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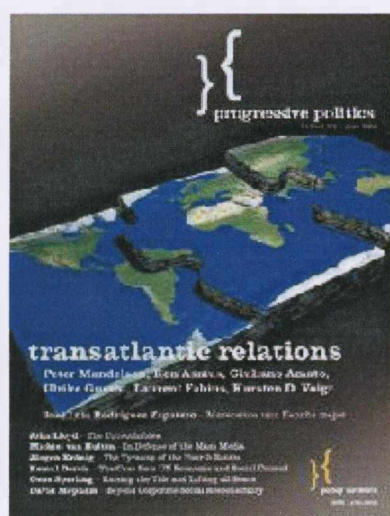
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PUBLICATIONS

Transatlantic Relations

Progressive Politics, Vol. 3.2



The new issue of Policy Network's journal, *Progressive Politics* focuses on the future of transatlantic relations. This volume includes six original articles by politicians and thinkers such as Giuliano Amato, Ron Asmus, Laurent Fabius, Ulrike Guérot, Peter Mandelson and Karsten D. Voigt. Together they stress the importance of, and the need for, finding new ways ahead for a revitalised transatlantic partnership.

The central theme running through this edition is that strengthening the transatlantic dialogue will require a concerted effort. While the articles debate just how much damage the relationship has already sustained, the authors remind us of values we share and the common challenges we face. While neither the US nor Europe can achieve their goals alone, their partnership still has an enormously positive influence at a global level.

The issue of responsibility reappears throughout the journal's two sub-sections - namely 'International Economy' and 'Politics and the Media' - most notably in Kemal Derviş' strong and provocative proposal in favour of a UN Economic and Social Council. Finally, in his 'Letter from the Frontline', the new Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero writes about his experience of the electoral campaign and the tragedy of the Madrid bombs, as well as outlining his plans for 'a better Spain'.

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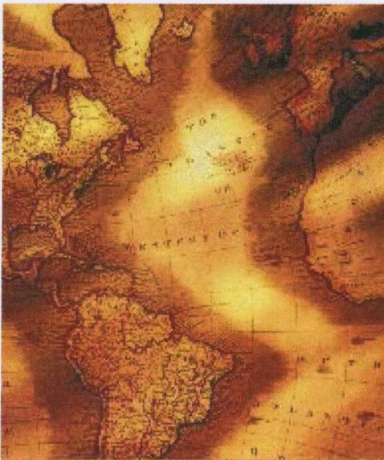
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PUBLICATIONS

Editorial - Transatlantic Relations

Peter Mandelson



There is a high level of angst on both sides of the Atlantic about the future of the transatlantic relationship. The Iraq crisis did not create this angst but brought it to a head. The feeling that Europe and America were somehow drifting apart had set in some years ago. Indeed, early on in his presidency, it was evident when President Bush attended the EU Summit in Stockholm and found himself faced with European anger over his unilateral rejection of the Kyoto Treaty. The mood is aptly summed up in the ambiguous title of Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro's new Brookings book *Allies At War*.

For Britain, the perception that the transatlantic relationship could be on the rocks poses a particularly acute dilemma. A basic tenet of British foreign policy for the past 50 years has been that we must not be forced into a position where we have to choose between Europe and America. Both represent the twin pillars on which foreign policy rests. If the breach in the transatlantic partnership were irreparable this would force Britain, for one, to rethink its traditional world-view. This edition of *Progressive Politics* addresses some of these difficult questions.

Historians of the transatlantic relationship tell us that there is nothing new about transatlantic splits. We do not have to stir our memories for long to remember the breach between Britain, France and America over Suez; de Gaulle's decision to pull France out of NATO's military structures; the deep crisis over the Russian deployment of intermediate-range nuclear-armed missiles in the late 70s and NATO's twin track response; and divided views over German unification. But, in the past, there was always the perceived threat of the Soviet Union to hold the Alliance together. Is it the case that, without the spectre of Red Army tanks rolling over the Central European plain, different values and perceptions of world threats will tear the transatlantic alliance apart?

I am not a pessimist. Two factors still hold the transatlantic relationship together. First, we have shared values. For all the criticisms levelled at the United States and its conduct of foreign policy, and despite concerns over Guantanamo Bay and the disgrace of the Abu Ghraib prison, the US remains the strongest force for democracy and human rights in the world today. As Europeans, that makes our relationship with America qualitatively different from the other nuclear powers (much as we want to strengthen our relationships with Russia and China).

Second, this congruence of values is matched on the US's part by unparalleled economic and military might. The harsh fact of 'realpolitik' is that, if we want anything serious to be done about the world's problems, we have to get America on side. And that applies as much to the future of world trade and the Doha development round as it does to debt relief for Africa, or solving the problems of the Middle East.

Moreover, I believe the factors that led to the breach between Europe and America over Iraq are now in retreat. The Americans are learning that military might on its own is not enough. To create a peaceful Iraq is requiring much greater involvement of the United Nations and further efforts to internationalise the coalition effort as we attempt to speed the process of Iraqi-isation and the path to democratic elections in 2005. America understands that it now needs allies: not just coalitions of the willing that will support America in its own policy decisions but a wider international community that wants its voice to be heard and recognised. So, the opportunity to reconstruct the transatlantic partnership on a stronger basis has unexpectedly emerged.

However, if the partnership is to be real and more than a matter of rhetoric, Europe must rise to the challenge. What does rising to the challenge mean?

First, it means better mechanisms to establish European consensus in foreign policy and not just on a lowest-common-denominator basis. In this regard, the new trilateralism that we have seen in operation between Britain, France and Germany, for example in dealing with Iran, is of the highest importance. Also, the proposals in the draft European Constitution for a European Foreign Minister will help Europe to be more effective in putting across a common view (where that common view exists). Institutional fixes can never be a substitute for hearts-and-minds agreement between sovereign governments, but they can help to create conditions in which it is more likely that such agreement will be reached.

Second, Europe needs to develop a robust security doctrine of its own that recognises the gravity of the threats that we face in the modern world. With the end of the Cold War, Europe has become complacent about its own security. In a way, Europe has become a victim of its own success. In guaranteeing peace and stability across the Continent, the assumption has grown that we can deal with the rest of the world on the same enlightened basis. But, unfortunately, that is not the world in which we are living. There are extremely serious threats around – not least, the potent mix of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Joseph Nye, the eminent Harvard scholar, has written that America needs to rediscover the virtues of 'soft power'. I agree. But the Europeans have equally to come to terms with the reality that the necessity for 'hard power' is, from time to time, unavoidable.

Third, Europe must develop the capabilities to be a credible partner of the United States in guaranteeing world security. We have to recognise that there were very serious political disagreements between Europeans about what was the right thing to do in Iraq. Clearly, we all now have an interest in creating a stable and democratic Iraq, whatever our view of the military action to remove Saddam Hussein. Having failed to go into Iraq together, we should leave together. But I recognise that the politics of opposition to the war colour attitudes towards the involvement of troops in what should be seen now as a wholly uncontroversial and noble mission. The other test of Europe's seriousness lies in Afghanistan. At the moment, the European arm of NATO is failing to provide sufficient troops to guarantee the stabilisation of that troubled country. Our willingness to act here is a real test of whether any US administration will take Europe seriously.

Finally, does Britain have to change its traditional approach to transatlantic relations? I do not think so, but I am convinced that we all must recognise that the metaphor of the bridge no longer provides the best description of Britain's position. The truth is that, if we are to have real influence in Washington, we have to have real influence in Europe at the same time. The stronger we are in Europe, the stronger we will be with Washington. That means we in Britain seeing ourselves as a leader and shaper of Europe's destiny. This is why the position of the Conservative Party under Michael Howard is so destructive of British national interests.

The right wing message of "live and let live" – saying to the rest of Europe "you integrate if you want to but leave us to be ourselves" – would marginalise Britain's position in Europe and ultimately lead to a huge loss of British power and influence in the world. Rightly, Tony Blair totally rejects this path. He realises that an integrated Europe of which we were not part would be a powerful player on the world scene. America would have to deal with that continental power regardless of any emotional sympathy for the United Kingdom. Such an outcome would mean the final relegation of Britain to the second division of nations. This is unnecessary and avoidable and must not be allowed to happen.

Peter Mandelson is Chair of *Policy Network*.