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Difference within Similarity: Transatlantic Relations as a 'Community of Neighbours'

Pertti Joenniemi

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PERTTI JOENNIEMI
Senior Researcher
www.diis.dk/pjo - pjo@diis.dk

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Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS
Strandgade 56, DK-1401 Copenhagen, Denmark
Ph: +45 32 69 87 87
Fax: +45 32 69 87 00
E-mail: diis@diis.dk
Web: www.diis.dk

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ABSTRACT[1]

The contribution focuses on the unfolding and tensions within the transatlantic relationship and it pursues, in particular, the question how the bonds of association between Europe and America are best comprehended and accounted for. In trying to break some new ground for theorization it argues that the Realist, Liberal and Constructivist accounts have so far come up short in terms of providing up-to-date and broadly acceptable answers. With the dominant theories focusing largely on either external enmity or internal homogeneity, difference internal to the relationship has too easily been conceptualized as destabilizing and seen as representing a rupture. In contrast, the paper asserts that while elements of enmity and homogeneity are important, communities such as the Atlantic one are also critically brought together by their internal differences. It then aims, in view of the difference-based dynamics at play and foundational for the Atlantic communality, to complement and provide a corrective to the more established theorization of that togetherness.

[1] I would like to thank Christopher Browning, Stefano Guzzini, Marko Lehti, Ian Manners, Viatcheslav Morozov, Hans Mouritzen and Sergei Prozorov for comments on earlier versions of this paper. A shorter version will appear in Christopher S. Browning and Marko Lehti (eds.), *The Struggle for the West*, London:, New York: Routledge (forthcoming).

INTRODUCTION

In focusing on the framing of the transatlantic relationship this contribution asks how the bonds of association between Europe and America are best comprehended and accounted for. At one level this question does not appear to make much sense in that the Atlantic constellation is generally viewed as rather self-evident. However, seen through the lenses of the major theoretical approaches of International Relations things appear different. Indeed, given their different vantage points the lack of consensus between them regarding the nature of the Atlantic setting and the West more generally such probing appears well founded. As Hellmann notes (2008: 28-52), the various schools of thought do not only provide profoundly different understandings concerning the essence of relations between America and Europe, but owing to their different theorisations of this relationship, they also provide significantly divergent predictions as to how the Atlantic bonds are likely to develop (e.g. whether decline or continuing stability will be the order of the day). For Hellmann this discrepancy is "unfortunate" and symptomatic of a profoundly "unsatisfactory state of affairs".

For the Realist school (e.g. Mearsheimer 1990; Walt 2004; Waltz 1993; Wolfers 1962) transatlantic relations essentially boil down to an *alliance*. The constitutive entities consist of nation-states without the alliance having any particular standing or identity of its own. The coming together of the Atlantic partners as the core of the West is taken to reflect common interests. The bonds are created in order to bolster physical security and togetherness also stands out as an instrument helpful in changing the distribution and balance of power. From this perspective alliances are basically viewed as threat-driven and far from immune to events such as the end of the bipolar system of confrontation. They are ephemeral and bound to crumble in the absence of external threats.

The Liberal school, in contrast, argues that the transatlantic relationship forms a *security community*. In being composed of democratic states and in resting on shared values as well as identities it provides security by allowing antagonism to be reinscribed as agonism. Inclusion in such a community requires that the applicants are made increasingly "more like us" (Adler 1997: 257) and consequently, in being premised on a sense of we-ness rather than the existence of outside threats (e.g. Adler and Barnett 1998; Hellmann 2008; Fuchs and Klingemann 2008; Risse 2008), there is less danger of it immediately falling apart once common threats dissipate. For Liberals transatlantic togetherness harbours resilience and is as such much more than an alliance of separate states and not merely there in order to avert threats. It exists above all in being for something and is therefore more or less immune to the danger of disassociation.

Constructivism provides still another approach through its acknowledgement of conflict as the crucial category of politics and an emphasis on the *discursive* and *socially constructed nature* of the transatlantic, and more broadly western, relationship. For constructivists (e.g. Hopf 2005; Klein 1994) the relationship's continued existence rests on the possibilities of reproducing the configuration in discourses pertaining to identities, values and interests. Although trying in general to extend the research agenda be-

yond both Realist and Liberal approaches, the more critical Constructivist scholarship exploring the transatlantic relationship has tended to side with Realism in viewing difference as threatening and external in character. For example Benhke (2007: 32) argues that for an alliance to come into being difference "has to be 'streamlined' into a homogeneous community in order for difference and pluralism to be externalised". In this understanding difference exists as something to be curtailed, yet its location on the 'outside' is constituted as essential if shared identities and commonality are to emerge on the inside. With difference in the form of an exception erased from the inside, it is assumed that the similarity left will override tendencies of re-nationalisation that may threaten the transatlantic bonds of association and in doing so also erase the security-related impact of commonality.

Yet, as testified by Hellmann, these approaches have come up short and have done so particularly in view of the recent dynamics in the sphere of transatlantic relations. Thus, the aim of this contribution is to go beyond the traditional and in particular the constructivist-inspired theoretical explanations as to the formation of transnational communities as exemplified by the Atlantic one, with a special focus on how community-building is seen as a source of security for the community's constituent units.

In endeavouring at doing so the probing here is embedded in three moves that can assist in theorizing what binds communities together.[2] First, I argue that liberal and constructivist accounts to the security-enhancing aspects of community-building have focused too much on the need for homogeneity in terms of values, culture and identity in binding communities together. The result is that tensions and disagreements over these aspects all too easily become viewed as destabilizing, as representing rupture, and not least as undermining the security-enhancing properties of the community such that the very existence of the community itself comes to be seen as in question. Argued more generally, otherness and difference within the community tend to be theorized and represented as a source of threat to be minimized and preferably expunged. Such a view can be seen, for example, in how depictions of social, cultural, political, religious and economic differences in the transatlantic community are today frequently presented as existentially salient divergences which threaten to derail the Atlantic togetherness. In contrast, supporters/optimists continue to argue that cultural, social, political, economic, religious ties are much stronger than pessimists fear. In short, there is much more commonality and homogeneity present than alarmists fear, and it is this sameness which holds the transatlantic community together – the invocation therefore being to continue to emphasize the need to build on such sameness in order to cement the common bonds. Notably, and in contrast, I argue that while elements of sameness and homogeneity are important, communities are also critically brought together by their differences. Instead of ousting otherness and constituting it as an inherent threat to be eradicated over time, difference itself can also be theorized as a central part of the glue that holds the community together.

[2] A similar approach has been developed and used in the context of a paper on Nordic commonality, see Christopher S. Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, "Remembering Peace, Forgetting War: Nordic Peace Reconsidered". Paper presented at the ISA Convention, New York February 2009.

The second move is to assert that traditional, liberal and constructivist approaches to transnational community-building have to date been overwhelmingly focused on a rather one-dimensional view of 'security-as-violence'. Security, here, is therefore understood as a condition where threats of physical violence within the community have been overcome. In endeavouring at opening for another option, I build on a developing body of literature which invokes the concept of 'ontological security'. Ontological security can be defined in terms of 'security-as-being' and is premised on a rather different set of assumptions to security-as-violence approaches. While I will develop the distinction in greater detail below ontological security is concerned with "the maintenance of the day-to-day routines that provide us with a sense of who we are and how we relate to others." (Roe 208: 778). Put differently, ontological security concerns the need of agents to develop *routinized* relations with significant others in order to provide themselves with a basis for action. Ontological security, therefore, does not necessarily require the absence of violent threat insofar as people often remain in abusive relationships because of the sense of identity which the habits and routines of that relationship provide them with. By the same token, though, ontological security can also (and more healthily) emerge where threats of violence are completely absent.

This leads us to a third move which is to argue that to the extent that other approaches have included any notion of ontological security it tends to be conceptualized as an end product of attempts to overcome the security dilemma of world politics and to focus instead on tackling issues of 'security-as-violence'. In contrast I argue that in some instances at least, security-as-violence is simply omitted from the debate in favour of developing routines prioritizing ontological security. To put the thesis explicitly: traditional approaches overwhelmingly understand transnational communities as emerging in the context of projects designed to provide security through processes of community-building and integration. Instead, it is argued here that transnational communities may also emerge in instances where the question of security-as-violence fails to arise with significant force. Traditional approaches, I claim, lack any account of such instances in being embedded in a different logic with security seen as constituting in the first place a physical challenge.

A DIFFERENT INROAD

Along these lines and with the assumed anarchic nature of international relations, there has been a tendency in the theorisation of transatlantic relations to view security-as-violence as constitutive of the community and its identity. Constructivism basically shares this approach with Realist and Liberal theories, although it approaches security not as something factual and given but as socially constructed through 'discourses of danger'.

The predominance of security-as-violence and the focusing on discourses of othering (with difference seen as external in essence) remained by and large unchallenged up to the end of the Cold War. However, and with the demise of the Cold War-related antagonism, it has become obvious that the external conditions do no longer confirm to the expectations of various established theories and hence an awareness of their limitations has increasingly set in. In consequence, and with the

customary security concerns absent, room has opened up for sidelining security-as-violence and instead focus on the routines within the community that pertain to considerations of ontological security and the embracing rather than ousting of difference in this context (cf. Hansen 2006).

In siding with such efforts of reconsideration, this contribution argues that the Atlantic constellation is best understood as a sphere carried by its internal differences. In other words, there has to be space for particularity to prevail as the identities constituting the relationship are never perfectly congruent. Differences invite, in this context, in principle for conflict also in the context of commonality, although in order to carry commonality the differences appear as complementary in nature. When/if achieved it is such complementarity that provides ontological safety for the actors included in the association. For this kind of relationship to emerge the togetherness felt across the Atlantic has to be premised on the recognition of difference through two types of constitutive moves; firstly, bordering in regard to the exterior and, secondly, through the creation and up-keeping of lines of differentiation that run inside the Atlantic togetherness. In other words, while the Realist school elevates bordering *vis-à-vis* the threatening exterior into a key constitutive factor, and the Liberal approach generally assumes the absence of any dividing lines within what is frequently labelled a 'security community', the departure applied here takes into account the existence and constitutive impact of both external and internal demarcations.

The aim is therefore to refocus the enquiry towards the transatlantic community's interior and to analyse how internal difference has been read and constituted. The emphasis is thus on highlighting the necessity and constitutive impact of the lines of division running across the similarity underpinning what the Liberal school outlines as the 'special' Atlantic relationship, i.e. 'special' in the sense that the assumed 'anarchy' of international politics has been exempted from that sphere. The contribution argues that the lines internal to the relationship form an essential but an overlooked ingredient of socially constructed transatlantic bonds. Such lines not only have to be there, but have to be there in a specific manner, for the identities upholding the very relationship to complement each other.

With identity reduced to a derivate of security, as has usually been the case in both Liberal and Constructivist studies, difference is easily conceived in rather categorical and oppositional terms. Arguably, identity hides its ontological vulnerability by projecting the insecurity of its being onto an external and radically different other (Connolly 1991: 65-6; Behnke 2007: 8). By separating between security-as-survival and security-as-being a more flexible and dynamic approach allowing for commonality to be detached from a narrowly understood logic of security becomes possible. The latter, which Mitzen (2006: 273) calls 'ontological security-seeking', allows for the idea that an actor's feeling of being secure not only hinges on the externalisation of difference. It also becomes conceivable that the demarcations outlining difference that run *within* a relationship (like the transatlantic one) are also conducive for the construction and upholding of stable identities because they contribute to "the experiencing of oneself as a whole". In being benign and allowing for a complementary relationship to unfold, they in fact facilitate through the

routines of community-building ontological security-seeking.

As to continuity and change in regard to the experiences of identity-related safety, Mitzen attaches importance to the *habits* that determine identity. Another level and logic is introduced as identity is not merely taken to hinge on security-as-survival. She separates the ontological basis of Self/Other relationships from their behavioural and ontic manifestations and argues that identities in an ontological sense become attached to the *routines* through which they are reproduced and these routines, whether they are premised on discourses pertaining to internal similarity or difference, have to remain stable for actors "to come to know who they are" (Mitzen 2006: 273-4).

Against this background, my claim is therefore that difference has been present in transatlantic relations all along and in many ways forms the backbone of the relationship. The routines central to constructing and upholding the Atlantic order actually require that various forms of internal difference are present for a complementary relationship to come about. This is to say that similarity has *not* been privileged over difference in the sense argued by both Liberal and Constructivist schools. Processes of differentiation in terms of status, belonging and orientation have been starkly present within the Atlantic sphere and have, in fact, been mandatory for a durable setting of identities to emerge.

BEING ALIKE AND YET DIFFERENT

This implies more concretely, and in the context of a unifying transatlantic similarity, that Europe has to be positioned as America's constitutive exterior (and *vice versa*). As a condition for their togetherness the parties across the Atlantic must actually remain *distinct* from each other. It further follows that for America to be viewed as a derivative outcome of border-drawing *vis-à-vis* Europe the inevitable processes of border-drawing do not merely stand for policies pursued by self-evident and stable entities. Such moves are not just instrumental in nature but actually contain crucial formative elements in regard to America's/Europe's own being.

Europe stands out, within this complementary constellation, as America's counter-identity and exists as America's most 'significant other'. Europe is neither identical with nor an anti-self to America but figures, instead, as something which America is not, although the latter at the same time stands in an internal and necessary relationship to the former, i.e. what is being excluded nonetheless leaves formidable traces in America's identity. Being external and different but yet also internal to America implies that Europe is seen as being akin. It is not viewed as an external other but seen instead as being within the bonds of the Atlantic 'family' with Europe, moreover, expected to be constantly moving in the direction of America in the context of a rather hierarchic relationship. Precisely in being alike but yet never expected to reach its ultimate model, Europe is quite crucial for America's understanding of itself and the generation of ontological certainty.

The argument, therefore, is that established theorisations do not fully grasp the dynamics of the rather neighbourly relationship reaching across the Atlantic as neighbours are akin and remain safely within the bonds of a family-type constellation. Instead, the main theories tend to fo-

cus on security-as-violence and thereby also contribute to upholding ontological routines that view internal similarity as a necessary condition for the establishment and preservation of the relationship. However, focusing on security-as-being and conceptualising the routines central to that ontology as a key constitutive factor allows for a very different argument.

It can be claimed, therefore, that relationships such as the Atlantic one actually require and rest – as to their internal dynamics – on processes of differentiation. The focusing on security-as-being introduces a different perspective by indicating that discourses of security-as-violence do not necessarily constitute the key ontological requirement for actors to know who they are, gain recognition and orient themselves with a considerable degree of certainty. Togetherness premised on knowing and caring for each other and the identities part of such a constellation may, in an ontological sense, also rest on routines that oust and disregard arguments pertaining to security-as-violence.

Along these lines, Atlantic relations do not constitute a 'security community', as often claimed by Liberals. Instead, it may be argued that Atlantic togetherness has increasingly gained features of a neighbourly constellation in allowing identity to be defined *with* rather than *against* others. Moreover, the relationship also elicits considerable non-utilitarian elements of rivalry and competition and as such is better thematised as a community premised on a-security rather than security.

Exploring the unfolding of internal difference and how it is devised and routinely discussed for it to sustain or undermine communality is therefore mandatory for the emergence of a more profound understanding of the identity-related dynamics that underpin the transatlantic relationship. This is so as difference, in addition to accord, may be viewed as a necessary condition for the sustaining of the overall construction. The crucial questions to be explored are therefore: How is the line drawn and kept in place providing Europe with the posture of being in-between, i.e. neither fully similar to America nor totally outside America's self-identity, and what has recently obstructed and problematised the creation and maintenance of such a line? And in view of the key constitutive role of the difference located within similarity, what kind of Self/Other interaction across this line of division strengthens or undermines the commonality unfolding across the Atlantic and the West more generally?

VARIATIONS IN DIFFERENCE

The effort of refocusing enquiry towards the interior and providing difference with positive connotations implies that the approach is in some ways non-Schmittian in essence. Although accepting the claim that identities are as a rule premised on difference and that border-drawing stands out as a mandatory aspect of processes that bring identities into being, it is not necessary to abide to the usual notion that commonality in international relations is always constructed by keeping similarity apart from threatening otherness through moves of radical differentiation between friends and foes (Schmitt 1996 [1932]; see also Odysseos and Petito 2007). The following analysis of transatlantic relations rather starts from the view that difference is omnipresent and also impacts on identity interactions which unfold within commonality. Moreover, it is not just negative in nature as

benign forms of difference are also conceivable.

This change in emphasis may be illustrated with the help of the following table outlining various ways of producing constitutive difference:

Kind of difference produced	Location of the difference produced: *Internal*	*External*
Positive	1.	2.
Negative	3.	4.

Whereas the standard Schmittian approach, which underpins Realist as well as radical Constructivist approaches, tends to be geared towards demarcations of difference that are external, negative and quite intense in character in bringing about outright alterity (option 4), this contribution aims at highlighting those that are basically internal to the transatlantic community and predominantly benign in nature (option 1).[3] As such I do not subscribe to the assertion that political order always comes into being through radical ontological differentiation based solely on an intensified existential and external alienation, as claimed for example by Behnke (2007). As already argued, other forms of constitutive difference internal to the order are also conceivable. In fact, they may take positive as well as negative forms, although negative forms must obviously remain within bounds in order not to translate into outright otherness. This is because the inclusion of forms of otherness contaminated or associated with external others designated alien to the transatlantic community would undermine commonality and would obviously invite moves aimed at externalising those features and forms of difference found difficult to handle and seen as threatening in relation to the very bonds of togetherness.

Furthermore, in investigating more closely the *relational, inward-oriented and intimate logic* at play in the sphere of Atlantic togetherness, and in order to account for some of the complexities and intricacies that are part of that logic, there exist good reasons for bringing in the concept of *neighbour* into the analysis. Along with a number of other concepts premised on emotional and intimate ties the concept has so far escaped theoretical attention in the field of IR (cf. Berenskoetter 2007: 648), although it fits with the increasingly desecuritised nature of Atlantic bonds. The concept is also warranted as it invites analysis to be geared towards security-as-being, without having to first bring in the routines and assumptions of normalcy premised ontologically on security-as-violence. Neighbours are there on their own merits as an anchoring point of identity without some external 'enmity' having to be invoked as a necessary condition for their coming together. The argument, therefore, is that a neighbourly relationship is premised on separate identities and is of value on its own terms without having to draw on any utilitarian motives. Moreover, for the Europe-

[3] The Liberal approach with its emphasis on 'security communities', i.e. the stress on internal homogeneity and the ousting difference from the internal sphere, points to option 3 in the table. Žižek (1999) provides for a quite different reading by arguing that Schmitt actually repressed the political antagonism located within the interior by projecting it exclusively into the exterior. However, as noted by Prozorov ((2009), Schmitt's political ontology actually precedes the very distinction between the internal and the external with most of the analysis geared towards the interior. Option 2 in the table appears to lack clear representation, although the English school with its emphasis on international society might be seen as representing a step in that direction.

ans to be viewed as America's neighbours, America has to stand out as a core constituent of Atlantic togetherness. As noted, among others by Žižek (2000: 109), neighbours come into being through "include me out" types of moves with processes of inclusion and exclusion co-existing. There are resonances here with Derrida (1976: 146-164) who would for his part view the European partners as America's 'supplement', i.e. secondary in relation to America itself, although the latter would not be complete without the former.

Crucially, neither of the two categories integral to the transatlantic bond precedes the other. They are instead interdependent and come into being simultaneously through moves of differentiation within a context premised on commonality. Seen from the American side, the emerging split divides their inherent similarity into America as the core and the Europeans as not fully like America. With the latter set up as a model there are centre-periphery dynamics at play with the former remaining at a temporal distance from the latter. Europe is charged with the task of rectifying its Self by constantly progressing towards the given model. In doing so, it is able to position itself as part of the same America-centred order but with both having particularistic yet complementary identities, the existence of unifying similarity implies that the neighbours do not present a profound counter-image or an antithesis of the core. Europe figures, instead, rather safely as an extension of America's Self and portrays to some extent – in being akin – America's own image.

America's European neighbours are as such entities located at the fringes of a unifying transatlantic similarity. They are located spatially and above all temporally at a considerable distance, but remain nonetheless quite close in political, social, cultural and emotional terms. Importantly, the relationship, i.e. one based on benign and complementary forms of difference, allows for a dismissal of arguments concerning security-as-violence within the unifying similarity, although as a result of their very closeness and nature of being an integral part of the inside, the neighbours may still at times become a source of considerable unease in terms of security-as-being. This is because the difference closest to the core may, for good reasons, be experienced as that most threatening. Profound ontological anxiety can arise if key expectations, perceived as central to the core-neighbours relationship, are not met and the well-rehearsed identity-related routines underpinning commonality followed.

In fact, in American eyes the European neighbours can become rather problematic and threatening in view of the core's sense of Self, either by adopting positions that are temporally just too far from the model provided by the core (as is usually feared by liberal theorising), but also if they come dangerously close, thereby undermining the existence of internal difference. Similarly, in European eyes America may become a fundamental source of uncertainty and discomfort by pursuing inappropriate policies outside the expected norm, thereby locating itself not only inside but also outside the norms grounding the Atlantic association. And more generally, despite being benign in character, also a neighbourly relationship may thus contain aspects of Schmittian 'decisionism' and the relations may be quite intense and pertain to conflictual issues.

Viewed from an American perspective the European allies may wreck the relationship by not contributing to the 'include me

out' type of operations mandatory for America's understanding of itself to be confirmed. For example, key narratives concerning America's quite distinct being and its assumedly rather exceptional nature as an icon to be emulated by others are in trouble if the European partners send signals that they increasingly view themselves as equal to America. Similarity would in this perspective actually threaten and possibly even undermine the relationship. Assertions of the Europeans being ahead and having turned into a model on its own terms would stand out as even more subversive in derailing America's self-understanding premised on far-reaching exceptionality, i.e. a form of difference that in the routines providing ontological safety stand out as *sine qua non* for America to be able to bond with Europe in the first place.

More broadly, the core-neighbours relationship is bound to encounter difficulties if the neighbours do not bring about and ontologically convey the right and benign kind of difference. They are not assumed to be purified of all difference, rather to the contrary, but for their difference to be tolerated and positioned as complementary within a joint sphere of similarity, it has to stand out as friendly and uncontaminated by any dangerous and external otherness. In fact, the existence of a particular kind of difference is crucial for the relationship to work without friction and, as in any neighbourhood, special types of 'hedges' are needed across the Atlantic for relations to stay friendly.

THE OPTION OF STRANGERS

One reason for including the concept of 'neighbour' in efforts of theorising transatlantic bonds is that the perspective also draws attention to some quite uncommon forms of internal difference. Regarding ontological safety, it is important for the core that the neighbours stay *familiar* and *recognisable*. If their image becomes too blurred, there is the danger that the neighbours will become viewed, not as neighbours, but as intruding *strangers* (Bauman 1991: 53-61) eliciting a more problematic type of difference liable to enhance existential unease. In being difficult to categorise they could undermine and derail various ontological routines central to assumptions of neighbourliness across the Atlantic.

Various processes via which neighbours turn into strangers – or drift as *liminals* too close to external alterity – can certainly impact on the identity-related routines which uphold particular relationships. Neighbours, in being intimately known from the very start, do not constitute anomalies threatening epistemologically to evolve into some form of external and binary otherness. Rather than being neither in nor out as strangers are, neighbours are ontologically embedded within the homeliness of the domestic. They belong to 'us' – although stay outside and remain at some spatio-temporal distance from the core – and in this sense do not immediately challenge the very efforts of classifying and order-making in the way strangers do. They do not bring about incongruence into the efforts of ordering and do not, by resisting through their obscurity moves of categorisation, militate against lines of separation premised on a binary division within similarity. Neighbours do not figure, at least not to start with, as horrifying and monstrous entities along the lines of strangers. And unlike strangers, neighbours bring about ontological stability and contribute to security-as-being, although they also harbour the potential to break outside the bonds of estab-

lished identities, thereby threatening the established core-neighbours constellation and the border-drawing mandatory for a neighbourly relationship to prevail.

The argument, therefore, is that the idea of strangeness may be quite relevant also in view of the strains that have plagued the transatlantic relationship over recent years and it remains, in principle, an interesting form of ontological difference worth keeping in mind. The concept of a neighbour, meanwhile, is helpful in being premised on difference that exists within a hierarchic and asymmetric relationship of togetherness. It presupposes the simultaneous existence of similarity as well as difference and does not rest on the idea that the identities of the core and its neighbours have to be altogether similar for a durable relationship to prevail. The introduction of the concept of neighbour might also be warranted in the sense that the relationship between the core and its neighbours is usually rather resilient. In other words, it is not conducive to rapid changes as it is grounded in a considerable dose of similarity, while simultaneously establishing and resting on various forms of difference, although these enabling conditions may change over time. Thus, the temporality of the concept and the rigidity of the routines underpinning it ontologically appear to resonate with the conditions that have been more recently part of the transatlantic relationship.

AMERICA AS A PROJECTION OF EUROPEANNESS

In regard to processes developing a sense of Self, Europe and America have historically been closely related. In general, though, their search for ontological security has been met by defining each other in rather negative terms. In fact, arguments pertaining to security-as-violence have been strongly present and at times they have been a cause of considerable anxiety and unease to each other. Discursive routines have frequently invoked instability and it is only relatively recently that ontological security has been established through discourses generating basic trust between them.

In view of the rigidity and resistance to change in the routines underlying transatlantic processes of ontological security-seeking, some temporal depth and understanding of long-term dynamics is therefore necessary. In the following I hence provide a broad account of the relationship from Europe's discovery of America in 1492 until the present. Given the historical sweep the following account of the relationship is obviously somewhat simplified, impressionistic and contestable, not least because space precludes analysing contending discourses and representations. The ambition, however, is simply to capture the broad contours of the relationship rather than its specifics. It is one of illuminating its quite sedimented nature, but the endeavour also seeks to account for the sometimes quite profound ruptures that have on occasions derailed the underlying discursive routines.

To start in 1492, then, it is clear that Europe's initial encounter with America significantly challenged constructions of European identity and the search for ontological security. The New World was basically comprehended inclusively and seen as an extension of Europe. However, it was also regarded as confusing with various articulations available. The new continent, if seen as empty and lacking any innate difference, could be viewed as offering a temporal break, although it could also be imagined

as the 'child' of the 'mother country', or purported as Europe's outpost, or articulated as a new appendage and colony. All these departures were premised on assumptions of similarity between Europe and America with Europe as the temporal model, even if the strictly Europe-centred, hierarchic and non-bordered perceptions of political space extending across the Atlantic excluded the use of concepts such as neighbours. In being envisaged as something of a copy of Europe, America was deprived of recognition and subjectivity of its own and rendered inferior to Europe. Such constitutive stories supported Europe's view of itself, but also made America eligible for rather one-sided efforts of projecting European 'civilisation' into this newly discovered space.

However, as a result of these various interpretative options America remained difficult to categorise. Indeed, sometimes it was viewed as a kind of axiological 'alien' that should not have been there in the first place. The concept of stranger is thus applicable in that the discovery of America was not simply a surprise to Europe, but also a source of ontological strain. Boon and Delanty (2006: 169) therefore describe the discovery as "nothing less than the most stark confrontation possible with radical otherness, previously unknown". Unavoidably, a relationship had to be devised and lines of difference drawn westwards *vis-à-vis* the new continent in order to complement those demarcated previously towards the East. However, with America initially seen as a 'blank space' and void of any agency of its own the question emerged of how to demarcate and outline America's character. In this respect there existed a rather ambivalent relationship between internal and external otherness and Europe's new western 'frontier' remained diffuse for quite some time (Boon and Delanty 2006: 169).

In the end, and with the dominance of Eurocentric departures, the New World was categorised not so much as new but rather as an extension of Europe. The political space at the other end of the Atlantic relationship was viewed as one of togetherness, since despite the considerable distance no distinct temporal boundary was yet drawn. In this respect, in being comprehended as an 'empty space' and a 'land of opportunity', America allowed and invited for European mastery to be pursued vigorously within this assumed emptiness. The new continent was therefore approached in an inclusive manner, even though the flip side of this projection of similarity implied that a major part of the local cultures had to be viewed as radically different and therefore also as ontologically threatening to Europe's Self.

In turn, this latter element resulted in measures of elimination, culminating in what Todorov (1984: 2) calls "the greatest genocide in history". Thus, even if ontologically America was viewed as a sphere of a-security, violence was nonetheless introduced in order to sustain similarity as the basic argument underpinning Europe's ontological sense of security, i.e. security-as-being. In other words, projections of a positive and non-threatening similarity and non-bordered space premised on views on Europe as the model could only be upheld at a considerable human price.

Over time, however, the initial emphasis on similarity was challenged by other representations highlighting difference, with the Atlantic increasingly perceived as a barrier of demarcation. Indeed, from the beginning of the eighteenth century the New World became depicted as increasingly distinct

from Europe. In succeeding in resisting notions of inferiority and opposing views premised on similarity and inherent togetherness, the constitutive routines changed with America being increasingly narrated as external to Europe.

Especially for immigrants travelling across the Atlantic America became depicted as something entirely new and different. Whereas Europe was viewed as stagnant, un-dynamic and moving in the wrong direction, America was imagined in terms of growth and progress (cf. Duignan and Gann 1994). The views of immigrants, and the pilgrims in particular, were premised on exclusion and contributed significantly to the demise of the initial European narratives of the New World. For them previous projections of Eurocentrism from 'the Old Continent' were to be left behind. In general, therefore, the new arrivals traded their European past for something quite different and America was, in this sense, no longer comprehended as a mere reflection of Europe or seen as a passive object of the pursuance of European politics and culture.

Instead, the increasingly hegemonic constitutive stories were those of immigrants fleeing from persecution, poverty, anti-Semitism or repressive and feudal conditions. In the view of immigrants, the New World was not similar to the Old, but superior to it and even heavenly. It constituted a positive model on its own term, and if Europe served as a template, it was viewed as a negative one to be escaped from and left behind not merely in spatial but also temporal terms. The perspective of a 'promised land', one embedded in a linear and eschatological conception of time, provided the ground for America to see itself as rather unique. Constitutive stories drew on ontologies of America as representative of revolutionary change, while Europe was seen as stuck in illiberal politics and historical rivalries. These stories pertaining to America's ability to define difference as any other identity-project also challenged initial European ways of comprehending America by furnishing it with agency and narrative power of its own. America stood, in this context, for what Europe was not, with Europe representing the ontological difference against which America's growing subjectivity, sovereign being and sense of Self could be articulated.

However, for the most part cultural and emotional bonds remained rather strong. For example, the notion of America's difference as lying in its revolutionary nature helped nourish some inclusive ties, particularly towards France. It was as such difficult to cut European ties completely, as is evident in how immigrants categorised themselves as British-, Irish- or Italian-American. In other words, the production of difference internal to the relationship employed in outlining what America stood for was still basically premised on assumptions of far-reaching social, cultural and emotional connectedness with Europe, although Europeanness stood for what had been left behind whereas Americanness signified arrival as to the spatio-temporal journey across the Atlantic. This duality also testified to the existence of a kind of neighbourly relationship and routines resting on assumptions of relatively benign forms of difference without concerns of security-as-violence gaining any major foundational role.

This, however, did not last. Over time the spatial as well as temporal externalisation of Europe gained ground in America, with the remnants of Eurocentric routines ultimately substituted for views that fur-

nished America with increased autonomy, and with the radical othering central to security-as-violence beginning to take precedence over security-as-being and the emphasis on benign difference in the search for ontological security. The Quasi-War of the 1790s with France, the War of 1812 with Britain and the Spanish-American War of 1892 all testified to the emergence of identities of outright opposition and the existence of a militarised rivalry. Such conflicts contributed to America and Europe being understood as quite separate entities within an international system based on conflict and divergent interests.

As noted by Kupchan (2008: 113), perceptions of enmity prevailed within "a zero-sum view of the security environment", or to express it differently in terms of the routinisation of the relationship, oppositional views regarding physical security and the consequent wall erected across the Atlantic contributed to ontological safety in the sphere of identity-formation. More abstractly, the narratives added rather Schmittian enemy-related elements to the ontology underpinning the transatlantic sphere. Differences internal to the relationship were consequently seen negatively and in order to oust these differences, a clear and well-bordered exterior was required. As the Atlantic sphere of enmity did not allow for cooperative relations, America opted for policies of isolationism.

THE BREAKDOWN OF POLARITY

However, America's basically isolationist policies began to unravel towards the end of the nineteenth century. With America having turned into a template and with the ontology of security-as-violence having somewhat declined in status, there was less need to constantly isolate the country in view of assumptions of profound difference and the need to keep it spatially apart from Europe. Owing to its strength and particular character of an icon, it was argued that America could show Europe the way out of its troubles. In this way by inscribing a temporal differentiation into the relationship, Europe could also be turned into a source of ontological safety and platform of self-realisation in the context of a cooperative relationship concerning America's Self, although the relationship had to be transformative with America as the template.

Thus, rather than being viewed as radically different, Europe – or at least the more democratic European powers – increasingly figured as 'assisted others' in the American discourse. Difference was once again present within similarity and narratives pertaining to a distinct hierarchy emerged, but this time with America positioned at the core of the transatlantic sphere. While the two entities were still seen as distinct from each other difference no longer amounted to outright externalisation and radical othering. In consequence, identities on both sides of the Atlantic, rather than remaining oppositional, grew increasingly compatible. This process was further supported by the Russian Revolution in 1917, which while being constituted as a form of radical otherness, at the same time created space to view differences in respect of other parts of Europe as compatible with American identity and therefore also to some extent internal to it. It is no coincidence that it was at this point that ideas of Western civilisation, i.e. a form of similarity shared with Europe for the first time became a part of popular American discourse (Gress 1998).

In policy terms the increased compatibility led America to become more activist in respect of Europe, not least in terms of projecting power towards the Old continent and engaging with it in ideological terms. The fact that America was understood as being ahead of Europe (socially, economically as well as politically) on the one hand preserved its distinctiveness, but also enabled it to project itself into Europe. The implied activism took on unprecedented forms with America's intervention on the side of Britain and France in WWI against Germany's otherness.

The challenge of war further spurred engagement which impacted on Europe and transformed the international system and its rules more generally. President Woodrow Wilson, in preferring multilateral internationalism, talked about creating peace by making the world safe through increased democracy and economic well-being. Such value-laden aspirations and comprehension of the country's ideal nature further supported projecting America into world politics, and Europe in particular. Wilson also proposed the League of Nations as a collective security arrangement to defend national self-determination for all countries, although at that stage America's preparedness to engage itself outside its own sphere was already waning. The difference prevailing on the other side of the Atlantic was ontologically still too offensive for America's identity to be devised on the idea of the Atlantic as the platform for the cultivation of truly neighbourly relations.

Instead of engagement a backlash took place as American societal currents did not support the continuation of active engagement. The routines sustaining America's sense of Self and the consequent spatio-temporal bordering turned out to be too rigid and entrenched. The policies of engagement therefore lost backing once danger was no longer seen as acute, with the US Senate rejecting participation in the League and thus showing America remained unwilling to take on binding obligations of collective action. With the arguments about security-as-violence losing in relevance as a ground for togetherness, America returned to its old, more isolationist stance. By the 1930s, with Europe increasingly perceived as slipping into the grip of chauvinism and irredentism, arguments pertaining to negative difference required distance be kept between the New and Old World.

However, the contest concerning how America should project itself into Europe and international affairs continued. Struggles over the country's foreign policy identity did not disappear despite isolationism peaking in the 1930s. Moreover, the Great Depression not only created a domestic political battleground, but as Nau (2002: 73) argues, also dramatically altered America's identity and markedly reduced the social and cultural distance between Europe and America by demonstrating that America was not immune to social ills or exempt from some basic 'laws' of history. The hardship encountered led to a questioning of America as a distinct ideal and created therefore space for an era of activist national government in the form of a turn towards welfare capitalism and industrial regulation. In a sense, America encountered strangeness within itself (e.g. Kristeva 2002: 265) as social and economic realities undermined American foundational myths of constant and uninterrupted progress. Consequently, instead of being perceived as profoundly exceptional and temporally in a category of its own, the country could at

least in some respects be equated with Europe, and in this sense the recognition of internal strangeness seems to have contributed to a more benign and inclusive reading of Europe's different character.

The new reading also supported a more cooperative relationship. The challenges encountered seemed to suggest that America's emphasis on individual liberty and strong societies of self-governance could not offer durable solutions and therefore the state had to be provided with a stronger emphasis. In other words, the established identity-related routines, both in regard to security-as-violence and security-as-being, were under great pressure and with development pointing to less emphasis on moves of securitisation, a re-reading of difference internal to the transatlantic relationship could take place in the sphere of security-as-being.

The pressures mandating a re-reading increased further as the focus on various 'social democratic', and hence European remedies, in the American discourse suggested that the social and cultural gulf between Europe and America was perhaps narrower than sometimes believed. The conclusion could be drawn that America's insular position and efforts of staying aloof did not prevent downturns or ruptures. As such, there were clear limits to America's unique and exceptionalist nature and, despite dearly held national beliefs, in some cases it seemed that European ideas might actually help remedy American problems. It then followed that America did not merely have to aspire for proceeding towards its own ideal being. With the decline in political, social and economic distance, America was perhaps after all not as distinct, self-enclosed, exemplary and clearly ahead in temporal terms as had been claimed. Hence also the conclusion could be drawn that the hierarchy between America and Europe was less profound than previously thought and America might sometimes benefit from the introduction of a more equal relationship with the projection of European qualities across the Atlantic. America was perhaps not as totally as had been thought the 'seeing centre' or the 'sovereign site' from whence politics could be surveyed and known with certainty (cf. Ó Tuathail 1996:4).

In sum, new routines were called for as European developments during the first part of the twentieth century facilitated a more benign and inclusive reading of the Old World, with America then also capitalising on this through increasing intrusion and the launching of efforts aimed at reshaping Europe.

FROM PEARL HARBOUR TO THE END OF THE COLD WAR

However, the outbreak of WWII allowed uncertainty again to be assigned to the outside. It brought perceptions of America as the 'seeing centre' firmly back in place, although it also catapulted questions regarding America's relationship to Europe onto the national agenda in a new manner with Europe seen not just as a site of danger but also as the location of some 'assisted others'. This type of bonding implied that any remaining nostalgia for America's insularity was finally abandoned as it had to be accepted that the difference to be overcome in regard to America's ideal being was not merely internal in nature. The core issue pertaining to America's essence was not just one of how close the country was to an idealised model ('City on the Hill') for others then to emulate America, but it also per-

tained to being charged with the task of impacting others. Hence space opened up allowing for spatio-temporal de-bordering as to the routines underpinning American self-understanding to be extended across the Atlantic.

The dominant narratives then departed from the view that Europe's troubles called for active American engagement with the Atlantic sphere turning into a crucial spatial setting impacting America's view of itself. Owing to the challenges faced in the sphere of security, American society accepted – albeit initially quite reluctantly and only after the drama of Pearl Harbour demonstrated the country could not stay detached from the war – the idea that America had to forge an alliance and get involved in the conflict. Engagement was also narrated as an expression of America's national strength, and stories told in favour of participation similarly took the form of narratives about the Atlantic democracies coming together in the hour of need.

Furthermore, legitimacy was sought by arguing that America had to project its democracy across the Atlantic in order to defend this aspect of its universal being against hostile attack, i.e. the war was arguably about defending features central to America's self- conception with similar qualities now being under threat on the Old Continent. The previous policies of staying aloof were therefore discarded in favour of active engagement resting on narratives of togetherness and complementary forms of difference.

Like after WWI, the wartime experience was followed by US attempts to implement an ambitious international agenda. This time, though, war-related mobilisation and engagement in the Old World were not accompanied by waning support for internationalism once the threats receded. It was instead taken for granted – at least among the foreign policy elite – that active engagement in European affairs had to continue as it would be unwise to settle for merely subduing the ideas and forces which in the long run could also have threatened America itself and America's own projection into world politics. Hence, rather active policies of *Einbindung* ensued in relation to key European powers with America having made, in contrast to a long history of trying to stay aloof from the Old Continent, a choice for Europe and the cultivation of Atlantic bonds. Or to express this in terms of identities, stories about physical security-seeking enabled and allowed for a lowering and re-drawing of the boundaries delineating America's view of itself, this then amounting to identity-related routines premised ontologically on a more inclusive relationship across the Atlantic. The previous spatial differentiation could be reconsidered and although with America still comprehended as quite unique, at least some forms of external difference became digestible and could be approach in inclusive terms.

Europe was undoubtedly still viewed as different but the ways of dealing with that difference changed. Rather than keeping Europe at arm's length, it was now found wise to outline a partnership in the form of transatlantic commonality and to impact on it by projecting America forcefully into the transatlantic sphere. Importantly, whereas America could remain its old and stable Self, Europe was bound to change in being still rendered as uncertain and therefore also insecure. The negativity that the European partners brought into the sphere of the Atlantic sphere was coded as something to be transformed over time. In order to fa-

cilitate the change in the bordering pursued *vis-à-vis* Europe, a considerable amount of similarity and benign forms of difference came into view on the other side of the Atlantic, and in consequence America's previous isolationist policies were reconsidered and eventually dropped.

Moreover, now feeling increasingly superior to other actors, including Europe, on the international scene America was tempted into a more internationalist stance and no longer defined itself "in opposition to Europe" (Eichner 2006: 25). Far more assertive and self-confident policies emerged and, combined with the fact that the European allies were increasingly prepared to acknowledge America's pre-eminence and its posture as an ideal, this facilitated active and neighbourly engagement. America could, within the post-war constellation, rest assured as to its superior nature being not only ahead in the form of policy-related competence but more generally in temporal terms. The transatlantic relationship thus amounted to a quite hierarchic and non-homogenous construction with America gaining recognition for its particular identity from European 'significant others' precisely by reaching out, engaging itself and making Europe a recipient of American politics.

The dominant narrations thus emphasised America's pre-eminence, undermining any calls for a return to isolationist policies, and rather supporting aspirations that the Old World be decisively moulded in the image of the New. With Europe furnished with potential for conversion, particular American qualities, values and departures were then to be planted into Europe. On the level of the politics pursued, various rather far-reaching schemes of political reform and economic engagement were devised to reform Europe's potentially negative features and forms of otherness. Germany was profoundly remoulded in order for it to become a free and democratic country and the Marshall Plan (1947-1951) stood out as a major vehicle for intrusion into European affairs. In general Europe was set on an American course. It was assigned with the task of progressing towards the American template while at the same time the development of complementarity between America and Europe was not to be equated with equality.

The principles to underpin the Atlantic relationship were hammered out in the Atlantic Treaty signed by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941, with the structure completed with the creation of NATO in 1949, an arrangement indicating that America was also prepared to accept its entanglement in a permanent alliance with the European powers. Clearly, America's new identity and the underlying ontology supported Europe gaining an inclusive and privileged position within the bonds of an Atlantic association.

The new stress on danger and security-related threats, particularly encountered in Europe, helped to keep the arrangement intact. The fight against fascism during WWII was to be continued, although now directed mainly against communism (Campbell 1992: 17-34). Concepts such as 'Manifest Destiny', which became part of the identity-related routines in American discourse, mandated the acceptance and pursuance of leadership in order for 'the free world' to be saved. Meanwhile, policies of containment required that the US continued to project itself into European politics. This was clearest through NATO, but was also evident in America's support for integration in Western Europe, not least through the establishment of the European Communities

(EC). As such, the US indeed became a constitutive 'European' and, in a sense, became a major European power impacting significantly on developments via the frame provided by transatlantic togetherness.

This is also to say that victory in WWII contributed decisively, as a formative event, to the accumulation of hegemonic discursive capital which could be used both domestically and internationally. Overall, the long-standing routines underpinning ontological security-seeking changed on both sides of the Atlantic. On a very general level, America provided a lens for Europe to be reinterpreted. As argued by Boon and Delanty (2007: 171), the Europeans were offered images through which they could figure out what had gone wrong and thereby also redefine themselves with reference to America, although the use of the option offered and opened up was also crucial for America's own self-understanding.

The platform and discourse established worked basically well, but over time also some difficulties emerged, for example, with the European allies' greater willingness to pursue policies of détente with the Soviet Union. According to Nau (2002: 77), France, Germany and Britain initiated the policy as they "doubted America's will" to defend Europe in the event of nuclear war and in view of Moscow having gained nuclear parity. This brought about a rift in Atlantic relations which could be interpreted as standing for the non-recognition of America's role in Europe and as challenging its leadership within the Western alliance. A considerable number of other issues such as the Suez crisis in 1956, the Cuban missile crisis, the oil crisis and the Vietnam War similarly tested whether a sufficient amount of inter-subjectively agreed commonality and the right kind of differences tying together the different sides of the Atlantic remained.

Arguably, the European allies did not object to the assumed similarity reaching across the Atlantic. They were basically content (although some more than others) with the hierarchy and the inclusive as well as complementary aspects of the Atlantic order, one described by Ikenberry (2008: 10) as one in which "the United States makes it power safe for the world, and in return Europe – and the wider world – agrees to live with the U.S.-led system". However, at the same time they did not fully abide by the non-egalitarian nature of the relationship, and in some cases were prepared to challenge America's hegemony by turning less faithful and appreciative in pursuing their own independent policies to those expected by America (cf. Costigliola 1998). And more importantly, the European way of understanding integration increasingly deviated from the American comprehension with the Europeans devising an ideal of their own. Rather than endeavouring at catching up with America and emulating America as an icon, their departure was predominantly anchored in overcoming Europe's own and notorious past. Above all, it was one of adding distance to the Europe of power political wars and a number of other negativities.

This endeavour of self-rectification implied, among other things, that the transatlantic setting was less America-centred than usually thought on the American side of the Atlantic. Europe did not just figure as an object of America's identity-related policies and ability to define difference as it was also able to lean on a constitutive narrative and ideals of its own in a self-sustained manner. Obviously, this narrative resourcefulness added considerably to equality within the

Atlantic sphere, although it could equally have subverted definitions imposed on Europe and thereby fuelled disagreement, as well as brought about serious rivalry. It turned out, however, that the differences were in general negotiable. Commonality prevailed among other reasons because integration had positive connotations both in the context of the European and America narrations. And more importantly, the ideals at play were complementary in nature. They did not clash as to the temporal perspectives involved the sense that the European stories defined what to avoid whereas the American ones focused on the path to chose. The complementary nature appears to be the main reason why Europe's efforts of rectification could be reconsiled with the American feelings of being vindicated and having gained the position of a template for others to follow.

THE TROUBLED PERIOD OF THE POST-COLD WAR YEARS

As a formative moment the end of the Cold War created a broad mixture of reactions and interpretations concerning the future of transatlantic togetherness. With the great struggle gone, the markers for positioning oneself became far more slippery and the profound changes in the political landscape obviously provided the various routines and interpretative frameworks underpinning the relationship with a significant test.

Initially the hope was that the relationship between the US and Europe would become even closer. What was to be accounted for consisted of success (although now located in the past) this then allowing a further idealising of the qualities of the Self in contradistinction to the obvious failings of the Other. Along these lines, it was frequently pointed out in the discourses trying to make sense of the turn that a by and large unified and neighbourly alliance had endured various difficulties. It had stood its ground as a 'community of destiny' under considerable duress and could, so the thinking went, now fully enjoy the fruits of success in terms of added similarity. According to commentators like Risse-Kappen (1996), the alliance represented a superior moral space and could now, in being validated by the crumbling of the historical Other and with the removal of previous spatial restrictions, play out its pacifying and democratising potential in an increasingly non-bordered manner within international relations at large.

However, this Liberal line of rather straight-forward and basically quite non-political (cf. Behnke 2007: 83-85) reasoning turned out to be rather short-lived. The radical openness of the situation was demonstrated in one of its aspects by that quite soon those comprehending the transatlantic relationship in terms of an alliance started to raise questions about the very meaning of the Atlantic togetherness. What is the alliance about and what holds it together if major threats are no longer identifiable? Such a security-as-violence based reading of political space led unavoidably to the conclusion that the relationship was lacking in purpose. The validity provided by the past-oriented discursive frameworks stressing the constitutive meaning of alterity was waning and there was, according to a number of Realist voices, no reason to continue to ride on overstated notions of similarity and suppress the divisive differences that also 'naturally' existed among those part of the transatlantic relationship.

One strand of the Liberal voices part of the debate came close to the concerns of

the Realists in arguing that the risk was indeed one of previous similarity being undermined. With the glue of the common threats gone, emotional distance reaching across the Atlantic was arguably bound to increase. With such questions generating an interest in probing the assumed similarity, it rather turned out that Europe and America were in many ways alarmingly different from each other. If measured in terms of basic values, the role of religion in public affairs, the way the media operates, approaches to environmental issues and the models of foreign policy, considerable cleavages appeared to run across the Atlantic. On a more concrete note, both the Balkan conflict and the Kosovo war seemed to testify to severe strains between Europe and America and overall, the emphasis on similarity as the basic feature carrying the relationship amounted to a broad and worried, but also rather confused debate on the future of transatlantic relations. The strains were taken to be rather severe and it was feared that the partners of the relationship would, in being exposed to critique sometimes called 'friendly fire' (Pond 2004), drift apart.

For some, however, the crux of the issue was rather that the differences were no longer complementary in the way they used to be. With Europe having turned into a success story through integration, and therefore also more self-reliant and less prone to submit oneself to a strict and categorical Atlantic hierarchy, there was also less preparedness among the Europeans to interpret America's difference in benign terms. Moreover, American feelings of being distinct and in a category of its own were strengthened by the end of the Cold War. From this perspective, the outcome testified, not merely to the essential benevolence of the American way of doing things, but also spoke for the need of continued American leadership. In this vein, the Clinton administration talked about the United States as the "indispensable nation" (cf. Steinmo and Kopsten 2008: 4) when it comes to questions of world order and world management. In other words, America felt increasingly hegemonic, not merely within the transatlantic setting, but also in the sphere of international relations at large. This was also in some sense problematic and, as stated by Fukuyama (2006: 6), "the emergence of a unipolar post-Cold War world had made the extent of American hegemony, as it turned out, a source of anxiety even to America's closest allies".

One expression of the growing inequality and problems pertaining to the constitutive routines consisted of the argument that the international system had turned 'unipolar', providing America not only with the right but also the duty to impact on developments. Expressions like the 'hegemonic moment' proliferated and it became commonplace to claim that America had, owing to the demise of the Soviet Union, become the sole superpower – if not *hyperpuissance*, as argued by the French Foreign Minister, Védrine. In other words, the differences underpinning the transatlantic relationship in terms of social distance had become more pronounced than previously. They were no more complementary and easily negotiable and hence endangered rather than carried the relationship.

The assumed success then also implied that there was little space or reason for American self-doubt. The prevailing identitity still retained the Cold War as its point of reference, and if difference appeared to proliferate in a disturbing manner, it was seen as being related to the partners rather

than oneself because, as the end of the Cold War testified, 'we' had achieved 'victory' precisely by being 'we'. The falling of the Berlin Wall was taken to signify that America was, as a 'winner', on the right track. With history now 'proving' that America was what it thought itself to be, there was no cause for self-doubt or change of course. However, the European conclusions were different in the sense that winning in the sense of overcoming the shadows of the past then also opened up space for the pursuance of different policies. [4] With Europe having been liberated from the burden of its notorious past the temporal emphasis could consequently be shifted from the past towards the present and the future. At large, this implied that the constitutive stories on the different sides of the Atlantic were no longer complementary in the way they used to be. With the shift in temporality on the European side the constitutive stories turned – due to their similarity – increasingly competitive in nature.

The growing influence of the neoconservatives and the election of George W. Bush as president in 2001 further added to America's determination to pursue distinct policies of its own. On one hand the neoconservatives stood for disengagement from Europe for America's assumed 'purity' to be preserved, i.e. various differences running across the Atlantic were furnished with a negative reading but on the other hand they also represented messianic views compelling America to lead and impose its policies on others (e.g. Dunn 2005). This approach implied that both similarity and difference were brought to the fore as being quite problematic in essence. As noted by Fukuyama (2002: 60), the neoconservatives felt that European policies had been too cautious and conventional during the Cold War years, whereas the neoconservatives themselves had stood for policies that went beyond conventional wisdom. The experience gained reinforced a unilateralist mindset and an us-versus-them logic within the neoconservative camp, which amounted to arguments that great leadership often involves putting aside self-doubt. In consequence, the neocons advocated determination and called for the flouting of the conventional approaches (i.e. the acceptance of complementarity and a benign reading of difference) also in an Atlantic context and crucially, with the presidency of George W. Bush, they were increasingly able to put these ideas into practice.

The terrorist attack in September 2001 further bolstered their position among other reasons because they were able to come with a framing that facilitated the transformation of the uncertainties of history into a new and readable script entailing also rather concrete challenges. Having a different, albeit plausible enemy and being now directly in danger America had no other option than taking forcefully the epistemic lead. With the emphasis and trust of the neocons in the utility of military force, this in turn meant that after having initially to adapt to a decline in the constitutive impact of security-as-violence in the aftermath of the Cold War, security-related arguments suddenly returned with considerable strength to the routines seeking to provide ontological stability.

[4] This is perhaps best exemplified by the EU's Security Strategy (2003) and its 2008 update both asserting that a breakthrough has been achieved as "the violence of the 20th century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history". For the ESS see http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf and for the update www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/ems_Data/docs/pressdata/ENreports/104630.pdf.

At the same time, however, terrorism has been quite difficult to pin down through any standard moves of temporal and spatial bordering. In consequence, extensive debates ensued regarding whether the new threats encountered added to similarity or difference and called for processes of increasing or reducing the impact of borders within the Atlantic partnership. The efforts of re-drawing have been evidenced for example by America's introduction of concepts such as 'the coalition of the willing'. Rather than testifying to homogeneity the dominant moves pointed to the existence of quite profound internal differences pushing America and Europe apart. The strains were, on occasions, quite considerable and in some cases America's emphasis on new forms of radical otherness amounted even to efforts of re-drawing the boundaries within the transatlantic relationship. With America seen as being directly under threat, doubts emerged as to the complementary and benign nature of European difference.

These efforts of re-reading were most clearly presented by Donald Rumsfeld (Joenniemi 2005). In arguing that time was no longer shared, he coined two Europes, each with their own temporal trajectory. Within such a constellation the 'New' Europeans could according to Rumsfeld be approached inclusively as they represented benign and adaptable forms of difference. The 'Old' should instead – due to their intransigence – be treated as having turned almost non-European in character in refusing to follow and abide to America's leadership. In aspiring at an autonomous perspective of their own and hence also heading temporally into an altogether erroneous direction, they were well on their way of turning into ontological strangers. This is to say that on the one hand Rumsfeld's discursive move and ontological intervention remained rather traditional in reflecting the hierarchical differentiation between America and Europe, but at the other hand it also contained new elements through the denial of any transatlantic equality and firm rebuttal of any coevalence. This contentious framing then mandated a re-drawing of the boundaries of the transatlantic community for the ambivalence, one created by the inability of some of the 'Old' European allies to abide to the new script, to be ousted. Rumsfeld's intervention quite clearly reflected his view that America had not just the unquestionable right but also the duty to decide on the borders of commonality as well as the unfolding of the various postures regarding centrality and peripherality within the re-shaped transatlantic constellation.

Whereas the record of discourses regarding security-as-violence remains rather mixed and has turned out to be quite difficult to translate into broadly acceptable ontological routines, the same goes for security-as-being, with America's understanding of Self being challenged by various other trends, including those of globalisation. It may be argued that the supreme importance attached to terrorism in the American discourse has in part served to counter arguments promoting de-securitisation. In this respect, the focus on terrorism has facilitated keeping various issues central to the security-as-violence discourse high on the national agenda. In any case, the question "who are we" has in numerous cases and very explicitly been raised in the debate, with this indicating that the ingrained habits that have aimed at providing a durable answer and anchor for the established identities have been under considerable stress.

BEYOND NORMALCY

Focusing on the scholarly debate indicates similarly that the normalcy of the transatlantic discourse is no longer what it used to be, and indeed testifies to an emerging breach in previous routines.

The seminal intervention of Fukuyama (1992) that a profound temporal shift has taken place through 'the end of history' underlines that issues pertaining to security-as-being continue to figure prominently in the debate. It seems, he asserts in drawing on an interpretative framework based on idealist philosophy, as if a core aspect of America's in some sense rather exceptional (even utopian) identity has been vindicated by history itself.[5] In other words, the temporal gap between America and its ideal being has been closed and with the dream having become true, America is more than just a beacon of future-oriented hope. His rendition can on the one hand be viewed as an effort of providing America with a stable and unambiguous being, although the opposite option is on the other hand also conceivable as success and the subsequent freezing of time may paradoxically also bring with it a considerable dose of existential anxiety. Rather than contributing to an externalisation of transition and ambiguity with America being seen as an unmoved mover, the alleged moment of temporal implosion affirming America's final arrival may entail elements of a profound crisis.

This is so as the argued reaching of an epochal threshold implies that America is not merely close to its teleological goal but has actually reached its telos. The temporal gap crucial for America's self-understanding between where it is and where it has been heading has finally been closed and this temporal difference is no more applicable as an ontological aspect of identity-building. Moreover, as the moment of fulfilment does not merely apply to America but the iconic status of liberal democracy more broadly, also the borderline between the inside and outside of the country tends to falter. The general applicability of the liberal-democratic model and its affirmed standing as the inevitable future path implies, in one of its aspects, that also others are unavoidably bound – with the demise of any meaningful exterior – to march in the same direction. Their teleological goal is set and the direction given, although they still might have some distance to cover prior to arrival.

In any case, in the context of Fukuyama's quite self-contained rendition of the post-Cold War America is in effect no longer able to purport itself as wholly unique as a 'promised land', one temporally on route to final success. Moreover, also the constitutive meaning of spatial difference is taken to be changed as America is no more able to gain a firm sense of being through comparisons and border-drawing *vis-à-vis* external and enabling difference. The change in temporality is thus bound also to impact on the hierarchy and dynamics underpinning external relations, including the Atlantic ones. In essence, the 'victory' and final break-through entails that the routines pertaining to the spatio-temporal differences on which America's ontological safety has rested no longer work in the way they used to. With the collapse of crucial forms of difference, therefore, the departures previously applied have to be radically rethought and revised, although it may also be noted that the narrative launched by Fukuyama on fulfilment neither projects

[5] Fukuyama's philosophical reading of the post-Cold War situation is premised on a liberal reinterpretation of Hegel's conception of the end of history and more particularly the interpretation provided by Alexandre Kojève (1969).

America as a stranger to itself, nor does it assert that America would have become increasingly similar in relation to its Atlantic partners. Instead, it suggests that America has finally become identical with itself.

Arguably, with the tectonic plates underpinning America's Self having shifted to new positions, not only the Self but also the transatlantic relationship are bound to be premised on rather different constitutive routines. According to Fukuyama's line of thinking, similarity in the form of American liberalism is bound to prevail the world over, and difference can now only appear as internal to the project and be predominantly benign and negotiable in character. With the collapse of an outside and the loss of key particularities, each and everyone has to follow America's iconic lead on a path of liberal politics. The temporal route is set as history has shown the futility of trying to devise alternative narratives premised on competitive and radically different approaches. And more broadly, with the meaning of similarity and difference as well as the relation between these two qualities changing, what constitutes the 'special' nature of the tight transatlantic togetherness may no longer be taken for granted.

However, Fukuyma's emphasis on an alleged triumph of liberal democracy and what may here be interpreted as a stress on profound changes in the routines and normalcy underlying America's self-constitution has remained a rather exceptional (and sometimes ridiculed) strand of argument.[6] Most voices in the debate have stayed within the bounds of the ordinary and have discussed the state and future of the Atlantic order on the basis of traditional theories and frameworks of interpretation. In effect, Fukuyama's claim of a drastic temporal shift, one calling for the introduction of quite different routines to underpin identities, has been by and large sidelined. It may therefore be argued that the identity-related routines installed in the aftermath of WWII have largely stood their ground. They have, it might be argued, done so by being in the first place firmly anchored during the years of the Cold War and secondly, the end of the Cold War has usually been interpreted as vindicating rather than derailing the routines applied. As such scholarly analysis has also generally approached transatlantic relations through the use of established theories. As noted by Ikenberry (2008: 4), IR scholarship has been "steady and predictable for many decades" and this goes for the theorisation of Atlantic bonds as well.

OTHER SCHOLARLY INTERVENTIONS

Realist voices are a case in point, having rather faithfully followed the established trajectories and eschewed the need for new thinking. For this reason they have also encountered considerable difficulties in trying to fuel the debate with broadly shared arguments. Their inclination to see external otherness, material factors, interests and instrumental reasoning as constitutive of alliances and international relations at large has, as such, provided them with a prominent position in the exchange of views. However, as threats and more generally an ontology pertaining to security-as-violence are assumed to imbue the Atlantic sphere with cohesion, it may also be noted that a reliance on Realist theories unavoidably

[6] However, for an effort to discuss the underlying Hegelian thesis further, see Žižek (2008). For an effort to relate Russia to the theme of post-history, see Prozorov (2009).

leads to the conclusion that the transatlantic relationship is moribund. The core claim of the Realist school is therefore that the reasons (in the form of external and radical otherness) which initially brought about the western association no longer exist. The ontology pertaining to security-as-violence has lost in constitutive impact and in consequence the days of the transatlantic relationship are necessarily numbered. The gist of the problem, they argue, is not internal discord but redundancy in terms of external otherness.

As Atlantic bonds have nonetheless persevered and have actually remained rather strong despite the discord and demise antagonistic relations, the Realists have more recently been compelled to become quite cautious in their predictions. They have, in some cases, even backtracked on their initial assertions presented during the 1990s. For example, Waltz (2000: 18-20) now admits that the transatlantic relationship has been far more resilient than expected. Likewise, NATO has remained on the scene. In trying to account for this resilience he brings in American interests as an intervening variable and claims that it has been in the US interest "to extend the life of a moribund institution", even hinting that American interests may in this case be misperceived.

In other words, for some reason the US has found it necessary to deviate from the dictates of the power political logic that according to Realists should basically determine the fate of the transatlantic association. Waltz also notes that with the disappearance of the Soviet threat and the increased freedom for various actors of pursuing goals of their own, the hegemonic tutelage of the US is no longer there. The US presence in Europe, he asserts, is nothing more than "an irritant to European states" with transatlantic bonds therefore becoming "a burden to America" (Waltz 1993: 75).

Kagan (2003) should also be mentioned here. His basically Realist analysis is premised on materiality and the distribution of power within the Atlantic order, although complemented by observations pertaining to similarity and difference. In essence Kagan argues that there is too much of a mismatch between America's increased strength and Europe's inability or lack of interest in following suit. Furthermore, there is an increasing lack of similarity in the strategic cultures across the Atlantic, with a 'Martian' America standing at odds to 'Venutian' Europe. For Kagan, the ontic as well as ontological differences within the relationship have become too pronounced, with America emphasising threats particularly after 9/11 and Europe tending to sideline feelings of being "at war". The routines pertaining to security-as-violence therefore no longer support complementary identities. Furthermore, a spatial and social discrepancy has emerged in the sense that America has turned into a global power, whereas Europe remains content with its regional emphasis. This arguably implies that the transatlantic sphere has lost much of its previous importance as a platform and discursive field utilised in the construction of America's Self.

However, worst in Kagan's view is that Europe no longer seems interested in following American leadership. Instead of affirming America's view of itself, Europe has become a source of ontological distress. In essence, Kagan aims, through his pedagogy and moves of denigration, at preserving routines that have for long underpinned America's view of itself. In this reading

American identity requires difference in the form of a particular kind of inequality in its relationship with Europe. With previous and established forms of otherness (e.g. the Soviet threat) now belonging to a bygone era, it appears that benign and compatible forms of difference conducive to upholding the transatlantic relationship are increasingly being re-interpreted. Rather than contributing to ontological safety they are now seen to produce existential anxiety.

Such assertions that the Europeans (a propensity shared also by some American authors such as Rifkin (2004)) are engaging in devising problematic stories seem true. The discourse on the Iraq war is obviously a case in point, with key European voices not just distancing themselves from but also looking down on American policies. Some note that America retains its will to lead but there is a lack of followers (cf. Buzan 2008). The strains as to the interpretative frame to be used in devising and upholding commonality have been quite obvious with Habermas and Derrida (2003) not only being critical of America but also claiming that – due to its reflexive nature and ability to learn from past errors – Europe is actually ahead of America. They assert that the temporal hierarchy has actually been reversed and Europe may therefore now also function as a model in the context of the transatlantic relationship. For sure, such interventions profoundly challenge the temporal forms of difference that have characterised the Atlantic association. They do so by radically revising the hierarchy that in particular has been essential for America's self-understanding by denying America the recognition that it craves for in the sphere of Atlantic relations.

The Realist reading of the role of difference in the context of Atlantic togetherness therefore appears to boil down to the conclusion that over recent years the relationship has taken quite problematic forms. These have become so pronounced that the whole association is at risk. With Europe increasingly displaying features of a stranger, they assert that America has consequently become less interested in carrying the burden, providing leadership and supporting the Atlantic community in general.

In line with Realism, also the Liberal school has remained by and large loyal to its traditional theories and interpretations. It seems in general to assert that the unifying similarity across the Atlantic has declined while differences have become more pronounced and problematic. There exists, though, a number of deviant voices within the Liberal camp with, for example, Nau (2008: 98-99) arguing that similarity has actually increased with stronger support on both sides of the Atlantic for common values such as democracy, human rights and market economy. This, he contends, accounts for the resilience of the relationship despite the radically altered circumstances.

Likewise, for the Constructivist camp similarity appears to stand out as the prime condition bolstering Atlantic togetherness. Shared identities originating with joint practices and processes of socialisation are seen, as indicated by Hopf (2005), as forming the backbone of the relationship. Similarity carries the relationship whereas processes of differentiation are in essence a problem as difference threatens to undermine commonality.

Although in some regards adopting a Realist position, Kupchan (2008) expresses a similar view by calling for undivided similarity. Yet he offers a somewhat different explanation for the declining ability to preserve the Atlantic order as a political and

cultural space. For him (as for Rifkin 2008), the problems are predominantly embedded in the decline of America's nature as a model and pole of attraction. Similar to the argument of Habermas and Derrida, he contends (2008: 43) that the traditional hierarchy and historical setting have been reversed. This has taken place in the sense that often Europe appears to stand for progress. The tables have been turned furnishing Europe with the position of a template. To prove his point Kupchan criticises the United States for various social atavisms: "death penalty, the underclass and uninsured, as well as the insensitivity to environmental change".

He then asserts that for many Europeans, the United States has indeed lost its allure as a model and magnet. The previous hierarchy within the Atlantic relationship as to ideals has arguably been reversed as there is far less reason for Europe to depict itself as a follower of America. In turn this has profoundly ruptured the routines mandatory for the maintenance of America's ontological safety. Notably, in Kupchan's view the problems are not located in Europe, but are instead embedded in America's inability to remain a model and consequently live with an inferior position within a constellation premised in general on complementary identities.

To be sure, many other voices have addressed the state and dynamics of transatlantic relations since the Cold War. However, if included in the interrogation, the overall view would not change as transatlantic togetherness is, with few exceptions, viewed and analysed in rather traditional IR terms, although space has also been opened up for various forms of contestation. The routines underpinning the relationship are overwhelmingly seen as related to questions of security-as-violence, with the togetherness that is there accounted for by positioning difference outside and similarity inside the relationship. This type of move is then enforced in a rather straightforward manner without proceeding beyond security-as-violence. The theoretical challenges of how to conceptualise the transatlantic association and the more recent signs of disassociation have in some cases been brought to the fore, although without moving beyond the centrality of security-as-violence. As argued by Hellmann and Herboth (2008), these shortcomings stand out as blind spots in an analysis and debate that has in general been premised on "a fairly conventional understanding of international order".

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Their observations have been made in the context of an attempt to grasp the broad contours of the scholarly debate. Thus, together with some colleagues they have sought to unpack the taken-for-granted assumptions present in contemporary debates on transatlantic relations, leading them to conclude that "only on rare occasions has [the debate] tackled questions as to how political spaces, i.e. spaces where political authority is exercised, come into being in the first place" (Hellmann and Herboth 2008).

This examination has moved along a similar track in targeting some of the theoretical claims that have been at play when judgment has been passed concerning continuity and change in transatlantic relations. In addition to outlining some problems with Realist and Liberal approaches, the inquiry has explored openings that might add to the relevance of Constructivism in arguing that it has been too much grounded in Schmittian-inspired constructions of iden-

tity resting on clear-cut distinctions between friends and enemies. Constructivism in its Schmittian form appears to be too inclined to ride on binary ontologies premised on the constant presence of security-as-violence as a key departure. By introducing concepts such as that of 'neighbour', it is argued a healthy corrective to the securitisation inherent in Schmittian readings of transnational space can be provided. This is because it permits a down-grading of the routines pertaining to ontologies premised on security-as-violence and allows a focus on those related to security-as-being.

The prioritisation of security-as-being in regard to security-as-violence opens up new space as to the essence of the transatlantic association and allows for a more dynamic and extensive reading of the meaning of similarity and difference within that relationship. As such, the aim has been one of introducing a somewhat different way of theorising the essence of the relationship. It has been argued that an emphasis on the internal and complementary forms of difference that are part of the Atlantic association makes better sense of what carries it in the first place and thereby also accounts for some of the tensions and conflicts that have plagued the Atlantic sphere in recent years.

Moreover, a crucial aspect of the contribution is the argument that the routines and the script bringing about the transatlantic bonds were to some extent reshaped already towards the end of the Cold War. Consequently, the routines grounding Atlantic togetherness have for quite some time rested on the stability and identity-related safety provided by the Atlantic bonds *per se* as an emotive rather than utility and security-as-violence driven sphere of neighbourhood. The latter discourses have, in fact, been markedly marginalised. This also implies that the projection of difference – seen as something threatening – into the exterior for internal similarity to come about is even less constitutive for the transatlantic relationship than has previously been the case. The difference present within the Atlantic, it appears, has instead turned into an increasingly necessary and visible condition for the relationship to continue to exist.

However, it must be kept in mind that difference may also turn into strangeness thereby endangering rather than bolstering the relationship. Europe may have gained some features of strangeness if seen with American eyes, but America may also have departed on a somewhat similar route of oddity. There has indeed more recently been talk about "the end of the American era", the policies pursued in the context of the economic down-turn have been described as "nationalisation", if not regarded as signs of "socialism", and new vocabularies designating the US as a "smart power" have been introduced, for example by Hilary Clinton in her statement at the nomination hearings. The problems that the Europeans have in sorting out what America basically is may further be compounded by the country turning increasingly inwards and the economy becoming the prime battle-ground where the future of the country is decided. The struggle is then not geared towards any external dangers or enemies such as terrorists either inside or outside the country, but consists instead of trying to remedy policy-related mistakes carried out within America itself.

In other words, America now leans strongly on efforts of distancing itself from the various errors committed during the eight years of the Bush-administration, in

particular being blamed for having caused a worldwide economic recession. The constitutive difference pertains temporally to the nearby past and is spatially located as being internal to America. Rather than having become identical with itself as argued by Fukuyama, America has according to the currently dominant narratives at least temporarily deviated from the path leading towards fulfilment. It subsequently has, in a way, to demonstrate and testify to a capacity to find the way back through moves of self-rectification. In some sense the recent problematisation of America's epistemic exceptionalism resembles the 1930's, with America having become a stranger to itself and therefore also able to adopt a more humble and lenient attitude towards external difference, including that embedded in transatlantic relations.

Against this backdrop, it could be concluded that the recent improvements discernible in transatlantic relations are not the result of some kind of normalcy returning with the new administration. It seems rather that the differences between Europe and America remain considerable. They may, in fact, be even more pronounced than previously, but that the reading of this difference – particularly on the American side – has become more approving. The various strains and tensions now part of the Atlantic constellation do therefore not necessarily endanger the relationship as seriously as often feared and argued by analyses that rest on the assumption that difference is highly detrimental to the Atlantic association. A more pronounced underlining of difference, which has been part of more recent and profoundly altered routines, may actually ground and carry the relationship. It is actually quite openly produced and maintained as a process of differentiation. The intensity of the Atlantic neighbourhood might, as such, have declined with less emphasis on security-as-violence. It is, however, predominantly routinised in ontological terms as a neighbourhood and thus also tolerates and perhaps even needs some degree of strain and dispute for difference really to stand out. And in principle, the change of perspective brought about by the introduction of concepts such as neighbours and neighbourhood into the analysis appears, at least to some extent, to remedy the 'blind spot' which, according to Hellmann, has hampered the efforts of IR theory to provide sufficient insight into the essence and dynamics of the transatlantic relationship.

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