



America and Europe:
Moving Towards
2020

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- & -
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A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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He joined the Diplomatic Service in 1968, working first in the UK Mission to the UN in New York, before returning to United Nations Department in London. In 1969, he was posted to Addis Ababa and then on to Paris, in 1972. From 1974, he worked successively in the Foreign Office News Department, London, on loan to the Prime Minister's Press Office and Assistant Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary.

From 1979 to 1983, he served in the British Embassy Washington, then as Assistant Head and then Head of European Community Department (Internal) at the FCO. From 1988 to 1991, he was Private Secretary to three successive Foreign Secretaries (Geoffrey Howe, John Major and Douglas Hurd). From 1991 to 1993, he served as Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr John Major, responsible for Foreign Policy and Defence.

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Europe without America?

In 1981, the United States celebrated the bicentenary of the Battle of Yorktown, the battle in which the English Admiral, Lord Cornwallis, lost decisively to the rebel forces and, along with the battle, lost the American War of Independence.

President Reagan stood on the podium, along with the leader of the country which shared so many American values, traditions and historical associations and paid tribute to the importance, two hundred years on, of that relationship. Reagan's distinguished guest was generous in his reply. As we celebrate the ties which bind us, he said, let us not forget that in a more recent conflict, in 1940, it was another country that stood alone in the battle for freedom and we owe that country a debt of gratitude too. The country the speaker was referring to was the United Kingdom. The speaker was President Francois Mitterrand.

It is hard to imagine that event being replicated today, hard to imagine the President of the United States sharing such a platform with the President of France and hard to imagine the President of France speaking in such terms. *Autres temps, autres moeurs*. It is an illustration of the up-and-down nature of the relationship between the United States and Europe, or rather the European powers.

America's Self Interest

When Donald Rumsfeld spoke disparagingly about old versus new Europe, he sent a shockwave across the European continent.¹ That too was an illustration: of the fact that 'Europe' only exists for the United States where it has suited it and of the fact that 'Europe' only exists for the countries that make up the European Union when it suits *them*.

Robert Kagan, in his book *Dangerous Nation*² paints a vivid portrait of France, first as ally and then as opponent, of the new United States. He portrays England too, first as opponent and then as ally. The French Revolution that drew inspiration from America became the French Revolution that shocked America. The restored French monarchy represented all that America most distrusted whilst the much hated

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British monarchy, or at least the system of government it personified, began to look like the embodiment of a liberal ideal which America shared. Kagan argues cogently that the policy enunciated by George Washington in his farewell speech was not an immutable doctrine of non-involvement in external entanglements at any time or at any price but an immutable doctrine of American national self-interest. Where that self-interest lay when England started campaigning vigorously for the world-wide abolition of slavery depended on whether you lived to the north or south of the Mason Dixon line. Just as where that self-interest lay when Europe was falling into the hands of tyranny in 1940 depended on whether you were President Roosevelt or Vice President Wallace, one an interventionist, the other a pacifist for equal but opposite reasons of perceived national interest.

Without the Battle of Britain and the invasion of Russia, Hitler might not have been stopped. Without Pearl Harbour he might not have been defeated. A Fascist United States under President Lindbergh, cooperating with Nazi Germany, as portrayed by Philip Roth in *The Plot Against America*³ is uncomfortably plausible. So is the portrayal of a Nazi-occupied Britain, collaborators and all, in Len Deighton's popular novel *SS-GB*.⁴

Common Interests?

Events dear boy, events" are, as Harold Macmillan famously said, the main ingredient of political life. Neither the events, nor the personalities who will create them or react to them, are predictable. One of the questions for this essay is how far the shared values of which Americans and Europeans still routinely speak exist as a genuine determinant of common external policy interests, or how far "shared values" are merely a way of convincing ourselves of the permanence of what may in reality be only temporary shared interests, or may even be no more than a description of what were, rather than are, common interests.

The value of tolerance is one example. Kagan argued in *Paradise and Power*⁵ that tolerance was another name for weakness. He has a point. If, for example, a European country had suffered a terrorist attack on the scale of 9/11 it would, I believe, never have occurred to that government, or the governments of Europe, to launch a retaliatory attack on Afghanistan, let alone Iraq. Our response would have been proportionate to our capacity to respond. Europeans who do not, on

the whole, carry handguns exercise their road rage by punching each other on the nose. In America, the protagonists, who do have handguns, shoot each other. After 9/11, the United States had the capacity to turn its anger outwards and did so, rationally in the case of Afghanistan and with international approval and support; less rationally, and without international approval and support, in the case of Iraq.

I doubt if this represents a qualitative, as opposed to a quantitative, difference between the United States and Europe or, at any rate, between the United States and those countries such as Britain and France which have a history of military engagement and which remain nuclear powers. For those countries of Europe with a tradition of neutrality the difference may be a more fundamental and enduring one.

Insofar as there is a tension between a tolerant (meaning for some in America, weak) Europe and a strong, militarily proactive United States that tension was perforce held in check for the duration of the Cold War. The tension manifested itself in strenuous European opposition to the neutron bomb and the deployment of Pershing missiles in Europe. But the United States was ineluctably committed to the defence of Europe because the US and Europe shared a common enemy in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's ability to overwhelm European conventional forces would have set off the tripwire of a battlefield nuclear response which, in turn, could have triggered an intercontinental missile strike.

Europe's backyard was America's frontline whether the United States wanted it or not. The Europeans could therefore moan about it but were obliged to accept, in their own self-interest, that there was one partner in NATO much more equal than all the others, namely the United States. But it was more than an alliance of extreme convenience. For most, though not all, of Western public opinion there was no question of moral equivalence between the USSR and the United States. Stalin, Berlin and Cuba saw to that. But, even so, the relationship was tested by Vietnam which was perhaps one of those instances, like Iraq, where the shared values of governments in support of war were pitted against the shared values of peoples in opposition to it. Certainly, when it came to Iraq, the governments of Europe may have been split down the middle in being for or against the war but the overwhelming majority of European public opinion was against it. Iraq, like Vietnam, has seriously undermined European faith in the underlying morality of US policy.

The Questions of Capacity and Proportionality

Proportionality, which may be another version of Kagan's "weakness"⁶ led people to accept that an American ability to kill 20 million Russians in a nuclear strike was a necessary response to the Russian ability to do the same. Many of the same people did not accept that the American involvement in Vietnam was proportionate, even if they accepted the domino theory in the first place.

Proportionality takes different forms. In Vietnam, for many Europeans the disproportion was between the war between North and South Vietnam on the one hand and the scale of the US military response on the other. In the United States, the issue of proportionality was between the importance of US objectives on the one hand and the growing loss of the lives of young Americans on the other. The same is increasingly true for Iraq.

For Jim Baker, as US Secretary of State, America's non-involvement in Bosnia was because America did not "have a dog in this fight".⁷ Europe *did* have a dog in the fight, the security of the European continent. But most European governments believed that the price to be paid for military inaction was less than the price to be paid in the lives of their citizens through military engagement. Napoleon's dictum that the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier still held sway.

By contrast, the military strikes against Milosevic in Kosovo were largely accepted by European public opinion because they (just) passed both tests of proportionality. Even though, as in Iraq, the military action had no specific UN cover it was accepted because Kosovo, as part of Europe, was seen as an EU responsibility. The EU's perceived failure to live up to its obligations in Bosnia made European leaders all the more determined not to fail again in Kosovo. Had Milosevic not collapsed when he did, then the loss of yet more civilian lives and the possibility of military action on the ground might well have swung an already anxious public opinion into opposition to further engagement. The litmus test of both public support and international legitimacy is, unsurprisingly, success.

By contrast again, in 2003 Iraq failed the proportionality test in terms of pain versus gain and, for Europeans, the fact that they were not persuaded of the case for the war in political, defence or humanitarian

terms increased the unacceptability for them of the failure to secure legal cover for the action.

“Shock and awe”, the doctrine of disproportionate response, has been discredited in Iraq and seems likely to be discredited even more when the decision to send a further 20,000 troops fails to halt the Iraqi civil war. If the military action in Iraq can be seen as a modern version of the domino theory, then the American public seems less and less persuaded of its validity: they do not see the solution to the problems of international terrorism as being solvable by American military invasion. As a result, selective, targeted, airborne attacks seem more likely than ground engagements as a future response to threats to Western interests, but Europe and the United States may well be divided in their assessment of the risks and consequences of such action.

What Price - Regime Change?

A crucial question for whether the United States and Europe grow apart is whether, despite the experience of Iraq, the United States remains in favour of regime change. The next British Prime Minister is more likely than Tony Blair to share the European dislike of regime change, given its failure to work in Iraq.

Tony Blair has argued in speeches and in an article in *Foreign Affairs* (*A Battle for Global Values*) that the “crucial point” about the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq is:

“...that they were not just about changing regimes but about changing the value systems governing the nations concerned. The banner was not actually ‘regime change’; it was ‘values change’. That is why I have said that what has been done, by intervening in this way, may be even more momentous than was appreciated at the time.”⁸

Part of the problem with this argument is that the two countries whose values systems were (at least in theory) changed were, or were thought to be, relatively soft targets. The United States is not about to intervene to change the values systems of Pakistan, a military regime with unauthorised nuclear weapons or of Saudi Arabia which spawned some of the nastier terrorists at large in the world. For reasons of self interest and the total impracticality of the use of force the United States prefers

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to embrace rather than demonise both countries. It is the self-serving and inconsistent nature of the rationale behind the invasion of Iraq that alienates Europeans (most Britons, apart from Blair, included) along with the suspicion that a real and serious terrorist threat is being used to justify action which is seen, not just as a disproportionate response, but as an inappropriate response.

Iran is the prime current instance where the Bush/Blair doctrine is likely to be tested. A US or Israeli air strike, or series of strikes, on Iran would not require European participation, though they might need logistical support as was the case for America's attack on Libya in 1980. The precise timing of an attack would be a secret but its imminence would not because of the prior build-up of diplomatic pressure and international action in search of a solution.

Europeans, including post-Blair Britain, are likely to be more preoccupied than Americans by what Sir Jeremy Greenstock called in a recent BBC radio interview "the consequences of the consequences".⁹ For example, the destruction of Iranian nuclear facilities would shield Israel from the immediate threat of nuclear attack but would also increase the long-term threat to Israel's security from sustained terrorist assaults. More gravely, if attacks had to be sustained on a number of Iranian sites over a period of some nights, the risk of an Iranian military response directed against Israel would also be that much greater. In the short term, Europeans would be more preoccupied than Americans by the likely threat to oil supplies. For the longer term, Europeans would be more concerned about the effects on peace in the region.

As a result, Europeans are likely to be more disposed to want to go the last mile for a peaceful resolution and to press for action limited to that which the UN Security Council will support. They will be even more opposed to regime change in general, and in the specific case of Iran, than in the past.

How far this divergence became a breach would depend on the consequences of American, or American-backed Israeli, military action against Iran. In the short term, most European governments would at the least want to distance themselves from the action (though the British government would be reluctant to do so vocally). If the longer term results were as dire as most European governments will fear then there would be a greater prospect than ever before that Europe would try to

take a lead, regardless of the United States, in forging an independent Middle East strategy. How far that exacerbated an already severe breach in transatlantic relations would depend on whether American public opinion turned against what had been done to Iran. In either case, it is hard to see Europe having the political influence over Israel that the United States has, at least in theory. It is almost as hard to see Europe trying to exert leverage on Israel by applying the pressure of its economic relationship. Israel commands much less popular support in Europe than in the United States but that support is nonetheless not negligible and if democratic Israel were thought to be seriously threatened by non democratic Arab states pro Israel public sympathy would increase. It is hard to see that essential dynamic changing in the next two decades. In other words, Europeans could pursue an independent policy towards the Middle East but the chances of them helping achieve a peace settlement without the active leadership of the United States look remote.

Security Threats through to 2020

In the case of Iran, fear of a nuclear-armed, aggressive dictatorship is the main driver of Western policy. While the analysis is shared across the Atlantic, the ultimate choice of response may not be. Will the same be true for the other challenges we will face over the next twenty years?

Over the period, the principal sources of tension within the West, as well as between the West and others, will come from:

- continued international terrorism, conceivably escalating to the use of nuclear weapons in some form;
- the interaction of so-called rogue states with international terrorism;
- instability in the Middle East caused by the Israel-Palestine question;
- the actions of Iran and the US response;
- instability in countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia fuelled by the pressures of a growing, young, population;

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- competition for access to energy supplies on the one hand and the abuse of power by energy suppliers on the other. The first is already a source of tension with China, the second of tension with Russia;
- the consequences of climate change and the lack of a transatlantic, let alone a global, consensus for dealing with them;
- the impact of demographic changes, which may exacerbate Europe's relative economic weakness and will, self-evidently, fuel migratory pressures;
- Pandemic disease.

One, or a combination of these, could lead to conflict. There are neo-realists who believe that a military confrontation between the United States and China is inevitable. Energy dependence is leading China to seek privileged relationships with controversial countries such as Somalia and Zimbabwe. The quest for energy security will cause more widespread tension as countries compete for privileged relationships with producers. There will be competition between the industrial powers and therefore greater scope for friction as India and China, in particular, compete for their share of energy resources and as they develop the political relationships to help deliver security of supply. How dangerous these tensions become depends upon many of the other factors in the equation. Those include the role of China as a country which thwarts or assists the management of the 'world order' in the UN Security Council. Mark Leonard has argued in a recent paper for the Centre for European Reform (*Divided World: The Struggle for Primacy in 2020*)¹⁰ that Russia and China will use their positions as permanent members of the UN Security Council to contain the United States and to protect themselves from western interference. If China does seek, in cooperation with Russia, to establish a sphere of influence which, by providing a comfort zone for dubious governments and thwarting effective action in the UN Security Council, threatens American interests then events may turn out as the neo realists suggest. But there seems to me to be nothing inevitable about such a clash which depends as much upon how the United States perceives its interests as upon the actions of China. The biggest unknown is what will happen within China itself.

In no foreseeable circumstances is Europe likely to see the way through these difficulties as lying in anything but the deployment of soft power.

If a neo-realist agenda of increasingly hawkish confrontation with China (of which Taiwan could yet be a trigger) became staple fare in the United States, it would set alarm bells ringing in Europe.

By 2030, Europe will be dependent on imports for 90% of its oil needs and 65% of its gas needs.¹¹ Unless the European Union can agree in the near future on a coherent energy policy, including on unbundling, regulation, energy choices and external energy policy its ability to frame coherent policies for its relationship with Russia will be constrained by its dependency. That dependency has already contributed significantly to the inability of the European Union to formulate a coherent policy towards the government of President Putin as individual European leaders have beaten a sycophantic path to his door. The United States will be less constrained but also less interested unless Russia's behaviour becomes threatening. Given Russia's dependence on exports for income and the disorganised state of its energy industry its capacity for sustained blackmail of the West is likely to be limited over the period but the impact of Russian bullying on its neighbours will be a source of anxiety and destabilisation. It is likely to make Ukraine, for example, even keener than it is now to join the European Union. The reluctance of some EU member states to see Ukraine join will be a source of friction with the United States which, not having to bear the costs, political and economic, is keener on enlargement than many Europeans. If that European reluctance was reinforced by fear of antagonising a bearish Russia, American irritation would be that much greater.

Convergence and Global Balance

The most catastrophic consequences of climate change will probably not be visited on us in the next twenty years but the evidence of inevitable catastrophe unless radical action is taken seems likely to become even more incontrovertible. If so, the perception gap between America and Europe will narrow though friction will persist as Europe remains more convinced that the cost of preventive action needs to be faced and met. It is likely that Europe will remain in the vanguard but, if the mood in the United States changed, and the United States put even more resource into technological research, the potential commercial gain could turn the United States from laggard into leader. If that happened the United States might in turn raise the stakes of climate change as a marker in its relationship with countries such as China.

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It seems likely that, barring a new 9/11 that provoked a massive US military response, European and American views on the management of some kind of world order are likely to converge in the post-Bush era. Lessons have been learned painfully from Iraq about the limitations of external intervention to deliver a result which matches up to the objective.

David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary at the time of the fall of the Shah of Iran, later regretted that Western powers had not intervened more to prevent the Shah's overthrow and, with it the loss of a country whose political and economic policies were oriented towards the West.¹² A similar dilemma may well present itself in other countries, for example in Saudi Arabia. The impact of a revolution in Saudi Arabia on energy supplies and on terrorist activity would be the key drivers of the Western response. A measured response, which secured European support, would require the United States to formulate its policy on a cool calculation of interest, rather than on its distaste for the regime and zeal for democracy, the latter not being a conspicuous commodity in modern Saudi Arabia in any event.

After Iraq, a unilateral US intervention, pre-emptive or otherwise, seems improbable and the prospects of an international coalition negligible. Taking the fall of the Shah as a model, and on the questionable assumption that the revolution there could have been forestalled, the main gain, compared with what has actually happened, would have been to avoid a regime which supports terrorism and is developing a menacing nuclear capacity. But whether trade in oil and other commodities would have been more secure is questionable given that terrorist action against the regime and the western forces in the country would have increased. Even support for terrorism elsewhere, while not on the present scale, would not have been impossible. After all, the situation would not have been unlike that in Pakistan i.e. a government anxious for a good relationship with the West but without the capacity to deliver a comprehensive anti-terrorist policy. Indeed, just as a blind eye to terrorism has been a price the Saudi regime has paid for internal stability, so the Shah would have very possibly had to pay a similar price in Iran.

The United States and Europe may both consider themselves unlucky in their present leaderships. The infatuation with Senator Barack Obama on both sides of the Atlantic is a measure, not so much of his evident

qualities as of that longing for a unifying political vision. There has never been a time in post World War II history in which Europeans have felt a greater sense of alienation from the government of the United States. It is alienation from both the politics and policies of President Bush. For Britons at least, with no tradition of a Supreme Court as the accepted ultimate guardian of a democratic constitution, the contested outcome of the Presidential election of 2000 contributed to an unwillingness to accept American presidential leadership unquestioningly. Insofar as Europeans felt, after the 2004 election, that George W. Bush embodied the sentiment of the majority of Americans that sense of alienation extended to the United States as a whole.

However, the intervening two years, and last year's congressional elections, have started to change perceptions. The faith of Europeans in the capacity of American democracy to find a middle ground of balanced policy has been partially restored, together with a popular belief that what Europeans have to do is to keep their fingers crossed until Inauguration Day 2009. That faith in the redeeming quality of democracy, despite European distrust of a particular Administration and its policies, is probably one underlying feature of the relationship which, though sorely tested, will survive over the next twenty years.

The European Union works because, in the end, each member country has confidence in the democratic institutions of the others. The EU has structures and rules to try to prevent a breakdown of that basis of trust in any of the member states. But if there were a failure of democracy in any member state then the loss of that fundamental shared value would wipe out all the other points of common interest that remained. A shared commitment to democracy, and confidence in each other's democratic structures, is likely to remain the glue in the transatlantic relationship. However far apart the United States and Europe grow on policy issues they are likely to see each other as "friends in need", something which will not be true of China or Russia. That may not prevent either Europe or the United States pursuing policies towards Russia or China which will test the transatlantic relationship to a greater extent than ever before, especially as the constraints of the Cold War no longer apply. The one thing that would prevent that happening would be the emergence of a new security threat, seen on both sides of the Atlantic as being as great as that posed by Soviet Russia.

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That apart, just as the balance of terror and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) made the superpowers shrink from nuclear confrontation, so global economic and energy dependence make the modern risks from military intervention that much greater. Economic interdependence was seen by the founders of the European Community as the key to peace and political stability. The same should be true on a global scale but with provisos. For that principle to work on a global scale seems to me to depend on two ingredients which may continue to divide Europe and America. The economic interdependence of the EU's member states translates into political stability in part because Europe has supra national institutions which have authority over the individual member states. The nearest global equivalent is the United Nations and European support for it will remain stronger than that of the United States. But it seems unlikely that any nation or regional grouping will make the sacrifices needed to implement the Annan reforms. If that is true, the main difference between the United States and Europe will be greater European regard for the rule of international law as determined by the UN Charter (something for which the next British Prime Minister is likely to have more respect than the present one) but combined with a similar reluctance to will the means to make the UN effective even when there is agreement on the ends.

If that is so, and it fits the pattern of the last fifty years, then the United States' frustration with the United Nations and, *de facto*, its reluctance to be constrained by international law as determined by the UN Charter and Chapter VII action authorised by the Security Council, will also continue and there will be pressure on Europe to redefine the terms of international engagement beyond the Westphalian model. Tony Blair has sought such a model, without conspicuous success in carrying his compatriots and other Europeans with him. The recent report to Kofi Annan on UN reform also sought to redefine the basis on which international intervention could take place so that it could be proactive and preventative, not just reactive. But that proposed reform was still firmly rooted in the notion of explicit UN Security Council authorisation. That will remain a significant division between Europe and America. Europeans will be much more reluctant than Americans to participate in, let alone support, unauthorised action. However, as I have argued, the scope for such action by the United States seems likely to be limited by the failure of the Iraq policy and there may therefore be a greater transatlantic convergence in practice than in principle.

The second ingredient that is necessary to make interdependence a driver of stability is what the French commentator, Dominique Moisi, has called the success of the culture of hope over the culture of humiliation.¹³ Herein lies one of the biggest differences between the United States and Europe. Both recognise the role of poverty and deprivation as breeding grounds for disaffection, anger and terrorism. Both have significant international aid efforts, though the European one is much larger than the American. Both share the millennium development goals though the Europeans, thanks to Gordon Brown's initiative for an International Finance Facility¹⁴, have so far done more about realising them. Both recognise that there is more to today's international terrorism than an outpouring of anger rooted in deprivation.

Europe's Role

But outside Tony Blair's 10 Downing Street, there is less readiness in Europe than in the United States to believe, either in Huntington's *clash of civilisations*¹⁵ (which Tony Blair has converted into a clash *about* civilisation) or that there is an axis of evil in the sense in which President Bush conceives it. No one doubts that there are fanatics who feed on poverty and deprivation but who are driven by zealotry, which Moisi has likened to Christian zealotry in Europe in the sixteenth century. Those terrorists, and the governments that support them, may cause huge human misery but reaching an understanding about the significance of that terrorist action and the nature of the West's response will be crucial if the relationship between Europe and the United States is not to be subject to constant tensions. As I have suggested, US perceptions and analysis are still far apart from those of Europe. Events have brought both sides closer. But I doubt whether many European governments recognise the concept of rogue states as construed by President Bush and Tony Blair.

There will be continued scope for American divide-and-rule in Europe because the European Union will continue to enlarge and because, partly but not exclusively as a result, the integrationist agenda, whose high point was the Maastricht treaty, will continue to lose ground. The willingness of EU member states to extend the scope of the supranational Community method of decision-making to the decisions which need to be taken over energy policy and climate change is in doubt. The political will which drove policy in the 1980s under President

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Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl has dwindled. Today's EU leaders want to take more decisions inter-governmentally, rather than use the supranational EC structures. That is a recipe for fewer decisions because all have to agree. Similarly, there is no coherent European view as to how to tackle the economic and social impact of globalisation. Migration will help the otherwise dire European demographic situation but itself poses problems of social cohesion, importing, as Moisi has argued, the culture of humiliation into European societies and contributing to the changed perception of the European Union in countries such as the Netherlands.

Even so, Europe will remain not just a hugely important economic player, as the largest economic grouping in the world, but a hugely important political player as the largest democratic grouping in the world as well. Far from being concerned about soft power, Europe is likely to see it as increasingly the most potent way of maintaining peace and stability in the world. The Europeans will not eschew the use of military power for peacekeeping, and will develop their independent capacity despite what President Mitterrand once described as an American desire to control more as they cared less, about Europe. However, the US nuclear umbrella and the US commitment to the defence of Europe through NATO will still be of huge importance to almost all European countries. That will not make them more inclined to support American actions like Iraq but it will be an important factor in Europe not wanting to allow its relationship with the United States to become cool or remote. By the same token, Europeans are unlikely to undertake peacekeeping operations in the face of US opposition, not least because their dependence on American equipment and logistical support will continue. While the European Union and the United States continue, in their different ways, to distort world trade and damage the interests of developing countries through agricultural subsidy and tariffs friction will continue between them as they also compete to pin the blame on each other. But there has been steady progress towards reform of agriculture on both sides of the Atlantic and the pressure on both Europe and America from other trading partners and from public opinion will compel further mutual concessions.

There has been growing cooperation between the EU and the US on the management of competition policy and business regulation. This

seems set to grow as both have an interest in establishing world-wide norms of behaviour for other industrialising countries.

Looking Eastwards?

The shifting of the tectonic plates, first observed in the 1980s as the United States started to pay less attention to Europe than in the past and more to Asia and the Far East, has continued. It may speed up as American preoccupation with commercial and political competition from China, in particular, grows. With the end of the Cold War, the trend is mirrored in Europe. Sentiment and policy will not be uniform across Europe. It will still be good domestic politics for a British Prime Minister to be seen at home to have a close relationship with the President of the United States, though Britain can afford to distance itself from particular US policies to a greater extent than in the past or than Tony Blair has recognised. It will still be good politics in France for the President to be seen as striking an independent attitude vis a vis America but this will be less marked under Chirac's successor just as the opposite tendency will be less marked under Blair's. The countries of eastern and central Europe will, albeit erratically, become more integrated within the European Union but will still look to the United States for their protection, especially if they are faced with continuing Russian bullying.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution the British establishment, terrified that the rot might spread to England, clamped down on liberal expression forcing reformers, such as William Cobbett, to flee to the United States.¹⁶ The restored French monarchy was similarly disposed. It may be that the United States has been passing through a similar period as it has had to come to terms with the shock and grief of 9/11 and that what Europe has generally seen as the measured approach of US Presidents from Eisenhower to Clinton will be restored.

Faced with terrorism on an even greater scale, or a China which was not just threatening the United States commercially, but undermining the scope for democratisation elsewhere in the world and for a world order acceptable to it, then the United States could revert to policies of "hard" power which would again put it at odds with a Europe committed to "soft" power.¹⁷ However, the present European resentment of US policies is a product of reluctant despair, not wilful rebellion against American leadership of what is still recognisably the

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West i.e. a community of interest based on democracy, defence and a belief in the benefits of liberal economies. If that is the case, those shared democratic values, defence interests and economic systems are capable of restoring a shared analysis of world developments and of being translated into agreed policies.

“Events dear boy, events” should, however, never be lost sight of.

Endnotes

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America without Europe?

If the West Collapses: Implications for American Foreign Policy

When the Cold War ended, a group of prominent social scientists – the international relations realists – provided a grim assessment of the future amidst the optimistic proclamations of a new world order. Without the threat of the Soviet Union to unite them, the realists argued, America and Europe would part ways. “NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are,” wrote Kenneth Waltz.¹ A return to multipolar power balancing in Europe was inevitable, proclaimed John Mearsheimer.² After all, the history of international relations suggested that the great powers would always clash in a world that lacked a central authority to enforce order. It was true for Athens and Sparta in ancient Greece, the great European powers in the centuries before World War II, and America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Why should the 21st century be any different? America and China would emerge as rivals; Germany and Russia would bid for hegemony in Europe; and the Transatlantic community itself would collapse.

Others who foresaw new trends in world affairs argued that the common values and the creation of a security community among the core of advanced, industrialized democracies (for whom war is no longer a policy option in relations with one another) had transformed part of international politics in ways that the realists could not fathom.³ To date that analysis has prevailed. But what if three decades after their earlier predictions, the realists were finally proven right about conflict and discord in the West? What if a new global balance of power, the collapse of the major post-World War II international institutions created under American leadership, and/or a growing divergence in values led to the collapse of the West as a coherent entity? America without Europe as its major partner would confront an array of new global challenges without the advantage of a strong democratic community at the core of its foreign policy, an unenviable situation to say the least.

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Europe's Place in American Foreign Policy at the Dawn of the 21st Century

Although America and Europe remain tied together today through strong political, economic and military linkages, Europe is no longer nearly as central to the Washington foreign policy community as it was from the founding of the Republic through the 1990s. From the American effort to gain independence, through the effort to block European expansion in this hemisphere, to the war with Spain and the emergence of America as a world power, Wilson's effort to create a Kantian community, the work of Roosevelt to keep Europe from falling under fascist rule, the efforts of his successors to save half the continent from communist domination, and finally the American role as humanitarian intervener and nation-builder in the post Cold War Balkans, Europe was consistently the most important region in the formulation of American foreign policy. The United States tried to keep European nations out of the business of this hemisphere, sought to prevent hegemonic domination of the European continent, and then pursued a project of building a Europe whole and free.

The exigencies for focusing on Europe no longer exist. Threats to America do not emanate from European nation-states as they did for the first two hundred years of the country's existence. The American post-World War II project of eliminating division on the continent is largely complete thanks to NATO enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe (followed by the EU's own expansion into the same region), the Dayton accords and the Kosovo war, and the effort to ensure that Russia did not reemerge as a power hostile to Western interests in the years following the Cold War.

Washington's general lack of interest in European affairs today is understandable; after all, policymakers address problems, and Europe is not the problem for the United States that it was earlier, and certainly not compared to other parts of the world. But Europe could become a problem for the United States in the future, both because it might succeed and because it might fail. And it could even be a problem if it simply muddles through.

Europe's Future: What Would Success Mean?

Various authors have defined future success in different ways, whether Charles Kupchan's image of Europe as the major threat to American power in the coming decades, T.R. Reid's examination of Europe's dominance through companies and currency, or Mark Leonard's argument that Europe will be the model for other parts of the world.⁴ It is possible that Europe could emerge as a military competitor by 2020, but unlikely given current trends, given its lack of willingness to spend on defense and the demographic challenges. What is more easily imaginable given current trends would be a Europe whose currency is the world's leading reserve currency, ending American domination of the international economy, and a Europe that was creating alternative approaches for the international community to solve problems in the vacuum created by a lack of American leadership. European success might also lead to Europe's role as an economic and security model for other regions seeking to move beyond traditional patterns of conflict in international affairs or for those countries that find the European lifestyle more appealing than that of the harder working Americans.

Europe's Future: What Would Failure Mean?

The current discord within Europe over the impact of the recent enlargements will certainly lead to a halt to any future enlargements for the foreseeable future and could even lead to the collapse of the European project itself. A collapse by definition would mean that Europe would no longer be a strong partner of the United States, which is why the United States has had a stake in Europe's development as a single entity since the Second World War.

Even the minimal failure, i.e., the failure to include Europe's periphery – Turkey, the former Soviet West (particularly Ukraine), the countries of the Western Balkans and the Caucasus – in the European Union would have significant consequences. What we learned in the 1990s was that the pull of membership in the European Union and NATO enabled elites to carry out painful political and economic reform that allowed them eventually to integrate into the West. And the prospect of future membership has been critical, for example, in Turkey, whose military has tolerated an Islamic party because of its pursuit of a pro-Europe policy, and whose government has allowed greater freedom of speech, abolished the death penalty, cut government subsidies, reached out to

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Turkey's Kurdish minority, and developed good relations with neighboring Greece.

Europe's failure to continue enlargement in the coming years could leave us by 2020 with a Turkey that might have open markets, but could well have a more politically active military, rolls back freedom for its Kurdish population, turns East in its orientation, and is generally unstable. Meanwhile, the Balkans could easily descend back into the chaos of the 1990s, and the failure of democratic consolidation in Ukraine and Georgia would mean that an authoritarian belt stretched across Eurasia, a region that contains significant nuclear material and scientists with the know-how to proliferate it, organized crime, traffickers of persons, drug runners, groups with links to al Qaeda, and an exploding HIV/AIDS epidemic.⁵

Europe's Future: Muddling Through?

It is quite possible – even probable – that Europe will neither succeed in developing itself as a strong political entity nor will it collapse. Rather it will find a way to muddle through much as is, ginning up ad hoc solutions to particular problems rather than fostering the kind of coherence for the enlarged Union that the constitution was supposed to provide.

Even the “muddle through” scenario could have negative implications for American foreign policy. Europe may have to expend enormous energy on maintaining the efficacy of the union, and there would only be resentment of an America that tried to distract it from the tasks on the continent by urging Europe to think more globally. Anti-Americanism is unlikely to dissipate simply because George W. Bush is no longer president. There would have to be a concerted effort by the United States to show some deference to European preferences on international issues, particularly on questions regarding the legitimate use of force and on the environment, in order to reverse the trends in European public opinion. But is the United States likely to defer to Europe in the coming years on international questions or to India and China?⁶ As the United States grows more Asia focused, Europe will only grow more resentful. If they fail to demonstrate the diplomatic skill to stay together on international issues, America and Europe may find themselves the target of skillful Chinese diplomacy playing the

two sides of the Atlantic against one another as they seek greater advantage with respect to the world's most dynamic economy.

So far, the discussion simply extrapolates from the current disinterest in Europe by America to lay out some problems that might crop up in the future. But what if we go from neglect to a real separation in the American-European relationship? How might this separation come about, and what would it mean for America's ability to conduct a successful foreign policy?

Possible Causes for Divorce

A major problem with forecasting is that we tend to use some combination of historical knowledge, existing theoretical constructs, and extrapolation from current trends in order to predict the future, and we get caught unaware by unanticipated events that seem inevitable after the fact.⁷ Although we might have predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union given the profound internal crisis that country faced in the 1980s, scholars and policymakers alike were caught by surprise at the whirlwind of events that took place soon after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. We should recognize that some new surprise could be the cause of massive change to our current global order – for example a global health or environmental crisis that reshapes international politics and that after the fact we all agree we should have foreseen. Or perhaps globalization will lead to a reshaping of the basic manner in which we organize ourselves politically and economically just as industrialization gave rise to the modern nation-state.

Even without anticipating a major shock to the international system, however, one can easily enough extrapolate from present trends to predict that the West might divide. The rise of India and China, a reassertion of Russia, and the emergence of a strong Europe could spell the end of the era of American domination, and the great powers might find themselves in a new era of balance-of-power politics. Or perhaps the crisis in multilateralism brought about by the American reaction to September 11 intensifies with a broader failure of institutions like NATO, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations. Or the divergence in identities and interests across the Atlantic finally leads to

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a collapse of common values. Or we live in a world in which all three scenarios have come to pass.

Structural Change: The rise of new great powers and a new global order

Based on present trends, by 2020, China will have emerged as the second leading economic power in the world behind the United States. It's not hard to imagine that India has developed into a major economic actor, Russia has used its energy resources to rebuild a strong state and reassert its dominance over the Eurasian region, and Europe has succeeded in consolidating economic growth and political unity across the continent. As the National Intelligence Council has suggested, "With these and other new global actors, how we mentally map the world in 2020 will change radically. The 'arriviste' powers – China, India, and perhaps others such as Brazil and Indonesia – have the potential to render obsolete the old categories of East and West, North and South, aligned and nonaligned, developed and developing. Traditional geographic groupings will increasingly lose salience in international relations. A state-bound world and a world of mega-cities, linked by flows of telecommunications, trade and finance, will co-exist. Competition for allegiances will be more open, less fixed than in the past."⁸

Of these trends, it is China's rise that may have the most profound implications for world politics in general and American foreign policy in particular. Naazneen Barma and Ely Ratner have argued that "the rise of China presents the West, for the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, with a formidable ideological challenge to [the democratic liberal] paradigm." They argue that this new model combines "illiberal capitalism" (free markets but authoritarian politics) and "illiberal sovereignty" (a rejection of the right of the international community to intervene in internal affairs) that is enabling China to forge ties with like-minded countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.⁹

China's rise as an ideological challenger might lead America and Europe to draw closer together as they did in the face of the Soviet challenge. But the post-World War II international order was sustained by the American commitment to multilateralism that gave rise to new political, economic, and military institutions that consolidated the West as more than just an idea. What happens if multilateralism has collapsed?

The End of Multilateralism: September 11 as a watershed event?

It has become fashionable to argue that September 11 changed America but not the rest of the world.¹⁰ But if September 11 and the war in Iraq changed America's interest in pursuing multilateral solutions to global problems, then the change in America will portend a broader change in global affairs. Or it may simply be that the institutions that America and its partners have relied on to manage international challenges are no longer able to address the problems of the 21st century. It is easy enough to imagine that the Doha round collapses completely, the NATO mission in Afghanistan fails, and the UN is unable to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. What would then happen to those institutions?

There may be enough momentum in the World Trade Organization and the United Nations that those institutions would survive their current problems. But it is hard to imagine that NATO can survive if it fails in Afghanistan. NATO as an organization held together in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War because it had unfinished business to deal with in Europe. It needed to extend its security umbrella across the continent in order to ensure democratic consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe, and it was faced with conflict in the Balkans that threatened its broader agenda. Once NATO had eliminated the threats that faced Europe from within, it was only logical that it turn its attention to the threats that emanated from outside of Europe, as America was arguing the alliance should do by the late 1990s. Although European countries balked at this notion initially, September 11 brought home the need to combat threats posed from abroad.

The NATO mission in Afghanistan is the boldest ever undertaken by the alliance. To date more than thirty thousand troops serve under NATO command in an effort to stabilize Afghanistan and defeat a resurgent Taliban. But the mission may well fail. Most European countries, notably France, Germany, Italy and Spain, are unwilling to send their troops on dangerous missions, leaving that work largely to the Americans, Canadians, British and Dutch (as well as the Australians). If NATO fails in its Afghanistan mission, those countries that were willing to engage Taliban forces will not soon forgive those that were not. If NATO cannot pacify Afghanistan, then it is hard to imagine that the United States will see any value in working formally through NATO to deal with the growing challenges from the Islamic world.

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Failure in Afghanistan might well occur in conjunction with a continuing divergence in values across the Atlantic, a divergence brought about in part due to a conscious European policy to utilize anti-American sentiment as a means of salvaging the European project.

The End of Common Values? Anti-Americanism and the Future of Europe

It is possible that the summer of 2004 will be viewed as the moment when the project to build a single Europe began to come unglued. Within months of the accession to membership in the European Union of ten countries, eight of whom came from the former communist East, voters in France and the Netherlands rejected the proposed European constitution. Many analysts pointed to the decision to expand the Union into the East and the proposed start of formal accession talks with Turkey as the catalyst for the constitutional rejection.

At the same time, a growing number of commentators have noted the divergence in values between Americans and Europeans on a whole range of issues: the organization of the economy and the welfare state, the environment, the role of religion in society, and the death penalty to name a few.¹¹

Is it far-fetched to imagine European elites turning to anti-Americanism in desperation as a means to regenerate the European project and foster greater unity?¹² These elites could argue that America was ill-suited to dominate world affairs because its values were so out of step with the rest of the world, and that Europe could not afford to be divided. A few winters without snow in the Alps or a few summers of searing drought might help bring the point home. And as the opposite sides of the Atlantic looked more and more different, the Western community might no longer be sustainable, and, just as Charles Kupchan predicted, Washington and Brussels by 2020 might go the way of Rome and Constantinople in an earlier era.¹³

What Divorce Would Mean for American Foreign Policy

Perhaps the most important casualty of a divorce would be the inability of the United States to foster a community of democracies to act coherently in world affairs. Such a community is only possible with a strong Transatlantic core. The implications for global democratic developments are even more troubling if the United States has lost its

primacy in international affairs. Michael Doyle has argued that the failure to support democratizing states in the 1920s and 1930s is typical of liberal states in changing international circumstances and that farsighted assistance to preserve an international liberal order has only occurred "when one liberal state stood preeminent among the rest, prepared and able to take measures, as did Britain before World War I and the United States following World War II, to sustain economically and politically the foundations of liberal society beyond its borders."¹⁴

That Western order, under United States leadership, prevailed in the Cold War because the peoples of the communist bloc came to understand that they were far worse off than their Western counterparts. The values victory was consolidated in the 1990s by the West in Central and Eastern Europe, but not elsewhere. We are already seeing reversals of democratic trends in Latin America and Eurasia. After failure in Iraq and an inability of the United States to articulate a freedom agenda forcefully in its aftermath, democratic reversals might well become more commonplace around the world.

A world in which the United States no longer leads and Europe has gone its separate ways would resemble the world of the 1930s when the West divided and failed to respond to fascism. Richard Haass has written that the American era in the Middle East is already over, with profound implications for a region in which Iran will emerge as a leading actor while Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt may all become engulfed in crisis, not to mention Iraq.¹⁵ A broader end to the American era combined with the collapse of the Transatlantic community would be even more disquieting. China's ability to pose an ideological challenge to democratic capitalism would become more significant, and Islamic fundamentalism would grow stronger.

If America and Europe go their separate ways, it is hard to see how core international institutions, including the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, and the G-8 (not to mention NATO), could function. So what would take their place? Without Europe and America working together, and certainly if America no longer dominates world politics, we are unlikely to see the development of successful new institutions. Instead, it is more likely that bilateralism will flourish in the trading realm, as the wealthy countries compete with one another to curry favor with leading developing nations, while shifting coalitions mark the political and military realm.¹⁶

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It makes a great deal of difference if this hypothetical world features a strong, united Europe or a weak and divided continent. The former could become a power countering American influence in the ways that Kupchan, Reid and Leonard have suggested. But Europe is likely to face grave difficulties in the future – economic stagnation, an aging population, instability to its immediate East, and continued energy dependence on an undependable Russia.

If Europe is weak and divided, the American approach to world affairs could rest on ad hoc coalitions made up in part of Commonwealth countries (notably the UK, Canada, Australia, and possibly India) plus perhaps some of the former communist nations (e.g. Poland and the Baltic nations). Meanwhile, France, Spain, Germany and Italy might try to salvage a Europe that moves closer to Russia and China.

Could America Return to Isolationism?

When the Cold War ended, American foreign policy elites worried greatly that the country would retreat into isolationism now that it had prevailed against the Soviet Union. On both the left and the right, voices called for an end to America's role as the world's policeman. In the 1992 campaign, with Patrick Buchanan drawing significant Republican primary support on a platform of America First and Ross Perot garnering nearly 20% of the vote in the general election decrying free trade, it seemed that perhaps America would retreat. Two years later, Republicans took control of Congress, and many new members proudly proclaimed that they held no passports and had no interest in traveling abroad.

Bill Clinton, although not elected for his foreign policy prowess, debunked the isolationists by arguing that in a globalized world, America could not afford to disconnect from the rest of mankind. And with the attacks of September 11, the American population supported active engagement to combat the threats posed from the broader Middle East.

By 2020, we will have a better idea if George Bush's belief that he will come to be seen as another Harry Truman is borne out. It is hard to imagine at this point that it will be.¹⁷ More likely will be the judgment that the management of the Iraq war was the greatest strategic blunder in American history and led to enormous problems for American foreign policy for years to come.

As such, we need to ask what the likely fallout will be for American politics. It is not enough to say that isolationism is impossible in a globalizing world. There are degrees of internationalism and isolationism.¹⁸ Economic engagement with the rest of the world is compatible with a worldview that is much more politically isolationist; after all, that was the premise of Washington's farewell address. Fewer American efforts to support democracy and a call for reducing American military presence worldwide are a rational public response to the Iraqi debacle.

American engagement with Europe has been a core component of its international engagement since the Second World War. If America and Europe go their separate ways, this is likely to feed isolationist tendencies. Without NATO, America would not have its most important formal military alliance, and if Japan has nationalized its foreign policy in response to a rising China and a nuclear Korea, Americans may believe they no longer need to provide a security umbrella for their leading Asian ally. The United States could certainly turn more of its attention to Asian affairs without creating the web of engagement that it has had with Europe.

Isolationism is even easier to imagine if somehow technological advances reduce the importance of hydrocarbons to the global economy. Perhaps that is unlikely by 2020, but certainly not by 2050. And if America no longer needs Gulf oil, then further retreat is easily imaginable. America could conceivably again seek to become the offshore balancer that the realists have become nostalgic for in recent years.¹⁹

A Return to Realism?

If we are imagining a world in which America and Europe have gone their separate ways, then we are imagining a world in which the realists were right. Europe might be strong, competing with America, China, India, and Russia for global influence. Or it might be weak, with some countries joining American-led coalitions, others seeking closer ties to Russia and China. It would be a world in which American primacy is likely to have ended, and it might be a world in which Americans have returned to political and military isolationism.

Perhaps America will have returned to a policy of offshore balancing. Rather than engaging overseas in crisis prevention and crisis

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management, America would simply ensure that no regional hegemony could emerge. But when the realists harken back to the halcyon days when America avoided entangling alliances, they ignore the costs that a policy of offshore balancing produced. True, America helped ensure that Japan did not succeed in Asia nor Germany in Europe sixty years ago. But the costs of waiting until those countries had started well on their way to seek supremacy in their regions were huge. Surely America and the world would have been better off if intervention had come sooner.

Any American grand strategy will be complicated in a world without Europe as a strong ally in dealing with two of the major issues that will continue to be at the forefront of American security challenges: nuclear proliferation and terrorism. By 2020, we may well look back on the early years of the century incredulous that America's war to prevent Saddam Hussein from developing weapons he did not possess distracted the country from preventing North Korea and Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons programs, which then opened to floodgates to others to follow, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.

Such proliferation would confront Europe with an interesting dilemma, and might further complicate American deterrence strategies. In a world in which the non-proliferation regime has collapsed, and in which the Europeans no longer felt secure under the American nuclear umbrella, would the EU seek to develop its own program? What would the reaction be of the two current European nuclear states, the United Kingdom and France to a broader European effort to build nuclear weapons?

Finally, on terrorism, the United States and Europe maintained close working relationships in the areas of intelligence and finance even through the disputes of 2003-04. But at the end of the day, throughout this current period, we were still allies. If we are no longer allies, and anti-American politicians have emerged to lead major European states, could this working level cooperation continue? Being able to count on European intelligence services and banks has been a crucial aspect of American policy, one that could be severely compromised if America and Europe part ways.

During the Cold War, it was usually good politics and good policy for leaders of an American ally to stay close to the United States. What if

that is no longer true? Staying close to America cost Tony Blair, Jose Aznar and Silvio Berlusconi significant political support at home. If European populations come to believe that they are more likely to be targets (Madrid and London), the closer they are to America, we could see a serious effort by European politicians to play the anti-American card both to further their political ambition and as smart national security policy. If that is how the political winds blow in Europe over the next 10-15 years, America will find itself in serious trouble.

The United States will likely focus more on Asia by 2020 than on Europe. The emergence of India and China as major economic powers (and in China's case, possibly an ideological and military power as well) makes this quite probable. But a growing belief that Europe is no longer relevant poses high risks to America's ability to conduct foreign policy. If the realists do turn out to be right about American-European relations, they will have been assisted by a failure of U.S. imagination and of U.S. leadership. Those who think that America can conduct its foreign policy without a strong Transatlantic relationship would be giving up on a foreign policy that promotes political and economic freedom. America without Europe will find achieving its foreign policy aims to be extraordinarily difficult – would China or Russia be better partners? Americans and Europeans do not have to agree on everything, and their interests are different. But a collapse of the Western community, and with it the ideals of the West, would signal that international institutions could no longer function, that the great powers were once again playing off one another, and that the American era was truly over.