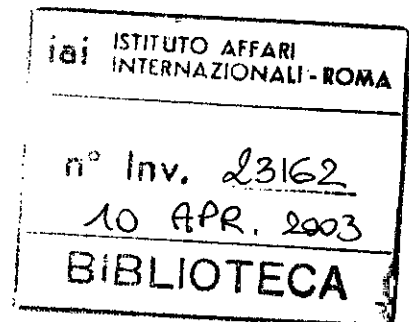
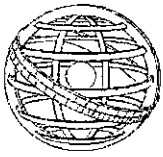


**TRANS-ATLANTIC AND TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS:  
PERCEPTIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11TH**

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)  
Roma, 01/X/2002

- a. Agenda
- b. List of participants
- 1. The impact of September 11 on U.S. policy in the Middle East and Transatlantic relations / F. Stephen Larrabee (11 p.)
- 2. After September 11th / Mark A. Heller (6 p.)
- 3. After September 11th: Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East in a Transatlantic Perspective / Roberto Aliboni (9 p.)





# *Istituto Affari Internazionali*

## **Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean Relations: Perceptions in the Aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>**

*Sponsored by  
the NATO Office of Information and Press  
and the German Marshall Fund of the United States*

Rome, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002

*Residenza di Ripetta  
Via di Ripetta, 231 – Tel. 06 3231144*

### **AGENDA**

9:30 am	<b>Introductory Remarks</b> <i>Roberto Aliboni, IAI, Rome</i>	
9:45 am	<b>American Perceptions</b> <sup>(1)</sup> <i>F. Stephen Larrabee, RAND, USA</i>	
11:00 am		Coffee break
11:45 am	<b>Arab Perceptions</b> <i>Mohammed Khair Eiedat, ACPD, Amman</i>	
1:00 pm		Lunch
1:45 pm	<b>European Perceptions</b> <i>Roberto Aliboni, IAI, Rome</i>	
3:00 pm	<b>Israeli Perceptions</b> <sup>(2)</sup> <i>Mark Heller, JCSS, Tel Aviv</i>	Coffee available on a self-service basis
4:15 pm	<b>Conclusions</b>	
5:00 pm	<b>End of the workshop</b>	

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# Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean Relations: Perceptions in the Aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>

*Sponsored by  
the NATO Office of Information and Press  
and the German Marshall Fund of the United States*

An international workshop organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali

Rome, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002

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**THE IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11 ON U.S. POLICY IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS**

**F. STEPHEN LARRABEE**

**RAND**

**Workshop on “Transatlantic and Trans-Mediterranean Relations:  
Perceptions in the Aftermath of September 11”**

**Sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and  
the NATO Office of Information and Press  
Istituto Affari Internazionali  
Rome, October 1, 2002**

## THE IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11 ON U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

F. STEPHEN LARRABEE<sup>1</sup>

The events of September 11 have had a major impact on U.S. foreign policy. The war on terrorism has become the central focus and guiding organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy. It is the prism through which all other issues are viewed by the Bush administration. The key consideration is how these issues facilitate or hinder the war on terrorism.

The events of September 11 have also resulted in a major shift in U.S. military strategy. The new National Security Strategy released by the Bush administration on September 20 essentially junks previous concepts of deterrence and puts a premium on preemption.<sup>2</sup> Bush administration officials argue that in the new era in which terrorists could acquire weapons of mass destruction, the United States can not afford to wait to be attacked but must strike first in order to assure its national interests and protect its citizens. While the U.S. always implicitly reserved the right to strike first if its vital national interests were seriously threatened, preemption -- or "anticipatory self-defense," as it is being called -- has now been raised to a cardinal principle of U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy.

In doing so, the Bush administration has driven the last nail into the coffin of Article 51 of the UN charter, which allows for self-defense *in response to an armed attack*. As Gary Schmidt has noted, in promulgating the concept of "anticipatory self-defense," Bush is pushing well beyond the traditional justification of self-defense as embodied in Article 51 -- that is, that the threat be imminent, leaving no choice or possibility of deliberation. He is making new law -- or at least applying an old principle to new circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

Current U.S. policy in the Middle East should be seen against of this changing strategic context and the impact of the events of September 11. The Bush administration

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<sup>1</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee holds the Corporate Chair in European Security at RAND. The views expressed in this paper are his personal views and do not represent those of RAND or its sponsors.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p.15-16. For background see David Sanger, "Bush to Outline Doctrine of Striking Foes First," *New York Times*, September 19, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Schmidt, "A Case of Continuity," *The National Interest*, Fall 2002, p. 11.



came into office highly critical of President Clinton's efforts to obtain a Middle East peace settlement and was initially reluctant to engage itself heavily in the peace process. September 11 and the suicide attacks against Israel in the Spring of 2002 thrust the Middle East back onto the U.S. policy agenda and forced the administration to give the region greater attention. However, the administration has seen most of the region's problems -- especially the Arab-Israeli dispute -- largely through the prism of terrorism, a fact which has often obscured the deeper roots of these conflicts and problems.

Four issues in particular in the Middle East have assumed greater importance since September 11:

### **The Arab-Israeli Dispute**

The suicide bombings in the Spring of 2002 forced the administration to give greater attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict because they threatened to reignite Muslim passions throughout the Middle East and make it more difficult for the administration to gain Arab support for the war on terrorism. President Bush found himself under strong pressure from many sides -- especially moderate Arab states -- to get more deeply involved in order to halt the violence and avoid a destabilization of the region. Moreover, the administration increasingly began to recognize that it would not be able to get Arab support for the war on terrorism as long as it took a hands-off approach to the Palestinian problem.

However, the administration's efforts have achieved few visible results, largely because the administration is perceived as pursuing a one-sided policy and is unwilling to put strong pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In addition, the administration's focus has increasingly shifted from pushing for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement to ousting Arafat and reforming the Palestinian Authority. Its strong support for Sharon also damaged its credibility with the moderate Arab states, not to mention the Arab "street."

**The Palestinian problem has been essentially seen as one of terrorism. In the administration's view, until the suicide bombings are stopped, there can be no prospect of peace. This ignores the deeper roots of the conflict and the degree to which Israel's actions have also contributed to the cycle of violence. It also puts the administration four-square behind Sharon, who has tried to portray his actions, like those of the U.S., as a struggle against terrorism.**

**It may well be true, as administration officials argue, that Arab governments in the Middle East have used the Palestinian problem as a pretext for avoiding much-needed reforms. But the issue has a deep resonance among the populations of**

**the region. There is unlikely to be peace in the region until it is addressed. This will require strong U.S. political engagement -- but also a more balanced and nuanced policy.**

### **Regime Change in Iraq**

Moreover, the Palestinian issue has increasingly taken a backseat to the effort to compel "regime change" in Iraq. Saddam's ouster has become the centerpiece of the Bush administration's Middle East policy, crowding out other issues, including the broader war on terrorism. Some cynics have charged that the campaign against Iraq is a political ploy to deflect attention away from Bush's domestic difficulties in the run up to the Congressional elections in November. While the single-minded campaign for regime change in Iraq has worked to the administration's advantage domestically, the concern with Iraq among the more hawkish members of the administration predates the electoral season -- and even September 11 for that matter.

The war on terrorism, however, has lent the Iraq issue greater urgency. Administration officials fear that Saddam may obtain nuclear weapons in the near future and that he may then be tempted to give them to other terrorists. However, most independent studies argue that Saddam does not have nuclear weapons and is not likely to be able to build a nuclear bomb soon. Moreover, the administration's argument assumes that Saddam is irrational and is willing to hand over these weapons to forces over which he has no control, knowing that he would be a target for a retaliatory U.S. nuclear strike if they tried to use these weapons. But why would Saddam put his fate and very existence in the hands of such groups? He is dangerous but not stupid or suicidal. His top priority is his own survival.

Within the U.S. political elite there is a broad consensus that Saddam is a threat and that everyone -- the U.S., the Iraqi population, the moderate Arab states of the region, and America's European allies -- would be better off if Saddam were removed from power. *The real debate is over how to do this, and how soon.* Four issues have emerged as central in the U.S. debate:

- **Unilateralism vs. Multilateralism.** On this issue, the divisions run across the political spectrum. The Republicans are split. The "old Bushies" (i.e. those associated with President Bush's father) such as Brent Scowcroft and James Baker argue that if the campaign to unseat Saddam is to succeed, the U.S. needs to build a broad international coalition. The "new Bushies" (those in the current administration) welcome international support to overthrow Saddam but are prepared to act alone, if necessary. They calculate

that once it is clear that Saddam will not survive, the European allies and moderate Arab states will quickly fall into line and support U.S. policy.

- **Post-Saddam Reconstruction of Iraq.** Many Senators, including some important Republicans, such as Chuck Hagel (R-Nebraska), are concerned that the administration has not carefully thought through the problems associated with rebuilding Iraq after Saddam's overthrow (the "Day After Problem"). To date, the administration has essentially ducked this question, arguing that it will worry about that problem later. The key issue, in their view, is to get rid of Saddam. After that, everything will fall into place. Indeed, one of the administration's main assumptions is that Saddam's overthrow will stimulate a process of democratization throughout the Middle East. While highly desirable, this seems to overestimate both the ease of rebuilding Iraq as well as the knock-on effect Saddam's removal will have elsewhere in the region.

- **The Impact on the Broader War on Terrorism.** Many Democrats -- and some Republicans -- are worried that the war in Iraq will divert attention from the real issue -- the war on global terrorism. Some even believe that Bush is so hell-bent on invading Iraq in order to divert attention from the fact that the war on terrorism is bogging down.<sup>4</sup> While this is probably too cynical an interpretation of Bush's motives, there is a serious danger that an invasion of Iraq will divert American attention from the broader war on terrorism. A war with Iraq will be costly (current estimates run from \$100-200 billion); it could require months to prosecute; and it will leave a devastated country that will take years, perhaps decades, to rebuild. Faced with these formidable challenges, it will be hard for the administration to maintain a single-minded focus on the war on terrorism.

Some conservative critics argue that the administration is in danger of losing sight of the forest through the terrorist trees. It has focused so single-mindedly on ousting Saddam that it can't see the broader terrorist threat. The real threat, in their view, comes from Iran not Iraq. Thus, they argue, the administration should concentrate on toppling the Iranian regime. This would eliminate the terrorists' greatest source of support and "cut the heart out Islamic fundamentalism."<sup>5</sup>

- **The Impact on Stability in the Middle East.** Critics and skeptics fear that an attack on Iraq, especially one not sanctioned by the UN, could destabilize the Middle East and lead to the weakening -- and possible overthrow -- of some Middle East governments such as Egypt or Saudi Arabia. These concerns are shared by many of America's

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<sup>4</sup> This argument has specifically been made by former Vice President Al Gore. See Dan Balz, "Gore Gives Warnings on Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 24, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Ledeen, "The real foe is Middle Eastern tyranny," *Financial Times*, September 24, 2002.

European allies. The Bush administration brushes aside such concerns. It argues that Saddam's overthrow will have a positive impact on stability in the Middle East and give new impulse to a process of democratization throughout the region.

The skeptics' concerns, while not inconsequential, are not likely to be strong enough to prevent an attack on Iraq. Iraq's willingness to accept inspectors on its soil has complicated the administration's strategy but is not likely to derail it. The administration sees the Iraqi acceptance as little more than a tactical ploy -- a delaying tactic -- and it appears prepared to carry out an invasion, with or without a UN resolution. Bush will almost certainly obtain the authorization he needs from the Congress to use military force against Iraq, though the broadly worded draft authorization which the administration sent to the Hill is likely to be amended in order to avoid giving Bush the type of blank check that President Johnson received in the 1964 Tonkin Gulf resolution.<sup>6</sup>

Most Democrats, especially those with presidential ambitions, are reluctant to be seen as undercutting the President. They remember that the most successful Democrats -- Clinton, Gore and Lieberman -- supported the Gulf War while the majority of Democrats voted against it. Thus they don't want to be on the wrong side of the fence on this issue. Moreover, the mood in the United States today is quite different than in 1999. The events of September 11 have made many Americans far more sensitive to the dangers of terrorism and more willing to support the use of force to deter these dangers.

### **Relations with Saudi Arabia**

One of the most important repercussions of September 11 has been a visible deterioration of U.S.-Saudi relations. The fact that 15 out of 19 terrorists involved in the September 11 attacks were of Saudi origin has greatly contributed to the souring of relations. Once viewed as America's critical ally in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is today increasingly seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The right wing of the Republican party and its fellow travelers have launched an all-out media assault on the Saudi regime, depicting it as corrupt, undemocratic and supporting -- or at least tolerating -- anti-American and extremist views.

The Bush administration's strong support for Prime Minister Sharon and its unwillingness to aggressively push the Saudi peace plan have also contributed to the deterioration of ties. The Saudis thought they had Bush's firm backing for the peace

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<sup>6</sup> The administration's draft gives the President extensive powers. There are no limits or reporting requirements. Nor is it confined to Iraq. It gives the President freedom to take all necessary action to restore peace and security "in the region." Under this construction, the administration would be free to undertake military action against other states in the region such as Iran or Syria.

plan. But Bush has done little to promote the plan, which has largely languished on the back burner. Instead he has concentrated on trying to oust Arafat -- and more recently Saddam.

At the same time, the Saudi leadership is alarmed by the growing anti-Saudi mood in the United States and fears being pushed aside. The leadership is divided on the degree to which the Kingdom should assist the U.S. in any war against Saddam. King Fahd and Defense Minister Prince Sultan are eager to go along with the United States, while others led by Crown Prince Abdullah are more inclined to stand up to the Bush administration.

The strains in relations with Saudi Arabia have increased the importance of Qatar in U.S. strategy. Qatar has established a strong alliance with the United States. The U.S. air base at Al Udeid has undergone extensive enlargement and has a 15,000-foot runway, the longest in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. Central Command plans to move command and control facilities from Florida in November. The move is officially billed as a biennial exercise but the equipment and personnel are likely to remain after the completion of the exercise. In the event of an attack on Iraq, Qatar will almost certainly serve as a launching pad.

### **Turkey's Critical Role**

September 11 has also increased Turkey's strategic importance in the eyes of U.S. policy makers. To be sure, American policy makers began stressing Turkey's strategic importance long before Iraq moved to center stage on the U.S. agenda. But the events of September 11 and the plans to overthrow Saddam have reinforced Turkey's strategic importance. Ankara's support -- especially the use of the airbase at Incirlik -- is critical for any attack on Iraq. The administration has thus actively courted Turkey lately.

The Turks, however, are unenthusiastic about the idea of a war on Iraq. Ankara has strong economic interests in Iraq, which would be damaged by a war with Baghdad. It is also worried that the collapse of Saddam's regime could lead to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Many Turks fear that such a situation could rekindle Kurdish separatism in Turkey and pose a threat to the unity of the Turkish state.

However, Turkish officials appear to have concluded that an American attack on Iraq is inevitable and that Ankara has little choice but to go along with an invasion. The real issue is the price for Turkish support. This time Turkey does not want to be left holding the bag, as it was in the Gulf War, which cost Turkey some \$30-40 billion. Thus it is likely to demand significant compensation for its support -- including the stationing

of Patriot air defense systems on its soil to protect it against any possible missile attack by Iraq as well as compensation for any economic losses incurred as a result of an U.S. attack on Iraq.

### **The Transatlantic Dimension**

**In Europe, the events of September 11 initially generated a remarkable degree of sympathy for and solidarity with the United States. However, a year after the events this solidarity has begun to dissipate and be replaced by new tensions and strains. Differences over the Middle East have not caused these strains, but they have clearly contributed to them. Policy differences between the U.S. and Europe have manifested themselves over two issues in particular:**

- **The Arab-Israeli conflict.** European governments and the EU tend to give high priority to an Arab-Israeli settlement, and especially the Palestinian issue. The Bush administration, by contrast, sees the Palestinian issue, as a secondary issue whose resolution will be facilitated, not hindered, by Saddam's overthrow. The U.S. and Europe also differ over their approach to Arafat's role. While many European governments do not entirely trust Arafat, they regard him as the elected representative of the Palestinian people. The Bush administration, by contrast, sees him as yesterday's man -- as part of the problem, not the solution. They regard his ouster as a precondition for the creation of an efficient, democratic and reform-minded Palestinian Authority and a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.

- **Iraq.** For the Bush administration, Iraq is *the* central issue and the key to transforming the Middle East. In their view, once Saddam is gone, the rest of the pieces of the Middle Eastern puzzle will fall into place. But as long as he is in power, there can be no peace in the Middle East. European governments, on the other hand, are much more focused on the Palestinian issue. They don't like Saddam, but they are worried that a war with Iraq may destabilize the Middle East. Most (Britain excepted) want any military action to be approved by the UN. Chancellor Schroeder has gone so far as to say the Germany will not participate in an attack on Iraq even with a UN Resolution.

Depending on how it is handled, Iraq could lead a major rupture in transatlantic relations. Bush's effort to work through the UN has won him points in Europe and helped to restore some sense of harmony in U.S.-European relations. But if Bush goes forward with an attack on Iraq without a UN mandate -- which is likely -- many European governments (Britain excepted) may not be willing to support the U.S. This, in turn,

could lead to a strong anti-European reaction in the United States' Congress, including calls for U.S. troops withdrawals from Europe.<sup>7</sup>

One casualty is already visible: the U.S.-German relationship. Chancellor Schroeder's unilateral refusal to participate in an attack on Iraq under any circumstances - even with a UN mandate -- has infuriated Bush administration officials and will not be forgotten. Schroeder is seen as having engaged in irresponsible election pandering and has severely damaged Germany's credibility in Washington's eyes. While the damage to bilateral relations may eventually be repaired, any hopes of Germany being viewed by the Bush administration as a "partner in leadership" are dead for the foreseeable future, even if Schroeder backtracks and tries to mend fences after the election.

**It is also unclear what lessons Europeans may draw from Schroeder's actions. Some European leaders may see his unilateral refusal as a lesson in how not to deal with the Americans. Certainly that is the administration's hope. But others may come to the conclusion that standing up to the Americans pays and is good domestic politics. If that is the lesson that is drawn, transatlantic relations could be in for even rougher times.**

#### **September 11 and the Debate on NATO's Future**

The events of September 11 have intensified the debate about NATO's mission and strategic purpose. A number of analysts contend that NATO needs to adapt to a fundamentally new strategic environment. In their view, today the cornerstone of a new European order is largely in place.<sup>8</sup> The grand strategic issues that dominated NATO's agenda in the past -- German unification, Russia's integration into the West, the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into Euro-Atlantic structures, ending the military conflicts in the Balkans -- are now completed or in the process of completion. As a result, Europe is now more secure than it has been in the last fifty years.

At the same time, the events of September 11 have made clear that the United States and its European allies are faced with a series of new and deadly threats -- terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, failed and rogue states -- most of which emanate from beyond European borders. Today as Ronald Asmus and Kenneth Pollack have noted, "the greatest likelihood of large numbers of Americans and Europeans being killed no longer comes from a Russian invasion or a war in the Balkans. It comes from the

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<sup>7</sup> Calls for a U.S. troop withdrawal, in fact, have already begun. See William Safire, "The German Problem," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> See Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, "The New Transatlantic Project: A Response to Robert Kagan," *Policy Review*, October-November, pp. 1-16.

threat posed by terrorists or rogue states in the Greater Middle East armed with weapons of mass destruction, attacking our citizens, our countries, or our vital interests.”<sup>9</sup>

This shift in the focus of threats has raised new questions about NATO’s role and strategic purpose. What is NATO for? Should it be primarily focused on enhancing stability in an increasingly stable Europe? Or should NATO broaden its role beyond Europe and address the new threats that have become more prominent since September 11?

Some observers such as Senator Richard Lugar have argued that preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should become a central NATO task. Otherwise NATO risks becoming marginalized.<sup>10</sup> He contends that in an era in which terrorist attacks can be planned in Germany, financed in Asia and carried out in the United States, old distinctions between “in” and “out” of area make little sense. Many Europeans maintain, however, that NATO should remain focused on peacekeeping in Europe.

This debate is not entirely new. It has been brewing for some years within the Alliance.<sup>11</sup> The Clinton administration sought to get the Alliance to focus more attention on threats beyond Europe, especially from weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the run up to the Washington Summit in April 1999. However, it met strong resistance to what Europeans perceived as an effort to “globalize” NATO.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the administration did manage to get language inserted in the Strategic Concept adopted at the Washington summit that officially recognized that threats such as terrorism and WMD could affect Alliance security.

The debate has been given greater momentum by the events of September 11 and the U.S. handling of the conflict in Afghanistan. In the Afghanistan campaign NATO was largely by-passed by the U.S. in favor of dealing with key allies bilaterally. Many Europeans see this as evidence that the U.S. is losing interest in NATO as an instrument

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See Richard Lugar, “Redefining NATO’s Mission: Preventing WMD Terrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer 2002, pp. 7-13.

<sup>11</sup> For early discussions that foreshadow the current debate, see David C. Gompert and F. Stephen Larrabee (eds.), *America and Europe: A Partnership for a New Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

<sup>12</sup> See William Drozdiak, “European Allies Balk at Expanded Role for NATO,” *Washington Post*, February 2, 1999. Joseph Fitchett, “A More United Europe Worries About Globalizing NATO,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 31, 1998; William Pfaff, “Washington’s New Vision for Europe Could be Divisive,” *ibid.*, December 5-6, 1998. For a European critique, see Curt Gasteyger, “Riskante Doppelerweiterung,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 9, 1999. Karl-Heinz Kamp, “Eine ‘globable’ Rolle für die NATO?” *ibid.*, April 2, 1998.



of policy and that in the future the U.S. will prefer to deal with crises, especially crises outside of Europe, unilaterally or with a few key allies.

How this debate evolves will have an important impact on NATO's future evolution and transatlantic relations. In the future, most of the threats NATO will face are likely to come from beyond Europe's borders. Thus NATO will need to find a way to address these threats more directly and forthrightly. If it does not, American support for NATO is likely to dwindle and the fissures in the transatlantic relationship, evident in recent years, will grow, eroding the sense of common purpose that has been the glue that has held the Alliance together for the past fifty years.

### **Implications for NATO's Mediterranean Initiative**

The events of September 11 and the evolving debate on NATO's future have three important implications for NATO. First, in the coming years, NATO is likely to become more outward looking and less Eurocentric. This means that the Alliance will increasingly focus on threats beyond Europe's borders. Many of these are in or emanate from the Middle East. Second, the distinction between European security and Middle Eastern and European security is likely to become increasingly blurred. As a result, Middle Eastern issues are likely to increasingly intrude on the NATO agenda. Indeed, as the debate over an invasion of Iraq underscores, they have already begun to do so.

Third, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative will take on greater importance. NATO will need to develop closer and more comprehensive security cooperation with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. A better understanding of security perceptions on both sides of the Mediterranean will be necessary if many of the new challenges are to be adequately addressed.

NATO's Mediterranean Initiative provides an important vehicle for conducting a dialogue about these threats and fostering closer cooperation between NATO and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. But it needs to be updated and expanded in light of the changed security environment. To date, the initiative has concentrated primarily on information sharing. But in the aftermath of September 11 NATO needs to begin to develop closer concrete cooperation in areas such as peacekeeping and counter-terrorism.

In particular, the idea of a "PfP for the Mediterranean" should be explored. When first proposed by Italy some years ago, the idea was somewhat premature. But in light of the new strategic context it may be time to revive it and adapt it to the Mediterranean setting.

There are, of course, major obstacles to closer cooperation between NATO and the countries in the Middle East and North Africa-- the most important being the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict and the tension that the conflict engenders. Until this conflict is solved, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa will be reluctant to engage in any multilateral cooperation that involves Israel. Nevertheless, it is NATO's interest to intensify the dialogue with these countries and give it more concrete content. Thus as NATO seeks to draw lessons from the events of September 11, more thought needs to be given to how to deepen and expand its Mediterranean Initiative.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For some useful ideas, see Roberto Aliboni, "Strengthening NATO- Mediterranean Relations: A Transition to Partnership," paper prepared for the International Seminar "From Dialogue to Partnership. Security in the Mediterranean and NATO: Future Prospects," sponsored by the Italian Parliament in collaboration with the NATO Office of Information and Press and the Italian Institute of International Affairs (IAI), Rome, Italy, September 30, 2002. See also Ian O. Lesser, Jerold Green, F. Stephen Larrabee and Michele Zanini, *The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative. Evolution and Next Steps* (Santa Monica, CA.: RAND, MR - 1164, 2000).

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**“After September 11<sup>th</sup>”**  
(Musings in lieu of a first draft)

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Workshop on “Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean Relations:  
Perceptions in the Aftermath of September 11

*Sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States  
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Any analysis of Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean relations must proceed from a prefatory caution: the European pole of both these axes doesn't exist. More precisely, at least insofar as foreign and security policy are concerned, it exists only as an aspiration, rather than as a reality. We know that Britain is not Sweden and Germany is not France, and also that France and Italy after the last elections are not France and Italy before the last elections. Moreover, the belief that the passage of time inevitably means progress toward “Ever Closer Union” does not seem as axiomatic as it once did – the current debate about Iraq being the most obvious manifestation of that. Consequently, references to “Europe” in any of these discussions need to be understood as impressionistic generalizations only slightly more valid, if at all, than the exceptions to those generalizations. Parenthetically, it is also the case that there is no North American pole to the Trans-Atlantic axis. Canada and the United States may be the closest approximation to twin countries in the world, but they are at best fraternal twins, not identical, and on matters of foreign and security policy, significant gaps sometimes appear – so much so that in recent discussions of policy vis-a-vis Iraq, at least one commentator has taken to calling Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien “the Schroeder of the Americas.”

The Trans-Atlantic Relationship: Decline of the West?

There is no need to elaborate at any length on the foundations of the close Trans-Atlantic relationship, whether in the institutional sense (NATO) or in the broader cultural sense. It is enough to say that America (and Canada) are the children of Europe who grew up and moved away but are still very much tied to it by constant contact, economic interaction, and the intimacy of familiarity – when citizens of these countries visit each other, they may indeed feel that they are in a foreign country (as they do in Australia, or New Zealand, or Israel) but not that they are on a foreign planet (as they still do, despite the ravages of MacWorld/Coca-Colonization, in China, or Sudan, or even – despite their functioning democracies – in Japan and India). The familiarity is not just in superficial manifestations of culture – what people eat and what they wear – but in deeper social structures (family functions, individual agency) and political systems (representative government, rule of law, separation of power, checks and balances, free press, etc.). Moreover, the cultural proximity has been reinforced, at least over the past half century, by a common strategic interest that has produced permanent American engagement in Europe after more than one-and-a-half centuries of conscious determination to “avoid entangling alliances” and remain

disengaged. It may be an exaggeration to see the common strategic interest of NATO as culturally or normatively determined (Christian Latin American was out, Muslim Turkey was in; democratic Sweden and Switzerland were out, dictatorial Portugal and Greece were in), but beyond the fear of Russia or Germany redux, there was undeniably a major cultural-normative component that led to the perception of the “common strategic interest” underlying the alliance.

Of greater interest in recent years are the trends that might undermine these foundations. These are not new, but they seem particularly evident since 9/11, hence, the tentative conclusion that 9/11 changed nothing and changed everything. It changed nothing in the sense that NATO, for several decades, was beset by Euro-American differences over the relative share of responsibility each side ought to bear for providing the assets needed to underwrite NATO missions (the so-called “burden sharing debate”), and also by Euro-American differences over what role, if any, NATO ought to play in military missions outside the North Atlantic theater (the so-called “out-of-area operations” debate). But as long as the main and direct threat of Soviet aggression remained, these differences were suppressed by general consensus over the nature and priority of the threat, the kind of response that needed to be prepared (i.e., general structure and tasking of forces), and (France excepted) the inevitability and desirability of American primacy in setting political-strategic doctrine. It changed everything in the sense that 9/11 precipitated the first post-Soviet, out-of-area debate: the first Gulf War came too soon for the belief that the Cold War was truly over to have been fully internalized; the Balkan crises, for all the Euro-American differences they revealed, were too European to be truly “out-of-area.” But responses to 9/11 and after fully reveal, not only the commonalities that remain, but also the differences that may erode the foundations of “the West.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Use of force

Some of the most important differences relate to the views of way international relations ought to be conducted, and particularly about the use of force. As the European project developed over the past half-century, Europeans profess to have developed from their dealings with each other a template for the conduct of international relations. Its main elements include the renunciation of the unrestrained pursuit of national interest and the partial sacrifice of sovereignty in favor of multilateral consultation and cooperation under the ever-expanding umbrella of international law, and the conscious promotion of structural economic interdependence in order to reduce or eliminate the existence of contradictory national interests. In this system, force is to be used only as a last resort, and except in clear cases of self-defense, only under cover of some collective or multilateral legitimacy, especially the United Nations. Americans, by contrast, are far more jealous of their sovereignty and more suspicious that multilateral procedures and international organizations will hamper their ability to act as they see fit.

To some extent, this contrast is overblown. The United States has been a founding member of and vigorous participant in most of the international organizations that have shaped the post-war world order (UN, IMF, World Bank) as well a variety of

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<sup>1</sup> William Anthony Hay, “Is There Still a West?” Foreign Policy Research Institute Watch on the West, vol. 3, no. 8 (September 2002).

regional economic and political-security groupings (OAS, APEC, NAFTA, not to speak of NATO itself). True, the U.S. has tried to use these multilateral organizations to forge global and regional orders that conform with its own views, needs, and interests, and when it has been unable to do that, it has not been so self-effacing as to foreswear freedom of independent action. In that sense, its approach to multilateralism has been more instrumental than ideological. But Europeans, for all their principled commitment to multilateralism, have also used it selectively to promote their own views and interests, and also acted unilaterally, even with military force, when their own vital national interests were at stake. That is how Spain acted when threatened with the loss of a small, uninhabited rock 200 meters from the Moroccan mainland and how it would undoubtedly act if force were used by others to liberate what they define as occupied territory in Ceuta and Melilla. That is how Belgium acted when, without any multilateral authorization, it asserted universal jurisdiction for its own criminal courts. And that is how Germany's Chancellor acted when he vowed at an election rally that he would not use force against Iraq even under an UN umbrella, promising instead that "We will go our own special German way."

Having said that, there is still a basic difference of approach. Americans generally feel less compelled to join in, or feel bound by, things to which "everybody else" agrees – whether those things are UN resolutions, international environmental standards, or international criminal court jurisdiction. In part, this stems from a different view of the mankind for whose opinions Americans profess to have a decent respect; for many Americans, the fact that the United Nations was dominated for so long by coalitions of totalitarian dictators and assorted other autocrats rendered it unfit either to legitimize or delegitimize what America did. But even when its partners' democratic credentials are beyond reproach, as is the case of the Europeans, the United States still shows greater willingness to go it alone. The most compelling explanation for this is not normative, but structural.<sup>2</sup> Unilateralism is a viable option for those with the power to act alone; multilateralism maximizes the leverage of those who don't (and constrains the margin of maneuver for those who do). The United States clearly falls in the first category; the Europeans are in the second. In that sense, each side has rationally opted for the optimal strategy or approach given its own capabilities.

That, however, is still only a partial explanation, because it begs the question of why the Europeans, individually and especially collectively, are in the second category. After all, Europe has the economic and demographic resources to generate the power that would sustain and justify (in a structural sense) a unilateralist foreign policy. But it has not done so. To some extent, this is because it has thus far been unable to agree or coordinate. But it is also because of a conscious decision not to – not to build military power, not to invest in research and development, not to be aggressive in asserting the values and beliefs it ostensibly shares with the United States.

### Moral Equivalence

Why not? One major factor must surely be the pervasive influence of moral equivalence – the ideology that turns the uncontested truth that nobody is perfect into

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, no. 113 (June 2002).

the logically perverted corollary that everyone is therefore equally imperfect, i.e., that there are no moral distinctions to be made, resulting in the conclusion that George W. Bush is just Adolph Hitler without a moustache and, by extension, that Saddam Hussein is just George W. Bush with a moustache. This kind of moral reasoning is hardly absent in the United States, but it is most prevalent within the confines of the academy, especially in the strongholds of post-modern angst (literature, philosophy, fine arts) and Middle Eastern Studies, and it does not seem to travel well outside the humanities, much less outside the ivory tower into the media, the general public, or the political system. In Europe, by contrast, it is very much the Zeitgeist (a concept that English cannot capture in a single word) – not just throughout academia but also in the media, in non-NATO Brussels, and in the center, center-left and left of the national political spectrums – where the former Justice Minister of Germany resides. The fact that she was dumped (after the election) shows how far this belief-system is from being hegemonic; the fact that she was Justice Minister before being dumped shows how far it is from being marginal. The result is that America debates the ways and means of a war on terrorism but reveals few doubts about its rectitude. An American columnist can write without any sense of irony: “We’re right and they’re wrong no matter what your daughter’s political science professor told her.” And Americans can take Bush’s description of an “Axis of Evil” with utmost seriousness while Europeans, with the sophistication and nuance in which they take such pride, greet it with the same knowing smiles provoked by Ronald Reagan’s denunciation of the “Evil Empire” more than fifteen years ago. That abhorrence of “oversimplification” leads them, even while condemning September 11, to refrain from attaching any name and face to the concept of evil (unless it is Ariel Sharon’s) and to be much more discriminating about what really constitutes terrorism and much more insistent on examining the grievances and root causes that lie behind it.

Admittedly, this gap is an exaggeration, perhaps even in a caricature. After all, for every Herta and Paul Amirian there is at least one Tony Blair. And Americans, for their part, are hardly indifferent to issues like grievances and root causes. Even so, their answers are typically different, in ways that have important implications for the Trans-Mediterranean relationship.

#### The Trans-Mediterranean Relationship: Partnership for What?

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is the most ambitious attempt to institutionalize a Trans-Mediterranean relationship. But it is hardly the first or only such project. By one count, there have been at least 11 such initiatives, beginning with the Euro-Arab dialogue in 1973.<sup>3</sup> All of these dialogues have been European initiatives and, in addition to raising Europe’s prominence in international affairs, all have had the objective of shielding Europe from the consequences of insecurity, instability and poverty in the Mediterranean. One of those consequences was terrorism, and September 11 therefore only raised the profile and perceived immediacy of a concern that existed before. The mechanisms chosen to promote security, stability and prosperity were dialogue, consultation, confidence building, and cooperation. The EMP qualifies as the most ambitious of these initiatives because it went beyond such

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<sup>3</sup> P.H. Liotta, *Future Talk: Building the Hybrid Security Community in the Euro-Mediterranean*, Jerome E. Levy Occasional Paper #3 (United States Naval War College, February 2002), p. 23.

anodyne activities and undertook some concrete measures, including economic assistance, and posited some concrete goals, especially the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. But even the EMP has failed to make much progress. The reasons for this, including those that pass for conventional wisdom, need to be subjected to closer scrutiny. In his paper for this workshop, Roberto Aliboni observes that the EMP has failed to work in the way the Partners had hoped for when it was established in Barcelona. In my view, the first part of this summary is correct; the second reflects the flawed premise that explains the failure. If the EMP was ever intended to be anything other than a talking shop, then it could only be as a modernity project – with political and social as well as economic openness at its heart – that is, an attack, not on an “Axis of Evil” but on an “Axis of Medieval” (even if dressed up in business suits). If so, then it is an illusion to think that “the Partners” shared the hope that it would be fulfilled. Because for many of the regimes and social formations in the south, any economic payoffs would certainly be welcomed, but not if they depended on the kind of openness that threatened their hold on power or the authenticity of their cultural systems. And for many of the partners in the north, the commitment to a modernity project was real but not very intense. As a result, the experience of this partnership stands in sharp contrast with the experience of the EU’s (and NATO’s) eastward expansion, including the Partnership for Peace. The latter involve the institutional enlargement of the European space, with clear normative criteria for acceptance and membership. The Mediterranean projects only involve the virtual expansion of the European space, with geography and lip service the criteria for acceptance and membership. It is not that the Europeans aren’t serious about the normative content of partnership, they just aren’t serious enough about it or convinced of its feasibility to push it very hard. Instead, they accept various excuses for the partner governments’ inability or unwillingness to open up, to democratize, to marketize, to pluralize, and to confront terrorism – defining them as grievances or root causes that need to be resolved first. Of these, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes pride of place.

It is difficult to explore the reasons why this argument resonates without treading on politically incorrect ground. But the fact remains that unresolved conflict and a state of war seem to be accepted as an obstacle to political, economic and social openness (as well as a breeding ground for terrorism) in Arab countries, even those far removed physically from the conflict, while it poses no such obstacle in Israel. (The same observation could be made about the Indian sub-continent.) It is also difficult to explain why this argument resonates more strongly in Europe than it does in the United States. But just as there are hypotheses that are perhaps given more weight than they should – for example, the greater power of the Jewish lobby in America – so are there hypotheses that are perhaps given less weight than they should, for example, the greater power in Europe of moral equivalence’s cousin – multiculturalism. This is not about tolerance of cultural diversity and pluralism. American society is at least as accepting as Europe of differences in religious belief and practice, as well as of culinary, musical and sartorial preferences. Indeed, America has a long history of absorbing immigrants with at least as much success as Europe, and it is almost a point of ideological principle that anyone can become an American while retaining his cultural roots. Perhaps that is why there is no American debate about a *leitkultur*. But it is about what is included in culture. American multiculturalism does not extend to politics, i.e., to the belief that diversity of political systems is legitimate. Instead, American ideology insists that the principles of democracy are universally valid and



rejects the rejection of “American” or “Western” democracy on grounds that it is incompatible with authentic cultural traditions elsewhere. It’s not that the Americans are incapable of compromising principles for the sake of short-term expediency; as Lyndon Johnson once said of an inconsequential Caribbean dictator, “He may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he’s our son-of-a-bitch.” Still, they are generally less willing to accept excuses or to believe that the modernity project is too unpromising to invest much effort and resources in it and are more willing to invest in the service of universal principles of local and world order. That may explain why they cut foreign aid in response to the jailing of Saad e-din Ibrahim for the alleged misuse of European funds, while the Europeans made do with verbal protests.

The difference may be explained by American naivete. It may also be explained by the other side of that coin -- European cynicism. Despite the passage of time, perhaps there is still a legacy of colonial patronization of the natives combined with post-colonial guilt that leads Europeans to lower their own expectations while dismissing America’s higher expectations as the modern-day equivalents of *la mission civilatrice*, the “White Man’s Burden,” and the kind of general Western arrogance that totally contradicts the spirit of multiculturalism.

What has all this to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Trans-Mediterranean relations? A lot, and nothing at all. A lot, since the conflict serves as a useful lightning rod to divert the debate from the real premises, terms, conditions and activities of a Trans-Mediterranean partnership. Nothing at all, because there are enough valid reasons to pursue a resolution of the conflict whether or not it encourages terrorism and blocks the modernity project, just as there are enough valid reasons to struggle against poverty, whether or not that is a “root cause” of terrorism. And also because even if we concede the necessity to address the issue seriously and engage in it, persistent calls to do so provide absolutely no practical guidance about precisely what the Europeans should do or what they think the Americans should do beyond what they have done before. Demands for more political and diplomatic action by the West need to be accompanied by more specificity about the content of that action and the rationale for it. Should the West try to coerce Israel into making more concessions than it offered in the past? If so, which ones? And what concessions, if any, should it try to coerce the Palestinians and other Arabs into making? Is Israeli acceptance of all Arab demands sufficient to end regional and global terrorism, sweep away the obstacles to the modernity project in the Mediterranean, and elicit either the peaceful transformation of Iraq or Arab support for a campaign against it? If so, does working for that communicate something about the potential for terrorism to achieve results, and does failing to work for that amount to a trivialization of the issue by the West? If not, what else is needed? And shouldn’t that something else also be discussed with the same urgency and candor? Unless all these issues are finally confronted head-on, both the Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean relationships seemed destined, at best, to ride around aimlessly, and, at worse, to go seriously off the rails.

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