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America Needs Europe



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We have not yet grasped all the implications of September 11 and the Iraq war. We need to abandon our usual ways of thinking because these events made everything interact in new ways: foreign policy, domestic policy, security, religion, politics, solidarity, militarism, and bureaucratic routine. New risks have emerged. We have to give up the old notion that after a war we can return to the same routine.

This time of great uncertainty and increased risk has the effect of producing odd coalitions. Europe is divided on the use of force and the need for international rules. There is a large divide between the United States and numerous non-Anglophone Western societies. The conservative Robert Kagan concludes that Americans come from Mars and Europeans from Venus. The existence of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is threatened.

Since September 11, American emotions have evolved and nationalism has crystallized, while European attitudes, and French attitudes in particular, changed, but in different ways.

There is no doubt that the fear, anger, trauma, nationalism, frustration, and need for security expressed by Americans has been greatly underestimated by Europeans, who have lived with terrorism for a long time.

The first part of this chapter explains why post-September 11 feelings of empathy by Europe toward the United States could not last and why we had a division between those who favored force and preemptive war and those who wanted to follow international law. The second part of the chapter addresses the essence of the transatlantic drift and the present role of the Europeans.

THE DRIFT APART

A feeling of vulnerability and a culture of uncertainty have increased since September 11 and the Iraq war in many parts of the world. During the Cold War, Europe and the United States were united by their common opposition to communism, despite tumultuous tensions when de Gaulle left NATO in 1966. Although the reproaches were as violent as they are now, no American politician at the time called him a coward or called the French “surrender monkeys.” No pictures of Normandy cemeteries were produced by the media.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, there were hints that the East-West conflict had been displaced by North-South antagonisms. With its wealth, power, and technological advances, the North became scapegoated by those who were not part of it or who wanted to compete with it. America was the number-one target. Numerous films and novels portrayed the destruction of American cities by dubious characters, including potential terrorists. Such signals could have alerted American decision-makers, but their degree of self-satisfaction blurred their perceptions.

These attitudes toward America continue in our post-September 11 world. Not everyone wants to immigrate to the United States and become an American, contrary to what some in Washington think. In a Pew Research Center poll conducted in twenty-four countries from November 12 to December 2001, substantial majorities in many countries believed that the policies and actions of the United States were a major cause of the September 11 attacks. For example, in non-European countries, 58 percent of the respondents held this view. In the United States, only 18 percent had this view (table 7.1).

American leaders were not the only ones to be blind. Had Europeans, and Jacques Chirac in particular, read summaries of the books and articles of the conservatives now in power, they could have anticipated what was going to occur. September 11 gave American hawks the opportunity to develop their plans. Not only would they topple Saddam Hussein, but they would develop ambitious pre-

Table 7.1. Question: How Many Ordinary People Do You Think Believe that U.S. Policies and Actions in the World Were a Major Cause of the September 11 Attacks?

	<i>United States Respondents</i>	<i>Non-United States Respondents</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>
Most people think so	0%	26%	9%
Many people do	18%	32%	27%
Only some people do	48%	29%	37%
Hardly any do	32%	9%	22%
Don't know	2%	4%	5%

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

emptive strategies, starting with the Middle East and the role Israel should play there.

AMERICA GOING BACKWARD

After September 11, Americans asked, “Why do they hate us?” The question will be asked for years to come. The answer goes beyond an understanding of the frustration of Arab-Muslim countries and their resentment of American hegemony. The answer addresses religious and cultural issues as well as themes like modernity versus resistance to modernity. Little is known in the West about how fragmented and fragile the societies of these Arab-Muslim countries are, at a time when, thanks to globalization and the revolution of information technologies, the world has become more tightly interconnected. So, while it might have been a surprise to the White House, a BBC poll in 2003 revealed that, for 71 percent of Jordanians and 66 percent of Indonesians, the United States was a greater threat to peace than al Qaeda. In eleven countries, 57 percent of the polled had a very unfavorable or an unfavorable opinion of the current American president.

The butterfly effect and the theory of chaos can be interpreted both ways. For American leaders and a majority of Americans, military intervention in Iraq was legitimate if there was the slightest hint that Saddam Hussein could set the rest of the world at risk by selling weapons of mass destruction to potential terrorists. It was difficult to attack terrorist networks, so attacking Iraq was the easiest solution to restore American pride after September 11. But for Europeans, attacking Iraq, located at the heart of a most volatile and explosive region, was suicidal, especially given the European view that there was inadequate preparation for the postwar period and the European belief that the United States had greatly underestimated local nationalism. Most Europeans concluded that the war in Iraq would only encourage Islamist fundamentalists and international terrorism.

Political scientist Stanley Hoffmann has concluded that now “America goes backward.” An administration elected by less than half of the voters had “drastically changed the strategic doctrine and the diplomatic position of the United States” by declaring that America had enough power to do pretty much what it pleased. Civil liberties were curbed. The rights of refugees and asylum seekers and the access of foreign students to U.S. schools and universities were reduced. The United States holds in custody an unknown number of aliens and some Americans, treated as “enemy combatants,” suspected but not indicted, whose access to hearings and lawyers has been denied. The federal human investment programs that had softened the harshness of capitalism since the New Deal are threatened, observed Hoffmann, by the administration’s “relentless war” against them. “Large numbers of old, sick, or very young people, mainly among the poor, will be deprived of financial assistance as the result of administration policies.”

SEPTEMBER 11 AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM

A French economist has talked about “enlightened catastrophism”—how people and bureaucracies project themselves into the future after a catastrophe in order to minimize or neutralize its reoccurrence. If other attacks are likely to happen, fate should not be challenged and many preventive actions should be pursued.

The American government has taken this perspective. But does the perspective not legitimize and justify actions to control citizen freedoms? Is not government by fear created? Are not preemptive wars then justified? Many other countries have been attacked by terrorists, but most of those countries have not proclaimed themselves to be in a “state of war,” and most have not declared all “rogue states” to be the enemy, as the United States has done.

Foreign observers were surprised by the lack of challenge offered in American media to the government’s policies. “The political forces that many expected to question policies and express dissent have been remarkably meek and mute,” wrote Stanley Hoffmann. In contrast to, for instance, British radio and television, the American media did little to express the complexity of the world to their audience and to illustrate the negative consequences of American isolationism. The concentration of the media in a few hands since the “reform” of the Federal Communications Commission worsened this phenomenon. (See the account by Robert McChesney and John Nichols in chapter 30.) Some editorials were more objective than others, but what is the size of their audience? The number of people who read the *Nation*, watch Bill Moyers, or listen to National Public Radio is relatively small. The absence of debate, disagreement, and negotiated compromise is at the core of the currently ailing American democracy. The right—the duty—of dissent used to be central to the American tradition.

EUROPEAN DISILLUSIONMENT WITH A NARCISSISTIC AMERICA

Great empathy was felt in Europe for America after September 11. Europeans had hoped at the time that their cooperation would be needed. “Planet America is back among us,” a British journalist observed. It was expected that “the wound—relative in comparison with European, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Palestinian experiences—would bring America closer to the common fate of humankind, would make it more sensitive to the problems of the poor and the weak,” a French observer wrote. “Within a few months, the image of a narcissistic, high-strung, and aggressive America replaced that of the wounded, appealing nation, essential for our balance.”

After the military intervention in Afghanistan, Europeans concluded that unilateralism was the American word of the day. American leaders seemed to

claim the role of gendarmes of the world. The invasion of Iraq greatly reinforced this role of global gendarmerie. Huge demonstrations in many countries opposed the American decision to act alone, without a clear mandate from the United Nations. Polls showed that, in most countries, majorities were convinced that America was acting to defend mainly its own interests, but not the common good. (Table 7.2 summarizes these poll findings and makes clear that Americans are more isolated in their views, while Western Europeans fit more in line with the rest of the world.)

Nor should we underestimate the transatlantic divide over Israel. According to a *Wall Street Journal* poll in 2002 and a survey reported in *Foreign Policy* the same year, 38 percent of Europeans supported Israel and 72 percent a Palestinian state, while 58 percent of Americans supported Israel and 40 percent a Palestinian state.

The refusal of the United States to support the Kyoto treaty against global warming had an interrelated impact on the rest of the world. The perspective of the American government was summed up by the president’s remark after he refused to sign (emphasis added): “What counts is the well-being of *the people living in this country*” (i.e., the United States). For similar unilateral reasons, the American government did not seem to want the country bound by any international agreement (on land mines, for instance, as well as on steel, the death penalty, antimissile defense, and the International Criminal Court).

It is hardly surprising that the American government’s unilateral decision to use force and substitute Saddam Hussein for Osama bin Laden as the number-one enemy to the world’s security did not convince America’s allies. France, Belgium, Germany, and Russia concluded that the U.N. inspectors were progressing in their effort to detect mass-destructive weapons in Iraq, while the United States claimed that this progress was only made possible because troops were mobilized at Iraqi borders. At the time, the French missed an important opportunity when they did not establish a calendar for inspection reports to the United Nations.

The American government argued that those who did not support its actions were against the United States and in support of the terrorists. France argued that

Table 7.2. Question: Do You Think the United States is Taking into Account the Interests of Its Partners in the Fight Against Terrorism, or Do You Think It Is Acting Mainly On Its Own Interests?

	<i>U. S. Respondents</i>	<i>Non-U. S. Respondents</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>
Taking into account the interests of its partners	70%	33%	34%
Acting mainly on its own interests	28%	62%	66%
Don't know	2%	5%	0%

even good friends may have disagreements. Had Jacques Chirac given a televised speech at, say, Harvard, talking as a “friend and a loyal ally” and warning a dear friend that he begged to disagree, he might have been better understood by the American public. He missed this opportunity and instead brandished his U.N. veto. That was a very poor move, though it did avoid a “clash of civilizations” scenario.

With 10 percent of the French population being of Arab-Muslim origin and with numerous agreements with Arabic countries, France did not have much leverage. Few in America understood this reality. Today, Islamophobia and Judeophobia are played out at the periphery of French cities, mirroring larger geopolitical tensions. In Washington power-corridor leaks to the press, in conservative magazines, and on the Internet, France often is portrayed as Arab-leaning. For example, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, William Pfaff observed that France commonly is portrayed “as allied with the radical Arab world out of fear of [its] unassimilated Muslim populations.” He quoted the conservative website FrontPageMagazine.com: “France even is ‘not a Western country anymore’ since in ‘many’ cities ‘no teenage girl can go out in the evening, at least without a full burqa’.” Pfaff concluded that “This kind of nonsense sets the tone” for much of the world’s varied misunderstandings of France.

The French moves that preceded the rupture between France and America early in 2003 have never been explained to the American public by the American media. It was not a journalist but the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who revealed in the *Washington Post* that the French ambassador to Washington had relayed to the administration a French proposal that could have avoided the bitter French-American break. The French proposal was for the United States to forego a second resolution at the United Nations, after which France and the United States would “agree to disagree.” This would have made the threat of a veto unnecessary and allowed the United States to proceed to its war. But according to Stanley Hoffmann, the administration preferred a public showdown on a second resolution, something Tony Blair needed at home. The American government preferred helping Blair, a loyal ally, to collaborating with Chirac, “a dissenting, and thus lapsed, ally,” in the words of Hoffmann. It was easier to attack France than Russia, China, or Germany. Polls in 2000 and 2002 had shown that between 36 percent and 41 percent of Americans saw France as “an unpredictable ally.” Only 7 to 9 percent of Americans said that France was the best ally, compared with the United Kingdom and Germany (25 percent).

Rewriting history is not an easy task. The American decision to intervene in Iraq was taken in the summer of 2002, as Joseph Wilson makes clear in chapter 14. Consequently, all the subsequent maneuvering was a smokescreen while the American military got ready. The Europeans were betrayed all along.

THE ESSENCE OF THE TRANSATLANTIC DRIFT

The notion of regeneration is at the foundation of American thought. It implies that the tracks of the past must be obliterated. "Forget about the past and a common history, mythology is over, the world of big blocks is gone," American conservatives seem to say. Now each country has to defend its own national interest and develop its own autonomous policies. The United States will fight for itself in vital parts of the world. The Europeans are to devote themselves to humanitarian concerns in a new division of labor. This is already the case in Afghanistan.

Such views, I think, are at the core of the misunderstanding between the "old" Europe, seen as exiting from history, and the perception of the American government that it is "making history." As early as 1996, Robert Kagan, working with Irving Kristol as an adviser to the White House, asserted that "hegemony must be actively maintained, in the same way that it was actively obtained. . . . Any decrease of this influence would allow the others to play a larger role in molding the world according to *their* needs." In a recent book written with Lawrence Kaplan, Kagan asserts, "United States foreign strategy must be straightforward, idealistic, self-confident, and well financed. Not only must America be the gendarme or sheriff of the world, but its lighthouse and its guide." When interviewed by PBS, Richard Haass, now head of the Council of Foreign Relations, added that America was in a very "creative" moment and that "there is a lot up for grabs." In another speech, at a Brookings Institution conference in 2003, Haass stated that "the disaggregation of the European Union" was a goal. Similarly, according to John Hulsman, a specialist on Europe at the Heritage Foundation, the administration's program is indeed to divide Europe selectively, playing individual countries against one another and moving from issue to issue.

It is obvious that Europeans and Americans are engaged in two different debates. But each is only concerned with one of the debates. This does not foster understanding. The French are obsessed by respect for the rules of the international legal system; a country should not go to war without a clear mandate from the international community. This position irritates American leaders. Americans are concerned with the way one manages postdictatorships. On one hand, France has never said clearly that it wanted the fall of Saddam Hussein, and it ignores this type of debate. On the other hand, American leaders have manipulated public opinion to justify their invading Iraq, based on allegations of weapons of mass destruction and on assertions that the end justifies the means.

At the present time, nobody knows if unilateralism comes from the fact that the United States is a "hyperpower" or because it already feels the decline of its empire.

The first interpretation is based on the obvious military victory of America in Iraq, the lack of resistance by Saddam Hussein's regime, and the fall of a tyranny. But

the costs of hyperpower action have been the casualties of civilian and military Iraqis, the casualties among American soldiers, the dangerous example given by the concept of preemptive war, the lack of respect for international laws, and the furor and frustrations raised in the Arabic world.

The second interpretation, that American unilateralism reflects American decline, is illustrated by the growing national debt of the United States, as discussed by Robert Greenstein in chapter 21. According to a recent report of top monetary strategists, in 2002 the United States consumed 40 percent of the savings of the major industrial countries of the world. At the present rate of debt increase, Americans will consume 100 percent of their savings in three or four decades. Will the external financial dependency of the United States be bearable? In ten years, the American trade deficit has grown from \$100 billion to \$450 billion. The world has to produce more in order for the United States to spend on and consume imported goods from all over the world.

For Europeans, the alternative may be either to elaborate credible defense and foreign policies or to disaggregate.

For the French, the transatlantic divide is very serious. After forty years, according to polls I have studied, for the first time the stable, friendly attitudes of Americans for France have been shaken. The feuds did not remain confined to the State Department but have spilled over because of the relentless attacks against France by the American administration and American media. A Pew Research poll in 2003 showed that 60 percent of Americans had an unfavorable opinion of France versus a 21 percent unfavorable opinion in 2002. American Republicans were those who most changed their attitudes, by 45 percent, versus a third for Democrats and a third for independents. Propaganda and manipulation by the American administration was effective: 62 percent of Americans supported the use of force in Iraq; 60 percent believed Iraq was responsible for September 11; 44 percent thought weapons of mass destruction had been found, or were not sure; and 75 percent believed the United States exerts a strong leadership in Iraq.

Should these attitudes persist, one can wonder whether we are not moving toward two types of Western societies. The two types appear to differ on perceived security; the role of the state in support of social services; and broad issues like immigration, readiness to go to war, religion, and patriotism.

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN AMERICA AND EUROPE

Current divisions within Europe and the uncertain future of the United Nations and NATO do not necessarily mean Europe will fail to be united in the future. Europe has trump cards. More vigorous decisions are likely to come out of the crisis that po-

litical Europe is now experiencing. Depending on individual issues, coalitions will likely be formed with Russia, with China, and with the new European countries. The American government may not be aware that, in the new order of the world, it is better not to be isolated; it is better to have a herd of other friendly elephants nearby (to paraphrase Chris Patten and Pascal Lamy of the European Community). Europe is the only potential friend of the United States. Americans cannot administer any reconstruction, fight AIDS, use intelligence cooperation, or establish commercial rules without Europe. Investment in human resources within the Department of State has constantly declined while military expenditures in the Department of Defense have risen steadily. At the same time, Europe has increased its investments in human resource programs and has no intention of competing with the military spending of the United States.

Many Europeans refuse the choice between a powerful Europe, antagonistic toward the United States, and no Europe at all. A middle way has to be found, based on a dialogue focused on real issues, such as Iran, and our intelligence cooperation. Europe, and France especially, may play a role of passeur, of translator between peoples and cultures. France and other European nations could be catalysts for new networks looking for alternatives.

France needs to ally with the American constituencies that opposed the invasion of Iraq and a policy of preemption. Americans went to war with considerable alarm and reluctance. One third of them opposed the war. The issue of weapons of mass destruction has not gone away, as evidenced by the testimony of David Kay in 2004. The expression of differences need not be interpreted as a weakness in alliances, or as a lack of friendship, but as an opportunity for mutual enrichment.

American foundations, philanthropists, think tanks, and other nongovernmental organizations that disagree with preemptive policy and believe in a policy of "more Europe" must take a much more active role in funding, communicating, and organizing.

More stories need to be written that present the European perspectives left out by mainstream American media. The insights of observers like Paul Krugman, and the specific policies proposed by many of the contributors to this volume, like Gary Hart (chapter 2) and Joseph Wilson (chapter 14), must be much more widely disseminated. New television series by people like Bill Moyers need to be funded. Talk show hosts like Charlie Rose need to feature personalities who bring to life the need for "more Europe." A major round of forums set in and embracing presenters from Europe and America needs to be held. The forums should be covered by C-SPAN and communicated via Internet venues like Commondreams.org, TomPaine.org, and MoveOn.org. Pressure needs to be exerted on mainstream media like the *New York Times* to better report the views of, for example, the *Guardian* and *Le Monde*.

American nongovernmental organizations should be brought into closer contact with the organizations responsible for the huge antiwar rallies in London, Paris,

and the 663 other cities in Europe and around the world. The European organizations did not prevent the war, but their protests were skillfully orchestrated. As Ralph Nader discusses in chapter 23, demonstrations in the United States often are weekend affairs, with little follow-up from Monday through Friday. Many European groups have better planning and better follow-up. Their expertise needs to be shared with their American counterparts through in-person exchanges.

All of these strategies must be converted into political action. The times call for a system in which candidates for public office have a “more Europe” perspective summarized for them in ongoing, common-sense ways that resonate with their constituents.

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