



## Editorial

### The Atlantic Alliance: For Better or for Wars. . . \*

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This special issue of the *European Foreign Affairs Review* originated in the pre-conference seminar on transatlantic relations in the framework of the *Conférence de Montréal 2003*, where this year's theme was 'Innovating in an Uncertain World'. As in previous years this, the 9th, *Conférence de Montréal* brought together decision-makers from the public and private sector to discuss important issues of international concern. One of the most pressing of these is the relationship between the two most important trading and power blocks of the world – the USA and Europe – in the aftermath of the US/UK campaign in Iraq. Global uncertainty requires governments to rethink their priorities and world governance to be reinvented.

## I Introduction

In 2003, the USA, together with the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland, by intervening in Iraq have changed the dynamics of world politics. By doing so, they have challenged some of the basic principles contained in the United Nations Charter, such as the prohibition against the (unilateral) use of force and the limitations on the right of self-defense. France and Germany are at the centre of a much more pacifist conception of the canvas of international affairs. There is now no commonly agreed recipe as to how new global challenges, which include international terrorism, arms control, bioethics and international justice, should be met.

Judging from the peace demonstrations and public opinion surveys of the European people, especially in countries supporting the USA, the popular

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European conception is rather more French, German and Russian than British.<sup>1</sup> On the governmental level we seem to be confronted with two conflicting conceptions of Europe and its role in the world. This being said, neither France nor Germany are totally excluding future interventions and although it has not increased overall spending on defence, Germany has recently decided on a new defence programme to improve the capacity of its armed forces for peacekeeping missions anywhere in the world.

Europe is searching for its role in world affairs at the time when it is about to shed the post World War II division of the continent – in itself a contribution to international stability that should please the USA. One may ask, how will Europe prepare for its new role in the world while also paying the costs inherent in the reunification of Europe? Economic and monetary union requires budgetary modesty on the part the Member States concerned, and the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have brought in their wake a slowing down of growth in many sectors at a time when security concerns require an increase in expenditures. According to Antonio Missiroli, what is required now is ‘more value for money and hence, a division of labour’.<sup>2</sup>

Shared interests lead to shared responsibility. Even when Europe tries to avoid unwanted military expenditures for the time being – it remains willing to complement the USA in terms of ‘soft security’ and to focus especially on its near vicinity, in particular the Balkans. All countries continue to invoke and profess solidarity, solidarity between States, in order to resolve the problems of terrorism, poverty, famine, and public health. Solidarity is the only way ahead, not only in military matters but also on economic development and immigration.

In the meantime, Europe is divided. What does this mean for the transatlantic dialogue? Which role can Europe play, which role NATO, which role the United Nations? What can Europe do if and when the USA retires from Europe and the EU is ‘on its own’?

## II Centrifugal Factors

The Iraq war has resulted in conflicting views between the EU countries but also between the USA and several European countries. Against the backdrop

<sup>1</sup> According to some reports, US intervention without a UN mandate was opposed by more than 60% in all EU Member States and many people opposed intervention generally even with a UN mandate: <[openforum.de/open.cgi/noframes/read/908](http://openforum.de/open.cgi/noframes/read/908)>. For a critique of opinion polls in general, see R. Weissberg, ‘Why Policy Makers Should Ignore Public Opinion Polls’ (Cato Policy Analysis No. 402, May 2001), <[www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-402es.html](http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-402es.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> See Antonio Missiroli, ‘Europe’s Security Policy Today’ (2002) 4 *Transatlantic Internationale Politik*, pp. 29–34.

of anti-US and anti-European sentiments on both sides of the Atlantic a rethinking of the relationship is taking place.

According to some, the UN and multilateralism have lost credibility, and the EU and the USA should now step in and take over the responsibility for international security. Both the US administration and several EU countries, including the candidate countries, are frantically seeking ways to prevent similar crises from happening in the future.

There are also groups in the USA who would prefer the EU to remain if not a military pygmy then a political dwarf, without a coordinated foreign and security policy. These groups are influential because, in accordance with the classical adage *divide et impera*, it is tempting for the USA to split the EU countries because it cannot collaborate with all the European countries. At the same time, there are voices in Europe advocating a strong EU against the USA. Such groups are putting the transatlantic relationship at risk.

However, many feel that the EU and North America have more interests in common than issues dividing them.

### III Commonality of Aims

As *Notre Europe*, a Paris-based think tank, observed:

The United States and Europe have the same democratic aspirations for their own societies and for others. They require access to energy sources and seek an international system that favours trade. Economically, financially, culturally, they are interdependent. Seen from the point of view of the rest of the world, they form a homogeneous ensemble characterized by its democratic values and its high standard of living. And the prosperity from which they benefit creates, similarly, global responsibilities. . . <sup>3</sup>

This is echoed by experts from the USA:

. . . because neither the United States nor Europe is omnipotent, both will need help in ensuring their own physical and economic security, let alone [facing] threats beyond their respective borders. That help is most logically sought from the nations with which we have most in common. Accordingly, whatever the merits of our respective positions, it is incumbent upon us all to make renewal of the transatlantic partnership an urgent priority.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Defining Together a New World Order, *Le Monde*, 29 May 2003.

<sup>4</sup> *Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C. Declaration on 'Renewing the Transatlantic Partnership'*, endorsed by a group of former US senior officials, 14 May 2003, at p. 4.

The challenge of the future is therefore, to take the right steps on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, to focus on common interests and to act in our common mutual interest.

#### **IV Building the Future Together**

The EU is about to take a number of important and difficult steps, including:

- To further develop the common foreign and security policy procedures, including more majority voting and the appointment of a permanent ‘Foreign Minister’ as proposed by the draft Constitution.
- To increase, coordinate and modernize the military capacity in the member countries and live up to their commitment of establishing an EU rapid reaction force of 60 000 soldiers plus civilian peacekeeping capacity.
- To engage in a discussion among all member countries (and not only a few of them) as to how the European countries can further strengthen and use their common military capacity.
- To agree on the content of a European security policy, which means taking a view on many of the very issues that are now in the forefront of the US national security strategy, such as, the fight against terrorism, the future of the Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestine conflict and the establishment of stable democratic governments capable of fending off terrorism in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other countries, counter-proliferation measures against weapons of mass destruction and dealing with North Korea. Javier Solana’s report to the European Council in Athens in June 2003 is a first step, but there remains much more to be done.

These developments will set parameters for the transatlantic dialogue. It now seems that while the EU is contemplating its identity and its future role in the world, it will probably expect that the USA:

- Try and work with the whole of the EU and not divide it.
- Commit itself in principle to seeking solutions to global issues within a multilateral framework and to consider unilateral reactions only when its vital national interests are at stake, and/or one or a few countries with little international backing are blocking multilateral compromises.
- Continue to recognize that the fight against terrorism requires a preventive effort including combating poverty, promoting democracy and good governance in all parts of the world, and that this fight can be greatly aided by a partnership with the EU and other countries.
- Use all its influence now and in the future in order to reach a settlement in the Israel–Palestine conflict.

- Reconsider its non-acceptance of the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol and other international agreements in order to demonstrate its readiness to work with the global community on global issues. In practice, this may mean that a dialogue should be started with the EU aimed at developing the revision of these documents.

The European countries and the USA, if they take their cooperation seriously, should also reinvent NATO. NATO has been and still is the most important organization for transatlantic security and military cooperation. In order to engage the USA and maintain the status of this organization, it must now, 13 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, be transformed so that it has relevance for today's global reality, as agreed at the Prague Summit of November 2002. NATO has to be able to act 'out of area'. The NATO-lead peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and the Balkans were encouraging beginnings. To implement both such and more ambitious tasks, NATO's military capacity must be adapted to modern tasks, for instance, by transforming heavy ground capability into air transportable forces with modern equipment comparable to those of the USA. This is not so much a question of increasing NATO's budget (although national defence spending in Europe may indeed have to go up) but mostly of setting the right priorities and of modernizing the command and communications structure. Progress is already under way in these fields. Sharing technology is also a matter that needs to be assessed on its positive and negative aspects. In the words of the American declaration mentioned above, '... cooperation within the EU, and between all EU members, can help to achieve better value for the funding. So can, too, additional transatlantic cooperation aimed at strengthening the ability to share technologies.'<sup>5</sup>

Arguably, the development of a strategic cooperation between the EU and NATO has to go hand-in-hand with a readiness to leave operations of particular interest to European countries to the EU. Here too, the first steps have already been taken.

## **V Recommendations**

In sum, transatlantic cooperation must be put back on track. Both partners need each other to be strong. Trying to build a strong Europe against the USA will divide Europe and this has no future in present-day society. At the same time, if the USA is not ready to recognize the aspiration of large parts of the EU to be more united and to be more effective globally, then transatlantic

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 3. Admittedly, this is a controversial issue in which cost-effectiveness plays one role among other considerations.

relations will suffer. A repetition of the Iraq situation is likely to have a long-term negative impact for both Europe and the USA.

Therefore, it is felt that the transatlantic dialogue must be more focused and more ambitious. The Summits between the EU and the USA – recently reduced from two to one per year – have to be better prepared, to the point where joint positions can be enacted and joint actions can be agreed upon. With the prospect of a permanent EU Foreign Minister, such transatlantic meetings should rapidly develop into the most important forum for transatlantic cooperation. But we have some way to go, and both parties must contribute.

Modernizing and rebuilding the transatlantic relationship reflects the basic interest of both parties to move towards a partnership of equality, wherein the USA and the EU are equally strong pillars of the transatlantic bridge. The shape of the pillars may be different, as the USA may be more focused on ‘hard’ military security. The scenario of the USA doing much of the cooking and the EU much of the washing up (read as the USA doing much of the fighting and the EU much of the subsequent relief and nation-building operations) is not one that should be dismissed out of hand. No doubt the EU will also have to build up more ‘hard capacity’, however, in the near future it will place more emphasis on peacekeeping, peace-shaping, preventive measures, development assistance and nation building. Both hard and soft security elements are required, but with the new threats we are facing in the form of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and internal conflicts, ‘soft power’ is now much more important than it was during the cold war, and that of the USA is in need of a boost. The EU, particularly after enlargement, has all the possibilities to be a fully equal partner with the USA. This is the best foundation for the transatlantic relationship. Admittedly it may not be easy. Enlargement raises questions of border permeability and nation building raises questions of Justice and Home Affairs.

Although the resolution of the Israel–Palestine conflict is not a specific subject of this thematic issue, there is a clear link with the issue of world order: While many Europeans believe that the establishment of a Palestinian state is the only way to solve the problem, the Bush regime is letting valuable time pass to set an end to it. Extremism may flare up and international terrorism may break out anew also in and against western democracies. Whether a more united Europe or a USA without President Bush will provide a better solution to this worsening problem remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that with respect to the Arab–Israeli conflict the words peacekeeping, solidarity, diversity and also nation building acquire a significance of their own.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Alfred Van Staden, ‘The US and the EU in World Politics. The Case for Complementarity’, speech for the International Conference on *America’s Changing Role in the World: Implications for World Order and Transatlantic Relations*, organized by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Berlin, 26–28 June 2003.

## VI The Scope and Content of this Volume

The authors in the current volume do not all share the same optimism about the feasibility of rethinking the transatlantic agenda at this particular moment in time, but they all concur in thinking that this century has entailed subtle or not so subtle changes on the international scene. Charles Kovacs describes the USA's progression to its current position of misunderstood hegemon and the possibility he sees for future US–EU convergence and alliance to build a better world. Hanspeter Neuhold from Vienna (Austria) shows considerable concern about the question whether the war in Iraq reflects an insurmountable rift in the transatlantic relations. Osvaldo Croci from Newfoundland (Canada) suggests that we are moving towards a concert of powers. Antonio Missiroli from the European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris (France) deals with the increasing peacekeeping role of the EU in the world. Albert Legault from Montreal (Canada) is perhaps the most clear in assigning roles to the three institutions, NATO, the EU and the UN. In this context we have included the speech by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen given at the *Conférence de Montréal*, where the Secretary General gave his personal views on the role of NATO in the longer term. Valsamis Mitsilegas, advisor to the British House of Lords, deals with the new cooperation in criminal matters after the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Centre. By way of comments, Jocelyn Coulon, Director of the Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in Montreal, concludes that Baghdad is living proof that unipolarism is dead, and Dan Hamilton, Director of the Centre for Transatlantic Relations, Washington, singles out three strategic challenges for the Partnership to come.

It may or it may not come as a surprise that this volume on transatlantic relations originated in Canada. This country has always been a privileged intermediary between Europe and the USA, a 'translator', a mediator or a 'helpful fixer'.<sup>7</sup> It has played this role especially in the 1960s, and it has played the same role in relation to Russia. Canadians should work towards reassuming that very role in the United Nations when it comes to looking for a common resolution that could follow up on Resolution 1441.<sup>8</sup>

Canada has always supported NATO, in part so as not to isolate itself on the North American continent, in accordance with the theory that<sup>9</sup> 'a country locked into a co-operative setting, be it in Europe or in North America,

<sup>7</sup> Albert Legault, presentation at the Roundtable, 'Les relations franco-canadiennes, un point d'ancrage des relations transatlantiques', Association Parlementaire Canada–France, Parliament of Canada, Ottawa, 22 May 2003.

<sup>8</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1441 on Iraqi Disarmament, adopted unanimously on 8 November 2002.

<sup>9</sup> J.G.S.T.M. van Hellenberg-Hubar, 'Transatlantic Links and Bilateral Relations', Paper given at the Netherlands–Canada Seminar on Security, Ottawa, February–March 2002.

has more chance to uphold the essence of its views in co-operation than in isolation (and) active participation is much more effective than to choose preservation by isolation'. It has been observed that policy makers and media do not always recognize Canada's participation in the European or other transatlantic defence objectives.<sup>10</sup> Europeans often perceive of Canada as a pawn or a Trojan horse of the USA in Europe – yet in the Iraq divide, Canada 'sided' with France. Although Canadian troops have been withdrawn from Europe, Canada's commitment to Europe and NATO remains strong.

The bottom line is, of course, always the community of cultures and values such as the protection of democracy, the rule of law and the observance of internationally agreed norms. In all this, the fundamental interests of both sides of the Atlantic are the same, even while interpretations may continue to differ. It is to the credit of the *Conférence de Montréal* to have functioned as a platform for the free intellectual debate on such important issues as these, and to want to continue doing so in the future.<sup>11</sup> Initiatives of this calibre help mutual understanding and are able to contribute in their own way to the improvement of humanity as a whole.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Legault, intervention at the roundtable on 'Les relations franco-canadiennes, un point d'ancrage des relations transatlantiques', Association Parlementaire Canada-France, Parliament of Canada, Ottawa, 22 May 2003.

<sup>11</sup> See <[www.conferencedemontreal.com](http://www.conferencedemontreal.com)>.