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American Attitudes on European Political Integration – The Nixon-Kissinger Legacy

Youri Devuyst

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Youri Devuyst

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Institute for European Studies, VUB
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ABSTRACT

This paper concentrates on the Nixon-Kissinger view of European political integration. In contrast with the mainstream position of the American Administrations during the 1950s and 1960s, Kissinger was convinced that by encouraging European unity, the United States was in fact creating its own rival. The start of a new system of European foreign policy cooperation in 1970 was seen by Kissinger as a particularly important example of Europe's attempt to challenge the American hegemony. Kissinger emphasized the need to maintain Western Europe in a subordinate role. Three main lines of action were pursued to keep the development of the European Community under control: maintaining bilateral contacts with key European allies, requesting a seat at the Community's decision-making table, and linking "obedient" European behavior to American military presence in Europe. The legacy of this policy still seems to influence the current American policy on the European Union. The Nixon-Kissinger term was, however, detrimental to rather than conducive of harmonious transatlantic relations. Tendencies to emulate it should therefore be discouraged.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Youri Devuyt has been teaching politics and institutions of the European Union at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel since 1994. He has been on the teaching staff of the IES Program on International Legal Cooperation (PILC) since 1997. Devuyt holds a doctorate in Political Science (VUB) and obtained Master's degrees in International and Comparative Law (VUB) and International Relations (Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies). The views expressed are purely those of the writer and may not, in any circumstances, be regarded as stating the position of the institutions for which the author is or has been working.

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1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE¹

As a “rogue elephant in the forest”, “the United States has come, for the time being, to be regarded in Europe ... less as the mainspring of civilization and more as the generator of crude power”.²

The metaphor dates from 1973, an era characterized by severe transatlantic tensions in the context of the Yom Kippur War, the oil crisis and Henry A. Kissinger’s failed initiative for a “Year of Europe”. The early 1970s were marked by a highly skeptical American attitude towards the first signs of European foreign policy coordination. While the American stance vis-à-vis European unification has always been characterized by a certain degree of ambivalence, in many ways the policy pursued by President Richard M. Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger can be interpreted as a high point of tensions. The policy was the first important manifestation—not by single individuals within an Administration, but by the highest political representatives of the United States themselves—of open fear and suspicion of European integration. It is therefore interesting to examine the vision expressed by the Nixon-Kissinger team more closely.³

Two broad views of Europe expressed by American leaders after the Second World War can be distinguished. One can be identified with the Administration of President John F. Kennedy. President Kennedy repeatedly expressed high hopes for the European Community as a burden-sharing partner.⁴ Kennedy’s vision of Atlantic interdependence, coupled with the rhetoric of the “equal partnership”, can be considered as a prominent manifestation of a confident, cooperative American hegemony. According to the Kennedy Administration, the Europeans needed “to move toward substantial internal cohesion in order to provide the solid foundations upon which the structure of an Atlantic partnership can be erected”.⁵ In other words, European unity was “an essential prerequisite” to the development of strong Atlantic ties.⁶ Kennedy’s Under Secretary of State, George Ball, repeated on numerous occasions that “a strong partnership must almost by definition mean a collaboration of equals”.⁷ As long as Europe remained in its fragmented state, the Kennedy Administration expected that the Europeans would naturally shy away from a real Atlantic partnership. Without internal strength and unity, Europe would refrain from getting institutionally close to the United States. Europeans would fear becoming simple “ancillaries” of American policy.⁸

Since the mid-1960s, Kissinger had been attacking the assumptions on which Kennedy’s burden-sharing expectations were based. Kissinger was convinced that by encouraging

¹ The author would like to express his sincere thanks to Harri Kalimo for his many constructive suggestions and improvements of the initial draft.

² Both parts of this sentence were quoted by James Chace (1973, 96). Chace has attributed the “rogue elephant” quote to Raymond Vernon and the “crude power” citation to Alastair Buchan.

³ For the American ambivalence regarding European integration, see Harper (1996).

⁴ Kennedy 1962, 132.

⁵ Ball 1962, 366.

⁶ Ball 1968, 61.

⁷ Ball 1962, 366.

⁸ Ball 1968, 66-67.

European unity, the United States was in fact creating its own rival. The start of a new system of European foreign policy cooperation in 1970 was seen by Kissinger as a particularly important example of Europe's attempt to challenge the American hegemony. Kissinger emphasized the need to maintain Western Europe in a subordinate role. The Nixon-Kissinger vision can be interpreted as an expression of distrustful, defensive hegemony, requiring constant reassurance of loyalty and obedience by the European partners.

The burden sharing vision of Kennedy and the rivalry oriented vision of Nixon and Kissinger continue to influence American foreign policy today. This paper concentrates on the Nixon-Kissinger view.

As to the structure of this paper, Chapter 2 briefly examines the general rhetoric of the Nixon Administration with respect to the development of the European Community. Chapter 3 puts the focus on the Nixon-Kissinger strategy for keeping the West Europeans under control. Three main lines of action are reviewed: maintaining bilateral contacts with key European allies, requesting a seat at the Community's decision-making table, and linking "obedient" European behavior to American military presence in Europe. Chapter 3 also analyzes the legacy of these three lines of strategy on current American policy on the EU. Indeed, this paper concludes by claiming in Chapter 4 that the Nixon-Kissinger legacy is in many respects detrimental to rather than conducive of good transatlantic relations. The current tendencies to emulate it should therefore be abandoned.

2 THE NIXON-KISSINGER PERSPECTIVE ON A “THIRD FORCE” EUROPE

2.1 Kissinger's theoretical “five power” concept

At the start of his Presidency, Nixon put forth a Kissinger-inspired concept of a world system resting on an arrangement between the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Japan and Western Europe.⁹ Kissinger was an admirer of the Congress of Vienna and initially seemed to believe that—still in the second half of the 20th century—the five major powers had to maintain the global balance-of-power.¹⁰ In Nixon's words: “I think we will be a safer and a better world if we have a stronger, healthy United States, Europe, Soviet Union, China, Japan, each balancing the other, not playing against the other, an even balance”.¹¹ In line with his “five power” concept, Nixon gave signs that he was inclined to encourage the development of the European Community as a “third force”. In 1969, following talks with French President Charles De Gaulle, Nixon made a statement in support of a Gaullist Europe:

“[De Gaulle] believes that Europe should have an independent position in its own right. And, frankly, I believe that too ... the world will be a much safer place and, from our standpoint, a much healthier place economically, militarily and politically, if there were a strong European Community to be a balance ... between the United States and the Soviet Union”.¹²

Nixon reiterated this view at a National Security Council meeting in January 1970, with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson attending: “I have never been one who believes the U.S. should have control of the actions of Europe ... I have preferred that Europe move independently, going parallel with the United States. A strong, healthy and independent Europe is good for the balance of the world”.¹³ On the surface, Kissinger seemed to agree. In contrast with those in “the bureaucracy” who strongly opposed a European caucus in the defense field, Kissinger claimed that “efforts to create a more coherent European voice in NATO are in our net interest”. In a note to Nixon, he wrote that “[g]reater European coherence would be quite consistent with what you have said about the desirability over the longer run of our being able to deal with Europe as a true and more equal partner”¹⁴ Nixon confirmed this thinking in February 1970 to Congress.¹⁵

2.2 Kissinger's skeptical view of European integration

The philosophy set out above is, however, to a large degree in contradiction with the actual policy pursued during Nixon's and Kissinger's time in public office. In fact, such

⁹ See Chace (1973, 96).

¹⁰ Kissinger's doctoral dissertation was devoted to the Congress of Vienna. See Kissinger (1956, 264-80; 1957).

¹¹ Cited by Gaddis (1982, 280).

¹² Nixon 1969, 246. My attention to this quote was drawn by William C. Cromwell (1974, 40-41).

¹³ U.S. Department of State 1970a, doc.56.

¹⁴ Kissinger 1979, 385.

¹⁵ Nixon 1970, 32.

diverging views may be found already in Kissinger's claims as a Harvard Professor. Kissinger had argued that the growth of European integration was unlikely to help American foreign policy objectives:

"The assumption that a united Europe and the United States would inevitably conduct parallel policies and have similar views about appropriate tactics runs counter to historical experience. A separate unity has usually been established by opposition to a dominant power. The European sense of identity is unlikely to be an exception to this general rule - its motives could well be to insist on a specifically European view of the world ... which is another way of saying that it will challenge American hegemony in Atlantic policy".¹⁶

In other words, postwar American foreign policy had for Kissinger rested on the wrongful assumption "that a united Europe would ease Atlantic relations, that it would inevitably pursue compatible policies while sharing a greater part of our burdens". Kissinger left no doubt that he "had never believed the results of European integration to be nearly so automatic".¹⁷

As National Security Advisor, Kissinger looked with particular concern at the start of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970. EPC was an attempt by the European Community's member states to organize a system of foreign policy coordination outside the Atlantic Alliance. To Kissinger, the creation of EPC confirmed that Europe was on a course of emancipation that would reduce American influence on the old continent. A year before, in October 1969, Kissinger had been shocked when meeting Egon Bahr, the German State Secretary in the Chancellery of Willy Brandt. Bahr made very clear that he had come to the White House to inform—but not to consult—the United States on Brandt's intentions towards the Soviet Union and East Germany.¹⁸ Following the meeting with Bahr, Kissinger realized that the Federal Republic was no longer planning to automatically subordinate its foreign policy to Washington's guidance, but would pursue policies in accordance with an analysis of its own interests.¹⁹ To Kissinger, the prospect of a European or German diplomatic offensive in the field of East-West relations was "distinctly threatening".²⁰ In Nixon's 1971 foreign policy report to Congress, Kissinger—the author of the text—formulated his feelings as follows: "For years ... it was believed uncritically that a united Western Europe would automatically lift burdens from the shoulders of the United States. The truth is not so simple ... For our closest friends are now developing a collective identity and collective policies separate from us".²¹

2.3 Nixon's and Kissinger's unilateralism in world affairs

To nevertheless maintain American leadership in world affairs, Kissinger proclaimed that the United States had "global interests and responsibilities", whereas a subordinated Europe was attributed only a "regional" role.²² According to Robert Schaetzle, a Kennedy

¹⁶ Kissinger 1965, 39. See also Andrianopoulos (1988, 66-73 and 90-110).

¹⁷ Kissinger 1979, 399.

¹⁸ On this episode, see Bahr (2003, 30 and 44).

¹⁹ Hanrieder 1978, 195.

²⁰ Barnett 1983, 292. See also Lippert (2005, 140).

²¹ Nixon 1971 16-17.

²² Kissinger 1974, 29. In his memoirs, Kissinger stated that he was merely "describing a condition that we deplored". See Kissinger (1982, 161).

Europeanist, but also Nixon's Ambassador to the European Community, Kissinger's "objective was a docile client-Europe, whose proxy would be in the hands of American officials as they went about their negotiations, whether with the Russians or the Arabs".²³ In practice, the Nixon-Kissinger approach implied that the United States would implement a unilateral course of action regarding the main questions of world politics, but nevertheless expected an obedient European support.

Kissinger's distribution of labor among the Atlantic allies was put to the test during the Yom Kippur War of October 1973. To help save Israel, the Nixon Administration took two unilateral decisions that astonished the Europeans. First, the United States began a massive airlift to Israel. Although no prior consultations with the allies had taken place, the Administration expected full European support. At NATO, Donald H. Rumsfeld, at that time U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, underlined in the North Atlantic Council "that while the U.S. has taken unilateral action with respect to the supplies for Israel, we consider the present situation a major test for the alliance".²⁴

The reality was different. As Kissinger complained: "Instead [of support], all our NATO allies except Portugal, the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany (for a time) either directly or indirectly dissociated from the airlift and banned our overflight of their territories".²⁵ After the cease-fire had been arranged, Germany discovered that Israeli ships were docking at German ports to receive American munitions. The United States had not bothered to inform the German government about the shipments. When Bonn asked that such shipments be stopped, this greatly upset Kissinger. He declared that he was going to "raise hell" with the Germans. In a meeting with the German Ambassador, he stated to be "astounded" by Bonn's decision and argued that the West Europeans had "deliberately isolated" Washington.²⁶

The second test of transatlantic coherence during the Yom Kippur war took place when the United States failed to consult its NATO partners when it decided to launch a world-wide nuclear alert at DEFCON III-level to prevent a military intervention by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Administration continued to keep the allies in the dark during the negotiations with the Soviets to force a cease-fire on the belligerents, although this directly affected the allies' Cold War interests. Instead of applauding Washington for having taken a major "risk to defend the global equilibrium", the Europeans "concentrated on the indisputable fact that there had been no prior consultation over an alert that involved U.S. troops stationed in Europe".²⁷ In NATO's North Atlantic Council, the lack of consultation received sharp criticism by France, Belgium and Italy.²⁸ Following the meeting, Ambassador Rumsfeld dispatched the following message to Kissinger:

"It is apparent that most of the allies felt embarrassed by not being even generally aware of what has been happening in the U.S.-Soviet discussions. They were further surprised and made feel irrelevant by the calling of the alert without prior notification, indeed without notification until more than seven hours later and even with little explanation afterwards ... Alliance relations in my view can fairly be

²³ Schaetzel 1975, 78.

²⁴ U.S. Mission to NATO 1973a, doc.32A.

²⁵ Kissinger 1982, 709.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State 1973, doc.81.

²⁷ Kissinger 1982, 712.

²⁸ U.S. Mission to NATO 1973b, doc.79A.

described as strained. Our allies do not say it, but I believe they are embarrassed at not knowing what is going on - even what is going on on their soil - with respect to the precautionary alert ... It makes them feel they are next to irrelevant in the truly important matters".²⁹

Nixon and Kissinger were much less sympathetic to the European complaints. Nixon publicly "chastised" the West Europeans for their lack of support in the crisis.³⁰ In his meeting with the German Ambassador, Kissinger emphasized that he was particularly concerned about "the total pattern of European behavior". He underlined that "[a]s one who has long favored European integration, it would be ironic now if the fathers of European integration in the U.S. could see ... that unity developing in opposition to the U.S., or that unity making cooperation with the U.S. more rather than less difficult". Given the lack of understanding shown by the European allies, Kissinger told the German Ambassador that he was asking himself "fundamental questions". He noted "that when he had spoken publicly of Europe having only a regional interest, he was attacked by his European colleagues. Now when something happens in an area of interest to Europe, Europeans disassociate themselves completely".³¹

For Europeans like French Minister of Foreign Affairs Michel Jobert, Kissinger's line of thought confirmed that the United States was looking at the Western European countries as simple subordinates whose only task was to follow Washington's leadership without discussion or consultation. According to Jobert, Europe was "treated like a non-person" and "humiliated".³²

2.4 The legacy

A true point of culmination has been President George W. Bush Jr.'s unilateral course of action on Iraq starting in 2003, and the Franco-American war of words on the subject. The incident has obvious parallels with the situation of Yom Kippur in 1973. Furthermore, recent attempts by the European Union (EU) to create an autonomous European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) have been looked at by Washington with a suspicion that is reminiscent of Kissinger's attitude towards European efforts at coordinating their foreign policies. During the negotiations of 1991 on the EU's founding Treaty of Maastricht, the Administration of President George H. W. Bush Sr. actively intervened to set the limits of European independence in the field of security and defense.³³ The Administration of President Bill Clinton made its support for ESDP conditional on what came to be known as the *three D's* of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: ESDP was acceptable if the EU could guarantee that there would be no *Duplication* of what NATO already did, no *Discrimination* against NATO allies that were not EU member states, and no *Decoupling* of Europe's security from that of the United States.³⁴ In other words, the Clinton Administration did

²⁹ U.S. Mission to NATO 1973c, doc.79B.

³⁰ See also Binder 1973, 65 (quoted in Lippert (2005, 213)).

³¹ U.S. Department of State 1973, doc.81.

³² Goldsborough 1974, 538.

³³ American reservations on the development of an autonomous European military capacity were incorporated in the so-called "Bartholomew telegram" of 20 February 1991 and in the "Baker five points", handed over to the Europeans on 16 April 1991. See van Eekelen (1998, 78-84 and 340-44) for a copy of the "Bartholomew telegram".

³⁴ Albright 1999, 129.

“not want to see an ESD[P] that comes into being first within NATO, but then grows out of NATO and finally grows away from NATO [and] could eventually compete with NATO”.³⁵

American fears about the nature of European defense cooperation were further strengthened when, in April 2003, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg held a mini-summit in Brussels at which they proposed the creation of independent EU military planning and command headquarters located in the Belgian commune of Tervuren, close to but separate from the Brussels headquarters of NATO.³⁶ That France, Germany and Belgium were at the same time leading the opposition against the plans by President George W. Bush Jr. for war against Iraq provoked bitter reactions in Washington. U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, described the European defense plans as the “most significant threat to NATO’s future”. In Burns’ words, the United States “could not support and will not support the creation of an alternative EU military headquarters, whether it’s in Tervuren or some other place ... Neither will we support a planning facility”.³⁷ The statement emanates the ethos of the Nixon-Kissinger era.

³⁵ Talbott 1999, 34.

³⁶ Réunion des Chefs d’Etat et de Gouvernement 2003.

³⁷ Burns 2003.

3 NIXON-KISSINGER LEGACY IN CONTROLLING THE COURSE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Initially, when arriving at the White House, the Nixon-Kissinger team developed a “revised approach” to European unity. The purpose was to mark a clear break with what they at the time regarded as counterproductive interventionism in European affairs by their predecessors. As Nixon stated in February 1970: “For too long in the past, the United States has led without listening, talked to our allies instead of with them, and informed them of new departures instead of deciding with them”.³⁸ Furthermore, Nixon felt that, “[w]hen the United States in previous Administrations turned into an ardent advocate [of European unity], it harmed rather than helped progress”.³⁹ Instead, Nixon and Kissinger announced a “low profile” attitude, “based on increased concern for what the Europeans want for themselves and a greatly improved consultative process on the major issues which affect Europe”.⁴⁰ Already in 1969, Kissinger had urged Nixon to “make clear that we will not inject ourselves into intra-European debates on the forms, methods and timing of steps toward unity”.⁴¹

However, in spite of his preliminary “low profile” philosophy, Kissinger soon started arguing for a better American grip on the European integration process. Active American involvement in European affairs was necessary to ensure Europe’s Atlantic orientation. Three main lines of action were pursued:

- (1) maintaining bilateral contacts with key allies within the Community;
- (2) requesting a seat at the Community’s decision-making table; and
- (3) linking European behavior to American military presence in Europe.

President Kennedy’s preferred option of obtaining an indirect voice in European affairs through the Community’s enlargement with Atlantic-minded countries was not one of Kissinger’s priorities. Kissinger looked at the Community’s enlargement with a degree of suspicion. He feared that a country’s entry into the Community, and its resulting “europeanization”, might well imply a reduction of American influence.

3.1 Bilateralism

Kissinger preferred strong bilateral ties with the European allies, because they constituted the most effective way for the United States to exert its influence on Europe. Kissinger’s insistence on bilateralism was based on “his basic antipathy over the prospect of a united Europe speaking with one voice”.⁴² This attitude was a logical extension of Kissinger’s remark, still as Harvard Professor, that

³⁸ Nixon 1970, 29 (bold in original).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁰ Kissinger 1979, 399.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴² Burr and Wampler 2002, 39.

“meaningful consultation with other nations becomes very difficult when the internal process of decision-making already has some of the characteristics of compacts between quasi-sovereign entities ... There is an increasing reluctance to hazard a hard-won domestic consensus in an international forum”.⁴³

The European Community presented Kissinger with a concrete example of his earlier observations. The creation of the European Community, and especially of EPC, threatened to destroy the good old custom “that the nations of the Atlantic - and especially the large countries - exchange ideas on outstanding issues in many informal contacts whose vitality was enhanced by their spontaneity”.⁴⁴ In the EPC, the Europeans would not only try to speak with a single voice. They “would share among themselves all information which they obtain in the framework of bilateral exchanges with the U.S. In other words, confidential bilateral exchanges ... were at an end”.⁴⁵ The Community’s efforts to speak with one voice on world affairs were described by Nixon as “ganging up” against the United States.⁴⁶

To avoid being cornered by a unified European bloc, Nixon and Kissinger continuously emphasized the importance of maintaining bilateral relations: “For many years to come, these [bilateral relations with the several European countries] will provide essential transatlantic bonds; and we will therefore continue to broaden and deepen them”.⁴⁷ Bilateral contacts with member states were carefully planned, notably in preparation of Community Summits.⁴⁸ Particular importance was attached to visiting new governments “shortly after their elections to attempt to develop a common position on the ... relationship of the Community to the U.S.”.⁴⁹

The Europeans seemed fortunately incapable of acting in common. During a Cabinet-level meeting of the Council on International Economic Policy, Nixon maintained that the Europeans would

“have one hell of a time acting as a bloc. They do not get along with each other. The French don’t get along with the Germans, the Germans don’t get along with the British. It will be some time before they can learn to act as a group. This means we have to work with the heads of government in the various countries and not that jackass in the European Commission in Brussels”.⁵⁰

Presumably, Nixon was referring to European Commission President Sicco Mansholt, who openly disagreed with Washington on Vietnam, Chile and Cuba.⁵¹

Kissinger’s skills in practicing active bilateralism, aimed at splitting-up an emerging European bloc, were amply tested and demonstrated during the oil crisis that followed the Yom Kippur War.⁵² In December 1973 and January 1974, the European Community’s Member

⁴³ Kissinger 1969, 266.

⁴⁴ Kissinger 1982, 188.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁶ Schaetzel 1975, 78.

⁴⁷ Nixon 1970, 32. For a similar remark, see Kissinger (1974, 30).

⁴⁸ See, for instance, U.S. Department of State (1972a, doc.91).

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State 1972d, doc.103.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State 1972b, doc.100. For the same remark, see U.S. Department of State 1972c, doc.120.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State 1972a, doc.91.

⁵² This paragraph is based on Calleo (1975, 103-12); Lieber, (1983, 17-20); Yergin (1991, 626-31); Demagny-Van Eyseren (2004).

States managed to produce a common position vis-à-vis the geopolitical consequences of the oil crisis. Along French lines, they agreed to pay particular attention to the development of positive relations with the oil producers and to institutionalize a Euro-Arab dialogue. In view of the European dependence on oil imports from the Middle East, they also resolved to present their own autonomous analysis on the energy situation at the Washington Energy Conference of February 1974 that had been called by Kissinger. Kissinger's idea was to organize an oil consumer bloc under solid American leadership in the form of an International Energy Agency. This was not in line with Western Europe's emphasis on the dialogue between producers and consumers.

However, in spite of their preparatory meetings, the Europeans failed to act as a unit in Washington. Much to the dismay of France, the other member states simply accepted the American proposals. When meeting his European colleagues in Washington, Jobert opened the gathering with the bitter salutation: "*Bonjour les traîtres*" ("Hello traitors").⁵³ Jobert had a particularly hard time when German Finance Minister Helmut Schmidt accused him of trying to divorce Europe from America. Jobert counter-accused Germany of betraying the European unification project.⁵⁴ Nixon and Kissinger had put particular pressure on Germany. Bonn was told that the maintenance of America's defense commitments in Europe was linked to Germany's behavior in the energy debate.⁵⁵ In the words of David P. Calleo, the Washington Energy Conference had been managed by Kissinger so as to "re-establish America's faltering hegemony over Europe" in the wake of the Atlantic crisis during the Yom Kippur War.⁵⁶

The current bilateralism pursued by President George W. Bush, Jr. is in very large measure in line with the Nixon-Kissinger prescriptions. Following the EU's 2004 enlargement, important voices in the Bush Administration advocated a so-called policy of "disaggregation". An often cited statement in this context is that of Richard Haass, Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. Haass argued that "we must disaggregate the European unity by opting for bilateralism: it is much better to talk to different capitals than to Brussels".⁵⁷ Later, Haass somewhat reformulated his remark: "Where there is no consensus within Europe - something increasingly likely to be the case now that the EU has expanded to twenty-five countries and over time will take in more - the United States should feel free to invite individual countries to work with it if they so choose".⁵⁸

Whether or not in the perspective of "disaggregation", the Bush Administration made a particular effort to maintain Washington's direct, bilateral relations with the accession countries that entered the EU in 2004.⁵⁹ In the words of Elisabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, the Bush Administration had been "especially aggressive -- to reassure [the accession countries] that just because they are joining the European Union does not mean they have less of us -- because we continue to work directly

⁵³ Yergin 1991, 630.

⁵⁴ Goldsborough 1974, 539. For Michel Jobert's point of view, see Jobert (1974b, 90-93; 1974a, 82-86; 1975, 280-87).

⁵⁵ Lieber 1983, 331.

⁵⁶ Calleo 1982, 116.

⁵⁷ Quoted by Pierre Hassner (2005, 75). Haass is quoted along the same lines by Ash (2004, 5); as well as Dombey and Dinmore (2004).

⁵⁸ Haass 2005, 165-66. For the neo-conservative rationale in favor of "cherry-picking" in the transatlantic context, see Hulsman (2003).

⁵⁹ Whether the Administration of Bush, Jr. is actually pursuing a policy of "disaggregation" is discussed by Peterson (2004a, 620-23; 2004b, 17).

with each of the member states on any number of bilateral issues that are of importance to all of us".⁶⁰ The same message was delivered by the President himself. When visiting Warsaw in 2001 and 2003, Bush made a point of repeating that there was no conflict between membership in the EU, membership in NATO and close bilateral ties with the United States.⁶¹ For the President, the new member states were natural allies of the United States.

In 2003, the accession states of Central and Eastern Europe all issued declarations in support of the invasion of Iraq, outside the EU context. While France and Germany expressed anger, the accession countries were praised by the Bush Administration and the U.S. Congress as "courageous", "responsible" and "bold".⁶² In fact, the episode constituted a dramatic demonstration of the lack of European unity on a crucial foreign policy question. Entirely in the Nixon-Kissinger spirit, the Bush Administration never mentioned Europe's failure to act in common as a "problem".

3.2 "Seat at the table" requests

To suppress Europe's "emancipatory" developments, the Nixon Administration soon discovered that bilateralism alone did not suffice. In May 1970, during Washington's evaluation of the European Community's preferential trade agreements and planned enlargement, the Departments of the Treasury, Commerce and Agriculture emphasized that the United States needed to actively seek the establishment of "continuing consultative mechanisms" with the Community. These mechanisms were deemed essential to ensure that the United States would be kept informed and able to register its concerns on the Community's developments.⁶³

The American request resulted, in August 1970, in a verbal understanding on the organization of semi-annual consultations with the European Commission regarding matters of mutual interest.⁶⁴ For Kissinger, this arrangement lacked a concrete possibility to intervene in the Community's decision-making. The United States could not afford to sit back and wait till it was confronted with undesirable European positions. Instead, Kissinger tried to ensure that the American voice was heard during the European deliberations, before the member states had fixed their final stance. In January 1973, he proposed President Nixon to ask British Prime Minister Edward Heath that the European Community would refrain from making decisions before the United States were given an opportunity to register its views in the formative period of policy-making.⁶⁵ Nixon did raise the issue, but Heath's response was negative.⁶⁶

Kissinger felt strongly about the matter and returned to it in the context of his famous "Year of Europe - 1973" initiative.⁶⁷ While proposing "a new Atlantic Charter setting the goals for the future", Kissinger emphasized the need for "an understanding of what should

⁶⁰ Jones 2004, 29-30.

⁶¹ Bush 2001; 2003. See also Wayne (2004, 4); Powell (2003, 2-3).

⁶² Rumsfeld 2003b, 2; U.S. Senate 2003.

⁶³ U.S. Department of State 1970b, doc.40.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State 1970c, doc.43.

⁶⁵ Burr and Wampler 2002, 11.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Kissinger 1974, 29.

be done jointly and of the limits we should impose on the scope of our autonomy".⁶⁸ For Martin J. Hillenbrand, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (1969-1972) and Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany (1972-1976), the key issue was "the American desire to enter at an earlier stage into the councils and consultations of the European Economic Community".⁶⁹ According to Hillenbrand, the Europeans could only regard Kissinger's initiative as an American attempt to obtain "quasi membership on the cheap".⁷⁰

In what turned out as a shocking experience for Nixon and Kissinger, the Europeans decided to prepare - among themselves - the common reply that would be given to Washington. As Kissinger recalls, "the European nations had decided that they would work on a paper (on Atlantic relations, no less) without any consultation with us. We would be shown no drafts; we would have no opportunity to express our views".⁷¹ Nixon and Kissinger were dismayed. In a letter to German Chancellor Willy Brandt, Nixon wrote that he found it inconceivable that "an endeavor whose purpose was to create a new spirit of Atlantic solidarity and whose essence should have been that it was collaborative at all stages should now be turned almost into a European-American confrontation".⁷² In a similar message to German Foreign Minister Walter Scheel, Kissinger expressed his "astonishment" that "the Europeans would not deal with us bilaterally, that we would have to await the results of the consultations of the Nine, and then deal with the Nine as a unit".⁷³ By September 1973, the European Community had agreed internally on a proposal for a joint declaration. For the Nixon Administration it was a document of "generalities and platitudes", without any trace of procedures for early consultations between the United States and the European Community.⁷⁴

The chances of obtaining a productive outcome for the "Year of Europe" worsened dramatically due to the transatlantic tensions during the Yom Kippur War. During a meeting with the German Ambassador in October 1973, Kissinger said he had "begun to be bored" by the project of the EC-US declaration "and was not sure it was worth further consultations".⁷⁵ On 12 December 1973, Kissinger nevertheless made a final effort. He declared that "[t]o present the decisions of a unifying Europe to us as *faits accomplis* not subject to effective discussion is alien to the tradition of US - European relations". He claimed that "as an old ally, the United States should be given an opportunity to express its concerns before final decisions affecting its interests are taken".⁷⁶

The Europeans did not change their position. Instead, the Member States agreed that the "Year of Europe" was an appropriate moment to define their European identity. In a formal statement adopted at the Copenhagen Summit of December 1973, the heads of state and government underlined their "determination ... to establish themselves as a distinct and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 36. The proposal for a new Atlantic Charter had first been made by Secretary of Commerce Peter Peterson. In a memorandum on transatlantic relations of November 1972, he proposed that the Administration would "seek a long-term, perhaps 10 years, compact or covenant of a cross-sectoral nature in which agreements on trade, defense, energy, monetary and other policies would be pulled together and in which we would articulate a new set of principles to govern our relationship - a new Atlantic Charter, as it were". See U.S. Department of State (1972e, doc.106).

⁶⁹ Hillenbrand 1998, 331.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Kissinger 1982, 188.

⁷² The Letter from President Richard M. Nixon to Chancellor Willy Brandt of 30 July 1973 is cited in Kissinger (1982, 191). See also Burr and Wampler (2002, 30-31).

⁷³ Burr and Wampler 2002, 31.

⁷⁴ Cromwell 1992, 84. See also Burr and Wampler (2002, 38).

⁷⁵ Burr and Wampler 2002, 38.

⁷⁶ Kissinger 1973, 43.

original entity” in world affairs.⁷⁷ While mentioning the need for close ties between the United States and the European Community, the European leaders emphasized that the transatlantic dialogue had to be maintained “on the basis of equality”.⁷⁸

By March 1974, the Nixon Administration ceased pressing for a formal declaration on relations between the United States and the European Community.⁷⁹ As an alternative, the allies decided to pursue pragmatic transatlantic consultations on three parallel tracks:

- *Consultations between the European Commission and the United States* were to continue on the basis of the understanding of 1970. The semi-annual meetings focused largely on economic topics within the field of responsibility of the Community.⁸⁰
- *Consultations between EPC and the United States* grew out of a pragmatic arrangement between German Chancellor Willy Brandt and President Nixon.⁸¹ The Brandt-Nixon approach is known as the Gymnich formula as it was adopted by the Community’s Ministers of Foreign Affairs during their June 1974 meeting at Gymnich, Germany. Following this meeting, the country occupying the six-monthly Presidency of the European Community Council was authorized to hold consultations with “allied or friendly countries” on the elaboration of a common European position of foreign policy. The Ministers trusted that this would lead to “smooth and pragmatic consultations with the United States which will take into account the interest of both sides”.⁸²
- *Consultations within the North Atlantic Alliance* were given new impetus by the Ottawa Declaration adopted by the North Atlantic Council in June 1974. The allies stated that they were “firmly resolved to keep each other fully informed and to strengthen the practice of frank and timely consultations” on matters relating to their common interests as members of the Alliance.⁸³

None of the consultative arrangements have met Kissinger’s initial objective. Many observers have concluded that “in the hindsight of history the most remarkable outcome of the 1973 round of declarations may well be the European Communities’ statement on European identity”.⁸⁴ In other words: “the new American approach seemed, unwittingly, to goad Western Europe to greater unity”.⁸⁵ Still, to this day, Kissinger is lamenting that that “the United States is excluded - by definition, as it were - from those activities which demand the greatest attention of Europe’s leaders”:⁸⁶

“In dealing with the European Union ... the United States is excluded from the decision-making process and interacts only after the event, with spokesmen for decisions taken by ministers at meetings in which the United States has not participated at any level. When America encounters spokesmen for the unified Europe, it discovers that its interlocutors have very little flexibility, because

⁷⁷ Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government 1973, 492-96.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para.14.

⁷⁹ Cromwell 1992, 93. See also Burr and Wampler (2002, 38).

⁸⁰ Krenzler 1988, 97.

⁸¹ Featherstone and Ginsberg 1996, 86.

⁸² Krenzler 1988, 98; Featherstone and Ginsberg 1996, 86.

⁸³ North Atlantic Council 1974, para.11.

⁸⁴ Pierre 1974, 114.

⁸⁵ Hoffmann 1977, 67.

⁸⁶ Kissinger 2001b, 55.

decisions taken by the Council of Ministers can be altered only by going through the entire internal European process again.”⁸⁷

In May 2003, entirely along Kissinger’s line of thought, a bipartisan group of former American foreign policy and defense officials called for the adoption of “a mechanism ... that allows more direct consultation between the United States and the institutional bodies of the EU”. In all relevant areas, “members of the U.S. executive branch could be associated -- with the work of separate European Councils”. The key issue, they said, was “not one of U.S. membership in the European Union, but one of association, dialogue, and cooperation before decisions are reached”.⁸⁸ The proposal was rejected by the Europeans.⁸⁹ The advocates of an American seat at the Community table seemed to have learned little from Kissinger’s earlier failures.

3.3 Linkage politics

As mentioned above, during the Washington Energy Conference of February 1974, Nixon and Kissinger put particular pressure on Germany by making the maintenance of America’s defense commitments in Europe conditional on Bonn’s position in the energy debate. Similarly, in the aftermath of his Year of Europe speech, Kissinger requested a quick response to his proposal for a new Atlantic Charter by threatening with cuts in American troop levels in Europe. The British Foreign Secretary interpreted Kissinger’s threat as “a piece of quasi blackmail” and “an act of gross indecency”.⁹⁰

The question of linkage also arose during transatlantic economic disputes. At a Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy in April 1969, Nixon explicitly “linked NATO and soybeans”. He said that “his support for NATO would be seriously jeopardized if the Europeans took restrictive action against U.S. exports because mid-western Congressmen, whom he can now control on security matters, would shift their views if European trade restrictions hurt them directly”.⁹¹ In other words: “if we start fooling around with their soybeans, their votes are gone”.⁹² The President also said that the European Community “could forget U.S. political support” if it turned inward economically”.⁹³ Nixon consequently instructed his trade negotiators to “let the Europeans know that there are a lot of Americans who would

⁸⁷ Ibid., 57. Along exactly the same lines, see Kissinger (1992; 2001a, 3-4; 2005, 166).

⁸⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2003. The declaration was endorsed by former U.S. Secretaries of State Madeleine K. Albright, Warren Christopher, Lawrence S. Eagleburger and Alexander M. Haig; former U.S. Secretaries of Defense Harold Brown, Frank C. Carlucci, William S. Cohen and James R. Schlesinger; former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Paul H. O’Neill; former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski; former U.S. Trade Representative Carla A. Hills; former U.S. Ambassador to the EU Stuart E. Eizenstat; former U.S. Senators Robert Dole, Sam Nunn, Charles S. Robb and William V. Roth; former U.S. Representative Lee H. Hamilton; and former Deputy Secretary of Defense John J. Hamre. Hamre is also President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) that took the initiative of drafting the declaration.

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Delors and *Notre Europe* (2003). This text, written under the leadership of former European Commission President Jacques Delors, stated that American participation in the EU’s complex decision-making processes had to be considered “inconceivable”. The text was endorsed by former Prime Ministers from Belgium, Spain and Portugal (Jean-Luc Dehaene, Felipe Gonzalez and Marion Soares); former European Commissioners (Etienne Davignon, Peter Sutherland, Giorgio Napolitano and Karel Van Miert) and several members of the European Parliament.

⁹⁰ Noble, forthcoming.

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State 1969b, doc.19.

⁹² U.S. Department of State 1969a, doc.19.

⁹³ U.S. Department of State 1969b, doc.19.

welcome our getting out of Europe”.⁹⁴ To bring the Europeans in line, Nixon himself persistently used the threat of an “isolationist” Congress as a bargaining tool:

“Now the Europeans cannot have it both ways. They cannot have the United States participation and cooperation on the security front and then proceed to have confrontation and even hostility on the economic and political fronts ... In the event that Congress gets the idea that we are going to be faced with economic confrontation and hostility from the Nine, you will find it almost impossible to get Congressional support for continued American presence at present levels on the security front ... we are not going to be faced with a situation where the Nine countries of Europe gang up against the United States - the United States which is their guarantee for security. That we cannot have”.⁹⁵

In fact, Nixon was rather certain that his linkage strategy would work as he was convinced that Western Europe badly needed American military support:

“If [the Europeans] adopt an anti-U.S. trade policy, resulting in ‘an unenthusiastic’ attitude in the U.S. about Europe, they must be made to understand that it will carry over into the political area. NATO could blow apart. The idea that the Europeans can defend themselves without us is ‘bull’. If NATO comes apart, they will be in a position of being economic giants and military pygmies ... European leaders ... are ‘terrified’ at that prospect”.⁹⁶

Thus, in the words of historians William Burr and Robert A. Wampler, Nixon and Kissinger “urged their allies to make economic sacrifices in the name of Cold War unity and to take into account Washington’s thinking before they reached decisions that could have an unfavorable impact on U.S. interests”.⁹⁷

Linkage politics has continued in the post-Nixon era. Still, in the current geopolitical context, the threat of a possible withdrawal of troops no longer makes the same Cold War impression. In this sense, the implosion of the Soviet Union has deprived the United States of a bargaining weapon that was frequently used in Cold War dealings with the allies.

3.4 Enlargement

An important part of President John F. Kennedy’s strategy to ensure the Atlantic orientation of the European Community was his insistence on British accession.⁹⁸ The accession of the United Kingdom actually took place on 1 January 1973, during the Nixon Presidency. The Nixon-Kissinger team was, however, not particularly pushing for the further enlargement of the European Community. When in 1974-1975, the right-wing dictatorships in Greece, Portugal and Spain came to an end, the United States hesitated to call publicly for the countries’ swift integration in the Community. As stated by U.S. Ambassador Martin Hillenbrand, “[u]nlike the case of the previous enlargement from six to

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State 1972b, doc.100.

⁹⁵ President Nixon’s nationally televised remarks, 15 March 1974, are cited by Cromwell (1974, 42). For a similar wording, see Nixon (1973, 79).

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State 1972c, doc.120.

⁹⁷ Burr and Wampler 2002, 2.

⁹⁸ Giauque 2002, 165-66; Winand 1993, 184-85 and 260-325.

nine, which the United States strongly and publicly supported, there has this time been a relative scarcity of policy pronouncements on the subject from Washington”.⁹⁹

Kissinger’s doubt on the finality of European integration was not the sole reason explaining this relative silence. In Washington, the democratic revolutions in Greece, Portugal and Spain were interpreted as a loss of influence. Washington’s close military bond with the right-wing dictatorships had stood in contrast to their relative isolation in Western Europe. The Portuguese revolution in April 1974, the downfall of the Colonels regime in Greece in July of the same year, and Franco’s death in Spain in November 1975 were perceived as “the end of Pax Americana in Southern Europe”.¹⁰⁰

Kissinger expressed himself repeatedly in a very pessimistic manner about the political evolution in Southern Europe and was sure that the United States would lose most of its grip over that part of the world.¹⁰¹ A team of U.S. Congressmen, visiting Portugal and Greece in 1975, concluded that “American influence over the political system will decline in the coming years ... For the first time, political leaders, other than the Communists, could question whether ... dependence on NATO and Washington was necessarily in the best ... national interest”.¹⁰² According to the Congressmen, “Greece’s commitment ... to become a full member of the European Community, was a manifestation of this new ability of Greece to view itself with interests separate from (although not necessarily antagonistic to) those of the United States”.¹⁰³ Similar remarks were made on Portugal. It was only with reluctance that Washington accepted the “Europeanization” of their former client-states as the best available option to guarantee their Atlantic orientation.¹⁰⁴ Greece became a Community member in 1981. Spain and Portugal joined in 1986.

The American post-Cold War attitude towards the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries in the Community has been very different from Kissinger’s hesitant approach towards the Southern enlargement. Following the sudden breakdown of the Soviet system in 1989-1990, the European Community was praised in Washington as an organization with a “vital role”.¹⁰⁵ President George H.W. Bush Sr. persistently described the Community’s vocation as that of “a magnet” that “draws the forces of reform forward in Eastern Europe” and brings “Eastern Europe closer toward the commonwealth of free nations”.¹⁰⁶ Enlargement to the East gave the European Community a “central role ... in the development of a Euro-Atlantic Community” and was seen as a net gain for the West.¹⁰⁷

Considering Kissinger’s hesitations in 1974-1975, it is striking that the U.S. Ambassador to the European Community justified Washington’s insistence on an early accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the Community by drawing a parallel between the Southern enlargement: “The enlargement of the original Community has already reinforced stability, prosperity, and the consolidation of democracy in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Many now look to the EC to work the kind of transformation to the East which it has already promoted so successfully on its Western and Southern peripheries”.¹⁰⁸ When, in

⁹⁹ Hillenbrand 1978, 392.

¹⁰⁰ Tsoukalis 1981, 157.

¹⁰¹ U.S. House of Representatives 1975, 10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁰⁴ Hillenbrand 1978, 405; Tsoukalis 1981, 157.

¹⁰⁵ Bush 1989a, 2; 1989b, 4; 1989c, 1; 1991, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Bush 1989b, 4; 1989c, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Dobbins 1991, 5. For a similar statement, see Bartholomew (1991, 5).

¹⁰⁸ Dobbins 1991, 5.

2004, the EU expanded with ten new member states, the Administration of George W. Bush Jr. welcomed this as “a bold and historic step” that “advances the creation of a Europe whole, free, and at peace”.¹⁰⁹ In the words of Assistant Secretary of State Jones, the accession had been “a longstanding U.S. policy objective” as it would “cement” the new member states into the West.¹¹⁰

In contrast with Kissinger’s concern about the loss of influence in former client-states, Bush Jr. seemed convinced that the eastward expansion of the European Union actually strengthened the United States. As the Central and Eastern European countries repeatedly manifested their support for American foreign policy in Iraq, their 2004 accession to the EU and to the NATO was seen in Washington as an important geo-political development, rendering Europe more prone to American leadership. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated: “The center of Europe has ... shifted eastward and our Alliance is stronger for it”.¹¹¹ Pursuing the same logic, the Bush Jr. Administration has - in the aftermath of the EU’s 2004 enlargement - continued to push for a further expansion of the Union. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns argued that - beyond Turkey - “the EU ought to be open for further enlargement because that ... intersects with our interests ... [W]e look at Bosnia and Serbia. We look at Albania and Macedonia and Croatia. We look at Ukraine and Georgia and we say that all of them should have some kind of link to the EU ... I hope the EU door will remain open”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ White House 2002.

¹¹⁰ Jones 2003, 6.

¹¹¹ Rumsfeld 2003b, 2. See also Rumsfeld (2003a, 2-3); Jones (2003, 37) and U.S. Senate (2003, S2501).

¹¹² Burns 2005, 3.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As an academic, Kissinger shifted from the vision of five world powers—which included a *strong* Europe—to believing that by encouraging European unity, the United States was, in fact, creating its own rival. In spite of the rhetoric at the start of the Nixon Administration, Kissinger’s emphasis was on the need to maintain Western Europe in a subordinate role. Europe’s attempt at “emancipating” itself, via a new system of European foreign policy cooperation, was seen by Kissinger as an important challenge to American hegemony. The Nixon-Kissinger strategy for keeping the West Europeans under control consisted of three main lines of action: (1) insisting on bilateral contacts with key allies within the Community; (2) requesting a seat at the Community’s decision-making table; and (3) linking “obedient” European behavior to American military presence in Europe.

When examining the legacy of the Nixon-Kissinger team for the American attitude on European political cooperation, elements of continuity and discontinuity become evident. On the one hand, the Kissinger vision on European political integration still has its followers today. Kissinger’s attitude towards the creation of EPC was similar to America’s current, skeptical approach towards the emergence of Europe as an autonomous actor in foreign and defense policy. Nixon and Kissinger’s net preference for bilateral contacts and their rejection of a “single voice Europe” is similar to Bush Jr.’s fondness for bilateralism, “disaggregation” and “coalitions of the willing”. The commonalities in approaches have also led to similarities in the results—foremost, a regrettable deterioration of transatlantic relations.

On the other hand, there are also major differences between the policies of the Nixon-Kissinger team and Bush Jr. Those differences can largely be explained by the end of the Cold War. Nixon’s linkage politics between European behavior and American military presence in Europe worked only in the specific context of the Cold War. The post-Cold War situation has fundamentally decreased the American ability to blackmail Western Europe with its military presence. That Germany could afford to oppose the United States during the 2003 invasion of Iraq is a sign of Berlin’s newly found post-Cold War freedom, and constitutes an example of America’s loss of influence on “old” Europe.

The United States has been rather successful, however, in compensating its decrease in influence on Western Europe through an increasing reliance on support from the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. By pushing the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries in the EU and NATO, while simultaneously maintaining and further developing close relations with those states, the United States has reaffirmed the Atlantic orientation of the Europeans institutions. Washington has been assisted in this effort by the attitude of Central Europe. According to Timothy Garton Ash, Central Europe has chosen “a version of European-American relation in which Europe is clearly subordinate to the United States; what is more - in which not Europe as a whole, as

a Union, but individual European countries compete to be the most faithful lieutenants of Washington".¹¹³

It remains to be seen whether the post-Cold War compensation policy will turn out to be a winning strategy for the United States in the long run. It is not a good sign that the policy seems inspired by a Kissinger-like mood of "fear and suspicion" towards the development of an autonomous European voice in world affairs.¹¹⁴ Kissinger's frame of mind did, indeed, prove disruptive to the harmonious development of transatlantic relations. His attempts at subjugating Europe neither strengthened the United States, nor Europe. It only contributed to a deterioration of the transatlantic climate and created a self-fulfilling prophesy by pushing the Europeans into adopting their declaration on European identity in international affairs. Current tendencies to emulate aspects of the Nixon-Kissinger strategy should therefore be strongly discouraged. Instead, the transatlantic partners would be well-advised to look for inspiration in Kennedy's vision of interdependence and equal partnership. The purpose should be that of developing an active burden-sharing arrangement that goes well beyond the narrowly-conceived militaristic perspective and focuses on such fundamental issues as sustainable development, human rights and the rule of law. Only a strong and independent Europe can serve as a mature partner in such an endeavor.

¹¹³ Ash 2005, 176.

¹¹⁴ Schaetzel 1974, 105.

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