

THE EUROPEAN UNION: ITS ROLE AND POWER IN THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

3-5 October 2003

Princeton, New Jersey

Conference Summary

Balance of Power

- There was extensive discussion of the nature of power, the differences between hard and soft power, unilateralism and multilateralism, as well as the importance of influence, trust, and legitimacy in any definition of power.
- It was posited that asymmetry of power between the U.S. and the EU is an enduring feature of international politics, and that differences in power portfolios create bargaining problems.
- It was discussed to what degree the theory of the balance of power has been or will be applicable to transatlantic bargaining problems.
- There was a broad discussion on the nature of European power, as defined in terms of influence and compared with that of the U.S. Alternatives offered were:
 - Europe is weaker than the U.S. and its influence is not proportional to the resources it commits. Some participants were of the opinion that the level of resources committed by Europe were not sufficiently acknowledged.
 - Europe will eventually exercise more power than the U.S. largely based on its economic links.
 - Europe already wields more power than the U.S.
- Many participants drew attention to the importance of Central and Eastern European countries. For some, they represent a key priority of the European project; for others, they demonstrate pro-American sentiment; for others still, they are a counter to a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis.
- It was agreed by some participants that Russia considers its alliance with the U.S. more important than with Europe, because the U.S. is the only actor willing and capable of addressing state and non-state threats to Russian security.

Complementarity and Division and Labor

- There was a consensus that thinking on intervention undertaken by the US and the EU is framed in terms of a division of labor, in which the US possesses military power and the EU civilian power. There was also discussion on the extent to which EU member states possess hard-power capabilities, although they do not necessarily take a high-tech expeditionary form.
- There was debate as to whether this division of labor is positive. Various options were considered as to the shape European power might take in the future:

- Civilian power might be embraced and strategically and openly developed, complementary to U.S. military power.
- Military power might be rationalized and modernized so as to allow Europeans to act independently of the U.S.
- It was noted that the US has a lot to learn from Europe about soft security, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and crisis management, and the EU has a lot to learn from the US about high-tech and expeditionary warfare. The various assets possessed by Europe and the U.S. were considered to constitute a “toolbox”, which could be used appropriately depending on the intervention undertaken.
- Several participants drew attention to the fractured and diffuse nature of military power in Europe. It was also noted that reform of a military is a long-term process, and therefore a significant period of time would pass before any policy determination on large-scale change in European military capacity could be fully realized.
- There was general consensus that one area in which Europe and the U.S. are cooperating effectively is in fighting terrorism and organized crime.

Common Security Strategy

- There was much discussion of the development of a common European security strategy that would pool and reorganize the resources of member states.
- It was argued that a common security strategy is inevitable in the EU, given monetary and economic integration, and in order to deal with problems on its doorstep. Others noted the difficulties that might prevent such a development.
- There was also discussion as to what extent European security needs could be met within the framework of NATO. While some felt that NATO would gradually become less important, others contended that defense against territorial aggression is and will remain for the foreseeable future within the remit of NATO.
- Those participants who were in favor of an independent EU force recommended that its role be defined in relation to NATO, so as to avoid duplication.
- There was some discussion of the implications of the neutrality of member states for developing a common security strategy.
- It was contended that if security is defined in terms of eliminating poverty, addressing desperation, and promoting education, then the EU is already pursuing security policies.

Unipolarity/Unilateralism

- It was posited that the U.S. copes with the possible threats of globalization by reinforcing and protecting its sovereignty, whereas Europe copes with globalization by sharing sovereignty through norms-based governance.
- There was general consensus that the European project is fundamentally concerned with pluralism and multilateralism, international cooperation, and adherence to a rule-based international system functioning through bargains and institutions. In addition, it was agreed that the U.S.'s hegemonic position in the current unipolar world order should not be equated with unilateralism.

- While many participants strove to distinguish multilateralism from unilateralism, some noted that multilateralism, like unilateralism, can be understood in terms of realpolitik.
- Many participants expressed that the U.S. is acting according to its own rules while considering the EU to be militarily weak, politically divided, and strategically naïve. Most also felt that the U.S. should recognize that they cannot solve all global problems themselves.
- There was broad consensus on the point that the U.S. cannot undertake military action of similar proportions to that in Iraq. This consensus rested on the notion that financial and logistical costs prohibit it. There was also debate on the extent to which lessons have been drawn by the U.S. from its intervention in Iraq.
- Some participants expressed surprise that there was not more discussion of the UN or the OSCE.

Nature of EU Institutions

- Participants noted the significance of the path taken by the EU integrating first monetarily, currently economically, and finally politically.
- Participants noted the opposing logics of the community and intergovernmental methods that shape European institutions and render them complex. It was agreed that the European constitutional treaty engages this question of complexity in European institutions. It was discussed whether the constitutional treaty clarified or complicated EU policymaking arrangements.
- The merits and shortcomings of unanimity versus majoritarianism were discussed, including the way in which the constitutional treaty should be ratified.
- Attention was drawn to the differences that exist in how business associations and civic associations gain access to EU institutions. EU interest groups gain legitimacy by engaging EU institutions, and EU institutions use the resources and approval of interest groups to legitimize their policies.
- It was discussed whether federalism is an appropriate term to describe current or future EU structures. Federalism was framed as both a political term and a philosophical concept.
- There was discussion on whether the disunity in Europe over intervention in Iraq constitutes a temporary or more long-term challenge, and whether this will be exacerbated by enlargement. Some debated the future relevance of Central and Eastern European countries' pro-American stance and membership of NATO.
- It was noted that the pace of European integration could be better understood in terms of the path taken by the US towards federalism. Several participants expressed reservations as to whether this comparison was useful or appropriate.
- There was general consensus on the importance of the prospect of EU membership in stabilizing and developing the Balkans. There was discussion on how European intervention undertaken further afield differs in impact.

Transatlantic Alliance

- It was discussed that a community of interests, which existed between Europe and the U.S. since WWII, was profoundly affected by the end of the Cold War. Several participants stated that currently there is little or no geopolitical consensus and the interests of Europe and the U.S. are diverging. Others believed that the resilience of the transatlantic partnership has been underestimated in the past and still is today. Moreover, some considered concern for the transatlantic alliance to be “self-indulgent” in the face of so many common threats and interests.
- There was general consensus that Europe and the U.S. are bound together by dense economic networks and economic interdependence.
- Most participants agreed that legitimate policy disputes between the U.S. and the EU often translate into anti-American and anti-European rhetoric, and recommended that efforts be made to moderate this tendency.
- Participants acknowledged that the concepts and vocabulary employed in the discussion of EU-U.S. relations could also serve as a guiding paradigm for understanding international relations.

Concluding Remarks

The two primary themes addressed at the conference were the nature of the transatlantic relationship and the current and future role of the EU in world affairs. In addition, the following observations were made:

- We must avoid the nostalgic and unrealistic view that there were no disagreements among allied states during the Cold War.
- There is as yet no global consensus on how to address the following three important issues: terrorism; rogue states; and failed states.
- Globalization has exacerbated and given rise to many threats that have an impact locally, regionally, and globally. These include: trafficking in drugs and humans, water shortage, traumatizing effects of conflict, poverty and desperation, and cyberterrorism.