

# Transcript — George Friedman on why the new US National Security Strategy is here to stay

**Christian Smith:** Hello, and welcome to this podcast from Geopolitical Futures. I'm Christian Smith. America's new national security strategy reflects a fundamental change in U.S. strategy. The policy, which was published at the end of last week, prioritizes America maintaining its preeminence in the Western Hemisphere, avoiding military competition with China, and asking Europe to stand on its own feet. Many of these policies are not surprising. Indeed, we have discussed them before on this very podcast. But the White House's decision to commit them to paper has given the world a more definitive view of American thinking. So today on the podcast, we break down the strategy, what it means for the US and the world, and whether it is an ideological shift or just natural geopolitics in the 21st century.

**Christian Smith:** To do so, I'm joined, of course, by Geopolitical Futures chairman and founder, George Friedman. George, welcome along.

**George Friedman:** Hi, George.

**Christian Smith:** You wrote in an article that came out, well, the day that we're recording this Tuesday that this is a, quote, fundamental change. I mean, how is it a fundamental change? Why is that? Why is it so different? Because it is to Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy.

**George Friedman:** Well, it is both a new policy on paper, but one that has been evolving for several years. And it's a new policy because basically the foundation of American foreign policy since World War II last 80 years.

**George Friedman:** Was the Cold War. And that had two dimensions. One was ideological and moral. In a sense, resisting communism and supporting those nations that would join us in resisting communism and preventing their fall.

**George Friedman:** That proved to be not an issue.

**George Friedman:** After the Russian performance in Ukraine, it became self evident that the Russians could not defeat Ukraine even after three and a half years.

**George Friedman:** And therefore the threat to Europe was minimal. At the same time, the United States found itself in a relationship with China that was extremely complex. On the one hand, the two economies were intertwined. They were entangled with each other and

dependent on each other in many ways. At the same time, the United States and China were maintaining hostile potential military relationships. You cannot be economically dependent on a country you might be going to war with on either side. So the world has fundamentally changed. On the moral side, there is not the threat of communism that would sweep the world. On the strategic side, the foundation of the Cold War was the American support for Europe and NATO. That was one of the foundations. There are others fighting in Vietnam, fighting all over the world in the past 80 years. And at this point, the Russians simply are not a threat.

**George Friedman:** Nor are the Europeans poor and weak as they were in 1945. The European GDP is now, if you take the European Union as a whole, the third largest in the world, very close to China's. So Europe is a very prosperous place at this time, but a very divided one.

**George Friedman:** They cherish their divisions. They have historical antagonisms toward each other, distrusts and so on, and they don't want to sacrifice their own national identity. Therefore, they don't have an equal military power. There is not a military force that would be very similar to the force the US feels that China feels. And there's no reason Europe can't feel the same way. So Europe, in a way, after the Ukraine events showed Russia's weakness, after the Cold War ended and after their status as a weakened economic system became obsolete, now that relationship shifts. The idea that the United States.

**George Friedman:** Is going to be continually defending Europe, where Europe can surely defend itself, given its economy, if it simply reorganizes itself to that, well, that's become obsolete. Why should the United States do that? And the answer that's been emerging for quite a while, even before Trump came to office, is that this is not rational.

**George Friedman:** At the same time, the United States said, look, we have been involved in wars constantly in the Eastern Hemisphere fighting communism. Well, communism is not something we're fighting, and it'd be a good idea to leave and concern ourselves not with the Eastern Hemisphere, but with the Western Hemisphere. So the United States regards Europe as a fundamental betrayal of the United States. In other words, having been under American protection.

**George Friedman:** For 80 years, having evolved into a massive, if divided, economic force, it still will not take responsibility militarily and expects the United States to do that. Now, some would say that the United States is betraying Europe.

**George Friedman:** But this document actually makes the case that Europe has betrayed itself and the United States. So it's partly about Europe, but it's also about China.

**Christian Smith:** Let me, let's come on to that in just a moment. Sorry, George, I was going to button there. Just before we get there. I did want to ask, just kind of at the core of this, of this document, of this policy at the moment, is the idea of America First. Of course. I mean, that's not surprising, says that the US Must prioritize its own national interests. National interests, obviously, is a term used a lot, including in this document. What are America's national interests?

**George Friedman:** Well, they were described. The security of the United States is the first interest.

**George Friedman:** Limiting American exposure to foreign wars is an other interest. Having good economic relationships with various countries in the world is another interest.

**George Friedman:** And America first is no different than Britain first or Venezuela first or any other country. What country does not put Itself first. Well, the idea that somehow it's a betrayal for the United States to be saying this has become very commonplace. It harks back to some age of American isolationism. Well, we were forced into the war by Japan.

**George Friedman:** We were forced into the war because the Germans declared war on us, not because we wanted it. And we fought the Cold War, no fighting, but stood guard on Europe. So in other words, the old model is obsolete. It's not meaningful at this point. Europe is not fragmented. Russia is not a major military power, nor is it a significant economic power. So all these things have changed. Thus the reality changes. Now, this has been an evolving dimension of America for the past years under all administrations. This is simply a recognition in writing of what has already changed and a justification of it.

**Christian Smith:** And let me ask. I mean, what I think is quite interesting from what you're saying is that if you look back to, say, the 1990s, the post cold War world of sort of unilateral American hegemony, I think back then, the sort of general consensus amongst big wigs in Washington was that almost that it was a good thing for America to dominate the world almost completely in some ways. But this document sort of goes in the other direction. Says, look, we'll do the Western Hemisphere. But the rest of stuff is all just a matter of balancing and other things. What's changed, do you think? Why is it not in America's interest anymore to sort of be the world's leading power in terms of being able to influence everywhere?

**George Friedman:** Well, it was also a time of difficulty for the United States. Being the world's power meant 50,000 dead in Vietnam and so on and so forth. What has changed here is the nature of the Soviet Union. The ideological imperative of blocking communism is gone. Soviet Union is Russia. The Russian military is not impressive, and the Russian economy is not substantial. The world has changed fundamentally. Europe is now not a shattered continent, having shattered itself, unable to defend itself against Russia. That's not an issue at this point. It's basic.

**George Friedman:** If you want to call it enemy, I won't call it that. Adversary is China. And coming to a peaceful understanding with China is a very important thing. And the Europeans are under no threat. And given the Russian performance, if the Europeans would simply form major military force, which they certainly could. So in other words, the United States did not enjoy the Cold War. We did not have hegemony over the world in the sense that we could never. If we had hegemony, we could have gotten the Europeans moving. We could have forced all sorts of things. We took national responsibility, and vast numbers of Americans served in the American military at that time, some going into various wars in various ways, many dying. And our economy was based on defense and the fear of nuclear war. And this was a very tense period, the last 80 years. So where you think of hegemony, you think of the Roman Empire.

**George Friedman:** Holding a vast number of nations under its control and the nations obeying it. We were herding cattle, and it was very, very difficult to bring them together. So what has changed is the threat of communism is gone. Even in China, which is still a communist country, it's the party's there, but the ideology is functioning. At the same time, Russia is not the threat it was, and Europe is not the shattered continent that it was. So the world has changed, and therefore, in a rational country, foreign policy changes. Foreign policy has been changing. But at some point, you have to make a dramatic shift, a very public shift. And that's what Trump has chosen to do. And this is not a surprise. This is what he ran on when he ran for president and he was elected on it.

**Christian Smith:** Well, this is the thing, in many ways, as you said before, things have been changing over the past several years. Obviously, since Trump came back into office in January, we've seen a large degree of what this document has said. In many ways, it's odd that it's come out now when actually it's sort of been in place since January in many respects. Really? I mean, do you think that's fair? Did we not already know this?

**George Friedman:** I think we knew this. But on the other hand, there was still a feeling in the world that somehow this was an illegitimate policy, that somehow the United States is

betraying its trust of the world, that somehow the United States was not a moral nation if it put itself first, that somehow the United States had a moral obligation.

**George Friedman:** So even under the Biden administration, we did not send troops to Ukraine, we sent weapons. All right? This was one of the first times that the Russians had acted militarily that the United States did not send troops. And so already under Biden, you were seeing the shift. So everybody looks back on Biden as fully supporting the Ukrainians only with weapons, and then let the Ukrainians die. There were no Americans fighting, but I.

**Christian Smith:** Guess people would say that that was to avoid nuclear war.

**George Friedman:** It was to avoid nuclear war. But in fact, I doubt very much the Russians wanted Mutually Assured Destruction, where they would go to war. For that, the Russians thought they would overrun Ukraine in a matter of months, which was the view the world had. And their failure showed them that, well, they do have nuclear forces, but they don't have very effective military forces. A minor country like Ukraine held them very, very neatly. So the world has changed and the world has changed. And the Americans became America first only after they were forced into the war by the Japanese and Germans. They did not want to get into it. So this is returning to an old view that was present, which is that we have two oceans protecting us from the mayhem of the Eastern Hemisphere. Let's stay on our side. And that was called isolationism, as it was negative, it was avoiding the chaos of the Eastern Hemisphere. Now, during the Cold War, we had no choice. It was either let the Soviet Union dominate the Eastern Hemisphere or take stand. We took a stand. And that stand was also for America first, forgetting for the moment the moral character of the war. The United States did not want the Eastern Hemisphere dominated by the Soviet Union, exploiting its wealth to build forces. So when you look at it that way, the oddity was.

**George Friedman:** That in the 20th century, we fought three European wars, the First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, as well as other wars. Okay, that was not in the nature of the United States. It was something that had to be done, but it no longer has to be done. So we return to the primary interest of the United States, its own national security, its own well being.

**Christian Smith:** And let's look at the sort of immediate hemisphere there, the Western Hemisphere, which is obviously the priority for the US in this document. I mean, really, we're talking about the Americas there. I mean, this is obviously a reinforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. But Trump's sort of given it his own twist as well, hasn't he?

**George Friedman:** Well, the Monroe Doctrine basically said that we would not tolerate, we might not be able to stop it. European interference in the Western Hemisphere.

**George Friedman:** During much of the Cold War, the Soviets did interfere in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba being the best example. But they also operated covert operations throughout Latin America. And that was an issue.

**George Friedman:** At the same time as those covert operations were being carried out by the Russians, the cartels, the drug cartels emerged, which represent a significant threat to the United States. The drug problem is serious, and so on. But also there is the fear that, what if the Chinese come into the Western Hemisphere? There's a vulnerability for us in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine basically said that if the Europeans entered the Western Hemisphere in Latin America, they were likely to take on the United States to try to reoccupy the United States. And this, in a way, is a return to the Monroe Doctrine. Monroe Doctrine said, we have a primary interest in this hemisphere. And since we don't have any possibility of doing anything in the Eastern Hemisphere, they left that part out. The part he added was that Trump has added, we have a fundamental interest in the Western Hemisphere.

**George Friedman:** And a minimal interest in the Eastern Hemisphere, unless it goes berserk, as it did in World War I, World War II, and avoided war, because the United States and the Russians are very careful to avoid war during the Cold War.

**Christian Smith:** So in that respect, I suppose, has much changed with regards to the Western Hemisphere. I mean, of course, a lot of what this document says is being linked to the military buildup in the Caribbean. In regards to Venezuela. Is there much link there to current ongoing, or is this really just more of the same as it always has been?

**George Friedman:** I think something else is happening in Latin America which people don't note. There were three great exporting powers under industrialism. The first was the American. United States was a great exporter to Europe. That's how it grew, by exporting. The second one was Japan, that emerged in the 1950s as a great exporting power. The third was China, a great exporting power. Now, all these had periods where they hit the wall, not sliding into nothingness. But we had the Great Depression. The Japanese had lost decade. The Chinese are now floundering.

**George Friedman:** So there has always been, during industrialism, a great exporting power. It was always one that you would never expect it to arise. No one expected the United States, a third world power, to arise. No one expected Japan after World War II to arise as a great

exporting power. And certainly no one thought the Chinese could ever amount to anything much. So when you look at the world, you're looking for, okay, who's the next great exporting power? And the first idea that you'll have is who's the most laughable one? Well, there are many laughable ones, but. But the one that's laughable, but quite possible, is Latin America. Brazil is becoming a serious country. Argentina is as well. And when we look at them, we're looking at those countries in the United States as evolving fairly rapidly into something that might be as impossible to believe, is that China would become the second greatest economic power in the world.

**George Friedman:** So when we look at Latin America, there are tremendous opportunities.

**George Friedman:** For a very, very prosperous Western hemisphere emerging. Some ground has to be cleared with the primary industry and primary exports are not drugs. But you're seeing that already happen in countries other than Venezuela. Venezuela linked to Russia very closely.

**George Friedman:** And to Cuba very closely is odd, the odd man out in Latin America. Much of Latin America is evolving quite well. So there are two dimensions to this. One, the drug issue, secondly, the fact that Venezuela is undermining the possibility of economic development in the Western Hemisphere. That the United States has done much investment in the Eastern Hemisphere and has fought many wars in the Eastern Hemisphere. But I think part of this action in Venezuela is truly against the cartels, their danger, but also clearing the ground for a more prosperous Western Hemisphere. Remember, the United States had its national security based on two oceans, the Pacific and the Atlantic. So long as we control those two oceans, the United States cannot be invaded. Unless Canada gets angry at us. We're the Mexicans and they're not going to do that. So at the base of this is the view, look, there is a potentially prosperous hemisphere here that allows us to be the leading power in that hemisphere and keeps us from having to evolve ourselves with wars that the Russians might sponsor or the Chinese, my sponsor. So the American strategy is to reach an understanding both with Russia and with China, as this document, particularly about China spoke, and to focus ourselves on the Western Hemisphere's evolution. It's not irrational, it just breaks the norms. But the norm was obsolete after 80 years. The norm was a fantasy. It was not an impoverished Europe unable to defend itself. It was, from the American point of view, a very prosperous Europe, using the claim that it cannot defend itself to avoid defense spending and void sending it troops into combat.

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**Christian Smith:** We're somewhat doing a circuit of the world here, so we'll move on just for the sake of time. Although we could of course talk a lot more about that. China is obviously this country that many didn't expect to become the second largest economy in the world. Back in 2017, Trump sort of had it as the primary challenger to the U.S. now that very much has shifted to an economic challenger, but not one that the US wants to challenge or be involved in any form of military confrontation. What's changed since then?

**George Friedman:** Well, during that time.

**George Friedman:** Where United States and China became deeply intertwined economically, their low cost products to the United States were fundamental to the American economy, including its industrial plant, while there was US exports to the United States that built the Chinese economy along with American investment.

**George Friedman:** So, particularly after his first term, there was an intense relationship between the two countries, China and the United States.

**George Friedman:** And to a great extent, the United States created China just as the Europeans created the United States. In other words, the prosperity of China was built on the access to the American economy.

**George Friedman:** Now, at the same time, the Chinese and the Americans maintained potentially hostile military relationships. This is very dangerous. To be that intertwined economically and at the same time, possibly going to war with each other was an irrational stance, not only for the United States, but for China as well.

**George Friedman:** So as has evolved into this has been an interesting set of meetings between the United States and China, particularly one between Trump and Xi, where they seem to have reached a sort of understanding. We talked about previous.

**George Friedman:** Sessions, and that understanding is that we are not going to go to war with each other. Taiwan is a minor issue that can be settled in various ways. It is not worth a war. China cannot wage a war in the Pacific. The US Navy is too powerful and the United States



is too far away. The United States has no desire whatsoever to invade China in any way. The two countries have economic interests in common. So what happened was that unlike Russia, which during the Cold War had no economic interest for the United States, it was purely a military power. China is a country that is quite dependent on the United States. The United States is 25% of the world's economy and its greatest import export partner. At the same time, the United States does not want to have a conflict with China. China does not have one with us. So what this document said, and it's a very important thing, is that we want to have a close relationship to China based on reduction of military confrontation and increased economic entanglement. This is a very attractive thing to China. And Xi has acted in many ways as if this was something he was going to welcome, not the least of which is getting rid of the desired chiefs of staff in the military. So there are things happening on this front.

**George Friedman:** As this happens. Then we have an interest in the Western hemisphere.

**George Friedman:** If possible, a good political relationship with China, with whom we ever have intimate economic relations with, and therefore the rest of the Western, Eastern, Eastern hemisphere feels less important.

**George Friedman:** And that's something that has evolved over time under many administrations. And what Trump is in this paper stating publicly is what he's been trying with the Russians and Chinese to reach an understanding based on economic advantages to both countries in dealing with this and getting away from war.

**Christian Smith:** You mentioned the Chinese military there, and obviously, Xi has uprooted a certain number of generals at the top of that recently.

**Christian Smith:** The Fact remains for some of us, of America's allies in the Pacific, and particularly thinking of Japan, Taiwan, of course, and the Philippines and a number of countries in the South China Sea, that, that China has had military desires, land aggression, military aggression, I suppose, in. In those areas in recent years. How can America, I mean, is America just walking away from that? What's the story there? How will that play out then?

**George Friedman:** China is in desperate economic trouble.

**George Friedman:** It built its entire economy based on exports to the United States, with exports elsewhere. But this was the main thing with the tariffs. The trust said that entire system was disrupted. The Chinese bravely said, we'll find other markets. Well, there is not any group of markets that could consume what the United States did. So China has a serious

economic problem. The question of Taiwan is very symbolic for them, but they have a serious economic problem that they can only solve with the United States. And so the Chinese have spoken a great deal about Taiwan. On the other hand, they've never done anything for one reason. They can't. Amphibious warfare is not something they can do well, and that's a very dangerous thing to undertake. More importantly, if the United States continues to view China as dangerous and continues with the tariffs that Trump set, China is indeed trouble economically. And so the Chinese have a very great interest in getting out of that trouble. And the price of that for the United States is a more balanced trade relationship and the end to the military confrontation. Stop throwing your weight around in towards Japan or South Korea or Taiwan or anything like that, and we can do it, deal with it. And Xi seems to arrive at that position at this point, which is that there are talks going on directly between the president of the two countries, and that as these talks go on, it seems that something is emerging and that therefore there is a new reality in the world. There are two major countries. Russia is not one of them. Russia is neither a significant military power outside of nuclear war, nor is it a significant economic power.

**George Friedman:** And the question of Ukraine cannot be what defines the global system.

**George Friedman:** And therefore, if the United States and China reach an understanding.

**George Friedman:** With the Russians, left out, Russia has great problems. Now, remember that Trump has also offered to the Russians closer economic ties with the United States in return for a ceasefire and ending the war in Ukraine. The Russians have refused to do that.

**George Friedman:** There was a choice that the United States could have intervene militarily in another one of the endless wars we've had.

**George Friedman:** Or make friends with China. China and Russia historically have not been friendly nations to each other. Even under communism. They fought battles along the river borders. They did not like each other. The Chinese, as I've said before, are now claiming that eastern Russia, which they stole fair and swear from the Chinese century ago, really should return to China. And they have maps drawn saying that's the case. So China is looking at Russia as an old potential adversary.

**George Friedman:** Looking at the United States, which is not a military threat, has no ability or desire to go to war in China, looks at the American economy, looks at the Russian economy and says, I see where we can somehow reach an understanding with due negotiations and everything else. Now this puts tremendous pressure on Russia, which was focused only on its

western border, trying to get Ukraine and failing on its eastern border. Central Asia, as we've talked about before, has broken away from the Soviet Union. And all five of the Central Asian country's leaders met with Trump a few weeks ago. So when you take a look at this situation, it not only is a necessary step for the Chinese and a desirable one for the United States, but it also.

**George Friedman:** Puts pressure on Russia.

**George Friedman:** That it was not expected to have. It was expected to have liquidated the Ukrainian issue, possibly dominated the older nation, Lithuania and Latvia, that he used to control.

**George Friedman:** And be free. On this other front, with an understanding, if not an alliance between the United States and China, Russia's in a very different place. So there are many dimensions to this is the point I'm making. There's not a simple one paragraph explanation of what's going on.

**George Friedman:** This is also a threat to Russia at the same point as a necessary evolution in Chinese American relations.

**Christian Smith:** The Kremlin has come out and welcomed this and said it likes the new national security strategy. Of course, as you say, the Chinese side of things makes it vulnerable. But where does this leave Russia then?

**George Friedman:** This leave Russia as a relatively minor power. It has a large military that failed at its mission in Ukraine and an economy that ranks way below the American.

**George Friedman:** The Chinese and the mass European economy. If you take the EU together.

**George Friedman:** And it's really weakened, it's lost its western borders, it's lost its eastern borders and has lost its southern borders, it's a country in deep trouble. It's not in deep trouble if the United States is diverted elsewhere. And the Russians were very happy to see the Chinese ties down. But if the United States and China come to an agreement, well, Russia has to fall in line with two because it has to develop its economy. And therefore, I think the thinking is that the Russians problem will be solved if there's an American Chinese entente. And the Chinese also want the Russian problem to be solved. They're not friendly with them. So you look at it geopolitically, there are very many things to be gained from this.

**Christian Smith:** Well, Europe in many respects thinks there's not much to be gained from it. Of course, as you say, there's lots of discussion about the concept of betrayal and things like that. Just we've talked about Europe, of course, but let's just briefly go back to it. Some here in the UK where I am, have said that this perhaps is just an attempt to shock Europe into action and the UK as well, that, that it's a bucket of cold water because frankly, as Europe has sort of shown in the last couple of years, it's not going to arise from its stupor, but very easily, even though it probably can. Do you think that's fair?

**George Friedman:** I think that the Europeans are engaged in wishful thinking. This is a fundamental shift. For the last century, we've been fighting European wars. The Cold War forced us to deploy hundreds of thousands of troops in Europe because the Europeans, and I will say this as a former European from Hungary, through their own savagery, destroy themselves. All right now, the Europeans think of themselves as an extremely valuable place and that the Americans surely want to protect it. The Americans look at Europe as a group of has beens and an entity that is the third largest economy in the world compared to US and China, that is well able to take care of itself, but chooses not to and pretends to be feeble because it expects the United States to step in. And from the American point of view, not just Trump's, Europe has been taking advantage of the United States. There was a period of time, up until the fall of communism, where there was an American interest in, in maintaining Europe by building its economy, stationing troops and hoping that the Europeans would take their place. Now Europe has a fantastic problem at hand. It's the fundamental problem of Europe. Europe is a group of small, weak countries with fragmented economies with bad memories of each other, deep distrust.

**George Friedman:** As that it's going to be left out of the game.

**George Friedman:** On the other hand, if Europe were to become a united entity, a nation with the various nations provinces, it could be a major power ranking with the US and China having its own military and so on. There are two barriers to this. The Europeans have gotten used to not having to worry about these things because the Americans will take care of it. That's gone. And secondly, the European countries don't trust each other, don't speak the same language, don't try to understand each other. So the tensions within Europe, with Poland now emerging as A major power.

**George Friedman:** France being France, and the Germans wondering what's happening again, they're going through their old game. The Europeans do not want to face the fact that the world has changed dramatically, that they are not a critical battleground for anybody that

divided their helpless but united their significant force. And I don't mean by that NATO, which is an American entity as well, or the eu, which is.

**George Friedman:** Hard for an American to understand what that is. But it's not anything that is a nation, that represents a nation. So Europe now chooses an existential issue to end the history that has had since the fall of the Roman Empire, of small countries feuding with each other and so on, join the United States of Europe and become a major player in the world.

**George Friedman:** Now, can the Poles trust the Germans? Does anyone trust the French? Are the British prepared to join this group? And we're not only talking about the Northern Europeans on the European plain, we're talking about Hungarians, Romanians, Italians and a whole bunch of other people.

**George Friedman:** So.

**George Friedman:** What appears to me unlikely is that they'll reach an understanding that makes them a power which is a unified Europe. And therefore Europe will in a way like Africa was during the European imperial period. It's going to be a place where the Chinese, the Russians, if they revive, and the United States are going to go hunting, but manipulating and so on. The Europeans have not yet faced this reality that they must make a choice and live with it. And I don't think they can make the choice of giving up their national autonomy and forming together. And in that case, it really doesn't matter much about Europe. Europe says Russia is not going to conquer it, and that's it.

**Christian Smith:** Well, in a worrying sign for Europe over in the UK over. Over the last week or two, the UK and Europe couldn't agree a deal to join together in the new military plan that they had because of how much it was going to cost the UK to join, which was somewhat embarrassing and, and a bit of a bad sign, I suppose. George, we're running out of time, but just very quickly. Well, look, what's to stop a new US president coming along in 2029 and just unpicking large parts of this in particular in relation to Europe?

**George Friedman:** Well, publicly in the United States has little respect for Europe. They love visiting and seeing the old things, but we don't take Europe seriously.

**George Friedman:** Two of my children served in the military. I was there too. We've spent 80 years defending Europe from itself. At this point, with Russia clearly weakened economically and militarily, if the Europeans can't handle this themselves, then hell, it's not communism anymore. Let them be under Russia. So there is no passion in the United States

for defending Europe. There are many Americans still alive who stood guard at the Fulda Gap, as we used to say.

**George Friedman:** Inside of Germany.

**George Friedman:** We have no desire to be put back into that position. The Europeans now have an existential problem. And of all the countries.

**George Friedman:** China, the United States, even Russia, Europe has the biggest problem because it has to abandon its history of nationalism and join together or be manipulated and played by the other powers. And the Europeans are in denial.

**George Friedman:** Because they're continually talking about the norm. The norm is obsolete.

**George Friedman:** The United States made it obsolete. China made it obsolete. The only norm you have is the Russians are still out there doing something. So they wanted to return to the norm so they don't have to make these difficult decisions and they probably can't make them. And we call a fragmented continent a victim. That's the name you give him. And they don't realize that and they feel betrayed.

**Christian Smith:** Well, at the new national security strategy, it certainly seems to have the ability, the potential to be quite an historic document.

**George Friedman:** But one of the most important things is to remember the document confirmed what has been going on for years in the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union. The questioning of what is Europe, what is it going to do when. So this is not a document that initiates something. It is a document that announces it formally, something that's been going on for years.

**Christian Smith:** George Friedman, as always, thanks very much for your time on the podcast. Thanks out there for listening as well. We'll be back again soon with another podcast from Geopolitical Futures. Bye Bye Bank.

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