

Labors of the New American Hercules:
Transatlantic Relations in the Wake of the War with Iraq

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I.

Time will tell whether preclusive military intervention in Iraq has truly helped to stimulate efforts to “resolve,” or even significantly change for the better, the complex crises emanating from the Persian Gulf, Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and the Korean peninsula, let alone help to institute a semblance of “communal” democracy in Iraq that can help unify its divergent ethnic and religious factions. From today’s standpoint, however, US relations with both major and regional powers appear much more fractious.

As the reasons for going to war did not obtain international legitimacy from the UN Security Council (UNSC), as did the US intervention in Afghanistan, or at a very minimum obtain a general international consensus, much like the war “over” Kosovo, the US-UK intervention has significantly damaged US relations with France, Germany, Russia and Turkey. It has also tended to undermine the “legitimacy” of the UN and, indirectly, the “credibility” of NATO. It may have also undercut the US-UK “special relationship.”

There is furthermore a real risk that US neo-conservative policies could continue to divide an expanding Europe and force it out of its comfortable Kantian “out of history” nest on Venus (in Robert Kagan’s stereotypes¹)—and throw it once again into the “real” world of major power rivalries.

To prevent the situation from proving totally disastrous will require that that Washington now engage in a much more sophisticated and innovative global strategy, one that emphasizes truly concerted US, European and Russian “power” and “responsibility” sharing, and that utilizes a more complementary mix of diplomacy and force.

II.

The fact that the US has fought relatively brief wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and now Iraq has created a new form of “short war illusion,” as well as a mirage of Herculean omnipotence—despite the fact the “victories” themselves have been complicated by the long-term nature of the peacekeeping effort and the political-social-economic problems related to reconstruction.

One of the major rationales for the French and Germans to oppose preclusive intervention in Iraq was not that of “pacifism,” but precisely *what to do with a defeated, instable and chaotic Iraq after the war*. Moreover, without any substantial “Marshall plan” to offer Iraq, the US simply could not expect the Europeans to pick up the post-war pieces without having any real say in the *initial* implementation of policy.

French and German disagreements with the US toward NATO-member Turkey have represented an additional factor splitting the Alliance. Although blamed for instigating a major crisis within NATO for not initially agreeing to provide AWACs and Patriot missiles for Turkish “defense,” neither France nor Germany were responsible for the Turkish refusal to support US troop deployments at the outset of the war; and neither France nor Germany was responsible for the Turkish threats to intervene in Iraqi Kurdistan after the war.

Ankara continues to fear the rise of a relatively autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which could, in turn, influence Kurds in Turkey to seek independence in eastern Anatolia. Ankara’s inability to reform its own relationship with the Kurds within Turkey itself could lead to greater tensions. Coupled with a reduction of the NATO presence, EU refusal to accommodate Ankara’s moderate Islamic leadership with some new form of EU “membership” may further isolate the country, leading it to search for new options.

These factors indicate that the US-UK “coalition” (officially dubbed in July 2003 as “occupying powers” by the UN)—or preferably NATO-Partnership for Peace forces under a UN mandate—will be needed to maintain a long-term presence in Iraq to deal with the threat of Turkish (and/or Iranian) intervention, disputes between Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs, as well as conflict with radical pan-Islamic Shi’ite factions, and Sunni Ba’athist insurgency, now dubbed a “guerrilla-type war situation” by General John Abizaid.

At \$3.9 billion a month, this was not the scenario expected by “Martian” neo-conservatives, but one that French and German “Venusians” had more correctly forewarned.

III.

US efforts to obtain the political economic allegiance of eastern European states may additionally divide the EU, and isolate Moscow.

A prime example is the \$3.5 billion sale of 48 US F-16 fighters to Poland (for 2006-08), in direct rivalry with Swedish Gripin and French Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets, and which includes over \$6 billion in a foreign military financing (FMF) loan package, 43 offsetting projects and direct US foreign investment. This “contract of the century” has upset French and Swedish arms producers, Germany (the major investor in Poland), as well as EU Commission President Romano Prodi.²

Ostensibly a reward for Polish support for the Iraq war, the sale of F-16s could also have the effect of alienating Belarus and Russia. The sale is symbolic of a burgeoning military-industrial relationship with eastern Europe, which appears contrary to unwritten US promises not to expand NATO infrastructure into eastern Europe. The F-16s, the deployment 5,000 to 10,000 NATO troops in Poland, plus the establishment of bases in Bulgaria and Romania, coupled with US efforts to foster a Polish-Ukrainian alliance in regard to “coalition” peacekeeping in northern Iraq, not to overlook the strategic implications of US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty, and US threats to cut

Russia out of the Iraqi oil market and not support its bid to enter the WTO, may, among other issues, all anger anti-Western Russian nationalists and frustrate moderates.

Despite the post-September 11 NATO-Russian entente, Russia has only grudgingly accepted Baltic state membership in NATO; it has demanded that all eastern European states sign the outdated Conventional Force in Europe pact before entering NATO, or revise it entirely. While Moscow has thus far supported limited US/NATO operations in former Soviet Central Asia, it has questioned the purpose of some NATO activities, particularly those affecting the Caucasus. The fact that Russia has pulled its peacekeepers out of Bosnia and Kosovo is already symbolic of its lack of continuing political support for US/NATO policy in these regions.

Whether NATO enlargement will, in fact, ultimately prove to be the “most fatal error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era,” as prognosticated by George Kennan, will largely depend upon the reforms taking place in NATO itself, as well the nature of security accords reached by NATO with both the EU, as the latter likewise expands into eastern Europe, and with Russia. Here, Moscow may be eyeing closer relations with China and India as it reluctantly cedes control over former Soviet space in both eastern Europe and central Asia, and looks quite resentfully as the US Hercules defeats Russian allies in Serbia and Iraq.³

IV.

While US policies appear intended to divide the “old” western and the “new” eastern Europeans, and place a wedge between the EU and Russia, they have been countered by European efforts to unify step-by-step, coupled with efforts to cooperate more closely with Moscow.

After the failure of European diplomacy to prevent the war “over” Kosovo at the 1998 Rambouillet Summit (a failure, rightly or wrongly, blamed on US diplomacy), the Europeans vowed to establish the *Euroforce*. Similarly, despite US efforts to play the UK, Spain and the eastern European states (particularly Poland) against France and Germany, the EU opted to expand its membership to 25, the EU appears to be moving closer together through the establishment of a single president and foreign minister.

On the one hand, the EU will need to provide significant security supports to its new members. This is true as eastern European states, which will soon be members of both NATO and the EU, will only begin to respect EU initiatives, once the latter can more truly guarantee their overall security. On the other, the EU will be compelled to reduce its dependence upon the US as the latter begins to re-deploy some of its bases (except Ramstein) and 70,000 troops away from Germany as a means to cut costs and move closer to new theatres of conflict.⁴

The latter was a prospect foreseen in the Clinton era; yet German opposition to the war with Iraq has been cynically used by the Bush administration as a pretext for cutting back in Europe. In addition to weakening the core NATO relationship with Berlin, already complicated by disputes over the International Criminal Court, this fact may possess

unexpected political economic consequences for US-German relations, coupled with the decline of the dollar relative to the Euro, and other major US-EU trade disputes over agriculture, aerospace and steel subsidies, as well as genetically modified organisms.

Contrary to US expectations, the political fall-out from the decision of UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to side with the Bush administration in the war with Iraq (despite Blair's failed effort to influence US policy from behind the scenes) could ultimately press the UK closer to the EU. The US-UK justification for so-called *pre-emptive* war (in the argument that Iraq possessed WMD and posed an *imminent* threat) has been seriously criticized. The whole US-UK "special relationship" has been put into question.

As the UK re-evaluates its relations with the US and Europe, London seriously looks like it could join "Euroland" within the next five years, despite having ruled out such a possibility in 2003. Should the UK ultimately take steps to move closer to the European Union, as the 1998 St. Malo initiative initially indicated, then the possibility of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) becomes much more plausible.

From this perspective, Europe will soon be *impelled* by both extra- and intra- European considerations to develop more autonomous military capabilities. Both the regional and global aspects of European diplomacy will need to be backed by credible force, if a CFSP is to be successful.

V.

The key problem is not so much European "weakness" but the Janus two-faced nature of US foreign policy.

On the one hand, U.S. neo-conservatives complain that the US will only respect the EU once the latter truly begins to flex its muscles and take up its responsibilities. (In this regard, the *Euroforce* must not remain an "empty shell"). On the other hand, the neo-cons have also opposed a Europe that can think and act for itself; they tend to exaggerate the *future* EU capacity for *independent* military action.

As the EU represents a new form of confederation, it will dubiously become a "hard pole" that can then wholeheartedly countermand the United States: Under the proposed new Constitution, foreign policy decisions will be subject to the principle of unanimity, while individual states will still retain control over their national militaries.

The real problem is thus not so much that the Europeans live in a Kantian realm "out of history", but that the two-faced foreign policy of the United States--with its Janus gates unexpectedly and selectively swinging open or shut for war or for peace--continues to insist on burden and responsibility sharing, but without accepting true European *power sharing*.

From this perspective, rather than attempt to restrict Europe's capacity to develop a truly unified CFSP, the US should work with the Europeans to establish areas of mutual

complementarity given their respective military and political-economic capabilities and differing interests (even it that implies a certain degree of asset duplication).

VI.

The above points indicate that a Herculean “divide and rule” strategy could alienate both the Europeans and the Russians, at the same time that US risks military and political-economic overextension in fighting the hydra of new threats, falling into the trap set by Bin Laden.

To prevent US overextension, the Bush administration should begin to internationalize the reconstruction of Iraq by *formally* phasing in the UN, plus NATO and Partnership for Peace forces, which may also help the Iraqi Governing Council obtain legitimacy and minimize policy disputes as Iraq prepares for self-rule. The Bush administration has, however, only brought in NATO states and the UN in piecemeal ways.⁵ In July 2003, France, Germany and Russia ruled out peacekeeping participation without a specific UN mandate.

If the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, the US may be forced to bite the bullet, particularly if peacekeeping forces become too stretched too thin between Afghanistan and Iraq.⁶ Yet here, states that strongly opposed the war with Iraq may find it difficult to bite the bullet as well: Is it possible to bring the UN totally into Iraq without tacitly granting the US-UK intervention a *post facto* legitimacy?⁷

Despite their opposition to the Iraq war, the French and Germans still play a complementary role in global peacekeeping and in Afghanistan under general UN mandates. The US has requested basing rights in former French colonial protectorates, which indicates the widening nature of the crisis. While the US itself may attempt to deal with the conflict in Liberia, French-led EU actions under UN banner in the Congo (after Ivory Coast) could represent the stepping stone to a more effective *Euroforce*.

The UN, US, EU and Russian “Quartet” may similarly need to consider the deployment of multinational peacekeepers, involving overlapping NATO-EU-Russian security accords to guarantee both Israeli and Palestinian state security, and to prevent the Road Map for Peace from losing itself along the route. (Tony Blair had linked US-UK intervention in Iraq to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a matter of “even handedness.”)

The US, EU and Russia should also foster the formation of multilateral “contact groups” (similar to that formed to deal with Bosnia) to focus on ending “World War III” in Africa, and to work toward Indian-Pakistani reconciliation. While only Washington can resolve the crisis with North Korea through diplomatic recognition and security guarantees for Pyongyang, the EU can help facilitate the US-North Korean rapprochement through promises of aid and assistance, so as to try to prevent the onslaught of a major regional war.⁸

Closer to home, the EU is taking over the peacekeeping role in Macedonia, and possibly Bosnia in 2004, but dubiously Kosovo. The Dutch have proposed a EU-led OSCE peacekeeping force for Moldova, with Russian cooperation. As both NATO and the EU continue their largely uncoordinated enlargement, the EU needs to show its strategic-military utility in eastern Europe, *but in coordination with the Russians*.

In order to prevent the alienation of Russia and to enhance overall European security, the creation of regionally based multinational security communities, backed by overlapping NATO, EU and Russian security guarantees, can attempt to offset destabilizing factors that help produce mafia-activities and terrorism.⁹

Another point cannot be over-emphasized: NATO enlargement is, in effect, leapfrogging over key strategically positioned EU members—ironically, the democratic states of Sweden, Finland and Austria. This fact gives the EU some leverage to deal with the US, but it will mean the careful coordination of NATO-EU defense planning. Here, instead of placing a provocative NATO HQ in the Baltic states, as has been proposed, the construction of a multilateral NATO-EU-Russian peacekeeping headquarters in Kaliningrad, as symbolic of multilateral security cooperation, may actually provide a better guarantee for Baltic state security. This is because an alienated Russia, without a *droit de regard*, may attempt to undermine *unilateral* NATO efforts to guarantee security in the region.

And finally, rather than denigrating the UN, the US should attempt to *re-legitimize* it, by making the UNSC more representative of post-Cold War political-economic relations. One option is to place France and Germany, and perhaps the UK, into one UNSC seat in terms of regional representation, assuming Europe can truly formulate a CFSP, and bring in Japan as a permanent UNSC member. This could help provide wider representation for the second tier non-permanent members. If more permanent members come in, then a two-veto system for the UNSC could be implemented.

A more representative UN could then play a more vital role in sanctioning concerted policies and in legitimizing military intervention and peacekeeping operations.

VII.

The American version of Hercules is engaging in a number of the “twelve labors” almost simultaneously. Having defeated the Lion of Nemea (the Taliban) at least in appearance, the war with the multi-headed Hydra of global terrorism, with the help of his nephew Iolaus, continues, the US has thus far failed to capture the Ceryneian Hind (Bin Laden) alive, although it may be on the trail of the Erymanthian Boar (Saddam Hussein), having snared his two sons, it has not been able to control the Stymphalian Birds that plague the Middle East road to peace. The new American Hercules has additionally not yet figured out a more clever stratagem to flush the nuclear waste from the stables of the North Korean Augeias.

Hercules had been confronted with challenges that resulted in significant errors of judgment and much “collateral damage.” Yet even that all-powerful mythological figure did not “succeed” in his twelve labors without seeking the advice of the gods (to obtain legitimacy) as well as the help of his friends. It appears, however, that the new American version may need even greater assistance than did the ancient one—with the assumption that its present friends and allies will not, in the very near future, decide to part company altogether.

Endnotes

¹ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power* (New York: Knopf, 2003)

² REF/RL “Poland, Belarus, Ukraine” (Vol. 5, No 15, 22 April 2003).

³ See my argument, Hall Gardner, *Dangerous Crossroads* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

⁴ Greg Jaffe, “In Massive Shift, U.S. is Planning to Cut Size of Military in Germany,” *Wall Street Journal* 10 Jun 2003. The US not only plans to downsize its 70,000 troops in Germany, but also deploy some 5-10,000 troops in Poland, some 15,000 in Azerbaijan (a fact seen as threatening Iran); and to increase troops in Djibouti to 5,000-6,500. Semi-permanent bases are to be maintained in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia plus Senegal, plus Ghana, Mali, Kenya. (It should be noted that many of these are former French colonies or protectorates). One of the primary goals in Africa is to protect Nigeria, expected to provide some 25% of US oil needs in the future.

⁵ Nine of NATO's 19 members are already involved in the Iraq operation, but not as members of NATO.

⁶ Nicholas Kravlev “Pullout in Afghanistan worries Germany” *Washington Times*, July 17, 2003.

⁷ See also my argument, Hall Gardner, “The Iraq Crisis and Its Impact on the Future of the EU-US Relations: An American View” www.cicerofoundation.org.

⁸ The North Korean government stated that “The Iraqi war teaches a lesson that in order to prevent a war and defend the security of a country and the sovereignty of a nation, it is necessary to have a powerful physical deterrent.” Cited in Colin Robinson, “Stand-off with North Korea: War Scenarios and Consequences” *Center for Defense Information* www.cdi.org. David Shambaugh “China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term,” *The Washington Quarterly* 2003 Spring Vol. 26, No. 2. See comments by former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, “US, North Korea Drifting Toward War” *Washington Post* July 15, 2003.

⁹ Hall Gardner, “Aligning for the Future” *Harvard International Review*, Winter 2003.