Vietnam, 9/11, Europe and the Unilateralist Temptation in U.S. Foreign Policy

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This essay intends to put into a historical perspective the events which profoundly changed the evolution of international relations in the first years of the XXI century. It searches for a convincing interpretative correlation between the United States' foreign policy turn toward its European allies at the end of the Sixties, when Richard Nixon replaced Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House, and the unilateralist temptation, which characterized the policies of the George W. Bush administration, in particular since the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

In the historical section the analysis is based on documents, while contributions from periodicals and books partly stimulated the theoretical elaboration. Initially, the focus is on the American government's critical decision to re-shape the Middle East with the war against Iraq in spring 2003: a decision that also divided the front of both the fifteen EU member states and the ten candidate countries which, within a few months, would compose the significantly enlarged European Union. Then, a set of relevant diplomatic documents is used to play on the analogy between the major international events of that period and those of the end of the Sixties and the beginning of the Seventies. The sources allow to re-examine transatlantic relations in the final two years of the

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Johnson administration and support the proposition that the attitude of the European allies toward the Vietnam drama deeply influenced the Nixon administration's subsequent decisions on the United States' global stance and, particularly, the U.S.-EC relationship. Afterwards, the absence of a European role in shaping the fundamental decisions on the re-organization of the international system after the Cold War is criticized, with reference to some significant contributions published on the American and the Italian press five years ago. Finally, the concept of a new European 'empire', anchored to a specific definition, is proposed as an essential element in the multipolar equilibrium of the twenty-first century.

1. The U.S. and world security

When the war against Iraq broke out in spring 2003, a phase of transition in the rules of the international system similar, in some ways, to the periods 1918-20 and 1942-45 seemed to take shape. It was not a generalized crisis, as in those years, but some elements nevertheless pointed to the fact that, especially after 9/11, the relationship between the dynamics of American foreign policy and the requirements of collective security was being decisively transformed.[1]

Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor to President Bush, clearly outlined the American vision in March:

"The coalition that is currently engaged in the hard, dangerous work to disarm Iraq is strong, broad and diverse. Nearly 50 nations are committed to ridding Saddam Hussein's regime of all its deadly, destructive and illegal weapons. (…) The combined population of coalition countries is approximately 1.23 billion people, with a combined gross domestic product of approximately $22 trillion. These countries are from every continent on the globe, representing every major race, religion, and ethnicity in the world. Diverse as this coalition is, each

[1] For contributions on the subject, see, for example, Melvyn P. Leffler, "9/11 and American Foreign Policy", *Diplomatic History*, vol. 29, no. 3 (June 2005), pp. 395-413; more recently, P. Edward Haley, *Stragies of Dominance. The Misdirection of U.S. Foreign Policy*, Washington (D.C.) and Baltimore, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006; Robert S. Litwak, *Regime Change. U.S. Strategy through the Prism of 9/11*, ibid., 2007.

member shares a common goal. We seek nothing less than safety for our people".[2]

If the elimination of the Iraqi regime was the contingent occasion for the creation of the coalition, it seemed evident that the search for security against the transnational threat of terrorism would constitute the proper and long-lasting bond of that particular alliance of countries, of which Rice stressed the demographic strength, the wealth and the remarkable representativeness in ethnic and religious terms. The members of the coalition, she added, "are contributing different personnel, services and materials, according to their means and expertise. (…) Every instance of support, from every country – no matter how small or large – is helping to win this war, and every one is valued".

In those days, the United States had undisputed leadership within the new coalition of countries which had rapidly and effectively resulted from its foreign policy choices, although they had been pursued by bypassing and violating the U.N. Charter. That effectiveness and that promptness sharply contrasted with the slowness and eventual failure of the American diplomatic action in trying to obtain consensus, even if based on the slightest majority, on a resolution at the Security Council, which would have legitimized the military operations. But there is more:

"Like the end of the Cold War, and the end of World War II – continued Rice – September 11 was one of the relatively rare earthquakes that cause lasting tectonic shifts in international politics. Long established alliances and venerable institutions are being tested. The international community can rise to this challenge, as it has risen to similar challenges in the past. The coalition currently assembled to disarm Iraq shows the way".

The paradigmatic importance of the coalition of powers involved in the clash with Iraq, in terms of the reorganization of collective security in the years to come, was more than obvious. In this, Rice's conclusion was quite explicit:

"Together, we are determined to do all we can to prevent Saddam Hussein, or terrorists with his weapons, from repeating September 11 on a vaster scale. *By*

[2] Condoleezza Rice, "Rice Says Coalition Members Committed to Disarming Iraq", *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 March 2003 (see also usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2004/Feb/11-759570.html).

continuing to work together – and by working to enlist as many countries as possible – we can help prevent similar or worse disasters from arising from another source at another time".[3]

Those words seemed to convey the suggestion, later partly put aside because of the unexpected developments of the war, that a new organization, more or less formalized in its composition and scope, but rapid and flexible in its decision-making process, could better manage present and future threats to collective security. Within it, the United States would exercise the influence and leadership which had been absent in the League of Nations, that had progressively eroded in the United Nations and had been reconfirmed, in time, within regional organizations such as NATO.

The League of Nations, strongly sponsored by President Woodrow Wilson, but actually created without the American participation because of the opposition of the U.S. Senate, did not prevent, and much less manage, the major international crises of the Twenties and Thirties. Although it formally survived the Second World War, it was dissolved in April 1946, when the United Nations – also strongly supported by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and, this time, with U.S. full participation – was already operational. The founding members of the new 'club' obviously reserved for themselves the right to progressively admit new candidates according to specific regulations.

If the coalition built by Washington for the regime change in Baghdad had the implicit effect of further eroding the fundamental role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and collective security, as had happened for the League of Nations, then it may be argued that in the postwar period, according to American initial expectations, only the tasks precisely and limitedly related to economic cooperation, development, human rights – and other topics dealt with, after 1945, directly or through specialized agencies – would be left to the organization, already suffering an identity crisis. In substance, a role limitation – or a downgrade? Certainly, an acknowledgement of the controversial assessment of U.N. activities since the end of the Cold War.

[3] Ibid. (italics added).

In fact, in the last decade of the twentieth century, after closing a long parenthesis of resource-wasting confrontation with Moscow, the United States considered the possibility of using the United Nations functionally in relation to its global power project, trying to insert its foreign policy and security choices within the framework and the operational practices of the organization. However, as a consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but also due to theories elaborated and partly adopted already in the 1990s, influential sectors of the American administration and public opinion started to consider that new options for the protection of collective security could be more effective, therefore once again modifying – as in the past – Washington's perception of the intersection between national interests and the assumption of global responsibilities.

2. The American global design, the European allies and the Vietnam War

The American design gradually developed during the twentieth century, centering around two basic concepts: the creation of a generalized consensus on the founding values of U.S. civilization and the structuring of the international order according to its ideal and practical foreign policy goals. Washington thus encouraged through the years, with strategic coherence but with tactical wavering, notions of international organization functional to that design, with a certain degree of flexibility relating to the options of other international actors.

Since World War II, with a mix of *realpolitik* and political idealism (its composition varying in time), the Democratic and Republican administrations embraced and sustained, in general, the concept of European integration and, in particular, the revolutionary project of creating a common European defense, which had emerged in the 1950s during the most troubled phase of the Cold War.

However, between the second half of the Sixties and the first half of the Seventies, the Vietnam War ended the American willingness and 'patience' *vis-à-vis* the European allies and their reluctance to contribute substantially to the defense of the collective security interests of the West. Besides its specific importance as a regional and localized conflict, the Vietnam War became one of the most

relevant sources of transatlantic tension. Moreover, it compounded a long series of divergences in the respective perceptions and policies for the management of global affairs, in the economic and in the security field.

The Americans were convinced that the solution of the conflict in South-East Asia was an important test of the European willingness to accept their burden of costs and responsibilities within an interdependent Atlantic system; a system capable of successfully reacting to Moscow's challenges and to the model of development proposed by the Soviet government and its allies. While experiencing their national tragedy in Vietnam, the Americans felt isolated and disillusioned, and thus tempted, during the Nixon, Ford and Kissinger years, to conduct a much less multilateral and less 'Atlantic' foreign policy – therefore, much more unilateral compared to the past – in order to stabilize the world order in terms of *pax americana*.

In the last years of the Johnson administration, the unilateral attractive and insidious temptation was summarized in an unspoken question: what really prevented Washington from acting globally as it had done, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in Latin America, an area which the U.S. was inclined to consider an international sub-system where its foreign policy could be projected and developed without having to consult with other global actors? To sum up: why, in the Seventies, apart from the formal aspects, consult the European allies? Why not play the American cards according to a new, more open and creative order of priorities in which Western Europe should be considered just as a region among many others? Why did the European allies have to be consulted as fundamental interlocutors in the context of the relationship with the Soviet Union, or China, and in the competition between opposing models of development?[4]

[4] See some interesting observations on U.S. unilateralism in Robert J. Lieber (ed.), *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the Twenty-First Century*, Upper Saddle River (N.J.), Prentice Hall, 2002; David M. Malone and Yuen Foong Khong (eds), *Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy. International Perspectives*, Boulder (Colo.) – London, Lynne Rienner, 2003; Thomas M. Kane, *Theoretical Roots of US Foreign Policy: Machiavelli and American Unilateralism*, London – New York, Routledge, 2006; Sergio Fabbrini (ed.), *The United States Contested. American Unilateralism and European Discontent*, London – New York, Routledge, 2006.

The path toward that temptation opened, in particular, after 1966. That year, the American escalation in Vietnam reached its peak in parallel with the administration's political efforts, on the domestic front, in support of its military operations in South-East Asia. At the same time, decisive choices in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict were made. All this, while the Atlantic Alliance was undergoing the repercussions of General Charles de Gaulle's decisions. In the period 1966-68, two important factors contributed to trigger the transformation of Euro-American relations: the long-lasting inability of the Europeans to respond unanimously to collective problems that could be resolved only on a global scale; and the American administration's gradual, but conscious and deliberate, choice of modifying the areas in which U.S. national interests and worldwide commitments overlapped.

Already in 1965, the military developments in South-East Asia had posed the premises for a sharp intervention of Secretary of State Dean Rusk at the NATO summit, held in Paris on 14-16 December. The meeting prevented the showdown with the Allies. It took place only three months before De Gaulle's letter to Johnson, which would render explicit the latent crisis by marking the climax of the French disengagement from the Atlantic defensive system. Harland Cleveland, who in September had become the American Permanent Representative to NATO, underlined that Rusk's speech had contributed to trigger a deep transformation of the multilateral approach to the problem of the member countries' responsibilities, even with respect to issues not directly pertinent to NATO. Furthermore, according to Cleveland, in terms of American leadership, the most important result of the summit was the European allies' realization of Washington's intent of evaluating the importance of its bilateral relations with other countries on the basis of the degree of responsibility that each one was willing and ready to assume. From this perspective, Vietnam was just an example, while significant, of the global peacekeeping system that should have developed in the second half of the Sixties with the contribution of the entire Western 'club'. Certainly, Cleveland ironically commented, to convert the European allies from the status of rich protectorates to the role of active participants in the police operations for the maintenance of the

global order outside of the Old Continent, would be a long and difficult task.[5]

Ultimately, as in the case of the Korean war, the Europeans had to incorporate the concept that the United States, by keeping its promises in Asia, offered a guarantee even in relation to its Atlantic commitments. For the Americans the task was to convince the Europeans that a concrete help in South-East Asia would allow Washington to enhance the cohesion of the Alliance. Starting in the summer of 1965, the dual attack launched by de Gaulle against the Atlantic and EEC institutions reached its climax with the compromise reached by the Six in Luxembourg at the end of January 1966, and with the letter sent by the General to Johnson on March 7. In this way, one of the major obstacles on the path of the reciprocal adjustment of transatlantic perceptions emerged. In those days, Robert Komer, Special Assistant to the President, rightly noted that American public opinion would realize that the administration was in trouble not only in Asia, but also in Europe and that, actually, if Washington had not badly involved itself in Vietnam, the management of the relations with the European allies would have been simpler and more adequate.[6] This comment was linked to the awareness of the increasing interdependence between Asia and Europe, which had become an integral part of the American perception of the international system since the Thirties, further strengthened with the challenges of the Cold War.

If the French challenge had raised the level of disagreement on the fundamental issues of Euro-American relations, then the need for

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[5] *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers* (FRUS), *1964-68*, vol. 13, Washington (D.C.), U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995, doc. 118, tel. 3491, Cleveland to Department of State, 18 December 1965. See also the sources and the literature cit. in Massimiliano Guderzo, *La guerre du Vietnam et l'intégration européenne: deux questions globales pour l'administration Johnson*, in Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaïsse (eds), *La guerre du Vietnam et l'Europe (1963-1973)*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2003, pp. 33-47. Cf. Andreas W. Daum, Lloyd C. Gardner, Wilfried Mausbach (eds), *America, the Vietnam War, and the World: Comparative and International Perspectives*, Washington (D.C.) and New York, German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[6] Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (LBJL), National Security File (NSF), Files of Files of Robert W. Komer, box 1, "Chrono March 1-20, 1966", no. 116, memo, Komer to Johnson, 4 March 1966.

a strong signal from Washington, already hoped for in the past, became even more urgent: a signal that, together with the substantial measures aimed at transforming and restructuring the Alliance, would also provide a formal framework for the American objectives in Europe. In his October 7, 1966 speech, while after the French rupture the forced reshaping of NATO proceeded, Johnson cited all the key concepts at the basis of the Euro-American relationship. He updated the call for interdependence, launched by John F. Kennedy in Philadelphia on July 4, 1962, to the new challenges and the new perspectives emerged in the last four years. He spoke of the interdependence between America and Europe, of 'wind of change' in Eastern Europe, of the American commitment for the reunification of Germany and Europe. Also, Johnson defined Washington's three basic goals: the strengthening of NATO, the unification of Europe through the expansion and the strengthening of the European Community, and the dialogue with the East. On this last topic, he mentioned non proliferation and possible mutual and balanced force reductions in Central Europe. Eventually, he praised the United States as a peace-loving country, although more than determined to remain vigilant:[7] a significant remark, considering that the Vietnam War had projected on the international scene the image of a warmonger country guided by a leadership captive of itself and of its wrong choices.

When NATO Secretary General Manlio Brosio visited Washington in November, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Rusk and their aides did not conceal the heavy problems caused to the administration by the European partners' uncooperative attitude. While the American government was sustaining the burden of the defense of the free world in Vietnam, Congress and public opinion were more and more upset by the fact that the Allies were not assuming their share of responsibilities, not even within the Atlantic defense. The American officials stated that the European governments spoke with two different and contradicting voices: the Foreign and Defense ministers pushed for a high level of

[7] LBJL, NSF, Speech File, box 5, "President's Speech Editorial Writers, New York, European Speech, 10/7/66"; *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (PPP), *Lyndon B. Johnson*, *1966*, Washington (D.C.), U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967, vol. 2, pp. 1125-1130; FRUS, *1964-68*, vol. 13, doc. 211, "Editorial Note".

American military forces while, at the same time, the Finance ministers and the executives of the central banks insisted that Washington reduce its balance of payments deficit. It was evident that in the Alliance a more efficient relation between the politico-military and the monetary-financial issues was needed. This point is noteworthy, as around it would evolve the future of the Euro-American relations.

From Washington's point of view, linking the two spheres in a way that was functional to the global aims of U.S. foreign policy would in fact require the constant effort of gathering the Allies around American interests, intended and proposed as objective advantages for the West. In 1966, the exercise of American influence assumed multiple forms, and evidently emerged in the attempt of including and organizing around the concept of trilateralism with London and Bonn a whole series of military and financial issues. After the difficult NATO ministerial session in December, which allowed the American leadership to reinvigorate the political, military and technical aspects of the Alliance, to the point of overcoming the French break, this concept inspired, starting in February 1967, the attitude of the American delegation working on the "Harmel Study" on the future of the Atlantic Alliance, a study which had been proposed in November 1966 by the Belgian Foreign minister Pierre Harmel. Significantly, the Americans suggested to take into consideration not only European security issues, but also relevant problems outside the area of responsibility of the North Atlantic Treaty, such as the military situation in the Middle East and the food crisis in Asia.[8] Included in the works of the fourth sub-group, the issue connected to the American desire not to jeopardize the Allies' confidence in the U.S. commitment in Europe. At the same time, Washington sought to convince the Europeans that developments in regions outside of NATO were important for the overall choices of the organization. However, the Europeans feared a shift of the United States' strategic priorities to areas outside the Continent and, in particular, tried to avoid their involvement in the unpopular Vietnamese conflict. Moreover, according to the CIA analysts, the apprehension that Washington could be tempted to sacrifice European interests to obtain

[8] FRUS, *1964-68*, vol. 13, doc. 236, tel. circ. 135657, Rusk to Posts in the NATO Capitals, 11 February 1967.

Moscow's cooperation for the end of the war in Vietnam persisted in Europe.[9]

As John J. McCloy, U.S. Representative to the Trilateral Offset Negotiations with Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany, wrote in August to Walt W. Rostow, the President's Special Assistant, it was necessary to convince the Germans that, the Vietnamese tragedy and the domestic turmoil notwithstanding, the Americans were willing to seriously reflect on their relationship with Europe and were opting to ask Bonn for "symmetrical" willingness.[10] The term 'symmetrical' was a clear indication of the expectations toward Bonn, and toward all the other Western allies, which in 1967 increasingly mounted within Congress and large sectors of American public opinion. The often diverging actions and expectations of the Allies forced U.S. decision-makers to continuously adjust their policies, while the management of external crises, in particular in the Middle East and South East Asia, remained an extremely demanding task. In order to assess the situation, the National Security Council convened a meeting on May 3, specifically designed to thoroughly discuss European issues. For the occasion, the Department of State prepared a concise document, strongly criticized by Secretary of Treasury Henry Fowler for bypassing the crucial problems: how "to reach a rational financial accomodation" with the initiatives of the European Economic Community and how to deal with France's confrontational attitude, when in order to push the U.S. out of Europe, or to at least diminish its role, De Gaulle had been ready to exploit precisely the EEC. Vice President Hubert Humphrey noted that the Europeans had "rejected the world after the loss of their colonies" and now sought only détente. Thus, their egoism had to be challenged with the proposal to better and more actively participate in external responsibilities. Johnson complained that, the American efforts notwithstanding, the Allies still felt neglected by the United States, and again stressed that the most urgent

[9] LBJL, NSF, AF, NATO, General, box 36, vol. 5, no. 17, CIA Intelligence Memo no. 1110/67, "NATO Looks to the Future", 8 May 1967.
[10] LBJL, NSF, Agency File (AF), NATO, General, box 36, vol. 5, no. 8a, letter, McCloy to Rostow, 11 August 1967.

problem was to convince them to contribute more substantially and effectively NATO's defense.[11]

In the following months, the military course of the Vietnamese conflict contributed to change the American attitude toward the link between financial and security issues, in the context of the relationship with the European allies. The Tet offensive at the end of January 1968, and the assertive American response, were the turning points. On March 4, Johnson assembled the group of senior advisors on foreign policy to discuss General William Westmoreland's request for more troops – 200,000 men. Clark Clifford, just nominated Secretary of Defense after NcNamara's resignation, outlined the reasons for arguing against a favorable response. He suggested that the United States should look at the world scenario and consider whether Vietnam was not preventing the exercise of a global role in other areas where intervention was needed.[12] When, on March 31, Johnson announced the opening of the Vietnam peace negotiations, and his decision not to stand as a candidate for a second mandate, his choice met the consensus of the European allies: the NATO Permanent Representatives thoroughly discussed South-East Asian issues in a debate that Cleveland defined as the most relevant in the last two and half years. The United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, and later, possibly, other partners, would contribute to the definition of post-war security agreements and to economic development projects in South East Asia. According to Cleveland, Washington should try to transform that willingness into Europe's more general participation to the future of Asia, perhaps in the form of a consortium, which could assume the burden of guaranteeing security and development in the area at the end of hostilities.[13]

In the last months of Johnson's presidency, American diplomacy moved in that direction both on a multilateral level and within the

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[11] FRUS, *1964-68*, vol. 13, doc. 251, "Summary Notes of the 569th Meeting of the NSC", Smith, 3 May 1967.

[12] LBJL, Special Files, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, box 2, no. 76a, "Notes of the President's Meeting with Senior Foreign Policy Advisers", 4 March 1968, 5:33 p.m.

[13] LBJL, NSF, AF, NATO, General, box 37, vol. 6, no. 16 (also Memos to the President, Walt W. Rostow, box 32, vol. 70, no. 87), memo, Rostow to Johnson, 1 April 1968.

bilateral relations with the stronger allies. It progressively became clearer that the Americans were willing to favor the process of European integration not *ex abundantia cordis*, but within the limits of the intersection of their national interests, pursued with an enlightened view to the medium-long term, and the ambition to regain centrality and power in the international arena nourished by their partners in terms of common responsibilities on a worldwide basis. The Europeans were unable, however, to take the step toward significant cessions of sovereignty so to allow for the exercise of a collective influence, despite the recurrent concerns on the United States' commitment to Europe undertaken at the end of the Forties. From the European point of view, in fact, it was not difficult to imagine that Washington's attitude toward European integration could sooner or later abruptly change because of some "agonizing reappraisal" of American foreign policy.

Not coincidentally, in May 1968, few months before the return of a Republican to the White House with Nixon's election, a prominent German politician, Kurt Birrenbach, former advisor to the ex-Chancellor, Ludwig Erhard, referred precisely to those distressing words to convey to Eugene Rostow, then Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, his preoccupations. The impression was that the combination of the Vietnam War, the explosion of the racial unrests, and the mounting financial difficulties could induce the future administration to limit America's wide-ranging commitments. Rostow reassured him, while also suggesting that the European partners should help the new president better sustain the burden of global responsibilities. Birrenbach then replied shrewdly: this concept was quite clear in Bonn, but it was also evident, for the Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger in particular, that aiding Washington meant above all learning to exercise forms of independent leadership, without always unconditionally accepting the American positions. In fact, Kiesinger himself had given Birrenbach the responsibility to refer that the German federal government would not uniform its attitude, with yet stronger reason, to the expectations of the Elysée.[14]

[14] FRUS, *1964-68*, vol. 13, doc. 304, memo of conversation, H.S. Malin, 1 May 1968.

In summary, from 1964 to 1968, the United States did not neglect the relationship with the Europeans.[15] But it is also true that, in those years, the Americans did not see nor feel the European allies standing beside them during the Vietnam War. Gradually, the perception of an unavoidable aporia between the project, of the Kennedy and post-Kennedy years, of a two-pillar Atlantic community based on the sharing of the economic and security burdens, and the reluctant European approach to that project started to emerge. This, together with the Vietnamese problem, opened the way to pessimism, both within the Johnson administration and in significant sectors of American public opinion. After the turning point, marked by de Gaulle's dual assault against NATO and the structures of the European Communities in the 1965-66 period, from 1967 onward some sectors of the American administration (in particular, the Department of Treasury, while the Department of State maintained the previous positions longer), an increased number of influential voices within the economic and financial sectors, and in the media, started to underline the need of forcing the Europeans to contribute more evidently and substantially to the United States' 'global' effort for the defense of the West. And this contributed to a drastic modification of Euro-American relations in the years of détente.

3. The absence of Europe

One fundamental analogy between the events of that time and the recent ones, connected to the outbreak of the Iraqi war as a consequence of the American reaction to 9/11, lies in the tragic delay of Europe's assumption of effective global responsibilities after the catastrophic experience of the two World Wars.[16] In the

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[15] See Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe. In the Shadow of Vietnam*, Cambridge (Mass.) – London, Harvard University Press, 2003; and the less recent literature cit. in Massimiliano Guderzo, *Interesse nazionale e responsabilità globale: gli Stati Uniti, l'Alleanza atlantica e l'integrazione europea negli anni di Johnson, 1963-69*, Firenze, Aida, 2000.

[16] For further analogies, see the growing literature quoted in Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young (eds), *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam, or, How Not to Learn from the Past*, New York, New Press, 2007; on European reactions, esp. the essay

Nineties, the Europeans created the Union but, missing a historically unrepeatable occasion, constrained the common foreign and security policy within the limits of intergovernmental consultation, thus determining the absence of a 'real' and efficient European force in the key period of the rebuilding of the international order after the Cold War.[17]

Still today, Europe presents itself disunited when facing the main challenges, unable to originate a coherent and responsible alternative to the unilateralist temptations of the United States. The alternative is a common foreign and security policy *tout court,* which would by definition eliminate the possibility of another serious intra-European division, as the one following the Iraqi crisis: a crisis that Washington, with motivations even more controversial than in the past, thought once again advisable to present as 'global'. Actually, just before the outbreak of hostilities, five members of the Union (Italy, Denmark, Great Britain, Portugal, Spain) together with the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, sided with the American position; four members of the Union (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg) decided to present a 'European' alternative that, for obvious reasons, was not European; finally, six members of the Union (The Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Austria, Finland, Sweden), while in various ways expressing their opposition to the war without a U.N. mandate, assumed a wait and see attitude toward Washington, as did other candidate members.

The new phase of the international system opened by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, by the military operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan at the end of 2001, and by the war against Saddam Hussein's regime in March 2003, instead pointed to the

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by Wilfried Mausbach, *European Reactions to the American Wars in Vietnam*, ibid., pp. 59-87. Interesting suggestions also in David L. Anderson and John Ernst (eds), *The War that Never Ends. New Perspectives on the Vietnam War*, Lexington (Ky.), The University Press of Kentucky, 2007, esp. the contribution by Gary R. Hess, *With Friends like These: Waging War and Seeking "More Flags"*, ibid., pp. 55-74; and Kenneth B. Moss, *Undeclared War and the Future of U.S. Foreign Policy*, Washington (D.C.) and Baltimore, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

[17] See e.g. Simon J. Nuttall, *European Foreign Policy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 149 ff.; David P. Calleo, *Rethinking Europe's Future*, Princeton – Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 183-374.

necessity for the European Union to acquire a common and efficient decision making mechanism for its foreign and security policy. The intergovernmental procedures, as demonstrated by the absence of Europe in the crises of the Nineties, the ten year period in which the system should have, and could have, been restructured so to prevent the difficulties dramatically emerged in the new millennium, do not allow the EU members to effectively face the global challenges of this century.[18]

In this context, a comment expressed in February 2003 by Robert A. Levine appeared appropriate. According to him, the Europeans "whine about America's increasing penchant to go it alone militarily and in foreign policy, without worrying about the support of its allies. But Europe is simply not getting respect that it will not pay for". Levine's argument was almost brutal in its clarity:

"During the Cold War and since, the United States has complained that the countries of Europe spend much smaller portions of GDP for defense than the United States. They prefer their *crèches*. That is their right. It is America's right to ignore their minor military capabilities. Another price Europeans refuse to pay is in sovereignty. Even if each state were to increase its defense budget to the American standard, that would just fund independent regiments in a nonexistent army. An army needs a commander, not a consensus. That can happen only in a United States of Europe with no opt-out rights. It is not happening".

And Levine concluded: "If Europeans want to share power with Washington, they should understand that they must pay for the privilege".[19]

Clearly siding with these arguments, although from a different viewpoint, was the March 16 intervention of Guido Montani, Italian National Secretary of the European Federalist Movement:

"The Iraqi crisis evidently showed that the European Union, the ambitions of France and Germany notwithstanding, does not have a concrete peace plan for the Middle East, nor for the world, alternative to that of the United States. If

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[18] See Daniel Levy, Max Pensky and John Torpey (eds), *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe. Transatlantic Relations after the Iraq War*, London – New York, Verso, 2005; Tod Lindberg (ed.), *Beyond Paradise and Power. Europe, America and the Future of a Troubled Partnership*, New York – London, Routledge, 2005.

[19] Robert A. Levine, "In Europe, Too: What You Pay for Is What You Get", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 February 2003; cit. in Massimiliano Guderzo, "L'Europa che non c'è", *Affari Esteri*, vol. 35 (2003), no. 140, pp. 818-827.

the Union had established a federal government with an effective foreign policy, it would have possessed the adequate financial and military forces to propose a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, to lead the Israeli-Palestinian conflict toward peace, and to neutralize tyrannical regimes such as Saddam Hussein's. If, today, the United States and Europe, in a mood of increasing tension, appear overwhelmed by a crisis without rational solutions, the main responsibility falls on European shoulders and on those who defend an absurd national sovereignty".[20]

Antonio Cassese, an influential Italian jurist, first President of the International Criminal Court for Former Yugoslavia, wrote on the eve of the Iraq war:

"International 'rules' still exist, indicating what is permitted and what is prohibited. And it is inevitable to conclude that the Anglo-American decision on the war is contrary to both the U.N. Charter and to other international norms. To use of armed forces without a U.N. Security Council mandate, or not as a response to an ongoing aggression, is a blatant violation of law. (...) Certainly, it is not the first time that the great powers violate the U.N. Charter. This happened in many occasions, the most recent in Kosovo. But now the situation is much more serious. The split in the international community and the crisis of the U.N. are a dramatic step back. (…) The fact that institutions of the past [such as the ultimatum] were adopted is the bitter demonstration of the barbarization toward which the international community is moving, on one hand because of terrorism and ruthless dictators, and on the other because of the abnormal reaction of undisputedly democratic States, like the United States and the United Kingdom".[21]

While the renewed outbreak of conflict in the Middle East in summer 2006 and the ongoing war in Iraq induced more pessimism than optimism about the prospects of stabilization in the area, the auspice is that the post-war period will lead to an effective restructuring of the international system once again based on the principles of multilateralism which had shaped the post World War II period. Senator Barack Obama, who might be elected president of the U.S. in November 2008, delivered a promising speech under this respect at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington, D.C., on 15 July. After quoting George C. Marshall's words announcing his Plan at Harvard University in June 1947, he asserted:

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[20] Guido Montani, "Governo federale per rendere l'Europa più forte", *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 16 March 2003.
[21] Antonio Cassese, "Come si viola il diritto internazionale", *La Repubblica*, 19 March 2003.

"Now is the time for a new era of international cooperation. It's time for America and Europe to renew our common commitment to face down the threats of the 21st century just as we did the challenges of the 20th. (…) It's time to strengthen NATO by asking more of our allies, while always approaching them with the respect owed a partner. It's time to reform the United Nations (…). For eight years, we have paid the price for a foreign policy that lectures without listening; that divides us from one another – and from the world – instead of calling us to a common purpose".

Concluding that "now it falls to us to act with the same sense of purpose and pragmatism as an earlier generation, to join with friends and partners to lead the world anew",[22] Obama also gave a middle-distance response to the radically different stand taken by Vice President Richard Cheney against Senator John Kerry's concern for cooperation with allies to fight terrorism, when he declared at the Republican convention in New York City, in September 2004: "George W. Bush will never seek a permission slip to defend the American people".[23]

Although impaired by the gradual coagulation of the Cold War between 1941 and 1947, the principles of multilateralism nevertheless offered precious threads for the fabric of future global relations. It is indeed necessary to re-invent the United Nations, thus to make its actions effective and beneficial. Finally, within the U.N., Europe has to learn to speak with a single voice.[24] The elaboration of a European common foreign and security policy could have unfortunately appeared to many, during the Cold

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22 Barack Obama, "A New Strategy for a New World", www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obama_071508.pdf.

23 Adam Nagourney and Robin Toner, "Cheney and G.O.P. Mount Vigorous Assault on Kerry", *New York Times*, 2 September 2004; cit. thanks to Samuel F. Wells, Jr., *Centralizing Power: Domestic Considerations in the Shaping and Implementation of the War on Terror after 9/11*, in Pierre Melandri and Serge Ricard (eds), *La politique extérieure des Etats-Unis au XXe siècle: le poids des déterminants intérieurs*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007, pp. 339-360:354.

24 On this subject see e.g. *Aspenia*, no. 20 (2003), esp. the contribution by Timothy Garton Ash, pp. 322-329, and his considerations on Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World*, New York, Knopf, 2003. Cf. also Dana H. Allin, Gilles Andréani, Philippe Errera and Gary Samore, *Repairing the Damage. Possibilities and Limits of Transatlantic Consensus*, Abingdon, Oxon – New York, Routledge, 2007; David T. Armitage, Jr., *A Comparative Analysis of U.S. Policy Toward European Defense Autonomy. Enduring Dilemmas in Transatlantic Relations*, Lewiston (N.Y.), Edwin Mellen Press, 2008.

War years, as an internal and secondary factor of the struggle between competing development models. Today, it seems instead an indispensable element for the rise of the European Union members to the rank of responsible global players in a new multipolar system. A federalist solution would offer a concrete answer to the present crisis. Obviously, it ought to be a creative solution, not one built on the footsteps of formulas already adopted, but one adapted to the specific characters developed by the European construction in the last sixty years. Since the enactment procedure of the European Constitution has temporarily reached deadlock, time could be ripe for a new political momentum to invent a Europe capable of avoiding, with the craftiness of the reason and with the courage of constituent moments, the traps of the joint decision between the supranational institutions and the national State, still firmly attached to those non-residual competences that it does not wish to yield to them.[25]

Containment, a smart stopgap re-discovered by George Kennan in 1946 as a more elaborate form of the *cordon sanitaire* needed to encircle Moscow's challenge – thus forcing the postponement, but not the abandonment of Roosevelt's grand design, since *quod differtur non aufertur* – was obviously a double-edged sword: the United States recognized the Soviet Union as the deuteragonist, contained and was contained, with changing strategies and results, throughout the Cold War years. When the Eastern system collapsed, the last, desperate attempt by Mikhail Gorbachev notwithstanding, the European Union missed the historic occasion to assume the role played by that system *vis-à-vis* Washington, with a cooperative function, instead of an opposing or hostile one, while still a 'containing' one. The chance presents itself again today, in even more difficult circumstances, also because of almost twenty years of more or less clumsy attempts that weigh on European shoulders, unless one wishes to confuse form with substance, and the talk about peace and defense of values with the

[25] See for example Antonio Padoa-Schioppa, "È il tempo dell'Europa politica", *La Stampa*, 27 April 2003; Massimo Castaldo, "La volontà politica dell'Unione Europea", *Lettera diplomatica*, vol. 36, no. 902 (11 February 2004), pp. 1-4. Cf. Sergio Fabbrini (ed.), *Democracy and Federalism in the European Union and the United States. Exploring Post-National Governance*, London – New York, Routledge, 2005; Id., *Compound Democracies: Why the United States and Europe Are Becoming Similar*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.

build up of peace and the establishment of effective guarantees for the survival of those values.[26]

The last phases of enlargement, formally completed in 2004 and 2007, could determine a fatal dilution of the integrative and constructive process of the continent or, vice-versa, could induce a core of member countries to accelerate it: a calculated acceleration, not a reckless sprint forward, as the adversaries of the Union, the American Union in that case, might have perceived it in 1787. To strategically face the circumstances, the Europeans – governments and peoples – should be able to define the limits of a European 'national' interest within the context of their reflections on, and of their policies for, federalism, in its supranational and infranational dimensions, thus introducing in the political and cultural debate the goal of assuming truly global responsibilities: on a communitarian base, i.e. proto-federal.

Actually, not much has changed since the Kennedy's speech of 1962 for an Atlantic egalitarian interdependence:[27] a substantially

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[26] Interesting contributions on this subject in Geir Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration. The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1998; Kathleen Burk and Melvyn Stokes (eds), *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945*, Oxford, New York, Berg, 1999; Sabrina P. Ramet and Christine Ingebritsen (eds), *Coming in from the Cold War. Changes in U.S.-European Interactions since 1980*, Lanham (Md.) – Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield, 2002; James E. Goodby, Petrus Buwalda, Dmitri Trenin, *A Strategy for Stable Peace. Toward a Euroatlantic Security Community*, Washington (D.C.) and Arlington (Va.), United States Institute of Peace Press and Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 2002; Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945. From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2003; Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power. The Global Response to U.S. Primacy*, New York – London, Norton & Co., 2005; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005 (rev. and expanded ed.; first ed., 1982); Helga Haftendorn, Georges-Henri Soutou, Stephen F. Szabo, Samuel F. Wells, Jr. (eds), *The Strategic Triangle. France, Germany and the United States in the Shaping of the New Europe*, Washington (D.C.) and Baltimore, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006; Franz Oswald, *Europe and the United States. The Emerging Security Partnership*, Westport (Conn.) – London, Praeger Security International, 2006; and the recent book published by Jeffrey Anderson, G. John Ikenberry, Thomas Risse (eds), *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order*, Ithaca – London, Cornell University Press, 2008.

and not only formally (or just partially, and in sectors) united Europe is today more than ever needed for the world's balance and collective security.

4. A new 'empire'

These reflections find an interesting conceptual collocation, which not many, however, are ready to accept: that is, the idea that the development of the European Community has gradually acquired a new imperial connotation.[28] The European construction can in fact be considered as the gradual creation of a space of values. The enlargement of this space is limited not so much by geography, but depends on the willingness of external interlocutors to consciously embrace those values and humbly be subjected to the prerogatives of the members of the 'club', that verify the minimum criteria for joining: political, economic and social criteria; strict criteria at the beginning, when the club can impose its rules, but in fact more flexible when the members have to provide justifications for their shortcomings and dereliction of duty.[29]

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[27] PPP, *John F. Kennedy*, *1962*, Washington (D.C.), U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963, pp. 537-539; recently reprinted in Sherrill Brown Wells, *Pioneers of European Integration and Peace, 1945-1963. A Brief History with Documents*, Boston – New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007, pp. 140-142; also in www.jfklibrary.org/speeches.htm.

[28] Cf. e.g. Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa. Gesellschaft und Politik in der Zweiten Moderne*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2004; Massimiliano Guderzo, "L'impero europeo", in *Studi Urbinati*, vol. 72 (2004/05), no. 56/3, pp. 357-379; Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire. The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2006. On the 'imperial' theme see also Niall Ferguson, *Colossus. The Price of America's Empire*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2004; Amitai Etzioni, *From Empire to Community. A New Approach to International Relations*, New York – Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; and the recent contribution by Strobe Talbott, *The Great Experiment. The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2008.

[29] On the subject see, among others, Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream. How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, New York, Tarcher/Penguin, 2004; T.R. Reid, *The United States of Europe. The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2004; and the recent contribution by Giovanna Dell'Orto, *The Hidden Power of the American Dream. Why Europe's Shaken Confidence in the United States Threatens the Future of U.S. Influence*, Westport (Conn.) – London, Praeger Security International, 2008.

The country that enters the club becomes part of, and not spectator of, the European enlargement: this is its reward. It is appealing, and thus compensates the sacrifices made, to Lithuania but not to Russia, to Bulgaria but not to China, to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia but not to the American State of Georgia, and much less to the United States itself.

The reward is to be inside, and not outside, *vis-à-vis* the new European *imperium*. However, up to now, its 'mother country' has not been able to thoroughly define, with the needed strictness and coherence to its founding values, the re-distribution of decisional competences within the hierarchical level of the internal administration (regional government, state government, federal or confederate government) and within the highest powers (European Parliament, European government, European judiciary power). Nor has it been able to acquire armed and police forces which would permit its citizens to delegate the use of force to the Union, without needing a gun in their personal or national holster.

The re-distribution of those competences was, without any doubts, the main challenge of the enlargement phases of 2004 and 2007, and will remain as such for the next ones. Actually, the enlargement of the European 'empire', that is, the peaceful expansion of an area of peace, democracy, respect and guarantee of human rights and personal dignity (apart from temporary regressive exceptions) depends upon a settlement of those competences, looking courageously to the future, and not nostalgically to the past.

To consider that the challenge of international terrorism and of so-called rogue States may nowadays offer to the European empire's difficult construction the paste, the 'necessary evil', once represented by the Soviets and by international communism in the key passages of the Cold War, means turning to the past, to paths taken at different moments in the history of the international system. Reacting to the threats to the security of the empire on the basis of these considerations is to give old, partial and therefore inadequate answers to problems that are not substantially new.

To face the future, for the main actors of the construction, instead involves being capable of appropriately posing a central question

to the new generations, an ethical even more than a political question: in which measure, with which goals and means can the European *ethos*, that is, the sum of the founding values of the new empire, contribute to the formation of a world *ethos*? The reference here is to a *Weltethos* that, as convincingly argued by the theologian Hans Küng since the Nineties,[30] constitutes, with the other two pillars of the *Weltpolitik* (intended as the political and juridical framework), and of the *Weltwirtschaft*, the triad of the future planetary governance.

The European empire must not be built with the sword, like the national empires of the past and of the present. Because of its value premises, it must be built in peace: a peace defended also with arms, of course, until arms will be necessary to an immature mankind. Contributing to the future *Weltethos* with the gradual and patient expansion of the European empire, not with the sword but with the moral suasion – that is, etymologically, with the example of the *mores*, of traditions – above all implies a courageous opening of Europe to the contamination of 'other' values, an ecumenical acceptance of the idea that the empire, although destined to decline and fall, and precisely *because* it is destined to decline and fall, may leave lasting traces in the history of mankind only by expanding, then fusing and eventually disappearing within a larger and more mature world community.

The European response to the American foreign policy decisions since 9/11 should have thus been, and ought to be now, so far-reaching and far-sighted. The military repercussions of those decisions, both in Afghanistan and Iraq, have not appropriately changed the priorities of the European agenda. That turning point, in fact, should be considered in a historic perspective as a trigger, more than just a symbol or a cause, of predictable U.S. reactions to the prolonged absence of Europe, of a really united and responsible Europe, from the world security arena.

Our time may be "the hour of Europe" again.[31] And it may hopefully again be also the hour of U.S.-European relations

[30] Hans Küng, *Weltethos für Weltpolitik und Weltwirtschaft*, München, Piper, 1997.
[31] Anne Applebaum, "The Hour of Europe", *The Washington Post*, 29 July 2008.

"rooted in common values, interests, and strong economic ties".[32] As Robert Schaetzel wrote in 1975:

"A more united Europe is undeniably the only means by which the old continent can satisfy its material wants and psychic desires. And in an international environment of gross inequality, of hostility and danger, with America no longer the pre-eminent force of earlier years, we now need a strong and therefore united Europe as never before. I do not question that Americans, if offered leadership, would support policies to this end".[33]

Ironical as it may appear, both Europe and the United States could easily and profitably refer to themselves today some thoughts on the "American future" published by Reinhold Niebuhr in 1952:

"Nations, as individuals, may be assailed by contradictory temptations. They may be tempted to flee the responsibilities of their power or refuse to develop their potentialities. But they may also refuse to recognize the limits of their possibilities and seek greater power than is given to mortals. (…) Significantly the same world which only yesterday feared our possible return to adolescent irresponsibility is now exercised about the possibilities of the misuse of our power".[34]

It is perhaps gloomily true, as the Italian poet Eugenio Montale wrote in the Sixties, that history is not *magistra* of anything concerning us.[35] But at least some basic lessons may be learnt on both sides of the Atlantic from the achievements and the fiascos of the last few decades and of the more recent past.

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[32] Lee H. Hamilton, "Treading Carefully in Trans-Atlantic Relations", 30 June 2008, www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080630/OPINION12/806300312/1002/OPINION. On U.S. strategic prospects see, among other contributions, Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro (eds), *To Lead the World. American Strategy After the Bush Doctrine*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

[33] J. Robert Schaetzel, *The Unhinged Alliance. America and the European Community*, New York, Harper & Row, 1975. Schaetzel was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Atlantic Affairs until September 1966, thereafter Representative and then Ambassador to the European Communities until October 1972.

[34] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (with a new introduction by Andrew J. Bacevich), Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008 (first ed., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

[35] Eugenio Montale, *La storia*, in Id., *Tutte le poesie*, Milano, Mondadori, 1984: "La storia non è magistra / di niente che ci riguardi".