Institut Européen
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European Institute
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The Hyperpower and the Hype: Reassessing transatlantic relations in the Iraqi context

by

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There has been no shortage of analysis of transatlantic relations over the last couple of years or so and the current disagreements over Iraq have accentuated these differences. Indeed, since September 2001 debate about the state of transatlantic relations has become something of a cottage industry. However, Robert Kagan's contribution to rethinking transatlantic relations stands out as one of the most influential contributions to this debate.[1] Although there are more nuanced and subtle studies of the state of transatlantic relations, Kagan's contribution came at an appropriate moment when transatlantic opinion (as well as that within individual EU Member States) is sharply divided over the wisdom of military action in Iraq.[2] Kagan's depiction of Europe living in a Kantian 'self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation', when compared to that of the U.S. which inhabits an 'anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable', appears to capture the essence of the respective outlooks of Europe and America on the world around them, especially on Iraq.[3]

The U.S. that emerged after the cold war was quite different to its cold war shadow which was variously constrained or, on occasion, challenged by allies. The U.S. that emerged in the post-cold war era is, in Hubert Védrine's word, a *hyperpuissance*. The full extent of U.S. strength (and vulnerability) was not fully appreciated until the attacks of September 2001. The September attacks reinforced and legitimised the willingness of Washington to impose unilateral solutions on international problems that are of direct concern to America's interests. In spite of the immediate outpouring of genuine sympathy from the European publics to Americans in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September, the U.S. soon made it very apparent that it was quite willing and capable of acting alone. The new breed of American assertiveness was summarised in Bush's anti-terrorism mantra that 'you're either with us or against us'. Even when support was offered, such as in the case of the first invocation of Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty on 12 September

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[1] Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, (New York: Knopf, 2003).

[2] For instance, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and David P. Calleo, *Rethinking Europe's Future*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

2001, the subsequent rebuttal bore mute testimony to America's determination to fashion a new international order that solidifies its hegemonic position.

The troubling message for many European capitals was not that Washington had turned its back on multilateralism, but that when its vital interests were perceived to be at stake, the U.S. is quite willing to go it alone. An equally troubling aspect was the relative inability of the EU Member States to decisively sway the U.S. one way or another on a range of international issues. The weaknesses of the EU in foreign and security policy have been repeatedly exposed in the post-cold war period with the lack of any substantial military capability to back up the Union and, perhaps more gravely, a lack of collective will. These differences, both across the Atlantic and within the EU, have been put into stark contrast by the Iraq issue.

The transatlantic differences of the use of military force in Iraq may, at first glance, appear to support Kagan's central thesis. The opposition to military intervention in many EU Member States not only confirms the enormous difficulty that the Union has in acting as one when it comes to vital issues of foreign and security policy, but also supports the notion that Europeans have a preference to work through the rule of law, negotiations and cooperation. The willingness of the U.S. (and, to an extent, the United Kingdom who has historically been ambiguous about its European vocation) to engage in military action appears to support Washington's Hobbesian view of the world and, therefore, the need to impose regime change on Iraq in the name of the greater good of the international system. It goes without saying that in a Hobbesian world the greater good of the international system is defined by the hegemonic power.

This examination of the state of transatlantic relations argues that the positions of the EU Member States and the U.S. are in fact more nuanced. Two concerns are highlighted. The first is that the European resistance to military intervention in Iraq is not only a result of collective military weakness which, *ipso facto*, leads to a preference for a non-military resolution. The positions of many EU Member States stems from profound concern about what military intervention might trigger in the mid to longer term, both in Iraq as well as the region generally. The second concern is that the push for military intervention by the Bush administration, possibly without substantial international support, will compromise the chances for long-term stability in the region. The decisive advantage of the U.S., the *hyperpuissance*, over its European allies is its overwhelming

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[3] 'Europe' refers variously to the EU, a condominium of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, or the EU and the candidates. Significantly eastern Europe, notably Russia, does not warrant mention in the post-

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military superiority. This alone cannot guarantee peace and stability for the region. That can only be done through multilateral efforts which the U.S. is not necessarily the best equipped to lead.

The hyperpuissance and the promise of assertive multilateralism

The emergence of the *hyperpuissance* in the 1990s was accompanied by increasing criticism from European capitals of the hectoring tone of U.S. diplomacy and profound differences over a number of international issues, most notably the Middle East. European concern was compounded by Washington's willingness to use military power, often in the face of opposition from its European allies. This was a trend evident under the Clinton administration with military strikes against Iraq, Kosovo, Serbia and the Sudan – all this from an administration that propounded assertive *multilateralism*.[4] The Clinton administration also presided over significant increases in U.S. defence expenditure and technological advancement in the military sector (a continuation of the 'revolution in military affairs') which not only emphasised America's military superiority but made interoperability with any prospective allies even more problematic.

The Bush administration, which assumed office in January 2001, thus inherited an increasingly unilateralist foreign policy where it was assumed that the U.S. acted on behalf of other liberal, democratic nations in its campaign against global threats. The Bush administration also inherited a global strategic outlook where the enthusiastic advocacy of a ballistic missile defence shield was motivated by concern over China, whilst also remaining active in the Middle East and the Balkans.[5] The attacks of 11 September 2001 led to further increases in defence expenditure as well as a reinforced determination to defend America's vital interests throughout the world. Unlike its European allies, the exercise of overwhelming military might was to be one of the main instruments for ensuring the defence of U.S. interests. This determination was also underpinned by the concept of 'pre-emption', unveiled in the National Security Strategy of that same month. The 'world' of the EU was essentially regional, not global, and the set of challenges facing the

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cold war context.

[4] The exception to the rule on the European side was the United Kingdom who participated with the U.S. in the December 1998 strikes against Iraq as well as patrolling the no-fly zones. More European allies were involved in *Operation Allied Force* against Kosovo and Serbia in the spring of 1999, but even then there was strong concern within the EU about the lack of a specific mandate for the strikes. Although the allied contributions were welcomed by Washington, it was also obvious that the support of European allies had primarily political effect.

[5] It is worth bearing in mind that only a few years ago one of the most popular concerns of U.S. foreign policy was the role of China. See Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*, (New York: Knopf, 1997).

Union emphasised the utility of different tools. There was however the realisation that even in the post-modern world of the EU military strength had its role to play.

Differences over Iraq: legitimacy and efficacy

The emergence of the *hyperpuissance* during the Clinton years signified, to many Europeans, the emergence of a power that was more than just a superpower. It was also a term with a deliberately implied element of criticism -- the presence of such a power is not healthy for the international system. Although this element remains largely implied, it is nevertheless underpins the reservations held by the majority of EU Member States and the ten accession countries over Iraq and the question of military intervention.[6] The concerns are complex and are not equally held by all. Nevertheless, two related sets of concerns can be identified focussing, on the one hand, on the immediate and longer-term stability of Iraq and the Middle East and, on the other, on the potentially destabilising role of the U.S. in this region and the international system. These two sets of concerns are worth examining in more detail.

The first set of concerns focuses on the legitimacy of any U.S led military action in Iraq. If military action is undertaken it should, according to many European allies, be based on a second explicit mandate, beyond Security Council Resolution 1441, that legitimises any military action. The desire for a second resolution is consonant with Kagan's view of a Kantian Europe with its 'self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation'. By way of contrast, America's apparent willingness to move ahead on the basis of Resolution 1441 is seen as evidence of America's willingness to 'exercise power in an anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable'.[7] Put in real world terms, the divisions can be traced back to the respective stances on sanctions against Iraq with a 'sometime U.S. tilt towards missile strikes of nuclear and chemical-weapons plants that Iraq will not open for inspection, and with a European tilt toward rewards for partial Iraqi compliance with inspections through partial lifting of trade embargoes'.[8]

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[6] On 30 January 2003 eight EU Member States and accession countries expressed their solidarity with the U.S. in a declaration published in twelve European newspapers. The remaining seventeen have a variety of reservations or simple opposition to the Bush administration's position on the use of military force against Iraq.

[7] Kagan, p.3.

[8] Elizabeth Pond, *The Rebirth of Europe*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1999), p.200.

The U.S. may have a clearer vision of what needs to be done (at least in the short-term) in Iraq since that is *the* issue at hand. For many Europeans the concerns over Iraq are inextricably linked to broader concerns about America's increasingly unilateral, even arrogant, conduct in the international arena. This is often a puzzling and even offensive point to many Americans who resent the implication that any actions it may undertake in Iraq and elsewhere are not in the interests of the 'West' more generally. Insult is added to injury when it is observed that one of the reasons the Europeans live in their post-modern world is due to the historic sacrifices made by American servicemen on European soil, the post-war reconstruction of the region and umbrage under an American defence shield for much of the Cold War.

Unfortunately it is tempting to trivialise President Bush's 'cowboy' politics which, while it may play well to a domestic audience, often reinforces negative stereotypes overseas. Closer examination reveals that the unilateralism of the Bush administration has its roots in the so-called assertive multilateralism of the Clinton administration which, amongst other things, featured opposition to the Kyoto protocols, the desire to scrap the Anti Ballistic Missile treaty (to make way for ballistic missile defences for the U.S.), and the desire for immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. European concerns that the U.S. was becoming increasingly unilateralist were compounded by the growth in the military and technological superiority of the U.S. armed forces during the 1990s. The possession of overwhelming military superiority meant that not only could the U.S. pursue unilateralist policies but it could also *act* unilaterally in ways that the European allies could not, even if they wished to.

The 'Europeans' Kagan refers to were not however entirely content to live in a post-modern world and ignore the realities of the Hobbesian world elsewhere. Significantly, it was the British who perhaps share the closest vision of international relations to that of Washington, who saw that the EU's glaring weakness was its lack of any credible military capacity to complement the Union's political and economic weight in international relations. French President Jacques Chirac reached similar conclusions but for different reasons. For him the EU Member States needed to bolster their military capabilities, not as a way of buttressing the Atlantic pillar of the Alliance, but to guarantee the independence of the EU from U.S. and NATO. The logical conclusion to Chirac, especially in his second term of office, was that the EU should become a counterweight to the American *hyperpuissance* for the health of the international system.

The Anglo-French St Malo Declaration, of December 1998, and its quest for 'the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible military forces' only served to highlight the historical divisions between the transatlantic orientation of the United Kingdom and the neo-Gaullist strain in French foreign and security policy. Although some quarters in Washington were rather surprised by the apparent *volt face* on the part of their traditional allies, concerns were soon alleviated by the profound gap between rhetoric and the will to actually provide the required resources on the part of many EU Member States. This has now become a significant problem in transatlantic relations since European complaints of American unilateralism can all too easily be countered with the observation that this is sour grapes on the part of allies who have made little real effort to provide the capacity for effective multilateralism.

Kagan is therefore right when he suggests that the European preference for its post-modern world makes it 'the enemy of European military power', in spite of Tony Blair's efforts to lead Europe towards a Hobbesian world.[9] What tends to exacerbate transatlantic relations is, in broad terms 'world perceptions' but, more specifically, the role and utility of military force. Broadly speaking, the EU enjoys similar international influence as the U.S. when it comes to trade issues, human rights, or social questions and, in some areas such as environmental, development or assistance issues, the EU often asserts actual or even moral superiority. Transatlantic differences therefore centre not only when and whether to use military force but its very efficacy.

It follows from the general observations above that one of the more specific European concerns, held most notably by Germany and France, is the efficacy of U.S. military power in the Iraqi context.[10] The first issue concerns the effectiveness of the military power as an instrument to bring about, or restore, long-term stability on the ground. From Vietnam on, the U.S. military has not been particularly effective at establishing stability on the ground nor, assuming this is a long-term aim of Hobbesian-inspired Washington policy, at assuring U.S. hegemony. Military intervention in Lebanon in 1983, under the Reagan administration, resulted in a back-down although the assault against small and undefended Grenada could qualify as a success. President Bush (senior) intervened in Panama, again with little effective opposition, with only qualified success. The intervention in Somalia at the end of his office resulted in an embarrassing

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[9] Kagan, p.65.

[10] The former has rejected the use of any military force while the latter, while the latter, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has threatened to veto any second resolution authorising the use of military force against Iraq based on the argument that 'war is the worst of all solutions'.

withdrawal, following an unauthorised and futile search for General Mohammed Aidid in the back streets of Mogadishu (now mythologised in 'Black Hawk Down').

Operation Desert Storm is often portrayed as the example *par excellence* of U.S. military superiority (and an exorcism of the residual negative spirits of Vietnam). The liberation of Kuwait was undoubtedly a necessary action that enjoyed widespread international support in response to the unambiguous flouting of international law by Iraq. However, the ensuing operation was essentially about restoring the *status quo ante* (which partly explains why Iraq is back on the agenda today).

More recently, in the post '9-11' world, the U.S. military has markedly increased its quantitative and qualitative lead compared to, for example, the forces it deployed in the Gulf a decade ago. Yet, these forces delivered an inconclusive result in Afghanistan. The much loathed Taliban were overthrown, but the top leadership of al-Qaeda remains at large and the organisation as a whole remains active (an irony not noted in the Bush administrations efforts to prove links between al-Qaeda and Baghdad). Even when U.S. military power is not used directly, but military assistance is granted, the results have also been inconclusive, most notably in the Israel-Palestine case.

Moving closer to home, it may be supposed that U.S. military intervention in the Balkans would prove the efficacy of American military might to sceptical European publics (and, at the same time, underline Europe's inability to harness military force to diplomatic ends). Following the disintegration of (federal) Yugoslavia in the 1990s a spate of ethnic cleansing swept through the Balkans. U.S. intervention eventually stabilised the situation and American diplomatic efforts, backed by military force, brought about the 1995 Dayton accords and, four years later, an uneasy peace in Kosovo. But, this was only accomplished in the face of considerable ethnic cleansing and loss of life. Interestingly, when *Operation Allied Force* in the skies of Serbia and Kosovo threatened to prove inconclusive in the first half of 1999, the U.S. was distinctly unenthusiastic about intervention on the ground.

The second and in many ways graver concern, relates to how the use of military force relates to the longer-term objectives for Iraq and the Middle East. The task ahead in Iraq is going to be far harder than it was just over a decade ago where the task was to restore the *status quo ante*. The task ahead in Iraq is nothing less than redefining the *status quo*. This may well require the use of military force to get the point of being able to draw new designs for a post-Saddam Iraq, but it

will also require much more than military power to create the conditions for longer-term peace and stability in the Middle East. This aspect is conspicuously absent from the debate about military intervention in Iraq. What is the objective of the military intervention besides, somewhat vaguely, removing Saddam Hussein from power and seizing weapons of mass destruction? Even more nebulously, is military intervention about severing the ties between al-Qaeda and Baghdad? The design of any post-Saddam Iraq remains entirely unclear. A meeting at the end of 2002 of the six main Iraqi opposition groups in London proved inconclusive and points to the need for more thought about what military intervention is meant to accomplish in the longer-term.

If the logic of military intervention in Iraq is accepted, the composition of U.S. military forces, as well perhaps as the disposition of Congress, makes military intervention more suited to the initial stages of a crisis rather than the longer-term and equally demanding process of post-crisis reconstruction. The early stages of military intervention also play to the America's military technological lead. This advantage is less relevant in post-crisis scenarios when different kinds of skills are of more use. Arguably, this is where the European and Canadian militaries have decisive strengths – perhaps combined with their more instinctive multilateralism. The logical corollary of this argument is that a division of labour is the sensible path ahead, whereby the U.S. uses its military superiority to suppress hostile military forces (or, presumably, *potentially* hostile forces in the case of a pre-emptive strike) while the allies assume the greater burden in post-crisis peacekeeping and reconstruction. This, after all, is the division of labour that has emerged in the Balkans.

The Balkan model as the way ahead?

This unofficial division of labour is one that is unattractive to the EU and its members for a three reasons. The first objection is that it relies upon the U.S. to intervene in a timely manner in the first place. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina Washington was distinctly unenthusiastic about intervention (preferring initially to portray it as an internal struggle) and, in the case of Kosovo, intervention came about after substantial ethnic cleansing had already occurred and after sizeable numbers of refugees had moved into surrounding countries. The timing and manner of U.S. interventions in the Balkans was one of the justifications behind the creation of the 60,000 strong EU Rapid Reaction Force that should be capable of carrying out the full range of Petersberg tasks, including peacemaking, by 2003. Nevertheless, this aspiration was born out of the potentially contradictory French desire to avoid over-dependence on both American military

power and American diplomacy, as much as the British desire to reinforce the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

The second objection, based on Kagan's contention that the U.S. and its European allies share very different perceptions of the international system, is that there may be circumstances where Europeans prefer not to accept the outcomes of American diplomacy following the use of preponderant military force. This was one of the enduring lessons of the Dayton Accords in 1995, as well as later differences over how military strikes should be conducted against Serbia and Kosovo. Certainly a reverse situation, where the European allies dictate the terms of settlement and by implication America's post-crisis role, would be unacceptable to Congress and the wider public.

The third reason for concern from the European perspective is that the European role in any post-conflict settlement is likely to be proportional to the initial involvement in military action. In military terms the involvement of the European allies in American-led coalitions tends to smack of tokenism rather than any genuine need for their involvement – a lesson painfully learnt by the Bush administration's rejection of assistance from its NATO allies in the immediate aftermath of 9-11. This is undoubtedly something that the European allies have brought upon themselves through years of declining or static defence budgets and the conceit in the early days of the crisis in Bosnia-Hezegovina that this was 'the hour of Europe'.[11] In the words of one American commentator, the 'inability of the Europeans, either as individual nations or as a community, to manage the tragic course of events in the former Yugoslavia was a heavy blow to confidence at all levels'.[12] Nevertheless, on those occasions when genuine efforts have been made to improve the European contribution to collective security, the U.S. reaction has often been unenthusiastic. The latest manifestation of this is the recommendation from the Convention's Working Group on Defence to improve defence procurement and purchasing amongst the EU Member States by creating a European Armaments and Strategic Research Agency. This has resulted in a distinctly cool reception in Washington.

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[11] There are a few exceptions to this such as the United Kingdom and, more recently, France. Greece and Turkey also spend appreciably more on defence than many of their EU or NATO allies but for reasons that have more to do with regional security competition.
[12] John Newhouse, *Europe Adrift*, (New York: Pantheon, 1997), pp.20-21.

The Hobbesian challenge and the Kantian finale

The U.S's propensity to see a Hobbesian world around themselves, compared to the European preference to gaze at the world through its post-modern windows, is likely to lead to continuing differences over broad issues, such as the role of military power in the international system, the role of international law, the international court and multilateralism, as well as more specific policy issues. Yet, these differing outlooks may both be essential elements in ensuring stability in a post-Saddam Iraq.

The debates about the use of military force against Iraq, based on alleged violations of UN Security Council Resolution 1441, have detracted attention from the potentially more serious issue of stability for not only Iraq but the surrounding countries. Five of Iraq's six neighbours – Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey – display ambiguity about not only the idea of a U.S. led military invasion but, implicitly, also about the shape of the *status quo* that might emerge. The exception to this is Kuwait. Even though Turkey has been cooperative, there are divisions between the government and the secular military. Of the remaining countries, Iran and Syria are perhaps closer to individual EU Member States than Washington. Saudi Arabia continues to play a complex game with the U.S. with cooperation in some areas, but remains resistant to the use of military force in the region. Jordan also retains a complex stance with some levels of cooperation (such as hosting U.S. special forces) while persisting in avoiding any public expression of support for a war.

The regional dimension is critical since if Saddam Hussein is ousted by a U.S. led military operation, the entire geopolitics of the region will change. The chances are also good that the U.S. (and allies) will have to remain in Iraq for a substantial period of time following military intervention, hopefully avoiding the pitfalls of the last substantial occupation in the early twentieth century. However, no matter how many allies are involved in the actual military intervention or the post-intervention stabilising measures, it is likely to be a U.S. inspired and controlled *status quo* that emerges (as in the Balkans). Again, if Kagan is correct in his assessment of Washington's view of the Hobbesian international system, the prime objective of U.S. foreign and security policy is, quite logically, to create a sustainable environment that preserves American hegemony. A substantial U.S. military presence in Iraq will give the U.S. the ability to project power throughout the region, presumably under the rubric of the post-9/11 fight

against terrorism.[13] Based on this post-Saddam scenario, it is not hard to see that many countries in the region are distinctly unenthusiastic about such developments. Syria, in particular, would stand to lose influence and may well feel threatened by its surrounding neighbours, including the U.S. presence in Iraq and the Mediterranean. Saudi Arabia may also feel distinctly uneasy at being surrounded by U.S. forces in Iraq, Yemen, Qatar and Bahrain.

Broader issues will inevitably arise as a result of this shift. The future of Israeli-Palestinian relations will inevitably be the most sensitive. Resistance is also predictable since any U.S. military intervention, even if in defence of noble ideals, will inevitably be portrayed as an 'invasion' designed to impose a new order on the region that is overtly pro-Israeli (and thus anti-Arab), as well as anti-Islam and imperialist.[14] The internal radicalisation of Iraqi national politics cannot be ruled out either, with the result that some splinter groups may be pushed into association with fundamentalist Islamic groups – thus making what is at present little more than an assertion, a reality. Oil will inevitably enter the equation as well since the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq will, presumably, be financed out of oil revenues which means there is no incentive to limit Iraqi production.

The reason for the pro-European stance amongst Iraq's neighbours is easy to ascertain. Put simply, it is not in their interests to have the geopolitics of the entire region redefined by Washington, with the possible exceptions of Kuwait and Turkey who may well benefit from such as shift. Unfortunately for these countries, the presence of a concerted 'European' position has been conspicuous by its absence. Even if France throws in its lot with the U.S. and the UK and participates in a coalition of the (begrudgingly) willing, the involvement of all parties on an equal footing in post-conflict reconstruction is unlikely.

It is at this juncture that a number of ironies may become apparent. The first is that, in the Iraqi case, the U.S. may be distinctly unenthusiastic about the active participation of their European allies, especially as this might constrain Washington's hands over a number of sensitive issues, such as the Israel-Palestine question. This is of special importance since one of the most divisive regional issues has been over 'European disapproval of American tolerance of Israeli

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[13] Getting to and from Iraq is unlikely to be an insuperable problem, given the support of Kuwait and Turkey.

[14] Although there is a formal separation of church and state in the U.S. Constitution, the frequent references to God (although not explicitly Judeo-Christian) and occasional references by members of the Bush

stonewalling on the peace process' and the perception that Arab-Israeli polarisation remains the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East.[15] For many EU Member States the situation in Iraq is certainly of concern, but it is the Bush administration's unwillingness to engage Sharon's government that has exacerbated an already serious situation and led to charges of a pro-Likud bias on the part of the administration. The distinct enthusiasm to ensure Iraqi compliance with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions on the part of the Bush administration is notably absent in the case of Israel and has led to a dramatic expansion in the number of West Bank settlements. Although the EU has engaged with all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is apparent that only a U.S. backed effort stands a chance of ending the mutual hostilities. Bearing in mind the wider geopolitical ramifications of U.S. military intervention in Iraq, it is curious that the Israel-Palestine issue was mentioned only once, in passing, in Bush's recent State of the Union address.

The second irony is that, in the post-cold war era, the U.S. has shown little enthusiasm for longer-term post-conflict reconstruction. The American preference, wherever possible, was to encourage the European allies to assume their 'fair share' of the burden. More often than not the U.S. has preferred to create the conditions for reconstruction and stabilisation to take place and then to encourage others, like the European allies, to assume the multiple burdens associated with reconstruction. It is unclear whether the U.S. will find its strategic interests served by a long-term commitment to the Middle East, especially when the unenthusiastic European response to the prospect of military intervention means that there will be few willing to assume the task of the reconstruction of Iraq and broader regional stabilisation. The expectation may well be that the European allies should assume increased peacekeeping duties nearer home (which indeed is happening in Bosnia Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Once again, this underlines the importance of the EU possessing an actual capacity to contribute to a wide range of crisis management tasks and not merely as a balance to an overbearing *hyperpuissance*.

It may appear, based on the above scenario, that the EU and its member states will be faced with a *fait accompli* in the Middle East and, at best, a relatively minor role in defining and shaping the region. Were this to happen, it would be a negative development for a number of reasons. The first is that the EU does have influence in the region and the active involvement of the EU and its member states in a post-Saddam Iraq would offer a number of distinct benefits. One of the most

administration to a 'crusade' and 'evil' risks giving a religious element to any post-Saddam occupation of Iraq. Such references are less routinely found in public statements from European leaders.

obvious is that EU involvement (especially given the differences between the member states over the use of military force against Iraq) would dilute the impression that any post-Saddam settlement for Iraq and the region is based on an American *diktat.*

The second compelling reason for an active EU role is that the apparent U.S. proclivity to view the world around as Hobbesian, along with the neo-realist assumptions that stem from that, emphasises the role of the military. Indeed, in Kagan's argument this is what distinguishes the U.S. from Europe in its ability to reshape international relations. The quantitative and qualitative superiority of the U.S. military, accompanied by frequent reminders about the inadequacies of the European allies in this regard, runs danger of creating a myth of invincibility. Yet, the EU Member States, the EU candidates and the six non-EU NATO allies possess substantial military forces that should not be dismissed. Nor should their wealth of relevant experience in various forms of peacekeeping. Indeed, in some cases the very fact that military forces are not American (or perhaps British) may be a distinct advantage in terms of reaching and legitimising post-conflict stability.

Several factors may make the U.S. extremely grateful for assistance from its European allies and this would include a voice in the post-conflict settlement. The first factor is that the need for a 'second front' cannot be ruled out, which might impose a significant strain on U.S. military resources. The highly unpredictable actions of Pyongyang may yet warrant military action, especially if North Korea is in the process of extracting plutonium from fuel rods at its Yongbyon facility. Washington's insistence that the asymmetrical approaches towards Baghdad and Pyongyang is entirely justified may yet come unstuck.. The assumption of a more active role in Petersberg-type tasks on the part of the EU would give the U.S. sufficient leeway to cope with such a scenario.

The second factor is that the U.S. spends considerably more on defence than its European allies. The already high levels, which were increased again post-9/11, may become burdensome in the event of any deepening of the economic recession in the U.S. (the absence of a realistic economic policy was one of the more worrying aspects of George Bush's State of the Union address of January 2003). The long-term burdens of posting considerable military forces in Iraq and the region may prove irksome to a public who will soon tire of the drain on the public purse by overseas commitments, especially if domestic issues such as Medicare come to the fore.

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[15] Ibid. Pond, op cit, p.200.

The third factor is that the American public is notoriously fickle in its support for overseas military adventures. There is no way to tell in advance when and if a 'Mogadishu' effect may kick in, or if the desire for post 9/11 revenge will sustain public support in spite of inevitable losses. Interestingly, many American allies are less sensitive to losses incurred in the face of a worthy military cause than the U.S. (a paradox not explored by Kagan). A heavy U.S. military presence in the Middle East will inevitably attract hostility against its military forces and there will be a cost, perhaps as the result of Beirut-type scenarios. The balance made by the Bush administration between the benefits of U.S. dominance in the Middle East and the costs of maintaining this position, is a case that must be made to the American public. The case for military intervention against Iraq may be compelling following Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the U.S. Security Council on 5 February, but it may be less evident in six months or even two years' time.

Conclusions

Kagan's masterful analysis of the state of transatlantic relations inevitably generalises. In fact, the Europeans are far more complex than he states in the confines of his essay. Nor are they as stereotypically Kantian as he might suggest (no more than all Americans are Hobbesian by nature). It may be true that the Europeans have had 'little to offer the United States in strategic military terms since the end of the Cold War'.[16] But, Iraq may well show the limitations of the *hyperpuissance* and unilateralism. Any military action to depose Saddam Hussein will, of necessity, have to rely heavily upon U.S. military might. Allied contributions would doubtlessly be appreciated, but the capacity (and willingness) of the U.S. to 'go it alone' risks reducing any allied contributions to political symbolism. It also explains the despondency and feeling of inevitability of military intervention amongst many Europeans. In short, in spite of the UN wrapping, there may be little consensual about the outcome. This may have grave consequences for the achievement of a sustainable post-intervention *status quo*.

In the absence of an internal coup the U.S. and allies will be compelled to use military force to bring about regime change but, as Charles Tripp observes, what happens afterwards may well bring the U.S. 'into more intimate and potentially more entangling and costly involvement with

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[16] Kagan, p.98.

social engineering in Iraq than might originally have been contemplated'.[17] As Tripp notes, the U.S. and the allies will face the challenges of dismantling the 'dual' state (based on patronage), harnessing the influence of communal politics, encouraging a professional and apolitical military and police to emerge, and managing Iraq's oil economy for the benefit of the people. These challenges suggest 'a long-term, deep-rooted and possibly contentious engagement with the politics and society of Iraq by those who wish to reconstruct the state'.[18] The regional dimensions, as suggested above, will also provide some treacherous waters that will have to be navigated.

None of the points above should be construed as arguments in favour of the *status quo* in Iraq. The conclusion that they point to is that the current situation in Iraq does not lend itself to the imposition of unilateral U.S. initiatives. The use of military force without consensus on what it is supposed to achieve, is dangerous for the region and may well exact a high price on the intervening powers. The key to any future stability in Iraq and the region lies in consensus and legitimacy. This means that the U.S. must be prepared to listen to the legitimate concerns and anxieties of its allies, as well as those of its own people. If military action is deemed necessary it should have the widest international support possible. Predominantly U.S. intervention in Iraq will risk being portrayed as serving U.S. interests and not those of a broader international community, it will not be seen as legitimate and will become a magnet for resistance and hostility. Nor can military force control the agenda of future Iraqi politics, which may well continue to display a mixture anti-imperialist, nationalist, Islamist and anti-Zionist themes.

Iraq post-Saddam will probably modify America's Hobbesian outlook, as well as disturb the serenity of Europe's post-modern world. The limits of U.S. military power are likely to be displayed in the delicate and possibly treacherous post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq. For Europe, Iraq stands as testimony to the fact that the EU may represent a post-modern ideal but the surrounding world does not. Certainly it is to be hoped that the apparent inability of the European allies to sway Washington's determination to take military action against Iraq will lead to renewed determination to make the EU a complete international actor (and less of a 'military pygmy' as George Robertson, NATO's Secretary-General, put it). This means that the Union should possess the ability to link its diplomatic efforts with its considerable economic leverage

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[17] Charles Tripp, 'After Saddam', *Survival*, Vol. 44(4), Winter 2002-03, p.25.
[18] Ibid. p.29.

and, beyond that, to credibly threaten and, if need be, actually use military force. Until the EU can display this last facet, it will not be treated as an equal partner in shaping the international system.

It would though be a serious flaw on Washington's part to assume that the lack of comparable military force on the part of its allies is the main determinant of their current reservations. The reservations are based upon genuine concerns about where military intervention might lead and not apathy towards the current regime in Baghdad. The reservations on the part of many of the European allies are also based upon an equally genuine concern about America's overweening power; something that seems to genuinely surprise or even offend many Americans. In order to alleviate these reservations the U.S. has to invest more political capital in multilateralism so that when unilateralism is unavoidable, the use of America's considerable power is seen as part of a common good. Unfortunately, the U.S. has little motivation to do so when the weakness of its allies has given it little choice but to act unilaterally. At a time when little appears to be common, let alone hint at a policy, on the part of the EU Member States in the conduct of their foreign and security policy, the case for an effective CFSP and ESDP is more compelling than ever.