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**The United States and the Origins  
of European Integration**

by

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# The United States and the Origins of European Integration

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It could be useful, in order to understand better the historical junction at which we find ourselves, to review the United States' contribution to the process of European integration; a *deus ex machina* role that has given an indelible imprint to the formation of a "particular" collaboration between certain European nations. The cold war context caused the American planners to become promoters of a form of European cooperation (and of integration between the United States and this area of cooperation) within a radical revision of their international strategy. The result has been the establishment of a new world balance that has lasted fifty years and in which the difficult process of unification of Western Europe has been able to develop itself.

Now that the ideological walls have crumbled down it is perhaps possible to re-read, with greater clarity, the events of half a century ago, allowing us to estimate with greater precision the course of our route and to become more aware both of the sea crossed and of the rest of the journey that lays ahead. Also because the destination has now somewhat changed.

## **From isolationism to entanglement.**

The myth of American "exceptionalism" has grown as the image of an America as a world completely different, superior and separated from that of the Old World, which is troubled by the lack of democracy and rife with social and international conflicts, a continuous source for wars and political disturbances. Since 1823, with the Monroe Doctrine, the United States officially distanced itself from Europe, and proposed itself as guarantor of the impenetrability of the Americas against the aims of European imperialism. Specifically addressing Czarist Russia, the American president established the principle that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." A substantial difference between the European and American systems was therefore established. Although declaring respect for the former and the intention to avoid any and all interferences in it, the United States would have considered an eventual European intrusion as "an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

The judgment on the European system was unfavorable and this is implicit in the statement: "It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to

any portion of either continent [*i.e.*, North or South America], without endangering our peace and happiness.”<sup>1</sup>

This claimed distance from Europe dates back to George Washington and to the words in his Farewell Address of 1796: “Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?” According to Thomas Jefferson in 1801: “Peace, commerce, and honest friendship, with all nations; entangling alliances with none.”<sup>2</sup> In the political lingo of the United States, the entanglement, referring especially to the Europeans, has had a totally negative meaning for a long time.

It was in this “splendid isolation” that North America entered the “American century” in a grand position of power. And it was during this century that the national and economic security of the United States showed how it couldn’t rely anymore on isolationism and its insularity. The participation in two World Wars and the economic and social disaster of the Great Depression of 1929, definitely terminated the isolationist policy. Either the United States had become too big or the world was too small and already interdependent, at that point. The global vocation, personified by Woodrow Wilson and shunned by Congress and the public with the failure of the Versailles talks, brought the United States back into an illusory and anachronistic withdrawal into itself. On December 7, 1941, the Pearl Harbor attack demonstrated once and for all the vulnerability of “fortress America.”

World War Two taught Americans that it was impossible for them to avoid the European entanglements, actually this was a much more dangerous operation than finding a means with which to control them. The new superpower had to come to terms with hard-headed Europe and in the process discovered again its heritage and the contribution made by millions of immigrants from the Old World to its prosperity. With its riches in skilled manpower, industrial manufacturing potential and its population, Europe was a crucial area of exchange for the US. It was also the closest culturally, therefore the easiest to “Americanize”, according to an old dream of the New World.<sup>3</sup> Even to enforce its global vocation, the American superpower discovered very soon the need for a European cooperation, total or partial.

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<sup>1</sup>The “Monroe Doctrine” (Monroe’s Seventh Annual Message to Congress) in James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1896, II, pp. 207-20.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in William Safire, *Safire’s Political Dictionary*, Ballantine Books, New York 1980, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup>See W.T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World. The Trend of the Twentieth Century*, Horace Markley, New York 1902.

## The Geopolitical aspect

Actually the United States, much to the relief of the critics of European entanglement, didn't get "dragged" by Europe into the World Wars, but entered them with the belief of defending its national interests. Even in the absence of a formal statement, this interpretation of the national interest represented a noteworthy expansion of the Monroe Doctrine.

During World War I and II, the United States entered the fray only when the results of the conflict were allowing hostile foreign powers to settle on the coasts of the two oceans that surrounds it, which, for all intent and purposes, were considered a border. This happened in 1917, when Wilhelm's Germany, with its no-quarter submarine warfare, showed itself to be aggressive and hostile towards US neutrality. At the same time, the breakdown of the Russian front allowed the Germans to focus on the West, turning the war in their favor. In the same fashion, the United States prepared for World War II - and even the isolationists turned into interventionists - when France was invaded in July of 1940 and Great Britain found itself alone, facing the Nazi aggression. Two days after the May 14 defeat of France at Sedan, president Roosevelt succeeded -with overwhelming consensus - in passing a supplementary \$ 896 million budget allocation for Defense.

When Germany reached the beaches of the Atlantic, the United States felt threatened, and for the first time allowed the building of a fleet to be utilized also in the Atlantic. It wasn't the totalitarian and evil approach and character of Nazism that stimulated the American power, just as the antithesis of the Russian system didn't stop America from helping Communist Russia immediately after the German invasion.<sup>4</sup>

The main reasons for the opening of the hostilities were the success and the implications of the Hitlerian "new order". It's a well-known fact that, long before Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt had committed his country to an undeclared war against Hitler's Germany. Actually, what Hitler had achieved by the end of 1942, presented itself as a geopolitical nightmare, with the Third Reich in the position described by Mackinder as "who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: who rules Heartland commands the World-Island: who rules World-Island commands the World".<sup>5</sup>

American "continentalism" was defeated here for good, the future would have to avoid isolationism which could turn into a dangerous isolation. It was the shield of the English fleet and Great Britain's policy of restraint - aimed at stopping the domination of Europe by a single power - that allowed the United States to remain in an aloof disengagement. Facing the ever more evident inability on the part of Great Britain to fulfill its long time function, and the brutal, forced European unity under Nazi rule, a result of the failure of that policy, the United States "discovered" the tenets and the dangers of geopolitics. The passage to globalism happened through the awareness of having to inherit, in the name of its own national security, the English policy of restraint.

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Lippmann, *Gli scopi di guerra degli Stati Uniti*, Einaudi, Torino 1946.

<sup>5</sup>Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, Holt and Company, New York 1919, p. 150.

It is with this awareness that, on August 22, 1943, a memo by the US Joint Chiefs explicitly stated the fundamental objectives to be pursued in the war: “(1) to destroy the German domination of Europe, and (2) to prevent the domination of Europe in the future by any single power (such as the Soviet Union), or by any group of powers in which we do not have a strong influence. If we do not achieve *both* these aims, we may consider that we have lost the war.”<sup>6</sup> In the summer of the following year, this concept was restated in an analysis by the Office of Strategic Service: “our interests require the maintenance of a policy designed to prevent the development of a serious threat to the security of the British Isles (and of the United States), through the consolidation of a large part of Europe’s resources under any one power.”<sup>7</sup>

The restoration of a world balance under American control is well illustrated by the contextual debate on the geopolitical objectives happening within the United States in those war years. If, according to the English Mackinder, the world balance depended on the maintenance of independence of the “Eurasian rimlands” from the domination by an “Eurasian heartland”, the United States had to secure themselves this objective. The director of the Yale Institute of International Studies wrote in 1943: “The most important single fact in the American security situation is the question of who controls the rimland of Europe and Asia. Should these get into the hands of a single power or combination of powers hostile to United States, the resulting encirclement would put us in a position of grave peril, regardless of the size of our army and navy.”<sup>8</sup>

The American geopolitical expert Nicholas John Spykman claimed, in those same years, that the “islands” of North and South America - which the Monroe Doctrine put under the protection of the United States - were risking being overwhelmed by the new imbalances. The results of World War II would decide “whether the United States is to remain a great power with a voice in the affairs of the Old World, or become merely a buffer state between the mighty empires of Germany and Japan.”<sup>9</sup>

These concepts were popularized by the war propaganda. In a documentary in the series “Why We Fight”, directed by Frank Capra (*America at War*, 1943), it was candidly explained to the American public that, had the Axis forces won the conflict, the United States would have to settle for the control of three tenths of the global raw materials as opposed to seven, one industrial region instead of three, and “only” one eighth of the world population.

### **The problem of the European settlement after the war**

While still at war, the United States began to evaluate the problem of a future European settlement, especially when the possibility of turning the tide of the war in

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<sup>6</sup>Walter LaFeber, *The American Age. United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750*, Norton & Company, New York 1989, p. 401.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace. Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, New York 1989, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup>Frederick Sherwood Dunn, “An Introductory Statement,” in Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York 1944, p. X.

<sup>9</sup>Nicholas John Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, New York 1942, p. 195.

favor of the Allies became likely, after the victory at Stalingrad. In those years hypotheses were formulated that undoubtedly contributed to the choices in the aftermath of the conflict.

It's not possible to ignore the effect on American choices caused by the debate on the Nazi "new order", which took place during World War II. Thanks to the Nazi propaganda, in the debate there was the tendency to underestimate the brutality and the monstrous Nazi system of exploitation of the conquered territories, to highlight certain positive features of this "new order" on the economic level, while at the same time deploring its subordination towards the Nazi political goals. In the Hitlerian creation something was seen that could have brought stability and employment, a betterment for the backwater rural regions of Europe, solutions that could help the economic malaise suffered by the Old Continent in the last decades. Mostly it was emphasized that the Nazi "new order" "designs to make Europe into a single economic unity, with co-ordinated currency systems and markets, and planned investment and development over the whole area on the basis of a rational continental division of labour."<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, it's hard to estimate how much of this interpretation rooted itself in the minds of the American strategists, contributing to the maturation of the choices for the period following the war. But we can't forget the thoughts of one of the chief architects of these choices, George Kennan, who - in a meeting in 1949 - told Dean Acheson: "it often seemed to me, during the war living over there, that what was wrong with Hitler's new order was that it was Hitler's."<sup>11</sup>

In September of 1942, at the request of the State Department, the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations, a non-governmental group, prepared a report titled "American Interests in The Economic Unification of Europe with respect to Trade Barriers", the conclusive remarks of which stated: "The United States would favor economic unification of Europe only if steps are taken to avoid the creation of an autarkic continental economy. Positive American policy should aim at the interpenetration of Europe's economy with that of the world, as well as a lowering of economic barriers throughout the world."<sup>12</sup>

The diffusion of these themes was helped by the works of the count Coudenhove-Kalergy, exiled leader of the Pan-European Union in New York, which proposed a European federation.<sup>13</sup> A study prepared by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress was widely circulated, in which was suggested that a European federation or confederation would have helped solve the difficult problem of Germany, offering that nation the possibility of equal treatment while at the same time enforcing some restrictions.

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<sup>10</sup>Maurice Dobb, *Aspects of Nazi Economic Policy*, "Science & Society", vol. VIII, n. 2, Spring 1944, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Max Beloff, *The United States and the Unity of Europe*, Vantage Books, New York 1963, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup>See R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergy, *Crusade for Pan-Europe*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York 1943.

Even president Roosevelt knew about these themes: former ambassador Bullitt issued a memorandum in which he analyzed the prospects for an eventual political unification of Europe, and the ally Churchill, in one of his Washington visits, in May 1943, hinted at similar points. During this particular occasion, Churchill talked about the possibility for a European regional council as well as a vaguely expressed idea of a system of European confederations into which Europe had to be modelled. In this picture, the English premier proposed the separation of Prussia from the rest of Germany.

The official standpoint towards an eventual form of European integration was then one of “extreme caution”. Roosevelt, personally, was cold towards these analyses and suspicious of any form of European unification, since he thought that it could jeopardize the collaboration with the Soviets. With the Soviet Union bearing the brunt of the war and lamenting the delays in the opening of the Western front, the American president didn’t want Stalin to think that he could be overtaken in his plans by the allied powers. Moreover, the United States feared that an agreement between European nations could interfere with the worldwide security tasks that the future organization of the United Nations would have been called to face, and they worried that the regional blocks could hinder their plans for a worldwide multilateral trade system.

One of the few officials in the State Department that kept on struggling against Roosevelt’s trust in the Russians, was George Kennan, a young, very articulate diplomat with an extraordinary knowledge of Russian culture, language and politics. His contradictions with the diplomatic establishment are invaluable to understanding of the dialectics and the difficulties with which the beginning of a new global strategy was modelled within the Truman administration.

To Kennan, in his words at the beginning of 1945, the Soviets didn’t have any interest in a political and economic resurrection of Europe: “They view with suspicion any source of unity or moral integrity in Europe that they cannot themselves control... Russia’s security, in their view, means absence of cohesion, and of balance, of harmony, in the rest of Europe.”<sup>14</sup> The USSR, it followed, would have worked against the European recovery. The Red Army was establishing total control in Eastern Europe, where no US or English troops were operating.

The hypothesis of a permanent presence of the USSR in Central Europe was conflicting with the security of the United States: “A basic conflict is...arising over Europe between the interests of Atlantic sea-power, which demand the preservation of vigorous and independent political life on the European peninsula, and the interests of the jealous Eurasian land power, which must always seek to extend itself to the west and will never find a place, short of the Atlantic Ocean, where it can from its own standpoint safely stop.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted in David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, New York 1988, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 95.



So convinced was Kennan that the territories occupied by the Russians could no longer be rescued, that he thought it better to immediately agree on the European spheres of influence, with a reciprocal agreement on non-interference. Kennan's frustration in not being able to get heard by the top brass almost brought him to resign; but in little more than a year he would have made one of the most influential advisors in the State Department.

It was at the beginning of 1946 that the attitudes towards the Russians changed, re-opening the debate on Europe in a new context. The disappearance of Roosevelt's "grand design", symbolically and ambiguously personified by the Yalta agreements, and finally sanctioned by the death of that great president, almost at the end of the conflict, forced the Americans to look for a new strategy, one in which Europe would have had a central role that would have demanded new solutions and interpretations.

The basis on which, according to Roosevelt, the maintenance of the world order was situated in the aftermath of the war, the alliance and cooperation with the USSR and an "international police" comprised of the two superpowers plus China and Great Britain, the support of the latter as junior partner and the functioning of the United Nations proved ill-founded. The UN was constantly blocked by the Russian veto and Great Britain found itself a former great power. Especially the growing hostility between the two superpowers gave to the strategists a glimpse of an unpredictable possibility: the former ally, whose armies had first liberated, and later occupied half of Europe, could have insinuated itself in the midst of the European power vacuum that had followed the demise of the Third Reich.

The geopolitical nightmare of a rimland in the hands of the great Eurasian power, hostile to the United States, came to substitute that of a Nazi Germany, which had just faded. The cold war was redrawing the good guys and the bad ones, but the chief objectives, for the US, were clear by now, even if fresh solutions had to be looked for, in the light of the recent developments.

## The German Question

One of the hottest problems to be confronted concerned the future of Germany. On the one hand, it was necessary to prevent the rebirth of Germany as a military power and as a threat for the global balance, on the other hand, it was imperative to eliminate the mistakes of the punitive peace of Versailles that could have fueled nationalism and resentment. The oscillation between repression and rehabilitation of the Germans characterized for a long period the top layer in the US government.

Roosevelt, in the irrational environment of a total war to extinction, sanctioned by his controversial decision to fight until the unconditional surrender of the Axis forces, seemed ready, in 1944, to follow the hard line. In the Summer of that year, he accepted the plan on Germany proposed by the Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau. To him, the only way to prevent future wars was the elimination not only of the German war making capability, but of its whole industrial structure, turning it into a “rural” nation. According to the Treasury Secretary, the economic chaos that would have ensued, would have brought home the defeat to the Germans.<sup>16</sup>

Roosevelt used the harshest terms in referring to the Germans, identifying them *tout court* with Nazism: “every person in Germany should realize that this time Germany is a defeated nation. I do not want them to starve to death, but, as an example, if they need food to keep body and soul together beyond what they have, they should be fed three times a day with soup from Army soup kitchens. That will keep them perfectly healthy and they will remember that experience all their lives...The German people as a whole must have it driven home to them that the whole nation has been engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of modern civilization.”<sup>17</sup>

In that same 1944, in Quebec, Roosevelt introduced the “plan” to Churchill. In order to convince the skeptical English ally, even economic motivations were added, as the possibility of increasing English exports as a substitute for the loss of many overseas assets. Churchill, as he states in his memoirs, accepted the plan only half-heartedly, simply because Great Britain had a desperate need for Morgenthau’s dollars. It was only in November that, confronted by many resistance’s, Roosevelt softened his position, ending up with the guarantee of a document which stated that, if it wouldn’t compromise peace, “German productive skill and experience should be utilized for the general economic welfare of Europe and the world.”<sup>18</sup>

The influence of the Morgenthau’s plan was still present in the directive JCS 1067, April 1945, which instructed the military governor of the American occupation, General Lucius Clay, to limit the industrial output and to proceed with an energetic denazification. A hard job, both due to the hostility of the people and the penetration of Nazism in the German society. Moreover, Germany’s economic self-sufficiency was been

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<sup>16</sup>See John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, Columbia University Press, New York 1972, pp. 95-132.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in *ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 121.

hindered in such a way as to force the American taxpayer to keep up the responsibility to feed and clothe the Germans. After the early criticism of this directive, all judicial measures concerning former Nazis thought necessary for the European and German reconstruction were halted, via a memo dated January 1946.

Clay ended up getting rid of the directive, allowing for the reconstruction of the industries and blocking the denazification process: the latter, had it been carried out to the letter, would have impeded the enlistment of sufficient cadres, especially at a managerial level, necessary for the economic rebuilding of Germany.

After the conference between the Foreign Affairs Secretaries of Moscow in April of 1947, denazification was entrusted to the Germans, and practically ended there. Characters like the industrialist Krupp were rehabilitated, German scientists and Nazi officers that were experts in the field of the Soviet Union obtained protection from the US, regardless of their past records.

In the pragmatic evaluation that made the Morgenthau plan look like something zany, other consideration came into play: the fear of growing hostility from the population towards the Allies and the memories of the tragic aftermath of that humiliating peace settlement signed by the Germans in Versailles, already condemned by Keynes in his famous *pamphlet*, the physical suffering of a society on the brink of starvation and an economy of barter. And, on top of that, with the passing of time, it was becoming increasingly clear that a European jump-start without Germany would have been very hard, due to the structural dependency of many a nation close to the German economy and its centrality in the whole European economic context.

These considerations, however, had to deal with the increasingly hostile developments of the relations with the Russians, with the French intentions of not allowing a German renaissance and with a public opinion, internal and external, still traumatized by the Nazi war crimes. As a newspaper explained, on the opening day of the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow, March 1947: "Basically the problem is how to bring the corpse of Germany back to life without making it dangerous again to the rest of the world."<sup>19</sup>

At that time, the American ideas had cleared up a bit and were establishing a direction. It was necessary for the world to know that, and for the Nazi menace presumably eradicated forever after the defeat to be substituted by a bigger and more global threat yet, the Soviet expansionism and totalitarianism. A few days later, the Truman Doctrine would take care of that.

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<sup>19</sup>Safe German Resurrection Prime Objective at Moscow, "Washington Post", March 10, 1947.

## Europe and the Containment

Quite naturally, there exists an enormous documentation on the US strategic shift during the consolidation of the “cold war”. We’re interested in shedding light on how, within this frame, the Americans have managed to pose the premises for an integrated Europe, keeping in mind that the result, in many respects, was different from that hoped for.

In the first months of 1946 it became clear to the top echelons what was already known at the low levels of the Truman administration which had worked closely with the Russians, as General Lucius Clay or the diplomatic George Kennan, who, in the summer of 1945, had already written: “The idea of a Germany run jointly with the Russian is a chimera. The idea of both the Russians and ourselves withdrawing politely at a given date and a healthy, peaceful, stable, and friendly Germany arising out of the resulting vacuum is also a chimera. We have no choice but to lead our section of Germany - the section of which we and the British have accepted responsibility - to a form of independence so prosperous, so secure, so superior, that the East cannot threaten it.”<sup>20</sup>

The passage from collaboration to opposition could be symbolically represented by the hiring of Kennan, an obscure and unheard diplomatic officer up until February 1946, to the top rank of a new agency, the Policy Planning Staff, charged with the elaboration of strategic proposals for the new course of the US.

The problem now was “to hold the Soviet away from the eastern shores of the Atlantic,” according to a top secret document of April 29, 1947, where the United States were defined as “the natural leader of this hemisphere.”<sup>21</sup> In the strategic revolution operated by the United States, Europe - and forcibly the Western part of it, given the impossibility of influencing the area controlled by the Soviet forces - became the border that the USSR wasn’t allowed to trespass, an essential field test to assay the North American capacity to put the assumed Soviet expansionism in its place.

According to the guidelines of “containment” established by Kennan, Russia considered the West as a foe, and intended to apply constant pressure to reduce its power. The United States had to contain the expansionist tendencies of the Russians with patience and a “vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” If the Americans could have been able to oppose a cohesive, stable and prosperous system, the Reds wouldn’t have managed to make a dent in it. Moreover, “the United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, Pantheon Book, New York 1987 (1967), p. 258.

<sup>21</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, I, pp. 738-50.

<sup>22</sup>George Kennan, alias “Mr. X”, *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, “Foreign Affairs”, XXV, July 1947, pp. 566-82.

If, as claimed by Kennan, “World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue,”<sup>23</sup> the instability and the economic crisis that was plaguing Western Europe offered great opportunities for intervention by the Soviet whom, unlike the westerners, could rely on national communist parties within the opponents’ field. Given the severe European situation, dramatically highlighted by the hard winter of 1946-47, the most urgent problem was that of bringing back stability and economic growth fast, because, as State Secretary George Marshall declared: “The recovery of Europe has been far slower than had been expected. Disintegrating forces are becoming evident: The patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate.”<sup>24</sup>

The economic concern was considered more urgent than a reinforcement of military defenses, certainly harder to digest for a public opinion on the way to post-war demobilization. There was also the variable of the American taxpayers and that of the Houses, firmly in the hands of a Republican majority. The task wasn’t easy and should have started with the realization that the bilateral *ad hoc* aid policy had failed. A different and innovative policy was called for.

### **Towards the Marshall Plan**

In 1947 the American shift towards a new and global “grand strategy” emerged and manifested itself. This strategy had one of its most creative and original moments in the Marshall Plan. In his Harvard address of June 5 th., 1947, where the Plan was introduced, Marshall pointed to the necessity of an aid program to Europe that the United States would have supported if the European states collaborated in a common program, giving birth to a cooperative action of their own. This statement was a healthy jolt to the abstract and utopian “Europeism” that sporadically had shown its features up until that moment, and marked the beginning of a road towards real cooperation still underway today. Some people, with a bit of cynicism perhaps, have stated that “the concept of European integration had various intellectual roots, but to make it come down from the sphere of an indistinct enthusiasm and associate it with a bundle of dollars meant a decisive increment of political penetration for Washington.”<sup>25</sup>

In any case, the majority of the scholars agree on the acknowledgment of the US decision to bank on the cooperation of the European states - certain particular European states - as the key to solve several post-war problems, even though the debate continues over the order of importance of these problems in modeling the American “plan”. In the modest and generic form in which it was introduced, the Marshall Plan was, however, a great turning point: the United States didn’t believe anymore, as in 1945, that the United Nations should have coordinated the aid to Europe. It was a role that, significantly, they

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<sup>23</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, VI, p. 709.

<sup>24</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, III, p. 219.

<sup>25</sup>Charles S. Maier, “Voi Europei”. *Concetti regionali e ruoli nazionali nel quadro del Piano Marshall*, in Elena Aga Rossi (ed.), *Il Piano Marshall e l’Europa*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1983, p. 43.

personally took as their own, also because the Russians had a voice in the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

Once again, it was Kennan, with his Policy Planning Staff, that elaborated the paper at the bottom of the Harvard address, anticipating the ideas expressed there and sometimes even the language. In this secret memo of May 23, 1947, we find some of the basic principles which guided the policy of the first phase of "containment": the most serious danger came from the devastation and the emotional damage brought on by the war and not from a possible Russian attack; consequently the solution for the US was to provide economic, not military aid; such measures would have been more efficient with a program managed in large portions by the Europeans themselves.

In this framework, the Policy Planning Staff "recognizes that the communists are exploiting the European Crisis and that further communist successes would create serious danger to American security. It considers, however, that American effort in aid to Europe should be directed not to the combatting of communism as such but to the restoration of the economic health and vigor of European society. It should aim, in other words, to combat not communism, but the economic maladjustment which makes European society vulnerable to exploitation by any and all totalitarian movements and which Russian communism is now exploiting."

Also the theatrical and propaganda aspects of the matter weren't forgotten. Aside from providing a real contribution to the solution of the European problems, on a psychological level, the aid plan was supposed to give the leading edge to the US, catalyzing the hopes and trust of the Europeans; the American public needed to get a clear explanation, detailing the centrality of the problem and the importance of the aid plan.

The United States did not wish for a unilaterally and formally imposed plan: "The formal initiative must come from Europe; the program must be evolved in Europe; and the Europeans must bear the basic responsibility for it. The role of this country should consist of friendly aid in the drafting of a European program and later support of such a program, by financial and other means, at European request...[The Program] must, for psychological and political as well as economic reasons, be an international agreed program. The request for our support must come as a joint request from a group of friendly nations, not as a series of isolated and individual appeals."

Moreover, the disbursements of said plan should have kept in mind the economic interests of the US and been issued *una tantum*, so as not to increase the already abnormal European dependency on America.

Another important point was that the proposal should have been made to all the European nations, but in a way that "the Russian satellite countries would either exclude themselves by unwillingness to accept the proposed conditions or agree to abandon the exclusive orientation of their economies."<sup>26</sup>

In this document, foundation of the Marshall Plan, the cooperation between European states is the crux of the matter; as Kennan would underline later, "we had

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<sup>26</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, III, pp. 224-30.*

serious doubts about the success of any movement toward European recovery that rested merely on a series of uncoordinated national programs; we considered that one of the long-term deficiencies of the European economy as a whole was its excessive fragmentation, the lack of competitive flexibility in commercial exchanges, the lack, in particular, of a large consumer's market. By insisting on a joint approach, we hoped to force the Europeans to begin to think like Europeans, and not like nationalists, in their approach to the economic problems of the continent."<sup>27</sup>

### **A Solution to the German Question**

Another main theme in George Kennan's policy plan was the political and economic rehabilitation of Germany. To Kennan, the aid plan, and thus the security of the US, was strictly linked to the reintegration process and the recovery of the German economy.

Just a few days away from delivering his recommendations to Marshall, in a conference held in Washington on May 6, 1947, Kennan was lamenting the delays and the lack of prescience with which the German question had been dealt with up to then. For two years the American occupation hadn't made any effort concerning the economic recovery of Germany, waiting to strike an agreement with the Russians. In the meantime, the American taxpayer had made big sacrifices in order to maintain a level of minimal subsistence in the occupied zone. It wasn't just the removal of the American burden, as much as the realizing of the essential role played by the German economy in the European recovery: the recovery of German productivity, even in a single area of that nation, was essential to the that of the whole of Western Europe.

According to Kennan: "in this case that which is at stake is an economic program of crucial urgency: a program on which tens of millions of people are waiting as a matter almost of life and death, a program which may prove decisive for the balance of power in Europe...In my opinion it is imperatively urgent today that the improvement of economic conditions and the revival of productive capacity in the west of Germany be made the primary object of our policy in that area and be given top priority in all our occupation policy; and that this principle be adopted as a general line of procedure of this government, binding on all of its departments and agencies."<sup>28</sup>

Actually, in that same Spring of 1947, other documents concurred in tying in Euro cooperation and political-economic rehabilitation of Germany in the minds of the top layer of the Truman administration, contributing to the final elaboration by Kennan of the preparatory paper for the Harvard address. In March, the so-called Hoover Report overcame some resistance and was accepted: the German juggernaut would have to function as the engine for the European recovery. On April 14, a special report by State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee highlighted a strategy of stabilization pivoting around German reintegration and European economic integration. According to the

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<sup>27</sup> George Kennan, *Memoirs*, p. 337.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 334.

report, the areas occupied by the Allies, Germany included, “should be coordinated parts of a comprehensive recovery plan, which in turn should seek to build the sort of ‘regional’ trading and production system that would enable recipient countries to become self-supporting.”<sup>29</sup>

In the new strategic situation, the German question, which before had been the political and economic neutralization of Germany, was turned upside down. In a paper by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee issued April 29, 1947, indications were given to overcome the French resistance: “From the viewpoint of the security of the United States it appears that our efforts should be directed toward demonstrating both to the leaders of France and to the leaders of Germany that the emergence of a principal world power to the east of them, ideologically opposed to all of their traditional way of life, whose ultimate aim is world conquest, and which they can successfully oppose only if both are strong and united against the new eastern menace, makes them interdependent just as France, England, Canada, and the United States are interdependent.”<sup>30</sup>

All this didn’t transpire in Marshall’s speech, for obvious reasons of political expediency. But it was clear that the solution to the German question would have been found within the framework of the European economic cooperation.

### **Marshall Plan and Europe**

The Marshall Plan introduced a new weapon in international relations: the massive use of economic aid to achieve political goals. It was launched as a first tangible and limited answer by containment, in the new US strategic initiative to establish a balance of power in Europe. While the Truman Doctrine consisted of an implicit call to arms for a global struggle against totalitarianism, the Marshall Plan’s goal was to prevent Western European instability, due to the devastations brought by the war and the impasse in the economic recovery. In this scenario the Soviet expansionism could create that situation that had already brought the United States to fight two World Wars: the possibility that a foreign hostile power could settle on the edge of the Atlantic, dominating the Old Continent.

The collapse of Europe highlighted its centrality to the security of the US, unquestioned before, but now explicitly stated. As Spanier puts it: “American independence and security required that the United States establish a balance of power in the interior of Europe. This was necessary to check any nation with designs on the sea-bordering states as a prerequisite to the elimination of Britain and eventual world conquest. During most of the nineteenth century, this balance had been maintained by the British navy. Now that Britain’s power had declined drastically, the United States would have to carry out the task alone. Western Europe possessed the largest aggregation of

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<sup>29</sup>Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan. America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1987, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis (ed.), *Containment. Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950*, Columbia University Press, New York 1978, p. 74.



skilled workers, technicians, and managers outside the United States. It maintained the second greatest concentration of industrial power in the world. A healthy and strong Europe could help shore up the balance of power.”<sup>31</sup>

Once again, it will be Kennan to emphatically realize the United States feeling of loss towards the possibility of finding themselves powerful but alone in a hostile world, with the acknowledgment of a community of values - not simply of interests, economic or otherwise - with the Old Continent: “Further deterioration might be disastrous to Europe. It might well bring such hardship, such bewilderment, such desperate struggle for control over inadequate resources as to lead to widespread repudiation of the principles on which modern European civilization has been founded and for which, in the minds of many, two world wars have been fought. The principles of law, of justice, and of restraint in the exercise of political power, already widely impugned and attacked, might then finally swept away - and with them the vital recognition that the integrity of society as a whole must rest on respect for the dignity of the individual citizen. The implications of such a loss would far surpass the common apprehensions over the possibility of ‘communist control.’ There is involved in the continuation of the present conditions in Europe nothing less than the possibility of a renunciation by Europeans of the values of individual responsibility and political restraint which has become traditional to their continent. This would undo the work of centuries and would cause such damage as could only be overcome by the effort of further centuries...in addition, the United States, in common with most of the rest of the world, would suffer a cultural and spiritual loss incalculable in its long-term effects.”<sup>32</sup>

It is necessary to underline both the rush and the vagueness with which a proposal of such scope was introduced by Marshall’s speech at Harvard, as well as the insecurity that covered the whole operation, due to the high economic and political costs linked to it. The Americans thought they had left the initiative to the Soviets far too long, and, at the same time, didn’t have a detailed plan yet. It was almost a year after, March 1948, that, facing the fait accompli of the Russian coup in Czechoslovakia, that Congress approved the European Recovery Program (ERP) within the Economic Cooperation Act.

### **Integration: The Squaring of the Circle**

In any case, vagueness and lack of details notwithstanding, by the end of the Spring of 1947 it was clear to the majority of American planners that the cooperation between European states and economic integration was the only key to achieve the long-term objectives of the United States, through an articulated alliance with Western

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<sup>31</sup> John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, New York 1983 (9th Edition), p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas H. Etzold e John Lewis Gaddis (ed.), *Containment*, pp. 108-109.

Europe. Beyond the examples already given, it is necessary to recall Acheson's speech in Cleveland, Mississippi, May 8, 1947. On this occasion the Undersecretary of State highlighted the fundamental objective of a "coordinated European economy."<sup>33</sup>

In a memorandum utilized by Kennan for the preparation of the Marshall's speech, William Clayton spoke explicitly of a recovery plan that should have encouraged "a European economic federation."<sup>34</sup>

In his analysis of the problems concerning the German recovery, John Foster Dulles noted the possibility for a European use, not a national one, of the German resources, with a concerted supervision between the various states, stating: "As we studied the problem of Germany we became more and more convinced that there is no economic solution along purely national lines. Increased economic unity is an absolute essential to the well-being of Europe."<sup>35</sup>

At the same time, in the American newspapers, influential pundits were debating the advantages of an economic and political federation for Europe. The authoritative Walter Lippmann pleaded American support for the "unification of Europe."<sup>36</sup>

The solutions proposed by this grand debate oscillated between economic integration and political unity. Some hinted at the creation of a single integrated market to achieve the high standard of living, the productivity and the stability of the US. Others were pushing for supranational forms of government, able to coordinate the integration and reconcile German recovery with the security priorities of its neighbors. To others yet, the solution was to be a complete imitation of the American model, which should have given birth to the United States of Europe.

The European Cooperation Act of 1948 formally sanctioned the economic integration, since America was "mindful of the advantage which the United States has enjoyed through the existence of a large-scale domestic market with no internal trade barriers and (believed) that similar advantages can accrue to the countries of Europe."<sup>37</sup>

Through cooperation and economic integration, the United States achieved the goals stated in the first phase, not yet military, of the "containment". From a political point of view they were the means to keep "the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."<sup>38</sup>

An offer *to be refused* was made to the Soviets: the ERP aid was linked to forms of economic cooperation and a controlling of the funds that was unacceptable to the USSR. The Marshall Plan was rejected by Stalin as an effort to form a Western block and to isolate the Soviet Union. A correct interpretation, but with their bluffing, the United States managed to place the responsibility for the division of the world in two, squarely on the shoulders of their adversaries. It was an instance of dangerous and lucky

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<sup>33</sup>Dean G. Acheson, *Present at the Creation. My Years in the State Department*, Norton, New York 1969, pp. 228-29.

<sup>34</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, III, pp. 230-32.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup>Walter Lippmann, *Cassandra Speaking*, "Washington Post", April 5, 1947, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup>Quoted in John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, p. 38.

<sup>38</sup>Walter LaFeber, *The American Age*, p. 469.

gambling: the joining of the Russians to the ERP would have in fact skyrocketed the cost of the aid, while Congress would have hardly given its approval, in the climate of war against totalitarianism primed by the Truman Doctrine.

Germany, pivot of the new Western integrated economy, remained divided in two and its dangerous potential faded within the European cooperation. The Schuman Plan of 1950 was the seal to this process of reintegration and new relations, putting an end to the centuries-old conflict between France and Germany. This agreement also marks the beginning of a real European acceptance of the idea of economic integration, which, in the beginning, was strongly opposed by the nationalism of the European states.

Germany was transformed from potential threat into a joining link to the new economic cooperation. At the urging of Jean Monnet, it was proposed to have the coal and steel production - base for the heavy industries and military might - of France and Germany controlled by an international authority in which the other European states could participate. In this way, the 1951 treaty that established the European Community for Coal and Steel (CECA) represented a significant step in the direction of European unity and autonomy.

The economic integration created the basis for the recovery and economic stability. With an intervention limited in time, the ERP aid managed to put Western Europe back on its feet, taking it off the shoulders of the American taxpayer. US exports took advantage of the reconstruction of a big European commercial partner and the economy of the Old Continent was integrated in the multilateral world system of exchange, as delineated at Bretton Woods. In this way, (and others, less evident) it was possible to stifle the development of the left-wing parties and create a cohesive power capable of counterbalancing the Soviet block.

It's impossible to ignore that today, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the entire basis on which the launch of a European cooperation - politically and geographically well defined - leaned on, has been modified. Russia is no longer the adversary to beat, but an accepted counterpart with whom to talk. Germany has found its unity and in the distance sees its already remarkable influence augment, at the risk of forcing the previously achieved balance. The former USSR satellites are pushing for an opening of the European Union to their applications for membership. NATO, although lacking the goal for which it was originally established, is considering applications for future prospective member states.

We're dealing with a big identity crisis within on an already troubled road: but it is just on the experience and riches developed on this route that Europeans, this time by themselves, must find "their" Europe.

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