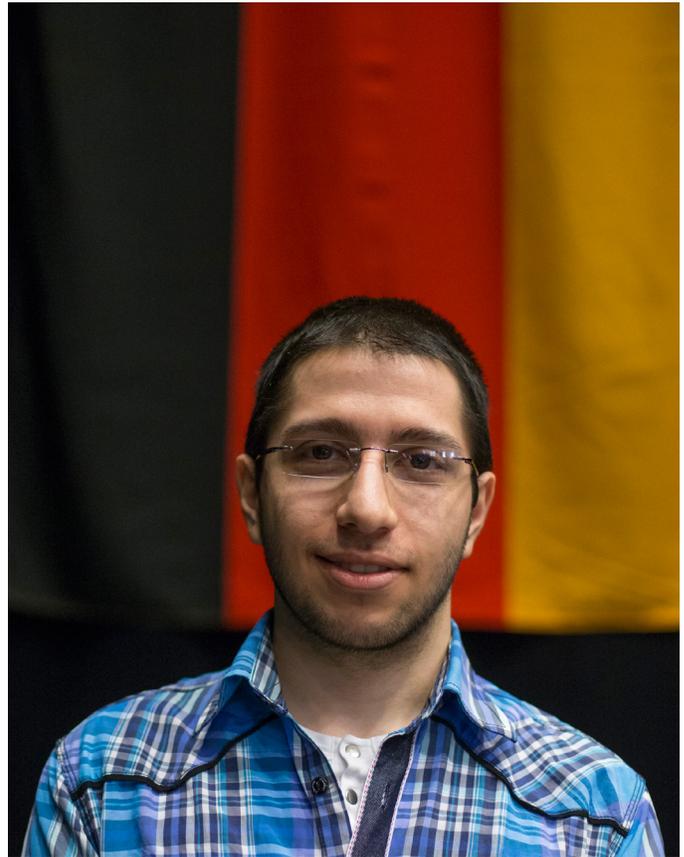
<sup>4</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Top Trading Partners—Year-to-Date Total Trade, December 2014," <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/top/top1412yr.html>.

*Make TTIP negotiations more transparent.* To counter the misperception of TTIP as a purely US-driven agreement in Germany, US and EU policymakers should consider the release of intermediate negotiation results, even at the risk of complicating deliberations. This would make it possible to highlight specific European and German interests, benefits, and goals in the trade talks and—if policymakers’ promises in this regard are indeed true—assuage fears of lowering quality standards.

The demand for transparency and accountability also has led to significant debate about the role of national intelligence in a democracy. Although most people understand that the very nature of the intelligence business is to withhold certain information, recent reporting about the scale and nature of the intelligence agencies’ activities has revealed a disconnect between the two countries that centers on how to balance the need for both privacy and security.

If the United States and Germany hope to cooperate in a meaningful way to address global challenges, they will need to address the question of the interests of the individual and the needs of the collective—the social contract. The debate about how and to what extent this could and should be done has unfolded quite differently in the United States and Germany. The passage of the “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001” (USA PATRIOT Act) suggests the United States has had some experience in engaging its population on the scope, and more importantly, the utility of such legislation. Moreover, the very title of this legislation—which deliberately sought to tie the concept of patriotism to support for intelligence collection post-September 11—is telling of the direction of American discourse on the interplay between civil liberties and national security. In contrast, Germany only recently has taken steps to engage its citizenry in a public debate about the value and the limits of its own intelligence services. Current reports about collaboration between the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) and the NSA show a country still grappling with the appropriate relationship between privacy and security in the twenty-first century.

The scope and tone of the conversation has affected the German will to partner with the United States—even beyond intelligence issues. Yet common concerns about the vulnerability of digital communications technology and the trajectory of electronic surveillance activities from other countries illuminate opportunities to collaborate on an international approach to address the balance between security measures and the right to privacy. By overhauling and implementing improved oversight authorities, and by elevating the examination of the social contract governing the give-and-take between the individual and the collective, Germany and the United States must move forward and place the challenges and opportunities of intelligence cooperation in a less adversarial context.



Ali Toprak, born as a Turkish citizen, poses in front of the German flag after he was naturalized during a citizenship ceremony in Berlin, on July 16, 2013. *Photo credit:* Reuters/Thomas Peter.

*Build on initiatives such as the Transatlantic Cyber Dialogue and invigorate the annual cyber security conference organized by the German Foreign Office and the US State Department.*<sup>5</sup> The latter specifically addresses signals intelligence and domestic considerations within the context of the legal framework of each country. In addition to engendering trust among the American and German citizenries, these conferences should also help NATO articulate the potential contribution of cyber security toward “strengthening [NATO members’] free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being,” as reflected in Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

*Continue a national conversation about the importance and necessity of Germany’s national intelligence capabilities.* Led by policymakers in Berlin, this conversation should also address the current and future roles and functions of intelligence oversight entities, notably relevant committees of the German Bundestag. This discussion would benefit from the participation of local, state, and federal entities, as well as experts and practitioners from government, the intelligence community, the media, and academia.

<sup>5</sup> German Missions in the United States, “Steinmeier to Open First Cyber Dialogue Event,” June 24, 2015, [http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/\\_pr/P\\_Wash/2014/06/25-CyberDialogue.html](http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/_pr/P_Wash/2014/06/25-CyberDialogue.html).

TODAY, THE CHANCES OF MEETING A MIGRANT IN GERMANY ARE THE SAME AS THE CHANCES OF MEETING A MIGRANT IN THE UNITED STATES: AROUND 13 PERCENT OF BOTH POPULATIONS ARE FOREIGN BORN.

The public debates about the potential costs and benefits of TTIP, as well as each country's national dialogue about the tradeoffs between privacy and security, illustrate the continued need to find answers to these questions. At their core, these debates need to balance the individual merits of any initiative with the real or perceived costs and benefits of transparency and accountability. Because the Next Generation populations of both the United States and Germany care deeply about these issues, talking through them together can help build renewed trust between them.

### Diversity, Equality, and Representation

The Next Generation is more diverse than generations of the past. Diversity of opinion, background, and ethnicity are increasingly acknowledged as values in themselves. Equality—not only the treatment of all people as equals but also the principle that certain resources, such as information, should be equally available—is essential to this perspective. To make this belief a reality, members of the Next Generation prize representation as a reflection of their interests. They want to see themselves represented among stakeholders in politics, business, and the media because they have a unique view and they want that view to help inform the direction for the future.

Increasing migration and changing national demographics have made ethnic diversity a fact of everyday life, both in Germany and the United States. Today, the chances of meeting a migrant in Germany are the same as the chances of meeting a migrant in the United States: around 13 percent of both populations are foreign born.<sup>6</sup> More than ever before, Germany now acknowledges that it is a country of immigration. Germany and the United States are the primary destination countries within their regions for both labor migrants and asylum seekers. Germany receives more asylum claims than any other country in the world: 170,000 in

<sup>6</sup> Migration Policy Institute, "U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850-Present," <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-population-over-time?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true>; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, *Migration Report 2013*, p. 10, [http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Forschung/Studien/migrationsbericht-2013-zentrale-ergebnisse.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Forschung/Studien/migrationsbericht-2013-zentrale-ergebnisse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile).

2014, followed by the United States with 120,000 claims, and these numbers are expected to rise in the future—in 2015, more than 400,000 asylum claims are projected in Germany alone.<sup>7</sup>

The growing interest in migration-related questions in both countries presents a largely untapped opportunity to inject new life into US-German policy conversations that have grown predictable and stale. As traditional topics of debate fail to inspire a new generation of transatlantic collaboration, migration is a topic in which not just political elites, but the populations in both countries, have a vested interest.

Potential questions to explore together concern security (how to safeguard borders and deter terrorists while keeping borders open for legal flows), the economy (how to attract skilled migrants), integration (how to prevent radicalization of minorities and instead help them thrive in their new countries), and humanitarian obligations (how to deal with refugee flows in a fair and realistic manner). The urgency in addressing these questions is visible in daily news headlines, from the surge of unaccompanied migrant children at the US-Mexico border in the summer of 2014 to the rising death toll of migrants crossing the Mediterranean in the spring of 2015. Both of these crises reflect migration and asylum systems in need of reform.

*Collaborate on the shared challenge of migration.* Germany and the United States should invest in an institutional dialogue about the emerging shared challenge of migration. Greater exchange between Germany and the United States to explore migration-related questions would be especially fruitful on the state and local level, where the impacts of increased flows of migrants and asylum seekers are felt most acutely, e.g., through city-to-city dialogues. On the federal level, energized institutionalized connections between the Department of Homeland Security and the Interior Ministry, or between the White House Task Force for New Americans and the Chancellery's Integration Commissioner, could create a new transatlantic project around a topic whose salience and urgency will only grow in the coming decades.

Demographic trends in the United States and Germany are also moving in a similar direction, a direct consequence of sustained high net migration into both countries. Today, 25 percent of the US population and 20 percent of the German population has a migration background, meaning that they are either first- or second-generation immigrants.<sup>8</sup> These populations will only continue to grow and shape the two societies, as well as the Next Generation of US-German relations.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR *Asylum Trends 2014: Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries*, p. 3, <http://www.unhcr.org/551128679.html>; Bundesregierung, Flüchtlingssgipfel im Kanzleramt Gemeinsame Aufgabe für Bund und Länder, May 8, 2015, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2015/05/2015-05-06-fluechtlinge.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States," Migration Policy Institute, February 26, 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>; German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, *Migration Report 2013*, op. cit.

However, the voices of new Germans and new Americans fail to appear sufficiently in transatlantic and bilateral dialogues. All too often, relations between the United States and Germany, whether on a citizen-to-citizen level or between political elites, are still conducted by traditional figures such as elder statesmen who cut their teeth during the Cold War.

*Incorporate new American and new German voices into the US-German dialogue.* With the US-German relationship in need of new direction and new energy, bringing people with migration backgrounds into the discussion allows for a fresh perspective that can help set the strategic agenda. One avenue toward this goal could be to increase the number of people with migration backgrounds in US-German exchange programs. Organizations like the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) are starting down this path with a youth exchange program that encourages the participation of Hispanic Americans and Germans of Turkish descent.<sup>9</sup>

Although there are many converging trends in the demography and makeup of American and German populations, the average person may not be aware of these growing similarities. Media coverage plays a major role in shaping the perceptions Germans and Americans have of each other by telling the same stories year after year. Skewed coverage of American issues in the German media, which often seeks to confirm stereotypes, presents Germans with a mostly negative view of the United States. The most widely held of these include rampant crime, high social injustice, and—the only positive view in the top three—beautiful landscapes.<sup>10</sup> A lack of coverage of Germany in the US media, aggravated by cutbacks in coverage of international news and the closing of foreign bureaus, makes it difficult to move Americans past their preconceived notions that Germany has little to offer beyond its World War II history and fairy-tale castles.<sup>11</sup>

Young journalists interested in going beyond the established news narrative and covering growing issues such as the technology sector, as well as new trends and ideas in established issue areas such as defense, economics, and demographics, could help correct these coverage imbalances; however, they are severely underrepresented in major media outlets' foreign bureaus. Granted, there are many examples of in-depth coverage on both sides of the Atlantic, such as George Packer's recent profile of German Chancel-

lor Angela Merkel.<sup>12</sup> But senior news professionals who were raised in times of less diversity manage and implement the international news agenda while young voices are often sidelined, which limits opportunities to explore under-reported transatlantic issues of interest to the Next Generation.<sup>13</sup>

*Boost young voices in journalism.* News media must acknowledge the importance of younger perspectives, especially in international coverage. Media outlets should facilitate exchange programs with innovative partners in the United States and Germany—e.g., *BuzzFeed*, *Huffington Post*, *Vox*, and *Vice*—to gain an understanding of where news coverage will be heading in the years to come and how to include in-depth and complex coverage in the digital sphere.<sup>14</sup> This could be as easy as shifting the focus of US-German journalist exchange programs, such as those offered by the Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) Commission and the Arthur F. Burns Foundation, away from cable news networks and toward media outlets that strive to explore new narratives and innovative story-telling. Additionally, transatlantic mentorship programs that pair accomplished foreign correspondents in Washington or Berlin with journalism students or junior news professionals from the other side of the Atlantic would facilitate exchange between the generations, ideally resulting in a deeper understanding of generational differences and ways to bridge those gaps in their reporting.

*Make transatlanticism captivating.* Transatlanticism in general, and the US-German partnership in particular, suffer from a lack of popular interest, in part because of insufficient efforts to integrate transatlanticism into popular culture. American and German stakeholders should bring media and communications experts and transatlanticists together to design a joint, so-called tribal marketing<sup>15</sup> campaign aimed at raising the profile of US-German relations. By promoting the relationship like a brand, utilizing unconventional marketing techniques, and building a loyal brand tribe, appreciation for each other's differences and similarities will grow deeper and wider—reaching well beyond the usual transatlantic-inclined audiences.

Diversity of opinion is a treasured value among the Next Generation, enabled by free and fair access to a variety of information sources from around the world. Increasing reliance on the Internet as a source of information and news, particularly among the Next Generation, has made the de-

9 American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, AICGS' New Transatlantic Exchange Program for Young Minorities: Giving Voice to Future Leaders, <http://www.aicgs.org/employment/aicgs-new-transatlantic-exchange-program-for-young-minorities-giving-voice-to-future-leaders/>.

10 Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, [http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/uploads/tx\\_reportsdocs/Januar13\\_Antiamerikanismus.pdf](http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/uploads/tx_reportsdocs/Januar13_Antiamerikanismus.pdf) (in German).

11 According to the Pew Research Center, "World War II and the Holocaust loom large for Americans. Nearly half (47%) say those events more than seven decades ago are still the most important in the U.S.-German relationship." See Pew Research Center, *Germany and the United States: Reliable Allies* (May 7, 2015), <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/05/07/germany-and-the-united-states-reliable-allies/>.

12 George Packer, "The Quiet German," *New Yorker*, December 1, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/quiet-german>.

13 For generational differences in attitudes toward the US-German relationship, see Pew Research Center, *Germany and the United States: Reliable Allies*, op. cit.

14 In 2014, BuzzFeed became the first major news outlet worldwide to create an International Women's Rights Correspondent position. See International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), "Jina Moore: BuzzFeed's International Women's Rights Correspondent," April 8, 2014, <http://www.iwmf.org/jina-moore-buzzfeeds-international-womens-rights-correspondent/>.

15 Tribal marketing focuses on building groups of people who are linked by a shared belief around a brand (a "brand tribe"). Its members are not only consumers; they are also believers and promoters. One of the most successful brands utilizing tribal marketing is Apple.

bate over net neutrality<sup>16</sup> a matter of freedom of speech. If governments fail to ensure that the Internet is accessible to everyone, that data is treated equally, and that the Internet is maintained as a level playing field, then Internet service providers will become gatekeepers limiting content and access to information, or even the Internet itself.

*Commit to a fair and free Internet.* Germany and the United States should publicly agree to jointly uphold the principles of net neutrality and Internet access. Together, they should set global standards and identify accountability mechanisms to enforce them, positioning themselves at the forefront of a rapidly expanding global debate.

The Next Generation utilizes digital and innovative technology to engage with the world, yet there is a distinct lack of technological solutions to classic transatlantic challenges such as language barriers, the high cost of transatlantic travel, and prevalent cultural stereotypes.

*Find technological solutions and embrace innovation.* Stakeholders should harness innovative technology in order to advance transatlantic relations and foster exchange on a broad range of tech topics. One Next Generation approach to finding tech solutions for complex real world problems would be “hackathons.”<sup>17</sup> Bringing together experts on US-German relations with software developers could lead to an increased supply of digital and “gamified” solutions, e.g., mobile applications, browser plugins, and web platforms, attracting younger generations to engage with each other through their devices as well as encouraging the established leadership in the transatlantic arena to employ digital technology. A first round of tech solutions could include browser plugins that add instant English subtitles to German Internet video clips (from Mediathek to YouTube) to remove language barriers, smartphone and tablet games that educate about stereotypes versus reality, and apps that connect communities in Germany and the United States that face similar demographic, economic, or geographic challenges.

Diversity, equality, and representation extend much further than the issues of demography and media representation. As a crucial step in the advancement of equality, women must be better represented in the transatlantic dialogue. Despite the fact that more women are being elected to Congress and the Bundestag, the rate of women’s political representation at the federal level still falls far below the percentage of women in society at large. The United States Congress is currently composed of roughly 20 percent women, the highest rate of participation for women in that institution to date. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s worldwide rankings, however, the percentage of women in the US legislature currently ranks only sev-

16 Net neutrality is the principle that all data on the Internet should be treated equally, not discriminating or charging differentially by user, content, site, platform, application, hardware, or mode of communication.

17 Hackathons (“hack” and “marathon”) are events where software developers and subject-matter experts collaborate intensively on developing software projects, often by way of a competition. The goal of a hackathon is to create useful, innovative and/or entertaining software products aimed at providing solutions to a particular challenge.

enty-fifth out of the world’s countries.<sup>18</sup> The Bundestag fared much better in the same ranking, putting Germany in twentieth place with 36 percent women, also a record high.<sup>19</sup> The presence of women legislators helps to diversify the conversation and broaden the perspectives of national governing bodies.

Organizations like Women in International Security and the Women’s Foreign Policy Group bring together women who are interested in international affairs to promote exchange and build a better, more connected community base to encourage participation and leadership. Through these activities, women are able to connect earlier in their careers and share best practices with their colleagues while exploring ways to work cooperatively. Though both the United States and Germany have made strides in this regard, all sectors of society would benefit from increased efforts to break the glass ceiling and elevate more women into leadership positions.

*Create transatlantic circles for young women.* A project to bring together the Next Generation of women leaders from the United States and Germany, either digitally or in person, will facilitate transatlantic exchange on a broad range of pressing domestic and international topics. It should be led by a think tank or other nonprofit organization that already has specific expertise on US-German relations. While conversations should not be focused solely on gender issues, talks about obstacles women face in society and politics can lead to the development of creative common solutions. Early opportunities for future leaders to network based on shared interests will enrich the overall US-German relationship by strengthening foundational ties.

## New Approaches to “Old School” Issues

There are a number of issues that have consistently played a key role in US-German relations for decades, and no amount of reimagining will displace their importance. Although the Next Generation has identified new dynamics that must be addressed through creative solutions, it is clear that certain bedrock connections between the United States and Germany—such as defense and military collaboration, joint diplomatic engagement of third countries, education, and cultural exchange—remain highly relevant.

Today, defense policies and military collaboration are often seen as a test for the US-German relationship. The end of the Cold War started a new hope for lasting peace in Europe. But the world has been stubborn and uncooperative, and international security challenges persist in nearly every region of the world. European security, largely underwritten by the United States since the inception of NATO, is also changing. Burden sharing within NATO continues to be a contentious issue, and there is worry that the Alliance could fracture as a result of differing threat perceptions regarding Russia.

There have been many calls on Germany to take the lead among NATO’s European member states, but the anti-mil-

18 Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in National Parliaments,” April 1, 2015, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

19 Ibid.



An American soldier talks to a German soldier and learns some new German words during a break at Exercise Unified Endeavor in the Grafenwoehr Training Area at the US Army Europe's Joint Multinational Training Command in Germany. *Photo credit:* Richard Bumgardner/United States Army Europe.

itarism that took hold in Germany in the wake of World War II never really went away. The Next Generation of Germans typically recoils from additional spending and investment on defense, finding few situations they believe would warrant the deployment of military troops despite proclaiming a desire to be more involved in world affairs. This has translated into a situation where military readiness has fallen and modernization efforts have stalled—a “hollow force,” as some critics see it.

*Increase investment in joint training and capabilities.* The United States military has been serving and training in Germany since the end of World War II, and the German Bundeswehr (Federal Armed Force) regularly participates in joint training and exercises with American combat troops. Unfortunately, overseas facilities and troops are among the first items on the chopping block when budgets get tighter. And no matter how many policy papers and op-eds call for Germany to spend more on defense, the reality is that the status quo is unlikely to change in the near future absent an existential threat. Consequently, the United States should resist the urge to find savings by cutting additional forces and sacrificing an essential piece of the transatlantic defense relationship that contributes not only to the development of military personnel of both countries, but also helps the German military maintain an adequate level of readiness with its existing capabilities.

However, maintaining military capabilities does little when the public does not support using them. Germans, aware of their own history as well as recent US foreign policy blunders, fear that partnering too closely with the United States

could draw them into an unwanted conflict. Conventional wisdom also assumes that Americans are always willing to support military interventions abroad. Recent opinion polls, however, suggest a notable agreement among the Next Generation with regard to when and why the United States or Germany should deploy their armed forces.<sup>20</sup> Military deployments that provide “humanitarian assistance” or “prevent acts of genocide,” for example, are supported by young Germans as much as Americans.<sup>21</sup>

*Understand the nuances of public opinion with respect to military deployments.* US and German political leaders should review and test public opinion more frequently to move away from assumptions driven by common stereotypes. For each future international military deployment the circumstances will be unique, but misperceptions today can lead to inadequate and incompatible capabilities and readiness levels when the transatlantic alliance needs them. Acknowledging the nuances of public opinion, when and where deployments appear to be publicly justified, allows decision-makers to make the right decisions for investments into interoperable US and German military capabilities.

A functioning defense collaboration is also closely linked to healthy diplomatic relations. Due to political, cultural, and

<sup>20</sup> Körber Foundation, *Die Sicht der Deutschen auf die Aussenpolitik April/Mai 2014* (Berlin: May 6, 2014), <http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/internationale-politik/sonderthemen/umfrage-aussenpolitik.html> (in German); Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, and Craig Kafura, *Foreign Policy in the Age of Retrenchment* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2014), <http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/foreign-policy-age-retrenchment-0>.  
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

historical differences, the United States and Germany have occasionally had trouble identifying shared approaches to common problems, even if their goals are the same. This inability to work together can have exponentially larger impacts as it becomes the perceived norm for US-German relations.

*Create “diplomatic empathy.”* The United States and Germany should each examine their bilateral relationship from the other’s perspective. They should think strategically about what motivations will drive the other’s decision-making, where the pitfalls lie from the other’s perspective, and how to address rifts before they become pronounced. Exchange programs that send US public servants to work in German government ministries and vice versa are useful steps toward this goal. The ability to break down stovepipes and build trust through mutual understanding will help form a stronger basis for future cooperation.

One way to strengthen connections on the operational level and create further buy-in by policymakers would be to add a new twist to existing exchanges of legislators and, in particular, legislative staff. Current programs tend to lack active focus but could be redesigned as thematic workshops with concrete outputs, such as joint reports, action plans, or conferences. For example, committee staff from the US House and Senate Intelligence Committees could meet with staff from the German Bundestag’s Parliamentary Control Panel toward a specific goal: to compare strategies for intelligence oversight and discuss the evolution of the debate in each country.

*Undertake bilateral development projects focused on third countries/regions.* The power of the United States and Germany to cooperate and contribute to progress elsewhere in the world should be at the core of the bilateral relationship. Both governments should partner on projects in third countries that create shared US-German experiences and reaffirm values. This allows for a pragmatic and regular exchange of information and development strategies, all while building cooperative experiences from the ground up. Development projects housed at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) could serve as a model.

Another foundation of the US-German relationship is exchange programs. For more than half a century, exchange programs between the United States and Germany have helped to strengthen the bilateral relationship. By experiencing each other’s countries and cultures in person, exchange program participants gain new understanding and become ambassadors for the host country and for the transatlantic cause. For example, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX), which has operated for over three decades, annually provides the opportunity for approximately seven hundred high school students to live and study in the partner country and gain invaluable insight into a new culture. Such formative experiences inform

participants’ worldviews and forge lasting connections on the citizen-to-citizen level.

*Invest further in bilateral exchange programs.* Exchanges such as CBYX and Fulbright Programs are at the very core of the relationship between the United States and Germany. But funding for US-German exchange programs has decreased in recent years, particularly from the US government, while demand has remained. In the CBYX case, the State Department announced a funding cut of 50 percent in fiscal year 2015, from \$4 million to \$2 million.<sup>22</sup> The German government has agreed to make up the shortfall in 2015 but cannot fill the gap forever. This narrowing of educational opportunity runs counter to Next Generation values, and it also damages prospects for the US-German relationship by cutting off the pipeline of future stakeholders. Involvement of foundations, other nonprofit organizations, and businesses will be a key element moving forward, but these are not substitutes for government investment. Educational opportunities also have been compromised at a more basic level. The United States has experienced a significant decrease in German language enrollments at all levels of education (K-16) over the past two decades.<sup>23</sup> Within the framework of the US-German relationship, there is a well-established linguistic imbalance, whereby German competence in English far exceeds American competence in German.

*Foster increased German language and cultural study among American learners, particularly nontraditional and minority students.* Americans of non-European descent and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds should be included in recruitment initiatives for German language programs. New and nontraditional voices will be key in the next phase of US-German relations. Specific attention could be directed at US community colleges, which tend to have higher percentages of these populations. Similarly, attracting German language educators from nontraditional and minority groups also would be an avenue for cultural exchange.

*Update curriculums in the United States and Germany to reflect current images of each society.* Too often, American and German perceptions of each other are based on outdated school curriculums reflecting clichéd notions and well-worn history. German language programs in the United States and English language programs in Germany need additional and continued support to develop course materials that reflect each country’s contemporary society and culture, with a particular focus on minority populations in both countries. These course materials should be made available for free or at a reduced cost, to ensure that they are available to educational institutions regardless of their level of funding. The University of Texas’ “Foreign Language Teaching Methods”

22 Michael Knigge, “Transatlantic Push to Save Key German-American Youth Exchange,” *Deutsche Welle*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/transatlantic-push-to-save-key-german-american-youth-exchange/a-18280893>.

23 Renate Ludanyi and Na Liu, “German Heritage Language Schools in the United States,” Heritage Briefs Collection, Center for Applied Linguistics, April 2011, <http://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/german-heritage-language-schools-in-the-united-states.pdf>.

program could serve as a model for development.<sup>24</sup> Updating curriculums will not only help students build modern intercultural competence, but could also attract young Americans and Germans from nontraditional backgrounds to take an interest in the US-German relationship.

*Share classrooms digitally.* German schools should develop regular programs inviting American teachers to teach middle- or high-school classes in Germany via FaceTime, Skype, or other Internet platforms, and vice versa. “Visiting” teachers can talk about their country, take the students on a tour of their school, and introduce their students to one another, to make the German language approachable.<sup>25</sup> Incorporating video conferencing and other forms of technology, such as chats with language learners in other countries, were unimaginable a generation ago. Today, they are simple yet effective tools to enhance educational opportunities and shared cultural understanding between the United States and Germany.

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<sup>24</sup> University of Texas at Austin, “Foreign Language Teaching Methods,” <https://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/>.

<sup>25</sup> Sam Dillon, “German in a Multicultural World,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/education/edlife/german-in-a-multicultural-world.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/education/edlife/german-in-a-multicultural-world.html?_r=0).

## CONCLUSION

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The Next Generation often faces criticism that it is self-centered. This report tried to walk the line of introducing new topics and ideas shaped by our beliefs while acknowledging the value of what has been built by the generations before us.

The twenty-first century presents a host of opportunities to expand knowledge beyond traditional constructs, by drawing on the vision, ideas, and capabilities of the young population in Germany and the United States—the Next Generation prism. This report presented a few elements of this vision—defined by the key principles of transparency, accountability, diversity, equality, and representation—and put forward recommendations to strengthen the ailing US-German relationship. Some of the recommendations are broad, some practical and small-scale.

This report does not aim to be comprehensive. It did not cover some important elements of the relationship, most importantly the theme of environmental sustainability. Instead, it aims to put new ideas on the table and to suggest an alternative lens to look at the bilateral relationship—a lens shared by many of the eighty million millennials in the United States and ten million in Germany.

This report in itself is a classic millennial product—putting ourselves at the center, writing and arguing via computers, tablets, and video conferences. It is a result of compromise—not all Fellows agreed with all statements and recommendations. Though we did find ourselves in “violent agreement” more often than not, disagreement and

heated debate were a large part of the process to come to a joint document and conclusion.

It is this diversity of opinion and the willingness to disagree openly that today’s US-German relationship needs at its core. It needs to free itself from the corset of superficial agreement in public while scoffing at each other behind closed doors. The twentieth century forged iron ties between the US and Germany; the twenty-first century needs to transform them. This starts with developing a more realistic and less nostalgic view of each other by becoming more informed and accepting of the differences that divide us, instead of assuming that our countries or our people will be united by default.

Yet the US-German relationship must be cared for; it will not take care of itself. Both the United States and Germany need to recognize this and start thinking about new ways to uphold the values they believe in together. The stakes are high. In a world in which the basic values the two countries share and love—democracy, equality of men and women, freedom of speech, rule of law—are not shared to the same extent by rising powers, it is imperative to work through our disagreements, teeth clenched if necessary, to align our responses to the challenges and opportunities of the next century. We need to stop dismissing each other, stop taking the US-German relationship for granted—not because of the past we share, but because of the future that awaits us.



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