

CHINA NOW



SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Newsweek

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A NEW SUPERPOWER STEPS UP
NEXT

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10 PEOPLE TO WATCH
NEXT

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MELINDA LIU
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Chinese Olympic basketball player Yao Ming

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANGEL PARRY
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EUROPE

Make Way for the Quiet Superpower

The year ahead offers the perfect chance to remake transatlantic relations.

By ANDREW MORAVCSIK

FOR NOW, ALL IS QUIET ON THE TRANS-Atlantic front. The United States is distracted by its quagmire in Iraq. Europe is still mired in its decadelong debate over a constitution for the European Union. And the name calling and accusation trading that led up to and followed the Iraq War is gone, if not quite forgotten. Yet 2008 could be a year of destiny for transatlantic relations. The

American presidential election is likely to trigger a major reconsideration of U.S. foreign policy, no matter which party or candidate wins. This should present Europe with a unique opportunity to shape American policy for the next generation.

But first Europe must get Washington's attention. American presidents, particularly newly elected ones, tend to underestimate the Continent—a reflection of the very different ways in which America and Europe engage with the world. Even after its chastening experience in Iraq, the United States continues to believe that the foundation of its foreign policy rests on its ability to project overwhelming military hard power on short notice nearly anywhere in the world. Europe, by contrast, is a quiet superpower. Though often just as influential as the United States, its slow and incremental style and its subtler “civilian” instruments of power—trade, aid, international law and diplomacy—are easily and often overlooked. The inclusion in the EU of 12 new members in Eastern and southern Europe has surely been the most cost-effective Western policy for spreading peace and prosperity since the end of the cold war. Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics are also now set to join the EU, perhaps to be followed by Turkey. Yet Americans pay little attention to any of this.

In recent years EU diplomats have also quietly averted crises in Montenegro and Macedonia and encouraged successful reforms in Morocco, Libya and Ukraine with trade deals, assistance to reform groups and state visits. Europe provides the bulk of global foreign aid, and is the primary supporter of various multilateral organizations and agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol. Even in the military realm, Americans who lecture Europe on its lack of commitment to Afghanistan or Iraq often forget the fact

that nearly 100,000 European troops are currently serving outside their home countries, as peacekeepers, police and combat troops. Europeans lead ongoing peace and reform efforts in critical countries such as Lebanon, Congo and Bosnia.

Still, if Europeans want to get the respect they deserve in Washington, they need to act now to focus the attention of the candidates and the next administration on these achievements. This will be difficult, because Americans find the decentralized, slow-moving, multilingual EU political system difficult to comprehend, let alone work with. Europeans therefore must finally provide an answer to Henry Kissinger's famous question: if you want to call Europe, what's its phone number? The first step is for Europe to sign and ratify the EU constitutional treaty so that the new U.S. president can look across the Atlantic on Inauguration Day and see a unified polity that has put its abstruse constitutional bickering behind it. Once Europe has done so, Tony Blair, Joschka Fischer or someone of similar stature can be installed in the new, stable, two-and-a-half-year EU presidency. Foreign-policy powers will be consolidated for the first time under a single foreign minister. Finally the American president will know whom to call.

With the EU's constitutional status clarified, enlargement can proceed down the Balkans, starting with Croatia. Europeans can discuss French President Nicolas Sarkozy's proposal for a more active plan for closer relations with their North African and Mediterranean neighbors. In the background, Turkish accession can also move along. Collective foreign-policy and defense decision-making will become routine. Political capital will be freed up for the difficult job of reforming the World Trade Organization, the United Nations and other global institutions. For the first time in years, America will find it has a real partner in Europe.

At the moment, the political will is there. Germany's Angela Merkel has abandoned plans for domestic reform, positioning herself instead as a foreign-policy chancellor. Sarkozy managed to get elected and form a government without restricting his room to move on Europe. In Britain, Gordon Brown has evidently postponed an election, thereby opening a window to ratify the EU treaty without a referendum. Meantime, in the United States, a Democrat in the Oval Office may well make a concerted effort to re-engage with multilateral institutions in areas from global warming to the United Nations; a Republican is likely to reinforce the trends since 2004 toward greater cooperation with allies. That leaves Europe, in the next 12 months, with an opportunity to put nearly a decade of bickering behind it—or get left behind in the geopolitical dust.

MORAVCSIK, a professor at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, is currently based in Shanghai.



Europe can reshape U.S. policy for a generation—but only if it can first get Washington's attention.