

## **U.S. Hegemony and European Autonomy: Challenge to the Transatlantic Relationship**

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**by**

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We live in interesting times, whether in "old Europe," "new Europe," or middle-aged United States of America. I have come to Europe at a time when Germany has painted itself into a "no-use-of-force corner," and can't get out, and the United States is in a "show-of-force corner," and can't back down.

Today's discussion of transatlantic relations is particularly disturbing. Some conservative Americans say France and Germany are no longer US allies, but in fact are now enemies of the United States. Meanwhile, some in Europe say they have more in common with Russia than with the United States. On both sides of the Atlantic, observers say that NATO is dead, and paint dire projection for the future of transatlantic relations.

I hope and believe the doubters are all wrong, and that the damage recently done can be repaired. But the repair job will not be easy, will require patience, and may not begin until there is a changed leadership philosophy on the US side.

The greatest danger to US-European relations today, which I have warned about for many years, is the combination of toothless European autonomy and careless American unilateralism.

The Bush Administration has managed, through its careless unilateral behavior to throw away all the good will generated by the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, and now to have put in jeopardy the new consensus on NATO's global role agreed in Prague last November.

In response, the government of France, called for a united EU front against the US approach to Iraq indulging in toothless "autonomous" behavior, the European response to American unilateralism - perhaps understandable, but not helpful.

To put recent events in perspective, it should be noted that for more than one half century, the United States and its European partners have suffered and survived one "crisis" after another.

Today, the United States and the members of the European Union face a new crisis. This one is based in part on the challenges of dealing with an international system in which the old threat from the Soviet Union has disappeared, only to be replaced by an international terrorist campaign against the West.

The Soviet threat, for the most part, had a unifying effect on the transatlantic allies. The shadowy and yet formidable challenge of international terrorism, however, has divided the Euro-Atlantic allies over the sources of terrorism and the appropriate responses.

As a consequence, international terrorism and the related issue of what to do about Iraq, has become the main external factor affecting relations between the United States and the Europeans. But it is factors internal to US-European relations that may in fact pose the most fundamental

challenge to the transatlantic alliance. Diverging world roles and perspectives raise the question of whether the United States and the members of the European Union are drifting apart and perhaps moving toward a transatlantic divorce.

### **Which United States? Which Europe?**

One of the difficulties in discussing the relationship between the United States and Europe is that the personas of both are constantly changing, forcing continual reassessment of how the most recent changes will affect U.S.-European relations.

#### ***The United States: benign or menacing hegemon?***

The United States has since World War II been the dominant force in U.S.-European relations. During the Cold War, U.S. power deterred military adventurism by the Soviet Union.

Europeans, with the notable exception of France, tolerated the increasingly hegemonic role of the United States. Soviet power made it clear to most European countries that the largely-benevolent U.S. hegemony was a small price to pay for a reliable security guarantee.

The United States, for its part, knew that democratic Europe was not only a critical strategic asset in its superpower competition with the Soviet Union but was also the main "prize" in the Cold War ideological competition.

At the end of the Cold War, some observers suggested that the United States should lay claim to its hard-won position as global hegemon, and reap the rewards of a dominant international position. Others suggested the Cold War victory had earned the United States the right to "come home" and tend to the needs of its people.

For most of the 1990s, this dichotomy left the United States in the position of a passive hegemon, or "reluctant sheriff," as Richard Haas put it. (Haas, representing the Bush Administration recently at the 2003 annual Davos meeting, had a harder time explaining the strong-armed sheriff.)

In the 1990s, the United States had the power and prestige to exert substantial influence on most international events or issues, but its leaders were not sure whether they wanted to exploit that position actively or to use it as a shield behind which the country could retreat and deal with its domestic issues. The administrations of President Bill Clinton showed flashes of unilateral behavior, for example at the Denver economic summit, the NATO enlargement summit at Madrid, and when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright proclaimed that the United States "stands taller and therefore can see further" than other countries.

But it was with the advent of the Bush administration that the United States began more actively to assert its hegemonic position. Candidate Bush had cautioned that the United States should pursue a "modest" foreign policy. Once in office, however, his administration moved unilaterally on many fronts in support of its policy preferences. On a wide range of issues, from ballistic missile defense to ecological protection, it rejected international agreements when they did not fit administration interpretations of U.S. interests.

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, the administration appreciated the outpouring of international sympathy and support but then adopted a strongly

unilateral posture, telling the rest of the world "you are either with us or against us" in the war on terror.

In 2002, the administration began marching alone down the road toward war against Iraq before realizing that neither the American people nor U.S. allies would support war against Iraq unless it were sanctioned by the international community.

The question is whether the Bush administration's strong go-it-alone inclination an aberration, or a sign of things to come? Will U.S. unilateralism finally provide the impetus for the unification of Europe, leading U.S.-European relations down a rocky road of competition and conflict, as some analysts have suggested? Or will the United States, under George W. Bush or his successor, find a balance between unilateralism and international cooperation that strengthens U.S.-European cooperation?

### ***What Europe?***

Just as there is a question about what kind of United States will occupy the American seat at the U.S.-European table, it is unclear what kind of Europe will be available to sit across the way.

In 1981, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, frustrated by the fact that nobody and yet everybody spoke for Europe, asked half-seriously "What is Europe's telephone number?" Some would argue Kissinger's question has now been answered. The European Union has a "High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy," Javier Solana, who in theory is the voice and face of the EU toward the outside world. However, if the outside world wants to talk about trade or economic and monetary issues, it had better not talk to Solana. Authority in this area is in the hands of the supranational EU commission.

And, if you want to influence the actions of the members of the EU, you might make some progress dealing with the capable Mr. Solana, but you had better also talk to the governments of France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and others, without whose initiative and support the EU does nothing.

Europe remains a mixed media presentation, part supranational organization, part united Europe, and very much still run by national governments, most of whose roots and political power are sunk deeply into their domestic power bases first and only secondarily in the "European idea."

It is possible that the EU's constitutional convention now being led by former French Prime Minister Valery Giscard d'Estaing will change all of this. The members of the EU could agree to move decisively toward a truly united Europe. They won't, but the constitutional convention will likely give the Union a more unified appearance and help reform the EU decisionmaking process - not inconsiderable accomplishments.

Particularly since the advent of the George W. Bush administration, growing numbers of Europeans have suggested that the unilateral behavior of the United States should stimulate the process of European political unification. In fact, however, recent events have demonstrated how far the European Union is from being "Europe."

To the extent that there has been unity, it has been in the belief that the issue should be processed through the United Nations Security Council; a preference that Great Britain helped convince the

Bush administration finally to embrace (albeit without much enthusiasm and now perhaps with some regrets).

And so, just as there are questions about whether the United States will be a benevolent hegemon or a unilateralist bully in its relationship with Europe, it is uncertain what mix of supra-nationalism and nationalism will govern Europe.

Of course, in these equations the United States and the members of the European Union have choices to make. The United States must decide what blend of unilateralism and cooperation best serves its long-term national interests. The EU members will have to decide to what extent they need an even-more unified front toward the outside world and to what degree they want to preserve national options, particularly in foreign and defense policy. The choices made will determine the quality of U.S.-European relations in the years to come.

### **Why Does it Matter?**

For over 50 years, the United States, Canada and their European allies have taken the Euro-Atlantic alliance and the "transatlantic link" for granted. It has been a basic assumption of our foreign and defense policies.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, a new period of questioning has begun. Americans ask: if the United States is the world's only superpower, what do weak-kneed, argumentative, legalistic Europeans have to offer to U.S. interests? Europeans ask: if Europe is on its way to unity, with most European countries on board, why should Europe defer to rude, reckless, impetuous Americans?

### ***U.S.-European relations in caricature***

The American side of this debate now finds articulate Euro-skeptics on the rhetorical offensive. One such commentator, Walter Russell Mead, has painted a picture of the relationship straight out of a classic American situation comedy ("The Andy Griffith Show"), writing:

"When Jacksonian America does think about Europe, it sees what Sheriff Andy of Mayberry saw in Barney Fife - a scrawny, neurotic deputy whose good heart was overshadowed by bad judgment and vanity. The slow-talking, solid Andy tolerated Barney just fine, but he knew that Barney's self-importance would get him into one humiliating scrape after another."

Another prominent commentator, Robert Kagan, argues that the success of the European integration process, creating a zone of peace and cooperation among countries that had warred for centuries, has also given birth to a "non-use of force ideology." According to Kagan, "This is what many Europeans believe they have to offer the world: not power, but the transcendence of power."

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld capped off the caricature commentary when he divided US European allies into those in "old Europe" who opposed US Iraq policy and those in "new Europe" who supported it.

One European commentator says that Kagan is "absolutely right" in judging that "Americans and Europeans no longer share a common 'strategic culture.'" Peter van Ham points out that "...for non-Americans, this is gradually becoming a world where the US acts as legislator, policeman,

judge and executioner. America sets the rules by its own behaviour, judges others without sticking to these rules itself..."

Such broad caricatures have recently dominated discussion of U.S.-European relations. They lead all-too-easily to the conclusion that the United States and Europe are drifting apart.

There is, of course, evidence of drift and division to support these approaches. Nation states tend to use the instruments of statecraft available to them. What instruments they develop and fund is at least somewhat dependent on what their history has taught them.

The history of the Second World War taught Europe that military conflict is to be avoided at all cost. Meanwhile, the United States came away believing that appeasement of dictators only whets their appetite for conquest.

During the Cold War, West European nations learned that putting aside old antagonisms allowed them to build a prosperous, stable community (the EU). Meanwhile, deterring and finally defeating the Soviet Union in the Cold War reinforced the American conviction that the demonstrated willingness to use force is necessary in dealing with potentially aggressive dictatorial regimes.

However, even given the validity of these observations, there is more to be said.

### ***Ties that bind...***

First, there is the simple fact that the United States, Canada and the members of the European Union share political systems built on the values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. Granted, this does not mean that these broad values are practiced similarly in all Euro-Atlantic nations.

There is no one democratic formula for solving the socio-economic problems of modern societies. European countries have in general chosen paternalistic approaches to social welfare, making the government the key agent in providing a social security safety net. The United States leaves more to the states and to private initiative.

The costs and benefits of the different approaches can be argued endlessly, but the most important reality is that, ultimately, the choices are made democratically. The belief in and practice of democracy remains an important part of the foundation for the Euro-Atlantic community.

In addition to shared political values, the United States and EU member states support market based economic systems in which competition drives the market but is governed by democratically approved rules and regulations. Neither the United States nor Europe allow completely free competition, and neither is fully effective in regulating commercial practices in a way consistent with societal values (witness the 2002 corporate and financial scandals in the United States).

But both the American and European systems try to balance the rights of the individual with the rights of society. The bias tilts toward individual liberty in the United States and toward social responsibility in Europe, but the balance is subject to democratic change and control on both sides of the Atlantic.

Moreover, European and American market economies are the essential core of the global economic system. Along with Japan, they are the main engines of international trade and investment, and it is therefore in their mutual interest to cooperate to make the system work.

The facts are all quite familiar. The economic relationship between the United States and the European Union is the largest in the world. The EU is the largest U.S. trade partner when goods and services are added up. The members of the EU have over \$800 billion of direct investment in the United States. The United States has over \$573 billion invested in EU states. The EU and the United States together account for more than 30 percent of world trade and represent almost 60 percent of the industrialized world's gross domestic product. These numbers and ratios will continue to grow.

At the end of the Cold War, some observers judged that the Soviet threat had imposed a discipline on transatlantic trade and financial relations that would disappear in the post-Cold War era.

The United States and Europe have continued to struggle with a variety of trade issues, as they did during the Cold War, but such differences have not shaken the foundations of the relationship. This is so because even though the system stimulates and encourages competition it also ceases to function effectively unless conflicting interests are eventually reconciled. In spite of continuing differences and the absence of a Cold War threat, the United States and Europe remain committed to resolving their trade and financial differences in ways that balance costs and benefits over time.

At the heart of the "realist" or "Jacksonian" projection of doom and gloom for transatlantic relations is the view that the U.S.-European security relationship is becoming irrelevant, NATO is dead, and the European Union will never muster enough political will and resources to become a significant military player alongside the United States.

There is a growing gap between U.S. and European deployed military capabilities. European states have simply not spent enough since the end of the Cold War to keep up with the U.S. Revolution in Military Affairs. What they have spent has not always been spent well, maintaining military structures and equipment more appropriate for the Cold War strategic environment than for likely 21<sup>st</sup> century conflicts. -During the Cold War, the gap between U.S. and European military capabilities produced different preferences for international problem solving. Now, the even-bigger gap yields even more dramatic differences.

However, it is possible to carry the gap projection too far, as Kagan and other have done.

Although the European military modernization picture is certainly bad, it is not beyond repair.

Europe needs to invest much more in defense, but the major European military establishments intend to be able to conduct future operations on a US-style high tech battlefield.

France, the UK, and other European states have scheduled improvements in communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, all weather precision weaponry, strategic mobility, and force projection over the next 15 years. If these improvements are carried out, they should produce European forces that are more capable of conducting operations in a great variety of

battlefield conditions in coalition with the United States and, to a lesser extent, on their own if necessary.

Why should the United States want the Europeans to make this effort? Perhaps the most fundamental reason is that the American people do not want their government to be the world's only policeman. U.S. public opinion surveys for over a decade have shown the American people believe the United States should help maintain international peace, but should share such burdens and responsibilities with friends and allies. This same attitude shows up in the preference of the American people to wage war against Iraq with a UN mandate rather than without.

As a U.S.-European expert study group (in which I participated) recently concluded, "Although the U.S. may be able to win wars without significant allied contributions, it is unlikely in many situations to be able to win the peace without military (and non-military) assistance from European allies...."

### **The Future of U.S.-European Relations**

Toward the end of 2002, the United States and the members of the European Union made important decisions affecting U.S.-EU ties and the institutional framework that supports Euro-Atlantic relations. Summit meetings of both NATO and the European Union opened the door for many additional countries to join the two organizations, moving toward the point where most European nations will be members of one or both of the organizations.

#### ***Enlargement of Euro-Atlantic Community***

In recent years the members of NATO and the European Union have struggled with the question of how and when to admit new members. The decisions have been complicated by the fact that most of the candidates are not yet ideally prepared for membership in either organization.

On the other hand, NATO and EU members felt an obligation to wipe out the old lines dividing Europe by inviting new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe to join. NATO's November decisions in Prague will bring seven additional countries into the alliance (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania).

The EU's enlargement decision, taken in Copenhagen in December, could bring ten more countries into the EU (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia) by May 1, 2004.

The combination of the NATO and EU enlargement processes, if consummated in the next few years with successful referenda and ratification in member and applicant countries, would bring the Euro-Atlantic institutional structure much closer to representing "a Europe whole and free" that George W. Bush's father had set as a goal in May 1989.

The process could also have unintended consequences. Some observers have speculated that the enlargement of the EU to include many of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe will make it virtually impossible for the EU to adopt an anti-U.S. stance in future years.

On the eve of the EU's enlargement decision, Karsten Voigt, the German foreign ministry's coordinator for German-American relations, observed "Any concept attempting to define the EU as

an organization that is basically against the United States is no longer able to muster a majority. That temptation is finished."

This does not mean that "new Europe" will turn the EU into a yes-man for U.S. interests. But it does mean that future EU criticism of the United States will in all likelihood remain framed by the desire to ensure a constructive Euro-Atlantic dialogue.

### ***Institutional reform?***

Both NATO and EU enlargements pose important decisionmaking issues for the respective organizations.

Under the 1949 Treaty of Washington, NATO operates by consensus, and the members are unlikely to give up the right to block a decision that runs counter to their perceived national interests. At least in theory, the more members NATO has, the more potential consensus-blockers there will be.

This raises the theoretical prospect of deadlock on the use of the alliance to deal with controversial security challenges, such as those that will arise in the struggle against terrorism and in the Middle East. On the other hand, it can be argued (and even demonstrated by recent events) that the new members are no more likely, and perhaps even less likely, to prevent an alliance consensus than are current members.

The EU for years has struggled with the conflict between the need for effective decisionmaking and the desire of member states to protect their interests on important issues.

Now it will have to deal with the degree to which such a large and diverse infusion of new members will make this dilemma even more difficult.

One of the critical issues before the EU's ongoing constitutional convention is how to ensure that the Union, or whatever the convention may decide to call the future organization, will be able to take necessary decisions with a membership of 25 in 2004, and possibly more down the road.

Meanwhile, there is some good news for those who remain hopeful about the future of U.S.-EU relations. The arrangements negotiated in 2000 under which the EU's European Security and Defense Policy would rely to some extent on NATO planning and some critical military assets were finally put in place. The accord means that the EU's military capabilities will develop in close cooperation with NATO, and therefore with the United States.

### ***The future is for the United States and Europe to choose***

What kind of a future does all of this portend for US-European relations? It could be drift and divorce, or simply prolonged deterioration. However, I am inclined to argue that a more positive path is available, although not guaranteed.

Both the United States and the members of the European Union will have to make decisions compatible with strengthening transatlantic ties. That is the challenge to current and future policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic.

The United States faces the challenge of using its power in ways that reflect U.S. values and draw on the American public's desire to cooperate with other countries while not inspiring opposition by

being too domineering. In other words, the United States has to be a hegemon without acting like one.

If U.S. allies still believe that U.S. leadership is essential on many international issues, as they apparently do, then their challenge is to express their criticism of U.S. leadership style in terms that are appropriate for frank and honest discussions among friends, and in ways that will promote US-European cooperation, not make it more difficult.

At the end of the day, neither the United States nor the European allies are likely to allow the current crisis in relations to undermine the broad area of values and interests that they share. This is so in part because the members of the European Union, individually and collectively, are the main source of potential support and relief for the United States in maintaining international stability.

Take a quick look around the world and try to find other allies that are as willing and able to make a wide range of military and non-military contributions to international security. You won't find many beyond Europe.

And, if Europeans look for allies that broadly share European values and interests, most will conclude that the United States, with all its flaws, will remain the most important and reliable world partner for a more united Europe.

The bottom line is that the United States and the members of the European Union still need each other. Moreover, the international community needs this "crucial couple" to find some form of marital harmony. Working together, the United States and Europe have the wits and resources to deal with most international problems, as demonstrated by British-French-U.S. collaboration late in 2002 to produce a UN Security Council resolution on Iraq. In the absence of such cooperation - as recently demonstrated over Iraq - the international community simply doesn't function very well.

But the United States and the members of the European Union must breathe new life into the sense of common destiny among the Atlantic community of nations.

For those who share this belief, the time has come to start preparing a re-awakening of transatlantic good will and cooperation.

The Atlantic Community has been the first victim of the crisis over Iraq.

No matter how the Iraq issue is resolved, we should now begin preparation of a new Atlantic Community Treaty. The treaty would have both political and functional goals.

Politically, such a major political act would shift the focus of US-European relations toward all that we have in common and away from the exclusive focus on what divides us.

Functionally, the treaty among all members of NATO and the European Union would create a soft-power framework of cooperation to complement the hard power frameworks of NATO and the EU's Common European Security and Defense Policy.

This will not be easy; attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic today make it even more difficult.

However, without a renewed sense of common destiny, the United States would be weaker and less predictable and Europe would be less confident and much less secure.