

[ACES paper-Lieber; August 13, 2004 (3:30pm)]

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES:
THREATS, INTERESTS AND VALUES

Paper Prepared for ACES Working Paper Series

The American Consortium on EU Studies

August 13, 2004

Robert J. Lieber
Department of Government
Georgetown University
Washington, DC 20057-1034
lieberr@georgetown.edu

Europe's relationship with America is intimate and yet troubled. Some have predicted that the expanded European Union (EU) of twenty-five countries, reaching from the Atlantic to the Russian border and with a population of 460 million people, a common currency and aspirations for a common foreign and defense policy will emerge as a powerful competitor to the United States. European resentment of American political, economic and military predominance is real, and disputes have multiplied over a wide range of issues, from Iraq to the International Criminal Court to genetically modified foods. Many foreign journalists, authors and politicians offer strident criticism of American policy and it is by no means excessive to ask whether the United States and Europe may now be on the verge of a divorce in which their alliance of more than a half century collapses or they even become great power rivals.

A number of European leaders have proclaimed their vision of an EU comparable to the United States and – in the view of some – one that can act to counterbalance America. The former head of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, observed that one of the EU's chief goals is to create “a superpower on the European continent that stands equal to the United States.” For his part, French President Jacques Chirac, has said that “we need a means to struggle against American hegemony.”¹ Germany and France, in cooperation with Russia, not only opposed the U.S. on the use of force against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, but Chirac and his Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, took the lead at the United Nations in opposing the American policy and in organizing an international coalition against it.

This opposition came as no surprise to those who, since the end of the Cold War, had

¹ Quoted in *The Economist*, April 26, 2003.

been predicting an imminent rupture of the U.S.-European relationship and the demise of NATO. For many observers, the removal of the Soviet threat presaged a new era and with it the unraveling of an alliance created in response to a Soviet Union that no longer existed. They expected this distancing to occur not only in security policy, but across a range of economic issues, since the end of the Cold War removed the imperative to contain international commercial or financial conflicts for the sake of preserving the anticommunist alliance.² European states would thus cease their collaborative bandwagoning behavior and instead begin to balance against one another or even against American power.³ In the words of Kenneth Waltz in 1990, even before the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, "NATO is a disappearing thing. It is a question of how long it is going to remain as a significant institution even though its name may

2 Benjamin J. Cohen, "'Return to Normalcy'? Global Economic Policy at the End of the Century," in *Eagle Adrift: American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century*, ed. Robert J. Lieber (New York: Longman, 1997), p. 74.

3 On the return to great power balancing, see, e.g., John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Summer 1990, pp. 5-56; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Arise," *International Security*, Spring 1993, pp. 5-51. For a German realist, who interprets French defense spending as a form of military balancing against the U.S., see Werner Link: Imperialer oder pluralistischer Frieden? Plädoyer für eine Politik der kooperativen Balance [Imperial or Pluralistic Peace? A Defense for a Policy of Cooperative Balance], *Internationale Politik* 5/2003, pp. 48-56.

linger on.”⁴

Predictions such as these were made in the months and years immediately following the end of the Cold War. But by the mid-to-late 1990s, they seemed less relevant in the face of U.S. led efforts to end the fighting in Bosnia (1995), the allied air war to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo (1999), and the enlargement of NATO. In turn, the September 11th terror attacks on New York and Washington seemed to represent a new and much more ominous shared threat. Nonetheless, with the passage of time and with the eruption of bitter debates about Iraq and extensive European criticism of American unilateralism on a broad range of issues, the specter of an Atlantic rupture has reemerged. Robert Kagan, in his widely quoted assessment, attributes the growing divergence to a profound difference in attitudes, in which America is now “Mars” to Europe’s “Venus”:

It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world. On the all-important question of power . . . American and European perspectives are diverging. Europe is turning away from power. It is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Kant's "Perpetual Peace." The United States, meanwhile, remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable and where true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might. *That is why on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus:* They agree on little and understand one another less and less . . . When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and

4 Kenneth Waltz, U.S. Congress, Senate, *Relations in a Multipolar World*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 102nd Congress, 1st Session, 26, 28, and 30 November 1990 (GPO, 1991), p. 210, quoted in Gunther Hellman & Reinhard Wolf, "Neorealism, Neoliberal Institutionalism, and the Future of NATO," *Security Studies* 3, #1, Autumn 1993, p. 17.

fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.⁵

From a very different perspective, Charles Kupchan also concludes that America and Europe are fundamentally diverging, adding that “NATO, far from being in the midst of rejuvenation, is soon to be defunct.”⁶ Kupchan bases his prediction on what he perceives as a shift in American strategic priorities away from Europe, an increasing political divide between the U.S. and EU, and a Europe at peace no longer needing its “American pacifier.”

Notwithstanding a long list of disputes and numerous predictions of political divorce, it remains premature to write the epitaph for the European-American partnership. Despite its historic expansion, the EU is not about to emerge as a formidable superpower, let alone take on the role of balancer against the U.S. The enlarged EU lacks sufficient central authority and

5 Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003), pp. 3-4. Italics added. Though note Javier Solana’s rejoinder that Mars found solace in the arms of Venus.

6 Charles Kupchan, “The Waning Days of the Atlantic Alliance,” in Bertel Heurlin and Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen (eds.), *Challenges and Capabilities: NATO in the 21st Century* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2003), p. 25. Kupchan elaborates on these themes in, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Knopf, 2002); and “The End of the West,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 290, No. 4 (November 2002). Also see Stephen M. Walt, who advocated American disengagement from European security commitments, in “The Ties That Fray: Why Europe and America are Drifting Apart,” *The National Interest*, No. 54 (Winter 1998/99): 3-11.

decision-making structure as well as the military capacity for an effective common defense policy. In addition, a community of twenty-five countries now includes member states from Eastern Europe, whose history provides strong motivation for maintaining close ties with the U.S. This perspective was evident in the support of the ten countries of the Vilnius group for American policy toward Iraq. Indeed, the intra-European divide over Iraq policy provided evidence that the member states of the EU will not reach a consensus on balancing against the U.S. Moreover, domestic politics, economic problems and the demographic profile of aging populations are much more likely to produce reductions in defense spending than the increases that would be required to provide the EU with the military capability of a major world power.

In sum, Europe's lack of unanimity on foreign and security policy, the inability to provide for its own security, and shared interests in trans-Atlantic economic cooperation and institutions, require a continuing partnership with America. Moreover, despite what Freud called the narcissism of small differences, the legacy of common values remains fundamental. Europe has neither the will nor the capability for a fundamental break, and the interests of the United States work against a divorce as well. Nonetheless, the sources of disagreement are deep-seated and have been increasing, and they deserve close attention. In the remainder of this essay, I analyze the reasons for transatlantic conflict and then consider the underlying sources of solidarity in the relationship. I conclude by assessing the circumstances in which radical change could occur and the reasons why true balancing against the United States is not taking place.

I. SOURCES OF CONFLICT

If, as Lord Acton famously said, power corrupts, then lack of power may also do so. For

today's Europe, and especially for countries once accustomed to a true international great power status, the disparity with the United States is especially painful. During the Cold War, sheltering under the American security umbrella was an unavoidable imperative, though under De Gaulle and his successors the French quest for autonomy repeatedly pushed the Atlantic relationship to its limits.

These problems were not exclusively of Parisian origin. Virtually from the time of its inception in 1949, the Atlantic alliance weathered a wide range of disputes, not only concerning strategy, but economics and politics as well. One of the earliest crises erupted over German rearmament and the 1954 rejection of a proposed European Defense Community by the French National Assembly. The controversy was serious enough for Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to threaten an "agonizing reappraisal" of America's relationship with Europe. Two years later, in 1956, the Eisenhower administration found itself at loggerheads with France and Britain when it joined with Moscow to condemn the Anglo-French expedition to retake the Suez Canal from Egypt. A more subtle but far-reaching problem arose after the October 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik, the world's first orbiting space satellite. With the American homeland potentially vulnerable to Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), how could an American president credibly sustain the commitment to Europe if defending Paris or West Berlin now meant exposing Chicago or New York to a potential Russian nuclear attack? Intra-alliance conflicts continued with the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command structure in 1966. Symptomatic of disputes at the time was the title of a book by Henry Kissinger's, *The Troubled Partnership*.⁷

7 Henry A. Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership: A Re-Appraisal of the Atlantic Alliance* (New

Out-of-area disagreements also developed over France's desperate and ultimately futile efforts to keep control in Indochina (1946-54) and Algeria (1954-62), and subsequently over U.S. intervention in Vietnam. A severe crisis erupted after the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, with the accompanying Arab oil embargo against the United States and the Netherlands, and the French-led tilt toward the oil-producing countries in contrast to American support for Israel. Oil and energy-related issues continued to reverberate in policies toward Iran after its 1979 revolution and in disputes over the construction of a pipeline to carry natural gas from Russia to the West. In the early 1980s, an intense crisis erupted over the U.S. and NATO decision to deploy intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe in order to counter Soviet SS-20 missiles. Multiple examples could be added to the list: trade frictions, economic competition, agricultural protectionism, cultural conflicts, and disagreements about policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, among other issues.

While these disputes were often intense, the underlying mutual security imperative caused Western Europe to remain closely allied with the United States in order to preserve an unambiguous American guarantee. In recent years, however, and without Cold War concerns, the possibilities for fragmentation have increased. Among the Europeans, France has become the most strident critic of American power and the most avid in seeking ways to increase its own autonomy and to steer the European Union toward an independent course. Near the end of his life, President François Mitterrand gave vent to a deep antagonism, declaring, "France does not know it, but we are at war with America. Yes, a permanent war, a vital war, an economic war, a

war without death. Yes, they are very hard, the Americans, they are voracious, they want undivided power over the world."⁸ Subsequently, the then French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine proclaimed, "We cannot accept . . . the unilateralism of a single hyperpower," and President Jacques Chirac called for a "more balanced . . . distribution of power in the world."⁹

Note that Mitterrand, Vedrine and Chirac expressed these resentments during the mid and late 1990s, while the Clinton-Gore administration guided American foreign policy, and well before the 2000 election and the coming to office of the Bush administration. Under Clinton, tensions emerged over Bosnia and Kosovo, the treaty to ban anti-personnel land mines, the Kyoto Treaty on global warming, the International Criminal Court, the ABM Treaty, enforcement of UN sanctions against Iraq, policy toward Iran, and policies toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This list serves as a reminder that serious disagreements, including complaints about American hegemony and unilateralism, have emerged under both Democratic

8 Mitterrand died in 1996. The passage is from a biography by Georges-Marc Benamou, *Le dernier Mitterrand* (Paris: Plon, 1997), and is quoted in Conrad Black, "Britain's Atlantic Option and America's Stake," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 22.

9 Vedrine and Chirac were quoted in Charles Krauthammer, "Not for Moi, Thanks," *Washington Post*, Nov. 26, 1999. The then French foreign minister had used the word "hyperpuidance" to describe American power, though President Chirac later disavowed the term. Chirac's more restrained language can be found in an interview with Craig R. Whitney, "With a 'Don't Be Vexed' Air, Chirac Assesses U.S.," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1999.

and Republican administrations and under presidents with very different leadership styles and policies.

Reactions to the Bush Doctrine

With the start of the George W. Bush presidency in January 2001, European-American relations became increasingly acrimonious. An important reason was the disputed outcome of the November 2000 election and the fact that the then Texas governor was largely unknown abroad. European political leaders as well as journalists, commentators and foreign policy analysts displayed the anxiety that occurs when the White House suddenly is occupied by a chief executive unfamiliar to elites in Paris, Berlin, London and Brussels. Many took cues from their American counterparts, most of whom had preferred Gore for president and expressed strong antipathy to the new administration. European first impressions thus became lopsidedly negative, and there was not only an immediate uneasiness, but increasingly inflammatory press coverage of the new president. Despite taking office with an experienced foreign policy team, Bush was frequently derided as a primitive, a Texas cowboy and even, in the words of one prominent British columnist, a “global vandal” and “reckless brigand.”¹⁰

In the wake of the September 11th terror attacks, European criticism of the Bush administration subsided and political leaders, the media and public embraced the United States in the presence of what seemed a threat not only to America but to the entire modern world and its

10 Polly Toynbee, “Special report: European integration,” *The Guardian* (London), July 18, 2001.

values. Despite an undercurrent of smug satisfaction that even the seemingly omnipotent United States was not invincible, or that America might somehow have deserved the attacks, there was widespread solidarity. This was evident in public opinion polls and took the form of political support and active cooperation in intelligence and anti-terrorism measures.

Indeed, just one day after the attack, on September 12, 2001, the 19 members of NATO invoked Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty for the first time in the history of the Alliance. Article V treats an attack on one member state as an attack on all, and requires that they take action under their respective constitutional procedures. Ultimately, sixteen of the then nineteen member countries contributed personnel to the Afghan campaign. In the ensuing months, American air power and special forces, working with the Afghan opposition, quickly defeated the Taliban regime and its al-Qaeda allies. The victory occurred far more rapidly and with far fewer casualties than many observers had expected,¹¹ but in order to retain tight control of the operation, the Bush administration opted not to conduct the Afghan war as a NATO operation. The decision made sense militarily, but it contributed to European resentments about unilateralism.

These reactions increased in response to the President's January 2002 State of the Union address to the Congress in which he spelled out what became known as the Bush Doctrine ("The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with

¹¹ For a pessimistic assessment of the prospects for success in the battle for Afghanistan, written shortly before U.S. and Northern Alliance forces captured Kabul, see John Mearsheimer, "Guns Won't Win the Afghan War," *New York Times*, Nov 4, 2001.

the world's most destructive weapons”) and especially Bush’s use of the term “axis of evil” to describe Iraq, Iran and North Korea. During the following year, with the growing divide over the impending use of force against Iraq and the September 2002 release of the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS) document,¹² European criticisms of American policy intensified. The change in attitude marked a shift away from the solidarity expressed by the allies in the initial days after September 11th, and it occurred for reasons specific not only to the United States but also to Europe itself.

First, American policymakers together with a substantial part of the public saw September 11th as a watershed and in their view the country now found itself in a war against terrorism. By contrast, with the passage of time, Europeans were less inclined to share this understanding. For example, an opinion poll conducted by the German magazine *Der Spiegel* eight months after the attacks, found that by a 3:1 margin Europeans saw September 11th as an attack on America, but not on Europe or the world.¹³ Though the analogy was misplaced, they tended to equate September 11th with their own experiences of domestic terrorism during prior decades. Indeed, in France, a sizeable minority even saw the United States as a threat. In response to an April 2002 opinion poll asking respondents to choose from a list of France’s principal adversaries in the world, 31% pointed to the United States, ranking it the third greatest threat, after international terrorism (63%), and Islam (34%), and just ahead of small countries

12 “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” September 20, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

13 Cited in R.C. Longworth, “Allies Are Worlds Apart,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 2002.

armed with nuclear weapons (30%).¹⁴

Second, there was a reaction against America's willingness and ability to employ its formidable power without the agreement of the United Nations Security Council or deference to the expressed views of European leaders themselves, particularly those of France and Germany. In addition, foreign (as well as domestic) critics seized upon two features of the NSS: preemptive military action against hostile states and terrorist groups seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the determination to maintain primacy by dissuading the rise of great power challengers. Some even expressed the view that the U.S. itself was becoming a rogue nation.

Third, much of the European reaction was directed against the American-led effort to disarm Iraq and oust the regime of Saddam Hussein. Policy differences had existed before, but in this case the intensity of German and especially French opposition and the way in which more animus seemed directed against a democratic ally, the United States, than at the tyrannical regime in Iraq, with its record of aggressive wars against its neighbors and flagrant defiance of binding UN Security Council resolutions, suggested an entirely different attitude. Despite these criticisms, European governments were by no means unanimous in opposition, and the leaders of eight countries signed a letter by Prime Ministers Blair of Britain and Aznar of Spain that supported the United States. (The other signers represented the Czech Republic, Denmark,

14 "Sondage Ifop," *Le Figaro*, April 2, 2002,

www.ifop.com/europe/sondage/opinionf/fcemonde.asp.

Hungary, Italy, Poland and Portugal.¹⁵⁾ Shortly thereafter, ten countries of the Eastern European Vilnius group signed their own letter of support. On the eve of the Iraq war, the Bush administration could thus claim backing from the leaders of four of the six largest countries in Europe (Britain, Italy, Spain and Poland) and from the leaders of at least eighteen European countries.

This official support masked the problem that by the time the war began on March 20, 2003, European public opinion, with the partial exception of Britain and a number of Eastern European states, had become increasingly opposed to the use of force against Iraq. Between July 2002 and March 2003, there was a strongly adverse shift in European attitudes toward the United States. In Germany, for example, where 61% of the public had held a favorable view of the U.S. versus 34% unfavorable, the numbers shifted to just 25% favorable and 71% unfavorable. In France there was a similar swing, from a favorable 63% vs. 34% unfavorable to a negative 31% vs. 67%, and during the war, one fourth of the French public wanted Saddam to win.¹⁶ Even in Poland and Britain, where the public remained sympathetic to the United States, there was an erosion of support. Britain dropped from 75% favorable vs. 16% unfavorable, to 48% vs. 40%,

15 For the text of the letter, see, "Europe and America Must Stand United," *The Times* (London), January 30, 2003.

16 *The Economist*, June 12, 2004.

and Poland from 79% vs. 11% to 50% vs. 44%.¹⁷ These views reflected the heated political climate and often intense public opposition to the war, but even a year after the war, in March 2004, only 37% of the Germans and 38% of the French expressed a favorable view of the United States.¹⁸

European Attitudes and Structures

On both sides of the Atlantic, it has become commonplace to depict “Europe” as a single entity with shared attitudes and policy predispositions increasingly at odds with those of the United States. This has been apparent in the words of European critics of America, as well as in the complaints by American critics of Europe. But Europe is not monolithic, as evident not only on controversial foreign policy issues, but on wider questions of European unity and on whether an enlarged and increasingly institutionalized EU should plot its course as a counterweight to the United States or in partnership with it. Britain and France have often been at odds over these issues, but other cleavages exist as well. The smaller member countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Portugal) have differed with the largest ones (Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Spain) over the extent to which

17 Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, cited in “Sinking Views of the United States,” *New York Times*. March 23, 2003.

18 See “A Year After the Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists,” Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for People & the Press, March 16, 2004, www.people-press.org.

decision making authority within the EU should be based on the size of each state. And, historically, there have often been disagreements between those who seek a truly federal United States of Europe versus those insisting on limiting the transfer of sovereignty. These internal differences limit the extent to which Europe can take on an adversarial role vis-a-vis America. Nonetheless, there *are* commonalities that transcend the EU's internal divisions.

Even countries that sided with the U.S. on the use of force in Iraq and that favor a close Atlantic partnership see multilateral institutions in a more favorable light than does Washington. On support for the Kyoto Treaty, the International Criminal Court, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the role of the United Nations as a fundamental source of international legitimacy, European policymakers and publics mostly agree. These shared views also exist on sensitive cultural and lifestyle issues. One in particular is the death penalty, where European governments now uniformly oppose capital punishment, though popular attitudes have sometimes lagged behind. Countries applying for EU membership are required to have abolished the death penalty, and the issue has become a source of friction with the United States.

Europe's receptivity to multilateralism and to international institutions has been shaped by experiences of the past half-century in which the continental countries have finally transcended centuries of conflict and war. Together, they have achieved steadily expanding cooperation and integration, the codification of agreed rules and procedures, and the transfer of previously sovereign state powers to the EU. As a consequence, Europeans tend to draw lessons from their specific regional experience and transpose these to a global level.

This perspective can create tensions with the United States, as does a structural trait of the EU itself. As the EU's original institutions (the European Coal and Steel Community,

followed by the Common Market and European Community) expanded from six member states (France Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries) to nine, then twelve, fifteen, and then twenty-five, agreement on common European policies has become an ever more cumbersome task.

Though provision for decision by weighted majorities has steadily increased, unanimity is still required on the most important issues, including foreign and defense policy. Thus, when the EU does manage to overcome coordination problems and succeed in hammering out common positions on specific issues, the policy stance often becomes inflexible. As a result, negotiations between Europe and the United States become fraught with difficulty, since the opportunities for compromise and adjustment that would ordinarily exist between two large countries, each with its own central authority, are much less likely to be available on the European side.

Two other structural problems create obstacles to cooperation. One is reflected in a widely quoted comment attributed to Henry Kissinger, “When I want to call Europe, whom do I call.?”¹⁹ In some instances, the EU does have a single individual empowered to negotiate on its behalf, and the constitutional treaty agreed upon in 2004 addresses this problem by providing for a President and a single representative for foreign policy. Nonetheless, it often remains difficult for the EU member countries to reach effective agreement with outside actors. Another difficulty is political as well as structural. In establishing their common identity, European states face a temptation to do so by defining their own position as distinct from that of the United

¹⁹ According to a close associate of Henry Kissinger, Peter Rodman, neither he nor Kissinger have any recollection of the former Secretary of State having written or said this. Conversation with the author.

States. This creates an incentive for disagreement almost regardless of the substance of the issue at hand.

Then there remains the disparity of power. The disproportion between the capacities of the United States and those of the individual European countries is so great that the latter often embrace multilateral institutions and rules as a means of limiting their superpower ally's freedom of maneuver. This impulse is intrinsic to disparities of size and influence, regardless of specific policies. Indeed, a former French foreign minister once observed that were France to possess the kind of power the U.S. now enjoys, Paris would be even more cavalier in its exercise. The power disparity also contributes to a free-rider problem. Achievements such as security represent a form of collective or public goods for all the countries of the alliance, in the sense that they are able to benefit from it whether or not the Europeans contribute. As Michael Mandelbaum has noted, peace in Europe, nuclear nonproliferation and access to Persian Gulf oil are examples of international public goods.²⁰ Not surprisingly, there is a temptation to evade responsibility because participants know that the U.S. is likely to pay the cost of dealing with potential threats (including economic ones), whether or not they contribute.

Note, however, that this kind of tension has been a feature of long standing and that it existed well before the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower. A graphic example of free riding, and of the accompanying buck-passing, in which a costly or dangerous task is avoided, whether through inaction or deliberate

20 Michael Mandelbaum, "The Inadequacy of American Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 5 (September/October 2002): 66.

evasion, was for many years evident in French policy toward terrorist groups operating in Europe. During much of the 1970s and 1980s, Paris applied the “sanctuary doctrine,” in tolerating the presence of terrorist groups provided they did not carry out operations against French interests.²¹ An egregious case of this behavior took place following the 1977 arrest in Paris of Daoud Oudeh, known as Abu Daoud, a founder of the Palestinian terrorist group, Black September. His group had been responsible for the Munich Olympic massacre of Israeli athletes in 1972 and for the murder of the American ambassador to Sudan, Cleo Noel, in 1973. Ignoring extradition requests from Israel and Germany, the government of President Valery Giscard d’Estaing instead deported him to Algeria.²² During the 1980s and 90s, however, as the groups became more violent and in some instances took actions within France, the policy began to break down and intelligence cooperation with the United States and other European countries significantly improved.

Policy Conflicts

On issues large and small, European and American differences have multiplied, and they are by no means confined to foreign policy. In trade policy, for example, there have been continual frictions. As a case in point, the EU filed a complaint against the U.S. in the World Trade Organization, challenging a policy that allows major American corporations to establish

21 Jonathan Stevenson, “How Europe and America Defend Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March/April 2003): 75-90 at 77.

22 *New York Times*, August 6, 1981.

foreign subsidiaries in tax havens as a means of reducing taxes on exports. The WTO ruled against the American policy and until such time as U.S. legislation is changed, the judgment allows the EU to impose \$4 billion in punitive tariffs as compensation. Conversely, in May 2003, the United States and twelve other countries, including Argentina, Canada, Egypt, Mexico and Chile, filed suit against the EU for its five-year moratorium that had blocked exports of genetically modified (GM) agricultural products, even though no scientific evidence of health risks has been found.

The U.S. Special Trade Representative, Robert Zoellick, as well as President Bush, criticized European policies for causing unwarranted fears in famine stricken African countries that have a pressing need for food aid as well as for the improved yields of these crops. In turn, European officials faulted the U.S. for refusing to join 100 other countries in ratifying the Convention on Biological Diversity, or the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an agreement for importers and exporters of genetically modified crops.²³ However, the Protocol itself was drafted in the face of U.S. objections, because it allowed importing countries to reject GM crops even without scientific evidence of risk, and American officials regarded its provisions as unduly restrictive.²⁴ Ironically, as long as GM crops face these obstacles, U.S. farmers producing for

23 Elizabeth Becker, "U.S. Contests Europe's Ban on Some Food," *New York Times*, May 14, 2003, and "Bush Decries Europe's Biotech Policies," *Washington Post*, May 22, 2003.

24 On the controversy surrounding early steps toward what became the Cartagena Protocol, see Robert Paarlberg, "The Eagle and the Global Environment," in Lieber, *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the 21st Century* (NY: Prentice-Hall and the Woodrow Wilson

certain export markets have had to adopt elaborate measures to avoid mixing non-GM seeds with the GM variants.

European critics of the U.S. sometimes convey the impression that the EU countries are far more altruistic and cooperative in their global relationships and in helping other countries to develop. However, the EU, along with America and Japan, shares a pattern of protecting domestic agriculture in ways that are harmful not only to consumers and taxpayers, but also to agricultural exporters in the developing world who find it harder to compete against these subsidized products. Indeed, the EU's agricultural protectionism has been especially egregious (a tribute to the political effectiveness of French farmers), and Oxfam, the international aid organization, reports that the EU has higher barriers to imports from the developing world than any other large industrial economy.²⁵ Altogether, the EU farm subsidy programs amount to some \$88 billion per year and those of the U.S. total \$52 billion.²⁶

On many of these issues, the domestic structure of European economies and political systems makes cooperation harder, not only with the United States but with other countries as well. Historically high levels of unemployment, demographic pressures from an aging population, and rising costs to maintain generous social services and pension benefits, coupled with relatively higher taxes and rigidities in the mobility of labor and in regulatory policies, tend

International center for Scholars, 2002), pp. 333-340.

25 "Oxfam Brands EU Bloc as Most Protectionist," *Financial Times*, April 10, 2002.

26 *The Economist*, August 16, 20003, p. 65.

to undercut Europe's competitiveness with America and Asia. These conditions foster restrictive economic and trade policies and thus greater friction with the U.S. and others. In addition, European parliamentary systems, with the exception of Britain, mostly produce coalition governments that are constrained by the demands of their component groups.

American Exceptionalism

The sources of transatlantic conflict are evident on the American side as well. The U.S. political system can complicate the efforts of administrations of either party to implement coherent foreign policy strategies and to bargain pragmatically with others. At times, divided government, in which the opposition party controls one or both houses of the Congress has been a feature of contemporary political life. Under those circumstances, a president may have to compromise on much of his foreign policy agenda, especially on appropriations, confirmation of appointees, treaty ratification, trade policy and economic sanctions. For example, the Clinton administration, after its first two years in office, had to deal with a Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by the formidable Jesse Helms who saw the world in very different terms. As a result, administration policies on such issues as arms control, trade, the environment and multilateral institutions were less consistent with European preferences than might otherwise have been the case.

Even when the executive and legislative branches of government are controlled by the same party, serious problems in foreign policy making often exist. For example, legislation in response to the WTO ruling on corporate foreign sales corporations was repeatedly delayed by partisan procedural disputes in the Congress. The structure of Congress also tends to magnify

protectionist pressures, as evident for example in the web of subsidies and other barriers to import competition for domestic producers of steel, sugar and cotton.

American exceptionalism, the unique character of the ethos, society and culture in the United States, also sets this country apart from Europe. For nearly two centuries, observers of America, from Alexis de Tocqueville writing in the 1830s to contemporary social scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, have identified fundamental factors shaping the American character. These include the absence of a feudal past, a “nonconformist” religious tradition, and the manner in which, during the 19th Century, the legacy of the American Revolution evolved into a liberalism which emphasized individualism and anti-statism. An early 20th Century American author, Mark Sullivan, provided a similar list of the country’s “distinctive characteristics.” These included individual freedom of opportunity, zeal for universal education, faith in representative democracy, adaptability, responsiveness to idealism and “independence of spirit.”²⁷ As Lipset later observed, Americans prefer a competitive, individualist society with equality of opportunity and effective but weak government.²⁸ In contemporary terms, these traits often take on a form almost guaranteed to antagonize European elites who, in the words of Walter Russell Mead, find American society “too unilateralist, too religious, too warlike, too

27 Mark Sullivan, *Our Times, 1900-1925* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1935), a six volume survey of national life, quoted in Robert J. Samuelson, “The American Edge,” *Washington Post*, January 9, 2003.

28 Seymour Martin Lipset, “Still the Exceptional Nation?” *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (Winter 2000): 31-45, at 45.

laissez faire, too fond of guns and the death penalty, and too addicted to simple solutions for complex problems.”²⁹

These attitudes are reflected in differing understandings about modern society and world affairs. In foreign policy, the most salient of these competing notions concerns nationalism and the use of force. Robert Kagan, David Brooks, Walter Russell Mead and others have written eloquently about the diverging 20th century experiences of Europeans and Americans.³⁰ For Europeans, nationalism brought repeated and catastrophic wars, and the use of force did not prevent most of their societies from being ravaged by war. By contrast, with the exception of the Civil War and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans have been largely insulated from such devastation, and 20th century military campaigns, with the exception of Vietnam, have been mostly successful as well as often laudable in moral terms. Intervention against Germany in World War One, liberation of Western Europe from Nazi occupation in World War Two, defense of Europe from Stalin and his successors during the Cold War, and liberation of Kuwait are among the major cases, but even a number of recent smaller scale interventions (Panama, Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti) can be seen in a positive light.

Contrasting World War Two experiences also help to explain differences between Britain and the continental Europeans. Virtually all the European powers were either defeated and

29 Walter Russell Mead, “The Case Against Europe,” *Atlantic Monthly*, April 2002, p. 26.

30 E.g., Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Brooks, “Among the Bourgeoisophobes,” *Weekly Standard*, April 6, 2002; Mead, *Ibid.*

occupied by Nazi Germany in the early years of the war, or in the case of the Axis powers (Germany, Austria, Italy), ultimately defeated and occupied by the allies. By contrast, England managed to stand alone after the fall of France in 1940 and ultimately emerged at the end of the war with America and the Soviet Union as one of the victorious Big Three allies. Britain did share the 1956 Suez debacle with France, but it did not suffer the kind of disastrous colonial wars that Paris fought in Indochina and Algeria from 1946 to 1962. These experiences help to explain why Britain delayed so long in seeking Common Market entry and why it has typically been the least willing among EU member countries to relinquish sovereignty.³¹

II. SOURCES OF SOLIDARITY

Based on the above wide-ranging causes for a parting of ways – end of the Cold War, differences of structure, attitude, experience and policy – it would seem logical to begin writing the epitaph for the European-American relationship. Indeed, not a few students of the subject have been doing exactly that. Nonetheless, the conclusion is almost certainly mistaken. Instead, practical experience not only of the Cold War decades, but of the years since 1989 suggests an entirely different lesson. The EU's capacity in the realm of foreign policy and defense remains limited, and on issues including proliferation, terrorism, international trade, financial stability, the environment, foreign aid and disease the evidence again and again is that there simply is no alternative to cooperation with the United States. Overall, the sources of Atlantic solidarity are

31 For elaboration on this theme, see Lieber, *British Politics and European Unity: Parties, Elites and Pressure Groups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 16-27.

grounded in the deep structure of the world in which Europe and America live, and they are at least as durable as the stubborn problems the Western world continues to face.

Europe in the International System

European aspirations are often evident in the rhetoric of its leaders. By addressing the outside world as though the European experience of the past half century was somehow universal, they imply the Kantian categorical imperative, “Act as if the maxim from which you act were to become through your will a universal law.”³² But Latin America (*viz.* Cuba and Columbia), East Asia (North Korea), and South Asia (Kashmir, Pakistan, India) are not well understood through the EU lense, and even less is this optic useful in viewing the brutal realities of the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, terrorism, al-Qaeda, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), let alone Africa (Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast). The precepts and practices that now prevail on the continent, especially peace, domestic stability, the rule of law, cooperation, the transcending of national sovereignty, and agreed means for nonviolent resolution of disputes, are noble as ideals but often beleaguered or irrelevant in troubled parts of the world. Indeed, insofar as portions of the Balkans are concerned, even Europe itself does not enjoy uniform cooperation, tranquility and the rule of law.

At the international level, the basic reality remains that of *anarchy*, meaning the absence of effective and binding sovereign authority above the level of the state. In other words, there is no government of governments. This feature has been repeatedly described by contemporary

32 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

scholars as well as in the classic writing of Thucydides and later in the work of thinkers such as Machiavelli and Hobbes. The anarchy problem gives rise to security anxieties of states, referred to by realist scholars as a *self-help* system, in which states fear for their security and are ultimately dependent on their own efforts. This in turn leads to a *security dilemma*, as states' efforts to provide for their own security tend to make other states feel insecure. This insecurity has been neatly expressed by John Mearsheimer, who has observed that, ". . . because there is no higher authority to come to their rescue when they dial 911, states cannot depend on others for their own security."³³

Of course, there exist important realms in which multilateral institutions and even international law do operate successfully. Examples abound in economics, trade, communications, air and sea travel, health and other areas. But on the most urgent and lethal dangers, existing law and institutions as well as the United Nations itself are frequently without the capacity or political will to act. Evidence from the past several decades provides numerous examples: Iraq's invasions of Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990, Saddam Hussein's flagrant defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, North Korea's violations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons (also in contradiction of the NPT); contraband trade by countries knowingly engaged in violating UN sanctions regimes; state complicity in drug-running, money laundering and terrorism; and the desperate problems created for their own populations and their

33 John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 33.

neighbors by failed states (as in the Congo, Liberia, Sudan and elsewhere.)

In cases such as these, the use of state power and of military force by the United States or by other countries that have the ability to act is often the *sine qua non*. For example in the Kuwait crisis of 1990-91, without American leadership, UN Security Council Resolutions and sanctions would have been unable to prevent Iraq's incorporation of that UN member state as Iraq's nineteenth province. In the case of Bosnia, weapons embargoes, Security Council resolutions, the creation of UN-protected "safe areas," and European intervention under UN auspices proved ineffective in halting murderous ethnic violence. Only after three years and 200,000 dead, did the United States finally take the lead in ending the killing there.

Impressive as it is, the EU's experience of cooperation, law and institution building as a means to end conflict and war does not by itself explain how Europe itself managed to reach its present state. While the miracle of Franco-German rapprochement and European unity had multiple causes, the central factors in ending three centuries of balance of power rivalry in Western and Central Europe included World War Two, the Cold War and the role of the United States. Among these were the devastating military defeat of Germany and the Axis powers, which discredited extreme and aggressive nationalism; the occupation of Germany and Italy by U.S. and allied forces; the threat posed by the Soviet Union, which required a large American military presence for the purposes of deterrence and defense; and the need for states that had previously been rivals (France, Germany, Britain, Italy, and others) to cooperate within the American-led NATO alliance. World War Two and the Cold War were thus critical factors in creating the conditions for European unity, and the American security umbrella had the effect of solving the anarchy problem on a regional basis. As a result, European states no longer needed

to fear or balance against one another. Of course, the ideals, passions, energy and institutions that went into creating the EU were necessary conditions, but by themselves they would not have been sufficient. The relevant comparison can be found a generation earlier in the aftermath of World War One. Then too, there was revulsion against the destruction and carnage of war, widespread expression of idealistic hopes for doing away with armed conflict, the creation of new institutions, most notably the League of Nations in 1919, as well as solemn international agreements such as the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact to outlaw war. But none of these prevented the downward spiral that saw Hitler and the Nazis take power in Germany and unleash the events that led to World War Two with its catastrophic destruction and ultimate horror of the Holocaust.

Limits of EU Foreign and Defense Policy

With the enlargement and deepening of the EU, efforts to develop a truly European foreign and defense policy have intensified. This is not altogether new. Since at least the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the EU countries have been formally committed to a common foreign policy and since 1999 to important elements of a shared defense policy. Yet Europe's quest for a common foreign policy has delivered quite limited results, and progress toward a European defense has proved even more elusive. This lack of achievement is no mere failure of policy or leadership. Instead, the obstacles are deep-seated and are unlikely to be overcome for the foreseeable future. They stem from two fundamental European deficits: the inability to reach internal political agreement and the incapacity to mount a common defense even if such agreement did exist.

Foreign and defense policies exist in a sphere of high politics and national sovereignty in

which states are reluctant to relinquish autonomy. Decisions about the use of force, with their life and death implications, are not readily delegated. Indeed, for all its insistence on a European identity separate from America, France has been the most assertive of its own foreign policy autonomy, even when this contradicts the positions of its European partners. British leaders, too, have long been outspoken on not ceding control of foreign policy, considering it a core prerogative of sovereignty.

Prior to the 2004 signing of the constitutional treaty, the EU had not just one but two senior foreign policy representatives empowered to speak on its behalf. One of these, Chris Patten, was a representative of the Commission, the other, Javier Solana, a spokesman for the European Council, on which the member governments sit. Yet in the immediate aftermath of September 11th, it was neither of these figures, but the individual leaders of Britain, France, Spain and Germany who flew to Washington in order to meet with President Bush at a time of grave crisis. Not surprisingly, the EU constitution provides for a single individual with authority to represent Europe as a whole in foreign policy, yet on the most important policy matters the limits of both will and capability are certain to persist.

Another serious obstacle to a common EU foreign policy is that differences among the member countries have often been at least as great as those between Europe and the United States. On Iraq, for example, governments were deeply divided. Most notably, Britain under Prime Minister Tony Blair aligned itself closely with the Bush administration and made a major troop commitment to the coalition. By contrast, France under Jacques Chirac not only joined with Germany in leading European opposition to the use of force, but sought to organize a worldwide campaign against United States policy.

Political differences such as these are not new. For example, in 1991, responding to the increasing turmoil in Yugoslavia and the unwillingness of the United States to intervene in another crisis in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, the president of the European Council, foreign minister Jacques Poos of Luxembourg, proclaimed that "the age of Europe has dawned."³⁴ But a lack of political agreement and of capability left the EU unable to act, thus compounding Yugoslavia's tragedy. Kosovo was another case in point, with Britain more assertive than the United States in advocating the use of force, while Greece (historically sympathetic to the Serbs) opposed the action.

The expansion of the EU widens these differences even as it adds to the number of countries supportive of close ties with the United States. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and especially Poland have painful historical memories of their treatment at the hands of their powerful neighbors, Germany and Russia, and they have good reason to look to the United States for credible security guarantees. The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have even stronger motivation. After signing a statement supporting the U.S. use of force against Iraq, these countries found themselves the target of intense pressure from France. President Chirac uttered the condescending words, "Ce n'est pas tres bien eleve,"³⁵ ("This does not show good upbringing,") and implied that East European dissent could adversely affect their pending EU membership. As another example, Lithuania complained that France had failed to consult it

34 Quoted in Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: Free Press, 1999), p. 109.

35 *New York Times*, February 23, 2003.

during delicate EU negotiations over Russian transit access to the territorial enclave of Kaliningrad.³⁶

These incidents illustrate a larger point about the conduct not only of France but of other leading member states of the EU. For all their rhetorical embrace of European solidarity, fidelity to multilateralism, and commitment to international institutions and laws, when they believe their national interests are at stake they are capable of acting unilaterally, regardless of these stated principles. France's protection of its agricultural interests, its refusal to allow the import of British beef despite EU clearance, its arm-twisting of the East Europeans, and its lax position on Iraqi sanctions in the years from 1992 to 2001 (not entirely unrelated to Iraq's large debts for purchases of French arms) are cases in point. But France is not alone, and whether in dealing with terrorism, national security, powerful domestic lobbies, or sensitive matters of national sovereignty. Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and others have been capable of acting with lesser regard for lofty principles.³⁷ Moreover, in the face of stubborn economic problems, including lagging growth rates and historically high levels of unemployment, France and Germany, as well

36 "Lithuania: Officials Say Russia Stalling on Kaliningrad Transit Talks," Prague: Radio Free Europe, March 31, 2003. www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/03/31032003155817.asp. As a result of World War Two, the Baltic port of Kaliningrad (formerly Breslau and part of Germany) became Russian territory. However, it lies between Lithuania and Poland, and Russian access requires transit through Lithuania.

37 Robert Jervis makes a similar point in "The Compulsive Empire," *Foreign Policy*, No. 137, July/August 2003: 83-87.

as a number of other smaller countries have defied the EU's limit on domestic budget deficits. These countries have incurred deficits that break the EU- imposed ceiling of 3% of gross domestic product (GDP). Indeed, Germany exceeded that limit in the years from 2002 through 2004, even though its own government had played a major role in writing the rules for the EU's "stability pact," created to coincide with adoption of the Euro.

Even if the countries of the EU were to find themselves in complete policy agreement and to relinquish sovereignty concerns, their incapacity remains a stubborn obstacle to the emergence of a credible European defense. In the aftermath of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States devotes more than \$400 billion annually to defense. In absolute terms this dwarfs the spending of all likely competitors combined, yet it amounts to just 4% of GDP, a figure well below the 6.6% peak in the mid-1980s during the Reagan buildup and much less than the double digit levels of the early Cold War years. In contrast, the 25 countries of the EU spend just 55% of the U.S. figure,³⁸ yet even that amount gives them far less capability because the effort is divided among separate national defense budgets and much is wasted in duplication.

Europe deploys approximately 50 percent more troops than the United States, yet its large forces (many of them reliant on conscripts) are mostly more suited to traditional land warfare than to the specialized foreign interventions and high-technology weaponry characteristic of 21st century conflict. Until recently, the capabilities have remained remarkably limited. For example, in the Kosovo crisis of 1999, despite the Europeans having two million

38 Data from "The European Defense Agency: Will It Make a Difference," *Strategic Comments*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Vol. 10, Issue 5, June 2004.

men and women in uniform, it took “an heroic effort” (in the words of the British Foreign Secretary) merely to deploy 2 percent of them as part of a peacekeeping force.³⁹ In contrast, as manifested in a series of stunningly successful military campaigns (Kuwait, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq), the U.S. has capabilities that no other country can match.

In material terms, the EU does have the ability to organize a significant and effective defense. The creation of a new European Defense Agency (EDA) for the purpose of coordinating military research and spending reflects the aspiration to improve capabilities and prepare for global security threats. Nonetheless, the EDA is a very modest undertaking and the structure of the EU’s political institutions, differences among its twenty-five member countries, demographic and financial constraints, and the weight of competing budget priorities largely work against fundamental change. As evidence of these limitations and despite recent efforts, the Europeans still have fewer than 100,000 troops available for deployment abroad among their 1.5 million regular soldiers available for NATO use.⁴⁰

As if these were not sufficient obstacles to Europe's going it alone, there remains the problem of fragmented European defense industries: the larger states seek to protect their own corporate champions while often excluding more efficient foreign producers. Even when

39 British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, Queen's speech debate, House of Commons, London, 22 November 1999, New York: British Information Service, PressReleases@newyork.mail.fco.gov.uk.

40 Data cited in *The Economist* (London), July 3, 2004, p. 41.

Europeans have cooperated acquire military equipment, they often face disproportionate costs or other limitations. For example, a consortium of European countries is building the “Galileo” system of space satellites for its own global positioning system (G.P.S.). Though this gives them a capability of their own, it does so at a cost of more than three billion dollars and largely duplicates what is already available from the United States. As another example, seven European countries (Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain and Turkey) finally agreed in May 2003 to purchase 180 large military transport planes from the European aerospace consortium, Airbus, at a cost of \$24 billion. In opting for European manufacture rather than buying existing and less costly American models, they purchased an aircraft (the A400M) that does not yet exist and the initial delivery of which will not begin until the year 2009. Moreover, as another example of added costs in buying European, the \$3.6 billion contract to build the engines for this aircraft went to a French-British consortium, even though a bid by an American manufacturer, Pratt & Whitney, was 20% less.⁴¹

Even with the new transport plane and a new Meteor air-to-air missile system being developed by an Anglo-French consortium,⁴² Europe will remain far behind the United States in

41 John Tagliabue, “Airbus’s Military Jet Gets a Boost,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 28, 2003.

42 Meteor is being developed by a consortium of the French company Matra and British Aerospace, in a collaborative venture with Germany, Italy, and Spain. The comparable American weapon, AMRAAM, is produced by Raytheon. See David Cracknell, "Cohen Begg Britain Not to Purchase Euro Missile," *Sunday Telegraph* (London), May 14, 2000; and British

air warfare capabilities. Though the quality of European weaponry in air-to-air and air-to-ground systems actually meets or exceeds that of the U.S., air superiority requires the integration of the most modern high-performance aircraft and avionics, weapons systems, surveillance, satellites, real-time intelligence, communications, targeting information, sophisticated radar, and battle-management systems. In the absence of this complete package, the impact of any one component is diminished.

The types of military systems required for Europe to achieve effective modern capabilities demand not only a much more rational use of existing funds, but a higher level of funding altogether. Although France spends 2.6 percent of GDP on defense and Britain 2.5%, Germany, the European country with the largest population and economy, spends less than 1.5 percent.⁴³ Moreover, the imperatives of German economic modernization, high unemployment, budget deficits, an aging population and the political dynamics of coalition government, as well as cultural and historical factors, create pressures for lower rather than higher defense spending.

Elsewhere in Europe, comparable political, economic and societal constraints also tend to cause downward pressure on defense budgets. The consequences are evident in the inability of the Europeans to create an effective Rapid Reaction Force. The idea for such a body was conceived in 1999, in the aftermath of the American-led Kosovo action, and in reaction to

Embassy press release, "Defence Procurement: The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence," May 16, 2000 (<http://www.BritainUSA.com>).

43 Data for 2001 from *The Military Balance, 2002-2003* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies and Oxford University Press, October 2002).

Europe's difficulties (with the partial exception of Britain) in contributing either to the modern precision air war there or to a prospective land force intervention. European governments, led by France and Britain, sought to create by 2003 a force of 60,000 troops capable of being deployed within 60 days and sustained in action for up to one year. This force was to be available for action in cases where NATO opted not to intervene, and to carry out the so-called Petersberg tasks – largely humanitarian missions. However, even this capacity, directed mainly at peace-keeping not the much more difficult requirement of peace-making, remained at least temporarily out of reach. The Europeans lacked not only the overall number of 180,000 designated troops (required for training and rotation purposes, in order to sustain the 60,000 member force in the field), but also the transportation, surveillance systems, precision guided weapons and other modern equipment that such a force would require.⁴⁴

Given its population, modern technology and wealth, the EU does possess certain kinds of military potential. Britain maintains well-trained forces available for deployment in combat outside Europe, and its military personnel played active roles in the 1991 war to oust Iraq from Kuwait and again in the 2003 campaign to defeat Saddam Hussein. British aircraft also took part in the Bosnia and Kosovo campaigns of 1995 and 1999, and in enforcing the no-fly zones in Northern and Southern Iraq (1991-2003). France has somewhat less capacity, but has intervened periodically in Africa in times of chaos or civil war, as in Ivory Coast and the Congo. Moreover, the EU took a small practical step in March 2003, when it assumed command of what had been a NATO peacekeeping mission in Macedonia and deployed slightly more than 300 troops there in

44 “Ready, or Not: Europe’s not-so-rapid-reaction force,” *Economist*, May 24, 2003.

a non-combat role. Nonetheless, the achievement of a European military body in the foreseeable future will fall well short of the robust, independent force originally envisaged and the EU will remain without the military component of a true world power.

American Capabilities and European Insecurity

Given its limitations in foreign and defense policy, Europe has fundamental reason to rely upon America as a hedge against future threats. Though Russia appears considerably less chaotic than in the immediate aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union, even its future behavior cannot be assured. Important parts of the old USSR remain troubled and the long term stability of the central Asian republics (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan), the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), and the large East European Republics (Ukraine, Belarus) appears far from predictable. Elsewhere, instability throughout parts of the former Yugoslavia, internal problems within the countries of the southern Mediterranean, and dangers stemming from the Middle East and Persian Gulf all represent potential risks. Upheaval along the European continent's eastern or southern periphery, whether from economic collapse, ethnic conflict, or interstate war, could send waves of refugees flooding into Europe.

As evident in the cases of Pakistan, Iran and North Korea, the actual or potential diffusion of weapons of mass destruction, including missile technology and nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, also poses significant dangers for Europe. While these threats are more diffuse and conjectural than the Soviet threat during the Cold War, they are not negligible and they provide a reason for European countries to retain their alliance with the United States as a form of insurance. Consistent with these concerns, the EU heads of state and government in

December 2003 endorsed a European Security Strategy based on a proposal by Javier Solana, their High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, for facing five security threats: terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflict, failed states and organized crime. Although the approval by the European Council deleted a reference in the original Solana strategy paper implying support for the preemptive use of force, it did retain language referring to robust intervention, preventive engagement and a crucial role for the United States (“acting together, the EU and the U.S. can be a formidable force for good in the world.”)⁴⁵

Closely connected to Europe's need for an American security partnership is the fact of U.S. primacy. Only the United States possesses the means to project power abroad in a decisive and compelling manner. Since the end of the Cold War, American might has been apparent both when it was deployed (as in Kuwait, Bosnia in 1995, Kosovo 1999, Afghanistan 2002, Iraq 2003) and when it was absent (Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia prior to 1995). With time, the relative margin of U.S. power vis-a-vis other actors appears to be increasing rather than decreasing. Not only does the United States possess the ability to move large forces by sea and

45 The European Council approval took place on December 12, 2003. See also Fraser Cameron, “The EU’s Security Strategy,” *Internationale Politik: Transatlantic Edition*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 16-24; and the text of the European Security Strategy, pp. 100-116. Also Peter van Ham, “Europe Gets Real: The New Security Strategy Shows the EU’s Geopolitical Maturity,” *AICGS Advisor*, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, January 9, 2004. For analysis of the Solana paper, see John Van Oudenaren, “The Solana Security Paper,” AICGS, June 2003, www.aicgs.org/c/solana.shtml.

air across great distances on a timely basis, but it also enjoys wide advantages in precision-guided munitions, stealth technology, satellite communication, command and control, and the whole panoply of forces needed to prevail in the air and on the modern battlefield, even as it minimizes casualties to its own troops.

Despite the unusually harsh and vindictive rhetoric leading up to the Iraq war in 2003, even those governments most adamant in their criticisms of Washington still took pains to cite the overriding importance of the American security tie. Thus Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer observed, "As anyone with any sense of history realizes, the transatlantic relationship is the crucial cornerstone of global security, of peace and stability not just in Europe, not just in the United States, but around the whole world. To call this cornerstone into question would be worse than folly."⁴⁶ Similarly, just one week after the start of the Iraq war, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, who had been the most strident critic of the United States, nonetheless proclaimed that, "Because they share common values, the U.S. and France will reestablish close cooperation in complete solidarity."⁴⁷ The German defense minister was even more direct in observing that there could be no security in and for Europe without

46 Speech to the Bundestag on transatlantic relations, quoted in German Information Center, *The Week in Germany*, July 12, 2002, www.germany-info.org.

47 *New York Times*, March 28, 2003.

America.⁴⁸ And despite continuing tensions in the year after the Iraq War, Foreign Minister Fischer was explicit in expressing a sense of the common threat to regional and global security from “destructive jihadist terrorism with its totalitarian ideology.”⁴⁹

In this context, the countries of the EU do have a security contribution to make, particularly in peacekeeping, policing and nation-building, tasks for which U.S. forces have often been less trained and adept. Such activity takes the form of cooperation with NATO as the organization by far the best suited for coordinating large-scale multinational engagements. EU military operations have been taking place in the Balkans, with the EU forces (using NATO assets) progressively taking on full authority in Bosnia.

Shared Interests and Values

Not only do security imperatives underpin the European-American connection, but despite disparaging words hurled across the Atlantic, so too do shared interests and values. Euro-American economic relations are simultaneously cooperative and competitive. They are competitive in their rivalry for export markets and commercial advantage, but they remain cooperative insofar as all parties share a deep interest in preserving the successful functioning of existing arrangements for trade, investment, financial flows, and the international economic

48 Peter Struck, German Minister of Defense, quoted in *The Week in Germany*, May 23, 2003, www.info-germany.org.

49 Speech by Joschka Fischer, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the 40th Munich Conference on Security Policy Munich, February 7, 2004, reprinted in www.germany-info.org.

institutions that sustain them. Europe and the United States find themselves needing to cooperate through the International Monetary Fund, Group of Seven (G-7), WTO, and other groupings, not only to resolve mutual problems, but to cope with global financial and economic dangers. Europe and the United States are one another's top trading partner, and they have a huge stake in each other's economic health, as demonstrated by vast two-way flows of investment and transatlantic mergers in many industries.

Shared experiences and values complement these material interests. Although the Western leaders who founded the great postwar institutions have passed from the scene and the events of the Cold War are a rapidly receding memory, other factors tend to sustain cooperation among policy elites, including easy familiarity with each other's culture and, in the case of the Europeans, a broad knowledge of American English. The information revolution, the internet and the media have also fostered increasing communication and contact across a wide range of activities. To be sure, not all these contacts are positive, as reflected in complaints about mass culture, "Disneyfied" entertainment, McDonald's, and the like. Resentment about American predominance in these spheres is very real, but complaints have been expressed in some form throughout the past half-century, often as much by cultural critics in America as those in Europe. Moreover at the popular level, attraction to or at least fascination with American mass culture, clothing styles, music, entertainment, leisure, and language has spread throughout Europe, especially among younger generations.

Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that Europe and the United States continue to share basic values including liberal democracy, open economies (albeit in different variations), the rule of law, the dignity of the individual, and Western notions of morality and

rationality. This underlying commonality remains fundamental, even (or especially) in an era of globalization. Regardless of highly publicized differences, Europe and America continue to have far more in common with each other than with any other regions of the world.

III. RADICAL CHANGE?

Could Europe and the United States nonetheless one day come to an irreversible parting of the ways and even become great power antagonists? Momentous events often arrive by surprise, so the question deserves attention. In essence, a fundamental rupture would require the combination of two elements. One of these is *capability*, the capacity of Europe to act as a great power opponent of the U.S. The other is *will* - i.e., whether Europeans or Americans desire this to happen and seek to bring it about. Despite the rhetoric of conflict, neither of these elements now exists nor seems likely, but under what conditions could they ultimately occur?

In terms of capability, the EU would need to achieve an unprecedented breakthrough in which member countries did not just talk about relinquishing fundamental political sovereignty, but actually did so. A true European federation, a United States of Europe, would possess the institutional prerequisites for acting as a single great power in defense and foreign policy. It would also need to make the politically difficult decision to allocate scarce resources in order to build a powerful military and to choose rivalry rather than partnership with the U.S. Could this ever take place? Theoretically, yes, though the likelihood remains remote. Some scholars of international relations and history argue that reaction to America's extraordinary predominance will lead to such an outcome, but for the combination of reasons cited above, there is little reason to anticipate such a transformation.

Motivation and will also are key. Were the Europeans to find themselves facing some unprecedented threat to their survival in circumstance where the United States was no longer able or willing to provide security, then the political impetus for Europe to provide its own security could emerge. On the other hand, the alternative of EU political fragmentation or collapse cannot be ruled out either. By itself, a growing European-American divergence in values and beliefs of the kind to which Robert Kagan and others have pointed is unlikely to sustain this kind of change. Instead, a steadily worsening climate of political dispute that finally reached a breaking point on both sides of the Atlantic would have to occur, and with it a collapse either in the will or ability of the United States to sustain its own world role.

CONCLUSION: EXPLAINING THE LACK OF BALANCING

Just as it has been said that Britain and America are two countries divided by a common language, so it is tempting to add that Europe and the U.S. are divided by their shared history, interests and values. Though some European leaders, most notably those of France, have proclaimed the need for Europe to counterbalance American power and indeed sought to do so over Iraq, it remains highly unlikely that any sustained balancing will take place. For the foreseeable future, Europe lacks a viable alternative. The United States is too preponderant, the countries of the EU too divided, Europe is without the means of its own defense and there is no real alternative to the security tie with the United States. At the same time, Europe does possess a comparative advantage in postwar peacekeeping and nation-building. Both Europe and the U.S. have a vital interest in the viability and institutions of the existing economic order, and only through their cooperation can they have any possibility of addressing broader world problems.

In addition, they share far more in common than appears from the cacophony of Atlantic debate.

In sum, however ardently it may be predicted, or desired, by disgruntled critics, divorce is not on the horizon.