

# Beyond the West: Terrors in Transatlantia

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One of the least expected but most significant events of recent years is that which led to a profound crisis in the transatlantic relationship. The argument advanced here is that the split between a number of European states and the United States of America not only casts doubt on the idea of the 'West' but also brings into question various liberal theories of international politics that suggest that the two regions are so bound together by ideology, interest and institutions that a serious disagreement between them was, and presumably remains, unlikely. This it is suggested both fails to explain the original rift and underestimates the very profound differences that continue to divide the US and Europe. A more complex and abrasive kind of relationship is in the making. Unfortunately, those who have thus far tended to shape the debate about the transatlantic relationship in general, and indeed the extent of US hegemony in particular, either seem historically unable or theoretically unwilling to grasp the extent of change now occurring in one of the most important regions in the international system.

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## *Introduction*

According to the standard, and still much-repeated, account of the history of International Relations, the subject has not just evolved in some peaceful fashion, but rather has emerged as a result of a series of great divisive debates. The first of these — coinciding with the period between 1919 and 1945 — brought us the clash between idealism and realism, with the latter, it is often asserted, finally trouncing the utopian pretensions of the former as one very hot war gave way to a distinctly more cold one after World War II.

The second debate — as much a reflection of the institutionalization of IR as a discipline in the United States as any great world event — pitted the scientifically or numerically inclined (invariably American) against those (more often than not European and British) who continued to favour what they at least referred to as the classical approach. And the third brought two groups into a head-to-head encounter, one of whom continued to insist that the end of the Cold War did not change the basic rules of the international game, and another, more variegated group, who seemed to agree about little, except perhaps that the collapse of the old order not only rendered traditional paradigms redundant, but created the kind of intellectual space that had previously not existed in an age of nuclear annihilation. Certainly the peaceful and unexpected end of the East–West confrontation seemed to be an especially liberating moment for those seeking to develop new ways of thinking; though, as a thousand flowers began to bloom, and old maxims started to wilt under the weight of attack from a variety of young and not-so-young Turks, one could almost feel sorry for those still attached to what some obviously regarded as outmoded ways of thinking. As one of those in the line of fire later bemoaned, it was no easy job being a member of the old guard in the post-Cold War era (Schweller, 2000: 410). Nobody, it seemed, loved those who persisted in telling gloomy tales about the brave new world rising phoenix-like out of the ashes of bipolarity (Gilpin, 1996: 3).

If one of the more obvious academic results of the collapse of the old order was to make the house of IR a much more interesting, though far more shambolic place to live in, another was to witness the proliferation of a raft of different theories that consciously set out to demonstrate that the world no longer operated, if indeed it ever had, according to the time-honoured laws laid down by the realist gods of yore (Sorensen, 1999: 83–100). This had many consequences, some benign, some less so, but one of the more obvious was to shift the locus of debate away from where realists had tried to situate it before — reflecting on the ways in which power maximizing states operated under conditions of anarchy — to searching for the sources of interaction and co-operation. Few of course predicted that swords would now be turned into ploughshares. However, there was, as Baylis has observed, a greater inclination now to think of security in more benign terms (Baylis, 2001: 253). One result was an increased popularity in those various theories, from constructivism to the English School, that emphasized society rather than systemic conflict. A second was to bring about renewed interest in the advanced European space in general and the transatlantic relationship in particular, both excellent working examples, or so it was argued, of why realism with its stress on competition and antagonism simply did not apply when it came to analysing relations between developed democratic states in an interdependent world. In many

ways the transatlantic relationship furnished an almost textbook case study of why security was not a zero sum game leading to that famous, and much talked about, ‘dilemma’. Indeed, following Baylis, there was no security relationship quite so benign as that between the European and American continents. Tied together by economics, united through values, and intimately associated through a complex web of institutions, they were bound to continue along the same harmonious path they had been walking along for years. It was, to use the jargon, the almost perfect illustration of a security community in practice (Adler and Barnett, 1998). Engaging in prediction is a risky and dangerous business. Nonetheless, if there was one prediction that most scholars within this particular tradition would have been prepared to make as one century gave way to another, it was that the transatlantic family would remain united. Spats might occur; harsh words might be uttered. But at the end of the day, ideology, interests and institutions meant that nothing was likely to disturb this most predictable of relationships (Peterson and Pollack, 2003).

If events following 2001 prove anything it is that we should all beware the hydra-headed danger called intellectual complacency, a problem that has for long beset IR, even though some of its more famous practitioners still feel the urge to defend it against the charge of always managing to get the future wrong (Cox, 1998). Naturally, nobody could have forecast in detail the transformative changes in US foreign policy that occurred once George W. Bush had taken over in the White House in 2001 (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003); and none of course could have anticipated the exact date on which the attack on the Pentagon and the Twin Towers would take place. The problem is that IR was not even thinking about such things. Nor was it even faintly prepared for the impact all this then had on the transatlantic relationship itself. Indeed, not only did IR fail to see the storm about to break across the ocean — in much the same way as it failed to anticipate the end of the Cold War (Petrova, 2003) — but was intellectually ill-equipped to do so for one very simple reason — it had already determined that Europe and the United States were more likely to bind than clash (Risse, 2002a). How wrong this particular prognosis turned out to be. Thus, within a few months of Bush’s election the relationship was already in political trouble; within a year it was in crisis; and by the end of 2002 many were beginning to ask whether it could even survive (Pond, 2004). Something else happened too. Discussion about this most stable of international bargains suddenly and rapidly became most interesting. Indeed, very soon there was no debate more likely to provoke controversy than that concerning the transatlantic relationship. Almost overnight in fact discussion about it shifted from the academic and policy periphery where it had been happily treading water for some years, to the top of many people’s agenda (Cox, 2003). After

the long calm came the storm, and the inevitable question — what had gone wrong? There was no shortage of answers (House of Lords, 2002–03). However, to judge from the number of hastily convened conferences, the alarming headlines and the worried look on the brows of many a policy-maker — not to mention the huge controversy occasioned by Robert Kagan's well-publicized effort to explain why Europe as Venus and the United States as Mars were heading for separation — it was evident that few could come up with a single credible answer. The relationship was in dire straits and few could explain why, or so it seemed (Cohen-Tanuga, 2003).

Yet the proverbial penny still did not drop for those raised in less troubled times. Indeed, as the transatlantic relationship went into near free fall through 2002 and 2003, some seemed to see their job not in terms of explaining, but of explaining away what was actually taking place in the real world. A very great deal of intellectual oil was indeed poured on troubled waters by those either unwilling to recognize how serious things had become, or who assumed that this was just another of those irritating transatlantic spats, which like those other little spats in the past would, in time, simply fade away. To anyone unschooled in the fine art of polemic, it very much looked as if even some of the better analysts were more interested in reassuring their readers (and possibly themselves) than in helping them understand the sources of the single greatest crisis in Atlantic relations since the end of the Second World War (Legro, 2002). Transatlantic officials became especially adept at reassuring the worried and the concerned. As one such noted during Bush's first term, though the relationship had gone through a most difficult patch, the 'fundamentals' in the end remained sound, certainly much better and 'more solid than detractors on both sides of the Atlantic' appeared to be suggesting (Cutileiro, 2004). It was not all 'doom and gloom' therefore (Jones, 2004a: 588). As a high level report released by the Council of Foreign Relations pointed out, the Transatlantic relationship might have been going through a stormy period, but this was no reason to despair (Kissinger and Summers, eds; 2004). Indeed, if anyone should be worried it was the Europeans themselves. After all, the crisis was not just something that involved certain European states and the US. It divided Europeans too. Europe therefore should look to set its own house in order first, before blaming everything on the Americans. Of course this did not mean there was nothing to worry about. Indeed, a great deal would have to be done in order to repair the damage. But at the end of the day, the overall structure remained sound. The battered ship of transatlanticism might have been badly holed. But it would not sink, and would not do so because Europe and the United States constituted now, as they had done in the past, a society of states that happened to share the same common purpose of fighting terrorism, maintaining an open world economy and

spreading the benefits of democracy and good governance to others (Risse, 2004). For these many reasons — and no doubt a few more — we should beware the pessimists with all their ‘overblown rhetoric’ (Jones, 2004b). As one of the more intelligent voices in the debate remarked, the relationship was clearly going through difficult times. It might even be in crisis. But this did not mean the ‘transatlantic community’ as we had ‘known it over the past fifty years’ was about to go under (Risse, 2002b). The ‘inevitable alliance’, as another writer defined it, would endure (Parsi, 2003).

It is this kind of thinking, often bordering on the complacent, that I wish to challenge here — partly because it privileges certain kinds of more comfortable facts over others; partly because it underestimates the seriousness of the challenge that still confront the transatlantic relationship — something people have been much prone to following recent American efforts to patch things up—and partly because it repeats the age-old error of which IR has been guilty on more than one occasion in the past—of failing to come to terms with signs of serious change in the international system (Allin, 2004: 663). It is this to which I take strongest exception. I want to argue, in fact, that far from the past being a very good guide to the future, it has, in its own way, become something of an intellectual millstone round our necks. Indeed, those who tell us ‘to remember our history’ (Steinberg, 2004: 4) are not only doing history a disservice (historians after all do not just deal in continuities) but are seriously underestimating the problems facing the transatlantic relationship in the modern era. Nor, I would argue, are these problems simply the by-product of one controversial President or one unfortunate war, as many seem to suggest (Schweiss, 2003; Gordon and Shapiro, 2004). This, I believe, is simply the comfort story the optimists like to tell themselves when confronted with unpalatable news. Taken together Bush and Iraq have obviously had a profound impact on the transatlantic relationship. However, they are only two acts in a much larger (and longer) play that needs to be examined in full if we are to appreciate the depth of the problems confronting the ‘West’ in the early part of the 21st century (Allison, 2004: 21).

This brings me then to one of the more famous explanations of the current crisis — that put forward by the American neo-conservative, Robert Kagan (Kagan, 2002, 2003). His controversial thesis is by now so well known as to not require too much elucidation here. At its most basic, it advances a stunningly simple argument — namely, that the growing gulf between the two sides is the political expression of a more basic asymmetry. This is why the US and a number of European states — though obviously not all — quite literally came to blows over Iraq, and why there is little likelihood of there being much agreement in the future. As he has famously argued, it is not this policy or that particular administration that explains the

rift. Rather, it is the fact that the United States has most of the hard power and Europe has so very little. This is a view I wish to contest here, not because his assessment of the military balance is wrong, but rather because his analysis only partially explains the current crisis. Kagan might have arrived at the correct conclusion. However, he has done so, in my view, by having missed the main point. He insists that the rift was, and presumably remains, a function of European weakness — I want to suggest a less obvious answer. That it could just as easily be interpreted as a manifestation of the opposite — to wit, an American inability to do what all successful hegemonies have been able to do in the past, which is to get those who are supposed to fall within their sphere of influence to follow their lead. In other words, the crisis should not be viewed as an expression of European frailty but a sign of assertiveness by a more self-confident, though still deeply divided Europe, one that is no longer prepared to sing from the same political hymn-sheet as Washington.

Finally, I want to draw out the theoretical implications of the empirical analysis presented here. In particular I want to suggest that the transatlantic crisis raises several difficult questions for those who insist that we are living in a unipolar world where America remains now, and for the foreseeable future, the dominant actor in world politics. If the events of the past few years point to anything it is not, in my opinion, to an America unrivalled in a world where dependent allies obey its every wish (Ferguson, 2004). On the contrary what it points to is quite the opposite — a world in which the US is finding it increasingly difficult either to assert its rule or to generate loyalty (Kupchan, 2002a). Of course, the United States retains many important assets, and Europe overall continues to need the United States. Even the most fanatical of Gaullists would accept this rather uncomfortable fact. And there would certainly be a very high price to be paid if Europe and the United States were to go their separate ways (Walt, 2002). All this is obvious. Nevertheless, even if we are not about to witness a clash of democracies, it must be obvious by now that old assumptions and traditional certainties can no longer be taken for granted. Nor can the trust which is the basis of all successful relationships. Indeed, one of the most important developments since 2001 is the degree to which trust has been eroded, to such an extent that many of America's more traditional friends in Europe no longer see the United States in the same positive or benign way as they once did, while an equal number of Americans no longer view the 'Europeans' (though significantly not the British) through the same rose-tinted glasses they once used to. A Rubicon of sorts has thus been crossed, and it is going to be extremely difficult to return back to the other bank. An American analyst once asked the important question — why has there been no serious effort to balance American power since the end of the Cold War, even

though the world is, as Coral Bell has put it, so out of balance? (Bell, 2003). His answer then was unambiguous and forceful — because the United States was too strong and the benefits of its hegemony so obvious for this ever to take place (Wohlforth, 2002). There is still something to this argument. However, it is not only static, it also ignores the very obvious fact that the world has gone through a very steep learning curve since the beginning of the century, one that has undermined old assumptions, challenged comfortable truths and led to new thinking on the part of all the principal actors — including those on both sides of the Atlantic

To explore these various issues, it is essential to take the long view and reconstruct in some detail the making of the ‘new’ transatlantic crisis, not out of any unnecessary deference to the past, but to show how deep-rooted the ‘new’ crisis happens to be (Ackermann, 2003). Here I go over familiar but important ground (Cox, 2004). In the first section therefore I deal with the period following the end of the Cold War and that almost forgotten era known as the post-Cold War period (Cox et al., 1999). As I shall seek to show, this was a most complex transitional moment. On the surface all seemed well as the West held together in the absence of a serious external threat to its integrity. However, as will become clear from my discussion, the appearance of solidarity only obscured the fact that serious problems were already beginning to shake old transatlantic certainties (Ash, 2004). Next, I look at the critical two years year coinciding with Bush’s election and the decision to go to war with Afghanistan. Again the story is a familiar one but needs to be retold, if only to show the extent to which a set of problems carried over from an earlier era now began to have far more serious consequences in another. Finally, I come to the Iraq war when an already fractured alliance was nearly undermined in what must now rank as the most extended crisis in the history of the transatlantic relationship.

Of course, as the soothsayers have been quick to point out, there has, since the end of the Iraq war, been a serious and at times concerted effort to reconstruct the relationship, so that it can, in Tony Blair’s words, meet the challenges of a ‘changing world’ (Blair, 2004). Even the second Bush administration has made an effort to be nice to the Europeans as both his own tour and that of Condoleeza Rice revealed only too graphically. But Atlanticists should not get overly excited. No doubt a relationship of sorts will continue (Kupchan, 2002b). Reforms might even help it to do so. But one thing remains obvious—the relationship is no longer the close and intimate one its used to be either during the Cold War or the immediate post-Cold War period (Heisbourg, 2004). A few years ago, it was normal to refer to something called the West; liberal theorists could also talk (and did) of a ‘security community’ (Deutsch et al., 1957). Today, it is doubtful whether we can talk of either with the same degree of confidence. Of course,

we are not heading towards war. Nor are we likely to witness the formation of new blocs. However, what existed once exists no more (Coker, 2003, 2004). Moreover, there is no guarantee that things will get much better in the future. Indeed, as we shall see in the last section of this article, new foreign policy challenges on the one hand, and changes going on within the United States and Europe on the other, are likely to make the transatlantic relationship far more difficult to manage. Where this will lead to precisely remains unclear and will depend on many factors, including, most obviously, future events, and, in addition, that most understudied of activities known as diplomacy. Nonetheless, as I will try to show, we have entered unknown territory. A divorce may not be on the cards. Nevertheless, turbulent times lie ahead. This will not only be a test for Europe and the United States — one they could easily fail — but also for the discipline of IR, which, if it wants to remain a player in this particular debate, will probably have to invent a new vocabulary and a new set of concepts to make sense of a very rapidly evolving situation.

### *Transatlantia Revisited — the Cold War and After*

Historically, the transatlantic relationship was born of three necessities — the need to manage Soviet power during the Cold War; the imperative of creating a framework within which the European powers could work out their own differences within a set of structures underwritten by a powerful arbiter from across the ocean; and last, but by no means least, of protecting American interests on the continent. Naturally, the relationship, as it evolved, had both its crises and critics. However, neither, in the end, did a great deal of damage. Indeed, all that they seemed to prove was that the relationship was rock solid. Moreover, if this was, as one writer put it, less a relationship and more a marriage entered into willingly — even by the weaker of the two parties — then there was no reason why it should not go on for a very long time (Lundestad, 1986). It may have left Europe dependent upon American largesse and Americans strategically entrapped. However, it provided both with levels of security they had not experienced before; it did so in ways that were broadly acceptable to most Europeans and the majority of Americans; and it generated a level of prosperity and unity which made Western Europe deeply — perhaps fatally — attractive to the communist countries of Eastern Europe (Heuser, 1996).

Inevitably, the end of the Cold War changed the context within which Europeans and Americans now had to operate. It also called into question one of the most fundamental premises of the transatlantic relationship itself — namely, that it was required in order to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The corollary of this was that it would be unable to survive the



disappearance of the threat that had called it into being in the first place. This of course was one of the constant refrains of structural realists like Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. Without the discipline imposed by the blocs in Europe, the future, they believed, was bound to be a good deal less predictable than it had been before. Indeed, according to Mearsheimer the future would very much look like the past with growing nationalist tensions in Europe accompanied by deeper divisions across the Atlantic making the world as a whole a far less stable place. Others were equally pessimistic and concluded, in classic realist fashion, that if the relationship had been held together by the existence of an existential 'other', then absent a serious external challenge, the two sides were bound to drift apart (Mearsheimer, 1990; Waltz, 1993).

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

This optimism was reinforced in turn by an active US diplomacy. Indeed, another significant feature of the transatlantic relationship in the 1990s was not how much, but how little, US policy towards Europe actually seemed to change. As one analyst has observed, while the end of the Cold War might have led to a major rethink in US foreign policy in nearly every other area, there was to be no substantial alteration in its attitude towards Europe (Lundestad, 2003). Nor did the US position in Europe come under serious, sustained challenge either. If anything, its hegemony was more secure at the end of the 1990s than it had been at the beginning (Ingimundarson, 2000). In fact, the other more remarkable feature of the period was the extent to which those who had previously been some of America's more severe critics during the Cold War, now became some of its most consistent supporters from afar. Moreover, if some of them complained at all, it was not because the US was using its power too frequently abroad, but was perhaps not employing it often enough. Even Clinton had more than his fair share of European admirers. His (admittedly uneven) support for humanitarian causes on the one hand, and European integration on the other, made him

an especially attractive American leader; and it was not so surprising therefore that when he finally did leave office, there was a feeling that he had not just been 'a good friend' of Europe's, but a key figure who had managed to maintain good relations between an America that was perhaps no longer so much in touch with Europe, and a Europe that was beginning to lose its ideological affinity with the United States (Johnson, 2004: 255–6).

Herein lay the problem. For even in the era of good feeling, serious differences were beginning to undercut transatlantic trust (Hulsman, 2003). First, there was the big clash over what to do about Bosnia. Having initially left the former Yugoslavia to the Europeans — we have 'no dog' in this particular fight chimed Secretary of State Baker — the Americans gradually felt compelled to get involved, and as they did so, were to become increasingly impatient with European dithering, so much so that by the time of the Dayton accord, their collective view about their friends across the pond veered between the less than flattering (at best) and the almost unprintable (at worst). Either way, it left many in the Washington foreign policy elite with the very firm impression that when push came to shove, on key security questions, the Europeans simply could not be taken seriously (Holbrooke, 1998).

The two sides also differed increasingly about regional priorities and how to deal with major regional problems. For the Europeans the priority in the main remained more than ever the European project — for the Americans the stage that interested them most was the world as a whole. Moreover, when the Europeans did get engaged in wider issues, the tools they tended to employ were more diplomatic and economic — a reflection no doubt of their military weakness — while the Americans by and large still remained more inclined to resolve problems using their hard power advantage. Indeed, while the United States still continued to look at the world in more traditional terms of threats, allies and capabilities, the Europeans in general viewed it as a set of security dilemmas whose causes, once properly understood, could then be dealt with using much subtler means. In most areas this did not make an enormous difference. However, in one case it did — over how to deal with the Israel–Palestinian conflict. Here the gap between the two grew exponentially as the decade wore on; and though momentarily united by the Oslo accord, as it fell by the wayside, the United States and Europe began to find themselves almost in the position of supporting opposed and warring factions in a conflict without apparent end (Haass, 1999).

There was, in turn, the equally problematic rift caused by intervention in Kosovo. Here of course there was more unity than division at first. Indeed, when compared to the deep divisions that had existed earlier in the Balkans, Kosovo almost seemed to be a model of how the West ought to work when

confronted with big problems (Allin, 2002). Yet even though NATO went to war as an alliance, and won as one, the whole operation failed to ameliorate the discord that had been one of the more obvious legacies from previous interventions in Bosnia. For one thing a number of European countries, some with historic ties to Belgrade and some not, seemed more inclined to limit the war rather than prosecute it with vigour. There was also the rather significant issue of European military capabilities. The fact that Operation Allied Force was run and largely conducted by Americans certainly did little to enhance European credibility in Washington's eyes (Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2000). And the lesson drawn in Washington, not surprisingly, was not an especially positive one, either about Europeans in particular or NATO in general (Halberstam, 2003). In fact, as we knew then (and found out more later) the Pentagon in particular drew the important conclusion that having used NATO in one war, they might not be prepared to do so again, especially if it involved fighting alongside allies who not only had limited technical means but whose leaders had to adapt to a public opinion that was far from supportive of fighting an engagement that had not been sanctioned by the UN (Clark, 2002).

Finally, though the Europeans in the immediate post-Cold War era had a far more positive view of the United States than they were to have later, there was no escaping the fact that by the end of the decade there were growing worries on the continent about an American inclination to deal with problems in ways that often showed little sensitivity to allies, and even less to that entity known as the 'international community'. US air strikes against Iraq, further sorties against Afghanistan, and the attack on Sudan in 1998, may not have provoked mass street demonstrations in London, Paris or Rome. Nonetheless, they left a bad taste in some European mouths and a feeling that although the United States would try to be multilateral when it could be, it was more and more inclined to act without reference or permission from its friends across the Atlantic (Patrick and Forman, 2002).

A drift of sorts was thus well under way long before the Bush team took over (Walt, 1998/99). The two sides hardly constituted rivals, let alone enemies in the making. Indeed, in an era when the world economy was booming and transatlantic economic ties were deepening, to have even talked of such things would have sounded faintly odd to say the least. Nonetheless, the strong bonds that had once united the two in an earlier age of Cold War confrontation were clearly coming under some strain. Nor did there seem to be any self-correcting mechanism. Within the United States, moreover, a new mood among a successor generation who had not experienced the Cold War close up seemed to be in the ascendant. This did not lead those who expressed it to seek unnecessary quarrels; what it did do,

though, was to make some wonder how seriously one ought to be taking the Europeans any longer. On the right in particular, there was a growing and detectable impatience with a Europe that not only appeared incapable of acting with purpose or vigour, but then had the temerity to think rather differently about the how the world ought to be shaped (Halper and Clarke, 2004). This feeling was made all the worse of course by a powerful undercurrent of American hubris that tended to increase rather than decrease as the decade unfolded. This assumed (without proving) that while the American free-market model generated jobs, growth and wealth, the European model with its raft of bureaucratic controls and labour regulations produced nothing but stagnation. Hence there was nothing to be learned from Europe, and until Europe changed its ways, it could be largely ignored while the United States continued to surge ahead — proving, if proof were ever needed, that having shaped and dominated the international relations of one century it was about to do the same in the next (Cumings, 1999).

### *Terrors in Transatlantia I: September 11 and Afghanistan*

The extent to which this vision shaped the outlook of the new Bush administration is a matter of some dispute. After all, in his pre-election statements, Bush talked in quite measured terms of a ‘humble’ America doing less rather than more in a world where every complex emergency threatened to drag the United States into unnecessary and costly commitment. However, as more recent evidence has shown, the new team was far more radical than its quietist rhetoric suggested (Mann, 2004; Suskind, 2004). Assuming that the United States was in a position of almost unrivalled power, it drew the not illogical conclusion that it could be altogether more self-interested — and less sensitive — when it came to dealing with others than its predecessor had appeared to be. Certainly, it would not be business as usual, and as if to make the point clearer than the truth, managed within a few months of assuming office to rethink its policy towards Iraq (the planing for whose change began in earnest), its relationship with China (which now moved from the category of partner to that of rival) and the much hated Kyoto protocol whose limited role in trying to control global warming was now challenged on the grounds of both science and sheer economic self-interest. Nor was this all. Within only a short space of time, the Bush administration formally rejected, or politically called into question, a whole raft of international agreements ranging from arms control and land mines, through to biological weapons and nuclear weapons testing. The International Criminal Court in particular came in for some particularly fierce attacks with the result that many commentators now began to wonder about the direction in which the United States was

heading. A very different kind of administration, it was clear, had taken over in the United States, one that was no longer committed, even in theory, to the basics of multilateralism. On the eve of 9/11, the transatlantic relationship looked to be in real trouble. Some even began to wonder whether the two continents were, at last, heading for that long-predicted divorce (Daalder, 2001).

Viewed within this larger context, the attack of September 11 seemed to represent less of a threat to the transatlantic relationship and more of an opportunity for Europeans to rebuild connections to their senior, but straying, partner across the Atlantic. This in part explains the speed with which NATO invoked Article 5 only a day after the attack (Walker, 2001/02). It would also help explain the unbelievable enthusiasm that many European countries now showed when it came to volunteering their own troops for action on the ground in Afghanistan. Indeed, as the Afghanistan campaign unfolded, the United States faced the somewhat bizarre situation in which the European members of NATO were actually offering more troops and equipment than the Pentagon wanted to use (Gordon, 2001). It was all rather overwhelming. One should not be too cynical perhaps. Europeans were genuine in their support for their wounded ally. They also had as much to lose from international terrorism as the United States. After all, a number of them (Britain and Spain in particular) had already experienced the scourge of terrorism, and were in no doubt where they stood on the issue and why. Nonetheless, a larger game was clearly being played out, one of whose many objectives was to steer the American ship of state back onto the multilateral course from which it had been deviating badly before 9/11.

The outcome of all this frantic effort, as we now know, was not to secure the relationship so much as increase European concerns about the US while raising further questions about America's attitude towards NATO as a fighting (as opposed to a political) organization. Certainly, by the beginning of 2002, relations once again appeared to have taken a turn for the worse, in spite of some valiant efforts by officials on both sides to deny that there was a problem. Naturally, NATO played down these difficulties, all the time stressing the alliance's contribution to the war. But it was very much the case of the dog that did not bark, or at least was not allowed to bark by the United States. As Paul Wolfowitz made clear at the first high-level briefing provided by Washington to NATO defence ministers in the autumn of 2001, the US was not much interested in using NATO structures; nor was it planning to rely heavily on European forces either. Such words of indifference did little to assuage the Europeans who not only felt slighted, but suspected that American insouciance reflected a deeper impatience towards Europe in general and the idea of constraining alliances in

particular. America's European allies found the new Rumsfeld doctrine of missions determining the coalition, rather than the other way round, to be particularly disturbing (*The New York Times*, 2001). For not only did this constitute a major conceptual break; it also had the potential to undermine the rationale for an established alliance like NATO. As one seasoned observer pointed out, whereas the old threat of communism had managed to bring friends together, it looked like the new war on terrorism was driving them apart. NATO looked like it was rapidly becoming one of the first, and most important, 'victims of 9/11' (Haftendorn, 2002).

Instead of the situation improving in the early days of 2002, they effectively got worse. In February, for example, the EU's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs went public and attacked the US for treating the Europeans as if they were mere 'sycophants' rather than real friends (Patten, 2002; Ignatius, 2002). Americans responded in turn by denigrating the Europeans. One analyst even went so far as to talk of a European 'hysteria', adding for good measure that what lay at the heart of European complaints was not the direction now being taken by American foreign policy but Europe's inability to come to terms with the fact that Europe was fast losing its special position as a privileged partner of the United States (*Newsweek*, 2002). Others adopted a tougher line still and launched a series of powerful attacks on their so-called friends — the British excepted — who found it all too easy to criticize the United States for taking decisive action while they proposed nothing in the way of a serious alternative (*Economist*, 2002). Even the language which the two started to use about (and against) each other seemed to denote something more than the normal spat that had punctuated the relationship in the past (Pfluger, 2002). Certain Americans could hardly disguise their contempt for a bunch of whinging Europeans who possessed little in the way of meaningful firepower. Wolfowitz was its understated best when he labelled all European attacks on the US as being 'simplistic'. Others were even tougher about those ingrates across the Atlantic. Indeed, underlying what some Americans had to say was something else — a sense of moral outrage about a continent which in their eyes the United States had 'saved' on at least three occasions in the 20th century, many of whose people now had the temerity to suggest that the biggest problem facing the world in the early 21st century was not so much international terrorism as an America grown drunk on its own power (Everts, 2002a).

Thus as the Afghan war drew to what turned out to be an inconclusive end, it was evident that not all was well within the NATO camp. Naturally, the embattled Lord Robertson did his best to hold the line, rather unconvincingly arguing that the gloom merchants had got it all wrong. As he told what must have been a rather naïve (or polite) American audience at

the beginning of 2002, NATO was just as relevant in the war against terrorism as it had been in the battle for Kosovo (Robertson, 2002a, 2002b). A few months later, the United States ambassador to NATO was repeating more or less the same thing (Dempsey, 2002). But the spin did not carry weight. Indeed, the more the officials span, the more the critics began to conclude that something really was amiss. As one noted US journalist commented after having returned from an extensive discussion on transatlantic relations in the UK, all the delegates might have sat around the same table using the same language, but the gap dividing the Europeans and the Americans about how to deal with the problem was plain for all to see (Pfaff, 2002). As another observer put it, this time after attending a meeting of the Trilateral Commission in New York, the Americans who were there were seemingly unable to appreciate the extent to which their world outlook was not shared in Europe — the Europeans meanwhile did not seem to understand the profound changes that had taken place in the United States as a result of 9/11. Certainly, as 2001 gave way to 2002 the Atlantic was beginning to look less and less like that proverbial bridge much loved by the British and more and more like that divide more favoured by the French (Hoagland, 2002).

### *Terrors in Transatlantia II: Iraq and After*

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

‘terrorist allies, then the attacks of September 11 would be but a prelude to far greater horrors’ (Sifry and Cerf, 2003).

For what precise reason or set of reasons the Bush administration decided to go to war against Iraq still remains a hotly contested topic — what is not in doubt, however, is the impact which this decision and the war itself had upon an already bruised transatlantic relationship. Certainly, having widened the war on terrorism in the way in which it did, and then justifying the move in terms of a new set of imperial principles that in the eyes of most observers seemed to represent a major departure in US strategic thinking, it was inevitable that many Europeans — encouraged by what was being said by critics on the other side of the Atlantic (Scowcroft, 2002; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003; Betts, 2003) — would feel queezy at best and downright horrified at worst by what Washington was now proposing (and would in March 2003 go on) to do — namely, make war against a regime whose capabilities were declining, whose possession of weapons of mass destruction was in some doubt, and whose connection to the kind of terrorists who had knocked down the Twin Towers was tenuous to say the least. The fact that the war was then announced without a second UN resolution, and indeed against the majority of the UN membership, only raised further doubts about the wisdom of using military action, especially as the most likely outcome (according to most European intelligence sources at the time) would be to increase global support for al-Qaeda rather than diminish it (Hitchens, 2003).

From this perspective, what requires explanation is not the fact that the majority of Europeans actually opposed the war, but that a number of governments chose not to. Some no doubt did so because they did not want to upset the US; others presumably acted thus because of their conservative solidarity with Bush. Certainly, the fact that several governments did feel compelled to sign up, bears powerful testimony to America’s continuing ability to garner support from even some notably reluctant quarters. A few governments, however, were true believers. Blair in particular (though not the British foreign policy establishment as a whole) seemed to have few doubts. Indeed, Blair was to play a quite critical and complex role throughout, in the early stages by helping mobilize European support for the war, and then later by trying to mediate between the Europeans and the Americans (Kampfner, 2003; Shawcross, 2003). Yet, in spite of his best efforts, nothing could overcome the divide between the United States on the one hand and France and Germany on the other. Nor could he do much to siphon off the real and genuine bitterness between the two opposing camps, caused in the first instance by the famous or infamous UN decision not to back the war through another Security Council resolution — something for which the French have yet to be forgiven in Washington —



and then by a refusal on the part of France and Germany to lend their support to any actions undertaken by the coalition of the willing in Iraq (Lindstrom, 2003).

Of course, as the dust of war began to settle after Saddam's defeat, many hoped (and a few assumed) that the transatlantic relationship would gradually be repaired. After all, if the crisis was Iraq specific, as some seemed to think, then once the war was over there was every possibility that things might soon get back on to an even keel. Indeed, a number of Europeans took it as read that such would be the cost and difficulty in rebuilding Iraq, that the Americans would have no choice but to repair the relationship if only to help them manage their new acquisition in the Middle East. This was one of the reasons no doubt why even Kagan began to strike a less belligerent note; and after having asserted in 2002 that the gulf between the two sides was probably too deep to overcome, two years on was suggesting that America now confronted a 'crisis of legitimacy', and that the only means of overcoming this was by seeking accommodation with those alienated Europeans. In fact, he even owned up to something he had never said before — namely, that the Europeans had not just objected to the war because of their weakness (his original line of analysis) but more obviously because the US went to war without their support and approval. This was quite a shift. He also agreed that some way had to be found to draw the Europeans back into the fold, and the obvious way of doing this he concluded was not by reminding them of how benign the United States happened to be, but of actually allowing them more of a say in the way in which the hegemon shaped world affairs. Indeed, there was every reason for the US to cede some power he agreed — not because of any sentimental attachment to the transatlantic relationship but to ensure domestic support for any future US action. In fact, precisely because the American people might be unlikely to 'support both military actions and the burdens of postwar occupations in the face of constant charges of illegitimacy' by the Europeans, the United States had every reason to meet their erstwhile allies half-way (Kagan, 2004).

The new line adopted by Kagan was also paralleled by a concerted effort by sections of the Bush team to construct what looked like real connections back to alienated allies. Indeed, as the splendid little war in Iraq gave way to a less than splendid peace, there was a marked alteration in US official rhetoric. This took many forms but expressed itself most obviously in a fairly concerted effort by the administration to get 'transatlantic relations back on track'. Even Bush himself now began to celebrate the virtues of 'effective multilateralism' and started to talk with great enthusiasm of Europe being America's 'natural partner' in an increasingly disturbed world. This in turn was accompanied by what some saw as an important bureaucratic shift within the Bush administration itself, with Powell and the State Department

at last coming out from behind the very large shadow earlier cast by the powerful Rumsfeld and his team of supporters within the Pentagon. Indeed, as the news went from bad to worse in Iraq, it was noticeable how much less the increasingly unpopular Rumsfeld appeared to be saying in public and how much more Powell was coming to the fore (Ries, 2003). In fact, having been seriously sidelined by the Pentagon and its conservative allies for so long, it now appeared as if the once marginal Powell was making something of a comeback. One sign of this was an article of his published in *Foreign Affairs* in early 2004. In this he advanced a powerful case for traditional allies. What he said contained a series of reassuring arguments. The first, which must have been music to many a European ear, was that pre-emptive action taken against potentially dangerous rogue states would only be used 'under certain limited circumstances'. In other words, Europe should not assume that Iraq was a model for the future. Nor should they believe that some strategic corner had been turned — in fact, far from being philosophically inclined towards unilateralism as some in Europe seemed to think, the Bush strategy he argued presupposed good and lasting relations with the UN and NATO. 'Partnership' he noted was 'the watchword of US strategy' in what he tellingly referred to as the 'age of cooperation'. This he concluded had been the real message contained in the much criticized (and much misunderstood) National Security Strategy document of September 2002 — and this would be the guiding principle in the days ahead. Indeed, without 'cooperative relations among the world's major powers' he concluded there was little or no chance of defeating terrorism (Powell, 2004).

This apparent turn in US foreign policy continued into the summer (and beyond), reaching an emotional height of sorts in June 2004, beginning with the commemoration of the D-Day landings on 6 June — a perfect moment to stress what united rather than divided allies — followed in quick succession by the G8 summit in Georgia and the EU–US Summit in Dublin. For the moment at least it really did look as if all had been forgotten, a perception that was underscored in 2005 following visits to Europe by both Condoleezza Rice and President Bush. Politics certainly played a big part in this. Indeed, as Bush entered the presidential fray, he found himself under attack from his Democratic opponent who made the factually correct and potentially damaging point that, far from increasing America's influence in the world, the administration had only managed to reduce it, and had done so by unnecessarily alienating old allies. As one of Senator Kerry's senior foreign policy advisers put it, the issue concerning Iraq was not whether the United States needed to employ force, but rather that it chose to do so in such a way as to minimize international support for its action. As James Rubin observed, if Bush had only waited a few months 'it would have been Iraqi non-compliance' and not spurious claims about an Iraqi threat that

would have ‘triggered the war’. This, he argued, would not only have made it easier to wage the war without mass resistance to it being mobilized in Europe — it would have meant that ‘many more countries would have been willing to contribute substantial troops and substantial reconstruction assistance if such international legitimacy had been obtained’ (Rubin, 2004). Clearly there was nothing Bush could do once the war had been fought to change how the war had been waged. Nonetheless a lesson was there to be learned for the longer term — namely, that allies (however ungrateful) were preferable to enemies, and loyal and willing allies were more likely to be useful assets than those constantly carping from the sidelines.

### *All’s Well That Ends Well?*

Thus as the dust began to settle, the language surrounding the relationship began to take on a quite different tone, much to the relief of officials on both sides of the Atlantic. No doubt this surprised a few people, though not others who had always assumed that reality on the one hand, and shared interests on the other, were bound to bring the two continents back closer together (Ikenberry, 2004). Indeed, if the optimists were to be believed, by the beginning of 2005 we were once again at the point where we had been so often in the past following other great transatlantic disputes. There almost seemed to be a pattern of sorts. First, the two sides would fall out, as they had done almost annually since the Suez crisis of 1956. The protesting masses would then take to the streets. The French would then reflect in their very Gaullist way about the overbearing character of American power. The Americans in turn would accuse any and every European critic of being anti-American. And then it would all fade away, indicating to the old hands at least, that necessity, if nothing else, would always bring these two members of the same family back under the same roof (Wallace, 2001). So it had always been; and so it was now (Bertram, 2002). As another analyst of the American scene pointed out, the pessimists had had the field for far too long. Now it was the turn of the Atlanticists to prove them wrong and show why the relationship remained a sound one (Hames, 2004).

It is difficult to disagree with facts, and it is especially difficult to ignore the rather obvious fact that an enormous amount of time was to be put after the end of the Iraq war (and following Bush’s re-election) in trying to repair the relationship (Powell and Solana, 2004). Yet in spite of these strenuous efforts, it was evident that no amount of smiling photo calls of assembled leaders and well rehearsed hand-shakes could paper over the cracks. The scars caused by Iraq remained, on both sides. Even the Iraqi elections did not persuade key European states to promise a great deal, and what support they did promise was not likely to occur in the country itself but outside Iraq

in neighbouring states. Even then the level of real European investment remained (in American eyes) decidedly miserly. Nor by the same token were Europeans much taken with Bush's larger vision of how to bring stability to the wider region within which Iraq happened to be located. Indeed, while Rice and the President were being ushered around the various European capitals in 2005, it was notable how much scepticism still remained on the European side about Washington's analysis of the Middle East more generally. Europeans may have been willing to listen politely to Washington. It was obvious, however, that the overwhelming majority of them had little time for Bush's rather simple-minded faith in the power of liberty, not to mention his almost religious-like belief in the thesis that democracy alone was able to unlock the door to security in the region as a whole. At worst they felt this was naïve — at best it was yet another example, they argued, of American maladroitness when it came to dealing with complex international issues.

Naturally, one could argue, and many continued to do so, that Europe and the United States still shared a common perspective on world problems, and that because they did so there was every chance of them striking what more than one analyst liked to call a new grand 'bargain' between the two (Dervis, 2004; Moravchik, 2004). This was certainly a dominant motif in early 2005. But even here the story was a bleaker one than that suggested by the optimists. Indeed, as the sceptics continued to point out, there were vital areas where the US and the Europeans seemed to stand in opposing camps. For instance, they had very different takes on the Israeli–Palestinian issue; they were not at one when it came to dealing with so-called rogue regimes; they stood in quite different corners when it came to the Kyoto agreement; they disagreed fundamentally about the International Criminal Court; and they had a totally different attitude towards international law. They also had some very big disagreements over arms sales to China (another crisis waiting to happen); and while they might have been at one when it came to defining ends in Iran — that is, preventing Tehran acquiring weapons of mass destruction — they clearly did not agree about the means to achieve this. Indeed, in the eyes of a number of senior officials in Washington, both the issue of China and the problem of how to deal with Iran had the capacity to do as much damage to the relationship in the future as Iraq had done in the past.

There was also the not insignificant issue of public opinion and values. Here again the news, though not unambiguously bad, could hardly be interpreted as encouraging. Take the question of popular attitudes. Here there was little disputing the fact that the United States under Bush had become increasingly unpopular in Europe, though significantly while many Europeans appeared to be highly suspicious of American power and the uses

to which it had been put in the past and would be employed in the future, a good number of Americans (possibly those who had voted for Kerry rather than Bush) had a reasonably positive view of their erstwhile allies across the Atlantic (Pew Research Centre, 2003). European suspicion, moreover, appeared to have risen quite markedly after Bush won a second term. The election, in fact, seemed to show just how deep the divide had become. Indeed, not only did the overwhelming majority of Europeans support Kerry against the unacceptable Bush, but went on to interpret Bush's subsequent victory as proving how foreign the United States had now become; and strange it increasingly looked to those across the Atlantic who did not believe in God, wave the flag on a regular basis, or who had already embraced the possibility of living in a postmodern world where borders and the notion of sovereignty appeared to matter less and less (Lundestad, 2003; Lieven, 2004). But it was not merely the election that divided the two. As we have seen, 9/11 itself had already caused a deep and profound rift. Indeed, if the attack had achieved nothing else, the one thing it did do was to emphasize what many writers like Lipset and others had been suggesting for a very long time — that America was an exceptional (and conservative) kind of country that had much less in common with Europe than some liberals liked to think (Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, 2004). Heisbourg might have been exaggerating somewhat when he asserted that while the United States had been transformed by the original atrocity it was still 'business as usual' for most Europeans (Heisbourg, 2002). But there was more than a grain of truth in his remark. As Garton Ash has cleverly observed, September 11 might turn out to be 'yet another' of those defining historical moments 'at which Europe' — *encore une fois* — declined 'to be defined' (Ash, 2001: 68).

Of course, it could be argued, and has been, that having a common enemy like terrorism was bound to draw the United States and Europe much closer together. Though oddly reassuring at one level, this argument overall tended to confuse operational cooperation (of which there continued to be a great deal) with how the two actually interpreted the terrorist threat itself. And here the divide—once again—looked marked. First, there was the simple, but important issue of how Europe and the US addressed the problem of terror. There was some common ground, of course. But as even our more sanguine commentators would concede, the United States, like any true 'warrior state', tended to adopt an altogether more muscular approach based on a philosophy of punishment and elimination (what some have referred to as 'hitting at symptoms'), while the Europeans — in the main — tried to address the threat less in terms of demons that need to be expunged, and more as a species of political phenomenon that had to be tackled by dealing with root causes by 'draining the swamp' (Smith, 2004). There was, in turn,

the issue of the struggle against terrorism itself. The Americans obviously felt (and feel) that they were at 'war' with a new kind of enemy. Many Europeans, however, were not so clear. Indeed, from the outset, some of the most distinguished of European commentators, including Sir Michael Howard, were clearly deeply unhappy with the idea that we were now all engaged in a permanent struggle without end with an implacable foe with whom there could be no negotiation (Danner, 2004). Certainly, Europeans did not see the struggle in these era-defining terms — the United States on the other hand, clearly did. In fact, as Washington had made only too plain since September 11, the US was now involved in something that was likely to last for at least one generation, possibly more. As Rumsfeld argued soon after the attack itself, the United States now faced a challenge that was likely to endure for as long as, if not longer than, that which had once been faced against fascism and communism (Booth and Dunne, 2003). A new world order beckoned and the sooner the rest of the world — including Europe — got used to this unpalatable fact the better.

This leads, logically enough, to NATO, the keystone upon which the transatlantic relationship has traditionally rested. In one sense, the optimists are right. NATO will survive, and will do so by continuing to be a useful vehicle performing all sorts of necessary roles from peace-keeping through to keeping a US foot in the European camp. Indeed, according to some, so functionally useful has NATO become that even if it did not exist, it would almost have to be invented. Nonetheless, this cannot obscure a simple but unfortunate fact of modern strategic life: the organization has become more or less irrelevant when it comes to dealing with the most urgent security issues of our day (Lugar, 2002). Naturally, it will not go under; no more than Europe will fall off America's intellectual map. But neither NATO nor Europe are any longer America's privileged partners in an age of international terrorism. That is the critical point (Heisbourg and de Wik, 2001). Europe does not even possess what Americans seem to respect and need most from allies — namely, adequate hard power. In fact, if anything has weakened the ties that once bound the two together, it is that Europe does not even have the military wherewithal to operate alongside the Americans in a serious combat situation. As one observer has noted, 'the huge additional investment' the Americans are 'making in defence will make practical inter-operability with allies in NATO or in coalitions impossible' (Robertson, 2002b). The arithmetic in other words no longer seems to add up (Alexander and Garden, 2001). It is not even clear that NATO is up to the job of handling the role it has been asked to perform in Afghanistan. It is even less obvious what role, if any, it is ever going to be playing in Iraq (Dempsey, 2004a, 2004b; Maddox, 2004a, 2004b). It might of course do some training; but that is about it, a situation that has led at least two

Americans to ask (yet again) that if the Europeans in NATO — with the obvious exception of the British — were not prepared to get their feet wet in Iraq, then what exactly was the organization for? (Daalder and Kagan, 2004).

But even if the arithmetic of war was driving the two sides apart, what about the overall character of Europe and the United States as species of modern society? Here surely there were many things that when taken together pointed to a more united future? There were two very different tales to be told. The more universal (and optimistic) version insisted there was a single liberal logic, one that was not only bound to lead advanced societies to resemble each other, but to engage in increasingly friendly behaviour towards one another. The other tale came to a rather different set of conclusions. General statements were all well and good. Unfortunately, they took no account of individual histories and specific identities. They also told us nothing about how individual systems reproduced themselves over time. In other words, they ignored variety, including, most obviously, the enormous variety of capitalist economies. Here again the gap seemed to be immense between a mainland Europe — where more attention continued to be paid to social cohesion — and the United States where such concerns played hardly any part in determining economic policy. Indeed, while liberal theorists could talk somewhat glibly of markets in general, Americans (as we have already suggested) talked very specifically and negatively about the enormous distortions they continued to see operating in Europe. This led the majority of them to only one conclusion — that the ‘American way’ was not only different but better — reflected on the one hand by the simple statistical fact that the US economic system generated more jobs and on the other by the well-established historical fact that American-style capitalism created more wealth. In fact, when looked at from this perspective, the less the United States had in common with its stagnating European competitors across the Atlantic, the better.

Naturally, one could discount a good deal of this if one could be certain that the United States still had a real interest in working with others; in other words, had a commitment to that larger entity called international society (Foot et al., 2003). However, as our earlier narrative has suggested, this is no longer so obvious. Of course, the picture is not a black and white one. In some spheres the United States will continue to work with others while maintaining its membership of several key international organizations. It will do so, moreover, for the entirely self-interested reason that the challenges of interdependence demand collective rather than singular responses (Slaughter, 2004). But an historical corner of sorts does appear to have been turned. Furthermore, it appears to have been turned — as our earlier discussion has shown — long before the ‘unilateral’ Bush assumed office

(Buzan, 2004a, 2004b). Nor did this change occur for merely short-term conjunctural reasons. Rather it was a reflection of more profound shifts caused, over time, by the perceived failure of several multilateral efforts in the 1990s, a growing sense that the UN was not merely an ineffective body but a deeply corrupt one too, pressure from conservatives in Congress to stand up more robustly for US interests, and America's own extraordinary renaissance in the 1990s. Indeed, under circumstances where its own position appeared to be on the rise, in a world where it was the only superpower left in the game, the United States, like any ascending power, was increasingly inclined to pursue policies that suited its interests rather than anybody else's (Cox, 2001).

Finally, the possibility of further drift is going to be determined in the future by changes taking place in the balance of forces between Europe and the United States. Making predictions — as we argued at the beginning of this article — is a notoriously risky undertaking. But there at least two long term trends that will not necessarily support the transatlantic relationship — one is a growing sense among many Europeans that the current and deeply uneven distribution of power leaves them far too dependent on an America whose views on world politics it does not necessarily share; and the other (too frequently brushed aside by sceptics) is the enormous changes now taking place on the European continent, changes that over time are likely to lead to its identity being defined not just in terms of a positive notion of Europe but an increasingly negative image of America (*New Perspectives Quarterly*, 2003). Naturally, this is not a comfortable conclusion to arrive at if one happens to be a transatlanticist of the old school. Indeed, according to one of the better known Eurosceptics, it doesn't even correspond to contemporary reality. In fact, if we were to believe Ferguson, Europe is little more than an economic basket case with few capabilities and a hopeless future (Ferguson, 2004). But this misses the main point almost completely. Europe might not be able to balance the United States military. However, huge seismic shifts are under way, and though European integration, further expansion, the launch of the Euro and the new European Constitution will generate their own set of problems, taken together in the broad sweep of history they all point to a more forceful political entity emerging at the end (Legrain, 2003; *Economist*, 2004). Nor should we (or some Americans) be so dismissive of Europe as an international actor. It does after all have over 60,000 military personnel stationed overseas. It has also become a major player in the modern global economy. Indeed, in spite of American jibes about the state of the European economy, Europe not only manages to compete in world markets, but in many areas is actually managing to outcompete the United States. It certainly sells a vast amount of goods to the US. It has also been involved for the past 15 years or so in a major take-



over of American assets in the United States itself, to such a degree that there is now more European investment in the US than there is American investment in Europe. Of course none of this means that America has become number two or is about to decline. Nor is it to ignore the very real problems that lie ahead for Europe (Everts, 2002b). What it does point to though is a changing correlation of forces that is not necessarily working to America's advantage (Frum and Perle, 2003). We should not get carried away. It is unlikely that the 21st century will be European or that Europe's vision of the future will 'quietly' eclipse 'the American Dream' (Rifkin, 2004). But it may not be pushing things too far to suggest that Europe will be playing a much bigger and, almost certainly, more independent role in world affairs in the years ahead.

New and more interesting times thus lie ahead, and the sooner the fact is recognized by all analysts the better (Kupchan, 2002c). Repeating the mantra that the relationship in its traditional form will endure because it has always done so will no longer suffice (Wolf, 2004). Which brings us back full circle back to the issue of change, something that the social sciences in general have invariably failed to anticipate, largely, as Keynes once remarked, because of an addiction to stability married to a fear of disorder (Keynes, 1919). It would seem that the same addiction, and possibly the same fear, is leading those who have made their reputations and committed their time to the study and maintenance of the transatlantic relationship, into committing the same mistake again. Not for the first time, the so-called experts would appear to be falling into their bad old ways of thinking too cautiously when they should be doing anything but. As one of the classical figures of International Relations once warned, those seriously involved in the study of world politics should not be using their skills merely to rationalize the status quo for fear that the alternative might be worse, but of explaining how and why, at certain critical moments in time, the status quo may no longer be sustainable (Carr, 2000). It is the thesis of this article that we may now have reached such a 'tipping-point'. This in the end is the real significance of what happened in Bush's first term. Of course, there is no absolute certainty in international relations. However, if events over more recent years point to anything, it is that the transatlantic relationship as we once knew it now looks increasingly as if it belongs to another age. Another kind of future beckons (Judt, 2004).

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