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## **Cracks in the West? Reflections on the Transatlantic Relationship Today**

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## Summary

The essay documents indications for “cracks” in the transatlantic relationship, identifies their potential causes, and outlines possible policy responses. Taking up Fukuyama's question of whether the West “is still a coherent concept,” we draw attention to the growing dissensus in the fields of environmental politics, security, and human rights. Subsequently, we offer preliminary explanations for these developments based on three leading schools of thought in International Relations. These explanations make reference to the distribution of power in the international system (realism), divergent ideas about the nature and the locus of the democratic legitimization of politics (constructivism), and the configuration of societal interests within states (liberalism). Finally, we come up with some ideas on how to mend the cracks that have appeared in the West, again drawing on the conceptual resources provided by the three schools of thought.

### 1. Introduction: The “Cracks in the West” thesis\*

After the end of the Cold War, both political scientists and journalists were facing the question of which global political constellation would take its place and which forces, tendencies, and conflicts would determine the fate of the world in the years and decades to come. The most famous – and infamous – answer was given by Samuel Huntington, when he identified the “Clash of Civilizations” as the sign of the new era<sup>1</sup>. Other – no less ambitious – analyses came to much more optimistic conclusions, the most prominent of these being Francis Fukuyama's thesis of the “End of History,” which he published in 1989.<sup>2</sup> This dramatically-sounding formula reflects his view that liberalism, i.e. the practically tested unity of democracy, free market economy, and human rights, has won the final victory in the competition of political ideas – a competition, which Fukuyama (following Hegel) sees as the central underlying process and the decisive impetus of world history.

Today, at a time when it seems obvious that anti-Western sentiment and violence-prone Islamism are gaining ground, this diagnosis may appear to have proven wrong. Fukuyama is unabashed, though. In a recently published article,<sup>3</sup> he points out that

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\* We wish to thank Martin Beck for comments and Hans Seidenstücker for translating the original German article.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, in: *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993) 3, pp. 22-49; see also Huntington., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Riverside, NJ 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History?*, in: *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18.; see also Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The West May Be Cracking*. Europe and America, *International Herald Tribune*,

none of the anti-liberal fundamentalisms – and his thesis is solely addressing these – has succeeded in establishing itself as a serious alternative to the liberal model, which continues to be perceived as attractive and preferable by those peoples who – like the Iranians or the Afghans – have experienced the consequences of its realization in political praxis.

In this essay we are not concerned with whether or not Fukuyama's view concerning the "End of History" is tenable. Rather, we are looking at the thesis which is at the center of his more recent article. Not only is this new thesis just as noteworthy as his earlier one; it is indeed little short of stunning given the view he argued fourteen years ago. Fukuyama raises the question as to whether we are witnessing the rise of a new (and so far most improbable) ideological conflict of global political importance. This conflict (*pace* Huntington) is waged not between the West and "the rest," but rather within the West itself – i.e. between the United States on one side and many of its Western, particularly European, partners on the other. Fukuyama asks "whether 'the West' is really a coherent concept," and proceeds to suggest a negative answer.<sup>4</sup>

There is much to be said for Fukuyama's assessment. In the past few years and particularly since the onset of the presidency of George W. Bush, points of friction in the transatlantic relationship have increased and intensified to such an extent that it now seems appropriate to speak of a significant deterioration, if not crisis, of intra-Western relations. True, these relations have never been completely free either of conflicts about means or of conflicts about interests (distributional conflicts). However, the current differences in opinion appear to be more significant and far-reaching than in the past. Furthermore, they are accompanied by deeper disagreements which extend to notions of legitimacy, and therefore call into question the "transatlantic value community."<sup>5</sup>

Recently, we have witnessed a particularly sharp deterioration in the German-American relationship, after Chancellor Gerhard Schröder used peculiarly critical and

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August 9, 2002; see also Fukuyama, U.S. vs. Them. Opposition to American Policies Must not Become the Chief Passion in Global Politics, Washington Post, September 11, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> See also Henry Kissinger, Die Risse werden größer, Welt am Sonntag, December 1, 2002. For a similar voice from this side of the Atlantic see Werner Weidenfeld, Kulturbruch mit Amerika? Das Ende transatlantischer Selbstverständlichkeit, Gütersloh 1996.

<sup>5</sup> For the distinction between conflicts about values, means, and interests, see Volker Rittberger / Michael Zürn, Towards Regulated Anarchy in East-West Relations. Causes and Consequences of East-West Regimes, in: International Regimes in East-West Politics, ed. Volker Rittberger, London / New York 1990, pp. 9-63. For an interpretation of NATO as a security community see Thomas Risse-Kappen, Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO, in: The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, New York 1996, pp. 357-399.

clear words, while commenting on U.S. plans to bring about a “regime change” in Iraq by the use of force. This behavior contrasts sharply with previous instances of transatlantic disagreements, in which Germany used to play the role of middleman. In our view, people on both sides of the Atlantic cannot be indifferent to the developments regarding both the intra-Western relationship in general and the German-American relationship in particular. Both sides benefit from a transatlantic relationship that (compared to what is the norm in international relations) is characterized by a high degree of reciprocal respect and mutual trust, and they do so especially at a time when transnational terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction create new and serious risks to international security. Hence, whether they realize it or not, everybody stands to lose if the decision makers and peoples allow this relationship to suffer.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Taking Stock: What Points to the Existence of Cracks in the West?**

### **2.1. Growing Dissensus over Environmental, Security, and Human Rights Politics**

In the past few years, and particularly since the Republican Bush, Jr. replaced the Democrat Clinton in the White House, the governments on both sides of the Atlantic have repeatedly, and it seems, increasingly, been unable to reach agreement on important issues or at least to find mutually acceptable compromises. Among these conflicts controversies over economic matters appear to be least threatening to the transatlantic relationship. For one thing, trade disputes have long been a familiar feature of this relationship. Perhaps even more important, they take place within the framework of established rules, namely those of the WTO, which effectively limit their divisive potential. Yet, controversies have also become more frequent in other issue areas such as environmental policy, security policy, and even questions of human rights.

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<sup>6</sup> A glance at some basic data gives an idea of what is at stake economically. European and U.S. companies invest more in each other's economies than in the economies of all other regions of the world combined. “Despite all the rhetoric of an ‘Asian century’ one has to acknowledge that during the past eight years [1994-2001] the American economy has invested ten times more in the Netherlands than in China. The European economy produced more than 60% of all new jobs created by foreign investors in the U.S.” (Daniel S. Hamilton, *Die Zukunft ist nicht mehr, was sie war. Europa, Amerika und die neue weltpolitische Lage*, Stuttgart: Robert-Bosch-Stiftung, 2002, pp. 29f.). The linkages between the German and American economies are also very considerable: \$ 17.8 billion of a total of \$ 95.7 billion foreign direct investment in Germany in 2001 came from U.S. investors. Concerning the reverse capital flow, the numbers are even more significant: of the gross new investment (direct investment) amounting to 122.5 billion Euro which German companies invested abroad in 2001, 41.8% (51.2 billion Euro) went to the U.S. – by far more than to any other country. The United Kingdom follows second by a large margin (16.8 billion Euro) ([<http://www.bundesbank.de/hv/bw/download/berichte/direkt01.pdf>] Rev. 2002-12-29). A sustainable decline of this share due to a continued deterioration of the German-American relationship would result in far-reaching negative consequences that could hardly be compensated.

A common and disturbing trait of many of these conflicts is that the United States, to the frustration of many Europeans, does not merely push for solutions different than those favored by the Europeans, but is unwilling to bear the costs of compromise and decides to “go it alone.” Examples include the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Kyoto process, which the Europeans see as an indispensable instrument for mitigating the effects of climate change, or its refusal to join the great majority of states (including all EC members) in ratifying the Convention on Biological Diversity.

When it comes to international security and especially to arms control, the United States has repeatedly preferred unilateralism over international cooperation. In some cases the U.S. government has withdrawn support for international agreements which it had previously advocated and whose stipulations, to a large extent, reflect U.S. preferences. The reservations of many European allies notwithstanding, the U.S. has withdrawn from the ABM treaty with Russia, in order to be able to develop and deploy a missile defense system, which, as many Europeans fear, might destabilize nuclear deterrence or pave the way to a new nuclear arms race. Likewise, the U.S. has blocked a proposed monitoring and verification scheme intended to give teeth to the Biological Weapons Convention, weakened effective measures to curb illicit trade in small arms, rejected the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, and – through a Senate vote – declined to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which had been negotiated for forty years. Through each of these choices, the U.S. has, from the viewpoint of most European governments, hampered or prevented progress concerning vital questions of international security.

Finally, the United States has made decisions concerning human rights issues that have considerably irritated the Europeans. A prominent example is the project of an International Criminal Court intended to punish and deter genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Not only has the U.S. “unsigned” the Rome Statute and thus renounced a project that is deemed most important by many European governments. The U.S. is even actively obstructing the establishment of the court by putting pressure on states willing to cooperate. Moreover, this case adds to a list of earlier human rights disagreements between the U.S. and a majority of the world community, including the controversial use of the death penalty.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed listing of cases in which the U.S. have obstructed or thwarted cooperation efforts by the international community, see P.J. Simmons, *Global Challenges. Beating the Odds*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Policy Brief No. 17, August 2002) [<http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief17.pdf>] Rev. 2002-11-11.

## 2.2. The Dissensus over Dealing with “Rogue States”

Nowhere is the transatlantic division more spectacular and explosive today than when it comes to the question of how to respond to the threats posed by transnational Islamic terrorism and those so-called rogue states which – according to circumstantial evidence – are seeking to acquire, and may be inclined to spread, ABC-weapons and appropriate delivery systems. In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, D.C., which caused strong dismay and genuine compassion for the victim(s) not only in Western countries, the U.S. enjoyed a high degree of sympathy. Its leaders knew – recall Chancellor Schröder’s pledge of “unconditional solidarity” – that they could count on the active support from their old and some new partners to prevent the repetition of such tragic events. The “war against terrorism,” which was first waged against Afghanistan, the logistical base of al-Qaida, received the approval of the United Nations Security Council and was supported by NATO – even though the broad and vague character of American goals in this war soon caused some concern with European decision-makers and observers, and despite the fact that this war – in contrast to the Kosovo conflict – was and is waged bypassing NATO.

The tide turned, however, when, after the military victory over the Taliban regime and the subsequent apparent (though hardly decisive) weakening of the al-Qaida network, a new target appeared in the American crosshairs: Iraq. After the devastating attacks of September 2001, which literally hit the U.S. out of the blue, the Bush administration has concluded that in order to safeguard its national security (but also the security of allied and friendly states) it may be necessary to “pre-empt” state or non-state aggression through military action. In the “National Security Strategy” published in September 2002, the U.S. goes so far as to declare this option part of its foreign policy doctrine, terming it “a distinctly American internationalism.”<sup>8</sup> A further strategy paper, published in December 2002, specifies the targets of such “pre-emptive measures” as adversaries armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Even the use of

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<sup>8</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C. 2002 [[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf)] Rev. 2002-11-11. – Cf. Peter Rudolf, “Präventivkrieg” als Ausweg? Die USA und der Irak, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP-Studie S 23, June 2002) as well as Klaus-Dieter Schwarz, *Amerikas Mission. Eine Analyse der nationalen Sicherheitsstrategie der Vereinigten Staaten*, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP-Aktuell No. 38, October 2002). In German treatments of the topic, the standard translation of “pre-emptive” is “präventiv.” By contrast, in the Anglo-Saxon debate, a distinction is made between prevention and pre-emption: while the first is targeted against merely potential dangers and is, as such, illegitimate, the latter is seen as a state’s legitimate response to an imminent attack. Cf. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars. A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations*, New York 1977, pp. 74-85. A classic example for a pre-emptive strike occurred in June 1981, when Israel attacked the Iraqi nuclear reactor construction site Osirak, without prior consultation. While this action was strongly condemned by the Security Council in Resolution 487 (1981), it was secretly welcomed by many Western countries. Cf. Max Jakobson, *Shades of Roosevelt and Stalin. Preemption*, *International Herald Tribune*, October 17, 2002.

nuclear weapons against these opponents is taken into consideration.<sup>9</sup> Regarding the use of military force, the U.S. government does not want to leave the final decision to the United Nations or even to NATO. Rather, the Bush administration reserves to the U.S. the right to act, if necessary, unilaterally and without the approval of the international community or of its allies. This runs counter to both the established and approved practice of containment towards so-called states of concern (such as Iraq or North Korea) and the principle of mutual consultation, at least with the transatlantic partners, on decisions of utmost importance for international security.

The Bush, Jr. administration Washington perceives Saddam Hussein's Iraq (in contrast to, for instance, India or Pakistan) as a WMD-armed adversary and, thus, as a potential threat to the security of the United States, its allies, and the states in the region. President Bush and his advisors believe that, if this adversary is not stopped in time, it could develop into a manifest and then possibly uncontrollable threat. The U.S. is convinced that the Iraqi leadership, which has proven its unscrupulousness more than once, continues to seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction as well as – possibly with North Korean assistance – long-range delivery systems. The UN inspection and sanctions regime has, at best, been able to delay this process. In the end, this threat can only be removed by an Iraqi “regime change,” which, barring the unlikely case of Saddam Hussein going into exile, requires massive military intervention. Furthermore, the U.S. justifies such an enforced regime change by the vision of a positive “domino effect,” where a liberated Iraq becomes the core of a process of eventual democratization of every authoritarian regime in the Middle East. This democratization would facilitate a reliable cooperation between the states of the region and with the U.S. as well as other Western countries. It would also defuse the security dilemma in the region and could open up completely new perspectives for the management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, from the U.S. point of view, the democratization of the Middle East would result in a reduction of social frustrations and thus dry out the breeding ground of violent Islamic extremism.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The White House, The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, Washington D.C. 2002 [[www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/12/WMDStrategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/12/WMDStrategy.pdf)] Rev. 2002-12-29.

<sup>10</sup> In speech at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) on February 26, 2003, President Bush stated: “A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region. (...) Success in Iraq could also begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace, and set in motion progress towards a truly democratic Palestinian state. The passing of Saddam Hussein's regime will deprive terrorist networks of a wealthy patron that pays for terrorist training, and offers rewards to families of suicide bombers. And other regimes will be given a clear warning that support for terror will not be tolerated.” ([<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>] Rev. 2003-02-27); see also Herfried Münkler, Blockierte Entwicklung. Über amerikanische Motive für einen weiteren Golfkrieg, Frankfurter Rundschau, November 29, 2002.



From the perspective of the (continental) European partners,<sup>11</sup> this scenario may be desirable, but quite unlikely. They take seriously the warnings of Arab governments that a military intervention in Iraq could easily result in a unprecedented and uncontrollable spread of violence in the region, which could also adversely affect Israel and which – through the Muslim minorities in Europe – might also have a negative impact on the security in their own countries. The Europeans do not expect a military intervention in Iraq to result in a significant push for democratization – neither in the region nor elsewhere. Rather than kicking off the mentioned “positive domino effect,” an intervention would result in fueling anti-Western sentiment and strengthening Islamist violence-prone forces in the Middle East. Indeed, the Muslim fundamentalists might end up making large strides toward their declared objective, namely to overthrow the corrupt, traditional regimes and replace them with revolutionary theocracies. In addition, European governments question the willingness of the United States to commit the resources necessary to transform a militarily defeated Iraq into a decently functioning democracy. This, they are convinced, would require the U.S. (as was the case in Germany and Japan) to remain engaged for many years with troops, economic aid and cultural influence in the country – a project that, as the Europeans see it, enjoys neither sufficient public support in the U.S. nor the necessary political will on the part of the administration in Washington. At the same time, they view themselves as incapable of shouldering that burden in the Americans’ stead. Europeans and especially the German government point out that, with the “war against terrorism” (which they insist has nothing to do with the Iraqi threat) far from being over, it is too early to open a “second front.” Not only would this new war tie up military and financial resources badly needed in other parts of the world; it would also undermine the political and diplomatic conditions – i.e. the “alliance against terror,” which includes Islamic countries – necessary for successfully combating transnational terrorist networks.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the Europeans fear its consequences for the world economy, at a time when global economic prospects are rather dim anyway.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The United Kingdom adopts a different perspective, leaning towards the U.S. view. [In the meantime, further European states including Spain, Portugal, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have sided with the U.S. and the UK on this issue, whereas France, Germany, Belgium and others have stood their ground and even reinforced their opposition to a military solution. See “Die Erklärung der acht europäischen Regierungschefs,” Spiegel Online, January 30, 2003 [<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,232948,00.html>] Rev. 2003-03-12.]

<sup>12</sup> The German foreign minister Fischer emphasized this argument in his address to the UN Security Council on January 20, 2003 ([<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/aussenpolitik/>] Rev. 2003-01-21).

<sup>13</sup> As early as September 12, 2002, German finance minister Hans Eichel, speaking on the TV talk show “Berlin Mitte,” warned that a “war in Iraq would certainly result in a rapid jump of oil prices and, subsequently, in significant global economic turbulence ([<http://www.heute.t-online.de/ZDFheute/artikel/0,1367,WIRT-0-2014578,00.html>] Rev. 2003-01-15).

In the spring and summer of 2002, all indications seemed to point towards the Bush, Jr. administration dealing with the Iraq problem largely irrespective of the views of the international community. Therefore, the Europeans were much relieved (as was the rest of the world), when, in September 2002, the U.S. administration proved willing to support a multilateral approach and to pressure Saddam Hussein through the UN Security Council, offering him a final opportunity of avoiding war by fully complying with relevant Security Council resolutions and cooperating with the weapons inspectors. In the debate that preceded the new Security Council resolution (SC-Res. 1441) the Europeans did not offer a coherent strategy for dealing with the Iraqi problem. Rather, they took quite different stances on a continuum extending between early military intervention, on the one hand, and the continuation of the containment policy of the 1990s, on the other hand. Germany categorically opposed military action against Iraq and ruled out any participation even in a UN-authorized intervention;<sup>14</sup> the United Kingdom (once again) unconditionally supported the U.S.; and the veto powers Russia and especially France sought to extract U.S. concessions – an endeavor which has not proven completely unsuccessful. The main bone of contention between the permanent Security Council members was whether a second resolution should be made necessary for the use of force to be permitted in the case that Iraq would not comply with the conditions laid down in the sought-after (first) resolution. By means of such a requirement, the French and the Russians hoped to ensure that the Security Council would continue to exercise its control on the issue and also to gain time in order to increase the chances of avoiding war altogether.<sup>15</sup>

On November 8, 2002, eventually, the Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1441, imposing on Iraq a disarmament and verification regime to be completed within a short time-frame. The resolution does not explicitly threaten the use of force, should Iraq refuse to comply with its obligations. However, it unambiguously reminds Baghdad that the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face “serious consequences” should it continue to be in “material breach” of its obligations. From the

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<sup>14</sup> In the beginning of 2003 it looked as if the German government might soften its position. Foreign minister Fischer indicated that Germany might not oppose a second resolution authorizing military action if Iraq openly violated the terms of resolution 1441, although Germany’s participation in the military intervention of a mandated “coalition of the willing” was still out of the question (Cf. “Die Hoffnung wird immer kleiner,” Interview with foreign minister Fischer, *Der Spiegel* Nr. 1 (December 30, 2002), pp. 22f. and “Ratlos in New York,” *ibid.*, pp. 20-24.) In his address to the UN Security Council on January 20 (see Fn. 12), Fischer confirmed once again the German government’s “opposition against a military attack [on Iraq]”. (see also “Powell droht mit Krieg, Fischer mahnt zum Frieden” [Powell threatens war, Fischer urges peace], *Spiegel Online* – January 20, 2003 [<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,231574,00.html> Rev. 2003-01-21]).

<sup>15</sup> In the best case scenario, from the point of view of the war opponents, the extra time would have been sufficient to prevent an U.S. intervention for the moment, considering that, due to climatic reasons, fighting against Saddam’s troops would be significantly more difficult outside the winter months.

U.S. and British perspectives, it is crucial, however, that in this case the resolution does not require separate Security Council authorization of further (i.e. military) measures. Russia's and France's original insistence on a second resolution has been watered down to the mere requirement of consultations, which the United States could easily meet without being kept from using force.<sup>16</sup>

To sum up: Europeans may consider it an encouraging success that the United States (finally) chose not to ignore the United Nations with regard to this issue; however, this cannot obscure the fact that they obviously did not succeed in "handcuffing" the United States,<sup>17</sup> who could at any time convincingly threaten to do what it considers necessary, with or without the backing of the international community.

### 2.3. Tense Understandings of Self and Other

These differences in addressing the Iraq issue reflect and feed a contentious constellation of perceptions of self and other in the transatlantic relationship: Europeans perceive the United States as a hegemonic power that is increasingly disregarding the need for international cooperation, and that believes that it can 'consume' solidarity without having to 'invest' in it to the same extent. On the part of the sole remaining superpower, Europeans register a growing tendency towards unilateralism or, more to the point, towards "à la carte multilateralism," i.e. a foreign policy style characterized

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<sup>16</sup> At the beginning of 2003, when military preparations for a war were at full speed, it seemed likely that this was how Resolution 1441 was understood by the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Notably, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell used the term "material breach" when speaking of the omissions in the weapons report turned in by Baghdad. (Cf. "U.S. Says Iraq 'Fails' on Disclosure. Powell Calls Weapons Declaration a 'Breach' of U.N. Resolutions," Washington Post, December 20, 2002, p. A 01.) For a while, even German diplomats were no longer certain if a second resolution would be needed – as the German Permanent Representative to the UN, ambassador Gunter Pleuger, pointed out in a New York Times interview (cf. "Germany Will Not Insist on Second Vote, Envoy Says," New York Times, January 9, 2003 [http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/09/international/europe/09GERM.html] Rev. 2003-01-14). The avoidance of a second resolution would have taken some pressure off the German government, being no longer forced to take a clear stand. Nevertheless, at his press conference on January 14, 2003, Chancellor Schröder once again spoke in favor of a second UN Security Council resolution: "I think that it is rather likely that the European partners will work towards a second resolution, ( . . . ) I also consider it reasonable." ([http://www.sueddeutsche.de/index.php?url=/deutschland/politik/60228&datei=index.php] Rev. 2003-01-15). [In the meantime, events have taken yet another turn. In February and March 2003, the U.S. and Britain called for a second resolution, setting Iraq a clear and narrow deadline for disarmament, while France, Russia, and Germany denied the need for a further resolution at this stage, arguing that the inspectors should be given more time to complete their job.]

<sup>17</sup> Speaking to European journalists, Colin Powell said on October 28, 2002: "By our willingness to show flexibility on that point, we essentially believe we have accommodated those who wanted an opportunity to decide this. They have now the opportunity to decide or not to decide it, to pass a second resolution or offer a second resolution or not, and we will be part of that debate. We're part of that Security Council. We had to make sure that we did not do it in such a way that a set of handcuffs were being put upon the United States and other nations (...)." [http://www.usembassy.it/file200211/alia/a2110106.htm] Rev. 2003-01-15.

by the tendency to practice international cooperation through international institutions if and only if it serves narrowly defined national interests, irrespective of the frustrations this behavior is bound to cause among its partners. This hegemon possesses unprecedented military and technological superiority<sup>18</sup> and reserves the decision as to when and where to use that power to itself. The Europeans reluctantly realize that when the right to “pre-emptive defense” becomes part of the most powerful and influential country’s foreign and security policy doctrine, basic norms of international law are being undermined – such as the general prohibition of the use of force and the role of the Security Council as the sole institution to authorize the use of force, based on Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. However, even more than the rationally calculated U.S. *realpolitik*, the Europeans fear a moralistic and Manichean neo-idealism, as being expressed in formulas such as the “axis of evil” introduced by President Bush in his State of the Union address in January 2002.<sup>19</sup> Against this background, the Europeans see themselves as the defenders of the principles of international law and of an international order that is compatible with a vision of international politics based on non-aggression, common rules, compromise, and dialogue – an order which they seek to promote through a moderate, civilizing foreign policy based on compromise and cooperation.

On the other hand, the U.S. tends to see the European Union as a grouping of states that refuses to take its share of responsibility for international security, i.e. a degree of responsibility which corresponds to its economic power or at least its self-perception as an important actor in international relations who is playing a key role in global governance. Representing many political analysts who sympathize with the Bush, Jr. administration, Robert Kagan speaks of a “power gap” between the United States and Europe which has appeared as the Europeans have increasingly been “moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation.”<sup>20</sup> Many U.S. opinion leaders see the “old world” and its aging societies in irrevocable decline and unable to reform their economies and social security systems.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Greatest Superpower Ever*, in: *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19 (2002) 3, pp. 8-18. [[http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2002\\_spring/kennedy.html](http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2002_spring/kennedy.html)] Rev. 2003-1-6.

<sup>19</sup> William Pfaff, *Thinking With a Manichaeon Bent. Light vs. Darkness*, *International Herald Tribune*, November 28, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Kagan, *Power and Weakness*, in: *Policy Review* No. 113 (June/July 2002) [<http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html>] Rev. 2002-11-11. (For a book-length elaboration see his essay: *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York 2003.) – In the meantime Kagan’s assessment of the transatlantic relationship has become part of a vigorous debate. For German contributions, see Gulliver vs. Liliput. Robert Kagans “Macht und Schwäche” in der Debatte (with contributions by Hans Arnold, Hans-Peter Dürr, Gunther Hellmann, Andrian Kreye, Claus Leggewie, Otfried Nassauer, August Pradetto, Ulrich K. Preuß, Joscha Schmierer, Sibylle Tönnies, Frank Unger, Karsten D. Voigt und Werner Weidenfeld), in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 47 (2002) 11, pp. 1345-1364.

From the U.S. perspective, the European partners refuse to confront the threats posed by global networks of well-financed terrorist organizations and by dictators striving to build up their own WMD arsenals; they do so because they fear both the political consequences they would have to draw from this and the reluctance of their publics to accept the associated burdens. At the same time, they try to slow down the United States in taking the necessary action, because they expect this to result in a further loss of European influence on international politics or rather in Europe's already existing relative insignificance being exposed. The result is a policy that appears both fearful and careless. Americans' reaction to this policy is furious, where they see it as caused by a cynical calculation, according to which it is not the Europeans, but the U.S. (either exclusively or primarily) that must be afraid of "cataclysmic" terrorist attacks like 9-11. As a result, the U.S. sees itself as a nation that lives up to the challenges placed upon it by virtue of its unique power position and that takes responsibility not only for international security, but also for the global spread of democracy, free market economy, and human rights. Put differently: the U.S. pictures itself as a "benevolent hegemon,"<sup>21</sup> providing the world with collective goods such as a minimum degree of international security and political and economic freedom. What is more, for U.S. policy makers, it is perfectly consistent with this mission that in their foreign policy they give pride of place to their own country's security and economic interests: after all, a weakened hegemon would be unable to maintain international order and would have to leave the world exposed to unfettered anarchy.

### **3. Explanatory Approaches: What Caused the Cracks to Appear?**

#### **3.1. Three Perspectives on International Politics**

When trying to explain these conflicts and tensions in the transatlantic relationship, it is worthwhile to look at the theories which political scientists use to explain events, processes, and patterns of behavior in international politics. There is no consensus among scholars of international relations (IR) on which concepts, assumptions, and models are most appropriate to explain the (inter)actions of states and other actors of international politics. Rather, a number of theories or "paradigms" compete with each other. We refer here to three of these, because they stand out as particularly influential in IR and because their basic assumptions in fact are reflected in many analyses of the current transatlantic discontent.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Duncan Snidal, *Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory*, in: *International Organization* 39 (1985) 4, pp. 579-615.

<sup>22</sup> See also John S. Duffield, *Transatlantic Relations after the Cold War. Theory, Evidence, and the Future*, in: *International Studies Perspectives* 2 (2001) 1, pp. 93-115. Concerning the three theories briefly described and then applied below see Gert Krell, *Weltbilder und Weltordnung. Einführung in die Theorie der internationalen Beziehungen*, Baden-Baden 2000, Chapters. 6, 8, and 11. Regarding

The first of these theories is *realism*, which is based on the assumption that international politics is about security or the maximization of one's chances of survival. This notion builds on the observation of a sharp contrast between domestic and international politics. Whereas in domestic politics, rules and laws can, if need be, be authoritatively interpreted by the judiciary and enforced by the executive, international relations is shaped by the conditions of anarchy and the security dilemma, which, in the final consequence, require states – as the main actors in international politics – to rely on self-help. When push comes to shove, only that actor is capable of effective self-help, who possesses sufficient power, i.e. sufficient military, economic, ideological, or political-diplomatic resources both in order to force its will upon other actors and in order to resist the demands of others. To be sure, the principle of self-help does not rule out cooperation of states for their mutual interest. It does imply, however, that states, knowing that today's partner might be tomorrow's enemy, ought to keep an eye on the development of their own relative power position as well as on the possibility of deception inherent in many cooperative enterprises.

From the perspective of (social) *constructivism*, this view of international politics is both too simplistic and too pessimistic. “Anarchy” – according to constructivism's slogan – “is what states make of it,”<sup>23</sup> i.e. power politics, security competition, distrust, the latent “war of all against all,” and all the other elements of a so-called *realpolitik* are historically possible, but are not an unavoidable result of anarchical preconditions shaping international politics. Material conditions, such as the distribution of military or economic capabilities, do not determine the form of international relations at a given time. Instead, anarchy – i.e. the absence of a world government which could effectively and reliably settle conflicts, removing the need for its ‘subjects’ to resort to violent self-help – is compatible with different “cultures,” i.e. relatively stable constellations of perceptions of self and other. Here, the range of possibilities includes enmity, but also extends to mere rivalry and even to mutual responsiveness and friendship between states. Therefore, ideational and social factors such as values, norms, social roles, or collective identities (self-perceptions) determine the behavior of states and other actors<sup>24</sup> in international politics.

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the position of prominence these theories hold in the current IR debate see Stephen M. Walt, *International Relations. One World, Many Theories*, in: *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998), pp. 29-47.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Anarchy is What States Make of It. The Social Construction of Power Politics*, in: *International Organization* 46 (1992) 2, pp. 391-425.

<sup>24</sup> In constructivism, social actors are constituted (first and foremost) by intersubjective meanings rather than (exclusively or primarily) by the possession of material properties. This makes constructivist theorizing much more ‘permeable’ to non-state actors than (e.g.) realism, which tends to see international relations as the natural domain of states.

The third theory to be referred to in this article also distances itself from the simple and uncomfortable ‘truths’ with which realism has always tried to dampen the hopes for civilized international politics. As we have seen, realism assumes that international anarchy and the power configuration existing at a certain point in time (such as hegemony, bipolarity, or multipolarity) determine the conditions for each and every state by which it has to align its foreign policy if it seeks to ensure its survival and welfare in a dangerous world. From the perspective of *liberalism*, this is a gross exaggeration of the role that external factors play in shaping states’ foreign policies. In fact, the manner in which a state conducts its foreign policy towards other states does not simply, or not even predominantly, depend on its power position. Nor is the shape of the relations between states at a given point in time merely a function of the distribution of power between them. Rather, foreign policy as well as international politics are contingent on how the political process is organized within the state (or the states concerned, respectively) and whose interests, due to social and political institutions and practices in this state (or these states, respectively), run the best chances of being taken into account by foreign policy decision makers. In particular, liberalism assumes that democracies – whose institutions introduce various checks and balances into the political process and make it difficult for foreign policy decision makers to shift the costs of risky decisions to others, i.e. to the populations who they represent and whom they depend on for their survival in office – conduct a generally more cautious, cooperative, and peaceful foreign policy than authoritarian states. This tendency is especially apparent in the relationship among democracies: Being capable of presenting impressive empirical evidence for their argument, liberal theorists see the hypothesis that democracies do not wage war against each other, as coming close to a social scientific law.<sup>25</sup>

## **3.2. Realist, Constructivist, and Liberal Explanations of the Cracks in the Transatlantic Relationship**

### **3.2.1. Realist Perspectives**

Examining the transatlantic relationship, as it has developed since the end of the Cold War, in the light of these three theories, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that realism has considerable explanatory power in this case. From the realist perspective, foreign policy is power politics and results in states striving for autonomy and influ

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. James Lee Ray, Democracy: On the Level(s), Does Democracy Correlate With Peace?, in: What Do We Know About War?, ed. John A. Vasquez, Lanham 2000, pp. 299-316; Anna Geis, Diagnose: Doppelbefund – Ursache ungeklärt? Die Kontroverse um den "demokratischen Frieden", in: Politische Vierteljahresschrift 42 (2001) 2, pp. 282-298 as well as Jack S. Levy, War and Peace, in: Handbook of International Relations, Eds. Walter Carlsnaes/Thomas Risse/Beth Simmons, London 2002, pp. 350-368.

ence.<sup>26</sup> States want to be autonomous in order to use their means of power in whatever way they deem best suited to ensure their security and welfare; and they want to exert influence on other states in order to make it as difficult as possible for the latter to use *their* means of power to damage them (or first of all, to acquire the amount of power that could endanger them). If states have to choose between autonomy and influence, they usually decide in favor of autonomy, especially when the external threat to their national security appears high. All states tend towards power politics, but only among the already powerful, this tendency unfolds in an unrestricted manner – the more powerful a state, the more it tends towards power politics.

Applying these considerations to the case at hand, i.e. the development of the transatlantic relationship in recent years, we can state that realist expectations are largely born out. The U.S. conducts a foreign policy that can be described as power politics, because it seeks to increase its autonomy and influence. Where autonomy and influence clash, influence based on institutionalized cooperation gives way to autonomy, i.e. a unilateral policy that has no “handcuffs” put on it, just as realism predicts for times of high security pressure. Finally, this type of behavior has grown in significance in the past few years, precisely at a time, when America’s unique power has become ever more pronounced. This is not to say that U.S. unilateralism is a novel phenomenon that could not be observed before George W. Bush became president. Rather, the current U.S. foreign policy behavior is more adequately described as an extreme variant of a hegemonic practice that already existed during the Cold War, even as it was intensified with the fall of the second super power, i.e. the Soviet Union. Similarly, when we emphasize the new quality of the current threats to Western (and non-Western) security, which blur the line between the domestic and the foreign, we must not overlook that the events of September 11, 2001 are only the climax of a number of terrorist attacks that U.S. installations faced throughout the 1990s.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, the Europeans feel less intensely threatened. Concerning transnational terrorism, the U.S. continues to be seen as the main or even single target of possible further attacks. But views also differ concerning the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of “rogue states”: In contrast to the U.S., the Europeans do not regard it as a realistic danger that they might become the victim of an WMD attack launched by states like North Korea, Iraq, or Iran.<sup>28</sup> Given this discrepancy in the per

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<sup>26</sup> Rainer Baumann / Volker Rittberger / Wolfgang Wagner, Neorealist Foreign Policy Theory, in: German Foreign Policy Since Unification. Theories and Case Studies, ed. Volker Rittberger, Manchester 2001, pp. 37-67.

<sup>27</sup> These include the first attack on the World Trade Center (February 1993; 6 deaths) as well as the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (August 1998; 224 deaths), and on the USS Cole in the port of Aden (October 2000; 17 deaths).

<sup>28</sup> Regarding the divergent assessments of the threat posed by Iraq see Kagan (Fn. 20).



ception of threat as well as the lack of a uniform European strategy to combat these new threats, the U.S. perceives itself as having to rely on itself and to make use of the transatlantic power gap when organizing collective action against these dangers. Of course, it is a matter of dispute as to whether the current strategy meets the requirement of prudence stressed by classical realists such as Hans J. Morgenthau<sup>29</sup>, i.e. to what extent the strategy and tactics chosen by Washington will indeed serve the security interests of the United States.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2.2. Constructivist Perspectives

Constructivism contributes to the analysis by focusing attention on the ideational and social dimension of the current tensions. When we pointed to the incompatibilities in the perceptions of self and other on both sides of the Atlantic (sec. 2.3.), we implicitly took a constructivist perspective. In the article that served as our point of departure in this essay, Fukuyama similarly stresses the role of ideological differences within the West resulting from different historical experiences. To him, most of the transatlantic tension originates in a fundamental disagreement over the question of where “the ultimate source of liberal democratic legitimacy lies.” Fukuyama summarizes this disagreement as follows:

Americans tend not to see any source of democratic legitimacy higher than the constitutional democratic nation-state. To the extent that any international organization has legitimacy, it is because duly constituted democratic majorities have handed that legitimacy up to them in a negotiated, contractual process. Such legitimacy can be withdrawn at any time by the contracting parties. International law and organization have no existence independent of this type of voluntary agreement between sovereign nation-states. Europeans, by contrast, tend to believe that democratic legitimacy flows from the will of an international community much larger than any individual nation-state. This international community is not embodied concretely in a single, global democratic constitutional order. Yet it hands down legitimacy to existing international institutions, which are seen as partially embodying it.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., New York 1973.

<sup>30</sup> For a critical analysis of current U.S. foreign policy from this perspective see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power. Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*, Oxford 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Fukuyama, *The West May Be Cracking* (Fn. 3).

This interpretation<sup>32</sup>, of course, provokes further questions: For example, one would like to know why and how this basic ideological disagreement has emerged in the first place. Constructivists would seek to make the varying foreign policy identities of the partners intelligible as the result of specific historical experiences. In this context, Gert Krell points to the phenomenon of U.S. “exceptionalism,” the “specifically American variant of nationalism.” The perception, extending back to the first immigrants, of America and American society as representing a new and better way of life could help to explain the reluctance of U.S. policymakers to accept goals and values authored, promulgated, or embodied by international institutions. In addition to exceptionalism, Krell refers to the pronounced individualism in American political culture that, from the outset, has been accompanied by religious fundamentalism. “Up to the present time, in the U.S. ‘the Evil’ is not just a religious, but also a political category (. . .) Combined with this fundamentalist feature that can partly be attributed to Puritanism, is a Manichean world view with a tendency towards self-elevation (*Überhöhung des Selbst*).”<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the corresponding European experiences relate to a shared history, in which nationalism and unlimited sovereignty are associated with war and destruction and supra-nationalism is associated with peace and welfare.

A further question suggested by this analysis is the following: Granted that the supposed differences in the political culture in general and the conceptions of legitimacy do indeed exist, they can, by their very nature, hardly have come into being in the past few years. But if so, how can they possibly account for conflicts (or an accumulation thereof) that we have begun to observe only recently? One possible answer suggests itself immediately: these differences become manifest, and upset the transatlantic relationship, only now, because the East-West conflict – which first and foremost was a conflict over fundamentally divergent political values – concealed these comparatively minor differences.

### 3.2.3. Liberal Perspectives

At first glance, liberalism does not seem to have much to offer when it comes to explaining the current crisis in transatlantic relations. Rather, it helps us to understand why cooperation within this segment of the international system (at least until now) has been so unusually diverse, deep, and stable: According to liberals, the security

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<sup>32</sup> Fukuyama’s interpretation could be refined by referring to the socio-cultural proximity between the United Kingdom and the U.S. which helps to account for the “special relationship” of these two countries – a relationship which in many regards represents a deviant case in the context of the observations made in this essay.

<sup>33</sup> Gert Krell, *Arroganz der Macht, Arroganz der Ohnmacht. Der Irak und die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen* (unpublished manuscript, Frankfurt a. M. 2002).

dilemma – which realists see as a universal condition of international politics – does not exist or is negligible between democracies. Since they do not threaten each other’s existence, they are willing to get involved in close mutual cooperation, even as, in this way, they forfeit some of their decision-making autonomy and allow themselves to become mutually dependent. Liberalism can also explain why there is no concern among Western policy makers that the tensions might escalate into violent conflict. NATO members form a “pluralistic security community” (Karl W. Deutsch) and this includes the reliable expectation that conflicts are dealt with and eventually solved without the use of force or even the threat of the use of force.

Liberalism can, however, contribute a further insight that sheds some light on the currently emerging cracks in the transatlantic relationship: From the liberal perspective, foreign policy always has a domestic side. Governments are constantly tempted, and sometimes succumb to this temptation, to “score points” with their publics (and, in democracies, with their electorates) by the way they deal with foreign policy issues. This temptation is the stronger, the more fragile the domestic power position of the government appears, the more widespread and pronounced are opinions and sentiments within the population (such as patriotism or anti-Americanism) that can be attended to through a conflict-accentuating foreign policy, and the smaller, or the more easily controllable, the related damage to important foreign policy goals (such as the preservation of one’s partners goodwill etc.) appears to be. Especially the latest troubles in the German-American relationship – two countries whose governments faced important and hotly contested nation-wide elections (*Bundestagswahlen* and Congressional midterm elections, respectively) at the time when the tensions arose – provide rich empirical evidence for these hypotheses.

The blunt public (and as such unprecedented) rejection by the German government of the U.S. approach to the Iraqi issue may be partly explained by opinions prevalent in German society. Chancellor Schröder’s talk of “*der deutsche Weg*” (the German way)<sup>34</sup> appeared to signal a break with a policy style that German governments had practiced for decades and that was characterized by the deliberate compliance with the collective decisions of authoritative international bodies such as the UN Security Council. The hypothesis that the Schröder government’s position on this issue was formulated with an eye to the upcoming *Bundestagswahl* is supported by the fact that in a poll conducted shortly after the 2002 election, around 49% of the respondents were categorically opposed to Germany’s participation in a possible war against Iraq. However, the share of respondents who were in favor of a German participation pro

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<sup>34</sup> Gerhard Schröder introduced this phrase during his party’s election campaign in August 2002 (“Die SPD im Wahlkampf auf einem ‘deutschen Weg’,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 8, 2002).

vided there was a UN Security Council mandate was not much lower (46%).<sup>35</sup> This is a rather narrow lead and hence it is doubtful that a robust domestic-politics based explanation of Germany's extreme stance on the Iraqi issue can be provided, at least on these terms.<sup>36</sup> An explanation based on realist theory and referring to the German increase in power after unification might be more plausible.<sup>37</sup>

Liberal theory also proves of limited value when it comes to explaining U.S. behavior in the current Iraq debate. At any rate, one cannot speak of overwhelming support for the deployment of U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf. According to opinion polls, the approval rate fell below 60% in August 2002, and at the end of October only 55% of respondents favored a U.S. strike on Iraq.<sup>38</sup> Despite the surprisingly low and by no means unconditional public support,<sup>39</sup> the behavior of the U.S. administration under George W. Bush may in part be explained by societal factors: "By mobilizing the security argument and the threat from abroad, a government's lack of domestic legitimacy or the fact that it represents particular interests is disguised."<sup>40</sup> Of course, further research would be necessary to back up this claim. In any case, it is a remarkable fact in this context that in January 2002 Americans' confidence in the Bush administration's competence in coping with domestic problems only received a 40:60 rating, while its competence concerning national security and combating terrorism received a significantly more positive 70:30 rating.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Infratest dimap October 2002 [<http://www.infratest-dimap.de/politik/deutschlandtrend/dt0210/default.htm>] Rev. 2002-11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Henry Kissinger has attributed the German uncompromising and, from an U.S. point of view, disloyal stance to what he interprets as the new political elite's "anti-Americanism." See Kissinger, The "Made in Berlin" Generation, *Washington Post*, October 30, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed analysis of German foreign policy since unification on the basis of the theories mentioned in this article, see *German Foreign Policy Since Unification. Theories and Case Studies*, ed. Volker Rittberger, Manchester/New York 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Clear differences between the German and U.S. publics emerge with regard to the question of whether Saddam Hussein should be removed from power. While among U.S. respondents 62% favour such a measure, only 33% of German respondents are favourable. (The Pew Research Center [<http://people-press.org/reports/>] Rev. 2002-12-29).

<sup>39</sup> More recent polls indicate broader approval within the U.S. public for the hard line taken by the Bush, Jr. administration. According to these polls, in mid-January 2003 more than two thirds (68%) of the respondents favored military action against Iraq. However, these findings remain ambiguous. For, at the same time, only 30% favored an attack on Iraq if efforts should fail to prove that the country possesses weapons of mass destruction (The Pew Research Center [<http://people-press.org/reports/>] Rev. 2003-01-18).

<sup>40</sup> Krell (Fn. 33).

<sup>41</sup> Krell (Fn. 33). Another liberal explanation of the 'Atlantic rift' is based on the "domestic analogy," i.e. the tendency of states to reproduce in their foreign policy their domestically practiced political and social behaviour such as, e.g., strategies to deal with conflicts. Thus, Tony Judt argues that differences between U.S. and European societies are growing and that this development is a root cause for diverging postures of the Western partners vis-à-vis questions of international politics, see Tony Judt,

#### 4. Pondering Solutions: How to Mend the Cracks?

The preceding discussion of IR theory-based explanations for the recent strains in the transatlantic relationship has concentrated on issues of international security. Turning to possible strategies for mending ‘the cracks in the West,’ the emphasis is once again on this issue area. This focus is certainly not inevitable: after all, it is obviously not the case that in other issue areas such as money, trade, or the environment the European-American relationship is characterized by anything resembling pure harmony. Nevertheless, security relations are special in this context justifying devoting particular attention to them. For while the tensions in various low-politics issue areas can be interpreted as symptoms of a continuing competitive relationship that existed long before the end of the Cold War, comparable conflicts in the issue area of security cooperation, which formed the backbone of the transatlantic relationship during the Cold War, have emerged in this intensity and frequency only in recent years.<sup>42</sup> If security issues are at the heart of the present crisis, then devising adequate and mutually acceptable strategies for responding to the new security threats – such as transnational terrorism and “rogue states” which possess weapons of mass destruction – are central to a sustainable re-definition of the foundations and the tasks of the Western alliance or transatlantic community.<sup>43</sup>

##### 4.1. Realism: Balancing through Upgrading European Security and Defense Cooperation

Accepting Kagan’s argument that the different approaches to international politics practiced on either side of the Atlantic are largely due to the power gap between America and Europe,<sup>44</sup> an appropriate response would be the creation of a European countervailing power – an ambition that is predicted by realist theory and termed “balancing.” Even when, in the foreseeable future, the objective and subjective secu

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Its Own Worst Enemy, in: New York Review of Books August 15, 2002 ([<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15632>] Rev. 2003-03-10).

<sup>42</sup> France’s withdrawal from the military arm of NATO in 1966 is a notable exception. Also, the recurring conflicts over the burden-sharing within the alliance are vaguely related.

<sup>43</sup> Other observers also emphasize the need for a re-definition of the relationship (as opposed to a mere renewal along traditional lines). For instance, discussing the German-American relationship, Jackson Janes and Cathleen Fischer state: “undits on both sides of the Atlantic are predicting that German-American relations will never again be the same. They are right. (...) That is because both Germany and the United States are still struggling to come to terms with their respective ‘11s’ [i.e. September 11 (2001) and the 9<sup>th</sup> of November (1989), respectively].” (Jackson Janes / Cathleen Fisher, *Depersonalizing Politics – Focusing on Policy*, Washington, D.C. 2002: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies [[www.aicgs.org/at-issue/ai-depersonalizing.shtml](http://www.aicgs.org/at-issue/ai-depersonalizing.shtml)] Rev. 2002-11-11).

<sup>44</sup> Kagan (Fn. 20).

rity threats posed by “rogue states” may be less for Europe than for the U.S., strengthening Europe’s power position appears to be a rational policy goal as it would remove some of the pressure now burdening the transatlantic relationship. From a realist perspective in any case, America’s superiority is a threat to the autonomous development of Europe, threatening to split Europe up, and therefore runs counter to fundamental European interests, particularly if it increasingly leads to unilateral action by the U.S., which, at present, the Europeans are unable to prevent or influence effectively.

The formation of a European countervailing power would have to include a strengthening of its military capabilities. In particular, the EU would need to speed up and intensify the process of building a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP),<sup>45</sup> although balancing in this case would have to go beyond military-political reforms. On the political level, closer coordination and ultimately a greater unanimity of the European Union in matters of security would be required. The question of Iraq has once more shown that such unity only continues to be lacking, but is fostered by the existing transatlantic power gap. The formation of a countervailing power through a significantly enhanced and intensified ESDP would not necessarily (and should not) have a confrontational character. Rather, a new form of transatlantic division of labor could be habituated: Europeans would increasingly live up to the American expectations of the Europeans taking greater responsibility for peace and stability in their own neighborhood and would be able to support the Americans more effectively in selected regions outside the European continent.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Europe would become less dependent on the United States. As a result, the Europeans, in case of a dissent over security policy, would be less sensitive to the U.S. threatening (however implicitly) to reduce its commitment to European stability. In fact, such a new division of labor might provide the Europeans with an as yet unknown influence on Washington’s security-political decisions. Commenting on Kagan’s theses, Werner Weidenfeld concludes: “What our continent needs in order to be a global actor and to be taken seriously in times of crisis, is a strategic idea of Europe.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The European Council in Cologne on June 3 and 4, 1999 is generally considered as the ESDP’s date of birth. The first initiatives can be traced back to the Maastricht treaty (1992), if not further. Within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, this treaty established for the first time the responsibility of the European Union concerning all matters of security and defense policy (Art. 17 TEU, formerly Art. J.7).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Helga Haftendorn, *One Year after 9/11. A Critical Appraisal of German-American Relations*. Lecture delivered on September 17, 2002 at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies [<http://www.aicgs.org/publications/PDF/haftendorn.pdf>] Rev. 2002-11-11.

<sup>47</sup> Werner Weidenfeld, *Gesucht: Europa als strategische Idee*, in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 47 (2002) 11, pp. 1363f.

However, given the very limited financial resources in most European countries, it is questionable whether such a strategy can be successfully pursued in the foreseeable future. That is, even though inspired by (political) realism, the strategy may ironically be doomed due to a lack of realism.<sup>48</sup> If the worst comes to the worst, proceeding down this road leads into a cul-de-sac. This would be the case if the U.S. would demand from the Europeans ever more substantial contributions to its hegemonic world order policy now that they are able to provide it, while at the same time the European influence would remain modest, because its improved power resources are still way below the threshold at which they would begin to become politically significant.<sup>49</sup>

#### **4.2. Constructivism: Dialogue of Cultures**

Devising a constructivist explanation for the growing tensions in the European-American relationship we, following Fukuyama, have pointed out the divergent understandings of the locus of legitimacy in international politics: While for Americans legitimacy comes bottom-up rather than top-down, the Europeans view the international community as a source of legitimacy outside the nation-state. The solution that corresponds to this explanation is easily formulated in general terms; yet, its implementation, is everything but easy. From the European perspective, the goal must be to strengthen the loyalty of U.S. political decision-makers to multilateral agreements and organizations. In light of the ‘consumption’ of solidarity practiced by the U.S. as a matter of course, especially during the past two years, this approach does not seem to hold much promise in the short term, though. Still, a few recent developments nourish hope that the U.S. might revise its UN policy in the foreseeable future. A case in point is the U.S. rejoining UNESCO, which it left in 1984. The fact that in the case of Iraq – in contrast to the Clinton administration during the Kosovo conflict – President Bush and his Secretary of State Powell have, despite their criticism, eventually chosen to seek a UN Security Council resolution, may be seen as another hint in this direction. On the other hand, it is plain that these steps and gestures should not be overrated,

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. military expenditures amount to approximately \$ 300 billion annually. All EU member states taken together spend “only” \$ 130 billion on defense ([<http://www.sipri.org>] Rev. 2002-12-29). In addition, U.S. military expenditures are scheduled to grow in the coming years in order to meet the needs of the war against terror: while the military expenditures have already reached \$ 330.6 billion (= 3.24 % of GDP) in 2002, \$ 369 billion are earmarked for the Pentagon in the 2003 budget, and in 2007 defense spending is to amount to \$ 442 billion ([<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2003/>] Rev. 2002-12-29).

<sup>49</sup> Leaving aside the effects on the transatlantic relationship, it is questionable as to whether the planned modernization of weapons systems and increasing of personnel (currently, 60,000 troops are to be earmarked for the rapid deployment force to be established in 2003) will provide adequate protection against the new security threats. This is because even the most advanced weapons systems are of only limited use in asymmetrical wars.

especially since a case can be made without much difficulty that instrumental interests shape the recent U.S. behavior towards the United Nations.

Meanwhile, constructivism does not argue that a state's foreign policy identity changes over night. Nor, as a rule, does such a change occur spontaneously. An instrument to promote change of basic understandings of self and other from the outside is the dialogue of cultures – the anti-thesis, if you will, to Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations."<sup>50</sup> A prerequisite of genuine dialogue is empathy (usually itself the product of long-term learning processes). Empathy involves overcoming one's own ethnocentrism and developing the ability and willingness to put oneself in the other's shoes. "Everyone must be able to locate his or her own individual, collective, national world within the other possible worlds, and to view it from a different/alien perspective."<sup>51</sup> An important step in this direction is gaining knowledge about other nations, cultures, and religions, and taking seriously their quest for respect and for being recognized as equal in worth and rights. One does not go out on a limb by asserting that the cultural ties between Europe and the U.S. are still rather strong and that both sides form part of a single civilization. Thus, a strategy of promoting the "dialogue of cultures" does not face insurmountable obstacles, although cultural differences that do exist between the U.S. and "the old Europe" deserve more attention and serious study. We have to launch and maintain a dialogue that takes place on many levels, examining the sources of the transatlantic misunderstandings and resentments that continue to burden the European-American relationship for all the indisputable "cultural proximity" of the Western partners.

A much greater challenge is of course involved in initiating and conducting successfully a dialogue with representatives of Islamic culture. Here the goal must be to reduce the subjective (i.e. mutually perceived) threats by increasing knowledge and understanding of one another. Dialogue can also be hampered by adverse social and material conditions. Politics can lead the way: through prudent legislation, the integration of immigrants may be alleviated; and in foreign economic policy, Western states should work towards international regimes that promote social justice on the

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<sup>50</sup> Huntington's slogan is misleading because the central "fault line" runs not between, but within cultures. This intra-cultural clash occurs between secularized social strata (which often include elements of the authoritarian ruling elites, but also elements of the opposition fighting authoritarian neo-patrimonialism) and religious counter-forces (that argue for a conservation or resuscitation of holy traditions or rally around charismatic leaders who instrumentalize religion to create a collective identity). This is rather obvious within Islam, but not exclusive to it. In the U.S., the "religious right" advocates the return to a supposedly glorious and virtuous past as do numerous Islamist groups in the Middle East. Cf. Edda Heiligsetzer, *Religiös-fundamentalistischer Terrorismus im Vergleich. Extremistischer Protestantismus in den USA und fundamentalistische Gewalt im islamischen Orient*, in: *Die Friedens-Warte* 76 (2001) 1, pp. 81-100.

<sup>51</sup> Ludwig Liegle, *Dialog der Kulturen* (unpublished lecture, Tübingen 2002).



global level. In addition, multilateral fora should be used to promote and strengthen, within the Islamic states and other developing countries, the notion that democracy is not a purely Western concept or project, but a system of rule that is compatible with, and desirable for, many cultures.

The United Nations system in particular can serve as such a forum, and it has explicitly offered to assume this role. Thus, the General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the “international year of dialogue among civilizations.” In September 2000, this dialogue had been the topic of a round table at UN headquarters initiated by the Iranian president, Mohammed Khatami, and chaired by the Secretary-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura.<sup>52</sup> In the future, these initial steps will have to be followed up on all levels, including the local and national levels.

### **4.3. Liberalism: Reducing the Dependency on Oil Imports and Democratization**

Liberalism (in a way similar to constructivism) suggests a strategy that immediately addresses the new threats to Western national security and is thus indirectly capable of improving the transatlantic relationship. The focus of this strategy is less on the subjective dimension of these threats, but rather on institutional constraints on societal or governmental interests that dispose states to use force as part of their foreign policy. From the liberal perspective, democratization as a comprehensive strategy of peace holds the key to the solution. The liberal theory of international relations is, however, dependent on ‘cooperation’ with research on political transition, whose task is to provide a complex understanding of the conditions under which democratization is likely to take place and to take root, focusing, *inter alia*, on the relationship between authoritarian elites and reformers.<sup>53</sup> Such an understanding is particularly needed in this case, since the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, including many oil-producing states, have proven especially resistant to democratizing tendencies that have succeeded in other regions of the world.<sup>54</sup> They include states that support or tolerate terrorist groups and also ones that, as for example Iraq or Iran, may pursue their own WMD programs. All obstacles to democratization do not originate in these countries, though. By virtue of their insatiable hunger for energy the highly developed

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<sup>52</sup> See also Ahmad Kamal Abu-l-Magd et al., *Crossing the Divide. Dialogue among Civilizations*, South Orange, NJ 2001 as well as The World Bank, *Dialogue Across Cultures*, May 2-3, 2003. A Summary of the Proceedings [[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Dialogue/\\$File/Dialogue-Report.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Dialogue/$File/Dialogue-Report.pdf)] Rev. 2003-01-15.

<sup>53</sup> A seminal text is Albert O. Hirschman, *Journeys Toward Progress. Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America*, New York 1965.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Peter Pawelka, *Der orientalische Staat: zur Resistenz patrimonialer und autoritärer Systeme in einer globalisierten Welt*, in: *Entwicklung – Demokratie – Frieden. Schwerpunkte Tübinger Politikwissenschaft*, ed. Volker Rittberger, Baden-Baden 2003, pp. 145-164.

Western industrial societies contribute to the strengthening of such regimes and their leaders: High oil rents create “rentier states,” whose governments – relieved of the pressure to democratize that tax-dependent states experience (“no taxation without representation”) – can and do use these oil rents to avoid democratic and economic reforms.

This provides Western democracies with potential leverage: oil rents flowing to authoritarian rulers in the Middle East could be reduced significantly as a result of the most important consuming nations, namely Europe, America, and Japan, undertaking coordinated, effective efforts to reduce their (dependence on) oil imports, especially from the region under consideration. Such efforts are possible and promising and, at least in principle, enjoy a high degree of public support. One has to keep in mind, however, that some well-organized interest groups and large companies who benefit from the current energy policy have significant influence on the foreign policy of oil-importing countries. Re-aligning import interests thus requires a long-term process of intra-state bargaining and debate that has to involve society as a whole.

Putting into practice this ambitious and time-consuming project of significantly reducing Western dependence on fossil fuels would be a key contribution to a peace-promoting policy based on a combination of sustainability and political change and might replace high risk strategies of externally-imposed democratic reforms or “regime change.”<sup>55</sup> In this statement the subjunctive mood must not be overlooked, however. At present, the prospects for a turn-round of Western energy policy appear rather dim indeed – despite the growing indications of man-made climate change. This is certainly true for the United States, whose government has just declared that it considers a large increase in its own (as well as in the global) demand for oil in the coming decades unavoidable. It expects the share of imports in the U.S. oil consumption to grow from currently 55 % to 70% in the next 25 years.<sup>56</sup> Viewed against the background of the previous observation, a contradiction in U.S. strategy towards the Middle East comes in sight: its foreign policy vision of a democratic Middle East, in which human rights are respected, economy and society develop and modernize, and

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Bruno Schoch, *Der 11. September als Quittung? Nicht das Sündenregister der USA, die versäumte Demokratisierung ist die Ursache des Terrorismus*, Frankfurt a. M.: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK-Standpunkte 6/2001) as well as Volker Rittberger, *Herausforderungen für die Friedensforschung nach dem 11. September 2001 aus der Sicht der Politikwissenschaft*, in: *S+F* 20 (2002) 4. Concerning the relationship of oil imports and authoritarian states see also Michael L. Ross, *Does Oil Hinder Democracy?*, in: *World Politics* 53 (2001) 3, pp. 325-361. Concerning the rentier-state concept see Martin Beck, *Friedensprozess im Nahen Osten. Rationalität, Kooperation und politische Rente im Vorderen Orient*, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 103-161

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Michael Renner, *Post-Saddam Energy Visions: Cheap Oil*, *International Herald Tribune*, January 17, 2003.

radical ideologies and terrorism have lost their appeal,<sup>57</sup> is undermined by its own conservative foreign economic and energy policy – a contradiction that it cannot solve but by force.

This said, the proposed long-term peace strategy is not devoid of risk, either. Theoretical arguments and empirical findings suggest that the process of democratization, i.e. the transition to a stable democratic peace, may be especially violence-prone. If authoritarian regimes become vulnerable as a result of reduced rent flows, then the possibility always exists that they use violence to compensate for the reduction of this type of income. The Iraqi attack on Kuwait in 1990 may well be a case in point.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The strategies we have outlined are far from easy and certain solutions. They demonstrate, however, that possibilities exist to mend the cracks in the Western alliance. Moreover, these strategies, even though they are suggested by different schools of thought in IR, need not be regarded as mutually exclusive options. They may be pursued simultaneously in order to, in the long term, trigger a re-definition of the transatlantic relationship satisfying both sides. The strategy based on realism centering on the upgrading of the ESDP directly addresses the European-American relationship and seeks to mitigate the imbalance that has occurred. The strategy based on liberalism to reduce the dependence on oil imports could, in the long term, result in a significant reduction of the security threats posed by transnational terrorism and authoritarian “rogue states,” thus – as a desired side effect – relieving the transatlantic relationship. The constructivist solution of a politically-orchestrated “dialogue of cultures” addresses subjective security threats by attempting to create a better understanding across the different cultures and life-worlds on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in the “West” and the “South.” Each of the proposed strategies, however, builds on the willingness on both sides of the Atlantic to take seriously the reciprocal dependence as well as the common vulnerability and to resist the temptation to shift the problems and burdens onto the respective other side.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Münkler (Fn. 10).

<sup>58</sup> Martin Beck made us aware of this dilemma. Concerning the transition risks of the democratic peace, see Edward Mansfield / Jack D. Snyder, Democratization and the Danger of War, in: *International Security* 20 (1995) 1, pp. 5-38.