

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
CENTER ON THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE

Second Annual Raymond Aron Lecture

IN DEFENSE OF DECADENT EUROPE

Speakers:            Tony Judt  
                             Gilles Andreani  
Introduction:        Philip Gordon

November 16, 2005

[TRANSCRIPT PRODUCED FROM A TAPE RECORDING]

## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GORDON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Let me welcome you all here, and apologies for the late start. There are a number of people still fighting the elements, but I thank you for doing your best to get here.

I'm Phil Gordon, the director of the Center on the United States and Europe here at Brookings. It's really a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the second annual Raymond Aron lecture here.

Aron, as everybody knows, was the prominent French scholar, philosopher, political commentator, journalist who was best known for his willingness to follow his ideas wherever the evidence took him rather than supporting the conventional wisdom of the day. He also combined great theoretical and historical work with a deep appreciation for the dilemmas of the policymaker and the need to apply those ideas to the real world. He had very little time for intellectuals who couldn't think about the realities of the real world. And finally, he also stood quite strongly for a strong U.S.-French and U.S.-European relationship at a time when that itself wasn't always fashionable.

I think in all of those ways he is sort of a symbol for what we aspire to do here, combining theoretical historical work with the dilemmas of the policymaker and the real world.

We launched this lecture last year as part of the expanded France program within our Center on the United States and Europe as a means for providing a forum for dialogue across the Atlantic between French officials and scholars and intellectuals and American ones to address topics relevant to France,

the United States, and the relationship. And last year we were very proud to have three of Aron's most eminent former students, Jean-Claude Casanova and Pierre Hassner, who were here, and then a third, Stanley Hoffmann, who was unable to join us but also contributed an essay to what we ended up publishing, which were the views of those three eminent students and scholars on force and legitimacy in international relations. And that publication is available to be picked up, if you haven't gotten a copy yet.

Tonight we are again delighted to have two eminent speakers who both also represent in a way this great talent for combining intellectual work and thinking about policy and the real world, both of whom also have in one way or another a connection to Aron as well as a connection to us.

Tony Judt, to my right, will be known to all of you, I'm sure, from his many works, including his numerous articles in the New York Review of Books and elsewhere. He's the Remarque Professor of European Studies at New York University and the Director of the Remarque Institute, which he founded in 1995. He's written a number of books on European history and the history of ideas, on France, and--I won't name them all, but I will underscore the most recent, this magisterial book called "Post-War: A History of Europe Since 1945," which I also should add is available for purchase out in the corridor, at a discount. So I hope you will avail yourself of the opportunity to buy that quite special work.

Tony Judt is not only an expert on Europe and European history and France, but also on Raymond Aron, about whom he has written extensively, including in a 1998 book called "The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus,

Aron, and the French 20th Century." And if you haven't read much about Aron, I would highly recommend the short essay in that book for a quick take on Aron's life and thinking.

We are also delighted to have with us Gilles Andreani, who has a special connection to the Center on the U.S. and Europe and the Aron Lecture. In addition to being an old personal friend and a friend of Brookings and the Center, Gilles was sort of present at the creation, if you will, of the Aron Lecture. He is the former director of the Centre d'Analyse et de Prevision, the French policy planning staff in the foreign ministry, which is supporting this activity. And Gilles was deeply involved in the conception of this opportunity, providing this forum for us to have this type of dialogue and for thinking of naming it after Raymond Aron.

I say he was deeply involved in that; it was actually his idea. I'm trying to keep a little bit of the credit for myself by saying that he was present and involved. But it was really Gilles's idea, and you can see that it was really a terrific idea and we're all the more grateful that he was able to come and join us today. Gilles also has had a number of diplomatic posts, but also scholarly positions and has written extensively about these issues.

Final word about the topic. I sort of feel obliged when you have a title with the word "decadent" in it to say a quick word about that before turning it over to the speakers to address it. As I think you know, the topic tonight, the idea of "In Defense of Decadent Europe" is another Aronian topic, a book by Aron in 1976, "Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente," which yet again took issue with the conventional wisdom by challenging the notion that Europe was facing

an inevitable decline. Decadence in that sense meant all the personal freedoms and liberties and welfare state and this view that you didn't need to really defend yourselves or make sacrifices or be disciplined but you could just enjoy life and everything would be fine. In that climate in 1976, that was a view that suggested that maybe the Soviet Union would prevail and we in the West and Europe would decline. And Aron challenged that view and said Europe obviously had problems but it was in fact unaware of its superiority. And of course, in the end, he turned out to be right.

It was that idea that seemed to us a good idea possibly to revisit, because in many ways that notion that Europe is decadent and in decline has its echoes today. Constitutional crises, rejection of the constitution in the referendum, riots in France, economic problems, demographic problems, challenges with immigration--there is a view out there that we may be now witnessing a Europe that is decadent, in decline.

So that is one of the questions for tonight: Is Europe falling behind and in decline, or is it poised for renewal, as it was then, as Aron rightly perceived? And I couldn't think of anyone better to help us think about that issue than Tony Judt, and I'll pass the floor to him now.

[Applause.]

MR. JUDT: Good evening. Thank you very much for having me here. Thank you, Phil, and the Brookings Institution.

I'm particularly honored to give a lecture in the name of Raymond Aron, who I knew, although I wasn't a student of his. He is one of just four surpassingly brilliant people that I've known in the course of my academic

career--two of them philosophers, one a molecular biologist, and the other, Aron, who is not readily defined. But among the many things that he was, as Phil said, was a public intellectual, which for him meant knowing stuff and then, but only then, talking in the public sphere about what should be done on the basis of what you know.

It's with the 100th anniversary of his birth this year and the 30th anniversary of the publication of the "Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente" next year that I sort of decided to shape my theme. It's hard now to remember the world of 1976-77, a world in which it seemed to the majority of progressive opinion in Europe, Western Europe--and to quite a lot of it here, too--that there was still a very strong case for socialism, for the prospects for an end of capitalism at one point or another in the foreseeable future, and we remember that in the election of Mitterrand, there was a huge celebration. I remember I was there in Paris in anticipation of le grand soir, the transformative moment that France was about to enter.

This wasn't just the French illusion. The British general election of 1983 saw a Labour Party manifesto which was so utterly committed to the proposition that you could take yourself out of the contemporary world and remake Britain on socialist lines without any reference to what was going on elsewhere that one Labour parliamentarian described it at the time as the longest suicide note in history.

Thirty years on, the casual unreflected assumption, the sort of received wisdom that capitalism was on its last legs and that socialism was the future and so forth is clearly no longer with us. We're a long way past that. I

would argue that, instead, the clichés and the received wisdom have shifted direction. Instead of assuming as a default position that we're part of some long progressive narrative with a socialist end point and the capitalist era that we're passing through is brief, transient, and unfortunate, I think that it is widely held in Western Europe--even more widely held here and in certain parts of Eastern Europe--that the liberal, as the French might say, or the neoliberal, as we might say, or the Anglo-American assumption about the future and about what is wrong with non-liberal presence has replaced it. We now live in an age where the clichés no longer look east, they look west--or, in certain op-eds, south, so to speak.

The cliché takes the form, I would argue, of an assumption, uninterrogated, that growth is good, that reforms, particularly in Europe, are inevitable, that Europe is suffering from a sort of sclerotic condition induced by its socialist institutions, it is stagnant and has a defunct social--or in some people's terms, socialist--model whose time has come and gone. And I suppose this is well summarized in punditland by the writings of someone like Tom Friedman--though he's by no means alone--most recently in the New York Times only a month ago, when he said, and I quote, that "History will record that it was Chinese capitalism that put an end to European socialism."

Now, I don't want in this brief lecture that I'm going to offer here to compare Europe as it now is to the United States, much less to China. As it happens, I share Aron's own sentiments, written in the '60s--and I quote--that "the American economy seems to me a model neither for humanity nor for the West." But I don't want to talk about that here, though it's a subject that

inevitably lies behind some of what I'm talking about. What I want to do is question the very currency in which we exchange opinions and debate in this country on these matters.

What is the conventional way of talking about Europe today?

Well, it's held to be economically or socially dysfunctional. Is that true? Well, it depends on the data you look at. Some European countries are much less efficient than the United States, which is typically taken as the sort of default point of reference. Other European countries are not. According to the World Economic Forum at Davos, the foremost efficient economies in the world today are indeed the United States, but the other three are Norway, Denmark, and Finland, which hardly suggests that the welfare state in its most advanced form is dysfunctional or problematic when it comes to being efficient economically. Famously, the United States ranks well below Europe on a whole number of scales having to do with life expectation, quality of life, health services, the gap between rich and poor, and so forth.

But the answer to that is normally, "Oh, fine. It's true. Europe is in many ways a better place as things currently stand, but it can't last. Even if the European way of running their economy is accorded a certain status as desirable, it is unrealistic. Sooner or later it's doomed."

Well, that raises other questions that I will talk about in a minute. But it's not altogether clear when people say look at those Europeans who have managed to cut clear of the old model and become efficient liberal states--e.g., the Celtic Tiger, Ireland; or the new Little Americas of Eastern Europe--Slovakia



is often brought out as an example--it's not altogether clear that these examples tell the story you want them to tell.

The Celtic Tiger, it's true, Ireland, transformed itself in half a generation from an impoverished rural society exporting people to a post-industrial service economy importing people. But it was able to do that largely because the overhead costs, not to mention the infrastructural investment, were all provided from Brussels in huge transfers over a period of three decades--mostly underwritten, of course, by the dysfunctional old European economies of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands. The same point might be said to apply to the typically argued and admired East European post-liberal--or post-old-economy tigers like Slovakia, imitating California in their rush to undercut the inefficient West European states.

But take the Slovak case. Slovakia--there are other examples--seeks to cut taxes, to have a flat tax, to encourage investment, and has been successful in doing so by making itself an attractive, cheap place for investors to come in and find a skilled, trained labor force. All true. But it's able to do this in large part, of course, because it depends upon, once again, anticipated future transfers from its new EU partners in Brussels to cover precisely the shortfall in the budgets which is occasioned by these reduced taxes and by the benefits given to outside investors.

At best, it seems to me, the Little Americas of Eastern Europe have a five-year window of opportunity during which they have skilled workers earning low wages and are able to benefit from external subsidies for their low tax rates, after which they will no longer be attractive enough and the investment

will go further east or further south and they will turn, as they must, to Brussels for the kind of support that they can no longer generate from inward investment.

So it's not clear to me that even the models that are sometimes positive as the way that Europe ought to go are as attractive or indeed as plausible as claimed.

The fetish of growth, of course, in its own right is something that we might talk about. From a historian's point of view it's worth remembering that the fastest growing country and the fastest growing economy in Europe between 1955 and 1970 was, of course, Rumania, for the obvious reason that it was coming from very far behind and forcibly growing in ways that were only possible when other areas of social development and social expenditure were held back.

All right. It's nice--question mark; it's doomed. What lies behind that assumption? What lies behind it, it seems to me, is the association of technological change--globalization--with inevitability or necessity. Since we have globalization, since technical change makes the kind of protected economies of Europe that we're used to no longer possible in the future, like it or not this change is going to be upon us. We can see the future because we can see the shape of the economic present.

Well, a cautionary thought on that subject. Imagine we were standing here not in the year 2005 but in the year 1905 and asking ourselves what do we know about the future--we economists, we political observers--on the basis of what we think we know about the present. Well, three widespread assumptions were made by, as it were, people like us in 1905 in Europe.

The first, famously, was that large-scale war between states would never happen again because the cost of it would be unsustainable for a state and the moral, human cost of it, as well as the technological challenge, would make it politically impossible for a state to go into that kind of war and stay in it. And that assumption, of course, remained in force until November 1914 or so.

The second assumption that everyone would have made was that the 20th century was not going to be America's century, it was going to be Germany's century. And indeed, Raymond Aron, in a conversation once with Fritz Stern, made this point himself, that how striking it was to those of us who lived in the 20th century--this is Aron speaking--that it didn't turn out to be Germany's century when it so obviously ought to have been. Of course, in a certain sense it did turn out to be Germany's century, but not in the sense that anyone perhaps meant in 1905.

But the third assumption, which is germane to what I want to say here, would have been, and it was very widespread, that the age of nation states and nationalism was over. In an era of what was not yet called globalization but what was regarded as much the same kind of thing--read Keynes's "Economic Consequences of the Peace," the introductory paragraphs, where he talks about the kind of world that was available to a London businessman in 1910--in a world of steamships, steam trains, telegraph, telephones, rapid trade, rapid movement, the breaking down of tariffs and barriers, the notion that independent nation states might spring up on the basis of nationalist movements seemed terribly passé.

Tomas Masaryk, who was going to go on to become the first president of independent post-World War I Czechoslovakia, did not until 1916 abandon his own belief, widespread among Central Europeans of his generation, that the Hapsburg Empire must survive because the logic of economics dictated that you wanted the largest possible space and you could not imagine putting up tariffs and customs and barriers between Prague and Vienna in an economy which was increasingly internationalized, not increasingly nationalized. Only after World War I, or late in it, did he abandon that belief.

So let's remember that it's very possible not only to be wrong about the future but to extrapolate politically from economic logic in a very, very mistaken way indeed. And indeed I think that the lesson of that particular example is, one, the Aronian one, that Max Weber's temptation to find necessity or even inevitability in any particular political moment is the one to avoid; and secondly, that we should all be wary of becoming enslaved, as Keynes once warned, to dead economists. When we assume the necessity and inevitability, A, of growth and, B, of economic primacy in the shaping of our future, we are slaves to 19th century economists, including, of course, Marx.

I want to argue that we need to pay a little more attention to politics. Whatever the logic of the inevitable pressure of the market, Europe will never win the race to the bottom in the effort to be competitive with China or even the United States. And here, I think, is the core of what I want to say. We have lived, most of us in this room, and most Europeans today, for too long in a post-ideological or, if you like, post-political era. We've forgotten what it was like before, how fragile the Western consensus of the past few decades could so

easily prove. Commentators and pundits, particularly in this country, ignorant of the past or too young to recall it, happily quote Munich and Yalta at you at the drop of a hat. But they're not normally able to explain to you why welfare states came into being after 1945 in Europe.

The state after 1945 transferred itself quite rapidly in Europe, in all of Europe, West and East--but I'll stay with West--from a tax-raising military-spending state of the kind it had been since the 17th century into a social state, spending huge amounts of money on health, education, pensions, housing, welfare, public facilities, and so on. The state was doing something quite new. But it wasn't doing this because there'd been some sort of socialist revolution. Most of the people actually doing it, implementing it in 1945 and through 1955 in Western Europe, were Christian Democrats, or liberals, not socialists of any kind. What they were doing was prophylactic. It was an attempt to prevent a return to the past. The liberal welfare states of Europe were not built as a vision of a utopian future, they were built as a barrier to Europe's 20th century as it had just been experienced.

Bear in mind that most of the men--they were men--who built the welfare states in Europe were not young social democrats. They were old, very old, liberals. William Beveridge, who wrote the famous report that became the basis of the British welfare state, was born in 1879. Winston Churchill, the man who commissioned his report that was published in 1942, was born 1874. Clement Atlee, the prime minister who actually implemented it, was born in 1883. Similarly in France. The men who actually invented post-war France--people like the senior administrator Raoul Dautry, who ran both the railways and

the health ministry; or Robert Schuman, born in 1886; or Jean Monnet, the youngest of this cohort, born in 1888; like De Gasperi in Italy, born in 1881, or the president of Italy, Luigi Einaudi, born in 1874.

All of these men were adults before 1914. They had grown up in the Edwardian generation of late 19th century reformists, but they also remembered a Europe before the catastrophe, before the cataclysmic events of 1914-45. And what they were constructing was both a completion of the great liberal reform projects of the fin de siècle--fin de 19th siècle--but also a barrier, as they understood it, against the return of depression, civil war, extremist politics, and so on. They all shared Keynes's view, Maynard Keynes writing just before his death, that after this war there will be a craving for social and personal security in Europe. And there was. The welfare state was constructed primarily, if you want to think of it in these terms, as a security revolution rather than a social revolution.

We've forgotten this. We've forgotten it because we've forgotten what ideological politics were like. As Aron famously wrote in 1955, this is the end of the ideological era. And we've been living the end of the ideological era and the end of the confrontational, divisive politics which it generated for the last 40, 50 years. The welfare state wasn't the reason for the end of it, but it was the form that the end of it took in those societies that were determined not to see its return. It's retrospectively misremembered by pundits and others in this country as a socialist revolution, but they couldn't be more wrong.

Therefore, it seems to me that as we enter the 21st century in a time when it's very clear that security issues--and by "security," I don't just mean

terrorism; I mean the sense of insecurity, the fear that the state might not be able to protect you, the fear that you might be vulnerable in many different ways, occupationally, physically, collectively, and so forth--that the security state in that sense is going to be more necessary in the 21st century than it has been actually in the last years of the 20th, when indeed we saw a retreat from it. Statism, the belief that the state was the best available actor to perform certain required social undertakings, ground itself into the ground in the mid-'70s in most European countries. I think that post-statism is now grinding itself into the ground as well.

I think the reason for this is precisely because of a return, or an anticipatable return, to the degree of insecurity, uncertainty, and fear of the future that people felt--not in the 1990s, '80s, '70s, '60s, or '50s, but in the 1920s and '30s and '40s. It seems to me precisely in a globalizing age, to use the cliché, a time when there is no choice but to accept the cross-border movements of people and money and goods, when immigration is both inevitable and necessary--and an enlarged European Union with it, I think--that it's precisely under these circumstances that the state becomes more, not less, necessary.

The European state displaced, it seems to me, the forms of community and security that most Europeans had for many decades before--either organization by work, by class, or by region or by religion. Europeans have none of these now, in most cases. What they have is the residue of the politically legitimate state, the state which is recognizably an expression of their interests and recognizably able, in a way that neither local government nor Brussels is, to protect them against unpredictable changes.

The unpredictable changes that have to happen, what outsiders describe as the inevitable reforms, may well be inevitable, but they can only be undertaken with political prudence in the context of the European welfare state. It's the welfare state that can reform. Abandon both the state and the old forms of job security or protection or whatever, and you get--well, what do you get? What you get, it seems to me, is what we're starting to see in Europe, what we see in Mr. Haider, or saw in Mr. Haider in Austria; or Christophe Blocher in Switzerland; or the Vlaams Belang, formerly Vlaams Blok, in Antwerp; or the Danish People's Party under Pia Kjaersgaard in Denmark; or the Norwegian Progress Party.

The Norwegian Progress Party at the last elections, two months ago, got 22 percent of the vote on basically a two-issue ticket. One issue was no more immigrants in a country where most people have not actually met an immigrant and, outside of Oslo, are extremely unlikely to. And the second issue was basically--though it wasn't articulated in these terms--back to the 1950s, back to a time when we knew each other, we felt secure, we felt a community, we felt Norwegian and knew what that meant. Not back to the 19th century, because then they didn't and couldn't have done. The forms of welfare security that people think of as remembered and now under threat in fact go back in most countries only to the '50s or '40s or, uniquely in the Swedish case, to the '30s.

But something is going on when in Antwerp, the richest town in the richest quadrant of one of the richest countries in the richest continent that the world has ever known, in Antwerp 38 percent of the population, including a large percentage of the Jewish population, in the last local elections votes for a party--



the Vlaams Blok, or Vlaams Belang as it now is--which basically says we are entering a time of terrible insecurity, they're not looking after you, there are lots of immigrants coming in, globalization means no one's protecting you, you need to be protected, we offer a promise of future protection.

That's the new old politics, not a fascism. This is not a return to the past, but the new old politics of what happens when the state appears to have lost control, or lost the initiative in a time of rapid and, for most people, as it seems, unregulated, uncontrolled change.

I have three general Aronian thoughts by way of concluding remarks. The first is that, yes, this is a very pessimistic way of thinking about the 21st century. It's what a Harvard political theorist called Judith Shklar many, many years ago called the liberalism of fear. It's the liberalism, if you like, of a vision of what's needed in Europe, based on an assumption that the default condition for most people in public life is risk rather than prosperity, threat rather than progress, uncertainty rather than more of the same. And I repeat that it's an illusion, the most dangerous illusion of all, projecting out from our own experience, as in my--I was born just after World War II--projecting out from our own experience of post-political, de-politicized, uniquely prosperous times when it seems possible to risk all manner of changes, since the downside of change has never, in our lifetime, been very serious, even in the worst circumstances. It seems very imprudent, at least, for us to project our own parenthetical experience between 1950 and the year 2000 on the future.

Secondly, I would say that yes, I'm arguing the case for a very tragic view of politics and choices. And again, I think this is an Aronian one and,

again, I think it's a European one. Europeans and Americans lived through very different 20th centuries. This is not clear to us, unless we think hard about it, because the second half of the century seemed to be one that bound us together in this common West, in which we think we have common cultural references, common political references, common moral references, and so forth.

But in fact, the 20th century experience of Europe and America is utterly different. My own country, Britain, experienced the 20th century and Britain is nearer America than Europe. When I was a child, everyone--it was quite commonplace to talk about the first day of the Battle of the Somme, when 62,000 British soldiers fell. That's one-quarter of the total American loss in the whole of the Second World War on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916. There was a powerful sense--and this is in Britain; and in World War II the British only lost one person for every 125 people in their population. Most East European countries lost something like 1 in 5, in Poland; or 1 in 8, in Yugoslavia; or 1 in 11 in Greece; 24 million people in the Soviet Union; and so forth.

These make for a very different experience of recent history. And it explains, I think, why the European model of social organization is not just the sort of randomly selected body of socialist projects and programs that were put in place after World War II. It is a widespread--going from left to well across the right of center--assumption that was, until the very recent generation--perhaps not true of the youngest generation, but was until the very recent generation universally shared that we cannot go back to "that." And "that" can be prevented,

in among other ways, by what we think of as the European model of social and political organization with the role that that entails for the state.

And thirdly, my final point, it's a very skeptical sort of way of thinking about politics. It seems to me there are great risks inherent in what, living here for 20 years, I've come to think of as the sort of optimistic American Manichean world view: The world is divided into the past and the future, with the assumption that, insofar as they are different, the future is better. It's divided into the old and the new. It's divided, retrospectively, of course, before 1989, into socialism or capitalism, stagnation or growth, them or us, and most recently, of course, with us or against us. And above all, good or evil.

Raymond Aron's own response to this way of thinking is very well known, and I'll quote it to you once more. *Ce n'est jamais la lutte entre le bien et la mal, c'est le préférable contre le détestable.* "The struggle is never between good and evil, it's the preferable against the detestable." A very skeptical but, if you're a 20th century European, very realistic position.

The detestable, it seems to me, can take many forms in the public realm, past and future. But it's always characterized by its attraction to one big theory, one big model, one big view of how things are, how they work, and how they should work. It's always very sure of itself. It's almost invariably dangerously smug in its incontrovertible theoretical superiority and moral rectitude.

What about the preferable? The preferable, it seems to me, is always a compromise. Europe today is a compromise caught somewhere between the lessons of memory and the distractions of prosperity, between what

I've called prophylactic social provisions and the attraction of maximizing profit. Like all such compromises, it's deeply contradictory and flawed. But of all the models that are on offer in the world today, it seems to me, in my opinion, the one most likely to be well-equipped to face the coming century.

"Decadent Europe"--the phrase is Aron's, but we can employ it for our purposes--decadent Europe is the 20th century's memorial book. It's a hard-bought reminder of the many and unpredictable--and I emphasize "unpredictable"--ways in which a society and a world can go terribly wrong. It's a memorial book that may yet have lessons to teach us in the decades to come. And it seems to me to reflect very poorly on commentators and public figures in this country that they are in such a hurry to see that book closed.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. ANDREANI: I would like to start by thanking you personally, Phil, for having me invited to contribute to tonight's events. It's a real honor for me. I'm not a scholar, I'm not an academic, but I'll try and rise to the challenge and speak.

You mentioned that I had affinities with Aron. These are only distant ones. I didn't know him. I can only say I have a sort of second-degree affiliation with him; that is, your two speakers last year were, as far as Jean-Claude Casanova is concerned, my own teacher, my own professor of economics at Sciences Po many years ago, and Pierre Hassner I regard as the man who taught me about everything I know on foreign relations. So it's in this capacity that I shall speak to the issue of tonight, "In Defense of Decadent Europe."

I'd like to start by going back to the purpose of the book. The purpose of the book, by Aron's account in his memoir, was to make a case for the superiority of the liberal economic model, liberal Europe, over the socialist model in Eastern Europe. He went on to broaden the issue, which means that in addition to the already-mentioned part of the book on Europe unconscious of her superiority, there are two other parts. The first is Europe mystified--mystified, of course, by the communist and progressive ideologies--and the second, the third and last part, is Europe as a victim of herself.

So quite a broadening of the issue, which itself is cast in a very particular context where, frankly, Aron's reflection on decadence and loss of self-assurance by Europe is certainly not confined to Europe but extends to the West as a whole. The risks he identifies for Europe, the many risks he talks to in his book, are, from one passage to another, sort of indifferently ascribed to Europe or to the West. And this is in the context of what he himself calls the withdrawal of America. This is the mid-'70s, a period in between two--a period in which you have witnessed the withdrawal of America from Vietnam and the certain loss of confidence in America's purpose, what he calls the retreat of the imperial republic.

As a conclusion to the book, Aron offers two distinct possibilities. One is that the rest of the world follows the path of the economic transformation made possible by industrial capitalism, a process in which there is a chance that the West could still represent, at least for some time, the leading edge--or what he calls the disaggregation of the American imperial domain; a process in which

an enfeebled Europe runs a very serious risk of becoming subservient to the Soviet Union.

The title, which Aron chose himself--so he says in his memoir--is both ironic, in a way, because I think he does not believe that Europe is threatened by decadence, and slightly misleading.

For one reason, this is not a defense in the real sense of the term. It retains all the analytical and dialectical character of most of Aron's writings.

Second, it is not on Europe. As I already mentioned, it is as much on the West as on Europe and firmly set by him into the context of what he called the retreat of American diplomacy. Actually, in his memoirs the book is being mentioned in a chapter which is called "The Decadence of the West," not of Europe.

And third, Aron's style and way of thinking do not fit well with the concept of decadence. Although a philosopher of history himself, an admirer of Spengler, someone perhaps who drew from Toynbee his vision of the real disappearance of Europe as an actor in world affairs, he is very skeptical of the very concept of decadence, which he says implies either a value judgment or a scheme of the future.

And therefore, throughout the book he tends to prefer a more objective characterization of the risks Europe faces, namely decline, or what he calls "recul" in French, meaning, basically, retreat; that there's a change in objective and measurable positions vis-à-vis others, rather than the kind of inner decay which he, in his own words, ascribed to the biological pessimism characteristic of the thinking on decadence.

So it's a very bizarre book, one which certainly goes beyond its stated objective, one whose title doesn't fit exactly with its content. However, it remains--and I must confess, I never had, you know, a chance to read it before I prepared this lecture--it remains a very fascinating book for a number of reasons.

And I start with--and maybe it's dangerous for me to venture into this in front of Tony Judt--but I think it retains a very significant historical value. It plunges us back into the intellectual and strategic atmosphere of the mid-'70s, which is a very special moment. I think it also alerts us to the limits of history, at least if it can ever be turned into a productive exercise.

For the alarms of Aron about Europe, namely stagflation, the appeal of Eurocommunism, the intellectual submission of Europe to progressive ideologies, the strategic ascendancy of the Soviet Union--all that may have been fully justified in the mid-'70s. Aron, indeed, was writing between the two oil shocks, the two SALT agreements, the Portuguese revolution, and the victory of the French left in 1981. But in retrospect, what Aron described as a rising tide of perils for Europe looks really like the turn of the tide in favor precisely of the liberal ideologies and in favor of Europe itself. The '80s saw a very unlikely unity of Western leadership composed of Reagan, Mitterrand, Thatcher, and Kohl, which displayed a degree of resolve in front of the Soviet Union, which was properly unexpected. The ultimate demise of Eurocommunism and eventually the peaceful reunification of both Germany and Europe.

What Aron did not foresee, and which in retrospect is also striking, is that in this story the Europeans played a distinct and significant role. Let me mention a few elements of this role.

In many ways, the battle of ideas between the East and the West was fought and won in Europe. The Europeans in the '80s generated their own antibodies to the attraction of Marxism and progressive ideologies, a process in which Aron's works played no small part, at least in my country. It is European voters and politicians which relegated the Italian and French communist parties to political insignificance. And it is certainly the Solidarity movement and the echo it found in Western Europe which dealt a final blow to the appeal of communist parties in the western part of the continent.

On top of this, the centrifugal forces in the east of Europe coincided with the high point of European integration--the high point, at least, of its appeal for public opinions. If you look at the period where Europe was most popular in public opinions in Europe--meaning the European integration process--it is between the Single European Act in 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty in 1991. I think there is more than a coincidence to the fact that, as centrifugal forces were manifesting themselves increasingly in the East, you had in the West a pull of attraction which gave these forces a sense of direction and certainly encouraged them. In 1989, the European Community appeared by common admission as the entity best suited to help the political and economic transformation at work in Poland and Hungary. At the end of the year--a year later, to be more precise, the European Union appeared as the best framework into which to accommodate reunified Germany within the context of a more unified Europe.

To sum up, far from being decadent or drifting into submission to the Soviet Union, the Europe of the '80s showed a measure of unity, resolve, and



influence on her own destiny, which Aron in his *Plaidoyer* did not and, in all justice, could not foresee.

This, I think, should alert us to the extremely risky and at times, I should say, even adventurous character of, you know, the kind of predictions which go along with what I should call--and it is not Aron I'm talking about-- "decadence thinking." The history of this thinking is full of such paradoxes that, at the time when decadence is often proclaimed, you see an unexpected turn in history, a change in fortune, which make this thinking generally wrong.

Let me quote only one sentence by Voltaire in 1770: "We are," he says, "in the time of the most awful decadence." And the history of this thinking is full of such kind of quotes. And of course I need not mention all of them. Quite a few of them, by the way, concern the United States rather than Europe, and most of them have been proven wrong.

Now, what about today Europe? In contrast to the Europe of the '80s or of the early '90s, the Euro optimism of this period seems now well behind. The economic performance of the euro zone has been hesitant at best, ever since 1991; the whole of the EU as an international actor unconvincing at times. And the failure of the European governments to get approval of the constitutional treaty and the dramatic rejection of the treaty by the French and Dutch voters certainly have reinforced doubts about Europe, especially in this country.

My purpose here is to try and revisit the various chapters of Raymond Aron and try to use a few questions I find there to the current state of Europe. But to do that, I think our perspective has to slightly change, and to change in two ways.

First, it is very remarkable that Aron's book spends 400 and so pages on Europe without hardly mentioning the European Community--only in a very dismissive way, to say that he does not believe that the European Community is a political entity, nor could it, says he, as far as the eye can see. That's about the only mention of the European Community in the book.

Now, there is now a sort of drift in vocabulary which makes it that when we speak about Europe, we're never too sure whether we are talking about Europe the continent and group of countries and people which it encompasses or the European institutions themselves. And this drift in vocabulary is in itself a telling of how different the situation of European integration process is now, as compared to what it was 30 years ago. And indeed, I don't believe any book on the current state of Europe could dispense of, not a mention, but a central whole being given to the European Union.

The second difference in perspective is that the *Plaidoyer* 30 years ago was in response to criticisms and hostile ideological forces coming mainly from outside Europe and which had deep resonance within Europe itself. Today, it seems to me, the main indictment of Europe is both from within and from outside. But they are very different. You have an American/liberal indictment, which Tony just referred to, and you have an internal debate within each European country as to the purpose and direction of the European Union. And in this sense, the debate is very different.

Now, is the Europe of today, like Aron argues it was 30 years ago, unaware of her own superiority? Are there elements in the European integration process, in the European Union, which deserve to revisit this formula and justify

it today? I think yes. I think the Europeans themselves are not appreciative enough of what they have accomplished. There are many items on which one could dwell in this respect; I shall only mention four very briefly.

The first one is peace. Now, there is a certain impatience of audiences, especially in this country, to arguments to the effect that the European integration process has brought peace to the continent or consolidated peace to a significant degree. Indeed, Aron himself took argument with the issue. He saw the peace in Europe essentially as a function of two elements. The first was American protection, and the second was what he calls the peace of satisfaction, describing in a slightly demeaning mode a situation in which every country, having renounced claims vis-à-vis others, could enjoy a sort of slightly bourgeois philistine sense of well-being.

I think, however, that the Franco-German reconciliation, its imprint on the European process has left this process marked by profoundly peaceful ethos which has resonated to this day and which has played a very useful role in consolidating the peace, especially in the direction of the new members. It's helped them moderate and occasionally solve longstanding subterranean disputes which might otherwise have resurfaced. And I do believe that peace is to be put to the credit of Europe and of the European Union.

The second is enlargement, and I need not dwell on this idea. The European Union has given the new members a sense of direction and within each country means it has essentially been a success.

The third is the single market at the euro. Again, I need not insist on that. I think the single market and the euro have not only brought to Europe

the benefit of a more integrated and competitive market, but it has also helped bring about transformations of nation states' economies which otherwise would not have been possible.

Finally, and last point, the EU, I think, is emerging as a stabilizing and moderating force in world affairs. It is progressively asserting a distinct international personality, not a blind trust in multilateralism or a rationalization of its own weakness, as is often argued in this country; rather, a mixture of some features of realism and idealism in international affairs. Of realism, it retains its taste for dialogue and its trust in the virtues of traditional diplomacy, in a way, and a certain distrust for ideology applied to world affairs. And of idealism, it retains not the desire to project its values outside as much as an acceptance of interdependence and the corresponding limitations on sovereignty which that interdependence entails. I think this combination makes the European Union an important--not a model, certainly, but an important moderating force, which is not superfluous virtue in today's world.

Now, would these achievements cause Aron to reverse his judgment that the European Union would never be a political entity? Jean Monnet, according to Aron, had come too late at the time when the nation states already had asserted themselves in Europe; indeed was too late to make for real European unity.

In parentheses here to mention that although Aron depicts himself, curiously, in his memoir as a militant of European unity and of the European community, there are many more signs of, let's say, slightly dismissive criticism

about European integration in his writings, at least those I have read myself, than of the sort of true belief which normally goes with -- of a European militant.

At any rate, I think today's judgment of Raymond Aron would most probably be different. Of course, everything depends on what you call a political entity. If you accept that the European Union is not a state in the making but an international union of states, an international organization, it is one in its category, by the density, closeness, effectiveness of the cooperation it has created among its members. I think it can definitely be called a *sui generis*, but nevertheless a genuine political entity in a category of its own.

Why, then, despite all these accomplishments, do we witness now a sort of loss of face in the European integration on the part of European citizens? The measure of the loss of face is given by the standard polls of the Commission, which show a decline of 10 percentage points over the last 15 years in the various key questions across Europe which measure the adhesion [?] of the opinions to the European Union. I think there are many reasons for that. I shall confine myself to those, you know, which pertain to the subject at hand; that is, the institutional and political ones, leaving aside the economy, the state of unemployment, and so on, which certainly have been decisive in these evolutions.

I think Europe is a great but complex and vulnerable idea. It's a great idea. I feel strongly about it, so I won't belabor the point. But in a sense-- to borrow again from Aron's vocabulary--Europe has been a victim of herself. It is a contradictory, complex project, that of Europe and integration, which can only be pursued with care and modesty, trying at each time to maintain a very

careful balance between autonomy and the sharing of sovereignty, the need for leadership at the center, and the character of a union of states which I think is predominantly that of the European Union.

And it is a vulnerable idea, because at a time where peoples are in search of certainties, of limits, of boundaries, of clear definitions, by its very essence the EU is an undefined process, or should I say undetermined process. Its ultimate political form, its ultimate membership are left open, which naturally makes public opinion suspicious of the true motives of the people who promote the idea. And if they don't trust their government, which happens more than often in any country, and especially in my country, then they will be deeply suspicious of them. But it is in particular in regard to the European Union.

Let me add to that--and this is only a very superficial explanation--that I think European governments have not treated this idea with the degree of care that it deserved over the last 15 years. I think they have made four main mistakes.

They tried to make Europe on the cheap. They proclaimed new, ambitious goals for the European Union while keeping its budgetary and institutional means at a minimum.

They have oversold what they have accomplished. They called a "political union" in 1991 what was in effect not a quantum leap in political integration. They called a "constitution" what was a significant improvement on existing treaties but did not change the character of the fundamental bond between European countries. And they divided themselves bitterly on Iraq, which brought disrespect, I think, to the whole European enterprise which, after

all, is supposed to bring about an ethos of moderation and compromise in intraeuropean relations.

And finally, they have chosen to minimize and defer issues which were deeply troubling for the European publics and their sense of identity, like the issue of Turkish accession. And they have downplayed and ultimately left mostly unresolved the huge institutional dilemmas which enlargement brought about, overlooking the obvious fact that a union at 25 could only function if it was more, rather than less, integrated from an institutional standpoint.

Be that as it may, and I think these reasons may contribute to the explanation of the failure of the French and Dutch referenda, I think the mistreatment of the European integration project by European governments is understandable and they must be excused in some way for that. It is a hard sell. It is very difficult to make the sort of compromises which are intrinsic to the European integration process. I think what you will see from now on is European governments take a deep breath before they try again.

So what you will essentially see is not a demise of the European Union, of which you can say it was *si mauvais*; the European Union will continue to function, but it will be quite some time--in my mind, at least 18 months to two years--before the European governments address again the unresolved dilemmas which brought about the failure of the French and Dutch referenda.

I would like to conclude with two questions which are intrinsic to Aron's thinking in the "Plaidoyer." First, not to use the word "decadence" or the word "decline," which he, at any rate, certainly would advocate using other than "decadence." I would simply ask are the problems of Europe more severe now

than they looked in 1976, when Aron wrote his book? And what should we make of the signs of European retreat, which make Europe's position in the world significantly lessened compared to what it was in 1976?

Actually, the retreat of Europe, its shrinking in political and other terms, has been the function of essentially three things.

First, there has been the dissolution of European empires, a process which Aron fully approved of against many of his political friends, as he regarded empires as unsustainable and incompatible with the democratic character of European states.

Second, the second sign of the retreat of Europe has been the division of Europe and the subjection of Central and Eastern Europe to Soviet rule for 40 years. And this is now over, in no small part because of the Europeans themselves.

And the third is the demographic retreat of Europe, one which has been noted by Aron and which will make Europe 12 percent today of the world's population, 20 percent at the beginning of the 20th century, perhaps as little as 7 or 8 percent in 50 years. I think there is no--this is something to which no value judgment should be attached. First, these things come and go, they change, as my own country has witnessed over the centuries. Perhaps France is the most anxious country from a demographic standpoint, having shrunk before the others and at a very rapid pace until 1945. And I think it should play no part in the--these three structural retreats, if I may put it that way, are not in themselves a good cause for indictment of Europe.



The second question which comes to my mind--and the last one, I reassure you--is that of the continuity between Europe and America, which is really the key to Aron's relatively dismissive attitude towards European integration. His strategic judgment was that the thing which mattered was Western unity in front of the Soviet threat, much more than European unification, a position which made him skeptical of the European defense community, at best a means to an end--the end being having Germany as an ally within the Western camp.

At the same time, Aron did see a genuine civilizational continuity between Europe and America. He used quite often the term "Atlantic civilization" in a positive mode. And indeed, when in the "Plaidoyer pour l'Europe Decadent" he dwells on the issue of a crisis of civilization, it is as much a crisis of the West as a crisis for Europe, a crisis, in his mind, whose twin manifestations would be the rejection of economic facts--and there he was thinking about the corrosive influence of a Marxist view of economy; and second, the refusal of collective action, more individualistic societies where collective decision-making would become nearly impossible.

What should we make of this sense of belonging to the same civilization today? Was it a genuine sense of belonging, or was it merely a function of being confronted with an identifiable and direct threat like the Soviet threat? As a rule, civilizational unities are normally much more perceived from the outside than felt within, where national and other sources of identity naturally tend to prevail. As a result, I think the sense of a commonality between two sides of the Atlantic is likely to decrease. It has decreased, from a strategic

standpoint, after the end of the Cold War. From a civilizational standpoint, I think we are bound to feel a little more Europeans and a little less Westerners. After all, who would rather be the European of 1976, in an insecure and weak subset of the West within a divided continent, than the citizens of today's European Union? I think that is the thought that I would like to thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. GORDON: Thank you very much, Gilles.

I have to say it's altogether typical of Gilles Andreani to announce in advance that he's not a scholar, he's just a modest diplomat, and then provide us with such an erudite analysis of history and the contemporary European Union.

And let me thank Tony Judt also for such a fascinating and provocative presentation.

I want to open up the floor to your comments and questions. Maybe I'll begin myself with one or two, because I think we heard two excellent defenses of decadent Europe up here and somebody has to provide the attack on decadent Europe, at least to press our speakers and frame it a little bit. I won't do that, but I do want to ask them a couple of questions.

Starting, Tony, with you and the notion of Europe being eclipsed by China, the Tom Friedman point that you mentioned. You know, Friedman often tells the story in his homely way about when he was a kid his parents said eat your peas because there are children starving in India, and now he tells his daughters do your homework because if you don't, somebody in India will take your job.

I'll ask you to reserve judgment on the style of analysis, but on the substance of what he was saying, I wonder if there's not something to it that you care to address. And, you know, maybe Aron was right that vis-à-vis the Soviet Union the European system was better, and it turned out to be wrong in the end that Europe was going to decline vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. But what about vis-à-vis India and China? Is it really true that Europe can preserve its system in a world in a globalized economy in which these rising powers are the ones generating jobs, wealth, and so on?

Secondly for Tony--I'll just put these out there and then I'll turn to the floor and you can come back to whichever ones you want and don't want. I wonder if you could elaborate--you made a point, the linkage between liberalism and all of these far right parties that we see emerging. You listed all of them and so on.

Maybe I misunderstood, but clarify it if I did. I could see a linkage there if one was saying Europe has been liberalizing and changing and doing all of these things and, as a result of that, all of these extremist movements are coming along. But I don't think you said the first thing. I think that, rather, you're saying, and it is true, that Europe is preserving its system and yet all of these are coming along.

So rather than the preservation of the welfare state and the European system helping to avoid such a scenario, I think one could at least ask the question is it not in part the result of a system that doesn't generate jobs and growth and so on that leads to the very problems that you pointed to?

Lastly, more for Gilles, I guess, a very nice defense of decadent Europe and the system, but the sort of obvious--the question that is begging to be asked: You arrive from Paris, there are a few problems going on in France over the past couple of weeks. Everyone is saying, well, this really makes clear that we're going to have to address our economic system and system of assimilation and so on. But I wonder, you know, does it really? And what is France's prospect for genuinely addressing reform on those two issues, assimilation and economics, when the broader attitude seems to be, well, our system is still broadly better than the alternative systems. In other words, it's hard to say the two things at once, that recent events mean we really have to change but at the same time, well, we shouldn't change because our system broadly is better than the alternative systems out there.

Those are a couple of things I hope you can react to. I also want to let people from the floor get in. Shall we--would you like to address any of those now, or shall we--

MR. JUDT: I'll address two of them very briefly.

MR. GORDON: Please.

MR. JUDT: One is on the subject of eating your peas. I forget my European educational background, but I've always thought that if the way you think is inadequate to your subject matter, then the thoughts you think are likely to be as well. So I do think one shouldn't distinguish too much between the style and the substance of the point at issue.

[Laughter.]

MR. JUDT: I would just say this, that I have no idea whether in the next 40 or 50 years, nor does anyone else, including the source of your quote, whether or not Shanghai and Bangalore are going to put such pressure on the European--America, too, but we're talking about Europe--on the European way of life that either the European institutions and way of life have got to be radically transformed, or else they go under. My point was simply that, for reasons that are political, not economic, I emphasize the remarkable absence of political thinking among people who look at the world today and see globalization and its apparently inevitable consequences. For political reasons, it will simply not be possible to do that.

So the question is not will Europe become like Bangalore and manage, therefore, to hold up its place in the world competitively, but what are the political costs and risks of even trying to do that?

And that comes to your second question, which I'll address briefly. No, my point was slightly different. The reason that you're getting the politics of fear in countries like Austria or Norway or Denmark or parts of Flemish Belgium, which are precisely the most successful forms of the welfare-state-turned-modern-economy--not the least successful, not the most vulnerable, but the least vulnerable in terms of their economic performance--is because it's not about economics. That's my point. Not everything is about economic rates either of growth or external threats to your economic performance from people growing faster. It is because people precisely in democracies--and the problem with democracy is that people are in a position to make collective decisions that may not be rational in terms of self-interest but they're absolutely dominant in

terms of consequences--that people in these countries are worried about the way the world seems to them to be going, not in terms of its impact upon their way of life or their particular personal resources.

I lived in Vienna for two years and my American-born wife was always utterly at the apparent contradiction. On the one hand, you're living in this town where no one seems to work, only on every fourth Saturday can you actually shop after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, nothing is ever open, the hours are very short; and at the same time, everyone has a convertible Golf and goes skiing three times a year. So there's something odd from an American's point of view. And yet, it continues to work. And the argument that it's doomed sooner or later after all, you know, falls foul of Keynes's observation that sooner or later we're all dead in the long run. But the sooner or later hasn't yet happened. And before it happens, political fears that it might happen will prevent the kind of changes precisely that those who are operating out of an economic deterministic position would advocate.

So I think that the question is framed--I don't mean your question, but the question that you're passing along is framed wrongly.

Just to sort of add a thought to what should be Gilles's question, you know, in this country we are very much taken up with the failure of the French assimilationist model and the evidence of that in Aulnay and Clichy and so on. But in the country where I come from, we have a model which is much more like the American model in terms of multiculturalism and a degree of permitted affirmative action and so on. We've had much more violent and much worse riots over a far longer period of time.

So it's not self-evident to me that the problems that Europe faces with these minorities--regarded primarily as minorities by color rather than by religion, certainly in England and, I think, France--is a problem of the model of the French attempt to get them in. There's something else going on.

MR. GORDON: Thank you.

Gilles, do you want to--

MR. ANDREANI: I want to answer straight your question, but I have two comments to make. First is that all developed countries are subjected to tensions because of growing diversity, growing inequality, growing individualism, and this puts a lot of pressure on our systems. Two, I don't know how far, given the political context and with elections pending, the French system will be transformed to respond to the riots which have been going on for nearly two weeks now. But one thing seems clear to me. The recognition that you have an issue at hand, that this time must not end like with the riots in the mid-'90s--you forget about it and you go to something else--is there. And I believe there is a much more pragmatic willingness to look at the issue. We have tended in France to frame the issue of how to integrate immigrants in a very ideological way, overlooking the practical and pragmatic solutions, as opposed to one another, which present themselves to respond to these issues. I think we are coming to a much more factual, practical consideration of the issue, which in itself is, I think, a good thing.

Just one thing. France has turned into French citizens and brought to, let's say, middle-class status a considerable proportion of its immigrants, including of North African origin. If you look at the indicators, as far as success

at school, immigrants tend to perform better in school than French kids with the same social or local background. And you look at other indicators of integration, like intermarriage or things like that, they are pretty high in France. So it is not at all clear to me that this is an indictment of the model. I think it's much more a function of unemployment, a function of the lack of unskilled labor positions with a certain chance at stability, a process which is at work everywhere else in the developed world, and so on and so forth, than the model itself.

MR. GORDON: We need to be conscious of the time, not least because we have to liberate the room and also because we can retire next door to a drink and a continuation of the discussion, but I did want to give people a chance to jump in and we'll take as many questions as we can.

Please, if you could say who you are before you ask your question.

QUESTION: Elise Langan, New York University.

I would ask you both to comment on what you think are the political implications for the EU with regard to Secretary Rice's recent brokering a deal to include the EU in safeguarding the borders at Gaza, how you feel that will affect both within the European Union and internationally, if you would.

MR. GORDON: Anyone else? Because I think we'll just take one round before we go.

Please. Norman.

QUESTION: Yes, I'm Norman Birnbaum from Georgetown University.



A question for Tony. Tony, you're obviously historically right about the moral and political background of the founding generation of post-war Europe. They were liberals, mainly liberals and social Christians. You mentioned Atlee. Why not Labour as liberalism and social Christianity much more than anything else?

But it's interesting, and it's interesting also for present purposes, to think about the others. That is, there was Blum, of course. But there were German social democrats who were in opposition, but they ruled in the states and they certainly were part of the social market consensus. And I hardly need remind the author of "Past Imperfect" of the inexpungible stupidity of the French communist party. But De Gaulle caught on very early to the fact that the members, the people who voted for it, were all part of this consensus--the unions, the civil servants. And even if we look at Italy, De Gasperi's great opponent, Togliatti, deserves to be thought of now as a founder of modern Europe.

And I wonder whether the implication of this is--it's not simply a matter for the historical argument--whether the implication is that if we look at Europe today, maybe figures we think of as outsiders or eccentric--Lafontaine, Bertinotti, the French Greens, even the French Trotskyites--may turn out to be anticipating some future defensive synthesis for Europe. One doesn't know.

MR. GORDON: Maybe we'll take one more. Andrew Pierre in the front.

QUESTION: Andrew Pierre, Georgetown University.

In a possible question, if Raymond Aron were alive today and writing a book in which he sort of projected a little bit the next 25 or maybe 50

years, what do you think he would say about the United States, the American empire, and a possible decline of the United States in the sum totality of global affairs?

MR. GORDON: Okay. Gilles, you've got 30 seconds.

[Laughter.]

MR. ANDREANI: The answer is I don't know, obviously, but it seems to me one thing which always struck me is that Raymond Aron never shies from calling America an empire--la republique imperiale--or speaking about the imperial domain of America, which includes Western Europe. That doesn't square very well with his otherwise impeccable anti-imperialist record in favor of decolonization. And I think he would be vindicated in his view by, let's say, recent developments of American foreign policy attitudes, but also he would probably see them in a positive way.

I think he would deeply suffer from the estrangement of America from Europe, because he is really an Atlanticist in the deepest sense of the term, believes there is a community of civilization there. And I think he would probably apportion the blame not exactly equally, but fairly, between the two sides in this sorry state of affairs.

But that's the best I can say. And I didn't know him; you did.

MR. JUDT: Well, I'm not sure knowing someone qualifies you to say what he would have said 25 years after his death.

But I can tell you two things. Aron's favorite book among his own books was his book on Clausewitz. And in the book on Clausewitz, one of the striking aspects of it is the constant emphasis--which was not in fact true of

Clausewitz, but it was true of Aron when he was projecting a little bit in the book--on the impossibility of talking about countries' external behavior without reference to their internal condition and their internal structures.

And I think--though, again, this is--I'm projecting heavily here--that the point that would have struck Aron as forcibly about the United States in the present and the foreseeable future is that its problems are not external but internal, and that it is an empire whose system of internal organization, which has been so much the source of its strength, is no longer in a condition to guarantee its future strength. It is in fact degraded, in the proper French sense of the word. And I think this would have worried him more than any particular foreign undertaking, or failure to undertake, because he would have regarded it as the core source of American weakness in decades to come.

That's, again, a projection.

Very quickly, to the two questions. With respect to the EU on the Gaza-Egypt frontier, I'm afraid I'm very both pessimistic and skeptical about the Israel-Palestine situation. I think that we have a tendency in this country to leap for joy every time something that should long since have happened and happens belatedly, partially, and with no evidence that it's going to have long-term consequences, because we're so desperate to see something come out of the mess.

The idea that we have achieved a situation in which we've put the Europeans in a position to take responsibility and be blamed for anything that goes wrong on that frontier is, I suppose, a kind of achievement of American foreign policy. But from the Europeans' point of view, it's not actually a terribly new situation. The Europeans have been enormously active in Gaza, admittedly

much more in the form of, sort of, charitable assistance and social services. And so it's not a new situation for them to find themselves involved in Palestinian affairs.

It's also, I'm afraid, not a new situation for them to find themselves sort of with the Israelis waiting to blame them for their partial and partisan relationship with the Palestinians, which already in today's Israeli press has been anticipated, some of the newspapers saying, you know, you can expect that as a result of this mistaken move, the Europeans will allow all kinds of risks that we or the Americans would never have allowed. But Gaza is now--I think it's terrible to say both in the Middle East and ought to be here but isn't--a sideshow. The real game now is in the occupied West Bank. When and if people are put there to do something really important, then I think we should have cause to sit back and think about what it means.

As to, finally, Norman's question, I think it's absolutely right. I didn't have time to talk about it. But what was striking about the years after 1945 was the consensus that ran from Togliatti, and even at a much more less intellectually self-conscious level Thorez in France, to someone like Charles De Gaulle or Churchill or the traditional European center right, on the need, A, for a certain kind of post-war stability based on the liberal pluralist state, and B, for that state to play a very active role in social life, modeled to some extent, as in Britain, on the role it had played in the war.

What worries me in Europe today is not that we are seeing that consensus broken down politically, but it's broken down generationally. I'm struck by how many young people, in opinion polls taken by Eurobarometer and

others, under the age of 30, grosso modo, are much less likely to understand the background virtues to the Europe in which they live--not necessarily anti-European; they take it for granted. They take it as a given. But they don't have any sense of the larger, as I said, prudential virtues of it, whereas people over the age of 30--and unfortunately, the older they are the more likely they are to say this--do.

And there seems to be the break in Europe, not left-right or communist-anticommunist or whatever, but partly generational and partly educational--something we haven't talked about--in that we now in Europe see a new division, a horizontal division, which crosses all the boundaries, rather like Medieval Europe where you have an educated class of Latin speaking clerics who could travel broadly from Oxford to Bologna, back through Prague, and feel as though they were in the same place. People like us feel that in Europe today, whereas underneath them there were the villaines and serfs who spoke only their local dialect and had no sense of either the virtues of a geography or the possibilities of the larger Europe that the Latin clerics had. And the modern clerics speak English, whereas the modern villaines and serfs speak only their local language. And they do not feel, for reasons that we know, particularly European, and the younger ones least of all, and this is a real danger.

And if I may just finally say as a footnote to what Gilles said, one of the virtues that the modern European Union has is by definition hardly ever perceived by people who live inside it. Whereas the States, America, has been, famously for the last 100 years, a magnet for individuals, European Union is a magnet for whole societies. The European Union, the prospect of joining it, the

possibility of being part of it with all that that entails, mythologically as well as in real terms, is the reason why Macedonia or Moldova or Serbia and, above all, Turkey are moving in the direction they've been moving in for the last 5 to 10 years. And it's a tragic feature of the West European in particular--the perception, or misperception, of themselves--that they can't see this enormously important role that a European Union plays outside its own frontiers.

MR. GORDON: Great. Well, let me thank you all very much for coming. Let me invite you next door for a drink and refreshments. And most of all, let me ask you to join me in thanking our two speakers this evening.  
[Applause.]