

A COMPANION TO EUROPE SINCE 1945

Edited by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Transatlantic Relations since the End of the Cold War: Permanent Alliance or Partnership in Peril?

ROBERT HUTCHINGS

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Lord Palmerston famously remarked that Britain had no permanent allies, only permanent interests.¹ At the end of the Cold War, the question was whether the transatlantic alliance, like alliances before it, would disband with the disappearance of the threat it was formed to counter, or whether it would turn Palmerston's dictum on its head. Was the transatlantic alliance, which had already established itself as the most enduring alliance in history, still cemented by common values and interests that transcended the particular circumstances of the Cold War? Or, on the contrary, would the breakdown of transatlantic solidarity over Iraq beginning in 2002 mark the beginning of the alliance's dissolution? Would international terrorism, so dramatically manifest in the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States, provide the alliance's new *raison d'être*? Were the United States and Europe poised to renew their relationship for a new and very different set of twenty-first-century challenges, or were Cold War partners inevitably drifting apart? All those questions were still open.

When the Cold War ended, balance-of-power realists and neo-realists foresaw the inevitable collapse of the transatlantic alliance, as well as other Cold War alliances like the US–Japan pact.² Absent a unifying threat, these theorists maintained, strategic alignment would give way to strategic divergence, rivalry, and counterbalancing responses. The values and habits of the bygone era might sustain the alliance for some years, but eventually the structural changes in the international system would lead to erosion. The sense of inevitable drift was later captured in Robert Kagan's claim that "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: they agree on little and understand each other less."³

Other observers, not persuaded by such deterministic assumptions, remarked on how little had changed in US–European relations after the end of the Cold War.⁴ Far from withering away, as realists and neo-realists had predicted, NATO seemed to have gotten a new lease on life, as former Warsaw Pact members eagerly lined up to apply for membership. Liberal internationalists saw a world in which laws and values transcended balance-of-power calculations. States and their leaders, in this view, embraced extensive agendas, not ones limited to the pursuit of power or

security, and thus were animated by considerations beyond those of external threats. The international agenda after the Cold War seemed to offer new opportunities, and necessities, for transatlantic cooperation on a host of new issues.

Neo-liberal institutionalists pointed to the critical role played by international institutions in setting agendas, promoting linkages among smaller states, and encouraging coalition formation.⁵ The international system, in this view, is politically constructed rather than predetermined. Although obviously affected by post-Cold War realities, European and transatlantic institutions, as associations of democracies, have the capacity to adapt themselves to altered circumstances and new challenges. Successful adaptation was not a foregone conclusion, but neither was it foreclosed.

Competing Visions

For political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, the challenge of fashioning a new transatlantic bargain was complicated by the manner in which the Cold War ended – “not with military victory, demobilization, and celebration but with the unexpected capitulation of the other side without a shot being fired . . . The grand struggle had ended not with a bang but a whimper.”⁶ With Western institutions intact and those of the Soviet bloc fast collapsing, the impulse on both sides of the Atlantic was to engage in incremental adaptation rather than wholesale change of those institutions. It was in many ways a sensible calculation, but it tended to inhibit the kind of creativity that was needed to fashion a viable new order.

The very speed of the process had served Western interests well during the period of German unification in 1989 and 1990, in that the US and its European partners were able to present Soviet leaders with a series of *faits accomplis* that they found difficult to counter effectively. However, it also meant that the post-unification, post-Cold War security order in Europe had to be built on the fly, as it were, with little time for far-sighted judgment. In the process, American visions of a “New Atlanticism,” intended to reconcile the twin goals of European integration and a US-led transatlantic security order, collided with European efforts to build a more cohesive and assertive European Union (EU) within a “post-Yalta” security order that liberated Europe from American tutelage.

Long-standing American support for European unity, going back to the Marshall Plan and even before, was always tinged with ambivalence, and those misgivings came more clearly to the fore at the end of the Cold War, as Europe embarked on a bold new drive for unity.⁷ On the one hand, the United States wanted a more cohesive and capable Europe and knew in any case that American policy had to take into account the reality of a more assertive European Union. On the other, American policy-makers did not always like the kind of EU that seemed to be emerging and so adopted policies that seemed to obstruct these efforts at every turn. It was not that American attitudes towards European integration were duplicitous, but that the two strands of thinking were equally strong and frequently in conflict. In post-Cold War Europe, absent a common external threat, the question was posed starkly: was the ambition of European unity compatible with a continued strong transatlantic link?

At the Paris summit of November 1990, marking the decisive end of the Cold War, three competing visions of the European future were evident. First was the

Europeanist vision of a more united, cohesive European Community (EC), moving resolutely to build economic and political union among its 12 member countries even as it widened its scope to bring in new members. NATO, in this vision, still had a place but no longer a central or permanent one. Second was the Atlanticist vision of a permanent American political and military presence in Europe and a seamless transatlantic security community, albeit with a new balance of US and European roles to accommodate a more cohesive EC. Third was the “Vancouver-to-Vladivostok” vision of a pan-European security community, advocated with differing motivations by the Russians, Czechs, and others.⁸

Secretary of State James Baker’s “New Atlanticism” idea, expressed in his two Berlin speeches of December 1989 and June 1991, tried to bridge the gap by proposing a system of interlocking institutions, with NATO, the European Community (soon to become the European Union), the CSCE (the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), and other organizations playing complementary roles. It was an elegant formulation in the abstract but often clumsy in the execution. President George H.W. Bush offered an even more expansive view of a “new world order,” with the Western allies at the core of an expanding democratic community and a revitalized UN system operating as its founders had intended.⁹ The hope, as expressed in President Bush’s speech in Prague in November 1990, was that the end of the Cold War would create the conditions not only for a continued transatlantic relationship but for a stronger and more natural one, freed from the unnatural imbalance of roles and responsibilities that the Cold War had imposed.¹⁰

American policy proceeded from several core beliefs. First, NATO had to survive as the key instrument of European security and the institutional link binding the United States to Europe. Second, NATO’s role in post-Cold War Europe called for its radical transformation, towards a broader security agenda and new balance of European and American roles and responsibilities. Third, the CSCE needed the institutional and operational capacity to play a stronger political role and assume new security responsibilities, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management. Fourth and perhaps most important, the United States needed to embrace European unity, including the development of a common European foreign and security policy, while also maintaining the vitality of transatlantic security – competing challenges that proved hard to reconcile in practice.¹¹

Underlying all this was the conviction that the United States had to remain in Europe to balance Russian power and provide stability so that a more united western Europe could extend its zone of democratic stability eastward. No idea was more strongly or deeply held in the upper levels of the administration. The American role, in Washington’s view, transcended Europe’s achievement of greater economic and political unity; it had to do with semi-permanent factors of power and geography.

Of course, this American presence had an economic as well as a security dimension. As the military dimensions of security receded, trade issues loomed larger – and now would be played out without the galvanizing element of the Soviet threat. It was, as President Bush put it in a speech in the Netherlands just before the Maastricht summit, “the danger that old Cold War allies will become new economic adversaries – Cold Warriors turned to trade warriors.”¹² Indeed, Uruguay Round trade negotiations loomed at least as large as security matters in US–European relations after 1990.

Conflict over the first-ever US–EC declaration was a portent of the difficulties ahead. Responding to overtures made by President Bush in his Boston University speech of May 1989 and by Secretary Baker in his Berlin speech the following December, German chancellor Helmut Kohl took the lead in proposing that the United States and the European Community issue a joint declaration aimed at giving US–EC relations a more intense and regular character. Accordingly, US and EC negotiators worked out a text to be issued at the Paris summit of November 1990. The four-page document was mostly hortatory but included a few specific commitments to closer dialogue that were inserted at US insistence over strenuous French objections.¹³ As luck would have it, however, US–EC Uruguay Round trade negotiations hit an impasse over agricultural subsidies on the eve of the Paris summit. The declaration, which Bush and Baker were reluctant to endorse under the circumstances, was salvaged by 11th-hour negotiations in Paris, but the new US–EC relationship was off to an inauspicious start.

The European Security “Architecture”

Debate after the Paris summit was similarly fraught in the security arena. US–French differences were particularly acute. Animated by the vision of an EC-centered Europe, France aimed to accelerate European integration while it still had political leverage over newly united Germany. “European construction” in turn required that the EC develop a political and security component to complement its economic institutions. Indeed, during the negotiations towards German unification in April 1990, Chancellor Kohl and French president François Mitterrand had issued a joint call for an accelerated timetable for reaching economic and political union by 1993.

These tasks acquired particularly urgency with two summits looming. A NATO summit to be held in Rome in November 1991 was to present the alliance’s “new strategic concept” and complete the vision of a “transformed alliance” heralded at the London summit of July 1990. The following month, in December 1991, the EC was to meet in Maastricht to complete the “single European market” and point the way to European economic and eventual political union.

Under these time pressures, French-led efforts to reinvigorate the Western European Union (WEU) or create a “Eurocorps” became locked in “zero-sum” competition with NATO. The French protested that the United States wanted to preserve a NATO-centric European security order even while gradually disengaging from an active role in European security. Hence efforts to transform NATO and develop new approaches towards the East were always viewed with suspicion in Paris, just as Washington was wary of French-led efforts to set up what appeared to be free-standing European security institutions in competition with NATO.

Behind the scenes, there was an effort on both sides to try to find a way of bridging these differences and bring France back closer to NATO. In the French ministry of defense and at the Elysée (the presidential palace) there was a current of thinking that favored drawing closer to NATO lest France be marginalized in post-Cold War Europe.¹⁴ These sentiments were reciprocated on the American side, which wanted France engaged in NATO and indeed wondered whether the alliance could survive absent full French participation. In a series of secret meetings in late 1990 and early 1991, the two sides explored what changes would need to be made for this to be

possible. These were serious discussions but also exploratory, not yet involving Mitterrand directly. Not for the first time or the last, discussions broke down. This became evident in a meeting between Bush and Mitterrand in Martinique in March 1991, when the French president slammed the door on the idea, arguing that Europe had to develop the capacity to defend itself because American disengagement was only a matter of time.¹⁵

Meanwhile, immediately after the Paris summit, European leaders launched a series of ambitious and ill-considered security initiatives. Kohl and Mitterrand called for the EC's absorption of the Western European Union. Italian foreign minister Gianni de Michelis likewise called for an early "merger" of the two institutions, also without saying how this new entity would relate to the Atlantic alliance. EC Commission president Jacques Delors went further, proposing that the WEU's mutual defense commitment be inserted into the EC's political union treaty and calling for the WEU to become "a melting pot for a European defense embedded in the Community."¹⁶ What that meant was not clear, but it seemed to have no connection to NATO or the United States. Similarly, the Franco-German proposal for a "Eurocorps" offered no explanation of how it would relate to NATO. Would it be inside NATO or outside? Would it complement NATO or compete with it? These unanswered questions prompted an angry US reaction – in the form of a *démarche* to all allied capitals – warning against the creation of a European "caucus" within NATO or a free-standing European security organization in competition with NATO.¹⁷

In his address to NATO's summit in Rome in November 1991, President Bush addressed these concerns directly:

The United States has been, is, and will remain an unhesitating proponent of the aim and the process of European integration. This strong American support extends to the prospect of political union – as well as the goal of a defense identity . . . Even the attainment of European union, however, will not diminish the need for NATO . . . We support the development of the WEU because it can complement the alliance and strengthen the European role in it . . . But we do not see the WEU as a European alternative to the alliance.¹⁸

Behind closed doors, Bush was adamant: "If Western Europe intends to create a security organization outside the Alliance, tell me now!"

Neither Rome nor Maastricht settled these fundamental differences, which continued over the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI). For the United States, the question was not just about US support for a more united Europe and its development of a security dimension, but whether this new Europe could be reconciled with a continued vital transatlantic security system. The extravagant assertion, in the opening line of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union (TEU),¹⁹ that "a common foreign and security policy is hereby established," fueled Washington's concerns, as did Delors's invocation of the idea of a "United States of Europe," an ambition that Washington tended to take at face value – not as a long-term aspiration but as a near-term challenge.

Even at the time, these debates seemed overwrought. The United States' NATO-centric approach would have been sound and sustainable if the US were prepared to

undertake the kind of fundamental restructuring of the alliance that some in Paris were urging on us. But Washington could not have it both ways – preserving a level of American dominance that was anathema to the French (and others) while also insisting that any European effort be made within the alliance framework. The French position was the mirror image of the American.²⁰ They wanted a European security capacity but resisted practical efforts to adapt NATO in ways that might have facilitated this goal.

A Pragmatic Truce

By the mid-1990s it was clear that neither vision was going to prevail in the near term and that the two sides needed to find some sort of middle ground. Europe's failure to avert or arrest the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, and then its inability to engage fully alongside more technically advanced US units in the Persian Gulf War of 1991, underlined Europe's dependence on US power for the foreseeable future. In the US, similarly motivated by the experiences in the Balkans (where it, too, had failed) and the Persian Gulf War, the Clinton administration aimed at forging a more balanced US–European relationship. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's June 1995 speech envisioning a "broad-ranging transatlantic agenda for the new century," together with similar overtures by Kohl and others, set the stage for negotiation of a New Transatlantic Agenda, including more regular and substantive consultations between the US and EC.²¹

In the security arena, with defense budgets dropping dramatically on both sides of the Atlantic, the need for a pragmatic meeting of minds became apparent. At the 1991 Rome summit, NATO leaders had approved the alliance's "New Strategic Concept," which outlined a more expansive approach to security, a new mission to promote stability among former adversaries in eastern Europe, a reoriented military posture to include enhanced peacekeeping and crisis management capacities, and a stronger role for NATO's European members.²² This last stipulation was meant to facilitate the creation of a European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as one of the three pillars of the European Union in the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992. That same year, the WEU outlined the so-called Petersberg Tasks – non-combat roles including humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and peacemaking – as its appropriate domain, leaving major combat missions to NATO.

Building on these initiatives, the Clinton administration acceded to European demands for greater autonomy, proposing within NATO the creation of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) to enable the dual use of NATO forces and command structures for alliance and/or WEU operations, as well as permitting non-NATO members to join in such operations.²³ This device, in turn, facilitated NATO's official endorsement, in the 1996 Berlin communiqué, of a "European Security and Defence Identity within NATO."²⁴ Through CJTF and ESDI, European forces would be "separable but not separate" – able to draw on NATO assets for European-only operations but not acting as a free-standing security organization.

Newly elected French president Jacques Chirac responded to these initiatives by signaling France's renewed interest in exploring the possibility of coming back into NATO's integrated command. The idea once again foundered, this time on US

unwillingness to accede to French demands that NATO's southern command be transferred from the US to a European country. (One can question the seriousness of Chirac's probe, however, for this episode followed a familiar pattern – of escalating French demands leading ultimately to a French *non* – going back to de Gaulle's protracted withdrawal from NATO's military command in the mid-1960s and indeed all the way back to negotiations towards a European Defence Community in the early 1950s.)

The evolution in transatlantic and European security continued to be overtaken by emerging security challenges, particularly in the Balkans. US–European differences over Balkan policy arose early in the Clinton administration over the latter's opposition to the Vance–Owen peace plan and its push, over European objections, for a policy of “lift and strike” (i.e. lifting the UN-imposed arms embargo and striking Bosnian Serb aggressors). Further developments – the helplessness of Dutch peacekeepers to prevent Serbian atrocities in Srebrenica in July 1995, the US-brokered Dayton peace accords, and the assumption by NATO, led by the US, of responsibility for implementing the accords – underscored European military and therefore political subordination to Washington, even for contingencies within Europe itself.²⁵

The 1999 Kosovo war, launched under NATO mandate, reinforced these lessons by demonstrating, as had the 1991 Gulf War, the wide and growing gap between US and European military capacities. In Kosovo, the US flew two-thirds of all strike missions, identified the vast majority of targets, and launched nearly every precision-guided missile.²⁶ For Americans, the cumbersome decision-making processes produced a growing sense that going it alone was preferable to conducting “war by committee” with allies who contributed relatively little to the military mission. For their part, Europeans saw that American military dominance translated into American dominance in political decision-making as well. Thus were European military capabilities bound up with the aspiration to greater autonomy in foreign and security policy.

In December 1998, British prime minister Tony Blair had joined French president Chirac in issuing the St. Malo declaration, asserting the EU's need to develop “the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.”²⁷ The following June, the European Council endorsed the principles of St. Malo but asked “how much capability the EU needs to possess independently from NATO” in order to fulfill these goals. The Council answered the question six months later in Helsinki, where it proclaimed a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as the successor to the NATO-based ESDI, and established the Helsinki Headline Goals – 60,000 troops capable of deploying within 60 days and sustainable for up to a year.²⁸ Their missions, as foreseen in the EU Treaty of Amsterdam, would include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, and crisis management, including peacemaking. At the 2001 Laeken summit, the EU announced a European Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) as the partial fulfillment of the Headline Goals, at the same time acknowledging that the RRF was not yet capable of taking on peacemaking and crisis management tasks – i.e. missions at the high end of the Petersberg scale.²⁹

Growing Divergence

NATO, meanwhile, was embarked on a similar process of adapting to the new security environment. At the 1999 Washington summit held on its 50th anniversary, NATO brought in three new members – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary – and announced a membership action plan to facilitate further eastward enlargement.³⁰ Allies also agreed in principle on a highly ambitious “defence capabilities initiative” designed to begin closing the wide gap between US and European military capabilities, but without any realistic appraisal of the higher priority Europeans were likely to attach to the EU’s more modest Helsinki Headline Goals. Indeed, the much-discussed “capabilities gap” was at base a “missions gap,” because European NATO members were not likely to commit the huge resources necessary to develop high-end military capabilities they had no intention of using.

The growing divergence over NATO’s future role was manifest in negotiations towards NATO’s 1999 Strategic Concept. Indeed, many of the disputes that surfaced were the same as those that had been with NATO at the creation: the geographic scope of NATO operations, how far NATO’s mandate should extend to nontraditional security challenges (in this case, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), the automaticity of the commitment to collective defense, and the relationship between NATO and the United Nations. The strategic concept addressed some of these, papering over differences along the way, but it failed to chart a clear course for the future of transatlantic relations.³¹ The American warning that NATO must go “out of area or out of business” turned this challenge into an existential one – a self-imposed litmus test for the very survival of the alliance. One had to wonder about the vitality of an alliance that seemed to face an existential crisis with every new decision.

Because of the amount of political capital and negotiating time required to bring seven new members into the alliance in 2004,³² the process of NATO enlargement served to mask a growing transatlantic divergence, while at the same time diverting attention from other issues on the transatlantic security agenda. It also served to alienate Russia, Ukraine, and other states of the former Soviet Union, which saw their erstwhile client states joining a formerly adversarial security institution that seemed permanently closed to them. As a consequence, NATO enlargement raised as many questions as it answered about the future of European and transatlantic security.³³ Allied leaders repeatedly proclaimed, with apparent sincerity, that they did not want to draw “new dividing lines in Europe,” but the process of NATO enlargement seemed, from Russia’s perspective, to be doing precisely that.

EU enlargement proceeded somewhat more slowly at the beginning, owing to policy disputes among EU governments as well as the inherent complexity of the accession process, but soon caught up. The false starts at the Amsterdam and Nice summits (of 1997 and 2000) led finally to the December 2002 decision of the European Council in Copenhagen to admit eight new members from central and eastern Europe, along with Cyprus and Malta, effective from May 1, 2004.³⁴ Moreover, having moved from 12 members at the end of the Cold War to 15 in 1995,³⁵ to 25 in 2004 (with Bulgaria and Romania joining in 2007, to bring the total to 27), the EU faced new challenges of streamlining the increasingly cumbersome system of collective decision-making and trying to articulate a vision of the European

future. These constituted the mandate of the “Convention on the Future of Europe,” or European Convention, launched at the Laeken European Council in December 2001.

Europe was similarly riveted on the challenge of completing the Maastricht commitment to Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), a project whose genesis actually preceded the end of the Cold War. Spurred by a series of Franco-German initiatives in the 1990s, negotiations within the EU led – to the surprise of the many Euroskeptics in the United States (and the UK) – to the creation of EMU in 1999, and the simultaneous adoption by nine EU member countries of the euro as a common currency, which entered into circulation at the beginning of 2002. By 2007, a total of 15 countries had joined the eurozone, and the euro had surpassed the US dollar as the currency with the highest combined value of cash in circulation in the world.

These two huge achievements – EU enlargement and EMU – gave lie to the supposed incompatibility of “widening” and “deepening,” but they also meant that the EU agenda was confined almost entirely to Europe itself rather than to the new security challenges beyond. The complaint sometimes heard in Washington that European perspectives were “parochial” betrayed a poor understanding of the enormity of what the EU had actually done since the end of the Cold War, but it reflected the extent to which the American agenda had moved away from Europe towards new global challenges and the growing weight of Asia, especially China, in US thinking.

European and American security perspectives were diverging steadily in the mid- to late 1990s, yet because there was no issue or conflict to bring these differences to a head, they tended to be obscured by the sugarcoated rhetoric of NATO and US–EU communiqués. All that changed one bright September morning in 2001.

Transatlantic Relations after 9/11

During the Cold War it was always assumed that if the collective defense commitment in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty were ever invoked, it would entail America’s rising to the defense of Europe after an attack on European territory. Yet the first time Article 5 was invoked, the roles were reversed: it was the European allies who rose to offer “all necessary aid” to the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Despite the decision of the US administration of George W. Bush to bypass NATO’s offer in favor of unilateral American action, Europeans were likewise fully supportive of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan to expel the Taliban regime and go after the Al Qaeda terrorists who had enjoyed its protection.

The instinctive and immediate European expressions of solidarity with the United States after 9/11 may have revealed the depth of the ties across the Atlantic, but they did not translate into a shared perspective on the threat posed by international terrorism. Nor did this new challenge replace the Soviet threat as the glue holding the transatlantic community together. To the contrary: while Europeans saw this new challenge as a more virulent form of a threat they had experienced already, the Bush administration proclaimed a “global war on terror.” As the Italian novelist Umberto Eco later put it, “If two airplanes had crashed into Notre Dame or Big Ben, the

reaction obviously would have been one of fear, pain, indignation, but it would not have [produced] the instinct to take immediate, unavoidable action that gripped the Americans."³⁶ What Europeans for the most part saw as a dangerous but manageable threat, to be treated as a matter of domestic security and law enforcement, Americans tended to see (one might say were *led* to see) as an existential threat on a scale approaching that of the early Cold War. Thus 9/11 served more to divide than to unite Americans and Europeans.

There were, of course, other divisive issues, notably the conspicuous US withdrawals from the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol on climate change in the first few months of the Bush presidency. To Europeans, embarked on the most ambitious effort towards multilateral integration in human history, such acts seemed to demonstrate a growing American unilateralism and disregard for global institutions, including those binding the transatlantic alliance. European public as well as elite attitudes towards the United States deteriorated alarmingly, reflecting differences over basic values as well as about specific policies. But it was the transatlantic clash over Iraq in 2002–2003 that brought these differences to a head.

Even before the dust had settled in Afghanistan, and with only an improvised, poorly designed stabilization plan in place, the Bush administration began building a case for war against Iraq, ostensibly on grounds that Iraq's WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programs and alleged ties to terrorists called for immediate action. For their part, the French insisted that "no military action can be conducted without a decision of the Security Council,"³⁷ subsequently lobbying to prevent adoption of just such an authorizing resolution. German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder went further, declaring that Germany would not provide material support for a war in Iraq even with Security Council endorsement. Within the United States, former US national security adviser Brent Scowcroft warned against ignoring "a virtual consensus in the world against such an attack."³⁸ The administration pressed ahead despite this opposition, following Vice President Dick Cheney's admonition that "the risks of inaction are far greater than the risk of action."³⁹ Thus when the United States and a "coalition of the willing" invaded Iraq in March 2003, it did so without the backing of many of its closest European allies.

The unprecedented breakdown of US–European solidarity over such a seminal security issue produced shock waves on both sides of the Atlantic. In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, the philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, odd political bedfellows indeed, issued joint editorials in Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and France's *La Libération*, calling for a united European response "to counterbalance the hegemonic unilateralism of the United States."⁴⁰ Other commentators proclaimed it the "end of the West."⁴¹ Yet differences over Iraq policy were only the proximate cause of a longer-term erosion of transatlantic solidarity, as has been discussed. Iraq simply brought these underlying differences into full view. If the breakdown had not occurred over Iraq, it would have occurred over something else.⁴²

Relations improved in the second Bush term, beginning in 2005, and with the elections of Angela Merkel as German chancellor and Nicolas Sarkozy as French president, as leaders on both sides came to realize the need to put an end to mutual recriminations over Iraq and restore more civil working relations. Additionally, the US presidential elections of 2008 and the end of the Bush presidency promise to

usher in a new and more hopeful chapter in transatlantic relations. Whether these changes in tone and leadership will translate into policy convergence was another matter, however.

While US attention was riveted on Iraq and international terrorism, Europeans were increasingly focused on intra-European challenges: enlargement, Economic and Monetary Union, and the constitutional debacle after the failed French and Dutch referenda on the European constitutional treaty in 2005. It was not so much that US and European leaders disagreed as that they diverged, each side focused on its own set of priorities, without the galvanizing element of an external threat to compel them to find common cause.

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, some commentators contrasted American fixation on that date with the greater importance Europeans attached to 11/9 – i.e. the collapse of the Cold War order symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. Yet this was only part of the story, for there were equally profound global changes underway that were only indirectly related to the East–West conflict or the process of European integration. The accelerating process of globalization was rendering obsolete the old categories – east–west, north–south, developed–underdeveloped, aligned–nonaligned – that had helped define the transatlantic relationship.⁴³ Finally, the rise of China, India, and other new powers was shifting the global balance away from the US–European partnership, no matter how doggedly political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic continued to assert their primacy.

All these changes added up to a period of flux in world affairs more profound than at any time since the creation of the Western alliance system in the late 1940s. The question for American and European statesmen was whether that alliance, which had served both sides so well in the last half of the twentieth century, could be refashioned to be as relevant to the challenges of the twenty-first.

A New Atlanticism?

The advent of new leaders in Germany, Great Britain, France, and, above all, the United States offered opportunities to strike a new transatlantic bargain, but the challenge was not only about changes of personalities and policies. Opinion surveys conducted early in the new century revealed a growing estrangement between European and American publics. In almost every European country, favorable attitudes towards the United States dropped by between 20 and 30 percentage points between 2002 and 2007.⁴⁴ These declines tracked also with measures of diminishing European support for the desirability of US global leadership, for committing additional troops to Afghanistan, and for the US-led war on terror (although Europeans were almost equally concerned with the threat of terrorism). The reasons Europeans overwhelmingly gave for the decline in US–European relations were the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, US failure to consider the interests of other countries, and President George W. Bush personally.⁴⁵

European attitudes were obviously driven by what Europeans widely perceived as the assertive unilateralism and militarism of the George W. Bush administration; whether they reflected a temporary shift or something more durable and worrying was a matter of debate.⁴⁶ On the one hand, European and American differences over the use of force in international relations, although exacerbated by the Iraq debacle,

seemed to reflect a deeper and more durable division that was reflected also in declining support for NATO. On the other hand, the evidence that Europeans continued to hold much more positive attitudes towards Americans than towards US policies, and that, excepting France, they continued to favor addressing threats in partnership with the United States, suggested the possibility of improved transatlantic relations after the 2008 US presidential elections.⁴⁷

However one interpreted these findings, they clearly suggested that fashioning a new Atlanticism would demand more than a nostalgic invocation of the past. As David Gompert put it,

The old Euro-Atlantic order was based on conditions that no longer exist: US–Allied military interdependence, agreement on the use of force, and a presumption that allies would stand together in crises. Analytically, therefore, the pre-Iraq alliance is not the right point of departure for considering a possible new Euro-Atlantic order. Nor is it wise to proceed from some received wisdom that a close US–European relationship is essential. That intellectual shortcut bypasses the crucial question of how US and European interests match up now and looking to the future.⁴⁸

A “compact” signed by prominent policy-makers and academics on both sides of the Atlantic offered a similar argument: “The Partnership between Europe and the United States must endure, not because of what it achieved in the past, but because our common future depends on it . . . Europe needs America . . . America also needs Europe.”⁴⁹

In the same vein, Geir Lundestad called for a “true redefinition of the American–European relationship.”⁵⁰ But what should be the elements of that new relationship?

To begin with, it was an inescapable reality that almost all the new challenges lay outside the traditional NATO area and many were in areas where US and European approaches had long diverged. Thus it would be too much to ask of the “new Atlanticism” that there be US–European convergence on every such issue. On some, such as engagement with China, agreement was neither likely nor necessary, so long as there was a forum for reconciling issues like arms sales. On others, like the Middle East peace process, US–European differences (as well as intra-European differences) were long-standing and unlikely to change appreciably.

But on many issues, US–European strategic convergence seemed both possible and necessary. These included such immediate security challenges as counterterrorism, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran, as well as medium-term issues of energy security and regional stability in the European “near abroad.” More broadly, they included issues of global governance related to the Doha trade round, post-Kyoto environmental cooperation, and the refashioning of international institutions to reflect the emerging distribution of global power and influence.

Since 9/11, counterterrorist cooperation had been good, but it was chiefly bilateral and sectoral (i.e. intelligence-sharing, financial tracking, etc.). Over the longer term, given the likelihood that this would be a generational challenge, it would be imperative to develop a shared strategic perspective on how to meet this challenge. The beginnings of such a convergence were dimly visible: if Americans (for understandable reasons) may have overreacted to the attacks of 9/11, Europeans may have

underreacted. After the Madrid and London bombings, European publics became more aware of the challenge within their own societies, even as Americans had come to see that the Bush administration's overmilitarized approach had made their country less secure than before. Similarly, as US forces in Iraq began draw down and transfer responsibility to Iraqi authorities, there would be new opportunities to fashion a US-European consensus going forward. This would not mean a US-European meeting of the minds – surely unfeasible, given all that had transpired – but a generally shared political and diplomatic effort to avert destabilization of the wider region. On Iraq as well as other regional issues, most critically Iran and Afghanistan, the essential requirement would be to develop an ongoing transatlantic dialogue as intense as that which characterized the Cold War alliance.

Some argued for a transatlantic division of labor between US “hard” power and European “soft” power, while others contended that Europe needs to close the gap between their military capabilities and those of the United States so that allies can operate together in every contingency.⁵¹ Although the latter argument offered a sounder basis for US-European security cooperation, neither of these formulas could substitute for the development of a shared security perspective. In other words, closing the “missions gap” took logical precedence over closing the “capabilities gap.”

One major liability in the transatlantic relationship was the lack of an adequate forum for strategic dialogue. It did not happen in NATO, where the scope of discussion was constrained by the unwillingness of many European countries to submit to NATO's strategic primacy, and the unwillingness of the United States to countenance an “EU caucus” in NATO. Nor did it occur in the US-EU framework, where meetings were too infrequent and formalized to permit the ongoing strategic dialogue that was needed. Of course, the EU itself had trouble enough with an *intra*-EU dialogue, with the result that there was really no place where all of Europe plus the United States could meet to discuss big strategic issues. The consequences were profound, because even issues closer to home – dealing with Russia, managing energy security, bringing Turkey into the EU – never were accorded the sustained transatlantic engagement that was once routine on major security issues.

To fill this need, Weidenfeld proposed creation of “Euro-Atlantic Political Cooperation” as a forum for dialogue;⁵² other formulas, such as enhanced NATO-EU cooperation, were also advanced. The precise form was less important than the shared commitment to dialogue, unencumbered by institutional turf warfare.

The same dangers and opportunities presented themselves on the global stage. International institutions were in crisis, owing to the challenges of globalization, the intractability of transnational threats, and the imperative of integrating rising powers into an effective global order. Whether the UN system, the international financial institutions, the World Trade Organization, and the G7/G8 could be transformed successfully was an open question, but it seemed clear that this could happen only if the United States and Europe exercised leadership and mustered the imagination to open these institutions to new actors while preserving the essential values undergirding the global system.

Since the end of the Cold War, it had been a popular rallying cry of political leaders and pundits on both sides of the Atlantic to assert that on almost every issue of the day Americans and Europeans would be better off working together than working

separately. It was an inspiring thought, and may even have been true, but the years since the collapse of the old order had shown that just because Americans and Europeans *should* act together in this new era did not necessarily mean that they *would* do so.

Notes

- 1 "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." (House of Commons, March 1, 1848.)
- 2 See, e.g., Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future"; Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics"; Hassner, "Europe beyond Partition and Unity"; Walt, "The Ties that Fray." For a review of realist and other theoretical constructs as they apply to US-European relations after the Cold War, see Matthias Dembinski, "Still Hanging Together?" in Evangelista and Parsi, *Partners or Rivals?* 61–83.
- 3 Kagan, "Power and Weakness," 5.
- 4 Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe*, 249 ff.; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 249–255.
- 5 Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It"; Kupchan, "Reviving the West"; Keohane, Nye, and Hoffmann, *After the Cold War*, 34 ff.
- 6 Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 343.
- 7 For background, see Brimmer, "Seeing Blue."
- 8 See e.g. Gorbachev's proposal for an "All-European Security Council" in his address to the Paris summit of the CSCE, November 19–21, 1990, and various suggestions in a similar vein by Czechoslovak president Vaclav Havel, Polish prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Czechoslovak foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier, as summarized in Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 283–287.
- 9 "Toward a New World Order," Address by President Bush before a Joint Session of the Congress, September 11, 1990, Current Policy no. 1298, Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State.
- 10 "Remarks by the President to the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly," November 17, 1990, White House press release of that day.
- 11 See e.g. President Bush's intervention at the NATO summit in London, July 5, 1990; declassified May 25, 1999; case no. 98–0142-F.
- 12 "Remarks by the President at Luncheon Hosted by Prime Minister [Ruud] Lubbers," Binnenhof, The Hague, the Netherlands, November 9, 1991, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House.
- 13 "Declaration on US–EC Relations," November 23, 1990.
- 14 This rethinking on the French side was driven in part by lessons taken away from the experience of the Gulf War of 1990–1991. See e.g. "French–US Relations Blossom amid Desert Storm," *Washington Post*, February 26, 1991.
- 15 The idea of France's rejoining the military command resurfaced in December 1995, when Mitterrand's successor, Jacques Chirac, announced France's rapprochement with NATO's military institutions. See Tiersky, "A Likely Story." This initiative, too, failed to materialize, for essentially the same reasons as in 1991.
- 16 Jacques Delors, "European Integration and Security," Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, March 7, 1991.
- 17 This was the "Bartholomew message," so dubbed because it happened to be signed out by Under Secretary of State Reginald Bartholomew in the absence of both Secretary Baker and Deputy Secretary Lawrence Eagleburger.

- 18 "A Time of Decision for the NATO Alliance," Intervention at the NATO summit, Rome, Italy, November 7, 1991, US State Department *Dispatch*, November 11, 1991.
- 19 Treaty on European Union, Maastricht, 1992.
- 20 On the French side Frederic Bozo reaches essentially the same conclusion in his *Mitterrand, la fin de la guerre froide et l'unification allemande*, 255–258.
- 21 For a Clinton administration perspective, see Gardner, *A New Era in US–EU Relations?*
- 22 Sloan, *NATO, the European Union, and the Atlantic Community*, 91–94.
- 23 North Atlantic Council declaration, January 11, 1994.
- 24 North Atlantic Council communiqué, June 3, 1996; Sloan, op. cit., 100–102.
- 25 Sloan, op. cit., 95–103; Lundestad, op. cit., 250–257.
- 26 Jean-Yves Haine, "An Historical Perspective," in Gnesotto, *EU Security and Defence Policy*, 39–40.
- 27 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Joint Declaration Issued at the British–French Summit."
- 28 Sloan, op. cit., 185; Keane, "European Security and Defence Policy," 91.
- 29 Salmon and Shepherd, *Toward a European Army*, 79.
- 30 The enlargement process was launched at NATO's January 1994 Brussels summit and formalized at the Madrid summit in June 1997.
- 31 Sloan, op. cit., 107–112.
- 32 They were: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
- 33 Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security*, 89.
- 34 In addition to Cyprus and Malta, the new members were: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Copenhagen European Council, presidency conclusions, December 12–13, 2002; EU Document SN 400/02.
- 35 Austria, Finland, and Sweden were admitted in January 1995.
- 36 *La Repubblica*, May 31, 2003.
- 37 *New York Times*, August 29, 2002.
- 38 *Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2002.
- 39 *New York Times*, August 27, 2002.
- 40 May 31, 2003. This article, along with Eco's and others, are translated in Levy et al., *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe*.
- 41 For example, Francis Fukuyama, "Das Ende des Westens," *Die Welt*, September 3, 2002; Charles Kupchan, "The End of the West," *The Atlantic Online*, November 2002.
- 42 Hutchings, "The World after Iraq."
- 43 National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future*.
- 44 Pew Global Attitudes, *Global Unease*, 13. (In France, favorable attitudes dropped from 62% to 39%; in Germany, from 60% to 30%; in the UK, from 75% to 51%.) See also Kohut and Stokes, *America against the World*.
- 45 Pew Global Attitudes, op. cit., 22; German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends 2007*, esp. 5–6 and 17.
- 46 *Transatlantic Trends* tended to be more sanguine than Pew about the reversibility of European public attitudes.
- 47 *Transatlantic Trends*, 7. Interestingly, Americans were more optimistic than Europeans on this point.
- 48 "What Does America Want of Europe?" in Lindstrom, *Shift or Rift*, 57.
- 49 Centre for European Reform and the Brookings Institution, "A Compact between the United States and Europe."
- 50 Lundestad, op. cit., 288.
- 51 Moravcsik, "New Transatlantic Bargain"; Gompert et al., *Mind the Gap*.
- 52 Partners at Odds, 137.

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Further Reading

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