

# The End of Atlanticism

Ivo H. Daalder

Relations among the transatlantic allies are in very serious trouble. It has been a long time since a US Secretary of State spoke of the Alliance 'breaking up,' as Colin Powell did in early February amid the flap over France, Germany and Belgium's refusal to allow NATO to take preventive steps to defend Turkey in case of a war against Iraq.<sup>1</sup> As close and long an observer of US-European relations as Henry Kissinger has even concluded that differences over Iraq have 'produced the gravest crisis in the Atlantic Alliance since its creation five decades ago.'<sup>2</sup>

Is today's crisis in transatlantic relations different from the many that occurred in the past? Some, like Robert Kagan, argue that the changing structure of US-European relations – and especially the great and growing imbalance of power – make this crisis different. 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus', Kagan writes pointedly. 'This state of affairs is not transitory – the product of one American election or one catastrophic event. The reasons for the transatlantic divide are deep, long in development, and likely to endure'.<sup>3</sup> Others have a more optimistic view. For all their differences, notes Philip Gordon, 'basic American and European values and interests have not diverged – and the European democracies are certainly closer allies of the United States than the inhabitants of any other region'. The differences that do exist, Gordon argues, are the result largely of a sharp policy shift in Washington under President George W. Bush. But only 'if policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic act on the assumption that fundamentally different world-views now make useful cooperation impossible' is a transatlantic divorce conceivable.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than conflicting, both contentions are in fact on the mark. There has been a profound change in the structure of US-European relations, though the differentiation of power is only one, and not the most important, factor accounting for this change. One crucial consequence of this transformation is the effective end of Atlanticism – American and European foreign policies no longer centre around the transatlantic alliance

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to the same overriding extent as in the past. Other concerns – both global and local – and different means for addressing them have now come to the fore. As a result, it is no longer simply a question of adapting transatlantic institutions to new realities – to give NATO a new mission or purpose. The changing structure of relations between the United States and Europe means that a new basis for the relationship must be found, lest the continued drift ends in separation and, ultimately, divorce.

The policies of the Bush administration will, for now, be determinative for the future of US–European relations. Nothing in the new structure preordains an end to transatlantic cooperation and partnership. But the gratuitous unilateralism that has marked the Bush administration's first two years in office – the embrace of American power as means to all ends and the deliberate neglect of international institutions and other structures of cooperation – has had a profoundly negative impact on European elite and public opinion. Bush's personal style has only made matters worse. The swagger, pugnacious language and the deep religiosity of his main message strikes Europeans as profoundly foreign. Many no longer see a common basis for action – and not a few now fear the United States more than what, objectively, constitute the principal threats to their security.

American policy toward Europe and the Atlantic Alliance represents the tipping point determining the future of a drifting relationship between the United States and Europe. Wise policy can help forge a new, more enduring strategic partnership, through which the two sides of the Atlantic cooperate in meeting the many major challenges and opportunities of our evolving world together. But a policy that takes Europe for granted – that routinely ignores or even belittles European concerns – may drive Europe away. For under circumstances like these, Europeans may come to resent being dragged into problems that are not of their own creation. There may come a point, perhaps sooner than many think, when Europe says: *Basta! Fini! Genug!* even *Enough!* – when Europe refuses to continue sharing the risks of international engagement without having an equal share in decisions that create those risks.

There is nothing inevitable about this sober conclusion, but the US–European relationship cannot sustain the kind of beating it has endured these past few years for much longer. The aftermath of the Iraq war, in fact, may turn out to be the test case for the sustainability and longevity of the relationship. An effort to forge complementary and mutually supportive policies to rebuild Iraq and stabilise and reform the Middle East may solidify the faltering relationship, while a determination by the US to go it alone may push it over the edge. Either way, US–European relations will be profoundly different for it.

### Shifting priorities

For over half a century, American and European foreign policy has centred around the transatlantic axis. For America, Europe and the allies stood centre stage – Europe was both the locus and the focus in America's confrontation with the Soviet Union. For Europe, America was its guardian and protector, enabling it to emerge from the ravages of war and providing it with the confidence necessary to overcome the stark differences that had produced two bloody world wars in three decades. The success of American and European policy helped end the Cold War confrontation with a whimper rather than a bang. And once this victory was consolidated during the 1990s, the structurally determined need to mediate US and European foreign policy through the transatlantic prism effectively came to an end. America's and Europe's immediate concerns have increasingly diverged – one focusing globally, the other locally. And the differences between them have been further accentuated by diverging perspectives of what drives the new age of global politics that replaced the familiar transatlantic world of the Cold War.

The fundamental purpose of American foreign policy for most of the past century was to ensure that no single power would dominate the Eurasian landmass. As the British geographer Sir Harold Mackinder theorised at the outset of the last century, power in international politics depends crucially on who controlled this area, for he who ruled the 'Heartland' would ultimately rule the world.<sup>5</sup> This reality was not lost on America's statesmen. Three times during the last century, they sent massive numbers of military forces overseas to defeat those who sought dominion of the Eurasian heartland – in the First World War, the Second World War and during the Cold War, which was to last the better part of half a century. Together, these interventions constituted what Philip Bobbitt has aptly called the 'Long War'.<sup>6</sup> Once the Soviet empire was no more, the last serious challenge for territorial dominion over the Eurasian landmass had been removed. The primary purpose of American foreign policy had thus been achieved.

It took some years to realise how much Europe's strategic relevance to the United States had been reduced. The 1990s (a period now best remembered as the post-Cold War era) were given over to consolidating the victory of the Long War. Together with its European partners, Washington set out to create a peaceful, undivided and democratic Europe.<sup>7</sup> NATO evolved from a collective defence organisation into Europe's main security institution – helping to stabilise the Balkans, to transforming military practices with no less than 27 partnership countries and forging new relationships with erstwhile opponents. It will have expanded its membership from 16 countries at the end of the Cold War to 26 by 2004. A

new relationship with Russia emerged after ten years of intensive effort. In 2001, Russia under President Vladimir Putin made a decisive turn towards the West, engaging the United States as a partner in the war on terrorism and negotiating a fundamentally cooperative relationship with NATO a year later. Finally, while pockets of instability remain in the Balkans, the Caucasus and beyond, Europe's main institutions – from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union to a revitalised NATO – have proven more than capable of handling such problems. As a result of these efforts, Europe is today more peaceful, more democratic and more united than at any time in history.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 reinforced America's strategic shift away from Europe. Rather than worrying about a single power's ability to dominate Eurasia, Washington is now focused on trying to defeat the terrible trinity of terrorists, tyrants and technologies of mass destruction. Seen from Washington, Europe can be a partner – even a crucial one – in US efforts to defeat this new threat, but only to the extent that it supports the fundamental course that Washington is embarked upon. As a strategic concern, Europe has moved from being the object of American policy to performing a supporting role.

Europe's shift in strategic priorities has been much less dramatic, at least for now. The principal focus of European foreign policy today is what it has been for more than 50 years – to eliminate the possibility of a return to internecine conflict through an ever greater commitment to sharing sovereignty within a European Union. The EU is the focal point

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for European policy and activity over a vast range of areas – from trade and monetary policy to judicial, social and (increasingly) foreign and security policy. For the immediate future, the EU has embarked on a fantastically ambitious phase, encompassing both deeper cooperation among existing members and enlargement of the overall Union to incorporate many of the neighbouring countries in the east. A constitutional convention, to be followed by a decisive intergovernmental conference, will decide the parameters of Europe's union in future years –

including whether Europe will emerge more and more as a single international actor in foreign and security policy, as it has been in the economic sphere. The enlargement project – in which ten countries will join in 2004, to be followed by Romania and Bulgaria a few years later – is equally ambitious. More than 100 million people will be added to the European Union, increasing its overall population by nearly a quarter. Yet, the combined GDP of the countries to be added is only 5% that of

the current members. The costs and consequences of enlargement are likely therefore to be enormous. By way of comparison, think of the United States incorporating Mexico into a North American Union.<sup>8</sup>

For at least the remainder of this decade, Europe is likely to remain focused on completing this ambitious project. So while America's focus has shifted away from Europe, Europe's focus has shifted ever more inward.

### **American power and globalisation**

The shifting foreign-policy priorities, and potential differences that arise from them, are accentuated by the diverging ways in which Americans and Europeans perceive the current international environment. We live in an age of global politics – an age characterised by two unprecedented phenomena.<sup>9</sup> One is the sheer predominance of the United States. Today, as never before, what matters most in international politics is how – and whether – Washington acts on any given issue. The other is globalisation, which has unleashed economic, political and social forces that are beyond the control of any one country, including the United States.

Americans and Europeans differ about which of these two aspects of our new age is the most important. Americans, and especially the Bush administration and its supporters, believe that US primacy is the defining feature of the contemporary world. 'The collapse of the Soviet empire led to a fundamental reordering of the international system, and to the current situation in which American global hegemony is the leading factor that shapes the present and, almost certainly, the future', argues Robert Kagan.<sup>10</sup> 'The unipolar moment has become the unipolar era', wrote Charles Krauthammer in a recent essay triumphing America's primacy.<sup>11</sup> Or, as the opening sentence of the Bush administration's *National Security Strategy* put it: 'The United States possesses unprecedented – unequaled – strength and influence in the world,' which it should use 'to promote a balance of power that favors freedom'.<sup>12</sup>

Europeans, in contrast, tend to see globalisation – including the constraints it places on any one nation's power – as the defining feature of the current era. 'The new era', Christoph Bertram observes,

can be summed up in one word: globalisation. Just as capital, commerce and communication operate around the globe unhindered by distance, so security and insecurity have become globalised – they can no longer be defined by reference to specific regions and territorial borders.<sup>13</sup>

The sheer speed and volume of cross-border contacts and the fact that globalisation is occurring across multiple dimensions simultaneously mean that neither its positive nor its negative consequences can be managed by individual countries on their own. As a consequence,

whether the issue is terrorism, organised crime, weapons proliferation, infectious diseases, democratisation, or trade in goods and services, no one country – not even the most powerful – can secure its goals without the aid of others. As British prime minister Tony Blair observed, ‘the lesson of the financial markets, climate change, international terrorism, nuclear proliferation [and] world trade ... is that our self-interest and our mutual interests are today inextricably woven together’.<sup>14</sup>

The differing perspectives on what defines the age of global politics are reflected in very different foreign-policy preferences. The Bush administration and its supporters favour what has been called a ‘hegemonist’ foreign policy, which is based on the belief that the preponderance of power enables the United States to achieve its goals without relying on others. As Krauthammer puts it,

An unprecedentedly dominant United States ... is in the unique position of being able to fashion its own foreign policy. After a decade of Prometheus playing pygmy, the first task of the new [Bush] administration is precisely to reassert American freedom of action.<sup>15</sup>

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 only underscored the vital importance of maintaining the freedom to act as Washington sees fit. As Bush argued, in rejecting advice that he take account of allied views in conducting the war on terrorism, ‘At some point we may be the only ones left. That’s okay with me. We are America’.<sup>16</sup>

The premium hegemonists place on freedom of action leads them to view international institutions, regimes and treaties with considerable scepticism. Such formal arrangements inevitably constrain the ability of the United States to make the most of its primacy. They similarly take an unsentimental view of US friends and allies. The purpose of allied consultations is not so much to forge a common policy, let alone build goodwill, as to convince others of the rightness of the US cause. Finally, hegemonists believe that the fundamental purpose of American foreign policy is to maintain and extend American power for the indefinite future. As Bush argued in June 2002:

America has, and intends to keep, military strength beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Europeans favour what has been termed a ‘globalist’ foreign policy, one that relies on international cooperation as a means to deal with the multiple challenges and opportunities globalisation creates. None of these can be harnessed or blocked by individual states alone. International cooperation is necessary to defeat terrorists, preserve biodiversity, stop the

spread of infectious diseases, halt weapons proliferation, promote democracy, ensure free trade and deal with the host of other issues on every nation's foreign policy agenda. In addition, while the United States is by far the most powerful state in the world today, one important consequence of globalisation is the diffusion of power away from states. Non-state entities, ranging from businesses to transnational citizens organisations, from crime cartels to terrorist groups, are often more nimble than states and frequently succeed in frustrating their policies. The changing policy agenda and rise of these non-state actors mean that even the most powerful state is losing its ability to control what goes on in the world. 'In an era of globalization that has dark aspects as well as bright', Chris Patten, the EU's External Affairs Commissioner, argues, 'I would strongly argue that America's national interest are better served by multilateral engagement. It's the only way to deal with the dark side of globalization'.<sup>18</sup>

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### **Consequences for transatlantic relations**

The main consequence of these changes in US and European policy priorities is to make the transatlantic relationship less pivotal to the foreign policy of both actors. For America, Europe is a useful source of support for American actions – a place to seek complementary capabilities and to build ad hoc coalitions of the willing and somewhat able. But Washington views Europe as less central to its main interests and preoccupations than it was during the Cold War. For European countries, America's protective role has become essentially superfluous with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, while its pacifying presence is no longer warranted, given the advance of European integration. The task of integrating all of Europe into the zone of peace now falls squarely on Europe's shoulders, with the United States playing at most a supporting role. Even the stabilisation of Europe's periphery – from the Balkans in the south to Turkey, the Caucasus, and Ukraine in the East – is one where Europeans will increasingly have to take the lead.

These shifts are becoming apparent in all sorts of ways – from the mundane to the profound. Diplomatic contact across the Atlantic is dropping precipitously in terms of quantity and quality, while within Europe it continues to rise. Take meetings among foreign ministers. During the 1990s, the US Secretary of State travelled to Europe on average nearly once a month. There were biannual NATO meetings, and frequent diplomatic forays interspersed among them – be it for US–EU meetings,

OSCE summits or issue-specific discussions ranging from arms control to the Balkans. In contrast, Secretary of State Colin Powell travelled six times to Europe in 2001, and only three times last year. Even in the midst of one of the most bitter transatlantic debates in memory, Powell flew to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to deliver a tough speech on Iraq, but he did not stop in any other European capital to make the case in person. To be sure, Powell spends considerable time on the telephone with his European counterparts. But the quick phone call is more useful for delivering a *démarche* than gaining a true understanding of what it might take to arrive at a common position. Such diplomacy is best conducted in person. The unwillingness to engage in this kind of personal give-and-take underscores the declining importance of Europe to Washington policymakers, and raises questions in Europe about whether the US is more interested in stating firm American convictions than forging common positions.

Contrast the paucity of recent transatlantic personal interactions with the European norm. European foreign ministers see each other as often as three times a month. There are monthly General Affairs Council meetings of the EU, the quarterly meetings of the European Council, biannual and annual meetings of international organisations ranging from NATO to the United Nations General Assembly, and frequent bilateral contacts. Each meeting provides an opportunity to resolve outstanding questions – and often enables countries to pre-empt disagreements that would otherwise occur. Of course, frequent contacts do not guarantee that conflict will be avoided, nor is infrequency of contact a guarantee of conflict. But it helps create mutual understanding, making conflict less, and agreement, more likely.

Just as personal contact is apparently becoming less important across the Atlantic, so NATO, the embodiment of Atlanticism, is beginning to lose its central role. For five decades, the Atlantic Alliance has served the dual purpose of military deterrence and political reassurance. Deterrence operated against the threat from the east, a threat that no longer exists. Reassurance operated across the Atlantic as well as within Europe proper. In both purposes, the Alliance proved to be spectacularly successful. But as priorities and interests have shifted on both sides of the Atlantic, NATO's confidence-building role is being increasingly marginalised. This became especially apparent after 11 September.

Within 24 hours of the horrendous attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the 19 NATO members did something they had never done before – they invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty declaring the attack on the United States an attack against all. But aside from the symbolically important deployment of NATO AWACS surveillance planes to the United States to assist in providing air cover over the country, the Alliance was assigned no role in devising or carrying out a military



response to the terrorist attacks. Plans for retaliating against al-Qaeda outposts in Afghanistan were drawn up by US military commanders in secret. And offers of military assistance from allied countries were largely spurned. 'I don't like this principle that the "mission defines the coalition"', complained Javier Solana, NATO's Secretary General at the time of the Kosovo war and now the EU's foreign policy chief, referring to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's oft-quoted dictum:

NATO invoked its most sacred covenant, that no one had dared touch in the past, and it was useless! Absolutely useless! At no point has General Tommy Franks even talked to anyone at NATO.<sup>19</sup>

Iraq, initially, was no different. When Rumsfeld travelled to an informal NATO defence ministerial meeting in Warsaw in September 2002 and was asked what role NATO might have in a possible war against Iraq, he answered: 'It hasn't crossed my mind; we've not proposed it'.<sup>20</sup> Two months later, Bush, while declaring in a speech at NATO's Prague summit that 'never has our need for collective defense been more urgent', emphasised that if the peaceful disarmament of Iraq proved impossible 'the United States will lead a coalition of the willing to disarm Iraq'.<sup>21</sup> Bush thus rejected the advice of Czech President Vaclav Havel, offered during a joint press conference, that in case 'the need to use force does arise, I believe NATO should give an honest and speedy consideration to its engagement *as an alliance*'.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps partly in response to these sentiments, the Bush administration in January formally asked NATO to support a possible war in Iraq in a number of indirect ways, including deploying AWACS radar planes and *Patriot* anti-missile systems to enhance Turkey's defence, taking responsibility for protecting ships in the eastern Mediterranean, providing personnel to defend US bases in Europe and possibly the Persian Gulf, and filling other shortfalls that could arise from the redeployment of American troops to the Middle East. France, Germany and Belgium's wrong-headed decision to oppose this request, of course, very much undercut European complaints that it was the Bush administration that was weakening NATO.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the central role NATO once played in US foreign and defence policy has dissipated in recent years. Part of the reason, for sure, is the growing capabilities gap separating US and European military forces. Yet, that gap provides only part of the explanation. Washington is also extremely wary of having its power tied down by coalition or alliance considerations. Now that it has the power to go it largely alone in the military field, few in the current administration believe there is much to gain from constraining the use of that power by subordinating the planning and execution of a military campaign to the dictates of alliance considerations. As Rumsfeld explains:

I said last year [2001] that the mission defines the coalition, and I think that was not only a correct statement, but it has been an enormously helpful concept in this war on terror. Every nation is different, with different cultures and geographies, and the thought that they should all agree at the same moment how to contribute to this war is nonsense. That will never happen, and it never has. Countries ought to decide individually what they can do. That's not a blow to NATO.<sup>23</sup>

From this perspective, the United States, not coincidentally, can do what it wants without regard for the views of others – be they Alliance partners or not. And what of NATO's role? Rather than providing a common front, the Alliance's military utility lies increasingly in providing the Pentagon a 'useful joint-training-and exercise organization from which the United States can cherry-pick "coalitions of the willing" to participate in US-led operations'.<sup>24</sup>

As US interest in the Atlantic Alliance wanes, Europeans are left with two alternatives. One is to try to reinforce the fraying bonds by emphasising the importance of transatlantic unity and the continued centrality of NATO in US–European relations. Often, this translates into expressing support for US policy, even in otherwise objectionable cases, in order to demonstrate continued fealty to the transatlantic ties. This was at least one reason why eight European allies wrote a newspaper column in late January 2003 in support of a firm response to Iraqi violations of UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, being good allies is, as Tony Blair has emphasised, also the only way in which a weaker partner can effectively influence a powerful country like the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Another way to fill the void created by America's lessened interests is to try to forge a stronger and closer European Union. 'If we don't speak with a single voice, our voice won't exist and nobody will hear us', warned Romano Prodi, president of the European Commission.<sup>27</sup> This impulse often fuels opposition to US policy in an effort to rally a common European position on a particular issue. These efforts are most often successful when the goal is creating new rules, norms, or multilateral institutions to deal with global challenges – as European efforts with regard to global warming, anti-personnel landmines and creating an international criminal tribunal have underscored. But on major security issues – as in the case of Iraq – both tendencies will be reinforced simultaneously. Thus, Britain led the effort to forge a coalition of European countries in support of Washington's policy, while France and Germany tried to develop a common EU position that would set a separate course. Neither has succeeded – leaving Europe divided and the United States with little reason to heed its concerns.

### The tipping point

Where does this leave the transatlantic relationship? In a major speech on the impact of Iraq on US–European relations, Powell noted that the transatlantic ‘marriage is intact, remains strong, will weather any differences that come along’.<sup>28</sup> But some marriages are sturdier than others. Every marriage, moreover, requires a continued commitment by both partners to make it work. And sometimes even the best of marriages end in divorce. What, then, will be the future of the transatlantic marriage? Will it end in divorce, with the United States and Europe calling it quits after more than 50 years of happy, fruitful, and successful marriage, and each going its own way? Or will the United States and Europe renew their partnership, take their vows anew, and update the relationship in ways appropriate for the new era in which they now live?

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Ever since the Cold War ended, the United States and Europe have slowly drifted apart, like the couple that has stayed married for all these years, continues to live together, but now communicates less and less as each partner goes his and her own way.<sup>29</sup> But the long drift has become unsustainable. Either relations will end in divorce or they will confront a crisis so severe that leaders on both sides of the Atlantic will have to take steps to update and renew the partnership. Which of these outcomes will come to pass will depend to a significant extent on the policy and preferences of the dominant player in the relationship.

Bush, and the policies his administration pursues, represent the tipping point in US–European relations. Nothing preordains the end of this alliance, but Bush’s policies – and even more so, his personal style – aggravate the deep fissures that have emerged in transatlantic relations as a result of the structural shifts discussed earlier. There are major differences between the United States and Europe (and, to some extent, even within Europe) about what should be the foreign policy priorities and how these should be pursued. At the same time, in casting many of his positions in black-and-white terms and employing a rhetoric with stark religious overtones, Bush has appeared more interested in demonstrating the righteousness of his positions than finding ways to accommodate other perspectives into US policies. Far from softening this approach, the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon only reinforced it.

For all the shared sense of shock engendered by the television images beamed across the globe, Europeans and Americans reacted very differently to the 11 September attacks. Whereas little changed in Europe’s policy, perspectives and priorities, the impact of the attacks on the United

States was truly profound. For the American people, the terrorists shattered a sense of physical invulnerability. For the administration, the attacks came to define its policy, foreign and domestic, in every conceivable dimension. And for Bush, the devastating events provided the fundamental purpose of his presidency. He would destroy the terrorists before they could strike again. He would defeat tyrants who harboured terrorists or ruled rogue states. And he would make sure terrorists and tyrants could not get their hands on the technologies of mass destruction.

Because America and Europe experienced 11 September differently, their policy convergence on dealing with the threat represented by these attacks has been tactical rather than strategic. There is significant cooperation on counter-terrorism between US and European law enforcement agencies, intelligence communities and financial regulators. And there is a joint commitment to weed out terrorist cells before they strike again. But there is no agreement on the broader strategic context of these efforts.

For much of Europe, this fight against terrorism at home must be complemented by a major new effort to tackle the root causes of terrorism abroad – the seething conflicts, poverty and despair, and the constraints on liberty that supplies the terrorist army with its dedicated soldiers. As Tony Blair put it just weeks after the attacks,

So I believe this a fight for freedom. And I want to make it a fight for justice too. Justice not only to punish the guilty. But justice to bring those same values of democracy and freedom around the world ... The starving, the wretched, the dispossessed, the ignorant, those living in want and squalor from the deserts of Northern Africa, to the slums of Gaza, to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan: they too are our cause.<sup>30</sup>

For Europe, therefore, diplomacy, peacekeeping and nation-building efforts, economic aid, and democracy-promoting assistance must play as critical a role as brute force in the anti-terrorist campaign.

In contrast, for the Bush administration, the strategic context of what it calls the global war on terrorism is the nexus between terrorism, rogue states and weapons of mass destruction.<sup>31</sup> Regime change – by force if necessary – represents the strategic thrust of this global war. Once rogue states have been liberated, terrorists will have no place to hide and weapons of mass destruction can be eliminated.

What makes these differences in perspective and approach starker still is Bush's personal style – the certainty with which he holds his views, the manner in which he defends them and above all the religious overtones of his rhetoric. The eleventh of September, in many ways, was an epiphany for George W. Bush – it defined the true purpose of his presidency. 'I think, in his frame, this is what God has asked him to do', a close

acquaintance told the *New York Times* days after the attacks.<sup>32</sup> More than a year later, a senior administration official confirmed that Bush 'really believes he was placed here to do this as part of a divine plan'.<sup>33</sup> The 'this' is what Bush refers to as the fight between good and evil – a fight in which America, representing the good, will triumph over the 'evildoers'. Once the world is delivered from evil, the good people everywhere will be able to get on with their lives free of fear. America's mission – George W. Bush's mission – is to make this vision come true.<sup>34</sup>

The clearly defined mission provides the Bush administration with a great clarity of purpose, and explains the complete conviction on Bush's part that his is not only the right way, but the only way. Supreme self-confidence was a trademark of the Bush presidency even before 11 September – Bush, for example, took great pride in staring down the EU heads of government during their first encounter in June 2001, which was dominated by the US–European disagreement over global warming.<sup>35</sup> This self-confidence became complete after the terrorist attacks: there would be no more doubting America's purpose or preferred course of action. America's policy preferences are unquestionably right, and the sole purpose of talking to others is to persuade them of that fact. As Powell told European journalists in summer 2002, President Bush

makes sure people know what he believes in. And then he tries to persuade others that is the correct position. When it does not work, then we will take the position we believe is correct, and I hope the Europeans are left with a better understanding of the way in which we want to do business.<sup>36</sup>

Because there is only a single correct policy – because, as Bush put it shortly after 11 September, 'either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'<sup>37</sup> – the value of other states, including those allied with the United States, is judged by their fealty to and support for American policy. Thus, when Rumsfeld drew a distinction between 'old' and 'new' Europe, he based the difference on the fact that new Europe supported US policy towards Iraq whereas France and Germany opposed it.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Germany, whose Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, effectively used his vocal opposition to war in Iraq to secure his re-election in September 2002, has been relegated to the proverbial dog house by the Bush administration – to the point that Rumsfeld even put Germany in the same category as Cuba and Libya as countries unwilling to assist the US in a war with Iraq.<sup>39</sup>

Rumsfeld may be blunter than most, but he very much reflects the president's view that loyalty to America's cause is a key requirement of allies. As the *New York Times* reported, Bush 'has redrawn his mental map of America's alliances'.<sup>40</sup> In the wake of the Iraq debate, Bush's ranking

of allies starts with Blair's Britain (the 'center of his universe'), followed by Poland ('the most gung-ho member of NATO'). Next is Spain (whose leader, Prime Minister José Marie Aznar, is a particular favourite of Bush), followed by Australia, Italy and Russia. Germany and France have fallen to the bottom of the list because, according to a senior Bush aide, both 'failed the Bush loyal test'.<sup>41</sup>

While some European countries have been flattered by their elevation in Bush's rank ordering – and many, especially the newer allies, have sought to ingratiate themselves to Washington by astutely playing to the American president's predilections<sup>42</sup> – most Europeans have experienced the Bush administration's certitude on policy matters with great unease. Even before US–German differences over Iraq boiled over, German officials complained bitterly about Washington's supposed arrogance. 'Alliance partners are not satellites', Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher noted pointedly in early 2002.<sup>43</sup>

But it is the White House's religiosity that is most striking – and disturbing – to many Europeans. The difference in perspective reflects in part a societal gap. Although American and European societies share similar perspectives on the importance of democracy, human rights,

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liberty, transparency and other socio-political values, they diverge notably on religious and traditional values. The United States is a far more religious country than the countries of Europe, and traditional values find far greater adherence there than in European countries (including Britain and other countries that aligned with Washington over Iraq).<sup>44</sup> Javier Solana has been struck and surprised by the degree religion has permeated White House thinking on core issues. For

Washington, 'it is all or nothing', Solana observes. 'The choice of language is revealing', he says – with us or against us, axis of evil, rogue state, evildoers. 'For us Europeans, it is difficult to deal with because we are secular. We do not see the world in such black and white terms'.<sup>45</sup>

There is, of course, nothing new about policy differences between the United States and Europe. These have occurred for as long as the Alliance has existed. What is new, though, is the near-zero tolerance in Washington for those who might see the world differently. Today, terrorism, rogues and weapons of mass destruction are Washington's all-consuming interests. Nothing else matters. 'When people are trying to kill you and when they attack because they hate freedom', Condoleezza Rice observes, 'other disputes from Frankenfood to bananas and even important issues like the environment suddenly look a bit different'.<sup>46</sup> No doubt. But these other issues remain important – and to some countries at some moments perhaps more important than the war on terrorism. It should be possible to discuss

different strategies for dealing with common threats without meeting the opprobrium of the White House or being relegated to a lower rank on the Bush loyalty list. Style matters, sometimes as much as substance. As Robert Kagan argued, in concluding his treatise on Europe's weakness and America's strength, the United States

could begin to show more understanding for the sensibilities of others, a little more of the generosity of spirit that characterized American foreign policy during the Cold War. ... It could pay its respects to multilateralism and the rule of law, and try to build some international political capital for those moments when multilateralism is impossible and unilateral action unavoidable. It could, in short, take more care to show what the founders called a 'decent respect for the opinion of mankind'.<sup>47</sup>

### **A European farewell?**

The single-mindedness of Bush's foreign policy may be both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. There is little doubting where America stands these days, no confusion about its goal or purpose. Nor is there any question that this president does what he says and says what he does. Such clarity can be welcome in foreign policy. More problematical, especially for America's closest allies, is the narrowness of Washington's foreign-policy agenda and the inflexibility that characterises its foreign-policy approach. This White House knows what it wants, and nothing or nobody is able to move it off course. To change direction is regarded as a sign of weakness, not wisdom. Anyone with a different policy perspective or prescription is either ignored or dismissed as clearly wrongheaded. Finally, there is little apparent concern about how America's actions may impact the interests of others.

So far, the immediate consequences of American single-mindedness have been manageable. Differences between the United States and its major European allies have continued to grow, but have not yet reached a breaking point. But that point may be approaching faster than is generally realised. The current crisis in relations comes at a time when the centripetal forces keeping the alliance together are probably weaker – and the centrifugal forces are at least as strong – than at any time since the Second World War. There is a growing anxiety among many Europeans that their inability to affect American foreign policy behaviour renders the costs of alignment with the United States increasingly great – perhaps greater even than the benefits.

Iraq may become the turning point for many Europeans. Even though their worst fears – use of weapons of mass destruction, the further destabilisation of a critical region, and additional terrorist attacks – did not (as yet) come to pass, there is little doubt that the way Washington

went to war left deep and lasting scars in Europe's psyche. With time – and astute American care and diplomacy – it is possible that the scars will heal, but there has been precious little of this care and diplomacy to date. As a result, it is becoming quite possible – perhaps even likely – that major European countries will conclude that an overt distancing from US policy is not only desirable, but necessary. In a reverse of George Washington's Farewell Address, Europeans may come to conclude that

The Great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations is in extending our comercial [*sic*] relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible ... [The United States] has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations & collisions of her friendships, or enmities ... Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of [the United States], entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of [American] Ambition, Rivalship, Interest, Humour or Caprice?<sup>48</sup>

There is nothing inevitable about this scenario. There is a more hopeful, and equally plausible scenario by which the deterioration of US–European relations will lead to a realisation on both sides of the Atlantic that a major readjustment is necessary to renew and update the partnership. Europe would invest in the resources necessary to complement its soft-power with real, hard-power capabilities. The United States would once again come to realise that allies and alliances are assets to harbour and strengthen rather than abandon or take for granted. A partnership of relative equals could emerge from this readjustment to deal with common challenges ranging from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to energy security, climate change and infectious diseases – provided both sides decided this is what they wanted.<sup>49</sup> What is no longer possible is for the relationship to continue to drift. There is too much resentment, and too many are becoming alienated, for the drifting apart to continue indefinitely.

Relations between Europe and the United States have reached a turning point. Either their long marriage comes to an end, or it will be renewed. Which one of these futures comes true will depend especially on the United States, which, as the senior partner, has the greatest power to put the alliance back on track or to push it off the road completely.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in Julia Preston and Steven Weisman, 'France Offering Plan to Expand Iraq Arms Hunt', *New York Times*, 12 February 2003, p. A1.
- <sup>2</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, 'Role Reversal and Alliance Realities', *Washington Post*, 10 February 2003, p. A21.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), pp. 3–4.
- <sup>4</sup> Philip H. Gordon, 'Bridging the Atlantic Divide', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1 (January/February 2003), pp. 74, 83.
- <sup>5</sup> Harold Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Norton, 1962). See also Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Superpower* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1988).
- <sup>6</sup> Philip C. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), pp. 21–61.
- <sup>7</sup> For details, see Ivo H. Daalder, 'The United States and Europe: From Primacy to Partnership?' in Robert Lieber (ed.), *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 70–96; and Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Goldgeier, 'Putting Europe First', *Survival*, vol. 43, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 71–92.
- <sup>8</sup> Charlemagne, 'Europe's Mexico Option', *The Economist*, 5 October 2002, p. 50.
- <sup>9</sup> Parts of this section draw on a longer exposition of this argument in Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, 'Power and Cooperation: An American Foreign Policy for the Age of Global Politics', in Henry Aaron, James Lindsay, and Pietro Nivola (eds), *Agenda for the Nation* (Washington: The Brookings Institution Press, 2003).
- <sup>10</sup> Robert Kagan, 'One Year After: A Grand Strategy for the West?', *Survival*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 2002–03), p. 135.
- <sup>11</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment Revisited', *National Interest*, no. 70 (Winter 2003), p. 17.
- <sup>12</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington: The White House, September 2002), p. 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Christoph Bertram, 'Shaping a Congenial Environment', *Survival*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 2002–03), p. 141.
- <sup>14</sup> Tony Blair, 'Building an International Community', Address to the Labour Party Conference, 2 October 2001.
- <sup>15</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The New Unilateralism', *Washington Post*, 8 June 2001, p. A29.
- <sup>16</sup> Quoted in Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 81.
- <sup>17</sup> President George W. Bush, 'Remarks at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the US Military Academy', West Point, NY, 1 June 2002, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html> (accessed August 2002).
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in James Kitfield, 'Pox Americana?', *National Journal*, 6 April 2002, p. 984.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Kitfield, 'Pox Americana?', p. 986.
- <sup>20</sup> Quoted in Bradley Graham and Robert Kaiser, 'On Iraq Action, US Is Keeping NATO Sidelined', *Washington Post*, 24 September 2002, p. A14.
- <sup>21</sup> George W. Bush, 'Remarks to Prague Atlantic Student Summit', Prague, 20 November 2002, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/11/20021120-4.html> (accessed January 2003); and 'At News Conference: NATO Role vs. Iraq', *New York Times*, 21 November 2002, p. A19.
- <sup>22</sup> 'At News Conference' (emphasis added).
- <sup>23</sup> Quoted in James Kitfield, 'US to NATO: Change or Else', *National Journal*, 12 October 2002, pp. 2978–79.

- <sup>24</sup> Kitfield, 'US to NATO', p. 2978.
- <sup>25</sup> Jose Maria Aznar, et al., 'United We Stand', *Wall Street Journal*, 30 January 2003, p. A14.
- <sup>26</sup> In a speech setting out Britain's foreign-policy principles, Blair listed as the first principle: 'remain the closest ally of the US, and as allies influence them to continue broadening their agenda'. Tony Blair, 'Britain in the World', speech to the Foreign Office Conference, London, 7 January 2003, available at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page1353.asp>.
- <sup>27</sup> Quoted in Emma Daly, 'Spain's Chief, on Bush's Side, Comes Under Attack at Home', *New York Times*, 4 February 2003, p. A12.
- <sup>28</sup> Colin Powell, "Remarks at the Davos Economic Forum", Davos, January 26, 2003, available at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2003/16869.htm> (accessed February 2003).
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. Ivo H. Daalder, 'Are the United States and Europe Headed for Divorce?', *International Affairs*, vol. 77, no 3 (July 2001).
- <sup>30</sup> Tony Blair, 'Building an International Community'.
- <sup>31</sup> For a representative statement, see *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington: The White House, September 2002).
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in Frank Bruni, 'For President, A Mission and a Role in History', *New York Times*, 22 September 2001, p. A1.
- <sup>33</sup> Michael Hirsh, 'America's Mission', *Newsweek: Special Edition* (December 2002–February 2003), p. 10.
- <sup>34</sup> Laurie Goodstein, 'A President Puts His Faith in Providence', *New York Times*, 9 February 2003, sect. IV, p. 4.
- <sup>35</sup> As Bush recalled upon his return from the US–EU summit, 'I think Ronald Reagan would have been proud of how I conducted myself. I went to Europe a humble leader of a great country, and stood my ground. I wasn't going to yield. I listened, but I made my point. And I ... patiently sat there as all 15 [European leaders] in one form or another told me how wrong I was' about the Kyoto accords. 'And at the end I said, "I appreciate your point of view, but this is the American position because it's right for America"'. Peggy Noonan, 'A Chat in the Oval Office', *Wall Street Journal*, 25 June 2001, p. A18.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in 'Old Friends and New', *The Economist*, 1 June 2002, p. 28. See also Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 281.
- <sup>37</sup> George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', Washington, 20 September 2001, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> (accessed February 2003).
- <sup>38</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, 'Press Briefing at the Foreign Press Center', Washington, 22 January 2003, available at: [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2003/t01232003\\_t0122sdfpc.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2003/t01232003_t0122sdfpc.html) (accessed February 2003)
- <sup>39</sup> 'I believe Libya, Cuba and Germany are the ones that have indicated they won't help in any respect, I believe', Rumsfeld told a congressional committee. Not only was the comparison grossly unfair, but it was wrong on the facts given that Germany (like other NATO members such as Spain and Italy) did allow the use of American based and granted overflight rights to US planes during the Iraq war. Germany also deployed 2,500 troops to protect US bases, sent personnel for the *Patriot* anti-missile system and AWACS planes to Turkey, and beefed up its presence in Kuwait during the war. Rumsfeld's statement is quoted in Glenn Kessler and Colum Lynch, 'Powell Lays Out Case Against Iraq', *Washington Post*, 6 February 2003, p. A23.

- <sup>40</sup> David Sanger, 'To Some in Europe, The Major Problem Is Bush the Cowboy', *New York Times*, 24 January 2003, p. A10.
- <sup>41</sup> Sanger, 'To Some in Europe', p. A10.
- <sup>42</sup> Thus, in early February no less than 18 European countries either signed a newspaper opinion article or open letter expressing their support for the United States over the issue of Iraq. See Aznar, et al., 'United We Stand', and 'Statement of the Vilnius 10 Group', 5 February 2003.
- <sup>43</sup> Steven Erlanger, 'German Joins Europe's Cry That the US Won't Consult', *New York Times*, 15 February 2002, p. A18.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Living with a superpower', *The Economist*, 4 January 2003, pp. 18–20.
- <sup>45</sup> Quoted in Judy Dempsey, 'Europe's foreign policy chief sees widening gulf with U.S.', *Financial Times*, 8 January 2003, p. 14.
- <sup>46</sup> Quoted in Judy Dempsey and Richard Wolfe, 'Different Views', *Financial Times*, 2 May 2002, p. 12.
- <sup>47</sup> Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*, pp. 102–103.
- <sup>48</sup> George Washington, 'The Farewell Address', 19 September 1796, available at: <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/farewell/transcript.html> (accessed February 2003).
- <sup>49</sup> The case for an 'elective partnership' has been well-made by James Steinberg, 'The United States and Europe – An Elective Partnership', Paper prepared for the Transatlantic Group meeting of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Florida, 15–17 February 2003.

166 **Ivo H. Daalder**