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## The Current Status of the Transatlantic Relationship – 4 Points of Consideration

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### Introduction

The French “Non” and Dutch “Nee” to the European constitution produced a common response on behalf of many EU officials. Most immediately pointed to French domestic policies as the main reason for the rejection: “This was a rejection and expression of dissatisfaction of Chirac, not to the EU,” was a commonly heard assessment. Other officials also criticized the French outcome and its voters saying: “people need and should look beyond their own backyard for the sake of Europe”. On the other hand, across the Atlantic, U.S. diplomats have downplayed the situation and said that the EU will continue to strive, even with the NO vote, going forward is the only and natural option for the EU, albeit at a slower pace.

However, the question of how the current problems facing the European Union and their influence on the transatlantic relationship remain. This paper will focus on a few points of the current status of the transatlantic relationship, and it will do so based on a few conclusions that can be drawn from recent important events. The first point is that the criticism directed towards the U.S. policy of approaching EU countries individually (leading up to the Iraq war) was unfounded. In essence, the counteracting argument and position of this paper is that the EU does not have a common military force or foreign policy, which made it both strategically and politically impossible for the U.S. to negotiate directly with the EU. The second point is that the failed EU constitution and consequently a weakened EU, is not in the interest of the U.S. The reasons are quite obvious for this. First, the EU will be forced to spend more time and effort away from global issues where cooperation with the US is necessary. The outcome of the G8 summit, hosted by Tony Blair who just assumed Presidency of the EU for the next six months, was heavily criticized in the U.S. for not discussing and addressing many of the critical global issues such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and antidemocratic developments in Russia. The agenda would most likely have been quite different had Blair assumed Presidency over a strong EU with a ratified constitution.

The third point is that Europe and the EU are not invisible to terrorism and that European ideals, way of life, and policy making are all subject to the targeting of Muslim extremists to the same extent as the United States. The Madrid and London bombings should serve as a wakeup call to European political leaders and general public that the threat of terrorism is not isolated to America or Israel, and that the European governments need to publicly take a harder stance against terrorism. The final and fourth point is that the failed European constitution was an expression of the power held by the old social welfare society and nationalistic forces within Europe. Not only does this present a problem for continued EU integration, but also for the transatlantic relationship. This comes at a time when the EU and the U.S. need to strengthen their cooperation and integration, and especially in the economic field where a joint effort will be required to prepare for increased Chinese and Indian competition.

### Background

In order to better explain and answer the previous statements, one needs to go back and look at the developments and changes that the transatlantic relationship has undergone since the early 1990's. The one single most important factor of cooperation and solidarity between the U.S. and Western Europe in the second half of the 20th century, dominated by the Cold War, was the common struggle against Communism. The Wilsonian ideal of an international order based on a common devotion to democracy and settling its disputes by negotiation rather than war triumphed among the nations bordering the North Atlantic. This is why the North Atlan-

tic partnership served as a key factor in American and European foreign policy. Even after the collapse of the Soviet-Union, the economic and diplomatic ties, strengthened by globalization have linked the well being in Europe and America in an almost inseparable manner. However, in the midst of all the turmoil in today's post 9/11 world, the common purposes that the North Atlantic foundation was initially built on have been severely challenged.

Henry Kissinger states that "the very definition of common security and, indeed, of common purpose is being questioned" between Europe and America . The fall of the Soviet-Union did not only produce several new states but it also removed the most important factor that united the western democracies in their common quest for wellbeing. The emergence of a strong European Union further complicates the relationship between the two allies. The progress towards a bi-polar world along with a unified and strong Germany poses a new "threat" to the American empire. European nations have been successful in uniting by creating a European Union with a single currency, the Euro. Europeans have newfound pride, and though they remain America's strongest allies, they often resent the U.S. military presence on the continent now that the threat of Soviet invasion has subsided, as well as that of American military presence around the world.

The term Fortress Europe stems from the aftermath of the Second World War. It was used to describe the "Atlantic Wall" as the chain of defenses set up by Hitler along the west coast of Europe, which was supposed to make Europe and Germany an impenetrable fortress – hence the term 'fortress Europe'. David Armitage writes that there existed other concerns of a "Fortress Europe," even as far back as 1942. According to one State Department study, the danger existed that, if the Europeans developed their own sense of "European nationhood," they might consider using "the economic weapon as a means of furthering continental policy" to the detriment of US interests. Secretary of State Hull worried that, if a European union developed, "such a union might lead to the formation of other economic power blocs and undermine prospects for a liberal trade policy and the formation of an international organization after the war. "

"Germany and France represent "old Europe," and NATO's expansion in recent years means "the center of gravity is shifting to the east" – Donald Rumsfeld, January 23, 2003.

Even when considering the unparalleled achievements that have led the European Union to what it is today, the question of whether the European circle of a true Union will ever be closed remains. The period leading up to the Iraqi war did not only show that the EU is quite far from establishing a common foreign policy on major issues, but it also revealed a deeper political divide that has continued to resurface. The internal differences of the European Union have clearly had a negative influence on its ability to approach international issues with a single voice, but they have also been detrimental to the long-standing transatlantic relationship with the United States. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's remark on 'old Europe' is arguable one of the most blunt and non-diplomatic comments ever made between two old allies. Nevertheless, it also described reality in a crushingly clear manner. The old battle between the major powers in Europe are still making themselves heard today, but it is the divide between older and younger states that has been making headlines since 9/11. In such a climate, where European integration is a stated priority, will the EU be able to develop a common European identity? The failed proposed EU constitution in France and Holland revealed that much of the rejection depended on voters being concerned over potential loss of power as well as increased immigration from the new eastern European member states. Turkish membership also played a significant role in voting outcome. Are these actually signs that there in fact does already exist a western 'elitist' European identity that is trying to preserve itself from newcomers? If so, this does surely bring another obstacle to the European integration process, which in turn will further complicate the EU's ability to speak with one

voice on foreign policy matters. One can argue that the development of a European identity is as important a task as was the completion of the Common Market, and that it may be necessary to prevent European integration from ending up in the scrapbook of history. The issue of identity and of the battle between ideologies will be further discussed in the third point.

#### 4 Points

Going back to the first point, one should remember that the EU is a treaty organization comprised of sovereign states, and from a U.S. policy making perspective, doing anything but courting individual states, would have been a grave mistake and blunder. This has become especially clear since the failed referendum on the proposed EU constitution, as well as from the withdrawal of troops by Spain. The EU is a union of nation-states, deeply divided by history, language, and culture, and it maintains a healthy division of outlook regarding major foreign policy issues. There are serious disagreements over American global power, the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Kyoto protocol, how to wage the war on terrorism successfully, and NATO’s role in the new era. These differences ultimately expressed themselves with the failed EU constitution and the subsequent breakdown in the EU budget negotiations. When one examines the current situation in Iraq and European participation, there are 12 EU member states with troops in Iraq, compared to 13 member states that do not support the U.S. led effort. Without making a judgment on the legality or reason for the invasion of Iraq, from an American perspective, the current picture of the divided European participation alone should reject the notion that the U.S. should have negotiated with Brussels directly.

The second point is that a weakened and divided European Union is not in America’s interest. To the first point, it would have been much more convenient for the Bush administration had they been able to talk directly to one European voice in Brussels. Their closest ally and traditional supporter have been Tony Blair and the United Kingdom. According to Robert Guttman, it is perhaps understandable that Britain has found it hardest of all the major European powers to show enthusiasm for the cause of unity. Britain emerged as a victor of World War II with many Britons still believing that much of their empire would last for a long time. As the British author, Hugo Young has pointed out, “for the continental nations, European integration after World War II was a kind of victory, the construction of something positive from the rubble of death and destruction. For Britain, it was a defeat, an arrangement reluctantly accepted, which codified the loss of Britain’s traditional independence from the continent, its empire, and its role as a top world power”. Britain has therefore always been fundamentally opposed to a strong centralized European government and has instead been pushing for expansion in order to spread out the wealth and decision making power and to keep either France or Germany from retaining too much influence. In a statement from 2004, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair stated: “Our task is not to stop globalization but to make it work for the benefit of all the people not the few”. Mr. Blair further warned against any attempt to carve out new divisions that divide Europe into inner and outer cores referring to the French–German proposition of a ‘two-speed’ Europe. Blair went on by saying: “there is a danger that progressive parties defined their economic policy by anti-globalization and its foreign policy by anti-Americanism”.

It also very possible that the transatlantic relationship would actually not look any different today even with a more unified EU or a different President in the White House. As much as one would perhaps like to think, problems between the EU and U.S. have been brewing for a while in the face of a strong republican controlled congress during the Clinton presidency, but the problems have truly come to light with the Bush administration in power. Former External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten suggested that even the US could not achieve all its aims by a combination of military power and unilateralism. It was in America's own best interests to support the multilateral institutions and to pay more attention to smart development assistance as much as smart bombs. While this may be true, the Bush administration, and especially the ultra conservative block, will not consider the EU more than an inconvenient nuisance

as opposed to a capable and resourceful ally if it so chose. Because America is uniquely powerful, Europeans can complain, but if that is all they do they will be ignored. The EU's only chance to influence US policy is to demonstrate that it is a serious and capable partner in tackling some of the issues that are top of the US agenda, notably dealing with terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, the G8 summit was thought to have been such an opportunity for the UK and Tony Blair to push Europe's agenda on these two issues but it did not happen. One could speculate that due to the currently somewhat unruly political climate within the EU, Blair did not feel as he had the credibility needed to back up any major plans or propositions on controversial issues. However, as the next point aims to demonstrate, the EU is moving in the direction of becoming a more capable and reliable partner to the United States, especially in the fight against terrorism.

The third focus point is that of terrorism within EU's borders and how strengthened EU participation in the war on terror should ultimately lead to a stronger transatlantic relationship. Terrorism has been a problem for many Western European states since the end of the 1960's and it has influenced both national and international political structures. Numerous initiatives have been taken the last few decades by the EU to increase the effectiveness in the fight against international terrorism. It has become evident however, that trying to combine national interests with institutional demands pose many problems when attempting to form a common strategy.

The European goal of fighting terrorism is not a new task as it can be traced all the way back to 1977 . Although concrete measures have been absent, the meeting of the council in Tampere 1999 managed to produce a new set of goals and plans of implementation. The events of September 11 put international terrorism on a whole new level altogether, and its catastrophic consequences are proof of a new form of violence never witnessed before. The magnitude of this event has probably changed our outlook on international terrorism forever. This 'new' terrorism has emerged parallel to the development of the EU's common Security and Defense policy. After 9/11, the EU proclaimed their ambition to fight international terrorism as follows: "The European Union recognizes that to be more effective in the fight against terrorism and on the world stage generally it must make its European Security and Defense Policy (EDSP) fully operational " .

This statement can be interpreted in different ways, but by connecting ESDP to the fight on terrorism, numerous interesting questions can be asked. Will the EU act militarily in the fight on terrorism and will that lead to a common defense? Will the common foreign and security policy become EU's prime weapon against terrorism? Will they succeed? Will the EU change as a result? And so forth. These questions have since the Madrid and London bombings been brought into a completely different perspective and urgency. The basic needs of any political organization/actor include the creation of shared interests and visions. This includes the mobilization and utilization of resources to gain the desired outcomes. This has been a problem in the history of the EU. The cause seems to be two-fold, partly because of consideration for the member countries own internal issues (conflict of interest in Northern Ireland and Cyprus for example ) and partly because of the inability to reach consensus on the definition of the concept of security (does it involve terrorism?) .

To make use of the capabilities and resources that the EU possesses, Gunnar Sjöstedt says that the EU needs to utilize the various existing networks of representatives . The EU representatives inside of this network have two main responsibilities: one being the messengers of EU policies, and the other as lobbyists of EU policies outside the Union. Representatives of non-EU countries in Brussels make up the core of this network. Corresponding tasks are fulfilled by the various EU information centers and delegations around the world. The permanent missions to organizations such as NATO and the WTO also represent the EU. Individual member countries also contribute to this international network of information through the many embassies and consulates around the world. It is however the EU Presidency that carries the big-

gest responsibility for foreign relations, and does therefore hold the most important part in the task of spreading the message of EU's strategic goals. It should however be noted that it is somewhat complicated to judge the actions of individual states in the Presidency role, as their actions must be analyzed against their national interests as compared to the collected interests of the Union. In summary, one can conclude that the EU possesses and has access to an almost unique magnitude in networks for being a regional organization. These networks include everything from environmental issues to trade and security politics.

With regards to the CFSP, organizations such as the UN, NATO and OSSE should be especially important networks or transaction channels". The importance of these networks in the fight against terrorism is quite obvious, but it is the development of further European integration that will decide how effectively the EU can make use of them. We can yet again conclude that a more integrated and strengthened EU would be in the interest of the U.S., especially when considering the potential the EU has to work effectively alongside the U.S. in the fight against terrorism and the spread of extremism.

The time immediately following September 11 is characterized by rapid changes for the EU. As early as September 21st, 2001, a new plan in the fight against terrorism was announced. The European Council also stated that terrorism is a real challenge to the world and Europe, and that the fight against terrorism will be a top priority for the European Union. In the following months, the EU supported UN resolution 1373 on the fight against terrorism; The EU also supported military action against Afghanistan under UN resolution 1368. The EU continued to work and develop its capacities to become a more effective actor in fighting terrorism. In December of 2001, at the Laeken summit, the EU made significant progress in these four points.

Without going into great detail on each of these points, it is clear that the EU quickly reacted to the events of September 11, and has translated political goals into concrete measures. This process has involved all three pillars of the EU, with meetings, deliberations, and reports. In addition, concrete international commitments to fight terrorism have been agreed upon with the United States, Russia, the 13 accession candidates, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, the western Balkan countries, the 12 partner countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Israel, Canada, India, as well as the Council of Europe. At the Ninth Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in December 2001, ministers adopted a broad-ranging Action Plan on counter-terrorism measures.

Despite the many developments by the EU on the fight against terrorism, they have not gone without criticism. In 'European Democracies Against Terrorism', Monica den Boer writes that the deciding factor of whether terrorism should be the responsibility of the CFSP is: "Not when the security of a nation state, but the security of the European Union itself is jeopardized by a terrorist act". Den Boer continues by saying that the essential question is how the EU defines 'security'. It is from that definition that the analysis of the EU must begin. For her conclusion, den Boer states that the third pillar is not suitable for the fight against terrorism. The reasons being the requirement of unanimity, too many levels of decision making, no defined security identity and a much too hierarchical system. This could undermine the legitimacy of decisions according to den Boer. This is familiar criticism of the basic foundations of the EU as an institution. Monica den Boer states that the decisions made after 9/11 cannot be carried out as long as these fundamental problems still exist. Malcolm Anderson, in the same book, writes that the fight against terrorism has proved to be an elusive goal. He continues by saying that: "Effective and continuing cooperation in the field of counterterrorism is almost impossible to achieve because the basis for this cooperation must be agreement between governments on political rather than criminal law enforcement objectives". EU's actions after the attacks in America can be seen as taking an increased political responsibility, but Anderson says that there are reasons why we should still be skeptical. The events in Munich in 1972 and

the Paris bombings in 1986 also initiated increased political cooperation, which Anderson calls “politics of the latest outrage”, but the political intentions were too weak and did not manage to have a real long-lasting impact.

Even while den Boer’s and Anderson’s criticism is justified from a historical perspective, and while some decisions that the EU has made since 9/11 has not been fully democratic; there is no doubt that the EU has never before gone further in the cooperation against terrorism. The EU has shown itself as a very active actor since the events on 9/11. In comparison to the normal decision making process, the EU has been able to reach decisions in remarkable speed in order to quickly respond to urgent developments. It only took the EU ten days to agree on the plan of action, and it was implemented into the institutional system by the end of 2001. The recent terror bombings in London has also shown that cooperation between member states, in this case the UK and Italy, can be very effective in apprehending suspected terrorists and bring them to justice.

The final and fourth point is that the failed European EU referendum in France and Holland was not only an expression of dissatisfaction against the EU, but also a sign that the new centralized free-trade European Union has not managed to tear down the old social welfare society and nationalistic forces. This does not only pose a problem for the EU as an institution, but also for individual European states as the economic threat of India and China will require European nations to work alongside the United States in a global financial and trade effort. In other words, EU member states need to have a global outlook in they way that they conduct business and not revert into a protectionist stance whether it is due to either far left or right movements. At the same time, it is both important and in the interest of the U.S to continue to value the EU as their most important ally instead of rival. Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote in a 1997 article titled “A Geostrategy for Eurasia”, that Europe is America’s essential geopolitical bridgehead in Eurasia, and that America’s stake in democratic Europe is enormous. “Unlike America’s links with Japan, NATO entrenches American political influence and military power on the Eurasian mainland. With the allied European nations still highly dependent on U.S. protection, any expansion of Europe’s political scope is automatically an expansion of U.S. influence. Conversely, the United States’ ability to project influence and power in Eurasia relies on close transatlantic ties” .

Mark Mazover’s book *Dark Continent, Europe’s Twentieth Century* provides an excellent perspective on how the political turmoil that dominated Europe in the 20th century still shapes European politics. Mazover suggests that the end of the cold war drastically changed Europe’s place in history. Europe once again became undivided, but without occupying the central role in world affairs, which it held before the Cold War began. Understanding where Europe and the EU stand today thus requires not only seeing how the present resembles the past, but how it differs from it as well. Mazover writes: “the intellectual tradition that identifies Europe with the cause of liberty and freedom goes back many centuries. But if we face the fact that communism and fascism also formed part of the continent’s political heritage, then it is hard to deny that what has shaped Europe in this century is not a gradual convergence of thought and feeling, but on the contrary a series of violent clashes between antagonistic New Orders” . If we assume Mazover’s analysis to be accurate, i.e. that of Europe being shaped through clashes between ‘antagonistic New Orders’, we must then ask the question of how these differences affect Europe of today and if the game really has changed? In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen is an extreme right-wing politician from whose anti-crime and anti-immigration themes have found echoes across Europe, from Austria and Italy to Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. But Mr. Le Pen is also tapping into a new anxiety about the loss of national identity, made more acute by the prospect of Europeanization and globalization, which he combines to call “Euro-globalization” “There is a deep concern over issues of personal and national identity in which the hard right is rooted,” said Simon Serfaty, director of European studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “People feel an invisible invasion:



too many immigrants, the European Union, the intrusion of American culture" .

Steven Erlanger of the New York Times also suggests that Europeans are discovering that as the European Union completes itself — both geographically, as it absorbs nations of the former Soviet bloc, and institutionally, with its large library of laws and shared currency — “the nation-state for which so many of their parents and grandparents fought and died is itself dying” . “Tied to all that change is an anxiety that swells from the bottom: that Brussels will not take care of its citizens as gently and lovingly as the national capitals have in the past” . Jack Rakove’s article “Europe’s Floundering Fathers”, published in *Foreign Policy*, argues that the issue of sovereignty will be especially crucial for the former Soviet states . Rakove writes: “All EU members are nation-states possessing full political sovereignty and a self-conscious sense of their historical people-hood. For many of these nations, the relative novelty of their status as self-governing entities (compared with the United States) may deepen, rather than weaken, their reluctance to relinquish national sovereignty to the faceless bureaucrats of Brussels and to obscure parliamentarians at Strasbourg. In particular, the new, intensely nationalistic members entering the EU from the old Soviet bloc are loath to see their stature as sovereign nation-states, capable of acting on the world stage, so soon submerged to an amorphous entity” .

## Summary

According to an opinion poll published in April 1999 , when the bombing of Kosovo was in full swing, 68 percent of French people were worried about the United States being the sole superpower. Asked whether there should be a new European force to replace NATO altogether, 57 percent of the French respondents said yes, against an average of only 36 percent in all NATO countries. Such attitudes inevitably color the whole question of what kind of Europe people want. Most French people say they don’t want Europe to become an “Anglo-Saxon” market economy, while Tony Blair is actively looking to the United States for new economic ideas to copy.

The development of a unified Europe has changed the mentality of foreign policy among European nations. It is no longer nuclear weapons and marching armies that pose the highest threat to security and welfare in Europe, the new objective is to manage rapid change and the increased complexity of Eastern Europe. Karsten D.Voigt describes this as an important challenge to the North American and European relationship: “We have to change the transatlantic relationship from its mainly military orientation to a new, broad basis that focuses more than before on cultural and economic shared values and interests” . However, America’s idealistic sense of foreign policy will make this process complex. Madeleine Albright displayed extreme idealism in February 1998 when defending the use of cruise missiles against Iraq, “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see farther into the future” . Much as Robert Kagan points out, there now exists a wide political and cultural gap between the U.S. and European nations. Robert Kagan, in “Power and Weakness” , argue the proposition that the transatlantic divide that followed 9/11, is largely due to the change in strategic perspectives between Europe and the U.S. According to Kagan, this strategic perspective depends on a large power gap and on ideological differences.

The crucial question now is not whether the U.S. and the EU will be able to change the focus of their alliance from that of a military one to that of shared cultural and ideological values. As undesirable and horrific its consequences can be; will the threat of terrorism serve as the much-needed revitalizing uniting factor that transatlantic relationship needs? Terrorism combined with the increased economic threat from China and India might prove to play the same role for the transatlantic relationship as that of Communism and the Cold War.

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