

JOURNEY TO BRUSSELS



A Report and Policy Recommendations

by

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May 2002

Purpose

The National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) was founded in 1974 by Professors Hans J. Morgenthau and George D. Schwab and others to serve as a nonprofit, independent foreign policy think tank to help shape U.S. foreign policy. Among members are experts from the worlds of diplomacy and academia and leaders from business and the professions.

The purpose of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy is to identify and articulate American foreign policy interests from a nonpartisan perspective within the framework of political realism. American foreign policy interests include:

preserving and strengthening national security

supporting countries committed to the values and the practice of political, cultural, and religious pluralism

improving U.S. relations with the developed and developing worlds

advancing human rights

encouraging realistic arms-control agreements

curbing the proliferation of nuclear and other unconventional weapons

promoting an open and global economy.

A distinguishing activity of the NCAFP is the publication of firm, reasoned positions designed to help formulate U.S. foreign policy. When, after study and discussion, the Committee or one of its study groups reaches a consensus on an aspect of foreign policy that affects American national interests, the NCAFP makes that judgment known to the administration, Congress, the media, and the general public.



Three members of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) conducted a fact-finding mission to the European Union (EU) from May 14 to May 17, 2002. The group consisted of George D. Schwab (president of the NCAFP), Bernard E. Brown (political science, CUNY Graduate School, and director of the NCAFP project on transatlantic relations), and Michael Curtis (political science, Rutgers University, and member of the NCAFP Executive Committee). Before departing for Brussels, the fact-finding group consulted, among others, with Ambassador Nancy Soderberg (member of the NCAFP Advisory Board, former member of the National Security Council, currently vice president for multilateral affairs, International Crisis Group). The main purpose of the mission was to present to five distinguished European researchers a National Committee proposal for launching a series of roundtables on reinventing the transatlantic partnership. With the assistance of Ambassador John B. Richardson, head of the European Commission's delegation to the United Nations in New York, and George Cunningham, director of the delegation's Public Affairs Office, the NCAFP mission met individually with six high-level officials of the European Union. The group also held discussions with the U.S. ambassador to the European Union and three members of his staff and with the U.S. and Canadian ambassadors to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), also based in Brussels.

In order to encourage a frank exchange of views, some of our respondents asked that they not be quoted or identified. We are therefore not citing anyone in this report. The individuals we met are listed alphabetically: Matthew Baldwin, Ambassador Nicholas Burns, Anthony Cary, Jim Cloos, Steven Everts, Jon Greenwald, Eric Hayes, Annette Heuser, William Hopkinson, Julian Lindley-French, Maria McLoughlin, Ambassador Rockwell Schnabel, Stefano Silvestri, Alistair Stewart, Lawrence D. Wohlers, Ambassador David Wright.

The Transatlantic Link

The transatlantic link is by far the most important economic and politico-military relationship in the world. The 15 countries that make up the European Union represent about one-fourth (and the United States represents about one-fourth) of the global economy. Including Canada and with the coming enlargement of

the EU, the transatlantic partnership will account for perhaps two-thirds of the global economy (to which may be added European nations that are not members of the EU). The North American and European economies are becoming increasingly intertwined, if not integrated. The volume of trade and the flow of capital between the two sides of the Atlantic are immense; massive investments have been made by Americans in the European economy and by Europeans in the American economy; and multinational firms are operating more and more through subsidiaries on both continents. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (the United States, Canada, and 17 European nations) is a powerful politico-military alliance. The transatlantic partnership is the central axis of democracy and the rule of law in the world. If the United States and Europe stand together, the chances of resolving international issues will be greatly increased; if the United States and Europe drift apart, the consequences for both sides will be negative and possibly disastrous. Therefore, it is altogether appropriate that the National Committee follow closely developments within the transatlantic community, encourage dialogue between Americans and Europeans on common problems, and make recommendations for strengthening the transatlantic partnership.

The State of Transatlantic Relations

As expected, the NCAFP fact-finding mission found a range of attitudes among its interlocutors concerning the state of transatlantic relations. Almost everyone agrees that there are serious differences between the American and European governments. Some believe that the two continents are drifting apart and make dire predictions (including the breakup of NATO) about the future. One member of the U.S. mission to the European Union spoke of a “marriage going sour”; the two sides are bickering even over trivial issues and saying such terrible things that divorce might seem preferable to continued cohabitation. Most of our interlocutors, however, are relatively optimistic about the future, arguing that shared interests and values are more important than differences over current issues.

Curiously, the most Eurocentric views we heard were expressed by two long-term American observers of the European Union, who perhaps thought they needed to open our eyes to recent developments. The increasing integration of Europe is a revolutionary event, said our first observer, and Americans must

understand and adjust to this new situation. Europeans believe that they are creating one of the most competitive economies in the world, and they may well succeed. Having a common currency in their pockets is giving Europeans increased confidence and a sense of power. They are proud of their accomplishments not only in creating a unified economy and currency but also in retaining what they believe is a distinctive and superior culture and polity. They are now emphasizing their differences with what they take to be the American model and believe that in every respect their own model is better. In their view, European society—with greater provision for a social safety net, more social solidarity, universal health care, and more egalitarianism (in the sense of reduced disparities between high and lower income groups)—is more humane. They also believe that the European Union is an example of multilateralism that could well be emulated by other regions and indeed by the world community. For some Europeans, capital punishment is an all-consuming issue and a key example of the greater concern for human life and dignity that prevails in Europe. By contrast, they see American society and culture as materialistic, violent, depraved, and racist and American foreign policy as egotistic unilateralism (expressed by the rejection of treaties and the refusal to accept constraints on its conduct).

The Europeans have come a long way in the past 50 years, a second American observer reminded us, and they certainly have a long way to go. But they have achieved economic unification and a common currency and, he assured us with more confidence than that expressed by any of the Europeans we saw, they will go on to create a common and effective foreign policy. It is in the American interest to support this evolution and to help Europeans become an equal partner (which is not now the case). Europe will then be able to assume a greater share of responsibility for global problems. Because on just about every issue the United States and Europe share basic values, the common cause will be furthered. It also will represent progress because the European position on global problems (from the campaign against terror, the Middle East, the Balkans, to the promotion of durable and balanced economic development in the third world) tends to be less militaristic and more sensible than the American position. In this view, U.S. policy relies too much on NATO as its channel of influence. The real game in the town of Brussels is the EU (which has political, economic, and social as well as military dimensions) and not NATO (a purely military alliance). The long-term security of Europe will be achieved through the EC, and not

through NATO. In this EU-centric view, the sooner power shifts away from the United States and toward Europe, the better off everyone will be, including a now overburdened, overarmed, and hegemonic United States.

The NCAFP fact-finding mission also met collectively with a half-dozen European intellectuals who reflected a resurgent confidence, tempered with a small dose of realism, in European institutions. They emphasized the contrast between American and European policymakers, all to the advantage of the latter. In their view, U.S. policy is “simplistic” (a favorite term); it views the world almost exclusively through the military prism. Because the United States is the dominant military power, it seeks to reduce complex political problems to the one dimension in which it can bring to bear its superior force. Therefore, it tends to act unilaterally and attacks the symptoms of problems rather than their underlying causes. For example, Americans talk of a “war against terrorism” to be fought exclusively by military means. Europeans believe that terrorism is a vastly overrated problem. Al Qaeda may do damage, but it is not capable of defeating the United States. Europeans have been living with terror for a long time and believe they can cope with the military challenge relatively easily. Also, the EU has placed its greatest emphasis on crisis prevention and the use of economic aid as an incentive in creating stability. As one of our European colleagues put it, the United States aims to kill the alligators, whereas the Europeans want to drain the swamp. The United States deals only with immediate or short-term problems; Europeans have the long view. The structures of the EU, which are based on the need to secure intergovernmental agreement, guarantee that policy will be multilateral and therefore has inherent safeguards.

Of all the European Union officials with whom we met, only one expressed views that might be termed “Euro-idealist” (that is, assumed that the EU will actually create a unified and effective foreign and security policy). This respondent complained about the “unilateral drift” of U.S. policy, scoffed at “simplistic” U.S. approaches to complex problems, and was especially concerned about three specific problems: the Middle East, terrorism, and Iraq. The official hastened to add, however, that U.S. and EU objectives are similar; the disagreement is over means. Specifically, it was suggested that the United States should pressure the Israelis to support UN resolutions. “We don’t believe that Sharon’s policies,” said this official, “will lead to peace.” In general, the emphasis

was placed on looking for fundamental causes and then using economic aid to get at the sources of conflict.

Cracks in the Euro-idealist structure were revealed quickly, beginning with a clarification of remarks on Middle East policy, during our discussion with this EU official. We asked what exactly was meant by “Europe” as an alternative to the United States in formulating policy for the Middle East. For example, in dealing with the critical question of the right of refugees to return, there are notable differences among the French, German, British, and Dutch and most other foreign ministries. Is there, in fact, any “common” European policy concerning the right of return, apart from a vague criticism of the American position? The kinds of reforms necessary to make the Palestinian Authority a viable negotiating partner? The exact borders of both states? Is the EU prepared to put troops on the ground in order to assure stability and to prevent further terror attacks? Our EU official beat a hasty retreat, admitting readily that there was no European consensus on the tough issues.

All EU officials concerned with foreign policy with whom we met were frank and forthcoming on the difficulties involved in creating a meaningful and substantive common foreign and security policy. The basic difficulty is that foreign policy is altogether different from fixing the price of agricultural goods. The member states have agreed to deal with a range of economic and social issues through community institutions (the so-called first pillar), whereby the Commission is authorized to make proposals, which are then formally approved, modified, or rejected by member states (through the Council) and to a lesser extent by the European Parliament. But foreign and security policy remains the prerogative of the member states, requiring a consensus. It will be up to the Convention on the Future of the Union, now in session in Brussels, to come up with recommendations for genuine change. Although the Commission and the Parliament wish to move foreign and security policy into the communitarian area, there is little likelihood that member states will agree to do so. The Union is almost certainly going to remain a hybrid structure, with the member states as the source of legitimacy for the entire system and the ultimate authorities in foreign and security policy.

The present (and first) high representative for the common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, has carved out an important role for himself. He and his office are increasingly active

in mediation efforts in the Middle East and especially in using financial aid and economic incentives in bringing about greater stability in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. But Solana himself has been the first to point out that foreign policy guidelines from the Council are too vague for navigating in stormy seas. Europe cannot hope to match the United States in military power for structural reasons and because of an unwillingness to increase spending on the military in order to catch up. The resolve to create an autonomous EU military force, registered first at St. Malo in December 1998 by Prime Minister Blair and President Chirac and approved by the entire EU in subsequent conferences, is an admission that “soft” power is not enough and that to be effective, diplomacy must sometimes be backed by force. To put it more cynically perhaps, why should Europeans spend more on their military when they are in effect getting a “free ride” through the protection offered by NATO? Europe is emphasizing crisis management because it can thus bring to bear its only asset, namely, economic power.

We came away from our talks with EU officials involved in formulating foreign policy with a sense that Europeans are deeply affected by the contrast between their success in forging economic unity and their relative and perhaps inescapable failure to create unity in foreign and security policy. President Chirac has insisted that Europe is and will remain a “federation of nation-states” (*“une fédération des états-nations”*), and most other European leaders agree that the European Union will not become a state, much less a superstate or a superpower. Each member state is using the Union, as it does all other multilateral institutions, to further its own interests. Political institutions cannot exist in a vacuum; they must be solidly based on a community and reflect a sense of common values and common identity. The sense of European nationhood today is too limited to sustain a viable state, and with a doubling of membership in the offing, such a Euro-national identity is even less likely to materialize. In our view, the frustration and feelings of powerlessness that this engenders are the forces behind the anti-American rhetoric—bordering, in some cases, on rage—of many Europeans.

It becomes necessary to portray the United States as militaristic and indifferent to the profound causes of conflict because otherwise there would be no role for the EU to play. But the rhetoric is excessive on its face. First, the Europeans have set for themselves the goal of creating an autonomous armed force, which means that in fact they accept the need to

project military power when appropriate. Second, to assume that the U.S. State Department and the rest of the vast federal bureaucracy is indifferent to crisis prevention and to the need to deal with the sources of conflict borders on the absurd. The ongoing debate within the U.S. government, universities, and think tanks concerning the fundamental causes of conflict is at least as lively (if not more so because of greater responsibilities) than similar debate within the EU. To claim that only Europeans are interested in “draining the swamp” and to assert even that they know how to do so is to reason in stereotypes. Similarly, contrasts between American and European models of society, culture, and polity that ascribe all defects to one side and all advantages to the other are more examples of stereotypes (if not cartoons). Such comparisons are especially inappropriate at a time when all industrial societies are experimenting with similar policies in dealing with problems of immigration, crime, welfare reform, economic development, governance of financial markets, and utilization of market mechanisms to achieve larger social objectives.

The NCAFP mission met with several EU officials responsible for transatlantic trade. We expected to encounter a storm of criticism concerning recent U.S. decisions to impose tariffs on steel and to increase agricultural subsidies greatly. To our surprise, our interlocutors were taking those issues in stride. They of course expressed concern, but all chose to emphasize that disputes had been successfully managed in the past and that only about 2 percent of transatlantic trade is a matter of dispute. Our interlocutors were intent on defending European interests but also were aware that trade issues are complex and require vigorous negotiation. One EU official pointed out that half of transatlantic trade is between agencies or branches of the same companies. Other officials readily agreed that domestic pressures are a problem on both sides of the Atlantic and are an inevitable feature of democratic political processes. The real problem is that the United States and the EU together cannot any longer run the global economy by themselves. They need to take into consideration current realities and negotiate with other industrial as well as third-world nations.

The Union and the Alliance

The resolve of the EU to create an autonomous military force inevitably will create a problem for NATO. How to integrate this

force, to the extent that it materializes, into existing command structures poses a thorny problem. European spokesmen have said that the European force is intended to strengthen, not replace, NATO. Many Europeans were also disappointed when the United States decided to conduct military operations in response to the September 11th attacks outside of NATO command structures. Some Europeans argued that NATO was among the first casualties of the war against terror.

The NCAFP group was impressed during its visit to NATO by that organization's remarkable ability to adapt to new circumstances. It continues to play a crucial role as a political as well as a military link between North America and Europe. It was never the geopolitical function of NATO to enable Europe to defend the United States from an external threat. In any event, NATO ceased to be a defensive alliance against a massive attack when the Soviet Union collapsed. Its major function, as defined by the New Strategic Concept in 1990, is to help create conditions for democratic stability and economic development throughout Eastern and Southern Europe. It would have been inappropriate for the United States to use NATO as its military instrument after September 11th because major forces had to be mobilized and then brought to bear outside the NATO area. It took almost a month for the North Atlantic Council to decide, after a confidential briefing by a U.S. official in charge of counterterrorism, that in fact the United States had been attacked by an external force. Four NATO members—Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—immediately offered forces to fight alongside those of the United States. NATO proved invaluable in permitting allies to cooperate, especially through the Partnership for Peace, and in coordinating intelligence activities concerning international terrorism. Sixteen NATO allies now have forces serving in Afghanistan, even though force planning is done through Central Command in Florida rather than through SHAPE. More important, NATO is now preparing for a “robust” enlargement at the demand of candidate states. NATO headquarters is bustling with activity, as the organization prepares for the next enlargement. As one of the NATO ambassadors told us, NATO membership is considered crucial by new members because it changes their lives. It brings them a sense of security and triggers a flow of capital, investment, and trade. Far from dying as a result of the September 11th attack, this ambassador continued, NATO is thriving. The danger posed by an autonomous EU force, he observed, is not that it will be too strong but that it will fail.

Conclusions

Americans and Europeans are each other's major allies in the world. When they bicker and fall out, it becomes more difficult for them to manage global problems. Each side has a vested interest in maintaining a healthy transatlantic partnership. In some respects there is a similarity between the structures of the transatlantic partnership and those of the European Union. In each case, the flow of goods, capital, and people across national boundaries has greatly increased. The European economy is now virtually integrated and regulated from Brussels. The transatlantic economy is becoming increasingly integrated through free trade and market forces plus some regulatory agreements. Regarding foreign and security policy, there is a large volume of regular contact and discussion: in the EU through frequent meetings of foreign and defense ministers and their representatives on ministerial committees, along with regular summit meetings of heads of state and government; in the transatlantic community through weekly meetings of the permanent representatives of the member states of NATO in the North Atlantic Council and summit meetings of foreign ministers and heads of government. In both the EU and NATO, the ultimate source of power regarding foreign and security policy is in the member states, and the basic operating principle is that of consensus. We may therefore distinguish usefully between economic and politico-military issues. In both systems (EU and transatlantic relations), the closer and more regular the contacts, the greater is the possibility of defining and agreeing on common interests. Therefore, we are led to make two preliminary recommendations that will reinforce the transatlantic partnership.

1. *Develop a Stronger U.S. Mission to the EU.*

The United States traditionally had a strong mission to the European Union, which was separate from its mission to NATO. Members of the mission complain, however, that they are frequently compelled to explain and defend U.S. policy on the basis of inadequate information and support. In recent years they have had an especially rough time in dealing with European charges that the United States is going it alone ("unilateralism") and is disregarding the interests of its European allies. The biggest headache, in addition to the constant hammering they take on the issue of capital

punishment, relates to American opposition to three recent treaties: the Ottawa Convention banning land mines, the Kyoto Convention on greenhouse emissions, and the Rome Treaty establishing an International Criminal Court. The NCAFP recognizes that opinion within the United States is divided on all these issues. But it is inexcusable to leave the impression that the United States is adopting positions that are arbitrary. Whatever the nature of the domestic debate, it is important to provide other nations, particularly allies, with explanations of official decisions. We recommend that the U.S. mission to the EU be given full support by the State Department and that a greater effort be made to explain American policies to European journalists, members of the European Parliament, and officials of the European Union. The goal is to make them as aware of our interests as we are of theirs.

2. *Increase Regular and Direct Contacts with EU Officials.*

The major effort by the United States in foreign policy and security matters in Europe must remain bilateral contacts with European states, including those not members of the EU. Along with this traditional bilateral diplomacy, the major channel for transatlantic interaction will remain NATO. We noted that differences in attitudes toward the United States among officials of the EU vary with the degree and amount of direct and regular contact with policymakers. The excellent working relationship that has developed between European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick has led to increased respect on both sides and a better atmosphere for productive negotiations. Disputes continue and doubtless always will, but both sides are negotiating with a better understanding of each other's domestic problems.

Members of the staff of the European Union's high representative for the common foreign and security policy who have had an opportunity to meet with the U.S. secretary of state, secretary of defense, and national security adviser have come away with a greater appreciation of U.S. policies. We believe it would be a good investment to hold more frequent regular meetings between top-level U.S. foreign and defense officials and representatives and counterparts in the European Union. No new structures are needed. The goal

of such meetings should not be the elaboration of a common transatlantic policy, which is unrealistic, but the creation of a heightened understanding on both sides of the Atlantic of national and common interests at stake. There would be fewer mutual recriminations (involving charges of American “unilateralism” or Europeans having “the vapors”) and a healthier climate of opinion.

The NCAFP fact-finding group also recommends that the National Committee make its own contribution to the task of strengthening the transatlantic partnership. To that end, it recommends that the National Committee launch a series of roundtable discussions among American and European scholars and decision makers to explore outstanding issues systematically and in depth. Articles by participants will be published regularly in the National Committee’s journal, *American Foreign Policy Interests*. On the basis of the roundtable discussions, the National Committee will continue its practice of writing reports and making recommendations to the United States and other involved governments.

NCAFP Policy Recommendations: A Summary

1. Maintain the Transatlantic Link.

After a half-century of cooperation on security and political matters through NATO and almost a decade of the “new transatlantic dialogue,” there is a tendency in both the United States and Europe to take the transatlantic community for granted. This is a grave error. Maintaining the transatlantic link is a vital necessity that requires constant attention and effort.

2. Increase Consultation Among Allies.

- a. States remain the power centers in Europe. Bilateral diplomacy is the major channel of communication between the United States and its allies and must not be neglected.
- b. A strong U.S. commitment to NATO is essential if it is to remain another major channel of consultation among allies.
- c. Reinforce the U.S. mission to the European Union. A

greater effort should be made to support the mission and enable its staff to explain U.S. policies and interests to the European public, members of the European Parliament, and officials of the European Union.

- d. Meetings at the highest level between policymakers of the United States and the European Union have proved productive. Those attending should include the U.S. national security adviser; the secretaries of state, defense, and treasury and their EU counterparts (notably, the high representative of the common foreign and security policy and the European commissioner for external affairs); and key staff members on both sides. These meetings should continue to be held on a regular basis.

3. *Involve Civil Society in the Policy Process.*

Cultural and educational exchanges constitute the underpinning of transatlantic institutions and must be further encouraged. The NCAFP intends to make its own contribution by launching a series of roundtables, with the participation of American and European researchers and decision makers, around the theme, “Reinventing the Transatlantic Partnership.”



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