

# *European Security and Transatlantic Relations After 9/11 and the Iraq War*

Heinz Gärtner and Ian M. Cuthbertson (eds.), Palgrave, 2005, 272 pp.

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The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 may have been the war to end all alliances. It was an expression of a new assertive American interventionism that had scant regard for global norms and institutions when these stood in the way of U.S. policy. It ruptured the unity of NATO and led European states to reassess their relationships with the United States.

The emergence of the United States as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War world takes some getting used to: international relations have been profoundly transformed, not always for the better. This collection of sixteen essays by academics and policy-makers focuses on the role of the European Union in the international security environment in the context of the Global War on Terror, or as it is now often referred to, the 'long war.'

This is a book about Europe, and how American military power constrains its foreign and security policies. The central issue for the Europeans is how to respond to the sudden emergence of the United States as both the sole superpower and as a missionary state with the global aim of rooting out terrorism by implanting democracy, by force of arms if necessary.

The central concern of the contributors is with U.S. unilateralism, and whether this means the marginalisation of NATO, the European Union, the United Nations, and global institutions more generally. The assertive policies of the Bush administration are the antithesis of the European approach to building international norms and institutions. The key question, put pithily by Regina Karp in her chapter, is whether the combination of unrivaled American power and a vision of the United States as an active force for reordering the world is 'likely to survive the Bush administration? Will the US return to a more restrained, cooperative approach under a different president, Republican or Democrat? Or are there more structural issues at stake? Do Bush administration policies reflect the primacy of a great power that exercises power at will?' (p. 104) Or, as the editors put it, 'Will the war on terrorism reinvigorate NATO, or will it merely become a convenient military "toolbox" for

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the United States to dip into to construct “coalitions of the willing?” (p. 9)

No-one can know for certain the answer to these questions, and it comes as no surprise that the contributors to this volume are unsure about what the future holds. But there is little ambiguity about the sort of world they would prefer: one in which the United States respects international institutions and works closely with its allies in a more measured approach to security matters. The tone of the book is thus highly normative. There is a tension between a more-or-less hard-headed recognition of the new realities of international relations, and a desire for the United States to adopt a posture closer to that of the European Union. Over and over we hear the authors plaintively urge the United States to behave more reasonably. Here are some examples:

No state can be seen to be above the system if the system itself is to have validity and credibility. (p. 8)

Americans need to understand that... the upending of international norms and rules is not something that should be done lightly... (p. 8)

The first statement is a tautology. There is nothing about the current system of international relations that requires it to be maintained; it will change, and the contempt shown by the Bush administration for international institutions may well be a cause of that change. The second statement is true only if the implied conditional is accepted. The Americans don't need to understand anything. Indeed, they have blundered through much of their recent history *not* properly understanding what they were about. They only need to understand the value of multilateral norms and institutions if those norms and institutions are to be maintained and strengthened. Translated, this means that Americans need to have European goals. That would be lovely; but that doesn't mean it will happen any time soon.

It would be nice, indeed, if U.S. policy-makers were to heed these pleas for better behavior. Perhaps the next administration will do so. This is not an impossibility: both the first President Bush and President Clinton were respectful of global norms and institutions. Indeed Clinton's security strategy was built around the aim of expanding the community of liberal market democracies. The authors' worry is that 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq changed all that. As the editors point out, “The war in Iraq exposed a deep and profound cleavage between the world views of the United States and those of its traditional allies, a fundamental difference of outlook

on the nature of the evolving international system and the role of power in it. For Europeans, it is a system of laws and rules... For the Americans, security rested on military power, not treaties...' (pp. 248-9)

The editors and contributors generally take the view that these 'deep and profound' differences can be smoothed over. They want to repair the relationship between the Europeans and the Americans; the question is whether the Americans will let this happen.

The policy recommendations in this book are thus set within a notion that there is fundamental agreement between Europe and the United States on threat assessment: strategic terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the principal threats to security. The central axis of global security pits an entity known as 'the West' against a threat of strategic terrorism emanating from radical Islam. The contributors work within the consensus official view of the global war on terror.

True, there are differences in how to manage these threats, and these were highlighted by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. But, as the editors say, 'that does not mean that the various viewpoints cannot be harmonized. In the broader perspective, the differences are more of emphasis than of fundamental opinion, and they do not reach a level where they should... impact seriously the long-term transatlantic relationship or act as a serious brake on further European integration in foreign and security policy. What is needed... is greater creativity in the dialogue... and a real commitment to find a workable and effective consensus on solutions to the challenges that the West as a whole faces.' (pp. 250-1)

For the editors, and for the bulk of the contributors, the principal goals are to maintain both European unity and the transatlantic alliance. There is no serious consideration of alternatives to either. Perhaps the transatlantic alliance will wither away and be replaced by some new security arrangement; perhaps there will be no common European view on matters of war and peace. And just why either European 'unity' on foreign policy or the maintenance of the transatlantic alliance are appropriate and necessary for global security is not explicitly laid out.

The contributors try, on the whole, to avoid unrealistic proposals. While there are important differences among them, the overall argument is that Europeans must reorganise and reinvigorate their militaries so that they can better fit in to a world

dominated by the United States. This means convincing the United States that what appears to be an emerging division of labor, with the U.S. doing the high-end warfighting, and the Europeans following with peace and stability operations, needs to be somewhat modified. A better mix would have Europe develop military forces that would be more capable of fighting outside Europe, and for the United States there would be more attention to nation-building and peace-keeping. Such an arrangement would give the Europeans more leverage over American policy, they believe.

The authors are specialists in, and practitioners of, international relations. Not surprisingly, they provide explanations almost entirely in terms of the structure of the system of international relations. But why, the reader might reasonably ask, are there such profound differences in world views between these two parts of 'the West?' The contributors to this volume suggest that the explanation is largely to be found in the emergence of American primacy and in the different historical experiences since the end of the Second World War: the slow emergence of a sense of European unity built on enduring institutions and shared norms, and the vastly different role of the United States as security provider during the Cold War.

There is much to be said for this as an explanation, but it is surely incomplete. Moreover, it reifies matters to talk about 'the United States' or 'Europe' having world views. Both places contain diverse populations, and what emerges as national or regional strategy is the result of a complicated political process. The authors don't discuss the domestic roots of the Bush administration's foreign policy: the role of the religious right, for example, or the influence (perhaps ephemeral) of neoconservative intellectuals in foreign policy formulation. Nor is much attention paid to the peculiarities of the American political system: to the manipulation and browbeating of the intelligence community by key figures in the Cabinet, for example, or the supine stance of the Congress in the run up to war. Whether these sorts of factors are 'structural' in some sense, or whether a new administration can radically reverse the course of American policy, remains an open question, of course. But whatever the answer, an explanation couched exclusively in terms of the features of the international system is likely to be inadequate in explaining the course of American foreign and security policy.

The focus of this collection is relentlessly Eurocentric. China and the Pacific are hardly mentioned. Yet we live in a single world, and events in one part impinge on other parts of the globe. The United States is a global power, and its relations

with Europe may be influenced by what is happening with third parties such as India, Japan or China. The Eurocentric focus on NATO, on a possible emerging European military force, and on the Atlantic alliance draws the gaze of the authors away from larger global dynamics, dynamics which may well have an impact on how the United States and Europe relate to one another.

The focus on 'Europe' also has the effect of blurring the differences within Europe. With the important exception of the chapter by Daniel Nelson, most authors regard the notion of 'Europe' as relatively unproblematic. They are concerned to maintain unity in foreign and security policy, of course, and see threats to this, but the very idea of 'Europe' is unquestioned. Given the sudden and rapid expansion of 'Europe' since the end of the Cold War, this is puzzling.

What may be emerging is a new set of alignments. The 'West' (and hence 'Europe' and the Atlantic partnership) may not be the entity that defends itself against a common threat. Instead, new alignments may be on the cards. Australia (which is not mentioned) and the United Kingdom – at least under their present governments – seem to have defined themselves as valuable junior partners in the American warfighting business. The less-developed countries of Eastern Europe, hoping for American beneficence, have also lined up behind the United States. This leaves the core states of what Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld once disparagingly referred to as 'old Europe' searching for a policy that will (1) integrate Europe under their leadership, (2) repair relations with the United States while pushing that country towards a more multilateral and diplomatic approach, and (3) increase European power vis-à-vis the United States. The attempt to simultaneously pursue all of these goals may be a bridge too far.

My personal sympathies are with the Europeans, and thus with the authors of this book: global norms and institutions, and a preference for diplomacy and conflict resolution, seem to me to be better than the reckless unilateralism of the Bush administration. Like the contributors to this book, I wish there were a different sort of administration in Washington. But the central question remains that of evaluating the probabilities attached to future trends. In their chapter, Heiko Bochert and Daniel Maurer explore a number of plausible future scenarios, in some of which the kind of outcome favored by Europeans occurs, and in some of which the United States basically runs the world on its own, doing either a relatively good job or (more likely) botching things up rather badly. Exploring a range of possible futures in this way is a useful first step, but it is surely possible to do more. We can

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posit a range of such scenarios, and we can state our preferences, but surely we also want to know something about the probabilities of occurrence of each scenario. At the very least, we want to know the kinds of events that would swing the future towards one scenario and away from others. In the absence of a serious evaluation of likely alternative futures, discussions of the state of transatlantic relations are reduced to little more than a complaint that the Americans aren't good Europeans. The problem, of course, is that Americans aren't Europeans, and are unlikely to become so. If wishes were horses, then beggars would ride.

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