

Editorial:
**The Future of European – American
Relations**

Sir Timothy Garden*

A. The Historic Bond

The bond that ties Europe to the United States is steeped in the history of the last century. America saved Europe from itself in two World Wars and the generosity of the Marshall Plan rebuilt not just the economies of Western Europe, but also nurtured the damaged political systems. The history of the European Union springs directly from those days. Through the Cold War, Western Europe and the USA had a common enemy in the Soviet Union. NATO provided a collective security arrangement where everyone had a voice, and the threat was clear. If there was occasional tension, it often sprang from European worries about whether the US might return to isolationism; or American irritation with lack of European investment in defence.

The decade of the 1990s was extraordinary. The fall of the Berlin Wall led successively to the reunification of Germany, the end of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, and the new freedom for the former Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. While there was some concern about the future of NATO without a clear enemy, the instability stemming from the break up of the former Yugoslavia gave plenty of work for Alliance forces. Indeed in 1999, NATO found itself in its first war as it carried out the Kosovo campaign.

The end of the Cold War gave new opportunities to both NATO and the European Union to spread East, and bring the economic, political and security benefits to a wider area. NATO took in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999, and will take another 7 new members this year. The EU is enlarging from 15 to 25 members this year, an expansion that is the equivalent of the US opening its borders to Mexico. This is a great step forward for peace and security. The EU has moved towards greater integration: the majority of states now have a strong common currency in the Euro.

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This new enlarged EU is a global trader, and has interests around the world. With 450 million people producing a GDP of the same order as the US, it is perhaps inevitable that relationships would have to change. The signs have been there for some time, and differences pre-date the arrival of the Bush Administration. The EU often takes a different line from the US over arms control, international organizations, the environment and wider trade issues and as the EU tries to move towards a common foreign and security policy, these differences may become more pointed.

B. 9/11 and the Relationship Between Europe and America

On 11 September 2001, all our worlds changed. The suicide bombing was not new but the fanatical terrorist conducting a long planned complex co-ordinated attack against a major western country and power was outside all experience. Western societies are extremely vulnerable to such tactics. We depend on a technological infrastructure to support our way of life. A box cutter becomes a weapon of mass destruction when it enables a terrorist to use a fuel-laden jumbo jet as a cruise missile to attack a building which houses thousands of people.

The universal European reaction to those attacks was one of sympathy for America, and horror at the outrage. Indeed many countries around the world including EU, lost citizens in the World Trade Center destruction. In France, *Le Monde* led with the headline that 'we are all Americans now'. The bickering across the Atlantic was quieted. NATO invoked Article V (an attack on one is an attack on all) for the first time in its history on 12 September 2001. The world waited to see how the US would respond. Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden achieved worldwide coverage which was not always negative in some parts of the world, it should be said. The academic debate on how a nation dealt with a non-state actor able to threaten a massively destructive attack became all too real.

C. Afghanistan and the War on Terror

The US response was thoughtful, constrained and appropriate as seen from Europe. Al-Qaeda had trained thousands of its followers in camps in Afghanistan, and the Taliban rulers of that country had supported and been supported by bin Laden. It was understandable perhaps that President Bush wanted the retribution in Afghanistan to be a US rather than NATO operation. However, there has been a price to pay for not using the Alliance when it was ready and willing. Of course allies did help in Afghanistan. The UK provide a great deal of air effort in the tanking, reconnaissance and signals intelligence field. But that was provided on a bilateral arrangement, that seems now to have become the norm for US-led military action. This has implications for the future of NATO to which I shall return. NATO's only significant role was to provide its

AWACs early warning aircraft to protect US skies against further 9/11 style attacks.

After al-Qaeda had been largely routed and the Taliban displaced, there was the challenge of rebuilding Afghanistan into a modern functioning democracy. The approach was sound and had universal support. A UN authorized constitutional process gave a clear path to producing a representative democracy. There was a charismatic widely accepted leadership figure in Hamad Karzai who could oversee the process. Early on he asked for assistance from the world to provide security in his war ravaged country, full of different ethnic groups, warlords and criminals. He said he needed an international force of 50,000 to provide the rule of law throughout the country. We, the non US members of NATO, provided only 5000 people in Kabul, and as the months passed it became even more difficult to get countries to take on the leadership of this small force.

Subsequently NATO has come to the rescue, but not with many more troops. The US continued, with some allies, warfighting, as it does to this day in Afghanistan; while the Europeans picked up the peace-keeping side of the equation. So in Afghanistan, we had the right response to the 9/11 terror attacks, but have lacked the will to support the political process that could have made Afghanistan a more stable region. Instead, the opium crop is flourishing, the Taliban are reasserting themselves, and al-Qaeda continues to cross the border with Pakistan.

The ‘war on terror’ has not been a phrase with much resonance in Europe. All our previous experience in counter-terrorism has made us wary of adopting simple offensive strategies. President Bush's axis of evil speech, naming Iraq, Iran and North Korea, followed later in 2002 by the new US national security strategy left many in Europe worried by the new direction that the world's only superpower was taking. Pre-emption of emerging threats, as postulated in the new US strategy, seemed to be calling into question the whole international system.

D. Iraq Divides Old Allies

I will not rehearse all the arguments over the military operation in Iraq in March 2003. Whatever the merits or otherwise, it was a period of incompetent diplomacy and dirty politics on all sides which led to divisions across the Atlantic and within Europe. Even within nations, opinions were divided and not necessarily along political lines.

The United States was impatient for decisive action; the United Kingdom wanted UN authority for military action; Germany and France led the call for more time for the inspection process. The attempt to achieve a further resolution to give authority for military action was unsuccessful. Hard bargaining by the US failed to achieve the necessary 9 votes, and in any event it was clear that France would exercise a veto if necessary. The US and UK opted to use UNSCR 1441, and previous resolutions on Iraq, as their authority for military action.

This failure of diplomacy has had a series of unfortunate consequences. In the USA, antipathy towards the UN has been reinforced. Although unexpected countries like Canada and Mexico had taken a tough stand in the Security Council, the real anger was directed at France and Germany. Both American and British politicians chose to use anti-French feelings in the run up to the conflict as a way to deflect public interest from the issue of whether military action was legitimate. Russia also remained unconvinced by the rush to war. Of course, questions about the legitimacy of the intervention are now increasing as the weapons of mass destruction continue to prove elusive.

The embryonic EU common foreign and security policy mechanism could do little to paper over the wide division between its members. Governments (if not their people) in UK, Spain, Italy, Denmark and Portugal were strongly supportive of the US push for military action. At the end of January 2003, their leaders, together with those of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, signed a joint note for the Wall Street Journal expressing their unity. France, Germany, and Belgium were strongly against a rush to war. In a more complex set of divisions, the prospective new members of the EU were brought into the dispute. This gave rise to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's unfortunate characterization of a division between 'Old Europe', represented by France and Germany, and 'New Europe' drawn from the grateful eastern European states. President Chirac added fuel to the flames by suggesting that pro-US candidate countries were 'badly brought up', and hinting that their EU membership applications might need reviewing.

EU optimists hope that the crisis over Iraq policy will promote a greater push for developments towards coherent European foreign policy positions. Some small hopeful signs emerged even during this turbulent period. The EU took over the modest but important task in Macedonia from NATO on 1 April 2003. There is an expectation in the longer term that the EU will progressively take on the Balkans task. Despite the megaphone diplomacy between the UK and France over Iraq, some reinforcement of their joint push for a more serious European defence capability has been seen. Blair, Chirac and Schröder met last month in Berlin to look at how they might give some joint leadership.

E. NATO Gets a Bruising

The diplomatic machinations over Iraq were also bruising for NATO. Afghanistan had shown the future: the US expects to lead coalitions of the willing. In any event, there would have been little chance of consensus among member states over mounting a NATO operation. Even with a sidelined role, the divisions between the various national players managed to cause excitement. NATO found itself in difficulties over authorization for planning the defence of Turkey in the event of a conflict in Iraq. The diplomatic temperature rose as France, Germany and Belgium saw themselves being pressured into giving a stamp of approval for the US early moves on Iraq. To the general surprise, Turkey in the end did not allow ground operations to be launched against Iraq

from its territory. There were no attacks by Iraq on Turkey. Nevertheless, the concern in NATO was real, and the public name calling between members was undoubtedly damaging.

While injured feelings will doubtless heal with time, Iraq reinforced questions about the future relevance of NATO. The Alliance has had a remarkable success over the past decade in the way that it has really helped to stabilize the Balkans. It has also done great work in its programme of enlargement, which has brought greater stability to Europe. At Prague in late 2002, the commitments by member states to a new NATO Response Force seemed to be accept that the Alliance needed to be able to spearhead high intensity operations in distant parts at short notice. NATO is already working well beyond its traditional area of interest.

There remains a tension between the practice of deploying NATO on post-conflict tasks, and the rhetoric of successive Alliance summits, which look for the most modern warfighting capabilities. Some European members suspect that the US sees NATO as a useful forum to encourage individual members to update their capabilities. This then allows coalitions of the willing to be built through bi-lateral arrangements. Thus the NATO's role becomes little more than setting equipment standards and sharing military doctrine. The lessons from the Iraq conflict of 2003 will undoubtedly reinforce the importance of precision weaponry and network centric warfare. Yet investment in these capabilities may be at the expense of the troops that are proving so vital after the fighting is over.

F. Post Conflict Iraq

The mistakes that have been made in the post conflict period in Iraq have not helped. Whatever view one held about the war, getting Iraq functioning as a normal country is the most important current challenge. It effects stability in the region and also the wide worries about growing al-Qaeda support. Here Europe and the US have a common strategic aim. The UN must have a major role in legitimizing whatever form of government emerges in Iraq. Despite setbacks, there are signs of progress in re-introducing the UN into the Iraq constitutional and political process. The adoption of the interim constitution on Monday is a hopeful sign. Yet none of us should underestimate the challenge that lies ahead in making Iraq a model democracy for the region. The terrible events of the war in Iraq in terms of deaths to the Iraqis remind of how much work there is to do.

G. The Future of International Security

At the heart of our transatlantic debate, is the still unanswered question of how best to meet the new security challenges. There is a fair degree of agreement between the US and Europe on the most important ones in the wider sense of global security. Despite the tremendous successes of recent years in moving

towards more democratic states, there remain parts of the world where either government is not functioning, or where totalitarian regimes still hold sway. At the same time, there is the growing threat from those who owe no allegiance to any state, but operate outside the rule of law, and can use terror as their weapon.

We have unsolved sources of tension and the Israel/Palestine conflict is a key in this dispute. The promise of the road to Jerusalem being through Baghdad now seems empty to many, including Tony Blair. India-Pakistan is looking more hopeful. From Haiti to the Congo we face conflict challenges.

We face problems of international crime; of corruption which undermines democracy; of poverty in much of the world; of declining natural resources be it fish, oil or fresh water; of environmental damage of which global warming is the most acute; of population growths in poorly governed regions; and of disease returning and spreading through global travel.

Some of these factors make conflict more likely, and all of them need concerted action by the global community. Europe remains less effective when trying to meet the challenges at the hard end of security. These challenges come from undemocratic states developing powerful new weapons, with which they hope to deter intervention by the international community. They also come from extremists who combine a willingness to die for their cause, with a wish to maximize terror and destruction on their enemies. Then there is the strife which comes from within the weak countries, which can lead to mass refugees, who look for help from the rich nations of the world. The US could do more at the softer end of security. Neither approach on its own can make us safer. Yet Donald Rumsfeld, in a press conference earlier this week, seemed to welcome the thought that the US should be the world's instrument of offensive firepower, and others should do the clearing up afterwards. This is not a future that appeals to Europe: one where the US decides on its own where to act, but expects Europe to sweep up after. Nor is it one likely to make any of us safer in the long term.

The enlarged EU is a region of 450 million citizens, with a strong currency, a GDP equal to that of the US, and a wish to help bring peace and security to other parts of the world.

The international system is imperfect, but it is important. We need to re-establish the trust between Europe and the US after a very bruising period so that we can work together as old friends and new partners to make the world a better place.