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## DIVERSITY UNDER FREEDOM

Reinhold Niebuhr and the Transatlantic Community

WILLIAM INBODEN

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The German Marshall Fund of the United States  
1744 R Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
T 1 202 683 2650  
F 1 202 265 1662  
E [info@gmfus.org](mailto:info@gmfus.org)

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By William Inboden<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Inboden is a non-resident fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He is a Distinguished Scholar at the Strauss Center for International Security and Law and an Assistant Professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas-Austin. He previously served as Senior Director for Strategic Planning on the National Security Council and is the author of *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (2008).

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In the midst of U.S. exhortations that European nations increase their defense budgets to meet their NATO obligations, one observer wrote an article for a U.S. audience trying to explain why Europeans, mired in an economic recession, resisted these pressures. The prospect of such defense spending, he said, “threatens living standards to a greater degree than Americans can realize. The issue of guns or butter is a real one.”<sup>1</sup> Facing such difficult trade-offs, it was no wonder that Europeans would resent such hectoring.

The U.S. author was Reinhold Niebuhr, and the year was 1951. Many Americans who had recently visited Europe had described to Niebuhr the pervasive anti-American sentiments they encountered. Seeking to understand these attitudes, Niebuhr identified several causes of European anti-Americanism, including the economic contrast between European social democracy and less-fettered U.S. capitalism, the resentments inspired by U.S. power, and the purported crassness and shallowness of a technology-obsessed U.S. culture. On the latter, Niebuhr’s memorably commented that “a civilization as preoccupied with technics as our own unavoidably exhibits vulgarities which mellow cultures find difficult to bear.” Accordingly, Niebuhr counseled realistic expectations about “the hazards which American-European relations will encounter, probably for decades to come.” Yet he still retained the conviction that transatlantic relations would endure “among friends and allies who are inexorably locked with us in a community of common destiny.”<sup>2</sup>

A perennial temptation bedeviling our contemporary age is to assume that the challenges facing us are unique to our time — and are

uniquely difficult compared to the purported simplicity of a halcyon past. Thus modern observers on both sides of the Atlantic often assume that transatlantic cooperation in the 21st century must overcome the manifest hurdles of disparate cultures between the United States and Europe, different assessments of national security threats such as jihadist terrorism and nuclear proliferation, divergent political cultures and economic models, and severely constrained resources. These obstacles are posed in contrast to the idealized picture of the mid-20th century when a relatively unified culture bridged the Atlantic, threats were manageable, and resources were abundant.

But it was never so. As a historical curiosity, Niebuhr’s words in 1951 serve as a reminder not only that tensions between Europe and the United States are an age-old story, but so are many of the specific causes of those tensions. European resentments of U.S. power and criticisms of U.S. materialism and cultural vulgarity, U.S. frustrations with European social democracy and anemic defense budgets, and different levels of religious commitment between the United States and Europe are all issues as old as the transatlantic relationship itself.

However, Niebuhr matters for transatlantic relations today for much more substantial reasons than just the comfort of historical perspective. That the transatlantic relationship has endured and evolved as it has testifies to the force of Niebuhr’s original vision. But as the United States and Europe are buffeted today by new challenges and an uncertain future, Niebuhr offers some insights that may help in restoring the transatlantic community to a firmer foundation.

In the words of the title of a recent book by the late intellectual historian John Patrick Diggins, “Why Niebuhr Now?” Admittedly it might seem unusual to look to insight from a U.S. theologian

*Niebuhr matters for transatlantic relations today for much more substantial reasons than just the comfort of historical perspective.*

<sup>1</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Transatlantic Tension,” *The Reporter*, 18 September 1951, 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* “Technics” may sound to modern ears like an archaic term; in Niebuhr’s use it referred to technology.

who has been dead for over four decades. But Reinhold Niebuhr devoted much of his intellectual work to the transatlantic community, and his life and thought embody the transatlantic relationship itself. Even if the issues he faced at times were different, many of his concerns and principles remain relevant today. While contemporary headlines are devoted to issues such as the euro zone crisis, declining NATO budgets, and the U.S. “rebalancing” towards Asia, many voices on both

sides of the Atlantic are questioning anew whether the transatlantic community has any relevance, or indeed whether there is any enduring basis for its existence. Niebuhr has much to offer in this regard. Looking at why Niebuhr believed so passionately in the “Atlantic community” (to use his oft-repeated phrase) reveals an enduring foundation for transatlantic relations — a foundation that remains fresh and relevant for the 21st century.

## 2 WHO WAS REINHOLD NIEBUHR?

Largely forgotten for a time except in academic circles, Niebuhr has enjoyed something of a public rebirth in recent years. U.S. President Barack Obama has identified Niebuhr as his “favorite philosopher,” and contemporary writers such as David Brooks, E. J. Dionne, and Walter Russell Mead regularly invoke him. A theologian, social ethicist, journalist, political activist, professor, and preacher, Niebuhr was one of the mid-century’s most prominent U.S. public intellectuals. Among his many other influences, he did much to shape domestic support for America’s intervention in World War II and its subsequent Cold War posture. He played a prophetic role in both cases. Very early in the 1930s, he began to raise alarms about the malevolence of Hitler’s Nazi regime in Germany, and early in 1946, along with figures such as Winston Churchill and George Kennan, he identified the threat that Stalin and Soviet communism posed to Western Europe and the need for a firm response.

The son of German immigrants, Niebuhr spent most of his professional life as a professor at New York City’s Union Theological Seminary. The seminary hardly confined him to ecclesial matters alone, however, as he was regularly featured in the pages of periodicals such as the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, the *Atlantic*, and *Life*. He graced the cover of *Time* for a feature story on his thought. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations

also consulted him, and he traveled regularly to Europe on behalf of political organizations, church groups, universities, and the U.S. State Department. He pioneered the development of the school of thought known as “Christian Realism,” a philosophy that emphasized balancing power with moral restraint in an imperfect world. In its political dimension, Christian realism sought to accomplish a measure of proximate justice while fervently eschewing any utopian aspirations. “Order precedes justice in the strategy of government, but...only an order that implicates justice can achieve a stable peace,” Niebuhr wrote in a pithy summary.<sup>3</sup> His anti-utopianism made him a fierce critic of totalitarianism, whether of the fascist or communist variety, and a dedicated albeit measured defender of democracy as the political system most consonant with human nature. In one of his most famous quotations, he observed that “man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr also devoted much of his life to strengthening the transatlantic relationship, as he sought to strengthen the bridge from the nation of his birth to the continent of his ancestry.

<sup>3</sup> Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (New York: Scribner, 1944), 181, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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# 3 THE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY

Niebuhr's views on the "Atlantic Community" were forged amidst crisis. Indeed, "crisis" is a recurring theme in Niebuhr's thought, and he seemed to use the term in two different ways. At times, he employed "crisis" to describe the immediate threats posed variously by Nazi fascism or Soviet communism. But often Niebuhr invoked "crisis" in a more general sense to characterize the existential moment in history, where democratic civilization on both sides of the Atlantic faced a loss of confidence and meaning, especially in the face of economic despair and the ideological and security challenges of the era. Against this backdrop, Niebuhr believed that the United States needed to identify what it stood for and — importantly — who it stood with. He spoke out strongly and passionately against the inclination of his own country to retreat into the illusory comforts of withdrawal and isolation. And he sought to reconnect the United States to what he believed were its natural allies in Europe.

In part, this meant sounding the alarm about the erosion of democratic civilization in Germany. He first attained national and then international prominence in the 1930s in part through his persistent efforts to galvanize world attention against the growing threat posed by Hitler and the Nazi Party. Niebuhr made regular visits back to Germany, and as early as 1931 — two years before Hitler actually came to power — Niebuhr warned that "the growing anger of the German people over the economic slavery to which the treaty of Versailles condemns them, voiced particularly in the Hitler movement, threatens not only the parliamentary government of Germany but the whole peace of Europe."<sup>5</sup> This early insight, and accompanying alarm, marked the beginning of his decade-long effort to draw attention to the emergence of Nazi Germany as a threat to the

European order — and to Jews and Christians within Germany.

Niebuhr also began forging a transatlantic network of religious and intellectual leaders who shared his concerns, a network that further embedded him in the fate of Europe. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community, and State that also marked Niebuhr's emergence as a major figure to European intellectuals. The Oxford conference was a landmark gathering of European and U.S. clergy and laity whose ranks included John Foster Dulles, later to serve as Secretary of State under President Dwight Eisenhower. The conference delegates gathered to consider the historical crisis amidst the looming clouds of war. Niebuhr's keynote address to the Oxford Conference warned of the pervasiveness of sin in every aspect of life: "sin is expressed... [through] making the self the center of the world."<sup>6</sup> His remarks resonated in a Europe threatened by a German dictator's efforts to make the Third Reich the center of the world and marked Niebuhr's emergence as an intellectual leader for the emerging Atlantic Community. His successive European sojourns included the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1939 and 1940, when Nazi bombing attacks occasionally punctuated his orations; a 1946 visit to postwar Germany that led him to write a feature article for *Life* magazine urging massive economic assistance for the collapsing nation while warning of aggressive Soviet intentions; a 1948 trip to Amsterdam where he delivered keynote remarks to the inaugural conference of the World Council of Churches; and numerous other European lecture tours on behalf of the State Department and various universities. He also forged enduring friendships with European leaders, including the British Socialist Stafford Cripps, German pastor and

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<sup>5</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "Let the Liberal Churches Stop Fooling Themselves!" *Christian Century*, March 25, 1931, 402-404.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Richard Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 179.

dissident Dietrich Bonhoeffer (eventually executed for his role in an effort to assassinate Hitler), Dutch clergyman Willem Visser 't Hooft, and Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple.

Niebuhr's transatlantic commitments led him to form a set of ideas about how and why the Atlantic Community existed. He grounded his Atlanticism on three principles that still resonate today: shared values, shared interests, and shared obligations.



# 4 DIVERSITY UNDER FREEDOM: SHARED VALUES

In a 1954 essay written on behalf of the American Council on NATO, Niebuhr distilled much of his life's thought on transatlantic relations. Titled "The Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community," the essay identified "common culture and common aspirations" as the bedrock of the relationship. However, shared values did not mean the same values, nor did it refer only to Christian values. In Niebuhr's words, the Atlantic community did not have "a unified culture" but rather shared "a way of making diversity tolerable under conditions of freedom." It is "composed of nations who have discovered the way to community despite diversity." This diversity included as intellectual sources the different denominations and traditions of the Christian faith, Judaism, and "various forms of secularism." Yet what enabled these diversities to live together, Niebuhr believed, were substantial forms of unity around a common moral foundation. "The religions are all derived from biblical faith. The secularism does not seriously challenge the main ethical affirmations of that faith."

Niebuhr believed that this diversity under freedom was not just a by-product of the Atlantic Community but rather formed the foundation of its strength and resilience. The United States and European nations may have, through accidents of history, learned of the necessity of pluralism "once the cultural uniformity of the medieval period was broken and religious and cultural diversity was established." But this diversity soon revealed its own advantage: "An advantage of a free society, which no one quite anticipated, was that each group could make some contributions from its standpoint which no other group could make; and the pretensions of each group were challenged by the criticisms of other groups." Such mutual accountability and creative tensions, Niebuhr believed, helped preserve the institutions of liberty and produce the cultural and economic

dynamism that characterized the modern Western world. Yet this communal diversity rested on "two prerequisites of a free society: the insistence that the individual has a dignity which makes it impossible for any community to use him as a mere instrument of its common purposes and that he has a higher authority to inform his conscience than the necessities of the community."<sup>7</sup>

Here Niebuhr distilled what he believed to be the essential values that animated the Atlantic Community. These were a commitment to the inherent dignity of the individual person, the sanctity of conscience over the conformist demands of the community or totalitarian pretensions of the state, and a political order that protected pluralism on the basis of these values. Within this system, Niebuhr believed, a wide range of economic orders were possible, from democratic socialism to free market capitalism, as were a range of stances on the use of military force.

Importantly, Niebuhr's belief in the shared values that defined the Atlantic Community did not mean that the United States and nations of Europe possessed identical values, nor that they even had to have the same source of their values. Rather, Niebuhr's conception elevated pluralism and tolerance of diversity into unifying and binding principles in their own right. And he affirmed the various streams of Western thought and history that, even while sometimes conflicting with each other, in the aggregate provided the intellectual and theological roots of the different values that shaped the Atlantic Community. Thus could Protestants place themselves in the tradition of the Reformation, Catholics in the tradition of Rome, humanists in the tradition of the Renaissance, and rationalists in the tradition of the Enlightenment.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from "The Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community," Box 16, Folder: "Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community." Reinhold Niebuhr Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

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No individual country had a monopoly on a particular tradition. Within the United States alone, all four traditions were represented, just as all four were represented in other nations such as the United Kingdom and post-Third Reich Germany. Enhancing yet further complicating the relationship, all four traditions had originated in Europe, leading Niebuhr to call the continent the “spiritual father” of America.<sup>8</sup> The New World in turn revised and adapted these traditions and occasionally exported them in updated forms back to Europe. The process culminated in these various streams flowing together to produce modernity, the project of liberal democracy, and the “Western Civilization” that Niebuhr committed himself to preserving in the face of totalitarian threats.

Collectively the values of the Atlantic Community were defined by what they opposed as much as what they included. Diversity only went so far, for it rejected agrarian feudalism, imperialism, and especially the ideological totalitarianisms of fascism

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<sup>8</sup> Niebuhr, “Transatlantic Tension.”

and communism. Around such values, and against such threats, the Atlantic Community emerged.

The Atlantic Community today shares much with that of Niebuhr’s day. Then as now, the United States and Europe differ in areas such as religious observance, church-state relations, cultural mores, economic preferences, and attitudes to war and peace. Then as now, the United States and Europe are united by their common inheritances of the various Christian and Enlightenment traditions of modernity, and by a common framework of “diversity under freedom.” From a vantage point within the United States looking at Europe, or vice versa, the other might appear strange and distant. Yet this distance fades if one instead looks from within the Atlantic Community out towards the broader world. The different ideological systems that hold sway elsewhere on the globe, such as religious hegemony or authoritarian capitalism, protect neither diversity nor freedom. From that perspective, the nations of the Atlantic Community perceive, as Niebuhr did, the values that bind them.

# 5 OPPOSING COMMON THREATS: SHARED INTERESTS

If Niebuhr's belief in the Atlantic Community emanated only from its common values, he would have been no different from the liberal idealists that frequently met with his disdain. Rather, Niebuhr's intellectual core rested on a strong sense of realism — and in his mind, the Atlantic Community's core was also based on shared interests. In his 1952 classic *The Irony of American History*, Niebuhr observed that “the ‘Atlantic community’ is becoming a reality partly because it does have common cultural inheritances and partly because the exigencies of history are forcing mutual tasks upon it.”<sup>9</sup> These “mutual tasks” in the charged context of the early Cold War included the shared interests of “the necessity of a common defense against tyranny” and “mutual economic measures” to promote prosperity and provide the necessary resources for defense.<sup>10</sup> Notably, while Niebuhr first identified the transatlantic interest in opposing tyranny in the 1930s, it endured as a theme in this thought after the defeat of the Nazis and into the ensuing standoff against Soviet communism of the Cold War decades.

How could someone like Niebuhr speak so idealistically about common values and also embrace the seemingly crass calculations of *realpolitik*? His first great book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, argued that in every dimension of life, “conflict is inevitable, and in this conflict power must be challenged by power.” Unlike many other realists who located the root of this conflict in the international system, Niebuhr traced it to human nature. “The selfishness of human communities must be regarded as an inevitability. Where it is inordinate it can be checked only by competing assertions of interest; and these can be effective

<sup>9</sup> Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner, 1952), 142.

<sup>10</sup> Niebuhr, “The Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community”

only if coercive methods are added to moral and rational persuasion.”<sup>11</sup>

Given this grim view of human nature and the persistence of conflict, Niebuhr advocated layers of accountability, of checks and balances, throughout every level of human social organization. This meant that “a healthy society must seek to achieve the greatest possible equilibrium of power, the greatest possible number of centers of power, the greatest possible social check upon the administration of power, and the greatest possible inner moral check upon the administration of power, and the greatest possible inner moral check upon human ambition, as well as the most effective use of forms of power in which consent and coercion are compounded.”<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, he held that it is not “possible to secure the external peace of a community...without balancing power against power in times of peace, and without setting power against power in times of war.”<sup>13</sup> The Atlantic Community needed to act in concert in using its collective power to defend its shared interests, because “the spiritual facts correspond to the strategic necessities.”<sup>14</sup>

Niebuhr defined shared interests in the negative. He did not conceive of the United States and Europe as having common interests in amassing greater and greater amounts of wealth and power, but rather believed they needed to align in the common task of protecting what they did have, of defending themselves and their political and cultural systems

<sup>11</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Scribner, 1932), xv, 255.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Kenneth Thompson, “Niebuhr and the Foreign Policy Realists,” in Daniel Rice, ed. *Reinhold Niebuhr Revisited: Engagements with an American Original* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 153.

<sup>13</sup> Niebuhr, “Synthetic Barbarism,” in *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Scribners 1940), 124.

<sup>14</sup> Niebuhr, “The Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community.”

*Niebuhr advocated layers of accountability, of checks and balances, throughout every level of human social organization.*

against external aggression and common enemies. These conceptions of shared interests also equipped Niebuhr to counsel patience and restraint in the face of periodic upticks in European attitudes of anti-Americanism, which he described as “a kind of subterranean stream in the life of Europe.”<sup>15</sup> Such frustrations, he believed, should not distract either side from appreciating and acting upon their deeper shared values and interests.

Is the situation different today, or does the transatlantic community still have shared interests? The financial crisis of 2008, the anemic recovery in the United States, and the ongoing travails of the euro zone certainly demonstrate our shared economic interests. This extends to the security realm as well. Not only is war inconceivable among the states of the Atlantic Community, but going to

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<sup>15</sup> Niebuhr, “Transatlantic Tensions.”

war without each other’s assistance is almost equally inconceivable. For all of the talk today of the 21<sup>st</sup> century being an “Asian century,” or of the U.S. strategic “pivot” to Asia, the fact remains that the United States and European Union still dominate the global power structure. Together they form the two largest economies in the world today, by far. NATO remains the world’s preeminent security alliance, and the combined U.S. and EU defense budgets represent over 60 percent of the global total. These shared interests go beyond capabilities to operations. Most major national security issues today are being addressed by the U.S. and European powers, including the Afghanistan war, the Libya war, the Syrian revolution, the Iranian nuclear program, revanchist Russian bellicosity, and the evolving threat of jihadist terrorism. Just as in Niebuhr’s day, shared interests and the burdens of history continue to compel transatlantic cooperation.

# 6 A CIVILIZATIONAL INHERITANCE: SHARED OBLIGATIONS

**B**ecause Niebuhr believed in the union of interests and values, he moved easily to embrace the Atlantic Community's shared obligations to the wider world. He described NATO as having a "double purpose" of protecting the values of the Atlantic Community and contributing "this possession to the whole enterprise of integrating a global community of nations." In the immediate context of the Cold War, Niebuhr also defined this in the negative. The Atlantic Community's most urgent obligation was to prevent the victory of Soviet Communism over the rest of the world. He called this tyranny "a simple utopian creed, according to which it is...desirable to unify the whole of human society upon the basis of a new and pretentious secular religion, interpreted by a chosen elite."

Against the messianic pretensions of communism Niebuhr believed that "the nations which share the treasures of 'Western civilization' have a right and duty to preserve these treasures and to make them available to the world community." This outward-looking vision of transatlantic responsibilities was confident without being triumphalist, for Niebuhr acknowledged Europe's unfortunate history of colonialism and the subsequent resentments justifiably harbored by many developing countries. For Niebuhr this meant that the nations of the Atlantic Community needed to "sincerely strive to dissipate historic resentment against their power,

[so that] they can not be accused of desiring anything for themselves which they are not ready to share with the world." After all, "nations and communities of nations are fortunate when they are so placed that, by defending their own liberties, they also contribute to the destinies of others."<sup>16</sup>

Speaking of the Atlantic Community's "shared obligations" may seem archaic, even naïve, in the contemporary context of fiscal retrenchment, worries about U.S. decline, and loss of confidence in the European project itself. But here Niebuhr's understanding of "shared obligations" might be instructive. For Niebuhr, the Atlantic Community's greatest assets were not material abundance but the set of values and ideas that defined it. These values had survived the existential challenges posed by fascism and communism, and in this durability had also demonstrated their global appeal to other nations beyond the north Atlantic basin. "Atlantic values" were not merely Atlantic but were ultimately universal, he believed, and offered a rich inheritance to the world. In this era of material scarcity, of ideological challenges posed by militant Islamism and authoritarian capitalism, the Atlantic Community would do well to recapture its confidence in its ideals.

<sup>16</sup> Niebuhr, "The Moral and Spiritual Content of the Atlantic Community."

*Atlantic values were not merely Atlantic but were ultimately universal, he believed, and offered a rich inheritance to the world.*

# 7 CONCLUSION: READING NIEBUHR TODAY

**M**oving forward, what might a Niebuhrian sensibility mean for transatlantic relations today? Policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic can draw a few key lessons:

- **Don't valorize the past; understand it.**

History can offer many insights and much-needed perspective for contemporary policy issues, but a misreading of history risks making prevailing challenges look even worse than they are. Appreciating Niebuhr in his context helps guard us against the excessive valorization of the past, an imagining of an idyllic era in transatlantic relations that in reality never was. Instead we can take from Niebuhr's life and thought an appreciation for the enduring foundations of the Atlantic Community and an understanding of how challenges can be met.

- **Don't panic over Mars and Venus.** This lesson follows from the previous one. Robert Kagan's famous essay from a decade ago highlighted the divide over values between the supposedly martial Americans ("from Mars") and the purportedly pacific Europeans ("from Venus").<sup>17</sup> While Kagan's analysis is essentially correct, the differences he identifies are also nothing new. Americans and Europeans have differed over values since the modern birth of the Atlantic Community. Niebuhr's concept of "diversity under freedom" provides a framework for navigating these value differences while appreciating the underlying commonalities. Americans and Europeans may sometimes resemble squabbling siblings, but they are still part of the same family, and have been for generations.

- **Bring clergy back into the transatlantic community.** The religious compositions of

Europe and the United States are different today than in Niebuhr's era, but this does not mean that religion does not matter anymore. Niebuhr's life demonstrates how religious leaders can speak to their own communities as well as to a broader public. Today, religious leaders continue to play a role in shaping popular opinion and values on both sides of the Atlantic. Clerical figures such as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Pope Benedict XVI, and Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams in Europe and Reverend Rick Warren, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, and Reverend T. D. Jakes in the United States exercise considerable influence on their religious communities in particular and public life in general. Much as Niebuhr in his day helped construct a robust network of clergy committed to the Atlantic Community, a similar project today could open a new dimension in transatlantic relations. The inclusion of religious leaders in building transatlantic relations will be particularly important as Islam continues to grow in Europe and some Christian communities experience an upsurge in membership.

- **Revalue realism.** Contemporary policy debates fall all too easily into a tired dichotomy between "interests" and "values," between hard-headed realism and lofty idealism. Niebuhr's development of Christian realism — very influential on other realists such as Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, and E.H. Carr — demonstrates that values and realism can not only exist in tandem with each other but should be incorporated within each other. For Niebuhr, this meant resisting a desiccated realism that defined a nation's interests only in material terms of wealth and security. Realism as he understood it included protecting a nation's identity and values, and acting in alignment with other nations that shared those

*Americans and Europeans may sometimes resemble squabbling siblings, but they are still part of the same family, and have been for generations.*

<sup>17</sup> Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, No. 113, June 2002.

values. Realism today needs to be revalued and appreciated as Niebuhr developed it: a moral framework for using power to defend transcendent values in a fallen, flawed world.

The image features a solid green background with several horizontal white lines. Small white dots are placed at various points along these lines, creating a minimalist, grid-like pattern. The lines and dots are arranged in a way that suggests a global network or a series of interconnected points.

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