

The Transatlantic Gap: Permanent or Temporary?

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The recent war with Iraq has created a state of affairs between Europe and the United States that no one on either side of the Atlantic can ignore any longer. The damage inflicted to the transatlantic relations during the last months is certainly a severe one. Europe, set to enlarge, is feeling the strain as France, Germany, and Belgium were opposing the intervention in Iraq, while European Union hopefuls and NATO invitees fully supported Washington's line. Indeed, a closer examination is warranted after such frictions threatens not only the climate between Washington and Brussels, but also NATO, and threatens to bring into question the very concept of a European Union.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the nature of the transatlantic gap and the causes of friction. Furthermore, it elaborates on what this means for small and medium powers and Europe's Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The following questions should be answered: What are the Americans trying to achieve and why? What are the sources of friction? Are there different strategies or threat perceptions? Is the transatlantic gap a temporary one, or will it go on and worsen? Answers to these questions should elaborate on scenarios that can help national decision-makers as to what measures can be applied to alleviate the current situation, and whether the Americans are serious about overcoming the current differences.

Part 1: A political and philosophical transatlantic gap

1.1 American Grand Strategic Dilemma after the Cold War.

Since the beginning of George W. Bush's presidency, American foreign policy has taken a more assertive tone. In fact the new administration's language is so different from the one of the former Clinton-cabinet that we may ask ourselves what the Americans are trying to achieve and why? Furthermore, is this new assertiveness only attributable to the beliefs of key players within the Bush camp, or is this the fruit of some *volonté générale*?

To answer such questions, we must retrace the foreign policy debate in the wake of the Cold War. Paul Kennedy highlighted three or four changes in the U.S. position as the East-West confrontation came to a close. The first change was the end of American strategic invulnerability, the second was the waning of America's undisputed preeminence in technology, manufacturing and finance, the third was the rise of new regional challengers, Europe and Japan in particular, and in consequence, the fourth change, saw a reassessment of the threat to national security brought about by the reduction of Russian aggressiveness, and a possible redefinition of what national security really means.¹

Kennedy's analysis came before and during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and before the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communist ideology. Furthermore, his argumentation proceeds along the lines of his seminal masterpiece *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*,² where indications of an empire's demise are measured by the relative emergence of challengers' capacities. In the early 1990s, conventional wisdom may have dictated that the end of the Soviet Union would possibly also mean the end of the supremacy of the United States as democratic ideals, economic liberalism, free trade and renewed multilateralism made small powers relatively more powerful.

This has not occurred. The reduction of the Soviet threat did not result in an large-scale alteration of the size and shape of U.S. armed services, and if anything, Kennedy's assessment was only correct in the realization that threats to economic interests were taking centre stage and were redefining national security along diplomatic and economic –not only military– lines.³ The final aim of American strategy was

¹ Paul Kennedy, Ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 167-177.

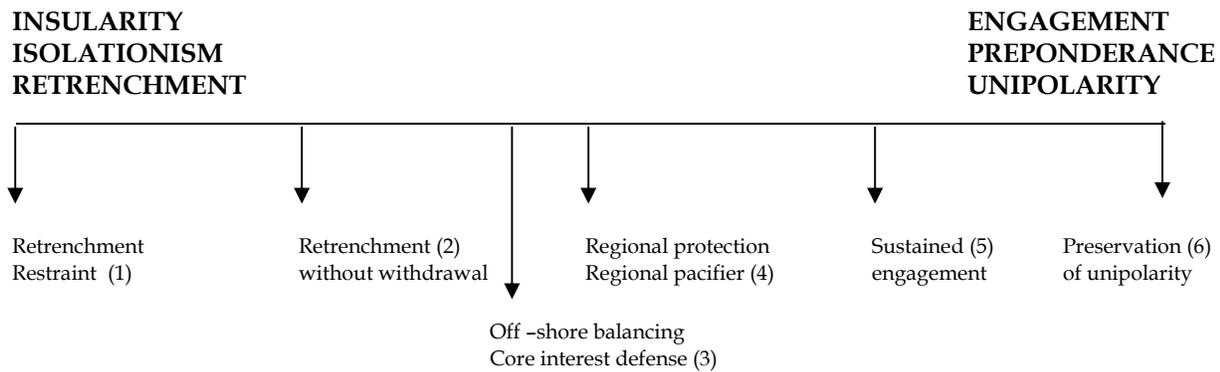
² Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, New York, Random House, 1987.

³ KENNEDY: op. cit., p. 179.

to avoid the fulfillment of trends that would have resulted in a weakening of the American position in the world. From this very general guideline, a debate on America's ultimate grand strategy can proceed.

In the half decade that followed the fall of the USSR, the revelation that America was still needed to solve European problems, that there was an immense capabilities gap between her and Europe, (but also between her and so-called "rogue states") provided the grounds for roughly five or six grand strategic positions. Most of these are based on the realist school of international relations. Such views are represented in the scale in Fig. 1, reaching from retrenchment to unipolarity. Four (1, 2, 4 and 6) are rather remote options, while the other two (3 and 5) are discussed here because they seem to explain the United State's current foreign policy. None of these policies admit a neo-functionalist or idealist leaning, although it should be admitted that Americans have always believed on the whole that their actions, no matter how coercive, were benevolent towards the global environment. America is indeed guided by values that are deemed to be universal. Unfortunately, such views are convincing adversaries that such values and ideals are contradicting cultural traditions and cannot be implemented without coercion. But the U.S. is (idealistically) convinced that democracy, liberty and free markets are the foundations of a better world, and tends to pursue idealistic outcomes in a realist manner.⁴

Fig. 1: Scale of positions for U.S. Grand Strategies



Position 1, retrenchment and restraint, implies cashing in the peace dividend and addressing pressing domestic issues. But since some domestic issues have a determinant outside U.S. shores, this still requires a sizable military capability.⁵ Position 2, retrenchment without withdrawal, resembles position 1, but puts emphasis on the maintenance of stability and the sustainment of overseas commitments where U.S. interests dictate it.⁶ Position 4, regional protection/pacification, resembles off-shore balancing, but clearly is a middle ground with the idealistic aims of preserving international stability. It leans heavily on engagement because it requires the United States to apply power to solve regional disputes and global instability by preventing the transfer of excessive economic output into military capabilities that could be directed against it in the future. This is a cooperative position that seeks the common good with the participation of newly found partners against delinquent States, proliferation and protectionism.⁷ Position 6, preservation of unipolarity, requires managing tensions between economic and security policies in such a way as not to trigger a balancing response. There is also the requirement to balance the desire to follow

⁴ Henry KISSINGER, *Diplomacy*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1994. See also www.whitehouse.gov, George W. Bush's National Security Strategy, unveiled 17 September 2002.

⁵ Eugene GHOLZ, Daryl G. PRESS & Harvey M. RAPODSKY, *Come Home, America*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 200-243.

⁶ Robert J. ART, *A Defensible Defense*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 51-98.

⁷ Josef JOFFE, *Bismarck or Britain? Towards an American Grand Strategy After the Cold War*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 99-122.

the momentum of primacy and the desires of public opinion, averse at bearing the costs of extended overseas presence.⁸

Off-shore balancing (position 3) and sustained engagement (5) are two sophisticated positions that leave ample room for interpretation and therefore are politically appealing. The attractiveness of off-shore balancing is that it calls for a form of insularity that leaves the door open to intervention to prevent challengers to America's primacy. It is also attractive because it suggests the protection of only core interests, thereby avoiding the specter of over-extension and commitment to quagmires. It also permits a gradual retreat from formal alliances and arrangements, thereby achieving a form of *à la carte* multipolarism.⁹

Sustained engagement is interesting because it implies linking the pursuit of American interests to a transformative vision that appeals to the public. Therefore it is understood that the current position and the inherent advantages of being the sole remaining superpower are to be maintained. This means forging a democratic peace without becoming a global policeman, for which there is no domestic support.¹⁰ Despite seemingly being at odds, these two positions are remarkably similar, the latter especially so since it requires *the active shaping of public opinion* in the absence of an objective threat like the Soviet Union.¹¹

The teeter-tottering and indecision of the Clinton years are directly related to the incapacity to mobilize public opinion in either the direction of retrenchment or engagement. This failure can be attributed to three other factors: One is the fact that all these proposed strategies have the same inability to focus, and lean on armed forces-capabilities that leave other great powers struggling for a distant second position. The second factor is the fact that the Clinton Administration was more preoccupied with economic performance, finding exit strategies to unwanted American commitments in the Balkans and in Africa, than with finding integrated solutions to post-Cold War instability. The third and perhaps most important feature of the foreign policy indecision of the Clinton years was the inability to affect the American system of political checks and balances to concentrate on foreign affairs. Throughout most of the Clinton administration's terms, the Democrat White House was locked in perpetual stalemate with a Republican and increasingly neo-conservative Congress. Party lines are seldom respected in American politics, as each senator and member of the House is directly accountable to his or her state's constituency. This means that positions can be commonly held between Democrats and Republicans, complicating the president's role of pushing a foreign policy issue through both Houses. This led the Clinton Administration to prioritize high, and ditch lower priority policies in favor of Congressional support for important domestic legislation.

This indecision continued even as George W. Bush took the oath of office as America's first new (and Republican) President of the 21st century. The early months of the Bush presidency were marred by a declining economy, a plunge that already had started in the closing months of the previous Administration.¹² Foreign policy was the farthest thing from President Bush's mind. With the possible exception of U.S.-Russia relations and continued support for NATO enlargement, traditional priorities,

⁸ Michael MASTANDUNO, *Preserving the Unipolar Moment*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 123-162.

⁹ Christopher LAYNE, *From Preponderance to Off-Shore Balancing*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 244-282. It must be said that this was always how America's founding fathers had conceived American foreign relations since the very beginning of the Union. See Jean-Philippe IMMARIGÉON, *L'Amérique, sujet du monde*, in *Défense nationale*, #12, Décembre 2002, p. 117.

¹⁰ Philippe G. LEPRESTRE, *The United States: An Elusive Role Quest after the Cold War*, in Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen's University Press, 1997, p. 72.

¹¹ John Gerard RUGGIE, *The Past as Prologue? Interest, Identity and American Foreign Policy*, in Michael E. Brown *et al*, eds, *America's Strategic Choices*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1997, pp. 163-199.

¹² Some would draw a link between the current conflict in Iraq, tensions with other members of the so-called axis of evil, with economic uncertainty. The reader is reminded that empirical research done in the early 1970s concerning a possible linkage between armed conflict and economic troubles (as an attempt to distract public opinion from domestic issues) has not met with conclusive evidence. It is not possible at present to presume that the Iraq war was deliberately started with the intention of distracting the public, as the notion of Iraq as a rogue State preceded an American economic downturn that started in the last months of the Clinton presidency.

such as the cataclysmic failure of the Middle-East peace process, received little attention from the Administration. Nothing, it seemed, could get it to focus until that fateful morning of September 11, 2001, which unleashed a series of events that highlight the features of a policy that seems to combine off-shore balancing with sustained engagement.

What are those features and how do they compare to events? Sustained engagement seeks to build on existing institutional bases by coupling continued U.S. engagement to strategies of transformation designed to achieve greater indigenous capabilities.¹³ Where no such alliances or arrangements exist, it relies on regional confidence building measures and local engagement. Finally, it seeks to upgrade UN capabilities as a reflection of survey held in the United States.¹⁴

Off-shore balancing adopts an insular position economically by minimizing reliance on overseas material and markets. In addition, the U.S. geographic advantage also promotes political and security insularity. This position would withdraw the deterrent umbrella and let others defend themselves. This is a position that sees nuclear proliferation as a fact of post-Cold War international life, and therefore departures from previous arrangements are envisaged to defend against it. Concrete vital interests are the only ones worth fighting for, and these determine commitments (as opposed to credibility determining commitment and in turn commitments determining interests).¹⁵ This position sees the risk of disengagement, as freedom of choice in economic and political matters is maximized to the detriment of institutions and permanent alliances.¹⁶ Finally, the power of the United States can be called in to check by the emergence of regional hegemonic powers, but this responsibility is usually left to others.¹⁷ The contradiction to this position is that a regional hegemon could be Russian resurgence, which the EU would counter, thus triggering a need to enhance capabilities. This in turn, would create a (mis-) perceived European hegemonic rise.

Evidently, there is a significant contradiction between the two proposals. Nevertheless, recent U.S. policy seems to reconcile both, especially after September 11th.¹⁸ For example, NATO immediately extended \$5 guarantees to the United States, which seemed consistent with Allies' commitments. This offer was turned down by the United States, which sought an *ad hoc* coalition to deal with Afghanistan instead.¹⁹ This is significant, because NATO as an organization does not extend guarantees. It does so only as a result of a consensual decision of its members. Therefore, for Lord Robertson, NATO's Secretary-General, to issue a statement concerning the extension of \$5 to the U.S., he would have needed the consent of the U.S. Ambassador to NATO. The fact that the Bush Administration decided against this raises the prospect of a schism between the Administration and the bureaucracy.²⁰

This would seem to fit with off-shore balancing, but at the same time, President Bush was careful to appease President Putin of Russia in the spring of 2001 to ensure the smooth enlargement of the Alliance. This is an example of sustained engagement, but why enlarge NATO if you are not going to use it? The partial answer of course is that there is a marked difference between May 2001 and October 2001 in

¹³ Ibid., p. 195. The buildup of the EU's military capability, in particular what is now the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) participates to this notion, and to the understanding that it is only complementary to NATO.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 197. The reader is cautioned that for some reason, the elected representatives do not share their constituencies' sentiments in regard to the role of the UN.

¹⁵ MASTANDUNO: Op. Cit., p. 273.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 274.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 275.

¹⁸ Policy environments are psychological *constructs*. Therefore the agonizing reappraisal of the U.S. role in the world was resolved on that fateful day, which pressed upon the Western world a tangible "clash of civilizations", which itself is a mental construction that waited to be made real either by events or by the will to power of U.S. policy makers. See Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *A Clash of Civilizations?*, in Foreign Policy, Summer 1993, and Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, Ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen's University Press, 1997, p.8.

¹⁹ Robert P. GRANT and Stanley R. SLOAN, *Don't Write Off the Allies*, Defense News, 25-31 March 2003. Also Ivo H. DAALDER and James M. LINDSAY, *Unilateralism Alive and Well in Washington*, International Herald Tribune, 21 December 2001, and also Rebecca JOHNSON and Micah ZENKO, *All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go: Why NATO Should Be on the Front Lines in the War on Terror*, in Parameters, US Army War College, Winter 2002-2003, p. 48.

²⁰ Something that should not be exaggerated, as NATO procedures use the silence rule, which means that a proposal that meets absolutely no vocal opposition passes. Therefore a proposal by one member to invoke \$5 need only meet the silent approval of the other members including the United States.

strategic thinking. So the intentions of the Bush Administration may have shifted from off-shore balancing to sustained engagement at the end of 2001.

Another event that would lend credence to this shift would be the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in December 2001.²¹ A precedent pregnant with proliferation consequences may have been set here. Since off-shore balancing sees proliferation as inevitable, then there is no reason to stick to a treaty that would presumably make Americans less secure. This of course opens the door to the deployment of missile defense systems, announced in December 2002²², but again, such a policy would require some form of engagement, as the initiative requires geographic participation of Great Britain, Canada and Denmark, and the technological participation of Japan among others. Some measures and some means of multilateralism therefore need to be maintained.²³ The U.S. stance on the Kyoto Protocol²⁴, attempts at creating a coalition to defy restrictions against genetically-modified crops²⁵, the cancellation of oil contracts that would have favored Russia and China²⁶ are indications that the U.S. is putting forward a strategy of off-shore balancing aimed at preventing the rise of local hegemonic powers. The tendency, therefore, if this theory holds true to reality, would be that the United States will deal with problems on a case-by-case basis more often in the future.²⁷ But it may also mean that, Americans fearing extended commitments, the actions that the U.S. intends abroad will more or less remain unfinished.²⁸ In essence, this is in part what has triggered the current frictions. This is also why it is unlikely that the Americans will ever suffer the strains of imperial overstretch. The outcome is not to install American governors the way the British did in their 19th century colonies. This places too many burdens on the political administration of far off territories, and furthermore, it is antithetical with American history. Being a former colony, the United States has no desire to rule over others.²⁹

What we are witnessing here is the empire of democratic ideals being spread with a healthy dose of steel to achieve a Kantian peace worldwide. In that regard, there is no reason for the U.S. to fear overstretch because its presence is limited to a sprinkle of military bases worldwide, the nature of which may have a local impact. But even if this impact is negative, such as on the island of Okinawa, where locals and U.S. troops have had frictions because of some soldiers' dubious mores, the central government, now used to benefiting from American presence, will not feel compelled to ask for removal of bases, as these provide local interests to Americans, and therefore protection. Furthermore, the immense power that Americans wield can overturn any decision by a government intending to ask for American withdrawal.

²¹ Since 1995, the Ballistic Missile Defence Organization (BMDO) had made efforts to develop systems that complied with the ABM Treaty. President Bush's decision to withdraw nonetheless is telling. www.BMDO.gov See also Pierre MAGNUSZEWSKI, *USA! USA! USA!* in *Défense nationale*, #12, Décembre 2002, p. 126-127 to gauge the consequences of such a withdrawal.

²² www.cnn.com John King: US to Deploy Missile Shield

²³ See Ballistic Missile Defence Organization (BMDO) Reports to Congress from 1994-1998 for foreign participation in missile defence.

²⁴ Joshua W. BUSBY, *Climate Change Blues: Why the United States and Europe Just Can't Get Along*, in *Current History*, March 203, p. 116. See also Pierre MAGNUSZEWSKI, *USA! USA! USA!* in *Défense nationale*, #12, Décembre 2002, p. 128.

²⁵ Edward ALDEN & Tobias BUCK, *US Challenges Ban on GM Crops*, *Financial Times*, May 14 2003, p.1 and 13. See especially Guy de JONQUIERES, Edward ALLEN and Tobias BUCK, *Sowing discord: after Iraq, the US and Europe head for a showdown over genetically-modified crops*, *Financial Times*, 14 May 2003, p.14. The article supposes a growing trend in the amount of friction in the coming years after Washington's patience has run out. This gives credence to the notion that the U.S. contemplates more and more *à la carte* alliances than traditional multilateral tools. In this case, the U.S. is lobbying the World Trade Organization in coordination with a dozen countries some of which are adversaries (China), some of which it recently had frictions (Germany) in an action that could hurt recent allies (Great Britain, Eastern Europe).

²⁶ Charles CLOVER, *Iraq to cancel three oil deals with old regime*, *Financial Times*, 26 May 2003, p.3.

²⁷ Also known as Donald Rumsfeld 'multiple coalitions'. See Robert E. HUNTER, *Fighting the 'Attack on All' Alone*, *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2002, www.rand.org/hot/op-eds/011302LAT.html

²⁸ Charles V. PENA, *The Anti-Terrorism Coalition: Don't Pay an Excessive Price*, *Foreign Policy Briefing #68*, CATO Institute, December 11, 2001. '[The] United States needs to avoid longer-term entanglements, open-ended commitments, and the potential for an extreme anti-American backlash.' Some would argue that avoidance of extended commitment is *exactly* what triggers anti-American sentiment.

²⁹ Jean-Philippe IMMARIGÉON, *L'Amérique, sujet du monde*, in *Défense nationale*, #12, Décembre 2002, p. 120. "Why bother with the obligations of empire when one can remain the only real sovereign state in the classic sense of the word?" (Author's translation) "*Pourquoi s'embarrasser des obligations d'un empire alors qu'on peut rester le seul véritable Etat souverain au sens 'classique' du terme?*"

This does not tell us why the Americans have chosen this strategy. Certainly, September 11th acted as a catalyst for choice, but there may be more to it than meets the eye. The transatlantic gap was opening up well before Mr. Bush came to power.³⁰ Joseph Nye, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Clinton Administration, gave serious thought to the more pessimistic scenarios that could befall transatlantic relations. He, like others, traces the emerging doubts as to the health of the transatlantic link to the Kosovo campaign, which acted as a watershed event. "Until interrupted by Kosovo (he wrote), headlines in the European press stressed differences with America, whether over bananas, hormones in beef... or any of a myriad other issues."³¹ But the Kosovo air war did not provide the needed cement to repair fraying relations. American dominance in the campaign made manifest the technological and military superiority of the American war machine by winning a campaign with the loss of only one plane.

Why is this so determinant? Because it puts the onus of a healthy transatlantic relationship on more efficient European political and military capabilities – a feature of off-shore balancing. Nye seems to be blaming certain large European powers for the rift. When Hubert Védrine confessed that the French policy must be to achieve a multipolar world³², this is all well and fine provided that this does not permit individual actors to think they can be regional determinants in the creation of local alliances, or, in other words, to rise as potential hegemon. This trend culminated in the dissidence of France, Germany and Belgium over the Iraq war. We are seeing now both sides attempting a rapprochement (which we will try to measure later in this paper). Not only does this rapprochement testify to the miscalculations of the dissidents, but also to the awesome political power to act unilaterally that the United States can wield in near impunity.

Therefore, there is a need to investigate *why* this choice of policy was made. One can postulate that the Americans were toying with the concept of sustained engagement during the Clinton years and that this strategy has common traits with off-shore balancing. Answering the question has two facets: One refers to the causes, the other one refers to the outcomes of such a policy.

1. 2: Sources of American Off-Shore Balancing Strategy

The theory that Americans are now engaged in "off-shore balancing" finds resonance in an article written by neo-conservative scholar Robert Kagan. He argues that the current transatlantic frictions are not transitory, but they are due to the fact that Americans and Europeans have switched positions and are now at odds with regard to strategic culture. A reversal has taken place in which the U.S. now displays the same penchant for *machtpolitik* as once-powerful (and unilaterally acting) European states did until roughly the Great War.³³ It is true that America was then relatively weak, or rather, unsure or unaware of her powers, and thus sought to have Europe settle her disputes using multilateral tools, such as the League of Nations and later on the United Nations. According to Kagan, multilateralism is the tool of the weak, and it is only normal that the U.S., being powerful nearly beyond challenge, is using its power as Europeans once did; with strength and martial glory. Therefore, the result of the Kosovo war, the display of European incapacity, and the irrelevance of Russian protests, the easy victory for what is deemed to be the greater good of the Serbian people has made America realize that it may do anything because it can do so. "Might is right" is the neo-conservative motto, and the operating factor in the current White House.³⁴

³⁰ Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum, 9-10 December 2002, § II, section 10. www.nato-pa.int

³¹ Joseph S. NYE Jr., *The US and Europe: Continental Drift?*, in International Affairs (RIIA), 76:1, January 2000, p. 51.

³² *A Call to Limits on 'Hyperpower'*, Boston Globe, 2 January 1999, p. A4.

³³ Robert KAGAN, *Power and Weakness*, Policy Review #113, www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html

³⁴ Victor RONCEA, *The Invisible Army*, Bucharest Ziua, 22 March 2003. FBIS translated text. See also Jean-Philippe IMMARIGEON, *L'Amérique, sujet du monde*, in Défense nationale, #12, Décembre 2002, p. 117-118. Even at the end of the Vietnam War, Americans tend to use force as a determinant for decision, the "old belief that the victory of their arms seemed to authorize the United States not only to take alone the decisions that they will impose on their allies, but also references that they seem to lack..." (Author's translation) "...la vieille croyance que la victoire de leurs armes semble autoriser les Etats-Unis non seulement à rendre seuls des décisions qu'ils imposeront ensuite à leurs alliés, mais surtout à leur fournir des référentiels dont ils sont censés être dépourvus..."

How has Europe become so impotent? If it is so weak and unreliable, how can it be an effective partner, and if not a partner, how can some perceive it to be a potential balancer? Realists saw the integration of the European Union as the early steps of a future great power that could challenge the United States. But the reality is that the technological and political gaps which leave Europe incapable of matching U.S. power is symptomatic of the political and now also philosophical shift that Kagan talks about: It translates into lower defence as well as research and development spending, and into a departure from hitherto common strategic objectives.

The common objective was of course to remove the Soviet threat. When this had happened, Europe cashed in her peace dividend³⁵, while the United States was left with overwhelming power. The uncomfortable truth is that the treasures and resources spent by the U.S. in fighting two world wars created a zone of peace based on the rule of law and multilateralism of a kind which Europe had never enjoyed before. Americans still cling to the belief that it is their sacrifice that gave Europe its peace. Europe and America, through NATO, fought the Cold War using common values and ideals. Now that the Cold War is won, and that the values and ideals that were spread from post-war Western Europe to post-cold war Eastern Europe, gives the impression that the United States have succeeded in making Europe to their image. These accomplishments mean that the remaining regions are to be democratized also, but without multilateralism or bargaining. It is to be done without compromise. And according to Kagan the rift occurs when Europe demonstrates it is unwilling and/or unable to use her might in the shaping of the outside world.

American military strength produced a propensity to use that strength. Europe's military weakness has produced a perfectly understandable aversion to the exercise of military power. Indeed, it has produced a powerful European interest in inhabiting a world where strength doesn't matter, where international law and international institutions predominate, where unilateral action by powerful nations is forbidden, where all nations regardless of their strength have equal rights and are equally protected by commonly agreed-upon international rules of behavior.³⁶

Thus Europe's interest would be to *multilateralize* the United States. But there may be another reason to the U.S. apparent shift from sustained engagement to off-shore balancing.

European powers after the Cold War engaged in a strategic reassessment of their foreign policies. Starting with Russia, one can see that foreign and domestic policies that were initially in accordance with Western aims soon turned sour after 1993. Between 1993 and 2000, Russia acted as unilaterally as it could, because for her, the international system was *constraining*. She therefore sought more autonomy. The rift between the U.S. and Russia (and with NATO) also came after the Kosovo war, and it took 18 months of NATO diplomacy to repair relations somehow.³⁷ September 11th removed any inconsistencies in positions between Russia and the United States with regards to terrorism. In late January 2002, an article by Tatyana Parkhalina about the "changed nature of the Atlantic Alliance", which for Moscow is dictated by the U.S., basically replicated all the arguments that were put to the Russians by Western diplomats and academics to convince them that NATO's survival and enlargement were not a threat. In essence, Parkhalina has now integrated this rhetoric and feeding it to the Russians:

The experience of relations with Western international institutions and individual countries in the last 5-6 years (attempts to block NATO enlargement, the Kosovo crisis, Russian-American contradictions in connection with the ABM Treaty) has shown that the course toward confrontation essentially leads to the country's marginalization, or more correctly, self-marginalization in the international arena. A considerable portion of the Russian elite clearly realizes more and more that the country's future is linked with strategic partnerships with the West.³⁸

³⁵ KAGAN: op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Frederic LABARRE, *NATO-Russia Relations and Enlargement to the Baltic States*, in *Baltic Defence Review #6*, BDCOL, Tartu, Estonia, 2001. www.bdcoll.ee

³⁸ Tatyana Glebovna PARKHALINA, *Analysis: Russia-NATO Relations: Changed Strategy or Tactical Maneuvers?*, in *Moscow Yadernyy Kontrol*, 29 January 2002, FBIS translated text.

This represents a fundamental change in U.S.-Russian relations, but the worrying trend is that the Russian and American presidents share a common view of power and its use.³⁹ This is indicative of the shift away from strategic culture that was until Kosovo, shared by Europe and America. The disquieting fact here is that President Bush and his entourage may have values that resemble more those of the Russians than those of Europe. Parkhalina suggests that Russian involvement in a European security system will be decisive, as Western leaders focus on two aspects of security transformation by “adapting... institutions to the new conditions, proper placement of priorities, establishment of confidential relations and an expansion of cooperation with Russia.”⁴⁰ This could be taken to mean reshaping multilateralism to better suit big power interests, robbing small states of an added relative advantage. She concludes by saying that the majority of Russian politicians have accepted the idea of “the inevitable polycentricity of the European security system.”⁴¹ Russia may have tried to take advantage of this polycentricity by supporting France, Germany and Belgium against the United States scarcely a year after this article appeared. But this common position may also be attributable to common interests in the region, namely French oil contracts with Iraq, and Russian dependence on high oil prices to help it pay its Soviet debt to Germany. The reasons that led to this coalition’s opposition to the war in Iraq may have otherwise been a glitch in transatlantic relations, but the United States (and France, in particular) may have deepened the rift by ignoring or dismissing the interests of these parties as irrelevant. Also, Washington may have seen this as the beginning of a trend to match and challenge U.S. interest in other areas.

Were there any indications that certain powers in Europe were rising to challenge U.S. supremacy? The end of the Cold War and Germany’s advocacy of the enlargement of NATO (first through Manfred Wörner as NATO Secretary General) then through successive foreign ministers. Her peaceful reunification heralded a new Germany, which had become “normal”. Far from being an innocent change, this provided the opportunity to take a more active role in international affairs⁴², and even if her history and constitution prevent a “muscular” involvement⁴³, it may trigger counter-hegemonic responses by the United States. For example, President George Bush (Sr.) offered Germany a “partnership in leadership”, irking Britain and France in the process, who were seeking special roles within Europe for themselves.⁴⁴

Hubert Védrine’s comments about *multilateralizing* the U.S. are an extension of early 1990s French foreign policy which was aimed at the promotion of a stable international system through universal multilateral institutions.⁴⁵ While there may be a debate as to whether the recent opposition to the war in Iraq may have been a French attempt at its own brand of off-shore balancing, “France is only demonstrating a different viewpoint on an issue under a similar ethical premise, and is arguing over the means to attain a common goal.”⁴⁶ But the ethical premises have changed, Kagan might argue. Furthermore, this stance is still consistent with French obsession about rank in the international arena, which led France to take on an increasing number of foreign policy initiatives under President Mitterrand. Yet these may have been

³⁹ RONCEA: op. cit.

⁴⁰ Ibid. This is advocacy against the disengagement of ten years prior, detected by Jean-Francois THIBAUT and Jacques LEFEBVRE, *The Soviet-Union/Russia: Which Past for Which Future?*, in Philippe G. Le Prestre, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen’s University Press, 1997, p. 39.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Paul LÉTOURNEAU and Marie-Elisabeth RÄKEL, *Germany: To Be or Not to Be Normal?* in Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen’s University Press, 1997, p.126. An example is her recognition of Croatia and Slovenia early in the Yugoslav debacle. See also Daniel VERNET, *Berlin’s New Westpolitik*, *Le Monde*, 11 April 2003. “Having become an ‘adult’... Germany can choose to participate in a war in Kosovo or Afghanistan and refuse to join another in Iraq.”

⁴³ Policy Planning and Advisory Staff of the German Ministry of Defence, *The Bundeswehr on Its Way to the Twenty-First Century*, in Istvan Gyarmati and Theodor Winkler, eds., *Post-Cold War Defense Reforms*, Washington DC, Brassey’s, 2002, p. 225.

⁴⁴ LÉTOURNEAU and RÄKEL: op. cit., p.126-127.

⁴⁵ This is consistent with Kagan’s analysis. Charles THUMERELLE and Philippe G. LEPRESTRE, *France: The Straitjacket of New Freedom*, in Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen’s University Press, 1997, p.135. See also Alain FAUPIN, *Defense Sector Reform: The French Case Study*, in Istvan Gyarmati and Theodor Winkler, eds., *Post-Cold War Defense Reforms*, Washington DC, Brassey’s, 2002, p. 50, where Faupin says: “In today’s European context, national needs merge with those of the rest of Europe, not only in our minds, but also in the increasing number of bi- and multilateral agreements.” Which could also be taken to indicate a desire for local primacy.

⁴⁶ Zhang ZHUJI, *Russia Joins the Franco-German Antiwar Camp*, in Beijing Renmin Ribao, 14 February 2003, FBIS translated text.

misconstrued as an attempt to deepen French ascendancy in Europe. It remains unclear, however, how American analysts can fail to see that France is also very much attached to NATO for the same reasons. As France returned to the fold in 1996, it seemed that “no one, whether in France or elsewhere, dreams of building Europe against the United States.”⁴⁷ But words and deeds do not much. France maybe perceives it as her duty “to show the way by supporting countries that refused to align themselves with the United States... This strategy entailed more demonstrations of France’s power and determination throughout the world, hand in hand with the affirmation of the creative genius and vitality of a nation confident of its future.”⁴⁸

Great Britain, in contrast, demonstrates that it is a staunch and reliable ally of the United States. Why is that? First, her own indecision as to her place in Europe makes it unlikely that she will ever consider or achieve a continental leadership role. Second, another paradox: The pessimism surrounding the New World Order heralded by the first Bush Administration has led British policy-makers to accept the fact that Great Britain is now a middle power and that it is unlikely to regain strong influence as in the 19th century. Implicit in this assessment is the message that Great Britain will not try to assert a greater post-Cold War role, but rather will act as a bridge between the two sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁹ This means that the United States doesn’t need to balance Great Britain as the latter has already conceded American supremacy. British pessimism surrounding the improbability of a “new world order” has to do with time. To quote Sir Douglas Hurd, the new world order suggests “more than we are likely, as politicians, to fulfill in our lifetime.”⁵⁰ But then again, this is what American technological supremacy, coupled with a neo-conservative approach of off-shore balancing strategy, promises to achieve:⁵¹ a “New World Order” within our lifetime. And this explains why, as Europe’s most capable military nation, Great Britain is often seen bandwagoning with the United States, from the role it took in the first Gulf War, to her support to American action in Iraq between 1998 and 2002, in Afghanistan and again during the recent Iraq war.

This short comparative summary may account for one of the reasons why the United States is behaving the way it does towards Europe. The transatlantic rift we are witnessing is as much the responsibility of an America that has lost patience with the outside world as it is emanating from great powers in Europe (and admittedly elsewhere, but this is not the topic of this paper), which has not altered her role to reflect the changed international environment; such understandably must be leading to conflict and role dysfunction.⁵² “As though intoxicated by its success in the fight against Al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan, the United States has made it known that it no longer considers it necessary to have an international mandate before turning its wrath on other countries accused of supporting terrorism.”⁵³ Last but not least, the 1999 Helsinki Summit, which committed to a coherent ESDP, can be perceived as a concerted effort to create a challenging force to the U.S.⁵⁴ Although some powers may have adapted their roles to reflect the change brought about by the end of the Cold War, and others may have not, this was not the most significant source of friction between the two sides of the Atlantic, there were others too.

What was then a major source of friction and also the primary reason for America to shift from sustained engagement to off-shore balancing? Let us not forget the emerging new international environment provoked by the September attacks, and the different perceptions on either side of the Atlantic as to their significance.⁵⁵ For the Americans, this was the first time since 1812 that they were hit at the centre of their

⁴⁷ THUMERELLE and LEPRESTRE: op. cit., p. 138.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

⁴⁹ Lu HONG, *Why Europe and the United States Struggle without Breaking up and Practice Cooperation without Subservience*, in Beijing Renmin Wang, 27 November 2002, FBIS translated text.

⁵⁰ Alex McLEOD, *Great Britain: Still Searching for Status?*, in Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen’s University Press, 1997, p.180.

⁵¹ RONCEA: op. cit.

⁵² Philippe G. LEPRESTRE, *Change and Continuity in Foreign Policy Role Conceptions after the Cold War*, in Philippe G. LE PRESTRE, ed., *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Kingston ON, Queen’s University Press, 1997, p. 261.

⁵³ Laurent ZECCHINI, *United States and Europe: Defense Budget Gap*, in Le Monde, 6 February 2002, FBIS translated text.

⁵⁴ Andrew COTTEY, *The European Dimension of Defense Reform, from the WEU to the EU’s New Defense Role*, in Istvan Gyarmati and Theodor Winkler, eds., *Post-Cold War Defense Reforms*, Washington DC, Brassey’s, 2002, p. 19-36.

⁵⁵ Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum: op. cit., § IV, sections 25 and 26.

power.⁵⁶ For Europe, it merely represented a grave and criminal attack, of an unprecedented scale, which managed the collapse of two or three buildings. The differing perceptions accentuated the gap as Europe was only willing (or able) to limit her comprehension of the war on terrorism to fight obvious and demonstrable links to Al-Qaeda, and was unwilling beyond such estimates to consider greater involvement elsewhere, thereby matching American *machtropolitik*. And so it seems that off-shore balancing may sometimes turn against those European states that are unwilling to support the United States, or present themselves as challengers on their own.

Perhaps the other reason that America adopted an off-shore strategy is due to the personality of the key members of the Bush Administration. Structural realism insists that role-definition increases with power. This may be so, but the level of power the United States enjoyed during the Clinton years is not much less than what it enjoys now under Bush. So we may presume that the shift from sustained engagement to off-shore balancing (and the doctrinal application of the latter strategy's edicts) is a function of the people who are now in power.⁵⁷ There is no doubt that role changes are governed by leadership changes.⁵⁸ Leadership – so the theory goes – must seize on (or create the conditions for) role redefinition, which is in the end, a strategic reassessment. A further indication of the personalization of policy lies in the fact that President Clinton reacted very differently with the World Trade Center bombers of 1993, who had the same intents as the hijackers of 2001.

The implementation of military reform by the Bush Administration, led by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is indicative of off-shore balancing, which refers to “leap-ahead” technologies (of the Military-Technological Revolution) in order to create more flexible forces. By doing so the administration was only responding (nearly instantaneously) to requirements, even when considering that many of the reforms were already implemented by the Clinton administration. Rather than long mobilization times and large forces, the new trends follow a new vision of warfare, which relies primarily on the offensive.⁵⁹ Thereby it is not surprising that the United States finds itself more and more as the initiator of action.

What is even more indicative of the personalization of foreign policy is the way Rumsfeld conducted his reform. Applying to outside help (think tanks, retired flag officers, civilian experts etc.), lack of transparency for outsiders, and bypassing existing channels and hierarchies, have created much resentment and have created a number of bureaucracy-administration rifts.

September 11th, the prospect of a rising European power-structure, either through individual great powers, or as a unit emboldened by ESDP, and the biases of personalized foreign policy are the causes of a shift between an undecided sustained engagement strategy and off-shore balancing, which are the sources of the political and philosophical transatlantic gap.

1.3: Outcomes of off-shore strategy

The other side of the question refers to the possible goals of the strategy. In essence, the disagreement between Europe and America could simply be limited to a dispute about ways and means, but the current rift is seen as more serious because no one is sure where an off-shore balancing political strategy will lead. American unilateralism would not be a concern if we could clearly see the results, and if the results are mindful of consequences for the future.

One thing is certain: Off-shore strategy is banking on rapid success, and so the goal would be to settle as many problems as American interests dictate in the most expeditious – and graphic – way and reap the

⁵⁶ Some would equate that to Pearl Harbour, but the reader should know that Hawaii was not yet a member of the Union then.

⁵⁷ LEPRESTRE, *Change and Continuity...*: op. cit., p.254-255.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 257.

⁵⁹ Dennis M. GORMLEY, *Implementing a Revolution in Military Affairs: The U.S. Quest for Military Reform*, in Istvan Gyarmati and Theodor Winkler, eds., *Post-Cold War Defense Reforms*, Washington DC, Brassey's, 2002, p. 65-69.

electoral benefits. We must leave the subject as it is because going further would be engaging in speculation.

But a few hints about the world that the Americans are shaping – wittingly or not – are necessary to introduce our scenarios. Off-shore balancing and unilateralism could lead nations in transition to participate more in American endeavours, and reap political and/or economical benefits which they would not have deserved otherwise. This could lead to increases in power for them that could trigger more ambitious designs, leading to cleavages in regional institutions, most notably in Europe.

Otherwise, Europe could choose to match American ambitions through a potent ESDP backed by a strong military capability, but this requires prerequisites that are anathema to the idea of European Union. These prerequisites could be a sharp turn to the right, with all that that entails for public and social policies. The U.S. could welcome Europe's support, but as we see below, this is far from being certain.

The world the Bush administration is shaping is a world at war with anything uncivilized. But a war against terror knows no bounds, because there will always be discontent. And even if discontent is eliminated, there will always be dissent and disagreement. The war on terror will find ways of redefining concepts to perpetuate itself, and so one cannot dissociate the idea of off-shore balancing from fighting terrorism. This is why it tends to draw inconceivable links with terrorism about anything that does not conform to its interests or vision. The United States is therefore pressured to ask allies to participate in this crusading, but participation requires matching American technological and capabilities superiority.

Part 2: A technological transatlantic gap

The United States are more capable, and therefore are more willing. (We have made that case so far.) How have they come to be so capable? During the 1991 Gulf War, Cottey says that American equipment, which was already several decades old, was roughly equivalent in quality as that of the European members of the Coalition. While the quantitative aspect is another discussion altogether, we must investigate the features behind this qualitative gap.

Suffice it to say that America spends more on defence than Europe. While the U.S. spent 281 billion USD in 2001⁶⁰, Western Europe as a whole mustered “only” 181 billion USD in the same period.⁶¹ In February 2002, President Bush announced a 15% increase⁶² of the U.S. defence budget, roughly the same amount as the British and German budgets combined for 2001.⁶³ This is again symptomatic of the philosophical and political direction that Europe has chosen, but the Pentagon and NATO remain insistent that more should be done to fill that gap, and that Europe, to quote Paul Wolfowitz, deputy to Mr. Rumsfeld, should show more “ambition”.⁶⁴ While Europeans do not share the same sense of urgency in pursuing the war against the axis of evil, they are growing uneasy at the American manicheism and unilateral tendencies⁶⁵. Hence, U.S. defense spending plans show favoritism for variable geometry coalitions instead of permanent arrangements like NATO.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex_major_spenders.html

⁶¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex_wnr_table.html

⁶² ZECCHINI: op. cit.

⁶³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex_wnr_table.html

⁶⁴ ZECCHINI: op. cit.

⁶⁵ Europeans, especially NATO Europeans, fear a decoupling of defence which would see the U.S. abandon Europe to her fate. In that respect, the request that NATO release from his duties Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) General William Kernan has sent shock waves in Europe, as it could be replaced by NorthCom, also responsible for the same geographical section. Europe fears it would have no say in monitoring priorities under such an arrangement. See Der Spiegel: “Fear of Decoupling”, 15 July 2002, FBIS translated text.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

But would simply raising defence budgets eliminate this gap? Not altogether. The gap is not necessarily in spending, but in what spending can achieve.⁶⁷ And spending must be made to develop techniques and systems that increase the capability of European forces. So far, increases have not translated into much more capabilities, because they have focused on standard of living improvements for personnel. Furthermore the technological gap is thought by some to be directly related to Europe's unwillingness to reconcile its interests with its values, which is a euphemism for reconciling its interests and projects with American ones. There is however another reason for the technological gap and it is U.S. commercial nationalism and security obsession⁶⁸ that prevents European access and participation to procurement contracts, tenders and R&D activities.⁶⁹ Therefore the European defence establishment cannot be fertilized by the American one, and the European defence industry is discouraged of attempting a breakthrough on the U.S. market due to security barriers, impossibly high tariff and non-tariff regulations.

While it would be tempting to diagnose a form of paranoid schizophrenia in the American leadership, it is in fact the American system of checks and balances that produces calls from Washington to have Europe modernize, while every individual Senator, Congressman and State legislatures attempt to protect their defense market.⁷⁰ But the Federal level also has such restrictions. For example, contractors eligible to bid for contracts for the U.S. Government must meet § 9.1 *Responsible Prospective Contractors* criteria, which state that eligible contractors are U.S. citizens, citizens of Puerto Rico or other American territories (§ 9.102 (a) 1-2) and that procurement shall be made only from such contractors (§9.103 (a)).⁷¹ Therefore, Europeans are blocked by the same people who beg them to spend more on capabilities. Furthermore, the immense power wielded by America makes business people weary. "Across the Atlantic, resentment against France may turn out to be much deeper than was initially thought. Bankers and financiers... speak of long term consequences if Paris does not make a gesture towards Washington."⁷² This could deepen or accentuate the technological gap.⁷³

NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson explained that his calls to increase spending are actually a warning to Europeans to upgrade quickly so that Europe can have an effective voice and discourage unilateralist tendencies in the U.S. According to this logic, the U.S. is encouraged in going alone against challenges not because of a desire for off-shore balancing, but because its allies are incapable of following.⁷⁴ The logic that only an increased capability will prevent American unilateralism was answered by the mini-summit of April 29 2003, when France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg convened to discuss the elaboration of an EU military structure outside of NATO.⁷⁵ Apart from a few declarations, results were perceived as mixed and deliberate efforts were made at playing down the importance of the meeting.

But restructuring the EU's defence establishment will not solve the technological gap. And if the American R&D market is closed to Europe, how then will she fill the gap? The solution is simple, and refers to another trade barrier, ironically: "Buy American". And the race to the breach has already started. Five European countries are buying the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. To observers, the American armaments

⁶⁷ Vincent DESPORTES, *Que faire du gap transatlantique?* in *Défence nationale*, #4, April 2003, p. 25. Desportes speaks of a three dimensional gap, whereby low spending means less spending for technological improvements, which in turn means incapacity.

⁶⁸ For example, concerning alleged Chinese spying.

⁶⁹ ZECCHINI: op. cit.

⁷⁰ Frederic LABARRE, *U.S. Sub-Federal Procurement Preferences*, Washington DC, Canadian Embassy, August 1998.

⁷¹ Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) V <http://www.arnet.gov/far/loadmainre.html>

⁷² Laure BELOT and Sophie FAY, *Business Circles Fear a French-American Divorce*, *Le Monde*, 4 April 2003, FBIS translated text.

⁷³ Christoph JAKUBYSZYN, *The Unprecedented Offensive of the U.S. Armaments Industry*, *Le Monde*, 19 March 2003, FBIS translated text.

⁷⁴ Alexander SZANDAR, Dirk KOCH and Martin DOERRY, *I Have Been Ashamed: Interview with NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson*, in *Der Spiegel*, 25 February 2002, p. 31-33. FBIS translated text. It is impossible to say if Lord Robertson realized that he was asking Europe to become Sancho to American *Don Quixotism*.

⁷⁵ AFP, Brussels, 29 April 2002. FBIS translated text. Results of the summit called for the creation of a European armaments agency, echoing the impossibility of accessing the U.S. market, the creation of a joint operations HQ no later than 2004 to accompany the setting of the 60 000 strong force being proposed by the EU.

industry is leading an unprecedented push to overtake the world market and thwart European development initiatives like the Sagem-Dassault project. "The Europe of Defence is falling apart."⁷⁶

This means that as long as the gap is not filled – somehow – Europe will be condemned in leaving the U.S. with a free hand to use off-shore balancing. This may sound like a call for a balancing attempt, but it is not. It is unclear how technological parity would translate into a will to power on the global scene for Europe. For her to do this, she would require the philosophy of the U.S. Administration. Some observers point to the inclination of some European leaders to use that stance, among which President Aznar of Spain and President Berlusconi of Italy.⁷⁷ Other European nations have other motives. Some consider transatlantic relations as paramount to their security, and they either want to acknowledge or reward U.S. support for their NATO membership, while they were snubbed by the EU for a comparatively longer period of time.⁷⁸ The result therefore is that the transatlantic gap, whether philosophical/political or technological, can only go on expanding, and furthermore engendering further gaps within an enlarging Europe, unless the causes of friction are not resolved soon. Fixing these frictions may not necessarily require that Europe buy American, but rather that the United States revert back to sustained engagement as national security strategy. The resiliency of this strategy only depends on whether its determinants can be influenced from outside. At present, if strength is the only thing that the Bush administration understands, Europe can do nothing. However, if it is only the fruit of the key players in the Administration, Europe may only need wait 1 or 5 more years, and hope for a Democratic, moderate Administration to take its place, if it's not too late. This is what we discuss in the following part.

Part 3: How resilient is this transatlantic gap?

After reading the above, it is possible that the current tensions will go on and worsen. But there are strong indications and reasons why they would not. "The fact that the United States is more, and European nations relatively less willing to use force to deal with international security issues was observed by some in the 1980s. This fact has been rediscovered and even exaggerated by contemporary neo-conservative pundits."⁷⁹ Indeed, neo-conservatives like Robert Kagan think this is a lasting rift.

But a recurring theme is that transatlantic relations are founded on common values.⁸⁰ Ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, freedom of choice, and democratic privileges, features that bring the two sides together and these are features that matter more and are more tangible to the populations of both sides than mere strategic culture. This is why "a renewal of the west as a community of action is shaped by interests that are common even when they are not equally shared".⁸¹

In light of this the Prague Capabilities Commitment, to reenergize NATO's strategic and capabilities, transformation is at last seriously considered.⁸² This is important, because NATO is the true barometer of the health of transatlantic relations. In light of this, it is interesting to note that in the wake of the September attacks, European allies were, according to Suzanne Daley, "desperately trying to give us political cover and the Pentagon [Mr. Rumsfeld] was resisting it."⁸³ This is indicative of the fact that when

⁷⁶ JAKUBYSZYN: op. cit.

⁷⁷ Daniel VERNET, *Germany and France, Champions of Europe?* Le Monde, 14 March 2003, FBIS translated text.

⁷⁸ Arturas RACAS, *Ten NATO Aspirants Back US View of Iraq's "Material Breach"*, AFP, Vilnius, 5 February 2003, FBIS translated text. See also Polish, *Czech Presidents Discuss War in Iraq, Urge Transatlantic Cooperation*, PAP, 3 April 2003, FBIS translated text. See also Euro-Atlantic Initiatives Regional Conference, *Policy Bulletin*, Budapest, September 2002, p. 5. "There is growing weariness among the Baltic States of giving up hard won freedoms to Brussels."

⁷⁹ Atlantic Community Opinion, *Transatlantic Relations the Day after Iraq*, 4 March 2003, www.atlanticcommunity.org/opinion.html

⁸⁰ ZHUJI: op. cit. See especially Rebecca R. MOORE, *NATO's Mission for the New Millenium: A Value-Based Approach to Building Security*, in *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 23, #1, April 2002, p.1-25. See also speech by French Defence Minister Mrs. Michèle ALLIOT-MARIE, *L'Avenir de l'Otan*, in *Défense nationale*, #4, Avril 2003, p. 13.

⁸¹ Simon SERFATY, *Europe Enlarged, America Detached?* in *Current History*, March 2003, p. 105.

⁸² Sean KAY, *Putting NATO Back Together Again*, in *Current History*, March 2003, p. 109. See also *Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum*: op. cit., § III, sections 15, 17.

⁸³ Suzanne DALEY, *After the Attacks: The Alliance*, The New York Times, 13 September 2001, p. A17.

the Alliance is called for it is nearly every time responsive. And therefore the rifts in the transatlantic link can be imparted to the Bush Administration who chose to snub NATO's support. But Mr. Rumsfeld's initial refusal to invoke § 5 also shows that off-shore balancing is a personal characteristic of key Bush players. Furthermore, the need to match the American drive in meeting the Revolution in Military Affairs would seem, according to some experts, overstated. The type of forces that NATO and the EU are trying to put together would in any case fit the current threat assessment in Europe pertaining to the war on terrorism, but there is no need for *Don Quixotism*.⁸⁴ In its procurement and force structure forces, Europe would do well to consider the strategic implications of the Revolution in Military Affairs, whose promises may not be as favourable as once thought. As Colin Gray puts it:

Dazzled by our own prospective military brilliance, we can forget that a well motivated and competent, if materially challenged, foe is going to be looking hard for asymmetrical sources of strategic leverage against us.⁸⁵

Also there are strong indications that the personalization of strategy will create more problems for the United States, and that the Bush administration's penchant for that strategy will mean that a loss at the polls could alter the strategy once more. Still there are consequences to fear as the following scenarios will demonstrate.

Scenarios

In the end, the resilience of the Atlantic rift may depend on three factors. The first is how quickly Europe can catch up to the U.S. The second depends on the lifespan of the Bush administration and a continuation of a Republican administration with a conservative strategic view of defence and alliances. The third depends on the successes engendered by off-shore balancing. We consider each scenario in turn.

Catching up:

This will depend on how much cooperation the U.S. is willing to entertain to allow Europe to catch up. But catching up to begin with still requires the immense political will to do so, and then the battle is only half won. If we believe what neo-conservatives say, raising European spending levels will mean that European strategic culture will have reverted back to what it was before the Great War, to the very strategic culture that America now entertains, then such a development would be of such depth in consequence for the creation of a unified Europe that it is nearly impossible to fathom. The new EU members are eager to cash in their own peace dividends, and a reversal would mean that defense policies would be operating along unilateral lines of off-shore balancing, leading to the dangers of re-nationalization of defense policies.

If the U.S. does not allow for "European military power" to catch up technologically, then the EU's ESDP could be limited to mopping up operations in the wake of U.S. unilateralism.⁸⁶ Or it would be simply limited to Petersberg tasks (peacekeeping). Yet, there are indications that the U.S. is asking Europe to catch up, adopt her *machtpolitik* philosophy, impose order on the neighbourhood to her east and south, and continue farther. At the same time, there will be the comprehensible aversion at seeing a European competitor rise up to challenge American power in the domain of philosophical conversion. Since off-shore balancing calls for the checking of regional hegemony, both scenarios above are likely. This would therefore perpetuate U.S. demands of better burden sharing, while at the same time, different American political levels of government would prevent European participation in American programs and R&D.

⁸⁴ JOHNSON and ZENKO: op. cit., p. 53, "The US and British experience in Afghanistan may indicate the US and NATO have overstressed the high technology and high investment aspects of coalition warfare and interoperability, and paid too little attention to the value of being able to draw on a pool of highly trained lighter forces, like the SAS, or their Australian, Canadian, German and other equivalents." (Quoting CSIS' Anthony Cordesman).

⁸⁵ Colin S. GRAY, *The RMA and Intervention: A Sceptical View*, in Contemporary Security Policy, 22:3, December 2001, p. 55.

⁸⁶ MAGNUSZEWSKI: op. cit., p. 135.

The Bush Administration's life span:

Democracies are not well equipped to fight long wars. It is likely that the next elections will be lost for the Republicans, and that a new Democratic agenda will take place, and that overextensive commitments will be scaled down. This happened in 1993 in Somalia, when the Clinton Administration withdrew American troops committed by the first Bush Administration. Causes for the loss of the elections could be tied to disasters in the field, or could more likely be tied to an ever declining economy.

On the condition of continued success, there could be a second mandate in the offing, but the quality of transatlantic relations is difficult to predict if it would pass that point. One thing is certain; the quality of relations with the American public and the outside world will depend on the quality of leadership the U.S. is prepared to give. So far, the Iraq war has vindicated the opponents, as the U.S. admitted doubts to the presence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq.⁸⁷ This could trigger political crises in Great Britain, Spain and elsewhere, and create the opportunity for a more cohesive Europe. The resulting political isolation of Washington could be a factor of defeat for President Bush.

Another factor of defeat for this Administration could be a continuing decline of the American economy, which, according to some, is affecting the middle class. This decline could be accentuated by the relative strength of the European economy. On the other hand, the failure of the Democratic caucus to present a suitable challenger for the next election could spell another four years of a Bush Administration.

The success of off-shore balancing:

The success of off-shore balancing could be addictive to new Administrations as well. Rapid and cheap success in military campaigns can embolden anyone. The situation now is that the American public seems less bothered by body bags. One hundred or so dead would have sent any Administration into a panic some years ago. The Americans pulled out of Beirut after a suicide bomber exploded a compound of U.S. Marines in 1983 at the cost of 249 lives. President Clinton pulled out of Somalia after 19 dead. A successful off-shore strategy would mean that the Administration initiating hostilities would not be casualty- or risk-averse. The lack of this aversion means the removal of a check to U.S. unilateral power. This trend is already visible, and it is directly related to September 11, the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) or the indicated NATO transformation heralded at Prague. September 11 with over 3000 people killed has changed the sensibility of the public. The RMA allows the weapons operator on a tactical level such liberty and ease in the management of violence that he/she is removed from it. So removed in fact that the risk being killed in action is becoming more rare, and is tantamount to bad luck (like sniper fire). This has effects at the strategic and grand strategic levels and at the tactical level as well. As weapons become more precise and more trustworthy, the collateral effects are also minimal on the other side, leaving the tactical operator the luxury to engage a potential target (or even a centre of gravity) with such success as to trigger a favourable cost-benefit balance sheet. Firepower became cheaper than manpower. "The enemy is better perceived as a collection of targets to destroy than as an *alter ego*, momentarily adversary, with whom one will ultimately have to be reconciled."⁸⁸ This has psychological consequences, but more than that, it is antithetical to European culture, where destruction is not an end in itself, but a means to have an adversary submit. Here, the RMA dictates its own logic, apparently removed from what the United States would really intend, as it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Americans seek destruction for its own sake. The result would be that more and more military power is applied because it is cheap, efficient and produces rapid results that every one can understand. Such success could remove the traditional aversion for casualties and encourage other Administrations to follow in President Bush's footsteps.

⁸⁷ Michael WHITE and Nicholas WATT, *Blair Faces Revolt as US Admits Doubts*, The Guardian, May 29 2003, p. 1. But even an educated guess could have brought about the same conclusions. See Mustapha BENCHENANE, *Etats-Unis et Iraq*, in *Défence nationale*, #4, Avril 2003, p. 15-23.

⁸⁸ DESPORTES: op. cit., p. 31-32. Authors translation. "L'ennemi est davantage perçu comme un ensemble de cibles à détruire que comme un *alter ego*, momentanément adverse, avec lequel il faudra à nouveau, ultérieurement, reprendre le dialogue."

Conclusion

Europe shows no sign of wanting to catch up to the United States in terms of military potential or of adopting its worldview. Also, there are indications that European attempts to pull its weight would be defeated by American law-makers.

Nevertheless, the double-edged transatlantic gap shows more promise of disappearing than worsening. The emphasis on technology (full spectrum dominance) has never been as strong as it is now, and it can be easily attributable to the last US administrations, but especially to the Bush administration. The way it is conducting business at home and abroad is producing cleavages. At home, disagreement with the bureaucracy may also create tensions that might trigger a fall of this administration, as will an eventual successful Democratic challenger for 2004, and a continued decline in the economy. Since we deem the strategy of off-shore balancing to be a product of this administration, it is unlikely that a Democrat presidency would replicate it, especially if the bureaucratic cleavages are as deep as suggested by sources.

This is compounded by the fact that many commentators, officials and academics have reiterated the importance of healthy transatlantic relations. It is likely that European leaders will reconcile themselves with the United States, but will not necessarily participate to her will to global power. In that regard, the stability of NATO should be a clear indicator of the health of transatlantic relations. Any indication that motions at the Council or at Ambassadorial meetings have difficulty passing should be a clear indication that all is not well. The fact that the U.S. is not looking for an Empire does not mean it is willing to stay in NATO.

In essence, this is a positive conclusion. In the short term, though, this means that a country would face itself with internal crises, if political parties side with the U.S. While in many countries there are strong constitutional safeguards concerning the use of armed forces abroad, necessity could dictate otherwise, especially if off-shore balancing is so successful as to dash the EU's drive towards an autonomous capacity, leaving other members as participants to variable geometry coalitions, creating regional security dilemmas. Last but certainly not least, American demands or requirements might trigger massive crises inside the EU or NATO.

In terms of foreign policy, governments would also have to take sides with regional powers attempting to exit the European orbit to side with America. Although far-fetched, this scenario is nonetheless illustrated by Polish participation in the Iraq war. This could create tensions within Europe which cannot be readily deterred, as the promise of EU enlargement weighs less and less in Eastern European thinking now after NATO membership is secured. This leaves more independence to countries which had been hitherto vassals of the Soviet Union. There is no denying that Polish motivations to go to war against Iraq owed a lot to its totalitarian experience.

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