Mind the Gap: The United States

Europe and the Middle East

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July 2004

Contents

Introduction

The Middle East is arguably the epicenter of all major global strategic questions of the day. Americans and Europeans alike view the instability emanating from the Middle East as the most critical security challenge of the 21st century.[1] The focus on Middle East issues at the major international meetings in June 2004 (the G-8, NATO and US-EU summits) underscored the importance of this region and its centrality to transatlantic relations. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to explore key Middle East case studies to provide lessons for larger questions of transatlantic relations after 9/11 and the Iraq war.[2]

The paper covers several Middle East issues that impact broader transatlantic relations: the Middle East peace process, non-proliferation policy with an emphasis on Iran, and democracy promotion. The paper also begins with a background section to provide a short historical perspective on current

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1)   On this point, see Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, 'The New Transatlantic Project,' Policy Review, Number 115 (October/November 2002), Accessed February 10, 2003 (http://www.policyreview.org/OCT02 /asmus_print.html).

2)   For scholarly works on US and European Mideast policy, see: Dalia Dassa Kaye, 'Bound to Cooperate? Transatlantic Policy in the Middle East,' ***The Washington Quarterly*** 27 (Winter 2003-04): 179-195; Robert D. Blackwill and Michael Sturmer, eds., ***Allies Divided: Transatlantic Policies for the Greater Middle East*** (Boston: MIT Press, 1997); Philip Gordon, ***The Transatlantic Allies and the Changing Middle East*** (London: Oxford University Press, 1998); Richard N. Haass, ed., ***Transatlantic Tensions*** (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999); Volker Perthes, 'The advantages of complementarity: US and European policies toward the Middle East peace process,' ***International Spectator*** 35, 2 (April-June 2000):41-56; Phebe Marr, 'The United States, Europe, and the Middle East: an Uneasy Triangle,' ***Middle East Journal*** 48, 2 (Spring 1994): 211-225; Rosemary Hollis, 'Europe and the Middle East: power by stealth?' ***International Affairs*** 73, 1 (January 1997): 15-29.

Middle East policy issues. Inevitably, other important issues, such as counter-terrorism policy, are given short shrift, but this is due to the limitations of a single study and a single researcher rather than to any assessment of the importance of such issues to transatlantic relations. Moreover, because the Iraq case is familiar, I address the issue primarily in the paper's background section, although the impact of the Iraq war is pervasive and affects all other policy areas.

In any study of transatlantic relations, one always needs to provide a disclaimer about the nature of 'Europe,' particularly when discussing core strategic and foreign policies. Just as it is often difficult to characterize a single American foreign policy orientation, it is certainly difficult to characterize a single European approach to foreign and security policy. A European audience is especially attuned to deeply-rooted differences in approach as one moves from the southern 'Garlic Belt' up to the Nordic states, or from 'old' Europe to 'new'. And naturally different colonial experiences (or lack thereof) have colored different European states' views toward key Middle East issues. At times it seems there is hardly a 'Europe' at all. The divisive effects of the Iraq war only reinforced this impression.

Still, it may be difficult but it is certainly not impossible to characterize a 'European' perspective, deduced from both EU and member state policies. Indeed, in the transatlantic context, with all of their differences, European states still have far more in common with each other than with the United States, with Great Britain being the only possible exception. But on core Middle East policy issues, Europeans (the British included) have a remarkably consistent and coherent policy that can be identified and contrasted to the US approach.[3] On some critical issues like the peace process and Iran, a common European policy has strengthened, not weakened, since 9/11 and the Iraq war. Where appropriate, I recognize national differences within Europe. But this is not a paper on internal European politics. The point here is to illustrate convergence and divergence across the Atlantic on Middle East policies, and in this context, Europeans are more alike than not.

Although structured somewhat differently depending on the policy problem, each section of the paper addresses three critical questions for transatlantic relations: 1) areas of convergence; 2) areas of divergence; and 3) policy suggestions for how to move forward.

I find that despite a great deal of convergence in all three cases, divergence exists which could potentially form the basis for future transatlantic crises, though perhaps not on the scale of the Iraq conflict. While divergence is

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3) On the growing political impact of the EU and increasing ability to sustain a common position, particularly on Middle East issues, see Roy Ginsberg, *The EU in International Politics: Baptism by Fire* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) and Gordon, *The Transatlantic Allies and the Changing Middle East*.

more apparent in some cases than others (most notably in the peace process arena), it is present across the board and is deeply rooted. I argue that differences over Middle East policy run deep because they are based on contrasting strategic cultures and historical narratives and are not just a matter of contrasting power positions, domestic politics or the whims of a particular US administration.

That said, transatlantic cooperation can be actively cultivated to forge common strategic approaches. Examples have already surfaced suggesting that the US and Europe can reach common perspectives and positions on key Middle East questions. But it will take an active effort to ensure that different perspectives do not lead to different and perhaps even conflicting policies in the most critical region of the day.

The most promising areas for cooperation are regional reform (political, economic and social) and the proliferation of WMD in and from the Middle East. The most difficult area for continued coordination will be the peace process, particularly if the stalemate between Israelis and Palestinians continues.

Background

The US and Europe in the Middle East before 9/11

Beginning with the 1956 Suez War, influence in the Middle East began to shift from Europe to the United States. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the British withdrawal from Aden in 1971, the United States assumed the primary leadership role in the region, from the Middle East peace process to Gulf security. Europe's colonial legacy and weakness in the US-Soviet superpower rivalry limited Europe's role in the region to that of supporting US policy, although certain European states (particularly France) continued to play a lead role in some areas, such as North Africa.[4]

Although the Americans and Europeans diverged on numerous policies — the 1956 Suez crisis, the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars, the 1983 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Camp David Accords, the US bombing of Tripoli — the division of labor, whereby the US took the lead on Middle East policy and Europe played a supporting role, basically held. But with the end of the Cold War, this division of labor between the US and Europe began to erode. Growing transatlantic division on a variety of issues (particularly the containment policy toward Iraq, Iran and Libya) began to raise questions about American leadership itself, an issue which did not emerge to the same extent when Europe depended on the US to confront the Soviet threat.

But with the Soviet threat removed, many Europeans became uncomfortable with the dominance of American power, including in critical regions like the Middle East. While most Europeans still preferred the US to take the lead on the Middle East peace process and maintain Europe's primarily economic position in the process (a model expressed through the 1991 Madrid process as well as Oslo), some Europeans began to seek a more

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4)   For a characterization of this historical division of labor, see Robert Satloff, 'America, Europe and the Middle East in the 1990s: Interests and Policies,' in Blackwill and Sturmer, **Allies Divided**.

political role in the 1990s. The appointment of an EU special envoy for the peace process in 1996 (Miguel Angel Moratinos), the establishment of an EU foreign policy chief in 1999 (Javier Solana) and the growing political and economic relationship between the EU and the Palestinian Authority further enhanced the European role.

To be sure, core American and European interests in the region remained similar, particularly energy security and regional stability. However, the end of the Cold War exacerbated divisions and highlighted areas where Europe and the United States placed different emphases, such as the security of Israel and WMD proliferation (central American concerns) and socioeconomic development to limit migration and radicalism (fundamental European interests). The gap only widened with visceral debates concerning Gulf policy, particularly the continuing sanctions against Iraq and the containment of Iran.

When these policy disputes spilled into the economic arena through the passage of secondary sanctions legislation in the US Congress (the Iran Libya Sanctions Act, or ILSA), it became clear that differences over Middle East policy were bringing transatlantic relations to a crisis point. As a Council on Foreign Relations task force report in 1999 stated, 'In the greater Middle East, the two sides of the Atlantic differ on the tactics for dealing with virtually every issue in the region: the Israel-Palestinian peace process; Western interaction with Iran; how best to slow proliferation of weapons of mass destruction into the area; the role of force in defending transatlantic interests in the region; and increasingly, even how best to deal with Saddam Hussein over the longer term.'[5] A paradigm of competition began to characterize transatlantic Middle East policy, undermining efforts to increase regional stability and solve regional problems.

In short, transatlantic tension over Middle East policy did not emerge with the Iraq war or even the Bush administration, even if President Bush's approach has exacerbated the problem. US-European disagreement on Middle East policy has been the norm, not the exception.

The post-9/11 environment and the Iraq war

The events of September 11 radically changed how the United States viewed the Middle East and the nature of regional threats. Some hoped that out of the tragedy would emerge new areas for US-European cooperation, replacing the competitive paradigm of the 1990s with a more cooperative relationship at the start of the century.

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5)   Robert D. Blackwill, ***The Future of Transatlantic Relations: Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations*** (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), p. 2.

This did not come to pass, primarily because for the United States, the terrorist threat and the war on terrorism have established themselves where the Soviet threat and the Cold War used to stand; this is not yet the case for Europe. As European foreign policy chief Javier Solana observed, 'For most Europeans today, the most important recent change in the security environment is the removal of the Soviet threat and not the emergence of a terrorist threat…'[6] Thus, hopes for greater, deeper US-European cooperation after September 11 proved ephemeral.

The tragedy of 9/11 did initially create a deep sense of transatlantic community (and robust US-European anti-terrorism cooperation).[7] But our responses to it have had a polarizing rather than unifying effect on transatlantic relations. As one analyst of transatlantic relations put it, '…where the cold war against communism in Middle Europe brought America and Europe together, the 'war against terrorism' in the Middle East is pulling them apart. The Soviet Union united the West, the Middle East divides it.'[8] Europeans were particularly uncomfortable with America's emerging doctrine of preemption as envisioned in its 2002 National Security Strategy.[9] But the most notable expression of renewed division was, of course, the transatlantic rift over Iraq.

The Iraq debate began when the Bush Administration turned from its post-September 11 efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan to the problem of Saddam Hussein's Iraq by the summer of 2002. The United States transformed this long festering problem into an international crisis by demanding that Saddam Hussein comply with UN Security Council resolutions calling for Iraq's complete disarmament. From the American perspective, Iraq posed an unacceptable threat to regional and global security and constituted a brutal regime responsible for unspeakable human rights abuses. While opinion in the US varied about the urgency of the Iraqi threat, the post-September 11 climate muted domestic debate. This helps explain why

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6) Javier Solana, 'Perspectives on US Foreign Policy,' ***Harvard International Review*** (Winter 2003).

7) On US-EU anti-terrorism cooperation, see Nora Bensahal, ***The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Europe, NATO, and the European Union*** (Santa Monica: RAND 2003). Still, even in this area, different approaches to confronting terrorism emerged. For a comparison of US and European approaches to terrorism, see Jonathan Stevenson, 'How Europe and America Defend Themselves,' ***Foreign Affairs*** 82, 2 (March/April 2003): 75-90.

8) Timothy Garton Ash, 'Anti-Europeanism in America,' ***The New York Review of Books***, February 13, 2003.

9) See, for example, Glenn Frankel, 'New U.S. Doctrine Worries Europeans: Decades of Coalition-Building Seen at Risk,' ***The Washington Post***, September 30, 2002, p. A1. For the full text see The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, PDF version available on the White House web site (http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html).

the US Congress easily passed a resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq if the President deemed it necessary and the majority of Americans supported the war.[10]

While the official reason to confront Iraq was its violation of UNSC resolutions regarding WMD, it was no secret that the Bush administration did not believe the Iraq problem could be solved without the removal of Saddam Hussein. Regime change in Iraq also fit into the administration's larger worldview about the need to radically alter the political landscape in the region in order to ultimately address the sources of international terrorism.[11] This unofficial motivation for war begins to explain some of the sources of tension which developed across the Atlantic.

While the split in European opinion (at least at the governmental level, since European publics overwhelmingly opposed the war) was greater than within the US, it is still possible to characterize a general European view on Iraq, at least at the initial stages of the crisis. While the Europeans also wanted to see Iraq disarmed, they did not view the problem with the same urgency as the Americans and were opposed to overthrowing the Iraqi regime.[12] Even European governments who supported the use of force, most notably Britain, did not support the goal of regime change.[13] Europeans were also more concerned about the negative implications of invading an Arab regime and the legality of such an invasion if not authorized through the United Nations. While transatlantic agreement on the goal of disarmament and the US administration's decision to proceed through the United Nations in September 2002 led to the passage of UNSC resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002 (which threatened 'severe consequences' if Iraq did not comply with disarmament demands), transatlantic conflict soon re-emerged as the Americans and Europeans viewed Iraqi compliance differently. Europeans began to suspect that no level of Iraqi compliance would be enough for the Americans (i.e., that the Americans were intent on toppling the regime) while

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10)   For American positions on Iraq as well as European perspectives, see Philip H. Gordon, 'Iraq: the transatlantic debate,' Occasional Papers No. 39, European Union Institute for Security Studies (December 2002).

11)   On the Bush administration's larger vision for the Middle East, see Philip H. Gordon, 'Bush's Middle East Vision,' **Survival** 45, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 155-165.

12)   For a representative European view on Iraq before the war, see an interview with Chris Patten, the commissioner of external affairs of the European Commission, in **Global Viewpoint**, Volume 20, No. 2 (September 9, 2002), located at: http://www.digitalnpq.org/global_services/global%20viewpoint/09-09-02.html.
Also see a speech by Chris Patten to the Plenary Session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 4, 2002, located at: http://www.europea. eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/sp02_364.htm.

13)   See Gordon, 'Iraq: the transatlantic debate,' on this point and internal European differences.

the Americans were concerned that no Iraqi violation would be sufficient for the Europeans to support the use of force.

The crisis only worsened as it moved from being about Iraq to the larger question of America's role in the world,[14] with Americans viewing some European states' positions against the war as a statement against America. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder campaigned against America and the Iraq war in the fall of 2002, which many believe helped him win the election but which also created a chill in US-German relations. But perhaps nothing created a sense of transatlantic crisis more than French President Jacques Chirac's active campaign against the war, including the dispatching of his foreign minister to nations on the Security Council who were weighing a second vote to authorize the use of force in late February and early March 2003 (a resolution the US ultimately abandoned when it became clear it would face a French veto). This active French lobbying against the war led many Americans to believe that France was more concerned about American power than about the Iraqi threat (Chirac's frequent statements on the need to maintain a multipolar order and a European counter-balance to American 'hyperpower' only reinforced such views).[15]

The French, German and Belgium effort to block NATO from making preparations to defend Turkey in the event of war further poisoned relations and eroded the legitimacy of a key transatlantic institution.[16] As one American journalist observed, 'Diplomats and analysts say the division over Turkey betrays deep feelings of unease on both sides of the Atlantic driven by many factors, not simply Iraq.. among them is the longtime French tendency dating from the de Gaulle era to chart a course independently of Washington, especially when Britain lines up with the United States.'[17] Major demonstrations against the war in European capitals turned into anti-America

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14) For an interesting analysis of debates about America's role in the world sparked by the Iraq crisis, see Michael Ignatieff, 'The Burden,' **The New York Times**, January 5, 2003.

15) Calls for a more unified European defense to counter American power also raised tensions. See, for example, an op-ed by the Prime Minister of Belgium, Guy Verhofstadt, 'Europe has to become a force in NATO,' **Financial Times**, February 21, 2003.

16) See Steven R. Weisman, 'Fallout From Iraq Rift: NATO May Feel a Strain,' **The New York Times**, February 11, 2003. A **Wall Street Journal** editorial went so far as to question NATO's utility in light of the French-German-Belgium action. See 'The End of NATO?' **Wall Street Journal**, February 10, 2003.

17) Steven R. Weisman, 'Fallout From Iraq Rift'. For another analysis of the Iraq crisis as a conflict over the exercise of American power, see Josef Joffe, 'Round 1 Goes to Mr. Big,' **New York Times**, February 10, 2003.

rallies and increased the tension and mutual hostility across the Atlantic.[18] As one analyst observed, 'The United States is today the target of an extraordinary wave of West European anti-Americanism greater perhaps than previous waves that crested between 1952 and 1974… For many European intellectuals and mediacrats, democratic America has become the Rogue State No. 1.'[19] American hostility toward Europe increased in kind (particularly toward France), leading a number of analysts to examine the increasing problem of anti-European sentiment in the US.[20] The Bush Administration sharply criticized the German-French position on Iraq and its efforts to block the defense of Turkey in NATO and even began to question the importance of Europe to American interests.[21]

Moreover, as European positions on Iraq began to differ (aided by the polarizing remarks by US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld referring to 'old' vs. 'new' Europe), the transatlantic rift also led to an internal European Union crisis. On January 30, 2003 Tony Blair led an effort to get other NATO members to sign a letter of support for US policy on Iraq — the 'letter of eight'.

Chirac's threatening language to Eastern European nations suggesting that their support for the war in Iraq could jeopardize their future standing in the European Union increased the sense of crisis and acrimony within Europe.[22] Although the EU was able to produce a relatively harmonious joint statement on Iraq,[23] in practice European state policy differed. In the end, nearly twenty European countries backed the US (although only Britain sent troops) while five remained opposed.[24] Given this internal European division,

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18) On anti-Americanism in Europe during the Iraq crisis, see Glenn Frankel, 'Sneers From Across the Atlantic,' **Washington Post**, February 11, 2003, p. A1. For an alternative view suggesting that Europeans continue to like America, see 'Living with a superpower,' **The Economist**, January 4, 2003, p. 18.

19) Arnold Beichman, 'Anti-Americanism redux abroad,' **The Washington Times**, November 20, 2002.

20) See, for example, Timothy Garton Ash, 'Anti-Europeanism in America.'

21) See Patrick E. Tyler, 'As Cold War Link Itself Grows Cold, Europe Seems to Lose Value for Bush,' **The New York Times**, February 12, 2003.

22) See 'Chirac warns candidate countries to toe EU line on Iraq,' **Agence France-Presse**, February 18, 2003.

23) The European Council held a special meeting to discuss the crisis in Iraq on February 17, 2003. For the full transcript of the Council statement, see 'War is Not Inevitable,' **The New York Times**, February 17, 2003 (http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/18/ international /europe/18ETEX.html) or the EU External Relations web site ('Extraordinary European Council on Iraq'): http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_ relations/iraq/intro/ec170203.htm.

24) On internal division within Europe on Iraq, see: Walter Mead, 'Battlefield Europe,' **The Los Angeles Times**, March 30, 2003; Paul Ames, 'EU leaders in somber mood as outbreak of war underscores divisions,' **Associated Press**, March

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana was silent during the crisis. Some began to question the future viability of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) given this tremendous split. The Iraq issue succeeded in becoming not just a transatlantic problem but a European problem.

America's failure to secure a second UN resolution to authorize the war — sought mainly to assist Tony Blair whose active support for the war was causing him trouble at home — increased American resentment of European allies who undermined their efforts. And the American decision to go ahead with the war without a second resolution led to enormous resentment in European capitals, and placed European countries supporting force in a difficult position as it became more difficult to justify the war to its publics.

Once the war started, the divisive atmosphere subsided as attention focused on limiting the number of civilian causalities and efforts to re-build post-war Iraq. The quick American victory and demise of Saddam Hussein's regime also quieted debate and led to calls for a speedy mending of transatlantic relations as attention turned to post-war issues.

But even after the war, tensions remained as Europeans and Americans viewed the war through different lenses and differed over the question of United Nations involvement in post-war Iraq. As Philip Gordon explained shortly after the war, 'Most Americans think victory has freed the Iraqi people, eliminating a threat that has dogged us for more than a decade…Nearly 70 percent believe military action was justified and that the world is a safer place as a result…Europe's assessment could not be more different…large majorities in France, Germany and even Britain believe the world is now more dangerous. Only in a few European countries do a majority think the war was justified.'[25] The failure of the US to produce evidence of Iraqi WMD capabilities and the prison abuse scandals have only increased European antagonism and suspicions of US motives in Iraq and beyond. And the cautious position of key European states like France in assisting reconstruction and political transition efforts (not to mention the unwillingness of the French and Germans to contribute troops) has fostered the American perception that many in Europe would like the US to fail. The transfer of sovereignty from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to an interim Iraqi government in June 2004 may alleviate some of these continued transatlantic tensions, but the transfer is unlikely to completely narrow the gap between the US and Europe on Iraq policy.

21, 2003; John Tagliabue, 'Who Stands With U.S.? Europe is of Two Minds,' **The New York Times**, January 31, 2003; Anne Applebaum, 'Here Comes the New Europe,' **Washington Post**, January 29, 2003, p. A21.

25) Philip Gordon, 'U.S. must fight for Europe's soul,' **Financial Times**, June 2, 2003.

1 Reasons for Divergence

Why do the US and Europe disagree so often on critical foreign and security policies in the Middle East? The answer is not just a matter of contrasting power positions, different domestic constituencies or the policies of a particular US administration. The differences exist because of the fundamentally different way each side views the world based on historical experience. Such experience forms contrasting narratives that shape respective perceptions, approaches and solutions to policy problems.[26]

Some popular explanations

The most well known explanation for transatlantic divergence comes from Robert Kagan.[27] Kagan argues that America and Europe are parting ways largely because of differences in power position. Essentially, America approaches the world differently than Europe because it is powerful and Europe is not. America acts unilaterally and often with force because it can; Europe relies on multilateralism, treaties and rules because it must. It is only natural for weak powers to prefer rules and for strong powers to avoid them. The disparity in power between the US and Europe has led to a gap in strategic perceptions; or, as it has been popularly portrayed, Americans are from Mars while the Europeans are from Venus. Consequently, Kagan suggests, these differences are no longer tactical as was the case during the Cold War. Today, America and Europe differ substantially and philosophically

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26) Parts of this section are drawn from Kaye, 'Bound to Cooperate? Transatlantic Policy in the Middle East.'

27) Robert Kagan, ***Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

'over what constitute intolerable threats to international security and the world order, as the case of Iraq has abundantly shown.'[28]

While one can find numerous empirical examples to refute Kagan's analysis (transatlantic anti-terrorism cooperation, the willingness of Europeans to use force in some cases like Kosovo, the presence of European peacekeeping forces around the globe, etc.), at the end of the day divergence exists, and it exists on critical issues.

But the problem with Kagan's power argument is it is rather static and deterministic. Do all powers act the same? Does it not matter **who** the power is? The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the Second World War as the global powers, but each acted quite differently in their spheres of influence in Europe.[29] The power of the United States did not dictate the formation of a multilateral order in Western Europe (the foundations of its current 'paradise'); other options were available for the European order that could have projected American dominance far more than was the case. The fact that it did not was a **choice** not a consequence of power. And haven't Americans themselves defined power differently over the years? While Kagan is right to say that different US administrations have more in common with each other in how power is perceived than with their transatlantic allies, the Clinton administration's emphasis on globalization and technology did impact its approach to the world and even its views on the use of force.

On the European side, structural weakness can be expressed in different ways, as the varying positions within Europe on questions of force suggest. Moreover, Europe's strategic culture favoring laws, multilateralism and eschewing the use of force was a product of history and can be reinvented as history unfolds. The Iraq crisis is already leading many Europeans to rethink the premise of this strategic culture, and the addition of fifteen new member states may further challenge existing thinking and practice. The desire of the European Union to draft a security strategy in the post-Iraq environment, including a strategy on non-proliferation, suggests the 'holiday from strategy' may be over. While Europe may never rival the United States as a global power, as theorists like Charles Kupchan suggest,[30] it certainly may rethink its view of power and its willingness to use force in world affairs even with relatively limited military capabilities. Ironically, it may be America's very power that inspires it to do so.

Other explanations for transatlantic divergence are also not entirely satisfying. For example, another structural argument suggests it is less power

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28)   Kagan, ***Of Paradise and Power***, p. 29.

29)   On this point, see Steven Weber, 'Shaping the postwar balance of power: multilateralism in NATO,' ***International Organization*** 46, 3 (summer 1992).

30)   See Charles A. Kupchan, ***End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*** (New York: Knopf, 2002).

positions than simple geography that explain why America and Europe approach the Middle East differently. But if this were the case, we could easily imagine more aggressive European policies given that Europe is closer to the region and thus more likely to suffer the consequences of major regional instability, terrorist threats, and WMD proliferation.

The rift in Middle East policy also cannot readily be attributed to the two sides' domestic politics. Europe's large Muslim population (three times that of the United States) and the strong pro-Israel lobby in the United States undoubtedly play a role in policy formation, but the power of such groups should not be overestimated. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although salient at the rhetorical level, is not necessarily at the top of the agenda for many Muslims in Europe, where the rights of immigrants and other domestic issues more directly affect their communities. On the US side, the pro-Israel lobby is active and vocal but not disproportionately strong; indeed, it is unlikely that it would be so successful if its arguments did not resonate with the larger US public and its view of the region.[31]

Do commercial and financial interests account for some of the divergence in transatlantic policy on the Middle East? Are the Europeans more concerned about protecting national corporate interests than Americans? Robert Kagan addresses this argument well: 'The common American argument that European policy toward Iraq and Iran has been dictated by financial considerations is only partly right. Are Europeans greedier than Americans? Do American corporations not influence American policy in Asia and Latin America as well as in the Middle East? The difference is that American strategic judgments sometimes conflict with and override financial interests.'[32] In other words, Europe's financial interests are less likely to conflict with strategic concerns because Europeans favor trade, multilateralism, and engagement in their foreign policy, including in the Middle East. Americans at times see strategic and economic interests in competition with one another whereas Europeans are more likely to view those same economic interests as supportive of their strategic goals.

Finally, we might ask if the basis of transatlantic differences today rests with the policies of the administration under President George W. Bush's leadership. To be sure, the policies of the Bush administration, particularly its emphasis on military force, unilateralism, and a preemptive security doctrine, have exacerbated transatlantic tension and contributed to the rift over Iraq. That said, the differences in approach to Middle East problems run far deeper than the policies of a particular administration, as the historical divisions between the United States and Europe indicate. Given the indeterminacy of

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31) See Dana H. Allin and Steven Simon, 'The Moral Psychology of U.S. Support for Israel,' **Survival** 45, no. 3 (autumn 2003): 123–144.

32) Kagan, **Of Paradise and Power**, pp. 61–62, n. 46.

this factor and others, it becomes clear that the roots of our different approaches are much more deeply embedded in our political cultures.

Strategic culture clash

The concept of strategic culture characterizes how a nation or group views the role of war, the use of force, and the nature of an adversary or threat in the international system; it also helps explain how actors confront such threats.[33] Differences in US and European strategic culture since World War II, rooted largely in their contrasting historical experiences, help explain differences in transatlantic approaches to the Middle East. As Kagan has argued, Europe's postwar experience has contributed to a strategic culture (stronger in some European states than others) favoring negotiation, commerce, international law, and multilateralism. In contrast, the US has favored a strategic culture supporting coercive diplomacy, the use of force, unilateralism, and the projection of US values abroad (or a more moralist foreign policy with religious undertones). The European experience with colonialism in the Middle East also contributes to Europe's strategic mindset, underscoring the limits of military force and occupation. Moreover, postcolonial ties between Europeans and Arab/Muslim states reinforces the European inclination for policies of negotiation and diplomacy.

These differences in strategic culture also lead to differences in US and European historical narratives, or views of how events in a region such as the Middle East have played out over the years. For example, because Europeans are generally more averse to the use of force, their historical narrative of the Iraq war is developing differently than the US narrative. The majority of Americans view the Iraq war as worth the loss of life and other costs it incurred (although this is beginning to change) while the majority of Europeans do not.[34] Although such characterizations are naturally generalizations, particularly

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33) On the concept of strategic culture and an interesting application, see Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China,' in ***The Culture of National Security***, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

34) See ***Transatlantic Trends 2003: Topline Data*** (July 2003), p. 28, located at: www.transatlantictrends.org/apps/gmf/ttweb.nsf/0/DA5A3225751A264585256D 78000D5F66/$file/Transatlantic+Trends+Survey+Results+2003.pdf, accessed October 14, 2003 (project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Compagnia di San Paolo). When asked whether the war in Iraq was worth the loss of life and other costs incurred, 55 percent of Americans and 25 percent of Europeans responded affirmatively. Seventy percent of Europeans disagreed while only 36 percent of Americans responded negatively.

on the European side, these basic differences in strategic culture capture the essence of policy orientations on each side.

For instance, different US and European approaches toward the Arab-Israeli conflict illustrate how disparate strategic cultures and historical narratives can lead to divergent policies. For Americans, the 1967 Six-Day War, a seminal historic event, was an unavoidable preemptive war to protect a nation's survival. Europeans view the 1967 war as the event that began the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Although Israel initially benefited from post-Holocaust sympathy in Europe, the 1967 war and subsequent developments, particularly the first and second Palestinian Intifadas, shifted the image of Israel from an underdog to an aggressor in European public opinion, even in more traditionally pro-Israel states such as Germany and the Netherlands.

The US openness to the use of force, particularly since the September 11 attacks, allows for a much higher tolerance for Israeli policies (which it views as necessary measures of self-defense) than does the European perspective, which sees Israeli military responses as disproportionate and counterproductive. As a recent analysis explained, 'Many Europeans' relative lack of sympathy for Israel may be related to the fact that Israel is a militarily robust nation-state that would rather fight its enemies than be killed by them.'[35]

Moreover, the US preference for projecting its values, particularly democracy, abroad also helps explain US positions toward Israel and the peace process. The US tilt toward Israel is not just the result of the pro-Israel lobby; the fact that Israel is a democracy that shares Western values appeals to the US public at large and increases its political support across the US political spectrum. The United States' desire to oust Yasser Arafat and promote internal Palestinian political reform also stems from this strategic culture, while Europe's preference for negotiation and engagement helps explain its reluctance to exclude the Palestinian leader. In addition, European aversion to unilateral policies and the historical legacy of the Berlin Wall contribute to European unease with Israel's current policy of building a security barrier. Americans, more often the target of terrorism than Europeans, are more sympathetic with Israel's claim that a barrier is necessary to stem terrorist attacks, although there is rising concern in Washington about Israeli plans to construct the barrier deep inside Palestinian territory.

Emerging role conflicts

Why have different strategic perspectives now spiraled into major transatlantic clashes? Role perceptions, or how each side perceives its role in the

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35)   Allin and Simon, 'The Moral Psychology of U.S. Support for Israel,' p. 135.

international arena, help explain recent transatlantic friction on Middle East policy and beyond.

Although the European project is a continuing process, the end of the Cold War led to serious internal thinking about Europe's role in the world — politically, culturally, and militarily. While Europe's focus continues to be primarily internal, particularly with its enlargement from 15 to 25 member states, the sense that Europe needs to project its power externally in a way that is commensurate with its economic stature is growing. According to the *Transatlantic Trends 2003* poll, the overwhelming majority of Europeans desire the EU to become 'a superpower, like the United States.'[36]

Although some individual European states, particularly France, have long desired the EU to project a global leadership position, most member states have traditionally viewed the European integration process as a means of keeping the peace and promoting prosperity in Europe and not necessarily of projecting power abroad. Some big powers such as Britain have been critical of a strong EU common foreign and security policy, fearing such common policy would threaten core national interests. Germany and smaller member states have been more supportive of a common external policy. More recently, however, particularly with the establishment of an EU foreign policy chief in 1999, there is a growing European desire to play a more significant political and perhaps even military role in global affairs. This evolving role perception is not yet matched by reality, as continuing division within the EU makes a common foreign and security policy difficult to implement. This problem is likely to worsen with enlargement. Moreover, European nations are not willing to increase defense spending to levels that would ensure their ability to project military power abroad. Given such realities, most European policy elites are less interested in challenging American power than in playing a complementary role where Europe's political importance in key policy issues begins to match its economic significance.

In other words, Europeans are increasingly uneasy with the 'doing the dishes' model of foreign policy, cleaning up with economic and peacekeeping support after US operations. They increasingly want a greater say in initial policy decisions and, if need be, military operations. The more the European role perception evolves from an internal focus on creating a model paradise for others to emulate to an active interest in projecting influence beyond the continent, the more likely are clashes with the United States. This is particularly true given the contending American role perception, which has strengthened during the last decade, of the indispensable nation ultimately responsible for global order.

Overall, Europe's strategic culture and role perception creates two fundamental disputes with the United States, in questions about the use of

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36) *Transatlantic Trends 2003*, p. 9.

force and in defining the caretaker of the international system as a multilateral order as opposed to an indispensable defender. The clash of strategic cultures, then, exacerbates divergent role perceptions as each side views its model as the preferable way to manage threats that the two sides perceive with different severity in the first place.

Implications

On the negative side, the implications of my argument suggest that transatlantic division is deeply embedded and will not disappear if a new US administration or European leadership comes to power. To make matters worse, these differences matter more now than they have historically. As Steven Everts observes, 'Unlike during the Cold War, when the Europeans argued — sometimes fiercely — with the Americans over nuclear strategy or how tough to be on the Soviet Union, today both sides are quarrelling over the importance of rules and norms when it comes to managing the international system.'[37] But on the positive side, my analysis suggests that perceptions can change to match emerging developments and, given the will, dialogue can help foster a shared sense of purpose and approach to key policy problems in the Middle East and beyond. In short, transatlantic division is likely but not inevitable, leaving room for creative policy to reverse the historic trend toward transatlantic discord on Middle East policy.

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37)   Steven Everts, 'A Question of Norms: Transatlantic Divergences in Foreign Policy,' *The International Spectator*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April-June 2001), p. 47.

2   The Middle East Peace Process

Background

The Europeans have traditionally played a limited role in the Middle East peace process (MEPP), with the US largely taking the lead. Until the 1991 Madrid peace conference, Europe played virtually no role at all beyond declaratory statements (most notably, the 1980 Venice Declaration).[38] The absence of a unified European voice and the Israeli perception of a European pro-Arab bias combined to shut the Europeans out of peace processing and solidified the dominant role of the United States, as evidenced in its brokering of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979.

With the Madrid and Oslo processes in the 1990s, the Europeans began to play a more significant role, largely in the economic arena. In addition to serving as chair of the economic working group in the multilateral peace process beginning in the early 1990s and its formation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) in Barcelona in 1995, the EU became the primary donor for the Palestinian Authority. The appointment of a special EU representative to the MEPP (Miguel Moratinos) in 1996 and, even more significantly, the appointment of the High Representative for CFSP (Javier Solana) in 1999 enhanced a common European position on the MEPP and thus strengthened the position of the EU.

While the United States continues to play the dominant role — and most Europeans prefer it that way — the EU has begun to exert not just economic but also political influence over the MEPP. For example, the Europeans played a constructive role in helping to broker the 1997 Hebron agreement and in helping the Americans convince Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to postpone a

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38)   For a detailed account of the European role in the Arab-Israeli peace process, see Ben Soetendorp, 'The EU's Involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: The Building of a Visible International Identity,' **European Foreign Affairs Review** 7 (autumn 2002): 283-295.

unilateral declaration of statehood in May 1999. Indeed, during various crises in the MEPP, particularly since the onset of the second intifada in September 2000, the EU has at times 'worked on Arafat' and promoted Palestinian reform efforts in coordination with the US.

The EU is also becoming the central venue for European peace process diplomacy, although this is more the case when the US is engaged in the process (when the US disengages, the prospects for independent initiatives from big states like France or Germany is greater). For instance, when the French and Germans attempted to introduce their own peace plans in the spring of 2002 as Israeli-Palestinian violence continued, Solana was able to win out with a European position in large part because the US was willing to re-engage in the process with the formation of the Middle East Quartet.

Indeed, the emergence of the Middle East Quartet (comprising the United States, the EU, the UN, and Russia) in the summer of 2002 is perhaps the best illustration of a growing European presence (if not influence) in peace process diplomacy. The United States and Europe have never before coordinated so closely on this issue. Considering the historical rifts across the Atlantic on the peace process, the development of the Quartet is notable. The Europeans have finally obtained a political, not just economic, place at the table. Still, optimism over this new European role has dampened as the violence continues and the US seems reluctant to engage the parties, either through bilateral diplomacy or via the Quartet. This has led some Europeans to question the continued viability of the Quartet, which many in the US administration never seemed to take seriously in the first place. With the Bush administration's support of Israeli Prime Minister Sharon's unilateral withdrawal plan, the future of the Quartet process and its road map plan is even more uncertain.

Areas of convergence

- **Common concern about spill-over**: Both the US and Europe are concerned about the negative effects of continued bloodshed from this conflict on the wider Middle East, even if the level of concern differs. Despite the Bush administration's inclination to disengage from the Arab-Israeli conflict, growing violence led to President Bush's Middle East vision speech in June 2002 (where he outlined his support of a two-state solution and emphasized the need for Palestinian reform) and ultimately to the Quartet process which operationalized these ideas via the road map. British Prime Minister Tony Blair also convinced President Bush to re-engage after the Iraq war, when the President hosted a summit in Jordan to boost the process. So there is a common interest in engagement to avoid a spill-over effect that could potentially be worked

with in the future, despite the Bush administration's general aversion to peace processing.'

- ***Common visions of a final settlement***. Americans and Europeans are closer in their visions of a final settlement (a two state solution) to the Arab-Israeli conflict than has historically been the case. Both sides have moved closer to the other's positions: the United States now supports a peace outcome (a two-state solution), not just a peace process (although many Europeans would like the United States to specify the contours of a final-status agreement, as occurred in the Clinton administration), while Europe has actively moved toward US positions on Palestinian reform.

- ***Joint support for Palestinian reform.*** A transatlantic consensus on the need for Palestinian reform has emerged, even if the US and Europe continue to disagree on the question of engaging Arafat. The EU supported American efforts to promote reform of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and to establish a Palestinian prime minister.

- ***A common peace plan.*** The Quartet process has produced the first ever joint peace plan, the road map. Despite growing frustration that neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians have implemented the road map — and European concern that the United States did not invest heavily enough in the effort — the road map constitutes a joint US-European effort to produce a peace plan. The Quartet has also served to coordinate European positions, helping to avoid unilateral initiatives from major European powers that have tended to erode Washington's confidence in a European partner in the past. However, with Washington's support of Israel's proposal for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, the future relevance of the road map plan is unclear. Officially, the US and Europeans consider the withdrawal plan — if implemented — consistent with the road map. Unofficially, many worry that the withdrawal plan will ultimately replace the road map and end any near term prospects of a negotiated final status settlement.

Areas of divergence

The US and Europe still remain far apart on some critical points. Indeed, this issue may prove the most difficult for transatlantic agreement if the regional impasse continues.

- ***Arafat.*** The most consistent area of divergence — but probably the least significant as it is more of a tactical issue — is the question of Palestinian

President Yasser Arafat. The US and Europe are likely to continue to disagree on this issue not because the Europeans favor Arafat as the Palestinian leader but because they feel that margnizalizing him will only make it more difficult to progress with Palestinian reform and enhance the legitimacy of the new Palestinian Prime Minister. The Americans view Arafat as undermining the peace process and an active supporter of Palestinian terrorism, and refuse to meet him. The Europeans continue to meet the Palestinian leader, arguing he is still the elected representative of the Palestinian people. But this disagreement is more likely to cause diplomatic unpleasantries than a fundamental crisis in transatlantic relations (the same cannot be said of EU-Israeli relations).

- ***Responses to the road map's failure***. The Americans and Europeans have differing approaches to the failure of the road map to date. The US administration's reaction has been to disengage while the Europeans are trying to engage the Americans and if they are unable to do so, to create an alternative approach to ignite the process (as the enthusiastic European support for the second track Geneva process suggests). Indeed, continued US disengagement increases transatlantic tension as well as internal division within Europe as different member states hold varying positions about how to proceed. The recent American support of Sharon's unilateral withdrawal plan from Gaza only further increased tensions with European partners because of fears that this plan is replacing the road map and any prospect of resuming negotiations (not to mention uneasiness with President Bush's far reaching statements in support of current Israeli settlements in the West Bank). That said, some European pragmatists hope to use the withdrawal plan as a mechanism to resume the negotiation process and get the road map back on track.

- ***Different views of the importance of the MEPP in wider regional diplomacy***. The reason the US administration is inclined to disengage goes to the heart of the problem and presents the most significant source of transatlantic divergence: the Americans have a different view of the strategic role of the MEPP in the larger region than the Europeans. An increasingly accepted notion in the Bush White House and among many in the US policy community — that the political and economic backwardness of the broader region is at the core of Middle Eastern problems — is at odds with the European perspective which holds the Arab-Israeli conflict primarily accountable for the region's ills. Ultimately the real danger may be the fundamentally different views of the United States and Europe about the role of the peace process in Middle Eastern diplomacy. In Washington's eyes, the road to peace may run through Baghdad, but for Europeans, it still runs through Jerusalem. Containing the conflict may be enough for Washington, but it is not

enough for most in Europe. The European sense of urgency to address this conflict will only increase with the perception that the conflict is spilling over into Europe itself and exacerbating Europe's already difficult challenge of integrating its growing Muslim communities.

Thus, despite greater policy convergence and coordination across the Atlantic on the peace process than at any other point of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this basic divide between the American and European approaches toward the parties and the issue itself is likely to remain a source of tension for some years to come.

Ways to move forward

- **Institutionalize the Quartet.** Many Europeans are increasingly frustrated that the Quartet has transformed into an ineffective body, which has neutralized a European voice on peace process issues while failing to produce concrete results on the ground. Some segments of the US administration never took this coordinating mechanism seriously. Consequently, many European policy elites are questioning the value of continuing the Quartet process. Even if the Middle East road map ultimately fails, however, the Quartet can still serve as a useful mechanism for US-European dialogue and cooperation on Arab-Israeli issues. An independent European approach is unlikely to produce better results in the current political context and will only serve to aggravate transatlantic relations. Those in the United States who worry about multilateralizing the peace process would do well to keep in mind that EU positions in the Quartet are much closer to US positions than a unilateral French or British position might be. Although completely shutting the Europeans out of the process might sound appealing to some Americans, it is no longer an option. At the very least, a European role will be essential to implementing any peace agreement and perhaps even to negotiating it in the first place. The days of the United States running the peace process unilaterally are numbered, if not over, even if it will still play the lead role.

- **Use biases to advance the process.** The American tilt toward Israel and the European tilt toward the Palestinians should be capitalized on, not denied. Unless Israel feels secure, it will never offer the type of concessions necessary for peace, and the Americans are the only ones who can offer the Israelis credible security guarantees. Because of this, only the US can press Israel to make tough decisions on the MEPP. On the other hand, the European tendency to view the conflict from the Palestinian perspective has given them a sympathetic ear from the

Palestinian leadership which has provided the EU with important leverage. The EU has begun to use this leverage to press Arafat at various times and to engage in efforts at reforming the PA security apparatus. While there are limits to what external pressure can accomplish if the regional parties are not ready to move forward, the division of labor whereby the US works on Israel and the EU works on the Palestinians could be effective if the US and Europeans coordinate and carry through with their commitments. That said, such an approach should not replace attempts to improve EU-Israeli relations and efforts to make clear to Israel that Europeans also value Israeli security.

- ***Maintain European engagement on the economic front.*** An increased political role for the EU in the core MEPP (Israeli-Palestinian track) should not come at the expense of the EU's traditional economic role in the MEPP and support for cooperative regional processes, such as the Euro-Med forum. The economic and regional dimensions of peace are as critical as ever, and this less visible role should not be viewed as a consolation prize. Europe has a comparative advantage in the economic area, both as a funder for the PA and regional initiatives and as a model for regional cooperation. While Solana or various European foreign ministers can complement high profile American attempts to broker a peace deal, the Commission should continue to focus on the economic dimensions of peace and the promotion of stability in the Mediterranean region.

- ***Restart the multilaterals.*** The Europeans should join the US in re-launching the multilateral track of the MEPP, perhaps as equal co-sponsors of the process. While the Arab parties have been reluctant to engage in regional cooperation efforts until the bilateral talks move forward, plans for re-starting this process should be in place so that the moment there is some positive movement in the bilateral tracks, the multilaterals can begin. The Europeans should, along with the Americans, forcefully advocate the resumption of these talks with the Arab parties, and attempt to include those Arab parties who previously refused to attend such talks, particularly the Syrians and Lebanese. A renewal of a regional process and dialogue can begin to change the regional psychology and support those in Israel interested in making concessions for peace. Such a process can also address regional challenges that can not be solved solely through bilateral channels (e.g., water, the environment, energy, arms control, economic development, refugees).

3 Iran and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Background

Before 9/11 and the Iraq war, WMD proliferation was not a central transatlantic focus, despite ongoing concern about Iraq's activities in the 1990s and efforts to create a regional arms control regime in the early 1990s in the multilateral peace track. However, given the US administration's focus on WMD as a central rationale for its invasion of Iraq and for its strategy of preemption as outlined in the US National Security Strategy in the fall of 2002, WMD proliferation quickly became a core issue on the transatlantic agenda. The American view that WMD in the hands of international terrorists posed one of the gravest threats to the international community began to define the nature of transatlantic discourse.

Despite growing European acceptance of WMD as a critical security threat and increasing attention to the problem, the European response has contrasted to the American approach, as evidenced in differences over Iraq in the lead up to the war. But the key test of transatlantic policy in this area will be Iran. Indeed, the Iranian nuclear ambition is likely to be the next challenge for transatlantic cooperation, despite the current consensus on how to approach this problem.

In order to understand the sources of likely transatlantic friction in this area, it is useful to keep in mind some of the general differences in approach between the US and Europe toward Iran. Despite some calls in American policy circles to consider normalizing relations with Iran — particularly after the 1997 elections which brought reformist leaders to power and recent tacit US-Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq — American antipathy toward Tehran is still strong. The legacy of the hostage crisis of 1979, Iranian involvement in international terrorist activities, continued virulent anti-American rhetoric, the rejection of Israel by the Islamic regime, a dismal human rights record, and of course Iran's pursuit of a nuclear capability will make the resumption of diplomatic ties extremely challenging. The US Congress is unlikely to reverse its sanctions legislation against Iran short of

dramatic developments in that country. Moreover, the decline of reformist power since the 2004 Iranian elections only strengthens American hardliners who argue for even tougher policies (although only a minority of American neocons still talk about regime change in Iran given the difficulties in Iraq).

This acrimonious relationship contrasts greatly with the EU and European member states' relationship with Iran. Not only does the EU and its member states maintain normal diplomatic contact with Tehran, the EU has engaged in a number of formal channels (including a human rights dialogue) in addition to ongoing negotiations with Iran over a Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). Europeans view Iran as a complex society in the midst of a great internal power struggle between hardliners and reformers, and hope to shape the outcome of this struggle through dialogue and engagement. This helps explain European puzzlement at the Bush Administration's inclusion of Iran in the 'axis of evil' in the President's 2002 State of the Union address. Although individual European states have at times suspended diplomatic relations with Iran (such as the UK during the Rushdie affair), the general contrast between Europe's relationship with Iran and the United State's relationship is stark, and creates the context from which different approaches to the Iranian nuclear issue are likely to emerge.

Areas of convergence

- *A tougher European approach to WMD*. European concern about the proliferation of unconventional weapons and the missile systems able to deliver them is growing, moving Europeans closer to American positions. Indeed, since the Iraq war, WMD is creeping toward the top of the European agenda. The war in Iraq and the diplomatic dispute prior to it provided a catalyst for Europe to place proliferation higher on its agenda and reexamine its policies to combat this threat. This shift reflected a general, pragmatic reaction to align Europe's policies more closely with the United States to help repair transatlantic relations as well as relations within Europe after the Iraq rupture. Europeans did not want to be marginalized and divided as they were in Iraq, and major European states such as France and Germany recognized that a united Europe was necessary for the projection of European power externally. Moreover, European governments were confronted with substantial evidence of significant Iranian efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

  Consequently, the EU issued a new policy to confront WMD at the European Council meeting in Thessaloniki in late June 2003 that included considering coercive measures if diplomatic efforts to stem proliferation in certain problem states failed, marking a dramatic

departure from the previous European, particularly German, aversion to the use of force in such scenarios.[39] Moreover, in an additional critical break with past practice, the EU agreed to insist that all future EU Trade and Cooperation Agreements (TCA) with third parties include a nonproliferation clause. In December 2003, the EU adopted a nonproliferation strategy that reinforced the principles set out in the June policy statement and made clear that WMD would now become a fundamental condition in all future EU agreements.

As a result, the EU is now pursuing an approach to proliferation that more actively addresses countries of concern rather than relying solely on existing international agreements to do the job. Although Europeans are still strong believers in international regimes, they increasingly recognize the implementation and compliance problems of accords such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Thus, like the United States, Europe is now focusing less on broadening international arms control regimes and more on improving the implementation of existing treaties, particularly those regarding nuclear weapons.

Recent EU diplomacy toward Syria is an excellent example of Europe's tougher policy on proliferation. The timing of the new nonproliferation strategy issued in December 2003 was bad luck for Syria because the strategy emerged just as the European Commission (EC) was engaging Damascus on a TCA — the rest of which have been concluded with every other Mediterranean country as part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Thus, because the EU-Syrian negotiations happened to coincide with the EU's new proliferation policy, Syria has become the first test case of the policy. Although the Commission completed a draft TCA with Syria in December 2003, the member states did not initially approve the agreement. Some key member states, such as Britain and Germany, expressed concern that the proliferation clause was watered down, and instructed the Commission to re-enter negotiations with the Syrians on this issue. Several member states are concerned that if the new proliferation policy is not applied in its first case, particularly with a country like Syria, the credibility of the entire initiative is in jeopardy.

- ***Common agreement on Iran, for now.*** Perhaps the best example of growing convergence on the threat of proliferation is the case of Iran.

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39) For the EU statement on WMD, see 'Presidency Conclusions: Thessaloniki European Council, 19 and 20 June 2003,' annex II ('Declaration on Non Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction'), http://ue.eu.int/pressData /en/ec/76279.pdf, accessed October 14, 2003.

Traditionally, the United States and Europe have taken very different approaches. While the United States has preferred policies of containment, economic sanctions, and the threat of force, European states have favored policies of engagement and have been reluctant to link their economic and political relations with Tehran's proliferation activity. Now, however, the European position is shifting toward Washington. In mid-June 2003, the foreign ministers of the EU's member states released a statement critical of Iran's nuclear program and demanded that Iran accept more aggressive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).[40] Most critically, the EU for the first time specifically linked the trade and cooperation agreement it is negotiating with Tehran to the nuclear issue. The French, in contrast to their stance on Iraq, have actively supported this tougher position toward Iran. Unlike in the Iraq case, there is a general international consensus that Iran is actively seeking a nuclear weapons option, and more consensus in this case on the intelligence surrounding the program. For now, there is agreement on the appropriate response: diplomatic pressure to force Tehran to shift course and work cooperatively with the IAEA to develop a peaceful nuclear program acceptable to the international community and in line with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which Iran is a signatory. The success of the Big Three diplomacy with Tehran which produced Iranian agreement for more intrusive inspections was applauded in Washington, even if many remain cautious about the long-term ability to ultimately stem Iran's program, particularly given recent revelations by the IAEA suggesting Iranian violations.

Areas of divergence

- *Contrasting threat perceptions*. The issue of a potential Iranian nuclear program and of WMD proliferation more generally, while increasingly a shared area of concern, illustrates continued gaps in threat perceptions. The Bush administration expresses overriding concern that WMD in the hands of states such as Iran or in those of international terrorists poses an existential threat to the United States. Although they acknowledge the heightened importance of the WMD issue, Europeans do not view

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40) See General Affairs and External Relations, 2518th Council Meeting, External Relations, Luxembourg, June 16, 2003, located at http://ue.eu.int /newsroom/NewMain.asp?LANG=1, accessed October 9, 2003. Similar statements on Iran were issued at subsequent External Relations meetings in Brussels on July 21, 2003, and in Brussels on September 29, 2003.

proliferation as an immediate security threat.[41] On the specific issue of Iran developing WMD, fewer Europeans (46 percent) than Americans (57 percent) view this as an 'extremely important threat' (support is even lower in key countries such as France [36 percent] and Germany [39 percent]),[42] and they are much less supportive than Americans of using military force to confront the problem.[43] Moreover, European concern about Iran's nuclear program reveals other motivations beyond a military threat, ranging from a desire by some (particularly the French) to avoid a second major conflict with the United States to concerns about the precedent an Iranian nuclear capability would set for the region and the future of the nonproliferation regime.

- **Differing Tactics**. The Europeans still tend to favor policies of engagement and preventive diplomacy while the US has a stronger inclination toward coercive policies. The American Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), although supported by many European parties, is a good example of an American approach to the problem as it is essentially an interdiction program focusing on coercive enforcement rather than preventive engagement.

- **Potential discord on Iran.** Despite the current transatlantic agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue, future disagreements regarding Iranian compliance could create transatlantic friction if not another crisis. For example, if the Americans remain convinced that Iran is continuing a covert nuclear program despite the nuclear agreement with the Big Three and IAEA inspections, it is unclear whether the Europeans will share such an assessment. Would the United States and the EU be able to agree, for example, on what types of Iranian violations would justify bringing the issue to the UN Security Council or even a preventive military strike? Could the parties reach agreement on what a UNSC resolution would say? At the end of the day, the European preference for talking things out and the American willingness to slug things out may remain. The presence of European diplomats in Tehran, in contrast to the paucity of US-Iranian contact, only reinforces this tendency. Iran is not likely to remain the good news story for transatlantic relations. While disagreement is unlikely to reach the level of the Iraq crisis — particularly given the consensus on intelligence in this case — differences

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41) See Harald Müller, 'Terrorism, Proliferation: A European Threat Assessment,' **Chaillot Papers** no. 58 (Institute for Security Studies, March 2003), p.97 http://aei.pitt.edu/archive/00000520/01/chai58e.pdf, accessed October 14, 2003.

42) **Transatlantic Trends 2003**, p. 21.

43) Ibid., pp. 33–36.

on this issue can further sour relations and impede collective action, undermining efforts to obtain Iranian compliance.

How to move forward

- ***Make use of the good cop/bad cop model.*** The most productive way to make joint progress on nonproliferation is for the US and Europeans to work with their respective inclinations for coercive and engagement models. In other words, the allies can play the good cop/bad cop routine to their advantage, both pressuring and enticing problem states toward better behavior. Progress with countries like Libya, Iran and Syria would not be possible without a combination of American pressure and European diplomatic engagement.

- ***Consider drawing on NATO*** as a forum for transatlantic coordination on a joint non-proliferation strategy and as a venue to demonstrate high-level political commitment to address this issue, building on transatlantic statements on WMD issued at the G-8 summit in Sea Island and the US-EU summit in Dublin in June 2004.

- ***Create a joint road map for Iranian compliance.*** The US and Europe (either via the EU or the Big Three) should start coordinating courses of action for Iranian compliance with IAEA inspections. Drawing on a Quartet-like model, the Americans and Europeans (preferably with the Russians and UN/IAEA) should begin putting down on paper what each considers unacceptable lines for Iran to cross in the course of implementing the IAEA's demands — in essence, a roadmap for Iranian compliance. If Iran does not comply down the road and resolve all issues related to its nuclear program, the allies also need to start defining what a UNSC course of action would look like — broad economic sanctions, targeted sanctions, a threat of force?

- ***Reactivate a regional security process.*** The Americans and Europeans should employ their respective leverage (in the American case, the threat of sanctions; in the EU case, the rewards of trade and investment) to encourage Syria to agree to join a regional security dialogue in the Middle East. Syria never participated in the multilateral arms control and regional security (ACRS) process, which began after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and foundered in the mid-1990s. The growing vulnerability felt by Syria, combined with the recent actions by Iran and Libya, offer a unique opportunity to establish a new regional security forum that would address region-wide security concerns and the

underlying sources for regional conflict — hopefully this time including the three countries that stayed out of ACRS. Such a regional dialogue would not preclude continued US and European efforts to press countries of concern on a case-by-case basis regarding their WMD capabilities, particularly if shared intelligence suggests an unequivocal and growing threat or violations of international commitments, as is the situation with Iran. But on both tracks — bilateral and multilateral — concrete action and a coordinated approach from the United States and Europe are more likely to be effective than continued debates about what the use of force accomplished in Iraq.

4 Promoting Regional Reform

In the June 2004 G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia, the United States unveiled — after months of diplomacy in Europe and the Middle East — its 'Broader Middle East Initiative' (formerly referred to as the Greater Middle East (GME) Initiative and officially renamed the 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa'), a plan to support political, economic and social reform in the region. The European response to the initiative has been cautious. Despite the common perception among Europeans that they have been in the business of democracy promotion far longer than the US, the fact is that neither the Americans nor Europeans have shown sustained commitment to press this agenda forward because of ongoing doubts about what democracy in the region might bring.[44]

Because of this, both the Americans and Europeans, despite differences in style, have been pursuing modest programs that are unlikely to change fundamentally the balance of political forces in the region. As democracy analysts Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers suggest, the US and Europe have been promoting since the late 1980s what they term the 'standard

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44) For good overviews of the dilemma of democracy promotion for US interests and the trade-offs involved in such efforts (namely that democracy may over the long-term produce more stable and productive societies in the region but it will also unlikely produce policies favorable to US interests), see Ray Takeyh, 'Arab Democracy and U.S. Interests,' **The National Interest**, No. 75 (spring 2004): 1-7 and Thomas Carothers, 'Democracy: Terrorism's Uncertain Antidote,' **Current History** (December 2003). On the shortcomings of European efforts, see Richard Youngs, 'Europe's Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform,' Carnegie Paper Number 45, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC (June 2004). For a transatlantic call to more aggressively tackle the democracy deficit, see 'Democracy and Human Development in the Broader Middle East: A Transatlantic Strategy for Partnership,' Istanbul Paper #1, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, June 25-27, 2004.

template of democracy aid programs,' which they characterize as a 'nonassertive mix of efforts to strengthen election administration, train parliamentarians, reform judiciaries, professionalize journalists, fund nongovernmental organization (NGO) activists...'[45] The problem with this template, they argue, is it is 'of little use in situations where entrenched power elites are determined to hold on to power and only interested in cosmetic reforms to gain international legitimacy and bleed off accumulating pressure for real political change.' [46] Despite earlier characterizations of the American democracy initiative as ambitious, its content essentially matches this basic template.

That said, there are limits to what even more aggressive policies might achieve, as regional reform will ultimately evolve from internal change. But outsiders, particularly Western states with significant political, military and economic leverage, can certainly support such processes.

Growing Convergence: Democracy Promotion as a Vital Security Interest

For the United States, Middle East democracy promotion is now considered a critical national security priority. For years, successive American administrations put regional reform on the backburner as it was perceived to interfere with the Arab-Israeli peace process and the stability of pro-Western governments. Since 9/11, this logic has been turned on its head: stability, it is said, now **depends** on reform. As President Bush framed it, 'Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe, because in the long run stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment and violence ready for export.'[47] America's political commitment to support such rhetoric is an open question, but the genuine and radical shift in mind-set on this issue across the political spectrum in Washington is not.

So too in Europe has commitment to Middle East reform strengthened. In addition to the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership process, European states are increasingly willing to use their economic levers and benefits of

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45)   Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, 'The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start,' Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief 29, March 2004.

46)   Ibid.

47)   President Bush's remarks to the National Endowment of Democracy, November 6, 2003, reproduced in *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2003/11/06/politics/06TEXT-BUSH.html, accessed November 10, 2003.

association agreements to push for political and economic reform in the region. Recent European Council papers on relations with the Arab world as well as the European Security Strategy all emphasize the importance of the reform agenda in the Middle East.

The European allies now share a belief that an open democratic space for venting frustrations is necessary for regional stability. As one European analyst observes, 'the most dangerous terrorists are educated citizens from autocratic countries.'[48] According to this logic, such people have no political space to express discontent, creating a recipe for exporting radicalism and instability. Prominent American analysts are similarly recognizing the need to 'dry up the swamp' of terrorism through political reform in the Arab world.[49] Consequently, a transatlantic consensus has emerged suggesting that political reform is a key ingredient to stability in the Middle East.

There is also emerging policy agreement about the sequencing of political reform processes. The view that democratic reform should focus on creating liberties and strengthening civil society before promoting elections is now widely held and perceived as the best protection against the general fear that democratization will lead to anti-Western radical Islamic regimes (the Algerian model). This explains the rather modest and incremental approach of both the Americans and Europeans in their democracy promotion efforts to date.

However, this shared consensus among the policy elite needs review, particularly in light of a very different consensus emerging among democracy analysts; namely, that the heavy focus on civil society and other non-governmental actors is a neutral, and perhaps even damaging, component of democracy promotion. Such groups, critics argue, are often either apolitical or support the political status quo, doing little to challenge the political distribution of power in authoritarian or 'semi-authoritarian' regimes in the region.[50] As one democracy analyst puts it, 'Democratization requires, among other things, an opening at the higher level of political institutions, contestation for national office, and expanded political liberties. These changes cannot be brought about by small numbers of citizens working to improve neighborhood garbage collection.'[51] Or as another analyst similarly observes, 'No matter how

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48)   Martin Ortega, 'Middle East: The Achilles heel of transatlantic relations,' in Güstav Lindström, ed. ***Shift or rift: Assessing US-EU relations after Iraq***, European Union Institute for Security Studies (November 2003).

49)   See Martin Indyk, 'Back to the Bazaar,' ***Foreign Affairs*** (January/February 2002).

50)   On the issue of partial liberalization, see Daniel Brumberg, ***Liberalization Versus Democracy: Understanding Arab Political Reform***, Working Paper No. 37 (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003) and Brumberg, 'The Middle East's Muffled Signals,' ***Foreign Policy*** (July/August 2003).

51)   Amy Hawthorne, 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?,' Carnegie Papers, No. 44, March 2004, p. 18.

many small-bore grants the US government gives to improve parliamentary effectiveness, judicial independence, or the rule of law, the legislature and judiciary in most Arab countries will remain subordinated to their executives... And no matter how much training the National Endowment for Democracy sponsors for women candidates or liberal politicians, they will not be able to compete in political marketplace until their governments allow freedom of expression and association.'[52]

Not only is support for civil society limited or neutral in its effect on democratization. Some analysts suggest that supporting such groups can even be counterproductive, enhancing illiberal forces and allowing anti-Western Islamic movements to strengthen in the absence of any viable alternative to entrenched state power.[53] While such critiques might be over-compensating and too readily dismiss the positive effects a civil society approach might have over time on societies in the region, such critiques do offer important insights regarding the limitations of bringing about regional reform without engaging in the messy business of politics.

Given the growing skepticism among democracy analysts about what support for civil society groups can achieve and the prominence of this view — appearing in a wide variety of policy-oriented publications — it is remarkable that such a gap exists between the scholarly consensus and the prevailing policy orientation toward civil society development.[54] If the US and Europe become genuinely serious about democracy promotion, such critiques must be studied and incorporated into future policy, suggesting a need for efforts to target political institutions of the regimes in the region more directly as a complement to approaches focused on non-governmental actors.

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52) See Tamara Cofman Wittes, 'Arab Democracy, American Ambivalence: Will Bush's rhetoric about transforming the Middle East be matched by American deeds?' **The Weekly Standard**, Vol. 9, Issue 23, Feb. 23, 2004.

53) See, for example, Sheri Berman, 'Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society,' **Perspectives on Politics**,' Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 2003):257-272.

54) For examples of scholarly policy-oriented critiques of the prevailing American/Western approach to democracy promotion centered on civil society promotion, see: Omar G. Encarnacion, 'Beyond Civil Society: Promoting Democracy after September 11,' **Orbis** Spring 2003; Tamara Cofman Wittes, 'Arab Democracy, American Ambivalence: Will Bush's rhetoric about transforming the Middle East be matched by American deeds?'; Amy Hawthorne, 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?'; and Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, 'The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start.'

American efforts

While the rhetoric of democracy promotion is a longstanding US tradition, its application to the Middle East is a relatively recent development and has generated high level attention in the post 9/11 environment.[55] In addition to several high profile speeches by President Bush and Secretary of State Powell (and speeches and articles by the former director of State's policy planning staff Richard Haass),[56] the Bush administration presented two programs to operationalize the new emphasis before launching its Broader Middle East Initiative at the G-8 summit.

The first program which emerged was The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Initiated in December 2002, the program was the first central showpiece for the administration's focus on democracy promotion. Funding for the program began and remained small (starting at only $29 million in 2002 for pilot projects and growing to approximately $100 million for FY03 and $145 million for FY04). The program consists of four central pillars: political reform — strengthening democratic processes, particularly civil society, as well as support for fighting corruption and improving parliamentary elections; economic reform — helping regional countries' competitiveness and the privatization process, encouraging foreign direct and domestic investment, and helping small businesses grow; education reform — fighting illiteracy, building schools, educating girls, and introducing computer training; and enhancing the role of women in the region. While few can object to such programs, the initiative has faced the ongoing critique that such efforts are limited and do not challenge or alter the existing political order. The standard democracy aid template characterized by Ottaway and Carothers seems to be very much at work here.

The second program which emerged was the US-Middle East Free Trade Area, announced in remarks by President Bush at a commencement ceremony in May 2003.[57] This initiative aims to build on the American free trade

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55) However, as Hawthorne points out, democracy assistance programs did not start after 9/11, but rather began in the early 1990s, mostly channeled through USAID programs focused on civil society. Such programs were low profile and did not receive the high level attention current US efforts are generating. See Hawthorne, 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?'

56) See Richard N. Haass, 'Toward Greater Democracy in the Muslim World,' *The Washington Quarterly*, 26, 3 (Summer 2003):137-148 and Richard Haass, 'Towards Greater Democracy in the Muslim World,' Remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, December 4, 2002, http://www.state.gov/s/p/rem/15686.htm, accessed December 12, 2002.

57) See President Bush's remarks in Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, May 9, 2003, http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/20497.htm, accessed June 23, 2003.

agreements (FTAs) with Israel and Jordan by helping others reform and join the WTO (only ten Middle East countries are currently in the WTO), negotiating bilateral investment and trade agreements, completing the FTA with Morocco (and after that likely Bahrain), launching new FTAs with other governments in the region, and providing assistance to build trade capacity for regional parties. The initiative's ultimate objective is the creation of a regional free trade area. The region's remarkably low intra-trade figures (approximately 8% of the region's total trade compared to nearly 75% for Europe and 50% for Asia) underscore the need for such an arrangement. [58] The initiative also seeks to establish a Middle East finance facility to help regional businesses gain access to capital and to improve the climate for trade and investment by reforming commercial codes, strengthening property rights, and fighting corruption. [59]

The more recent Broader Middle East Initiative builds upon these previous efforts to create an umbrella process encompassing political, economic and social reform. During consultations with European and Arab allies over the spring of 2004, details of the plan were leaked well before the formal launching of the initiative in June 2004.[60] Although the contents of the initiative were not significantly new or particularly bold (supporting programs assisting democratic processes, equal rights for women, the rule of law, civil society, access to education, combating illiteracy, removing trade and investment barriers, integrating regional actors into global trade markets, etc.) — essentially MEPI plus — the leaking of the initiative created overwhelmingly negative responses from the region and a good deal of skepticism from European capitals.[61]

Not only did many fear that the initiative was too comprehensive and based more on American conceptions of the terrorist threat than on regional needs (including in its definition of the Greater Middle East the countries of the Arab world plus Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Israel), but the overwhelming initial reaction was that the US was trying to impose change on

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58) See Remarks by E. Anthony Wayne to International Arab Banking Summit, Montreal, Canada, June 25, 2003, http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/rm/2003 /21945.htm, accessed July 2, 2003.

59) For details of this economic initiative, see White House Fact Sheet, Proposed Middle East Initiatives, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/ print/20030509-12.html, accessed May 12, 2003.

60) See 'US Working Paper for G-8 Sherpas,' Al-Hayat, February 13, 2004.

61) See for example Steven R. Weisman and Neil MacFarquhar, 'U.S. Plan for Mideast Reform Draws Ire of Arab Leaders,' **The New York Times**, February 27, 2004. American critiques also emerged: see, for instance, Ottaway and Carothers 'The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start' and Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'The Wrong Way to Sell Democracy to the Arab World,' **The New York Times**, March 8, 2004.

the region. Suspicion of the American plan only grew when Arabs and Europeans feared that the initiative was an attempt to avoid dealing with the Arab-Israeli peace process. And ongoing divisions between the US, Europe and the region over Iraq and the Arab-Israeli arena have only made US efforts to promote regional reform more difficult.[62] The prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib (and elsewhere) have further undermined American legitimacy and ability to project its values abroad. Indeed, the US credibility problem — while always present — is increasingly posing one of the most significant challenges for moving a reform agenda forward.

In response to critiques that the Americans badly handled what should have been a generally uncontentious plan, the Bush administration made efforts to package the plan more as a response to calls for reform emanating from the region itself. In addition to the widely noted UN Development Reports of 2002 and 2003 which raised the profile of the reform agenda by regionals themselves (the report was authored by prominent analysts from the Arab world), the administration also noted additional calls for reform emerging from the region to bolster the legitimacy of its initiative, including the declarations issued by the Arab Business Council, in Sanaa Yemen and at the Alexandria Library during the spring 2004.[63] The final name given to the initiative also reflects a desire to display a partnership rather than an imposition of democracy on the region.

Still, despite the American efforts to re-package the initiative, suspicion of American motives and the US credibility problem raised doubts about the impact and viability of this program. The initiative also faced the standard critique that the programs it included were admirable but would ultimately not change the political realities in the region.

European Efforts

The Europeans have viewed recent American efforts at democracy promotion cautiously, particularly since many claim that Europe has already been

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62) See, for example, Hugh Pope, Karby Leggett and Philip Shishkin, 'Peril Mounts for a Mideast Initiative: U.S. Shift to Israel Spurs Arab, European Skepticism; Rantisi Killing Fuels Anger,' **Wall Street Journal**, April 18, 2004.

63) For Arab observations on reform efforts emerging within the region, see Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'The Sick Man of the World,' **The Washington Post**, March 28, 2004; King Abdullah II, 'Reform in Our Priority,' **Wall Street Journal**, April 16, 2004; Jackson Diehl, 'Listen to the Arab Reformers,' **Washington Post**, March 29, 2004, A23. For a more detailed reform agenda presented by the organizer of the Alexandria meeting, see Ismail Serageldin, 'Critical Reforms in the Arab World: From Rhetoric to Reality,' located at: http://www.serageldin.org/ArabWorld.htm, accessed April 1, 2004.

promoting such programs for years, most notably since the establishment of its Barcelona, or Euro-Med Partnership (EMP), in 1995.

The Barcelona process was initiated in the context of general optimism about the Middle East peace process. The process began as a program to buttress bilateral peacemaking with a regional forum (alongside the US-initiated multilateral peace process) to address regional issues in a OSCE-like fashion, covering political/security, economic and social baskets. The idea was to support stability in the region by promoting these broad areas of cooperation, with the unstated goal of preventing floods of immigrants from entering Europe by improving the economic, security and political conditions in the area.

The Barcelona process has been the only regional forum to include Israel and all its Arab neighbors, including Syria and Lebanon (parties which boycotted the American-led multilaterals in the 1990s). However, the gradual deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and demise of the Oslo process prevented progress on the political and security tracks, essentially stalling work in these areas. Future efforts in the EMP attempted to insulate the remaining agenda in the economic and social areas from negative developments in the peace process. As the peace process agenda slowly faded, the Barcelona process evolved into essentially a series of bilateral free trade agreements between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. The process also sought to create a regional free trade area by 2010.

The reform agenda was not a high priority. Because of concerns that pushing reform would threaten regional stability (and thus risk a sharp increase of immigration from North Africa), coercion and conditionality tools were not favored as a means to push regional reform. [64] Europeans, like the Americans, also harbored concerns about pushing Arab states like Jordan and Egypt too hard on reform because of their support for Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Indeed, the European Union has been much less critical of the Mediterranean region than other developing areas, has been cautious about interacting with Islamist opposition forces, and has placed its largest financial aid packages into non-liberalizing states like Egypt.[65]

The Barcelona process also favored the traditional European inclination to press for economic reform before political reform. Funding for human rights and democracy projects received less funding than family planning or drug eradication programs, constituting only 2% of total European aid to the Mediterranean region.[66] The money that did flow to democracy-oriented

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64) See Richard Youngs, 'The European Union and Democracy in the Arab-Muslim World,' Working Paper No. 2, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, November 2002, available on CEPS website (http://www.ceps.be).

65) Ibid.

66) Ibid.

NGOs went to Western-style organizations with limited social bases, with no European support for professional associations, mosques, neighborhood organizations, craft groups, or Islamist NGOs.[67] Since 9/11, even more attention has gone to projects that reduce migration pressure. The fifth EMP ministerial in Valencia in April 2002, for example, added a new justice and home affairs pillar to the partnership in efforts to clamp down on illegal immigration and fight terrorism.

Rethinking Barcelona

The EU is now recognizing the failure of the Barcelona process to effectively tackle the reform agenda, and like the US is giving this issue much greater attention. The European Commission is channeling more funding into civil society projects and focusing on social dimensions, as the formation of a Dialogue on Cultures indicates.[68] There is also now a much greater willingness by the EU to use its soft power (financial and trade incentives) to promote political and social reform, particularly adherence to human rights norms. The EU's willingness to use its trade and cooperation agreement with Iran as leverage for progress in the human rights and proliferation areas (among others) is viewed by some as reflecting a new trend in EU policy toward the region.

While the EU is unlikely to have as much leverage with its Mediterranean partners (or other Gulf states for that matter) as was the case with Iran, particularly given the reluctance of many regional partners to engage in political and social reforms, it is clear that the EU seeks to test whether this model can apply elsewhere. Signaling a greater emphasis on democracy and human rights, the Commission issued a communication on May 21, 2003 laying out strategic guidelines for 'Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratization with Mediterranean partners' which was presented at the Euro-Med Ministerial conference in Crete on May 26-27.[69] Given their reluctance to press such issues in the past, the Mediterranean partners were

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67) Ibid.

68) For additional steps taken by the EU and individual member states on democracy promotion since 9/11, see Richard Youngs, 'Europe's Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform.'

69) See Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners, Strategic guidelines,' Brussels, May 21, 2003. For a summary of this communication, see 'Promoting respect for Human Rights and Democracy in the Mediterranean,' on the Commission's website (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/news/ip03_732.htm), accessed December 2, 2003.

surprised by the forcefulness of the EU emphasis on the human rights issue, which many Europeans view as a means to address the larger democratization agenda.

Moreover, as part of its 'Wider Europe/New Neighbor' initiative, the EU is attempting to present a series of incentives for regional parties — essentially all the benefits of EU membership except inclusion in the institutions themselves — if they make progress in the political and economic reform areas. As a Commission paper explains, 'Ultimately, a share in the EU internal market and the possibility to benefit from the four freedoms is offered but the Commission will stress that the pace of progress and the depth of integration with Europe of each of the Mediterranean partners will be defined by their respective commitment to and implementation of political and economic reforms.'[70] The Commission is in the process of drafting Action Plans for partners which have either Partnership and Cooperation or Association Agreements in force with the EU, which for the Middle East includes Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. A priority for such action plans includes progress on political, economic and social reform.

The emergence of these new EU programs has ignited a debate about how to operationalize the enhanced focus on democratization and human rights. Many believe that the Barcelona process is still the most appropriate mechanism to address such issues, arguing that its past failings relate more to the lack of political commitment than to any structural problems inherent in the process. This group argues that in many ways the Barcelona process is the best expression of Europe's soft power and therefore this structure has taken on strategic importance as the Middle East has become so significant to Europe's security outlook. This camp believes the achievements of the Barcelona process and its potential have been underestimated, and that this existing structure can be reinvigorated to address the democracy agenda. As one European diplomat viewed it, 'take away the 5 billion Euro from Barcelona and you essentially have an OSCE in the Middle East.'

Others, however, are concerned that because of its narrow geographic focus (the Barcelona process does not cover the Gulf region), this structure is not sufficient to deal with the magnitude of the regional challenge. Some Nordic countries in particular began pushing the Council to produce a document re-thinking Europe's relationship with the broader region, resulting in a paper in December 2003 suggesting the need to improve and even complement existing institutions to address the issue of political and economic reform in the larger region. The Council is continuing to prepare a strategy for

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70) See 'Sixth Euro-Med Ministerial Conference: reinforcing and bringing the Partnership forward,' November 28, 2003 (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm /external_relations/euromed/conf/naples/index.htm), accessed December 2, 2003.

the EU's relationship with the region which includes a large focus on the reform agenda.[71]

Yet even these more aggressive European efforts to promote regional reform face a similar critique as the American plans in that ultimately they are not targeting the regimes directly. As in the past, civil society and training projects continue to receive more attention than fundamental reforming of political institutions.

Areas of Divergence: Is a joint effort possible?

Some signs have emerged suggesting that Europeans support working with the Americans on the reform agenda, such as German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's endorsement of US-European cooperation on reform in his February 2004 speech at the Munich security conference as well as the Council's strategy paper on relations with the Middle East suggesting that the EU should welcome working and coordinating with the US even if it pursues a 'distinct strategy.' And the G-8 initiative incorporated many European concerns in order to present the plan as a Western, rather than American, plan. That said, the Europeans are generally skeptical and likely to be resistant toward American initiatives for several reasons.

First, Europeans do not like grand visions. High profile speeches by President Bush calling for the democratization of the region make them nervous. Europeans prefer subtler approaches to democracy promotion (some would argue too subtle). But the reality is that the American ideas are neither grand nor dissimilar to European efforts, as the previous review has underscored. Even if the Broader Middle East plan sounds expansive, its operationalization is likely to follow an incrementalist approach to which the Europeans can hardly object given their similar efforts in this area. While Europeans may rightly encourage the Americans to tone down their rhetoric, coordination on such multilateral programs makes sense, even if their effects are likely limited.

Secondly, Europeans fear that association with the US will undermine their own efforts in the region. There can be little doubt that America's poor image in the region is a stumbling block to assisting regional reform. Many regional NGOs refuse to accept American funding and worry that explicit American support will backfire and undermine their local legitimacy. But Europeans underestimate their own credibility problems, as regionals do not always make distinctions among 'Western' support. The Europeans should make clear that reform is an international and regional concern, not just an

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71) See Judy Dempsey, 'EU ministers put forward strategy for Mideast,' *Financial Times*, March 26, 2004.

American interest.[72] Increased conditionality is more likely to have an effect if the regional perception is that both the US and Europe now mean business when they talk about their desire to see meaningful reforms.[73]

Moreover, Europeans are wary of the perception that promoting democracy and reform is a Western attempt to impose values and norms rather than allowing the region to generate change from within. Given European proximity to the Middle East and its colonial legacy, the perception of imposition is a sensitive issue. The view of Iraq as an example of democracy imposed by force has only increased concerns about the American agenda. But Iraq seems to be more the exception than the rule, as talk about regime change in Iran or Syria has all but ceased. Most American officials recognize that democracy is not a one-size fits all package and that democratization is an incremental process which can be assisted but not imposed from the outside. The Europeans are themselves reassessing whether institutions like the EMP are sufficient to address regional reform, making this an opportune time to coordinate efforts with Washington. Given that regional actors have been calling for a reform agenda, the US and Europe can assist regional reform in ways that maintain regional ownership of the process.

Finally, Europeans worry that a new initiative will supplant efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. This concern reflects the most divisive gap in US and European positions. For the Americans, containing this conflict may be sufficient, but for Europeans it is not. The sense of urgency to address peacemaking will only increase with the perception that the conflict is spilling over into Europe itself (for example, in the form of anti-Semitism and local radicalism) and exacerbating Europe's already difficult challenge of integrating its growing Muslim communities. But Europeans could leverage support for joint reform initiatives into American re-engagement in peace process diplomacy. Promoting regional reform and Israeli-Palestinian peace should be mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

How to Move Forward

Despite the challenges and limitations outlined above, American and European leverage could be enhanced through a coordinated approach to supporting regional reform. In addition to continued efforts on the multilateral level, the transatlantic partners could jointly strengthen existing plans by moving beyond

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72)   For a European view of this nature, see Francois Heisbourg, 'Beyond the U.S. initiative,' **International Herald Tribune**, March 24, 2004.

73)   For useful suggestions on how to do this, see the German Marshall Fund, 'Democracy and Human Development in the Broader Middle East: A Transatlantic Strategy for Partnership.'

a civil society orientation toward a focus on reforming the political institutions of the regimes themselves. Support for measures suggested by democracy analysts — such as legalizing political parties, broadening political inclusion, holding national elections, expanding legislative power and increasing the independence of the judiciary — would be a positive start in this direction.[74]

However, a coordinated transatlantic agenda for supporting reform in the Middle East will not succeed if the perception on the continent is that the Americans are proposing such plans to avoid dealing with the Arab-Israeli peace process. The Americans must also show genuine commitment to this cause (increasing budgets but also human resources) and a real desire to have the Europeans as a partner in this process. The US should be more subtle and make clear that its vision for democracy in the Middle East does not entail the installation of democracy by force. American officials should demonstrate sensitivity to differences within the region and work with the Europeans to identify the most ripe issues and countries to press forward on regional reform. More coordination on the various FTAs being negotiated bilaterally in the region would also prove useful, and far more thinking and coordination is possible on how to jointly transform such bilateral arrangements into regional free trade zones. Joint efforts to revive the idea of a multilateral regional development bank also make sense.

The US and Europe can also improve the prospects for a regional reform agenda if such efforts take place in the context of movement on the political and security fronts. This means renewed American attention on the peace process (including efforts to resume an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and not just support for unilateral Israeli measures) and a willingness to consult with European partners on such efforts. In addition, the revival of a regional security process would create a more favorable regional context for both bilateral peace processing and regional reform discussions.

Finally, the US and Europe should support the consolidation of democracy in Turkey and draw on Turkey as a useful model and participant in a regional reform program. A definite accession date for Turkish entry into the European Union (even if the time-line is long) would be an important element of such efforts.

The US and Europe now recognize that reform in the Middle East is not just an attractive talking point but an essential interest. In addition to the important question of how best outsiders can promote reform, the other key question today is whether the transatlantic allies should and can work on this project together. If the Americans demonstrate that they genuinely desire a European partner (not subordinate) in this endeavor, the Europeans should overcome their skepticism and actively shape and coordinate with US plans*.*

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74) These and other measures are suggested by Ottaway and Carothers, 'The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start.'

The Europeans should view the flurry of US activity as an opportunity to improve existing programs rather than a challenge to them. A joint reassessment of existing policy, with its heavy focus on civil society development, is in order. Of all Middle East policy areas, a common approach to regional reform might be the most fruitful area for transatlantic cooperation, even if it will take many years to produce change in this troubled region and there are limits to what even a perfectly coordinated approach can achieve.

Conclusion

None of the major problems in the Middle East today — terrorism, proliferation, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq, regional reform — can be solved by one power alone. Neither the United States nor Europe, working each on its own, can foster a stable, democratic, and prosperous Middle East. Building cooperation on areas identified in this paper will not entirely narrow the transatlantic divide nor avoid future crises, but it can contribute to a more pragmatic and hopefully constructive approach toward a region that is likely to affect global stability — and the personal security of millions — for some time to come.

Europeans and Americans cannot afford to be complacent and expect that a variety of common threats emanating from the Middle East will necessarily cause transatlantic cooperation. Despite a variety of areas of common ground, transatlantic division on Middle East issues is pervasive, historically the norm, and deeply embedded in respective strategic cultures. But rather than being paralyzed by such divergence, both sides need to recognize how and why their approaches to the region are different and then work actively to cultivate a common strategic agenda and dialogue on key problems.

Building on a growing consensus in the areas of nonproliferation and regional reform holds the most promise for a shared transatlantic agenda, while the festering Palestinian-Israeli conflict is likely to pose the greatest challenge for a common transatlantic program. Even in the more promising areas, significant political will and investment on both sides will be necessary to move forward. But the costs of not making such an investment may be even higher.

About the Author

Dalia Dassa Kaye will be a visiting professor of political science at the University of Amsterdam in 2004. From 1998-2004 Dassa Kaye was an assistant professor of political science and international affairs at the George Washington University. In 2003-2004 she was a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the office of strategic policy planning, where she drafted the first version of this paper (the views expressed here are solely the author's own). During her time at the MFA, Dassa Kaye worked closely with the Clingendael Institute to organize a transatlantic seminar on Middle East policy which convened in March 2004. The author wishes to thank Maarten Lak and the policy planning staff at the MFA for their generous time and assistance with this project, as well as Alfred van Staden, Alfred Pijpers and Peter van Ham from Clingendael.