

AICEI PROCEEDINGS

The Transatlantic Link Revisited: The Future Prospects of Europe – United States of America Cooperation

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the future prospects for cooperation between the European Union after the Treaty of Lisbon and the United States of America under its new leadership. This paper will focus on the maintenance of the transatlantic alliance and the way in which each partner contributed to the maintenance of this alliance. Such alliance-maintenance will have to move beyond issues of military “burden-sharing”—important as those are—to examine whether or not trade and social issues also need addressing. The end of the Cold War has not diminished the importance of consultation on political and security issues, including human security aspects. A healthy transatlantic relationship remains essential in order to guarantee the security and prosperity of Europe and the United States. Viewing transatlantic relations as a common platform for the development of global partnerships with other political actors will strengthen the transatlantic link and direct its future development. The theoretical framework will be derived from two aspects of political science and international relations: theories of neoliberalism and literature on “historical materialism” as discourses used in order to define globalization.

Keywords: globalization, European Union, Lisbon Treaty, neoliberalism, politics, globalization.

Introduction

During the Cold War, the perception of the Soviet Union as a common threat served as a binding mechanism that ensured cohesion between Europeans and the US. The end of this common threat in the post-Cold War environment initially produced a temporary interruption in efficient analysis and restructuring of the transatlantic relationship. However, a series of new security issues in the 1990s, starting with the Gulf War and culminating in Operation Allied Force¹ in Kosovo and Operation Allied Harmony¹ in Macedonia, placed some very important questions on the new agenda. The emergence of more definable, traditional inter-state threats as well as non-traditional intra-state conflicts increased the urgency of the search for a new common US-European strategy. The nature of new trans-national threats forced a radical reshaping of the transatlantic partnership.

Destabilizing factors affecting US-European relations are closely connected to certain traditional, national values and discourses that exist on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition, one needs to further examine issues connected to power politics, issues of burden sharing and Europe's defence policy.

The following analysis will examine the future prospects for cooperation between the post-Lisbon European Union and the US under its new leadership. One vision of a strengthened Europe sees the EU increasingly acting as a superpower and as a counterbalance to the US in international relations. It seems increasingly important to spend time on alliance-maintenance, on addressing some of the issues that have the potential to weaken the transatlantic commitment which has been a powerful force for security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. However, such alliance-maintenance will have to move beyond issues of military "burden-sharing"—important though those are—to examine whether or not trade and social issues also need addressing. Both sides of the Atlantic have experienced important changes in governance through the EU's adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon and the coming to power of the Obama administration in the US—changes that might profoundly influence the current estrangement between Europe and the US.

The theoretical framework will be derived from two areas of political science and international relations: from theories of neoliberalism and from the literature on "historical materialism" as discourses used in order to define globalization. Neoliberal expressions of globalization are the most influential in international relations theory. By looking at the theoretical framework, one can identify and analyze the discourses that exist on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Theoretical Framework of Neoliberalism and Historical Materialism

Neoliberal expressions of globalization are based on classical liberal economic arguments that observe international economic processes as matching spheres whereby economic exchange processes such as free trade, the spreading of prosperity and development, and an increased quality of life for all citizens are all parts of these processes. Furthermore, neoliberalism argues, economics does not only bring economic benefits, it also brings political benefits, largely through the creation and support of liberal democratic institutions in which “liberty, freedom and justice for all are to be guaranteed because the people hold political power” (Weber, 2005, 107). This is the reason why classical liberals believe that economic processes act as drivers of political processes. At a time of globalization, liberal principles become neoliberal reflections of globalization where three processes occur simultaneously and act as a positive force: economic liberalization (free trade), political democratization (empowerment of people), and cultural “universalization”. “For neoliberals, globalization is about the benevolent spread of liberal economic, political, and cultural processes, institutions, and practices throughout the world” (Weber, 2005, 108).

Historical materialists are generally in accord with neoliberals that globalization is a process, a way of life, even an ideology that spreads capitalist ideas, institutions, and practices throughout the world. However, historical materialists disagree with neoliberals on a number of important issues. Unlike neoliberals, they believe that capitalism and liberal ideology are not premised on contradictions. Furthermore, they are not the final and complete expressions of economics and politics. Consequently this implies that liberalism is not the final stage of history. Rather, it represents a step on the way to communism, which according to historical materialism, represents the real end of history (Weber, 2005).

The two schools of thought are present on each side of the Atlantic, with liberalism or neoliberalism mostly present in the US. Neoliberal expressions of globalization are by far the most influential in international relations theory and in policy circles. They seem to be the most “historically accurate” in the wake of the post-Cold War collapse. They inform policies which create regional free trade organizations like the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and that affect global institutions like the World

Trade Organization. The US under the guidance of neoliberal expressions has been a promoter of democracy throughout the world; however, the US has increased its demands for this burden to be shared in the post-Cold War environment.

The Issue of Burden-Sharing and European Defense

Unilateralism has emerged as the most controversial post-Cold War issue in US-European relations. Prior to the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, European officials criticized the US approach to foreign policy as compared to the European tendency to emphasize negotiation, compromise, and other diplomatic and soft-power means in general. European expression of disapproval, already common during the Clinton administration years, reached a high point during the early months of the Bush administration and reached a climax with the US rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, the US threat to withdraw from the ABM treaty, and other policy actions (Daalder, 2001). Because of the EU's experience of integration since the 1950s, Europe tends to regard itself as by definition "multilateralist". Furthermore, multilateralism is seen as a product of the nature of a supranational framework of governance (Kagan, 2002). This characterization depends upon a particular definition of multilateralism. It overlooks the degree to which European multilateralism often exists, in its behavior toward the outside world, as well as the degree to which the capacity for unilateral policy action remains an issue in Europe itself.

European governments and political leaders recognize a certain tension between the global multilateral order and what are seen as distinctively European values. European approaches to unilateralism and multilateralism tend to be viewed subjectively, to the extent that there is self-criticism; the focus tends to be less on the content of policy than on Europe's failure to unify sufficiently so as to be strong enough to compel or persuade the US to adopt different policies. Different standpoints and policy disagreements are further aggravated by cultural differences and by what many perceive as a widening gap in transatlantic values (Van Ham, 2001). One can detect a number of opposing discourses, in particular regarding the issues of military security and defense.

A number of analysts have argued that Europe's foreign and security policy has not expanded sufficiently, "with almost 10 years lost to institutional

construction [it is] only now, with the adoption and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, [that there exists] the possibility of further advances” (Bergmann, 2010, 3). The Treaty of Lisbon can potentially lead to the revival of the transatlantic link with the development of certain elements such as an EU diplomatic corps, the European External Affairs Service, and improvements in European defense capabilities, especially at the institutional level. In this regard, as Kern (2010, 12) argues: “Although supporters of the Lisbon Treaty have long denied that the document will lead to the creation of a European army, Article 28 of the Treaty clearly establishes the legal basis to do so.”

Historically, the issue of “burden-sharing” has been implicit in US-European relations (Hunter, 2002; Thielemann, 2003). At an institutional level, European military security policy is quite effective, with a significant amount of peacekeeping activity undertaken. The differences with the US occur over the issue of strategic and European military capability, for which there is a lack of willingness to contribute to a budget sufficient to ensure such capability: “it remains unclear how the Lisbon Treaty will impact some of the structural problems facing European defense. Currently, three states—Britain, France and Germany—contribute almost two-thirds of all military spending within the EU, and the Lisbon Treaty does not address how that burden might be more equally shared” (Kern, 2010, 13). This constitutes the essence of the burden-sharing dilemma; Americans tend to view this problem primarily in terms of a military capability gap, basically the ability of Europeans to undertake a greater share of military security tasks (Kupchan, 2000). The US desires to see its European allies do more, not just in Europe but also on a broader international scale. One can argue that if such a capabilities gap exists, then it is not so much between the US and Europe as between Europe’s stated intent and its ability to fulfill this intent (manifested through differences in peace-interventions and peace-keeping missions). One can argue that the aforementioned issue of burden sharing and the problems of perceptions and priorities of national foreign policy became transparent during the US-campaign in Iraq. The decision of France and Germany not to provide military backing for the US campaign in Iraq perhaps revived certain US anxieties. This decision affected the transatlantic relationship in a way that impinged primarily on the coherence of decision making within the European Union. However, a more recent critique has also emerged: “Up until January 2009, the conventional wisdom was that Europe was not stepping up to the plate in

defense-related matters because of its leaders' personal aversion to former President George W. Bush and his policies. However, President Barack Obama, who is far more popular in Europe than was his predecessor, is fighting the same uphill battle to persuade European allies to increase their troop commitments. The problem, however, extends far beyond Afghanistan" (Kern, 2010, 12).

Instead of having a strong and united Europe as an ally, the US was primarily backed up by its traditional ally, Britain, representing the renewal of the "special relationship" (BBC, 2009). At the time, the transatlantic relationship rested to a significant degree upon US bilateral relations with Britain, France, and Germany, and this meant a lack of European decision-making coherence. Prior to examining European foreign policy as a whole, it would thus be useful to examine the role of Britain in the transatlantic relationship.

Links between Britain and the US have traditionally been extremely close. The two countries share a set of common values as well as a commitment to democracy and the free market. Over the post World War II period, they developed a lasting partnership that continues to be a stabilizing force in the world. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the organization that primarily embodies the transatlantic relationship and it has been a stable feature of the period since World War II. Britain and the US are important members of the main international organizations: NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Group of Seven leading developed nations plus Russia (G7/8), as well as of the UN, and they regularly cooperate closely in these spheres. Britain also plays a major role in the Commonwealth. Britain has a tradition of peacekeeping in countries such as Korea, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone (Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin, 2004). In the Commonwealth and elsewhere, Britain tends to take a similar approach to the promotion of democracy and human rights.

US Secretary of State Dean Acheson provided the most famous definition of Britain's postwar dilemma when he commented that Britain had lost an empire without finding a new role. Less well known is Acheson's view on the future role of Britain, stating that Britain's future must lie in Europe (Brinkley, 1992). In fact, the question of whether Britain is above all a European power or not has lost much of its force as memories of empire have retreated. Britain's history and interests lie far beyond the continent of Europe. But

Britain essentially made a choice between its former imperial possessions in the Commonwealth and Europe when it joined the European Economic Community in 1972, a choice reaffirmed when EEC membership was overwhelmingly endorsed in a 1975 referendum (Barkham, 1998).

Britain and America share powerful historical, linguistic, cultural, and business links. On many issues of foreign policy, Britain remains inclined to share the American viewpoint. British suspicion of continental Europe, on the other hand, remains. The British ruling elite do not share the Franco-German conviction that peace can only be guaranteed by the invention of a new security system for Europe that rises above the realist policies implemented by nation states. The close relationship between France and Germany has continually defined the direction that Europe has taken and has continually clashed with British attempts to guide the EU in a different direction. Most British policymakers believe, however, that the "special relationship" with America is not an alternative to close ties with the EU; indeed they say that the relationship will only prosper if Britain is an essential member of the EU. The appointment of Lady Catharine Ashton as the new foreign policy chief of the European Union can perhaps contribute to involving Britain more in European affairs. On the other hand, Hubert Verdine, diplomatic advisor and chief of staff to former French President Mitterrand, argues: "The choice of Madame Ashton is more surprising, but not entirely, actually, because it's not a question of naming a foreign minister for Europe. She only has to manage the common foreign policy, which is a small part. There will always be a foreign policy that is French, German, British and even Portuguese, Swedish or Greek" (Grunstein, 2010, 15). Indeed, unilateralism remains a challenge even for Europe.

Another great change taking place on both sides of the Atlantic is that of demographical change. Europe's population is getting older while the population of the US is getting younger: "But while Europe's immigration was enough merely to keep its population roughly stable, the combination of immigration and rising fertility—among native-born Americans as well as recent immigrants—meant that America's population actually grew at rates exceeding most expectations" (The Economist, 2002, 11).

As for Europe, demography can also be a problem and therefore the governments of European countries should take measures beyond their countries' borders: "Enlargement alone will not be enough. If little else is done, the West Europeans will retain their fiscal burdens and rigid economies

and watch admiringly (or sadly) as the real growth takes place to their east—or else, as seems all too possible, they will hamper that growth by forcing the newcomers to share their own restrictions and subsidies. Instead, Western Europe needs to bring the new starkness right into its midst, both by becoming more open to immigration and by encouraging more entrepreneurial vigor among existing citizens” (The Economist, 2002, 11). Those demographic changes can influence the transatlantic relationship in numerous ways. If the partners in the transatlantic relationship are wise, they can both benefit from the current structure of their demography and not burden their respective economies or societal structures. As stated in the citation above, Europe should become more open to economy-induced immigration.

It seems increasingly important to spend some time on alliance-maintenance, on addressing some of the issues which have the potential to weaken the transatlantic commitment that has been such a powerful force for security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. However, such alliance-maintenance will have to move beyond issues of military "burden-sharing" and address trade and social issues as well. New and increasingly complex issues demand an international response.

Future Challenges in Alliance Maintenance

There are a number of social and legal issues on which there exists disagreement between Europe and the US, such as the Kyoto Protocol,¹ the International Criminal Court, and the issue of the death penalty. The US has been trying to resolve those issues by offering alternative solutions; however, one can expect these disagreements to continue to exist for some time between the US and Europe. European leaders genuinely welcomed President Obama's victory, hoping that it would reinvigorate transatlantic ties (BBC, 2008). However, the differences which may occur in the realm of security are the ones that need to be addressed because future cooperation—whether economic or cultural—cannot be achieved unless security issues within and outside of Europe are not properly addressed.

At the global level, there are several challenges which Europe and the US need to bridge. First of all, there exist some unresolved issues over NATO from both sides of the Atlantic. Collective security can complement but in the long run cannot replace NATO's traditional focus on collective defense. Both

are important elements of NATO's future mission. One could argue that, at a global level, the importance of NATO's role in the world has increased since the events of September 11. From this perspective, it is essential for NATO to have new capabilities to meet global threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the relationship between these factors. Both sides of the transatlantic alliance have different perspectives regarding the threats to NATO's viability as a military organization. An issue for potential disagreement between the US and Europe is that of the growing gap in military capabilities between the two. Other allies have only limited capabilities in lift, precision weapons, intelligence and surveillance platforms, and protection of forces against chemical and biological agents (Gordon, 2002). NATO members have committed themselves to bridging this gap, and for the USA it will be critical that its European allies within NATO succeed in refocusing their defense efforts.

However, connected to the initiative of the US to act within NATO comes the question of "unilateralism". Differences between Europe and the US over priorities, policies, perspectives, and sometimes even values, require the US to act on its own. However, it is questionable to label such differences as American "unilateralism" since the US is rather oriented towards coalition building; its choosing not to act within the realm of the international community could perhaps better be described as 'unilateral acting'.

Another possibly vital aspect of the US-European partnership is connected to the role of Russia in the international community. The US-European relationship is focused on the political and economic integration of Russia into the West. America and Europe share a common interest in working with Russia to encourage continued progress on human rights, religious and press freedoms, the rule of law and political and economic reforms. Both sides of the transatlantic relationship benefit when a democratic and economically viable Russia is able to build real partnerships with Europe's core institutions, including NATO and the EU. The creation of a NATO-Russia Council will facilitate joint decisions and actions in areas of common concern (Mahncke, Rees, and Thompson, 2004).

Finally, there are potential issues with regard to US-European cooperation in managing regional crises within Europe. There was an insecure start with the intervention in Bosnia; however, cooperation has been close and rather successful in Southeast Europe in terms of aiding transitional countries and supporting the establishment of civil societies. The US and the EU have

implemented comprehensive judicial reforms in Bosnia in cooperation with the government, monitored peaceful elections and established the International Civilian Office (ICO) in Kosovo, and concluded the Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia. It is clear that the US and Europe's official positions on security issues are becoming more coordinated and this proves that coherent transatlantic policy is much more efficient in implementing policies and making them viable.

Besides criticisms addressed at the European Union, one should not forget to consider the level of knowledge and understanding of Europe shown by the US: "At the same time, among Washington's traditional Atlanticists, there was a failure to grasp the tremendous transformation that had occurred in the European Union, which went from a small clique of Western European states dominated by its two most prominent members, to a diverse and sprawling concept that now includes states from the East, as well as an increasingly formidable supranational European government" (Bergmann, 2010, 3). The European supranational structure has evolved and the milieu has changed considerably, introducing new actors that influence not only decision-making processes in Europe but also the transatlantic partnership.

There exist a number of scenarios regarding the future prospects of the transatlantic alliance. One of those scenarios and recommendations for future actions is depicted in the report of *Notre Europe*, drafted by one of Europe's leading policy think-tanks: they propose a new approach requesting EU member states to contain "national illusions" while the U.S. contains its imperialist tendencies, thus allowing for the transatlantic partnership to become "a springboard for a global partnership" (*Notre Europe*, 2010). As stated earlier, two of the most salient obstacles to the further development of the transatlantic partnership have been overcome: the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force, enabling the creation of the necessary institutional arrangements to allow for the greater unity of the EU, while the election of Barack Obama has opened a new chapter in US foreign policy. With the major obstacles out of the way, one needs to look at potential risks that the transatlantic partnership might encounter.

One potential risk for the US would be a loss of effectiveness and credibility as a result of turning towards unilateral actions. Moreover, an even greater risk would be that of the "United States becoming increasingly 'post-European', looking for new partners of similarly global size and weakened, in doing so, by the loss of its European alliance and by the Asian momentum in

the globalization process” (Notre Europe, 2010, 23). On the other side of the Atlantic, a potential risk that the EU might face is that of becoming weak and marginalized due to a return to a “pre-Maastricht’ Europe obsessed by national rivalries and its special relationship with Washington, gradually slipping into a marginal role in the world” (Notre Europe, 2010, 23). These risks do exist, but neoliberal expressions of globalism and sharing of common values will eventually keep the transatlantic link strong.

Recommendations for strengthening the transatlantic link include: practicing multilateralism as the basis for international negotiations and actions; the management of global issues and the adoption of a common approach to such management by the US and the EU; and “strengthening the Euro-American partnership as a platform for forging global partnerships with all the players on the international stage” (Notre Europe, 2010, 34). These recommendations need to be accepted as a long-term strategy that would be carefully planned and supported not only by the new and old EU member states but also with the inclusion of candidate countries on their way to full integration and entry in the EU.

Conclusion: A Need for Ever Closer Cooperation

The aim of this paper is to examine the future prospects for cooperation between the post-Lisbon European Union and the US under its new leadership. The paper focuses on the maintenance of the transatlantic alliance and the ways in which each partner contributes to this maintenance. Such alliance-maintenance will have to move beyond issues of military “burden-sharing” to address trade and social issues as well. The lack of a common threat in the post-Cold War environment initially caused a temporary interruption in the efficient analysis and restructuring of the transatlantic relationship. The problems that exist in US-European relations which one can identify as destabilizing factors are closely connected to some of the traditional, national values and discourses that exist on both sides of the Atlantic. By looking at the theoretical framework of neoliberalism and historical materialism, one can identify and analyze the discourses that exist on both sides of the Atlantic.

The potential risks and future prospects which will arise if both partners in the alliance retain the status quo include the following:

- Potential risk for the US: loss of effectiveness and credibility as a result of turning toward unilateral actions;
- Potential risk for the EU: weakness and marginalization due to fragmentation.
- In order to avoid such potential risks in the future, several recommendations can be put in place to strengthen transatlantic links:
- Practicing multilateralism as the basis for international negotiations and actions;
- Managing global issues and adopting a common approach to such management; and
- Viewing partnership as a platform for establishing and developing global partnerships with all the players on the international stage.

In conclusion, one needs to stress that the US and the member states of the EU do share common values in the sense that all of them are mature democracies. A more coordinated and coherent transatlantic policy will provide for much more efficient policy implementation by making transatlantic policy more viable. Viewing transatlantic relations as a common platform for the development of global partnerships with other political actors from the other parts of the world is one of the recommendations for strengthening the transatlantic link and directing its future development. The need for cooperation between the US and a united Europe is not only desirable but essential. Differences may still exist but potential emerging crises need to be addressed fully and properly.

Endnotes

- ¹ NATO's Role in Kosovo. Operation Allied Force. Retrieved from: <http://www.nato.int/Kosovo/all-frce.htm>
- ² NATO's Role in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Operation Allied Harmony. Retrieved from: <http://www.nato.int/fyrom/home.htm>
- ³ Regarding environmental issues, there were number of debates at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December, 2009. For further illustration on Obama's administration upon this issue see: "The Quiet Death of the Kyoto Protocol" by Samuel Thernstrom, *The American*, November 5, 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.american.com/archive/2009/november/the-quiet-yet-historic-death-of-the-kyoto-protoco>

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