

CURRENT HISTORY

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“September 11 should be a catalyst for a renewal of the West as a community of action that is shaped by interests that are common even when they are not always equally shared. What the West needs, and must seek in and beyond the EU and NATO—the two central institutions that comprise it—is more, not less, integration.”

Europe Enlarged, America Detached?

SIMON SERFATY

Europe, as Americans have known it since 1917, is dead and beyond resurrection. Some, admittedly, remain in a state of denial as they still predict, and even await, the revival of the traditional nation-states whose sovereignty within impermeable boundaries was well worth a war or two.¹ But that prospect ended when the rise of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, institutions created to save the nation-states (from each other, as well as from themselves), progressively eroded their members' sovereignty instead.

“To understand,” wrote Isaiah Berlin four decades ago, “is to perceive patterns.” Patterns are not shaped by theory but asserted by history. The pattern that has grown out of Europe's history over the past 50 years could not be more evident. With nation-states reinventing themselves as member states of the union they form, or which they hope to join, the EU is achieving a new territorial and even political synthesis that is making much of the continent whole after NATO helped make it free. The single currency (the euro) that was launched in January 2002, the enlargement to 10 new members

that was announced in December 2002, the constitutional convention scheduled for spring 2003, and the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that will take place in 2004 are the identifiable plays of an endgame known as finality. The agenda is not new—deepen in order to widen, widen in order to deepen, and reform in order to do both—but its scope and urgency are.

The final transformation of Europe should make Americans proud. The deconstructed Old World that twice in just over one generation organized its own collective funeral is now being consolidated à l'américaine. In large measure, this transformation is due to inspired United States policies that showed, during 15 glorious weeks in spring 1947, how the peace could be won historically after the war had been won militarily. Indeed, the new Europe is more peaceful, safer, more affluent, and more democratic—in short, more stable and, why not, more likable—than at any previous time. Even the unfinished security business inherited from earlier wars but still feared after the cold war has receded because institutional enlargement has acted as a catalyst for reconciliation and reforms. Yet muting a legitimate United States satisfaction with Europe's current condition, there is increasing exasperation over what is still missing and even some apprehension over what might be about to emerge.

For the growing number of Americans who have at last ceased to view “Europe” as an institutional illusion, causes for concern are varied. Most generally, an ever more united and progressively stronger Europe could conceivably rise as a “counterweight” to United States power. As the cold war was ending, Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington was quick to forecast Europe's future as the “preminent

SIMON SERFATY is a professor of United States foreign policy and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University. He also serves as director of European studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. His most recent book is *Memories of Europe's Future* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2000).

¹In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), John Mearsheimer writes ominously that “[a]lmost every European state, including the United Kingdom and France, still harbors deep-seated albeit muted fears that a Germany unchecked by American power might behave aggressively.”

power of the twenty-first century.” In 2002 the theme became more common: the EU as seen by Harvard’s Joseph Nye was the “closest thing that the United States faces” for a world in which, suggests *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, “two United States are better than one.” At its best, such a Europe might explain its interest in assuming a greater role in the world as an obligation to protect Europe from America, but also America from itself.² At its worst, the increasingly assertive and even adversarial use of its newly regained power would leave Europe as an alternative to United States leadership at the possible cost of American interests. This latter prospect is all the more troubling since Europe might wish to pull its weight before it is ready, thus leaving Americans once again with the burden of finishing what Europeans started but could not complete. In other words, the new Europe cannot claim to do all it wants so long as it has not become all it can be, especially in the areas of military capabilities and political unity. Pretending otherwise, and viewing this moment as Europe’s time, would risk exposing the EU as a mere “counterfeit” of the superpower it claims to be.

In coming years—after the 2003 constitutional convention and the 2004 IGC—Americans will have to be convinced that the new Europe will be the counterpart that successive United States administrations have awaited, rather than the counterweight or counterfeit they might resent or from which they could suffer. To achieve that lofty goal, much will be needed from both sides of the Atlantic. Europeans must take their own commitment to integration seriously—to do what they say they will do. This is especially true for foreign, security, and defense policy, about which “headline goals”—for both capabilities and structure—should also come with robust deadlines if they are to gain the credibility they deserve. In addition, as they move toward their institutional finality, Europeans should acknowledge the United States in the development of their union. More specifically, the United States role and privileges as a nonmember member state of the EU

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should be made an intrinsic part of Europe’s “finality debate” with the invitation of a handful of American observers drawn from Congress to the Convention on the Future of Europe presided over by former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (the convention is expected to produce the first draft of a constitution for Europe).

Only with a tangible acknowledgment of the United States role can the EU be engaged more directly than it has been—on the same grounds as the bilateral ties maintained by the United States with each of the main EU members. Admittedly, United States–EU relations cannot substitute for bilateral relations if the Europeans themselves do not complete their union. Yet, it is already possible to view the EU as the sixteenth member of the 15-member union—a virtual member that influences its partners no less

than they influence each other. The presummit invitation extended to President George W. Bush by the European Council in June 2001 was a first step toward such a privileged United States status relative to, and

even within, the EU. Similar consultations should occur not only at the highest political levels but also at lower levels and for each of the various bodies that “represent” the EU. Again, the dynamics of United States–EU ties will remain conditioned by what EU members do with and for their union more than by what the United States seeks from each of them within or outside the union.

ALL THAT NATO IS NOT

Like the EU, the post-cold war North Atlantic Treaty Organization has also evolved. Most fundamentally, NATO, as its members relied on it after 1950, is finished. Although this conclusion had begun to emerge after the 1999 war in Kosovo demonstrated the limits of NATO as a community of action, the events of September 11 clearly reinforced it, and the ensuing United States–led war in Afghanistan, which kept the alliance at a distance, made it explicitly marginal and seemingly irrelevant.

Beginning in 1991, the United States and its 15 NATO partners in Canada and Europe had sought to prepare the alliance for the new security environment caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. A modest adaptation of NATO, as well as its enlargement, was expected to expand the eastern zone of stability to the rest of Europe. The war in Bosnia and the escalation of violence elsewhere in the Balkans

²Samuel Huntington, “The U.S.—Decline or Renewal?” *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1988–1989; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 29; Thomas L. Friedman, “I Love the E.U.,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 2001.

ment in Prague, unilateral decisions by the United States on behalf of its NATO allies had become more difficult to impose, and a more united Europe with its own security identity was bound to increase that difficulty exponentially.

In addition, because most of the new NATO members were small, weak, or poor, the capabilities gap within Europe would be growing no less dramatically than the capabilities gap between Europe and the United States—between Latvia and France no less than between France and the United States. In any case, the gap was no longer defined by the availability and quality of military capabilities, but also by the will to use them—assuming the ability to agree on the areas, in and out of Europe, where they might be used. Previously, it had been America's will to wield military force everywhere that had been questioned. Now it is Europe's will to use force anywhere that is debated: weakness encourages appeasement, or at least a quest for "solutions" that avoid the use of force even at the cost of additional, occasionally unwanted, and often self-defeating compromises.

When the United States undertook military action in Afghanistan in November 2001, its NATO allies expected that their offer of solidarity entitled them to an active role in the war that they were willing to enter but unable to fight because of their own insufficiencies. Yet, reports of American neglect of Europe's offer were no less exaggerated than related accounts of European dissatisfaction with the alleged neglect. The NATO allies were not underused by the United States: their uses—partly military, but mainly nonmilitary—were understated on both sides of the Atlantic. What the United States can do is necessary—indeed "indispensable," as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once put it. But it is not, and is unlikely to become, sufficient: the United States alone cannot manage instability around the world, the blowbacks inherited from earlier conflicts. The same is true of NATO. During the cold war, one organization was enough to attend to the common defense of the West: one enemy, one alliance, one theater, and one hegemonic leader. This was United States unilateralism with a NATO *prix fixe*. Now the security environment is more diffuse, the war more strange, and the enemy more elusive—everywhere and nowhere, about everything and for nothing. Whether at one (the United States), at 20 (with Russia), at 26 (after Prague), or at many more (past 2004), NATO alone will not suffice: how-

*In Afghanistan and wherever else
the wars of September 11 might go,
NATO has become an afterthought.*

ever necessary the alliance may be for military purposes, it is not, and never was, a full-service institution. It is Western multilateralism à la carte—a bit of this institution and a bit of that institution, simultaneously or consecutively, and designed to constrain or engage the leading members. Unimultilateralism is the new imperative—with the United States at the helm, as needed.

Admittedly, other NATO countries must spend more on defense—and after the French and German elections there are indications that they will, at least to a degree. The shared goal is to remain "interoperable" and also maintain appropriate levels of "cooperability," without which the alliance would be too unbalanced to gain the global scope it now needs and was given at the Prague summit. But the criteria of cooperability are not met only by levels of defense spending. They are also satisfied by what European NATO countries can do in relief of their senior partner during the latter innings of a particular contest.

Working through the EU, the European allies have the economic capabilities to reward and sanction; the political tools to stabilize and punish; and the know-how to negotiate and isolate. Like sheer

military power, these capabilities, tools, and skills are not sufficient to initiate action—but they are undoubtedly necessary to end it.

In short, on the way to Prague, enlargement ceased to be NATO's central issue, and it even ceased to be a contentious issue for Russia. Indeed, it was no longer an issue at all: growth might be better for the organization, but that would be of little significance if NATO itself did not become a more capable and more efficient organization with a global reach. Unless it was decided to let a larger NATO wither away, the NATO agenda had to be broadened. For enlargement to be effective, the organization also needed a new mandate and more capabilities, as well as reform of its structures and governance. In effect, for NATO, as for the EU, the agenda became widen in order to deepen, deepen even as you widen, and reform to do both. Accordingly, in Prague NATO did not merely complete the post-cold war process launched by its 16 members in Rome in June 1991: it also pointed to the rise of a new NATO whose 26 members would rely on new capabilities equipped for global action and placed under the control of new command structures designed to give the organization the means and reach needed to wage a global war on the new enemy.

DEFINING THE “NEW NORMALCY”

The limits of NATO as the security institution of choice, but also its unparalleled potential over that of any ad hoc alliance, were reinforced by the events of September 11, 2001 and the “new normalcy” of “postmodern conflicts” they threatened to inaugurate. Central to the uncertainties that surround NATO and its purpose is a fundamental difference between the allies over the meaning and implications of these events.³

The semantic contest that began almost at once between America and its European allies reflected a clash of historic experiences that became increasingly evident in 2002.⁴ For Europeans, notwithstanding the spontaneous emotions generated by the extraordinary sight of their bleeding, crippled, and even frightened senior partner, these events were, in a sense, predictable—history as usual. Hegemonic powers cannot live their moment of preponderance without pain. Indeed, judged by standards set by history, the suffering endured by America on September 11 was relatively minor—a few minutes of casualties on a bad day in Europe in 1916 or 1940. Understood as an act of terror, that pain pointed to a way of life that European countries have faced and defeated many times, from Northern Ireland to the Basque region—although the standards of September 11 were especially disconcerting since, in French President Jacques Chirac’s words, “next time it might be us.” Still, having properly demonstrated their sympathy, Europeans could invoke the *déjà vu* of history to reassert the *déjà dit* of the need for consultation with the allies and for patience in defeating the enemy.

For Americans, such logic hardly applied. Pain may well be the way of history, but it is not the American way. Wars are expected to be waged “over there,” where the forward deployment and use of

superior American power keeps them by containing foes and even, on occasion, friends. “Over here” acts of terror might be initiated by misguided high school teens or nihilistic misfits. But these acts would be homebred, not exportable to the nation by evil forces abroad. So it had been since the War of 1812, and for 189 years subsequent attempts to violate America’s territorial invulnerability had been countered forcefully, whether far away in the Pacific (after Pearl Harbor) or closer in the Caribbean (after the Cuban missile crisis). Hence, the war that erupted in Afghanistan, where the culprits hid, was more than the “first war of the twenty-first century” (as President Bush called it)—it was the first war in at least half a century that America could truly call its own. The United States goal was not to protect or avenge others but to avenge and protect America’s citizens and its institutions. The war would therefore be fought the American way: admittedly brutally, until unconditional surrender or unmitigated annihilation, and somewhat unilaterally, with coalition members used on the basis of need rather than stated availability.⁵

But this transatlantic clash of history is not limited to the experiences enjoyed by the New World relative to, or occasionally at the expense of, the Old. It is also rooted in the differing interpretations that were and continue to consist of the most effective way to contain the threats unveiled through the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As British historian Eric Hobsbawm noted on the eve of the twenty-first century, “single, specific events . . . are unpredictable,” but even post facto the real task for historians and analysts “is to understand how important they are or could be.” That certainly is true of the events of September 11: however unpredictable these events may have been, it would be wrong to shy away from assessing their consequences.⁶

Europe’s vision of the “new normalcy” does not fit the United States view, let alone its preference. For many in Europe, the perpetrators of this violence, already helped by their enemy’s blunders and by chance, aim mostly at the United States and the local conditions it permits or even creates. Accordingly, it is important to influence United States responses whose motivation might be legitimate but whose consequences would be felt in and beyond Islamic countries, including in European countries where the risks of a cultural spillover are especially high. Thus, the Euro-Atlantic community of interests perceived in the immediate aftermath of September 11 has come under threat since Presi-

³The reference to a “new normalcy” was first made by Vice President Dick Cheney. Quoted by Bob Woodward, “CIA Told to Do ‘Whatever Necessary’ to Kill Bin Laden,” *Washington Post*, October 21, 2001, p. 22. See also Lawrence Freedman, “Post-Modern Conflict,” *Financial Times*, September 12, 2001.

⁴For a lengthier discussion of some of these themes, see Simon Serfaty, “The Wars of 911,” *The International Spectator*, October–December 2001.

⁵“Leadership demands a Pagan ethos,” writes Robert D. Kaplan, as he acknowledges, or boasts of, the “imperial reality” that “already dominates our foreign policy” and demands that “power politics [be placed] in the service of patriotic values.” See *Warrior Politics* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 145, 154.

⁶In conversation with Antonio Polito, *The New Century* (London: Abacus Books, 1999), p. 1.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL TOPICS IN TODAY'S WORLD AFFAIRS...

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dent Bush began to emphasize the other dimensions of an "axis of evil" that included, but were not limited to, Iran (and North Korea) as well as Iraq.

Beginning with the president's pronouncement of this axis of evil in his January 2002 State of the Union address, the two sides of the Atlantic appear to have drifted away amid parallel charges of Europe's anti-Americanism and America's anti-Europeanism. In Afghanistan and wherever else the wars of September 11 might go, NATO has become an afterthought—a "spare wheel," suggested its secretary general, George Robertson. In summer 2002, the offensive rhetoric heard during Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's campaign for reelection in Germany provided a catalyst for an American exasperation with, and anger at, countries the United States has saved from themselves and others throughout much of the twentieth century. It also pointed to a potentially dangerous split within the EU between a peripheral ring of Atlanticist states, led by Britain, and a continental core of European countries, led by France and Germany, with both competing for the allegiance of new NATO and EU members in the east.

In January 2003, the rhetoric escalated when United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld remarked that "Europe as Germany and France, that's the old Europe." But, added Rumsfeld, "look at vast numbers of other countries in Europe. They're not with France and Germany . . . , they're with the United States." Rumsfeld's "new" Atlanticist Europe was heard a few days later when eight NATO countries in Europe (Britain, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, as well as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary) praised "American bravery, generosity, and farsightedness" and pledged "unwavering determination and firm international cohesion." Compounding this potential split is a growing capabilities gap between the United States and Europe that has prevented common action even when values or interests might otherwise be shared, however unevenly.

With America's traditional margin of security now bridged, there is less room for ambiguity and indecision, at home as well as from the allies. The threats posed by weapons of mass destruction that could be—or have been—acquired by intrinsically hostile groups or "evil states" are real, lethal, and unacceptable. "The depth of the hatred," said Bush in his State of the Union speech, "is equaled by the madness of the destruction they design." The hypothesis is too daunting to be checked for accuracy after the fact. The madness will have to be denied before the hatred can be cured, thereby mak-

ing it necessary to “be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty,” as the president put it more cogently in an address in June 2002 at West Point.

This is the defining question that was raised on September 11, 2001, when four hijacked planes and 19 criminals ended America’s sense of territorial invulnerability. America and its allies had already perceived the threat (one of the “other risks of a wider nature” first envisioned in NATO’s 1991 Strategic Concept, and reasserted in its 1999 Strategic Concept). It is an existential risk written with the invisible ink of an unpredictable future. It carries with it the related danger of an undeclared cultural war that would prove irreversible for the many, although precipitated by the suicidal acts of the few.

The response of Western powers to that risk should not be to go it alone but confront it together. While “Europe must understand we are ready and able to act without them to fight this new war,” as Richard Perle, an influential defense analyst, put it, the United States is probably neither ready nor able to end the war on terrorism on its own, even if it continues to win every military engagement it faces or launches. September 11 should be a catalyst for

⁷Quoted by Nicholas Lemann, “The Next World Order,” *The New Yorker*, April 1, 2002.

a renewal of the West as a community of action that is shaped by interests that are common even when they are not equally shared. What the West needs, and must seek in and beyond the EU and NATO—the two central institutions that comprise it—is more, not less, integration. Among themselves as a mutually shared right of first refusal, but also with new associates and partners, the NATO countries should be able to agree on immediate priorities and certain key principles on how to define and counter these new threats, as well as on a course of action during the days after these threats are defeated or even preempted. As Harvard’s Samuel Huntington has stated, the “idea of integration” is the “successor idea to containment.” More specifically, integration is “about locking [the allies] into these policies and then building institutions that lock them in even more.”⁷ This is the idea that was launched along two parallel paths after World War II, and refined—deepened and enlarged—throughout and since the cold war. It is also the idea that can now be brought to fruition by and between the United States and the states of Europe in the context of the new normalcy envisioned after the cold war for the twenty-first century. The goal is not merely to do something, let alone everything, together, but to ensure that together, everything, or even something, gets done. ■