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# The Trans-Atlantic Relationship in the Post-Cold War International Relations

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## 1. Introduction

In an age of the image the importance we attach to great events can be most readily measured by the lasting impact they have upon our visual consciousness. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the killing fields in Bosnia, the slaughter in Rwanda; their significance, separately and collectively, have been most effectively conveyed to us through dramatic pictures not well-crafted words. As journalists will tell you, one photograph is worth more than a thousand words. The point is well taken, particularly in relation to one of the most important events of recent years, the terrorist attack on America on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Words, of course, are essential, but at the end of the day it is the image or images of those planes ploughing into the World Trade Center in New York that most successfully conveyed the truly sensational character of what happened in (and to) the United States on that clear blue autumnal morning.<sup>1</sup> Fred Halliday has characterized the attacks as ones that shook the world, and he is surely right to do so.<sup>2</sup> A senior Bush official was overstating it somewhat—but not much—when he remarked that September 11<sup>th</sup> was a ‘day’ that ‘changed’ the history of the American ‘nation’ forever. Donald Rumsfeld made much the same point when he reminded those who might have hoped otherwise, that while terrorism was not like fascism or communism, the war against it would not last for days, weeks, or even months, but for many years to come; and as if to make the point clearer than the truth, went on to insist that the long struggle which lay ahead was likely to be just as protracted and ‘every bit as momentous’ as those which the US had been engaged in before against German fascism and international communism.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, comparisons with other great transitional conflicts in the past can be more misleading than useful, as Paul Schroeder amongst others has reminded us.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that such analogies have been drawn, speaks volumes about the significance which has already been attached to what happened on that Tuesday morning in September 2001.<sup>5</sup>

But how important was September 11<sup>th</sup>? Opinions remain divided. At first, some analysts warned against exaggeration.<sup>6</sup> The attack, they argued, would not change the structure of the international system. Nor would it alter the dynamics of globalization. Nor, according to some skeptics like Francis Fukuyama, would it make much of a difference either to the underlying tectonic shifts that were currently shaping the world from the bottom up.<sup>7</sup> Some in the field of International Relations were also unimpressed by the impact which September 11 might have, other than making many academics instant ‘experts’ on terrorism, Islam and religion.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, they argued, when compared, say, to the

<sup>1</sup> See Jenny Edkins, ‘Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11’, *International Relations*, Volume 16, No.2, 2001, pp. 243–256.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Halliday, *Two Days that Shook the World* (London: Saqi Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, *Remarks*. Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, 20 February 2002. Defense Link, US Department of Defense, 22 February 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Schroeder, ‘The Risks of Victory: An Historian’s Provocation’, *The National Interest*, No. 66, Winter 2001/02, pp. 22–36.

<sup>5</sup> See my essay ‘Meanings of Victory: American Power after the Towers’ Ken Booth and Tim Dunne eds., *Worlds In Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). pp. 152–161.

<sup>6</sup> For an early attempt to assess the impact of 9/11 see the various contributions to *International Security*, ‘The Threat of Terrorism: U.S. Policy after September 11’, Vol. 26, No. 3, Winter 2001/02.

<sup>7</sup> According to Fukuyama, ‘September 11 was a “blip” in the wider scale of things’. Cited in David Osborne, ‘The future ain’t what it used to be’, *The Independent Review*, 7 April 2003.

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of views from the IR profession see Bengt Sundelius ed., *The Consequences of September 11* (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2000).

great shifts brought about by two world wars and the Cold War, September 11<sup>th</sup>—practically and theoretically speaking—looked to be but small beer. It might have killed a large number of people and caused the Middle East to have become a less stable place. But we should not assume the world would be turned upside down as a result.<sup>9</sup>

This view, understandable perhaps in the immediate aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, is not one that commands much support a few years on. Indeed, the more time that has elapsed since the event itself, the more defining September 11<sup>th</sup> appears to have become, especially for the United States itself. Indeed, after having lived through nearly ten years when national security had become relatively unimportant—according to one senior official, the US went on ‘an extended beach party’<sup>10</sup>—it has now come to overwhelm American public discourse, to the extent of shaping voter preference, limiting citizen rights, and redefining the very structure of government. As Condoleeza Rice pointed out in her famous testimony of 8 April 2004, since September 11<sup>th</sup> the United States in general, and the organization of national security in particular, has gone through a reformation almost (if not quite) as important as that which occurred in the early days of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Nor is this all. The United States in the meantime has fought and won one war in Afghanistan, another in Iraq, reformulated its grand strategy, ‘found’ an enemy around which to construct a foreign policy for the long term, become involved in some serious abuses of human rights, killed a very large number of terrorists, suffered an enormous loss of popularity abroad, and been propelled outwards into ever greater commitments. This is quite a transformation. After all, when Bush became President he was talking of intervening less abroad, particularly in those places where the US was deemed not to have a vital interest. Now American forces are more active in more countries than at any time since the end of the Second World War. The (much overstated) fear that the United States under Bush would withdraw into itself and reduce its presence in the world has been dealt a severe, and one must suspect a permanent blow, by what happened on September 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>12</sup>

Which brings us then to the subject of this paper: the impact of more recent upheavals on that most hardy of regimes known as the transatlantic relationship.<sup>13</sup> Few doubted they would have some impact. However, none could have predicted the impact would be quite so great, so great in fact that it appears to have transformed serious discussion about it from one of the intellectual backwaters of international politics where very little ever seemed to be happening, into to an issue area of central importance.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, there has been no dearth of debate since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Indeed, to judge from the several official communiqués, the many conferences, the numerous workshops and the endless debates—not to mention the controversy occasioned by Kagan’s well-publicized effort to explain why Europe and the United States were heading for separation—some might conclude that there has been much too much.<sup>15</sup> But troubled times generate intense discussion, and no discussion

<sup>9</sup> For an historical perspective see John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Quote from former Director of the CIA, James Woolsey in Galma J. Michkovitch, ‘Interview’, *Prospect*, September 2003, pp. 20–23.

<sup>11</sup> See Steven Strasser ed., *The 9/11 Investigations* (New York: Perseus Book Group, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> For an early assessment see my ‘American Power before and after 11 September: dizzy with success?’, *International Affairs*, 78, 2, 2002, pp. 285–300.

<sup>13</sup> For a range of views see the useful John Peterson and Mark Pollack eds., *Europe, America, Bush: Transatlantic Relations in the Twenty First Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> A point I make in ‘Kagan’s World’ *International Affairs*, Volume 79, Number 3, May 2003, pp. 523–532.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Kagan’s ‘Power and Principle’ first appeared as an article in the journal *Policy Review* in the summer of 2002. A book version of the same subsequently appeared under the title *Paradise & Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London : Atlantic Book, 2003).

over the past few years has been as intense, or divisive, as that which has focused on what some at least see as the failing health of that once previously healthy specimen known as the Transatlantic relationship.

Yet we face a very real paradox. On the one hand, most of the recent headline news about the relationship has veered between the deeply pessimistic and the almost catastrophic. One study even spoke of a near-death experience,<sup>16</sup> while another lamented a past we would never see again.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, much of what has been said by what might be termed the in-house policy professionals, implies that in spite of what has happened, we should never forget that in its essentials the relationship remained sound. Indeed, there remains now, as there has been throughout, an almost instinctive inclination amongst many analysts (policy-makers in particular) to argue that whatever has happened, the underlying forces supporting the edifice of transatlanticism are more powerful than those trying to bring it down. One thus confronts an odd kind of intellectual schizophrenia, best exemplified perhaps in a high level report released by the Council of Foreign Relations in 2004. Here the authors accepted that the Transatlantic relationship had gone through one of the great traumas of recent times. But this was no reason, they argued, to think that things could not be repaired: a combination of sensitive diplomacy on the one hand and good will on the other, would, it was felt, bring the damaged ship back home to port.<sup>18</sup>

Many academics, it seems, feel inclined to agree. Indeed, some of them were every bit as keen as policy insiders to explain why much of this alarmist adhocry about the so-called death of the West was so much bluster.<sup>19</sup> It was true: the relationship had gone through a most sticky patch, the most serious in the history of the Alliance.<sup>20</sup> But this was no reason to despair.<sup>21</sup> NATO after all was still 'in business' and getting bigger. The economic ties between the two continents remained sound. And Europeans and Americans agreed on some very important core values. Thus the two parts of the Transatlantic jigsaw puzzle would continue to fit together. The battered hulk of multilateralism might have been badly holed. But it would not sink—and would not do so for the very simple reason that Europe and the United States constituted now, as they had done in the past, a genuine security community which also happened to share the same basic interests of fighting terrorism, maintaining an open world economy and spreading the benefits of democracy and good governance to other countries. Nor was there any reason to think the two were about to clash because of any power shift having taken place within the wider international system. For these various reasons (there were no doubt more) we should beware those bearing apocalyptic messages of doom and gloom. As one of the more influential writers on the subject asserted, though we had been through an extremely rough passage, there was no reason to conclude that the 'transatlantic community' as we had 'known it over the past fifty years' would go under.<sup>22</sup> The 'inevitable alliance', as another analyst defined it, would

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death Experience of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Tony Judt, 'The World We Have Lost', *Newsweek*, May 31, 2004, pp. 36- 46.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Kissinger and Lawrence H. Summers eds. *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> See Thomas Risse, 'Beyond Iraq: The Crisis of the Transatlantic Security Community', Chapter 8 in David Held and Mathias Kosnig-Archibugi eds; *American Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Ronald Asmus, 'Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2003, Volume 82, No. 5, pp. 20–31.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Jeff Legro, 'Terrors in Transatlantia' Unpublished Paper presented at the Workshop on Transatlantic Relations, Villa La Balza, May 10 -12, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Risse, 'Beyond Iraq: Challenges to the Transatlantic Security Community'. Unpublished Paper presented at the Workshop on Transatlantic Relations, Villa La Balza, Italy, May 10-12, 2002.

thus endure. We had been through many difficult times in the past. We were going through another one now. But this did not mean the relationship was about to falter.<sup>23</sup>

It is this view that I wish to challenge here—in part because it smacks of a certain intellectual complacency, partly because it ill-prepares us for the future, and partly because it appears to assume that the future is more likely to look like the past than anything else. It is this to which I take strongest exception. Indeed, I want to argue that far from the past being a very good guide to the future, it has, in its own way, become something of a mill-stone round our necks. In fact, those of either a liberal or even a realist persuasion who tell us ‘to remember our history’<sup>24</sup> are not only doing history a disservice—historians after all do not just deal in continuities—but are seriously underestimating the extraordinary combination of novel problems facing the Transatlantic relationship today. Nor are these problems purely a function of Bush and Iraq. Indeed, I want to challenge another form of complacency: that which assumes that the world (and along with it the European-American relationship) is bound to return to something like normal once we have got over Iraq and Bush departs office. No doubt both have made an enormous difference.<sup>25</sup> That much is obvious. But it would be foolish to think that the resolution of one, or the political departure of another, will solve everything, if indeed it will solve anything at all. Indeed, even after Bush and Iraq have been consigned into that proverbial dustbin of history—and neither is guaranteed for some time—the Transatlantic relationship will still be facing some very stern challenges.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, I want to contest a third myth made popular by the enormously influential Robert Kagan: namely, that the crisis is a reflection of growing American power on the one hand and European powerlessness on the other. This, I suggest, is not only too narrow a base upon which to erect a sturdy thesis. It also happens to be seriously one-sided. Hard power is not an insignificant coefficient. However, what Kagan misses—as in fact do most other American accounts—are two other factors with enormous consequences for the long term: namely America’s decreasing leverage over Europe (something obscured by the formal expansion of NATO) and Europe’s increasing self-confidence (a reality missed in the US because so much of the coverage is negative). It is these twin realities, as much as American male insouciance about a feminized Europe, that point to more testing times ahead.

To make good these bold claims, I have organized what follows into three main sections. The first deals with the period following the end of the Cold War and that almost forgotten era known as the post-Cold War period. As we shall see, this was a most complex, almost Janus-faced transitional moment, during which all seemed well at one remove, even though serious problems were beginning to undermine previous Transatlantic certainties at another. Next, we look at the period coinciding with Bush’s election and the decision to go to war with Afghanistan. Here we see the extent to which a set of problems carried over from an earlier era began to have far more serious consequences in another when the relationship was put to the test, and almost failed it completely. Finally, we come to the Iraq war when an already fractured alliance was nearly undermined in what must now rank as the most extended crisis in the history of the Transatlantic relationship. Of course, as the soothsayers have been quick to point out, there has, of late, been a serious and concerted effort to reconstruct the

<sup>23</sup> Vittorio Parsi, *L'alleanza inevitabile. Europe e USA oltre Iraq* (Milano: Egea-Universitara Bocconi Editore).

<sup>24</sup> Comment by James Steinberg. *Inaugural Conference: The Center On the United States and Europe*. April 21, 2004, The Brookings Institution, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> See Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies At War: America, Europe And The Crisis Over Iraq* (New York McGraw-Hill, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> According to Graham Allison, it makes no difference who is in the White House now: relations can only get worse. See his brief comment in Mark Leonard, ‘The burning of Bush’, *Firmagazine*, Issue no. 61, June 26, 2004, p. 21.



relationship, so that it can, in Tony Blair's words, meet the challenges of a 'changing world'.<sup>27</sup> But we should not get overly excited. Indeed, I want to warn against any unnecessary euphoria. No doubt the 'West' in one form or another will survive.<sup>28</sup> Reforms might even help it to do so. But it will not be the same 'West' we knew before.<sup>29</sup> A few years ago, liberal theorists could (following Karl Deutsch) talk with some confidence about the continued vitality of a security community that had not only survived the end of the Cold War but managed to flourish under conditions of globalization.<sup>30</sup> They would, I think, be foolish to do so any longer.

## 2. Transatlantia revisited—the Cold War and after

Historically, the Transatlantic relationship was born of three necessities: the need to manage Soviet power during the Cold War; the imperative of creating a framework within which the European powers could work out their own differences within a set of structures underwritten by a powerful arbiter from across the ocean; and last, but by no means least, of protecting American interests on the continent. Naturally, the relationship, as it evolved, had both its crises and critics. However, neither, in the end, did a great deal of damage. Indeed, all that they seemed to prove was that the relationship was rock solid. Moreover, if this was, as one writer put it, less a relationship and more a marriage entered into willingly—even by the weaker of the two parties—then there was no reason why it should not go on for a very long time.<sup>31</sup> It may have left Europe dependent upon American largesse and Americans strategically entrapped. However, it provided both with levels of security they had not experienced before; it did so in ways that were broadly acceptable to most Europeans and the majority of Americans; and it generated a level of prosperity and unity which made Western Europe deeply—perhaps fatally—attractive to the communist countries of Eastern Europe.<sup>32</sup>

Inevitably, the end of the Cold War changed the context within which Europeans and Americans now had to operate. It also called into question one of the most fundamental premises of the transatlantic relationship itself: namely, that it was required in order to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The corollary of this was that it would be unable to survive the disappearance of the threat that had called it into being in the first place. This of course was one of the constant refrains of structural realists like Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. Without the discipline imposed by the blocks in Europe, the future—they believed—was bound to be a good deal less predictable than it had been before. Indeed, according to Mearsheimer the future would very much look like a deeply shambolic past with growing nationalist tensions in Europe accompanied by deeper divisions across the Atlantic itself making the world as a whole a far less stable place. Others were equally pessimistic and concluded, in classic realist fashion, that if the relationship had been held together by the

<sup>27</sup> Tony Blair, 'How Nato is adapting to a changing world', *Financial Times*, June 28 2004.

<sup>28</sup> See Charles Kupchan, 'The End of the West' *The Atlantic Online*, November 2002. [Http://www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com).

<sup>29</sup> Francois Heisbourg, 'US-European Relations: from lapsed alliance to new partnership', *International Politics*, Volume 41, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 119–126.

<sup>30</sup> See Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (New York; Columbia University Press, 1957).

<sup>31</sup> Geir Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation: the United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952', *Journal of Peace Research*, 23, September 1986, pp. 263–277.

<sup>32</sup> Beatrice Heuser, *Transatlantic Relations* (London: Cassell, 1996).

existence of an existential ‘other’, then absent a serious external challenge, the two sides were bound to drift apart.<sup>33</sup>

As it turned out, some of the more Spenglerian prognoses about the decline of the West *sans* a clear and present danger proved to be quite false. In fact some of their prognoses appeared to be so wide of the mark that it became increasingly fashionable in the 1990s to reject their arguments altogether. Indeed, when Europe as a whole did not return to the past, Germany did not become a threat, and the Transatlantic relationship held, many not only celebrated the fact (reasonably), but saw in all this confirmation, once again, of the failings of a now redundant realist way of looking at the world in general. How in fact could one take their warnings seriously? After all, instead of entering into more competitive times, the core Atlantic powers appeared to be drawing much closer together. And far from returning to the past, they looked to be facing the future with a great deal of confidence.

All this was helped of course by an active US diplomacy. Indeed, another significant feature of the Transatlantic relationship in the 1990s was not how much, but how little, US policy towards Europe actually seemed to change. As one analyst has observed, whilst the end of the Cold War might have led to a major rethink in US foreign policy in nearly every other area, there was to be no substantial alteration in its attitude towards Europe.<sup>34</sup> Nor did the US position in Europe seem to suffer much either. If anything, its hegemony was more secure at the end of the 1990s than it had been at the beginning. Nor did this seem to generate very much resistance.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the other more remarkable feature of the period was the extent to which those who had previously been some of America’s more severe critics during the Cold War, now became some of its most consistent supporters from afar. Moreover, if some of them complained at all, it was not because the US was using its power too frequently abroad, but was perhaps not employing it often enough. Even Clinton had more than his fair share of European admirers. His (admittedly uneven) support for humanitarian causes on the one hand, and European integration on the one other, made him an especially attractive American leader; and it was not so surprising therefore that when he finally did leave office, there was a feeling that he had not just been ‘a good friend’ of Europe’s, but a key figure who had managed to maintain good relations between an America that was perhaps no longer so much in touch with Europe, and a Europe that was beginning to lose its ideological affinity with the United States.<sup>36</sup>

Herein lay the problem. For even in the era of good feeling, serious differences were beginning to undercut Transatlantic trust.<sup>37</sup> First, there was the big clash over what to do about Bosnia. Having initially left the former Yugoslavia to the Europeans—we have ‘no dog’ in this particular fight chimed Secretary of State Baker—the Americans gradually felt compelled to get involved; and as they did so, were to become increasingly impatient with European dithering, so much so that by the time of the Dayton accord, their collective view about their friends across the pond veered between the less than

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’, *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1993, pp. 44–79, and John Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability After the Cold War’, *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1990, pp. 5–56.

<sup>34</sup> Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From “Empire” by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 264.

<sup>35</sup> See Valur Ingimundarson, ‘The American Dimension: Britain, Germany and the Reinforcement of US Hegemony in Europe in the 1990s’ in Klaus Larres ed., *Uneasy Allies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 165–183.

<sup>36</sup> This is why Chalmers Johnson has argued that Clinton was a far more effective Empire builder than Bush. See his *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the republic* (esp. 255–256) published in London in 2004 by the Marxist publishing house, Verso Press.

<sup>37</sup> These are discussed in John Hulsman’s testimony before the House Committee on International Relations in Europe, 11 June 2003.

flattering (at best) and the almost unprintable (at worst). Either way, it left many in the Washington foreign policy elite with the very firm impression that when push came to shove, on key security questions, the Europeans simply could not be taken seriously.<sup>38</sup>

The two sides also differed increasingly about regional priorities and how to deal with major regional problems. For the Europeans the priority in the main remained more than ever the European project: for the Americans the stage that interested them most was the world as a whole. Moreover, when the Europeans did get engaged in wider issues, the tools they tended to employ were more diplomatic and economic—a reflection no doubt of their military weakness—while the Americans by and large still remained more inclined to resolve problems using their hard power advantage. Indeed, while the United States still continued to look at the world in more traditional terms of threats, allies and capabilities, the Europeans in general viewed it as a set of security dilemmas whose causes, once properly understood, could then be dealt with using much subtler means. In most areas this did not make an enormous difference. However, in one case it did: over how to deal with the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Here the gap between the two grew exponentially as the decade wore on; and though momentarily united by the Oslo accord, as it fell by the wayside, the United States and Europe began to find themselves almost in the position of supporting opposed and warring factions in a conflict without apparent end.<sup>39</sup>

There was, in turn, the equally problematic rift caused by intervention in Kosovo. Here of course there was more unity than division at first. However, as the NATO campaign intensified it became increasingly clear that a number of European countries—some with historic ties to Belgrade and some not—were more inclined to limit the war while the US was keen to win it by the shortest military route possible. Once again, the lesson drawn in Washington was not an especially positive one, either about Europeans in particular or NATO in general. Indeed, as we knew then (and found out more later) the Pentagon in particular drew the important conclusion that having used NATO in one war, they might not be prepared to do so again, especially if it involved fighting alongside allies who not only had limited technical means but whose leaders had to adapt to a public opinion that was far from supportive of fighting an engagement that had not been sanctioned by the UN.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, though the Europeans in the immediate post-Cold War era had a far more positive view of the United States than they were to have later, there was no escaping the fact that by the end of the decade there were growing worries on the continent about an American inclination to deal with problems in ways that often showed little sensitivity to allies, and even less to that entity known as the ‘international community’. US air strikes against Iraq, further sorties against Afghanistan, and the attack on Sudan in 1998, may not have provoked mass street demonstrations in London, Paris, or Rome. Nonetheless, they left a bad taste in some European mouths and a feeling that although the United States would try to be multilateral when it could be, it was more and more inclined to act without reference or permission from its friends across the Atlantic.<sup>41</sup>

A drift of sorts was thus well underway long before the Bush team took over.<sup>42</sup> The two sides hardly constituted rivals, let alone enemies in the making. Indeed, in an era when the world economy

<sup>38</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End A War* (New York: Random House, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> See Richard Haass, ed., *Transatlantic Tensions: The United States, Europe, and Problem Countries* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> General Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War; Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Conflict* (Oxford: Public Affairs Ltd., 2002) pp. 431–432.

<sup>41</sup> See Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman eds., *Multilateralism & U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement* (London: Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Walt, ‘The Ties that Fray: Why Europe and America are drifting apart’, *National Interest*, No. 54, 1998-199, pp. 3–11.

was booming and Transatlantic economic ties were deepening, to have even talked of such things would have sounded faintly odd to say the least. Nonetheless, the strong bonds that had once united the two in an earlier age of Cold War confrontation were clearly coming under some strain. Nor did there seem to be any self-correcting mechanism. Within the United States moreover a new mood amongst a successor generation who had not experienced the Cold War close up seemed to be in the ascendant. This did not lead those who expressed it to seek unnecessary quarrels; what it did it did do, though, was to make some wonder how seriously one ought to be taking the Europeans any longer. On the right in particular, there was a growing and detectable impatience with a Europe that not only appeared incapable of acting with purpose or vigor, but then had the temerity to think rather differently about the how the world ought to be shaped. This feeling, which combined suspicion and contempt in equal measure, was made all the worse of course by a powerful undercurrent of American hubris that tended to increase rather than decrease as the decade unfolded. This assumed (without proving) that whilst the American free market model generated jobs, growth and wealth, the European model with its raft of bureaucratic controls and labor regulations produced nothing but stagnation. Hence there was nothing to be learned from Europe, and until Europe changed its ways, it could be largely ignored while the United States continued to surge ahead—proving if proof were ever needed, that having shaped and dominated the international relations of one century it was about to do the same in the next.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. Terrors in Transatlantia I: September 11 and Afghanistan

The extent to which this vision shaped the outlook of the new Bush administration is a matter of some dispute. After all, in his pre-election statements, Bush talked in quite measured terms of a ‘humble’ America doing less rather than more in a world where every complex emergency threatened to drag the United States into unnecessary and costly commitment. However, as more recent evidence has shown, the new team was far more radical than its quietist rhetoric suggested.<sup>44</sup> Assuming that the United States was in a position of almost unrivalled power, it drew the not illogical conclusion that it could be altogether more self-interested (and less sensitive) when it came to dealing with others than its predecessor had appeared to be. Certainly, it would not be business as usual; and as if to make the point clearer than the truth, managed within a few months of assuming office of rethinking its policy towards Iraq (the planing for whose change began in earnest), its relationship with China (which now moved from the category of partner to that of rival), and the much hated Kyoto protocol whose limited role in trying to control global warming was now challenged on the grounds of both science and sheer economic self-interest. Nor was this all. Within only a short space of time, the Bush administration had also formally rejected, or politically called into question, a whole raft of international agreements ranging from arms control and land mines, through to biological weapons and nuclear weapons testing. The International Criminal Court in particular came in for some particularly fierce attacks.

<sup>43</sup> For US hubris at the turn of the century see Bruce Cumings, ‘Still the American Century’ in Michael Cox, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne eds., *The Interregnum: Controversies in World Politics 1989-1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 271–299.

<sup>44</sup> On the radical character of the Bush team’s world outlook, see Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: the Bush Revolution in American Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C., The Brookings Institution Press, 2003), James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004), and Ron Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O’Neill* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004) esp. pp. 70–86.

The net result of all this of course was to make many commentators wonder about the direction in which the United States was now heading. A very different kind of administration, it seemed, had taken over in the United States, one that was no longer committed, even in theory, to the basics of multilateralism. On the eve of 9:11, the Transatlantic relationship looked to be in real trouble. Some even began to wonder whether the two continents were, at last, heading for that long-predicted divorce?<sup>45</sup>

Viewed within this larger context, the attack of September 11 seemed to represent less of a threat to the transatlantic relationship and more of an opportunity for Europeans to rebuild bridges to their senior, but straying, partner across the Atlantic. This in part explains the speed with which NATO invoked Article 5 only a day after the attack.<sup>46</sup> It would also help explain the unbelievable enthusiasm that many European countries now showed when it came to volunteering their own troops for action on the ground in Afghanistan. Indeed, as the Afghanistan campaign unfolded, the United States faced the somewhat bizarre situation in which the European members of NATO were actually offering more troops and equipment than the Pentagon wanted to use.<sup>47</sup> It was all rather overwhelming. One should not be too cynical perhaps. Europeans were genuine in their support for their wounded ally. They also had as much to lose from international terrorism as the United States. After all, a number of them (Britain and Spain in particular) had already experienced the scourge of terrorism, and were in no doubt where they stood on the issue and why. Nonetheless, a larger game was clearly being played out, one of whose many objectives was to steer the American ship of state back onto the multilateral course from which it had been deviating badly before 9:11.

The outcome of all this frantic effort, as we now know, was not to secure the relationship so much as increase European concerns about the US while raising further questions about America's attitude towards NATO as a fighting (as opposed to a political) organization. Certainly, by the beginning of 2002, relations once again appeared to have taken a turn for the worse, in spite of some valiant efforts by officials on both sides to deny that there was a problem. Naturally, NATO played down these difficulties, all the time stressing the alliance's contribution to the war. But it was very much the case of the dog that did not bark, or at least was not allowed to bark by the United States. As Paul Wolfowitz made clear at the first high-level briefing provided by Washington to NATO defense ministers in the autumn of 2001, the US was not much interested in using NATO structures; nor was it planning to rely heavily on European forces either. Such words of indifference did little to assuage the Europeans who not only felt slighted, but suspected that American insouciance reflected a deeper impatience towards Europe in general and the idea of constraining alliances in particular. America's European allies found the new Rumsfeld doctrine of missions determining the coalition, rather than the other way round, to be particularly disturbing.<sup>48</sup> For not only did this constitute a major conceptual break; it also had the potential to undermine the rationale for an established alliance like NATO. As one seasoned observer pointed out, whereas the old threat of communism had

<sup>45</sup> Ivo Daalder, 'Are the United States and Europe heading for divorce?' *International Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 3, July 2001, pp. 553–567.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Walker, 'Post 9/11: The European Dimension', *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2001/02, pp. 1–10.

<sup>47</sup> Philip H. Gordon, 'NATO after 11 September', *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Winter 2001, pp. 92–93.

<sup>48</sup> According to Rumsfeld "this war will not be waged by a grand alliance for the purposes of defeating an axis of hostile powers. Instead it will involve floating coalitions of countries, which may change and evolve. Countries will play different roles and contribute in different ways. Some will provide diplomatic support, others financial, still others logistical or military. Some will help us publicly, while others, because of their circumstances, may help us privately and secretly". Quoted in *The New York Times*, 27 September 2001.

managed to bring friends together, it looked like the new war on terrorism was driving them apart. NATO looked like it was rapidly becoming one of the first, and most important, 'victims of 9/11'.<sup>49</sup>

Instead of the situation improving in the early days of 2002, they only got worse. In February, for example, the EU's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs went public and attacked the US for treating the Europeans as if they were mere 'sycophants' rather than real friends.<sup>50</sup> Americans responded in turn by denigrating the Europeans. One analyst even went so far as to talk of a European 'hysteria', adding for good measure that what lay at the heart of European complaints was not the direction now being taken by American foreign policy but Europe's inability to come terms with the fact that Europe was fast losing its special position as a privileged partner of the United States.<sup>51</sup> Others adopted a tougher line still and launched a series of powerful attacks on their so-called friends—the British excepted—who found it all too easy to criticize the United States for taking decisive action while they proposed nothing in the way of a serious alternative.<sup>52</sup> Even the language which the two started to use about (and against) the other seemed to denote something more than the normal spat that had punctuated the relationship in the past.<sup>53</sup> Certain Americans could hardly disguise their contempt for a bunch of whinging Europeans who possessed little in the way of meaningful firepower. Wolfowitz was its understated best when he labeled all European attacks on the US as being 'simplistic'. Others were even tougher about those ingrates across the Atlantic. Indeed, underlying what some Americans had to say was something else: a sense of moral outrage about a continent which in their eyes the United States had 'saved' on at least three occasions in the twentieth century, many of whose people now had the temerity to suggest that the biggest problem facing the world in the early twenty first century was not so much international terrorism as an America grown drunk on its own power.<sup>54</sup>

Thus as the Afghan war drew to what turned out to be an inconclusive end, it was evident that not all was well within the NATO camp. Naturally, the embattled Lord Robertson did his best to hold the line, rather unconvincingly arguing that the gloom merchants had got it all wrong. As he told what must have been a rather naïve (or polite) American audience at the beginning of 2002, NATO was just as relevant in the war against terrorism as it had been in the battle for Kosovo.<sup>55</sup> A few months later, the United States ambassador to NATO was repeating more or less the same thing.<sup>56</sup> But the spin did not carry weight. Indeed, the more the officials span, the more the critics began to conclude that something really was amiss. As one noted US journalist commented after having returned from an extensive discussion on transatlantic relations in the UK, all the delegates might have sat around the same table using the same language, but the gap dividing the Europeans and the Americans about how to deal with the problem was plain for all to see.<sup>57</sup> As another observer put it, this time after attending a meeting of the Trilateral Commission in New York, the Americans who were there were seemingly unable to appreciate the extent to which their world outlook was not shared in Europe: the Europeans meanwhile did not seem to understand the profound changes that

<sup>49</sup> See Helga Haftendorn, 'NATO III', *Internationale Politik*, Spring 2002, pp. 29–34.

<sup>50</sup> See Chris Patten's comments in 'Jaw-jaw, not war-war', *Financial Times*, February 15, 2002; also David Ignatius in *The International Herald Tribune*, February 16, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in *Newsweek*, 25 February 2002.

<sup>52</sup> See for example, 'Who needs whom?', *The Economist*, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2002, pp. 30–32.

<sup>53</sup> Friedbert Pfluger, 'European sniping at America is overdone' *International Herald Tribune*, 21 February 2002.

<sup>54</sup> See Steve Everts, 'Why should Bush take Europe seriously?', *Observer*, 17 February 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Lord Robertson. Speech, 31 January 2002, *Pilgrims of the United States*, New York, 31 January 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Judy Dempsey, 'US Diplomat denies NATO sidelined since attacks', *Financial Times*, 3 April 2002.

<sup>57</sup> William Pfaff, 'The NATO Allies are drifting apart', *International Herald Tribune*, April 18, 2002.

had taken place in the United States as a result of 9:11. Certainly, as 2001 gave way to 2002 the Atlantic was beginning to look less and less like that proverbial bridge much loved by the British and more and more like that divide more favored by the French.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4. Terrors in Transatlantia II: Iraq and after

Long before Iraq therefore the relationship was in trouble. It is just possible that if the war on terror had remained confined to dealing with well defined threats and targets, then the already shaky edifice of transatlanticism might have recovered its equilibrium. But it was not given time to do so—and for fairly well known reasons. First, in January 2002, Bush identified an ‘axis’ of three evil states, including amongst them Iraq, a state which according to the President did not just oppress its own people but also supported terror and either had, or was enthusiastic to acquire, its own weapons of mass destruction—weapons that might easily fall into the hands of terrorists. Then, in June, he announced a new national security doctrine which argued that in an era of terrorism not only was deterrence not enough, but that containment of certain regimes was not enough either. This was followed up in August by a keynote speech of Rumsfeld’s that really marked the beginning of the political campaign at home to convince the American public of the need to take pre-emptive military action against Saddam Hussein. Finally, in September, the administration published its new National Security Strategy document—the same month in which Bush went before the UN General Assembly calling upon the nations of the world to enforce the Security Council’s (various) resolutions on Iraq, ominously warning that if Iraq were ever to ‘supply’ weapons of mass destruction to its ‘terrorist allies, then the attacks of September 11 would be but a prelude to far greater horrors’.<sup>59</sup>

For what precise reason or set of reasons the Bush administration decided to go to war against Iraq still remains a hotly contested topic: what is not in doubt however is the impact which this decision and the war itself had upon an already bruised transatlantic relationship.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, having widened the war on terrorism in the way in which it did, and then justifying the move in terms of a new set of imperial principles that in the eyes of most observers seemed to represent a major departure in US strategic thinking, it was inevitable that many Europeans—encouraged by what was being said by critics on the other side of the Atlantic<sup>61</sup>—would feel queezy at best and downright horrified at worst by what Washington was now proposing (and would in March 2003 go on) to do: namely, make war against a regime whose capabilities were declining, whose possession of weapons of mass destruction was in some doubt, and whose connection to the kind of terrorists who had knocked down the Twin Towers was tenuous to say the least. The fact that the war was then announced without a second UN resolution, and indeed against the majority of the UN membership, only raised further doubts about the wisdom of using military action, especially as the most likely outcome

<sup>58</sup> Jim Hoagland, ‘The Atlantic can become a chasm’, *International Herald Tribune*, April 15, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Speeches and documents in Michael L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, *The Iraq War Reader* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> See Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe and the Crisis over Iraq* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> For more mainstream US critics of the war see *inter alia* Brent Scowcroft, ‘Don’t Attack Saddam’, *The Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2002, John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, ‘An Unnecessary War’, *Foreign Policy*, January-February 2003, and Richard K. Betts, ‘Suicide from the Fear of Death?’, *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2003.

(according to most European intelligence sources at the time) would be to increase global support for al-Qaeda rather than diminish it.<sup>62</sup>

From this perspective, what requires explanation is not the fact that so many Europeans opposed the war, but that so many governments on the continent did not. No doubt some, like the former communist states, felt they had no alternative given their security dependency on the United States; others went along (one suspects) less because they reflected public opinion—certainly not the case in Spain or Italy—but rather because of a sense of conservative solidarity with the Bush administration. Certainly, the fact that several governments did sign up, bears powerful testimony to America’s continuing ability to garner support from even some notably reluctant quarters. A few governments however were true believers. Blair in particular (though not the British foreign policy establishment as a whole) seemed to have few doubts. Indeed, he was to play a quite critical and complex role throughout, in the early stages by helping mobilize European support for the war, and then later by trying to mediate between the Europeans and the Americans.<sup>63</sup> Yet, in spite of his best efforts, nothing could overcome the divide between the United States on the one hand and France and Germany on the other. Nor could he do much to siphon off the real and genuine bitterness between the two opposing camps, caused in the first instance by the famous or infamous UN decision not to back the war through another Security Council resolution—something for which the French have yet be forgiven in Washington—and then by a refusal on the part of France and Germany to lend their support to any actions undertaken by the coalition of the willing in Iraq.<sup>64</sup>

Of course, as the dust of war began to settle after Saddam’s defeat, many hoped (and a few assumed) that the transatlantic relationship would gradually be repaired. After all, if the crisis was Iraq specific, as some seemed to think, then once the war was over there was every possibility that things might soon get back on to an even keel.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, most Europeans took it as read that such would be the cost and difficulty in rebuilding Iraq, that the Americans would have no choice but to repair the relationship if only to help them manage their new acquisition in the Middle East. This was one of the reasons no doubt why even Kagan began to strike a less belligerent note; and after having asserted in 2002 that the gulf between the two sides was probably too deep to overcome, two years on was suggesting that America now confronted a ‘crisis of legitimacy’, and that the only means of overcoming this was by seeking accommodation with those alienated Europeans. In fact, he even owned up to something he had never said before: namely, that the Europeans had not just objected to the war because of their weakness (his original line of analysis) but more obviously because the US went to war without their support and approval. This was quite a shift. He also agreed that some way had to be found to draw the Europeans back into the fold, and the obvious way of doing this he concluded was not by reminding them of how benign the United States happened to be, but of actually allowing them more of a say in the way in which the hegemon shaped world affairs. Indeed, there was every reason for the US to cede some power he agreed—not because of any sentimental attachment to the transatlantic relationship but to ensure domestic support for any future US action. In fact, precisely because the American people might be unlikely to ‘support both military actions and

<sup>62</sup> For the most muscular defense of the war—penned by an expat living in the United States—see Christopher Hitchens, *Regime Change* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> On Blair and Iraq see the more critical John Kampfner, *Blair’s Wars* (London: The Free Press, 2003) and the much less critical William Shawcross, *Allies: the United States, Britain and the War in Iraq* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> For a useful discussion of all these issues see Gustav Lindstrom ed., *Shift or Rift? Assessing US–EU relations after Iraq* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> A view expressed to the author by James P. Rubin, assistant secretary of state in the second Clinton administration.



the burdens of postwar occupations in the face of constant charges of illegitimacy' by the Europeans, the United States had every reason to meet their erstwhile allies half way.<sup>66</sup>

The new line adopted by Kagan was also paralleled by a concerted effort by sections of the Bush team to build what looked like real bridges back to alienated allies. Indeed, as the splendid little war in Iraq gave way to a less than splendid peace, there was a marked alteration in US official rhetoric. This took many forms but expressed itself most obviously in a fairly concerted effort by the administration to get 'transatlantic relations back on track'. Even Bush himself began to celebrate the virtues of 'effective multilateralism', while others started to talk with great enthusiasm of Europe being America's 'natural partner' in an increasingly disturbed world.<sup>67</sup> Certainly, by the beginning of 2004, it almost sounded as if there had never been a crisis in the first place!

This in turn was accompanied by what some saw as an important bureaucratic shift, with Powell and the State Department at last coming out from behind the very large shadow earlier cast by the powerful Rumsfeld and his team of supporters within the Pentagon. It certainly looked as if Rumsfeld was talking much less in public as time went by, while the highly respected Colin Powell looked to be saying a whole lot more.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, having been seriously sidelined by the Pentagon for so long, it now appeared as if the once marginal Powell was making something of a comeback, and in a key article published in *Foreign Affairs* in early 2004, advanced a powerful case for traditional allies. What he said contained a series of reassuring arguments. The first, which must have been music to many a European ear, was that pre-emptive action taken against potentially dangerous rogue states, would only be used 'under certain limited circumstances'. In other words, Europeans should not assume that Iraq was a model for the future. Nor should they believe that some strategic corner had been turned: in fact, far from being philosophically inclined towards unilateralism as some in Europe seemed to think, the Bush strategy he argued presupposed good and lasting relations with the UN and NATO. 'Partnership' he noted was 'the watchword of U.S. strategy' in what he tellingly referred to as the 'age of cooperation'. This he concluded had been the real message contained in the much criticized (and much misunderstood) National Security Strategy document of September 2002: and this would be the guiding principle in the days ahead. Indeed, without 'cooperative relations among the world's major powers' he concluded there was little or no chance of defeating terrorism.<sup>69</sup>

This apparent turn in US foreign policy continued into the summer of 2004, reaching an emotional height of sorts in June, beginning with the commemoration of the D-Day landings on 6<sup>th</sup> June—a perfect moment to stress what united rather than divided allies—followed in quick succession by the G8 summit in Georgia, the EU-US Summit in Dublin, and the NATO meeting in Turkey. For the moment at least it really did look as if all had been forgotten as the major powers sat down to work out the modalities of how to bring order and stability to a fast deteriorating situation in Iraq. Politics also played its part. Indeed, as Bush contemplated the next presidential election, he found himself under attack from those who made the electorally damaging point that far from increasing America's influence in the world, he had actually managed to reduce it, and had done so by unnecessarily alienating old allies. As one of Senator Kerry's senior foreign policy advisers put it, the issue concerning Iraq was not whether the United States needed to employ force, but rather that it chose to do so in such a way as to minimize international support for its action. As James Rubin observed, if Bush had only waited a few months 'it would have been Iraqi non-compliance' and not

<sup>66</sup> Robert Kagan, 'America's Crisis of Legitimacy', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp. 65–87.

<sup>67</sup> Quote from a senior State Department official, US Embassy, London, 19 February, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> For an articulation of the 'new' line see the speech by Charles Ries—Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department, December 1, 2003, *United States Mission to the European Union*.

<sup>69</sup> Colin Powell, 'A Strategy of Partnerships', *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2004.

spurious claims about an Iraqi threat that would have ‘triggered the war’. This, he argued, would not only have made it easier to wage the war without mass resistance to it being mobilized in Europe: it would have meant that ‘many more countries would have been willing to contribute substantial troops and substantial reconstruction assistance if such international legitimacy had been obtained’.<sup>70</sup>

## 5. All's well that ends well?

Thus as the dust began to settle, the language surrounding the relationship began to take on a quite different tone. This clearly surprised a few people, though not others who had always assumed that reality on the one hand, and shared interests on the other, were bound to bring the two back closer together once they had gotten over Iraq.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, if the optimists were to be believed, we were once again at that point where we had been so often in the past following other great Transatlantic disputes. It almost seemed to follow a pattern. First, the two sides would fall out, as they had done on so many occasions before. The protesting masses would take to the streets. The French would then reflect in their Gaullist way about the overbearing character of American power. The Americans in turn would accuse any and every European critic of being anti-American. And then it would all fade away, indicating to the old hands at least, that necessity, if nothing else, would always bring these two members of the same family back under same roof.<sup>72</sup> So it had always been; so it was now; and so it would always be in the future.<sup>73</sup> As another analyst of the American scene pointed out as the warm words began to flow back and forth across the Atlantic during 2004, the pessimists had had a field day for a while: now it was the turn of the Atlanticists to prove them wrong and show why the relationship remained a sound one.<sup>74</sup>

It is difficult to disagree with facts, and it is especially difficult to disagree with the obvious fact that an enormous effort post-Iraq has been put in to building those proverbial bridges back across the Atlantic.<sup>75</sup> Yet in spite of the enormous effort, there was no hiding the tensions that still lay just below the surface. Clearly, the scars caused by Iraq would take a very long time to heal, if indeed they healed at all. Naturally, there were those who felt there was still everything to play for; that even now a new bargain between the two could be struck that would set the relationship on a much firmer footing.<sup>76</sup> But as events unfolded, many wondered on whose terms the bargain would be set, and what would it actually mean on the ground. Indeed, in spite of all the fine talk about a ‘new vision’ for a re-imagined Alliance, it was notable how little appeared to be changing.<sup>77</sup> If anything, the tide still seemed to be running against the United States, most obviously in Spain whose new government removed its troops from Iraq after having voted out a pro-American government, in Germany which still refused to help, and France who never would. Nor was there much chance of NATO as an organization getting involved in any serious way in Iraq. Indeed, as a number of commentators were

<sup>70</sup> James P. Rubin, ‘Political Dynamite’, *FT Magazine*, April 3, 2004, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> This is well expressed in G. John Ikenberry, ‘The End of the Neo-Conservative Moment’, *Survival*, Vol. 46, no 1, Spring 2004, pp. 7–22.

<sup>72</sup> William Wallace, ‘Europe, the Necessary Partner’, *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2001, pp. 16–34.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher Bertram in a talk given at the *Oslo Militære Samfund*, Oslo, Norway, 4 April, 2002.

<sup>74</sup> Tim Hames, ‘Americans are not aliens’, *The Times*, June 7, 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Colin Powell and Javier Solana, ‘Building stronger bridges across the Atlantic’, *Financial Times*, 25 June 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Moravhik, ‘Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4, July-August 2004, pp. 74–89.

<sup>77</sup> Kermal Devis, ‘The alliance must find a new vision’, *Financial Times*, June 28 2004.

to point out, it was now so bogged down in what many saw as a failing NATO operation in Afghanistan, that it was difficult to see what it could ever do in Iraq. Talk of its involvement to some looked to be little more symbolic.<sup>78</sup>

Nearly everything therefore seemed to point to the more general conclusion that whereas the Cold War may have united allies and the end of the Cold War brought the two parts of a once divided Europe together, recent events have divided them badly—perhaps so badly that it is difficult to see how they could easily get back together again.<sup>79</sup> Of course one could argue, and many continue to do so, that Europe and the United States were still united by values. True enough. But even here the story is a far more complex one. Indeed, if we take the widest sweep possible, then it is evident that they may not be so united after all. Most obviously, they are not at one when it comes to defining the root causes of the terrorist threat; they are seriously divided when it comes to Israel; and they do not agree either about how to deal with so-called rogue regimes. Nor do they necessarily view each other in quite the benign way as suggested by the optimists. Thus a number of Americans have some very grave doubts about the possible long-term implications of the European project, and many Europeans of course have even graver doubts about American hegemony. Indeed, if recent polls are to be believed, the level of suspicion of the United States in Europe has never been so high. Americans and Europeans may not even share identical values. In fact, if the end of the Cold War has exposed anything, it is the extent to which most Europeans seem prepared to embrace the challenges of post-modernity (including living without a God and a well-defined notion of sovereignty) while the bulk of Americans are not.<sup>80</sup> This divide moreover appears to have become more marked since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Indeed, if anything has widened the gap over the last few years it is the fact that America has been transformed by the original atrocity and most countries in Europe have not. Heisbourg might have been exaggerating somewhat when he asserted that it was still ‘business as usual’ for most Europeans.<sup>81</sup> But there was a major grain of truth in this. As Garton Ash has cleverly observed, September 11<sup>th</sup> was ‘yet another defining moment at which Europe’ declined ‘to be defined’.<sup>82</sup>

This leads us then to the Atlantic Alliance more generally. Again, we have to make a series of distinctions. As we all know (and as every official repeats) NATO will survive in one form or another, and will do by continuing to be a useful vehicle performing all sorts of necessary functions from peace-keeping through to keeping a US foot in the European camp. But as even more mainstream Americans have conceded, NATO has become more or less irrelevant when it comes to dealing with the most urgent security issues of our day.<sup>83</sup> Naturally, NATO will not go under; no more than Europe will fall off the America’s intellectual map. But neither are any longer America’s privileged partner in an age of international terrorism. That is the critical point.<sup>84</sup> Europe does not even possess

<sup>78</sup> See Judy Dempsey, ‘NATO must modernize and rethink its strategy. Is that mission impossible?’ *Financial Times*, June 25 2004, and ‘NATO’s incredibility’, *Financial Times*, June 26 2004, Bronwen Maddox, ‘Future of NATO hangs its help in Afghanistan’, *The Times*, June 26 2004, and ‘NATO in Afghanistan’, *International Herald Tribune*, June 28 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Martin Wolf, ‘The transatlantic divide must not be allowed to widen’, *Financial Times*, June 23, 2004.

<sup>80</sup> Geir Lundestad discusses some of these dividing issues in his *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp. 269–294.

<sup>81</sup> Francois Heisbourg, Unpublished Lecture. *Oslo Military Academy*, 13 March 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, ‘Europe At War’, *The New York Review of Books*, December 20, 2001, p. 68.

<sup>83</sup> ‘The ongoing pace of military operations in Afghanistan and the escalating violence in the Middle East serve to underscore the fact that the basic security challenges of our day no longer lie within Europe but outside of it. Senator Richard Lugar, Cited in ‘US Senate Hears NATO Reform Proposal’, *Voice of America News*, No. 5, May 2002.

<sup>84</sup> See Francois Heisbourg and Rob de Wit, ‘Is the nature of the transatlantic security relationship changing?’, Debate, Web Edition, *NATO Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1, Spring 2001, pp. 15–19.

what Americans seem to respect and need most from allies: namely, adequate hard power. Indeed, if anything has weakened the ties that once bound the two together, it is the simple fact that Europe does not have the military wherewithal to operate alongside the Americans in a serious combat situation. As one observer has noted ‘the huge additional investment’ the Americans are ‘making in defense will make practical inter-operability with allies in NATO or in coalitions impossible’.<sup>85</sup> The arithmetic in other words no longer seems to add up.<sup>86</sup> And because it no longer does so, the United States will be more and more inclined to act alone when it feels its vital interests are threatened.

This leads logically to a third source of drift identified here: America’s growing inclination towards finding its own kind of answers to global problems. The picture of course is not a black and white one. In many areas the United States will continue to work with others while maintaining its membership of several key international organizations,<sup>87</sup> if for no other reason that the challenges of interdependence demands collective rather than singular responses.<sup>88</sup> But a corner of sorts does appear to have been turned, and was turned long before Bush assumed office, and several years before September 11<sup>th</sup> and the decision to go to war with Iraq.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, it was turned not because of short-term factors, but rather deeper change taking place in the immediate post-Cold War years, including the perceived failure of several multilateral efforts in the 1990s, growing pressure from Congress, the rise of a new nationalism in America itself, and, of course, America’s own extraordinary renaissance in the 1990s.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, under circumstances where its own position appeared to be on the rise, in a world where it was the only superpower left in the game, the US, like any ascending power, has been (and will continue to be) increasingly inclined to pursue policies that suit its interests rather than anybody else’s.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, the likelihood of drift is going to be determined to an increasing degree by how Europe and the United States regard each other. Making predictions is a notoriously risky undertaking. But two long term trends that will not necessarily support the transatlantic relationship are beginning to make themselves felt: one is a growing sense amongst many Europeans that the current and deeply uneven distribution of power leaves them far too dependent on an America whose judgements it cannot always trust—witness here its decision to go to war with Iraq; and the other (too frequently brushed aside by skeptics) is the enormous changes now taking place on the European continent that over time will very likely lead to an identity defined not just in terms of a positive notion of Europe but a more negative image of America.<sup>92</sup> Naturally, this is not a comfortable conclusion to arrive at if one happens to be a Transatlanticist of the old school. Indeed, according to one of the better known Euroskeptics, it doesn’t even correspond to reality. In fact, if we were to take Niall Ferguson seriously,

<sup>85</sup> Lord Robertson, *Financial Times*, February 25, 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Alexander and Timothy Garden, ‘The Arithmetic of Defence Policy’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 3, July 2001, pp. 509–530.

<sup>87</sup> See Rosemary Foot, S. Neil MacFarlane and Michael Mastanduno eds., *US Hegemony and International Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>89</sup> See Barry Buzan, ‘American Exceptionalism, Unipolarity and September 11: Understanding the Behaviour of a Sole Superpower’. Paper for ISA Conference. Montreal, March 2004. See also his *The United States and the Great Powers: World politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2004).

<sup>90</sup> See Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman eds., *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

<sup>91</sup> See my ‘Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony’, *New Political Economy*, Vol. 6, no. 3, 2001, pp. 311–340.

<sup>92</sup> See ‘America’s Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties’, *The Pew Research Centre*, March 18, 2003.

then there is only one future for a sclerotic and inward-looking Europe: as a dependency of its more powerful and more dynamic protector to the West.<sup>93</sup> But this misses the main point almost completely. The logic of European integration, the phenomenon of expansion, the successful launch of the Euro, the new European Constitution, and the search for a defense identity, will undoubtedly create difficulties for Europe in the short term. However, taken together, they still point in one direction: towards a new Europe that over time is more likely (rather than less) to become more assertive and thus more competitive with the United States.<sup>94</sup> Admittedly, shaping a credible EU foreign policy for the future will not be easy.<sup>95</sup> And for the moment, Europe may prefer the certainties of bandwagoning rather the risks involved in trying to balance the United States, especially as any attempt to balance at this point in time would, if nothing else, divide Europe as much as unite it. Nevertheless, such a passive stance cannot be guaranteed for ever, as some on the neo-conservative right now appear to appreciate.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, if we are correct, we should not be interpreting the new transatlantic crisis and the deep divisions that caused it as symptoms and expressions of European weakness—as Kagan amongst others has suggested—but rather the first manifestation of a more serious European challenge to American primacy.<sup>97</sup> New and more interesting times lie ahead. However, those who continue to repeat the mantra that the Transatlantic relationship is safe because we think it is (and have held yet another conference and workshop to prove the point) may not only be deluding themselves, but failing to grasp one of the great shifts now taking place in the international system. Experts in the past have invariably failed to predict major change. One might almost say that is the mark of the expert as Keynes once observed. But there should be no excuses this time round—though some might be having to get a few ready if they persist in arguing that Europe and the United States form a natural community whose interests and ideas about the world are likely to coincide for ever.

<sup>93</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: the Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

<sup>94</sup> Even the European economy may not be quite so sluggish as most Americans seem to think. See Special Report: Europe v America, 'Mirror, mirror on the wall', *The Economist*, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2004, pp. 81–83.

<sup>95</sup> Steven Everts, *Shaping a Credible EU Foreign Policy* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2002).

<sup>96</sup> David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End To Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003).

<sup>97</sup> For one of the few writers to challenge traditional assumptions, see Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).