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## **EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES: COMMON INTERESTS AND DIFFERENCES IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION**

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## **1. Transatlantic commonalities and differences**

Since the turn of the century there has been a sharp deterioration in transatlantic relations. During the 1990s there were rifts and clashes, particularly with regard to the Balkan wars, yet the early Clinton administration's unilateralism soon came to an end and, all in all, transatlantic relations came out well. By contrast, the Bush administration's early unilateralism proved not only far stronger and more entrenched than that hinted at by the Clinton administration, but also very steady and continuous. This strong and steady U.S. unilateralism has created an unprecedented split across the North Atlantic – a split that may be the harbinger of a new international map, with the West disappearing or being seriously weakened as a geopolitical notion. For the time being, however, the situation is definitely not one of conflict, but rather of uneasy and weak cooperation.

Transatlantic interests are still there to bring allies together. In 2005, at the beginning of his second mandate, President Bush visited Europe to confirm the special quality of the transatlantic bond in American eyes. Some are actively cooperating with the United States. However, besides a good deal of durable common interests, there are also remarkable differences in both interests and perceptions. Many Europeans are beginning to sense that their interests are not necessarily in tune with those asserted by the United States, yet they hesitate to assert them or feel they lack the necessary instruments to do so. In this context, some competition is also surfacing, particularly in France. However, this competition is basically defensive in character.

What triggered the split was the war on Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Most Europeans saw the Iraq war as a very risky mistake and an unnecessary move, although all of them shared the American assessment of Saddam Hussein's regime and the need to put it under pressure with a view to influencing its policies or making it change from inside. But more than that, most Europeans opposed the principle of preventive war and the strong unilateralist doctrine behind that principle. Like most nations in the world, most European countries were primarily concerned by a U.S. policy that threw into question the basis of international legality.

For the permanent members of the UN Security Council putting international legality into question was also an attack on their international political status. France felt this more acutely than other permanent members of the Security Council. This was one more reason why it opposed the American intervention in Iraq so fiercely.

Instead, other European countries felt ideologically close to the Bush administration. Thus, they joined the U.S. coalition, like the United Kingdom, Mr. Aznar's Spain, and Italy. Eastern European countries also joined the coalition, since they felt they had to stay close to the United States so as to acquire a real assurance against threats that could come from their powerful Russian neighbor.

Two years after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the split is still there. And looking more closely at recent political developments, there can be no doubt that, while the war on Iraq is still the cause of that split, indeed, the split now extends to all Middle Eastern and North African politics. This area is becoming the most problematic sector in transatlantic relations.

The roots of the split however go beyond the Iraq war: as a consequence of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C., the United States came to see Islamic terrorism and the broader Middle Eastern area from which it apparently originates as the key threat to its national security. Furthermore, it came to the conclusion that Islamic terrorism is "deeply rooted" in the backward social, economic and, above all, authoritarian political conditions that prevail in that area. Implicitly, it equates terrorism with Islam by providing a "cultural" explanation for terrorism. True, the American political discourse refers to terrorism as a broad evil, whether Islamic or not. However, there is no doubt that for the U.S. the core terrorist threat comes from Islamic and Arab quarters, namely the broad area – the Greater or Broader Middle East and North Africa – from which empirically the threat actually comes or is perceived to come.

The American security strategy against this strongly perceived threat is multi-pronged. It includes the struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against terrorism. It uses international cooperation to some extent, but without allowing it to become a constraint on its foreign policy. Hence its strong unilateralism. Today, the core factor in this strategy is the **democratization** of the countries concerned. Of the various – not always actually existing – motives that spurred the war on Iraq, the necessity to establish a democratic regime in that country and the conviction that this would have a regional domino effect has over time become the dominant motive and the backbone of the present American strategy for the Greater Middle East with a view to strengthening its national security.

This security vision is not shared by most Europeans. Europeans agree that backward economic, social and political conditions in the Middle East and North Africa pose threats or risks to their security. However, in their view, the risk is not that backward conditions will generate terrorism, but that those conditions will cause domestic instability and underdevelopment in the countries concerned with important spill-over effects in European countries. Furthermore, the common European view is that, in addition to backward conditions, there are also important international political problems to be solved – in particular the Israeli-Palestinian problem – so as to create a context in which peaceful relations can prevail. The Europeans share the aim of promoting democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. But they see the transition to democracy as a long-term process that can be stimulated but not imposed from the outside. Furthermore, they do not believe that force can help to set such a process of democratization into motion.

In sum, at the roots of today's transatlantic splits and rifts are different perceptions of security. Although both the United States and Europe believe that the Middle Eastern and North African region plays a basic role in shaping their security and both are convinced that social, economic and, most of all, political conditions have to change in that region, the factors affecting security are explained in different ways and, thus, generate different strategic views. Not only does this tend to give way to different responses, but sometimes the very fact that there are differences in policies and visions

is perceived as a risk for one's security. So, for instance, some Europeans see the imbalances in U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict as a factor of risk.

In sum, for apparently different reasons and in different modes, democratization is today at the heart of Western security strategies and policies towards the Middle East and North Africa. By pursuing democratization policies towards this area, the United States and Europe assert their common interests. At the same time, though, they are also asserting their differences. Sometime they compete. It is for this reason, that analysis of today's transatlantic relations vis-à-vis the Middle East and North Africa has to concentrate on policies of **democracy promotion**.

## 2. Democracy promotion

While it is well known that the EU is running a civilian and political agenda of cooperation towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East - the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) - developments in Iraq have concentrated public attention on the American military agenda towards the region. This may have generated a black-and-white opposition between the perception of Europe, seen as carrying out a civilian and cooperative democratization agenda, and the U.S., seen as implementing solely a military agenda. One should not overlook, however, that in American intentions this military agenda is instrumental to a political goal, namely the democratization of the region. To that purpose, the U.S. government put forward a Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) at the end of 2003 with a view to promoting political reform in the region. After a long international debate on it, the June 2004 Sea Island G-8 Summit endorsed the GMEI with significant modifications and under the new name of "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa". In addition to this major international partnership initiative, one has to remember other purely American national programs of civilian cooperation, such as MEPI (the Middle East Partnership Initiative) and the bilateral free trade agreements (such as those with Morocco and Jordan).

Since the 1995 Barcelona conference, the European agenda is essentially based on the EMP. This partnership is rooted in a number of long-standing Mediterranean policies initiated in the 1970s. Thus, it is older than the American initiative, which only began to emerge in 2003 (even though the GMEI and the Partnership for Progress have well-known predecessors in U.S. policy towards Latin America).

In any case, the scopes of the two sets of EU and U.S. initiatives overlap without coinciding. The EU concentrates on the Mediterranean area - a strategic and geopolitical notion which is largely foreign to Americans - whereas the United States focuses on a much broader area, also including - in addition to the Mediterranean (i.e. North Africa and the Near East) - the Gulf and Central Asian countries up to Pakistan.

Despite differences in their age and scope, the European and American agendas have many points and concerns in common. In a perspective of security and political-economic reform, numerous concepts and concerns look very close, practically the same, for instance the goal of promoting democracy and the use of partnership and inclusion to attain that goal.

When these analogies are framed however in the respective EU and U.S. strategic frameworks, strong differences emerge. In other words, **the same concepts and instruments have different meanings, relevance, and functionality when considered**

**against the backdrop of the respective European and American strategies towards the regions of the Mediterranean and the broader Middle East.** Consequently, while one would expect the analogies in the EU and U.S. programs of cooperation with the region to give way to closer transatlantic cooperation, in fact, the differences underlying the analogies prevent such closer transatlantic cooperation from taking place. As already pointed out in the first part of this presentation, that differences are prevailing over analogies is due to the importance of the existing strategic differences between Europe and the United States.

As a result, those interested in fostering transatlantic cooperation will have to hammer out strategic differences first, as the existing analogies do not suffice in and of themselves to allow for any effective and concrete U.S.-EU political cooperation. At the same time, analogies in goals, concepts and instruments are not entirely neutral or unimportant in seeking to close or narrow the gap between strategies. The strategic differences behind the analogies must be investigated and clarified with a view to helping close the gap. In the following we make an attempt to compare the current European and American agendas of civilian and political cooperation towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East, precisely with a view to understanding whether they can be used to help narrow the strategic gap.

### 3. Concepts

The first and most important analogy between the EU and U.S. agendas is the **nexus between security and democracy**. In a sense, this nexus was already considered at the outset of the presentation, when we talked about the broad reasons for differences in transatlantic perceptions towards the Middle East and North Africa. Let's go back to this very important point.

Both EU and U.S. programs believe that more democracy in the countries of the region would result in more secure inter-state relations at regional as well as international level. In EU perceptions and policies, the advent of the rule of law, respect for human rights and minorities, and democratic political institutions is regarded as a factor of "structural stability". The same is more or less true in American policies and perceptions. The Clinton administration promoted democracy, although in less systematic ways than the EU. Democracy promotion is crucial in the Bush administration's Middle East policy as well. In President Bush's vision, however, the nexus between democracy and security is strictly linked to the global war on terrorism and that is why it is articulated in such a way as to make a fundamental difference with respect to the EU's perception of the same nexus.

In fact, as already pointed out, the American nexus is articulated as a deep-rooted relationship between terrorism and democracy: the lack of democracy and the authoritarian regimes that prevail in the region are - so the argument runs - at the root of the backwardness of regional societies. This backwardness, in turn, generates terrorism. Hence, the need to promote deep changes and fundamental reforms that have to engage societies and cultures even more than regimes and governments.

This being U.S. approach, the current EU and U.S. policies are predicated on apparently similar, yet substantively different rationales: while EU democracy promotion policy essentially targets political regimes, that of the United States is looking, first of all, for deep-rooted cultural and societal change. This difference has been harshly resented by

the interested countries of the region and has given way to strong criticism and grievances from regimes and “the Arab street”, extremists and liberals alike.

The strategic difference can be illustrated as the difference between a prevailingly functional and institutional European concept of democratization vs. a prevailingly value-laden American one.

The second U.S.-EU analogy worth mentioning here regards the **nexus between economic development, democracy and security**. Both visions are predicated on the principles endorsed in the Washington Consensus. The economic dimension of the Barcelona process, for instance, is definitely based on a strong liberalization which in turn would give way to significant direct investment from abroad, fast technological progress, increased productivity and efficiency and more significant export-led growth. In both the EU and U.S. case, democracy is a fundamental factor to assure freedom and, thus, foster economic development.

However, the United States emphasizes liberalization and globalization, whereas the European vision, while predicated on globalization as much as the American, gives regional and inter-regional integration more importance than the United States. The EU's emphasis on regional integration stems from security further to economic development. What the EU is suggesting is that regional integration is a pattern of relations that, by fostering economic growth, helps promote democracy domestically and peace in the region among the countries involved - as has been the case with the EU itself. Thus, according to the EU vision, there would be, broadly speaking, a virtuous circle between economic development, democracy and peace. Such a circle would result strongly facilitated by applying the EU model of economic regional integration in a densely institutionalized context.

While not amounting to conflicting views, these EU-U.S. differences have surfaced time and again in the recent history of the EU-U.S.-Middle East triangle: the EU combination of bilateral Association Agreements in an inter-regional context of developmental relations vs. the U.S. combination of bilateral free trade agreements in the context of the global WTO perspective; the strongly officially-managed processes of the EU-initiated EMP vs the essentially civil society based processes of the American-promoted Middle East Economic Summits (and - as of today - the Forum for the Future); the EU approach in the Middle East peace process REDWG vs. the American one; are just some evidence of these differences. While American regional approaches converge towards a global framework and are instrumental to strengthening it, the EU regional approaches, while not against globalization, consider regional frameworks as significant per se and tend to finely balance regional and global dimensions in a perspective of both economic development and security. Again, we face a deep-seated strategic difference.

A third analogy to be explored regards the **nexus between international institutions and legality, on the one hand, and democracy and peace, on the other**. That the former may be neglected with a view to promoting the latter is a “realist” or “hobbesian” perspective that is definitely not a part of the EU political culture. Yet it is precisely this perspective (the war on Iraq) that has been emphasized ultimately in the security vision worked out by the Bush administration. Kagan has expressed this difference as Americans come from Mars and Europeans from Venus. The cooperative attitude of the EU may be partly a result of its lack of power, i.e. its impotence, as Kagan points out. It is partly, however, also a genuine legacy of its peculiar experience after the end of the Second World War.

France and Germany insisted on linking the war on Iraq to a more convincing international legal context partly out of a wish not to be excluded or dwarfed as international actors and partly out of sincere conviction. Albeit to different extents, all EU nations – for sure, the founding ones - have internalized the international cooperative and liberal thinking on which the EU has been built on. There is no doubt that EU nations see a stronger nexus between international institutions and legality, on the one hand, and democracy and peace, on the other, than do today's sole U.S. superpower and other traditionally-minded great and small powers.

Here we have another strategic difference between the U.S. and the EU. This strategic difference, along with those noted above, generates opposition in transatlantic relations regarding the Middle East and the Mediterranean, even though in principle Europeans and Americans pursue the same finalities and employ similar policies.

#### 4. Policies and instruments

Not only do the United States and the EU employ similar concepts, they also use similar policies and instruments to promote reform in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Both their policies use instruments predicated on inducements and conditionality.

The most important positive inducement is **partnership**. Partnership brings about enhanced international status to less favored partners and the benefits of political and security cooperation to all partners. It is implemented by **inclusion, consultation and dialogue**. Consultation, dialogue and especially inclusion are construed as positive conditionality, namely as rewards to be earned by abiding by given conditions. On the other hand, conditionality can also be negative. This means that economic or political resources are denied as a consequence of behaviors that do not fit with those agreed or expected by parties. Partnership excludes (or keeps at bay) harsher forms of conditionality or coercion, such as sanctions and military interventions.

This system of rewards and punishments, carrots and sticks, is particularly elaborate and formalized in the EU experience. However, it is regularly applied by American policies as well. In particular, Europeans and Americans have jointly applied these policies with respect to countries in Central-Eastern Europe and the Balkans within the framework of the OSCE, NATO and the Partnership for Peace.

The most important difference between the United States and Europe in applying these policies and instruments is that, particularly when it comes to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the United States has acted in an essentially bilateral way so far, whereas the EU has acted through collective frameworks, the most recent and sophisticated one being the EMP. No doubt, collective frameworks are much more conducive than bilateral relations to the task of fostering partnership, consultation, dialogue and inclusion. In principle, they are more effective than bilateralism. Collective endeavors such as the EMP are more congruous to the broad goal of governing long-term change and reform in less developed areas with a view to enhancing regional and international security.

With the establishment of the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future, the United States joined the EU in employing collective frameworks of governance with respect to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In other words, besides employing a set of instruments and policies, such as partnership and inclusion, in its bilateral schemes of cooperation, thanks to the Partnership for Progress the United States is now

also employing these policies within a collective framework of governance similar to the EMP. Once again, we are faced with remarkable similarities. Once again, however, convergence is hindered or attenuated by strategic differences and, as we have seen previously, by the impact these differences have on concepts. Let's tackle this point more in depth.

A notable difference between the American and European programs today is the highly integrated character of the European agenda. The so-called "holistic" character of the EMP, bringing together political dialogue, migration, cultural cooperation, financial aid, and so forth, allows for higher effectiveness and governance, at least in principle. And the working of the EMP's holistic character is made possible by its high degree of institutionalization. Common institutions, in fact, make it possible to set linkages where they are needed. The Partnership for Progress and a Common Future brings together a number of different sectors and factors. It does so in a weak institutional environment, however, and in a less extensive and integrated way than the EU.

This is a notable difference. Would it be attenuated if the United States were to bring in more integration and institutionalization? Only if the U.S. strategic perspective were to change as well. If the strategic perspective remains unchanged, differences cannot be attenuated. In fact, the different strategic inspirations and ideological inclinations of the respective U.S. and EU programs generate differences in the use and development of instruments that can hardly be eliminated or attenuated. The intimate cooperative character of the EU strategy has an impact on the nature and evolution of the partnership and its instruments - such as dialogue, inclusion, and so forth - which are not made possible by the more traditional and "realist" character of the American strategy.

With the establishment of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the principle of **co-ownership**, the gap between U.S. and European cooperation may widen. The partnership established by the EU within the EMP has always been criticized by the Southern Partners as not being a real partnership. For a long time, the EU tried to sell the EMP as a joint venture among peers, but this was never bought by those assumed to be peers or partners. Nevertheless, the genuinely strategic cooperative inspiration of the EU's policy towards the Mediterranean has allowed it to gradually recognize political inequality within the EMP, consult on the issue with the partners and put forward suggestions on ways and means to attenuate and overcome such inequality by more adequate patterns of relations. Ultimately, the cooperative logic of the EMP has brought about a fundamental reform in the pattern of relations thanks to the introduction of the principle of co-ownership. Co-ownership means that decisions are taken to the extent that they are actually owned by the partners concerned - be they from the EU or from the Southern Mediterranean countries.

There are risks in this policy, yet also opportunities. Some decisions will be "owned" by all partners. More often than not, though, what is going to happen is that decisions will be owned by different groupings of countries. By means of what is called "reinforced cooperation" in the EU institutional jargon, these groupings will have the opportunity to advance together in fields from which others have opted out. The differentiation envisaged by the ENP will be key to making the EMP work more effectively and increasing its political significance.

In conclusion, the same instrument can or cannot work. It can work more or less effectively according to the strategic perspective in which it is employed. The kind of instruments taken into consideration above look more effective in the EU cooperative

than in the U.S. realist perspective. In a cooperative perspective, they are bound to have a stronger effect of integration and socialization.

#### **5. Transatlantic cooperation: narrow margins**

The EU and U.S. policy of long-term governance with respect to the Mediterranean and the Middle East are very similar as far as concepts and instruments are concerned, yet are bound to work in very different ways because the concepts and instruments are framed by very different strategic perspectives. Moreover, the instruments at hand look more consistent with cooperative than realist strategies. In fact, in a cooperative framework, the available instruments look bound to evolve towards reinforcing joint action and allowing for effective governance.

The chances for synergy between U.S. and European policies are contingent on changes in the respective underlying strategies. If the EU strategy became more realist, there could be stronger transatlantic cooperation and vice versa. At the same time, significant shifts in strategies are not likely. The second Bush administration does not look bent on changing the concepts and goals used by the first one. By the same token, it is unlikely that the EU will change its approach. EU divisions today over the Middle East allow for neither a shift towards a more realist European strategy nor a strengthening of the present cooperative strategy. All the EU will be able to do is strengthen its cooperative strategy within the limits of the EMP. It will not however be able to enlarge (extend ???) its policies towards the Greater Middle East nor will it be willing to cooperate strongly there within the framework of the US-led Partnership for Progress and a Common Future.

One cannot rule out the possibility that there will be shifts and changes on key political questions, such as Middle East regional security, the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab conflicts or WMD. Any such change would strongly affect strategies demanding their adaptation to the new situation. For example, higher U.S. priority for a decent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could contribute to narrowing the transatlantic gap and allowing for more U.S.-EU cooperation in democracy promotion and long-term regional governance.

As a matter of fact, EU-U.S. cooperation in promoting democracy and regional governance can only be set in motion by changes in strategies and concepts. But even if concepts and strategic perspectives remained unchanged, the transatlantic partners should not overlook that differences could be smoothed out by attempting to cooperate on policies and the way they are implemented. Without prejudice to the respective political finalities and aspirations, such cooperation could be set in motion and might, at the end of the day, contribute to narrowing the conceptual and political gaps in transatlantic relations with respect to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. This would be beneficial to cooperation between transatlantic allies as well as between the latter and the Middle East and North Africa.