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Chapter 1

Conceptualizing the Transatlantic Relationship

Introduction

It is readily apparent that the US and the EU are dissimilar types of actors. The US is a single state with a federal political structure. Its size and power accords it the ability to act decisively in the world and to gather other states behind its leadership. The EU comprises a group of states, all with different histories. They have been brought together by shared interests, but the process of European integration is still evolving and remains a 'work in progress'. The EU is a unique experiment, a *sui generis* actor, in which there is no single vision about what it will eventually become. Prime Minister Tony Blair (2000) described the EU as an emerging superpower but not a super-state. Both the US and the EU are guided by the power of ideas. They possess a sense of legitimacy that they derive from their own political and economic systems. The power of these ideas differs in the case of the US and the EU and helps to explain their approaches to security.

In this chapter I will look at the different characters of the US and the EU, at the ideas and the experiences that have shaped them. In the light of those differences, I will seek to elucidate the implications that these have for the transatlantic security relationship. I will argue that their particular histories and capabilities have forged contrasting approaches to their use of force. This has made it difficult for the two sides to agree on the appropriate ways to deal with new security challenges.

American exceptionalism

America has always conceived of itself as special, a nation set apart from the rest of the international community. This derives first of all from the democratic nature of its domestic political system. Since its

founding, the US has been a country with a strong belief and pride in the power of its written constitution. This was seen as distinguishing it from the despotic regimes of Europe: a document carefully assembled by rational men, that created checks and balances between executive, legislative and judicial powers. These controls were designed to enshrine the rights of citizens, guarantee basic freedoms and build political structures that would be subject to the rule of law.

The confidence of the US in its political system has been translated into its overseas policies. America's opposition to the Soviet Union was predicated on a belief in the innate superiority of its democratic system. In the aftermath of the Cold War the goal of democratic enlargement became the cornerstone of US foreign policy. The US has believed that promoting its own model of political development will improve the governance of other countries and reduce the likelihood of conflict. A strong assumption in its policy-making has been that democratic countries are peaceful and refrain from armed conflict with each other.

The US democratic system has also provided an underlying sense of legitimacy for those occasions where America has intervened militarily abroad. Even in cases where no multilateral organization has sanctioned such action, the nature of America's own political system and its adherence to principles of freedom has been regarded as sufficient authorization. In the context of the 'War on Terror', President George W. Bush acknowledged that there would be occasions when allies would not support the US position and it would be necessary to act alone. This he considered acceptable, with the words 'after all, we are America' (quoted in Daalder, 2003). There has been a tendency to assume that the facilitation of elections will transform the situation of countries and there has been a failure to appreciate that America's own democratic story was a hard fought and difficult road (Hodgson, 2009, 16).

Another strand of America's uniqueness is perceived to arise from its capitalist economic system. This system extols the virtues of free enterprise and the accumulation of wealth by individual effort. The prospects for self-advancement are considered to be available to all citizens, depending upon their talents and willingness to work hard. This is the heart of the so-called 'American dream' that has led immigrants to flock to America to pursue individual prosperity and fulfilment regardless of their ethnicity or socio-economic backgrounds. According to this vision, America is the land of opportunity in which

all can realize their ambitions providing that they have the determination to succeed.

The principles of free-market economics have been at the heart of American foreign policy. After World War II the US supported a liberal international order that was designed to keep countries out of the Soviet embrace. It funded this through Marshall Aid and was willing to suffer discriminatory trade policies in order to see the economic viability of its allies restored (Calleo, 1987). Washington also served as the architect of a network of global economic institutions. Successive administrations fashioned an economic order based on financial and trading institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and, later, the World Trade Organization (WTO). With the US as the lynchpin, these institutions regulated interaction between capitalist states, promoted international commerce and free trade, and helped to foster foreign direct investment. They also promulgated a set of American values, which gave the country huge amounts of influence outside its own territory through the positions its appointees enjoyed on the boards of these organizations. In the post-Cold War era, increasing the number of free-market countries became a central tenet of American policy as well as pressuring those countries still wedded to centralized control.

The success of its economic system and the domestic prosperity that it engendered made American culture widely known. The US film and television industries have helped to disseminate American values and ideas. Its music, clothing and food have all been enormously influential. There has been no evidence of a diminution in the attractiveness of US popular culture. Its technological prowess has made America a global leader in designs and industrial innovation. US multinational corporations, public servants, members of its armed forces and diplomats have successfully marketed this culture and these products overseas. As well as drawing admiration, this culture has excited hatred in those that fear the replacement or dilution of their own value systems by Western ideas.

A third and final strand of America's 'specialness' has been its sense of moral superiority (Hodgson, 2009, 10). This has arisen from its religiosity, its belief in its own virtue as a kind of 'New Jerusalem'. This is evidenced in the moralistic rhetoric of US politicians and it has underpinned the conduct of American foreign policy. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, US presidents kept their country from interference

in European affairs because they feared America would become tainted. In the second half of the twentieth century it has found expression in America's sense of leadership of the West. It has lent itself to a good versus evil dichotomy in popular perceptions.

Walter Russell Mead identified four principal domestic schools of thought that have helped to mould US foreign policy by drawing upon the strands outlined above (Mead, 2001). The first school are 'Hamiltonians', who emphasize the importance of the US capitalist system and extol the need for a strong relationship between big business and government. This group of thinkers see trade and access to raw materials as the irreducible objectives of an enlightened foreign policy and have stressed the role that access to energy must have in strategic planning. The second school are 'Wilsonians', who seek to advance democratic values around the world because they believe that democracy promotes accountability and makes for more predictable and reliable allies. They also tend to uphold the concept of moral leadership by the US because its domestic values accord it a special role in international affairs. President Jimmy Carter's advocacy of human rights vis-à-vis the Soviet Union during the 1970s was an illustration of this approach. A third school are 'Jeffersonians', who concentrate on protecting American democracy at home rather than trying to spread it overseas. They fear that the very act of attempting to export US values will undermine the nature of American society. The last school are 'Jacksonians', who lay emphasis on the physical security of the US. They believe that the country should focus on its own national interests and should avoid being drawn into overseas actions on moral pretexts that easily become confused.

The ideas and values of these four schools of thought have been evident within all American administrations to a greater or lesser extent over the last sixty years. Particular strands of thinking have been uppermost at various times as influential figures within the executive have vied for the ear of the president. Not only have these strands been present within government, but also within other sectors of the body politic, such as Congress and a plethora of interest groups. Each school of thought has sought to advance its priorities in the key debates about America's role in the world: about the extent to which it can lead, engage with other countries or withdraw behind its own borders.

The presidency of Bill Clinton drew heavily on some of the principles embedded within Wilsonianism, including support for

international organizations and the promotion of democracy around the world. He came to power at a time when the West was wrestling with the implications of the end of the Cold War. It led to a questioning of the willingness of the US to continue leading in the world and the price it was willing to pay. Clinton inherited an expanding US economy that was at the same time facing economic competition from countries such as China. He chose to adhere to free-trade policies, such as supporting the WTO and creating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). America remained a promoter of liberal values and supported the work of international organizations, such as the UN. Clinton pursued a humanitarian agenda and this contributed to a series of costly interventions in areas that were not traditional American interests, such as Somalia, Kosovo and Haiti. A leading critic, Michael Mandelbaum (1996), was to characterize this approach as ‘foreign policy as social work’, namely the desire to try to improve the lives of people all over the world by the intervention of American military power. The implication was that America was neglecting its interests for ill-thought-out liberal ideas.

President Clinton was followed by the administration of George W. Bush, which was strongly influenced by Jacksonian ideas. This was manifest in the dismissive attitude towards global institutions and the sense of frustration with multilateralism. Bush was eager to pursue US national interests and was willing to ignore international structures that were not deemed to serve that end. Conservative nationalists within the higher reaches of the executive, such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Richard Cheney, saw the 1990s as ‘a decade of neglect’ of American interests and were determined to reassert the country’s power. Drezner (2008, 205) observes that President Bush was the least travelled American President and Colin Powell the least travelled Secretary of State for thirty years, whilst Cheney only travelled abroad once during the first term.

Also within the administration was a particular strand of Wilsonianism that was evident in some of its leading neoconservative thinkers (Ikenberry, 2004, 10). These included figures such as Douglas Freith, Paul Wolfowitz and John Bolton inside the government, and Irving Kristol and Richard Perle outside (Mann, 2004). This group believed strongly in the moral rectitude of the US and its mission to confront states who threatened the US-led international order. They argued that democracy was sufficiently important to

justify being actively exported. If necessary, America had to be prepared to export its values, including democracy, by force.

Commentators have tended to emphasize sharp differences between the presidencies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. In retrospect, however, the significance of the differences are questionable. There were undoubtedly variations in tone, not least because the Bush presidency was critical of, and determined to assert its distinctiveness from, its predecessor. Yet underneath there were many aspects of continuity, a factor true of successive post-war administrations. Both leaders shared the strategic objective of preserving America's position of primacy in the world (United States National Security Strategy, 2002). Sustaining a global order has taught the US that it must have the forces to police its interests and has created a perception of the fungibility of military power.

Both Clinton and Bush sought to manage the international system according to the vital interests of the US. They were prepared to engage multilaterally with other states and organizations only so far as those interests could be advanced. The values that they sought to promote were consistent in both cases: freedom and democracy. They both sought to maintain and extend America's ability to act. All US presidents jealously guard their country's independence from external influence. In the words of Bailes (2005a, 181), 'the US ideal stands out in clear contrast (to Europe) as one of intactness and immunity from intrusions of all kinds'.

What was different between the Clinton and Bush presidencies was the context in which they found themselves. The Clinton period was relatively benign and was faced with overseas conflicts in which the US could choose whether or not to intervene. But by the time of Bush the international situation was far darker as the shock of the 9/11 attacks had changed the environment in which American power was exercised. Not since Pearl Harbor had the US suffered an attack with such dramatic psychological consequences. It propelled the Bush administration into a fundamental reordering of American security policies.

Thus far the presidency of Barack Obama has represented a throwback to some of the ideas within Wilsonianism. Under his leadership, the US has endeavoured to rebuild international support for its policies and has moved away from the unilateralism of the Bush era. But there are also strong continuities in Obama's policies with those administrations that have gone before. For example, he has continued record levels of US defence spending in a bid to

prevent the emergence of a strategic competitor. In addition, whilst Obama has emphasized his break with the past by drawing down American forces in Iraq, he has counterbalanced this by substantially increasing force levels in Afghanistan.

The EU: a new sort of power

In Europe, unlike the US, there has been no belief in the inherent goodness of the body politic. Rather the opposite: the states of Europe have tried to transcend the logic of balance of power politics that led to two self-destructive wars in the twentieth century. The aim has been to contain internecine quarrels and domesticate the relations between European countries. In this post-war endeavour Europe has been spectacularly successful. France and Germany have been reconciled and war has become an unthinkable way to resolve interstate differences. In the words of the European Security Strategy, 'European countries are committed to dealing peacefully with disputes and cooperating through common institutions' (European Council, 2003b).

The mechanism by which this was achieved was economic integration and the active pooling of sovereignty; first through the European Coal and Steel Community, then the EC and finally the EU. The EU has moved beyond the boundaries of the Westphalian states system into a system of multilevel governance that is unparalleled elsewhere in the world. Some policies are pursued on a supranational basis, others remain within the exclusive provenance of the member states, whilst a further category involves mixed competences. European integration has occurred through a process of agreeing norms and then building institutions around them. This complex system is underpinned by the rule of law and the Union has moved forward by the agreement of legal texts.

Power has been mediated through an institutional framework, thereby facilitating clarity of information and the reduction in potential transaction costs. Members large and small have been enabled to negotiate peacefully over their interests and the European Commission has been tasked with protecting the interests of the community as a whole. There has been criticism throughout its history that the EU is overly preoccupied with institutions and that it focuses on process to the neglect of outcomes. This view fails to understand the nature of the Union, that institutional relationships have actually been at its heart and have made the European

project possible: ‘for the EU ... grand strategy is the preservation and enhancement of the integration process’ (Smith, 2009, 14).

Central to this evolution has been the development of a free-trade area in which the member states have dismantled their tariff barriers and moved towards the creation of a single market in goods and services. The European social market approach has differed from the more purist model of capitalism championed by the US, although individual countries stand at various points along a spectrum between a liberal model of capitalism and a social-market version. Countries such as the UK gravitate more to the American end of the model and countries such as Sweden gravitate towards the other. Whilst the US has traditionally placed more emphasis upon self-reliance and entrepreneurship, the European model has been more committed to social justice and welfare programmes. EU countries have tolerated a much larger role for the state in the economy and have supported key industries, such as agriculture, in order to protect the internal economic system from the chill winds of international competition.

Although the EC started in the economic realm, it has gradually extended its competences into foreign policy and security. This growth in competences, particularly as a result of the 1992 Treaty on European Union (or ‘Maastricht Treaty’) has meant that ministers from member states are drawn together regularly in a web of discussions. They meet with their counterparts from other member states to discuss matters of common interest. Parts of the EU are supranational in nature, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Court of Justice, and the Commission has played a growing role in guiding relationships and instigating new initiatives. This has encouraged the development of common European views and has been described as ‘transgovernmentalism’ (Wallace and Wallace, 2000) in which actors in discrete sectors of national governments cooperate closely together.

This process by which an increasing range of issues are decided upon in EU institutions – ‘Brusselisation’ (Allen, 1998, 54) – has been counterbalanced by the fact that it is the member states, through the overarching European Council, who decide what powers and policies are pooled and which remain intergovernmental in nature. Nation states have remained the principal actors in European politics and there is still considerable diversity amongst states in the nature of their governments and the policies they adopt. These governments have been reluctant to cede additional

competences to supranational bodies in Brussels, particularly in relation to foreign and security policy. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is not a common policy as such but resembles more of a mechanism by which the foreign policies of the key European states are discussed and reconciled with each other.

Francois Duchene (1972, 39) foresaw that the peculiar nature of the EC would shape the sort of power that it would want to project: namely 'civilian' power. By the term 'civilian power', Duchene was indicating that the EU would be non-military and non-coercive in nature. It represented a new type of actor in international relations: a 'power' whose influence derived from its trading strength and its attachment to legal processes. It is able to exert 'soft power'; namely, a power of attraction as a result of its own political system and the values that it represents (Nye, 2002). This resonated with the growing interdependence of European states in the post-war period as well as their relative lack of power in the face of super-power military rivalry.

The EC/EU not only pacified the bellicose intents amongst its members but also externalized these policies so that it presented no military challenge to neighbouring states. Exercising coercive power on a large scale would be contradictory to the EU's own sense of mission; namely to mitigate the anarchical nature of the international system. This has confronted the Union with a dilemma when addressing certain types of security concerns because of its reluctance to draw upon hard power resources. Formal civilian power status ended with the ratification of the Treaty on European Union, when the ambition of a security and defence policy was realized (Nuttall, 2000). It took a further step forward with the creation of an ESDP in 1999 as hard power instruments were formally acquired (Smith, 2005, 68). Nevertheless, the Union has continued to perceive itself as a power of a special nature within the international system. It represents a group of post-modern states that pursue significant interests through an institutional framework (Cooper, 2003, 50; Kirchner and Sperling, 2007, 221).

Manners (2002) developed the theme of 'civilian power' when he described the Union as a 'normative power' within the international system. By this he meant that the Union seeks deliberately to externalize the values that it contains within its own institutional nature. For example, the EU actively promotes democracy, human rights and the protection of the rights of minorities (Cameron and Balfour, 2006). It has incorporated these principles from its relationship with

the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Such values are then pursued through its conflict prevention policies and the peaceful resolution of disputes (Smith, 2003). Unlike the Westphalian model in which states pursue selfish national interests, the EU sees itself as an ideological power. Tocci (2008, 2) argues that the EU should not only embody certain values but should also act consistently in terms of the means it employs and the results that it obtains.

Aggestam and Hill have built on the idea of the EU having a sense of its own exceptionalism and special mission. They see it as attempting to conduct a civilizing role by pursuing a notion of itself as an ‘ethical power’ (see Aggestam, 2008, 1). Its own internal value system leads the Union to act in certain ways: to strengthen international order by adherence to multilateralism and to exercise military power in principled ways. Its ethical dimension has been uppermost in its humanitarian operations when it has sought to act as a ‘force for good’ within the international system (Orbie, 2008, 28). This civilizing mission is exported to surrounding countries through the values it expects them to adopt prior to becoming EU members.

This idea that the EU, through its economic strength and its particular set of values, has come to embody a particular sort of power has gained widespread acceptance. Ortega (2007, 124) argues that ‘the European Union contributes to the global order in two different ways: as a model and as an actor’. It is a model of political and economic integration and multilevel governance. It seeks to address the root causes of problems and to use economic incentives to influence the behaviour of others. McGuire and Smith (2008, 54) talk of the Union’s power in terms of ‘soft balancing’: the influence that it derives from negotiation and persuasion. The EU engages with others using a variety of instruments ranging from aid through to commercial agreements. By doing so it aims to modify their behaviour. Its approach reflects the Union’s own historical experience of trying to steer its members away from conflict through the mechanism of economic interdependence. Such policies are designed to channel energies into peaceful competition and to make countries so tied together as to make conflict unattractive.

The extent to which the EU is a ‘global actor’ is more open to contestation. In terms of trade and the regulation of financial interactions, the Union represents a partner equal to the US. In the disbursement of aid, the EU has become the world’s largest provider. But its ability to exercise power remains open to question.

Biscop (2008, 16) differentiates between the EU as a global *player* – a reflection of its size, population and economic prowess – and as a global *power*, which it can only become through sustained effort. Niblett (2005, 49), borrowing from the idea of Commission President Romano Prodi, describes the EU as ‘a global civilian power’. McCormick (2007) takes this a stage further by arguing that this civilian power status gives the Union a unique advantage in navigating the current and future international system and justifies its description as a new type of ‘superpower’.

Critics of the civilian power model regarded it as a post hoc rationalization. In their view the EC/EU was making a virtue out of its own inadequacies. Hedley Bull (1982, 51) argued that the EC’s status, particularly in relation to the threat from the Soviet Union, was made possible by the presence of American military power to guarantee its security. The inability of the EU to deploy ‘hard’ power led it to rely upon ‘soft’ power, such as economic and trade instruments. Critics contrast the EU model to that of the US which emphasizes its military power and sees its own interests and those of the international order as coterminous.

Most analysts agree that the EU is still less of a global actor than it could be. This is a reflection of the multiplicity of views amongst its members and its failure to build the necessary political will to face security challenges. There have been numerous attempts to address these weakness in reflection groups and at European Council meetings. They have led to: discussions about different speeds of integration within the Union; mechanisms by which states can abstain from involvement in foreign policy decisions without binding the rest; and the divisive idea of a foreign policy *directoire* of the most powerful states (Keukeleire, 2001, 77). A spectrum of opinions about these issues has been a feature of EU discussions about CFSP since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.

Now that the Union possesses hard power capabilities through ESDP it has the full range of instruments of a global power. Yet in reality the CFSP is not truly a common policy because the member states tend to pursue their various national interests in moments of crisis (Gordon, 1997). This inadequacy has been reflected in two scholarly debates. One has been the so-called ‘capabilities–expectations’ gap between what some hope the Union should be capable of achieving and what it can actually deliver (Hill, 1993). The second has been the debate about EU ‘actorness’: namely the extent to which the EU can mobilize its resources and political will to achieve

objectives. In the future, the EU will need to choose whether it wants to focus its energies on being a regional pacifier or whether it wants to devote itself to being a global actor (Gunilla Herof, quoted in Ortega, 2007, 60).

The implications of US–EU differences

The fact that the US and the EU are different sorts of actors has led many commentators to view post-Cold War transatlantic relations as exhibiting growing patterns of divergence. A relationship that was once regarded as the bedrock of the West has come to be seen as fractured. One element of this is a sense of a widening cultural gap between the two sides. Garton Ash (2005, 94) notes how the US no longer defers to European values and even appears to question whether European views are worth taking into consideration. A generation of American post-war leaders that looked to Europe as their natural allies has been dying out and being replaced by individuals with no discernible affiliation to Europe. President Barack Obama exemplifies that development. The demise of an east coast political elite has led to a shift in the centre of political gravity from a European orientation towards America's interests in the Pacific (Walt, 1998–99). This has been compounded by the greater proportion of American trade crossing the Pacific than the Atlantic. America's rapidly growing Hispanic community is pulling the orientation of the country in another direction, towards Mexico and south America.

There are important differences between the two sides in relation to domestic values. Attitudes towards crime and the treatment of offenders is an example of this, with the US incarcerating a much higher proportion of its population. The retention of the death penalty is linked to this and has been a source of concern in Europe. The provision of health and social security benefits is another feature that distinguishes European and US societies, although President Obama has moved the US closer to Europe by his health care reforms. Rising religiosity has been an aspect of the US, especially in the south. This has carried over into political discourse and results in national politicians invoking strong moral language in their speeches. The influence of the 'Christian Right' and its ability to mobilize opinion, on issues ranging from abortion to stem cell research, is widely remarked upon. This contrasts with the values of secular societies in Europe where religious vocabulary is rare. 'It is

evident that in the spiritual realm the United States and Europe have grown far apart' (Pfaff, 2008, 51).

Other commentators dismiss the thesis of a growing cleavage in transatlantic values. They point out that on fundamental issues such as support for liberal democracy, market economics, the rule of law and human rights, the US and Europe are closely aligned. These shared values underpin the relationship and ensure that no group of states have more in common. Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Gordon (2009, 1) states that 'the United States and the European Union form a community of shared values and a partnership of shared interests'. Nau (2008, 82) endorses this by arguing that 'transatlantic institutions and values are much stronger today than they were when communism prevailed in half of Europe'. Shared values continue to act as the glue in transatlantic relations in the sense that it preserves a security community and a sense of what puts them all at risk.

A second element in the thesis that Europe and America have been growing apart relates to the perception of Western decline (Harries, 1993). This is the argument that the rise of other powers is eclipsing the West. There is a wealth of evidence that the West is no longer in the driving seat of world affairs and is increasingly overshadowed by the rise of other states. In particular, the post-Cold War hegemony of the US seems to be waning, and its position of unipolarity is giving way to the prospect of 'multipolarity' or 'non-polarity', in which the world is divided between many states possessing different sorts of power (Haass, 2008; Prodi and Verhofstadt, 2010). Critics point to overstretch in the American military brought on by the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is alleged that America has squandered its global dominance and paved the way for its own imperial decline.

The economic challenge presented by emerging powers is even more apparent, reflecting the huge populations that they represent. Due to their high rates of growth the economic dominance of the Group of Eight Leading Industrial Countries (G8) has been superseded by the 'G20', led by countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China ('BRICs'). If China continues to grow at its present rate, it will overtake the American economy within the next twenty years. Russia has been in the process of returning to the international stage, wielding the influence that it derives from its reserves of oil and gas. Such powers as these perceive themselves to have been marginalized by the Western-led order in the past and now reject the

constraints imposed by its rules and norms. Countries such as India and Brazil demand radical change within the UN Security Council on the grounds that it no longer represents the distribution of power within the world. In the words of Zakaria (2008, 4–5), ‘in every other dimension (than politico-military power) – industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural – the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from American dominance’.

These pressures can be interpreted as having provoked a crisis in transatlantic relations. Instead of encouraging the Atlantic allies to club together to preserve their ascendancy, these external challenges have compounded the divisions within the West. No longer willing to act as the obedient lieutenant of America in the face of its declining position, the EU has become more ambitious and assertive as a rival centre of power to that of Washington. European political and economic union spurred the emergence of a European foreign and security policy that can be argued to have unsettled the transatlantic relationship. According to this view, Europe has repudiated Atlanticism and has struck out on its own, trying to act as a second voice in the West and a counterweight to America (Gordon, 2003). The EU can be seen as unifying around its opposition to the US and seeking to become a new pole of power (McCormick, 2007).

This thesis contains some elements of truth, but it is easily exaggerated. There are echoes here of past debates about US decline (Kennedy, 1989). After expectations of a downward spiral in American power in the 1980s the country proceeded to experience long-term economic growth during the 1990s. Today the US is the foremost economic power in the world and it has proved many times its capacity to re-energize its economy and achieve remarkable innovation. The economic recession that began in 2008 was certainly a cause for concern and there remain long-term problems in terms of America’s budget deficit. But its economy remains dynamic and in military terms it remains far more powerful than any of its potential competitors. The US spends on defence as much as the rest of the world put together and it possesses an unrivalled capacity to project power. By historical standards its proportion of gross domestic product spent on defence, at 4 per cent, is low, and there is every prospect that this will be preserved.

Furthermore, America continues to lead a Western world that exerts influence and control through global organizations. Within frameworks such as NATO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the WTO, the West still

dominates. The US and its allies have created systems of international trading, monetary exchange and regulation that provide the architecture for the entire international system. Voices calling for more representative international organizations have been unable to relinquish the vice-like grip exerted by Western countries.

As for the EU attempting to rival the US, the prospect is unconvincing in all except economic terms. In other indices of power, the EU is not the equal of America – its population is ageing and its level of economic growth relatively slow. Whilst the EU has been determined to assert its own identity and viewpoint, even when that has differed from the position of the US, the organization has not coalesced around an anti-American position. It has continued to need US leadership in strategic affairs. To expect the EU to unite against America is to misunderstand the breadth of opinion within the Union itself. Countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal oppose such an orientation and would prevent a common European front from emerging in opposition to America. It is misguided to think that Europe can draw strength from opposing Washington: such a course would leave the EU paralysed and listless.

A third body of opinion has sought to explain transatlantic tensions as the result of growing disparities in power. Krauthammer (1990) described the period after 1990 as marking the ‘unipolar era’ in which the US was less dependent on the support of its allies and less beholden to multilateral cooperation to achieve its objectives. The end of confrontation with the former Soviet Union meant that the US was freed to focus on global security concerns. In contrast, Europe had neglected these issues in the past and relied upon the US to manage them. The EU has possessed insufficient means to address global challenges and has been unable to make a significant contribution.

Debates about disparities in power have led to a perception of divergence in the strategic cultures of the US and the EU. Strategic culture is based on the understanding that a country’s approach to the use of force has been shaped by its history. Kagan (2003, 11) supports this, arguing that ‘now that the US is powerful, it behaves as powerful nations do. When the European[s] ... were strong, they believed in strength. Now they see the world through the eyes of weaker powers.’ Other factors that help to shape strategic culture include the nature of the political system, technological development and national values. Ziemke (2000, 88), one of the pioneers of

this idea, has suggested that it revolves around a state's self-conception, mediated through its historical experience of past conflicts. Strategic cultures serve to determine what states identify as being in their interest and what they find threatening, as well as deciding how these threats will be addressed (Cornish and Edwards, 2005; Giegerich, 2006; Meyer, 2006b).

The US has a clear strategic culture shaped by its hegemonic status and based upon its vast material and technological power. In the 1990–91 Gulf War and the 2003 War against Iraq, the US used this power against a conventional adversary and demonstrated its awesome capabilities. Both Democratic and Republican administrations have increased levels of defence spending in order to ensure no state can become a competitor. The aim has been to ensure that the US can fight and prevail in multiple theatres simultaneously. American policymakers believe that their country inhabits an international system in which military threats emanate from a variety of sources and have therefore been predisposed towards a security culture that privileges a military response.

The impact of 9/11 was significant in two respects. In the first place it galvanized the US into using its military power offensively. It led the US to disregard the importance of its allies because it saw no value in including them in its operational tasks. Second, 9/11 exposed the vulnerabilities in US homeland security, something that had been overlooked for a long period of time. It led the American government to allocate significant spending to the field of domestic security and look for allies to work with in this field.

In contrast to the US, a European strategic culture and what it wants to achieve in the world has been unclear (Kirchner and Sperling, 2007, 243). Within the EU, a number of cultures have coexisted simultaneously, ranging from the muscular cultures espoused by the UK and France to the culture of constraint of Germany and the neutralist traditions of Ireland and Austria (Meyer, 2006b; Giegerich, 2006, 67–81; Toje, 2008, 19). There were attempts in the 1990s to bring the strategic cultures of EU states closer together, and there were even discussions of an EU White Paper on Defence. Nothing materialized from these debates and, until the Union developed competences in defence, a common culture was irrelevant (Heisbourg, 2000a, 9–10). Since the creation of an ESDP (renamed the Common Security and Defence Policy after the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon) there has been a concerted effort to converge the strategic thinking of the member

states in order that the EU can act with greater unity and maximize its potential.

Military power remains a secondary and relatively novel instrument for the EU. Instead, it uses its economic leverage to cajole adversaries towards its position. Whilst 54 per cent of Americans agreed that the best way to ensure peace was through the preservation of military strength, only 28 per cent of Europeans concurred (Transatlantic Trends, 2004). The EU has exhibited a distinct lack of ambition to play a strategic role on the international stage. In the words of Bertram (2006, 41), 'beyond the boundaries of their Union, European governments either have no strategic ambition at all or are content with things as they are'.

In 2003, under the leadership of Javier Solana, the European Security Strategy (ESS) was agreed at the European Council meeting in Thessaloniki. The ESS was an attempt to conduct systematic thought about challenges to the security of the EU, its soft and hard power capacities and the objectives it would like to attain (Missiroli, 2008, 2). The ESS represents more of a doctrinal statement, or system of shared beliefs, than a strategy because of the inherent heterogeneity within the EU (Dannreuther and Peterson, 2006, 5). The fact that the ESS exhorts its members to develop a common strategic culture is evidence that this was not felt to exist at the time. Whitman (2006, 8) argued that the ESS 'is part of a wider CFSP/ESDP "work in progress" and in this context ... [it] is part of the attempt to forge a consensus on what should guide the EU's international role'. In this sense it establishes a framework in which EU security policy can be developed. The ESS may help an EU strategic culture to develop but, if so, it will remain to be seen how compatible this would be with the prevailing strategic culture of the US.

Kagan (2003) castigated the EU for its apparent attachment to Kantian principles of international peace and security. He described Europe as 'Venusian', ignoring the multitude of threats to Western interests. This artificial sense of security was made possible, Kagan argued, because the US invested so heavily in military power and extended its protection to its allies. Europe is accused of having grown used to tolerating threats because it abdicated its responsibility for trying to counter them. According to this view, Europe is in long-term decline and has become susceptible to compromising with dangerous states because it lacks the political will to build up its coercive power. Kagan (2003, 4) proceeded to argue that 'they [the

US and Europe] do not share the same broad view of how the world should be governed, about the role of international institutions and international law'. Europe has allowed itself to believe that it can address threats without resorting to coercive power. This view has found an echo in no less than Robert Gates, the US Secretary of Defense. He described the 'demilitarization of Europe – where large swathes of the general public and the political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it' (Gates, 2010).

Other commentators have reacted to these criticisms in different ways. Some, such as Espinosa, agreed, contending that 'while Europe developed a free-rider culture on security matters, the United States developed a superpower culture' (Espinosa, 2005, 46). It is undeniable that Europe has not invested in military capabilities to the same extent as the US: after the Cold War they reduced defence spending and sought to enjoy a 'peace dividend'. Their defence budgets have remained focused on national priorities. At the same time, they have failed to generate the necessary political will to act together. Even on matters that involve conflict between its own members, such as the Cyprus issue, the EU has been unable to resolve the problem itself. Asmus contributed a more nuanced point. He argued that a power gap had always existed between America and Europe but the main difference had become the purpose to which America was prepared to use its power (Asmus, 2003, 23).

Other European commentators have rebutted Kagan's allegations. Nicolaidis argues not that the EU is Kantian by default but by deliberate choice. It is not a lack of resources that causes the Europeans to invest relatively little in their armed forces but a result of how they see the world. Nicolaidis (2005, 98) contends that 'Europe is no longer Kantian because it is weak; it is weak because it is Kantian.' European states look back to the experience of twentieth-century wars that were catastrophic in terms of the numbers of lives lost and damage wrought. In the words of Cooper (2003, 85), 'the use of force is a failure of policy, rather than an instrument of policy'. According to this view, the EU comprises post-modern states that reject both coercion as a means to resolve disputes and the imposition of democracy upon those that do not seek it. In matters of security, the Union has been more sympathetic to issues such as humanitarian intervention and state building, where it can exercise its own strengths through the use of economic resources.

According to this view, the EU has tried to use its 'soft power' resources to influence other actors (Nye, 2002, 8–12), whereas the

US is predisposed to the use of 'hard power'. It is indeed the case that some Europeans look with condescension upon US policies and view their own approach as more sophisticated. In the words of Croci (2003, 471), 'Europeans ... tend to regard the USA as a clumsy giant with little *savoir faire*.' The Obama administration has been sensitive to these accusations of US heavy-handedness and has talked explicitly of using 'smart power' as a means to secure its objectives. Smart power represents an attempt to rebuild America's influence in the world through diplomacy and developmental assistance. It reflects a predisposition on the part of Washington to listen to the views of other countries.

These transatlantic differences have been starkly exposed in international crises. Basic differences of grand strategy have been in evidence on such occasions. On the one hand has stood the US as a dominant, hegemonic power that defines its security interests globally and assesses risks conservatively. On the other hand has stood the EU, focused inwardly on integration and self-construction, perceiving itself as upholding different values. These divergences of approach, highlighted within the US-led 'War on Terror' and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, have caused grave damage to the cause of transatlantic unity. They have raised the question as to whether the two sides of the Atlantic are travelling in different directions.

Conclusion

No one would deny that the US possesses a strong power identity. Both before and after the Cold War it has been the foremost power within an international system that it has played the dominant role in shaping. US policymakers have held a clear view of their country's national interests and they have zealously guarded its sovereign capacity to act. America has defined its interests globally and has amassed the capability to project its power on a global stage. Yet at the same time, part of America's claim to be a superpower rests on its leadership position within Europe (Holbrooke, 1995). It has placed a premium upon working with its allies and has been reluctant to lose its position as leader within NATO.

The EU has not possessed a power identity as strong or as clear as that of its transatlantic ally. It has been less united and more hesitant as a security actor. Nevertheless, the EU presents an alternative model to that of the US: a non-coercive power that embraces globalization and is committed to multilateralism. Its power of attraction,

due to the legitimacy of its model, is significant. Lindberg (2005, 6) captures this idea well when he notes that American ‘exceptionalism is now matched by an emerging sense of “European exceptionalism”’. The interesting question is whether these exceptionalisms can complement one another or whether they will ultimately become mutually exclusive.

Both sides of the Atlantic are aware of the many security challenges that confront them. They also realize that only by working together can they have any realistic prospect of managing and overcoming them. After all, if the US does not work together with the EU then the fundamental question is raised as to whom it can work with.

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