A DEFINING MOMENT IN PURPOSE AND COMMITMENT

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NATO is facing a structural crisis resulting from three realities inherited from the Cold War and affected by the events of September 11, 2001: Europe and its unfinished condition, the United States and its preponderant power, and security and its new normalcy. To renew NATO, its members must make a commitment to a community of action for the fulfillment of common goals within and beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. Within an alliance of purpose, the goal is not for all allies to do everything together; rather the goal is to make sure that all allies together do everything.

This is a defining moment, and the United States and the states of Europe have a blind date with history. Beginning with the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summits that will be held in Dublin, Ireland, and Istanbul, Turkey, in June 2004, decisions made on both sides of the Atlantic over the next five years, and the conflicts waged along the way – in and beyond Iraq – will leave Europe and its relations with the United States, as well as the EU and NATO, either much more cohesive and stronger or more divided and, therefore, weaker.

The Alliance of purpose built during the Cold War — and twice enlarged since — as a community of increasingly compatible values and compatible interests, must now be renewed as its members make the required commitments to a community of action for the fulfillment of common goals within and beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

As was seen during the Atlantic crisis of 2003 over Iraq, renewing the Alliance will not be easy. The crisis, which is hardly over, was neither bilateral — not even between the United States and France or any other EU country — nor personal — not even over Europe's mistrust of President George W. Bush and parts of his administration.

These difficulties point to conditions that have often existed in the past, and were readily resolved with a summit meeting (as was done in Williamsburg, Virginia, in May 1983) or a swift display of U.S. leadership (as was exerted in Paris in October 1954, in Nassau in January 1963, in Washington in February 1973, and in Dayton, Ohio, in the fall 1995). Rather, the crisis of 2003 was, and remains, a structural crisis resulting from three broad and overlapping new realities, inherited from the Cold War and affected by the events of September 11, 2001: Europe and its unfinished condition, the United States and its preponderant power, and security and its new normalcy.

COMPLETING THE UNION

The transformation of Europe, from a fragmented and unstable mosaic of nation-states into an ever larger and peaceful union of member-states, already stands as the most significant geopolitical development of the latter half of the 20th century. That is cause for legitimate satisfaction in the United States.

To an extent, the idea of a united Europe is an American idea, not only as an inspirational demonstration of what a few hundred Americans were able to do in the New World 200 years earlier, but also because it is the postwar commitment of U.S. power and leadership that gave the states of Europe the resources, time, and security they needed to engage in a process of integration that its European Founding Fathers first started out of a shared sense of past failures, rather than on behalf of a common vision of the future.

For the past four decades, however, Europe's integration has depended on several conditions that determined the scope, pace, and effectiveness of each of its new initiatives:

- Robust and evenly shared economic growth, with primary benefits going to the most recent members or the more needy small economies — as shown by the history of European union after the enlargements of 1973 and 1986;

- Stable and confident centrist national leadership able to resist pressures from either extreme of the political spectrum — as shown by the transformation of the European Left in France, Spain, Italy, and Britain; and

- Regional stability, in the East during the Cold War (which now includes some of the new members) and also, especially since 2001, in the South — where lies the Greater Middle East, from the Persian Gulf through the Middle East and into North Africa.

In the midst or on the eve of finality, and threatened with a wave of terror to which Europe may well be far more vulnerable than the United States, these same features are currently lacking, and the EU may be more challenged — more at risk — than at any time in over 30 years. These are causes for apprehension not only in Europe but also in the United States, where the commitment to an ever closer and ever larger Europe paradoxically looks often more real than among many EU members.

As the EU nears the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaties in March 2007, three issues appear to be especially contentious:

- the ratification debates for the so-called EU constitution;

- the renegotiation of the Stability and Growth Pact and the negotiation of a new six-year EU budget; and

- the effective integration of the 10 new EU members, including — most of all — Poland, and an effective management of current or upcoming additional applications, including that of Turkey.

This is not a small agenda. How well it is managed — and how — is up to the 25 EU members; but it is, nonetheless, of direct interest to the United States in the context of its relations with Europe within and outside the Alliance.

POWER AND WEAKNESSES

Europe's ability to produce more power of its own, especially military power, is cause for exasperation rather than apprehension. Admittedly, there are some concerns that a stronger Europe might ultimately emerge as a counterweight that would define, together with other ascending states, a new multi-polarity at the expense of U.S. influence. Such concerns are exaggerated; and the competitive pressures that could result from a stronger Europe need not be, and are unlikely to become, adversarial. On the contrary, only a Euro-Atlantic partnership that escapes its current condition of perceived "power and weakness" can overcome a futile debate over the marginal relevance of European states that look mostly like dead weights relative to an America whose intrusive preponderance makes it look increasingly like an imperial bully.

In other words, only a stronger (and, hence, more united) Europe can assert itself as a credible counterpart within the Alliance, and only an Alliance that stands on two distinct weights — inevitably uneven but, hopefully, complementary — can point to a global order short of the bellicosity that characterized pre-1914 multi-polarity, but extends beyond the U.S. preponderance that defines the post-1989 uni-polarity. In short, there is nothing intrinsically wrong about the ideas of counterweight and multi-polarity because both help either side of the Atlantic rely on the other to unload or share some of the burdens of collective defense and global order.

However, the multidimensional nature of power imposes a discussion of weaknesses found in both the

United States and Europe. While U.S. preponderance is beyond challenge — on grounds of capabilities, saliency, and (now) zeal — Europe readily qualifies as a power in the world because of interests that are global in scope and vital in significance, capabilities that are at least competitive in all non-military dimensions, and a widespread reputation for leadership inherited from the past but also renewed for the better over the past 50 years.

The next few years will show whether the states of Europe and their Union are willing and able to also gain the military power, as well as the will to use it, without which they would remain unable to move up to the next level — as a power in the world that would also stand as a world power — or, as British Prime Minister Tony Blair put it, a superpower but not a super state.

The reference to Tony Blair is not by chance: the key to Europe's development of a common foreign, security, and defense policy is, indeed, the participation of the United Kingdom — an ingredient that is even more indispensable, at least in the short term, than Germany's contributions.

Whatever skepticism or ambivalence there may be in the United States about the rise of a strong Europe, the decisions ahead will have to be made by the Europeans themselves — spend better, but also spend more, on behalf of interests and in defense of values that Americans need not fear, to the extent that these are, indeed, more compatible with U.S. interests and values than with those of any other part of the world.

In an alliance of purpose, the response to the preponderance of the one over the many lies neither in the quest for balance (as an adversarial "counterweight") nor in the acceptance of follower-ship (as a passive "counterpart"). Rather, the commonality of purpose suggests the feasibility of complementary actions on behalf of policies deemed necessary for the fulfillment of goals that are common to each of the allies, even when they are not evenly shared by all of them.

The idea of complementarity is not new. It is an idea that America and Europe, NATO, and the EU are enforcing every day in Afghanistan, and it is an idea that has been used repeatedly in Haiti, in the Balkans, in Libya, in Iran, and elsewhere. In the ongoing quest for a new global order in the unfolding century, the most reliable coalition partners remain the like-minded states that populate the Atlantic Alliance — and these states deserve at least a right of first refusal for any of the missions for which a coalition might be needed.

This means that for Europe to achieve its transition toward a complete union — complete geographically, as well as in terms of its access to power, but also complete within the continent as well as across the Atlantic — several key goals will have to be met:

- Complementarity of European membership in NATO and the EU — meaning that any European member of NATO should ultimately be a member of the EU, including Turkey, but also Norway (and others), and every EU member should be a NATO member, including Austria, but also Sweden (and others).

- Complementarity of NATO and EU relations with countries that are not members of either institution — meaning especially a more active coordination of U.S. and European policies toward Russia and other institutional orphans in Europe, as well as toward other countries that are not part of the Euro-Atlantic geographic area but are nonetheless seeking partnerships for peace and prosperity in its context — like North Africa.

- Closer U.S.-EU relations — as in Europe's acknowledgement of the United States' special status as a non-member member state of the EU, but also as in a U.S. acknowledgement of the EU as a vital, though unfinished, partner. Coming after the historical enlargements of both the EU and NATO, a new European Commission, as well as a new or renewed U.S. administration in the fall of 2004, ought to permit a new deal in U.S.-EU-NATO relations, including, at the earliest possible time, an unprecedented summit meeting between

the heads of state or government of all EU and NATO current members and applicant countries.

- Better coordination between NATO and the EU as two institutions whose parallel contributions to the war against global terror are indispensable if those wars are going to be both won and ended. The future of a European security pillar is tied to NATO, and NATO's future is dependent on its ability to act globally — on the basis of capabilities enhanced by a better coordination of non-military security tools between the allies, and a common understanding of the priorities they share based on a more compatible strategic view of the world they face.

NEW NORMALCY

That the vital interests of the United States in Europe, and America's central interest in the Union that is at the core of the new Europe, remain unaltered after the events of September 11, 2001, should be cause for little debate. If anything, the end of one global conflict and the start of another increased the need for closer and more closely coordinated Euro-Atlantic actions on questions of home and foreign security.

As shown in Iraq, even a nation without military peers cannot remain for long a nation without capable allies. For there, in Iraq, the coalition of the willing that was organized in early 2003 has proven to be insufficient to attend to the broader missions it faced after completion of the major combat phase of the war on May 1, 2003.

The significance of Iraq cannot be overstated. Failure there is not an option. An abrupt departure of coalition forces without delivering on the goals of stability and reconstruction for post-Saddam Iraq is not an acceptable choice.

Nor is any sort of blame game helpful — either within the coalition or with those states that failed to join it. This is not a game that can be won by anyone except their common enemies. Time is running out to end counterproductive theological debates and, instead, bring into the mix the same multilateral framework used to end the war in Afghanistan after the Taliban had been defeated — a multilateral framework that adds to the global legitimacy of the United Nations the specialized capabilities of NATO and the EU.

Within an alliance of purpose, the goal is not for all allies to do everything together; rather, the goal is to make sure that all allies together do everything.

During the coming months, the coalition in Iraq will, therefore, have to be enlarged to attend to a mission that must be deepened. That mission is fourfold:

- Restore security — this may well require additional forces on the ground, including NATO forces, pending the organization of viable Iraqi military and police forces;

- Assert the national legitimacy of an Iraqi government that rehabilitates the Iraqi state — this demands a direct U.N. role in attending to a credible transfer of sovereignty on June 30, 2004, and national elections no later than January 2005;

- Pursue the reconstruction of Iraq, under the direct management of the new Iraqi government, with the support of all allies, whatever their disposition at the start of the war; and

- Ultimately achieve reconciliation not only within and among Iraq's main communities, but also between Iraq and its neighbors.

The criteria for solidarity in the new security normalcy inaugurated by the events of September 11, 2001 (and also of March 11, 2004), need not be limited to Iraq. The wars of 9/11 have many fronts; to argue that Spain, for example, dropped out of these wars because it withdrew its forces from Iraq is tantamount to arguing that the United States did not enter World War II until its forces landed in Normandy in June 1944 — with the qualification, however, that some of the Spanish forces withdrawn from Iraq must now be put to good, collective use on another front, like the front in Afghanistan.

Beyond the finality debates in Europe, which the United States cannot ignore, and beyond the war in Iraq, to which the states of Europe cannot remain indifferent because of the unthinkable and indivisible consequences of failure, the Greater Middle East is the defining geopolitical challenge of the new century — including, but no longer limited to, its Israeli-Palestinian fault line — in a region that is simultaneously of extreme volatility and of vital interest to the rest of the world.

The point should be self-evident: there cannot be any sort of global order if there is no order within that region. For such an order to emerge, U.S. power, however indispensable it may be, will not prove sufficient unless it can rely on Europe's power which, however necessary it is, is obviously not sufficient alone either.

That is the challenge that must now be addressed with the same bold spirit, the same compelling compassion, and the same common purpose as was shown when the transformation of Europe began 50 years ago as a revolt against a failed past.

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