

**“Iraq is chance for U.S. to fix its relations; Country seeks new stance with EU,” *The Washington Times*, April 27, 2003, page A9.**

**By Louis R. Golino**

### **SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES**

Winning the peace in Iraq provides policy-makers with a key opportunity to try to repair the rift in U.S.-European relations, say leading U.S. and European analysts who spoke recently at the Brookings Institution.

They added that in addition to working together to build postwar Iraq, American and European leaders should seek to develop a common approach to curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and deploy NATO peacekeepers to Iraq.

But at the same time, after the Iraq war and the rancorous diplomacy that preceded it, returning to the status quo in trans-Atlantic relations is not an option, said Ivo Daalder, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Moreover, he said, both the United States and Europe must adjust to certain new realities,

The new realities include, Mr. Daalder said, the fact that "the trans-Atlantic relationship is no longer the central relationship either for Europe or for the United States."

Although there have been numerous crises in U.S.-European relations since World War II, the analysts agreed that trans-Atlantic relations reached their lowest point in the run-up to the Iraq war.

Mr. Daalder, for example, said he had never seen anything like the current rift, which he considers to be much more fundamental than previous crises in U.S.-European relations.

#### **Growing strategic gap**

Robert Kagan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace argued that the roots of today's trans-Atlantic difficulties lie in a growing strategic divergence between the two sides of the Atlantic.

Mr. Kagan said the key issue is the different ways Americans and Europeans view using force Europe being much more reluctant to use force than the United States is. September 11, 2001, also widened the strategic gap between the two sides of the Atlantic because it was perceived differently in Europe than it was in the United States.

Europe, analysts say, does not believe that it is at war with terrorism and has not acted as decisively since September 11 to protect its homeland security as has the United States. European countries are, however, cooperating closely with Washington on counter-terrorism.

In addition, during the run-up to the Iraq war, many commentators pointed out that European views on the conflict were rooted in perceptions of the unparalleled power of the United States. Many Europeans want to be close partners of the United States, while others such as the French think Europe should try to become a counterweight to the United States.

Mr. Kagan suggested that Europeans should not seek to counter U.S. power, an effort that will only divide and weaken them, and Charles Grant, director of the London-based Center for European Reform, said the United States should not seek to divide Europe, because a weak Europe is not in American interests.

### **Weapons of mass destruction**

Mr. Grant, who is a former defense editor of the Economist, said Europe should take weapons of mass destruction more seriously and be prepared, if necessary, to use force against states that have such capabilities.

On April 14 European Union foreign ministers for the first time discussed the issue of weapons of mass destruction and began developing a common policy on how the European Union should deal with countries that possess such weapons.

All the analysts at the Brookings forum agreed that Europe must enhance its military capabilities, and develop a strategic doctrine and shared-threat assessment.

Christoph Bertram, a well-known German foreign policy expert who is director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, argued in favor of what is known in EU jargon as reinforced cooperation in the defense field.

He said the only way to start the European defense is to have France and Germany lead a group within the European Union that is likely to include many other EU countries.

### **European defense spending**

Mr. Bertram agreed with the other speakers that Europeans must spend more on defense. He noted that Europeans spend roughly a half-billion euros a day on defense, while U.S. spending is twice that amount.

But he added that the European money is not spent well because of various redundancies within European defense industries and that to develop serious military capabilities EU members would have to pool their defense resources more effectively.

France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg will hold their own defense summit in Brussels on Tuesday to develop a program similar to the one Mr. Bertram proposed.

The proposal for a core defense group has been described by some critics as a project that will divide the European Union because it involves four of the 15 member states.

In advance of the April 29 meeting, the same four countries called for substantial increases in European defense spending, particularly for modernizing equipment.

At the Brookings meeting, Mr. Grant suggested that EU nations strive to spend an average of 2.5 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. Some European countries spend less than 2 percent of GDP on defense.

### **NATO in Iraq**

The Bush administration has asked NATO to consider sending peacekeeping troops to postwar Iraq.

Defense experts say there would be many benefits to a NATO deployment in Iraq. These include enabling the United States to share the burdens of postwar stabilization with its NATO allies.

A NATO role in Iraq would also help revitalize the alliance, which has been largely sidelined in the U.S.-led wars on Iraq and terrorism.

And as Mr. Daalder said at Brookings: NATO "knows how to do peacekeeping. It knows how to do stabilization. It knows it better than the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps or indeed anybody else."

Moreover, NATO has considerable experience coordinating peacekeeping missions that involve non-NATO countries, which would be useful in putting together a multinational peacekeeping force in Iraq.

Such a force is likely to be perceived by Iraqis and the rest of the Arab and Muslim world as more legitimate than a mostly U.S. military presence.

U.S. officials have also suggested that NATO might be tasked to oversee the disarmament of Iraq that the United Nations started.

### **France and NATO**

The main obstacle to a NATO deployment in Iraq had been France's position that NATO's mandate should be limited to Europe.

France also raised objections to proposals from Germany and other alliance countries for NATO to take over the U.N.-mandated peacekeeping force in Kabul, Afghanistan, which is under German and Dutch command.

France recently dropped its opposition to NATO involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On April 16, all nineteen NATO allies agreed that beginning in August NATO will assume command of the Afghanistan mission, but the operation will not be under a NATO flag.

That will greatly improve the continuity of command arrangements for this force and will mark NATO's first deployment outside Europe. NATO is providing logistical support to the German and Dutch troops leading the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

France has recently sought to repair its badly frayed relations with the United States. For example, it has become more flexible on the issue of the role the United Nations will play in rebuilding Iraq, saying it would accept a phased-in U.N. role.

### **Germany and the United States**

Germany has gone further than France in recent weeks to show how committed it is to repairing the rift in its relations with the Bush administration, according to news reports.

In addition, defense analysts point out that although Germany did not send any troops to Iraq, it has played an important role in that conflict, one second only to that of the Britain.

For example, Germany assigned a significant number of its police forces to protect U.S. military bases in Germany, deployed an anti-chemical-weapons unit to Kuwait, gave the United States overflight and basing rights, sent Patriot missiles and AWACS surveillance aircraft to Turkey, and might send peacekeepers to Iraq.

Germany has also said it is ready to replace Danish troops in Bosnia if the latter are deployed to Iraq as part of a Danish-led peacekeeping and stabilization force that the United States has requested, and that may also include troops from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Turkey, among other countries.

France and Germany opposed the U.S.-led war on Iraq but are offering to work with the United States on the rebuilding, and political and economic reconstruction of postwar Iraq.

Both countries have also acknowledged that U.S. and coalition military forces would take the lead in the initial stabilization of postwar Iraq, as suggested by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell in Brussels on April 3.